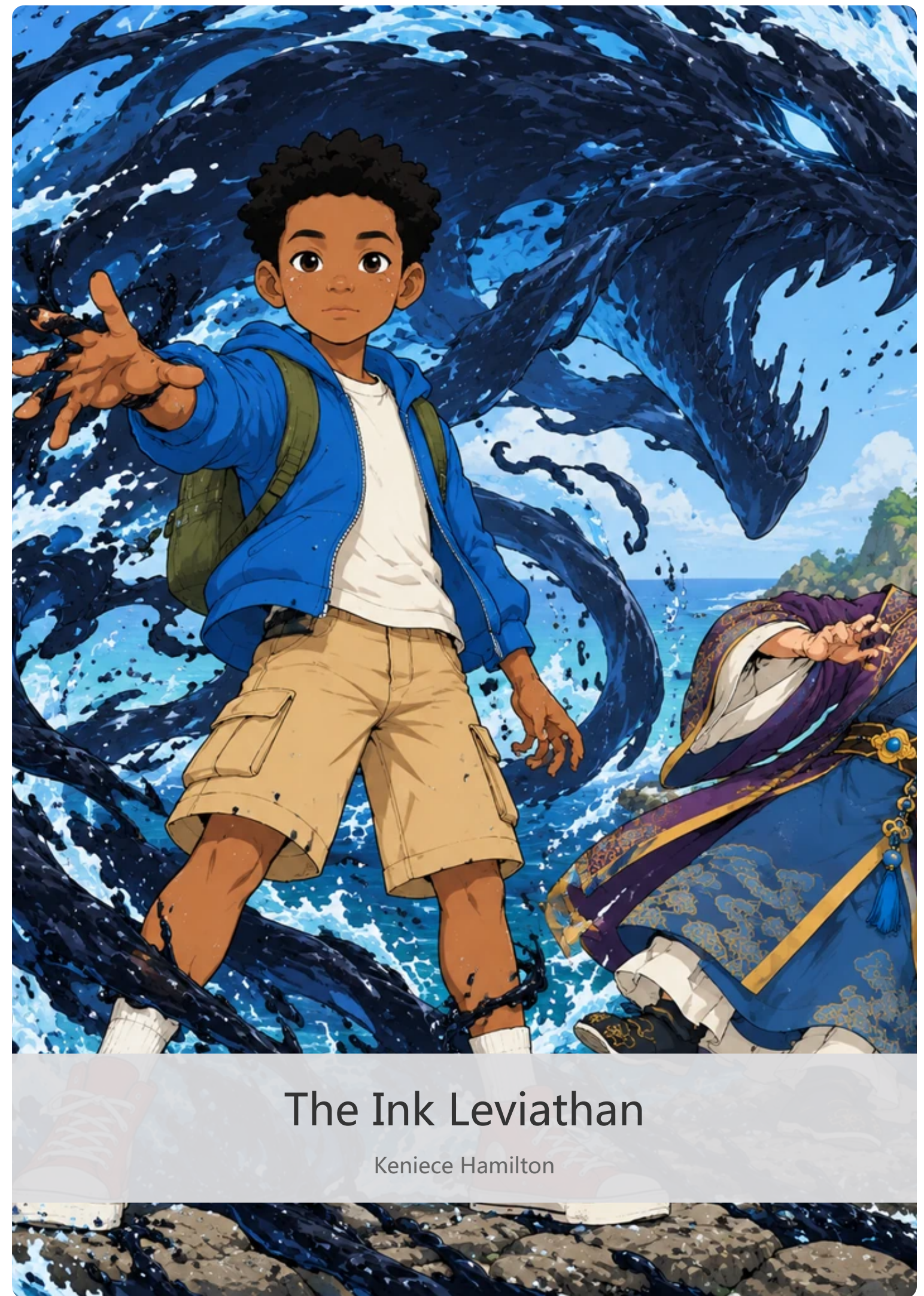




The Ink Leviathan

Keniece Hamilton



The salt-spray of Obeah Cay stung Jahmari's cheeks as he clutched a charcoal sketch of a magnificent leviathan. Elder Thorne stood before him, sneering with a voice that sounded like grinding coral. The Council had just denied him, viewing his silence not as a virtue, but as an empty void.



My voice isn't in my throat, Jahmari whispered softly, pressing the rough parchment against the cold limestone altar. Elder Thorne rattled on about empires and ghosts, dismissing the boy's art as mere daydreams and quiet smudges.



With a sudden burst of resolve, Jahmari ripped the parchment page right down the middle. Instantly, the sketched leviathan roared to life, leaping from the paper in a swirling spray of vibrant indigo ink.



The massive ink creature coiled gracefully around the ancient stone altar, filling the air with the scent of ancient ozone and heavy deep-sea pressure. Jahmari looked up at the towering beast with a calm, triumphant smile.



Is this void enough for you, Elder? Jahmari asked, his eyes locked onto the terrified man before him. Thorne stumbled backward in utter disbelief, his rich silk robes catching sharply on the jagged stone floor.



This is impossible, Thorne gasped, trembling as he stared at the moving artwork. The ink is supposed to be dormant for all but the High Mages, so where on earth did a boy like this steal such ancient magic?



I didn't steal it, Jahmari replied steadily, his gaze completely unblinking. You only heard the heavy silence of the room, he added, urging the elder to now feel the overwhelming noise of the creature.



Who on earth taught you this kind of power? Thorne gasped, clutching his chest as the magical pressure mounted in the chamber. Jahmari simply smiled at the terrified Council member.



The ocean taught me, Jahmari quietly replied, looking toward the open horizon. She doesn't require spoken words to be heard, because she speaks directly through powerful tides and raging storms.



The magnificent leviathan bowed low, its ink-skin shimmering brilliantly like a bruised twilight sky. Jahmari smiled brightly as the grand ivory gates of the Academy slowly creaked open before him.