

Westcrest

Episode #21: Folkvangar

Jeremy doesn't need to admit that he's nervous as they approach Chatravati's study, because it is already written all over his face.

"Don't worry," says Sarra as she stops beside the beige door with a brass doorknob. To Jeremy it seems like a rather ordinary door.

"Go on then," says Sarra, nodding towards it. Jeremy raises a fist to knock but Sarra interrupts him. "He already knows you're coming, Jeremy." Then she rolls her eyes and bounds away, leaving Jeremy alone with the door... and a decision.

Any illusion of free will is stolen from him as the door is drawn open from the other side. Chatravati smiles strangely at Jeremy and motions for him to enter.

Jeremy steps forward, his eyes darting about. The walls of Chatravati's study are decorated with extravagant wallpaper that depicts autumnal leaves. The brown and orange leaves are intertwined into shapes so complex they make Jeremy's head hurt. A busted-up cassette player is playing an Urdu love ballad. There is a dossier here.

"Welcome to the *Folkvangar*," Chatravati says, his eyes twinkling. "Freyja's Hall."

And all at once Jeremy feels the room expanding around him. He glances at the walls and sees the leaves are now shifting and dancing as though caught in a breeze. On each side of the room enormous tree trunks rise like vaulted pillars stretching off into the distance.

"Come, Jeremy. Sit." Now the room is just a room again, though Jeremy is nervously aware that the leaves on the wallpaper still seem to be moving at the periphery of his vision.

"This is a place of great power, Jeremy," Chatravati touches his fingers to his silvery beard. "Long ago, such places were commonplace."

"What happened?"

"They took it from us," Chatravati says, staring at Jeremy intently. "To them, our planet was a glittering jewel."

Jeremy looks doubtful. "Who took it?"

"You would call them *demons*," says Chatravati simply and it is precisely the gentle modulation of his tone that Jeremy finds so terrifying. "They came from other worlds and they *feasted*. But we did not give up. We *have not* given up."

"So *that's* what Westcrest is for," says Jeremy. "You fight demons."

“Demons—as you will quickly learn—come in *many* forms.” Says Chatravati. “That is, if you decide to stay here with us.”

At that, Jeremy remembers what he wanted to ask Chatravati about to begin with. “What about DuPont?”

Thoughts of his previous employer still kept Jeremy awake at nights. He was supposed to have completed a job for the Haitian and he had failed. It was a well-known fact that Saul DuPont did not tolerate failure.

“Let *me* deal with DuPont,” says Chatravati dismissively and Jeremy feels a sudden surge of frustration.

“Why are you even asking me to stay?” He suddenly demands, rising from the chair. “Why do you even want me here?”

“Because eventually,” begins Chatravati. “I believe that you will be instrumental in saving the world.”

Their eyes meet and—for a moment at least—Jeremy manages to hold his gaze. Chatravati is telling the truth, Jeremy realises, and that’s when he says:

“Okay.”