

Forgotten Wife : Let the Traitors Kneel Down Novel

Chapter 371-380

Alessandro pressed a kiss to the back of his hand, affirming, "It's ready." He returned to his workshop while Abril made her way to the city, intent on finding Sirius to ask him a question. "Did you help Fay with the dragon?" she inquired. "Yes, right now she is in the tower of sorcerers, studying it." "I want to go there; send me." Sirius consulted a parchment before responding. "Search is to break nothing, and if you discover something, let me know first." "Why don't you come with me?" Abril asked.

"I've already repaired the barrier I wanted to strengthen, so you could return to attack us if needed. It will give us time to protect ourselves." "You can go. This will take me all night in the laboratory. I'm sure I've discovered something. I just hope I can save some of the dragons I destroyed." He tore the bag from the river he had been given and, before he reached the tower of sorcerers, he noticed it seemed almost empty, as all the magicians were busy helping to restore the city.

When he opened the door, he saw a dragon occupying nearly all the space in the room, a creature Sirius must have summoned. "Have you discovered something?" he asked. "Yes, this is a real dragon in its natural form. The dragons are already extinct." "My father used dark magic to keep the bodies of those who opposed him alive. When he did, these people became puppets." "I believe your sister is with these dragons." "The cry of Hades was the monsters exterminated. If they want to return to flesh, they need it." "With this power, you could create it yourself.

If you build an army of dragons, it will be advantageous. Dragons are very difficult to kill; you need a lot of strength to take down a single one." After obtaining the mirror, Cassian communicated with Maya. She was furious and began to scold him for having rendered his guardian. "Were you ready to pay with your body to the first guardian?" she demanded.

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"Return to the land of the fairies." "I can't, but there is something I must do." "Are you sure you're willing to sacrifice your body?" "No, I know you would get furious if I did." "I'll break up with you the next time you talk like that," she warned, her voice trembling with fear of losing him. "Cassian, go!" "If you really care, don't do it again." "I won't." "Be ready, I'll also send you a message for both of you. How is it?" "It's good, growing and growing." "I will try to return soon. My place is far away, but I also have a duty to my kingdom." "Be careful.

Take care." After finishing her conversation with Maya, Cassian went to see Alessandro. He wanted to speak with him before returning to the guardians' dwelling, worried about disappearing suddenly. "I miss you," he said. "The king is in a meeting right now," a guard replied. "What do

you mean?" "With Prince Calum and Princess Sefora. Do you want to announce something?" "No, I'll wait." Cassian left Alessandro's workshop and saw him leaving with Princess Sefora.

Upon entering, he noticed Alessandro didn't look exhausted and asked, "How did the negotiations go?" "Well, it hasn't been easy to agree on the terms of the alliance, especially since they keep insisting on an alliance through marriage." "There's always someone who wants a lasting alliance, one that is firm and appealing. That's why they seek a marriage union." "Yes, but I don't care! I'm married; we are one sole union." Alessandro glanced at the marriage mark on his brother's arm. "This mark is proof of that pact, of the perfect union that exists among us. It cannot be ruined.

I will go away, even if I find my wife. I still believe that joy does not change, Abril in the soup kitchen, that you will take another wife." "You should have seen this; this morning got furious to see that you are with Princess Sefora. Do you need something? Why did the worm come?" "Return to the guardians' home." "Why? You were there yesterday." "Yesterday I didn't have the opportunity to immerse myself in guardian matters. I want you to help me recover my body." "Is that possible?" "He says yes, although I still don't know how. Therefore, I must return to the guardians' dwelling.

We will need to prepare for this war if the dark king escapes from Hades. If he has to fight against him, the best thing you can do is to be in your own body, not mine." "You're right. If there's something that can help, let me know." "Of course, I will." Cassian was the greatest son of the guardians; he always sought to help. He had been waiting for Cassiel that day. "Were you busy?" Cassian asked. "I have a life outside this room. Do you know how you can get back to your body?" "First, you must recover it.

It is located in the village of guardians in the forest of Hath." "And how do you know where your tomb is?" "It's easy to find, as your mother said. It's in the biggest tree in the middle of the village. When you encounter it, you'll know." "It's at an intermediate point between the world of the living and the dead. For me, it would be easier to return to my body in this place since my soul is here, although this will depend on the state in which I am located." "Okay, I understand." "Yes, I will do it." Cassian quickly left the guardians' room.

After speaking with Cassiel, he was determined to tell Alessandro that he would have to go to the woods of Hath. Alessandro was reluctant to let his brother embark on a solo journey, knowing the kingdom was not a safe place. "I will support you. Don't ask anyone else to do it; everyone is very busy helping out in the city."

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"I'll be fine, Alessandro. You don't have to worry about anything," Maya said, her voice steady despite the uncertainty swirling around them. "Even if you say so, it won't be calm if you're alone," Tarik burst into the room, his expression serious. "I only stayed around here while I was looking for the queen," Cassian interjected. "I couldn't help but listen to this conversation." "I can't allow you to accompany me, Tarik, if something troubles you," Alessandro replied firmly. "I'm strong; don't underestimate me.

Besides, I have a curiosity about the village and its guardians," Tarik insisted. "Make that decision your own," Alessandro said, his tone leaving little room for argument. "I'll ask my father if I can support you, even though I believe it isn't wise. This is not a safe place, and I can't afford to be reckless." "I'm Tarik," he introduced himself, his chest puffed out with pride. "If I could decide, I would be the successor of the fairy queen, the hereditary prince of the realm of the fairies.

Even though it's not official yet, my succession will be named when she returns." Alessandro regarded him with a raised eyebrow. "What are you doing here? Are you here to represent the fairies? Have the fairies joined the battle?" "I'm not here as a representative of my kingdom. The realm hasn't decided whether to join the fight yet. I just came to spend some time," Tarik replied, shrugging nonchalantly. "This war affects us all. Why doesn't the fairy queen want to join the battle?" Cassian pressed. "That's a decision only she can make," Tarik said, his voice tinged with frustration.

"Even though I'm not her official successor, I can't convince her to join the fight." "The queen should know better than to ignore the darkness that looms," Cassian said. "If she continues to refuse, I doubt anything will change. But I would appreciate your help in convincing her, even if it seems futile." "Just stay safe for now; you won't be alone when the war comes," Tarik assured him before leaving the room, leaving Cassian and Alessandro alone. "Don't worry; he's just a kid," Cassian said, trying to lighten the mood. "Well, your daughter-" Alessandro began, but Cassian interrupted.

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"How is my daughter?" he asked, concern etched on his face. "She's strong. She possesses air magic and floats everywhere since she started flying, controlling the wind. Every time I see her, I'm reminded of you. I loved seeing her again," Alessandro replied, his heart heavy with longing. "I hate not being able to remember her. I wish I could laugh with her again and meet the girl I once knew," Cassian said, his voice thick with emotion. "That's a good idea. We need to prepare for war," Alessandro suggested. "You're right.

If you send her to a safe place, it must be for a good reason," Cassian agreed, his resolve strengthening. "I will do everything I can to protect her." "Only with her was it little; separating from you was the hardest part," Alessandro said, his voice softening. "I will assure you of her safety. The memories may fade from your mind, but they will remain in your heart, and those cannot be erased," Cassian reassured him. "In truth, I want to believe that," Alessandro replied, a flicker of hope igniting within him. "When you return to see your daughter, you will understand.

She may be much bigger the next time you see her. You must be busy, but I will try to convince Tarik to accompany you," Cassian said, determination in his voice. "If you have offered to accompany me, you should take it back," Alessandro warned. "He is the hereditary prince of the queen, and I don't want to put him in danger." "And that's why you're going alone? Don't think it's reckless if you find yourself in danger; just run," Cassian cautioned. "My life is not reckless; it is not yours to decide," Alessandro replied defiantly. "Be very careful," Cassian urged.

"I will be, so don't worry," Alessandro promised. "I'll see you later." As he left his home, he ran into Abril and Fay, who had just arrived to stay with them. "Cassian, I'm glad you're here. There's something you need to know," Abril said, her expression serious. When he saw Abril, a pang of jealousy struck him at the sight of her with Fay, even though she was a beautiful fairy. He couldn't help but feel a twinge of pain. "Who are you talking about?" Cassian asked, his brow furrowing. "Those were not monsters," Fay replied.

"In reality, they were dragons, but instead of blood, they had something dark in their veins. Those dragons were betrayed by black magic, corrupted by the power of darkness. Though dragons are extinct, they remain territorial and solitary, never attacking in groups." "But those who attacked were a group," Cassian pointed out. "That was because they were being controlled," Abril added sharply. "The Hades Rift is closed at the moment. We can't sell her for the key of Hades that is kept here. For this, you will need an army, but you can use monsters.

You will create your own monsters using darkness; their monsters may even include humans," Cassian explained. "Wouldn't it be better to use the key we have? The fight spreads in this place, and the kingdom will end up destroyed," Abril argued. "We won't have that, Cassian," Alessandro said firmly. "We will fight; we won't let things go easily." "We have seen the danger these dragons pose. What do you think would happen if there were no army?" Cassian asked, his voice rising. Alessandro didn't respond; he knew perfectly well what would happen if the fight reached their doorstep.

They would be destroyed. "If that's what would happen, we can't just hand over the key like that," Fay insisted. "But we can, the one in the king's possession is affected," Abril said. "I think this is the best course of action. Our people have suffered enough because of the monsters," she added, placing a hand on Alessandro's shoulder. "I also believe this is the best way forward. We must lead the battle for our people; we cannot allow more blood to be spilled," Alessandro agreed, his resolve hardening.

"I suppose you are right, but we must ensure it does not affect any other kingdom," Cassian said, his voice thoughtful. "This is something we have to study carefully," Abril concluded, her gaze steady.

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Cira knew they wouldn't sell them out, not without a fight. The doors of Hades were open, and though it was inevitable, they couldn't afford to delay any longer. She felt exhausted and achy, as if her entire body had been worn down. The days seemed to be drawing to an end, and she needed to find a place where she could rest and recover. She called for Liona to help her up. Liona approached, concern etched on her face. "How can I help the princess?" "We're leaving," Cira replied, her voice steady despite her fatigue. "Where to?" Liona asked.

"We're returning to Laios." "You still don't look well. Perhaps we should stay hidden a little longer." "That's exactly why we're going. Help me get out of here. We can't remain hidden in caves." Liona nodded and helped Cira out of the cave. Cira walked almost as if she were dragging herself, weak from days without proper food or sleep. Once outside, she approached the dragons she had revived, her eyes drawn to the largest one, which seemed to be her

favorite. With great effort, she climbed onto its back, feeling a surge of strength as the dragon lifted off the ground.

Liona followed suit, mounting another dragon. As they soared toward the kingdom of Laios, Cira knew they would face challenges ahead. Cira was aware of the most vulnerable spots in the barrier, allowing them to enter without much trouble. The abandoned mansion they were heading to was quite far from their entry point, but it was a place they could find refuge. Once inside, Liona helped Cira settle in. The mansion, though neglected, was not entirely unwelcoming. "How long has this mansion been abandoned?" Liona asked, glancing around. "It was left to ruin when the monsters invaded Laios.

Those who survived fled to the capital. Even now, there are many monsters lurking about. They must be terrified to return." "There's a room on the second floor. Please, take me there," Cira instructed. Liona complied without question, laying Cira down on the bed. Cira took a moment to catch her breath, grateful for the brief respite. Liona quickly prepared the bedding, still acting as a servant despite her own powers. "I wonder what I should make for dinner," Liona mused, glancing around the abandoned space.

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"I'll need to venture into the woods to find something to cook." As she gathered her thoughts, a rustling sound interrupted her. "Who's there?" Cira called out, her voice firm despite her weakness. "You should ask who I am," came a voice from the shadows. "Yes, you're a monster from Hades," Cira replied, her heart racing. "You're a monster too, at least in part," the voice retorted. "Monsters recognize us," Cira said, trying to make sense of the situation. "I saw you arrive with this girl," the voice continued. "She grants me power. She's trying to open the doors of Hades.

Why not join us?" "No, I prefer to remain in the shadows, waiting for the right moment to act. The moment when the monsters let us reign." "If that's your choice, you should help us," Cira urged. "I don't like being seen," the voice replied. "The monsters in the front lines are the ones who sacrifice themselves to keep the doors open," Cira explained. "You have intelligence," the voice said, a hint of admiration in its tone. "I've seen few monsters like you." "Why do you think we managed to escape from Hades?" Cira asked. "I don't know, but I'm sure you'll tell me," the voice replied.

"The cracks lead to the depths because of humans. They are the ones who control beings like you, at least not any longer." "Are you strong?" the voice inquired. "Stronger than you think. The key to Hades is not in the hands of monsters or mortals. Those keys were created to confine us, not to free us." "Does that mean we cannot open the doors of Hades?" "They can be opened, but not by monsters or humans. This girl will open them. She will want to see it." "Then why are you here?" the voice asked, its tone shifting.

"If you decide to go to the girl, you'll help us gain our freedom," Cira insisted. "I want to be free now, but she is weak, and you could destroy her," the voice warned. "We will not surrender," Cira declared, her resolve firm. "I can do it now. Have patience; the moment will come, but this is not the time." Meanwhile, Fay had been restless, having spent the night

examining the remains of the dragon. After deciding what to do next, he resolved to rest. "Everyone knew I would leave, so I'm withdrawing," he said as he turned to go.

"Fay, could you talk to me for a moment?" "What's going on?" he asked, pausing. "I'm going on a journey to recover the body of the first guardian. Arik has offered to support me. The kingdom isn't safe right now; it's better if you don't come." "If you're worried about Tarik's safety, you shouldn't be. If you're already weak, we're not. He is her successor, and if you want to support me-" "You trust too much in your strength," Fay interrupted. "That's why I'm the same as you. That's why I'm as strong as you are."

"That's why I trust him." "If you're going, I'd like you to take me with you," Fay said, determination in his eyes. "Then go and rest. I haven't slept at all since I arrived." "Wait, there's something I'd like to ask you," Fay said, his curiosity piqued. "What is it?" "How long will you be in Cosset?" "I don't know yet. Why do you ask?" "Just curiosity, that's all!" Fay replied, a hint of a smile on his face.

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No crosses in linen. "My mission is to see what happens here so that my village can be prepared." "To fight?" Cassian asked, but Fay didn't respond. "The queen must be part of this war if she is planning it. She wouldn't dare disobey the guardians because she has a way out." "Cassian, I am one of the royal generals for a reason. I can't talk about it, but I won't deny it, nor will I affirm anything. Just get rid of your illusions." "Thanks, Fay." "I'll see you tomorrow. I need to tell you something." Fay didn't have a room, so she went to Tarik. When she saw him, she smiled. "Welcome."

"Are you alright?" he asked. "Yes, just a little tired. Are you fine?" "Yes, perfectly." He noticed she was about to accompany him. "Did you meet Cassian?" "Yes, I told you I decided to accompany him." "Thanks for letting me go." "Can I know why you decided to support him?" "This is Lissana's world. I want to protect it-for her." "Tarik, when you are Fey..." "We can be together, but that doesn't change the fact that she is my best friend."

"That's why I want to do what I can to ensure that when she returns to her world, she leaves a little better." "Is that the only reason?" "Yes." Fay left the bed and said, "You must always be aware of this, Tarik. There are lines you cannot cross." "What do you mean by that, Dad? What line are you talking about?" Fay didn't respond; she had fallen asleep. Tarik wondered if he should ask her again, but his priest didn't wake until the next day. When Fay opened her eyes, Tarik asked, "What line are you talking about?" "Good morning, Tarik."

"I'm still half asleep; could you give me a little space to wash up?" "I'll give you space to answer. What line in the sand?" "And I didn't miss you, Lissana. She could be a friend, a bad person." "Do I fall in love with her? I don't see Lissana that way." "I hope it stays that way. Lissana was a child the last time we saw her, but she won't be that way when we return. Don't change your perspective, Tarik; that alone would bring you pain. It's not destined for you; it can never be with you that way, since we both belong to different worlds." Fay looked out the window.

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At first, the sun had just begun to rise, and she said, "You should give yourself a break or leave it behind. Cassian tells me he will leave soon." "What will you do?" Tarik asked. "I will continue studying the dragon that killed. I want to find out all its weak points so that we will be prepared when we come back." "Didn't you have to comply with the queen's orders?" "Her orders were that it could be a danger for our people, those who are safe.

That's why I have to study." "How long will we spend in the human world?" "Don't worry; if there's a significant problem, we will get back to you sooner. Just try not to take too long." "Do what you must; I will return afterward." "I can't go without you. I'll be there, and I'll kill you if you look back, even if you are my daughter." "Try to return ready." "I will, soon, Daddy." Tarik went to the kitchen and asked the servants to prepare a bag of food. Then he headed toward the entrance.

"Wait for Cassian." "It's been a while since we've waited." "Wake me up soon; are we going?" "We will take a few horses and use parchment to teleport us, but only part of the way." "I have a winged horse; it will be faster than a normal horse, and we will have a better view." "That sounds good. Come see me for your friend." "I don't want to put him out." "Now we can go." Tarik climbed onto his mount and told Cassian to go ahead. His horse was already flying; it was much faster than riding. They followed the palace behind them and then left the city.

Cassian used teleportation parchment, and they instantly appeared in the city of Farell. Tarik had never used a teleportation scroll before, as Cassian had said. "You can find your way." "No." "The horse must descend." Tarik felt his horse falter, and once on the ground, Cassian lowered it as he had said. "Rest easy; this is where you are traveling using parchment." "My horse is fast; let's not use those again." "With your horse, it took us many days to get to Farell. That's why we use parchment." Tarik's side felt heavy with worry.

"It seems like you have a good friend." "I've had him for as long as I can remember; he was a gift from my father." "I thought fairies couldn't leave the ground." "I am the successor of the queen; there are exceptions." "Rest, so we can move on. I want to fulfill this mission and return ready." In the grove of Hath, when Abril woke up, her eyes felt tired and heavy. She had fallen asleep in the same room as Alessandro; he had fallen asleep on the sofa.

Being with him had once been comfortable, but at that moment, it was extremely uncomfortable, as Alessandro was completely unaware of her presence. She sat on the bed, hugging her knees, while he continued to sleep on the sofa. She wondered if she would ever return to being the same, if he would ever tie her back. Miles of doubt attacked her mind, and she couldn't stop it from happening. Abril let out a long sigh, and at that moment, Alessandro woke up and asked, "What's wrong?" "Good morning," she replied.

"Don't you want to answer my question?" "That's why I didn't respond; things have gone beyond what they were. You feel uncomfortable about taking it off." Abril remained silent for a minute before replying, "I would be a liar if I said no. For me, you continue to be the man I fell in love with, but I am aware that I'm a complete stranger to you at this moment." Alessandro got up from the sofa, walked to the bed, and sat beside her. "It's true that I don't remember you, because I want you to be completely unknown to me." He caressed Abril's cheek, and she felt a mix of warmth and uncertainty.

The Grove of Hath Abril felt at ease when she was by Alessandro's side, as if she were home after a long journey. "Really?" he asked, a hint of disbelief in his voice. "If my presence bothers you, you can always sleep elsewhere," she replied, trying to mask her concern. "No, I'm not thinking about that. It's just a bit uncomfortable in these tents. I don't want to flee," he assured her. "I'm glad to hear you say that. When you're not around, I feel lost," she confessed. Alessandro wanted to kiss her, but he hesitated, not wanting to make her uncomfortable or feel pressured to leave.

"I have a lot of work to do, but I'm prepared," he said, shifting the conversation. "I'm also saying goodbye to Cassian. He should have left by now." "I believe he has gone. I think he'll leave soon," Abril replied. "Honestly, the guardian may have a quote?" he mused, his brow furrowing. "That's right. I want to believe that. I hope this war will end faster with him here." "I hope so too. I want everything to be ready as soon as possible," she said, her voice steady. Alessandro removed his clothes and stepped into the stale room. When he returned, Abril had gotten up and washed her face.

"What will you do today?" she asked, her voice soft but curious. "I need to find their weak points to know how to destroy them," he replied, determination in his tone. "Are you with Fay?" she inquired, concern creeping into her voice. "Yes, she knows a lot about dragons. You'll meet Princess Sephora again," he assured her. "I'm still clear about our terms. I think I will continue negotiating with them. They need us; we are the only ones who can provide the weapons they need to fight against them."

Even if I don't like it, you are my queen, and I want to respect you." When Abril heard that, she felt much calmer. She had hated the idea of Alessandro getting close to Princess Sephora, fearing he might fall in love with her. She had left behind all her promises, as none of them seemed to matter anymore. Alessandro appeared troubled, his worries evident. "I won't get closer to the prince. I'll go outside, I promise you." "Thank you for being so considerate," Abril replied, relief washing over her. "I want to respect you as my wife, and I'll come back."

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It's comfortable to be by my side, just as it is for me," he said, his tone earnest. "Every few hours, I get tired," she admitted. "Tarik feels the same." They looked at each other, both aware of the challenges ahead. As they reached the Forest of Hath, the sun dipped behind the horizon, casting shadows that hinted at the night to come. They descended into a small clearing, aware that they could not continue their search for the village of the guardians much longer. While they rested, Tarik asked, "Does Lissana enjoy the kingdom?" "In the Cathedral, this kingdom is her home."

But it has been built on the land of the fairies. Perhaps for her, the land of the fairies feels more like home than Cosset," he replied thoughtfully. "But she will come back here," Tarik insisted. "Yes, because her family and her life are here," he said firmly. "I would love to see the human kingdom with her, but I know that can never happen," Tarik added wistfully. "You can come and visit whenever you want. You will always be welcome," he assured him."

"Thanks for saying that! When I become king, I can't wait for the king to die," Tarik joked, trying to lighten the mood.

"Are you sure you're safe?" Cassian asked, concern etched on his face. "I want to protect my kingdom and all its inhabitants. This is a decision I've made, and I won't change my mind." Cassian didn't know Lissana well, but he thought about her determination. "I hope you don't regret your decision," he said quietly. "Me too," Tarik replied, his gaze drifting to the sky. Tarik fell to the ground, using his arms as a pillow, staring up at the beautiful starry sky of the fairy realm. He hoped they would return soon, so he could see Lissana again.

They continued searching for the village of the guardians, trying to spot it from the sky, but the towering trees obscured their view. They descended and began searching the ground. They searched throughout the day, but luck was not on their side. As they scoured the surroundings, Tarik asked, "Is there any clue to find the village of the guardians?" "No. Cassiel just said it was easy to find. I should look for the biggest tree in the forest, which is in the middle of the village. But we've been searching from the sky and haven't found anything.

I think I should ask Ale for instructions from my mother. I don't believe what Cassiel told me," he said, frustration creeping into his voice. "Hmm... maybe there's a barrier protecting the village, which is why we haven't seen it from above," Tarik suggested. "It's been a long time since anyone lived in the village, which takes something away from it," Cassian added. They ventured deeper into the woods, trying to find their way. At one point, they ended up running in circles. Tarik stopped and said, "We're not getting anywhere.

We're just going in circles." "I've been told this before, but I don't understand why. Let's go straight. Where did we go astray?" Cassian asked. "In the middle of the forest, I'm sorry. That's why we're lost among the plants, but here in the clearing, there's nobody," Tarik replied. They began marking the trees to ensure they wouldn't return to the same spot. Eventually, they stumbled upon some rocks that had been unearthed. Cassian recognized the symbols and recalled what he had learned in his language class. "These rocks say we should go back," he said.

"Do you understand what's written there?" Tarik asked, intrigued. "Yes, I can read it in all known and unfamiliar languages. It says: If you want to get there, you will have to go behind." "But that's the opposite direction," Tarik pointed out. "What do you want me to tell you? There's nothing else we can do. We must follow the instructions," Cassian replied. Reluctantly, they walked in the opposite direction, hoping it would lead them to the village. As they continued, they found themselves back at the same place. This time, they noticed a mark on one of the trees, which Tarik translated.

"Bleed," he murmured. "What does that mean?" Cassian asked, puzzled. "I think you need to spill it to reach the guardian villages," Tarik replied. "But where?" Cassian questioned. "You can do it in the dirt. Maybe this forest is alive and just doesn't want to waste time again," Tarik suggested. He made a small cut on his arm, and the blood dripped onto the ground, causing the forest to stir with life. "You're right; the forest is alive. It only reveals itself to the guardians," Cassian realized, hope igniting within him.

Cassian and Tarik continued advancing along the path. As they neared the end, a massive tree loomed in the center, its trunk so vast that it was hard to believe it had existed for so long. Surrounding it was a beautiful village that was supposed to be abandoned, yet it appeared surprisingly well-kept. The air was clean, and though the hierarchy had crumbled, the houses still stood, untouched by neglect. "What do you think?" Tarik asked, glancing around. "It's supposed to be abandoned. My mother was the last guardian."

When the other guardians died, they left the village, leaving it completely alone," Tarik replied. "Do you think anyone is still here?" Cassian inquired. "It might be better if we leave the village," Tarik suggested. As they explored, Tarik noticed that many of the houses still had food inside, and the smoke from the chimneys curled into the air. Yet, there was no sign of life, as if the village were haunted. He returned to Cassian, who was waiting for him. "Did you find anyone?" Cassian asked. "No, but the fires are still lit," Tarik said, his brow furrowing.

"It's strange." "Do you think they're hiding?" Cassian pondered. "Yes, someone lives here and seems to be very good at hiding. But we can't play hide and seek all day. Let's head to the tree before night falls." As they approached the tree, Cassian warned, "Stay alert. We don't know what might attack us." When they reached the largest tree in the village, Cassian stepped closer to its trunk, which was enormous yet oddly thin. "Is the person you're looking for buried here?" he asked. "I don't think he's buried, but where could he be?" Tarik mused.

"If he is here, we should cut it down," a deep voice interrupted from behind them. "No!" Tarik spun around to see a man of small stature, even shorter than most. Cassian stepped forward. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" he demanded. The man approached them cautiously. "When I touched the tree, I felt its pain," he said, his voice trembling. "I am Ran." "This is the guardians' forest. It was supposed to be abandoned. What are you doing here?" Cassian pressed. "A few years ago, we had to leave our home."

When we arrived, the forest showed us there was no food, and we were never meant to touch it. If we let it go, it would mean there is more than just us," Ran explained, gesturing toward the trees. As if on cue, several small figures emerged from the shadows, all resembling Ran. "You're dwarves," Cassian observed, astonished. "Yes, we are the guardians. The forest has told us to stay hidden," Ran replied. "Take me to the first guardian in this tree," Cassian insisted. "Before we do, I advise you not to use weapons," Ran warned.

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"I have it under control," Cassian assured him, stepping closer to the tree as if it were a person. "I need to recover the body of the first guardian that you are guarding." Cassian advanced a few paces toward the tree, feeling an invisible barrier prevent him from getting closer. He tried to break through, but it was futile. Seeing Cassian struggle, Tarik attempted to help, but at that moment, the branches of the tree lashed out toward him. "The forest is alive," Ran cautioned. "It doesn't take kindly to attacks."

It has never let us near that tree." Cassian spoke to the tree, trying to convince it of his intentions. "Please, I need to take the first guardian's body." He continued to plead with the tree, but it

remained unyielding. As he fell to his knees, the dwarves retreated to their homes, leaving him alone with the tree. Fireflies began to gather near the trunk, illuminating the area. Cassian sat on the ground, gazing at the first guardian. He was so close yet could not reach him. With a long sigh, he whispered the guardian's name.

"How am I supposed to recover your body, Cassiel?" As he spoke Cassiel's name, a faint light flickered around the trunk. Cassian extended his hand to touch the barrier, and suddenly, the barrier shimmered and weakened. Cassian could feel the coldness of Cassiel's body, revealing that he was indeed dead, yet his form appeared perfectly preserved. After many hours of effort, Cassian struggled to lift the body, realizing it was too heavy. He called for Tarik to help. Tarik approached cautiously, wary of being flung through the air again, but this time, the tree did not attack.

Together, they carried the body of the first guardian back to the village, where no one lingered near that tree any longer. As they reached the village, an elderly dwarf approached them. "Is that person alive?" he asked, concern etched on his face. "No, but I hope he will be again," Cassian replied. "This village belongs to the guardians. Shouldn't you return?" the elder asked. "I don't think I can see this place again. Now, it is your home," Cassian said. "Thank you for your kindness, but I am aware of what is yours. You can return when it is safe.

We will not fight for it," the elder insisted. "I have a home and family here, just like my brother. Our lives are not in these woods. Consider this your home," Ran interjected, his voice firm. "Soon, there will be a war where monsters will come, so prepare for what lies ahead." Cassian handed Ran several scrolls of transportation. "If the forest cannot protect you, use these to escape." "We have seen what monsters can do. Thank you for providing us an escape route," Ran said gratefully. "Were you attacked by monsters?" Cassian asked.

"Yes, it was about twenty-five years ago, though I'm not entirely sure. Our lands were barren, and then a dark cloud descended upon us, annihilating our village. We barely managed to escape," Ran explained. "Where did you live before?" Cassian inquired. "On the mounts of Vaizel," Ran replied. "That's near the kingdom of Xurt," Cassian noted. "Yes, it is," Ran confirmed. "The kingdom of Xurt never mentioned any attacks from monsters," Cassian remarked. "I don't believe the kingdom of Xurt cares, Ran.

The monsters attacked us and pursued us relentlessly until we fled," Ran replied, his voice heavy with memory. "Did they remain in your village, as if they were guarding something?" Cassian asked. "We don't know. We never felt safe, but it seemed like they were protecting something," Ran said, shaking his head. "Thank you for telling me. I hope you don't think I'll come back to fight," Cassian assured him. Cassian turned to Tarik, instructing him to prepare for their journey to Cassiel. Tarik listened intently, awaiting the arrival of his mount.

"We can't fly; I don't want to go back to using those scrolls," he said, feeling uneasy. "We need to return quickly," Cassian urged. When Tarik's mount appeared, Cassian instructed him to head to the city of Farell, where they would part ways at the outskirts of the royal capital. Tarik felt his stomach lurch as they traveled, the sensation making him feel ill. He leaned against his mount while trying to help carry the first guardian's body. "I hate those scrolls," he muttered. "I know, but we have to manage.

I need to inform the palace, so thank you for helping me carry the body of the first guardian," Cassian said. Tarik summoned all his strength to stay upright and assist Cassian in carrying the weight of the first guardian.

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After arriving at the royal palace, Tarik felt the weight of exhaustion pressing down on him. The horsemen had carried the first guardian, and he was eager to rest. They had used teleportation scrolls, and the journey had drained them completely. Cassian, one of the guardians, had left Cassiel's body on the first floor, making it easier to find the guardians' quarters. As he made his way to his room, he heard his brother's voice calling out to him. "Lessan," Alessandro said, turning back. When he saw Tarik, he asked, "When did you arrive?" "I just got here," Tarik replied.

"How did it go?" Alessandro inquired. "It's better to talk somewhere else," Tarik suggested. "Agreed." Cassian's room was nearby, so he led Alessandro to it and closed the door behind them. Alessandro's expression turned serious. "What's going on, Cassian? The kingdom of Li is the only realm struck by monsters, right?" "That's true," Cassian confirmed. "But today I discovered that there are also monsters in our kingdom, and they attacked." "They never mentioned being attacked by monsters," Alessandro said, frowning. "That's because they haven't been attacked yet.

The monsters are in the mountains of Vaizel," Cassian explained. "The mountains of Vaizel, not the cities or towns. Since they fell into them, they've been expelling them from the mountains," Alessandro noted. "Dwarves?" Cassian asked. "Yes, Lessan. I believe the monsters are protecting something in that place." "Do you think the key to Hades is hidden there?" Alessandro asked, his brow furrowing. "No, I think we should go and investigate," Cassian replied. "Even if it's the key to the gates of Hades, we can't take it. We cannot gather it," Alessandro said firmly.

"I see, but what is it that they are protecting?" Cassian pressed. "Then what could it be?" Alessandro asked. "The doors of Hades. Maybe the doors will appear in that place. The monsters must sense it, and that's why they are there," Cassian speculated. "There's no point in trying to guess what they are protecting. We must focus on strengthening our kingdom before I leave for battle. Something tells me we don't have much time," Alessandro said, his voice heavy with concern. "I know. There are things we must address first.

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The gates of Hades must be closed, and we must protect our people." "You're right. The best course of action is to take Cassiel quickly. I also have some questions I want to ask. Can you bring him to the guardians?" Alessandro asked. "Of course. I'm curious about the state he's in," Cassian replied. When Alessandro saw Cassiel's body, he was taken aback. Just as Cassian had said, Cassiel's body was stable and intact. No one would think he was dead; it looked as if he were merely in a deep sleep. "Your body is intact. Do you believe it's made of angel blood?" Alessandro asked.

"I'm not sure, but I can't help but wonder if our brothers will return. Cassiel said that guardians never truly die; they simply release their bodies to enter the spiritual world. Perhaps they can come

back," Cassian said. "That's what I want to ask Cassiel," Alessandro replied, his voice filled with hope. "Demons are imprisoned," Cassian added. Alessandro wanted to know if this was possible. He was searching for an opportunity to betray their brothers once again. They carried Cassiel's body to the guardians' quarters. Behind the door, Cassiel's spirit awaited them.

"Why did you regress?" Cassiel asked, his voice echoing softly. Cassian had prepared a bed for him and said they had left his body there. Cassiel turned on his side, watching them closely. "My body seems to be in excellent condition," he said. "I don't believe there's any reason to worry, even if it might take some time." Alessandro asked, "If they died during the war, is there any way to bring them back?" "Hmm... If you suggest their bodies are intact, maybe they can return to life. It will also depend on whether they want to cling to life," Cassiel replied thoughtfully.

"Why aren't you living?" Cassian pressed. "In all my time living, I realized there's something I need. The only person who matters to me is not here. A world where nothing awaits you... it's hard to want to come back. I was at least excited about wanting to return, but I was sure I had already died for a reason." "The forest is harsh; your body is in the trunk of a tree, and I will protect you," Cassian promised. "You created this forest to protect the guardians. I had to take great care of my body; I'm happy to have created it," Cassiel replied. "And we will go.

If you need anything, don't hesitate to ask us," Cassian said. "I will need time. Come back in two days," Cassiel replied. Cassian and Alessandro returned to their room. Cassian was lethally exhausted, so he bid his brother goodnight. Alessandro also returned to his room, where Abril slept deeply. As he sat next to her bed, she stirred awake. "Why did you take so long?" she asked, her voice soft. "Cassian returned. Can I fulfill your mission?" he replied. "Let's hope that's the case," Abril said, taking Alessandro's hand. "Can I sleep with you?" he asked.

"Of course," she replied, making space for him in the bed. Alessandro leaned back against the headboard, wrapping his arms around her as they embraced, cherishing the moment together.

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When Cassian entered his room, he couldn't help but reflect on the years that had passed. Although Alessandro insisted that the location of the doors to Hades was inconsequential, Cassian disagreed. If they knew where the doors would appear, they could save more lives and prepare their armies for battle. As he woke, the sun was already setting; he had slept the entire day. Afterward, he set out to find Abril and her brother, but on his way, he encountered Fay. "Thank you for taking care of my son," Fay said, her voice warm.

"He knows how to take care of himself, even on dangerous journeys," Cassian replied, a hint of pride in his tone. "In truth, I received a lot of help." "I'm glad to hear that," Fay responded, her eyes sparkling with relief. "How much longer do you think you'll be gone?" Cassian asked, concern creeping into his voice. "That's not why I'm asking," Fay said, her expression turning serious. "I'll be gone for a few more days." "What will you do after that?" he inquired. "There's a place I need to visit. Could you cover for me?" "Tarik has a plan for you whenever you want to leave.

But this place I want to go, Tarik shouldn't accompany me. It's too dangerous for him, given his strength and power. I don't want to put him in harm's way." "Where do you want to go?" Cassian asked, curiosity piqued. "To the wings of Vaizel's mountain," she replied, determination etched on her face. "What are you looking for?" he pressed. "The doors to Hades. They are hidden among the monsters, and no one knows they exist. I believe they are protected by the very creatures that inhabit that territory." "Why do you want to leave?" Cassian asked, his brow furrowing.

"As soon as possible," she said firmly. "I will accompany you for a few days; there are still things I want to uncover about the dragon they killed." "Thank you," he said, appreciating her willingness to join him. "But I must go now. I need to communicate with Maya." Cassian continued on his way, first seeking out Abril. He needed to hope he could reach Maya. It was difficult since he was married, and the bond of marriage made things even more complicated. He longed to return to the land of the fairies, but he couldn't do so without fulfilling his duty as a prince.

He had to take care of his child. Abril was in the courtyard, training with Kiara. Her skill with the daggers had become impressive, and she approached Cassian with a confident smile. "You've become an excellent warrior; you no longer stumble or fall," he praised her. "Could you lend me the mirror? I want to communicate with Maya," he asked. Abril pulled the mirror from her clothes and handed it to him. "She was worried about being able to talk to you." "I'll return it later," he promised. "You have time," she replied with a reassuring nod. "Thanks," he said, grateful for her understanding.

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Cassian found a quiet spot to speak with Maya. When he connected with her and saw her face, he felt a surge of longing to hold her in his arms. "Hello, my love," he greeted her softly. "Cassian, you make me miss you even more than I already do," she replied, her voice tinged with sadness. "I'm sorry," he said, feeling the weight of her emotions. Maya pouted and said, "I can feel your anxiety and fear. What's going on, Cassian?" He sighed, gathering his thoughts. "Maybe I've discovered where the doors to Hades are located." "Where?" she asked, her interest piqued. "On Mount Vaizel.

I'll be ready to leave in a few days." "Be careful. Remember, you are my life," she said, her tone serious. "And I mean that literally." "Of course, I will," he assured her. "How is Uzziel?" "He's doing well," Maya replied, her expression brightening. "He's getting so big!" "Hello, Daddy!" Uzziel chimed in, his voice cheerful. "Hello, Uzziel. It looks like you're growing up fast," Cassian said, smiling at the boy. "I'll soon be taller than you!" Uzziel declared confidently. "I'm sure you will be," Cassian laughed. "When will you come back?" Uzziel asked, his eyes wide with hope.

"I'll be back soon, I promise. Just take good care of your mother," Cassian instructed. "Of course! I'm a man now; I'll take good care of Mommy," Uzziel replied proudly. "Hello, Uncle Cassian!" Lissana greeted him, peering into the mirror as if searching for something. "Hello, Lissana," he said, noticing her curiosity. "Have you seen Tarik?" she asked eagerly. "He visits his mother often, but he hasn't been able to see Tarik since he left the land of the fairies. The

next time we call, maybe you could..." "Do you want me to communicate with him?" Lissana interrupted. "Only if you want to."

It's not like you'd die to see him," Cassian teased. "I'll let you know, but don't worry if I do," she replied, a mischievous smile on her face. "Just suggest it subtly," he advised. "Okay!" she agreed, her excitement palpable. Cassian continued to talk with Maya, their conversation flowing easily until night fell. He reluctantly said goodbye, feeling as though his heart was breaking into a thousand pieces. He then went to find his brother, who was in the dining hall with the others. Alessandro looked up as Cassian approached.

"I'm glad you've joined us," he said, a hint of relief in his voice. Cassian took his place at the table, sitting beside Alessandro and across from Abril. Tarik was seated next to Cassian, while Kiara and others filled the remaining seats. As the food was served, Cassian spoke up. "I plan to travel to the mountains of Vaizel." Alessandro frowned, his expression darkening. "I thought we had discussed this and decided you wouldn't go there." "That was your decision, brother. I can't ignore this," Cassian replied firmly.

Abril, intrigued by the conversation, asked, "What's in the mountains of Vaizel?" "I believe the gates of Hades are there," Cassian explained. "How do you know this?" Alessandro challenged. "There are monsters in the mountains; they've been appearing for a long time. If there were monsters there, I would know," Cassian insisted. "The mountains of Vaizel have always been dangerous because of the beasts that dwell there. It's impossible to overcome them; they are monsters that have never left," Alessandro warned.

"I would appreciate it if you didn't put yourself in danger." "What about Hades?" Kiara interjected. "That's what I want to find out, which is why I must go," Cassian replied. Abril spoke up, "This will be a dangerous journey, and I won't let you go alone. You need help in the city." "That's why I'm not taking the horsemen," Cassian said. "I'll accompany you," Tarik offered. "It's too dangerous for us to go alone. If what you say is true, we don't know how many monsters are in that place or how strong and dangerous they can be," Kiara argued.

"All monsters can be defeated, Cassian." "Yes, but it's a risk we're taking," Barto added. "I support you as well. I must protect my sister's life and ensure nothing happens to her," Kiara said firmly.

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Alessandro stood at the edge of the mountains, contemplating the journey ahead. "Then you will also go," he said, his voice steady despite the weight of his thoughts. "I don't think you should venture to such a dangerous place." Kiara nodded, her expression resolute. "That's why I didn't want to stay here. This is the best time to let them go. We need all the help we can get." "I understand that you're scared after seeing how your kingdom was attacked and destroyed," Alessandro replied, his brow furrowing.

"But finding out where Hades will strike next would be invaluable." Alessandro couldn't deny the fear gnawing at him-the fear that his kingdom would once again come under attack and be utterly destroyed. He knew that as long as Cira was free, they would always be in danger, a reality they could not control. Abril placed a hand on Alessandro's shoulder, her voice softening. "Let him

know I love Cassian. I believe Kiara is right; this is a complete disaster. But we'll be fine. I know I'm with you." Kiara agreed, her eyes shining with determination. "Abril is much more powerful than I am.

Her strength surpasses even my son's. You will be fine without us." "Besides, Tarik will stay with you," Alessandro added, glancing at the young prince. Though thin and slender, Tarik's resolve shone through his worried expression. "You are an excellent warrior, and as the prince of the fairies, you must demonstrate your skill. Otherwise, you will be discarded." Tarik smiled, a flicker of confidence igniting in his eyes. "The test may save your life," he said, his voice steady. Alessandro let out a long sigh.

"Fine, let it go." Turning to Kiara, he continued, "You will be near the kingdom of Xurt. I would appreciate it if you could bless your arsenal. If what you're saying is true, it's best that you are prepared. Our kingdom will soon become a battlefield." "That sounds good to me," Cassian said, his tone serious. "The mounts of Vaizel are near the kingdom of Xurt." "Cassian, have you thought about when you will leave?" Abril asked, concern etched on her face. "Fay needs a few days. We will go when he is ready," Cassian replied. "Let's discuss the details later.

We should eat before the food gets cold," Alessandro said, trying to lighten the mood. He watched as Kiara and Tarik finished their meals, then stood up, placing a hand on Abril's shoulder. "I'm sorry. I know you're also thinking about the good of our kingdom." "It's late. I'll see you all tomorrow," Cassian said as he began to withdraw. Then he remembered he had handed the mirror to Abril, so he returned. "Thank you for this." Being far from loved ones was painful and difficult, he thought as he stepped away. Once alone, Alessandro turned to Abril.

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"You are too." "Yes, I miss Lissa," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. "I wish we could all be together, like a family." Abril looked at Alessandro for a moment before asking, "What do you want? If you've forgotten Lissana, why are you so curious to see what she's like?" Since he had lost Lissana, Alessandro had struggled with his memories. "Yes, but I'm also afraid of your reaction. I don't agree with her." "I understand your fear, but if you don't empathize with her, you will never connect with her. It will be as it was when you were apart," Abril said gently.

Alessandro intertwined his fingers with Abril's, his expression earnest. "It's true that I was in denial at first. Everything was so confusing when I lost my memories. But now, I believe your words and trust in you. If that girl is my daughter..." "We couldn't raise her, but that doesn't mean we couldn't love her. We couldn't remember her, but we could still change that," Abril replied, her voice filled with hope. "I want to be a good father to her, even though I don't know how," Alessandro confessed. "You've done well once; I'm sure you will do it again.

You will be a good father for our daughter," Abril reassured him. "I hope so," he said, determination flickering in his eyes. After a moment, they both returned to the room. For the first time since he had delved into his memories, Alessandro told Abril that he wanted to see their daughter. When he finally laid eyes on her, he was taken aback. She was as beautiful as Abril, with

the same fiery red hair. She should have been only a few years old, yet she seemed to carry the weight of the world on her small shoulders.

That night, Alessandro wished he could recover his memories, regretting the loss that felt permanent. The next day, he set out to assess the damage to their kingdom, hoping to find survivors among the ruins left by the attack. The atmosphere in the city was somber; many had lost family members, and the sadness was palpable. At the end of his tour, Alessandro asked Gabriel to compile a list of everyone who had lost someone. He wanted to offer comfort to those grieving. Cassiel had mentioned he would return after two days to see if they needed help.

Cassian and Alessandro had planned to stay at the guardians' dwelling for that time, just as Cassiel had requested. As they stepped into the light, they were shocked to find Cassiel's body lying in the dirt. They rushed to lift him, calling out his name. What they didn't expect was for Cassiel to respond. "Stop shouting, I'm here," he said weakly. "You managed to return to your body!" Cassian exclaimed. "But why are you covered in sweat?" "I could return to the world, but I couldn't move much," Cassiel replied, his voice strained. "I was weak.

When I tried to stand, my body couldn't support me, and I fell." Alessandro and Cassian helped Cassiel back onto the table. "Thank you for seeing me. I thought I would be trapped in that state forever," Cassiel said, relief washing over him. "This means you're going back to your body, but you're still useless," Alessandro remarked, a hint of frustration in his voice. "I just need time to recover. I will regain my mobility," Cassiel responded, annoyance creeping into his tone. "Should we leave you here?" Cassian asked, concern etched on his face. "No, don't leave me.

I can't be left alone in the sun again. Would you like a healing magician to assist me?" Cassiel replied. "Let's go then," Alessandro said, lifting him carefully. As they exited the guardians' dwelling, they made their way to one of the rooms on the second floor, settling Cassiel in one of the available spaces. "I'm looking for my wife now that I'm back," Alessandro said, glancing back at Cassian. Once Alessandro was gone, Cassian turned to Cassiel. "Are you really going to regain your power?" "Yes, I will. It's taking longer than I imagined," Cassiel replied, determination in his eyes.

"How do you plan to recover your mobility?" Cassian pressed, eager for answers.

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Alessandro returned shortly after Abril, crossing the threshold to find Cassian and the first guard waiting. It was easy to see how similar they were-like two drops of water. Cassian had short hair, while Cassiel's cascaded down his back, yet their resemblance was undeniable. "You two are so alike that anyone who saw you would think you were twins," Cassiel remarked. Abril thought the first guard was arrogant. She quickly took his hand, infusing him with her magic. Cassiel felt a rush of warmth, but he still sensed the lingering effects of his illness.

"I recognize those golden eyes and that red hair," she said. "You're both human and fairy." "Do you feel better?" she asked. "Just a little. I think I need more time to recover," he replied, his voice still weak. "In these moments, I can't use all my power on you, so I have to keep

going with what I have left." "Don't worry," Cassiel said with a faint smile. "I understand. When you've been dead for so long, you learn to be patient." Abril had many questions for the first guard, but nothing seemed appropriate, so she decided it was best to let him rest.

His questions could wait a little longer. "I'll leave you to rest," she said softly. "Take care." "Thank you," he replied, closing his eyes. As Abril stepped out, she found Alessandro waiting. "What's the last thing I should tell Cassiel before I leave?" she asked. "I'll be gone for a few days. If you need anything, ask your servants," he said, his tone serious. "Where are you going?" Cassian inquired, curiosity evident in his eyes. Alessandro hesitated, unsure of how Cassiel would react to his journey to the kingdom of Xurt. It was a delicate matter.

"There's something I need," he finally said. "I hope you can find what you're looking for." "I hope so too," Cassian replied, his expression solemn. As the next day dawned, Alessandro prepared to depart. "Be very careful. Don't do anything reckless," Abril warned, concern etched on her face. "My sister's life is linked to hers. We cannot afford any mistakes," Alessandro replied, his voice firm. He turned to Kiara. "Make sure to bless the air of the kingdom of Xurt." "I will," she promised, determination in her eyes. "Take care and return soon," Abril added, her heart heavy with worry.

The journey to the kingdom of Xurt stretched long before them. They could only use one piece of parchment a day, and much of Xurt's territory was desert. With no towns nearby, they were forced to camp in the arid landscape. As they sat by the fire, Kiara leaned her head against Alessandro's shoulder, feeling the warmth of his arm around her. "Is the king here?" she asked, her voice laced with curiosity. Kiara shot him a sharp look. "No, and if you say so, I'll kill you." "Why would there be anything that would only cause me trouble?"

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I was just curious about the elven realm," he replied, his tone light but cautious. "Many die out of curiosity. You should be careful," she warned, her voice steady. "That's enough. Stop fighting," Cassian interjected as he settled down on the ground beside them. "We owe it to them. If we don't protect them, who will?" he added, glancing at the flickering flames. Fay rekindled the fire, nodding in agreement. "Cassian has a point. We're not here for you; we should focus on getting better." "Now that you mention it, why are you in the human world? What is your child doing here?"

He is the heir, and I'm surprised he was allowed to come out," Kiara pressed. "He hasn't contested why he has betrayed his safety for a place where his life could be in danger. The kingdom of Cosset could be attacked at any moment," Cassian replied, his expression serious. "I just wanted to know what he desires. That's all," Kiara said, her tone softer. "You just want to get your friend back and have him the same age as you," Cassian teased. "I imagine you must be speaking of Princess Lissana. You're not hoping that your child will like a human, are you?" Kiara shot back.

"She's just a friend. It's nothing like what you're thinking," he insisted. "You're entering the human world, knowing it's such a dangerous place, even if you don't realize it! You can't ignore the feelings you have for her." "That can't be true..." he protested. "I'm only telling you the truth. When you return, your eyes will reveal what you truly feel," Kiara said, her voice

firm. In reality, it was something he had tried to dismiss, but he couldn't shake the feeling that it wasn't just his imagination.

It would break his heart to see his daughter destined to separate from him, living in worlds so different from one another. That night, Fay found himself pondering Kiara's words. The next day, Cassian was the first to wake. "Hey, wake up," he said, nudging Barto. "What's going on?" Barto mumbled, rubbing his eyes. "We need to leave before the sun is high. Help me wake the others," Cassian replied. He approached Kiara, who was sleeping peacefully between Barto's arms. He was grateful not to have to wake her himself, knowing her sharp tongue could cut like a sword.

"Is it time?" she asked, blinking awake. "Yes, wake up Kiara. We need to move now if we want to leave before midday," Cassian urged. Barto gently shook Kiara awake, and she groaned, clearly reluctant to rise. "How are you so sure?" she asked, yawning. "Today is the winter site festival. The royal family will parade through the streets when the sun sets," Barto explained. "And we've been standing on our feet all this time for that?" Kiara asked incredulously. "We didn't have a choice," Cassian replied, a hint of frustration in his voice.

They finally reached the heart of the royal capital of the kingdom of Xurt, where life bustled around them. Despite the desert terrain, water flowed freely through the city's canals, nourished by a central spring. Palm trees provided shade, their fronds swaying gently in the warm breeze. Kiara admired the vibrant colors of the dresses on display. "Everything is so beautiful," she said, her eyes sparkling with wonder. "Don't get too emotional; this is just the entrance," Cassian teased as they walked together. "But it's still difficult not to be amazed.

Everything is so wonderful; it's worth it," she replied, her enthusiasm infectious. As they approached the palace doors, they were met with laughter from the guards, who barred their entry upon seeing their humble, dusty clothes. "What now?" Kiara asked, frustration creeping into her voice. "We'll have to wait," Cassian said, crossing his arms. "I'm tired of being on the floor, but we don't know when the princess will come out." "Don't worry. It will happen soon," Barto reassured them. "How can you be so sure?" Kiara pressed.

"Because today is the winter site festival, and it's customary for the royal family to parade through the streets at sunset," Barto explained. "And we've been standing here waiting for the sun to set this whole time?" Kiara asked incredulously. "We didn't have a choice," Cassian replied, his patience wearing thin.