

Journey into the Realm:

The Stolen Child

Markelle Grabo

Prologue

Beauty could be found in remembrance, but today all I wanted to do was forget.

I wanted to forget the Element fairy attacks and my rocky relationship with my sister, Zora. I wanted to forget the deaths of my friends, Janie and Daran. I wanted to forget Ellie's betrayal and my stay in Fire Prison. I wanted to forget the way elves looked at me now, like I was murderous and untrustworthy just because I was half-Golden fairy. Most of all, I wanted to forget Stellan: his time as a soldier, our painful separation, his promise to leave the war for me...everything that led to his murder.

With each passing moment I was losing more of what had kept me strong all these years. I was falling apart when I needed to be whole. I was supposed to end the war between Element fairies and elves. How could I end a war when I couldn't even end my own heartache?

But I couldn't use today as another opportunity to dwell on the uncertainty of the future. I had to tuck away my grief and insecurity because today wasn't about me. Today was about Brielle.

Or should I say Queen Brielle? She hadn't been officially coroneted, but with Queen Taryn's passing, she had to assume all queenly duties.

Passing was such a euphemism, a way to make death sound less painful and losing someone bearable. The Queen of the Elf Realm had been *murdered*. Brielle had lost her mother and I had lost my aunt, who never even knew we were related. She had spent her entire reign leading the elves in a war against Element fairies, the very fae who had ultimately taken her life. Now she would never see the end she had fought so hard to achieve.

I closed my eyes against the bitter wind. Rain had begun to fall, the droplets splattering my face. I shivered and held tighter to Kalani's neck. My dragon had slowed

because of the weather, but the powerful gusts her wings created were enough to give me goosebumps.

Nathan's grip around my waist tightened. He could tell that my shivers were not only the result of the cold wind, but also of my lingering despair over the past few weeks. I leaned my head back against his shoulder, my face now fully exposed to the rain. I didn't care; I wanted the shower to wash away my grief.

"We're almost there," Nathan said quietly into my ear. I could tell he had actually yelled, but the wind had dulled his voice to barely a whisper.

I nodded, unable to speak. Kalani roared as we neared the capital city of Tarlore. We couldn't land among the elves because she would crush every house or vendor cart nearby. Instead, we would land in a clearing east of the palace.

As we soared over the city, I kept my eyes trained on the sky. I didn't want to look down. I couldn't bear to see the grief-stricken elves wandering the streets, clothed in black, mourning their Queen.

We finally reached the clearing. Kalani landed gracefully on the grass as the light rain grew into a downpour. I slid off my dragon, her wet scales making my dismount slippery and uncoordinated. Nathan followed my actions quickly in order to steady me. I thanked him wordlessly with a nod and patted Kalani's neck in gratitude for bringing us here. Razi, Zora's dragon, was also present, along with Brielle's golden dragon, Bronte. Kalani thrashed her tail and moved to join them.

The ride was over. Time to face the new queen.

I really didn't know what to expect. Brielle was a free spirit; her youthful exuberance for life was evident to everyone she met. But she also had a great personal strength, and her fierce courage was unshakable. How was she dealing with her mother's murder? I would find out soon enough.

Two palace guards were there to greet us. I was disappointed that Eder wasn't among them. I had first met the elusive guard when he saved me from drowning back in the Human Realm. The last time I spoke with him he had told me that he was somehow involved in my past and future but said he couldn't reveal any of the answers I sought until the time was right. Months later, he sent me a tense note asking that I visit the orchard in Birchwood, where a trio of nymphs had spoken several other unclear messages. But I had to give the nymphs a little credit. Even though their cryptic messages hadn't prevented my capture, I had been warned about the Element fairies' close proximity.

Still, I waited for Eder to reveal his intentions to me. I had rescued my sister, figured out my secret, and killed an evil Element fairy general. How much longer, or better yet, *what else* would I have to do to make the time finally right?

Although I was displeased with Eder's avoidance issues, I was grateful to see Danica and Jacqueline – high guards I knew well – waiting for us at the edge of the clearing. As Nathan and I neared the two elfens, Danica rushed forward and threw her arms around me, immediately sobbing into my shoulder. Shocked, I held her tentatively, rubbing her back slowly to comfort her.

"This is my fault, Ramsey," Danica confessed. "I'll never forgive myself."

Before I could ask what she meant, Jacqueline cleared her throat and motioned for us to follow her to the palace. I reluctantly stepped out of Danica's frantic embrace and nodded to Nathan. Urging a still-hysterical Danica forward, we left the clearing and traveled through the woods to reach Tarlore's castle.

I quickened my pace until my strides matched Jacqueline's. The stoic guard kept her eyes trained ahead, her face devoid of expression.

I swallowed. "Where is Brielle?" My voice was hoarse for a reason unknown to me. I felt as though I had slept for ages and was just now waking up.

At first the high guard appeared to be ignoring me. Finally, she pursed her lips and said, "Standing on the bridge. Waiting for your arrival."

"It's raining," I said, stating the obvious.

The high guard nodded. "The Queen doesn't seem to care."

I winced at Jacqueline's mention of Brielle's changed royal status. I realized then that I was facing a completely new reality. Brielle was Queen. Queen Taryn was dead. I was half-fairy. What next?

I returned to Nathan's side. "I have to go to Brielle. She's waiting on the bridge in the pouring rain."

Nathan took my hand, squeezing it lightly before responding. "Go ahead. She needs you."

I smiled gratefully and hurried off without explaining my intentions to Jacqueline, who seemed to be in charge now that Danica was in shambles. She didn't stop me, so I assumed she knew what I was doing.

I carefully watched my step as my feet carried me to the bridge. The ground was slick and rain continued to pour. I didn't want to fall, but thinking of Brielle, standing alone, made my pulse quicken. I ran faster, my arms and legs pumping – Brielle was my only focus.

I reached the bridge. The rain formed a curtain separating me from the grieving royal. I stood at a short distance from her, watching the way her head bowed and her arms rested haphazardly over the railing. I barely recognized the wild princess I loved and admired.

I ran forward, feet smacking the wet cobblestone, heart racing. Brielle turned as she heard my approach. I didn't wait for her to speak. I threw my arms around her and brought her close. She buried her face in my shoulder and held me so tight I could barely breathe. I didn't mind.

She wept silently and her body trembled. I could feel her hot tears on my skin, a contrast to the cold rain. "I don't know if I can do this," she admitted breathlessly. "Not without her."

"We'll do it together," I promised her, pulling back to meet her gaze. "We'll survive together."

We had lost so much and felt that we would never be whole again. The rain fell, the outlook was bleak, and our grief had claimed our spirit.

But it had not claimed our strength.

We would never be whole, but we could be mended. Not perfectly, but enough to survive. And I knew we would.

Because when Brielle finally found the strength to smile, it was as though the sun shone through the rain, bringing a ray of hope to the darkness.

~1~

Promises to Keep

“Today is the day,” I muttered listlessly, closing my eyes briefly to ward off approaching dread.

Two weeks had passed since my arrival in Tarlore. Queen Taryn’s funeral had taken place exactly one week ago, and yesterday we celebrated Brielle’s coronation. She was now fully accepted as Queen Brielle of the Elf Realm.

I felt Nathan’s breath on my neck. “Are you nervous?”

I contemplated the question for a moment. We currently rested in the purple guest room I had claimed upon my arrival. Lying comfortably on the bed, I felt safe tucked in Nathan’s arms. I wouldn’t feel this way after today.

“Yes,” I said, unable to lie to him.

“Maybe there’s another way....”

I sighed. “Nathan, if there were another way, surely Queen Taryn would have found it before she was...before she died.” I paused, drawing in a deep breath. “As far as everyone is aware, I’m the only one who can end this. I promised Brielle I would leave the day after her coronation.”

“She hasn’t summoned you yet. She may have changed her mind,” he suggested, pressing his forehead against the base of my neck. Warmth blossomed across my skin.

I shook my head, ridding myself of any temptation. “She hasn’t.”

I felt his fingers curl where they rested against the cloth of my dress. I wiggled and turned until we lay facing each other. His breathtaking emerald eyes held apprehension and sadness in their depths. If not for the striking silver slashes holding my attention, I would have cried.

“I’m leaving only because going to the Golden Fairy Realm will bring peace to this Realm and to the Element Fairy Realm. As High Queen, a command from Queen Titania would put a stop to everything. I’m half-Golden fae and her only niece. If there’s a chance our shared blood can make her hear me out, I have to take it. I’m the only one who can reach her.”

“I know that,” he replied, his gaze never once drifting from my eyes. “I just don’t want you to go.”

“Me either,” I told him, bringing my face closer to his, my lips closer to his lips. “I know the risks, the temptations. But nothing in the Golden Fairy Realm could ever replace the greatest temptation of all.”

“What’s that?” Nathan wondered.

I brushed my fingertips across his cheek until my hand rested at the back of his neck. “You,” I confessed, smiling tentatively.

Ignoring the rational part of me that said now was not the time, I pressed my mouth to his, losing myself in the taste of him, the thrill of just being near him. My fingers tangled themselves in his pale hair, and his hands ran down my sides, sending shivers through my body. He smiled against my mouth as we deepened our embrace, and at that moment all I could think was: *I just want this. I want this forever and nothing else.*

And then suddenly another thought crossed my mind, one I couldn’t ignore even with Nathan’s hands all over me and my lips locked with his.

I have promises to keep.

I couldn’t ignore them forever.

Someone knocked at my door.

I reluctantly withdrew from Nathan and sighed. “That must be Jacqueline.” I sat up and ran my fingers through my

tousled hair, trying to look like I hadn't been kissing Nathan only moments ago.

Nathan followed suit and rested his head against my shoulder. His heavy sigh made me pause. "I'm just meeting with her. I'm not leaving yet."

"I know," he said quietly, but I could tell he wasn't reassured by my words.

The knock sounded again, harder this time. "Is she persistent or what?" I muttered, sliding off the bed to slip on my flats.

I turned around when Nathan didn't answer. He was lying down again, looking up at the ceiling. Everything inside me felt heavy and knotted.

"I'll be right back," I told him softly.

I didn't think he heard me, but I didn't wait to find out because Jacqueline's knocking was giving me a headache and all I wanted to do was return to Nathan. I had to leave now; otherwise, I never would.

Jacqueline's grim expression greeted me as I stepped out into the hall. I closed the door and nodded to her, uninterested in speaking. She started walking almost immediately, and I was nearly jogging by the time I caught up to her.

We hurried downstairs to the second level and entered the parlor where Brielle was waiting. I noticed Addison's presence as well. She resembled her brother so much that I couldn't stop an image of Stellan from invading my mind. I pushed down my sadness before it could consume me as we timidly exchanged smiles. Addison wasn't bothered by my newly discovered fairy heritage, but ever since her brother's murder, conversation between us had been awkward and strained, neither of us able to put what had once connected us out of our minds.

Brielle beckoned for me to sit down just as Jacqueline left without being dismissed. Confused, I turned my attention to Brielle, who had claimed her own seat across

from me. She wore an emerald green gown that reached the floor, lined with emeralds at the bottom hem. Her sleeves went to her elbows, hemmed with emeralds as well. She had a darker green sash tied at the waist and was wearing her usual emerald jeweled crown. Around her neck was a pendant clustered with jewels of all kinds, which she wore because of her power to use gems to perform various abilities. It was a complicated but potent set of skills.

The jewel she was wearing so much of today, emerald, was used for healing. I remembered that all too well from the time she had used the gem to save my life when we rescued Zora. I had been badly burned by Finn the fire fairy general, and Brielle had been the only one able to save me.

The new Queen looked magnificent but so unlike herself that it almost brought me to tears.

I could hardly recognize the Brielle I first met eight months ago in the royal who sat before me, and I was slightly afraid of what might happen to me. If Brielle, the elfen who had sworn she would never change, had turned into this, how would I be able to keep myself from changing completely, even more than I already had since coming to the Elf Realm and realizing my Golden fairy heritage?

I finally took my seat. “Queen Brielle, you asked me to come,” I reminded her, both eager and a little fearful for the conversation to begin. “And we both know what this is about, so perhaps we should just get on with it.”

“What have I said about calling me by my title?” she asked, turning her head away from me, like she was afraid to meet my gaze. Brielle, afraid of me? It was unheard of, but I didn’t know how else to explain her reaction to me.

“Okay then, fine. *Brielle*, you asked me to come,” I repeated.

“Yes, I did,” she said quietly. “When you first came here two weeks ago, you said you were ready to end this war. We decided that you would leave the day after my coronation.”

I nodded. "I remember. I haven't changed my mind."

Brielle rose from her seated position and crossed to one of the many windows in the parlor. I couldn't tell if she was actually looking at something or if it was just a way to keep from seeing me. "But the terms have."

"What?" I asked.

"The terms have changed," the elfen said.

"What does that mean?" I asked. When she didn't answer, I looked to Addison. "What does that *mean*?"

Addison, who stood near the door, wore an expression of alarm, like all she wanted to do was escape.

Frustrated by my unanswered question, I sighed loudly. "Brielle?"

"King Vortigern assumed you would try to travel to the Golden Fairy Realm to meet with Queen Titania, so he bribed a group of Woodland fairies to devise a certain spell, one that put restrictions on the Magical Realms – a spell that applies only to those with elfin blood," Brielle explained.

I swallowed dryly. "What kind of restrictions?"

"The only way you can travel to the Golden Fairy Realm is by traveling through the other four Magical Realms first. That means going to the Mermaid Realm, the Flower Fairy Realm, the Woodland Fairy Realm, and then to the Element Fairy Realm before being able to enter the Golden Fairy Realm."

I raised my eyebrows, unconvinced that this was such a complication. "That doesn't sound too difficult. I'll simply make a new elf circle each time I cross into a Realm. I won't even have to move very much."

"There's more, Ramsey," she said quietly. "Along with the offerings necessary to cross into the Realms, you will need the crown of each Realm's ruler."

"What do you mean, exactly?" I asked.

"That means, for example, when you travel to the Mermaid Realm, you must persuade King Almgot to give

you his crown. Then mermaids will need to make a portal with their magic for your transport. You may only use an elf circle to reach the Mermaid Realm. From then on, you must rely on each Realm's inhabitants. Once they make their own version of the circle, place the crown and the offering inside, then you may leave."

I sat back in my seat, dumbfounded. "How could Queen Titania let this happen?" I asked.

"As you have heard countless times already, Queen Titania chooses not to meddle with the war. She probably doesn't even know of the spell."

"Then how do you suppose she will listen to me if she doesn't care?" I wondered. "What if going to the Golden Fairy Realm does nothing?"

Brielle didn't respond. I shook my head, fists curling in anger. "This is impossible! How am I supposed to get King Vortigern's crown if he is the one who came up with this idea?" I cried.

Brielle's expression brightened. "When you reach the Element Fairy Realm, you must find the rebellion. From this rebel cell you will receive all the help you need."

Now I was *really* confused. "What rebellion?"

"When I returned home from Aubrey after our ability school closed, I received a letter from an Element fairy named Joseph. He started a rebellion against Vortigern several years ago, and Element fairies disgusted by his reign have gathered to oppose him. I told Joseph about you, and I can assure you that the rebellion can get you to the crown."

"How do you know Joseph is trustworthy? What if this is just a trap Vortigern is using to reach me?"

Brielle scowled, finally looking like her old self again. "I'm not as dimwitted as you think. Of course I was apprehensive at first, but I realized his sincerity rather quickly."

"What made you trust him?" I asked, too stubborn to let this go just yet.

Brielle grinned. "He told me Vortigern has an ulterior motive."

I gaped. "Vortigern has an ulterior motive?!"

She nodded. "I always knew there was more to this war than a stolen fairy child and misplaced pride. Why else would Vortigern let this go on for thirty years?"

"So what is it?" I asked, eager to know.

"Well, I don't exactly know what the motive is," Brielle admitted. "Neither does Joseph. But he did say that the war with the elves is just a distraction to hide what the King is actually planning."

I rolled my eyes. "Way to get my hopes up," I muttered, crossing my arms against my chest. "I still don't know if I trust this rebellion guy."

Brielle glared at me. "You have no other choice. Joseph and the rebellion are your only hope to steal Vortigern's crown."

I groaned. "Fine, let's say I trust him. How do I find him once I reach the Element Fairy Realm?"

"He couldn't disclose his location in his letters for fear of them getting into the wrong hands, so you should ask for 'the man in red.' That's all the help I can give you," she admitted.

"All right, and who am I supposed to ask?" I wondered.

"You'll know who to ask when the time comes," the Queen explained.

"I thought only fairies were supposed to be vague," I remarked bitterly, shaking my head.

"Elfen queens too," she mocked. "And please tell no one of my correspondence with Joseph. Spies are everywhere. I can't trust anyone else with this information, not even our closest friends."

What she meant was that I couldn't tell Nathan. I swallowed dryly. A secret between us didn't sound like a

good idea. But this was the Queen's request, so I had to obey.

We watched each other silently. I finally remembered that Addison was in the room with us. I turned my head to see her still waiting by the door.

"What do you think?" I asked my friend and former rescuer. "Is this journey too risky, or should I blindly follow Brielle's advice?"

Addison left her post at the door to sit down next to me on the couch. "The journey is too risky, but you knew that already."

I nodded slowly, unable to lie to her.

She took my hands and squeezed them lightly. "And you didn't have to ask for my opinion. You've already made your choice."

I sighed. She was right; I had.

No matter how dangerous or completely absurd, I had to journey through the Realms to reach the High Queen. She was the only one who could stop Vortigern, and I was the only one who could possibly convince her to do it. And if the King did indeed have an ulterior motive, he needed to be stopped before he could succeed.

"I'm in," I said, acknowledging my choice.

Suddenly Brielle looked nothing like a royal and everything like the wild elfen I had met what now seemed like a lifetime ago. She threw her arms around me and squeezed until I choked.

When she finally let go, I had only one question: "Can Nathan come with me?"

I returned to my room and found Nathan waiting where I left him. I felt my anxiety reach new heights as I sat on the bed next to him. He reached out as if to welcome me into his arms but refrained when I crossed my arms rather than

accept his embrace. Ever since Stellan's murder, I had experienced mood swings around Nathan. Sometimes I was eager to explore the uncharted territory that was our relationship, kissing him and practically gluing myself to his side. Other times I yearned for the days when we were only friends because those days were simpler. Stellan was still alive then. So was Queen Taryn. And I wasn't half-fairy.

With all that had transpired in such a short amount of time, I often wondered if it was selfish for me to have Nathan's love. I also couldn't allow myself to be distracted by him, and although I found myself giving in to temptation more than refusing it, I really did try to keep some distance. I needed time to move past my grief. And despite my love for him, my primary focus had to be ending the war. I knew our relationship was strong enough to endure. I just wasn't sure if Nathan knew that. I wanted to assure him that it wasn't his fault and ask him to be patient with me, but every time I opened my mouth to begin, words failed me.

"So, what's the plan?" Nathan asked slowly, tentatively. He knew my moods – though not the reason for them – and had already realized that I was in a fragile state. One wrong word and I could end up shutting him out. It was horrible, but it was the truth.

"We leave early tomorrow morning," I told him.

He balked. "*We*? But I – how could I – what do you mean?"

I gave him the shortest possible version of my meeting with Brielle, leaving out the part about Joseph and the rebellion as Brielle had requested. When I finished, I could tell that he didn't know what to say. If I weren't in one of my moods, he would probably have hugged or kissed me, glad that I wasn't going on this journey alone, relieved that I was including him. But I wasn't accepting physical contact, so he just sat and watched me until I couldn't take his silence any longer.

I bit my lip. “So, are you coming? I mean, you can’t follow me all the way to the Golden Fairy Realm, but you can at least travel with me until we reach the Element Fairy Realm.”

He nodded and hesitantly placed his hand on my knee, as much affection as I would allow at this point. I smiled wanly and leaned into him, resting my head on his shoulder. I felt him relax. I was slowly melting from the cold statue I had been moments earlier. But we both knew I wouldn’t melt completely. Not for a while, at least.

“Aimee and Tavis are here,” he said, deciding to drop a huge bombshell on me out of nowhere.

I jerked away from him and met his emerald gaze. “In the palace?”

“Yes,” he confirmed. “They arrived while you were meeting with Brielle.”

“You’ve spoken with them?” I assumed.

Nathan nodded. “They came to apologize for treating you so coldly after your return to Birchwood. They want to make it up to you.”

I hugged myself as tightly as I could while still being able to breathe. “It’s too late for that now. I have a journey to take.”

Nathan sighed and ran his fingers through his hair, which had grown longer during our stay at the palace.

“Can’t you at least meet with them before we leave? They’re truly sorry; I can tell.”

“So what?” I asked, standing up and crossing to the door. I couldn’t be around Nathan anymore. Too many conflicting emotions. I needed some air. “I don’t need an apology. I just need this war to end.”

I opened the door.

“Where are you going?” Nathan wondered. His voice was gentle, but I could still tell how irritated he was by my antics.

“Nowhere.”

I stepped out into the hall and shut the door before Nathan could respond.

I never planned on going to meet them. My original plan was to find Zora and tell her that I was leaving tomorrow morning, but then I realized I didn't want to. I didn't want her to know. Selfish of me, yes, but reality nonetheless. She wouldn't be able to handle the journey I was about to embark on. And she would probably volunteer to travel with me, and that was something I would never consider. But I didn't want to reject her when I was already taking Nathan with me, so avoidance was the only option.

Brielle had given me advice along the same lines. The fewer who knew, the better. The new queen didn't want to draw attention to her secret weapon and, come to think of it, neither did I. I wasn't looking for attention. I had received enough of that when the elves discovered I was half-fairy.

So when I realized I didn't want to see Zora, I had nowhere else to go but downstairs in search of my visitors.

I found them in the library. Aimee was sitting on a couch, an open book in her lap. Tavis was inspecting the fireplace or something. I couldn't tell because he had his back to me. I cleared my throat loudly so they would notice my entrance. I wasn't sure what I wanted to say to them yet, so I didn't speak.

"Ramsey," Aimee said, closing the book and placing it on the end table. She rose from the couch but didn't travel any closer to me.

Tavis turned and moved to join Aimee. He regarded me warily. "Hello," he greeted. I saw confusion in his eyes, probably because I wasn't wearing my wings. I had furled them upon my arrival at the palace because I couldn't deal with elves staring at me.

“Nathan told me you came,” I muttered, clasping and unclasping my hands nervously.

“We’re sorry it took so long,” Aimee said gently.

With her kind green eyes and short black hair, it was difficult to imagine a healer like Aimee exiling anyone for being different. She had sure fooled me.

Tavis was another case. He was tough and impulsive. His reaction to my half-fae heritage had surprised me only because he wasn’t an elf who feared easily. But he had feared me – probably still feared me.

“We tried to convince Reid to join us, but he refused,” Tavis said plainly. He wasn’t one to avoid the truth.

“He still blames me for Janie’s death. And Daran’s for that matter,” I replied, sighing heavily. “The question is, do you?”

Aimee smiled. “That’s why we’re here. Your secret was a shock to us, but we’ve realized our mistake. We should have stood by you.”

It made sense that Aimee was doing all the talking. She was never at a loss for words. But I wondered how much of her speech was scripted and how much was coming from the heart.

“Say something,” Tavis implored once the silence between us had grown awkward.

I took a deep breath. This was definitely not how I had planned our reunion. But having Aimee and Tavis beg on their knees for my forgiveness wasn’t realistic, and I knew that. This was their apology: coming to Tarlore, admitting their mistake, facing me without flinching. I could take it or leave it.

“I understand your reaction to my secret. That doesn’t mean I’m not bitter over it, but I do understand. Thank you for coming to make amends.”

I blinked hard and took another steady breath. Aimee stepped forward and took my hand. Tavis smiled but remained where he was.

“Nathan told us you were leaving soon,” Aimee mentioned. “I wish we had more time to talk.”

I nodded. “So do I. But Nathan and I have obligations.”

“Wait, Nathan’s going with you?” Tavis asked, startled. “Isn’t that impossible? He’s not a Golden fairy.”

“Plans have changed. King Vortigern devised a spell requiring me to journey through each Magical Realm before I can enter the Golden Fairy Realm. And to move from Realm to Realm, I must acquire the crown of each ruler. I can’t do that on my own, so Nathan’s coming with me.”

“We’ll come too,” Tavis surprised me by saying. I had thought it would be Aimee who spoke first.

“I can’t ask you to do that,” I said, releasing Aimee’s hand and taking a step back.

“You don’t have to,” Aimee assured me, exchanging a quick glance with Tavis. “We’re willing to risk whatever danger there is in this journey. We didn’t support you when we could have in Birchwood, but we can now.”

I shook my head. I couldn’t let them do this. It wasn’t right. “This is different than standing up for me at Stellan’s funeral.” I paused when nightmarish images infiltrated my mind. I swallowed and found the will to continue. “The first few Realms could be easy, but I’ve been to the Element Fairy Realm. It’s no stroll down the dirt roads of Birchwood. And I have to somehow steal King Vortigern’s crown....You can’t come.”

Aimee narrowed her eyes in defiance. “No. Don’t say that. You admitted that you can’t do this alone. Just having Nathan isn’t enough either. You’ll need a healer. And Tavis’s explosive power will add to the offensive spell power you and Nathan share.”

“We can get you to the Golden Fairy Realm, Ramsey,” Tavis added. “Just give us the chance.”

Of course I wanted to tell them no. Bringing them along was a risk I shouldn’t take. They could be killed. But they were also right. Even with Nathan by my side, the

journey wasn't a guaranteed success. I could do with a little more help. Aimee's healing and Tavis's offensive ability would greatly improve my chances of reaching the Golden Fairy Realm. They were assets I couldn't afford to ignore. I couldn't let my emotions get in the way of my goal. To end this war, I had to be a realist. I had to let them join me on this journey through the Realms.

I couldn't say no.

To continue reading *The Stolen Child*
Purchase Options are for Hardcover Paperback and
eBook/ePub;

[Direct from the Author](#)

[Direct from the Publisher](#)

[Amazon](#)

[Barnes & Noble](#)