

JOSHUA AND THE
MAGICAL
ISLANDS

PORTALLAS BOOK 2

By Christopher D. Morgan

CHAPTER ONE

Morelle



Joshua and Sarah strolled happily through the forest towards Morelle. With the turmoil of the battle against the Goat and His Blood-bats at Jemarrah behind them, and nobody chasing after them anymore, they felt much more relaxed as they walked hand in hand.

Now that he and his girlfriend were less than a day's travel from his home village, Joshua was both excited and nervous about introducing Sarah to his mother.

Sarah gazed into Joshua's eyes and smiled.

"You know you have mud down the side of your nose," she laughed at him.

Joshua laughed back. He reached into his keeper bag and took out a small, oval mirror with a short, wooden handle. It was the Mirror of Prophecy he had been given by Fable back at Fable and Florelle's Inn. He stared at it to see what Sarah was talking about. He stopped walking and froze, staring into the mirror, his mouth open and his eyes wide.

Sarah's smile faded. "Joshua? What is it?"

He turned and gazed at her. More than anything else, he loved Sarah's deep, blue eyes. He'd do almost anything to catch a moment admiring them. But this time it was different. This time, Joshua feared for Sarah.

She sensed something was wrong and asked softly, "Joshua, what is it?"

A look of terror formed on his face. "The Goat. He's still alive!"

Sarah stared back at him in horror. He turned and set off at a brisk pace through the forest with Sarah chasing after him. "Joshua, wait! Slow down! What did you see?"

"Come on!" he said, beckoning her to hurry.

They soon reached the outer boundary of Morelle, where they had planned to meet Andrew, who had travelled back with Galleon a few days earlier.

"That's strange," Joshua said, looking around.

"What's the matter?"

"He's not here. He was supposed to meet us here, right? That is what he said, right?"

"Maybe he just forgot."

"Andrew? That's not like him. No, something is wrong. I can feel it."

"Oh, come on, Joshua, don't you think you're jumping to conclusions? There could be a dozen reasons why he's not here."

Joshua fixed his eyes on the ground, shaking his head.

"No. Something's definitely wrong."

He turned towards Morelle, and they hurried off again.

As they neared the village, they both sensed something was amiss and approached with caution. An eerie mist hung in the air as they crept into Morelle. There were no people coming or going. The forest was deathly quiet.

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“Can you smell that?” Sarah asked. “Like...smoke.”

Joshua nodded. A light breeze started to clear the hazy mist. As it did, Joshua froze at what he saw. Chills ran down his spine. The hair on the back of his neck stood up, and his heart skipped a beat.

A scene of total devastation appeared through the acrid smoke. All the buildings in Morelle had been burned. Joshua’s home village was reduced to ashes.

The roofs were all gone, and the few remaining beams were smouldering. Plumes of smoke drifted into the air. Sarah gasped, raising her hand to her mouth.

They pushed on through the burned remains, trying to see if they could find anyone. The entire village was deathly quiet with not a soul in sight.

Joshua stopped in front of what was left of the Elder’s hut. Atop the remnants of its roof stood a post with a black flag flapping in the wind. Across the face of the flag was the unmistakable mark of The Goat.

“Where is everybody?” Sarah asked in shock as she surveyed the devastation before them. The scene was uncomfortably familiar to that of the Valley of Moross they had encountered when they were looking for the Oracle of Forestium a few days ago. All the people of the valley had been banished to another world by the Goat and the only things left were the burned-out shells of huts.

“He has them,” Joshua said quietly.

Sarah looked at him with grave concern. “What was it, Joshua? What did you see in the Mirror of Prophecy back there?”

Joshua turned and put his hand on Sarah’s shoulder. “Death,” he replied after a long pause. “I saw someone die in my arms.”

Sarah looked stunned. “Who was it?” she asked with bated breath.

Joshua surveyed the sight of destruction around him. He shook his head slowly. “I don’t know who it was. The image was hazy, and I didn’t see her face clearly.”

Joshua struggled to figure out who the figure in the mirror could have been. “It was...a girl...I think. She had two colourful feathers in her hair. But I couldn’t quite...I...I just don’t know.”

“What happened to everyone here?” Sarah asked.

The present situation now started to sink in with Joshua. Morelle wasn’t just a village. He recalled a lifetime of experiences. When he saw his home, he didn’t see a familiar wooden hut made from logs and moss, he saw memories of a happy childhood. Everything that Joshua was—everything that made him the person he was; all his triumphs and failures, all his hopes and dreams—was now reduced to ashes. Joshua shook his head, a tear welling in his eye. He wrapped his arms around Sarah and broke down. The two comforted each other in their moment of despair.



Finally, Joshua and Sarah turned and continued through the ruins of Morelle, looking for survivors. It was the same at every building; everything was burned, but there was no sign of any bodies. It was as if everyone had just vanished and the village had then been destroyed.

Joshua stopped in front of his mother’s hut. The roof was missing, and most of the walls were no longer standing. What was

left of the furniture was now a pile of smouldering ash. A black cauldron lay smashed across the floor in what was once the kitchen. Beside it was a scorched wooden doll. Joshua picked it up.

“What’s that?” Sarah asked.

Joshua caught her eye. He tried to force a smile as he brushed soot from the toy. It wasn’t just a doll. The tattered figure represented much more than that. A flood of happy memories surfaced. In his mind’s eye, Joshua watched wood shavings drop to the ground as his mother carved it from the Ashfer tree branch he had brought home with him one day. She had spent weeks carving, shaping, bringing the toy to life. He remembered being so pleased when it was finished, and he was allowed to play with it.

“Mum made it for me when I was small,” he explained, a smile forming. “She was clutching it when I told her I was leaving Morelle.”

Sarah reached over and gently put her hand on his shoulder. “How could the Goat have done this?”

“I don’t know,” Joshua said turning to look at her. There was despair in his tone. He pursed his lips and breathed a heavy sigh.

“He has them all,” he said looking around. Anger welled inside. Joshua felt a sickening sensation in the pit of his stomach. After all he had been through, after defeating the Goat’s dark forces, after losing his father, and now this? *It mustn’t be in vain. I have to do something.*

“We have to find them,” he proclaimed. “We have to find them and bring them back.” Joshua’s breathing quickened. Emotions he had ever tapped into surfaced like an erupting volcano inside

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him. "And when I do," he declared, "I'm going to make him pay for what he's done. I'm going to kill him."

CHAPTER TWO

Orb of Sacrifice



The distant shriek of a Raetheon pierced the sombre atmosphere. The majestic bird circled the village high above the treetop canopy. As Joshua looked up to see if he could spot it, he heard a faint voice.

“Joshua—”

Startled, he and Sarah spun around to find the source of the sound.

“Joshua,” the voice called again, “help me.”

The cry came from beneath a pile of scorched wood embers. Joshua and Sarah dug through the hot charcoal. They yanked at the smouldering remains, tossing them aside, trying not to burn themselves in the process.

A charred and blood-stained hand reached up from beneath the pile and Joshua grabbed it. As Sarah removed the remaining pieces of debris, Protello's face stared up at them. His breathing was laboured, and he looked at Joshua with beseeching eyes. Joshua knelt down and cradled him. The dying Metamorph could barely support the weight of his own head and struggled to lock his focus onto Joshua's face.

"Protello, what happened?" Joshua asked frantically.

"It was the Goat," Joshua's friend whispered. He gasped for each breath. "Only you can rescue them, Joshua."

He lifted his hand and opened his fingers to reveal an orb exactly like the three Joshua had used before to help him open the Portallas. Engraved on this crystal was the shape of a coffin.

"This is the Orb of Sacrifice," Protello murmured. His voice was now but a faint whisper. "My death...will activate it. You must get to the other side and...open the next Portallas. Open them all, Joshua. Only then can you hope to defeat Him. Find the others and...open...open them all—"

Protello coughed and spluttered blood, which showered Joshua's hands and arms. The sight of Protello in such pain was gut-wrenching. It scared Joshua, but he tried to remain strong for his dying friend. The Metamorph's voice softened further, and his body was now completely limp.

"Please, Joshua, you have already opened the Portallas in this world. You must...open them all...do this before...before it's too..."

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Protello was unable to finish the sentence. Joshua felt the life slipping away from the Metamorph. Joshua's friend gasped his last lungful of air, and his head fell to one side.

After a few seconds, Sarah felt Protello's lifeless wrist. She glanced at Joshua and slowly shook her head. "He's gone," she said quietly.

A tear ran down Joshua's cheek. Very slowly, he put his hand to Protello's face and lowered the Metamorph's eyelids. Within seconds, Protello's limp body began to disintegrate, until it finally turned to dust, falling through Joshua's arms and into the pile of rubble beneath him.

As it did so, the orb in Joshua's hand started to vibrate and hum quietly. The humming grew louder, and the crystal began to pulsate with ever increasing flashes of light.

Joshua and Sarah stood up. As the wind carried the ashes of Protello's body into the air, there was a blinding flash of light from the orb. Joshua dropped the crystal, and a vortex opened up right above it with such intensity that it threw them both to the ground. Leaves and branches were carried into the air by the deafening wind, swirling around the vortex.

Through the torrent of air, Joshua could see a sandy beach. Clear blue waters crashed onto the sand. Thick palm trees with enormous green leaves dangling all the way to the ground lined the shore. Joshua and Sarah turned to each other with puzzled looks. It was unlike anything either of them had ever seen.

"Where is that place?" Sarah shouted above the noise of the rushing wind. Her hair blew about with such force she had to use both hands to keep it from her eyes.

"I don't know," Joshua shouted back, "but it must be where all the others are."

“We should go through, as Protello told us,” Sarah shouted at the top of her voice. The vortex picked up debris and embers from all over the village and tossed them about like matchsticks in a tornado. Joshua and Sarah had to keep dodging larger flying objects. As the two of them regarded each other wondering what they should do, the vortex started to dissipate, and the image of the sandy beach began to recede.

“Quick!” Joshua screamed. “It’s closing. If we don’t go now, it’ll be too late.”

He reached for the orb, grabbed Sarah’s hand and they both jumped into the vortex. The deafening rush of wind swirled around them violently. Joshua heard Sarah screaming but lost sight of her. He was disoriented and no longer sure which way was up. Everything went dark, and he felt all his senses ebb away.