

PREFACE

Nobody knows that Kai isn't my real brother.

I found him one day at the back of my father's flower shop. We are located in the middle of a small road, curved a little bit north from the town's Marketplace. We are fortunate that some people come by here because of our nation's new motto, but the sight of the little boy sprawled out on our back lot fills me with dread and I know he is a refugee.

If my mother was home, I'd ask her to help me wake him because she's always been the most gentle to the refugees we'd see once in a blue moon. But she went into town to pick up some groceries and my father is always wide-eyed when it comes to dealing with people. I take a deep breath and I try to remember the way my mother does it.

The stillness of his body makes me want to believe he's dead. But then a breath of air, and his body is heaving, up and down. I walk over, taking small steps at a time.

I stare at him for a moment. And then it comes over me. The first thing I do is brush the hair from his forehead. I do it in gentle strokes and I see his eyelashes flutter and then I am met with pink eyes.

I know of these refugees with their wild hair colors and their mystic eyes, but this is the first time I have seen one so up close. I try not to flinch, but it's so hard to not. His pink eyes are so

different to the dark pairs I have and or even to the blue ones I have seen. And then I remember that I am here to help, so I lift him up.

He's heavy and he protests, but I say, "It's okay. I'm here to help you."

He gives in and then I hear him whispering. At first, I think he is speaking his own language, but then my ears find the words.

"Water, please."

I take a look around the road and see it is empty. I wonder if I should hide him, but it doesn't seem like he has enough time before he dies. I tell him, "I'll be right back. Don't move or else you'll get hurt."

I run back into the shop and my father is busy watering the plants. He doesn't see me, or he ignores me, as I grab a glass of water and a piece of bread. Once I'm outside again, my heart drops because he's not there anymore. The back lot is empty. But then I hear him, and I see that he's now sitting upright against the shop, next to the door I am coming out of. My heart races again and I am completely ecstatic that he hasn't left me. I bring the food and water to him, and he finishes the water before I can take another breath.

"What's your name?" I ask him. I am half crouching on the ground.

He speaks in between mouthfuls of bread. "Kairo."

“How old are you, Kairo?”

“14.”

I am incredibly surprised that this little boy is older than me. My mouth falls out because he looks incredibly frail and skinny. His light skin is bruised with reds and purples. For a moment, I am scared that he will die on me. I am scared that he won't make it, but it is rude to stare and I don't want him to know I am scared he will die.

I also introduce myself because I feel that is the right thing to do. “My name is Shae. I just turned 12.”

He looks up at me and for the first time, and gives me the lightest of all smiles. It lights up my heart and I feel that I have done something good. I am proud of myself and I hope he is happy. He goes on and says, “Thank you, Shae.”

I don't know how it happened, but when my parents found out I was hiding a refugee in the house, we decided to keep him.

My parents said that it was easy for him to pass off as my brother. I was secluded with education taught by them, and my face is easily generic and unrecognizable.

No one knows this story because the war has took away my mother and father. Now, it is just me and Kai in the world.

We fight against injustice.

We fight for love, for peace, and for the harmony of beauty.