

**SOPHIA FREEMAN SERIES by T.X. Troan**  
**SOPHIA FREEMAN**  
**AND THE GATE OF JADE**  
**EXCERPT**

“So, Wondnair, what happened back there?” Tim asked, picking at his food. “Why did the arbiters put our victory on hold?”

Sophia hung her head in silent shame.

“Sophia’s body was taken over by, uh ... someone,” said Wondnair.

“You mean ... T-Tombermon? Why would he help us win?” Tim shook his head. “No, it can’t be true—”

“Look, no monster of that size would simply drop and let you two pass,” Wondnair continued. “Sophia was like its master back there.”

Holding her bowl tightly, Sophia watched her teardrop fall into her earthy soup.

“So, she broke the rules?” Tim couldn’t eat any more. “It’s over—we’re disqualified.”

Wondnair said, “We don’t know that ye—”

“I am so sorry, Tim,” cried Sophia. “We lost because of m-me.” She wiped her eyes. “You shouldn’t have come with me to fight that fountain guardian. Then this n-never would have happened.”

“Sophia.” He slid closer to her on the bench.

“I’m n-not the Ch-Chosen One!” She slammed her fist on the table.

Tim gently placed her head against his shoulder and wrapped his arms around her. “Sophia, listen to me. The fight isn’t over.”