



# *Quietus*

*A Wicked Ending*





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*underwood*

*Book 3*

*By*

*Andaleigh Archer*

Quietus A Wicked Ending

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To Lilly & Kaileen

*~When he himself  
might his quietus make  
Hamlet*

*quietus*

~a finishing stroke

~discharge or release from life

~anything that kills



*All*

*Fae Must Die!*

# Prologue

Time is immeasurable in the Realm of the Fae, and therefore difficult to determine how long it had been since the death of Queen Lillianna.

The Elysian Court disappeared, along with its faithful nobles. The warrior Elves of Denmire disappeared as well. Those that did not perish fled and were never seen or heard from again. Day and night ceased to exist, left only to a perpetual pallor of in between. The constant state of springtime disappeared, leaving everything damp and bitterly cold.

Kailen looked down at a spiral of stones near his feet. It was a place he came to gather his thoughts and remember those he loved and lost. He no longer ruled a kingdom or was husband to a Queen. His small expanse of land in which his humble cottage occupied was in a quiet valley,



surrounded by trees, at the Realm's farthest point, well secluded from any evil.

Although his fairy blood had once protected him from the harsh elements, he now found he suffered, just as if he were mortal. He was thankful for the abundance of wood to keep him warm and the winding river near his home, which remained plentiful with fish despite the changes. However, even though he felt safe from attack, it remained a lonely existence.

Kailen removed his hood, feeling the harsh wind bite angrily at his flesh. He stood still, waiting, quietly listening, as he always did, and looked out anxiously toward the trees. He hated this time of day. He hated the fear that accompanied it. However, he knew it was vital for healing, trust, and inner peace. Therefore, he never protested. He simply waited, carefully watching the trees for a sign.

It always began with the sound of labored breathing, brought on he was sure by the fear of the unknown, followed closely by the footfall of cautious feet, gingerly crushing the leaves with each hesitating step.

Then his eyes caught sight of a small silhouette. As if blind, the figure reached out a pale, trembling hand to safely ascertain the surroundings before stepping through the thickets. Kailen waved a hand as the figure walked toward him. From beyond the shadow of empty eyes, a light flickered.

"I did it. I walked a little further today. I almost made it to the river."

Kailen brushed a tendril of hair aside, revealing a beautifully haunted face.

"I knew you could do it," he replied encouragingly. "A little more each day."

"Did you follow me?"

"Not today," he assured. "You did it all by yourself. You're getting stronger. Did you try to release your wings?"

"No! No! I can't do it!" she cried, stamping her feet like a child.

"Hush now. It takes time," he added.

"It's coming. I can smell it on the wind," she said, sniffing the air like an animal.

Kailen felt a chill, anticipating her words.

"What's coming?"

She turned to face him, her eyes becoming large and black. Her face twitched, and then she looked up toward the sky.

"Snow," she said blankly. "It's red and filled with death."



*The capture after the Solstice*

“I don’t want to be here. I want to go home.”

“You have no home, Aislin. It’s gone, all of it. This is your home now,” Falowan replied blankly.

“How could you betray Denmire?”

“Denmire? I have no remorse for its destruction. Denmire was unwilling to acknowledge the power of the Shadow Lord. They left me no choice. You’re lucky I spared *your* life.”

“How could you betray Kailen?” she cried.

“Come, come, Aislin. You throw accusations of betrayal around too easily. Let me remind you you’re just as guilty of betraying Kailen as I am. Don’t pretend you didn’t have a

hand in his demise. You used him. You have used him all your life.”

Aislin lowered her head, letting a quiet sob escape her lips. “I never used him. I loved him.”

Falowan laughed. “Love? Love is weakness. That is what killed Kailen. Be wise, Aislin. I know you understand the significance of power,” he said, moving behind her. “You and I once shared a bed. As I recall, you rather enjoyed it from behind.”

Aislin let out a laugh of disgust. “Don’t flatter yourself.”

“How soon did you bed my son after me? Perhaps you were sleeping with us both. It wouldn’t surprise me. You were nothing but my whore.”

“You weren’t always so cruel,” she cried, trying to pull from him.

“Yes, that’s true, I suppose. However, I’ve learned there is a fine line between pleasure and cruelty. I think it’s best when they’re mixed, don’t you?”

Falowan forcefully turned Aislin around and pulled her hard into his chest. “As I remember, you enjoyed my aggression. As I recall, I was the *one* you loved.”

Aislin’s eyes narrowed. “I never loved you, Falowan. I used you, just like you said. It was Kailen I loved, always Kailen.”

“Is that so,” he seethed, grabbing her breast with his free hand. “Perhaps we should revisit our past and determine how true that statement is.”

“Reminiscing, my love?” The image of a woman formed from shadow stepped into the light. Her expression was cold and unamused. Falowan released Aislin and casually stepped back.

“Maeve, my love. I didn’t hear you enter.”

“Apparently,” she replied, her black eyes balefully narrowing into slits. “You forget yourself, like my son, I see and hear everything. He may be willing to share his whore with you, but I am not willing to share my whore with an elf.”

Falowan’s lip curled slightly in disdain at her comparison. “I was just letting her know of the Shadow Lord's interest-”

“I know what you were doing,” she interrupted and crossed to Aislin. “Beauty by chance. Beauty by fate. Beauty makes for the freshest bait,” she sang, raising her thorny fingers toward Aislin's face.

Aislin tried to recoil, but Falowan grabbed her arms and held her steady.

“Beauty and temptation go hand in hand. As does betrayal. Remember dear,” she said, sneering at the trembling elf, “I can make beautiful things wither with the touch of my hand.”

Aislin’s eyes grew wide as Maeve seductively drew a thorny nail down her quivering cheek, slicing through her skin with a razor-sharp fineness, instantly drawing blood. Aislin screamed out, which only made Maeve smile at her handiwork.

“Oh, stop your caterwauling!” she said, sealing the wound on Aislin's face with a wave of

her hand. Aislin let out a small whimper but otherwise remained silent.

"I can't have you looking all scratched up in front of my son. You are my gift to him, after all."

"Wha-what do you mean?" Aislin stammered through her tears.

"My son needs a playmate."

"Playmate? You want me to be the Shadow Lord's mate? No. No. I won't-"

"Mate?" Maeve laughed. "Don't be silly, girl. You are his exercise. He needs to build up his strength."

Aislin looked at Falowan and then back at Maeve. "You can't be serious."

"Oh, but I am, She-elf. You are nothing but a toy for my Devy to play with, and furthermore, you will please him. As for a mate, you are not worthy enough for that position. Any child you produce from his exercise with you will be destroyed. Is that clear? You will cater to his every need, my beautiful one. Should you fail, you will have to deal with me. You do not want to deal with me. Is that understood?"

Aislin's lip trembled, and she forced a nod.

Maeve smiled. "That's a good elf. See Falowan, all it takes is a woman's touch."

Falowan gave her a subservient nod. "As always, my love."

2

## *Reflection*

Kailen placed a blanket over Lilly, who was sleeping peacefully next to a roaring hearth. Though it was difficult to ascertain, he believed four seasons had passed since her death and resurrection. Childlike madness protected her from the memories leading up to and after the events of Devligant's birth. However, as each day progressed, bits and pieces began to emerge, and with it, violent, uncontrollable outbursts.

Other peculiarities were emerging as well, but Kailen dismissed them as side-effects of her ordeal.

He wanted her to regain her sense of self and did his best to help her through the torment of emotions she was experiencing, but often, she would shut down and withdraw from him



altogether. Sometimes he thought he was pushing her too hard. He wanted his wife back, the healthy, vibrant Lilly he remembered, but not at the cost of her sliding further into her dementia.

In the beginning, she confined herself to the cottage, only stepping outside on a few occasions. Ultimately, the venture would prove fruitless causing fits of hysteria. However, as time passed, her confidence began to grow, and with it, the need to explore.

At first, they took walks together. Then she wanted to take walks in the woods by herself. Initially, he protested, but she insisted. When he asked her why? She said she was looking for someone. When he asked whom she sought? She would not respond.

He imagined she was looking for herself since she made no mention of anyone from the court. Therefore, he allowed her walks in the woods, first following at a safe distance if she needed him and then letting her explore unobserved when he thought she was strong enough. Still, he kept his mind clear should she call to him. That connection between the two of them had never severed.

He had refrained from any sexual advances toward her, hoping for the day she would come to him. He did sense she loved him. She certainly needed him. But deep down, he knew she had to come to him on her terms. He had also come to the realization she might never want him in that way

ever again, and this didn't matter as long as they were together.

As challenging as it was for her to navigate her emotions, he found he had his own demons to contend with. While the memories of that day were nebulous for her, they were crystalline for him. There was no blanket of madness to protect him from the images of that day and the evil she was forced to birth. There was no mask he could wear to conceal the pain of burying their daughter, Shaylin. Lilly was still unaware of her death. In truth, she had not asked about Shay or Diana. When he mentioned them in passing, she insisted they did not have any children. After that, he decided not to broach the subject again since he hadn't seen or heard from Diana since the solstice. Diana disappeared along with Timian and everyone else he knew and loved. All he could do was hold fast to the hope they were somehow together and alive. Still, the odds were against them.

Grief, guilt, and despair challenged his emotional state, and at times, anger got the best of him. Not wanting to show that side to Lilly, he would wait until her daily walks to release his pent-up rage. This often involved throwing rocks, chopping copious amounts of wood, or shooting arrows into the void until his fingers were bloody and raw. Sometimes he would just sink to his knees and cry bitter tears of guilt and frustration. He was angry with the Noble's betrayal of her, his father's

betrayal of him, but mostly he was upset with himself.

As King of Denmire, he should have protected his people after the Shadow Lord's return, and yet, he had no choice but to fade into the anonymity of death. For, if he were to attempt to fight against the Shadow armies, he couldn't protect Lilly. She had no one, and if they knew she was alive, they would come after her again.

Everything ate at him. He had not been truthful with himself, or Lilly, about his history with Aislin. It was his nondisclosure of their past and his insecurities about Elysia's traditions that drove a wedge between them. He should have been truthful. Furthermore, he should have been there to help her instead of lamenting like a spoiled child.

The bitterest memory was his obsessive thoughts over the half-naked man lying frozen in the snow next to Lilly's blood-spattered body. He had so many questions. *Questions that tormented him to shame.* He asked her once about Ayden, but she only stared blankly into space. He assumed she couldn't remember her relationship with him or what he did to her, just like she couldn't remember Diana and Shay. He wasn't even sure if he wanted her to remember Ayden because then there might be more he didn't want to hear. Even if Ayden was a pawn in the nefarious plot between his father and Maeve, he still carried out the deed. It was rape. And anytime his mind ventured anywhere else in his thoughts, he told himself Ayden raped his wife, planting the seed that brought forth horrific evil

back into the Realm. Lilly was the victim of dark magic. In the end, it was fortunate Ayden took the coward's way out, ending his own life, for if he had encountered him alive, he would have killed him without question.

Kailen brushed back a piece of silver hair that had fallen over his wife's face. She stirred slightly, whispered something inaudible under her breath, and pulled the blanket up to her chin. Her hair glittered like ice in the light of the fire. The vibrant red, which had been so striking, drained away shortly after her breath expired. She was still beautiful, perhaps even more so in some ways, but her physical appearance reminded him of a past he wished they both could forget.

He looked over at a small book sitting above the hearth's mantle. Eldon's gift was instrumental in her resurrection and had he not had it on him that fateful day, she would not be with him now. In retrospect, he wondered if he should have let her have peace versus the torment of memory fragments and mental instability that continued to plague her since her quietus slumber. He did not recall even questioning whether or not he was doing the right thing at the time; he simply wanted her to breathe.

Kailen walked over to the hearth and took the book off the mantle. He returned to his chair, and upon closing his eyes, reflected back to the day Lilly died. He remembered the stillness of their surroundings. How he could not speak or move. How the realization of the moment hit him hard,

causing his heart to pound rapidly in his chest. It was as strangely audible as the snow hitting the ground. Then he felt intense heat against his leg. It was not the wound his father's arrow had inflicted but Eldon's book. It glowed with vibrant light, creating heat so intense it literally burned a hole through the fabric of his breeches, searing his skin before it fell onto the snow and melted a circle where it landed. It quelled his grief momentarily and shifted his focus to the strange phenomena. He could not recall why he reached down, picked up the book, and opened it, but it was as if he knew it was a key to helping Lilly.

He opened his eyes and then the book. The pages illuminated with the ink spilled image of Eldon's handwriting. He read the letter that was only for his eyes once again. However, unlike the day of the solstice, when he found it impossible to decipher its meaning, the moments preceding her death caused a shift in his subconscious, allowing him to reveal the book's hidden secrets.

The pages immediately folded and curled into themselves, forming the latch he had seen only briefly in his bedchamber. He pulled the latch revealing a small corked bottle that contained a pearlescent liquid. He uncorked it and smelled the contents. It was not particularly odorous; however, the moment he breathed in the strange liquid, his nose warmed. He managed to lift her head, pour the contents into her mouth, and then placed her head back down onto the pillow of snow. Several moments passed, and when nothing happened, he

buried his head in his hands and cried in hopeless despair.

Then, suddenly he heard a desperate breath like someone breaking through the surface of an ice-covered lake. Parting the veil of his hands, he saw her blue lips turn pink, her ashen skin became variegated, finally settling to a youthful cream. The veins in her neck pulsed and thickened as a golden light infused the entire length of her body, causing it to shudder. When she finally came to rest, her eyes opened and met his own.

Despite her revival, she could not speak or move. And although he tried, he could not resurrect Shaylin as he did Lilly. His grief was palpable, but ultimately, he would bury it, for the snow was falling rapidly, and if they remained there, they were doomed to die.

The wounds he sustained left him unable to carry two women. No sounds were coming from the solstice celebration, and he feared the worst. His father had left him to die alongside Lilly and Shay.

With no one to help him, Kailen pulled Shaylin's lifeless body over to Lilly's and folded them into his arms. He knew he could invoke Dissipatus to get them all to a shelter. He did not feel the township of Bree, Denmire, or Elysia were safe. He had to get as far away as he could. Kailen closed his eyes and concentrated. He envisioned a small cottage in an area on the fringe of the Realm. It was a place he and Timian would often frequent

in their youth. He knew it would be safe. He knew there would be shelter.

Kailen closed the small book and placed it back on the mantle. He then placed another log on the fire, lay down next to Lilly, and pulled her body into his. Sleep came easily and fast.

## *No Resistance*

“You will find no resistance from the Shelf,” Maeve assured.

Devligant sneered and sat back against his throne. He didn't like his mother taking it upon herself to ensure his sexual conquests. He felt sure he was capable of that himself. If Aislin didn't want to comply, he knew what to do. He was no stranger to getting what he wanted.

Still, since his rebirth, much had changed. He could remember every aspect of his former self, but he wasn't who he remembered. Even his physical appearance had changed. His long silver hair was now red, and his green eyes were a constant reminder of the woman who had killed him and then rebirthed him back into the Realm. This toyed with his senses and filled him with a fury he was unable to control.



It was this lack of control that plagued his ability to wield strong magic. Maeve assured him it would return in time, and she would handle all that pertained to the Shadow Realm until he was strong enough. This displeased him even more, as he did not fully trust her. He never did. Though she was integral to his return and his original mother, they had always suffered a tumultuous relationship. He didn't want her around but had a difficult time letting her go. She maintained a power over him as she did his father, and this angered him. Not only was she stronger magically, but she seemed able to tap into his own neurosis with a surgeon's precision, toying and playing with him like a master puppeteer.

There were other things as well. His cunning nature did not flow lucidly from his thinking, and he found he questioned his abilities. Even Falowan was more adept at turning a phrase or bending a will than he was, which instilled an element of insecurity, another feeling for which he was unaccustomed. He was surreptitious in his previous existence but now found it less easy to see others' weaknesses. Furthermore, he could not shapeshift, an ability he was especially nuanced in before his death. This caused him great distress, which only added to his list of foreign emotions.

“Did you hear what I said?”

“Yes, Mother, I heard you,” Devligant snapped. “However, you take liberties that are not necessary. I'm sure I am capable of seducing an elf.”

“Of course, you are, darling,” Maeve cooed. “It’s just you have so much to contend with. I just thought a little assured cooperation from those around you might be welcome.”

“I don’t need help in that area,” he repeated.

“Suit yourself,” Maeve replied casually, pouring herself a goblet of wine. She took a deep drink and eyed him dubiously above the rim. “Still, your arrogance was your downfall the first time around. Don’t let history repeat itself.”

The wine goblet she held flew out of her hand and crashed with a resounding clatter against the wall. Laughter rose to the back of her throat, and she turned to face her son.

She shook a thorny finger at him. “You need to control your anger and use it wisely,” she admonished.

Devligant seethed in fury. He wanted nothing more than to toss his mother across the room as he had the goblet, but he restrained the urge. What little power he had was owed to her, and in truth, she could easily destroy him with her own.

Maeve poured another goblet of wine, crossed to him, and placed it in his hand. He took a drink, all the while looking into his mother’s eyes.

Maeve rubbed the top of his leg. She wasn’t one for affection. “The fairy bitch drained you. At least she’s dead.”

Devligant lowered his goblet. He could see doubt behind her eyes.

