

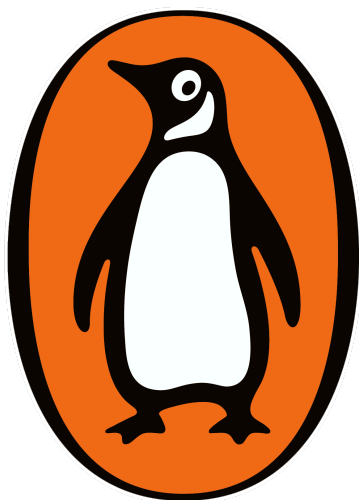


GOLD

THE
PLATED PRISONER
SERIES

V

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR
RAVEN KENNEDY



About the Author

Raven Kennedy is a California girl born and raised, whose love for books pushed her into creating her own worlds.

Her debut series was a rom-com fantasy about a cupid looking for love. She has since gone on to write in a range of genres, including the adult dark fantasy: The Plated Prisoner Series, which has become an international bestseller.

Whether she makes you laugh or cry, or whether the series is about a cupid or a gold-touched woman, she hopes to create characters that readers can root for.

When Raven isn't writing, she's reading and spending time with her husband and daughters.

You can connect with Raven on the social media platforms below or visit her website: ravenkennedybooks.com

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHOR
Raven Kennedy

GOLD

The Plated Prisoner Series

V



When you feel swallowed by the dark,
may you become your own light.







CHAPTER 1

AUREN

I go loudly.

Loudly, loudly into the void.

The blaring rattle of a solitary fall.

I don't close my eyes against the strange dark. My grief wails like thunder, clapping past a broken chest, while echoed teardrops stream down my cheeks like rain.

The world ripped, and I was ripped from *him*.

It feels wrong. So wrong to be rent apart. Like fingers curled around my ribs, yanking me open. Hollowing me out.

Thick wind peels at my skin. Rushing air plugs my nose and condenses on my tongue. A howling clatter drowns my ears. The flash of lightning and stars surrounds me in the yawning dark.

Through it all, I can see the rip.

I can see the jagged edges of the torn sky above me, a betraying Ocean air gaping like a wound in the dark. Liquid gold bleeds through, falling like gelatinous droplets, glinting as they drip down

into the nothing. But that rip gets further and further away from me, my body plunging deeper into the starry unknown with unstoppable force.

I'm alone. Alone in this dark, endless void, torn away from Slade.

I keep falling and falling, further and further away from that rip. Further away from him. And as if that weren't terrifying enough, my senses are suddenly stripped away.

My sight. Sound. Feeling. Taste. Scent. All of it—*gone*.

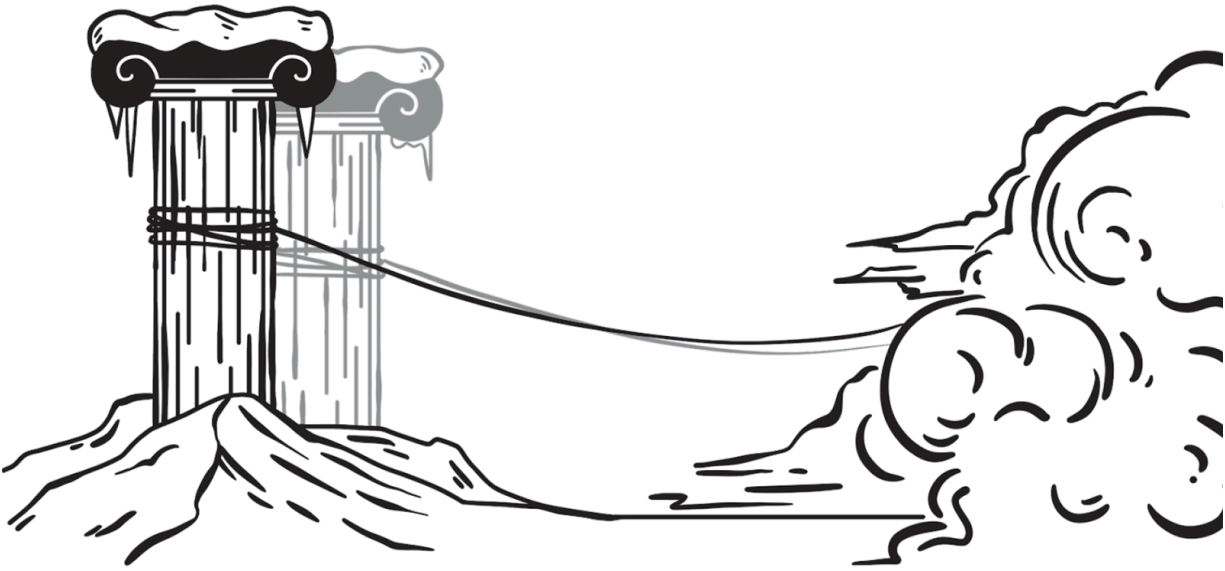
The scream tearing from my throat is no more either. Or if it is, I can't feel it. Can't hear it pierce my ears.

Without my senses, without any way to experience what's happening, my grief and fear condenses. Time stretches and snaps.

I don't know what will happen to me in this void. I don't know if this is what it feels like to die. Though I do know one thing.

This
is
what
it
feels
like
to





CHAPTER 2

SAIRA TURLEY

In the beginning, there was a bridge.

A bridge to nowhere, they said.

A bridge that existed into non-existence. A bridge where people went and didn't come back.

Where cold and color warred. The former winning, the latter drained.

And I...I went.

I walked that bridge that didn't want to end. I slogged through the barren gray, scraping through time that ceased to exist with goose bumps pebbled on my thin arms.

I was just a girl, but I went. Because my father had been forced to go, and he never came back.

None of them did.

So I snuck onto it, determined to find him. I told myself I wasn't going to fail. I wasn't going to turn around.

Now, when the story is told, people think I kept going because I was brave. But really, it was because I was scared of falling.

So I walked.

For days and years. Through memories and moments.

I soon found that it wasn't just a path. It was an all-consuming void of my own bleakness. It had me believe I'd never make it to the other side of the bridge itself any more than I'd ever make it to the other side of my soul's grief. They went hand in hand. They became one and the same—the journey on the bridge and the path of my own desolation. Because my mother had died, and my father had gone, and I was so utterly alone even before I started the long, solitary trek.

I became hungry and thirsty on that path, and so very tired. The cold air did strange things, playing sounds that came out of the foggy nothing. There was the voice of my father, telling me to keep going. The sound of my mother, crying, urging me to come back.

But that earthen, colorless ground was steady and perpetual, so I kept dragging my tired soles on and on and on, letting the land guide me through the forever. Because I had nothing to go back to. I had nothing to lose by going forward. And the way down looked such a long way to fall.

So I kept walking.

Until I was so exhausted I thought I might just finally have to give in and lie down to die. Forlorn body and forsaken spirit drained out into the voided path.

But then, it...ended.

It's funny, I kept going because I was terrified of tipping off the edge. But that endless bridge did have a limit. The rough path of earth was there step after step, until suddenly, it wasn't.

After all of that, I ended up falling, anyway.

It was a strange sort of falling, though. I didn't fall down, I fell through.

My scraped and blistered feet slipped through the shade of the earth, tearing a scream from my throat. I plummeted down, down, down, through dirt and rock, past grime and rubble. Where my breaths were just dust and the sand had no purchase.

I thought I was going to fall forever through the ground, but then I was spat out like a bitter taste, and I crashed through the clouds in an amethyst sky.

Whereas the ground had felt intangible, the sky felt liquid. Its dense weight shoved at me while cotton-bloomed clouds tossed me left and right. The ground was up and the sky was down, and I flipped so many times that my clothes tore to shreds. Thick strips of my dress cascaded out behind me like tattered wings while my arms flapped uselessly in the air, trying to gain control, trying to fly when all I could do was fall.

Until, suddenly, I wasn't falling anymore.

Like gravity was just a breeze, and I was lighter than the grass. The tips of my toes bounced lightly before my heels met the earth, the frayed strips of my dress billowing down around me like wings tucking back in.

As soon as both of my feet were planted, a shockwave poured over the earth like a ripple through the water, and out of it spread a sea of glowing blue flowers that burst from the soil. The ground was now as solid as it should be, the air bursting with the perfume of blooms, and the sky no longer felt like a current wanting to whisk me away.

I was...here.

I'd crossed the bridge to nowhere, and I reached somewhere new. I didn't know much—I'd never left my city in Seventh Kingdom—but I knew I wasn't in Orea anymore.

I wasn't alone, either.

People were around, staring at me wide-eyed, looking up at the clouds I'd jostled through. I could feel the magic in the air even then, though I didn't know what the feeling was. I didn't know what those bystanders would be to me. Didn't know what those pointed ears meant.

But I would soon.

Years would pass, and this magical world would become my home, but I never forgot that endless trudge on the bridge. In turn, the fae never forgot the way I burst through the sky like a broken-winged bird, and that is what they always called me.

So, yes, I was scared to fall. But without falling, I never would have landed.

And what a beautiful thing it was to land.