

The Delengrad Trilogy

Book Three:

# Repatriate

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**Repatriate:** re·pa·tri·ate: to return (someone) to his or her own country.

## Prologue

I gasped as a man stepped into the candlelight. Gone was his beard and long black hair. His identity as the Pirate no longer existed. From him, Jacob Kramer emerged from the shadows and began to live again.

“Jacob?” I asked in shock when I recognize his face. It couldn’t be Jacob.

“It’s me, Anna.” He said softly and extended his arms out to me.

I ran to him. His arms engulfed my small frame and hugged me tightly to him. My face found a perfect place to nestle on his shoulder. I breathed his scent into me. He smelled like a mixture of wood and the sea, something much different than I remembered. Large tears fell from my face as I cried into his chest. I clung to this moment with Jacob as if it would last forever.

“Did you ....paint all these paintings of me?” I whispered as I stared at them.

Jacob nodded his head. “I did. I didn’t want to forget the beautiful blonde I risked my life for. You look like Regina, but I recognize your soul.”

I pulled my face out of his shoulder and wiped my tears away. “They told me you were dead.”

“Who told you?” He asked me as his hands attempted to wipe away my tears.

“Katie. She said Judge Slider signed your death certificate. You died in Caterpillar Canyon.”

“I never went to Caterpillar Canyon. Slider sent me to Silence Island. I was a prisoner there until William busted me out.”

“The Island? Why did he send you there?”

“Do you remember the night you rescued Sarah from Miss Maxine in the attic of the Academy? I saw you leave your room that night and followed you to the attic. I was the guard who saw you hiding in the shadows. I snuck into the attic the secondary way, put on one of the uniforms, and allowed you to get the upper hand against Miss Maxine. Once Miss Maxine discovered me, I ended up on the Island. When I was there ....something made me forget who I was. I couldn’t remember, not even the night Sarah and I burned down the Academy. Only when I saw you just now did I finally remember who I am. But tell me about my sister. Where is she? My parents?”

I muttered a vulgar word to myself when he asked the dreaded questions. I did not want to be the one to tell him about his family, but there was no one else. “Um, Katie and your mother is alive ....I think, but your father passed on. I don’t know when he died. Oh, Jacob! How did you survive all these years? How are you alive?”

“Are Katie and my mother still in Lee?”

“I think so. They were when I was taken. She was Regina’s best friend, you know. Even though she was forced to betray her all those times, Katie never stopped being her friend. We’ll get them back, Jacob. I promise.”

“I know we will. I’m ...just happy to hear they’re alive. After all these years, I thought they were dead. I thought I was an orphan.” He chuckled. I saw tears brimming along his eyes. He did not wish to cry in front of me, so he spoke quickly. “Um, after William helped me escape the Island, I became a Whisper. It’s Slider’s curse on them that keeps me alive, but I didn’t think it kept anyone else alive.”

I laughed. “How could something that evil old man did turn into something so wonderful?”

He took my hands into his and played with my fingers. “It is wonderful, isn’t it? The moment Queen Veronica told me about you, and your resurrected soul, I felt something come to life inside my heart.”

“I never stopped loving you, Jacob, even when I was forced to be Regina. I tried dating other boys, but no one seemed good enough to me. I guess I subconsciously did not want to be with anyone else besides you.”

“That is a very romantic idea, my love.” He smiled at me.

I kept my body pressed to Jacob’s. I felt lost in this moment and did not want it to end. Time clicked away the minutes as Jacob and I stood together, refusing to let one another go. I pushed my chin up so Jacob could kiss me, but the notion finally hit me. “Jacob, what did you say about the Academy? You and Sarah burned it down?”

He turned his face down to look away from me. I saw the shame in his actions. “We did.”

“Why?” I asked.

He sat down on the chair that matched my vanity table. I saw him take a deep breath. “When you were Regina, Sarah and I went to the Academy to find out if Slider took you there. He was not there, but Corrine was.”

“Corrine?” I asked fearfully.

“Yes, your first group roommate. Apparently, she tried to possess Sarah when we attended the Academy.”

“I suspected as much.”

“The necklace you gave to Sarah stopped Corrine from succeeding. Corrine told us as punishment for failing to kill you, your necklace was placed on her. It ...turned her body into a monster.”

I gasped. “My necklace? The one with the jade heart?”

He shook his head. “She was chained in the attic and forced to wear the necklace. It seems that Corrine was tasked with the duty of murdering you, but she couldn’t. So, she possessed Sarah to do it for her.”

I took a deep breath. “What did I do to Corrine that would make her want to kill me?”

“She didn’t want to, per se. She told me her mother made her do it.”

“I wonder who Corrine’s mother was.” I wondered out loud, not expecting Jacob to know the answer.

Jacob trembled as he shook his head. “Miss Maxine.”

Thunder clapped somewhere nearby. It shook the ground we lived in. “Miss Maxine was Corrine’s mother?”

I wanted to say I knew my old first year roommate, but the fact was Corrine did not tell me where she came from or anything about her parents. It would certainly explain the oddities I encountered with her at the Academy. My mind could not grasp that a girl so young would be capable of such violent acts. I denied what Jacob said to me by shaking my head, but he insisted it was true. “I assume Corrine spoke the truth. Remember the year Sabrina was attacked at the Academy? Sarah confided in me that it was her who attacked Sabrina, but Corrine made her do it. Now, I think you were the target, not Sabrina.”

I whispered, “When we were roommates, Corrine mentioned that Sabrina was not meant to be the victim. I didn’t think she meant me. Miss Maxine must have been under the orders of Judge Slider.”

“It’s possible. Anyway, in the attic, Corrine taunted Sarah about it, and um ....she kind of lit Corrine on fire.”

I opened my eyes wide, but it was not enough to express the shock I felt. “Sarah ....did what?”

Jacob’s voice reached a lower tone as he said, “Sarah burned Corrine alive.”

I brought my hand to my mouth to cover my gasp. Behind my hand, I asked, “How could Sarah do that, even to someone horrible like Corrine?”

“Anna, the Whispers are good people but something bad lives within us. It feels like evil lives and breathes inside me, and Sarah, like ....we don’t have a choice.”

Jacob’s words frightened me. I looked deep into his eyes. I saw so many tragedies there, and death. “We always have a choice, Jacob. We just have to make the right one.”

He laughed. “Oh, how I’ve missed you, Anna. There are not many optimists left.”

I hugged Jacob closed to me. As his body pressed into mine, I felt the darkness clinging to his soul. I vowed to help Jacob and Sarah escape it once again.

# Chapter One

Finding Jacob did not stop the nightmares.

*The cold, wet air slaps the windshield as the wipers desperately try to clear away the rain. Bright headlights illuminate the black asphalt with yellow stripes, reminding me where the lane is. I am alone in my car, driving the road at night. The darkness surrounds me as I focus my eyes on the road. I cannot see inside the car, only the road in front of me is impervious to the darkness shadowing me.*

*I look behind me and there is no one there, but I have to keep driving. I am driving towards something. I cannot remember why I am on this road at night and I do not have time to think about it, I have to get there. Not a moment to waste.*

*Suddenly, from the darkness above me, a person drops from the sky and onto my car. The body lands with a hard thump on the roof, a mere inches from my head. Fear pulsates through me as I realize the person who created the darkness has found me, again. I try to get control of my hands as they violently shake, threatening to steer the car off course.*

*I cannot think. Logic abandons my mind as the fear crawls inside it, finding a new home to birth panic. Screams explode from my throat as a black figure appears outside my car window. Blue eyes stare at me through the clear pane of glass. My flesh crawls at the thought of one inch of flimsy glass being the only thing separating me from the figure. I do not stop to think about it because I must keep driving.*

*As I drive, the person only stares at me through the window. It does not attempt to get inside my car. The answer comes to me when I feel myself slipping into the darkness. Whatever it is outside my window, it has full control over the car. However, a part of me does not want to interfere with its plan. I feel the darkness calling my soul and I want answer it. All my life I have felt the darkness inside me, breathing as I breathe, growing as I grow.*

*But I knew inside my soul I did not want to live in the dark. I wanted to thrive in the sunlight and live a life a beauty, not evil.*

*The monster outside felt my thoughts and roared in anger. I grab the wheel and make sure my seatbelt is fastened as I push down the accelerator. I decide to ram the car into a tree as soon as I see one. Madness escapes my body in the form of laughter as my foot slams the pedal down to the floorboard. I'm going to do it. I know this will rid me of the darkness.*

*I see a tree. I narrow my eyes and drive my car right into the .....*

I woke up screaming into my lit bedroom.

Sarah was with me. Her body lay beside mine and turned to comfort me. The bed shook as she shifted her lean body. It made me realize I no longer dreamed. I was safe in my bedroom with Sarah. The soft candlelight floated around my room, and kept darkness away while I slept.

“You alright, Anna?” She asked me as her hand touched my shoulder. Her eyes were barely open and her voice was just a notch above a whisper.

Sweat poured out of my body. My breaths came out fast and I gasped as I answered her. “I think so.”

“Nightmare?” She asked.

“Yeah.”

“Oh, it’s okay, Anna. You’re safe now. Do you want me to light more candles?” Sarah whispered softly.

“No. I’ll be alright.” I said as I patted her shoulder. “You go back to sleep.”

Sarah turned away from me to return to her peaceful slumber. My nightmares are something she is getting accustomed to. I lie awake in the bed, unable to close my eyes. Anxiety seized my body, held it hostage against my will. For about an hour, my body was stiff with fear. However, sleep refused to be denied and I felt my eyelids close. I drifted back into sleep. I am grateful it was a dreamless rest.

## Chapter Two

We sat at the table with the council to discuss our next move. I lived in the ground, not far from the Law. This constantly worried me. I did not want to come face to face with Slider yet. I wanted to move us back to Delengrad and rebuild our army, but I could no longer go as I pleased. Now that King Gordon and his Council ran the new Delengrad, I needed their permission before I could make plans for our future. Jacob, Via, Sarah, Kaylee, King Gordon, and his council sat with me in a tiny room with a table long enough to fit the king and his council. There were no artwork hanging on the dirt walls, nor were there expensive vases or masks encased in glass. The Whispers learned to live without their beautiful material possessions.

Via Corosso. This was a woman I was not familiar with. Since I did not know her, I did not trust her. My only memory of her is brief. She is the Captain of the guards for the new Delengrad. Her previous position was with Whispering Woods, until it burned down. Jacob and Sarah insisted Via could be trusted with our plans. I decided to listen to them and take a chance on the young woman whom is considered quite deadly.

“Thank you King Gordon, and gentlemen of the Council, for meeting with me. I have questions, and a plan of action I would like to discuss with you. If I may?” I asked King Gordon.

Time had not scarred the King. He looked just as I remembered when I stayed in Whispering Woods. Maybe his beard was a little longer and a little whiter, but his face stayed the same. He did not need the assistance of a walking cane and walked as if he were a man in his forties. “You may.”

“First, do we know what happened to Slider and the city?”

Via cleared her throat to answer me. “Slider still resides in the city. We can’t pinpoint his exact location. The citizens are still there, but no one has seen the old man or his wizard.”

“Then we can go to Lee and get Katie back. If we do it quickly, we can take her before anyone notices.” I said with hope.

Sarah shook her head. “We can’t remove a citizen from the city. We’ve already tried.”

“There has to be some way to free Katie and the rest of them?” I asked.

“There is and you are the answer.” King Gordon said. “I think the curse of those who live in Lee will cease to exist when you fulfill the prophecy of the End.”

Kaylee sat beside King Gordon and shook his head in agreement. I felt my body stiffen with anxiety. When I was younger, the thought of killing Slider was so far away. Now, it was right in my face and scared me. I did not want a war. I wanted a life of peace. I shook my head in defeat as I realized I could never get what I wanted while Slider hunts me. “Maybe we don’t have to go to war. What if I corner Slider by himself, without his wizard, and offer a truce between us?” I

asked out loud. I did not say it to get their opinion. I said it because I thought it was my best option.

King Gordon's eyes grew dark and narrowed as he said, "A truce will not punish Slider for what he's done to us, and to you."

His council nodded their heads in agreement with their king. I looked to Sarah and Jacob for their support, but did not find it in Sarah. Her face was engulfed with rage. I wondered what Slider did to anger her so much.

"I agree with you, Anna. I don't want a war. We've lost so much already. I want the opportunity to live in the light again. I think we should offer the truce, but if Slider says no, then you have to kill him. At that point, you wouldn't have a choice." Jacob said.

"Why does it have to be me?" I asked.

Kaylee answered, "Anna, you are the child Slider murdered. Only you can take his life and send his soul to the Gates for judgment."

"But it seems wrong that the Universe would want me to kill Slider. Think about it, Kaylee. The act of murder put Slider in this situation, so why would murder make it right?" I replied with reason.

No one answered me. I looked into the face of every person in the room and expected to see logic churning in their minds. Yet, I only saw darkness on their faces. They seemed intent on the death of Charles Slider.

"Queen Veronica said you must murder Slider to set us free. Only you can send his soul to the Gates. It has to be you since you were the one he killed." King Gordon said.

"Who is Queen Veronica?" I asked.

"The Queen of Firefly Forest." Jacob answered for him. "I spent time there while I searched for you, as did Sarah, and Via. The Flies are good people. They certainly helped us out of a few deadly situations."

"They made us one of them." Sarah said.

"How are you one of them?" I asked with confusion.

"They initiated us into their society long ago. Our skin will glow once it gets too dark to see." Sarah said with a large smile and locked eyes with Via.

"Your skin glows? How did I not see it before?" I asked in amazement.

"Mud." The trio answered in unison.

“Oh, and leather body suits, but I don’t recommend it. It made me sweat something horrible.” Sarah chuckled.

I saw their eyes meet as the memories of their travels ran through their minds. For a moment, I saw a flash of darkness pass over their faces as they chuckled. *How could they be so giggly and casual during a conversation about killing Judge Slider?* This meeting scared me down to my soul. I never realized how evil the ones I loved had become.

Out of nowhere, a feeling to travel to Firefly forest overcame me. I had a strong urge to see the city for myself. I saw answers waiting for me there. I wanted to discuss the idea of traveling to Firefly forest, but I had to know the fate of other people I loved. “Sarah, what happened to Uncle, and Auntie? William, and Henry?”

Sarah cleared her throat, and tried to make eye contact with me, but she could not. “When Slider came for Delengrad, he went to Lordview first. My parents didn’t make it out alive. As for William, and Henry ....well, I don’t know where they are. They were with us until William suddenly abandoned us. He’s not affected by Judge Slider’s curse, so he can travel in the sunlight. Henry went after him, but that was ....a long time ago.”

Her pain was like a hidden layer of wallpaper under a fresh coat of paint. No matter how many times you paint over the wallpaper, it would always be there. At least until the walls came crumbling down.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Sarah.” I wanted to reach out and comfort her, but Sarah was no longer the innocent little girl I rescued from Miss Maxine. She showed no emotion as she recanted her story so I stayed right where I sat.

“It’s alright. I’ve come to the conclusion hundreds of years ago that they’re probably dead. I keep hoping they’re actually looking for Slider, or hiding until Slider dies.”

I collected my thoughts before I spoke. “Slider. I wish there was some way I could see what he’s doing. What he’s planning?”

Kaylee smiled at me. His chin pushed down to his throat as his gray eyes bore down on me. “Actually, my darling, there is a spell. It’s inside one of my books I saved from the castle fire. I’d have to look for the book. At the moment, I don’t know where it currently resides. But it would allow us to see Slider, and what he is doing.”

“Really?” I asked. I was quite astonished that he actually had the spell I needed.

Jacob, Sarah, and Via, on the other hand, were not astonished. They looked angry. Their cheeks burned with a purplish red color, and they stared hard at Kaylee. If looks could kill, the trio would slaughter Kaylee right then and there.

“And why did you not tell us this before, old man?” Via asked with a sweet smile, but her voice seethed out of her mouth as she spoke. “This could’ve helped us, oh, four hundred years ago.”

Kaylee chuckled at her. “I would never hide such a spell from someone as charming as you, Via. Please don’t be ready to slaughter me just yet. I said I have the spell, I did not say I have the ingredients to create it.”

“What do you need?” I asked Kaylee.

“A little tugon root, sage, and, um . . . some pieces of fruit. Those won’t so difficult, but I need fire from the Flies, and something of Slider’s. It must be something that used to belong to him. With those ingredients, I can create the spell you need.”

“Are the herbs, roots, and fruit easy to find?” I asked.

“Pretty much.” Kaylee replied with a nod of his head.

“I wonder if we make the fire you need.”

Kaylee shook his head at me. “No, my darling. It can’t be just any old fire. It must come from Queen Veronica.”

“Why?”

“She is the Queen of all fire, and fire is prevalent for creation.” Kaylee said. I almost giggled at him. It felt wonderful to be back in his presence. Our souls may have been separated for four hundred years, but it felt like we were still the same people. Unlike Jacob, and Sarah.

“Will she give us the fire?” I asked with trepidation.

Jacob answered for Kaylee. “I think she would. After all, we are members of their society. I’m sure she’ll give it to us when we explain the reason. She wants to see Slider and his evil ways gone just much as we do.”

“I hope you all realize this means we have to travel to Firefly Forest.” Sarah said into the group. The impact of her words shook Jacob, and Via. An invisible fear crossed their faces. Their spines became erect and goosebumps were visible on their arms. “Anyone here want to do that again?”

“Why? What happened before?” I asked.

No one wanted to speak. Everyone in the room seemed too frightened to tell me. Thankfully, Via turned her head to me and said, “After Slider murdered you, William wanted to rescue Rachel from Williamson Law. We were forced to the Flies for help. We entered the west side of the forest and worked our way east. Our strategy was to find the mysterious tribe, but three days later, we found Ceptors. They killed our friend Kyle, and injured Sarah, and William. We barely escaped those creatures. If it was not for the Flies, we would be dead.”

I shook my head with confusion. “That doesn’t make sense. The Ceptors guard the Gates of Judgment. Why were they in Firefly forest?”

Jacob and Via looked at each other before she said, “We think the Gates are located west of their city. It’s the only explanation for their presence.”

“Anna, you’re missing one big problem. Even if we manage to get the fire from Queen Veronica, there’s still the problem of something from Slider. I don’t have a personal possession that belongs to him.” Kaylee said to me. “And before you suggest it, we can’t go to the house in Lee. It would be too dangerous for anyone to go back there. King Gordon would never allow it.”

King Gordon shook his head to show he agreed with Kaylee. It took a moment before a large smile took shape on Jacob’s face. “I have something very personal that belongs to Slider.”

“Do you?” I asked with narrowed eyes. *What could Judge Slider have owned that is now in Jacob’s possession?* I wondered.

Jacob chuckled before he told us a story. When he thought of himself as the pirate, he attempted to murder Charles Slider in the dungeons of Williamson Law. Before Carlen spoke a spell that saved their lives, Jacob, as the Pirate, cut off Slider’s left pinky finger. He said it was like everything happened in slow motion; Jacob throwing out his hand to stab Slider, Slider stepped back to throw up his hands, the pinky finger sliced off and flew in the air, Slider looking at his hands in shock while the finger landed perfectly in Jacob’s hand. Quickly, he shoved the finger inside the breast of his jacket pocket. No one saw Jacob tuck the pinky away for safe keeping, not even the Law. Many years have gone by, but the finger stayed in perfect preservation, and in Jacob’s possession.

“Will his pinky finger work?” Jacob laughed when he realized the joke he made. “Get it? Because I cut it off and it won’t work anymore.”

“I am more than positive it will.” Kaylee tried to ignore Jacob’s laughter and straightened his spine. He threw his shoulders back as if to show he was above Jacob’s attempt to humiliate Judge Slider and his pinky finger. “Then all that is left is the fire.”

“I wonder if we can create the fire you need? We are Flies.” Sarah brilliantly suggested.

Kaylee shook his head, again. “No, it must come from Queen Veronica.”

“But how do we get to Firefly city without saying hello to the Ceptors?” Sarah exclaimed. She turned to Jacob. “Can the Flies come get us?”

“I don’t think so. It’s been too many years since we’ve been to the forest or asked for their help. I think we can count them out as far as help goes. So, we have to travel to the city on foot. Are you two prepared for this?” Jacob asked Sarah, and Via.

Via shook her head with pride. "I am. If my King and Council allow my absence, that is."

"You may escort Anna and Jacob, Via." King Gordon said.

"What about our powers and our citizens! We've waited a long time for Anna to break our curse. When can she restore us to the sunlight?" Councilman Marcus demanded of King Gordon. It was silent in the room. No one moved their eyes or dared to adjust their bodies in the chairs. I may be new to the kingdom, but I would never speak to my king like that.

Kaylee cleared his throat before he answered. "Your Majesty, I am assisting Anna with her powers while she recovers. I am confident she can restore us to the light before she travels to the Flies."

"What is she? A witch like Borlock?" Councilman Marcus asked with disgust. Time faded every councilman's hair to gray, but Councilman Marcus's hair remained black as coal. His dark eyes and hair looked creepy against his pale skin. I felt as if I were in the presence of an actual vampire.

"Far from it. She's a special person like us." Kaylee replied.

"If she's just like us, why can't I restore us to the sun?" A smug frown sat on Councilman Marcus's lips. He seemed the crudest man on the council.

"Anna is not cursed, unlike you." Kaylee said with narrowed eyes. Councilman Marcus gulped and remained quiet the rest of the meeting, but he kept his plump lips pursed the entire time.

"Anna? Are you sure you want to travel to the Flies?" King Gordon asked me. "We are too weak. We must remain underground until our bodies adjust to the sunlight, and world above us. This will be your task. And you will be alone."

When he put it like that, I doubted my choice. "Um, hopefully I will not be alone."

"What are your intentions once you complete your spell? How will this help us defeat Judge Slider?" Councilman Titus's voice stayed soft while he asked the question.

I took a deep breath before I said, "I believe that once I know Slider's intentions, I can make my decision. If he has decided to kill me, I have to be ready. If he wants peace, then I am going to offer it to him, but I want to know what is in his mind before I meet him face to face."

Councilman Titus nodded his white head slowly. "I see."

King Gordon sat in his chair, staring out into space. I saw his thoughts run rapidly through his mind. His eyes did not stay still and he did not speak. Instead, he spun his long, white beard through his fingers.

“I hear your thoughts, King Gordon. I will travel with Anna to Firefly forest. I am sure the young Jacob will refuse to stay behind, so with your permission, he should go. She will be safe.” Kaylee said without looking at his king.

“Thank you, Kaylee. Jacob has my permission to accompany to two of you on your journey. I have no doubt my citizens will be safe, we will have our powers to protect us, but Anna will never be safe from Slider. I cannot protect her once she leaves the ground.” King Gordon said with a scratchy voice.

“I’m going with them.” Sarah insisted.

“Sarah, we need you here.” King Gordon said to her with narrowed eyes.

“Protecting Anna and Kaylee is more than a two person job. They need as many people as they can get. The citizens will be safely hidden underground with their powers. Anna is headed for Firefly forest and Ceptors. They need me.”

“The young lady is right.” Councilman Titus said softly. “The ground is not stained with our blood, but with theirs. If Sarah feels she needs to go with them, then I say let her go.”

“Kaylee?” King Gordon asked without turning to look at him.

“Sarah would be quite a spectacular addition.” Kaylee answered after a few moments of thought.

“Via?”

Via did not answer her king at first. It seemed like she was contemplating her thoughts before she answered. Her hesitation visibly disturbed Sarah. “I feel the underground city can make it without her. I will establish Niles Arbogast as the temporary leader in command in our absence.”

“Then it is settled. When do you wish to leave, Anna?” King Gordon asked me.

“The citizens are my priority. We will leave as soon as I heal the city.” I replied.

“Then we shall form a plan in the meantime.” Via nodded to Jacob, and Sarah.

“We will meet again in thirty days.” King Gordon said to the group and dismissed them from the room.

I wanted to be by myself, so I waited until the sun came up to pace the long tunnels of the underground kingdom. The kingdom will continue to sleep during the day until Kaylee instructs me how to cure them of the curse. It disturbed me terribly that everyone expected me to kill a person. Judge Slider is a terrible human being, but he is still a person who lives and breathes. How could I actually kill him? The mere thought of plunging a knife into his chest made me shudder. Would I look into his eyes as he died? Or will I be the one that dies?

“Do you doubt my capability?” Sarah’s voice disrupted my thoughts.

I wanted to continue walking, but something drew me to the right. I stayed in the shadows as I crept down the short hall veering to the right of the tunnel. I heard Via’s voice respond to Sarah.

“No, not at all.”

“Then why did you hesitate when King Gordon asked you if I should come along? And don’t tell me it was about the safety of the citizens. I know you, Via.” Sarah said with an angry voice.

“Okay. If you want the truth, I worry about you. You were in a good place until we went with William to find Rachel. Remember what you did to Corrine?”

“That won’t happen again! Kaylee gave me another charm to protect me from evil.”

“And you were wearing it when you burned Corrine alive, were you not?” Via’s words stopped Sarah’s protests cold. “This has nothing to do with you being capable. I don’t doubt your abilities. If killing that girl was the result of the previous trip, think of what could happen this time.”

I heard Sarah rip her arm away from Via. “That’s a laugh coming from you. You’re the deadliest woman in the lands and you criticize me for killing one person. Corrine and her mother tortured me! They made me try to kill my own cousin! If you don’t understand my reasoning behind it....”

“No, Sarah, I understand your reason. I get it, but....I do not wish for you to turn out like me.” A few seconds of silence passed before I heard Via laugh. I heard Sarah laugh, as well. It seemed to relieve the situation between them. “I think we both know my heart is a black slab of cold ice, but yours is far from it. I know you want to be married and have a child of your own. Let’s say Anna sends Slider to the Gates and the world is saved from evil. What will you do then? How can you have a normal life when you had to do horrible things to survive? I don’t want that for you, Sarah. It’s in the future for me, but you still have a chance. Do you understand what I’m trying to tell you?”

“I do, but I’ll worry about it when the time comes. There’s no point discussing a future when Slider is still alive. Do you understand what I’m trying to tell you?” Sarah’s voice did sound sarcastic to me, but Via did not take it that way.

“You make a good point. Alright, we will worry about it when the time comes.” Via said in a light voice.

“Good.”

“I will always have your back, you know. That’s what sisters do for each other.”

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