

AWAKENING POWERS – Book One in the Trilogy of Power

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CHAPTER ONE

Regnaryn shivered at the unexpected chill in the air. The brightness of the room told her it was much later than Mama normally let her sleep.

She quickly dressed, wondering if she should take the time to braid her long red hair. This was one of those times when she wished she was not the only human in Reisseem Grove; the others never had to worry about such things.

Halfway down the large staircase, the silence of the house assailed her. She ran through each room, calling out. No response. The house looked right, neat and tidy, just the way Mama liked it. But no one was there. She mindcalled to them but was met with only silence.

She ran outside. Still no one was there. Where could they be?

The Square!

Regnaryn raced down the trail and through the dense wood.

The sound of familiar voices as she neared the clearing made her so glad, she barely noticed the oddity of everyone being there.

She called to her mother.

No response.

She called to the rest of the family and then to the others.

They neither heard nor saw her.

She called again, raising her voice. Still, no one reacted.

Regnaryn mindspoke to everyone.

Nothing.

"At last you are here," an unrecognized voice boomed. "I have been waiting. Now it can begin."

She looked around but did not see the owner of the strange voice.

Regnaryn heard a crackle and saw a flicker of flame. She watched in horror as the flame grew and spread toward the oblivious crowd.

She cried out. They did not hear. Only when the fire engulfed them did they react; not to her but to the flames.

Their shrieks filled her ears, and the smell of burning flesh, fur and feather permeated the air. Her feet were rooted like an old tree and she could not move to help them. Regnaryn knew it was just a matter of minutes before she too would be consumed.

Yet, as everyone around her was ablaze, she alone stood untouched.

:You have caused this,: the unknown voice spoke into her mind. *:If it were not for you, they would not be suffering. You are the cause of their pain and the horrific end they face.:*

Regnaryn stared, aghast, as the others burned. Tears streamed down her cheeks. Helpless, she closed her eyes.

"You horrible little thing, closing your eyes will not remove the sight from your mind. You say you are not at fault, yet you alone stand unscathed. Explain how that is possible?"

She shook her head and sobbed, "I do not know. But how could I cause this? Why?"

"Because you are evil."

"I could never do this," she screamed.

"Yet you have, but I can help you," the voice, now velvety smooth, said. "Give yourself, your power, to me. Allow me to purge you of this evil."

Regnaryn almost yielded, but something deep within stopped her. She fell to her knees.

"No!" she screamed over and over until the words no longer made a sound.

"Regnaryn," a familiar voice said as a gentle hand lightly touched the teenaged girl's shoulder. "Child, wake up, you are having a bad dream."

Regnaryn opened her eyes to see Trebeh's face; the large amber eyes and silky white mane untouched by the flames she had just witnessed. Regnaryn bolted upright and threw her

arms around the yekcal's neck. On any other occasion, Regnaryn, so close to adulthood, would not cling like a child to her mother. But, after the horrific nightmare, she welcomed the comfort and safety of her mother's arms.

"Oh, Mama, it was horrible. The flames. Everyone was burning and... and..."

Regnaryn sobbed until she could no longer speak. Still, she held fast to the cat-like yekcal.

"There, there, child," Trebeh said, gently stroking Regnaryn's hair.

"It was horrible, Mama," Regnaryn sobbed. "There was fire everywhere. Everyone was screaming. I tried to warn you, but no one heard me. And, that voice... that vicious voice saying I was to blame. Saying I was evil."

The girl looked into Trebeh's eyes. "Mama, it is not true, is it? I could never do such a horrible thing. Could I?"

"Dear one, you would never do anything to hurt anyone. It was a dream, just a bad dream," Trebeh purred softly, trying to calm Regnaryn's fear.

"But Mama, it was so real. I could feel the heat."

"Dreams are like that."

Trebeh continued stroking Regnaryn's hair until the youngster calmed. Trebeh rose, walked across the room, picked up Regnaryn's robe and gently tossed it to her.

"Come downstairs, we have time for a cup of tea before the others wake."

Trebeh entered the kitchen and, with the slightest wave of her hand, created small candle-like flames in the two wall lamps. The light bounced off the large windows, the room immediately as bright as midday.

Trebeh motioned Regnaryn to sit. She poured two cups of tea from the always-full pitcher then sat across from the massive wooden table and watched Regnaryn sip the cool sweet tea.

"Tell me more about your dream, child."

"It was so real, and that voice." She shuddered. "He was taunting me... accusing me... blaming me... He said he would help me if I gave him my power." She looked at Trebeh. "What was he talking about? I have no power."

Regnaryn's words immediately evoked a distant memory in Trebeh and the yekcal fought hard to hide the shock she felt. "I know it felt horrible, dear, but it was just a dream."

"You are right, Mama." Regnaryn set aside the empty cup. "But he was so real, so vicious, that I..." She stared into the darkness beyond the window for a few seconds then shook her head. "I am too old to act so."

"Child, even grown men, great warriors, can be dropped to their knees by such things."

"Why would I have such a dream, Mama?"

Trebeh smiled. "Ah, if we only knew what causes us to dream the things we do."

:Ayirak, love, are you awake?: Trebeh whispered to his mind.

It did not matter how quietly she called her mate, he always woke to her voice and this time was no exception. He reached for her only to find himself alone in the large featherbed.

:Trebeh, where are you? Is something wrong?:

:I am in the kitchen with Regnaryn. She had a bad dream.:

:Is she alright? She has not done that in years, not since she recovered from the fever.

Should I come down?: He could feel her thinking it over in her mind and quickly added, *:I certainly could use a cup of tea and a good morning kiss, since that is all I can expect in the kitchen with one of the children there.:*

:Why you dirty old cat,: she said, her voice reflecting the grin she dare not show to Regnaryn.

He growled back a sound shared only between lovers. She had to keep herself from outwardly laughing. *:I think it better if you do not bring the dream up unless she does.:*

:I understand,: Ayirak replied.

"Your father is awake and coming down, child."

"Please do not tell him about the dream, Mama," Regnaryn pleaded. "I do not want him to think I am acting like one of the littles."

"If that is your wish," Trebeh said.

Regnaryn nodded. She had no sooner placed a cup of tea in front of her father's place at the table when Ayirak appeared, his massive frame nearly filling the doorway. He stood a moment and then entered.

"So, what has you two up before the sun has even risen?" Neither answered. "Whatever it is, it must be important to pull you out of bed so early, my little sleepyhead."

He crossed the room and wrapped his arms around Trebeh's waist. She turned and kissed him on the cheek.

"You could have at least run a comb through that mop." Trebeh laughed and ran her long finely manicured fingers through his brown spotted mane, trying to tame the sleep-induced rumple.

"Ah, I would have, dear one. But the thought of being away from you another moment far outweighed my desire for grooming."

Regnaryn and Trebeh broke into laughter. Ayirak feigned a look of hurt.

They sat in idle conversation until the first glimmer of sunlight shone through the window. Trebeh sighed and pushed her chair back.

"It is time for this lovely quiet to come to an end. The others will be up and about shortly. Regnaryn, help me prepare breakfast."

"I believe that is my cue to leave," Ayirak said and stroked his fur-covered chin. "So, I will go upstairs to make myself more presentable as my lady previously requested."

He rose and strode from the room.

Trebeh smiled. "I think this may be the first time in your seventeen years that you have been awake to help with the morning meal."

Regnaryn sheepishly nodded. "Um, I guess so. But you usually do this all by yourself."

She thought a moment and added, "I always help with the other meals."

"So you do, child, so you do."

Trebeh told her what needed to be done. Breakfast was ready just as the quiet was shattered by the sounds of voices and footsteps bounding down the stairs to the kitchen.

So it begins, Trebeh thought with just a hint of disappointment at the loss of the rare calm.