

HEARTACHE

written by

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INT./EXT. CASTLE - MORNING

A small bird arrives at a nest that sits beside a stained glass window. Past the window, a still, quiet crowd gathers inside the throne room.

INT. THRONE ROOM - MORNING

Standing tall and firm in front of the throne is LORD LINUS (55), Lord of the castle. Some people in the crowd look at him with awe, while others murmur as they stare at the other end of the room.

INT. CASTLE HALL - MORNING

Behind the large, ornate doors of the throne room waits ALICE (20), suited in an elegant, ceremonial armor. She takes deep breaths. From within her breastplate, she takes out a compass that glows in a faint, blue light, harnessed to a silver string chain.

She looks at it with determination. And suddenly, a vision appears before Alice...

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT

In a dark, cold, and suffocating dungeon lie a man and a woman with their hands shackled to the walls. Their bodies look thin, dehydrated, and pale as snow, except for the purple bruises that are scattered all over their bodies.

Their faces hold a blank, tired, agonizing stare. It's Alice's mother and father.

INT. CASTLE HALL - MORNING

Alice grasps the compass tightly.

ALICE
Take me to them.

Suddenly, the sound of booming trumpets cue her entrance, as the large doors begin to creak and open. She quickly hides the compass, and composes herself. The doors come to a stop. The crowd has gone completely quiet as they stare at her.

INT. THRONE ROOM - MORNING

Alice steps in, sure-footed, and makes her way to Linus.

LINUS
Kneel, Lady Alice.

Alice kneels and bows her head. A servant brings a ceremonial sword to Linus on a pillow, he grabs it and steps forward to meet Alice.

LINUS (CONT'D)
Alice Linwood of Blárwind. Do you swear by your House and under the eyes of the Four Sentinels to protect and serve the Kingdom of Frosbern?

ALICE
I do so swear.

From within the crowd, a delicate, composed lass watches the knighting. It's Alice's sister, LISSA (17), who wears a wistful look as she stares at her sister.

But Alice doesn't notice her. Her eyes are fixed on the floor, concentrated, breathing deeply.

LINUS
Then I, Lord Linus of Blárwind, command you...

Linus places the ceremonial sword on her right shoulder.

LINUS (CONT'D)
To be just amongst the wicked,
Then, on her left shoulder.

LINUS (CONT'D)
To be wise amongst the fools,
Then, on top of her head.

LINUS (CONT'D)
To be brave amongst the weak. From now on, you shall fight for the kingdom with all the strength of your body, mind, and soul. You may now stand, Dame Alice, Frigid Knight of Frosbern.

She lets out a heavy sigh of relief. A big smile sprouts in her face as she waves at the crowd, who cheers for her. All but Lissa, who remains idle, staring at her sister.

Lissa sees the silver string chain on Alice's neck. She sharpens her eyes with doubt upon noticing it.

Lissa turns around and walks out of the throne room, yet again unnoticed by Alice, who continues to bathe in the celebrations of the crowd.

EXT. GARDEN - EVENING

Alice walks with GUSTAV (65), her butler, along the castle garden. He is an old but strong, hearty man, with a gentle soul.

GUSTAV

I do say, I'll miss our evening strolls in the garden, Lady Alice.

ALICE

Are you trying to make me stay?

GUSTAV

Oh, no, of course not. I'm just glad I get to walk with you one last time before you go. It's hard to believe how fast time flew since you arrived at the castle. I still remember when you were a little lass, just this tall.

He gestures with his hand how tall Alice used to be.

ALICE

(flattered)

That's enough, Gustav.

GUSTAV

And now look at you! All mature and grown up.

ALICE

And you haven't aged a day.

GUSTAV

Ah, but not even I can escape the clutches of time. We all grow old eventually. Too old for our nests. Too old for our comforts.

ALICE

I'll miss you too.

They share a pleasant smile, until...

LISSA (O.S.)

Gustav!

Gustav turns his head to notice Lissa sitting elegantly in a gazebo drinking tea. She holds a blank expression on her face. She has been watching them all this time.

GUSTAV

Miss Lissa! Forgive us, we didn't see you there.

Gustav and Alice walk up to the gazebo, they stop at the entrance.

LISSA

Good evening Gustav. Hello, Alice.

ALICE

Where have you been? I didn't see you at the banquet last night. You missed out on dad's favorite roast.

LISSA

I must apologize, I had other important matters to attend to.

ALICE

(joking)

More important than your sister's knighting?

Alice elbows Gustav in a humorous manner.

LISSA

I'm truly sorry I couldn't be there.

Gustav reads through Lissa's face.

GUSTAV

Did you need something, Miss Lissa?

LISSA

Yes, would you be so kind to bring me some treats to accompany my tea? I looked for Felicia this morning but I didn't manage to find her. I do enjoy her custard pies.

GUSTAV

But of course, I'll be right back with them. Miss Lissa, Dame Alice, if you'll excuse me.

Gustav bows and leaves. Alice walks inside the gazebo.

ALICE

May I?

LISSA

Please, help yourself.

Alice takes a seat and pours herself a cup.

ALICE

Did you brew it yourself?

LISSA

Yes.

Alice takes a sip.

ALICE

Oof, that's hot.

LISSA

It must be hard getting used to that title. Dame Alice.

ALICE

I like the sound of it. Don't you?

Alice sips on her tea. Lissa fixes her eyes on Alice's necklace.

LISSA

When do you leave?

ALICE

The day after tomorrow. We'll stop by Ninia and then head to the capital.

LISSA

That's quite the detour.

ALICE

We're stopping by House Conrad for a while, not really sure what for. I wonder if their volunteer is any friendly.

LISSA

That would be Theo Conrad.

ALICE

Oh, yeah? How come you know of him?

LISSA

War councils. He's quite the nice gentleman. Refined, polite... so yes, you could call him friendly.

ALICE

What's this? My little sister enjoying her time as the new heir of House Blárwind? I didn't take you as a flirter. Is he as dashing as you make him sound?

Lissa finally breaks, as a smile is painted on her face, flustered with Alice's jokes.

LISSA

Oh, please, cut it off. You're lucky you're not in my shoes. You wouldn't even last a minute in a war council, let alone a gala.

ALICE

All the reason to become a knight, right?

Lissa's smile goes away immediately. She composes herself.

LISSA

Aren't you a bit nervous?

ALICE

You look more nervous than I do. I'm the one going to the war, and you look like you've seen a ghost. I already told you, I won't let myself die out there in battle. At least not without a fight. Those Myrkans don't stand a chance.

Lissa tightens her grip on the cup of tea.

LISSA

Alice-

ALICE

I swear, you worry too much sometimes.

Lissa lets out a sigh.

LISSA

Maybe I do. I know you're strong,
but to think you'll be out there
fighting those brutes... I don't
like even the thought of it.

ALICE

It'll be alright, Liss.

Alice puts her hand on Lissa's shoulder.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I'll be back before you even
notice.

A faint, sad smile paints Lissa's face. Suddenly, Lissa
throws herself over her sister for a hug. Alice is surprised
by it and reciprocates it.

Suddenly, a servant cuts the hug short.

SERVANT

Dame Alice? Lord Linus is summoning
you to the training grounds.

ALICE

Thank you, I'll be right there.
(to Lissa)
I'll see you after training, yeah?

LISSA

Right, see you.

Alice leaves the gazebo. Lissa remains standing by the
entrance. She turns to stare at her reflection on the tea,
and then down at the compass she just snatched from Alice's
neck.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM - SUNRISE

The call of a rooster brings forth the day of Alice's
departure. A warm sunrise paints the clouds in an orange,
purple hue. Alice is scouring her room, looking for the
compass. A servant approaches her door.

SERVANT (O.S.)

Dame Alice, the chariot is waiting
for you. All preparations are
ready.

ALICE

Thank you, I'll be right there.

She keeps searching with frustration.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Where in the world is it?

Alice notices that Lissa walks past the open door of her room.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Liss? What are you doing up this early?

Lissa doesn't answer. She continues to walk down the hall.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Liss?

Alice walks outside and sees Lissa enter her own room, ominously. She follows her inside.

ALICE (CONT'D)
What are you—

INT. LISSA'S ROOM - SUNRISE

Alice peeks her head inside Lissa's room, only to find her holding the compass in her hands. She stands in front of the window as the sunrise brightens up the room. Alice freezes.

LISSA
You're not very secretive, you know. I've seen you staring at it, talking to it. You've become so obsessed with this little trinket ever since you chose to become a knight.

Alice keeps quiet.

LISSA (CONT'D)
Tell me what's going on. Why are you joining the army? Really?

ALICE
Liss, I... I think I can finally find our parents.

LISSA
Our parents are dead, Alice.

ALICE

That's not true. They're out there, waiting for us. And I know I can find them. With that thing, I can.

Lissa looks at the compass with concern.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I know it sounds crazy, but I think it knows where mom and dad are. It has shown me. I've seen them in my sleep, in visions... They need our help.

Lissa notices the needle points east.

LISSA

East?

ALICE

Myrka. I assume that's where they're imprisoned.

Lissa can't meet Alice's eyes. She hides hers in the compass.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Don't you want them back? Don't you want to live those happy days with them once again? To have a family again?

LISSA

I... guess.

Lissa, with her stare dug into the ground, extends her hand to give the compass back. Alice grabs it, but Lissa holds on to the chain. Alice stops as soon as she feels Lissa's tug.

LISSA (CONT'D)

But what about me?

ALICE

Hm?

Alice looks back at her sister. Lissa lifts up her face and begins to cry softly, as glistening tears roll down her face.

LISSA

I don't want you to leave me.

Alice tears up. She quickly surrounds Lissa with the warmest hug she has felt in a long time. A real hug. Lissa embraces it, clinging tight onto her sister's clothes, letting go of the compass, dropping it on the ground.

The compass rolls slowly on its side until it comes to a stop, all the while the sisters cry softly.

ALICE

I've never wanted to leave you,
Liss. You're my little sister. I
would never want to. But this is
something I have to do. I've held
on for this hope for too long. I
can't give up now.

Lissa's voice breaks.

LISSA

I'm going to miss you... so much.

They hold the hug for a little more.

ALICE

I'd put you in my pocket and take
you with me if I could. But a lady
as refined as yourself wouldn't
last a single day of war.

Lissa laughs a little in between her tears. They break the hug, Alice holds Lissa tight from her shoulders.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I promise I'll come back as soon as
I can.

Lissa picks up the compass and puts it inside Alice's hands, curling them tight.

LISSA

Then make sure to come back with
them.

Alice nods with confidence. An honest, bittersweet smile paints Lissa's face. They share one last moment together as the sun rises slowly between them, through the window.

INT./EXT. CASTLE - MORNING

A sudden breeze whisks up a couple of leaves that fly by Lissa's window. The leaves fly up high; up to the bird's nest seated at the top of the castle. The little bird plucks some of his feathers and takes flight once more.

FADE OUT.