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THE THRONE OF
BROKEN GODS

GODS & MONSTERS

BOOK TWO

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THE THRONE OF
BROKEN GODS



ONE

SAMKIEL



It had been twenty thousand, one hundred and sixty minutes since she left, and I had counted every single one. My eyes skittered toward the large clock on the other side of the room. Sixty-one now.

"So, a giant, scaled-winged beast destroys half of Silver City and just disappears?" The anchorwoman shifted in her seat as she stared at me. Jill was her name, right? Or was it Jasmine?

Scorching-hot metal bit at my skin as I pushed a large sheet off of me. The ground rumbled as I dug myself out of the hole my body had made when I crashed to the street. My ears rang, and when I touched them, my fingers came away wet. The silver shine on them told me everything I needed to know. Blood. She had screamed so loud that it had burst my eardrums.

I threw my head back as another heart-shattering roar lit up the sky. It was pain and anger and utter heartbreak. It shook the nearby windows, and I wondered if it could be heard throughout the realms. One mighty clap of wings, then another, and she was airborne. Thunder cracked the sky in her wake, the speed of her ascent displacing the air. Lights and sirens bellowed on the street as flames tickled the buildings all around me.

I couldn't stop thinking about our time together, every second, from the

first to the last. Dianna's words echoed as if we were back at that cursed mansion.

Her smile had awoken something in me, and for the first time in a millennium, I felt the ice I'd encased my heart in crack. She gazed at me through those thick lashes, her hazel eyes filled with warmth, as if I was worth something. She held a single small finger out, and I held my breath. What was wrong with me?

"Pinkie promise, I will never abandon you, Your Highness."

More of those odd words of hers, but they meant something to me. Everyone I held dear had left me. I'd lost them and secluded myself, yet this creature... No, this woman promised me something I had begged for. Such simple words, such a simple act, had fractured something in me and shifted my world.

I stared at the empty night sky, watching her dark wings beat across the sky, her sleek form disappearing into the roiling clouds, away from me.

"You promised," I whispered as the sirens continued to wail.

Noise flooded the newsroom, pulling me from the memory and slamming me back into the present. Hot lights blazed down on us. I did not remember the name of the woman sitting across from me, even though several people had reminded me.

Disappeared? That's what they were saying. She had ripped a hole through that building and my chest as she fled.

I plastered a smile onto my face, one made of falsehoods and despair. I leaned forward. *"Disappeared is a misnomer, to say the least. As you know, it is very easy for powerful creatures to hide."*

A slight blush grazed her cheeks, and my stomach rolled. How easy mortals were to manipulate with a smile and kind words. They had no clue what was coming, the casualties I feared would happen soon.

"Yes, and speaking of which, what would you like the people to call you?" She shifted closer, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "Since you have officially returned?"

I did not think or pause. I knew the answer and had denied it for far too long.

"Samkiel." I forced another broken smile. Could they not see?

"Samkiel is fine." Liam was a shield I hid behind, as if I could pretend to be anything other than the World Ender. Liam was my attempt at a new start, even if it was a broken one. And Liam had cost me everything. If I had been the king every text was written for, been the protector the old gods built monuments for, maybe I could have saved her, helped her more. So, no; Samkiel was who I was, who I would forever be, and Liam died with whatever part of Dianna's heart fractured that night.

BACK AT THE GUILD IN BOEL, I SPLAYED MY HANDS ON THE TABLE.

Vincent sighed beside me and folded his arms. "They had questions they were supposed to stick to. I apologize."

Vincent gave the thin man behind me a hard stare. He adjusted his glasses and flipped through the tablet he carried everywhere. "I swear they picked their own questions, my liege. I would never..." He paused. "I'll fix it."

I sighed and walked to the window before turning to face them. Gregory. That was his name. He was a member of the council, sent as an advisor to help ease the growing animosity among the mortals. Vincent approved of him. It seemed everyone approved of Gregory. They all saw I needed extra assistance, but Gregory could not help me with my problem.

"What is your job title once more?" I asked Gregory, cutting a glare at Vincent again, knowing he had more of a hand in this than the shivering celestial.

Greg's throat bobbed. "Article 623 in the House of Dreadwell states that all ruling monarchs must have an advisor. With all due respect, my liege, your parents had one, and you need one, too. I should have been appointed to you the second you returned, but that did not happen. Since you have fully come back, the council feels it is past time that I assume my station. I am more than adept at dealing

with the media. I have experience in political, legislative, and judicial matters as well. I am the qualified party.”

“Ah.” I nodded, the air in the room growing heavy. Vincent shifted and shuffled some papers on his desk. “As the qualified party, I can assume accidents like today will not happen again. Correct?”

Gregory looked at Vincent and then down, avoiding eye contact with me. “I will go handle this current situation.”

“Fantastic,” I said and turned to the window, looking out at the clear sky and the mortals below.

His footsteps receded, and I heard the door close a second later.

The power flickered, and I took a deep breath, steadying my nerves. Lights buzzed, and I took another breath, inhaling through my nose and slowly exhaling through my mouth.

“You have to expel some of that.” Vincent neared, slipping his hands into his pockets. “Another thunderstorm wouldn’t hurt,” he said, nodding toward the window.

I shook my head. “It’s been raining for days.”

“And it’s dried. Do it. You need it.”

My head lifted, and I felt the familiar tingle beneath my skin as I summoned the energy. I felt every atom. They bounced off each other, building the storm. A tendril of power whipped out of me, and I took another breath. The sun disappeared, thick clouds rolling across the sky. Thunder rocked the world, the clouds broke open, and rain poured down like someone had turned on a great faucet. I heard the curses of mortals down on the street as the wind howled.

“Feel better?”

“No.”

My reflection glared back at me from the rain-spattered window. The suits they draped me in were supposed to make the mortals see me as more approachable, but I knew it was actually to show them I was not falling apart. My face was clean-shaven and my hair trimmed short. They wanted me seen as whole and not the broken king they knew so little about.

Fake a smile. Look presentable, as if your entire world is not in shambles. Pretend. Pretend. Pretend.

That's what Vincent said, what he preached. He wanted the mortals to feel secure and not as if the world was on the verge of yet another catastrophe.

Lightning streaked across the sky, and the door opened. My eyes searched the reflection in the window. I longed to see her burst through the door, carrying a plate of food for me, a smile blooming across her cheeks, as she had done at the Vanderkais' mansion.

"See, it's grumpy, just like you."

I spun as the image of her faded, and Logan rushed in, carrying a smaller tablet than Greg's.

"We found something."

I pushed away from the window and was at Logan's side in an instant.

Logan handed me the tablet, with a graph displayed on the screen. Blue, yellow, and red lines all showed an upward trend. I scanned the screen, noticing the small numbers along the bottom. Time was labeled over thirty minutes, yet it still made no sense.

"What am I looking at?" I sighed, rubbing my brow.

Vincent retreated behind his desk, watching Logan and me.

"The waves you see show electromagnetic interference, pretty much what TV or radio give off during a broadcast. They spiked right here when Kaden started talking, and stayed that way until he..." He stopped, and I knew a part of him hurt for Gabby's death, even if he never spoke of it. "Anyway, it stopped shortly after."

"And?"

Vincent cleared his throat. "Logan thinks it was broadcasting not just to us, but beyond Onuna."

Logan sneered at Vincent. "I'm not wrong. It spiked, and to a degree that made it accessible to not only every TV and radio in this realm, but further."

Vincent rolled his eyes. "Whatever you say. I think there is no possible way it could reach past this realm. They are closed, and even if it could be done, who would Kaden be reaching out to? Everyone is dead. You really think some cosmic entity survived this long and wants a special broadcast on Dianna?"

"Why am I just now hearing of this?" I asked with a frown, looking between the two.

Logan cleared his throat. "Vincent thought it was a pointless lead on yet another dead end, but once I saw the graph, I knew I was on the right track."

Vincent cleared his throat. "We need to focus on making sure the mortals are comfortable, not chase our tails on hints and guesses. The spikes could be from the energy both of them expelled when she—"

"You do not answer to Vincent," I snapped. I did not mean to talk to him like that, but I knew I had done so often over the last two weeks.

Logan scowled at Vincent as I leaned forward and took the device. Ignoring their stare-down, I studied the screen. "If, by chance, Logan is not wrong, who would he speak to? More importantly, why would they be interested in Dianna and her sister?"

Logan shrugged. "I don't know, but I do know there was an energy spike high enough that it not only affected every bit of technology, but hit satellites as well. We may not be able to reach realms, but—"

"But nothing. It's impossible," Vincent said, cutting Logan off.

Their bickering faded into the background as I stared at the chart. Logan was not wrong about the spike, but it was the line that followed that made the noises, lights, and world fade away. It dropped immediately after Gabby died, a flat, steady line that dragged across the screen. Her echoing scream roared back into my head.

"Thank you, Logan," I finally said, stopping them mid-argument. Still looking at the tablet, I turned and left.

"We still have one interview left!" Vincent called, but he did not follow.

"Cancel it."

"I can't," I heard Vincent whisper.

"Well, you do it, then," Logan replied to him.

Their voices faded away as I headed toward the main conference room. I took the elevator up several floors, my eyes scanning, memorizing that graph as a million and one possibilities ran through my

head. If Logan was correct, who cared enough to want to witness such a thing?

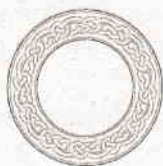
I pushed open the mahogany double doors, the lights in the conference room already on. The dark leather chair spun toward me and stopped, facing me. Manicured nails tapped on the desktop, and she smiled at me.

“Is this new?”

Dianna.

TWO

SAMKIEL



“Dianna.” Her name left my lips in a whisper, and I damn near crushed the tablet. She stood and walked around the desk. I took a large step toward her and engulfed her in my arms. Her body pressed flush against mine, and I nearly wept. Her warmth seeped through my clothes, the part of me that belonged to her screaming awake. I had missed her so damned much. She was here, whole and well. I could touch her, feel her. I lowered my lips to brush against hers, needing that connection, but she turned her head away. Then I realized I did not feel her arms around me. Her hands gripped my arms, and she pushed me back, forcing me to let her go.

“This is expensive. Do you mind?”

My heart lurched as she stepped back, adjusting the open suit jacket that clung to her. She ran her hands over her top as if brushing away the feel of me.

“I have been looking for you. Where have you been? It’s been weeks. Two, to be exact.”

She half turned, brushing a stray hair from her face. “You counted?”

“I count every second you’re gone.”

A soft chuckle left her lips, her brows ticking up as she trailed her

fingers over the desk, rearranging some of the pens. "Coming on a bit strong, aren't you?"

My heart stilled as another part of me suddenly went on high alert. "What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing, actually." She paused, as if thinking. "Oh, you mean since my whole freak-out?" She waved the pen in the air before tapping it against her palm. "I'll admit, that was a bit dramatic. Sorry about your building, but you fixed it, so that's good."

I shook my head. "I don't care about the building. You left after—"

"Oh, that." She shrugged. "Yeah, well, I have a lot to do and needed to clear my head, you know?"

"Dianna." Her name left my lips in an anguished plea. I had felt her pain, remembered it, and now she sought to bury it.

"Oh, don't make that face. I'm fine." She winked at me, extending her small finger and waving it in the air. "Pinkie promise."

"Have I done something to wrong you?" I asked, my chest tightening. She was acting so dismissively.

"Wrong me?" She stifled a laugh. "Gods, I forget how ancient you are sometimes. What does that even mean?"

"I'm just trying to understand where you are coming from."

She twirled the pen between her fingers. "Which parts?"

"Us."

She snorted. "Us? There is no us." She waved her hand, her palm facing me. "The mark is gone. We don't work together anymore. Remember?"

"Is that all I was to you? Work?"

"Listen, it was fun. We messed around, but it doesn't have to be a thing. You know, I thought, given your history, you would understand?"

"My history?"

"You've had flings before. Remember? I've seen them." She tapped a finger against her temple, smiling slightly.

Blood thrummed in my ears, my heart pounding tenfold. This was wrong. She was ... lying. This wasn't her. I knew it. I knew what we had, what we had both felt. The ache in my heart turned to blistering