

*the*  
RETURNED  
HEIRS  
PART TWO

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Faith*

I did not speak to anyone as we travelled today and spent the time in the carriage rather than riding Milo. It was an important conversation to have with Aleksander, as hard as it was. I did not want to risk my life or my friend's life for him. I had always believed that if two people were meant to be together they would always find their way to one another. Sebastian's hand was on my leg and I looked at him, raising one side of my mouth into a smile. I shuffled closer and leaned on his shoulder. I knew I had no choice but to marry him and I would have to find some common ground to avoid anything uncomfortable between us.

'You are quiet today, Faith. Are you unwell?' he asked, putting his arm around my shoulder.

'I am fine,' I said bluntly, not wanting to go into detail. 'I just want to rest.' I closed my eyes. I woke suddenly in a pool of sweat. I looked at Sebastian, there were droplets on his forehead.

'When did it get so hot?' I pulled back the curtain in the hope of letting some air into the carriage, but it did not help. I leant down and picked up my skirt and started to shake it up and

down in hopes of cooling myself. I saw the way Sebastian looked at me and stopped.

‘Sorry, I am rather warm and was trying to cool myself down.’ I lowered my skirt back down and opened the curtain again.

I took in the surroundings; it was a rainforest. The trees were thick and covered in flowers and moss. There were ferns everywhere, tall ferns in a tree and short ones on the ground. I saw fallen trees on the ground and the flies were everywhere. There was green as far as the eye could see, light, dark, jade, olive and very few patches of brown of the tree trunks. I looked at the ground and saw pink flowers, purple and red flowers. I leaned myself out of the carriage to look ahead. Sebastian pulled me back as I smacked his hand away. There were trees hanging low over the only path through the forest. I glanced up and saw the only little patches between the tops of the trees that allowed the sun to sneak through. I noticed a macaw perched on the tree above, his beautiful red feathers with a peak at the blue and green in his wings. I whistled at him as we rode past. I glanced back one more to see his beauty and caught eyes with Aleksander. We smiled at one another. I laughed as I took in the views. I did not remember ever going through here as a child, but it was amazing. I felt Sebastian yank hard to pull me back in. I glared at him.

‘We have almost arrived. We will be stopped shortly for you to change into an appropriate gown.’

‘I couldn’t see the castle. Is it in the rainforest or on the outskirts? Have you seen how beautiful it is out there?’ I spoke so quick. He shook his head, confused about what I had just said. I chose not to repeat myself.

‘HALT,’ I heard Aleksander shout to his men. ‘We will have a

brief pause before moving on.’ He sounded so in command and strong in the way he talked.

I opened the carriage door and jumped out as I walked around to my box of clothes and ruffled through them to find ‘something appropriate’ as he said. To me, they were all appropriate. I went back to the carriage to see what he wore. It was a white and golden tunic. I snuck back to my crate. I found a jade and gold dress; I picked it up and headed towards Annie and Harley’s carriage. Aleksander dismounted his horse. He was shaking his legs as he walked towards Rohesia’s carriage. He turned and peered back at me. A part of me regretted my decision but we both knew it was the safest option. He picked up the necklace I had given him a child and kissed it before he knocked on her carriage door. I hopped in.

‘Help me change?’ I asked them and quickly put on something appropriate. I brushed my hair with my fingers and put on a golden head piece that allowed my waves to flow down my back.

Harley kissed her fingers and pulled them away. ‘Bellissima.’

I jumped out and headed back to sit with Sebastian. I saw Dmitirov smile.

‘You look like a princess, Faith. Aleksander spoke of your conversation, and I approve,’ he said. I smiled and raised my hand for Sebastian to help me. I looked over the dress. It was green with a few touches of gold throughout it. Golden patches along the sleeve and on the bottom of the skirt with two thick stripes that ran up both sides. Sebastian kissed my cheek.

‘What was that for?’ I asked him, shocked at his randomness.

‘You look beautiful beyond words,’ he said. He saw the black tie around my neck and went to lift it up. I put my hand over it.

‘Something from home,’ I said, not letting him see Aleksander’s cross. He nodded.

‘I cannot wait to introduce you to the families and to show off my beautiful future queen.’ He was sounding exceptionally proud and beaming from ear-to-ear.

We exited the rainforest, and I could see the tops of the castle towers over the mountain. They were brown and unlike the greyish colour back home in Hisadalgon. I was beyond excited to see another castle. We rode over the mountain but I was disappointed; it was not as large or grand as the one back home. The towers were the tallest parts and extended maybe one hundred metres in the air and the castle was no bigger than two storeys. It looked more like a huge house than a castle. The town gleamed in the distance; it looked cleaner. We walked through the town and everyone had a smile on their face; they were not covered in dirt and there looked to be no dirt anywhere. They waved at the carriages. I waved back at them, smiling. There were no gates protecting the castle. We stopped and Sebastian hopped from the carriage but did not offer a hand to help me. Aleksander offered his as I grabbed it tightly, trying not to look at him.

‘Just remember to breathe and lose the candour. Be proper, polite and gracious,’ he whispered to me.