

The Dragon King and His Fallen Star Novel

< Chapter 10: The Dragon's Return

+5 Bonus

Chapter 10: The Dragon's Return

KIERYGAN'S POV

I had been flying for two days.

First to Mount Kyros, the old volcano that once shaped the northern lands of our kingdom. Beneath it, the Pyraethyst mine pulsed with dormant power. I descended in silence, shifting out of my dragon form and slipping past the warded runes carved into the black stone.

The mine was still intact.

Of course, it would be. This place was far too important to Malric.

Inside the dark tunnels, the Pyraethyst shimmered faintly in the dim torchlight, like fire trapped beneath stone. I ran a hand along the jagged edge of a newly exposed gem. It was cold to the touch, despite being

born of volcanic heat.

Unlike the one the girl had given me. Hers had absorbed a flicker of her light, and it still held a quiet warmth. This one looks lifeless now, but in the wrong hands, it could be turned into a weapon.

If Malric wanted the girl back, he'd come for the gems too.

I ordered the mined gems secured, stationed additional guards at every tunnel mouth, and reinforced the arcane wards with fresh blood sigils. Ashteryn would have approved of the layering. I used one of his designs.

I wondered if he'd met with the girl yet, and whether they'd learned anything new about the bracelet. And if they had, I imagined she might've frozen again, shrinking beneath the smith's crabbiness. The thought made me smile. Poor girl must have been scared

out of her wits.

I returned to the sky once I was satisfied with the mine's protection.

High above the land, I soared. My mirrored scales render me nearly invisible against the sunlit blue. From that height, the world stretched beneath me: shifting forests, fractured rivers, mountains dusted in snow.

But I wasn't searching for beauty. I was hunting for something vile.

I swept north, toward the ruins of Moonspire, the former capital of Vargheim, the werewolves' realm. Once proud. Now nothing but a graveyard of stone and ash.

There were no signs of Malric or his witch. No clues. Only silence, old bones, and the lingering stench of blood long dried.

I circled once. Twice. I waited, watching the neighboring towns and cities. But nothing

stirred.

So I pushed farther, beyond the charred edges of Vargheim, into the icy ridges that stretched past the wolves' lands. I was determined to find them. Or at least something that might lead me to them.

But something pulled at me. A tug. Faint as a breath against the back of my mind. A whisper threading through the cold, as if beckoning me home.

I ignored it at first. Shook it off like I would a dream. But it grew stronger with every beat of my wings, gnawing at my mind like a restless thought that wouldn't quiet.

But something told me I should listen.

With a deafening roar, I breathed fire into the sky. Then, finally, I turned.

Invisible against the clouds, I angled my wings toward Altierra.

Before the sun had moved an inch, Solmere appeared on the horizon. I swept over hills and snow-laced fields. From above, everything looked untouched.

But predators like me notice the smallest twitch, a movement that doesn't belong.

Even from the sky, I caught it: a glimmer of silver and white, barely distinguishable from the snow.

The girl.

She's standing on a frozen lake.

I fought to hold back a screech. I couldn't risk startling her. And she couldn't afford to make any sudden movements.

What in the gods' name was she doing here? She was too frightened to leave her room, barely spoke unless spoken to, and nearly fainted if more than two people were in the same space.

And yet... here she was, far from the castle, wandering into the wild.

Before I could even tilt my wings for another flap, the ice beneath her cracked. And she vanished.

She surfaced once. Her hands pounding desperately against the ice. Her pale face just beneath the surface, eyes wide in panic, lips parted in a silent scream.

My gut twisted. She was running out of air.

She slammed her fists again, weaker this time. Her gaze flicked upward, then stilled, resigned. She was fading.

I dove without hesitation, the sky a blur around me. Fire surged up from my chest, and I exhaled a torrent so hot it shattered the ice like glass. The sheet cracked, splintered, then gave way to a hiss of steam.

I shifted mid-air, the cold slapping against my hot skin as I hit the water and dragged her out. I laid her on the snow. Her skin was bone-pale, lips tinged blue. She wasn't breathing.

"No," I growled under my breath. "Don't you dare give up."

I pressed my palm into her chest, forcing the water out. Again and again.

"Breathe," I hissed. "Come on. Fight."

I kept going, relentless, until at last she coughed—followed by a sharp, ragged gasp.

She choked, then coughed again, and I caught her before she rolled onto her side. Without thinking, I pulled her to my chest, cradling her close. My skin ran hotter than most; she needed that heat.

"You're alright now," I murmured, tightening

my hold and gently stroking her back. "I got you."

She shivered violently against me, soaking wet, barely conscious. But alive.

I adjusted her in my arms as I made my way back to the castle. The frost-covered forest closed in around us like a mouth as I crossed into the treeline. Her head lolled against my shoulder, skin still cold, breaths shallow but steady. Every step I took was slow, careful.

Then came the crunch of snow underfoot.

Mirael emerged from the trees, cloaked in midnight blue, her hair untouched by wind or frost. She halted when she saw me, the color draining from her face. Her gaze darted from mine to the girl cradled in my arms. For a moment, something like worry crossed her features—but it didn't quite land.

"Thank the gods you found her," she gasped, her hands flying to her mouth a little too theatrically. "I was looking for her."

I didn't answer. I didn't stop walking, either.

She moved to fall in step beside me, boots crunching softly over ice-laced roots. "

You're... you're back early," she said. "I thought you weren't due until tomorrow night."

Still, I said nothing. Not until the castle towers came into view beyond the thinning trees. Then, in a low voice, I asked, "How did she end up on a frozen lake?"

Mirael swallowed. "We were spending time together. I wanted to make it up to her after the last time. Thought it might help her come out of her shell," she said, voice light, almost coaxing. "But then she saw a butterfly and just ran off. I tried to follow, but she disappeared into the woods. I

searched everywhere."

I stopped walking. So did she.

Slowly, I turned my head toward her. "You, a seasoned spy, lost a girl in the woods?"

She tried to keep her face still, but the nervous swallow didn't escape me.

"You, who hunted Malric's scouts through the Nightingrove?" I asked. "Who tracked an enemy battalion through a blizzard without leaving a single trace behind? And you expect me to believe a frail, frightened girl slipped away from you."

Her mouth opened again, but I was already walking. She followed in silence until we crossed the castle threshold. I stopped, turned to her.

"Leave," I snarled. "Now."

She didn't argue. She knew me well enough not to.

Warm air and the scent of lavender greeted me as I entered the palace, but neither did anything to temper the fury burning in my chest. The girl lay limp in my arms, her breath barely brushing my collarbone.

I took the stairs two at a time, each step heavier than the last.

"Kierygan!" Evander's voice rang out from the corridor above.

He came rushing toward me, coat half-buttoned, his usually neat blond hair tousled like he'd either just woken up or walked off a battlefield.

"What happened to her?" he asked, eyes wide with alarm.

"You tell me," I snapped, my voice sharp enough to flay skin. I didn't slow, forcing him to match my pace.

Evander fell in beside me, blinking rapidly at

the girl in my arms. "... I went to get her earlier, but she wasn't in her room.

Something urgent came up with the trade delegates from the Southlands, I had to..."

"I don't care," I cut him off, my voice echoing down the stone hall. "I told you, explicitly, you were to watch her while I was gone."

Evander went silent, guilt staining his face.

I reached the girl's room and shouldered the door open. The fire still burned low inside, but the air felt colder than it should have.

I sat on the edge of the bed, still cradling her, unwilling to let go just yet. Looking up, I met Evander's confused gaze. "Fetch Danaiah," I said. "And tell Emma to come, too."

He didn't respond. The vampire just vanished without a word, leaving only the faint whoosh of displaced air in his wake.

Emma appeared almost instantly. I turned toward the window, giving her space as she changed the girl out of her damp clothes.

When it was done, I looked down at her... At this girl. This strange, fragile creature who was meant to be nothing more than a key. A weapon. A means to an end.

And yet, I was filled with fear I could not name at the thought of losing her. Again.



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