



Titania descended the stage as they approached. "I'm pleased to see all of you here tonight." Her eyes settled on Aliana rather than the former king of Camelot.

"Like we had much of a choice," Lacy muttered. "We were all but kidnapped by Puck." Galahad cleared his throat and shot Lacy a warning look.

Titania raked her gaze over Lacy. Her face showed no sign of annoyance, but somehow Aliana knew the queen wasn't pleased with her smart-mouthed friend. "I believe you were on your way here before Puck brought you to my palace, yes?"

"We weren't looking for your city, per say," Galahad told her. "But we were hoping to find information to help us find the Dragon, Silzik. Or possibly a clue regarding Excalibur's location."

“We know my sword is here on the Isle of the Blessed,” Arthur said as soon as Galahad finished. “What we don’t know is *where* it hides.”

Titania nodded slightly, her calculating gaze slipping between the king and Galahad. “Such information does not come cheaply, dear king.” Her gaze flicked to Aliana’s new gauntlet. “And I’ve already given you one mighty gift without receiving anything in exchange.”

Aliana clenched her fist, feeling the glove pull and slide over her flesh as she did. If Titania had wanted something for it, why didn’t she say anything earlier?

“What price would you ask for the information?” Arthur asked.

“I would ask two things,” Titania said, taking a gold and jewel-encrusted goblet that a servant handed her. “I would ask a sword for a sword. Should you claim Excalibur, you would give me the sword that the Lady of the Lake gave you.”

Arthur nodded his acceptance, but Aliana wondered why Titania had chosen such a simple thing. She reflected on the strange jewels that decorated the Elf blade, but her thoughts were interrupted when Arthur spoke. “And the second?” he asked.

The queen took a long drink from her goblet before answering. “The second is a task I would ask of the Destined One.”

Aliana gulped as her friends all shifted a fraction closer to her. Galahad tried to tug her closer to his body but Aliana stood firmly on her own. She hadn’t shown Titania weakness in the cave when she’d freed Arthur. She couldn’t do so now. “What do you want me to do?”

The queen looked at Galahad, and Aliana swore she saw frosty contempt for her knight in the queen’s emerald eyes. “At a time of my choosing,” she finally said, “I will tell you of the task I have in mind and you must complete it.”

“Your Majesty...” Arthur said.

“Deal,” Aliana said over Arthur’s words. The queen grinned wickedly, and Aliana ignored the sharp, reproachful looks from the guys and the hard pinch to her side from Lacy.

“Aliana—” Owen started, but Titania silenced him with a glare.

“The bargain is struck,” the queen declared, looking to Arthur.

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