



## Prologue

### <<< Neath the 10th Realm >>>

The sharp ringing in her ears and heavy limbs were the first things Iris was aware of. She moved her head from the left to the right, her neck was stiff and the gravel beneath her body was harsh and jagged. Her limbs felt like thousands of needles were pricking her skin. A shrill scream sliced through the ringing in her ears and her eyes opened. Her body was crushed by a large rock, and the sun above her was harsh and bright. But she was not outside, no she laid on the floor of the Throne Room, or what once was a throne room. The long hall was hot and smoky, flames crept up the large velvet curtains that were now torn and barely hanging up. She let out a jagged breath and glanced down at her form. She pulled o the sheer black veil that covered her face, her dress was heavy and unbearably hot. Her hands were sticky and wet, she glanced at them as they trembled. Her lips curled into a grimace — they were covered in blood. Was that her blood?

She li ed her hands and with whatever magic she still had in her tired system she pushed the rocks o of her. She stood on legs that were ready to give out at any second. She spun around looking at the destruction of the Palace. "Artemis!" She called out, her eyes caught the sight of crimson beside her. She gasped and let out a sob. A body, dressed the same as her, her sister — crushed and unmoving. She knelt down beside her sister. "No!" She cried out. "Brigid, please wake up!" She looked up, was anyone le ? She had to find him, she had to find him before it was too late.

"Iris!" A hand grabbed her arm, "We must go." Eldest Esther, still wore her veil properly, as if the world around them wasn't crumbling. The ground beneath them rumbled again and Esther reached a hand out for Iris. "We must get to the cave!" She pulled her up. Iris couldn't look away from Brigid until she was pulled into a hallway.

"What's happening?" She asked, her mouth was dry and filled with ash. "Where's Artemis?" She glanced around at the remaining sisters that walked loyaly with the Eldest.

"We don't know." Esther looked back at the others, "She never showed up for the debriefing."

"I don't — I don't understand." The hall spun and her mind was fuzzy. Nothing made sense, nothing was real. It couldn't be.

"It is the end of Neath," Esther said earnestly. Her icy eyes met Iris's from behind the veil, "It is the end for all but you."

"No. No," Iris didn't believe it. She couldn't. She wasn't able to understand it. Maybe it was because she had lost so much blood. Maybe it was because she didn't want to. "Where's — I have to find..."

"We haven't much time." Esther interrupts, "I thought we would have more of it." She turned a corner and they walked through an archway. The ground rumbled once more but the firm grasp on Iris's arm kept her moving. "I was foolish to keep you ignorant. I should have warned you."

They stepped out of the castle from a small wooden door. The Silver City around them was stained with blood and ash. Citizens ran throughout the streets screaming for help, desperately clinging to each other. The sisters guided Iris to the town center where the Cave of Ethestia stood, unscathed not a rock out of place. In front of the sacred cave stood the one she was so nervous to lose. The only one that really mattered to her. Iris's vision was blurry but she could feel his presence like a wave of warmth. Druig's hands were clasped together, blue eyes filled with tears — and suddenly his aura was much di erent that the warmth she was used to.

"Druig," She stumbled forward but the sisters blocked her and formed a mystical shield. Esther stepped passed Iris and blocked her with an arm.

"Step aside, Druig." Esther said and stood straight. "We must go into the cave."

"The emergence has already started." He said. "There is nothing that can stop it now." He looked distraught. Emergance? Iris wanted to break through the barrier, but her magic was fading. She wondered where the other Eternals were? Did they know about what was destroying Neath?

"Created to destroy, All in the name of their blessed maker." Esther stepped forwad. "I am well aware there is nothing we can do." She hissed. Iris stared at Druig but he was avoiding her gaze. He stepped to the side in surrender and tucked his chin down. The Eldest motioned for the sisters to wait. She walked through the barrier and toward Druig. "If it had not been for Ethestia, I would have never let you touch her." She glanced back at the sister and they moved forward. They walked toward the cave and Iris tugged at the grips on her arms. She couldn't leave him, he needed her.

"Let me say goodbye." Druig said, his eyes finally li ing from the ground. The sisters weren't stopping but his words sparked a fire in Iris's heart. He needed her. "Let me say goodbye!" His voice was a shell of what it normally was. His eyes glowed gold but his powers couldn't a ect the sisters.

"Please!" Iris cried out. "Please, Esther!" She looked to the only one who could help her. "Please!" Was the only word that could form on her lips but Esther gave a nod of approval. Instantly the sisters released Iris and she ran over to Druig. He caught her in his arms and they squeezed each other. She could feel her body tremble against his. "Please, tell me this isn't your doing." She held onto him like he was an anchor in a raging sea.

"I would have stopped it," Druig said. "I would have if I had known." He placed a hand on her cheek. "My sweet, Iris." He whispered and pressed his forehead against her's. "You loved a monster." He pulled away from her and turned away.

A sob racked her body and she fell to the ground. She couldn't lose him. She just couldn't. He was her world and she always believed that she was his. The sisters picked her o the ground. One rubbed the tears o her cheeks and the other rubbed their hand against her back. But their comfort meant nothing to her shattering heart.

They moved into the cave, it was pitch black, all-encompassing. "Form a circle," Esther ordered and Iris was dumped in the middle of them. The cave was cold and quiet, unlike the raging world outside. There was no light just darkness in the cave. "You were created in this cave and you will die in it." She said and placed warm liquid on Iris's forehead.

She took in a sharp breath, "I don't understand!" She screamed. "Please stop this! I don't want to die!" She let out a loud sob.

"Soon all that will remain of this planet is ash!" The voices of the sisters blended together and bounced o the cave walls. "You were chosen, Iris. Your death is not the ending but the beginning." Iris spun around, eye squinting desperately to see the faces of her sister. "It will all be okay. Have no fear, you are what none of us could be."

They chanted in the language of Ethestia. Iris felt her body tingle and burn. She grabbed her stomach as she felt her body rip and tear. She screamed out in pain. She couldn't breathe as a glittering cloud of white surrounded her and fogged her vision. She could feel the world ending in her bones. She su cated as the cloud swirled around her, hurting and healing her all at once. The sister's words drowned out and all she could hear was a dull hum

A/N

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**This is only the beginning and Freya has not been introduced yet but she will soon and I promise more Druig to come ...**



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**much love, Savannah**

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