
Episode 1: Pure of Heart

K. Arsenault Rivera

From set *Wilds of Eldraine*
08. 08. 2023

There was a king who dwelled in Eldraine, a good king, who had at his side a good queen. Together they had four good children, and those who lived within the kingdom lived happily, knowing they would remain in good hands for generations to come.

But the good king is dead—slain defending his family to the last—and the queen is dead, too. All of their superstitions, all of their wards, all of their goodness meant nothing in the face of the Phyrexian invasion. The generations that should have lived in peace now lie in mass graves below upturned heaths and meadows.

The knights who repelled the invasion—both those gone to seed as mercenaries and those yet clinging to valor—call Will the Boy King. And, no matter how much she wishes it were otherwise, Rowan cannot blame them.

The knight they've come to see provides easy comparison. Dents and rends mark her armor, telling the story of her valor as surely as letters on a page. Her handsome face is silvered with scars earned in valiant service. Her hammer alone is near to Will's size. The arm she lost in the fight against the Phyrexians has been replaced by enchanted wood—a gift from the fae that begs as many questions as it answers.

And there are many questions surrounding this woman. For the past six months she's been demanding tribute from nearby villages in exchange for her services driving off "raiders." But the raiders in question, well, they always seem to wear her colors. In spite of this, the townsfolk have a fondness for her—and it is this fondness that drove Will to seek her out for parlay.

"Syr Imodane," Will says. He inclines his head, offering a hand to the knight. "Glad tidings to you. I'd like to thank you for welcoming me among you and yours."

The knight does not budge from her makeshift throne. Legend had it she'd crafted it from the bodies of fallen Phyrexians—and it certainly looked the part, all sharp angles and edges. She sits with one leg draped over her lap, her eyes narrowed at Will.

"Queen Imodane," she says.

"Ah, a queen. Then we can make arrangements as equals," Will says. He offers a friendly smile, though Rowan can see the cracks in his mask.

Imodane's riders laugh. She does, too, her shoulders rising and falling. "Oh, we're beyond talking, Boy King. The only reason I agreed to this little meeting was to see if you were as pathetic as I'd heard. You are."

"Watch your—" Rowan starts, but Will raises a hand to cut her off. Anger boils in the pit of her stomach. Her brother's smile never quite leaves his face. "Pathetic, is that what you think of me?"

“You’ve given me no reason to think otherwise,” says Imodane. “Where were you during the Invasion? Certainly not on the field.”

“Watch your tongue,” Rowan cuts in. They may not have been on the field, but they’d fought their own battles within the castle.

Will waves her off. “Then how about a duel? If I give you reason to think otherwise, you bend the knee. No more raiding, no more pretending to the throne. In honor of your service to the crown you can remain one of our vassals and champions, provided you act accordingly.”

His calm only makes Rowan angrier. Power prickles in her blood. She flexes her fingers, palm to fist, palm to fist, trying to bury her feelings.

Imodane scratches at one of the scars along her jaw. “And if I win?”

Will gestures to the heralds behind them. She knows what he is going to say, and she already hates that he is going to say it. “Me and mine follow you, instead. I’ll surrender the crown of Eldraine. You will be High Queen in name and deed.”

He hadn’t consulted her about this. If he had, she would have told him how foolish it is. Will could hold his own in some fights, sure. But against a woman like Imodane he had about as much chance as an ant before a lion. Their mother could have done this, even their father—but Will?

“Let me do it,” she whispers to her brother. “I can handle her.”

“I’ll be all right,” Will says.

“Her hammer’s bigger than you are. Will, please. There’s no need for more of us to get hurt.”

She will grant him one thing—his gaze has more steel in it than it did a few months ago. “If it brings us stability, I don’t mind shedding my own blood,” he says. “Besides, she’ll come around when she realizes I don’t back down from a fight.”

You will lose more than your blood if you do this.

She will not respect you if she sees you broken before her.

I’m right here, why won’t you trust me?

Death is thick in the air on Eldraine; family ties bind her in place. She cannot make a fool of her brother. Not in so public a place as this. Besides, he’s been training tirelessly every morning. He’s come a long way from the awkward boy she once knew.

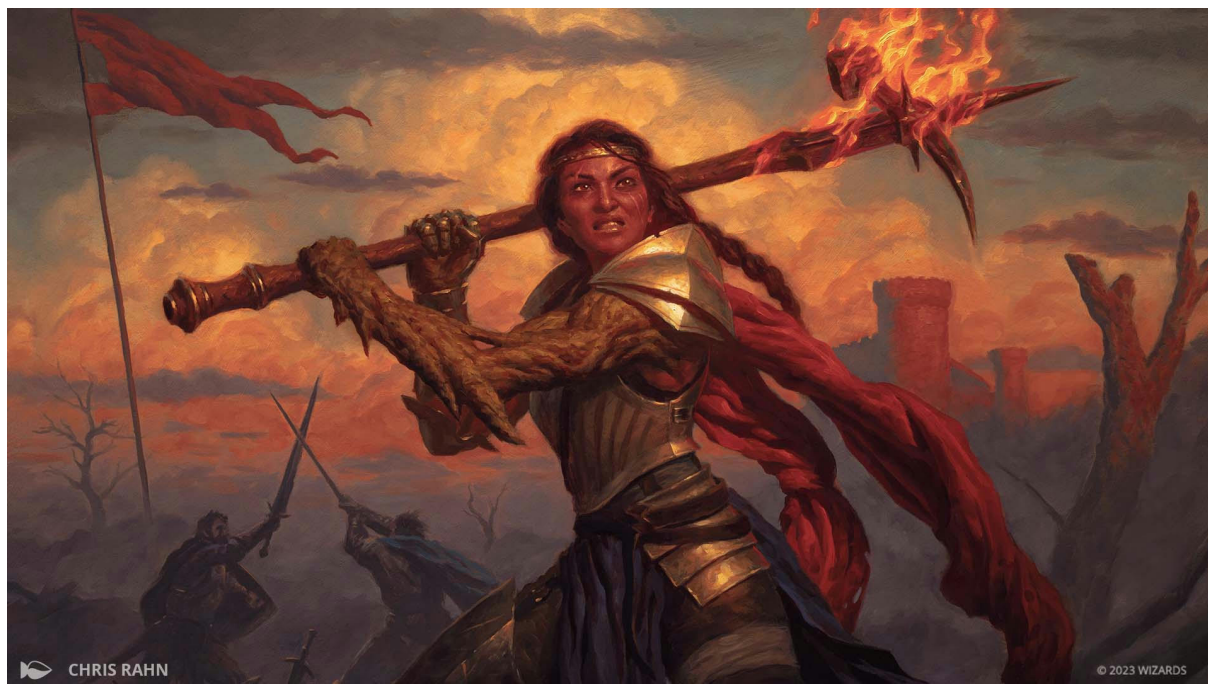
A raiding knight like Imodane has land cleared for battles. How else are her underlings to work out their rage between campaigns? The grass here is well worn, the earth packed tight below. On one side, Imodane’s rebels sit staring out at them in their cobbled together armor. Nothing unites them, save their faith in Imodane, and yet to her they seem happier than her own brothers and sisters in arms. The Ardenvale knights may wear finer cloth, yes, and they’ve a place to sleep when many don’t—but their faith and loyalty lay with the old king.

The Good King.

Rowan takes a breath.

Her brother takes his place.

A bugler sounds the horn.



Art by: Chris Rahn

Long have knights tilted at one another on fields of battle and fields of glory. So many of her memories see her bouncing on her father's lap as she watched them, asking questions about everything she saw, asserting with perfect confidence that she'd number among them one day. Her father always assured her that she was right. When at last she tilted for the first time, her joy sparked in the hearts of all her family and thus, like kindling to flame, grew stronger.

Phyrexia took that from her.

Now, when she watches Will fall into a fighting stance, she sees their father's face shadowing his. Imodane becomes a barbed monstrosity intent on destruction.

Rowan tightens her grip on the sword. She tries to root herself to the present moment through its heft, through the sensation of leather against her fingers. It's going to be all right. This time is not that time.

Imodane makes the first move, rushing toward Will with her great hammer in tow. Rowan flinches—but Will has this under control. He blasts the ground with ice, leaving it slick. Imodane's momentum carries her to a pratfall. Unable to recover, she falls face-first onto the ice. Even her rebels cannot help but laugh.

Whatever hope they had for an honorable duel is gone. Imodane doesn't take kindly to being made a fool.

Flame bursts from the head of her hammer. The ice coating the field melts, the thirsty ground drinking up the meager moisture with gusto. Imodane raises herself up and—with one mighty arm—swings the hammer overhead.

Will manages to avoid the shattering blow, but only just, throwing himself to the side. The move of a complete and utter novice: he cannot regain his balance before he, too, falls to the ground.

And Imodane can raise her hammer faster than Will can get back up.

Rowan's throat goes tight. Fear screws her to the sticking spot. Each second of indecision burns her from the inside.

She hates this. It isn't who she is.

She won't let it be.

All of the anger she'd felt then, watching her father die, all of the sorrow she'd felt after—as current through a wire she lets them course through her, unimpeded.

But there is something else coming along with the anger, the sorrow. Something new and terrible. Rowan knows it not, yet like poison it courses through her veins, setting her afire.

To name what leaves her fingertips a bolt of lightning is to name a cauldron a thimble. The heavens themselves tremble at the sight; dark clouds recede to allow the king of elements its regal charge. By the time the thundercrack brings them all to their knees, it has been full five seconds.

Only when the dust settles does she realize what she's done.



Art by: Alexandr Leskinen

Generations from now they will call this Stormcutter Mountain. With lightning her blade, Rowan's cut a massive rift into the side of the nearest peak. Giants could not hope to match it, not for all their trying.

Her fingertips tingle, her heart catches in her chest. She stares at her hand, at the massive rift, in disbelief. Power like this isn't. Where had she found it?

"Rowan?" Will sounds horrified. He looks it, too. Even Imodane's gone pale with terror. The way she's looking at her is the way people looked at ...

They're afraid of her?

Rowan's tongue sticks to the roof of her mouth. She can't think of anything to say, so she stands tall, instead. If she reaches for her sword, she'll still project power—

But the moment she makes the gesture, Imodane drops the hammer, turns tail, and runs. The woods swallow her up before either of them can figure out how to stop her.

That isn't quite true. Will could have. A single ice bolt would have done it, but he remains on the ground, staring up at Rowan. Even when she helps him up, he never takes his eyes away from her. "What have you done?" he asks her.

She isn't ready to answer that. "You should have let me fight. You never should have done it yourself; you know you don't have the training—"

Eyes on her back. Swords drawn behind them. Her warrior's senses are alight. Imodane may have fled, but her rebels haven't. And without any clear direction, all of them are looking for a chance to make names for themselves.

"We can talk about this later," she says. "When we're out of this mess."

There was once a good and noble knight who served at Castle Embereth with her fellows, who drank deep of festival wine and boasted as loud as any man could boast. Stout of arm she was, but stouter of heart.

That woman died months ago. Imodane is all that remains.

She runs, fear lending her fleet feet, through the thick brambles and over fallen boughs.

But here is the way of things: whenever one flees the past, one must watch carefully the future.

Imodane does not. Nor does she realize what has happened until her foot lands, beyond all thought and reason, on cold stone.

Hewed stone in the middle of the wilds.

Sense returns. Her spine ashiver, she looks around for what feels the first time.

Wherever she is, the woods are gone. Into a palace she has wandered, a throne room glittering and gossamer. Music in strange keys beguiles her ears; she smells wine, ripe fruit, and perfume. All around, the landscape shifts as easily as the music—walls become windows into a realm of plenty; windows become doorways to who knows where. If she tries, she thinks she could see straight through the misty structures, but she doesn't want to try. There are things mortals are not yet meant to know. Though the throne before her is shrouded in shadow, she knows upon seeing it where she must have ended up.

Imodane falls to her knees. "Forgive me, Your Majesty, I had no intent to trespass."

Two eyes, gold as mead, glow from the dark. "*There is no need for apologies. You were summoned.*"

She wishes to answer—but the sight of this delicate sovereign has robbed her of any sense.

A gentle, cruel laugh caresses her cheeks. "*Would-be Queen. Once-brave adventurer. Tell me ...*" The fae lord's hand cups Imodane's chin, tilts her face up. "*Are you pure of heart?*"

There is a village far from all of this.

It lies at an edge of the Realm so remote that, in day-to-day life, the names of kings and queens never cross the lips of its residents. Yearly visits from a single traveling merchant serve as a holiday all in their own. Whatever road the merchant takes to find this place, he has not shared it with the world, for even the Phyrexians neglected this place.

Perhaps they were not fond of sheep.

There are more sheep in the village than people by at least five-fold. When people say the word Or-rinshire, the word "wool" inevitably follows.

Kellan doesn't like it here. And as he slinks through the door of his family's small home, he knows the feeling is mutual. He just hopes his mother doesn't notice the signs.

But mothers are gifted with many magical talents, among them the unnatural ability to ask questions their children would rather go unasked. As Kellan walks through the door, his mother looks up from her spinning—and when she does, her face drops from joy to concern.

“Welcome home, sweet—oh, no. Are you hurt?”

He tries to wave her off before she can stand up, but there’s no use. She’s crossed the meager distance in the blink of an eye. Already she is looking at the scratches on his cheek, the pricks of blood on his forearms.

Kellan decides to look at the floor rather than up at his mother. “It isn’t a big deal,” he mumbles.

“It isn’t a big deal?” she repeats. From the folds of his hood she produces a nail. “Kellan, what is this? What did they do to you out there?”

He winces. He thought he’d gotten all of them, but he should have known there’d be one hiding somewhere. “It was just ... do we have to talk about this?”

He does not need to see his mother’s face to know her heart is sinking. She smooths the yew shavings from Kellan’s hair with a sniff. “Oh, honey, I’m sorry. We don’t need to talk if you don’t want to.” After a breath to steady herself, she turns her head and gives a shout. “Ronald! Ronald, get me some water from the well!”

Kellan winces as his stepfather shouts in answer. When his mother leads him to sit by the table, he plops down into the chair with a pout, slumping a like marionette whose strings have been cut. Yes, quite like a marionette, he is wiry and small for sixteen. All the more reason for the other boys to have chosen him as their victim. He still doesn’t meet his mother’s gaze, not even when she fetches a clean rag and starts dabbing away the blood from his brown skin.

“Was it the Cotter boys?” she asks. “I owe Matilda five skeins, I can give her a talking-to while I drop them off—”

Kellan sighs. He can’t find it in himself to lie. “It’s not their fault.”

“If they’re the ones who hurt you, I can’t see how it wouldn’t be,” his mother answers.

Wide grins. Laughter and jeers as he ran from them. *You never belonged here, half-blood.*

“They asked me a question, I answered wrong, that’s all it is,” Kellan says. He hears his stepfather’s thumping footsteps, the open of the door.

“What kind of question warrants this sort of treatment?” his mother says. “Kellan, honey, whatever happened, none of this is your fault. You didn’t answer wrong. These boys, they’ve got ...”

“They’re afraid of me, I think,” Kellan says. “They think the Slumber’s my fault.”

His stepfather arrives; the bucket sloshes to a stop beside them. “Who’s afraid of our Kellan? Whoa—what happened?”

“It isn’t a big deal,” Kellan says. He wants to get up and hide, so they stop staring at him and the cuts on his face, but he knows that isn’t going to happen.

“The Cotter boys. Look what they threw at him,” his mother says, plucking another nail from among his clothes. “And look at his hair! I’ve no idea what’s gotten into their heads ...”

A soft *hrrm* from Ronald. He plucks a wood shaving from Kellan’s wavy brown hair, then holds it to his nose. “Yew, and I’d bet that nail is cold iron. That so, Kellan?”

Biting his lip, Kellan nods.

His mother stops mid-gesture. “The question they asked you ...”

He still doesn’t look up. “They asked if it was true my real dad was a faerie.”

The nail drops between the three of them.

Ronald is the first to break the silence. He lays a hand on Kellan’s shoulder. “It doesn’t matter what they say, son. All that matters is who you are, not where you’re from. And who you are is our boy.”

Kellan swallows. The question’s almost too frightening to ask, but he has to be brave. Heroes in all the stories are brave. “But ... But what if it’s true, and that is who I am? Don’t I belong in the woods?”

“The woods aren’t the way you think,” his mother says. “There are dangers there you can’t yet imagine, my sweet boy. When you’re older, we can face them together. But for now ...” His mother throws her arms around him. For a moment, he’s not sure who’s embracing who. “You belong here,” his mother says. “With us. No matter what anyone else says.”

But it isn’t the first time she’s said this to him, nor the first time they’ve all embraced.

And as much as Kellan loves his family, when he looks to the woods ...

When he looks to the woods, all he feels is longing.

Castle Ardenvale lies in ruins. Half-burned and abandoned, it is no proper home for a would-be High King and his court. Will’s taken up residence at Castle Vantress, instead. Perhaps he hopes the knowledge that’s seeped into the stone will lend him wisdom.

Rowan’s not so sure of that. Although she’s been standing in her brother’s makeshift war room for fifteen minutes, this is the first time he realizes she’s there. No matter that the guards announced her, no matter how many times she’s cleared her throat, his papers have interested him more. She can’t blame him for it, not entirely; as acting king, Will’s buried beneath a mound of paperwork taller than the two of them put together. Alliances, arrangements for taxes, oaths of fealty and fiery condemnations—it is impossible to tell which is which when the stack is so high.

Of course, she can blame him for taking the title in the first place.

It’s clear to see how much all this has worn on him. There are bags under his eyes and stubble on his chin. The black eye he sustained during the fight with Imodane hasn’t yet healed. Either Will can’t be bothered to ask Cerise to heal it for him or he’s trying to make a statement. Must be the latter—if Cerise *had* gotten a look at him, it’d be gone, regardless of what he wanted.

“We’re leaving,” she says.

Will squints at her. His own twin, and he can’t recognize her. He thinks he can rule the realm like this? “Don’t think with your sword arm, Rowan,” he says, sounding far more like a beleaguered parent than their father ever did. “Our siblings need us. Our people need us.”

“I’ve already told Hazel and Erec I’ll be away for a while, and I think this is the best thing we can do for the Realm,” she says. She had a speech in mind before coming here, but she finds now that the words have changed. “Look at yourself, Will. You’re exhausted. The soldiers tell me you haven’t slept in two days, and looking at you right now, I believe it. Word’s going to spread throughout the kingdom about what happened at the cliffs—”

“—A situation we could have avoided if you’d trusted me,” he cuts in, sharp as ice. Will sits up and sets his jaw. Not breaking eye contact, he picks up a letter. “The Marquess of Roxburgh wrote to me today. He says he will not bend the knee to a man who lets his sister inflict such harm on others. ‘A coward

cannot be High King of Eldraine,' he says. It isn't the only letter of its type I've received. I wish you'd trusted me more."

There is a spike of pain in Rowan's temple, a headache she's been dealing with of late, one that's eroded her patience. She presses her eyes closed. "You'd be dead if I hadn't interfered. But he is right about one thing: you aren't the real High King of Eldraine. You didn't go on the High Quest."

"Don't rake me over the coals for a technicality. The Realm *needs* a High King; I did what I had to do. And I would have done that at the cliffs, too. I had a *plan*, Rowan. I don't always need you to save me," he says. "We have to be careful about the impression we're making. People want to be united, and I want to unite them. *Blasting a hole in a mountain* is no one's idea of unity. I could have talked to her, found some way forward, but now she's gone off into the woods and her rebels have reason to fear us."

"So? Let them be afraid. I doubt any of them will be raiding the countryside any time soon with the beating we gave them. I'd rather have a thousand brigands living in fear of me than a dozen farmers living in fear of brigands," Rowan says.

Her brother clenches his jaw, pinches the bridge of his nose. "That's not what our parents would have done."

The headache pounding at her temple, her own bottled anger, the spark of her blood—who can say what it is that causes her to burst out at him? But burst she does. "That's rich, Will. Our parents wouldn't ignore a curse that's spreading through the kingdom. Or is 'unity' going to solve the Wicked Slumber, too? I didn't know all those people needed was a handshake and a cup of ale. And before you forget, our parents *earned* their titles. You just decided to call yourself High King because you thought it suited you, no matter how much I told you it didn't."

She's gone too far, she knows she has. But that's fine. They don't have to talk about this anymore. All they have to focus on is finding a way to solve the problem. The Wicked Slumber might have stopped the Phyrexians in their tracks, but the Realm struck a foul bargain to pay for it. Now it's spreading among the citizens of Eldraine with no end in sight. Nothing can wake the dreamers—neither true love's kiss, nor a bucket of ice water.

So long as they can solve the problem of the Wicked Slumber, the people will rally behind them. Vantress's finest minds have not cracked it in the months they've had to study the issue—but Vantress's finest minds don't have access to the Multiverse.

The twins do.

Besides, it gets them away from here. From the castle that is not quite theirs, from the memories.

And for all their differences, they share at least one thing in common: their spark. Rowan reaches for its power as she has so many times before.

Will tenses. "Rowan, we can't just leave—"

"We aren't going to sit here either," she says. "Strixhaven taught us to find magical solutions for our problems. That's what we need to do."

"I'm *High King*. I have to stay here!"

Strange. Shouldn't they have left by now? It must be Will's fault—his petulance is keeping them in place. Or maybe his annoying insistence on an unearned title. "Your duty is to Eldraine, and duty's calling. You're ruining my focus."

This time, she puts all of her focus into Walking—closes her eyes, forces herself to look past the stabbing pain in her head, her own frustrations.

But closing her eyes is a mistake. Once more she sees them down the long, curved halls of Castle Ardenvale: her father, sword in hand; the Phyrexian behemoth he's fighting. Her stepmother and her siblings running away, straight toward Will and Rowan, fear in the children's eyes and determination in her stepmother's.

"Keep them safe, and live well," Linden says.

She knows how this story ends.

She doesn't want to see it.

"... Rowan?" Will says. For the first time since they started this conversation he sounds concerned. "Are you all right?"

Her chest feels tight, her head might as well have a spike through it, and whenever she closes her eyes she sees their father dead on the end of a Phyrexian's blade.

And, as if taking away her parents and ruining her relationship with her brother wasn't enough, the Phyrexians seem to have taken something else from her. She can't clear her mind enough to planeswalk. The spark—it doesn't seem to respond. In fact, she can't feel it at all.

"No," she says, flatly. "Fine. Stay if you want to. I'm going."

Every new moon, Kellan and his mother walk to an old willow tree on the edge of the woods. With its bark against their backs and its leaves shading their eyes, Kellan's mother tells him stories. The stars dance in front of his eyes with every word. Fireflies become the gleaming shields of knights; swaying blades of grass their swords.

Lately, instead of a new set of heroes every time, he hears of two worthies in particular: a young woman who fled her training as a hedgewitch, and a young man she saved from a troll's rampage. Through the wilds they've journeyed together, facing all manner of beast and canny mage.

He has the feeling he knows who they are, but he's enjoying getting to know them this way.

On this night, as any other new moon night, he is near-running to the top of the hill. The family sheepdog's following in his wake, bounding along through the grass, full of energy despite the hour.

"Think you can beat me there, boy?" Kellan calls.

Hex barks, drool flying from his prodigious jowls.

Kellan grins. He gives Hex a running pat, but pulls ahead of him all the same. There's no mercy when it comes to racing your sheepdog.

When at last they reach the tree he is panting for breath, but happier than he's been all day. From here on the hill, the rest of the village seems as far as Castle Ardenvale. He lays a hand on the comforting bark of the willow and turns. His mother said she'd be along in a moment—he could see her from here.

But when he looks out, it isn't the village he sees.

Rather, it isn't *just* the village. Ahead of him there is an archway made of ethereal, translucent stone.

His mother's stories have prepared him a little. He knows precisely what it is: An invitation to speak with one of the High Faeries.

As for why it's here ...

Kellan's breath catches in his chest. To the right of the archway he can see his mother running up the hill. If she sees it, she hasn't said a word.

He could stay here. He could wait for her, ignoring the door until it fades away.

But his scratches still ache, and the words of his so-called fellows echo in his mind. *You don't belong here.*

If they're right ... Could it be his father's finally taken notice of him? His real father?

The moment Kellan has the thought, his hand is on the strange doorknob. Hex barks up a storm. Each one feels in time with the hammer of Kellan's heart. But he can't falter— this might be his only chance. If his mother catches up, she'd never let him go through.

Kellan passes through the archway. A hero never hesitates. An unseen gust of wind throws him the rest of the way through and he lands on a cool, mossy floor. Only when he props himself up does he realize that the grass here is all silver; the twisting trees overhead bear jeweled fruit. In the distance he sees thatch-roof houses large as mountains, while all around him there are miniature castles populated by moving miniature knights.



Art by: Anna Steinbauer

When he sets his eyes—a little afraid, now—on the horizon once more, he spots the staircase, and at its top the throne. There is a figure upon it.

Humans are as fond of calling things beautiful as they are of drawing breath. In doing this the meaning of the word has been worn away, as a mountain may, over eons, become a shore.

The reason for this is simple: true beauty, unadulterated and pure, is enough to strike the viewer senseless.

The figure who sits on the throne is as beautiful as the stars themselves. Kellan, who has never ventured far from his village, can't comprehend what he's seeing. The planes of the figure's face beguile him; the flash of their wicked smile sees him robbed of all thought.

"Tell me, brave hero ... Are you true of heart?"

It's only a passing veil of clouds—clouds that have no right being so low to the ground—that dispel Kellan's fatal fascination. What was it the stories said? Best to avoid looking at the fae directly. He stares down at the ground.

"I don't know. I think I'd like to be," he says.

"That's no answer at all," says the figure. They sigh, much in the way his mother did when imitating princes. *"Are you truly your father's son? Bearing such wounds as that, without having dealt twice as many in turn?"*

His heart skips a painful beat. "So, it's true? I'm half-fae? D-do you know my father? Wait, are you—?"

Maybe if he got a better look at the figure's face, he'd know. He steps forward—only for roses to lash his feet in place.

"Careful, child. The blood that compels hatred from mortals offers you some protection here. But that protection is finite," they say. *"Remain where you are and I shall make no move to stop you, but take another step, and you forsake your realm for my own."*

Oh. This was the Faerie Lord. Who else could it have been? Kellan's knees knock together. He tries to kneel, like all the knights do. He feels silly. "Y-Your Majesty."

"Lord Talion," they answer him.

"Lord Talion," he says. "Do you know my father?"

"I know many things. Yet if you know who I am, and to whence you have come, you know that our kind surrender nothing," Talion answers. They lean forward on the throne, perching their head on their hand. *"We have our own laws. Render me a service, child, and you shall have your answers."*

Our kind. Our own laws. This place, with its jeweled fruit, with strange animals slinking between stranger trees. To stand here is to stand in the home of a long-lost relative, uncertain of what significance anything holds.

Yet the fae do not lie. His mother's always been clear about that. *When you deal with fae, the straighter the answer the better.* And this seemed pretty straightforward to him.

"What do you need?"

Talion hums a strange tune, as lovely as bird song. They snap their fingers and two fae appear on either side of Kellan, each with a bowl of glistening fruit. Kellan's stomach rumbles at the sight; his throat feels dry. *"You must be hungry."*

But his mother taught him well, and Talion said it himself: the fae do nothing for free. "No, thank you."

Talion smirks. With a wave of their hands, they dismiss the other fae.

"To business, then. Witches three have this land with slumber plagued. Agatha, the Hungry, lays in wait near her great cauldron, in search of heroes to eat. Cruel Hylda has taken winter's crown for her own. Wherever there are lovers and lords, you shall find the beguiling Eriette. Whosoever is brave enough to defeat them shall break the curse upon the Realm, and for that service, earn a boon from my ever-full treasury."

A curse upon the Realm? Three witches? Talion's in need of a real hero. Kellan's palms sweat. The bravest thing he's ever done is go through that archway. He's never fought a battle, nor completed a quest. But how can he say no? This place, these people ... they're his blood too, aren't they? Maybe his father's a faerie knight, strapping and bold; or perhaps a mage, cunning and clever. Whoever he was, he was someone Talion respected. Shouldn't that mean something?

Kellan wants to know more about him. Wants to be more like him, this man who dwells among the silver grass, in a land of impossible beauty. His mother glimpsed it once and left—but Kellan only wants more.

If he fails, he fails. But if he can do it, he'll finally know the truth.

"I'll do it. I'll go."