

Today was a horrible day to be here. The gravestone was polished marble that shone like a jewel in the sun. The birds' odes and a sweet scent of spring flowers floated on the slight breeze. The day was too bright and cheery for such a gray storm inside.

I gently touched the silver dagger that was beside the stone. Tracing the ornate decorations brought back so many memories. One kept replaying over and over and over again, tumbling through my mind on an endless loop. I wanted it to stop but didn't have the willpower to do so.

A brave warrior had led us all into battle that day. I could only remember one fraction of time in that battle. Her helmet had been thrust off earlier in the battle. Her long, blonde hair flowed through the air, giving her a halo of gold. Her blue-green eyes were hard and full of a strange emotion of fear, determination, and anger. Purple clouds of light swirled around her fingertips. An arrow, the feathers blue and green, was the only thing that seemed to move in this fraction of a memory. It spun as it traveled towards her. The tip gleamed in the light just before it hit her. I didn't see any blood, but her eyes filled with pain. I screamed her name as she fell to the ground.

I remembered other memories too. I took her back to our stronghold. The horse had run as fast as I could force it to go. It was so bumpy as I cradled her limp body in my arms I thought I would drop her. She was still alive. Her skin was still warm, and her chest still rose and fell with breath. I remembered Marius yelled at me to grab medicines and potions once we got her home. He knew how important my sister was to the revolution, to the war, to me. I remembered her hand becoming cold. I would have said I remembered that drowning pain but that hadn't left.

"She'd want you to continue," a voice said from behind.

I was almost grateful for the interruption of the memories.

"I've lost any faith we had in winning the war," I returned. "Marius, if she's dead..."

The tears sliding down my cheek silenced me. Marius knelt beside me. He placed a bouquet of roses at the base of the stone.

"Be realistic for a moment," he said. "Faith wasn't going to win the war for us. Do you think she'd want you to stop fighting?"

"Don't talk to me about what she wants," I snapped.

I turned to him with a glare. His face had no anger in it. It had pity and sympathy. I didn't want that. Being angry was always easier. I wished he would feel that way. I was good at arguing.

"I've been through this before. Faith is the first death you've experienced. And I know that we're doing the right thing. The enemy wants to kill us just cause we have magic. Faith and others have sacrificed themselves to do what is right."

"If it couldn't help Faith, why is any of this magic stuff useful?" I demanded, throwing up my hands. "If we have powers, why can't we save them?"

"Nadine," Marius warned. "You know that isn't true. We aren't fighting cause it's useful. You're mad that she's dead. I get that. You're grieving. It's normal. I know you're mad at me cause I couldn't--"

"Don't," I interrupted. "That's not why I'm mad at you. I'm not mad at you at all really. I just..."

"Just mad at the war for taking her away and so you've lost faith that the world was going to be better after the war?" he suggested.

I managed a small smile. I appreciated how much Marius knew about me.

"Yeah, that's exactly it," I admitted. "I don't want to support a war that will just kill the people I love, but I also know that if we do nothing we still die."

"You can't ignore everything. Take that anger that's all inside of you and use it to make the war's end come sooner. Make things safe for all of us. Just no using it for revenge, alright?"

“If I could use it for revenge, I would,” I scoffed. “I didn’t see who killed her.”

Marius was silent for a moment, thinking. I turned to him and he finally spoke again.

“I’m not really sure if I should encourage revenge then cause you’d take it out on all of our enemies or discourage it cause revenge still doesn’t get you anywhere.”

I smiled and nearly laughed.

“Come back to camp when you’re ready,” he said, standing up.

“I’ll come now,” I decided. “I want to be ready if the enemy decides to attack again.”

I had lost Faith, but there was still a small flame of faith that we’d win the war.