

The Shrouded City of Faralune





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The Shrouded City of Faralune

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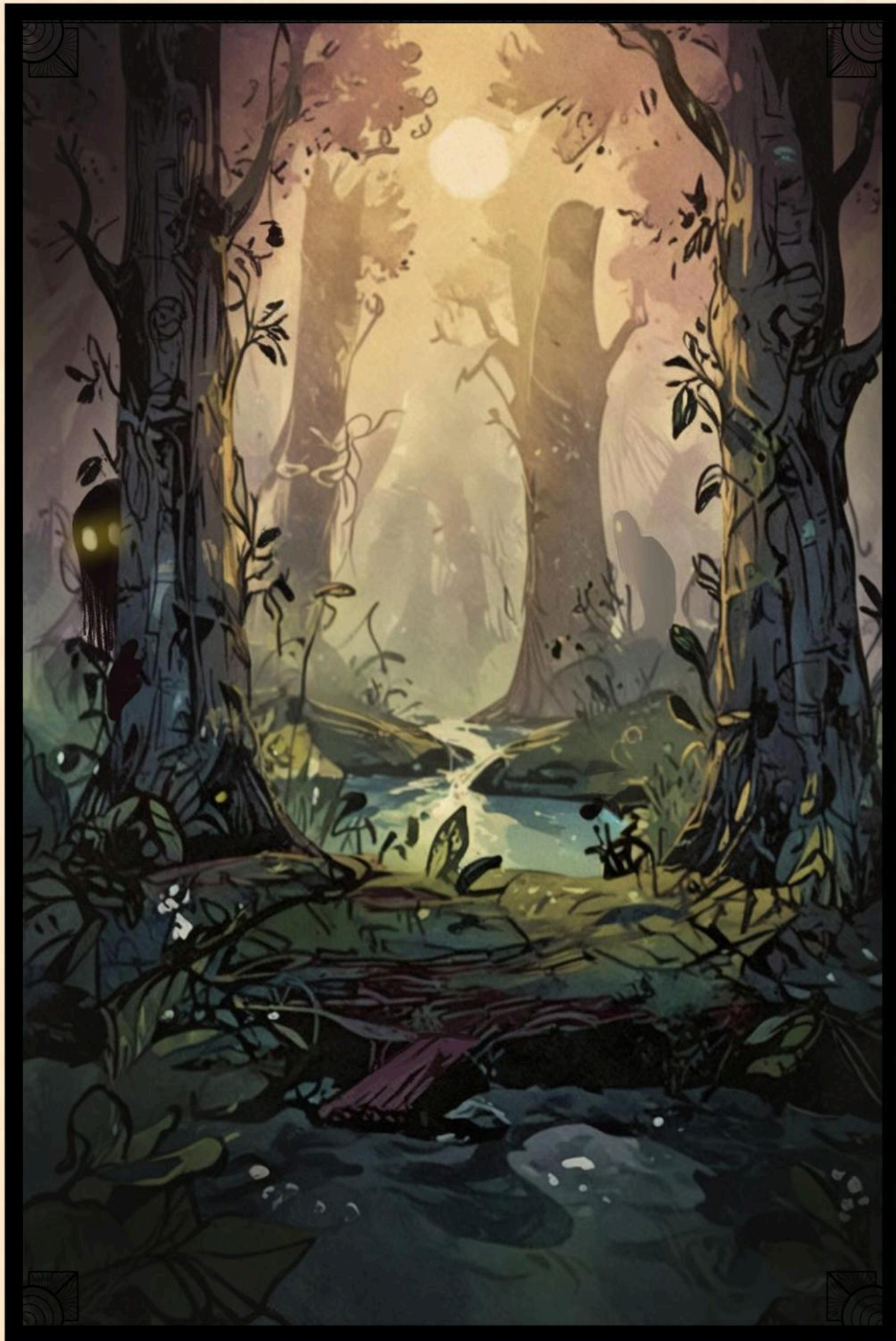
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— *The Shrouded City of Faralune* —

Deep within the Mistwood Forest, where sunlight struggled to penetrate the thick canopy of ancient trees, lay the hidden city of Faralune. Whispers of its existence circulated among outsiders, spoken of in reverent tones. Many believed it to be nothing more than a myth. Faralune remained untouched by the outside world, cloaked in the Ethereal Mist that curled and twisted like a living entity, ensuring that no one could navigate their way through its depths.

Faralune was a realm of wonders, inhabited by beings with strange and extraordinary abilities. Some could manipulate the very fabric of light, conjuring enchanting illusions that flickered like candles in the breeze. Others possessed the gift of communication with nature itself.

There were those who could glimpse into the future, their eyes shimmering with the knowledge of what was yet to come. It was a community founded on harmony, bound by an oath that compelled its members to wield their gifts for the greater good.



Chapter 1

However, darkness loomed on the horizon.

For centuries, the High Queen had safeguarded Faralune from malevolence, but a new Queen had ascended to power. She was ruthless, exploiting the enchanted abilities bestowed upon the people of Faralune for her own greed and malicious purposes.

The most powerful among them were kept under her iron grip, rendering them unable to rise against her tyranny. Only the weak roamed the streets, and soon, Faralune transformed into a place of dread.

How tragic it was—poor Faralune, isolated and abandoned, with no one to turn to...



“Pearl! You really must get up!”

I groaned as I heard my mother call me again for what felt like the thousandth time. “Coming!” I shouted back.

Reluctantly, I climbed out of bed and stretched my arms. Ever since the new High Queen came into power, our lives had changed drastically. I now had to work on the farm with my father and could no longer attend school. Although my family did not live in Faralune, our small village fell under the Queen’s control, as nobody else wanted to claim that small piece of land. We now had to work twice as hard just to afford a simple meal.

I got ready for the day and made my way to the farmland. My father was busy fixing the truck, which meant I was in charge of tending to the plants and vegetables for the morning. I didn’t mind, though; I had always loved caring for them.

As I walked toward the vegetable patch, something caught my eye. A flash of red fur darted out from the bushes—a fox with sly eyes and a tail that swayed like a flag. In its jaws was one of our hens.



“Hey!” I shouted, my heart racing at the sight of the lifeless hen. Without a second thought, I bolted after the nimble thief. We couldn’t afford to lose another chicken; there were only so many left.

Through the tall grasses, across a stream, and deeper into the whispering trees, I charged. The murmurs of the forest around me grew louder. Birds chattered in disapproval, and leaves rustled as if mocking me with the fox’s escape. The adrenaline fueled me, the thrill of the chase overpowering my fear of getting lost.

Suddenly, I reached a clearing and skidded to a halt, my chest heaving as I scanned the surroundings. The sun filtered through the thick canopy of leaves, casting dappled light across the ground. But the fox was nowhere to be found.

My heart began to race for a different reason, and confusion seeped in. Where was I? I turned in circles, my eyes scanning the clearing, but every tree looked the same. They had seemed so welcoming moments ago, but now they appeared threatening, their gnarled bark taking on a creepy aspect. I had been so caught up in the thrill of the chase, but now I stood lost and alone, the forest closing in around me.



“Okay, stay calm,” I whispered to myself, praying for the rising panic inside me to subside. I tried to recall the path I had taken, but each tree looked eerily similar, and the only sound was the soft rustle of leaves. The forest felt like a maze. I had always been warned to stick to the trails, but I couldn’t see a single path nearby. Taking a deep breath, I turned and walked toward the edge of the clearing, hoping it might lead me back to somewhere familiar. Every step felt heavy, each crunch of leaves beneath my feet echoing loudly in the silence of the forest. If only I had paid better attention to where I was going instead of being so focused on catching the fox.

Tugging at the sleeves of my worn shirt, I kept moving forward. A soft breeze rustled the leaves overhead, as if the forest were trying to whisper something to me—an address, perhaps, or maybe just some reassurance. With every step I took, I fought the rising panic curdling in my stomach. I simply walked, and walked, and walked.



Chapter 2

The sun had begun its slow descent behind the dense canopy of trees, casting an amber glow that flickered like a dying candle. A chill crept into the air as shadows stretched and twisted around me. I had always been enchanted by nature's beauty, but now, as darkness encroached, fear settled in my stomach like a heavy stone. Night was approaching, and my eyelids felt heavy. It was dark and gloomy, with the canopy of trees blocking out my only source of light: the moon.

Just when despair began to clutch at my heart, a voice boomed through the stillness, making me jump. "Hey! You there!" I whipped my head around, my eyes wide. Three soldiers emerged from the trees, their dark uniforms smudged with dirt, exuding an air of stern authority. The atmosphere around them shimmered as if charged with an abnormal energy, casting an ominous glow over their figures.

"How did you get past the Mist? You are trespassing," one soldier barked, stepping forward. His face was stern and unsmiling, his eyes narrowing as they assessed me.



“I’m sorry! I got lost in the forest; I didn’t mean to trespass!” I stammered, panic and confusion flooding my body. Where were these soldiers from? What mist were they talking about?

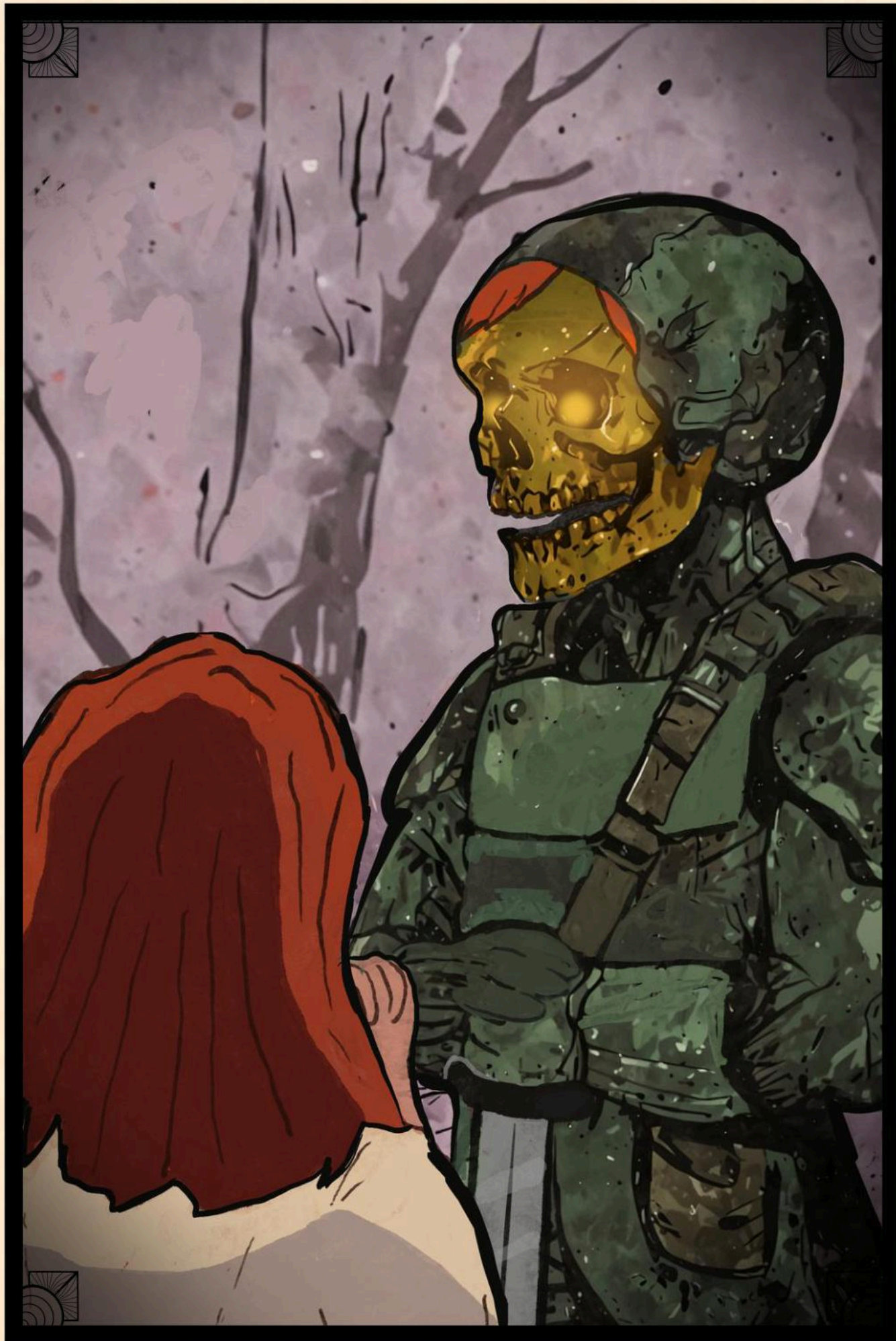
“The Ethereal Mist doesn’t allow anyone beyond the clearing. How did you get in? Are you posing a threat?” one of the soldiers asked, interrogating me.

The Ethereal Mist! I had heard of it in the stories my mother used to read to me. They warned of the curse it held—that no one could pass through and that anyone who did would never return, trapped in dreams that twisted reality. I never believed it. I would always tell her that I would prove her stories wrong and travel through the Ethereal Mist. But that was years ago, and I had almost forgotten about it.

How could it even be real? How did I get through it? No, there must be a mistake. I must be dreaming.

There’s just no way.

The soldier’s voice interrupts my thoughts again. “I won’t ask you again, girl. How did you get through the Mist?” he barks, his hand hovering above his sword.



I clear my throat. “I’m truly sorry. I didn’t realize I had gone beyond the clearing and through the Mist. I’m not sure how I got here,” I tell him, praying that the soldiers will help me in some way.

All three soldiers eye me for a moment before two of them approach and suddenly grab both my arms.

Their grip is tight and strong, and no matter how much I try to pull away, my efforts prove futile.

“You’re coming with us, trespasser. The Queen will surely know what to do with you,” the soldier, whom I presume is the leader, says in a gruff voice.

“I—I didn’t mean to!” I stammered, my heart racing.

“I was just—”



“Silence! You are in the presence of the guard of Faralune,” another soldier interrupted. His expression showed no hint of empathy, only a sense of duty.

The third soldier, a woman with fiery hair that shone even in the dim mist, stepped forward, assessing me with keen eyes. “We cannot let you return without answers,” she stated firmly. “You must come with us.”

They marched me deeper into the city, the mist swirling around them like a living thing, embracing them while shunning me.



Chapter 3

We had been walking for an hour before we finally reached Faralune. The soldiers had tied my wrists with a tight rope, leaving them red and sore. I tried to distract myself by observing my surroundings. The streets were dark and empty, and there was no sound except for our footsteps and breathing. From what I could see, the city was in poor condition. Smashed bottles and rubbish covered the ground, and the alleyways were littered with the homeless. It seemed that the stories about Faralune's downfall were true.

As we approached a majestic castle, adorned with banners that fluttered like wings, my heart pounded with a mix of fear and excitement. The High Queen of Faralune awaited beyond the gates. I had only heard tales of her wrath and wisdom, and I wondered how such a tyrant could bring ruin to a kingdom as beautiful as Faralune.

Inside the castle, the grandeur took my breath away. Glistening chandeliers hung above, illuminating enchanting tapestries that depicted the kingdom's rich history. The atmosphere sparkled with magic as we neared a great door marked with the insignia of the Queen—a phoenix rising from the Mist.



The soldiers pushed the door open, revealing a throne room. At its center sat the High Queen, draped in silks that flowed like water. Her eyes locked onto me with a weight that made my heart race.

“Ah, and who do we have here? I suppose you are the girl who managed to wander through the Ethereal Mist, am I correct?” she inquired, her enchanting voice echoing through the empty throne room. One of the soldiers shoved me forward, urging me to answer. I was hesitant. I was just a mere villager, nobody of importance, yet here I stood before the High Queen of a realm spoken of in stories to children.

“I ask you again,” she intoned, her voice like chilled silk, “how did you breach the Ethereal Mist?”

I swallowed hard, glancing sideways at the flooring, which was adorned with gemstones intricately set into the stone, twinkling as if alive.

“Your Highness,” I stammered, “I truly do not know.”



“You do not know,” she echoed, her tone betraying disbelief, “yet here you are, trespassing, when none have crossed these borders uninvited in years.”

“I was... I was chasing a fox,” I managed to say, feeling ashamed to admit the childishness of my actions. “It stole a chicken from my father’s farm, and I ran deep into the Forest to reclaim it. I lost my way among the trees, and then, somehow, I found myself here.”

A flicker of something—curiosity, perhaps—crossed her sharp features, but it vanished in an instant.

“A mere fox led you to the gates of Faralune. Unbelievable,” she scoffed, her fingers drumming lightly against the armrest of her throne. Each tap sent a flutter through my insides.

“But I swear I did not intend to intrude!” I pleaded, desperation lacing my voice. “I just... it was a silly chase. I didn’t understand where I was going. Please, I never meant any harm!”



She leaned forward, her gaze sharpening like a blade, and I felt the air grow colder. “There are no such things as silly chases, girl. The Ethereal Mist is not just a barrier; it is a guardian, a protector of our realm. Do you understand the peril your presence invites?”

I nodded, though confusion tangled with fear inside me. The fox was just a creature—what was so dangerous about chasing it? “I must have stumbled through by accident,” I repeated, a tremor threading through my voice. “I meant no harm; I only wanted my father’s chicken back.”

“And what do you propose we do with you?” she asked, drawing her chin up and pursing her lips into a thin line. “Shall I send you back to your father, allowing him to believe you wandered off into the depths of the Forest never to return? Or do I imprison you here, with no knowledge of the threat you pose to my Kingdom?”

“I would never dream of harming Faralune!” I cried, overwhelmed. “Please, just let me go home. I have no ill intentions. My father must be so concerned.”



For a moment, silence enveloped the throne room, the weight of her contemplation palpable in the air. I felt her gaze scrutinizing me, searching for a glimmer of deceit in my wide eyes, but all she found was raw fear.

“Do you not understand?” she said, leaning in even closer, her presence pressing down on me. “This Ethereal Mist doesn’t allow anyone to escape, yet you have found a way in. You possess a gift, a power that could alter everything.” Her words slithered into my mind, and I felt the weight of her scrutiny bearing down on me.

“Power?” I echoed, taken aback. “I don’t know anything about power. I just want to go home.”

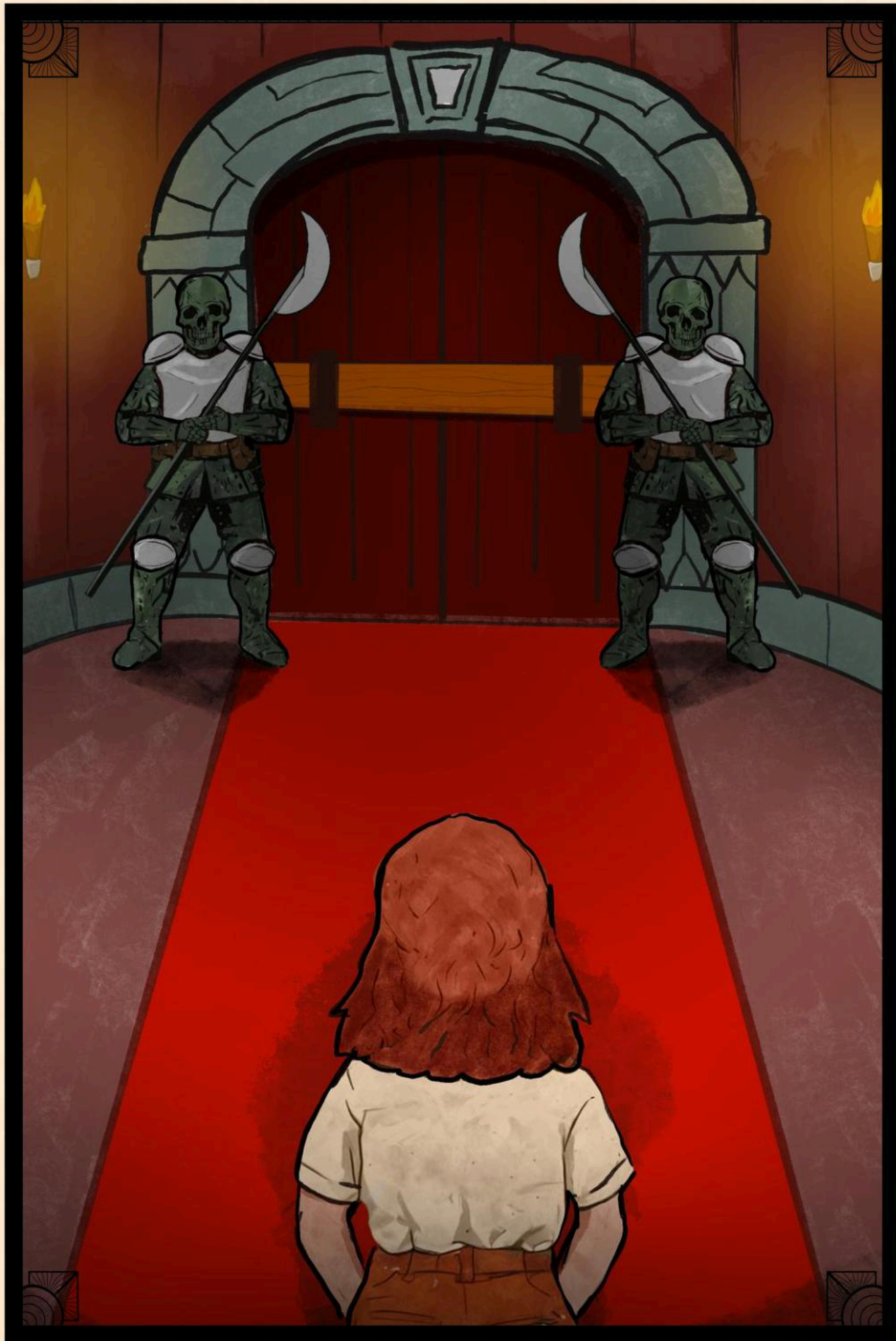
Her expression darkened at my ignorance, and for a moment, I feared she would unleash her fury upon me, punishing me for my naivety. Instead, her demeanor shifted, and the interest in her eyes grew more intense. “Perhaps I should use you instead. Imagine the chaos you could unleash on this world with a little guidance. Or maybe...” Her voice trailed off as she pondered, weighing my fate like an ancient scale of judgment.



I felt tears pricking at the corners of my eyes. I was not a pawn in her wicked game; I was not here to wreak havoc or disrupt the balance of power. “No! You can’t use me like that!” I exclaimed, my voice rising in defiance. “I don’t want to be a part of your evil plans! I want to go home!”

Her laughter rang through the mist—cold and echoing like the howl of a distant wind. “Home, you say? Can you even find your way back now?” She gestured toward the vast throne room and the soldiers standing behind me. She was right; there was no way I could return home now. I was truly trapped.

The Queen’s lips curled into a smile that could only be described as feral. “It is not merely about darkness; it is about control. Imagine a world in which the weak are no longer enslaved by the powerful. The rightful rulers shall rise, and all shall bow to me and you.”



For a fleeting moment, her words painted an alluring picture. A vision of a world where tyranny was vanquished danced before my eyes—a world where my family didn't have to struggle just to survive. But then the truth set in; every dream of liberation concealed a sinister reality.

“I see the flicker of defiance in your eyes,” she said, a twisted smile curling at the corner of her lips. “But do you not understand? You have been chosen. The power of Ethereal Mist suffuses you now. It flows through your veins. Join me, and together we can conquer more than just Faralune. We can go everywhere, make every being in this world bow to us!”

I shuddered, the very thought igniting a fire of rebellion deep within me. “You don't understand,” I replied, my voice stronger than I felt. “I don't want to do anything. I want to go home.”

“You really think it's that simple, do you? Let me tell you, child, it isn't. If you do not want anything to happen to your precious family, you will do as I say. You will work for me, and I will ensure you are prepared. End of the story.”



My breath hitched in my throat at her words. She's threatened to harm my family, and I can't let that happen. I looked down at the floor, a sign of surrender.

The Queen smirks, her eyes dark pools of terror. "You have chosen wisely, girl. You are now at my disposal, aren't you?" She laughs, the sound echoing through the room. It sends a shiver down my spine, and I can feel the soldiers behind me stiffening, perhaps with fear—but who am I to say?

The Queen dismisses us, and the soldiers lead me out of the throne room. I am no longer a simple girl living on a farm with her family; I am now a girl under the High Queen's control, forced to do everything she says. End of the story.

Except, the end of the story is truly just the beginning...



Chapter 4

Cold stone walls encase me, the darkness so dense it seems to swallow the flickering candlelight on the narrow ledge. Shadows dance around me, tauntingly. I squint at the iron bars of my cell, each one a stark reminder of my captivity and the High Queen's overwhelming power. The echo of her threats reverberates in my mind like a haunting melody, a relentless drumbeat underscoring her iron grip on my fate and the safety of my family. I never wanted this to happen; I just wanted to go home. Mother must be searching for me now, undoubtedly worried. But it's for the best. I'm doing what's right; I'm protecting them from harm.

The soldiers told me this would be my home until the Queen decided otherwise. I've been here for so long that I've lost track of time. All I've received is a thin blanket and some water. Bread has become a rare commodity, so I haven't been given any. Sometimes, I hear the other prisoners crying in the cells beside mine. I wonder how long they've been here and why. The Queen visited me once to ask a few questions about myself—my name, age, the village I came from, and other details.



Of course, I didn't want to reveal anything, but inconveniently, one of the other prisoners had the ability to compel anyone to tell the truth. They had been captured for the Queen's personal use and were forced to use their power on me. She wrote everything down on a piece of parchment, and I didn't see her again after that.

A sudden movement in the corner of my cell jolts me from my thoughts. I turn around and squint into the darkness. I can't make out anything, but I can't shake the feeling that something—or someone—is there.

“Who's there?” I call out, my voice trembling slightly as it echoes off the cold stone walls.



A figure slowly materializes, cloaked in the same darkness that shrouds the corner of my cell. I peer into the shadows; it's a boy, perhaps around my age. He wears a dark cloak, and his unruly curls of dark hair frame his face. A smudge of dirt streaks across his cheek, giving him a wild appearance. However, what stands out most are his striking blue eyes, which shimmer in the dim light. For a moment, they remind me of the Queen. I stand up and take a step back. "Who are you? How did you get in here?" I ask, trying to mask the fear in my voice.

"Keep your voice down. I'm not here to harm you. I'm just here because I know how to help you," he replies. "We can't stay here. Come on, let's go."

"Wait, what? What do you mean? Who are you?"

He sighs, "Why do you ask so many questions? I suppose I could tell you who I am, especially since I know who you are. My name is Alaric Solace, and I've been sent to get you out of here," he says, urgency lacing his voice.



“Sent to get me out of here? By who?”

“Oh, just stop asking so many questions so we can leave. I’ll explain everything on the way.”

I didn’t want to trust him, but what other choice did I have besides rotting in this cell until the Queen finally decided to visit me again? “Fine, I’ll come with you,” I reluctantly agree. “But how are we going to get out of here? How did you even get inside in the first place?”

He smiles playfully. “Watch and learn,” he says before disappearing into the darkness of my cell.

My eyes widen in surprise as I hear his laughter. “Where did you go?” I call into the room, still unable to see him.

“Oh, I’m still here. You just can’t see me because I’ve blended in with the shadows. It’s my power, I suppose you could say. I can become invisible as long as it’s dark,” he explains, his voice echoing in the empty cell. “Are you ready? Time is running out. If the guards find us—” he whispers, emerging from the shadows.



“I’m not sure about this. What if it’s a trap? What if you’re leading me straight into the High Queen’s hands?”

“I swear, I’m not your enemy. I know the risks, and believe me, I want to see you free. Just trust me. I can help you.”

I glance toward the heavy iron door of my cell, hesitating. “How do I know you won’t just disappear and leave me behind?”

He takes a step closer to me. “I won’t. I promise. All you have to do is hold onto my hand. I’ll keep you hidden with me. They won’t even know we’re there.”

“And if they catch us?”

“They won’t. Once we’re in the shadows, they won’t see us. It’s just a matter of getting to the exit undetected. But we have to go now—before they change guard.”

He offers his hand to me, urging me on. I sigh and reluctantly take it. “Okay, but I’ll be watching you.”

He smiles as he merges with the shadows once more. “Follow my lead.”



Chapter 5

The air in Faralune was thick with mystery as Alaric and I navigated the deserted streets. The faint glow of the moon was our only companion. Most wouldn't have any ordinary reason to wander these alleys, especially at such a late hour, but our purpose was far from ordinary.

"Keep close," Alaric whispered, his voice smooth and confident, yet laced with urgency. As he spoke, his form shimmered, blending into the shadows and darkness, merging with the midnight cloak that enveloped the world around us.

"This place feels like a ghost town. Is it always like this at night?"

Alaric glances around the deserted streets. "It gets quieter after sundown. People avoid the streets, especially with the Queen's guards patrolling. That's why we need to keep moving."

I frown, feeling the weight of the moment. "Right. I still don't understand why you came for me. Why take such a risk?"



“Because you matter. I know you don’t see it yet, but your power—it’s more significant than you realize.”

“My power? The Queen did say something about me having a ‘special power.’ I didn’t understand what she meant, though.”

He nods earnestly. “That’s the point. The secret organization has been watching you. They believe you could help us fight against the Queen.”

Fight against her? But how? I don’t know anything about these powers... I don’t see how I could be useful to anyone.

“You don’t understand. The Queen has you locked away for a reason. Your power must be strong if you were able to get through the Mist. If harnessed, you could change everything—for better or for worse.”

I take a deep breath, letting his words sink in. “And this organization... what do they want from me, exactly?”



Alaric's eyes narrow in determination. "They want to free our people from her tyranny. They believe that with your help, we can tip the scales. There are others like you, with abilities that can counter her reign."

"But what if I'm not as powerful as you think I am? What if getting through the Mist had nothing to do with me?"

"Nobody else has ever gotten through it alive. People always get lost in the thick fog of the Mist and never return. You really think that just happened?" He sighs and shakes his head.

"You're not alone in this. There are mentors in the organization—people who will guide you, train you, and teach you to harness your power. Think about it, Pearl. Think of the people suffering under the Queen's regime. People like me, who take risks to try and make a change. You have a chance to help us, and you can't let anything hold you back."



I quietly contemplate what he said, weighing my options. I take a deep breath. “I’ll do it. If there’s even a chance that I can help restore Faralune to its former glory, I want to try.”

Alaric’s eyes light up with joy and hope. “That’s the spirit! You made the right choice. We’re almost at the Base. Everyone’s waiting for us.”

I take deep breaths as we continue walking, finally reaching a clearing near the outskirts of the forest. The night air is cool, and there’s a light breeze. It feels familiar, like I’ve been here before—perhaps during my wandering through the Forest.

“Here we are.”

I look at him, confused. “What do you mean?
There’s nothing here?”

He grins. “That’s what you’re supposed to think.”



Alaric stands beneath the sprawling arms of the ancient oak tree, its gnarled bark weathered by centuries of storms and seasons, whispering secrets to the wind. I watch with skepticism as he approaches the trunk.

He raises his hand and begins to knock a rhythmic beat on the tree, a playful tap-tap-tap that echoes into the quiet clearing.

For a moment, nothing happens. Then, to my complete surprise, the old oak tree shudders, creaking ominously. A splintering crack slices through the air as the ancient trunk snaps in half, dust and splinters flying. My heart races as the two gigantic halves of the tree fall away like the pages of an old book, revealing a dark, spiraling staircase that seems to descend into the depths of the Earth.

“How?” I gasped, the reality of the moment washing over me. Surely this was some kind of trick or a dream from which I would wake at any moment. But Alaric’s eager expression assured me that this was all too real.



He motions for me to follow him. Cautiously, I step after him, slowly descending the worn wooden stairs as the air grows colder around us. The staircase twists and turns, illuminated by an otherworldly glow that seems to emanate from the walls themselves. The scent of damp earth and moss fills the air, and shadows dance in the flickering light.

Each creak of the worn steps echoed ominously, and the crumbling stone walls seemed to whisper secrets into the darkness. I took deep breaths, trying to make sense of everything. How could this all be possible?

Nothing made sense anymore.

As we reached the bottom of the staircase, the air shifted, growing colder. A heavy wooden door loomed before us, reinforced with iron and etched with strange symbols that seemed to pulsate with an energy of their own. Alaric hesitated, turning to meet my gaze. "Whatever happens, just follow my lead," he said, his eyes piercing mine with a resolve that both comforted and frightened me.



With a nod, I tried to steady my breath, wishing I could project the same calm I saw in him. The door creaked open with a jarring sound, revealing a chamber that resembled an ancient vault, its walls lined with shelves filled with books and artifacts that looked centuries old. In the middle of the room, a long table was surrounded by cloaked figures, their faces obscured by shadows, their presence both commanding and intimidating.

Alaric stepped forward, pulling me gently beside him. “We’re here,” he announced, his voice echoing in the cavernous space. The figures turned slowly, as if awakening from a trance, their attention shifting solely to us. It felt like being scrutinized under a microscope, the fervent intensity of their gazes making my skin prickle.

“Welcome,” one of the figures said, their voice a blend of authority and intrigue. As they stepped forward, I caught a glimpse of sharp, glinting eyes peering from beneath their hood. “You must be the one we’ve been waiting for.”



The weight of those words pressed down on me, a mix of dread and a flicker of something else—fate, perhaps? I glanced at Alaric, whose expression was unreadable, and suddenly, I felt small and exposed.

Slowly and deliberately, he raised a hand to his hood and drew it back, revealing a face that seemed carved from granite—a chiseled jaw, high cheekbones, and eyes like swirling storm clouds, full of knowledge. He leaned forward in his seat, almost as though he were inspecting me. “You must be Pearl Caddell, the girl who wandered through the Mist?”

I nodded, slightly bewildered. “Yes, that’s me. How do you know about that?”

“Word travels fast in our circles. Your encounter with the Mist was no ordinary event. It has opened new pathways and possibilities for us.”

“I never meant to get involved in anything like this. I was just... trying to find my way back home.”



The leader smiles gently. “Sometimes, the paths we stumble upon lead us to a greater purpose. But let’s not dwell on that for too long. The Evil High Queen is a formidable foe. She’s been spreading darkness and despair through Faralune for some time now. The rest of the organization and I have been trying to defeat her for years, only to fail each time. But you—your experience with the Mist grants you insights we desperately need.”

I look at him, confused. “Insights? I’m just a girl who got lost. How could I possibly help? Are you saying I have some kind of... special ability?”

The leader nods. “Yes. We believe you possess a unique connection to the realms beyond. With training and guidance, you can harness that power. Our best minds are working tirelessly to decipher the remnants of your experience.”

I slowly begin to process everything, but I’m still uncertain. “But what can I do against someone like the High Queen? Isn’t she invincible?”



“She’s powerful, but not unbeatable. Every force has its vulnerabilities. Your link to the Mist gives you an edge—an awareness of her weaknesses that others lack. More importantly, you inspire hope. Many rally for a chance to fight back because of your bravery.”

“But I wasn’t being ‘brave’ about anything. I just got lost...”

“Sometimes, the universe chooses us for roles we never anticipated. Will you join us, Pearl? Your courage is already stirring the hearts of those who have lost their way. Together, we can turn the tides in our favor.”

I take a deep breath. “Yes, yes, I’ll do it. I’ll try my hardest to prove to you all that I can help save Faralune,” I say with determination.

He smiles at me. “Wonderful. You can settle in and start your training as soon as possible. We are all cheering for you, Pearl.”

As I leave the chamber and am taken to my room, where I will be staying, I feel uncertainty lingering within me, along with a new sense of purpose. I don’t know what will happen to me, but what I do know is that I will try. Sometimes, things must be lost for more to be gained.



The Shrouded City of Faralune

The protagonist, Pearl, reflects on her decision to fight to save the world of Faralon. Despite her feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, she demonstrates her determination and strong will to do what is right. After receiving support and encouragement from others, she discovers a new purpose in her life. The story emphasizes the idea that sacrifices may be necessary to achieve greater gains and that self-belief can lead a person to confront challenges.

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