

THESE VIOLENT DELIGHTS

Written by

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INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

In the dim light of a seedy dive bar, the CACKLES and SHOUTS of inebriated MEN and their nightly ESCORTS create a music unique to a socialization hub for the lower middle class.

SUPER: "NOUVEAUX, 2668"

Various MEN and WOMEN, dressed for blue-collar jobs, sit scattered around the cacophonous room.

Some watch a sporting match, featuring two teams of robots kicking a ball back and forth, on floor-to-ceiling screens. Occasionally, some of them CHEER with excitement as others CURSE and throw their hands in the air.

PROSTITUTES line the walls of the room, male and female, naturally beautiful and made up to accentuate their already well-displayed features. A constant stream of them flows in and out of the doors to a back, unseen section of the tavern.

Androids mill about behind the bar, making and delivering drink after drink for the paying human customers.

A few lone wolves sit at the counter, each playing absently with the dinky touchscreens built into the bar itself.

All except one.

At the end of the bar, face largely hidden by a raised black hood, Lilac REDEN (19) sits on a stool, her nervous fingers tapping against her otherwise untouched mug of ale.

A loud SHOUT from the gaming crowd causes Reden to jump and glance over her shoulder. After a moment, she relaxes and turns back towards the bar.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Lilac?

Reden gasps and turns around once more to find ANDREW (mid 40s) standing behind her, a half-empty glass in his hand. With features that have aged none too kindly over the years, Andrew regards her as one might regard a startled animal.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Hey, kid. It's just me.

Reden looks around at the other patrons in the busy bar, though none so much as raise their heads at the interaction.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

Reden turns back to the man and nods. Andrew downs the remnants of his glass and sets it down on the counter. With a smile, he extends his hand to Reden.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go somewhere quieter. And more private.

Reden nods again and takes Andrew's hand. She allows him to lead her to the back of the room and through the doorway through which several courtesans and their customers have already disappeared.

INT. PLEASURE ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Reden enters a small room, sparsely decorated with a chaise and a couple of armchairs. Before Andrew steps in after her and pulls the door to, sounds of pleasure can be heard from all around. After the door shuts, silence envelops them.

Reden lowers her hood, revealing long hair, tightly braided back from a face that might be considered conventionally beautiful, were it not for the thin scar marring the skin from her ear to the corner of her mouth.

Andrew's eyes fall to the scar with an expression of pity before he looks back up to meet Reden's eyes.

The two stand at a short distance from each other for a moment before Andrew opens his arms to her.

Reden smiles at the man and hugs him warmly, the familiar embrace of a father and daughter, or an uncle and niece.

REDEN

It's been a long time, Andrew.

ANDREW

I can't believe you're here.

He pulls away just enough to look at her, never removing his arms from her shoulders.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I was so surprised to hear from you. After eight years, most of us assumed the worst.

Reden shrugs and Andrew rubs her arm comfortingly. He moves to sit in one of the armchairs, leading Reden in the same direction. She pulls her arm away gently.

REDEN

I think I'd rather remain standing.

ANDREW

Of course. I understand.

Andrew sits in one of the armchairs, watching Reden's every move as she meanders about the room and examines the dime-a-dozen minimalist artwork hanging on the red walls.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Where have you been, Lilac?

REDEN

Here and there. You'll have to forgive me if I don't tell you exactly.

ANDREW

I understand. I suppose trust isn't easy to come by when you're a Reden. Or even a friend of theirs.

She pulls her cloak tighter around her, moving on to the next painting and avoiding his gaze.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I can't imagine what it's been like for you. And the things people must say about your father.

Reden shrugs.

REDEN

You get used to it.

Andrew's face falls, expression heavy with guilt and an overwhelming sadness. He leans forward in his chair.

ANDREW

I'm glad you reached out to me.

REDEN

You were one of my father's closest friends and allies.

ANDREW

I trusted him with my life.

Andrew pitches his voice into a whisper before he continues.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

There are a great many more of us,
Lilac, that believe what your
father believed.

Reden meets his gaze over her shoulder.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

And, if you'll allow us, we want to
help you make his ideas a reality.

Reden pauses and turns back to the painting before her.

REDEN

You would defy the king, even now?
After all that's been lost?

Andrew straightens in his chair.

ANDREW

I would kill the king myself.

Face blank and untelling, Reden nods.

REDEN

I see.

Andrew stands, leaving the space between them uncrossed.
Reden reaches one hand up and grasps the stone on the small,
unassuming pendant around her neck.

ANDREW

I know you're afraid. But you don't
have to be. You're safe with us.

Andrew coughs and clears his throat.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(beat)

We can defeat him, Lilac. The King
is not --

Another, more violent cough wracks Andrew's body, halting his
words. A wicked smile flashes across Reden's face, there and
gone in an instant. She turns back to her father's friend,
her expression fixed in a deadpan once again.

REDEN

What were you saying? The King is
not...? Sorry. I couldn't
understand you.

Reden steps over to him, like a mountain cat stalking its prey.

REDEN (CONT'D)
 Not invincible? Not the rightful ruler? Not more clever than you could possibly imagine?

Andrew's eyes shoot to Reden in terror and realization.

REDEN (CONT'D)
 Perhaps what you should have said is: the King of France is not to be underestimated.

Through the rasping COUGHS and GAGGING, Andrew gasps out a response, clutching onto her cloak for support.

ANDREW
 Lilac, please.

Reden takes a step back, yanking the fabric from Andrew's hand. The man stumbles and loses his footing briefly, leaning instead on the armchair to keep himself upright.

REDEN
 Lilac Reden is dead. And soon, you will be as well.

Andrew claws at his throat as he coughs again and blood spatters out onto his lip.

REDEN (CONT'D)
 Andrew Dubois, on the count of conspiracy to commit an act of high treason against the crown of France, as your jury, I find you guilty.

Andrew falls to his knees, gasping for air past the blood now pouring from his mouth and nose.

REDEN (CONT'D)
 As your judge, I sentence you to death. And as your executioner --

Reden watches as Andrew collapses, writhing as he chokes to death on his own blood. She spots something and reaches over to unbutton his shirt. She pulls it back to reveal a tattoo of two wyverns on the background of a fleur de lis.

REDEN (CONT'D)
 Huh.

Reden reaches behind her ear and taps the skin there, eyes narrowing at the tattoo.

Reden blinks and lowers her hand. She carefully rebuttons Andrew's shirt, quick and nimble despite his constant flopping about with the coughs racking his body.

REDEN (CONT'D)

As your executioner, I carry out this sentence.

She kneels beside him, lightly touching his face to draw his gaze up to hers.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Long live the king.

Andrew's movements stop entirely. His hands fall limp to the ground and his head tilts backward, eyes now glassy and lifeless.

Reden raises her hood, stalking across the room and opening the door.

Where the lively SHOUTS and MOANS of the other patrons once filled the air, now quiet spurts of COUGHING, GAGGING, and SOBBING penetrate the otherworldly silence surrounding the bodies in the hall outside.

CYNFAEL (V.O.)

Do you believe it was necessary to kill all of them?

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Reden stands at the foot of a large dais at the center of a cavernous room. Sitting in the grand black, red, and gold throne on the dais, CYNFAEL (late 40s), the handsome, though aging and brutish King of France, scowls at Reden.

SUPER: "MALAIS PALACE"

Reden's face holds its customary impassive mask as she regards the king, neither afraid nor proud.

REDEN

Yes, sir. The man you sent me to investigate was indeed one of the southern border rebels. I noticed a few more men on your wanted list in the establishment. Everyone else was either equally involved or aiding known traitors.

(MORE)

REDEN (CONT'D)

It was a mercy they all died as easily as they did.

The king folds his hands together and rests his elbows on the arms of the massive throne.

CYNFAEL

I see. And how was that, exactly?

REDEN

Radiation poisoning.

Reden reaches into her cloak and retrieves a vial about the size and length of her index finger, seemingly empty.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Tiny little devices, no bigger than a grain of salt. Completely harmless unless activated with alcohol and --

She lays a hand on her pendant, pressing a hidden button on the back which causes the necklace to emit a barely susceptible sonic frequency.

REDEN (CONT'D)

A micro-sonic emitter.

CYNFAEL

Dubois never takes his eyes off his drinks. We've tried before.

REDEN

Which is why I spiked the whole lot.

The king nods.

CYNFAEL

I wasn't aware your little experiment had been tested yet.

REDEN

This was the test.

CYNFAEL

I see. And if it had gone wrong?

REDEN

I'd have followed Andrew out of the tavern and slit his throat. Left him die in the gutter like the rat he was.

Cynfael nods, content with the answer.

CYNFAEL

And what of the androids?

REDEN

Didn't see my face or hear my voice
to run through any government
recognition.

The king nods again.

CYNFAEL

You mentioned a symbol on Andrew
Dubois's chest. May I see?

Reden throws back the cloak on her right arm. On the bare skin there glows a panel similar to a phone touch screen. Reden taps a few buttons, then reaches behind her ear to touch the same spot from before.

She flicks her wrist toward the wall and a nearly invisible screen hanging there suddenly lights up with an image. Andrew Dubois from Reden's point of view. Cynfael examines the photograph critically as Reden zooms in on the tattoo.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Interesting.

REDEN

I've seen the fleur de lis before.
The southern border rebels like to
use it for their brands. But the
other things. Snakes?

CYNFAEL

Wyverns. Ancient protectors of
royal bloodlines.

He gestures to the image.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

This is the seal of a royal family
that never was.

Reden glances from the image to the king.

REDEN

Do you mean to say they created
this for my father?

Cynfael's eyes narrow at the design on the screen.

CYNFAEL

Perhaps.

Reden retracts the image by tapping her arm a few more times.

REDEN

I'll look into this. See what I can find.

CYNFAEL

That won't be necessary.

Reden pauses for a moment, confusion crossing her usually schooled features.

REDEN

Majesty. With all respect, if we can find that symbol anywhere else in the mortuaries or in the rebel camps, we might find leads as to where their base is.

CYNFAEL

And so our people will look. However, that is not the path that lies before you, Lethe.

The King stands from his throne and walks a few steps down the bottom of the dais, coming face to face with Reden.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

You've been paying for the sins of your father for a long while now.

Reden drops her gaze from the king's, frowning.

REDEN

There is much for which I must atone.

CYNFAEL

Yes, there was. However, after seeing how well you've done since your appointment to the River Lords's council, I think that, perhaps...

He trails off, reaching under Reden's chin to lift her eyes back up to meet his own.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Perhaps it is time relieve you of the burden you carry.

REDEN

I do not understand.

CYNFAEL

You are a lady of a council of my closest security advisors. You have proven yourself time again not only as my best assassin, but as one of my most loyal subjects. And you should be rewarded as such.

REDEN

Forgive me, majesty. Are you suggesting --

CYNFAEL

Freedom, Lethe. Freedom from your father's legacy.

REDEN

Freedom? Meaning I could leave the Palace, leave Malais behind?

CYNFAEL

Perhaps I wouldn't want you to leave the palace for good. But I am certainly willing to give you a little leash. So long as you don't plan on strangling me with it.

Reden stands straighter, prouder.

REDEN

I would never. You are my king. I would die to protect you. I could never lift a hand against you. Not after all you've given me.

CYNFAEL

Good. You're almost done, child.

The king strokes her hair before returning to his throne and turning back to his subject.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

One more mission, mundane as any other. But then, your crowning glory. A legacy to call your own.

REDEN

I shall do whatever you will, your majesty.

Cynfael smiles again, the wicked gleam in his eyes burning like an ember in a dying fire.

INT. PALACE TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Reden wanders through the training room doors lost in thought and not paying attention to the world around her.

HUGO (O.S.)
Oi! There she is!

Reden glances up, her reverie broken. Fighting in the training room are three men, each wielding solid wooden staffs. All three look up and halt their training session when Reden enters.

HUGO Dumas (early 30s), a hulking brute with the body of a killer, grins at Reden. His leaner, wiser twin, VERNE (early 30s) LAUGHS at her entrance, leaning heavily on his staff.

VERNE
Look who's finally back. Took you long enough. I'd have handled it in less than a week.

Hugo hits his brother over the head.

HUGO
Mate, it took you three weeks to come back from your first.

Verne smacks his brother back with the staff in his hands.

Reden rolls her eyes and steps past the teasing twins to the younger, more reserved man standing in a little ways away from the others. PHLEGETHON (21), tall, dark, and handsome, watches the twins warily, always ready for a fight.

REDEN
Speaking of long journeys, where the hell have you been?

He pulls his gaze away from the now loudly arguing brothers across the training room to her. His eyes look her over, considering and calculating behind a cool twin to Reden's usual expression.

PHLEGETHON
I got back the day after you left for Nouveaux.

REDEN
Everything go well?

Phlegethon shrugs. Before he can answer, the twins across the room explode into a chaotic fight, their staffs swinging through the air and colliding with cringe-worthy CRACKS.

PHLEGETHON

Everything went about as well as you can expect.

Phlegethon steps over to the wall, where a plethora of other weapons and training gear hangs from the wall.

PHLEGETHON (CONT'D)

What about you? How did your mission go?

REDEN

About the same.

He leans his staff against the wall and gets to work taking off his gauntlets and other training gear. Reden taps her fingers against her thigh impatiently, absently watching Verne and Hugo fight in an evenly matched duel.

PHLEGETHON

You're doing that thing.

Reden looks back up at him, eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

REDEN

What thing?

Phlegethon nods to her hands. She looks down and promptly balls both hands into fists.

PHLEGETHON

What's going on?

Reden SIGHS heavily. After one last check that the others in the room are still otherwise occupied, Reden pitches her voice into a whisper and leans closer to Phlegethon.

REDEN

The king has offered to absolve my father's debts.

PHLEGETHON

What? Just like that.

Reden shrugs.

REDEN

He says I only have a few more jobs. Two, actually. One that's standard, just like the others.
(MORE)

REDEN (CONT'D)
Some rebel fool the Earth will be
glad to be rid of.

PHLEGETHON
And the other?

Reden hesitates.

REDEN
He didn't say specifically. Just
that it would be like the crown
jewel in an assassin's career.

Phlegethon's gaze turns inward as the words spark something
deep in his memory.

REDEN (CONT'D)
His words, not mine.

PHLEGETHON
Did he say when?

REDEN
I'm leaving tonight for the first.

Phlegethon nods. Reden narrows her eyes at him and puts a
hand on his shoulder.

REDEN (CONT'D)
Are you alright?

Phleg shrugs.

PHLEGETHON
Fine.

Reden cocks her head at him in a challenge.

REDEN
Really?

PHLEGETHON
Yeah.

REDEN
Come on. Now you're doing that
thing. The broody, I'm-going-to-
keep-everything-to-myself thing.

He LAUGHS.

PHLEGETHON
I don't do that.

VERNE (O.S.)

Yes, you do.

Phlegethon and Reden look up to see Verne walking toward them, Hugo on the ground, GROANING in pain.

HUGO

All the time, mate.

Hugo stands with labored breath and joins his brother. His gaze immediately turns to Reden, appraising her.

HUGO (CONT'D)

So. Do we at least get the pleasure of knocking you on your ass before you leave on your next assignment?

Reden LAUGHS, completely forgetting her conversation with Phlegethon as she stands and approaches her friends.

REDEN

I mean, if I had a few years, perhaps it would be a possibility.

VERNE

Bring it on, little girl.

Reden scowls at the nickname and punches Verne in the shoulder.

REDEN

Come on, mate.

She slips her cloak off her shoulders and throws it back toward Phlegethon, who still stares off, lost in his own thoughts and memories.

INT. PRINCESS'S QUARTERS - DAY

In a rustic breakfast nook, Princess ARMELLE Valdemar (19) sits alone in the early morning light.

In front of her, an untouched plate of breakfast sits pushed to the side of an ancient tome and a stack of papers. She scribbles another note on the paper and then flips to the book's next page, vigorously absorbing every word.

Blindly, she reaches out with her free hand and taps around the table, searching out her plate. She picks up a piece of toast and takes a bite, never looking up.

A light KNOCK at her door does nothing to draw her eyes from the text. She waves a hand toward it.

ARMELLE

I'm not ready yet, Gretchen. I'll be down soon. I promise.

The door opens and in walks the King of France.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

You really are losing your hearing, my friend.

Armelle glances up, and the small grin on her face fades instantly. She gasps and jumps to her feet, lowering her head in a bow to the King.

CYNFAEL

Come, now. I don't think my hearing is that bad.

ARMELLE

Your majesty. Please forgive me. I was not expecting you.

CYNFAEL

Ah. But you see, I was expecting you.

Armelle meets her father's gaze, if only for a moment before she drops it again.

ARMELLE

Forgive me again, majesty. Have I forgotten an appointment we made?

CYNFAEL

No. Though, occasionally, I do like to see my daughter at family meals.

The King indicates for Armelle to return to her seat. She nods and obeys.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

It's been over a week since our last proper conversation. And now you only take meals in your chambers?

ARMELLE

Apologies, father.

Discreetly, Armelle picks up a few pages and skims through them, placing the short stack on top of the open book on the breakfast table.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

You know my tutors. Around this time of year, they like to play the game of who can assign me more work. For now, Giselle is winning, if you were wondering.

She smiles almost convincingly. The King notices the book on the table and reaches out to pick it up, apprehension spiking across Armelle's features as he reads the title aloud.

CYNFAEL

The Border Doctrine. Twenty-one sixty-eight.

He drops the tome on the table before Armelle, closing it.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Might I inquire as to the kind of work your tutors have you doing?

Armelle swallows hard.

ARMELLE

All right. I'll admit. It's just light reading. I found it rather fascinating. And relevant, given the growing border rebel numbers.

The King sits beside his daughter and gestures to the book.

CYNFAEL

And I'm sure the council vote that's fast approaching has nothing to do with it.

Armelle SIGHS, avoiding her father's eyes as she gathers her notes and absently flicks through them.

ARMELLE

I've read the literature, Father. Forgive me for saying so, but we don't have a choice. There shouldn't even be a vote. We made a promise. We signed a treaty.

CYNFAEL

The ruler of this country five hundred years ago signed a treaty that has probably been long forgotten by the other nations involved. If they still stand beyond our borders.

ARMELLE

But following the treaty could do so much. We could end the famine, the floods. We could help our people survive to live better lives. All we need is help from the other nations.

Cynfael takes his daughter's hand.

CYNFAEL

If we allow other people to do our work for us, then we become indebted to them. And I, for one, do not fancy the idea of France being in debt to anyone.

Armelle meets her father's gaze with a challenging stare.

ARMELLE

We wouldn't be in debt. We would be trading our skills, our crops, our technology with the rest of the world in exchange for any medical advances or new technology or other resources they may have.

CYNFAEL

Until they want more than we can give them.

Armelle grasps her father's hand tighter, her eyes and voice imploring him to see reason.

ARMELLE

You act as if international communication and trade is unprecedented. But we as a world did it so much five hundred years ago that physical borders were barely recognizable.

CYNFAEL

And does this book tell you what happened back then? The risks to our people? The wars? The genocide?

Armelle sits back in her seat, sighing.

ARMELLE

If it's war you're afraid of, then you can not deny this treaty. We share those borders.

(MORE)

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

The other lands of old have a say
in the matter too.

She pauses, weighing the threat of speaking her next words.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

I've been in contact across the
walls.

Cynfael stands, storm clouds brewing behind his eyes and
lightning crackling in his deafening ROAR.

CYNFAEL

You what?

Armelle does not flinch away, instead staring up at her
father with strength and sheer will.

ARMELLE

They all agree. We have things they
need. They have resources we cannot
survive without. The walls have to
come down, father.

Cynfael's hand tighten into fists, and muscle in his jaw
flickers as he grinds his teeth together.

CYNFAEL

That is not for you to decide.

ARMELLE

No. It's the council's decision as
a group. But they, and the rest of
our people, deserve to know the
full truth. I intend to tell them.

The King glares at her with the fires of hell behind his
eyes.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

And then there's my council vote.
On it's own, not enough to sway a
decision. But I can be quite
persuasive, if you recall.

CYNFAEL

You still have much to learn about
the way of the world, Armelle.

ARMELLE

Perhaps. I suppose we'll find out
at the council meeting.

The king gives her a hard stare and then leaves, the wooden door to her room splintering slightly at the hinges as he slams it shut behind him.

INT. TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Sweat runs down every inch of Reden's body as she punches a bag in the early morning light streaming into the training room. Furious flurries of punches and kicks land on the battered instrument, each accompanied by a loud GRUNT.

PHLEGETHON (O.S.)

Careful.

She backs away from the bag to see Phlegethon strutting through the entryway, not exactly dressed for training.

PHLEGETHON (CONT'D)

I hear that thing hits back sometimes.

REDEN

Then it's a better opponent than any of you boys.

She pulls her gloves off and stretches her sore muscles.

REDEN (CONT'D)

You're up early.

PHLEGETHON

Says the girl beating the shit out of a punching bag at eight A.M..

Reden shrugs.

REDEN

I didn't feel like waiting for later just to fight for floor space with Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dumb.

Reden makes her way over to a bench against the wall, a spare set of clothes and a towel lie. She pulls her dirty shirt off with no regard for the male only a few feet away.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Plus. I'm leaving early to get a head start on my target.

Phlegethon leans against the wall.

PHLEGETHON

So eager to get to work.

REDEN

It's my freedom, Phleg. This mission, then the next, then...

She trails off and shrugs, dragging her towel down her sweat matted body.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I mean who knows? But it's freedom. I've been looking for that for thirteen years. I'm not about to wait any longer than I have to when I'm staring it in the face.

Reden lowers herself onto the bench and drags on a clean tunic. Phleg doesn't meet her eye.

REDEN (CONT'D)

What's up?

PHLEGETHON

I wanted to talk to you before you left.

She shrugs, bending over to remove her shoes.

REDEN

Sure. Shoot.

PHLEGETHON

(in French)

In the old language?

Reden gives him a confused nod, then picks up in fluent French to answer.

REDEN

What's wrong?

PHLEGETHON

Do you trust the king?

Reden drops her shoe, as well as her jaw.

REDEN

What is that supposed to mean?

PHLEGETHON

When he promised you your freedom. Did you believe him?

REDEN

He's my king.

PHLEGETHON
That's not an answer.

REDEN
He's my king and, yes, I'd trust
him with my life. Is that answer
enough for you?

Phlegethon huffs with no other response. Reden leans toward
him, fury dancing across her face.

REDEN (CONT'D)
Isn't it? Don't you trust him?

PHLEGETHON
Tell you the truth? I don't know.

Reden shoots to her feet, angry.

REDEN
If you were talking to anyone else,
you'd be arrested for treason just
for saying that.

PHLEGETHON
A true ruler does not care for the
insults of those under his
influence.

She crosses the distance between them, getting up in his
face.

REDEN
He is your king. And he demands
your respect.

PHLEGETHON
What has he ever done to deserve
it?

REDEN
Besides saving your life?

The words hang ugly in the air between them.

REDEN (CONT'D)
After my father betrayed King
Magnus, betrayed his country, he
was executed. The king had every
right to kill me too, and yet he
didn't. He spared me. And you.

She throws her hands in the air.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Maybe you'd have survived. Your father wasn't one of the major players, but mine led an insurrection. And he paid for it. And I've been paying for it my entire life, and my king is offering me the chance to lose that part of me. The part that I hate. I won't throw that opportunity away.

Phlegethon's shoulders slump.

PHLEGETHON

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to rile you up. I didn't mean that the king can't be trusted. I just...

He shakes his head.

PHLEGETHON (CONT'D)

I don't want you to get hurt.

REDEN

That's your problem if you want to worry. But don't ask me not to do what's best for me to keep your conscience clean.

She snatches up her bag and stuffs her dirty clothes and shoes into it.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I'll be back from Lyon in a week, max.

She stalks to the doorway, still spitting rapid-fire French back at him as she goes.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Get some rest. We can talk when I get back, so long as you're feeling more sensible.

PHLEGETHON

(back to English)

Lethe. Wait.

She stops in the doorway, not looking at him.

PHLEGETHON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Just... Be careful?

She answers, still never meeting his gaze.

REDEN

Always.

She storms from the room, Phlegethon watching her with a curious expression as she leaves.

EXT. MARKET - LATE AFTERNOON

PEDDLERS fill the dirty streets of the slums with traveling carts and stalls. Some with trinkets of technological advancement like ten-year-old netscreens, some with foods and spices. PROSTITUTES line every alcove and crevice.

Their CLIENTELE, dirty and exhausted workers, wander the city performing various chores and running errands. They slouch about and never seem to be in a hurry to get anywhere.

INT. LAFAYETTE TAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

The same energy from the streets can be felt in the majority of the patrons of the local taproom. Everyone looks like half-dead zombies, quiet and resigned to their miserable lives.

In the corner, watchful for eavesdroppers, a group of REVOLUTIONARIES converses in hushed tones. One hotheaded member of the group, JEAN-LUC (early 20s), argues fiercely with a comrade, ISABELLE (mid 20s).

JEAN-LUC

The king ordered this. We should storm the castle now and slit his throat while he sleeps.

ISABELLE

You arrogant fool. Watch your tongue. Or rather, for all our sakes, hold it.

Two other members of the same group, MICHAEL and AMELIE (mid 30s), a young couple in the underground revolution, look up at this, pausing their own conversation to listen to Jean-Luc and Isabelle's.

Jean-Luc leans in to Isabelle, pitching his voice low but still managing to lace every word with conviction and malice.

JEAN-LUC

I could do it. I will kill him.

ISABELLE

And how is it you plan on getting past the city gates?

(MORE)

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

Or the king's guards? What about the five assassins he has waltzing about Malais palace?

Jean-Luc scoffs.

ISABELLE (CONT'D)

It only took one of those assassins to slaughter an entire tavern full of people. Just like this one. Consider that before you go around making claims of coups and murders.

Jean-Luc crosses his arms and sinks into his seat, Isabelle's words dampening his spirits. His face falls from angry and ready to start a fight to a somber, mourning frown.

Their leader, CLEMENT (late 40s), a scrawny, worn man with years of pain hiding behind his sad eyes, clears his throat. While he speaks quietly, his words command the attention of everyone in their group.

CLEMENT

Ladies and gentlemen.

The group falls silent and listens.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

Andrew Dubois was one of the best of us. He and the rest in Nouveaux gave their lives to our cause. It falls on us to ensure that sacrifice not be in vain.

He raises his mug of ale into the air in a toast.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

Pouvez-vous vivre bien dans la prochaine vie.

The other four, one by one, all raise their glasses as well. In unison, they repeat after Clement.

OTHER REBELS

Dans la prochaine vie.

No one takes a drink from their glasses.

Jean-Luc waits only a moment before he leans across the table toward Clement, his earlier fire returning.

JEAN-LUC

So. What's our move? Where do we go next?

The three other revolutionaries at the table, instead of chastising Jean-Luc, look to Clement for an answer.

MICHAEL

He's right, Clement. We need to get moving. We're running out of time.

AMELIE

Our troops are fired up and ready to go. We're all ready to fight. And die.

Isabelle scowls at them all.

ISABELLE

Your brothers' and sisters' corpses have barely had time to cool.

Clement holds up a hand to silence her.

CLEMENT

Enough. Isabelle is right.

MICHAEL

Sir.

CLEMENT

Today will have no more talk of murder and knee-jerk reactions. Today is a day of mourning.

The bell above the door in the pub rings and Clement looks up. A man, CAULDEN, stands there, face covered in the shadows of his long hood. Caulden glances around the room for a moment before his head turns toward Clement.

He nods at Clement and Clement returns the gesture.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

And of honoring our dead.

He stands.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

Excuse me for a moment.

Isabelle follows his gaze to the man in the doorway and nods at Clement in understanding. Jean-Luc huffs and turns to Michael and Amelie, whispering feverently out of ear shot.

Across the room, Clement meets with Caulden and the two of them exit the tavern together.

Isabelle watches after them suspiciously.

EXT. TAVERN ALLEY - SUNSET

Clement and Caulden turn down an abandoned alley between the tavern and the ancient abandoned building beside it. Once he checks up and down the alley and his view of the nearby rooftops, Clement extends a hand to Caulden.

CLEMENT

It's good to see you again,
Caulden.

Caulden takes his hand and shakes it, never removing his hood. He speaks with a deep voice that could be young or old.

CAULDEN

I bring news that you probably
aren't going to like.

Clement purses his lips, preparing for the worst.

INT. TAVERN / HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jean-Luc exits the tavern's restroom, anger still lacing every muscle in his face. As he steps down the hall back toward his table, a woman steps in front of him, her dark cloak covering half of her face.

Reden's braid, as well as her patented smirk, peek out from beneath the folds of her hood.

REDEN

Excuse me.

Jean-Luc nods at her and tries to sidestep her. She moves in the same direction.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Apologies. Again.

Once more, Jean-Luc attempts to step around her, and Reden jumps in front of him.

JEAN-LUC

Excuse me, lady.

REDEN

I couldn't help but overhear you
earlier.

Jean-Luc pales slightly.

JEAN-LUC

What are you talking about?

REDEN

I didn't hear much, to be honest.
But I did hear you expressing
interest in the palace in Malais.

Reden steps in closer, almost up against Jean-Luc.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I happen to have a few friends
there.

JEAN-LUC

Really?

She nods, grinning and staring at him through her lashes with
sultry bedroom eyes.

REDEN

Really. Quite a few of my...

She reaches a hand up and drags it along Jean-Luc's chest.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Clients reside there.

Jean-Luc swallows hard, his breathing now labored.

REDEN (CONT'D)

If you were still interested, there
are some rooms upstairs. We could
talk.

She strokes a finger down his face.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Privately.

He nods, speechless, and she grins salaciously, lifting his
hand and pulling him towards the stairs at the end of the
hall. Jean-Luc follows, anxiously raising his free hand to
scratch behind his right ear.

EXT. TAVERN ALLEY - NIGHT

Clement purses his lips in anger.

CLEMENT

How long do we have?

CAULDEN

Hours. Perhaps.

On Clement's arm, a small BEEP alerts him to a message. He looks down at a touchscreen, similar to the one on Reden's arm. He taps it a few times, squinting at the message in confusion. He taps once more and swipes at the screen.

His eyes widen and his features go slack.

CLEMENT

I think you might have
overestimated.

Clement rushes toward the end of the alley. Caulden catches his arm before he can get too far.

CAULDEN

What are you doing?

CLEMENT

If you're looking for some kind of
sign, this would be it.

Clement shakes free and runs to the end of the alley and around the corner back to the tavern.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Reden follows Jean-Luc into a tiny, rickety broom cupboard of a bedroom and shuts the door behind them. Jean-Luc glances about, his fingers twitching anxiously.

REDEN

So. You're Jean-Luc Baudin.

Jean-Luc turns around at the sound of his name. Reden's hood now lays back against her shoulders, her face now clearly revealed. Her usual cold deadpan now replaces all pretense of seduction and intrigue.

JEAN-LUC

How did you know that?

Reden waltzes toward like a lioness stalking prey.

REDEN

I make it a point to know the names
of the major players in the
rebellion against the King.

Jean-Luc stands a little taller, preening.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Well, and their sidekicks, of course. Hence knowing both your master and you. Respectively.

Jean-Luc's shoulders slump with wounded pride. Reden stops a few feet in front of him and crosses her arms.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I also make it my business to know their habits. For instance, that little chip you've got in your head? I've got one too.

She taps the place behind her ear.

REDEN (CONT'D)

So does everyone worth their salt in French intelligence. And I know the difference between scratching your ear and calling for help.

Jean-Luc glances toward the door.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Please try. I don't imagine it will be too long until daddy comes running for you. But I'd love something to play with in the meantime.

He freezes, meeting her cold, hard gaze. After a moment of sizing her up, Jean-Luc takes a step back and sits on the edge of the creaking wooden four-poster bed in the corner.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Jean-Luc scowls at her.

JEAN-LUC

Don't you dare call me that.

REDEN

It speaks.

Reden LAUGHS humourlessly. Lashing out in one quick movement, Reden reaches into her cloak and unsheathes her katana, leveling it at Jean-Luc's neck before he can even breathe.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Listen carefully, you little brat. So long as I have this, I can call you whatever I want. Got it?

Jean-Luc's head barely moves as he nods, wide eyes fixed on the shiny, sharp blade pressed against his throat.

The door behind Reden creaks open. Without glancing up, Reden smiles and addresses the intruder.

REDEN (CONT'D)
Clement Baptiste.

Reden straightens to see Clement standing in the doorway, a grim frown on his face.

CLEMENT
Lilac Reden, I take it.

Reden scowls at him.

REDEN
I prefer Lady Lethe of the Underworlds.

CLEMENT
I'm sure you do.

After a brief pause, Reden opens her free arm to welcome Clement into the space.

REDEN
Please. Join us. We were just talking about you. Although.

Lilac leans back down to Jean-Luc's eye level, a taunting glint in her eyes as she addresses him.

REDEN (CONT'D)
Two's company. Three's a crowd.

Reden strokes a hand down Jean-Luc's face.

REDEN (CONT'D)
Don't you think?

She pulls her sword back and prepares to plunge it into Jean-Luc's chest.

Before it can come in contact with flesh, however, Reden's sword is intercepted by a strikingly similar, if somewhat smaller version.

Reden looks up to see Caulden, a wakizashi drawn from beneath his cloak, holding the line between her and her kill. He edges himself between Jean-Luc and Reden. She smiles at the newcomer, unfazed.

REDEN (CONT'D)

And now it's a party.

Reden disengages from the man and spins, throwing a dizzying array of blows aimed for Caulden, all of which he parries expertly. They dance around the room, each seeming to see the others' moves before they make them.

Caulden manages to throw Reden off balance and pushes his sword against hers until her back rests against a wall of the bedroom. Her sword sits matched with his mere inches from her neck.

Reden's eyes fall on the fleur de lis symbol on the hilt of Caulden's blade, a perfect match to the symbol on her sword. She scowls up at her opponent.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Where did you get that sword?

She kicks out at her opponent's shins and he moves to block the blow, allowing her to escape his grasp. She backs away from him, going on the defensive.

CAULDEN

It belonged to my father.

REDEN

Like hell. Stole it, more likely.

CAULDEN

No, Lily.

She freezes at the familiar voice -- and the nickname. Caulden lowers his blade to his side. With his free hand, he reaches up and pulls his hood back.

Reden stares in shock as she comes face to face with Caulden -- the man she has always known as Phlegethon. Her sword falls limply to her side.

REDEN

Phlegethon? What are you doing?

She glances around the room in confusion before dragging a glare back to Caulden.

REDEN (CONT'D)

You're with them?

CAULDEN

Reden --

REDEN

You're a traitor!

She raises her sword in front of her, but never gets the chance to use it.

Clement lunges forward, two tiny needle-like metal prongs attached to his thumb and forefinger tips. He jabs them into the flesh behind Reden's right ear.

A jolt of ELECTRICITY audibly passes through Reden and she goes rigid. Her sword falls to the ground, followed moments later by Reden. She convulses for a few seconds before passing out.

Caulden glances from the unconscious assassin to Clement and then back to Jean-Luc, who still sits wide-eyed and panicked on the room's bed.

CAULDEN

We should hurry before it wears off. She won't be happy when she wakes up. And she's sure to tell the king of my betrayal.

Clement waves a hand at Jean-Luc to stand and join them. The younger man does, slowly and numbly.

CLEMENT

Right. Jean-Luc, you go downstairs and tell Michael and Amelie to go on to the city. You can tell them what happened on your way there.

Jean-Luc nods and stumbles from the room, his eyes fixed on Reden as if she might suddenly wake up and bite him.

Clement calls after him as he slips out of the door.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

And send Isabelle up.

Clement glances back at Reden. Caulden sheaths his own sword before crouching beside his best friend and picking up her sword.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

I'll have her bring the car around back. We should be able to bring this one out that way without being seen.

Caulden crosses his arms petulantly.

CAULDEN

Bring her with us? Are you insane?

Clement looks back up at Caulden.

CLEMENT

This is Royce Reden's daughter. I will not just abandon her in this place.

CAULDEN

She was Royce's daughter. Now she is a trained assassin. One of the five Underworlds assassin lords. One who, in case you've forgotten, was sent to kill you.

CLEMENT

And? She doesn't look particularly threatening at the moment.

Clement kneels beside Reden and brushes the hair that has fallen onto her face back with a gentle hand.

CAULDEN

Gods above, you really have gone mental, haven't you?

Clement glares up at him.

CLEMENT

This girl has been forsaken by all who claimed to care for her.

Caulden shifts uncomfortably at the double meaning lacing Clement's words.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

I will not do the same.

CAULDEN

If you take her to the city, she may very well lead the king straight to us.

CLEMENT

Then we are doomed either way. But, in taking her back, I'll have fulfilled my promise to Royce. Perhaps she will even have the patience to listen to what we have to say.

CAULDEN
Patience? Clearly you don't know
Lilac Reden.

Pulling his eyes away from Reden's face, Caulden observes Clement's wishful gaze.

CLEMENT
You can help me with this or not,
son. But the time for waiting is
over. This is our shot and we will
not throw it away.

Clement turns his gaze up to meet Caulden's, his stare deep and penetrating.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)
Our revolution begins today.

Caulden pauses, considering the words. His gaze travels back to Reden, where it lingers in the moments it takes before he nods in agreement with his father.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

An ancient-looking car drives down an abandoned road in the rural countryside. Though the car has a futuristic design, with solar panels making up the entire roof, years of disrepair and neglect have turned it into a glorified rust bucket.

INT. CAR - DAY

Reden lies in the back seat, her head on Caulden's shoulder and her wrists bound before her. Isabelle drives while Clement sits in the passenger seat. Caulden stares out the window, a hand on the hilt of a dagger on his belt.

Reden's eyes fly open and she takes a deep breath as she comes to. Her eyes find Caulden's first. He grins a half-smile at her.

CAULDEN
Good morning, beautiful.

Reden sits up quickly and then gasps, reaching up with her bound hands to grasp her head. She pauses as her hands come into view and squints at the ropes around her wrists.

REDEN
Phleg, I thought we said no more
wild parties.

CAULDEN

Well. When you're popular.

Reden breathes a laugh. She tries to sit up further, but sways and falls back against Caulden.

REDEN

Gods. What happened?

Clement turns around to examine his guest.

CLEMENT

I hit you with forty thousand volts of electricity.

Reden's eyes widen at him as she tries to focus her eyes to get a good look at the man talking.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

I wouldn't worry. The amperage was low enough that there shouldn't be any permanent damage to your brain.

Caulden scoffs.

CAULDEN

Shouldn't. That's comforting.

Clement takes Reden's chin in his hands, gazing into her eyes as if looking for any unexpected damage.

CLEMENT

The only thing that should be non-functioning at the moment is your Hippocampal Motor Processor.

(to Caulden)

Which is the effect I was aiming for, so there is that.

Clement pulls away, leaning back into his seat in the front of the car. Reden's eyes come into focus and she finally sees Clement in full focus.

REDEN

You.

She starts forward, growling and reaching for his throat. Isabelle swerves momentarily as she turns around. She reaches an arm out to block Reden from getting closer to Clement.

ISABELLE

Hey! Caulden. Take care of her, for gods sakes. Or throw her in the trunk, like I suggested.

Caulden gains a hold on Reden and pulls her back against his chest, her arms at an awkward angle against her abdomen.

REDEN

Let me go.

She struggles against him again.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Traitor! Let me go!

Caulden holds her tighter, pressing her arms into her chest until they constrict her ability to breathe. She gasps for air and pushes back against her boyfriend.

CAULDEN

Lilac, enough. Enough!

Reden pushes against him fruitlessly one last time.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Enough. Calm down.

She relaxes in his arms, closing her eyes and taking steadying breaths. After a moment, Caulden loosens his arms and Reden takes a long, deep breath in. When she lets it out, it resembles a sob.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Let me explain.

REDEN

Explain what? That you're helping them? You betrayed the king.

Isabelle glares at Reden in the rearview mirror.

ISABELLE

The king is the one who has betrayed the entire country.

Clement holds up a hand.

CLEMENT

That will do, Isabelle. Keep your eyes on the road.

Isabelle shakes her head, but drops her eyes back to the road before her and drives on in silence. Clement clears his throat and meets Reden's unforgiving glare.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)
You'll forgive me for what I've
done, Lady Reden.

REDEN
Don't call me that.

Clement holds up his hands placatingly.

CLEMENT
I had thought that, perhaps, if
Caulden were here when you woke up,
you might react with less...

He trails off, looking for the proper word.

REDEN
Boiling rage?

Caulden places one hand on her shoulder, keeping his other
arm firmly around her waist.

CAULDEN
I told you. You clearly don't know
Lilac Reden.

REDEN
Just like I never knew you.

Reden gazes out the window in the opposite direction as him.

Caulden clears his throat.

CAULDEN
Just out of curiosity. What was
your plan for Clement and Jean-Luc?

Reden glances back at him suspiciously, then at the older man
in the front seat. She shrugs.

REDEN
Murder suicide. Lucky for me, you
two argue in public a lot, so it
wasn't that far of a stretch. The
plan was perfect.

CAULDEN
Until you got caught.

REDEN
I think you mean until you
kidnapped me. Asshole.

A brief silence falls between them.

Caulden and Clement exchange a look.

CAULDEN

You've always known the kind of man
I am, Reden. That hasn't changed.

REDEN

Says the man who betrayed
everything he stood for to kidnap
his best friend and stab his king
in the back.

CAULDEN

Cynfael Valdemar was never my kind.
And I stand for what I've always
stood for. Honor. Integrity.

He shifts Reden to the side so that he can meet her withering
stare.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Family.

He looks back up at the two rebels in the front seat.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Though this isn't exactly how I
planned for you to meet him.

Reden follows his gaze. Clement shrugs while Isabelle grins
at him in the rearview.

REDEN

You're can't be serious.

CAULDEN

Unfortunately, I'm dead serious.

Caulden points to Isabelle first.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

My older sister, Isabelle. Fierce
warrior. Royal pain in my ass.

Isabelle flicks him off without looking at him. Caulden
CHUCKLES and then nods toward his father.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

I believe you've met my father,
Clement.

Reden shakes her head, at a loss for words.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

And then there's me. Real name is
Caulden Baptiste.

Taking a shaking breath, Reden tightens her shaking hands
into fists.

REDEN

A whole family of lunatics.

CLEMENT

We're a family of believers, Reden.

REDEN

Believers in what? In my father?

CLEMENT

In part, yes. In what he was trying
to do when he was murdered.

REDEN

You mean executed. That's what
happens to traitors when they try
to usurp the line of succession
handed down by the previous king.

ISABELLE

Tell me. Do you even have a brain
of yours, or does old Cynfael
merely speak through your mouth?

REDEN

Excuse me?

CAULDEN

Izzy --

ISABELLE

No. I really want to know. How is
it you can spout his lies as the
absolute truth, like you actually
believe it all? How can you trust
the man who murdered your father in
cold blood?

The car falls silent.

REDEN

Easy for a traitor to see another
of your kind as a hero. And not as
a man who nearly drove this country
into dust and shadows.

CLEMENT

Lilac --

REDEN

I told you not to call me that.

Clement sits back in his seat and listens to her rant.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I am Lethe of the Underworlds. I am a ruler of the Assassin's Court. And I am loyal to the man who kept our country from falling to ruin.

CAULDEN

Or are you loyal to the man who is actively ruining it?

Reden stops and glares at him, betrayal and murderous intent flashing across her anguished features.

REDEN

How dare you?

CLEMENT

Listen to me. You don't have to believe me. But I want you to hear this.

Pause.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

What is it, in your mind, that the border rebels support?

REDEN

My father's mission. To change the line of succession King Magnus set before he was killed.

Clement shakes his head.

CLEMENT

No, my child. We seek to ensure that King Mangus's wishes, his intended line of succession eventually comes to pass. Where it currently has not.

REDEN

What are you saying?

ISABELLE

Cynfael was never the King's choice
to take his place upon his death.

REDEN

No. That's just a lie. An
outrageous and completely
fabricated --

CAULDEN

King Magnus chose someone else,
Reden. And your father died trying
to ensure that person ended up on
the throne.

CLEMENT

He was unable to finish his
mission. But we are led by someone
who knows the truth. Someone who
wants to finish what your father
started.

Reden sinks back into the car seat, taking in the life-
altering words being thrown around the car.

REDEN

Who was it? Who do you think the
King want on the throne?

The three members of the Baptiste family exchange glances.

CLEMENT

Forgive me, but that is where I
must stop.

REDEN

Why? You've had no problem ripping
every detail of the truths in my
life to shreds up until now.

CAULDEN

Reden --

She turns on him and growls.

REDEN

Call me by that bastard's name one
more time!

The silence that falls in the following moments persists for
almost a minute before Clement begins again.

CLEMENT

I stop there, lady, because if I tell you too much at once, your brain will shut it all out. When we arrive, I will bring you to someone. A person who will explain everything to you. Someone who, I believe, will help you see that the truths you've been led to believe are the fabrications of a madman.

REDEN

And who is that?

Clement turns and faces the road again, his part of the conversation done. Reden turns to Caulden.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Who are we going to meet? And where?

Caulden release Reden and she pulls back into the opposite corner of the backseat.

CAULDEN

You'll find out soon. In the meantime, rest. You'll want your full strength when you reach the city.

Reden leans against the door, keeping her eyes wide open and watching the other members of their party as the car lumbers down the old highway.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

The King paces in front of his throne.

The heavy oak doors at the entrance to the room GROAN open and two guards usher Hugo and Verne inside. Cynfael looks up at them expectantly.

CYNFAEL

Lords Acheron. Cocytus.

Hugo and Verne drop to their knees in unison at the foot of the dais.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Have you heard anything?

HUGO

There's no word from Lethe yet, my lord.

VERNE

Her last communication put her somewhere in the province of Lyon two days ago, making preparations for an operation last night.

CYNFAEL

Has there been confirmation of this operation being carried out successfully?

HUGO

We have none yet, your majesty. We are currently awaiting word from our scouts in the area.

CYNFAEL

I do not like to be kept waiting, Lord Acheron.

Hugo nods in understanding but does not respond.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Lord Cocytus.

Verne raises his eyes to meet the King's unforgiving stare.

VERNE

Majesty.

CYNFAEL

Have you not had contact with your kin who might be more useful in gathering information?

VERNE

No, your majesty. I have not thought to contact them.

CYNFAEL

Do. Offer them clemency in exchange for information.

Hugo and Verne exchange surprised glances.

VERNE

Clemency, your majesty?

Cynfael shrugs.

CYNFAEL

I didn't say we I had to honor the offer. But the illusion of safety in their situations is priceless. Use it. Then, once you've gotten the information, end them.

Verne nods.

VERNE

In that case, I'll be in contact with them presently, majesty.

The king nods.

CYNFAEL

Good. You may leave.

Verne bows his head and then straightens to his feet, turning and exiting toward the door. Hugo stands as well.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Lord Acheron. One more moment, if you please.

Verne stops in the doorway, waiting for his brother. The king waves him one.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

He'll be with you in just a moment, Verne.

Verne nods wearily and bows out of the room with one last glance at his twin. The heavy oak doors close behind him.

The king steps down the stairs of the dais to come face to face with Hugo.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

I have a special assignment for you, Hugo. One which I would never entrust to anyone else.

Hugo swallows hard.

HUGO

Anything, your majesty.

CYNFAEL

I need you locate Lord Phlegethon.

Hugo bows his head in agreement, exiting the room a moment later.

Cynfael returns to the throne, propping his elbows on the arms of the chair and steeping his fingers before him. His brows furrow as he plots and broods.

The door flies open a moment later, no guard announcing the new arrival as Princess Armelle storms across the room and bows briefly at the edge of the dais before raising an accusatory stare at her father.

ARMELLE

You canceled the council vote?

CYNFAEL

I have other things occupying my time at the moment. While I appreciate the opinions of my privy council, this decision will be mine and mine alone.

Armelle crosses her arms, simply fuming.

ARMELLE

To ignore our treaty is an act of war, which requires a unanimous council vote to move forward --

Cynfael stands, towering over Armelle as he bellows a response.

CYNFAEL

Until the moment I decide otherwise.

Armelle flinches ever so slightly.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

I am the King of France. This is my country to rule as I see fit. I will not have you making a mockery of my reign.

ARMELLE

Apologies, Father.

Cynfael glares at her a moment longer before waving her away.

CYNFAEL

Go. Do something useful with your time that doesn't include trying to embarrass me further.

ARMELLE

Yes, your majesty.

Armelle bows and backs out of the room, defeated.

INT. CAR - DAY

The car jostles as it hits a bumpy stretch of road. Reden leans on the opposite side of the car now, curled up against Phlegethon with her cloak pulled around her. She shuffles around when the car bounces, but remains asleep.

The car pulls to a stop and Isabelle shuts it off. She and Clement exit the vehicle while Caulden nudges Reden's shoulder.

CAULDEN

Hey. Wake up.

Reden GROANS and pulls her cloak up to cover her eyes. Caulden smiles and yanks the cloak away from her face. Reden peels her eyes open and glares at him.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Come on. We're here.

At the words, Reden sits up instantly, glancing around through the car's windows. Outside, the occasional florescent light illuminates a massive hangar where other cars, as well as planes and a helicopter, reside.

Reden sits up as Caulden exits the car. Reden squints into the florescent light as she steps out.

INT. HANGAR - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Clement offers a hand to Reden. She scowls and exits the car by herself, awkward with her hands tied too closely together.

She stumbles as she stands, Caulden rushing forward to catch her.

CAULDEN

Easy.

She shrugs off his helping hands. He grips one arm tighter.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Hey. No one here really cares about your pride or prowess, so you don't have to be a bitch to everyone.

REDEN

Now who doesn't know me?

Caulden rolls his eyes and retrieves his sword from its sheath. Reden instantly jerks back towards the car, but he holds her steady.

CAULDEN
 Lethe, relax.

REDEN
 Says the man pointing a sword at me.

Caulden ignores her and presses the blade against the ropes on her wrist. He hesitates and glances up at her.

CAULDEN
 Promise you're not going to hurt anyone?

Reden shrugs.

REDEN
 Whatever. Fine.

Caulden tightens his grip.

CAULDEN
 Reden.

She SIGHS dramatically.

REDEN
 Fine. I promise.

CAULDEN
 Good.

Caulden sets to sawing off the ropes. Reden watches his sword as he does, examining the symbol at the top again.

REDEN
 What did you do with my father's sword?

Caulden saws through the last of the ropes and Reden's arms fall free.

CAULDEN
 I have it.

Reden rubs her raw wrists as Caulden wraps a hand around her upper arm and leads her toward where Isabelle and Clement have gathered with Michael, Amelie, and Jean-Luc.

REDEN

Where?

CAULDEN

Like I'm going to tell you that now
that your hands are free.

REDEN

I made you a promise. And since my
word actually means something,
unlike yours, I intend to keep it.

Caulden scoffs.

CAULDEN

So self-righteous. As always.

REDEN

Look, I just want to make sure you
didn't leave it in some god
forsaken brothel in Lyon. Or toss
it in the river.

Caulden stops to look down at her.

CAULDEN

I would never.

He pulls back his cloak to reveal the katana and wakizashi
sheathed side-by-side.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Your father and my father were like
brothers. They fought in battle
together, protected France
together. I would never separate
these blades.

Reden's face falls ever so slightly, embarrassment and pity
peeking through her mask of complete apathy.

REDEN

I'm sorry.

Caulden drops his cloak back and starts back toward the group
of rebels. Jean-Luc glances up at Reden as they approach and
frowns.

JEAN-LUC

What is she doing here?

REDEN

So I guess there are some hard
feelings about trying to kill you?

JEAN-LUC

You --

CLEMENT

Stop. We have more important matters to discuss.

Jean-Luc shakes his head but belligerently turns back to the conversation at hand.

AMELIE

We told her you were returning. But we didn't know what you'd be bringing her.

She inclines her head toward Reden.

CLEMENT

I didn't want to get the Queen's hopes up in case something went awry.

Reden pitches her voice to where only Phleg can hear her.

REDEN

Queen?

Caulden SHUSHES her and joins in the conversation.

CAULDEN

Is she meeting us in the capital, then?

ISABELLE

Of course not. She heard Clement was back and wanted to give him a grand welcome herself.

CAULDEN

She's coming here?

CLEMENT

Not my idea. I'd hoped to get word to her before we went to see her so she'd have time to...

He glances at Reden.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

Prepare.

CAULDEN

She really doesn't know Lilac's here?

AMELIE

Not at all.

CAULDEN

Then we should hide her. Tell the Queen about her arrival and then tell her that her --

A heavy metal door SLIDES open beside them and a woman, ADELAIDE (mid 20s), long hair pulled back in a sensible bun and dressed in pristine military fatigues, steps through with a broad smile on her face.

ADELAIDE

Clement. I am so pleased you've made time to return to the city.

Reden takes a step back, unnoticed by Adelaide, who now shakes Clement's hand in greeting.

REDEN

(under her breath)
Oh gods.

Adelaide turns to the group and nods at each of them in turn.

ADELAIDE

Lovely to see you as well, Isabelle. Caulden. It's been a long time. And who is ... ?

She trails off as her eyes fall on Reden, who looks shell-shocked. Tears swim in Reden's eyes and she pulls against Caulden's tight grip on her arm. Adelaide schools her features and smiles warmly at the girl.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

Lilac.

Reden's breathing escalates from merely labored to hyperventilating.

CAULDEN

It's all right.

REDEN

(to Adelaide)
No. You're dead. You've been dead for thirteen years.

Adelaide shakes her head lightly.

ADELAIDE

Oh, my darling. No. I have been
right here all this time.

Reden takes a gasping breath and steps forward, her eyes wide
in wonder.

Caulden loosens his grip.

CAULDEN

Reden.

Adelaide glances at him briefly upon hearing the name.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

A slow smile spreads across Reden's face. Adelaide's own
maternal smile extends from ear to ear.

REDEN

You're alive?

Adelaide nods. Reden takes another step forward.

And then spins into Caulden, pushing him back and reaching
into his cloak to grab her father's sword. In the blink of an
eye, she has the sword leveled at Adelaide's neck.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Perhaps I can fix that.

Isabelle pulls a revolver from her waistband and aims it at
Lilac. Jean-Luc grabs a dagger from his belt, and Amelie
retrieves a shortsword from her own weapons belt. Even
Caulden unsheathes his wakizashi.

Adelaide merely holds Reden's gaze and keeps the smile on her
face. Clement watches it all carefully, rubbing the two
prongs in his fingers together.

CAULDEN

Reden, put it down. You said --

REDEN

I said I wouldn't hurt anyone and I
won't. I can make her death
painless.

Her voice shakes, though her hands remain steady as ever.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I think I owe my mother that
courtesy.

Adelaide turns her eyes to Caulden and the other weapon-wielding rebels.

ADELAIDE
Lower your weapons.

Isabelle regards her incredulously.

ISABELLE
My lady, she threatens you.

ADELAIDE
And you threaten your princess.

A sharp intake of breath and a brief waver of her sword mark the only signs of Reden's surprise.

REDEN
What did you just say?

All around her, one by one, everyone lowers and stows their weapons away.

ADELAIDE
My Lily. You've grown so much.
You're so strong. And I am so very
proud of you.

REDEN
Why did you call me a princess?

ADELAIDE
Because I am the rightful Queen of
France. And you are my only heir.

Reden shakes her head.

REDEN
You're lying.

CAULDEN
She's not.

CLEMENT
This is what I could not tell you
before. You see your mother here.
You must know that at least some of
the king's words were lies.

REDEN
If the king lied, it was only to
spare me the truth that my mother
abandoned me to lead a terrorist
organization.

A tear frees itself from Adelaide's eyes.

ADELAIDE

You're right. I did abandon you. I thought you were killed with your father. That's what I was told. But I should have made sure myself.

She takes a deep, shaking breath and continues.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

By the time I learned the truth, it was too late. And for those years of your life, the moments that are lost to us forever, I apologize.

Reden's sword hand shakes uncontrollably and she raises her other hand to steady it.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

So do it.

ISABELLE
My lady.

CLEMENT
Adelaide?

ADELAIDE

Quiet.

(to Reden)

My darling, if all you hear from me now is lies, and if you truly believe I am a villain in all this, please. Do it. Because without you, we will never win this country back. We will never succeed.

Reden lifts the sword higher, tightening her grip until her knuckles shine white. She takes deep breaths to steady herself, her eyes boring into her mother's unwavering gaze. The rebels watch on in terror and intrigue.

Reden inhales, holding her breath as she raises her sword above her head --

And drops it to the ground not a moment later. A loud SOB emanates from her as she falls to her knees beside her father's sword. Her mother kneels next to her, pulling Reden against her chest and stroking her hair lovingly.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

It's alright, love. It's alright.
I'm here.

Caulden lets out a heavy exhale of his own, meeting his father and sister's gazes with relief shining in his eyes.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Reden and her mother walk at the head of the group down a dimly-lit hallway. They come to a stop at a side door, the group still a ways behind them. Adelaide calls back to them.

ADELAIDE

Clement, would you mind leading them to mission control? I'd like a moment alone with my daughter, please.

Clement nods.

CLEMENT

As you wish.

The group passes through the door into another hallway. Caulden, the last of the group through the door, pauses and stares between Reden and her mother.

ADELAIDE

We'll be fine, young Caulden.

He frowns skeptically, but steps through the door regardless, allowing it to shut firmly behind him. Adelaide inclines her head toward the end of the hall, where a narrow staircase leads up to a thick, locked metal door.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

Come. I want to show you something.

Adelaide walks toward the stairs, not checking to see if Reden follows her. Reden hesitates with a glance at the door through which Caulden and the others have disappeared.

Reden looks back up toward mother and follows her.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Reden steps into an industrial-sized elevator, designed more with packages in mind than actual people. The doors close behind her and her mother presses a button in the metal wall. The elevator GROANS as it surges upward.

After a moment of the elevator traveling in silence, Reden speaks.

REDEN

How far up are we going?

ADELAIDE

I believe the correct question
would be how far down did we start?

Reden casts a puzzled glance at Adelaide who smiles and explains.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

During the wars before the borders,
the city's inhabitants built these
underground tunnels to be able to
survive in the event of a nuclear
holocaust.

The elevator lurches and Reden looks around, as if judging
its ability to properly function.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

When the city flooded a few hundred
years later, most everyone forgot
about them. I only knew because of
the stories my great grandmother
told my mother when she was young.
She was actually from the city, you
know.

REDEN

And what city would that be?

The elevator SQUEAKS obnoxiously to a halt and Adelaide
smiles at her daughter.

The doors open and early sunlight streams into the tiny
elevator. Reden squints at the sudden light and holds up her
hand to block it as best as possible as she steps out of the
elevator.

EXT. ROOFTOP - SUNSET

Reden blinks a few times and stares out at the extensive
skyline before her. Many smaller buildings lie completely
ruined and submerged below the murky water. Some more
recognizable buildings, however, tower above.

In the distance, two skyscrapers tower above the saturated
ground, the sunset glinting off of their broken windows.
Several other structures remain standing as well, though none
as easily identifiable as the Eiffel Tower.

ADELAIDE

Welcome to Paris, my love.

Reden face fills with awe and wonder as she steps toward the edge of the building's roof.

REDEN

It's the most beautiful thing I think I've ever seen.

Adelaide strides to the wall separating them from a six story fall into infested canal water below and sits on top of it, inviting Reden to sit by her side.

ADELAIDE

I haven't seen this skyline for eleven years.

Reden lowers herself onto the parapet, her eyes still fixed on the setting sun, which silhouettes the ruins of the once-great city.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

The last time I sat here, watching the sun set, was the night I discovered you had survived.

Reden manages to drag her eyes away from one spectacle to fix her gaze on the other one sitting right beside her.

REDEN

You've known for more than a decade?

Adelaide nods.

ADELAIDE

I've wanted to come for you for so long now, but --

REDEN

But what? I wasn't as important as your pretty new country?

Adelaide SIGHS and shakes her head, sweeping her arm in the direction of the city before them.

ADELAIDE

All of this may be beautiful.

She turns back to her daughter.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

But I would trade every inch of this land to have back the years I've lost with you.

REDEN

Then why didn't you come for me?
What have you been doing here?

ADELAIDE

I've been building an army, Lily.
To save you.

Reden cringes at the nickname.

REDEN

Please don't call me that.

ADELAIDE

I'm sorry. You're nineteen now. I'm
sure you've outgrown it.

REDEN

No. I mean...

(beat)

I mean I prefer to go by Lethe.

ADELAIDE

Right. I haven't forgotten how much
Cynfael favors those silly little
names for his assassins.

REDEN

It's not silly. We have a purpose.
I am Lady Lethe, named for --

ADELAIDE

The river in the Ancient Greek
Underworld, most commonly
associated with lost memories. You
got the title because you're adept
at leaving behind no witnesses who
can remember you or your crimes.

Reden recoils from this.

REDEN

How could you possibly know that?

Adelaide shrugs.

ADELAIDE

Lethe isn't just your name. It's
been the name of a dozen and a half
assassins over the past two
centuries. It's last owner looked
remarkably like you and happened to
love your father very much.

After a moment of complete confusion, Reden shakes her head in disbelief.

REDEN

You were Lethe of the Underworlds?

Adelaide nods.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Then you knew what the training was like. The things I've had to do to survive. And yet you still left me there?

ADELAIDE

When King Magnus died unexpectedly, I didn't know he'd left me a country. I was twenty-nine. A lady. I could barely take care of a child and a husband.

REDEN

Then, no offense, but why would he name you his successor?

ADELAIDE

The king had no heirs. And the only people he trusted were his River Lords. Which turned out to be his downfall.

FLASHBACK - INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The grand hall of the royal palace, gilded in gold chandeliers and vaulted ceilings, glows with the vibrant pulse of a ball in full swing.

SUPER: "MALAIS, 2655"

Dozens of COURTIERS dance in avant-garde ball gowns and military uniforms to music both foreign and familiar. Not quite modern, not quite classic.

At one end of the room, a dais rises above the rest of the floor, lined with three thrones. In the middle sits King MAGNUS (late 40s) in full military dress, pristine white only offset by the full array of medals on his chest.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)

King Magnus was the leader of France, and also the Underworlds. Lord Styx.

(MORE)

ADELAIDE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And I was his right hand man. His battle partner. Lethe. We trusted each other more than anyone else.

In the throne to his right sits Adelaide, years younger, positively radiant in her ball gown of sparkling crystals, which glint in the glow of the room to resemble stars against the night-sky darkness of her skin.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)

Royce was his confidant, and his closest advisor. Acheron.

To the King's left sits ROYCE Reden (early 40s), a handsome, kind-looking man in a uniform similar to the King's in many regards, but for the smaller amount of medals on his chest. Adelaide's eyes scan the room as the King engages in conversation with Royce beside her.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)

And Clement. My best friend. You're father's partner. And the King's consort. Cocytus.

Between the two thrones, Clement enters. He sits on the arm of King Magnus's throne and puts a comfortable hand on the King's shoulder. Adelaide regards him with the look of a sister seeing her brother making out with his girlfriend.

Magnus reaches up with one hand and grasps Clement's. The two chat (no audio) in whispers and sly smiles. Magnus laughs at something Clement says and the latter drops a kiss on the King's cheek.

Adelaide rolls her eyes good-naturedly. A group of true friends and fierce warriors.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)

And then, there was Cyn.

Cynfael, clad in black robes and armed to the teeth, skirts about the edges of the ballroom, eyes everywhere and on everyone.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)

He was the oldest of us, besides Magnus. A brutal warrior. But he took too much joy in killing. And so he never really fit well in our team.

Cynfael sets his eyes on the King and his court at the top of the dais and scowls.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
We didn't know we couldn't trust
him. We had no idea what he was
planning.

After a moment, Cynfael sinks back into the shadows and
through a hidden doorway.

INT. KING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adelaide and Royce sit beside the King's bed, concern marring
their features. The King's face has fallen pale, and a healer
tries to get him to drink some elixir. Clement lies on the
bed beside him, holding his hand.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
There was no warning when the king
fell ill. But he knew what was
happening. He'd been suspecting an
attack for months. Which is why he
called a council meeting two days
before he died to adjust the line
of succession.

The King speaks to Adelaide and Royce, who both share a
nervous glance and then look back to their friend and leader.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
He said he chose me because I could
bear heirs. But also because I
could fight to protect my throne
and my people. Because I was the
best of the assassins, and the one
with most heart.

Adelaide laughs harshly in her voice over.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
If only he could see me now.

INT. HIDDEN PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

Adelaide shuffles down a stone corridor, far from the
brilliance of the marble and gold of the ballroom. She
glances over her shoulder before pressing on.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
Only your father and I, along with
the privy council, knew of Magnus's
plans. Or so we thought.

She rounds a corner to find Clement and Royce waiting for her. They talk quietly, each keeping constant guard over their friends' shoulders.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
 Until, coincidentally, the entire Council began to fall victim to the same illness that plagued Magnus.

The three assassins argue, each looking equal parts angry and terrified.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
 Your father decided it would be safer for us out of the palace.

INT. REDEN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Adelaide slings a bag over her shoulder and hugs Royce hard. A panel in the wall behind her has been slid to the side to reveal a short, carved out escape passage leading into the darkness beyond.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
 He told me it would too dangerous to send you first all by yourself, so I went through the secret passage in our chambers.

YOUNGER LILAC (6) rushes forward to grab her mother's arm. Adelaide gives Royce one last worried glance before dropping to her knees and enveloping her daughter in a hug.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
 I had just gotten past the city gates and met Clement when I heard the shouting and the screaming from inside the palace.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Royce Reden stands between his SIX YEAR OLD daughter and Cynfael, dressed in a darker version of the white dress uniforms worn earlier at the ball.

Cynfael raises a broadsword and decapitates her father before her very eyes. His blood spatters onto her face and nightgown. The new king stares at her greedily and raises the sword again.

CUT TO BLACK.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
I don't know what happened after
that.

FADE IN:

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Adelaide sits with Clement in a small kitchen, an untouched glass of water in front of her. Bags have formed under her eyes. Clement holds her hand tightly.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
We stayed hidden with some friends
in the city for a few weeks,
waiting for word. And then we got
it.

An older WOMAN comes into the kitchen and hands Adelaide a letter. She opens it, and breaks down into tears.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
Royce Reden, convicted traitor and
usurper, executed at the hand of
the new King.

BACK TO PRESENT - EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Adelaide drags her gaze from the sunken city to look at her daughter.

ADELAIDE
There was no word about you. I
think I just accepted that I'd
never see you again.

Reden pulls her cloak tight around her and drops her gaze from her mother's.

FLASHBACK - INT. CAR - NIGHT

Adelaide sobs in the passenger seat of Clement's car as he drives them far away from the city.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)
Clement was the last of the privy
council. He convinced me to come
here, to Paris. Said there were
people here who wanted things from
the crown that we both knew Cynfael
wouldn't give them.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Adelaide, still puffy-eyed, meets with several soldiers who bow to her. She looks to Clement, standing next to her, as he bows as well.

ADELAIDE (V.O.)

We came seeking sanctuary. Instead we found a rebellion. And we started building an army in the hopes that one day we could take my home back.

BACK TO PRESENT - EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Adelaide stands and stretches, searching the horizon.

ADELAIDE

I found this place my third day here. For two years, I'd come here every day and I'd look out at this city and I'd think of how beautiful it must have been in its prime. How humanity tried and failed to destroy what made it special. I remember thinking that I wish you could see it. See that some disasters can only serve to make you stronger.

Adelaide turns back to her daughter.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

And then the letter came. Encoded, of course. Something only one of the Underworlds could read.

REDEN

Phlegethon.

She nods.

ADELAIDE

Two years after I lost your father, Caulden was sent on his first lone mission. His father and I wept for his return. And for the news he brought. The news of your survival.

REDEN

And yet you didn't come for me.

ADELAIDE

Actually, I did. I got to the city's border before Clement brought me back. Told me what I think I already knew. That the king had his claws in you. That he'd turned you into a puppet who hated your parents and would do anything for the king.

Reden's shoulder are slumped and she sighs harshly.

REDEN

He told me that you were a traitor. And I believed him. The whole country did.

ADELAIDE

History is written by the winners, my love. For now, that's him.

Adelaide smiles sadly.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

I knew there was no waltzing into the capital and rescuing you. I knew that coming for you had to be carefully planned. And that I'd need an army. So I stayed. And I raised one for you. And I watched you grow up from the outside. Protected you where I could. Stayed out of your way when I couldn't.

Adelaide sits down closely by her daughter's side.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

I came up here the night Caulden returned. I watched the sun set. And I vowed that I wouldn't see it again until I could share it with my daughter.

Tears slide down Reden's face, but she avoids her mother's eyes, still analyzing the tragically beautiful skyline. Adelaide slips an arm around Reden's shoulders and pulls her daughter tight against her, tears of her own flowing.

Reden never returns the hug. She never pulls away, either.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Cynfael sits on his throne, Hugo at the foot of the dais.

CYNFAEL

I trust this news is important.

HUGO

My lord, I have not yet received word from my kin. However, I have looked into your other... Assignment.

Hugo pulls letters out of his pocket and places them on the ground before him

HUGO (CONT'D)

I found these hidden in a secret compartment in Phlegethon's room, majesty. Letters that make no sense.

CYNFAEL

How so?

HUGO

Sir, it appears these letters are written between two men, named Phlegethon and Cocytus. And yet I know my brother. This is not his hand. I don't know what to make of this.

Cynfael scowls.

CYNFAEL

I do.

HUGO

Majesty?

CYNFAEL

It appears we have a traitor in our midst, Lord Acheron. Please inform me if Lord Phlegethon returns to this Palace, as I don't intend on allowing him to leave it again with his head still on his shoulders.

Hugo stares down at the letters, apprehensive.

INT. PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Armelle watches through a hidden window that looks down into the throne room as the King speaks to Hugo. She pulls back, only her eyes illuminated from the small sliver of light coming in through the opening.

With one last glance toward her father's throne room, she rushes off down the empty stone corridor, her footfalls silent as death's.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

In an underground bunker, a group of rebels position themselves around a massive table. Adelaide sits at the head, with Reden to her right and Clement to her left, Caulden and Isabelle taking up their other sides respectively.

Other REBELS, including Jean-Luc, Michael, Amelie, and several new, unfamiliar faces also join the group at the table. A few STRAGGLERS make their way to their seats as Adelaide addresses the group.

ADELAIDE

Thank you, generals, for joining us tonight. As you may have heard whispered around your campfires tonight, the Princess of our revolution has returned to us.

She lays a hand on Reden's shoulder and smiles. Many of the generals at the table stare at her and WHISPER amongst themselves. Reden does not smile or react.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

Tonight, she brings us information from the viper that currently sits on my throne. And so I'll turn the conversation to my daughter now. Lilac?

Reden doesn't respond immediately. One of the generals, an older man named BRIGADIER, snaps at her.

BRIGADIER

How are we supposed to trust anything that comes out of her mouth? She's been the King's bitch for years.

Several generals murmur agreement. Reden's hard, impassive mask does not give away her reaction. She merely meets the general's gaze in silent challenge.

CAULDEN

Hold your tongue, Brigadier. You've no idea what she's been through.

BRIGADIER

I don't care what she's been through. We've all been through shit. She's been murdering us for months at Cynfael's bidding. What makes you think she wants to help us?

CAULDEN

You idiot --

BRIGADIER

Sit down, you traitor. Don't forget you were his puppet too. We shouldn't trust either of you.

Isabelle jumps to her feet and snarls at Brigadier.

ISABELLE

How dare you?

This time, Michael jumps to his feet, yelling at Isabelle. He points to Reden.

MICHAEL

Don't be thick, Isabelle. She tried to kill your father and your friend just yesterday.

CAULDEN

That wasn't her fault.

The argument continues in the background as most of the rebels join in and argue amongst themselves. Clement quietly meets Adelaide's eye, and she shakes her head gently. Reden turns to her mother with an eyebrow raised in faint amusement.

REDEN

You're right. Quite the army you've put together.

Adelaide opens her mouth to protest, but Reden holds up a hand to stop her.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Leave this to me.

Reden leans back in her chair, taking in the cacophonous argument with a slight grin. After a moment, she sticks two fingers in her mouth and WHISTLES. Loudly. The entire room stops in their tracks, glancing down at the girl reclining in her chair as if she doesn't have a care in the world.

REDEN (CONT'D)

If you're all done with your sixteen-way pissing contest, might we address the real problems we're facing here?

Caulden reigns in laughter, while many of the generals, including the Brigadier, glare at her brazen attitude.

Adelaide nods at her daughter's command, and inclines her head toward the others in the room.

ADELAIDE

Be seated and be quiet, ladies and gentlemen. Let my daughter speak.

One by one, the room falls back into order again as the generals take their seats. Reden watches her mother's display of authority with a look of appreciation.

REDEN

Now, the truth is, you've no reason to trust me. You've no reason to trust Phlegethon, either, I suppose. It's true that we've both been fighting for the other side for quite some time now.

Brigadier HUFFS a dissenting comment, but Reden ignores him.

REDEN (CONT'D)

And I'm not sure I've fallen completely in love with whatever it is you people want. I'm not sure I want to be a member of this rebellion.

Adelaide watches her daughter carefully as she continues.

REDEN (CONT'D)

But I remember now. I remember Cynfael Valdemar murdering my father in front of me. And now it's his turn to pay in blood.

Caulden nods at her, urging her to continue.

REDEN (CONT'D)

The last time we spoke, the King told me he would free me of the debt that's tied me to him since I was a child. My father's debt. And all I had left to do were two things.

She nods to Clement.

REDEN (CONT'D)

My first job was to track you down
and kill you. Quietly enough so
that the rebels didn't raise you
into martyrdom like Royce Reden.

Clement nods in understanding.

ADELAIDE

And the other requirement?

Reden meets her mother's gaze, then looks around the room.
She hesitates.

REDEN

I don't know.

Brigadier jeers at this, as does Jean-Luc.

BRIGADIER

See that? Playing with us. Probably
just buying time for her King to
come and slaughter us all.

REDEN

I haven't been in contact with the
king since I left Lyon. My HMP is
still down.

(to Clement)

Thanks for that, by the way.

Clement and Caulden share a laugh.

JEAN-LUC

And we're just supposed to believe
that?

She meets the boy's gaze with a cat-like stare.

REDEN

Boy, the King's closest battalion
is located at the edge of the
ruined lands. Not a day's travel
from here. If I'd told him where
you were, you'd already be dead.

Jean-Luc sits back in his seat, seething.

CLEMENT

So you have no idea what he's
planning?

REDEN

Nothing really. He didn't say who the target was. He just said that the kill would be the crown jewel in my career as an assassin.

A dead silence engulfs the room. When Reden looks up to her mother, Adelaide's face is stone cold with rage and horror.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Okay. That means something to you, clearly, but I'm just a little clueless. Fill me in, someone?

Clement speaks to Adelaide, ignoring Reden.

CLEMENT

He wouldn't.

ADELAIDE

There's only one person who threatens his reign. More than myself or Lilac.

REDEN

Who? What are you talking about?

CLEMENT

But could he do it? He loves her.

ADELAIDE

Not more than he loves that throne.

Reden stands up, waving a hand between the intense stares of her mother and Clement.

REDEN

Excuse me.

Neither Adelaide nor Clement answer. Instead, Isabelle chirps in.

ISABELLE

A few weeks before King Magnus got sick, Cynfael mentioned to Underworlds that he was planning something. Something that would go down in our histories. Something that would mean every child from here to Nouveaux to Marseilles would know his name.

CAULDEN

Something he called the crown jewel
of his career as an assassin.

ADELAIDE

Killing a royal.

Reden just looks even more confused by this explanation.

REDEN

So, he was planning on sending me
to kill you?

ADELAIDE

No. If I were to die, especially at
your hand, I would only become a
martyr. Like you said. Much as it
pains me to say, the revolution can
carry on with or without me.

REDEN

Then what? He's planning on having
me commit suicide or something?

CAULDEN

No.

Reden looks up at him, practically begging for someone to
give her a straight answer.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Reden, the King wants you to take
out the only other person who
stands to take his throne from him.

CLEMENT

The girl who's secretly been
working with us for the past year
to do everything she can to
undermine her father's work.

Reden shakes her head and whips her gaze from Clement to her
mother, to Isabelle, and then finally to Caulden.

REDEN

Armelle Valdemar? The princess? The
King's daughter? That's who he
wants me to kill?

ISABELLE

He'd have an excuse, too. If he
knows about her ties to us, she
could easily be tried as a traitor.

ADELAIDE

Instead, he wants to handle it quietly. Not let on that he can't even control his own blood. But we'd know. The rebels would lose hope. She's our strongest ally. Without her, the probability of our success is slim, at best.

REDEN

But why me? Why can't he have someone else kill her?

ADELAIDE

Because of your name.

CAULDEN

He never planned on releasing you from your father's legacy. He was going to shackle you with it.

CLEMENT

If you killed the Princess, an innocent compared to the King, he'd frame it against you. Against your family. The rebels would lose all faith in our honor.

REDEN

Wait a second.

Reden stumbles backward from the onslaught of information. Her friends and family watch her with concern, while the pit of vipers down the table watch her fall apart with a sense of relish.

REDEN (CONT'D)

You're saying that the King was trying to frame me. To kill me.

CAULDEN

Reden --

Reden holds out her hand to hold him at bay.

REDEN

Stop. Stop with that name, stop with the lying and the propaganda. I will believe a great many things about the King. I'll believe that he killed my father, I'll believe everything else. But this is where I draw the line.

Reden stalks toward the exit, two rebels at the end of the table standing to block her way. She growls at them.

ADELAIDE

Stand down.

The rebels obey and sit back in their chairs.

Reden yanks the door open and slams it behind her. Adelaide cringes at the loud metallic CLANK and the following smaller CLANKS of Reden's boots hitting the stairs, followed by the GROANING of the elevator.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Each step sending dozens of stones flying, Reden paces back and forth, shaking her hands anxiously. She pauses, her breathing labored as she braces her hands on the parapet and looks out onto the broken city.

The elevator CREAKS up to the roof behind her. She scowls to herself, not turning to see who steps off when the doors slide open.

REDEN

If you're here to give me a lecture about being ladylike or polite or whatever else Princess are supposed to be--

Caulden leans against the elevator doors and SCOFFS.

CAULDEN

Well. I'm not particularly good at any of those things.

Reden spins around to face him.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Doesn't mean you're not about to get an earful.

REDEN

Don't start.

CAULDEN

You've heard the truth. You wouldn't have been sitting in that room today if you didn't believe what your mother told you.

REDEN

Something you're willing to bet on?
Willing to bet your life, mine,
everyone in the entire country?

CAULDEN

Gods above, Reden, listen to
yourself.

REDEN

Do. Not. Call. Me. Reden.

Caulden pushes off the elevator bank and storms over to her,
leaning in until they breathe the same air.

CAULDEN

To hell with that. I'm through
pretending that Royce Reden was
anything other than a patriot, and
you and I both know that you feel
the same.

REDEN

Don't you dare tell me what I'm
feeling.

CAULDEN

Someone has too. Or else you'll
spend the rest of your life lying
to yourself.

REDEN

Look around. The liars and the
cheats are ruling the world, Phleg.
(beat)
The king of France has been doing
it for thirteen years. He's still
on that throne.

CAULDEN

He never deserved it.

REDEN

What makes you think I do? What
makes my mother and I any better?
She's an ex assassin who abandoned
her daughter to be raised by her
mortal enemy. And me. I took her
place in the Underworlds. Killed
hundreds of these people's family
members. Husbands, wives. Mothers.
Daughters.

(MORE)

REDEN (CONT'D)

How am I any better than the real princess, who risks her life every day actually trying to make her country a better place.

CAULDEN

Armelle doesn't want to be a princess. She never did.

REDEN

And you think I do?

CAULDEN

I know you can do it. And you will, if the situation calls for it.

REDEN

But it's not what I want.

Reden shrugs helplessly.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I'm an assassin, Phleg. I'm not royalty.

CAULDEN

But you are.

Reden takes a step away from him, turning to face the city for a breath of fresh air.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Lil-

REDEN

I'll help you. I'll go to Malais. Save the princess, bring her back here. And then she can deal with all of this. Let her keep the tiaras and ball gowns and tutors and wealth. I never wanted that. I still don't.

CAULDEN

It's your birthright.

REDEN

Because a dying King chose my mother and not your father, the man he loved? None of this makes sense.

CAULDEN

It doesn't have to. But it is the truth. And you are the princess. No matter what name you call yourself.

Reden shakes her head, ready to ignore him. Caulden indicates the city and the world beyond their rooftop space.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Do you know what the border rebels fight for?

REDEN

The Border Doctrine. The one that closed us off from the rest of the world. The rebels want the walls torn down.

CAULDEN

The rebels want the world to be righted. Five hundred years ago, everything stopped. Trade, advances. But there was this idea back then of globalization. It meant that what happens to one group of people affects us all.

Reden shrugs, not following.

REDEN

And?

CAULDEN

And that's why the rebels fight for your mother. For you. What happens to you can change all of France. All of our history. And our future. They fight for hope.

REDEN

Putting hope in me is not the smartest thing in the world.

CAULDEN

But they have put their hope in you. Millions of people are relying on you. And Armelle. Whether you want them to or not. They're hope will stick with you as long as you carry your father and mother's blood in your veins.

Reden nods.

REDEN

So if I drain all my blood, I'm
home-free?

Caulden shoots her a good-hearted glare.

Reden shakes her head with a sad smile.

REDEN (CONT'D)

No. I guess I don't really have
freedom anymore. Not so long as I
live.

CAULDEN

Maybe not the kind of freedom
you're looking for. But you do have
power that other people dream of.
Now it's your decision. What are
you going to do with it?

Reden and Caulden stare off into the night, both considering
the huge precipice on which they now stand.

INT. ARMELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Armelle lies propped up in bed with a book in her hands. A
soft KNOCK causes her to set the book aside and sit up
straighter. The door to her bedroom breezes open, light as a
whisper of air has knocked it over, and Cynfael enters.

Armelle scrambles to stand, but Cynfael raises a hand to stop
her.

CYNFAEL

Please. It's all right.

Armelle sits back down, though she remains tense and rim-rod
straight. Her father makes his way across the room and sits
on the bed beside her.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

You needn't be so formal, darling.
It's just me.

ARMELLE

After what you said earlier, is
that meant to make me feel better?

Cynfael SIGHS and reaches out to take his daughter's hand.
While she refrains from snatching it back, she barely
breathes for as long as his hand touches hers.

CYNFAEL

My Ellie. I know I haven't truly seemed like your father these past few years. But you're still my little girl. And I want nothing more to see you happy.

He smiles at her and drops her hand to reach into his cloak. From it, he pulls a small box with a black silk ribbon tying it together. On top sits an envelope.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Come to the ball tonight. I had an artist hand-make this just for you.

He hands her the box and she takes it, holding it in her lap. The King nudges her shoulder kindly.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

I chose this year's theme just for you. And you and I both know that you have the perfect costume for it in that closet of yours.

A slight grin stretches across Armelle's face and she nods.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Good.

He stands.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Now. Do this decrepit old man a favor and allow me to try to make up for all I've done.

Armelle avoids her father's eyes, her smile already slipping.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Just five minutes? Please?

Armelle finally nods and glances up at her father.

ARMELLE

Alright. But just five minutes.

Cynfael CHUCKLES.

CYNFAEL

That is all I can ask, isn't it?

Cynfael bows his head and then exits the room. Once he has left, Armelle picks up the package and pulls the ribbons off.

When she removes the box's top, she gawks at the crystal mask inside, the lamb-inspired design so innocent and pure.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Adelaide sits at the head of the table still, an unamused expression fixed on her face as the world descends into chaos around her. Once again, the room around her, with the exception of Clement and Isabelle, engages in an unintelligible shouting match.

Clement leans in to Adelaide.

CLEMENT

Not exactly how you imagined today going, huh?

ADELAIDE

Do bite your tongue.

The bickering before them continues until the door CLANGS open, SQUEALING on its hinges, and collides with the stone wall with a deafening BANG. Reden steps through with her usual deadpan and a pair of crossed arms.

The room falls silent as all eyes go straight to her. Her mother watches her with especial interest.

REDEN

Listen up. I'm going to help you rescue your little princess. The other one, I mean. The real one. But we're going to do this my way or no way, got it?

No one issues a complaint.

A messenger enters the room through a side door and crosses to Clement and Adelaide, whispering inaudibly.

Reden holds her shoulders back.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Good. Now, the plan is simple. I shall return to Malais Palace with Phlegethon.

She stumbles for a moment, then corrects herself.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. Lord Caulden and I shall return under our usual ruse.

(MORE)

REDEN (CONT'D)

We shall go from there. I trust
there are no objections?

At first, it seems as if this suggestion will be received
with the same silence as the first.

Until Clement stands from his chair, a letter in his hand.

CLEMENT

That might not be the best idea,
Lady Reden.

REDEN

On what grounds do you deny my
plan?

He indicates the letter.

CLEMENT

The princess herself sent a
message. Apparently, the king has
discovered my son's duplicity.

Pause.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

While I do care for you, Lady
Reden, and would do anything to
protect your life, I will not lose
my son again.

Reden nods.

REDEN

Nor will I.

She SIGHS.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Well. I do have one other idea.
It's not exactly conventional, but
it will get the job done.

Adelaide narrows her eyes at her daughter suspiciously.

EXT. PARIS ROOFTOP - SUNRISE

Reden stares out at the city one last time, a sense of calm
washing over her face. Her mother sits beside her on the
parapet.

ADELAIDE

I wish there was another way. I hate sending you back. We just found each other again.

Reden shrugs.

REDEN

We did it once. Next time will be a walk in the park.

Adelaide squeezes her daughter tight, and then releases her. She stands and moves over to a long, thin box sitting on the ground. She picks it up and hands it to Reden.

With an unsure look to Adelaide, Reden pulls the top of the box open and reaches inside to retrieve the gift. Her father's katana lies inside, brighter and more brilliantly reflective than before.

ADELAIDE

Caulden had it sharpened and polished for you.

Reden smiles up at her mother.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

I think he believes he has to apologize for not accompanying you back to Malais.

REDEN

He couldn't go, anyway. He'd be executed and I'd be distraught. No way I'd be able to do what needed to be done at the palace.

Adelaide cocks her head at her daughter.

ADELAIDE

He's protective of you.

REDEN

When I was eleven, Phleg tried to run from the palace. We'd planned it together, but I chickened out. When they caught him, I begged on my knees for hours for the king to spare his life. Caulden got away with some lashes, but the king spared him. Phleg likes to think he owes me his life after that. Even though my hesitation in meeting him is how he got caught.

She shrugs.

REDEN (CONT'D)
He's been like a big brother ever since.

ADELAIDE
Are you and he seeing each other?

Reden shakes her head adamantly.

REDEN
No. I mean, I love him. Don't get me wrong. But like I said. He's like my brother.

Reden LAUGHS. Her mother frowns.

ADELAIDE
I see. Well, perhaps one day you might --

REDEN
Mom, you can stop right there. Please.

She laughs nervously.

REDEN (CONT'D)
There's something you should know about me.

Adelaide pauses and waits with a curious expression.

REDEN (CONT'D)
I'm not into men.

Adelaide tries and fails to hide her shock.

ADELAIDE
Oh. Well, that's alright. I've known all kinds, and if women are more your taste --

REDEN
Actually, not women either.

Her mother raises an eyebrow, confused.

REDEN (CONT'D)
I've never felt like that about anyone. I love Phlegethon. I think I loved my father. I think I love you.

(MORE)

REDEN (CONT'D)

But I don't think I'll ever love
anyone like you loved Royce Reden.

Reden shrugs and runs a hand down her father's blade to
distract herself.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I guess it's one of the things the
King beat out of me. Something that
makes me as heartless and wicked as
he always wanted.

Adelaide reaches out and strokes her daughter's face. Reden
meets her mother's eyes reluctantly.

ADELAIDE

No. There is nothing wrong with
you, Lilac. If that is how your
heart beats, then it is how your
heart beats. No tricks of the mind,
not even Cynfael Valdemar's, could
change that.

Reden's face, more vulnerable and open than ever before,
lights up under her mother's love and acceptance.

Adelaide grasps her husband's sword and gestures for Reden to
rise from her seat on the wall.

ADELAIDE (CONT'D)

Now. I want you to take this blade,
and the name Reden, and wield them
both with pride. Take back what is
ours and leave no room for
question. We are the Reden line.
And we are France's future.

Reden beams, tears swimming in her eyes, as she weighs the
sword in her hand. She unsheathes it and holds it up proudly.

INT. KING'S STUDY - AFTERNOON

Cynfael sits at a massive oak desk, pouring over papers and
books. A rushed KNOCK comes at his door.

CYNFAEL

Enter.

Before the words fade into the echoing silence of the
cavernous room, the doors fling open and Hugo enters, bowing
hastily.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)
News, I take it?

HUGO
Yes, majesty.

CYNFAEL
Has your family responded?

HUGO
No, my lord. Lady Reden. She's
returned. And...

He trails off.

CYNFAEL
And?

HUGO
And I think you should see this.

INT. INFIRMARY - NIGHT

Cynfael, followed closely by Hugo, enters the palace infirmary.

REDEN
Get off. Get off me. Go buzz about
someone's mangled corpse won't you?

Covered in bruises and tiny cuts, with bandages encircling the fun parts of her naked chest, Reden sits up on a hospital bed, barking orders at nurses who attempt to help her.

REDEN (CONT'D)
And if you're currently lacking a
mangled corpse, I am sure I can
find one somewhere very nearby.

She glares at one NURSE in particular, who scurries away into a back room. Reden shakes her head and looks up at the newcomers to the room. Her face lights up with a smirk as she sees Hugo and the King.

She pushes up against the bed with one arm, grimacing and falling back before she can stand fully.

CYNFAEL
Relax, Lethe. I'm told you've a
great deal of healing before you're
able to do much of anything again.

With a painful-sounding LAUGH, Reden bows her head in the King's direction.

REDEN
Majesty.

HUGO
Giving the help Hell, are we?

Reden shrugs stiffly.

REDEN
I don't believe I have another setting, to be honest.

CYNFAEL
You look like you were run over by a whole herd of cattle.

REDEN
You should see the other guy. Talk about a mangled corpse. It'll be a miracle if they can identify the bastard.

CYNFAEL
I trust that means you succeeded in your mission?

Reden gingerly reaches across to her nightstand, where she picks up a tiny gold object and tosses it to the king. Cynfael examines it.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)
A signet ring.

The golden monster of a ring contains a relief of the same symbol Reden found on Henri's chest. Cynfael examines it a moment longer before pocketing the ring. Hugo gestures to her injuries.

HUGO
Guess you didn't get those from Clement Baptiste, then.

REDEN
Nah. These came from a bar brawl in Nouveaux on my way back. I said the wrong thing about the rebellion, they said the wrong thing about the royal family, one thing led to another, and then bam. Hospital.

Cynfael chuckles softly while Hugo rolls his eyes at her. The King waves a hand at Hugo.

CYNFAEL

Leave us.

With one skeptical glance at Reden, Hugo obeys. Cynfael lowers himself onto the bed adjacent to Reden's.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Your H.M.P. stopped transmitting two days ago.

REDEN

Yeah. You can think Clement for that, the asshole. Hit me with electricity and fried the circuits.

CYNFAEL

Well. We'll get that repaired as soon as you are well enough to sit through the surgery. Speaking of which...

Cynfael silently dismisses the other two nurses in the ward, leaning in to whisper to her privately.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

I suppose it would be unwise to ask if you happen to be ready to take on that last task I must ask of you.

Reden lurches forward, wrapping a hand around her abdomen in pain.

REDEN

Of course not. If you will it, my king, it shall be done.

CYNFAEL

Good. I am so very glad to hear that.

The King nods at her and stands, starting back toward the door.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

You'll receive your assignment shortly.

A few feet from the exit, Cynfael turns back to Reden, a suspicious hint in his gaze.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)
 One last thing, my dear, before I
 forget.

REDEN
 Yes sir?

CYNFAEL
 As of last night, Lord Phlegethon
 has been declared an enemy of the
 crown. A threat to be eliminated as
 soon as possible.

Reden takes a deep breath and nods.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)
 I am aware that the two of you have
 been close for several years,
 Lethe.

REDEN
 He's like a brother. And yes, if he
 threatens you, my lord, I will put
 a blade between his shoulder blades
 without a second thought.

A truly wicked smile spreads across the King's face.

CYNFAEL
 Good. Very good.

He walks back toward the exit, calling back to her.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)
 Rest well and heal quickly, pet.

Reden watches him go, the slightest bit of hatred allowing
 itself into her glare as he leaves her line of sight.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Fewer rebels mill around the room now, Clement manning his
 own small bay of computers. He glances up when Caulden enters
 and waves him over.

CAULDEN
 What do you want?

CLEMENT
 I see you're still mad at me.

CAULDEN

You and I pulled her out of the frying pan. We had her back. And you just threw her back in the fire by herself. Yes. I am still mad at you.

CLEMENT

For the last time, it was her plan, not mine.

CAULDEN

You could have told her no.

Clement CHUCKLES.

CLEMENT

Oh no. If there's one thing I've learned over the years, it's that you simply do not stand between a Reden woman and her quest for vengeance. You can only do your best to ensure she survives the journey.

Caulden crosses his arms irritably.

CAULDEN

Is that all you called me for?

CLEMENT

No.

He hands Caulden a piece of paper from his desk.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

I fixed Reden's H.M.P. before she left. She's able to send brief, untraceable messages back to us.

CAULDEN

And?

CLEMENT

And she got in this morning. King doesn't suspect a thing as far as she knows.

He nods to the message in Caulden's hands.

CLEMENT (CONT'D)

Sent that specifically for you.

Clement turns back to his screens and taps away at a holographic 3-D keyboard. Caulden steps away, unfolding the page and reading the text printed there.

The corners of his mouth lift up into a wry grin and he shakes his head, folding the letter and placing it in his pocket.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Cynfael paces about irritably. When a KNOCK comes at his door, he practically GROWLS at the intruder.

CYNFAEL

What?

The doors open and Hugo rushes in, bowing deeply before approaching the dais.

HUGO

Majesty.

CYNFAEL

What is it, Acheron? I'm in a most foul mood.

HUGO

Then perhaps this will cheer you up, my lord. I have heard back from my kin in the rebellion's army.

CYNFAEL

And?

HUGO

And there's a lot more going on than just Phlegethon betraying us.

The king smirks, the wheels in his head turning.

INT. REDEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Back in her palace bedroom, Reden peels the bandages on her abdomen away slowly, grimacing the entire time. She finishes one layer, tossing it to the side and preparing to start on the next when a KNOCK raps on her door.

She freezes and looks up in the direction of the noise. She stands and shrugs on a satin robe hanging from the back of her door before slipping it open and peeking out.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

While no person waits for Reden, a large box sits in her doorway. A shining red velvet bow tops the box off, complete with an enveloped note on expensive stationary tucked beneath the ribbon.

Reden glances up and down the hallway before kneeling down and retrieving the box. She retreats back into her bedroom and shuts the door behind her.

INT. REDEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Reden carries the box to her vanity table in the corner. She picks the card up and opens it first. Reden reads the riddle, written there in elegant calligraphy, out loud.

REDEN

"For your recently ailing health/
Is a night out prescribed.
The key to all your future wealth/
In this box you shall find."

She furrows her brows at the message, flipping the note over to search for the rest.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Good gods have you gotten cryptic,
Styx.

She places the letter on the table and eyes the box with a skeptic interest. Reden slips the ribbons off and lifts the box's lid, setting both carefully to the side as she gazes down to see the box's contents for the first time.

A look of puzzlement crosses her features. In the box, on an outrageously expensive dress of black satin and silver crystals, sits an intricate metalwork mask in the shape of a wolf's face, the maw detailed exquisitely.

Beside the mask, another envelope of a similar size and quality as the first lies in the pile of fabric. Reden opens it and retrieves the encased invitation.

INSERT IMAGE: Invitation for "The King's Eighth Annual Masquerade Ball"; a few lines down, the date "12 August 2668", is spelled out. And then, in the middle of the page, "2668 Theme: Fairy Tales."

Reden turns this over as well, this time finding more writing on the back in the same elegantly scrawling hand as the first note. The king's words on the page echo in her head.

CYNFAEL (V.O.)

I do so love fairy tales. Don't you? I especially love the one about the naïve child in the red cape, put in place by the ever-powerful wolf. Enjoy your final night before true freedom, Lethe. Sincerely, Styx.

Reden looks over the top of the letter at the mask and the dress, biting her lip as the weight of the world falls on her shoulders.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Caulden stands in the shadows of a house's chimney, the sleeping slums of a city quiet as death beneath him.

He reaches into his pocket and retrieves the note from Paris. The moonlight illuminates the short slip of paper.

INSERT IMAGE: "12.08.2660. Returning the favor. Same time and place we were supposed to meet that night. -L"

A GRATING sound draws his attention up from the letter to the ancient gates across the darkened city, each surrounded by king's guards protecting every interest to the Malais Palace, which lies just beyond.

Caulden scowls at the city, at the palace, at the guards. He folds the letter and returns it to his pocket.

The touchscreen on his arm BEEPS with a new notification. Caulden pushes himself deeper into the shadows as he answers the call. Surrounded by trees and undergrowth, Caulden's father's face greets him, grim and --

And bloodied.

Caulden recoils from the sight.

CAULDEN

Father. What happened?

CLEMENT

Paris. We've been betrayed. The king found us.

Caulden shakes his head in disbelief.

CAULDEN

Reden wouldn't have --

CLEMENT

I don't think it was her. But I do worry about what the king might know through this leak.

CAULDEN

What do you mean?

CLEMENT

I mean the king found Paris. Which means his mole knew about Paris. Which means he's probably been there before. He might have even been there the past few days.

Caulden CURSES under his breath.

CAULDEN

Reden. The King might already know about her.

CLEMENT

I have no idea. But it's a possibility.

Caulden runs a hand through his hair.

CAULDEN

Alright. We'll figure this out. What about you? The Queen? Are you alright?

CLEMENT

I'm fine. Isabelle is fine. But there are a few I haven't seen since the attack. Michael and Amelie. Jean-Luc. And Adelaide.

Caulden bites his lip.

CAULDEN

Damn it. All right. Just find somewhere safe. If you can, look for the others. I'll go in and find Reden.

CLEMENT

You can't! If you interrupt her mission now, more than just she and the princess could die.

CAULDEN

I won't let that happen. On my life, I will not abandon either one of them.

Caulden raises his eyes from his father's image to the palace, where fancy cars and even horse-drawn carriages already pile into the courtyard for the masquerade.

INT. PALACE BALLROOM - NIGHT

A parade of papier-mâché and metal faces in the shapes of creatures from tales both familiar and obscure dance around the ornate, if intimidating, ballroom. MEN and WOMEN, free of the usual constraints of their identities, mingle freely.

Among the faceless dancers of pinks and teals and blacks and whites, Reden stands out as a show-stopper from the moment she enters the ballroom through the main entrance.

Her dress, fitted to her perfectly with a mixture of black satins and authentic crystals, makes it look as if the night sky outside wraps around her like a cloak. Her mask covers her entire face, save for her mouth and chin.

With her beautifully curled and fashioned hair tumbling freely down her back the final piece in her extravagant costume, Reden transcends beauty to become a goddess, worthy of a name like Lethe of the Underworlds.

Almost immediately after stepping into the room, the eyes of men and women far and wide try covertly to sneak glances at her, a wild MURMUR spreading like wildfire.

A hand grasps Reden's arm, leading her toward the dance floor. Reden looks up to see a wolf mask identical to hers.

REDEN

What are you doing, Acheron?

Now on the floor, Hugo slips an arm around Reden's waist and pulls her close, jumping into the newly begun waltz.

HUGO

The strength of the wolf is the pack, right? I'm here to help you on your mission.

He twirls her away and then spins her back into his arms.

REDEN

If I needed your help, I'd ask.

Reden examines the room around her over Hugo's shoulder as they dance across the floor expertly and gracefully. Her eyes catches on something in the crowd and she trips over Hugo's feet. He catches her and holds her arms tightly.

HUGO

Watch your step, Lady Lethe.
Wouldn't want you to reinjure
yourself.

The song ends and the audience applauds the orchestra. Hugo and Reden merely watch each other, examining every single move and breath.

The next song, a more upbeat pop song, begins. Hugo holds out his hand again with a devilish smile.

HUGO (CONT'D)

One last dance?

Reden eyes the hand, considering.

Another wolf-masked man approaches on quick feet, grasping Hugo by the arm and tugging him toward the exit.

VERNE

We have to go.

REDEN

Hello, Verne. Nice to see you as
well.

Verne glances up at her only briefly before turning back to his twin.

VERNE

Hugo. Now. We need to leave.

Hugo nods goodbye to Reden.

HUGO

Save at least one for me, won't
you?

And then Verne drags him from the main crowd and the two disappear in the madness of the party.

Reden waits a moment and then turns back in the direction where her eyes caught on something moments before. She takes a few steps forward, dodging the pulsing dancers on the floor as she makes her way to the outer edge of the ballroom.

There. A flash of bright red in the otherwise dimly colored array of false faces.

Reden takes another step forward, and another, each step revealing flashes of the red cloak and crystal-adorned mask.

Reden breaks through the crowd. A few feet away, Armelle stands in a simple white gown, with a blood red cloak falling past her shoulders to pool around her feet.

Two men speak with Armelle, clearly hitting on her. She nods and smiles past the mask, every so often looking out into the crowd as if searching for someone to save her.

Reden smiles and crosses the remaining space between them. She reaches out and links arms with Armelle, beaming at her warmly.

REDEN

There you are.

She plants a huge, sloppy kiss on Armelle's lips. The two men before them gape openly. Armelle's eyes shoot wide open, staring in shock at Reden even after the other girl pulls away and slides an arm around her waist.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I've been looking for you.

Reden sidles even closer to the princess, cocking her head to the side innocently as she turns to the two men.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Who are we entertaining now?

The two men STAMMER and then quietly leave. Reden LAUGHS and turns back to Armelle.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Well, that was fun. Haven't done that for a while.

ARMELLE

Who... Who the hell are you?

Reden's smile fades and her expression turns serious.

REDEN

Princess, my name is Lilac Reden.

ARMELLE

You... You're Lilac?

She takes Reden in again analyzing every detail.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

I didn't know what my father had done to you. I thought maybe he killed you that night after I left, after he killed your father.

REDEN

You were there the night he killed my father?

FLASHBACK - INT. PALACE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Royce Reden's freshly chopped head rolls to a stop beside his body. Lilac stands in a pool of his blood, shocked beyond her ability to scream. The king sets his sights on her and raises his sword once more.

Another young girl (YOUNGER ARMELLE), the same age as Lilac, runs forward and throws her arms around Lilac.

YOUNGER ARMELLE

No!

Cynfael stops, his eyes darting to his daughter.

CYNFAEL

Armelle! Move this instant.

YOUNGER ARMELLE

Father please. She's my friend. Please don't hurt her.

Lilac clings to Armelle tightly.

LILAC

Please.

The king slowly lowers his sword. From down the hall, TEEN VERNE and TEEN HUGO approach Cynfael, dragging a YOUNGER CAULDEN behind them.

TEEN HUGO

Majesty. We found this one, but his father and sister escaped.

The king and young Lilac are engaged in a staring contest, each daring the other to back down and blink.

TEEN VERNE

Sir. Should we execute this lot as well?

The king finally blinks.

CYNFAEL

No.

TEEN HUGO

Sir?

CYNFAEL

Take them both the dungeons, Lord Acheron.

Hugo jolts a little at the title, but nods. Cynfael gestures to Verne, and then to his daughter.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Lord Cocytus. Take my daughter to her room please.

Armelle SCREECHES bloody murder as Verne steps forward and tries to pry the two girls apart. Lilac cries silent tears and holds on to her friend, but makes no sound.

BACK TO SCENE - INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Younger Armelle's SCREAMS still echo in Reden's mind as she take the other girl in properly for the first time.

REDEN

You're the one that saved us.

Armelle gives her a sad nod.

ARMELLE

I am sorry I didn't do more. For you or your father.

Reden shakes her head, taking in her surroundings. She wraps her arm around Armelle's waist once more and drags her toward one of the halls branching off

REDEN

We have to get out of here.

ARMELLE

Why?

REDEN

You're father sent me to kill you.

Armelle glances around anxiously at the possibility of the words being overheard.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I won't hurt you. I'm with Caulden and Clement.

ARMELLE

Why would my father kill me?

REDEN

We can talk reasons and explanations later. For now, we're still halfway through the woods with the darker half still ahead of us. Come on.

The party continues around Reden and Armelle as they slip seemingly innocently off the dance floor and out of sight.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Hugo and Verne enter through the open doors of the throne room, their masks pulled from their faces.

HUGO

Your majesty --

The twins stop cold. At the foot of the dais, bound and gagged, kneel a sobbing Michael and Amelie. The king stands behind them, wielding a broadsword.

VERNE

Gods above.

CYNFAEL

I don't believe they have jurisdiction here, your gods. Otherwise they could stop this.

The King raises the sword slightly and Hugo lunges forward, falling on his knees not far from Michael.

HUGO

Your majesty, please. Wait. Tell me what you need. Anything you need. I will do it for you. Just please. Spare my brother. I beg of you.

Cynfael lowers the sword, that wicked smile curling his lips upward.

EXT. PALACE GARDENS - NIGHT

Reden leads Armelle through the palace gardens, glancing over her shoulder every few seconds.

ARMELLE

If the guards catch us out here --

REDEN

They won't. I've got a plan.

When they reach an old, crumbling stone bench, Reden bends down and reaches underneath, pulling from it her father's sword.

ARMELLE

You can't take on all of my father's guards.

REDEN

I don't have to. Like I said. I have a plan. So please, for the love of the gods, keep your voice down and keep moving.

They push forward, sticking to the shadows of the tall bushes and vine trellises.

A twig SNAPS behind them.

Within the blink of an eye, Reden unsheathes the sword and jumps between the princess and the sound. When nothing immediately jumps out at her, Reden slowly inches forward toward the sound.

Another step. They wait.

Two more steps. They wait.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Armelle. If I tell you to run, you run. Got it?

Armelle nods mutely.

Another half-step and Reden freezes. A PALACE GUARD turns the corner, eyes locking on Reden. Reden raises the katana high, her breathing steady, and holds out a hand to the princess behind her.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Get ready.

The man in the guard's uniform calls out in a familiar voice.

CAULDEN

Reden, wait.

Armelle takes a step forward, but Reden holds her back. She regards the guard with skepticism. The guard removes his helmet, revealing only Caulden. Reden heaves a SIGH of relief and sheathes her sword.

REDEN

What are you doing here?

Armelle beams and GIGGLES, pushing past her.

ARMELLE

Caulden!

Armelle runs to him and practically jumps into his arms. He embraces her tightly. Reden watches the display of affection with a rather awkward expression of surprise.

CAULDEN

Mel.

He pulls back and pecks Armelle on the cheek before examining her from head to toe.

CAULDEN (CONT'D)

Are you alright? Are you hurt?

ARMELLE

No. Lilac found me. I'm fine.

CAULDEN

I can see that. You like getting yourself into messy situations, don't you?

Armelle smiles a girlish, flirtatious smile at Caulden. Reden still glances almost comically between the two, hopelessly confused and caught off guard. Eventually she interrupts with no questions.

REDEN

You were supposed to wait at the gates so that we would have a way out.

Caulden meets her gaze, his mouth flattening into a grim line.

CAULDEN

I needed to warn you.

REDEN

About what?

Armelle tucks herself under his arm, listening to his warning intently.

CAULDEN

Paris was attacked. Your mother's missing. My father thinks we've been betrayed.

REDEN

By whom?

CAULDEN

Doesn't matter. If you've been smoked out, we need to get the hell out of here. Now.

HUGO (O.S.)

I'm sorry.

Reden and Caulden draw their swords in unison, pushing Armelle behind them as they turn to face their former friend. Hugo stands beneath the trellised arch leading into the gardens. In his hand, he holds a handgun.

HUGO (CONT'D)

I can't let you leave.

Armelle SQUEALS as Verne appears, grabbing her from behind and holding his own gun at her head.

Caulden turns to focus on him, backing up against Reden like the lethal killing team they are.

REDEN

Hugo. You're my friend. I don't want to hurt you.

HUGO

I'm the one with a gun, Lethe. Even you aren't invincible against a bullet.

REDEN

No. But you've only got one shot. Kill me or Caulden. Then the other will be all over you. It will be a bloodbath.

Hugo shrugs, somewhat helplessly.

HUGO

It will be a blood bath no matter what.

REDEN

You could fight him. He's not the person you thought he was. He's the traitor. My mother is the Queen of France.

VERNE

Your mother is dead.

Reden's impassive mask slides into place, hiding her reaction.

REDEN

If that's true, then it's me. I am your Queen. The throne Cynfael Valdemar has taken is mine.

HUGO

We know. He told us. Doesn't change anything.

REDEN

He lied to you for years --

HUGO

He has my family. They ratted out the rebel camp, but it's not enough. He needs this rebellion to go away. Needs all three of you to go away.

Armelle paws at the arm tight around her shoulders and struggles feebly against Verne's strong grip. Caulden watches intently. Their gazes meet, and a conversation beyond words passes between them.

REDEN

We can save your family. We can save you.

HUGO

No one can save me.

Caulden taps the back of Reden's hand lightly, drawing her attention. He taps it again, off and on, in a seemingly random pattern. She glares at Hugo, never letting on that the situation has fundamentally changed.

REDEN

I'm so sorry.

HUGO

For what?

REDEN

That you're still not going to have
the chance to kick my ass this
time.

Before the words can set in, Armelle stomps on Verne's foot and knocks him off balance. Surprisingly strong and nimble for a princess, she relieves him of his gun and delivers a debilitating elbow to his face. He falls to the ground, still.

In the same moment Caulden jumps for her and knocks her to the ground, out of the line of fire. Reden jumps forward and to the side, swinging out with her sword at the caught-off-guard Hugo.

His gun fires with a deafening CRACK before Reden's sword collides with his arm, causing the gun to fall into her waiting hand.

She aims the gun at his kneecap and pulls the trigger. BANG. Hugo BELLOWS with pain, grasping his knee in pain.

She gives him a once over, and then aims the gun one more time. Pulls the trigger. Another BANG as the bullet collides with his other kneecap in an explosion of blood and bone.

Hugo passes out from the pain.

Reden turns back to her friends, only a fraction of a moment having passed since her witty one-liner started the altercation. A thin line of blood appears on her arm from where the bullet grazed her.

She shrugs off the pain and examines the scene around her.

Hugo and Verne both lie bloody and unconscious on the ground. Caulden helps Armelle to her feet, murmuring reassurances to her as they stand. He glances over to Hugo's twin wounded kneecaps, and then shoots an incredulous gaze to Reden.

CAULDEN

Was the second one necessary?

Reden shrugs.

REDEN

Probably not.

She nods to Armelle.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Nice moves.

ARMELLE

Thanks. Caulden's be training me
for a year now.

Reden shrugs in approval.

REDEN

That works. Come on. The guards
will have heard that. We need to --

The hammer of an old-fashioned revolver cocks behind Reden's head and she freezes. A look of terror floods Caulden and Armelle's faces as they behold the man standing behind Reden.

CYNFAEL

It's time to end this, I'm afraid.
Princess.

Caulden raises Verne's gun in the King's direction, but another player in the game comes up from behind and takes it from him. Jean-Luc. Now he holds a gun at both Armelle and Caulden. He smirks with pride as he nods a hello to Reden.

REDEN

So, sidekick. Et tu?

He sneers at her, ignoring the nickname jab.

From the same side of the garden through which Jean-Luc entered, Michael and Amelie, now free agents join team evil, each landing a pistol on Armelle and Caulden respectively.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Fantastic. A party. I love parties.

CYNFAEL

Quiet, please. Don't make this
harder than it needs to be.

REDEN

You're the one making this hard.
You've got us all in your hands.
Pull the trigger. Let my blood
spill in the streets like my
father's did.

Cynfael leans forward to whisper into her ear.

CYNFAEL

I would, you little brat. But, you see, you still have a job to do for me.

Armelle's whole body shakes with tremors.

ARMELLE

Father. Please.

CYNFAEL

Silence.

She shies away from the sheer force in his voice.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Your crowning jewel. Right here for the taking, Lady Lethe.

REDEN

Reden. My name is Lady Lilac Reden.

CYNFAEL

Your name is whatever I choose to say it is in the papers tomorrow. This is my story. Not yours.

REDEN

Then I guess you don't need my help writing it.

Cynfael GROWLS and grabs Reden's hand, still holding Hugo's gun. He raises her hand, despite her efforts to the contrary, to point at Armelle. Caulden bristles but doesn't move.

REDEN (CONT'D)

I won't do this.

CYNFAEL

You don't have a choice.

His hand closes around hers, finger prying hers apart and onto the trigger. Reden fights, but the king makes progress, inch by inch. All three of the ex-resistance fighters watch with bated breath. They don't notice Caulden inching toward Armelle.

REDEN

Stop. Don't do this. Please.

Cynfael runs his pistol through Reden's hair.

CYNFAEL

This has been a long time coming.
Thank you so much, my darling, for
being such a good little girl.

He pulls the trigger.

Reden SCREAMS.

And Caulden jumps in front of the princess, knocking Armelle back and taking the bullet square in his chest. Now, it's Armelle's turn to SCREAM.

ARMELLE

CAULDEN!

She falls to her knees beside her love, trying to staunch the bleeding.

CYNFAEL

Fool.

He points Reden's hand again, preparing to fire again. Tears streak down Reden's shocked face.

REDEN

No.

Cynfael finds his target again.

BANG. Another gunshot. But not Cynfael's. A strange gurgling sound befalls the King's lips as he collapses forward, nearly crushing Reden. She drags herself out from under him and looks up to see --

Adelaide, surrounded by half a dozen rebel SOLDIERS. They hold guns on the traitors amongst them, and Jean-Luc, Michael, and Amelie immediately surrender.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Mom?

Adelaide kneels beside her daughter and holds her tight.

REDEN (CONT'D)

They said you were dead.

ADELAIDE

When they attacked Paris, I knew
you'd be in trouble. I got as many
out as I could and headed straight
here. My baby girl.

She holds Reden, now hyperventilating, tighter. Reden pushes her away and turns towards Caulden.

REDEN

Phleg. No.

She half-walks, half-crawls across the short distance to her dying friend. Too much blood pools on the grass before him. Armelle holds him tight, sobbing. Reden glances at the wound and then looks over her shoulder at her mom, helpless.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Please. We have to help him.

ADELAIDE

I don't know if we can.

REDEN

We have to.

She turns back to her friend, who has a weak grimace plastered on his face.

CAULDEN

What do you know? The she-devil can cry.

Reden sobs a laugh.

REDEN

I hate you.

CAULDEN

I know.

Armelle brushes Caulden's hair out of his face.

ARMELLE

You know you're not allowed to die, right?

He laughs, coughing up a little blood as he does.

CAULDEN

Your wish is my command, princess.

REDEN

Which one?

Caulden reaches out with both hands, one grabbing Reden's and one grabbing Armelle's. The girls meet each other's eyes and hold tight to their shared love.

Adelaide and her soldiers look down on the gruesome scene of multiple bodies and pools of blood. And the three young people clinging to each other as if their lives depend on it.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BORDER WALL - DAY

A concrete wall raises over a hundred feet into the air. Something like the Great Wall of China, the dirty, cracked concrete barrier stretches out in both directions as far as the eye can see.

Settled in between the stones at the bottom of the wall resides a huge, ancient, rusted metal door, bolted and welded shut.

SUPER: "One Year Later"

On a stage before a small, healing village, a series of three thrones sit proudly on display. Engraved in each throne is the crest of the fleur de lis and wyverns.

Immense CROWDS fill the audience, all brightly dressed and healing along with their village. At the sound of TRUMPETS, they all jump and press forward, fighting to catch a glimpse of France's new royal family.

One by one, they take the stage.

Queen Adelaide, now dressed in a gown rivaling that of any great Queen of History.

Princess Lilac Reden, in a much more formal version of her cloak and assassin's uniform.

And thirdly, Princess Armelle Valdemar, radiant and brilliant as any star. And quite, very, extremely pregnant.

Instead of taking their seats on the throne, they all approach a microphone at the center of the stage.

All three of them greet their subjects with smiles and waves. Lilac's gaze scans the crowd for a specific someone.

She smiles when she finds him. At the foot of the stage, watching the crowd stands Clement Baptiste, dressed once again in his military regalia. And there, in a wheelchair beside him, Caulden, outfitted in the garb of a king's guard.

He catches her gaze and nods at her, gesturing to her mother beside her, who has held up her hand to begin her grandiose speech. The village falls into an excited silence.

ADELAIDE

My citizens, my countrymen, and my family. Thank you for joining us in this historic occasion. Five hundred years ago, the borders of our lands were sealed off, and we were left on our own. And now, thanks to the combined efforts of our military, Princess Armelle, and my daughter, Princess Lilac, I am pleased to say that today begins a year long project to tear down these walls and expand not only our outreach, but also our minds.

Reden catches Armelle waving at Caulden and rolls her eyes, applauding with the crowd as her mother's speech comes to a close.

Reden steps forward, pointing towards the ancient door.

REDEN

Today we open doors that should never have been closed. Today we celebrate France, it's history, and it's bright new future.

She nods toward a team of workers with chainsaws and other heavy equipment. They nod back, pull down their facemasks and helmets, and set to work unlocking the barrier for the first time in five hundred years.

The crowd cheers and watches in amazement as sparks fly. In their distraction, Reden leans over to Armelle, careful to avoid the microphone.

REDEN (CONT'D)

You know, if you were going to make gooey eyes at my best friend all day, you could have skipped this part. Something about morning sickness. People eat that up.

The girls share a laugh.

ARMELLE

I wouldn't miss this for the world.

Armelle puts a hand on her swollen stomach.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)

Did he tell you the good news, though?

REDEN
About what?

ARMELLE
It's a boy.

Reden beams at her. Her mother shushes them, but turns her gaze immediately back to the ceremony at hand.

REDEN
Let me guess. He's got Caulden Jr.
already embroidered on all the
onesies, doesn't he?

Armelle shakes her head, blushing.

ARMELLE
Not exactly.

A huge BANG from the door catches their attention for a moment. Reden watches absently as the crowd CHEERS again. Armelle takes the moment of distraction to lean over to Reden and whisper to her.

ARMELLE (CONT'D)
His name is Royce.

Reden pauses mid-clap to turn to her friend. A bittersweet smile spreads across her face as she pulls Armelle into a side embrace.

Another, louder CLANK from the door. The power tools suddenly cease, and the crowd falls into a hushed collective MURMUR.

Adelaide turns and nods at the girls, and they fall into line. Together, they approach the door, nod thanks to the workers, and reach out for the door's gigantic handle.

The crowd, started by a loudly yelling Caulden, starts counting back from five.

CROWD
FIVE! FOUR! THREE! TWO! ONE!

The ladies pull mightily at the door and, slowly, the ancient beast GROANS and swings on it's hinges.

From the other side, another large crowd CHEERS. Bright sunlight streams through and music plays. Reden meets Caulden's gaze over her shoulder, and then takes the first step forward into the new world before her.

END