

The Elementals Trilogy  
The Book of Earth  
Book 1

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## PROLOGUE

The great cloud was just a silhouette against the night sky. It rose up, an ominous pillar of heavy darkness that descended silently over the unsuspecting city. There were none of the warnings that accompany the erupting of a volcano. No quakes or rockslides, just the silent venting of ash. This was no normal eruption. This was a controlled and planned release, not an awesome display of raw power. As ash filled the empty spaces of houses and shops, shouts could be heard, muffled and choked as people were startled awake and began trying to flee the city. There was no hope for them, the ash cloud choked and blinded. Houses turned into tombs.

A small group of cloaked figures crested the ridge overlooking the city just as the ash cloud crawled over it. Willow looked out over the devastation below, rooted in place, her ashen hair whipped in the terrible wind, her blue eyes troubled. Three others stood with her, two men and a woman. One of the men turned his back on the doomed people below them. His long dark hair tugged against the leather tie that held it and although she didn't know him, something about his face seemed familiar and Willow felt absolute trust in him.

“We are too late.” He said quietly.

“Is there nothing we can do for them?” Willow asked, though she already knew the answer.

“No.” The other man said, pushing pitch-black hair from his face. “It is too late for them. An unfortunate sacrifice, but a necessary one. We can still stop the coming evil. Let their deaths not be in vain.” The other woman nodded, pulling her cloak tighter around her and following the others as they turned and headed across the ridge toward the

mountain looming over the city.

Willow took one last look at the cloud of death before turning and hurrying after the others. As they made their way closer to the base of the mountain, opposite the cloud of ash and soot, Willow felt the air grow heavy with dark magick.

“They’re here.” The woman said her voice pitched low. There was a deep rumble like thunder, though the sky was clear, and they watched as the side of the mountain rose up like a giant taking a deep breath. The force of the movement threw them off their feet. From the ground Willow watched with a mixture of fear and terrified awe as a chunk of the earth itself tore free of the ground near her in the unmistakable shape of a giant hand and forearm.

The rock hand braced itself and the ground heaved again, sending Willow sprawling. She scrambled backward as the rocky form of shoulders and a torso breached the soil, topped with a craggy head. Her gasp had the head swiveling around to face her and the empty cave-like holes that served as eye sockets locked on her and sparked a sinister red to match the glowing cracks that interrupted the ground around them. Its jaws opened with a grating sound, like two boulders sliding against one another, and it let out a gravelly roar that shook the rocks loose for meters around.

The darkness was oppressive when Willow woke with a start in her own bed, drenched in a cold sweat. Her sleep heavy arms struggled to untangle herself from her damp sheets, tightly twisted around her limbs. She hadn’t had dreams that vivid in a very long time. The image of the rock creature felt seared into the inside of her skull. When her feet hit the cold of the wood floor she let out a series of deep, calming breaths,

grounding herself, and let the sound of waves crashing outside her open window pull the panic away from her. It had felt so real, like reliving a memory. She padded softly across the floor to the window, the creaking of the old house adding another layer of comfort and calm to her.

That creature...and the volcano... The moon was reflecting off the ocean outside, picturesque, as any photograph, but Willow didn't see it. The dream continued to replay in her head, every detail as clear as the first time. She would have to talk to Holly about it. The adrenaline ebbed away but sleep would continue to elude her, her thoughts firing around inside her head. There was something familiar about the dream, the people in it, and the rock creature. She'd seen something like that before, she just couldn't remember where. The ocean called to her, the waves beckoning her down to the rocky beach. She dressed quickly, pulling on a worn out pair of jeans and an old sweater, before tiptoeing down the winding staircase to the kitchen. She'd long since learned to dodge the squeaky bits of floor throughout the house and made it to the mudroom, slipping on boots, and out the door in near silence.

She felt her emotions settle as she walked the familiar stretch of beach near the house, but there was a charge in the air that she couldn't shake. Ever since the accident she'd felt an ominous energy hovering over the island, like it was waiting for something. Holly had seemed on edge too but when she'd pressed her about it she'd brushed it off as stress. Willow knew it was more than that but left it alone, when Holly was ready to talk she would and not a moment before. Willow just hoped it wasn't too late. Cool water lapped at her toes before she realized she'd wandered so close to the water. She turned to look out over the water and the world spun for a moment. She stumbled, disoriented, and

pressed her palms against her eyes, breathing deeply till she felt the dizziness subside. When she opened her eyes she gasped, scrambling away from the water. The beach around her was lit up, bright as day, from the wall of flames flickering over the surface of the ocean. Waves of fire crashed upon the beach, leaving trails of scorched, blackened sand behind them. The roar of the blaze was deafening but Willow stood frozen in fear. The entire ocean burned before her, the heat searing her skin and clothes. She closed her eyes again, attempting to pull a shield of calm over herself, thinking of cooling water but the temperature only rose. She pulled in a deep breath, coughed on the smoke, and tried again steeling herself against the flames.

“Stop this. It’s only a vision.” As the words left her lips she put a touch of will behind them. Cool night air wrapped around her like a soothing balm against her heat-dried skin. Everything was as it had been. The waves lapped gently at the shore and the moon trailed its reflection across the surface of the calm sea. There was no evidence of the flames. She turned back towards the house. Sleep was beyond her now and she’d seen enough to know they couldn’t ignore this anymore.