

Helping your children choose books they will love



LoveReading4kids.co.uk is a book website  
created for parents and children to make  
choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from  
**The Rise of Nine**

Written by  
**Pittacus Lore**

Published by  
**Penguin Books Ltd**

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.



## **The Rise of Nine**

### **Chapter One**

I shake my head when I unfold my plane ticket, unsure if Crayton bought me this seat on purpose, or if it's just a coincidence. It's seat 6A, and I'm half expecting Marina to sit behind me in row seven, and Ella to make her way back to row ten. Instead the two girls drop quietly down beside me and lean towards the aisle to study every person entering the plane. When you know you are being hunted you are constantly on-guard, and we never know if the Mogadorians are following us or if they've found us. I raise the shade to watch the ground crew hustle back and forth under the plane and see if anything looksuspicious, the city of Barcelona a faint outline the distance. Crayton will board last, only after he feels the flight is absolutely secure.

Marina's knee bounces up and down furiously against mine. On top of everything else—the battle at the lake, the death of her Cepan, and finding her Chest—it's her first time on an airplane and she's nervous. It's actually the first time in almost ten years since she's left the town where she spent her childhood. A town and a convent that got destroyed by the Mogs. Thankfully there was no video of the incident or there's no way we'd be able to leave. Right now we just look like three studentsgoing away on a trip.

“Everything okay?” I ask. My newly blond hair falls into my face and startles me. I keep turning towards her forgetting I dyed it this morning. It’s just one of the many changes to happen in the last forty-eight hours.

“Everyone looks fine,” Marina whispers, keeping her eyes on the crowded aisle. “We’re safe, as far as I can tell.”

“Good, but that’s not what I meant.” I gently set my foot on hers and she stops bouncing her knee. She offers me a quick apologetic smile before looking back to study the passengers. A few seconds later, I feel her knee bouncing against mine again.

Marina’s been locked up in an isolated orphanage with a Cêpan who refused to not only train her, but to remind her why she’s here on Earth in the first place. I’m doing my best to help her, to show her how to control her strength and when to use her developing Legacies. I’m also trying to show her that it’s okay to trust me. Not only did she just lose her best friend Héctor back at the lake, but like me, she lost her Cêpan right before her eyes, something that will scar us both forever. The Mogadorians will pay for what they’ve done to those we’ve loved, on Earth and on Lorien. It’s my personal mission to destroy every last one of them, and I’ll be sure Marina gets her revenge, too.

“How is it down there, Six?” Ella asks over Marina.

The five men below the plane begin to clear away their equipment, conducting a few last-minute jobs. “So far, so good.”

My seat is directly over the wing, which is comforting. On more than one occasion I’ve had to help a pilot out of a jam. Once, over southern Mexico, I used my telekinesis to push the plane a dozen degrees to the right, moments before crashing into the side of a mountain. Last year I got 124 passengers safely through a vicious thunderstorm in Kansas by surrounding the plane with an impervious cloud of cool air. We shot through the storm unharmed like a bullet through a balloon.

When the ground crew disappears from the tarmac, I kick my backpack under the seat in front of me and wait impatiently for Crayton to board the plane. Every seat has been filled but the one behind Ella. I look out at the wing, checking for anything out of the ordinary.

“Six?” Marina asks. I hear her buckle and unbuckle her seat belt nervously.

I look away from the wing and accidentally kick my backpack again. Crayton bought it for me at the airport. The three of us need to look like normal teenagers, Crayton says, like students on a field trip. That’s why there’s an open biology text book on my lap.

“Yeah?” I respond.

“You’ve flown before, right?”

Marina is a year older than I am, and with her almond face and with her new haircut, with it falling just below her shoulders, she can pass for an adult. Right now, however, she bites her nails and pulls knees up to her chest like a scared child.

“Yes,” I say. “It’s not so bad. In fact, it’s kind of awesome.”

Sitting on the plane, I can’t help but think of my Cêpan, Katarina. When I was nine, after a close call in a Cleveland alley with a Mogadorian that left us both shaken and covered in a thick layer of ash, Katarina moved us to Southern California. Our crumbling two-story bungalow was near the beach, practically in the shadows of Los Angeles International Airport. A hundred planes roared overhead every hour, interrupting Katarina’s teaching, drowning out my play dates with my only friend, a skinny girl next door named Ashley.

I lived under those airplanes for seven months. They were my alarm clock in the morning, screaming directly over my bed as the sun rose, and at night they were ominous ghosts telling me to stay awake, to be prepared to rip off my sheets and jump in the car in a matter of seconds. And because Katarina didn’t let me stray far from the house, the airplanes also filled my afternoons. On one of them, afternoon, as an enormous plane shook the lemonade in our plastic cups, Ashley asked, “Have you ever been on a plane?”

“Not really,” I said.

“What do you mean, ‘Not really’? You’ve either been on a plane, or you haven’t.”

I remember feeling my face burn with embarrassment. I finally said, “I’ve never been on an airplane.” I wanted to elaborate, to tell her that I’d been on something much bigger, much more impressive than a little airplane. That I had come to earth on a ship from another planet called Lorien and that the trip had covered more than a 100 million miles. I didn’t though, because I knew I had to keep the Lorien secret.

Ashley laughed at me and then finished her lemonade. Without saying goodbye, she left to wait for her dad to come home from work.

“Why haven’t we ever been on a plane?” I asked Katarina that night as she carefully peered out the blinds of my bedroom window.

“Six,” she said, before correcting herself. “I mean, Veronica. It’s too dangerous for us to travel by plane. We’d be trapped up there. You know what could happen if we were thousands of miles in the air and Mogs followed us on board?”

I knew exactly what could happen—the chaos, the other passengers screaming and ducking under their seats as a couple of huge alien soldiers barreled down the aisle towards us with swords. We would meet them and try to kill them before they killed us. I

could see what might happen as we fought, and potentially brought down a plane with innocent passengers, all of whom would die. Still, those possibilities, and others that might happen, didn't stop me from wanting to do something so normal, so human, as fly from one city to the next. My silence the following days must have cut through Katarina, because to my surprise she bought us two round-trip tickets to Denver. I couldn't wait to tell Ashley.

"Do you know how stupid this is?" Katarina asked as we stood outside the airport on the day of the trip.

"Just once. I just want to do it once." I said, smiling, knowing it was unfair to ask Katarina for anything more than she'd already given me. Her entire life revolved around keeping me safe and making me strong. For me to ask for something on top of that was selfish. And I knew it, but I couldn't stop myself. "We don't even have to get off the plane if you don't want to. We'll just stay on and fly right back here."

Katarina ran her hand through her short black hair. She had dyed and cut it the night before, just after making herself a new I.D. A family of five walked around us on the curb, dragging heavy luggage, and to my left a tearful mother said goodbye to her two young daughters. I wanted nothing more than to join in, to be a part of this everyday scene. "No," Katarina finally said. "We're not going. I'm sorry, Veronica, but it's not worth it."

We walked home in silence, letting the screaming engines of the planes passing overhead speak for us. When we turned the corner of our street, I saw Ashley sitting on her front steps and the humiliation was almost too much to bear. She looked at me walking towards our house and mouthed the word *liar*. And no matter what I said, there was no way I could change her mind. She thought I'd made up the trip, and the next day she told all the other kids at school. From that point forward, I was known as a liar. And it hurt because it wasn't true. We were supposed to go on the trip. I just couldn't explain why we didn't.

And the irony in the whole situation was that I was a liar. All I had ever done since landing on Earth was tell lies about my name, where I was from, where my father was, why I couldn't stay the night at another girl's house in fear of being hunted and killed by unspeakable monsters. Lying was all I knew and what kept me alive. But when Ashley called me a liar the *one* time I thought I was telling someone the truth, I got so angry and upset that I walked to my room and slammed the door, and without thinking, I punched the wall. To my surprise, my fist went straight through.

Katarina ripped open my bedroom door with a kitchen knife in her hand, thinking it must be Mogs. When she saw what I had done to the wall, she lowered the blade and smiled said, "Today's not the day you get on a plane, but it is the day you're going to start your training."



Seven years later, sitting in this plane with Marina and Ella and nowhere to run, I can hear Katarina's voice in my head. I've flown dozens of times now, and everything has gone fine, though this is the first time I've done it without using my invisibility Legacy to sneak on board. Katarina would never have allowed this, but as guilty as that makes me feel, I know I'm much stronger now. And I'm getting stronger by the day. If a couple of Mog soldiers charged at me from the front of the plane, they wouldn't be dealing with a meek young girl. After all the events of the last years, I've become a soldier, a warrior, someone they should fear instead of hunt.

Marina lets go of her knees and sits up straight, releasing a long breath. In a barely audible voice, she says, "I'm scared. I want to get in the air."

"Stay with me and you'll be just fine." I say in a low voice.

She smiles, and smile back at her. On the battlefield yesterday in Spain, when she was pushed to her limits, Marina proved herself to be a strong ally with amazing Legacies. She can breathe under water, see in the dark and heal the sick and wounded. Like me, she's also developed telekinesis. And because we're so close in order—I'm Number Six and she's Number Seven—our bond is special. When the Charm still held and we had to be killed in order, the Mogadorians would have had to get through me if they wanted to get to her. And they never would have gotten through me.

Ella sits silently on the other side of Marina. As we wait for Crayton, she opens the biology book on her lap and stares at the pages. I've never seen someone concentrate so hard to keep up a charade, and I'm about to tell her she doesn't actually have to read the book, but then I realize she's not reading at all. Ella is trying to turn the page with her mind, but nothing's happening. She's still young. Her next Legacy will come in time.

Ella was on another ship, one I didn't know existed until John saw it in his visions. She was just hours old at the time, which means she's almost twelve now. Crayton says he is her unofficial Cêpan because with the Mogadorians attacking and Ella being just born, there wasn't time for him to be officially appointed to her, but like all of our Cêpans, he has a duty to help Ella develop her Legacies. In their ship was also a small herd of Chimaera, Loric animals capable of shifting forms and battling alongside us.

Even though Ella's only developed one Legacy—she's what Crayton calls an Aeternus, someone with the ability to move back and forth between ages—I'm happy she's here. After Number Three died, only six of us remained. With Ella, we're seven. Lucky number seven, if you believe in luck. I don't, though. I believe in strength.

Finally, Crayton squeezes down the aisle, carrying a black briefcase. He's wearing fake glasses and an over-sized brown suit. Under his strong chin is a blue bow tie. He's supposed to look like our teacher.

“Hello, girls,” he says, stopping next to us.

“Hi, Professor Collins,” Ella whispers.

“It’s a full flight,” Marina says. That’s code for everyone on board looks okay. There is no imminent danger.

To tell him everything on the ground appears normal, I say, “I’m going to try to sleep.”

He nods and takes his seat directly behind Ella. Then he leans forward between Marina and Ella and says, “Use your time on the plane wisely, please. Study hard.”

That means not to let our guards down.

I didn’t know what to think of Crayton when we first met. He’s stern and quick tempered, but his heart seems to be in the right place. And from years of sitting in front of the computer while watching over Ella, his knowledge of the world and current events is incredible. Official or not, he has taken his Cêpan role seriously. He says he would die for any one of us. Anything to save Lorien, he says. Anything to defeat the Mogadorians, anything to exact our revenge. I believe him on all counts.

Yesterday, on top of the dam overlooking the carnage at the lake, Crayton told us that Setrákus Ra, the Mogadorian leader, would be on Earth soon, if he wasn’t already.

That Setrákus’ arrival was a sign that the Mogadorians understood we were a threat, and

that they were going to step up their campaign to kill us. Setrákúsis more or less invincible. The only Lorien that could fight him was Pittacus Lore, but yesterday Crayton told us that one of us holds all the same powers that Pittacus did. “I’ve read about a boy who seems to have extraordinary powers in India. High up in the Himalayas. Some believe him to be the Hindi god Vishnu reincarnated, others believe the boy is an alien imposter with the power to physically alter his form.”

“Like me, Papa?” Ella asked. Her father-daughter relationship with Crayton took me by surprise, and I couldn’t help but feel jealous.

“He’s not changing ages, Ella. He’s changing into beasts and other beings. The more I read about him, the more I believe he is a member of the Garde, and the more I believe he may have all of the Legacies, and be able to fight and kill Setracus. We need to find him. We need to find him as soon as possible.”

I don’t want to be on a wild goose chase for another member of the Garde right now. I know where John is, or where he is supposed to be, and I can hear Katarina’s voice again, telling me we should connect with John first before anything else. It’s the least risky move. Certainly less risky than going on Crayton’s hunch and rumors on the Internet.

“It could be a trap,” I had said. “What if those stories have been planted just for us to find?”

“I understand your concern, Six, but I’m the master of planting stories on the Internet. There are far too many sources pointing to this boy in India. He’s been there for a long time. He hasn’t been running. He hasn’t been hiding. He’s just being, and he appears to be very powerful. If he *is* one of you, then we must get to him before the Mogadorians do. We’ll go to America to meet up with Number Four as soon as this trip is over,” Crayton said.

“Promise?” Marina asked.

The captain’s voice comes through the speakers. We’re about to take off. I dream of redirecting the plane towards West Virginia and John and Sam. Images of John held in a prison cell keep entering my mind. I never should have told him about the Mog base in the mountain, but John wanted to get his Chest back and there was no way I could convince him to leave it behind.

The plane rolls down the runway and Marina grabs my wrist. “I really wish Héctor was here. He’d have something smart to say right now to make me feel better.”

“It’s okay,” Ella says, holding her other hand. “You have us.”

“And I’ll work on something smart to say,” I offer.

“Thanks,” Marina laughs. I let her nails dig into my wrist. I give her a supportive smile, and a minute later we’re airborne.