

Awakened

Book One

Of

The Last Fey

By

Phoenix Wolf

‘A Celestial Fantasy Novel’

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Dedication & Acknowledgments

To my husband—

for your love, unwavering support, and quiet strength.
For standing beside me through joy and heartache, trials and
triumphs.

You are my anchor, my heart, and my home.
I love you to the moon and back.

To my two incredible boys—

your wild imagination and boundless creativity never cease to
amaze me.

You inspire me every single day.

This story was born of dreams, held together by love,
and carried forward by those who believed in me,
even when I doubted myself.

Thank you.

*“Some stars burn quietly for centuries—
waiting for the one who remembers why they burned at all.”*

— **The Chronicles of the Last Fey**

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Prologue:

The Awakening

The castle burned with silver flame. Screams echoed through marble halls laced with starlight, and the once-proud banners of the Celestial Court were ripped from their pillars by snarling shadows. The Queen ran to the throne room. Her long hair was streaked with stardust, her gown soaked in battle and grief. In her arms, she clutched her newborn daughter—tiny, radiant, crying. Light bled from the infant's skin like it was trying to remind the world of something it had already begun to forget.

The King appeared in the doorway just as she stopped beside the windows, his celestial armour cracked and smoking. "They've breached the outer walls," he said. "I'll hold them as long as I can." He met his wife's eyes one last time. No goodbye. No final promise. Only knowing. "They must live," the Queen whispered, pressing a kiss to her daughter's brow. "Even if we do not." Two cradles stood beside the shattered throne—Both now empty.

Across the ruined chamber, Hanna, the royal handmaiden, reached with trembling hands to wrap the princess in enchanted linens. Her hands shook, but her resolve did not. "I'll take her to the Earth realm. To Patric and Isabelle, as you commanded. They'll keep her safe." The Queen's voice cracked. "And Annette? Has she delivered our son to his uncle yet?" Silence. Hanna looked down. "Annette never made it to the gates." The Queen went still. Something inside her—ancient and divine—froze. "She betrayed us," Hanna said. "She was working for him." "My son..." the Queen breathed. Grief sharpened into rage. A howl shattered the stained glass above.

Shadows surged in—clawing through marble and memory. The Queen turned to Hanna, silver eyes blazing, drawing her ice blade—its edge glowing with starlight. “Run.”

And Hanna did. Beneath a sky without stars, she crossed realms—carrying the last hope of a dying kingdom. Through ice storms and forgotten gates. Through ancient ruins where even time dared not tread. Until at last, she found them—Patric and Isabelle. Humans bound by magic and oath, who took the child in and swore never to reveal her truth. They named her Felix.

And far away, in the hollowed palace, the Queen stood her ground. The throne room—once radiant with celestial fire—now wept with darkness. From those shadows emerged a man cloaked in midnight and ash.

His face half-hidden. His eyes full of hunger.

He looked nothing like the man she once knew.

“You won’t win,” the Queen said, her voice the final chord of a dying star. “You can steal my son. Poison this realm. But you will never break her. She is starlight made flesh.”

“She was mine the moment you birthed her,” the figure hissed.

“As is the boy. They are the twin keys. She just doesn’t know it yet.” The King and Queen shared one final glance. Then the Queen struck. Light against darkness.

Old magic cracking the stone.

Hope warring with despair. Their battle was brief. Cataclysmic.

And then—she fell.

Her body crumpled like a broken constellation.

Her breath left in a whisper of stars.

Far away, in a small human house beneath an ordinary sky—

The silver-eyed girl opened her eyes for the first time.

She did not remember the stars.

But the stars remembered her. And they were waiting.

Chapter One:

A Storm is Brewing

Felix

The day before my twenty-first birthday, I felt it—like a ripple under my skin. Something was coming. For weeks, there'd been this gnawing sense that something was off. It wasn't anything I could name. Just a weight in my chest when I tried to sleep. A prickling at the back of my neck when I walked alone. The quiet had grown too quiet. The wind, too sharp. Like the world had started holding its breath—and I was the only one who noticed. It was worse that morning. I couldn't sit still. Everything inside me itched, like I didn't belong in my own skin. So, I ran. Cold air scraped down my throat as I jogged along the lake, shoes crunching on the frozen path. The lake shimmered like glass, a silver mirror of the cloud-laced sky.

This place had become the closest thing to peace I'd felt in years. We'd been here almost twelve months now—a record for us. But I knew better than to get attached. We never stayed long. This time, it was just me, my younger sister, and the people I called my parents. My older siblings had stayed behind in the last town. Lucky them. Isabelle and Patric were more like shadows than parents. Isabelle wore her kindness like a mask—soft-spoken and gentle, but the weariness in her eyes said she'd stopped trying long ago. Patric? He watched me like I was a ticking time bomb. Strict. Cold. Always tense when I entered the room. They treated me differently than the others.

I stopped asking why a long time ago. My siblings had drawn their lines in the sand years back. I gave up trying to cross them. I used to wonder what I'd done wrong. Why I was the one always held at arm's length. Eventually, I stopped wondering. The loneliness became part of the background noise—like the wind, or the sound of our car packing up for another move.

Then I met Hanna. She was... different. Beautiful in a way that made people nervous. Her silver eyes looked through you—like they were searching for something just under your skin. We met at the lakeside diner, both stuck slinging pancakes and coffee to tired tourists. I'd never had a real friend before. Not one that lasted. But Hanna saw me. Not the girl who kept moving. Not the quiet, weird one. Me. Somehow, she always knew when something was wrong—even before I said a word. Like she could sense the storm inside me.

We were wiping down the counter after a slow lunch rush, sunlight glinting off the lake through the windows. My mind was still on the weight in my chest when she leaned over and said, "We should go out tomorrow. Celebrate properly." "Celebrate what?" I smirked. "Me being one year closer to full-blown adulthood anxiety? That's not a party. That's a cry for help."

Hanna snorted. "Please. You need it. You're basically turning into a brooding Victorian ghost. Let me dress you up, get you drunk, and drag you into bad decisions."

"That's not comforting."

"Wasn't meant to be. It's a threat."

"Great. Can we start with tequila or regrettable tattoos?"

"Both. Obviously." I laughed, the first real laugh in days.

"Besides, you know Patric would never let me go." Hanna rolled

her eyes. “Patric loves me. He’ll say yes to me. You’ll see. And twenty-one is important. For you especially.” I paused, cloth still in hand. “What do you mean?” Hanna’s posture changed, small, but I noticed. Like she said something she shouldn’t have.

She turned to look at me. Her mouth opened—then snapped shut. Her eyes flicked to the door. And then it chimed. Everything shifted. Winter spilled into the room—cold, sharp, and wrong. The air turned heavy. Still. My breath caught. A man entered. Tall. Dressed in black like the shadows had followed him inside. He smiled like he knew something I didn’t—and when his eyes met mine, a chill crawled up my spine. The scent of danger clung to him like smoke. Something inside me whispered: Run. The man looked like trouble dressed in leather. Tattoos snaked up his forearms—symbols that didn’t belong here. A scar cut from his jaw to cheekbone, pale and jagged. His dark hair fell in careless waves, but it was his eyes... too still. Too sharp. He smiled. A predatory smile.

Hanna stiffened beside me. “Shit,” she muttered. The man strode to the counter and leaned in, casual. “Coffee?” he asked, voice low and rough. I blinked. “Sorry, we are actually busy closing up. Someone...” I looked at Hanna, “forgot to lock the door. But I can get you one really quick.” Hanna didn’t speak. Her posture was rigid, silver eyes locked on him like she knew something I didn’t. I turned to the machine, forcing calm into my limbs. I could feel his eyes on me the entire time.

“Been in town long?” he asked.

“About a year.”

“You like it here?”

“It’s quiet.” I shrugged. Offered nothing more.
He leaned in closer, eyes gleaming. “What’s your name?”
I hesitated. “Felix,” pointing at the ridiculous name tags the owner has us wear. He tasted the word like it meant something.
“You don’t look like a Felix.”

I didn’t know what that meant, but it made my skin crawl. I set the cup in front of him. “Let me know when you’re done and I’ll ring you up.” He didn’t touch the coffee. Just stared. My fingertips tingled. My whole body felt... wrong. Like the room had tilted on its axis. He felt familiar—not comforting. Like a memory trying to crawl back into my head.

Finally, he sipped the drink. “Nice place. Locals seem friendly.”
“We are. Until we’re not.” The words slipped out before I could stop them. His grin widened. “Fiery. I like that.” I moved around the counter. “Look, it’s time to lock up. I will get you a take-away cup then you should go.” But as I passed, his hand shot out and clamped around my wrist.

I froze.

His grip was ice and steel. My heart slammed into my ribs.
I looked down—and saw it. My skin was glowing. A soft, pale light pulsed beneath the surface of my arm. Like starlight trapped under my skin. What is happening?
“Let go,” I said, voice trembling.

He didn’t. His eyes narrowed. He saw it too. The air dropped ten degrees. My breath misted. Another pulse.
“Let. Go.” Louder this time.

DING. The bell above the door rang, sharp and final. He turned slightly—and I tried to yank my arm back as the door creaked open behind me.

Hunter

I saw her today. After lifetimes of searching—across stars, through shadows, through lives I could barely remember—I saw her. The girl from my dreams. The one I remembered dying for. The one I had loved before I had a name. The other half of my soul. My wolf stirred the moment she came into view, pacing beneath my skin, restless and wild.

I'd gone running that morning, trying to burn off the storm in my blood. It always got worse this time of year. Around her birthday. The bond always surged then. Louder. Stronger. Taunting me with what I couldn't reach. But this time... it led me to her. She was running along the lakeside trail, just ahead of me. Breath misting in the cold. Her hair tucked under a knit beanie, with streaks of silver-blue escaping—glowing faintly in the morning light. Just like the Seers said: starlight reborn. I stopped in my tracks. My chest constricted. Like I was seeing colour for the first time in years. She stopped too, standing at the water's edge, unaware that the universe had shifted.

I should've said something. Anything. But all I could do was stare. She turned, as if sensing me. Our eyes locked. And something snapped taut. Electric. Timeless. Holy. The bond flared—just a thread at first, but enough to freeze me in place. Her eyes widened. She felt it too and it confused her. But she felt the pull. I took a step towards her. She blinked again then shook it off. Like she was shaking off a trance.

Then she ran. I didn't follow. Not yet. She wasn't ready. I had waited lifetimes—surely, I could wait one more day. Still, I stayed close. Shadowed the town like a ghost. Watched. Waited. Because her power was waking. And the wrong ones would feel it too.

When the sun began to fall, I felt it—a pull. Cold. Sharp. Her fear. My body moved before thought. Toward the diner. I pushed open the door. The chime rang. I saw her. And I saw the man gripping her wrist. The light under her skin had begun to shine—faint, but unmistakable. A growl ripped from my chest. I stepped inside. Conrad. Of course it had to be him. Even with the shadows surrounding him, I knew him. That scent of rot behind the charm. The hunger clinging to him like ash.

He looked up. “So, the big dog comes when he’s called,” he said, all mockery. I ignored him. Went straight to her. Felix’s breath came shallow. Eyes wide. Glow pulsing under her skin.

“Let her go,” I growled.

“She’s not his.” Conrad tilted his head. But he released her. “Not yet.” My hand hovered near my side, where my gun was. It would look weird walking around with a sword to my back. “I had to give her a little push,” he said. “Now the fire’s lit.”

He stood. “I’ll be seeing you soon, Felix.” Then he looked at me and smiled. “Unless you want to stop me.” My blood surged. My wolf rose. “You already made that mistake once. Still wearing the scar.” He struck. Faster than he should be. His fist caught my shoulder. Tile exploded behind me. The diner erupted. I slammed into him, claws and teeth bared. He hit back, too hard. Stronger than before. We crashed through the counter. Felix screamed—but I couldn’t look at her. Not now.

Conrad laughed. “Still not strong enough.” “You don’t touch her,” I snarled, ramming him into the fridge. The glass cracked. “She’s his by blood,” he hissed. “You’re just a distraction.”

I snapped. Fists flew. His smirk cracked. He threw me across the diner. My ribs screamed. Then I felt it. Felix’s panic. Her energy flaring. No. Not like this. Not in fear. Her power exploded. Light burst from her in a solar flare—blinding, silver-streaked. It hit Conrad square in the chest. He screamed. His skin burned. Smoke curled from his coat.

Felix collapsed, dazed, trembling. I stood, breath ragged. “Enough.” Conrad sneered. “This was just a taste. You can’t protect her forever. She will be his.” Then he vanished. Silence. The diner lay in ruins.

Felix knelt in the corner, still glowing faintly, eyes wide. I stepped toward her. She flinched. That broke something in me. “I won’t hurt you,” I whispered. She stared—confused. Lost. “I don’t know what’s happening to me,” she said. I wanted to tell her everything. Who she was. Who I was. What we were. But not yet. So, I knelt beside her and said softly, “You’re awakening. And he... he’s the reason you’ve been running your whole life.”

Her world tilted. But even in the chaos, she held my gaze. Like a storm waiting to break. And I knew—with more certainty than anything in this life or the last—I would protect her. Whatever it took. She screamed, clutching her head. Her eyes fluttered. She swayed. And then she fell. I caught her—like I always would.

Chapter Two:

Shadows and Secrets

Felix

It's him.

The man from this morning.

The one with the silver eyes. The moment he stepped into the diner, something inside me didn't just stir—it detonated. It wasn't panic. It wasn't fear. It was something else. Something ancient and aching, like the sound of a key sliding into a lock I didn't know I was wearing. My body recognized him before my mind could catch up. The world tilted. My lungs forgot how to breathe.

My fingers dug into the edge of the booth as warmth and cold collided in my chest, swelling into something unbearable. It was the same strange gravity I'd felt by the lake. That moment had haunted me all day, flashing through my thoughts without warning. And now, here he was again—framed in the doorway by the bleeding light of the setting sun. A low, guttural growl rose from his chest like distant thunder. And I felt... safe. Not just safe. Home. Which made no sense. I didn't know his name. But some part of me did.

Some buried piece stirred beneath fear and memory—an echo from a place I couldn't name. He looked at me, and time slowed. Not like the shadows that had gripped my wrist—his touch hadn't felt like chains dipped in malice. No, this new stranger, his presence was something else. And when he growled—low, primal—it should have terrified me. But it didn't. It filled the

space between my ribs like light cracking through stone. My heart didn't leap to run. It surged toward him. Like it had been waiting.

The man's grip on my arm stiffened. I felt the change in him first—a flicker, a tremor. Then I saw his face twist. Shadows bled from his skin—not cast by light, but born from it—crawling over him like oil in water. The tattoos on his arms shimmered, shifting with every heartbeat. His confidence curdled into something meaner. The air grew thick. My breath fogged. My thoughts scattered under the pounding in my skull. “So,” he sneered, his gaze never leaving the silver-eyed man, “the big dog comes when he's called.”

I didn't understand. The way they looked at each other—like enemies. Like brothers. Like war. I should have been afraid. But my attention had shifted—to my arm. It was glowing again. Light pulsed beneath the skin like starlight trapped in flesh. The brighter it got, the more it hurt—not like injury, but pressure. Like something inside me was trying to break free. Everything tightened. The moment coiled.

His fingers faltered on my wrist. He glanced from my glow to the stranger. Something passed between them—unspoken, sharp as broken glass. The man's voice dipped into something cruel. “She doesn't even know, does she?” He turned to me, his voice silken and sharp. “Poor little thing. Must be confusing—glowing like a dying star and not knowing why.”

My stomach dropped. They were talking about me. He leaned in, close enough that I could feel his breath against my ear. “You don't know who you are, do you?” he whispered. “No one told

you?” He let go of my wrist and shifted, like he might turn and walk away. For a moment, I wanted to believe it was over. But he stopped. Turned. “I’ll be seeing you soon, Felix.” He said my name like he’d always known it. Then, to the silver-eyed man, with a smile sharp as knives, “Unless you want to stop me.”

And then the world cracked open. They moved at once—too fast to follow. A blur of motion. Flesh and shadow. Light and teeth. Hanna screamed. I didn’t think. I reacted. My body didn’t lunge or strike—it opened. Something inside me rose like a tide. Cold. Vast. Ancient. It surged from the centre of my chest like a breath held for lifetimes. Then it exploded outward. The cold was sharp and searing, like ice forged in the heart of a dying star. Frost bloomed along my skin, shimmered down my arms. My vision warped. The edges of the diner twisted. Light shattered. Glass shrieked.

The stranger staggered back, his skin smoking where the glow touched him. My knees buckled. A sound echoed in my skull—distant, haunting. A song? A name? My name. Whispered across some unseen chasm. My fingers glowed. My teeth chattered. My thoughts scattered like snow in a storm. And then the pain hit. A spike behind my eyes. A ringing in my ears so loud it drowned the world. Except him.

The silver-eyed man. His voice cut through it all like warmth in winter. “I won’t hurt you.” He was close now. Closer than he should have been. His silver eyes held something I couldn’t name—not just strength or concern, but something older. Like he’d known me long before I ever looked in a mirror. “I don’t know what’s happening to me,” I whispered. My voice cracked.

He dropped to his knees in front of me, met my eyes with a look that could burn mountains. “You’re awakening,” he said softly, like the words hurt him. “And he... he’s the reason you’ve been running your whole life.”

The world stilled.

No lights. No sound. Just him.

And me.

And truth.

Then pain—raw and consuming. It ripped through me, a scream I couldn’t voice. Agony bloomed in every nerve. And then—blackness. The kind that hums.

The kind that feels like falling between stars. I didn’t hit the floor. He caught me.

Hanna

“Felix!” I was already moving before she hit the ground—but I was too slow. He caught her. Hunter. The silver-eyed wolf who’d been promised to her in starlight and prophecy. He held her like she was something sacred. Like letting go might kill them both. I dropped to my knees beside them, reaching for her hand. Ice. Her skin was frigid.

The glow beneath it had intensified—not a flicker now, but a steady, pulsing radiance. The spells we’d used to bind her power, to hide her from the ones who hunted us, were unravelling. I could feel it. Like threads pulling free from the seams of a cloak I had spent years weaving. Moonlight bled from the cracks. Raw. Ancient. Wild. Too soon. It was all happening too soon.

Her pulse—still there, still fighting—beat out a frantic rhythm. And beneath it, her magic surged like a second heartbeat. Her body was remembering what it had forgotten. Or maybe what I'd tried too hard to help her forget. I wanted more time. Just a little more. Hunter hadn't taken his eyes off her. As if she were the only thing tethering him to this world.

His rage hadn't faded entirely—Conrad had that effect on people—but something in him had quieted now. His hands, still trembling, held her with infinite care.

I looked at him—really looked. The silver in his eyes shimmered like frost, like something feral just beneath the surface. But there was grief there, and something else—something deeper. I knew what he was—what the stars had promised.

But I hadn't expected this kind of devotion. "You're early," I said softly. "I thought we had more time." He didn't answer, just nodded once, tightly. The low growl that still lingered in his chest wasn't for me—it was for Conrad. For the threat he posed. For what he might yet become.

I turned back to her. She looked so much like her mother now. In the right light, in this light—she was Elyria's mirror. The same silver-blue hair. The same proud cheekbones. The same stubborn set to her jaw, even unconscious. "So much like her," I whispered, brushing a strand from her cheek. "So much like the Queen." My throat burned. "I'm sorry, little star," I murmured. "I did everything I could to keep you safe."

The memory rose sharp and unwanted. The night the Celestial Court fell. The stars blinked out. The sky cracked open. The

throne room was fire and ash. And in the middle of it all, Queen Elyria placed her daughter in my arms and made me promise. “Take her. Run. Keep her hidden. Whatever it takes.” And I did. I tore through realms. Through blood and flame. Wrapped her in the last of the Queen’s magic, bound her light in veils that nearly cost my life to cast.

I crossed into the mortal world and found Patric and Isabelle. Kind. Loyal. Human. They loved her, in their way. But they never truly understood her. Not just a girl—but starlight wrapped in flesh. A child of prophecy. The last Celestial Fey. She wasn’t meant for this world. Not like this. Not in hiding. But we had no choice. So, I stayed close. Always watching. Always warding.

Every time Conrad—or others like him—got too near, I moved them. Town after town. One life. One long, careful life built on lies and protection and quiet fear. But the veil is gone now. The bindings are breaking. And she’s been seen.

I looked at the man holding her again—Hunter, the Guardian. The boy who was born to find her, to protect her, to stand beside her when the sky turned to war. He held her like he’d been carrying her in his soul long before this moment. “She doesn’t remember you, does she?” I asked. His jaw tensed. “No.” “But you remember her.” He nodded. And in his silence, I saw it. The lifetimes of waiting. The bone-deep knowing. I placed a hand on his shoulder. “Then hold on to that. She’ll need you to remember, until she can.”

His arms tightened around her. No more hiding. No more false names. She wasn’t just Felix. That name had been a disguise. A

life stitched from safety and lies. But the girl in his arms was born from something bigger than safety. She was Annabelle Starfire—heir to the Celestial Court. The child of Elyria and Xarion. The light in the dark. The one we all bled to protect. Her fingers twitched in mine. The glow flared—reaching, searching. Power hummed through her veins, singing a song only she could hear. She was waking up.

And somewhere out there, in the cold places, he was watching. The one who smiled like graves. The one who moved like a curse. The one whose face I couldn't recognize—but somehow did. The one who served the thing still hiding in the dark. The Dark Fey. I knew who he was now. I'd buried the memory too long, pretended it couldn't be true. But I saw it in his eyes. I knew. Two beings were staring back. He was watching. Waiting. The storm was rising. And all we could do now... was be ready.

Unknown

He felt it.

A rift tearing through the tapestry of realms—raw, searing, beautiful. Not a whisper. Not a tremor.

A detonation.

Her awakening had begun. The surge hit him like a lover's scream—primal, blazing. Power laced with starlight—Celestial blood breaking free of its bindings.

It echoed through the bones of the world, stirred the dark seams of forgotten places, and bled into his marrow like liquid fire. He inhaled it. Held it in his lungs like incense. Like worship.

“Finally,” he breathed, voice trembling with hunger. The word came out reverent. Almost tender.

Almost.

Around him, the shadows rippled in ecstasy.

The chamber twisted in response, devouring light, stretching its walls like the breath of some ancient beast. Carvings writhed across the obsidian floor—runes etched in king’s blood and queen’s bones—glowing with the pulse of something far older than this world.

Her light.

His obsession.

His claim.

A voice cut through the dark. Feminine. Harsh. Ferocious.

“She’s waking,” said Eris, materializing from the gloom. Her eyes burned red, her smile all jagged edges. Annette stood beside her, silent and watchful—the slave who had once betrayed king and queen, stolen their child, and handed him to the dark. “What do you want us to do?” He didn’t turn.

He was watching the shimmer in the air—the lattice of power that had snapped taut the moment the girl’s magic broke free. Annabelle.

Not a girl. Not anymore.

The last of the Celestial Fey. His best friend’s daughter. The child of the only man he had ever called brother. “Nothing,” he said at last. “We wait.” Eris hissed, barely containing her rage. “You promised blood. Promised fire. We’ve waited long enough.” “And you will have both,” he said softly. Deadly. “But not yet. She’s unripe. Her magic still clings to its bindings. She doesn’t

remember what she is. Who she is. But she will.” He turned to face her.

Eris flinched. Only slightly. But he saw it. Savoured it. “She’ll come to us,” he said. “Not because we drag her here—but because she’ll want to. To protect them. Or to punish them. Either way...” He smiled, teeth like knives. “...she opens the door.” The light in the chamber dimmed, retreating from the edges of his form. Thunder cracked deep beneath the earth. “She is the key,” he whispered, more to himself than to her. “And keys don’t just unlock—they unleash.”

A second presence stirred. From the far edge of the chamber, a figure stepped forward, coalescing from shadow and ash.

Not formed of flesh. Carved of silence and sorrow.

Conrad. He knelt instinctively, head bowed low, magic held tight beneath his skin. The shadows caressed him—wrapping around his limbs like chains he’d long since stopped fighting. “You saw her,” the man said, not asking. “Yes,” Conrad answered. Voice thin. Strained. “She glowed. She... she reminded me of—” He stopped. The thought, unfinished. Too dangerous to name. Too real to fully bury.

The man approached him, slow as rot. The shadows parted around him like supplicants. “She is mine,” he said, voice low and terrible. “Her light was borrowed. Stolen by the stars. But she’ll return it. She’ll return to me.” Conrad said nothing.

He didn’t move.

Didn’t breathe. Though taller, stronger—cloaked in his own magic—he felt like a boy again. A child forged in shadows. A blade fashioned from lies. “Yes... Father,” he whispered.

The word rang false. The title he'd been taught to speak—was a lie. If he could remember—truly remember—the cradle of starlight he once shared with the girl he now hunted... perhaps something might shift.

But memory was a casualty long buried.

All that remained was obedience. Fire. And a silence that screamed. The man turned away, drifting deeper into the sanctum of his ruinous court. The chamber flexed with his passage—stone reshaping, breathing beneath enchantments older than grief. Beneath him, sigils sparked to life—old language written in the bones of gods, pulsing in time with a heartbeat that was not his own. Her heartbeat.

At the chamber's centre, he approached an altar—obsidian and silver, veined with celestial bone.

Above it hung the lattice of shadow-thread and starlight. A web of realms. Of prophecy. And at its core, one point burned brighter than all the rest.

Her.

Annabelle.

She had always been there. Even hidden. Even bound. She had never truly left him. Her light had threaded his every breath, his every curse, his every moment of silence.

And now it called to him. Screamed for him. Soon, she would remember what she was.

Not mortal.

Not lost.

Not theirs. His.

He would take that light. Wrap it in shadow. Strip away the lies, the softness, the stolen years.

He would burn the world until she knelt.

And when she did—when the old self crumbled and only the truth remained—he would rebuild her in his image.

Beautiful.

Terrible.

Endless. He raised a hand toward the burning point of light. His fingers trembled—half from restraint, half from need.

“Soon, my queen,” he whispered. His voice cracked under the weight of it. Twisted with hunger. With love shaped like a coffin.

“You will come home. You will kneel. And the world will bleed for us both.”

Behind him, Conrad remained hidden. A boy-shaped ghost wrapped in guilt and chains. He watched the altar—watched her—and something ancient stirred in his chest. Something forgotten. The light at the centre of the web looked... familiar.

Chapter Three:

Truth in the Fog

Felix

Darkness. Vast. Endless. Silent. I floated in it—weightless and unmoored, like a soul adrift in a sea of stars. Thought barely formed. Feeling was distant. Time—meaningless. There was no ground. No sky. No body. Just space. And silence. And me. Or... what was left of me. I tried to scream, but even that felt foreign. My voice—my very being—seemed to scatter into the void.

Where am I? What am I? Am I... gone? Then— A flicker. One light. So small I thought I'd imagined it. But it drifted closer, golden and warm, like a forgotten ember still alive in the ash. Then another. And another. Soon they came in waves—hundreds, thousands—stars awakening in the dark. Their light wasn't harsh, but soft, pulsing gently, like lullabies sung by the universe itself. They moved around me, through me, into me. And in their light, something stirred.

Peace. Deep and ancient. Not the kind you find in silence or sleep, but the kind you've always longed for without realizing. A peace woven into bone, into breath. My soul exhaled. And that's when I heard her. Not with my ears—there was no sound here. But I heard her just the same. A voice, soft as moonlight on still water, echoing inside the marrow of my being. "No, child..." It was beautiful. It was sorrowful. A voice weighted by lifetimes of grief and love, of sacrifice and secrets buried beneath stars.

“You are not dead.” The lights pulsed around me, as if responding to her sorrow. Or to mine.

Then what is this? I tried to ask. Where am I? She didn’t answer with words at first—only presence.

She wrapped around me like wind through the trees. Like the hum of music before a song begins.

“You are in between,” she finally whispered.

“Between the veil and the waking world. Between what you were... and what you must become.” The lights trembled, glowing brighter. “I’m sorry,” she said, and my soul felt that sorry like a wound. “Sorry for all that was taken. For the lies you were forced to live. For the pain that waits ahead.” Each word fell like rain on fire. Gentle. Final. Who are you? I asked. There was a pause. The lights swirled around me in spirals now—faster, like a storm building beneath the stillness. “You will know me,” she said, almost to herself.

“When the time is right. When the truth no longer hides behind fear.” The stars brightened suddenly, pulsing like a heartbeat. “But now... you must wake.”

Why? I wanted to cry. Please, not yet. I’m not ready.

She hesitated—just a breath. “None of us ever are.” What am I becoming? I asked, my voice—or thought—flickering like a candle in the wind. “You were forged in starlight. Moulded in silence. Marked by loss and purpose. You will be light in the shadow and shadow in the light.”

That didn’t help. It only raised more questions. I don’t understand. “You will,” she whispered, “but understanding comes at a cost.” What kind of cost? She didn’t answer. Instead,

she said, “There is a path only you can walk. You are the question and the answer. You are the door and the key.” This is nonsense, I thought bitterly. Beautiful nonsense. She chuckled, soft and sad. “It always sounds like nonsense until it’s the only truth left.” The light began to intensify, warm and wild, spilling into me like sunrise breaking across shadow.

“Listen closely, child of starlight...” The voice folded in, wrapping around my soul like a final embrace. “Trust your companion.” The stars began to whirl. Faster. Urgent. “Trust your guardian.” What guardian? I asked. Who—The stars were turning white-hot now. My body—or whatever remained of it—burned with light. The void cracked at the edges. “But most importantly...” The voice grew quiet. Intimate. Close enough to touch. “...trust yourself.”

And then— White. Blinding. Whole. Everything. And nothing. The voice was gone.

The stars vanished. Silence. Then—warmth. A pressure at my side. A hand. Real. Solid. Alive. I blinked. Once. The light hurt. Everything hurt. I blinked again. Silver. Eyes. Beautiful. Painful. Like moonlight over still water. Like storms held back by a single thread. They stared down at me with something fierce and vulnerable—like I was the answer to a question he didn’t know he’d been asking.

And I knew those eyes. From the lake. From the dream. From something deeper.

I inhaled sharply and choked. The air tasted too real. Too thick. My body felt heavy, as if I’d been poured back into it piece by

piece. My limbs ached. My chest thudded with a heartbeat I hadn't known was missing.

I wasn't in my room. Soft fabric beneath me. A deep green couch. Walls of smooth wood and ivy-draped windows. The crackle of a fire. It smelled like pine and smoke and wildflowers. I was somewhere safe. And still—I wasn't calm. I felt cracked. Hollowed. Like someone had taken me apart and stitched me back together wrong. I sat up slowly. Every motion a question.

"Felix?" The voice was thin, shaky, but unmistakable. I turned. Hanna. Tears streaked her face. Her hands trembled as she crossed the room and dropped beside me. She wrapped her arms around me before I could speak. "I thought you wouldn't wake up," she whispered, burying her face into my shoulder. "You scared me."

Her hug was too tight. Desperate. Like someone clinging to the edge of something they didn't want to let go of. "I... I had a dream," I murmured. "Or something like one. There were stars. And a voice. It said..." I paused, trying to remember her exact words. "It said I wasn't dead. That I had to wake up. That I should trust my companion. My guardian. Myself."

Hanna stiffened just slightly—almost unnoticeably—but I felt it. I pulled back to look at her.

"What happened?" She exhaled slowly and tucked a damp strand of hair behind her ear.

"You passed out. At the diner. Right after that guy—"

"The one with the tattoos," I said, finishing for her. "He grabbed me." She nodded. "You weren't breathing at first. And then..."

“Then what?” She hesitated. Her gaze dropped to her hands in her lap. “Then you pushed back. Your light, your power.” She looked up again, slower this time. “It’s waited a long time to come out. But it wasn’t... uncontrolled. It was like it knew exactly where to go.” Goosebumps crept across my arms.

“So, I wasn’t imagining it. Me glowing. The man. His tattoos. They moved. Like shadows. Like they were alive.” Again, she paused. Too long. Too carefully. Finally, she said, “You weren’t imagining it.” “Then what was he?” I asked. “And what am I?” Her expression flickered—something unreadable behind her eyes. “Hanna,” I said again, more firmly. “You know something. You’ve always known more than you let on. Just tell me.”

She looked away, jaw tightening like she was holding something back. “Not yet.” “Why not?” “Because the truth isn’t something I can give you like a gift, Felix,” she said softly. “It’s something you have to grow into. If I told you everything now, it would break you.” I blinked, stunned. “Break me?”

Her gaze finally met mine again. Steady. Sad. “Some truths do that. But not all wounds are meant to be avoided. Some... you walk through and come out stronger.” My chest felt tight. Like her words carried weight I couldn’t understand yet.

“You’ve known me my whole life,” I said. “Have you been lying to me this whole time?”

“No,” she whispered, fiercely. “Never lying. Just... protecting.”

I didn’t know how to feel about that. Part of me wanted to push, demand answers, tear the curtain down and face whatever lay behind it. The other part... was afraid. Afraid that everything I

thought I knew about myself would crumble. That voice from the dream echoed again, soft in the back of my mind: Trust yourself. And suddenly, I felt it again—just a trace of him. The man with the silver eyes.

He was here. Close. His presence brushed against my senses like a breeze I couldn't see. And it grounded me. I looked toward the hallway.

Hanna followed my gaze. "He's waiting," she said quietly. "He hasn't left your side since I brought you here."

My heartbeat thudded. "Who is he?"

Her smile was faint, wistful. "Someone who's waited a long time to find you."

"But do I know him?" "Not yet," she said. "But you will." A silence settled between us, not awkward—but charged. Like the hush before a storm breaks. I wasn't sure what I was about to walk into. Or who I was supposed to be.

But I knew one thing. Nothing would ever be the same again.

Hunter

Nothing—nothing—could compare to the way rage tore through me the moment I saw that scum's hand on her. I had come to observe. To wait. To be careful.

But that plan burned to ash the second she flinched.

The second she looked up at him with those wide, starlit eyes—afraid. And then... it happened. A flicker. The first flicker of her.

Power—ancient and wild—crackled from her skin like lightning bottled by the stars themselves. It pulsed once, golden and raw, and in that breathless instant, time itself seemed to still. Conrad

recoiled. The air shivered. The room held its breath. And I woke. Not from sleep. Not from rest. From the long, agonizing wait of lifetimes. My beast surged forward, unchained and roaring, centuries of fury igniting in my blood.

The careful mask I'd worn shattered like glass beneath a tidal wave. I didn't remember the fight in detail—only pieces. The blur of fists, claws, snarls. The sound of shattering wood. The stench of sulfur, decay, and something stolen—twisted magic clinging to Conrad like rot. But she—Felix—shone like a rising storm over the sea. Her scream wasn't fear. It was release.

It cracked the world open. And then came the blast.

A tidal wave of cold and light, brilliant and wild, exploded from her—pure, crystalline, furious. It slammed into Conrad like a judgment rendered by the cosmos itself. He screamed—a sound not of pain, but of terror. Because her magic didn't just hurt him. It knew him. Knew what he was. And it rejected him.

The shadows clawed at him as he disappeared in a burst of smoke, dragged back into whatever pit had spit him out.

And she—my star, my mate—collapsed. Now she lay on my couch. Still glowing faintly. Her light brushed against my senses like snow caught in moonlight—quiet, delicate, impossibly beautiful. Her chest rose and fell in shallow rhythm. Her magic shimmered just beneath her skin, frayed and flickering like the last thread of a comet's tail. The bond between us—dormant for so long I feared it had faded—thrummed now like a second heartbeat inside me. She was here. Real. Alive. And mine.

Not in the way Conrad meant. Not in the poisoned, possessive way monsters cling to what they think they deserve. No—she was

mine like breath belongs to lungs. Like gravity to the earth. Fated. Promised. Written into the marrow of the universe. I had searched through ages. Crossed borders etched in magic and shadow. Bled across a hundred lifetimes. For her. Only her. And when she opened her eyes—just for a heartbeat—I saw it.

Recognition. Confusion. Wonder.

And something more. A pull. That ancient thread between us—older than time—stirred. Just for a moment. But I felt it. Her soul touched mine. A whisper of what we were. What we are. And in that heartbeat, a memory stirred. Not here. Not now. But long ago—when the stars were still young and we had no names. I saw her as she was then, draped in stardust and flame, standing barefoot on a cliff made of light. Her laughter echoed through the cosmos. My hand found hers, and everything slowed.

I remembered the way she'd smiled when the world ended, and how she had kissed me beneath a dying sun.

Love. Grief. War. Rebirth. Over and over again.

A cycle written in ash and gold. She had always found me.

And I had always lost her. Until now. And then she slipped back into unconsciousness. Not because she was weak. Never that. But because her soul was still remembering. Relearning. Waking. So, I stayed. I didn't trust myself to sit too close. Being near her felt like trying to breathe inside a supernova—beautiful and burning and all-consuming.

I went upstairs only when I had to. The blood needed to be washed away. Not because I feared it. I had worn far worse.

But because I didn't want her first memory of me to be soaked in violence. She had to see more than the beast. She had to see the

man. The water scalded my skin, but I welcomed it. Let it take what it could—the fury, the memory of claws meeting flesh, the sound of her gasp. But nothing could wash her image away. Felix. Glowing, gasping, powerful and broken and radiant all at once. Still hers.
Still mine.

A sound. Barely there. The shift of weight on the couch. A breath. A change in the air. She's awake. My hand gripped the edge of the sink. My pulse stuttered. My chest tightened. I wasn't ready.

How could I be? How do you prepare to face your soul's other half, when you've lived every life aching for them in silence? I closed my eyes and felt her again—stronger now. Brighter. Alive. Felix. My starlight. My fate. I had no idea what came next. Only that everything we were, everything we had been waiting for, was about to begin.