

The Queen They Made

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Prologue

Restricted Record | Vault of Crowns | Scribe: E. Varast (Royal Historian)
Entry I: On the Matter of the Queen They Made

They will say she was born wicked.
That corruption marked her long before birth.
That her crown was shaped from bloodshed, tempered in blight, and sealed by shadows that should have remained buried forever.

These are the stories that comfort them.
Stories shaped to absolve guilt and distance themselves from the ruin they helped create.

But I remember her before the darkness.

Before the priests' verdicts.
Before the king's death.
Before eight of the nine woke in their graves of dust and memory.

She was gentle in those days.
Brave in ways that frightened the villagers.
And though she bore sorrow like a wound that never healed, she carried hope, fragile but defiant, as though she believed the world could still be mended.

I record here the truth as I am sworn to do:

She did not rise to the throne by her desire.
She rose because we forced her into it.
Every choice we stripped from her carved the shape of the queen she would become.

I witnessed the first fracture.
I watched the lies take root within the court.
I catalogued the prayers not meant for mortal ears, prayers that stirred old things beneath the stone.

I saw the girl condemned.
I saw the queen crowned.
And I saw the creature she became when the world demanded its own destruction and handed her the knife.

Let the priests speak their revisions.
Let the nobles ink their polished falsehoods.
Let the kingdom cling to the version of events that lets them sleep.

But this entry shall remain unchanged.

This is the truth of the queen they made.

End of Entry I.

Chapter One

My records begin on the morning of the execution. It is important that the telling starts here, the moment Vira, the girl who would one day become our queen experienced the first in a series of losses that forged the queen our history remembers.

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The crowd crushed in around me long before I reached the square.

Bodies packed shoulder to shoulder, breath steaming in the cold morning air as everyone strained for a glimpse of the platform. I kept my head down, weaving through elbows and cloaks until I reached the gallows stage, placing my hands on the edge of the frost-bitten wood.

The cold slid along my spine like a warning, nipping at my nose and toes, but I didn't care. I needed to be here. I needed to see her. I lifted my eyes enough to see the edge of the guillotines frame; pale wood rimed with frost. My stomach twisted so hard I thought I would be sick, but I kept going, pushing against my toes, reaching for a better view.

Mama was somewhere beyond that. Bound. Surrounded. Alone.

A thick fingered hand grasped my worn cloak before yanking me back into the sea of bodies. I fought to recover my spot, but it was useless. The crowd swallowed me whole, pushing me deeper until my back pressed against a wall of wool and armor. I was surrounded by strangers who whispered her name like a curse. Strangers who didn't know the truth.

I didn't want to hear their lies.

I didn't want this to be true.

But I couldn't leave her.

Not now.

An intense desire built beneath my ribs, my eyes darting back and forth for a way through the mob. My gaze landed on a pile of pine boxes that towered over the swarm. I moved fast, reaching my goal in mere seconds before scaling the side with ease, and perching myself on the edge of the box on top.

I looked toward the platform as The Order of Severance took to the stage on the beat of a thundering drum. Their arrival forced a hush to fall across the crowd, a silence so quiet that even the crows that were perched on the parapets remained still, watching, knowing. My heart plummeted into my stomach at the sight of them. Their dark cloaks and bone-pine masks with a stylized nine-prong pine etched into the brow.

The Order filled the block, forming a semi circle behind the guillotine as the king and young prince came into view, situating themselves in the center, ahead of the guillotine, addressing the gathering of witnesses.

The king stepped forward, robes whispering across the wooden platform. When he spoke, his voice carried like steel striking stone, meant to reach the farthest corners of the square and leave nothing unsaid.

“My loyal subjects.” He began, “today we gather not for spectacle, but to right a wrong made against the kingdom and the church. A kingdom endures only when its laws are honored, its crown respected, and our gods are obeyed.”

The young prince stood at his right side, chin lifted, posture mirroring his father’s. A student shadowing the master.

My mother was presented before the crowd, shivering in the open air, laid bare as the gods first made her, stripped of clothing, of warmth, and of dignity.

A hot pulse beat in my chest, burning against the cold morning air. I had no words for the emotion rising through me, only the certainty that nothing about this was right. My hands shook with a quiet fury, and I folded them into my sleeves. I could not draw attention. Not here. Not now.

“Before you, stands one who has forsaken all three.”

A murmur rolled through the crowd before the king raised his hand, silencing them before he continued, his voice swelling with righteous condemnation.

“Forsaken.”

“Broken faith.”

“Called what must not be called.”

“This woman is charged with treachery against the Crown. With endangerment of the realm through forbidden rites. And with attempting to stir powers that were severed for a reason.”

The priests repeated each charge, their voices layering like a dirge:

“Treachery.”

“Endangerment.”

“Forbidden rites.”

I watched on the edge of my seat as the priests dragged my mother behind the guillotine and pressed her to her knees. They locked her wrists and neck into the wooden slats, sealing her fate with calm efficiency. Her head lowered, her hair spilling over her face like a shroud.

The king pressed onward.

“Know this: Our Gods watch over us because we uphold the boundary that protects mortal life. But she” he pointed at my mother accusingly, “sought to cross it. She sought to whisper to the Nine, whose bodies were buried by the wiser men of the past.”

Again, the priests echoed:

“Buried.”

“Silenced.”

“Severed.”

The king’s voice lowered, more intimate and menacing.

“To call upon such beings is not courage, but corruption. A disease of the spirit, and a threat to every man, woman, and child who calls this realm home.”

He gestured to the crowd, sweeping their fear and fury into himself like fuel.

“For this, by decree of the throne, by the authority of the Order, and by the sacred law of Severance, she is condemned to die.”

The priests’ voices boomed in answer:

“Condemned.”

“Severed.”

“Judged.”

The prince cast a nervous glance at his father, seeking approval, but holding the royal posture. The king did not acknowledge him, instead lifting his chin, delivering the final decree:

“Let her fate stand as reminder and warning. The boundary between mankind and the forbidden is thin, and those who cross it will be cut away.”

A chilling echo followed:

“Cut away.”

And in the breath that followed, my world began to end.

I did not understand what they meant, and none of it felt true. My mother was no conspirator of the Nine. She was my mother, nothing more.

I watched her closely as she lifted her head and scanned the crowd, though I had no idea what she was searching for. When her eyes reached mine, her movement stilled. Her lips began to shape words, too soft to hear, but as the whisper rose, the tone became familiar.

“Hush now, my wandering star, rest easy in the evening.

Ancient guardians of our hollow earth, listen, please hear me.”

I listened intently, catching every line. The crowd murmured in confusion, unable to recognize the tongue. It was an ancient language, long forgotten by man, though my mother and I had known it since birth.

“Take her in your ancient care, I beg you, follow close behind.

Please old ones, find her, please veil her from their wrath.”

A faint glow escaped her mouth, a string of blue shimmering specks that drifted into the cold air. As her voice grew stronger, the light grew with it.

“Tender child of mine, walk now without fear.
For the elders beneath the soil, stand ever so near.”

The ground responded. The blue shimmer rising between the wooden boards like answering fireflies. The crowd gasped. The king’s eyes widened, and his expression shifting from triumph to terror.

He snapped his head toward the executioner. “Now. Do it now,” he shouted.

My mother kept singing.

“Where I am pulled away, let her life be carried.
Keep her away from any harm. Keep her, until the prophecy is ready.”

The blade dropped before the final lines left her lips. For a single, impossible moment before it touched her, the glowing blue shimmer flared outward, sweeping through the square and rushing into the waiting pines. A terror-soaked scream ripped out of my lungs. The crowd erupted in horror as well. Whether they reacted to the blue shimmer or to the death, I had no way of knowing.

“Don’t fear this!” the priests proclaimed, “It’s the corruption leaving the body! You are all safe!”

I climbed down from the boxes. I needed to be with her. I couldn’t leave her. I barely touched the ground before someone stopped me with a grip that bit into my shoulder. I craned my head back to see who had grabbed me, it was my father, the coward. He picked me up, hoisting me over his shoulder before trudging through the crowd.

“You weren’t supposed to be here Vira.” He snapped as we reached the edge of the pines where the path led home. I fought for him to release me, as hard as I possibly could, but he was stronger than me.

On our first step into the forest, a blue shimmer touched my cheek as if greeting me. My hair stirred in its presence, while everything else around us remained untouched.

The historian in me must note what she could not have known then. This trial had been decided long before the crowd gathered. The king needed a display of strength, and he clung to the performance with desperate resolve. She threatened the lies that held his rule together, and any threat to those lies was destined to be destroyed.

I end this account with a truth they tried to bury. What happened in that square seemed small to those who carried out the sentence. A shimmer in the air. A child crying for her mother. A woman who dared to sing in the face of death.

Yet this moment shaped every shadow that followed. The church would later write that the wind was nothing more than winter's breath, terrified of what it revealed. They would insist the child in the crowd was ordinary, a face without meaning. Their lies became the truth the kingdom chose to remember.

But I was there. I saw the fear in the king's eyes when the blue shimmer rose. I saw the priests tremble beneath their carved masks. The priests named it corruption, a claim they repeated often enough that even the king believed it. Yet the evidence recorded in our oldest texts reveals something very different. The shimmer did not rise as a sign of decay. It rose because the Vorenathi heard her words and chose to respond. What happened in that square was not a fall into darkness. It was a call, and it was answered.

They destroyed an innocent woman to protect the fragile story that held their power together. And in doing so, they forged the very force they feared.

This was their first and greatest mistake. The act that shattered a life, stained a kingdom, and sparked her villainous reign.