

This page was actually from my "first pass" - the typeset version of the book I had to proofread. These symbols mark the corners & centerlines of where the printed pages would be cut/aligned.

played by Robin Wright in the Netflix film

ISABELLE

I like to write from different character points of view, because it helps me to understand who they are - what is their past? what/who do they care about & why? What makes them do what they do? Humans are complex creatures, and the characters in my books are no different.

Prince Henry, played by Nick Robinson in the Netflix movie

AFTER THE REHEARSAL dinner and proposal, Queen Isabelle found her son in his chambers. Instead of rejoicing, though, he stood gazing pensively out the window toward Mount Khaevis.

the word for "dragon"

"You could choose her, you know," the queen said.

Henry startled from his thoughts. "Choose her?"

"Elodie," the queen said. "I saw how you read and reread all her letters. You are intrigued by her intelligence, her cleverness and wit. She could be the one you keep."

"Mother—"

She shushed him by placing her hand on his. She was surprised to find it rather steady, when she'd thought him distraught. "Henry, you are a dutiful prince. When Jacob ran away from Aurea, you took on the role of heir to the throne without hesitation, and you have carried the burdens of prince of Aurea without complaint for so many years. But you deserve to be happy, as well."

"That, I disagree with," Henry said. "A future king does not think of his own happiness. The kingdom's well-being must al-

At this point of the story, Elodie (and the reader) don't know yet what terrible things are in store. This chapter sets up the tension by showing that the Queen & prince of this mysterious kingdom know more than Elodie (and the reader.)

Queen Isabelle was once a princess brought to Aurea to be sacrificed. But King Rodrick fell in love with her and chose her as "the one to keep." He saved her life & married her.

Queen Isabelle is a firm & powerful ruler in public. But in private, she is a mother who loves her son.

This is actually a huge burden she carries, because she has to preside over all the sacrifices of princesses now. She always knows that she could easily have been the one tossed into the dragon's caves.

This breaks Isabelle's heart as a mother, but she understands as a Queen.

Document codes for internal publisher use. Redacted here b/c they're irrelevant.