

*Foar Famke van der Eems*

The falling stars have always fascinated me; they made me feel part of something bigger than myself.

In some cultures, a falling star is seen as a soul who leaves our earth or as a sign of good luck. While other people make wishes to the falling stars, believing it has some magical power.

I have been wishing upon those stars for as long as I can remember, wishing for my happy ending and, like many, for a happy beginning.

But what is a falling star? It is just a meteor vaporising because of our Earth's atmosphere. Layer by layer, it dissolves into thin air until there is nothing left.

It is a beautiful phenomenon that our universe has created to protect our Earth. Even destruction can be seen as something beautiful. I, however, could never understand why it was called a falling star, as it is primarily a rock instead of a star. Instead of falling, it burns until there is nothing left.

## PROLOGUE

It was the middle of the night when the six leaders of the witch covens gathered. They concealed themselves in the underground safehouse of the Novaria coven. The lights were dimmed, and only a few features of their faces were visible in the low light. A few witches from the Hidia coven were casting spells at the entrances. Even though they were metres underground, fear still beat in their hearts. The walls of the underground safehouse were adorned with ancient runes and drawings from the great and almighty Mixillia. They hoped it would protect them from the doom that awaited them outside. The six coven leaders exchanged glances when thunder struck and the safehouse shook. Thilda, leader of the Novaria coven, spoke with a stifled voice, 'We must end this. It has gone too far, and the only way we can right this wrong is by destroying Elvira, once and for all.'

The other witches nodded as they huddled even closer to each other to discuss the plan. Before they emerged from the hideout, they prayed to Mixillia, hoping it would protect them. What they found was a world on the verge of falling apart. The land had fallen into complete darkness with thunder clouds covering all the land. The balance that was meant to be kept by the witches had been completely disturbed and replaced with a barren no-man's-land. Cracks had formed in the ground, giving way to the underworld hiding beneath their world. The forest, which used to hold all kinds of magical plants, had died down to a dry and dusty wasteland. The witches returned to their own covens in the greatest of haste and gathered their witches to prepare for battle. Before the Variik coven could rejoin the others, they were ambushed by Elvira. Her once bright

blue eyes had been consumed by an obsidian black glaze. Her teeth were darkly stained by the black blood that ran through her veins. Black lines like lightning covered her arms and face, and her fingertips looked like they had been burned to a crisp. A smile which could only be described as macabre hung on her lips as she drew from the Earth's power once more, the blackness consuming more and more of her. With one snap, all the witches from the Variik coven collapsed, blood streaming from their ears, eyes, mouths, and noses. Gradually, they choked on their own blood, but above the sounds of gagging echoed the eerily laugh of Elvira. While she was busy eliminating her own coven, the others combined their powers and prepared for war. In the Farital forest, Elvira discovered the remaining covens. That maniacal laugh never ceased, even when her head started twitching as if she were possessed by something. The witches fought with all their might. The Hidia witches had to protect the others as they attacked the demonic creature before them, while the Gawika witches had to heal all those who were wounded. They held out, but not for long. The protection provided by the Hidia witches wavered, and at every opportunity Elvira got, she killed.

The sky broke open, and for the first time in months, sunlight reached the land again. From that light descended a creature with cat-like features, the same features that had been displayed on the drawing in the hideout. The god of magic, Mixillia, had descended from the sky, and the light that the god had brought with him had spread towards the witches, connecting them to him. But the light couldn't reach Elvira, and with every attack Elvira did, the light from Mixillia faltered, but it also took some of the darkness away from her. Elvira growled loudly before she charged at the god she once prayed to. It was the collision of light and darkness, and for a moment, the land was silent. The thunder that roared through Taharni had stopped for the first time in months. Then, a big ball of light emerged from where Elvira and Mixillia had collided, and it grew and grew until the whole land was covered in light, with darkness at its very core. At that moment, it felt as if the entire land was frozen in time,