

SHAW HART



THE LOST HEIR'S

Love

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SHAW HART

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Anya needs a Prince.

Her grandma, the Queen, has all but demanded it, and a ball has been planned for her to find a suitable match.

Too bad Anya is dreading it.

She's not in the mood for a ball. She's got too much on her plate to worry about Princes or finding a husband. She's still getting used to being back at the palace and living in luxury instead of on the streets.

When the night of the ball comes, will Anya find a Prince to capture her heart?

**This is a short and sweet novella. Love Princess Anastasia? Love stories about Princes and Princesses? Then this book is for you! Click that button!*



A nya

I WAKE WITH A START, a gasp leaving my mouth as I sit up in bed. My platinum blonde hair hangs in my eyes as I try to catch my breath. I've been having nightmares ever since I got back to the palace, found out I was the long-lost heir, and got my memories back. Every night since then, I relive the night I lost my parents and escaped with my one and only friend, Kian.

I should probably talk to someone about it, but as a Princess, I'm supposed to be a calming figure for our people, so instead, I keep my nightmares a secret. I know that grandma and Kian are aware of them, but neither has brought it up. Yet.

I can read Kian well enough to know that he's going to start asking me questions soon, though. His eyes have been clouded with worry for a few weeks now, and he's been sticking closer to me than ever before.

It had been a shock to find out that I was the long-lost Princess and that I wasn't an orphan. My grandma had been thrilled to welcome me home, but I'm still trying to adjust to all of the changes and learn how to be a Princess.

I've been in Princess training for the past six months, learning how to take over once my grandma has passed. Her health has been failing for the last few years, and while she

may have been stable for the past few months, she is getting on in age, and I know that she'll be stepping down and letting me become Queen sooner rather than later.

That's why we're having a ball tonight. So that I can find a man and be settled before my grandma passes. I sigh, thinking about the ball tonight. I've spent the last three weeks helping my grandma plan it and picking out my dress, but my heart just isn't in it. I don't want to be paraded in front of a bunch of people. I don't want to pick a man that I've only met for one night, but my desire not to let my grandma down is stronger.

A knock sounds at my door and it swings open. I smile as Kian slips inside my room, grinning at me as he closes the door and jumps onto the bed next to me.

"Morning, sleepyhead," he says with a cheeky smile.

He's already dressed and I'm sure he's been up for a few hours. He's one of those weird people who loves waking up early. He's not technically supposed to be in here, but old habits die hard.

Kian and I grew up together. He used to live in the palace with his parents who were servants. His parents died the night mine did, when the castle was overrun. He fled with me, and we were together for a year before I lost him. I had gone out for food one day when the crowd jostled me. I had tripped and fell, hitting my head. When I woke up later, I couldn't remember anything.

Kian had looked for me for years and he finally found me five years later. He had told me who I was, but I didn't believe him. I didn't have anything to lose though, so I had gone with him to the palace where I met the Queen. I had been humming a song that always brought me comfort, and she had overheard me. I hadn't understood why she was crying or hugging me until she brought out the music box, the one I've seen in my dreams since I was young.

It had come back then. I had cried with my grandma over our lost time, over my parents, and she had moved me into the palace. I had insisted that Kian moved in too, and he's spent the last few months learning how to be one of my advisors.

“Morning,” I mumble back as he gets comfortable next to me.

“Ready for tonight?” He asks, and I notice his voice sounds off.

“I guess,” I say with a sigh, staring up at my ceiling.

“It’s going to be alright,” he says, his voice quiet, and I smile when his hands find mine on top of the comforter.

We quiet as we stare at the ceiling, both of us pondering what tonight will bring.



Kian

I PUSH through the door into the servant's quarters and grit my teeth as I see everyone rushing by, getting ready for the ball tonight—the ball where Anya, *my* Anya, will choose a husband.

I don't even know why we're bothering with all of this. She's mine, always has been. She just doesn't know it yet.

When our parents were killed all those years ago, I had to choose between staying at the palace or running with Anya. It was a no brainer. She was my best friend, my home. I went where she did.

We spent a few rough years in an orphanage before we left and lived on the streets. I taught Anya how to steal and protect herself. It was hard, but we were happy.

Then, one day Anya went out to get food. I had found a job at a stand in town and had been at work. When I got off, and she wasn't where we had been sleeping, I knew that something was wrong.

I looked for her for days, growing frantic as time went on. I had assumed the worst until a few years ago when I had been heading to work and had seen a flash of the palest blonde hair. I did a double-take, and there she was, rushing down the street in the opposite direction.

I had almost tackled her when I hugged her. I had been so happy that I had finally found her after all those years. When she turned around and shoved me off of her, staring at me like I was a stranger, my heart just about broke in two.

She was skittish, cautious around me for a while. I told her about us growing up, and when she still didn't believe me, I knew that I had a way to prove it to her. We headed back to the palace the next day.

It was a long trip, but I would have gone anywhere with Anya. When we got back, her grandma had recognized her right away and had welcomed us both home.

I had wanted to tell her that I loved her, that I had always loved her, but she seemed so overwhelmed. I thought after a few days, she would remember the palace and her grandma, and things would be back on track, but then the nightmares came.

So, I had put off telling her how I felt once more. I was going to tell her, and then her grandma announced that we would be having a ball so that Anya could pick a husband. I've been panicking ever since.

I can't lose her. She's my life, my everything.

I thought her grandma knew that. She's always had this look in her eye when she sees the two of us together, but I guess it was all in my head.

I know that she hasn't been doing well these last few years, but I didn't think that she was in such a rush to marry Anya off.

I miscalculated, but that won't happen again. There's no room for error here. I can't lose Anya. Not again.



A nya

I SMOOTH my fingers nervously over the skirt of my red silk dress. The ball started an hour ago, and it's in full swing now. I've already eaten some of the food, although not much. My stomach is tied in knots as I look over the crowd, taking in all of the eligible bachelors that are here to try to win my hand.

My grandma is seated next to me with a serene smile on her face. She reaches over, her frail hand finding mine, and she gives me a reassuring squeeze. I try to flash her a smile, but it feels forced, and I can tell she doesn't buy it.

Nervous butterflies take flight in my stomach as people start to filter onto the dance floor. I know that it's only a matter of time before someone asks me to dance, and we have to get this whole charade started.

Everyone here is dressed to the nines, their hair perfectly coiffed, and their dresses and tuxes only the newest fashions. My dress is blood red with a full skirt and a sweetheart neckline that hugs my small curves. My blonde hair is twisted up on top of my head, and rubies twinkle at my ears. Black high heels complete the look. I'm not dressed as eye-catching as some of the other women here, but I wanted to feel comfortable. I'm still not used to always being made up at all hours of the day.

Seeing this ball reminds me of the night my parents died, and I blink away flashbacks of that night as I try to stay in the here and now. I'm not that starving orphan anymore. I'm not all alone. I have family, friends, and a whole palace full of employees. I'm never alone now, but it still hasn't sunk in that this is my life.

Soft music from the small orchestra set up on the other side of the room fills the ballroom, and I close my eyes, trying to slow my heart rate. Low lights mean that there's plenty of dark corners, and I long to slip into one and hide for the remainder of the night.

I blink open my eyes and meet Kian's. He's watching me from his table off to the side of the room, his eyes worried as he watches me. He smiles at me, trying to be encouraging, and I do my best to smile back.

There are days that I wish that I was back on the streets with Kian. It was hard, learning to survive on my own, how to feed myself, and find a place to crash each night, but I had been happy. Even when we were making our way from Paris to Saint Petersburg, and I didn't remember who he was or who *I* was, it had been fun.

I gaze out over the crowd, looking for another friendly face, maybe someone that I recognize or remember from when I was younger. Everyone here seems like a stranger to me though, and I look back to Kian. I just want to see a friendly face before I'm asked to dance and pick a husband.

More people join the crowd on the dancefloor, and I look away from Kian to see a man about my age in a classic tuxedo headed my way. He smiles cockily at me as our eyes meet, and I dread his approach. He's going to ask me to dance, but I can already tell that he's not the man for me.

My eyes meet Kian's once again, and I find him scowling at the guy approaching me. He looks back, meeting my eyes, and I widen mine, begging for him to help me. He dips his chin in a slight nod, and I let out a breath of relief.

Kian will rescue me. He always has before.



Kian

HER EYES SEARCH out mine as some preppy looking Prince makes his way up to where she's sitting next to her grandmother. I give her a reassuring smile as I wind my way along the back wall towards her.

I grit my teeth, my fingers curling into fists as I watch him walk up to her. He offers her his hand, and I watch as she takes it reluctantly. She forces a smile at him as he brings her hand to his lips, kissing the back of it as she fights back a grimace. I want to rip his hands off her.

I manage to control myself, and I edge closer as he leads her out onto the dancefloor. Watching him hold her, pulling her close as he moves her around the dancefloor feels like torture. My entire body feels tight, tense. I want to put a stop to the dance, to the food coming out and the drinks being poured, to every single man here looking at my girl, to this whole ball.

I want to pull her away from him, but I would never do anything to embarrass her. So instead, I grit my teeth and force myself to stay rooted to the same spot, watching them.

She's never let on to how she feels about me. There are times where I think that she feels this between us too, but then

the moment passes. Maybe I should have just blurted it out before. I just didn't want to push her.

Anya looks bored out of her mind as the Prince yammers on. She hasn't said a single word to him as they dance, just keeps forcing a smile and sending me wide-eyed help me looks. My body relaxes as I realize that she'll never choose that bachelor.

The song comes to an end, and I let out a sigh of relief as the final notes float through the air.



A nya

I TRY TO STEP BACK, once again, from Prince Marc, but he just tugs me back closer to him. I remind myself that Princesses don't assault people, but my entire body wants to stomp down on his toes and pull out of his grasp.

I knew this was going to be a disaster as soon as Prince Marc came up to where I was sitting with my grandma and asked me to dance. Or I should say when he demanded that I dance with him. If my grandma hadn't been sitting next to me, I would have turned him down flat.

It was apparent from that moment on that he was an arrogant jerk, but since I didn't want to embarrass grandma or myself, I had sucked it up and taken his offered hand.

Prince Marc is attractive in a totally obvious way, but he certainly knows it, and his cocky attitude is a huge turn off to me. We've been swaying together for a few minutes. Every time my eyes meet Kian's, I roll them so hard that I'm worried that they'll get stuck like that in my head.

Kian is watching from a few feet away, making sure that I'm alright alone with this stuck up Prince. My grandma is watching from her throne at the head of the room, her eyes watching my every move, and I try to smile at her. She can see

right through me though, and I know she can tell that I'm not interested in Prince Marc.

"So my polo team went to-"

I tune Prince Marc out, not interested in hearing him brag about how good at Polo he is or anything else. His hand dips a little lower, skimming the top of my butt, and I glare at him, but he's not paying me any attention.

The song has to be halfway over by now. It feels like it's been going on for years now, and I look around at the other guests here.

I can't see myself marrying any of the guests here. I'm only twenty, and it seems far too young to be married or ruling a kingdom. My grandma became Queen when she was twenty-two, and I have a feeling that I'll be following in her footsteps.

Anxiety claws at my throat, and I step away from Prince Marc as soon as the music fades to a close.

"Thanks for the dance," he says with a smarmy smile as he takes my hand and brings it to his lips.

My skin crawls as his lips brush over the back of my hand, and I try not to throw up or make a scene as I hurry to jerk my hand away from him. I give him a fake smile that doesn't reach my eyes as I thank him for the dance and for coming.

"I really think that there's something here," he says, matching me step for step.

"Hmm?" I ask, pretending not to hear him as I take another step back.

"You and me, Anya. I think that we could be great together. I can already see us ruling this place together. With you by my side, we could really make this place great."

"I, uh,"

I have no idea what to say to that. Maybe he's crazy. There's nothing here between us.

"I have a lot of other bachelors to meet tonight, but it was lovely to meet you. Thank you for the dance," I tell him before

I spin on my heel to make my escape.

Kian smiles at me as I pass by him back to my throne.



Anya

I'VE BARELY TAKEN a seat when another Prince heads my way. He seems shy and much more timid than Prince Marc, and my hopes begin to rise as I study him. Maybe he won't be as bad as Prince Marc was.

He makes his way up to me, bowing deeply before he meets my eyes and offers me his hand.

"Princess Anya," he says, and his voice comes out high and nervous. "I'm Prince Sebastian of Antonia."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Prince Sebastian," I tell him, offering him my hand.

He clasps it in both of his, and I try not to wince at how clammy his hands feel.

"Would you like to dance, Princess?" He asks in his high-pitched voice, and I bite my tongue, force a smile, and nod.

Prince Sebastian beams at me, and I feel bad for judging him before I even know him. I glance back at my grandma over my shoulder, and she gives me a laughing smile as I walk off with Prince Sebastian.

A slow song starts up as Prince Sebastian leads me onto the dance floor. Kian raises his eyebrows at me, and I nod my

head, letting him know I'm alright as Sebastian takes up the traditional waltz pose.

He's a good dancer, and I expect him to try to talk to me or get to know me during our dance, but he keeps quiet. It's kind of nice not to have to make small talk but also a little weird and awkward. The whole point of this ball is to find a suitor, and I can't tell if Sebastian is just shy or if he's just not interested in me.

I let Sebastian twirl me around the room as I rack my brain for something to say to him. Maybe he's waiting for me to start a conversation.

"I've heard Antonia is beautiful," I tell him and he nods his head, his eyes fixed on a spot over my shoulder.

Alright, so that didn't work.

"What do you like to do in your free time?" I try again.

"I don't have free time. I need to study so that I can be a good ruler for when I become King."

No emotion shows on his face as he says that, and I look over his shoulder to Kian, widening my eyes at him. I mean, on the one hand, I guess having a serious partner would be good for me, but I want someone that I get along with, someone that I can laugh with and have fun with, and Prince Sebastian is definitely not that guy.

If his clammy hands and high-pitched voice weren't enough of a turn off, his lack of emotion or personality definitely would be.

I guess he's better than Prince Marc. At least I wouldn't have to be bored listening to his glory day stories for the rest of my life, or worry about him cheating on me, like I would with Marc since that guy is definitely a player. Sebastian does seem like he would be a better ruler than Marc, but I also have a feeling that I would be bored out of my mind with him.

When the song finally ends, I thank Prince Sebastian for the dance and make my escape. Kian watches me the whole way back to my throne.



Kian

I WATCH Anya get twirled around the room by another Prince. He seems tedious, but also tense, uptight, and I can tell that she's not interested in him either. I relax, ignoring the looks a few girls are throwing my way as I watch my Princess.

Anya throws me another pleading look and I smirk at her. She rolls her eyes at me and continues to dance around with the second Prince. She seems bored out of her mind and I lean back against the wall as I watch her.

A dark-haired girl that has been watching me all night starts to inch closer and I sigh, shifting away from her. I hope she gets the message that I'm not interested in her. You would think that she would notice that I've only had eyes for one girl but I guess she didn't pick up on that.

I count down the seconds until her dance ends, letting out a deep breath when I watch Anya turn and leave without a second glance to the latest Prince.

I watch as Anya takes her seat next to the Queen and it looks like she's going to get a break before someone else asks her to dance. I've decided that now is my chance. I'll just walk over there and ask her to dance. Then I'll tell her how I feel, how I've always felt and we'll be together forever.

I'm about to make my way over to her when the dark-haired girl from earlier makes her move. She steps in my path and I jerk to a stop so I don't run her over.

"Hey there," she says, looking up at me from under her eyelashes.

She gives me a coy look and now it's my turn to force a smile.

I glance back at Anya, wincing when I see her take another Prince's hand and head out onto the dancefloor. I bite back a sigh as I lean back against the wall.

After this dance, I'm making my move.

It's time.



A nya

IT TAKES a couple of minutes before the third suitor comes up to ask me to dance. I don't have much hope that anyone in this room will be the one for me. Not after the first two guys.

My eyes stray to where Kian is standing against the back wall. A pretty dark-haired girl is talking to him and for a second some strange emotion fills me. I frown, trying to decipher what it was but then my eyes meet Kian's and I smile when I see that his eyes are locked on me. I forget all about the tight feeling that washed over me when I first saw some girl flirting with him and give him a smirk back.

He smiles back at me but then my attention is pulled away when another Prince comes up to ask me for a dance. I bite back a sigh as I slip my hand in his and my grandmother gives me a reassuring smile.

The orchestra starts a new slow song and I rest my hand on this guy's shoulder. He doesn't say anything for the first minute and I realize that I never even got his name or where he's from.

I don't think that it really matters. I'm in his arms and I don't feel anything. No spark, no connection, nothing.

I guess I should be thankful that I don't have to try to make small talk or pretend like I'm interested in this guy. He's

attractive and if I had to choose between the three Princes so far, it would be him, but only because we could spend our whole marriage apart, not talking.

I look back to where Kian was standing and see that he's still there, leaning against the wall with the dark-haired girl still talking to him. He's still watching me and when our eyes meet, he crosses his, making a funny face. I giggle, sticking my tongue out at him in return and he grins at me.

The girl rests her hand on his suit covered arm and he tears his eyes away from me for a second, looking down at her. I look away before I have to watch them flirting in the dark corner.

I wish that I could just marry someone like Kian. He gets me, knows me better than I know myself, and he's my best friend.

My grandma is watching me closely and she smiles, her eyes drifting over to where Kian is standing. Her smile widens as she looks at him and I frown, wondering what that was all about.

I take in the ball, admiring all of the hard work that went into decorating and planning this event. Servants dressed in perfectly pressed suits seem to waltz around the room, polished silver trays held aloft as they pass along the ballroom.

Tables are strategically placed around the room with flowers and candlelight placed artfully in the center. Guests mingle along the buffet line and over by the bar. More guests talk in small groups along the edge of the dance floor.

I look around the room, taking in all of the pretty strangers and I wish that I hadn't agreed to this whole evening. This isn't how I want to find a partner, a husband. The song comes to a close and I nod at the silent man I just danced with and turn to head back to my place beside my grandma.

I only make it two steps before a broad chest blocks my path. I gasp, jerking my head up to meet a familiar pair of crystal-clear blue eyes.

“May I have this dance?”



A nya

MY BODY RELAXES and I finally feel like myself for the first time all night as Kian takes me into his arms. I let out a deep breath and he chuckles.

“That bad?” He asks, his voice like velvet as he whispers in my ear.

“Oh, where should I start?” I ask, rolling my eyes.

Kian chuckles, the noise rolling over me and I shiver, leaning into him more. He wraps his arm tighter around me, our hips brushing against each other as we sway to the music.

“What was so wrong with bachelor number one?”

“Oh, you mean Prince Marc, the manwhore?”

“Yeah, that one. No love connection?”

“He spent the whole dance talking about his Polo skills and how sought after he is. Hard pass.”

Kian laughs softly, tugging me closer to him.

“What about bachelor number two?”

“His voice was so high pitched and he had no personality.”

“That can’t be true,” Kian argues.

“It is. I tried to ask him what he does for fun and do you know what he said?”

“What did he say?” Kian asks, his hand smoothing up and down my back as I start to get worked up.

“He said he doesn’t have time for fun. Kian. He. Doesn’t. Have. Time. For. *Fun*,” I stress.

“Alright, that’s pretty bad,” he relents.

“He said, instead, he spends his time studying to be a good ruler, but I mean, no fun?” I still can’t get over that.

“Okay, so we’re passing on bachelor number two. What about number three?”

“The guy who didn’t say anything to me for our entire dance? Actually, come to think of it, he never said one word to me. He just bowed and offered me his hand to dance.”

“Maybe he’s the strong silent type?” Kian offers.

“Yeah, maybe,” I say, not convinced.

“Not your type?”

“Uh, no. I’d rather have someone that I can have fun with or at least talk to. Although, if I had to pick between the three, I guess it would be him. He wouldn’t be as annoying as the other two.”

Kian stiffens under my hands, and I look up at him questioningly.

“Do you think your grandma is going to make you choose tonight?”

“I don’t know,” I say honestly.

I’ve been wondering about that all night, all week, if I’m being honest. I know this is how she found my grandpa, but times have changed. Haven’t they?

My grandma lucked out with my grandpa. He doted on her, was loyal, and kind, and sweet. Oh, and he was a great King. None of the Princes here tonight are even close. In fact, the only man here that even comes close to being the kind of man

that I would want for a husband is Kian, but Princesses aren't allowed to marry anyone who isn't a royal.

Kian has always been there for me. He was my friend, and he loved me before I was royalty. He protected me, spent years looking for me, and then was with me when my life turned upside down. He knows about my nightmares, is always there for me, worries about me. He's the only person that I trust, the only one who has always been there for me. I love him.

Holy crap. I *love* him.

My feet stop moving and Kian stops along with me.

"Figure it out yet?" He asks in a low voice.



A nya

THE SONG ENDS and I feel like my feet are rooted to the floor. Kian studies my face, his hands resting on my hips for a beat before he takes my hand and leads me through the crowd and out onto the balcony. The night breeze causes goosebumps to rise along my arms and I shiver. Kian pulls me into his side, leading me over to the edge.

He stands so he's blocking the wind and I smile. He's always doing stuff like that. Making sure that I'm taken care of and protected. I never thought of it before, but every time I look at him, he always seems to be watching me already, his gaze unwavering.

"Have you figured it out then?" He asks me again and I think back to that moment on the dance floor.

It hits me all at once. I love Kian. I think I always have. He's been my friend, my only friend for as long as I can remember. My protector, my confidant, my family. He was there for me when no one else was, he brought me back together with my grandma and to the palace. He knows me, really knows me, and he's still here. He still loves me for me.

"I love you," I whisper, meeting his piercing eyes.

"About time," he whispers back a second before his lips land on mine.

It's my first kiss and it's perfect. It tastes like longing and desire. My fingers dig into his biceps as I crush myself to him. My brain shuts off, my mind no longer in charge. All I feel is his lips on mine, his hands on my hips, tugging me closer.

His tongue slides across my bottom lip. The sensation is soft and sweet and my lips part on instinct. His hands spear into my hair, scraping along my scalp as he tips my face up to his, deepening the kiss. His tongue melds with mine in a sweet caress. He tastes like heaven, like forever.

"Anya," he breathes out against my lips.

His lips land back on mine, pillowing them in a sweet caress. I never want this moment to end. His lips ghost against mine and I move closer, desperate for more contact. I feel him grin against my mouth and I pull back to meet his eyes.

"That was even better than I imagined it would be," he says with a grin.

"You've thought about kissing me?" I ask, my voice coming out breathy.

"Yeah, I've only been dreaming about it every day since I was twelve. Well, before that, but I used to think it was gross and I was going to get cooties before that."

"Why didn't you ever tell me?"

"I've always loved you, Anya, but you've been so far out of my league. When I found you again, you didn't even remember who I was. I wanted to give you time to remember us, to get your life back and be settled before I told you. I didn't want to push for more before you were ready and I know you're still having the nightmares. Then your grandma suggested this ball and I kind of freaked out. I don't want to lose you to some random Prince."

It takes me a minute to process everything he said and I go from happy, to laughing, to worrying about what will happen now.

"I don't want to marry a random Prince either," I tell him.

“Then don’t. Marry me instead. We can go to your grandma together and ask for her blessing.”

“What if she says no?”

“We’ll convince her to say yes. Or we’ll elope. I don’t care as long as I have you,” Kian says, pulling me against his chest.

I realize that he’s right. As long as I have Kian, everything will be alright.



A nya

“THERE’S something that I want to do before then,” I tell Kian and he looks at me in confusion.

“What’s that?”

“I want you,” I tell him and I watch as his eyes darken with lust.

My breasts feel heavy and there’s an ache between my legs that I can’t seem to ease, no matter how tightly I press my thighs together.

I’m in his arms, my legs wrapped around his waist a second later. I feel him moving but as long as he’s taking me somewhere where he can peel my clothes off and take away this ache, then I don’t care where he takes me.

I barely notice when he carries me over to the corner of the balcony, to where we’re tucked away from any prying eyes. He balances me on the edge of the balcony. I can feel the cold stone underneath my ass and it causes me to squirm against him.

His hands are running over me and I moan and arch into them, nerve endings all over my body coming to life as my clit perks up, eager for attention.

We lose our clothes in a blur of fumbles and rushed movements. His cock rubs along my skin, hot and heavy against my soft curves and my hips lift, needing him to move just a little lower.

My head is thrown back against the soft ivy vines that are climbing the stone walls, my hands fisted in Kian's hair as I try to rock against him. His lips wrap around the stiff peak of my nipple and I cry out, arching into him further in an attempt to get him to take more into his mouth.

His tongue teases the sensitive bud and heat pools between my thighs. When the head of his cock dips lower, bumping over my clit, I'm sure that I'm about to come. He's not even inside of me yet and I'm already so close to the edge.

"Fuck, I love your body," he groans against the swell of one breast.

I can only moan as he kisses his way to the other one, taking that nipple into his mouth to tease it with his tongue. He licks and sucks until they're red and puffy. They're wet from his mouth and I can see that my chest is flushed a rosy pink.

"Spread those thighs. I need to taste you. I want your flavor in my mouth when I fuck you the first time."

I spread my legs enthusiastically as Kian kisses over the swell of my stomach and settles between my thighs.

"So pretty and pink," he says as his thumbs spread my lower lips, exposing all of me.

I'm about to beg him to taste me when he leans in and takes one long slow lick up my center. My head tips back until I'm staring up at the moon as Kian's tongue licks up and down my slit, spreading me with the tip of his tongue and circling my sensitive button.

I never thought that my first time would be outside, balanced on the wide balcony, but it's perfect. For once, my life is scheduled or organized. I'm finally living.

My hips move against his mouth as my peak starts to grow near.

“Give it to me, Anya,” Kian growls against my drenched core and I almost sob as the first wave hits me.

“Kian!” I scream up to the night sky as I come against his mouth.

His tongue licks up all of my cream, his thumb working my clit as he tries to prolong my orgasm.

When my body goes slack, he gives me one last lick before he looks up, his eyes meeting mine. I can’t wait any longer.

I grab his arm, dragging him up my body and then pulling him down until his mouth meets mine. I kiss him hard, tasting my own release on his lips as I shift beneath him, urging him to slip inside me.

Kian’s hands run down my body, his palms cupping my plump ass as he yanks me forward, thrusting into me in one swift move. He seats himself fully inside of me and I gasp, wincing as I struggle to get used to his cock stretching me so wide around him.

“Fuck, Anya,” Kian grits out, a pained expression etched onto his face. “You’re so tight.”

“Just give me a second,” I tell him and already I can feel the pain starting to fade as pleasure takes its place.

When I start to shift against him, he takes my cue and begins to move. He’s slow at first, letting me get used to the new sensations. When I wrap my legs around his waist, digging my heels into his ass and urging him to go faster, harder.

I gasp when he gives me what I want, pounding into me as his fingers dig into my ass. My arms wrap around his neck and I hold onto him as that familiar pulsing feeling starts to grow inside of me.

“Kian, Kian, Kian,” I chant as he angles my hips up so that he can brush against my clit with each pass.

Tingles start to grow stronger and my hands slip to his shoulders, my short nails digging into his muscles as I start to splinter apart around him.

“Yes! Kian!” I scream as I come, my back arching and my legs tightening around his hips as I come all over his cock.

Kian’s hips piston into me as he swells and starts to come inside me. His body shakes as his release splashes inside of me.

“Anya,” he groans against my neck as his release subsides.

We’re both breathing hard as Kian pulls out of me slowly and then rests his forehead against mine as we come back down to Earth. When I’ve finally caught my breath, I pull, giving him a love drunk grin.

Loud voices come from outside the door and we both come back to reality.

“Let’s go find your grandma,” he says and I nod.

We hurry to get dressed again, sharing secret smiles and gentle touches as we tug our clothes on.

I kiss Kian one last time before I slip my hand into his and we head back to the ball. My eyes lock with my grandma’s and I take a deep breath as we head up to where she’s seated. Her white hair gleams under the lights and she’s dressed regally in a navy-blue gown. Her body looks frail wrapped in all of that fabric and a pang of sadness hits me as I think about her leaving me.

My feet feel heavier with every step and I look around the room, at all of the guests, all of the eligible bachelors. Will she be happy that I chose Kian? Will she be mad that we went through this whole event, only for me to pick the boy who has been here all along?

We climb the steps up to her and Kian squeezes my hand, trying to reassure me as we stop in front of my grandma.

“There you two are. I was wondering where you had snuck off to,” she says with a knowing smile.

“We got some fresh air on the balcony,” I tell her and she gives me a knowing look.

My cheeks heat with a blush at her expression and I feel Kian chuckle next to me.

“We wanted to talk to you about something,” Kian starts and I clear my throat, looking up at him for support before I turn back to face her.

“We love each other, grandma. We want your blessing to get married.”

I hold my breath as I wait for her to say something. She looks between us for a beat before a slow smile covers her face. Her eyes sparkle as she grins at the two of us.

“It’s about time,” she says with a laugh and my jaw almost hits the floor.

“What?” I ask.

“Oh, come one. You didn’t think I noticed the way you two look at each other. You’ve always been close and I always knew that you would end up together one day. I was just tired of waiting and I wanted to see you two settled before I pass.”

“So... you arranged a ball so that we would realize that we were in love with each other?”

“Yes, I knew that the thought of you with another man would be too much for Kian and thinking about marrying someone would make you think about your future and you would realize that Kian is your future.”

Kian and I share a look, wondering if my grandma is really some kind of evil genius or matchmaking angel. She’s like a fairy godmother instead of just my grandma.

“Then, we can get married? We have your blessing?” Kian asks.

“Yes, you can get married and you have my blessing.”

Kian tugs my hand until I turn and face him. He cups my face in his large palms, tilting my chin up toward him. He grins down at me, his eyes shining with love and happiness.

“I love you, Anya.”

“I love you, Kian.”

His lips meet mine then and I hear my grandma stand behind us, telling the guests that the party is over. I don’t pay

attention as the room clears out, the guest heading out now that I've found my Prince.

That's what Kian is too. He's my Prince.



Kian

TEN YEARS LATER...

I FIND my wife on the balcony where we shared our first kiss. It's our ten-year anniversary and I just managed to get our daughter to bed. We got married a month after the ball. Both of us were ready and Queen Marie was just as eager to see us together.

The wedding was a whole elaborate affair, but I barely remember anything other than the girl of my dreams walking down the aisle toward me. She had looked beautiful in her white gown with her blonde hair pulled back in two diamond-encrusted clips. I could have sworn that she was floating as she came down the aisle, and then she was in front of me. She was smiling up at me, her hands in mine as we said our vows and became husband and wife.

We had our daughter, Marie, two years later. She was born five months before her great grandmother passed. I know that Anya was happy that her grandma got to meet her before she was gone.

Anya is a great queen. The people love her and I know that she takes excellent care in every decision that she makes. All of those classes I took to become one of her advisors have

really paid off, and I love being able to help my wife any way that I can.

“There you are, my Queen,” I say as I walk up behind her.

Her blonde hair is blowing in the gentle breeze, and she turns to face me.

“My king,” she says with a smile as she opens her arms for me.

I wrap my arms around her shoulders, kissing the top of her head as she rests against my chest.

“Happy, love?”

“Of course. I’ve got you and Marie. What more could I want?”

“Just checking,” I say, as we look out over our kingdom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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