

## Chapter 10

I go to thank Dante for the dagger in the morning. I knock on his door.

Weird, no guards?

I knock again when he doesn't answer.

It's only 7, so maybe he's still asleep... I have a bad feeling about this...

I try the door, it's unlocked. I walk into the office, it's empty. I turn the handle to the bedroom, silence still filling the air.

"Dante?" I call, looking into the dark room. I see a lump under the blanket.

So he is sleeping...

I turn around to walk out of the room, but the bad feeling is still there.

**"Neptune! Help me! Help!"**

**"I'm coming!"**

I see a boy with blue wings bleeding. Another boy, this one with black wings and white hair, runs up to him. He holds his hand over the boy's wound. My bad feeling grows. I turn around and walk back into the room. I flip the light switch on.

Blood!

I run over to the bed. Dante is lying there, barely breathing. Blood covers his bed. I rip the covers off of him. A stab wound in his stomach is leaking blood.

"DANTE!" I scream. "SOMEONE HELP! HELP! THE PRESIDENT IS DYING!" I yell as loud as I can. Guards come running in and carry him away. I follow them. They take him to the nurse who starts sewing him up. He winces in pain and looks at me. His eyes seem foggy, distant, like he's so far away.

"Iris, listen to me. There... There are people... Who are weak... You have to be strong... For those people... You are a... Leader... Bear it so... Bear it so they don't have to." He tries to speak between painful breaths, then his eyes go completely foggy, and he stops breathing.

"NO!" I scream. Guards push me out of the room and yell things at each other. They try to resuscitate him. I start crying as they slam the door closed. I sit on the ground in the hallway.

"Iris! What happened? Are you okay?" Lyvah comes running down the hallway.

"Dante! He- He's- He was stabbed!" I sob.

"What?! No! We just saw him yesterday! How did this happen!" Tears well at his eyes. He pulls me into a hug and rubs my back. We sob into each other's shoulders. I didn't see her come down the hallway, but when someone else joined the hug, I knew it was Samantha. Guards file out of the room.

"Time of death, 7:26." One of them says to another, who writes it down.

"No!" I sob. Lyvah hugs me tighter.

"You have to do something! Whoever did this must pay!" I shout at the older woman. She's one of Dante's guards.

"We are trying to find out who did this. We are having a witness describe the man who did this to a forensic artist."

"Well do it faster! He's only getting farther away!" I yell in her face.

"It takes time to draw and then find a match." She tries to explain.

"I don't care!" I spin around and run down the hall. I slam the door behind me as I run into my room.

"Iris! Are you okay?" Samantha runs over from her bed.

"I'm fine. I'm going to bed." I wipe the tears from my face.

"Are you sure, and what about your shift?" She asks.

"I'm sure, and I don't care about my shift, someone else will cover it.

They can punish me however they want! I don't care!" I push past her and get into bed.

"I'm sorry..." Samantha says before walking out of the room.

I wake up to the sound of Samantha's shower. I get up and rub the sleep from my eyes. I get up and sit on my bed until Samantha is done in the shower, then I get in the shower and get ready for the day.

I go to my post and then breakfast. When I walk into the cafeteria Samantha greets me, followed by Lyvah. We sit at an empty table and start talking. I hear bits and pieces of other people's conversations.

"How can these people act as if nothing happened? Like the president didn't just die?!" I ask angrily.

"We got him!" A male guard, with dark brown hair, runs into the room. He holds up a piece of paper.



"It's someone from the Kalasla clan! A clan of Alphanians!" He explains.

"Then let's go!" I turn and run outside. The guards follow me. Lyvah sees me running down the hall and grabs Samantha. We all load into a carriage as other guards come pouring out of the building and into other carriages. The carriage starts moving fast. The village is pretty close. We get there in only an hour. We all load out of the carriage and surround the commander.

"The village is still about an hour's walk away. We will camp here until nightfall. Then we burn the whole camp to the ground." He instructs. Cheers are heard from all the guards.

"Doesn't that mean..." Samantha starts.

"Everyone dies?" Lyvah finishes.

"Yes! For their crimes, the whole village should be punished! We cleanse them through fire!" The commander shouts. More cheers are heard.

"I don't know about this... That includes innocents and children... I only wanted revenge on the man that did this..." I mutter to Lyvah. He nods.

"Dante wouldn't want this. He mutters back.

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