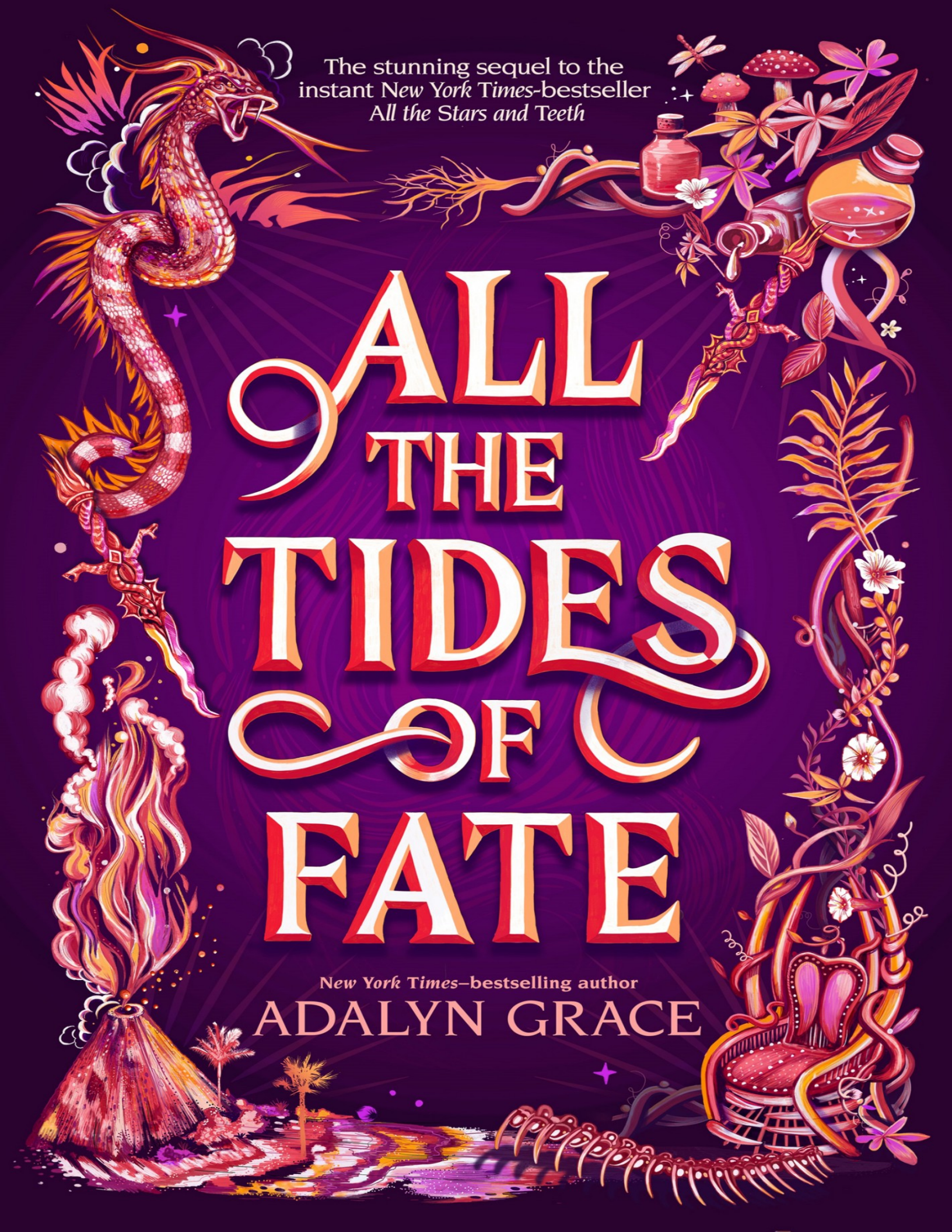


The stunning sequel to the
instant New York Times-bestseller
All the Stars and Teeth

ALL THE TIDES OF FATE

New York Times–bestselling author
ADALYN GRACE



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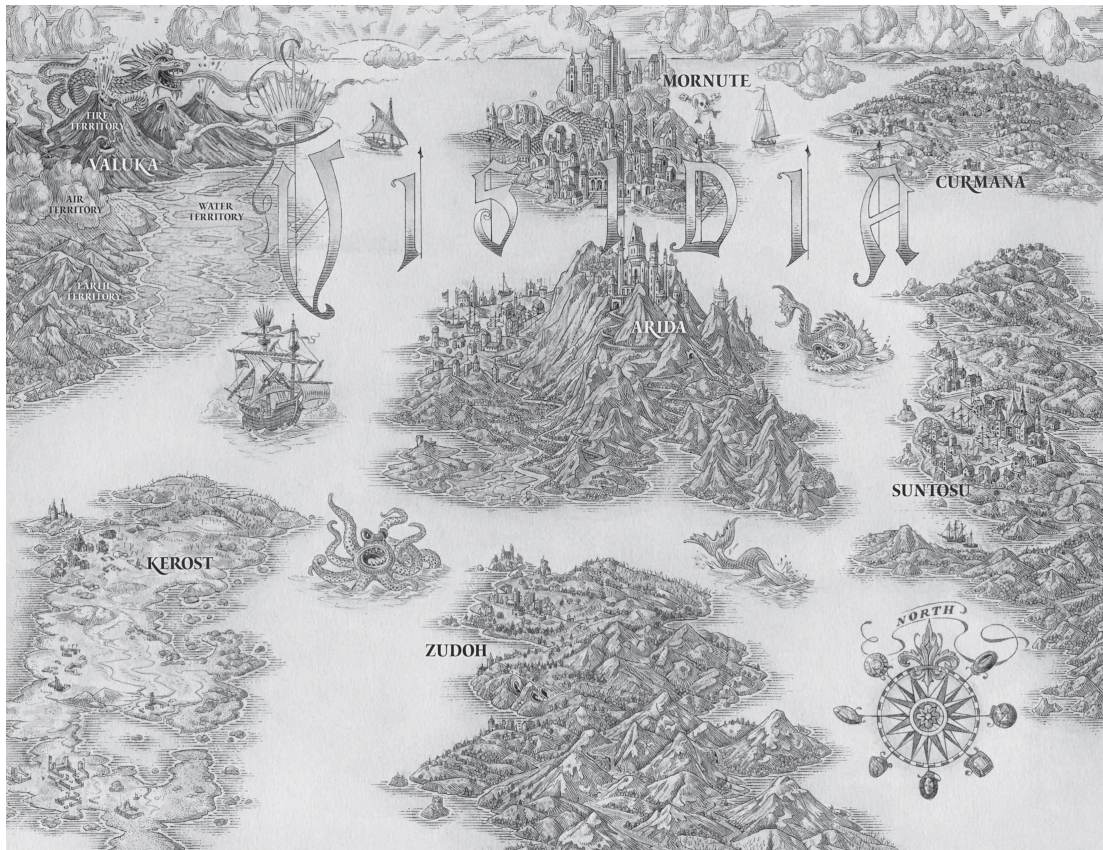
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To Josh—

*For telling me to write this series, and for believing in me
while I did.*

To Tomi—

Because there's no one I'd rather be doing this with.





THE KINGDOM OF

ISLIDA

ARIDA

Island of soul magic

Represented by sapphire

VALUKA

Island of elemental magic

Represented by ruby

MORNUTE

Island of enchantment magic

Represented by rose beryl

CURMANA

Island of mind magic

Represented by onyx

KEROST

Island of time magic

Represented by amethyst

SUNTOSU

Island of restoration magic

Represented by emerald

ZUDOH

Island of curse magic

Represented by opal

CHAPTER ONE

This water is fierce.

It snarls as it thrashes against *The Duchess*, who lets herself be jarred by the wrath of winter's tides. She tests her new captain, knocking me against the weatherworn helm as grainy seawater slickens the wood and dampens my fingers.

But I won't slip. Not this time.

"Back the mainsail!" I dig my boots into the deck and grip the helm tight, refusing to let the ship bait me. I am the captain. If *The Duchess* refuses to listen, I've no choice but to make her.

Today there's no promise of neighboring islands in the distance. None of Mornute's mountains are visible through the milky-white haze that blows in from the north. It wets the air, seeping into my pores and plastering dampened curls to my neck.

The ship buckles from another blow of the tides, and I brace myself for what's coming as I see the faint shadow of the fast-approaching buoy I anchored to the sea a full season ago. I shut my eyes and pray under my breath to any god who might listen as we approach, begging them to spare me. Begging them to let this be the day that the boundaries of my curse are pushed further.

But as always, the gods refuse to listen.

The moment *The Duchess* passes the buoy, my knees buckle as white-hot pain rips up my spine and through my skull like a too-familiar blade cleaving through me. I bite the inside of my cheek until I taste blood, doing everything I can to keep my pain contained so that the crew won't grow suspicious. I dig my fingernails into the helm, cool sweat licking at my neck as my vision flickers in and out. Desperate, I give Vataea the signal.

She leans over the stern at once, whispering a chant so fierce that every word that passes her lips is a clap of thunder. The sea regards her curiously at first, then obeys Vataea's siren magic with a snap, twisting the direction of the tides. Some of the crew mumble with irritation as we turn back toward

the docks, wondering why I have them do this same silly trip every day—not even half a morning long, and never to any specific destination. But at least out loud, they don’t complain. They’re not foolish enough to go against their queen.

The moment *The Duchess* is southbound toward Arida, the tension against my skull eases and my ragged breathing steadies. Only when my vision begins to clear do I loosen my grip.

Vataea presses a tentative hand upon my back. “Perhaps it’s time we stop this.” The mermaid’s voice never fails to sound like the sweetest of songs, even if the words threaten to cleave me again. “Maybe it’s time to stop fighting your curse, and to make the best of it.”

I say nothing. Until someone’s had half their soul ripped away and cursed into another living person, I don’t care to hear their suggestions. Vataea will never know what it feels like to have part of her being merged with someone else. To be able to feel their presence. Their strongest emotions. Their *everything*.

She doesn’t get to be the one who’s fatigued from trying to break this curse.

Vataea’s hand slips from my back, leaving my skin cold. “I’m sorry for what happened, but being reckless isn’t going to cure you any faster.”

I want to bristle. I want to turn and yell about all the things she doesn’t understand. But instead, the air in my lungs deflates as she turns and makes her way to the bow.

Those are the limits of my curse. A curse that means half my soul—and all my magic—lives within Bastian.

And like today, every attempt to break it only ends in failure.

The docks are filled with royal soldiers and servants who draw back as we approach Arida’s docks, where the fog camouflages the visiting ships, turning their sails opaque. Instinctively my chest seizes when I see the figures waiting there for me, knowing it’s no longer time to be a captain, but a queen.

“Toss the anchors!” I twist the helm and the ship groans as I force her against the waves, slowing our brisk speed. My crew obeys, and the two anchors catch the bottom of the shallow water, jarring us. Someone slams into the ship’s ledge and slips face-first onto the deck, but I can’t help them. I twist the helm the opposite way, forcing the ship to oblige. To obey.

She steadies herself, and my grip loosens as my muscles relax.

The moment we hit the shore, my crew spurs into action. Some focus on righting the anchors and dropping the sails while others toss themselves upon the shore to secure the ship. They lower the ramp onto sand red as blood, where Mira, my lady-in-waiting, stands in a thick black cape with a collar of white wolf fur that stretches to her modest chin, tight and suffocating. Her matching gloved hands are folded before her, eyes narrowed with the perpetual worry I’ve grown accustomed to.

“You’re late.” Her breath steams the air, creating whorls that shroud the faces of royal staff who straighten as I approach. Two of them hold a plush sapphire pillow with elegant silver-and-gold embroidery, and balanced atop it sits my crown—the head of a giant Valuna eel, its mouth open and waiting to sit upon my head and clamp around my jaw. Waiting to devour me.

The gem-encrusted spine glistens from the dampness of the fog, making my throat thick as I consider how natural this false crown looked on Father. It’s a crown made for imposters, and as it’s fitted swiftly upon my head, I can’t help but think how natural it must look on me now, too.

“I’m never late.” I fasten my sapphire coat tight and straighten my crown as the eel’s jagged teeth graze my jaw and temples. “I’m the queen.”

I’m quick to match the smile Mira flashes at me, though our playfulness is nothing but a farce. This is a game we’ve played since summer, one that’s expected by my kingdom. They smile and I smile back, no questions asked. I’m their queen now, and despite all that’s happened, I’m meant to show my people that we’re still strong. That while Visidia has suffered loss, we will unite to surpass our hardships and restore the kingdom.

“Tell that to everyone waiting. It’s your first advisory meeting as Visidia’s queen; you ought to make a better impression.” Mira’s tired eyes roll; it’s

something she never would have done before last summer, before she was nearly killed during Kaven's attack on Arida. Now though, she's relaxed, willing to tell anyone what's on her mind—including me.

I'm glad for it. I'm glad for the color in her cheeks and the energy in her step. I'm glad that she's *alive*. Not everyone was so lucky.

"The queen dowager is waiting with the advisers in the throne room," Mira begins, but those words ignite a wicked chill within me. It blossoms in my stomach and wraps claws around my throat.

"Don't call her that." *Dowager*. I practically hiss at the title, not needing an additional reminder that Father is dead, the remnants of his charred body feeding the fish as he rests at the bottom of the sea. "When you're in my presence, call her by her name."

Mira's cheeks flush, and I try not to let the embarrassment from my outburst show. When she opens her mouth, I wave her words away, not wanting the apology that lingers on her tongue. The last thing I need is more people tiptoeing around me—especially when they've no idea what really happened the night Father died. That if I'd been able to stop Kaven before he reached Arida, Father would still be alive. I'd be the princess, and my soul would still be in one piece.

But that's far from the fate the gods cursed me with.

I shove my hands deep into my coat pockets before anyone can see how fiercely they tremble, and raise my chin high for those watching. "Take me to the advisers."

CHAPTER TWO

The throne room falls silent when I enter, the last tendrils of conversation evaporating like smoke as the heels of my boots snap against the marble floor.

Bitter air and the prickle of ghosts brushing against my skin welcome me into a room I've not stepped foot in since I fought Kaven here last summer. It's one that no longer shows signs of the fire that destroyed it, or even a drop of the blood I remember flowing so freely from Father's corpse when he drove a sword through his own stomach to sever his connection to Kaven and give Bastian and me the ability to fight him.

I don't stop to observe the advisers who stand and bow their heads until after I've taken a seat at the head of an oversize black quartz table, rubbing my fingers over the charred bones of my throne—freshly lacquered since the fire so that it's sturdy enough to sit upon.

It's a cruel punishment to hold our council meeting here, but no one says a word, likely thinking the same thing I am—one of us is sitting in the very spot where Father died.

Mother sits after I do. Her curls are slicked back, fashioned into plaits that are so tight they lift her forehead, making her eyebrows high and alert. Once, her beautiful brown skin glowed radiant as the seaside cliffs at sunrise. Now it's sallow and sunken, and she holds her lips like she's just taken a bite of something thoroughly unsatisfying. Perhaps she feels the wrongness of this room as much as I do.

Advisers from each of the islands—with the notable but not unexpected exception of Kerost—take their seats around us. Feathered quills and parchments full of notes lie before them. There's an empty seat on my right meant for my leading adviser, Ferrick, but I wave for a royal guard to take his chair away.

"Ferrick has duties elsewhere today," I tell the advisers before they can ask, jutting my jaw so that I might look as authoritative as possible beneath my crown. "I'll speak on behalf of Arida myself."

Next to me, Mother's voice chides in a whisper only I can hear, "Mind your tone, Amora. You're not here to fight; we all want the same thing."

Her words force my lips into a thin line. Ever since I took the throne, there's been no shortage of those who question my authority. But she's right; confronting Visidia's advisers as though I'm prepared to fight them will do me no good.

Digging deep into myself, I find my will to continue playing the game Mira and I started back on the docks—the same tired game I've been playing with the kingdom since taking the throne. I plaster a smile to my lips.

"Thank you all for coming." I make myself sound lighter this time. Friendlier. "I know things are difficult for all of us right now, so I appreciate everyone's willingness to meet."

"I'm glad we finally have the chance." The voice that speaks is deceptively tender. It belongs to Zale, the newly appointed adviser of Zudoh, an island we're working on reintroducing into the kingdom after my father wrongly banished them eleven years ago. Though her people cruelly suffered, Zale was kind enough to offer my crew and me shelter and protection when we arrived in Zudoh on our quest to find Kaven—even despite Bastian being his brother.

Ever since her island was freed from Kaven's reign, she's developed a lively glow to her warm skin, and her once hollow eyes have filled with a brilliance that rivals the brightest malachite. She's gorgeous in her silky white robes, but there's a fierceness in her that's not to be overlooked. Zale's one of the sharpest and most determined women I've ever met.

Beside her, Lord Bargas sits as proudly as one can be while bundled in a ruby coat so thick that it's practically a blanket. Accompanied by his young successor, they represent Valuka, the kingdom of elemental magic. My heart skips a beat when I see him, as I'm reminded sharply of Bastian and how he'd pretended to be the baron's son on the night we first met to gain entry to my birthday celebration. The baron and his crew had been left out at sea, disarmed, disrobed, and under the heavy influence of Curmanan sleeping powder.

“Hello, Your Majesty.” His lips pull into the kind of smile that could melt ice during the coldest winter. He’s the oldest adviser, nearly sixty, and seeing him not only reminds me of Bastian, but also of the way Father liked to joke with the baron. The way he would clap Lord Bargas on the shoulder and roar with one of his chest-rattling laughs.

“It’s a pleasure to see you again, Lord Bargas.” I clear my throat and the emotion swelling within it, tucking it away for a later time when eyes are less prying. “I hear you were sleeping the last time we all met.” That earns me a few chuckles, even from the lord and the young woman sitting next to him.

“I assure you, it wasn’t by choice.” There’s a conspiring gleam in his eyes. “That blasted pirate even stole one of my favorite swords. Be sure to get that back for me, would you?”

I match his lively smile. “I’ll see what I can do. Who’s this you’ve brought with you?”

He claps a firm hand upon the young woman’s shoulder. “This is Azami Bargas, the daughter of my eldest brother, and my new successor. Azami will be fully taking over by spring.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Azami.”

She bows her head quick and low. “Likewise, Your Majesty.”

I’m surprised to find there are other faces here I don’t recognize. While most watch me with intrigue, Mornute’s new adviser steeples their fingers on the marble table, then taps anxious patterns upon it. With each tap of their fingers, tiny constellations dance around their lacquered black nails. When they catch me looking, they jolt to attention.

“Leo Gavel, Your Majesty!” Leo’s face is pleasantly youthful, with full peachy cheeks sprinkled with freckles enchanted to look like stars. Physically, Leo is small and plump, with striking features that give me a tinge of jealousy for all those able to practice enchantment magic. They’ve piercing yellow eyes and matching buzzed hair, and wear a lavender pantsuit with winged liner in a similar shade around their eyes. “We haven’t been able to meet since Mornute’s previous adviser was killed during the attack, but I assure you that I’m well trained. I look forward to working together.”

“As do I.” But my words are forced as my thoughts linger on the night of the attack, wondering how many people I let die. Because I couldn’t kill Kaven the first time he and I fought on Zudoh, how much blood am I responsible for spilling?

There’s yet another new face—the adviser representing Curmana, the island of mind magic, judging from his loose onyx pants and shimmering cape.

“I’m Elias Freebourne, and I’ll be filling in for my sister, who went into labor the morning we were loading the ship to journey here. I look forward to serving you, Your Majesty.” There’s a glint in his striking green eyes that warms my skin. I turn quickly away.

“This meeting is to discuss the unification of Visidia,” I tell them. “I’d like to focus on our restoration efforts with Zudoh and Kerost. While relations with the former are going as well as we can expect, we need to figure out a way to restore Kerost’s trust in us before they secede from the kingdom.” We let them suffer from the storms for far too long. We ignored them as a time trader profited off their pain and stole years of their lives. If we want to make it up to them, we’re going to have our work cut out for us.

Mornute’s adviser stirs. “I’m more than happy to discuss restoration efforts, Your Majesty. But my primary purpose for coming here is to discuss the well-being of Mornute, and how it’s being impacted by Visidia’s recent ... changes.”

At once I know Leo is referring to my abolishment of the law preventing Visidians from practicing more than one magic. A law that was crafted upon the kingdom’s biggest lie, and that I put an end to the moment I took the throne.

For centuries the Montaras kept Visidians weak, ensuring they only practiced one magic—and never even had the ability to learn soul magic—so that no one could single-handedly overpower our family. They crafted a legend of a beast that would cause Visidia’s ruin should they break the law. A legend that tricked my people into believing that the Montaras alone could

use dangerous soul magic to protect them. The story became so ingrained in our kingdom's foundation that few people ever strayed.

Even now, my people don't know what the Montaras—my family—did. They believe I vanquished the beast and freed magic. If they knew the truth, I wouldn't be on the throne. I'd never have the chance to make things right.

So long as I wear this crown, I have only one goal: repent for the mistakes of my ancestors by breaking the Montara curse and freeing soul magic from our bloodline. I'll make this kingdom whole by giving my people everything they were always meant to have, and finally tell them the truth.

And then, I'll accept whatever punishment they see fit.

"I, too, would like to discuss how these changes are affecting our individual islands," says the Suntosan adviser, Lord Garrison. He's a stout man with a thick red beard that conceals half his face from view. It's meticulously styled every time I've seen him, and soft, too. Like he coats it in oil every night. "Some of us have traveled great lengths to be here. It's only right that we get to address our concerns."

Mother's reminder rings in my head—*you're not here to fight them*. But gods, between his proud chin and assessing eyes, I can't help myself. "I know our geography, Lord Garrison," I say tersely, satisfied at the way his eyes narrow in surprise. "I'm very aware of how far you've traveled. I'm certainly happy to listen to everyone's—"

"In the past," he says, rolling over my words as though I haven't spoken, "King Audric would open these meetings with each of us presenting our own thoughts and needs for the islands we represent, rather than opening himself —"

At the mention of Father, something in me snaps. Mother's hand finds my knee beneath the table, squeezing it in warning. But her presence isn't enough to prevent the malice that cracks my smile.

Lord Garrison was always loyal to Father, but like the rest of the advisers, he was politely cold to me. Up until this past fall, I was hardly allowed any interaction with the advisers. Father held too many secrets; until I earned the title of heir to the throne, I was never allowed details of these meetings.

It was purposeless and frustrating, especially now as I sit at the head of a room, meant to lead a group of advisers who hardly know me and whose trust they believe I've not yet earned.

But they're mistaken. I earned my place on this throne the moment I stabbed Kaven. I earned this seat with his blood and mine. I earned it with my magic, and the sacrifice of every life I took to get here.

Trust be damned. I've earned this crown with my soul.

"Thank you for letting me know how my father ran things. We all know he was a perfect ruler, never making a single mistake." I straighten in my seat, pinning my eyes to Lord Garrison's. "And considering how I was never allowed in those meetings, and that no one ever thought to include me, your information is *very* helpful. But I'd like to remind you, Lord Garrison, that my father is dead." I don't look away as he flinches, nor do I turn to Mother as her hand goes limp on my thigh. Instead, I keep my focus trained on the Suntosan adviser as he shifts with discomfort.

When he opens his mouth to speak, I hold up my hand and continue. "However the late king used to rule doesn't matter, because he's no longer the one who sits on the throne; I am. I'm not sure if you felt it was okay to condescend to me because I'm a woman, because of my age, or simply because I'm new to this position and you felt the need to establish some sort of dominance you do not and will never have. But the next time you open your mouth to speak to me, remember that you're talking to your queen. Do you understand?"

From the corner of my eye, I catch Mornute's adviser slack-jawed in their seat while the others look away in uncomfortable silence. Lord Garrison's face turns scarlet, and I'm glad for his embarrassment. He deserves it.

"I understand, Your Majesty," he practically huffs, as if uncertain whether to be surprised or apologetic.

"Good. Then I suppose we can continue with the discussion I've laid out?" I roll my shoulders back, making it a point to show that I'm relaxed, and not a tensed coil ready to spring again. "I am, of course, interested in discussing the aforementioned 'changes,' as well, as I suggested before your outburst.