



Chapter 7:

The World Unravels

The months passed; Crystal watched as the world unravelled around her.

Since the murder, it felt like everything had changed, she started to not recognise people anymore. The once joyous and optimistic humans became darker and sadness gripped many of their hearts.

After the dragon attack, voices started to visit her in dreams, dark voices that echoed the words her father had told her and Blake at the beach, that the King had abandoned them. Crystal didn't want to believe the voices; it couldn't be true. Crystal knew in her heart that the little white lamb had been sent from the King himself to save her and her friend. Each morning when she awoke, Crystal would grip her necklace and be reminded of the promise made and was filled with the reassurance that the King was indeed still with her.

Crystal would watch as a stream of people each day would flow into her home to speak with Tavon, they sought his advice and guidance on the things that were bothering them in their lives. Tavon would patiently listen to their grievances before handing them sealed envelopes and sending them on their

way. This happened over and over, and Crystal became curious about what was written in the envelopes.

One day after the crowds had gone home for the night, Crystal confronted her father and asked him what the papers were.

"They are spells," her father answered simply.

"Spells?" Crystal asked curiously. "What are those?"

"With the magic of the King, I write a spell, a series of instructions for the people to follow. If they follow it, the King will address and fix whatever troubles them."

"That doesn't sound right ..." Crystal murmured under her breath. She couldn't remember Yanis ever issuing these spells?

"Here, I will write you a spell, take it and you will feel much better," Tavon sat for a moment scribbling words on a piece of paper, then wrapping what looked like a stone and small piece of bone in the paper, before holding it out to Crystal, "Take it," he smiled at his daughter.

Crystal stared at the paper with scepticism, something about it just didn't feel right, "Um, no it's ok father, I feel better already," she said before turning and running out the door. Something about the spells made her feel extremely uncomfortable, her promise pendent felt hot against her chest. She had grown to understand that the pendent would only grow warm when there was danger about. Crystal decided that she trusted the King's pendent over her father, even if he was the King's supposed Commander.

Her father had introduced many strange new cultures, one of which he called currency. Currency was made up of small circular metal pieces engraved with his initials on one side and a likeness of the King on the other side, these 'coins' were used in exchange of goods and services. No one was permitted to just give away their wares, or services, they had to use

the coins. If people did not have enough coins, then they would not get the goods. At first people were sceptical, but as more and more people accumulated more and more coins, they started to be able to afford more and more things, which made people around them jealous. This brought a false sense of joy to the people with the most money, they began to feel above those who had less coins than themselves.

No one had more coins than Crystal's father, who asked ever increasing prices for his services. No one but Crystal could see anything wrong with this system, which confused her greatly.

Soon there were people living on the streets, since no longer could people build free homes for them. If you wanted a home, you had to work and earn it yourself. If you did not work, you did not earn, with no money food and shelter were getting increasingly hard to come by. A class system was starting to appear in the city between the haves and have nots and it broke Crystal's heart to witness. She was sure this was not how the King would want things to be.

Another strange culture Crystal observed developing was that of segregation. Tavon began insisting that females be excluded from meetings and decision making amongst the people. He decreed that woman should leave all decisions up to their male counterparts and concentrate on running their households instead. At first, women thought that Tavon was being considerate of their busy lives, but slowly over the months, women started to feel left out and that their voices no longer mattered. Many women accepted this as their new normal, thinking it was the will of the King. Crystal though had her doubts; it broke her heart to witness women fall from the position of equals to that of subordinates. She though was only a child, so felt powerless to stop any of it, she had no idea why no one else noticed what was truly happening.

The biggest shock of Crystal's life came one rainy morning, when a knock came at the door while she sat with her family eating breakfast. Tavon answered the door. Crystal strained to hear what was being said between the mysterious man and her father. After a few moments, Tavon thanked the man and closed the door. When he turned, Crystal's heart almost stopped, the look of pure rage was etched across his face.

Tavon marched over to Crystal and stared with almost black eyes, in a cool, emotionless voice he said, "Alex is dead," before he stormed off to his work quarters.

Crystal sat in shock. Alex was one of Crystal's closest friends. For weeks he had been battling sadness. Crystal just a week prior had gone to see him to try and cheer him up. He had opened up to her that day, telling her how he felt a great darkness inside, a depression that would not go away. He had told her that his mother had come to visit Tavon and in exchange for all their money, he had given her a powerful spell, which she had placed under Alex's mattress.

At first Alex had felt happier, especially after the night he witnessed two glowing orbs enter his body. For a few weeks he felt great, he felt as though the glowing orbs had been the King himself entering into his very soul, but soon came to the realisation, when his life started to go wrong and the depression returned, that the orbs were not the King, that he had been deceived by the evil Army.

After this realisation the shadows came. All day and all night they would harass him, telling him to end it all, but Alex said he did not want to, he wanted to live become an adult. Alex felt as though the King had completely abandoned him.

Crystal had been scared hearing this story, she felt powerless to help him, but she did reassure him that the King still loved him and had not abandoned him, he just had to

remain strong and tell the shadows that they could not control him. She promised things would get better once they were able to reconnect with the King, he just had to remain strong until then.

"I don't know Crystal," Alex frowned sadly, "I don't think we will ever be able to reconnect with the King. I think he is truly gone and that only Louis and the Army control things now."

"No, don't think that Alex, please be strong!" Crystal pleaded.

"I'm sorry, but I feel this in my heart to be true. I really wish we were back in the Kingdom, where the King could refresh my soul and take away this burden that I am always feeling."

"I also wish for that," Crystal agreed.

"I think that is the one thing I miss the most about the Kingdom. I never realised until now just how important and special that morning cleansing actually was. We always just took it for granted, but it really was a miracle and I miss it and the King so much. I wish we never came to this terrible place, I feel as if there is a void inside my very soul and I have nowhere to hide and no one to turn to, not even the King."

Those were the last words Crystal ever heard him speak.

Crystal cried as she thought about Alex and his battle with this strange darkness. She somehow felt responsible, as if she had not done enough to help her friend when she had the chance. At that moment she felt small. Antonia wrapped her arms around her and whispered to not worry, that everything would be alright, but those were not the words that Crystal needed to hear at that moment. Shoving her mother's arms away, Crystal ran to her room, locking the door behind her. She wanted to be alone with her thoughts and tears.

At that moment, Crystal felt angry at the King, how could He let something so terrible happen to a young boy, barely a

year older than herself. Children weren't supposed to die, the mere thought terrified her! For a moment she felt that the King truly had abandoned them.

It was then that her pendent began to pulse, curious Crystal looked down and saw that it was glowing softly. She gripped it in her hands and slowly opened it. The promise, 'You belong to me!' glowed brightly like fire for a moment, before dimming back to normal.

In that moment, Crystal knew the King was still amongst them, he had not abandoned them. Crystal took much comfort in the fact that the King was watching. She slipped off her bed and kneeled on the floor and prayed that the King received Alex's soul and could give the troubled boy the peace and happiness which he deserved.

Alex wasn't sure how he had died; all he knew he was looking down at his lifeless body laying on top of his bed. Not knowing what was going to happen now, Alex turned and looked around, he hoped the King would come to greet him and take him from this terrible world, instead he was greeted by two tall dark shadow figures.

"Are you here to take me to the King?" he naively asked.

One the shadows laughed, a laugh that sent a chill down his spine. "We will take you to a King," said the second shadow figure.

With that, the shadows grabbed Alex's arms on either side and dragged him towards a portal which had opened in the corner of his room. Fear gripped him and he tried to pull away, but the shadows held him tightly.

"Where are you taking me?" he cried as they dragged him closer to the portal.

"To the place where you belong child."

Alex screamed in terror as he felt himself being sucked through the portal.

On the other side sat a dark foreboding castle. The castle was wrapped in chains, chains made by a giant spider who covered almost the whole front of the building. As the shadows dragged Alex closer, the spider opened a set of chains, to allow them entry into the building. Once they were through, the spider remade the chains, bigger and stronger than before.

The shadows dragged Alex through the black and grey halls of the castle.

Alex could see shadow figures poking their faces out from the shadows, some of them were squealing with glee.

Alex didn't know what this place was, but knew it was not part of the King's Kingdom. This was somewhere entirely different.

Down to the dungeon Alex was taken, and into a dark, damp cell he was thrown. A heavy caged door slammed behind him and before Alex could take a single step, heavy chains flew up from the floor and wrapped themselves around his leg. He tried to fight the chains, but it was a futile effort.

He sat down on the cold wet floor and began to cry.

"What's your name?" a voice came from the other side of the prison cell. Alex wiped away a tear and replied. "Alex. Who are you?"

"My name is Adair."

Alex felt a chill; Adair was the man that had mysteriously died months ago. Alex felt a small amount of relief that he was not in this awful place alone.

"Where are we? Where is the King?" Alex asked, desperate for answers. "The King is not here my boy," Adair said sadly. "We are subjects of

Louis and the Army now. This is our punishment for our sins."

Tears flowed from Alex's eyes. He had heard stories about Louis and his Army, but he had hoped it was just

a story the adults were making up to scare small children like himself.

"What will happen to us? When will the King come to save us?" Alex asked, desperate for answers.

"The King isn't coming for us, we are trapped here, possibly forever," Adair took a deep breath before continuing, "Louis and his Army minions will come for you soon, and they are going to hurt you. But you must be strong, don't let them break you. After a while, you will get use to the pain."

Alex felt his heart stop. What kind of afterlife was this? Why was the King punishing him like this? He asked Adair this question.

"The King isn't punishing us; we are being punished by Louis and the Army for breaking the King's Law. We have sinned and everyone we know will end up in here with us, being tortured by the minions for all of eternity," Adair gave a deep sigh. "My biggest regret is not listening to Yanis. He warned us about temptation, and the tricks Louis would play, but I did not listen. I just wanted that metre more of land, I don't know why I wanted it so badly, I had plenty of good viable land. My greed got to me in the end, so now I am here, far from the Kingdom, for all eternity."

"What happened to you?" Alex asked curiously. "I was murdered." Adair replied.

"By who?"

Adair took a deep breath before saying, "Tavon."

Alex gasped, "Commander Tavon was the murderer?" Alex could barely comprehend it.

"Commander Tavon?" Adair asked curiously, "My, things have changed since I left. How could that despicable man be the Commander!?"

Alex wondered this also. Things seemed so clear now, Alex could see where he and the rest of the humans had gone wrong. They had ignored their King and pursued their own quest for adventure and greed. This had been a momentous mistake and there was no way either of them could escape to warn the others about the dangerous path they were on.

“Don’t worry son, I’ll come up with a plan to save us,” Adair said reassuringly. “I don’t intend on spending all of eternity here.”

Adair’s words were cold comfort to Alex, who once again burst into tears.

Louis was delighted by the arrival of young Alex into his Kingdom. To have a child fall into his clutches would have to be torture for the King. Louis could imagine the King standing on his lonely balcony, overlooking his empty Kingdom and weeping for the lose of one of his precious children.

For weeks Louis and his minions had focused their efforts onto the boy, to drag him down so low that he would feel like he had no hope left for him in his life. It had been a delightful experience, seeing the fear in his eyes as he and his minions visited his room. His mother was the person though who opened the gateway to allow them full access to her son. She had placed one of Tavon’s spells under his mattress, which allowed him to enter his body and take control.

Louis wanted the boy to die from the start, he wanted to use him as symbol, to send a wave of fear through the humans, and let them know that not even the very young could escape death in this new world.

Louis was delighted when the people began questioning their mortality, many of them also felt like the King had truly abandoned them. The King would never have allowed such a

young child to die in the Kingdom, so the fact this child was now dead was proof that the King no longer loved or cared for them.

Louis kept a close eye on the people's thoughts and feelings through Tavon. Every day he would enter his body in order to put together the spells he would have Tavon pass out to everyone who sought his advice. Merely accepting the spell was a sin, so everyone who wanted help were actually just surrendering their eternal souls to Louis and his Army, and they had no idea they were doing it! It was the perfect plan!

In Tavon's body, Louis had also managed to divide the people by creating different wealth classes, he couldn't believe how fast greed was cultivated in the humans, it was as if they were born to be greedy, they fell so easily. It was just wonderful!

Dividing the people down through gender roles was also another brilliant idea of Louis's. The more he could divide and make people's lives a misery, the better he felt. His plan continued to come together smoothly, the almighty King at this moment in time, did not look so mighty to Louis. Louis couldn't be happier!

The King wiped a tear from his cheek. He mourned for the lose of Adair and Alex. They were trapped inside Louis's castle and there was nothing he could do about it. The King felt like Louis at this point was winning. Every day hundreds more of his people fell for Louis's tricks. The King wished he could break his own rules and go save them all, but he could not interfere with their free will. All he could do right now was weep for his lose. Yanis had tried to get back to the Kingdom with some of the King's faithful, but even their road had been blocked. Louis had planned this well, the King only wished his people were not so gullible to fall for his tricks.

But the King did have a plan to save them all up his sleeve, he was just waiting for the right moment to play his hand. If Louis thought he was more powerful than the King, he had something else coming. But for now, the King just had to sit and wait.

His time was coming.