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THE STOLEN
GOD – DAWNING

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Chapter 1

Fallout

Eternal life, what was the meaning of an eternal life if you had lost part of your heart? This simple but heart-wrenching thought kept running through Lia's mind as the warmth of the sun coming through the window warmed her skin. Lia sighed as she ran a hand through her hair and let her thoughts drift to the look on Bart's face, the anger he had felt towards her and Tulus. She had known that the experience of living amongst the mortals had changed their son, but she had hoped that he would be able to bring himself to see them as his family as he did his adoptive one.

Becoming a mother had been a dream for so long that Lia had thought it would never happen when unexpectedly she and Tulus had learned that she was expecting. Their joy at the birth of their twins, Prince Bartolus and Princess Amalia, had been shared by all the gods of Evanentium, as all knew how much they had wanted to have children. It was that moment when it felt as though nothing could possibly have made them happier, and their son had been stolen from them.

Lia could never shake the truth that if not for her and Tulus' actions towards his brother, Molus, that life would have turned out very differently and she would have never had to see such hatred from her son. When Molus had stolen Bart from his cradle as an infant, he had set a chain of events that no one had seen coming, except possibly for the Seer, but it would be unlikely that he would ever admit that. Bart's upbringing on Aruna, among the mortals, had fostered a truly humble core at the centre of his being, his belief in equality; compassion and a genuine love for the people of Aruna were at the heart of his every action.

Although humbled by her son, Lia found it difficult to see how they would be able to mend the rift that had opened between them. Her son had inherited his father's stubbornness and it tore at her heart that the two were at such opposing

views on how Bart should live his life. She desperately wanted to have a relationship with Bart but the rules of the gods, the rules that Tolus needed to enforce as king made it seem impossible, for Bart was unwavering in his view to remain on Aruna with the mortals.

It was understandable to see why Bart's mind was so made up on this matter, they had played no part in his life for the first twenty years and it was only when he had risked his own life to prevent a civil war between the Powered and Technicians on Aruna had they revealed themselves to him. Although as a family they had hoped he would return home with them, they had failed to realise how deep his love ran for the mortals in his life, particularly Kristy, a unique individual. Kristy was the strongest mind to be born on Aruna for many years, but it was her character that appeared to have captured her son's heart.

The connection between the two had been strong from the beginning but as time moved ever onwards, that connection and love continued to deepen and had become so strong that Lia now worried that even when she passed away, as all mortals eventually do, Bart would still be unable to consider returning to his family on Evanentium. Lia had hoped that the bond between her children would have been enough to tug at that familial bond and bring Bart home but the recent events with Kristy's capture by Molus had an unexpected result. Amalia had always desired to have her brother in her life but had found the rules and requests that they had imposed on her to bring this about too hard to handle.

Every parent tries to do the right thing by their children, but Lia knew that she had let her daughter down; in trying to bring her son home, she had risked her very relationship with her daughter. Tolus did not agree with her on this matter for he viewed their actions as justified in bringing their son home, but Lia could not deny that Amalia had withdrawn completely from all interactions with them. Staring out the window, Lia observed Amalia practicing combat moves in the gardens. She had drawn a small crowd and Lia knew why, Amalia's strength and power seemed to have expanded since Bart came back into her life and the other gods were intrigued.

Lia knew that as Bart continued to fight against Tolus, it would force her husband to act as he had with Amalia recently and issue a command to force Bart to return to Evanentium. This action was something that she feared for how they were ever to be a family if they were forcing their children to submit to appease the rest of the gods. In the past, she had never considered the impact of such

commands for it was always for the benefit of the gods, but now seeing the pain it caused their daughter, she could not agree to it so willingly.

Sighing heavily, Lia's solitude was abruptly interrupted with a surprise knock at the door. Assuming it was Tulus, she murmured, 'Enter.' Although Tulus would not normally knock, he was more formal with her now as he prepared to act as a king not a husband or father.

A small shuffle and apology slipped through the quiet of the room. Turning, Lia saw the Seer turning to leave. 'Don't go, Seer! Sit and stay awhile.' Bowing his head respectfully, the Seer entered the room fully and took the seat indicated. Smiling at the Seer, Lia asked, 'What brings you to my chamber, Seer?'

The Seer's retuning smile was one of understanding as he responded, 'Please do not feel the need to put on airs, my queen. The events of late sadden us all as our prince feels further away than ever before.'

Having known the Seer for so many years, Lia knew that it was ridiculous to try and keep anything from him. Although it was not an absolute, the Seer's prediction of the future was rarely incorrect. His skill at reading an individual's true path had meant that he spent a lot of time observing people, their actions and intentions. Lia had been sceptical of the Seer's abilities early in her life, but she had always found him to be someone she could talk freely too. It was as if his knowledge of life's direction made it easier to discuss the core of a problem. He never answered her question direct or gave her a succinct answer but asked questions that helped her find the answer on her own.

Realising that the Seer was waiting patiently for her to return from her thoughts to the present, Lia grinned; this time, however, a much warmer and genuine one. Gesturing with her hand for the Seer to go on, Lia waited. 'Before I move into the reason for my visit, may I be so bold as to ask how you are. I sense the sadness in you and the king's anger is quite clear to any who happen to deal with him now.'

Most gods would not feel as bold as to ask such questions or make such comments, but the Seer had never feared the repercussions of such action. Realising that she had never questioned why in all these years she decided to query. 'Seer, no other god would ask such things; aren't you afraid of how I might respond to such questioning?'

Laughing gently, the Seer answered, 'As a Seer, I live a life of service to other's futures; I see so much but am limited to be a witness to events of greatness. My life is in its very nature not one of true freedom, so in that simple

understanding I have a clarity and that clarity means that I would prefer to speak openly. Any negative consequences that may occur will not make my life any more or less a prison; they would merely limit the comforts I have.'

The Seer's comments made Lia stop and think, she had always assumed such knowledge was a powerful thing but seeing it from the Seer's perspective, it was obviously a bigger burden than she could have ever imagined. Unsure on what to say, Lia was hesitant in her response. 'I'm sorry that you feel that way about your life. If it helps, I have always appreciated your frankness.' The Seer's response was a simple smile and nod.

Trying to move on with the conversation, Lia continued, 'In answer to your earlier question, I am as well as can be expected. My family is splintered further than I could ever have imagined possible. Instead of spending time together and enjoying getting to know each other, we are facing an impossible situation. If Bart and Tolus can't find some common ground, I fear what may happen.' Shaking her head, Lia exasperated and said, 'If only I could get Tolus to see what we are at risk of losing. He seems to think that if he can keep Bart with us, that it will all work out.'

Sitting quietly as Lia spoke, the Seer commented, 'So you think that the king will issue a command to the prince to return to Evanentium?'

Shrugging her shoulders, she said, 'What choice is left? Bart's continued unwillingness to return on his own is making the rest of the gods uneasy. Our own laws prevent a god from living permanently amongst the mortals; we cannot ignore that just because he is our son. But by issuing a command, I know that we will remove any chance of a relationship with him. If only we knew what Molus said to him in the prison.'

Raising a quizzical eyebrow, the Seer questioned, 'He did not tell you?'

Frowning, Lia responded, 'No, when they exited Molus' cell, there was no willingness from either Bart or Tolus to consider stopping and talking it through.' Looking questioningly at the Seer, Lia asked, 'Do you know what happened down there?'

Shaking his head slowly, the Seer stated, 'I am aware only of what I was able to witness through the portal as Bart journeyed down to Molus' cell to rescue Kristy. What transpired between uncle and nephew is only known to the three present.'

Pausing before continuing, the Seer seemed to consider whether he should speak further. After coming to some internal resolve, the Seer spoke, 'Bart

showed extraordinary skill and power in the challenges of the prison path. His love for Kristy is incredibly strong and that should not be overlooked by anyone, for I sense that she still has a great deal of connection to the events unfolding.’

Lia stared at the Seer, asking, ‘Do you mean that she may hold a greater sway over our son than Tolus’ power as king?’

Looking a little unsure, the Seer commented, ‘On that, I cannot say, for much of the future surrounding Bart is now unclear. What I can say is that her life’s path is heavily connected to Bart’s, but when I look into her future, I am unable to see with clarity. The blocks I am now encountering are so numerous that I feel as though I am as uncertain as everyone else on what the future will bring.’

The fear that Lia had earlier been ruminating on started to rumble once again. Looking back towards the Seer, ‘From the moment that Molus took Bart, it has felt as though whatever decision we make, we have continued to head down the same path. Can you tell me, Seer, is the path that our son is on the one that he was always meant to travel?’

‘You said it best, my queen. The path that we have been on was set the day that Bart was left to be raised by the mortals on Aruna. However, the path that he is travelling is still unclear as at each point in time that Bart is faced with a decision; he follows his own heart and instinct. This very mortal trait is what makes it so difficult to know for certain the outcomes of his decisions, hence the blocks I am encountering.’ The two were silent for quite a while as the words settled between them.

Speaking so softly that the Seer almost did not hear, Lia asked, ‘What will happen if, or should I say, when Tolus issues Bart with the command to return?’

Looking less certain than Lia had ever seen him the Seer spoke, ‘I don’t know. The further I investigate the future the less certain I can be. What appears to be happening is that we are heading down a path which has only two possible outcomes. The first will lead us into a future that is bathed in light but the other is dark, no light at all as if there is no life at all to see.’

Shocked, Lia did not speak straight away before breathing out and asking, ‘Is Bart the cause of this?’

With a shrug of his shoulders, the Seer countered, ‘All is uncertain, my queen. Whether the cause is Bart, Tolus or something entirely different, I cannot be sure. However, I would caution the king in his actions. Bart is standing on a precipice when it comes to the gods. All is not lost with our prince if you allow him the time to be himself and work out how he is going to move forward. If the

king continues to push, Bart will feel no option but to respond in force, for he feels that is all we are likely to respond to.'

Pausing before he continued, the Seer looked around as if unsure that someone might be listening, 'I am sorry, my queen, but this task is up to you. The king is unlikely to listen to any but you on this matter. I urge you to ask him to stay his hand just this once and allow Bart the time he needs.' Lia bristled at what the Seer was asking her to do. She knew that Bart needed time, he had made that so clear to them, but they had thought they knew best and had not listened.

'What you ask me is not easy, Seer. The other gods are applying constant pressure on Tulus to act. I would be asking him to go against everyone on this matter if I do so.'

Clasping his hands together, the Seer almost appeared to be pleading with her, 'I know what I am asking, my queen, but I feel in this one thing I must speak up. I feel as though it would be in the best interest of all if the king and prince were able to build a bridge between them. I also know that Princess Amalia is feeling torn between her allegiance to her parents and her brother. The more unified the family, the better it will be for all gods and mortals.'

Lia wanted to chastise the Seer for his assumptions about her family; he didn't know what was best for them. They were her children after all. But whatever way she looked at the scenario, she knew he was right. Tulus needed to give Bart a chance and that chance needed time, time for Bart to choose to come home of his own volition. Lia also knew the Seer was right about Amalia. The recent command from Tulus preventing her from helping her brother rescue Kristy had broken something between them.

Quickly wiping away the tear that had slid down her cheek so that the Seer would not see, Lia commented, 'I had already decided to speak with Tulus on the matter, so your request is unnecessary. I want my family to be together and to achieve that I need for the two of them to mend the rift.' Seeming satisfied by her comments, the Seer stood and thanking her, turned to leave.

As the Seer was leaving, Lia murmured more to herself than the Seer, 'Although, I dread that Tulus is not going to be moved by anyone on this matter.'

The look in the Seer's eyes seemed to pierce Lia's very soul as he spoke, 'The king would be wise to act with caution. Forcing your children further and further away when our own future seems uncertain is the quickest way to bring us to a future of darkness.' With that comment, the Seer exited the room, leaving Lia more confused and uncertain than she had been before he arrived.

Standing, Lia moved to the window and looked out at her daughter and was content to just stand and watch. Amalia had always been confident in her skill, knowing the direction she was going in. However, Lia could not help but wonder how different she may have been growing up with her brother by her side. A brother, who was always there for her and who she could talk to about everything. Instead, Amalia was left to grow up alone and burdened by being the child left behind, forced to do her parents bidding.

Annoyed by her thoughts and second-guessing, Lia turned back from the window. Steeling herself, she gathered her arguments together and locating Tolus headed for the door. Although she may not be able to convince him to not issue Bart a command, she could at least let him know that in this instance, she could not support him. Tolus was the love of her life but having children was a rare and wonderful privilege and she needed to start putting them first. They had all been robbed of the last twenty years but that did not mean that they needed to lose their future together.