

Dutybound: Light Wings Epic Volume 1

by Mark A. Alvarez II

EXCERPT

Ara grasped her blouse. This deepening wound tore at her chest, as though she knew this whole time that it would be here that her heart would break.

“Lady Ara,” called her loyal maid, Amelia, so struck with concern that the wrinkles in her forehead seemed to suddenly age her ten years. In her eyes was a clinging intuition.

Ara sensed her concern, as if the maid already knew, but spoke anyway. “He’s gone.”

“The master?” asked the maid.

“Stello.”

“My lady,” Amelia said with grief before bringing her eyes back to Ara.

There was then a lull as they both thought. The maid’s stare grew distant as Ara let out a faint whimper, breaking the still silence.

Finally, Amelia asked, “May I ask why the master left?”

Ara’s insides shuddered. “He fears of . . .” She hesitated, looking at the letter, fully dazed, unable to grasp the idea of its true meaning. It was as if something hid beneath his words, something he was not telling her. Memories flashed through her mind, and her chest tightened. It couldn’t have returned. It was her prayers that had saved them. It was her strength, her power that had defeated it in the first place. Could it still exist somewhere, outside the reach of man? “He fears of its return.” She felt the warmth of her tears beneath her eyes once more, while the maid’s face paled, her own fears apparent in this revelation. The war was supposed to be over.

Amelia wanted to release tears of her own. But still, she held an unchanging sternness of stone, something unbreakable, showing a strong sense of obligation and duty, no matter the adversity. She had to be strong for the lady even though she could not be strong for herself. “Lady Ara, I’m terribly sorry. Lucia . . .” Her concern for the child shone within the sparkles of her green eyes as she uttered her name. “Should I go to her?”

Ara looked up at her, her amber eyes still wet with tears. Despite the circumstances, she released a slight smile, remembering her daughter. “Yes, please. Thank you.”