

## Chapter 1: Fall of the Tower - The Dragon King and His Fallen Star

KIERYGAN'S POV For fifteen years, I have lived in hiding. Among those branded as rogues, among the broken, forgotten by the world. For fifteen years, I've buried the truth of who I am. Of what I am. I am a Dragon. The last of my kind. It was a night like this when my entire family was slaughtered. It was a night of celebration. My father, King Aleron, had just marked his five-hundredth year on the throne of the Dragon Kingdom. I wasn't there to celebrate with them. And I wasn't there to defend them. I was a fool. I thought I had better things to do than sip wine and trade empty pleasantries with preening nobles. Why waste a night dancing beneath chandeliers when I could waltz above the fire? Chase danger. Court the wild. So my friends and I had snuck away to the mouth of Mount Kyros, a dormant volcano said to sing in the wind. I'd bragged that nothing could burn a dragon. Not lava. Not flame. That I could dance on molten rock and come away unscathed. I was proving a point. While we laughed like fools in the heat, Alpha King Malric Thaurak of the Werewolf Realm descended on our kingdom with steel, silver, and witchcraft. When we returned, there was only ash. The people I'd boasted about just hours ago, said to be indestructible and immune to flame, were now nothing but bone and cinder. My kin, reduced to dust. Whatever weapon Malric had, it was strong enough to kill dragons. Strong enough to destroy us. With the help of those who survived Malric's attack, I vanished to the one place no sane soul would follow: Misty Valley. A place drowned in fog, choked by ancient woods, and haunted by stories no one dares retell aloud. It lies just beyond the borders of Val'Thiraël. They say fae once ruled there, until a plague devoured them all. Now the land is cursed, tainted, and abandoned. Few dare approach, afraid the sickness still sleeps beneath the soil. That's why Misty Valley is perfect. No one comes looking for the dead. But now, I'm back. After fifteen years of waiting, of fear and fury and cold-blooded planning, I have returned to collect what is owed. For more than a decade, I've heard the stories. King Malric burning realm after realm with searing fire and blinding light, his mistress Morwenna always at his side. But rumors spoke of a witch, one even more powerful than Morwenna, living in the tower under Malric's protection. The true source of their unnatural strength. But in recent years, he's gone silent. The burning, the conquering, the endless cycle has stopped. Perhaps he's grown complacent, believing no one left can challenge him. This is the moment I've been waiting for. Tonight, they all pay: Malric, Morwenna, their cursed witch, and every soul who stood with them. I hover above King Malric's castle, wings stretched wide in silence. The celebration is in full swing. Gowns glittering, laughter echoing into the cold winter night, the air thick with the scent of meat and spiced wine. From the darkness above, I watched. Against the moonless sky, I am invisible. My mirrored scales shimmer, blending me into the night—no, erasing me from it. Up here, I am cloud. I am air. I am reflection. They won't see me coming. They won't get the chance. Surrounding the castle are my allies: rebels, outcasts, witches, werewolves, and vampires. Every one of them was owed blood. They were all just waiting for my signal. And then, I breathed. Flames erupted from my throat, falling like judgment. A river of gold and fury, it scorched the towers, devoured the feast hall, and screamed through the corridors before they could even ring the bells. Stone cracked and roared beneath the heat. The rebellion surged behind me. My allies, in their war-forms, slammed into the iron gates. Witches hurled fire from their palms. The scent of blood and smoke twisted through the air, mingling with the rising howls of panic. I swept across the courtyard, my breath igniting all it touched, my tail sending guards

flying like broken dolls. As I circled once more, a howl echoed from below. I dove and landed amid the wreckage, shifting into my human form as I hit the ground. My deputy, Orryx, emerged from the haze. A werewolf who had once served Malric, but after the tyrant slaughtered his mate and son, Orryx had sworn himself entirely to me. His gray eyes glimmered in the firelight. "They're gone," he growled. "Malric and his bitch fled in the chaos. Magic, most likely." Rage flared again, hot and sharp. "You're telling me... not only are they still breathing, they actually got away?" Orryx winced. "They were faster," he admitted. "But we'll find them. Besides... there's still the tower." Right. The witch. The real reason Malric rose and held his grip on power. The one who helped slaughter my family. The witch who helped kingdoms fall. I stormed through the rubble, Orryx close at my heels. Flames still clung to shattered walls, licking at twisted beams. My soldiers scrambled aside as I approached the tower—a tall, jagged structure of stone as black as sin. It stood apart from the rest of the castle. No banners. No balconies. No windows or carved gargoyles boasting wealth and power. I turned to my deputy, voice low and sharp. "Did you kill it?" Orryx hesitated, then finally spoke. "Not yet," he said carefully. "We... weren't sure what to do. Thought you should do the honors." I scoffed. "I gave you a simple order," I snarled. "When you see it, kill it." Orryx just shrugged, a sly smirk tugging at his lips. "See for yourself." We began climbing the spiral staircase, and by the final curve, I was nearly running—driven by the certainty that my prize, my revenge, waited at the top. When I reached the landing, I slowed. The corridor was... wrong. For a moment, I wondered if we had taken a wrong turn in the dark. This was where Malric kept his greatest weapon? No torches lined the walls. No gilded sconces. No gold-veined marble or elaborate carvings like the rest of the palace. I turned toward the only door at the end of the passage. Its iron handle was rusted, flaking beneath my fingers. Three heavy locks bolted it shut from the outside. It did not resemble the entrance to a sanctum. It looked like a prison. My thoughts tangled. If the witch had truly given Malric and Morwenna the power to wipe dragons from existence—to burn kingdoms, to bend realms to their will—then she should have been rewarded. Draped in silks. Guarded like treasure. Celebrated. Indulged. I frowned and glanced over my shoulder. "Are you certain this is it?" I asked Orryx. Orryx only nodded, his expression unreadable in the dim light. I shoved the door open with my shoulder. The smell struck first—so sudden and foul it felt like a physical blow. Mildew. Rot. The sour reek of long-stagnant air. And beneath it, something else. Something that made the back of my throat tighten. For a grim moment, I wondered if something had died in here and been left to seep into the stones. Still, I stepped into the darkness. "I need a torch," I barked. "Now." In an instant, a soldier handed me a flame. I swept it across the pitch-black room, the flickering fire casting twisted shadows that danced along the walls. My boots echoed in the oppressive silence, each step swallowed by the tower's weight. My hand went for my blade, ready to cut her down. My heart steeled, my teeth clenched. "Show yourself, witch," I growled, voice low and menacing. "Stop hiding." I stepped deeper into the chamber, the torch swinging from side to side. Then, at last, a flicker of movement caught my eye, just beyond the torchlight, lurking in the darkest corner. I thrust the flame into the shadow, eager to finally reveal the face of the elusive witch. But what I found wasn't a witch. It's a girl. Fragile. Filthy. Thin as famine. Her skin was mottled with bruises, her limbs trembling. She curled in on herself, like something caged too long. Then her eyes, impossibly bright and disturbingly amethyst, met mine. And they held none of the fire or malice I had expected. Only fear. She flinched as I stepped closer. When I crouched, she raised an arm instinctively, shielding her face, as if she had done it a thousand times before. As if she already knew the pain was coming. I had waited for this moment for years. I had imagined it in my mind a thousand times, every ounce of suffering I would inflict on Malric, his wh\*re, and the witch who

enabled them. There was never any doubt. No mercy, no hesitation. But now, standing on the edge of vengeance... I hesitated. For the first time in fifteen years. I see no witch. No monster. No nightmare made flesh. Just a girl.