

Chapter 8

*Every puzzle has a final
element of surprise.*

In the beginning, there was a book. A book of prophecy aptly named *Mahakala's Book of Prophecy*. Chairman Loo discovered the book in a library of a dungeon eight years ago. In it were prophetic verses which made Chairman Loo the man, or beast, he was today.

The final pages told of seven doors. Seven doors awaiting the touch of Fate. Chairman Loo was a patient man. He didn't need to know how the doors were opened, nor did he need to be there for the opening of the first six. It was the seventh door that maintained his interest.

And today, he was finally able to witness its opening. A day he had been waiting for ever since he first got hold of his book.

"Step back," said the chairman after Paige uttered the password which opened the thaumite door. There was no portal that appeared. The door opened as a door would, revealing a small closet. Inside, hovering in the center, was a cylindrical, metal artifact.

"It's the cryptex," the chairman heard Paige say.

He was a bit confused. The *Book of Prophecy* mentioned nothing about a cryptex.

“Don’t touch it,” barked the chairman as Paige moved in. He examined the thaumite door and its interior, wary of any traps or pitfalls which were embedded, but he sensed nothing.

The cryptex slowly rotated in the air, beckoning anyone to pick it up.

With his one free hand, Chairman Loo reached inside and grabbed it. There were five metal bands with alphanumeric characters on each of them. It was like a combination lock: if he entered in the correct passcode, the cryptex would open and he’d have access to the secrets inside.

“Tell me the code to open this,” demanded the chairman.

“Can I see it?” asked Paige.

Chairman Loo held it out to her.

“I mean, can you give it to me?” asked Paige.

“No,” said the chairman.

“You’re not making this easy,” said Paige.

“You solved the door quick enough. Solve this,” said the chairman.

“The door had clues! There’s nothing for this cryptex! I’m hoping there are clues on the cryptex itself.”

The chairman held out the cryptex and rotated it to show her the different sides.

“You’re not going to give it to me,” said Paige.

“Of course not,” said the chairman.

“This may take me a bit,” said Paige.

“Take your time. The longer you wait, who knows how long your friend can last from internal bleeding,” said Chairman Loo. Inside, he smiled to himself. He was in charge of the situation here, and no

one was going to take this cryptex away from him.

Vanguard Paige closed her eyes and her lips started moving. Was she casting a spell?

“You better not try anything funny. I can sense magic and the minute I detect a spell, your friend is dead,” said the chairman.

“I don’t have magic, I’m trying to figure out the answer to your cryptex. Think of it as going into my mind palace. In order to make the associations required for this puzzle, I have to pull upon the database of my mind and visualize what is in front of me because you won’t let me touch the cryptex itself. And when I search through all the available data-”

“Fine, fine, fine. Do whatever. Young people talk too much,” said the chairman.

“You know, while I’m looking, you could give me the big boss spiel. Explain to me how you put together this elaborate plot to generate the thaumite door,” said Paige.

The chairman smirked. She thought he did all of this. At one point, he cared. He wondered who Mahakala was and why there were seven doors to begin with. But in the end, what mattered was getting the doors open.

“Just give me the answer to this thing,” said the chairman.

Paige looked at the chairman, and then closed her eyes once more. The chairman wondered if she was stalling. Maybe she’d speed it up a bit if he gave Jess another hit on the head.

“It’s ‘MOIRA’. It’s spelled M-O-I-R-A,” said Paige.

The chairman looked at the cryptex. He couldn’t open it with just one hand, especially since his claws would get in the way. However, he couldn’t put Jess

down, else there would be the three vanguards against himself.

He could walk away with Jess, but if he didn't have the right password, then he wouldn't be able to open the cryptex. It would be a risk he'd have to take.

Chairman Loo opened his mouth to say something, but Paige was in front of him, incredibly close. How did she move so fast?

Paige headbutted him.

There was an explosion of intense pain and his hands went to his face. Blood gushed out from his nose. Why was he bleeding from a mere headbutt?

He looked at his hands. They were no longer hairy. Was he not in beast form?

The chairman looked around in confusion. Kats and Ando were beside Jess, and Paige had jumped into the thaumite door.

And then the dungeon disappeared.

FIVE MINUTES EARLIER

"Oh! That's interesting," said Paige.

"Your powers are really strange," said Kats.

"I'm entitled to a class just like everyone else. I don't know what I'd be though. I don't think I'd have the stomach for being an assassin."

"You get used to it," said Kats.

"You're a scary woman," said Paige. She dismissed the prompt and was brought to a screen displaying her class:



Class: Anti-Mage

Nullify and absorb magic. The amount of magic absorbed is dependent on your Magic attribute.

ACCEPT

“I don’t get to choose a class? It’s given to me? That’s lame. Although, this class makes perfect sense,” said Paige. She clicked *Accept*.

Allocate 5 attribute points.

Class Bonus: Points put into magic are negative. Points transferred from other attributes to magic are 1:1.

| | | |
|-----------|------|---|
| Muscle: | 125 | ↕ |
| Movement: | 85 | ↕ |
| Mind: | 140 | ↕ |
| Magic: | -245 | ↕ |

RESET

ACCEPT

“Now we’re talking,” said Paige. She made a quick calculation in her head. This could work.

“You have a plan?” asked Kats.

“I do, but I’ll miss being smart. Kats, I know you don’t owe me anything, but I have one last favour to

ask. I'm going to take down the chairman. Please make sure Jess is looked after. I won't be around to protect her," said Paige.

"What kind of talk is that? You're going to sacrifice yourself?" asked Kats.

"What? No! Of course, not! However, I'll be going somewhere," said Paige.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't really know," said Paige. She made some adjustments on her attribution window:

Allocate 0 attribute points.

Class Bonus: Points put into magic are negative. Points transferred from other attributes to magic are 1:1.

| | | |
|-----------|------|---|
| Muscle: | 20 | ↕ |
| Movement: | 20 | ↕ |
| Mind: | 20 | ↕ |
| Magic: | -540 | ↕ |

RESET ACCEPT

"Wow. You really hate magic," said Kats.

"When I click *Accept*, I'll be able to gauge the amount of magical energy I can nullify, thanks to our *Soul Sync*. I will stall until I drain enough magic from the chairman so I can overtake him. When I move, please make sure you save Jess and I'll take the cryptex. You okay with that?" asked Paige.

"Do you know how to open the cryptex?" asked Kats.

"No. The answer is probably in my Book, which

for some reason is no longer in my inventory. Furthermore, once I accept this, I may not have the brains to figure it out,” said Paige.

Kats was silent.

“This was the part where you were going to kill me with your weapon to get the cryptex, right?” asked Paige.

“I wasn’t going to kill you.”

“But you, me, and the chairman were all tasked with getting this cryptex. Do you know how to open it?”

“No,” said Kats.

“So you need me alive,” said Paige.

“I wasn’t going to kill you!”

“I think I know a way to find out how to open it. Then you can have what’s inside,” said Paige.

“Really?”

“The quest for the cryptex isn’t my quest, Kats. I’m doing it because the Book said I was going to do it. But now, I’m free to do whatever I want. And after this, I’m quitting the vanguard life. I’ve moved my stats back to normal. Well, a bit more than normal, but I want to get into university,” said Paige.

“I’ll protect Jess,” said Kats.

“Brilliant! You won’t regret this, Kats. I owe you one.”

“I think you owe me more than just one.”

Paige grinned as she hit *Accept*.

Everything had disappeared. The chairman found himself, and everyone else, back in Club 1838.

“What? What happened?” asked the chairman.

Kats looked around. Multiple guns were trained

on them. The military had taken up positions around the portal ready to fend off any attack from the gorgons. Upon seeing only humans, they lowered their guns.

Kats looked around. They were surrounded by vanguards. All the statues had reverted back to their human forms. They were confused, rightfully enough, but they weren't injured. The gorgons took good care not to hurt them.

"Medic!" Kats shouted. The military was quick to respond and she told them of Jess's condition. She left the part out about the chairman. That would be a battle she'd have to dance carefully.

Kats looked for the portal, but it was gone.

And so was Paige.

There were many mysteries about Paige, but none of it was surprising. Would Paige give her the cryptex? She didn't mention death was on the line for her, but then again, she didn't like to be dramatic.

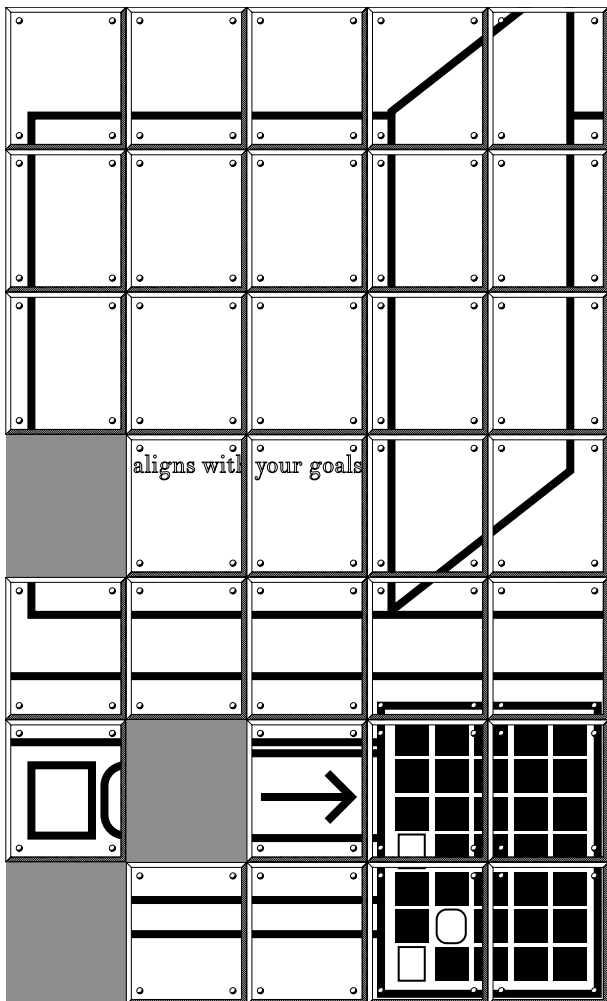
Paige was in a small closet made of thaumite. It was cramped, and the door was closed. Draining the dungeon of magic seemed like a good idea at the time, but if she was going to be stuck in a closet for eternity, that was going to suck.

On the backside of the door was the line-art she couldn't find earlier.

"Now you give this to me?" thought Paige. She noticed three panels were missing from it. Were they important panels? Probably. She called up her inventory to see if she had her Book. She didn't.

She kicked on the door. It didn't budge.

Where was she if the door was no longer part of



She noticed three panels were missing from it...

the dungeon? Was she floating through space in some unknown dimension? She kicked the door again and started screaming. Her mind went to movies where people were buried alive. That wasn't helpful for her mental state.

The door opened.

"You're in my fridge," said a voice.

Paige looked outwards. A lady dressed in a simple grey dress was peering into the closet Paige was sitting in.

"Oh! Sorry. I took a wrong turn," said Paige as she crawled out with the cryptex in hand. As she exited, she looked back, and saw that, yes indeed, she had been inside a fridge.

"Please, have a seat," said the lady as she motioned towards a table set up with two cups of coffee.

Paige looked around. She was in a small wooden hut. The furnishings were sparse, with only a few cupboards, a wash basin, and a table for two people. A fireplace burned off to the side with an iron pot cooking some type of rich smelling stew. The thaumite fridge was out of place in this little hovel.

"Why the fridge, you ask? It's hard to keep things cold, and sometimes, I just want a cold brew, you know?" asked the woman.

Paige stared at the woman. She was of an indiscernible age, with dark hair tied back and a long, angular face. Her complexion was fit for make-up commercials. The outfit she wore was simple: a full-length, grey tunic with no pattern, and the only adornment she had were a few wooden beads.

"Are you Moira?" asked Paige.

"Even after decreasing your mind attribute, you still figured it out. Clever girl," said the lady.

"You don't seem all that alarmed to find me in

your fridge,” said Paige.

“You don’t seem all that alarmed to be found in my fridge,” said Moira with a smile.

“Are you the one who gave me these abilities?” asked Paige.

Moira smiled again and put a card on the table in front of Paige. She took a sip of her coffee.

Paige picked the card up. On it was the title “Skill: Level Up” and a picture similar to the icon in her inventory. Beneath it was the description: “Grants character the ability to level.”

“That’s an extremely rare card, you know. I won it off of Morpheus. She was so mad,” laughed Moira.

Paige wasn’t following. It was difficult to take in everything around her. This would have been a cake-walk earlier when she was a genius, but at this moment, it was too much information.

“Sorry, I know things are a bit confusing. But I waited until you arrived so we could review together! Let’s see now. I’ll bring up your stats,” said Moira.

| | STATUS | SKILLS | INVENTORY |
|--------------|------------------|--------|-----------|
| PAIGE | Anti-Mage | | |
| LEVEL 40 | | | |
| Muscle: | 20 | | |
| Movement: | 20 | | |
| Mind: | 20 | | |
| Magic: | -540 | | |

“No one has ever decreased their magic to such an extent. Having said that, the *Level Up* card has only been played twice before, so we don’t really have a large sample size,” said Moira.

“Are you telling me my life was a video game to you?” asked Paige.

“Oh no. It was more like a board game. And each of us was able to grant one special ability on top of the cards we’ve collected for our characters. It’s so exciting! I was able to give you the *Fourth Eye*.”

“So, this was some weekly board game night you have with other... what shall I call you? Deities?”

“We prefer Ethereals,” said Moira.

“So you pit us against each other with these games of yours?”

“It’s a co-op board game! Kind of. Depends on the situation I guess. Anyway, we all work together! That’s why Morana was helping you. I always team up with Morana,” said the Ethereal.

“Who?”

“Oh, you know. The character she had was the assassin with no social skills. Sometimes watching that human made me uncomfortable. But Morana is nothing like that. She’s a dear,” said Moira.

A door Paige never noticed opened. A woman, dressed in a pink pant-suit with shoulder pads only eclipsed by the size of her hat, came in. Although her style was wildly different, her face was the same as Moira’s.

“This is the one here? Bless her soul, what a sweetheart,” the woman said as she held out her hand, drooped as if expecting someone to kiss it. Paige didn’t know what to do.

“Mari is the name. Just shake it, dearie. You don’t need to stare,” said the woman.

Paige grabbed Mari's fingertips, giving it a polite shake.

"Your friend is useless," continued Mari. She waved and the wall near the table expanded. A chair was pulled out and she sat down with a glass of red wine in her hand.

"Now, now, Mari. Don't belittle your character in front of a human," said Moira.

"Easy for you to say. You won, didn't you? And what did mine do? Get captured. I gave her so many opportunities, too," said the lady. She looked over to Paige.

"You tricked her out of the dungeon. She would have done beautifully, armed with that whip. It would have been a slaughter," said Mari.

Paige looked at Mari. If she was talking about Jess, she couldn't see how any type of slaughter would have happened.

"We're talking about Jess? Right?"

"Yes, dearie. Keep up. I thought you were smart," said Mari. She took a puff from her cigarette. Paige wondered where the wine glass disappeared to.

"Don't insult my character, Mari. You were impressed by her actions too," said Moira.

"I'm sorry, but that stupid bear was beating up my baby! It's hard to keep one's composure after such a traumatic incident!"

"You gave her skills too?" asked Paige.

"Of course! She had electricity, but you knew that. At the beginning, I was wondering if it should be hail, because has anyone had the power of hail? No! But in practice, that's a weird power. You hold your hand up and ice balls come out. I mean, that's good if you need to fill a punch bowl at a party, but it's a battle against monsters, not a popularity contest.

Anyway, had she wielded it properly, she would have chain lightning-ed all of you. Or most of you. Probably not you, sweetie, because of the whole best friend thing. Honestly, you two would have been amazing as partners but then Morana stole you,” said Mari.

“Right. That’s Kats’ ethereal,” said Paige.

“Ethereal is capitalized, dearie. Anyway, it’s not fair that Moira and Morana always team up! And Morana doesn’t play fair! I’m positive she cheated! We aren’t supposed to interfere with our characters, but she was giving that assassin directions on what to do,” said Mari. Her hands and face were very animated as she shook her fist in the air.

“Mari,” said Moira, but Mari interrupted.

“You! You there, human one,” said Mari, pointing a finger at her.

“Yes?” asked Paige.

“You had no clue what was going on, right? You were more in the dark than the parents of a weed-infused teenager. And do you know why? Because Moira doesn’t cheat! She follows rules! Except for that *Level Up* card. Honestly, that card is OP!” said Mari as she poked at the card on the table.

“Mari,” said Moira, but Mari continued.

“If I had this card, my character would have been blasting everyone! Lightning would be zapping enemies, Jess would be in slow motion, the *Immigrant Song* would be the soundtrack, it would have been glorious. Anyway, that’s beside the point. Where was I? Oh right! Morana is a cheater! I’m sure she talked to her character, because that character had a purpose! She had goals! You were riddled with indecision, anxiety, and acute ignorance!”

Mari was looking straight at Paige. Paige wanted to argue those adjectives, but she kept quiet.

“Mari, Morana had the *Revelation* card. That’s why she could commune with her character.”

“Wait. She did? Ohhh. You know, that card is OP too,” said Mari.

“What card did you give Jess?” asked Paige after a bit of hesitation. She didn’t want to send Mari into another rant, but she was curious.

“Oh. She got the *Immortality* card. A lot of good that did. She wasn’t even in a position to die! How utterly pointless.”

“You’re kidding me,” thought Paige. All that time worrying about Jess’s well-being and Jess couldn’t die. She felt sorry for Jess; her ethereal didn’t seem to be very good at playing games.

“It’s capitalized, sweetie,” said Moira.

“She was supposed to be with all of you when you met up with the cyclops. Do you know how long it took me to set that up? Four of your human years! Can you believe it? I had to start it before the game even began,” said Mari.

“That’s technically cheating,” said Moira.

“No, it’s not! Morana is the cheater. Oh, and on the topic of time, can I just say I HATE being in time? It’s like forever in here. I don’t know how all of you are just happy with event A followed by event B for the rest of your miserable lives. I’ve been here so long I can’t even remember how *not* to be in time. Anyway, I’m positive Morana left behind evidence of being a cheater. So I’m going to find it and I’m going to show everyone what a big cheater she is!” said Mari. She stood up with her arm stretched upwards and her finger pointing to the sky. Paige looked up. The roof, which wasn’t tall enough to accommodate their heights, was higher.

“Quit wrecking my house,” said Moira.

“Be a dear and compost this for me, will you?” asked Mari of Paige. She put her sandwich on the table and opened a door to the hut.

“You’re forgetting something,” said Moira, as she tapped her fingers on the table. Mari gave out a loud sigh. Her hand slammed against the table, leaving an object behind. She turned to Paige and pointed at her.

“You. Human. Don’t bet with Fate,” said Mari. She stormed out of the hut.

“She’s a spirited one. Mari is going to hound Morana for a long time. Or at least until tomorrow when she finds something else that incenses her,” said Moira.

“There are a lot of M names with the Ethereals. It’s getting confusing,” thought Paige.

“It’s the theme, sweetie. Each game has a theme attached to it to keep it interesting. Don’t pay any attention to it. In fact, it would behoove you to just ignore us,” said Moira.

“It’s a little hard to do,” said Paige.

“Well, ignore my words at your peril,” said Moira.

Paige looked at the object Mari left behind. It was another playing card. Moira picked it up and winked.

“We make bets too. Getting new cards is what makes this rewarding. Minerva still owes me one, but I haven’t seen her. Probably borrowed Manann’s cloak,” said Moira.

The thought of humanity being used as literal pawns in a board game was not lost on Paige. She probably would have been angrier if she wasn’t so confused by the number of Ethereal names.

“I told you they’re not important,” said Moira.

“Wait. You weren’t allowed to interact with me?” asked Paige.

“Of course not. Rules are rules, you know,” said Moira.

“Well, no. I don’t know. But then, which one of you gave me the *Soul Sync* skill when time stopped during a level?”

“One of us contacted you? And outside of human time? That’s odd. When we play, were stuck in this horrible little universe of yours. Don’t take that personally, but I’m with Mari on this: I absolutely abhor time. Still, I can’t resist the Game. I’d sit through hundreds of years to do so. In fact, I have. Ha! Remember the one that lasted a hundred and nine years? The theme was oatmeal back then. That was Mari’s idea. Morana was so mad,” said Moira as she sat back, her eyes focusing on a memory. Paige, not being immortal, didn’t remember that one.

“How many players are there in this game?”

“It’s not really set. Anyway, talking to humans during the game is definitely against the rules. So that means it was Mahakala. She always breaks the rules. That’s why we don’t let her play,” said Moira.

“I think she was playing,” said Paige.

“Oh, she was definitely playing. She was in control of at least a couple of characters. I know she influenced the Chairman,” said Moira.

“Hold on a minute. This Mahakala person gave me so many benefits. But you’re saying she was in charge of the guy who assaulted Jess?”

“She also sent those kidnappers after you. She’s complicated,” said Moira with a laugh. She got up and stirred the pot of stew on the fireplace.

“Why would she do that?” asked Paige.

“You humans and your need for answers. Sometimes things are because they are. Here, try my soup. I do admit the food humans require and make is by

far the best part of your existence. That's another reason I come here. Admittedly, I was hoping for a longer Game. We only played for sixteen years and there were a few more dungeons I wanted to try out," said Moira as she placed two bowls on the table.

"Sixteen years? This game has been going on for sixteen years?" Asked Paige.

"I know, right? If I knew we were going to play a filler game, I wouldn't have spent so much time on the miniatures. It would have started sooner, too, but Maat took forever drafting her resource cards. You're not eating. Try the soup! I'd say 'Eat up before it gets cold,' but it won't get cold," said Moira as she lifted a spoon to her lips. She let out a huge sigh of contentment.

"Ahhh, I got this recipe from a woman in Somalia. It is amazing. The gorgon and siren team-up was my idea, by the way. I thought it was clever."

"So you made the dungeons designed to kill us," said Paige.

"We all made the dungeons! And it made you stronger!"

"And you made the puzzles, too?"

"Sometimes. Although, I prefer drawing the puzzles from the puzzle deck because the cards are pretty," said Moira.

"You have a puzzle deck?" asked Paige.

"A puzzle deck, a dungeon deck, there are all sorts of cards in this game. Metis makes them. She's the best one at making them pretty, to be honest. Look at the quality of this one. It glows when activated and leaves a trail of light when you wave it in the air. It's also water-proof! Mari tried to dip one of the cards in a bisque she had been eating. Fortunately, the card was okay, but the bisque was ruined. Why didn't you

open your cryptex?” asked Moira.

Paige looked down into her hands. She still held the cryptex. All this time she’d been holding it and it’d slipped her mind. She placed it on the table.

“I just got it and I don’t have my Book,” said Paige.

“Right! I took it away! Hah!”

“Why would you do that?” asked Paige in frustration.

“I made a bet with Mnemosyne. Which I won thanks to you being able to figure things out without the Book! You’re so clever, Paige,” said Moira as she patted Paige on the head again. Moira reached up to a lone bookshelf with a few leather-bound manuscripts on it. She pulled a smaller one out, and put it on the table. The bookshelf didn’t change in the number of books it contained. Paige looked at it.

“This is my Book,” said Paige as she lifted it up. She had only seen it virtually, but here it was available in real life.

“Think of it as a final gift. The last few chapters have a lot of exposition, sorry.”

Paige flipped through the Book and then skipped to the end. It was all there. She read about herself reading this sentence. It was surreal. She flipped further ahead and saw a passage about Death.

“Ethereals talk a lot. Jess would love it,” said Paige.

“Our minds are infinite, sweetie. When we talk to you humans, we’re doing everything we can to hold back. Anyway, don’t read your book here, silly. You can do that any time. You won’t lose it. Even if you think you lost it, the Book will always appear in your bookshelf.”

“Hey, there’s a page ripped out after Chapter 8!” said Paige.

“Of course there’s a page ripped out. It’s in your cryptex.”

“How can I solve the cryptex when pieces of the seventh door are missing?”

“You lose a few points in your mind attribute and you are this thick already? You won’t need anything from that door, sweetie. All of that is for later,” said Moira.

“Later?” asked Paige.

“Speaking of the final puzzle, it will take you a bit,” said Moira.

“The cryptex isn’t the last puzzle?” asked Paige.

“Oh dear, no. The cryptex just gates the final meta puzzle. Didn’t you notice how different the quote is for Chapter 8?”

“No, because I just got the Book now. You took it from me, remember? And I’m not the speed reader I used to be. Anyway, how can there be more puzzles? I thought the Game was over,” said Paige.

“Well, it’s over for us. Not for you. Want a hint for the cryptex?”

“Yes,” said Paige.

“You didn’t even try it yet.”

“Give me the hint,” said Paige.

“It involves the quote from this chapter,” said Moira.

“So does every other chapter!” said Paige.

“You are a clever girl,” laughed Moira.

Paige looked at the cryptex. She didn’t notice this before because she was busy making up fake answers for the chairman, but the first two rings of the cryptex required letters and the last three rings had numbers. Perhaps the answer wasn’t a word.

“That’s the spirit! You’re figuring it out already! Anyway, you need to solve this so you can help Kats

with the final puzzle,” said Moira.

“What? The final puzzle belongs to Kats? Do we need to go through another portal?” asked Paige.

“No. That’s done. Portals won’t appear in your world any more. It took a lot of effort to get them to appear, since your world didn’t have magic. Linking up magical dimensions to non-magical dimensions is near impossible without intervention. And now that you exist in the world with your ability to nullify magic, well, they’ll never appear.”

“The vanguards will be dissolved?” asked Paige.

“Yes, your world is going to turn back to normal,” said Moira.

“Jess is going to be so mad at me,” said Paige.

“And she’s immortal. That’s a tough burden to bear, you know. I’m sure there was a *Doctor Who* episode about that,” said Moira.

“We keep our skills?” asked Paige.

“Why wouldn’t you. Although your class is pretty useless in a world that doesn’t have magic. Still, that was a good call. I was wondering what was going to happen up until I wrote that part. Good show,” said Moira.

“You wrote my Book but didn’t know what was going to happen?” asked Paige.

“Yes. Not many people understand that,” said Moira.

“I don’t understand that!” said Paige.

“That’s because you’re human,” said Moira. She stretched and cracked her back.

“Augh. Did I mention I also didn’t like inhabiting corporeal bodies? Except for the eating thing. Anyway, the game is done, and so is my stew, and I’m tired of this space-time continuum thing you’ve got going for you. Do be a dear and compost this, please.

We won't see each other again, but I will remember you. You impressed me, but then again, the woman who gave me this recipe impressed me. Goodbye," said Moira as she gave Paige the sandwich that Mari left behind.

Moira stood up from the table, not worrying about the size of the hut roof. She stood tall and her skin looked the colour of radiance. Paige didn't realize that was a colour. Moira smiled again and gave Paige a final condescending pat on the head.

Paige blinked. When she opened her eyes, she was in her room. The smell of cabbage cooking was in the air. It wasn't the same as Moira's stew, but this had a scent of home.

In her hands were the cryptex and her Book. Was there any point in reading what she had missed? The Ethereal's Game was over. However, she couldn't resist. She opened her Book.

It didn't take her too long.

Paige picked up the cryptex and entered the code. It opened to reveal a torn page. On it were the panels missing from the seventh door.

"Why go to all the trouble to hide these three?" she wondered.