

*This is no fairytale...*

# QUEEN & THE KINGSMEN



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# QUEEN & THE KINGSMEN

A DARK FAIRYTALE ROMANCE

WICKED EVER AFTER SERIES



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# CHAPTER 1



The shrieks and cries grew louder as the choking green mist twisted and swirled around the princess.

“Grab her!”

“Seize the evil queen!”

“Guards! Guards!”

They were all fools.

Fools to think their little slings and arrows would have any power over me. These fragile mortal beings with their weak flesh were as wisps of air to me. I ruled over the ethereal realm, deep in the forest where magic and mysticism still reigned. How dare they think they could capture me, Queen Zelladine, ruler of the creatures and fairies of the forest? As if their human laws had any hold over me?

Plates of delicate china crashed to the floor as heavily laden tables were overturned. Platters of roast beasts, bowls of sugared fruits, and cups of fragrant wine spilled and splattered onto the pristine white marble floor, staining it a gruesome, mottled red. The screech of instrument strings and discordant chords could be heard above the din as the orchestra musicians stumbled over one another in their haste to escape. The tinny clatter of metal could be heard as the King’s Guard took up position, circling me.

“Oh my,” I exclaimed, raising one black wing eyebrow. “Have I interrupted the feast?”

“Release my daughter, Zelladine,” ordered King Basil.

Curling my lip in a sneer, I pointed one long, red fingernail at him. “That is Queen Zelladine to you.”

I watched as his face swelled, the skin turning an ashen purple in his anger. “Seize her,” he screamed as foamy spittle sprayed from his mouth.

The guards stepped closer. Bayonets drawn. With a flick of my wrist, the fire-forged steel of the bayonets curled and withered as the metal melted. With frightened cries of alarm, the guards took a step back.

“Where are my kingsmen? Send for the kingsmen!” ordered King Basil.

“My, my. You must be positively petrified of little ol’ me if you are calling for your elite guards. Should I be flattered?” I asked, my lips twisting in mockery.

King Basil took a lumbering step forward. The obnoxious bulk of his body belying the threat of his movements. Raising his fist, each finger clad in gold and jewels, he sputtered and tripped over his words.

“Tut, tut, Basil,” I warned, my gaze flicking to the center of the great hall. “Careful.”

A whirling funnel of green mist towered to the vaulted ceiling with veins of black smoke creeping along the sides and across the floor. In its center was the king’s precious only daughter, Briar Rose. All that could be seen were flashes of her blue gown and bright, tawny hair.

“How dare you invade the sanctity of my kingdom,” thundered King Basil.

“Your kingdom. *Your* kingdom!” Pacing away from his odious presence, I circled the green column imprisoning the princess. “How dare you claim this land for your own? We were here long before your silly stone castles, before you restrained and crippled the wilds of nature about you. As if you had any right!” My hands fisted into the fine silken folds of my cloak as I tried to curb my anger.

The women of my clan had been ruling over the forest and its inhabitants since time immemorial. Then the humans came



with their weapons of destruction. Ripping the stones from the earth, cleaving them into rigid little boxes to make their castles and ramparts, walling in what used to be open and free. Tearing down trees and ruining the homes of my beloved fairies to plant their vanity crops of tobacco and hops for the further debasement of their kind. With every season, I saw more and more torn from my grasp. With the death of every tree, every flower, every sweet breath of air choked by the smoke from their hearths...my power weakened. Several generations ago, I'd summoned the dark force to at least keep these wretched humans at heel. Yet, the dark force can only contain and restrain, it cannot recapture what I have lost.

Only the light of understanding will heal my realm and offer a chance of peace between my kind and the humans, a light that will never come from the likes of King Basil. Only interested in the tangible displays of wealth—gold, silver, jewels—he was incapable of understanding the true riches of existence, and if left to his disgusting devices, he would stifle and strangle my only hope.

I couldn't allow him to succeed in his plans. It would be the final ruination of my realm.

I must stop him at all costs. Even if it meant sacrificing the innocent.

Raising my arms high, my head thrown back, I called to the ancients. "Let a curse be upon the House of Basil. No child of his loins will further his withered and impotent lineage."

A deep howling wind spun into the great hall, whipping the green mist into a tempest. The column rose higher and higher.

"Hear me now, oh ancients. Obey my command!" I called forth, my voice rising.

The green column spun faster as it closed in on itself. Squeezing tighter and tighter.

"You evil witch. You will pay for this," spat King Basil. "I will see you punished."

“You? Punish me? I’d like to see you try,” I said, chuckling at the man’s impudence.

I had yet to see an impressive human. They were all weak of mind and limb, more eager to engage in drink and sloth than anything of meaningful purpose. In my world, strength and power, the emotional embodiments of nature herself, were valued. Even this king’s guards hid behind their armor and weapons of tin and wood. *Pathetic.*

Curling my fingers into claws, I slowly brought my hands together. By my command, the green column of mist began to compress. As my hands came closer and closer together, the column became shorter.

“No!” cried out the king as he fell to his knees.

The green mist was now a spinning ball of dark light.

Clapping my hands together with a resounding snap...the green mist disappeared.

Along with the princess.

Glaring up at me from his prone position, the king growled, “You will pay for ruining my plans.”

Scraping my nails down his cheek, I laughed. “Do your worst.”

With a flick of my wrist, I was gone. Leaving the shattered remains of the feast in my wake.

## CHAPTER 2



“*Y*ou cannot ask it of me, my queen.”

Smiling indulgently, I stroked the silky feathers of my faithful servant, Hrafn. A raven of extraordinary size and intelligence, he had been by my side since I’d rescued him when I was no more than a sprite.

“It is the only way.”

“It will leave you defenseless.”

Chuckling him under his golden beak, my lips twitched at his concern. “Defenseless? My, my. When have you ever known your queen to be defenseless?”

“Everyone has a weakness, Zelladine. When you learn yours, I fear it will be doubly weak, for you will have no knowledge or power against the emotion.”

His words sobered me. Hrafn only used my given name when he was especially concerned.

“I had no choice. You know I am bound to grant any request asked of me by a pure soul. Plus, it served my purpose.”

My plan was fraught with risk and danger, but it was the only way to stop King Basil from razing the forest to the ground in his hunger and greed for more land and power. If unchecked, he would combine his kingdom with another’s on the other side of the village. The two powerful men would crush all that was left of the old ways. There would be no sanctuary left for my kind or the ancient magic. I had hoped

the dark force would chase these bothersome humans away, but it had been too many seasons and they were still here... still imposing their will on all they saw. The humans were even smart enough to send enchanted wolves to guard them. Hrafn informed me the wolves had added to their pack. A female who seemed to have special powers of her own. It was only a matter of time before they realized how to defeat the dark force and my realm would truly be left unprotected. No, it must be this way.

“Must all the fairies go? What of your own protection?”

“Hrafn, I will be safe. No, you must go. King Basil must not suspect what we are about.”

As I stroked his back feathers with affection, we both heard a thundering rumble roll through the forest. An anxious look to Hrafn was all it took for him to launch into the air, high above the treetops. I watched him circle the clouds, his wide wings outstretched. Returning to my arm, he clattered and cawed in agitation.

“It is the kingsmen! The kingsmen!”

“How can you be certain? Mayhap it is only the king’s bumbling guards,” I reasoned.

“My queen, I tell you these are not the slight and weak humans who amble about the king. They must be the kingsmen.”

A shiver of apprehension raced down my spine. No one had ever seen the fabled kingsmen; not even my sources could learn of their whereabouts or numbers. I only knew what the whispers in the forest said, that they were to be feared, that unlike the other mortals, the kingsmen had some knowledge of the ancient magic.

“You must be mistaken, Hrafn. How could they possibly have found me? The forest has enchantments and protections. The dark force would have risen from the mist and stopped them.”

“All the more reason to fear them, Zelladine. I tell you, they have found you.”

Biting my lip, I turned my head to focus and think.

Turning back, I raised my chin in resolve. “This changes nothing. If anything, you must hasten your departure.”

“My queen!”

“Go! I command it.”

My eyes misted with tears as I watched my friend and companion lead the others to safety. No matter what may befall me, I knew Hrafn would not fail me. He would see my plan through.

\* \* \*

THE GROUND BEGAN to shake and quake beneath my feet. As if it too was afraid of what approached. Refusing to flee like a coward, I stood my ground...and waited. In short order, I could hear brittle branches snapping as the undergrowth of the forest was crushed under their horses' hooves.

Then it happened...the kingsmen broke through the trees.

A deep and primal preservation instinct had me taking a few steps back. These men could not possibly be normal humans. The humans I had observed were either slight and weak-limbed or corpulent from drink and overindulgence. These men were neither. Astride their horses, they seemed to embody the ancient myths of the giants who once roamed this Earth. Each of the four had thick arms with wide shoulders and heavily muscled chests. Instead of the effeminate, tightly coiffed curls of the men of King Basil's court, these men let their hair grow wild. It hung in thick waves down to their shoulders in the deep, rich colors of the soil. Dark brown, chestnut, a light sand and one who was even as gray as stone at the temples.

Eschewing the hammered tin armor of the king's ineffective guard, these men wore leather breeches with linen shirts, each dyed an ominous black. It was as if they wanted to send a message to their enemies that they did not require armor to vanquish anyone in their path.

I now understood the true reason why the kingsmen were feared but never seen. Surely King Basil had them conjured from the depths of some black magic hole deep inside the fiery Earth's belly.

No, these men could not possibly be human.

Yet, for all their brawn and bravado, I was still the powerful fairy queen.

Tilting my chin high, I asked, my voice deep with regal indignation, "Who dares enter my realm without permission?"

While my withering look would have sent most scurrying, these men responded with only a chuckle.

Throwing my shoulders back, I tried again. "I command you to leave my forest."

The one with the graying temples leaned forward in his saddle, resting his large hands on the horn. His stance was casual and unafraid, which tweaked my anger.

"Queen Zelladine, you know who we are and why we have come," he said.

Only partially pacified by his proper use of my title, I responded sharply, "You presume too much. I have not the faintest idea why you have disturbed my peace."

All four men leaned back in their saddles, each exchanging a cryptic look. They then turned their gazes back on me. Each had piercing eyes of either azure blue or emerald green. It was unsettling to see such bright, intense eye colors on men such as these. My stomach twisted and tightened but not entirely from fear.

"That is your one and only lie, *your highness*," said the largest one with hair the color of dark red clay and disturbingly blue eyes. I think they called him Sigmun.

"How dare you call me a liar?" I exclaimed as my hands fisted nervously in my black robes.

"How dare you lie," the one with tawny blond hair quickly responded.

“If you don’t cooperate, you are going to find we will *dare* quite a bit more,” threatened the one with gray hair, his voice dark and low.

Shifting my eyes from one to the other, I could feel the energy radiating from them. Power and anger. Especially from the one who had yet to speak. From the moment they entered the glen, his eyes had not wavered from me. It was unsettling and oddly stirring.

These kingsmen were setting me back on my heels and I did not appreciate it one little bit. I was unaccustomed to feeling overwhelmed and, strangely enough, almost powerless. Usually, I was the most commanding presence, but these men—with their assured, confident manner and displayed brute strength—were making me feel almost...submissive. Breathing heavily through my nose, I nurtured the feelings of outrage such a weak thought brought to my breast. Submissive indeed. Over my dead body would I ever submit to anyone... even the kingsmen.

“I’d like to see you try,” I ground out through clenched teeth.

“Zella, you don’t want the torment we can bring. Lift the curse on the House of Basil. Return the king’s daughter’s body to her family for a proper burial and we will leave you in peace.”

So, the dark, quiet one had finally spoken. His words were soft and evenly measured, giving them an ominous sound. The threat undeniable.

Bristling at the familiar sound of my given name being used in such an informal manner, I snapped back, all the while ignoring the fluttering in my stomach that the almost-endearment caused. “Never. King Basil shall never have another son or daughter. His lineage of hate and greed dies with him.”

“Remember when you are begging for mercy and yet receive none, *you* chose this,” responded the dark, quiet one.

\* \* \*

THEY SWUNG down from their steeds in unison. If possible, they all seemed even more intimidating off the massive horses. Each one was easily head and shoulders taller than myself, a rather remarkable feat since I was both slim and tall.

One more reason why I found these four men unsettling. I was accustomed to looking down upon my subjects and others. Always having the advantage of superior height. Why, even that insipid King Basil was barely taller than my elbow.

Yet these men. All tall...threateningly so.

Enough was enough. While they may seem otherworldly, they were still mere mortal men. They would be no match for the dark force once I called it down upon them.

Raising my arms, I prepared to summon the dark force to do my bidding.

Just then, each one of the men reached into their saddle bags and pulled out a large, black crystal, the likes of which I had never seen. Curious, I watched as they slowly circled me, tossing the black crystals into the air and catching them easily.

So distracted was I by the obsidian prisms as the sunlight danced off their polished glass-like sides, that I failed to become alarmed when they surrounded me.

By the time I noticed, it was already too late.

Raising my arms again in haste, before I could even chant the special call, they raised their own arms and sent the black crystals smashing into the ground.

Each one splintered into a thousand black shards as a violaceous cloud emerged from the wreckage. I watched in confused fascination as the smoke snaked and twirled upward. The tendrils interlaced to create a cage around me.

Letting out a shriek of outrage, I curled my fingers into fists as I sought to burn their hearts from within their chests.

Nothing happened.



Raising my arms, I cried out for the dark force.

Nothing.

“What form of torment is this?” I demanded, pulling my lips back to bare my teeth.

“We haven’t begun to torment you,” warned one of the men.

I shrieked in response as I once more tried to use my powers.

Nothing.

Swiping my arm through the purple smoke only caused a piercing sensation on my skin. Having never felt the like before, I could only assume it was pain. As an enchanted creature, I had always been immune to such sensations.

I was trapped inside this dark sorcery cage.

In horror, I watched as each of them slipped a long, black leather whip from their saddle horns. They slowly untwined the braided leather, each raising his arm high to crack the whip above his head.

Taunting me.

Once more, I tried to summon the dark force but was denied.

The air was rent by the cracking of a whip as the thick, black leather strip closed around my raised wrist. Another snap and my other wrist was imprisoned in leather.

“I shall see you damned for this!”

Pulling on my arms with all my might, I was no match for their strength. Two of them encircled my purple mist cage, wrenched my arms down and close to my body. Another whip snaked around my middle, further strapping my arms down. Contorting my body to the left and right, I could not break free. In desperation, I called out to Hrafn, but he did not come to my aid.

With my body strapped in leather, the men stepped through the purple mist, seemingly without harm. It must be some sort

of enchantment to bind only my powers.

The one with the gray hair grasped my chin and forced my head back to meet his dark viridian gaze.

“Will you submit, and do as you are bid?”

Jerking my chin free, my eyes narrowed to slits as I inhaled deeply. “Hear me now—”

A heavy hand was dragged across my lips, quieting me.

“We’ll take that as a no. Come, Troylus. It grows dark. We must secure her in the dungeon before the sun sets.”

The kingsman with gray hair, Troylus, nodded his head before leaning down and placing a shoulder to my middle. Slung helplessly over his shoulder, my arms bound and the blood rushing to my head, I could only listen and watch. Waiting for an opportunity to escape.

“You speak the truth, Gripir,” answered Troylus. “Regin, ride ahead and prepare the fortress for our return.”

The one with the tawny hair nodded his assent and disappeared on his horse through the trees.

The dark, quiet one approached me as I lay prone over Troylus’ shoulder. Running his hand down the long, silken length of my straight, black hair, he pulled roughly on the ends. I hissed, the sharp stab of pain alarming.

“This one will not submit easily, my brother.”

Swatting my backside, Troylus ignored my shriek of protest and said, “Which will make breaking her all that much more enjoyable, Gripir.”

*For the first time since the dawn of the first sun, a queen of the fairies was carted out of the forest against her will...by four mortal men.*

## CHAPTER 3



The ease with which this man carried me over his shoulder revealed his brute strength. He didn't even appear winded in the slightest as he kept me helpless and dangling over his broad shoulder as if I were simply a cloak on his back.

Troylus.

Yes, that was the name of my captor.

He would be the first of the kingsmen to pay. Pay severely with his life. But not before I had some fun torturing him for even daring to think he could compete against my power.

As the blood rushed to my head, I tried to lift it enough so I could see where they were taking me. It was a fortress located outside the forest that looked like so many I had seen and conquered before. Large blocks of stone, tall turrets to make their insignificant building appear mightier than it truly was against powers as strong as mine. A drawbridge entrance that, for some reason, the humans believed would keep their foe at bay. When would they learn that man-made structures or defenses had no hold over me?

Gasping as Troylus' shoulder jabbed into my middle, I noticed something around the fortress I had never seen before. The purple haze that the kingsmen had used to capture me in the forest blanketed the dark gray stones. It rested heavily over every crack and every squared edge, giving off an eerie aura that I couldn't help but find fascinating.

What had these kingsmen found?

What magic had they conjured?

“What is this place?” I asked as I arched my back even more to fully take in the fortress.

“Your new home. But rest assured that it is truly befitting of a queen such as you,” Troylus said as he and the other men waited for the drawbridge to lower before riding inside on their steeds.

“Release me at once, and I will consider sparing your lives,” I said as I tried to wiggle myself from his shoulder to little avail.

Troylus chuckled. “Just a little bit further, your highness. I will be releasing you soon enough.”

It wasn't long before the horses were moving forward again, and as we entered the thick purple haze, a sizzling fire burned within my core. The unfamiliar sensation brought tears to my eyes and captured what little breath I had left from the bouncing of our mount which drove Troylus' shoulder deeper into my stomach with each move.

“What witchery is this?” I asked more to myself than to Troylus because I knew he wouldn't reveal their attack strategy.

The thick, amethyst smoke was clearly my undoing right now. With every breath I took, my power became more and more suffocated. I was nothing but a weak maiden in distress cast over her captor's shoulder with no ability to fight. It was then that a new sensation grew from the depths of my belly.

Panic.

Looking out onto the horizon one last time before I was carried fully into the heart of my prison, I searched for any sign of Hrafn. Nothing.

Closing my eyes, I silently sent out a call for help. My only hope was that this encompassing fog could not hold back the connection I had with the one who could be my only savior.

\* \* \*

A DUNGEON. Yes, that is where I sat.

Dark, damp, cold and what could become deadly if I could not come up with a way to regain my strength. Sitting tied to a chair, I had already come to the conclusion that without my powers, there would be no escape. The kingsmen had left me alone, so confident that with only a small, barred window near the ceiling and metal shackles around my ankles and wrists, I would be going nowhere. They were correct in that assessment. No matter how hard I tried to remove my bonds or lift the purple haze spell that enchanted this fortress, there was nothing I could do.

The heavy stomp of boots announced Troylus' presence without me having to turn my head to see him enter my new, forced domain.

“Queen Zelladine, I hope you find your accommodations suitable?”

The jest in his tone had me grinding my teeth to resist the urge to counter in any way. I may have lost my strength in magic, but I had not lost my strength completely. These kingsmen would soon discover just how much of a force I was regardless of what mystifying spell they had conjured.

Troylus slowly walked around me and stood with his arms crossed against his chest with a smirk on his face. I stared up at him, directly into his eyes. I refused to show anything but complete control and composure.

“Let me begin. You will tell us where we can find Briar Rose's body, so she can receive a proper burial. This is nonnegotiable and only one of many demands we will make upon you,” he said, not moving, and not breaking the eye contact we both refused to back down from.

A true battle of wills had begun.

Though as with every foe in my past, I had no doubt *I* would emerge victorious.

The smirk on Troylus' face grew to a wicked smile as he leaned forward and looked at me closely. "The other men and I have wagers on how long it will take to break you, and with whom you will break. I am fairly confident I will win this bet with them. Though we all knew you would not answer on first ask, I'm actually pleased you did not. I enjoy a challenge."

I did not enjoy the feelings coursing through me. They were unfamiliar and made me feel weak. Nervous? Trepidatious?

Regardless of what they were, I grew to detest the man before me for causing these inferior sensations to attack my body.

Troylus took hold of the leather strap around his waist and removed it with a swish of his muscular arm. The slicing sound bounced off the moldy walls of the cell, sending a shiver down my spine. He then removed a dagger from a holder that hung off his hip and placed both the strap and knife on a nearby wooden table that took up most of the length of the wall. He made every slow move seem calculated and choreographed, as if he knew that my heartbeat sped up with every inch of his movements.

With a raised eyebrow, he looked over his shoulder at me and asked, "Would you consider yourself a merciful person?"

I raised my chin and hardened my expression. "No. Never."

"Neither am I, my dear Zelladine. Neither am I."

I wasn't sure if it was the way he spoke to me, as if I were a commoner with a common peasant name, or if it was the fact that I watched his eyes darken as he approached me with dagger in hand, but a lump formed in the back of my throat that I struggled to swallow against.

Fear. Yes, fear had me nearly whimpering when he brought the tip of the knife to my throat and ran it delicately along my collarbone. The touch of cool metal against my flesh contrasted with the warmth of Troylus' breath so close to my

ear and sparked emotions inside of me that had lain forever dormant before.

“Have you ever screamed, Zelladine?”

He pushed the knife a little harder against my neck, piercing the skin just a little. The sting of having my flesh cut for the first time in my existence had me gasping in surprise. I tilted my head away from the weapon as a trickle of blood dripped to my shoulder.

Mortals bled. Not me. Not me.

“Have you ever felt so much pain that you howl against the air you breathe in hopes of releasing some of the agony?” Troylus’ voice was low and husky, reminding me of how I would speak to my prey as well.

He ran the knife down my neck to the fabric of my clothing and sliced effortlessly through the material. Like a wolf clawing at his victim, Troylus slashed away at every inch of clothing that had once covered my body. What remained after his vicious and unrelenting attack was my shivering and completely nude body in nothing but metal shackles. Never before had I stood—or sat for that matter—bare and helpless.

Defenseless.

Vulnerable.

The *victim*.

“You will pay for this dearly,” I seethed through clenched teeth. “In the worst possible way imaginable, you will pay.”

Another deep chuckle released from my captor as he went and placed the dagger back down on the large table and then walked over to me, took hold of the chains that restricted my ankles and tightened them around the legs of the chair, spreading my legs wider. “Well, in that case, I better make this good. I want it all to be worth it in the end when you’ll make me *pay for it*.”

Troylus took a few steps back once he tossed the last remaining shred of my clothing to the side and stared upon me. His gaze ran from the tips of my toes that rested on the

cool floor, to the top of my head, which caused my face to heat in embarrassment. His eyes devoured every square inch of my being, and there was nothing I could do to stop him or conceal myself in any way. My arms were shackled behind my back, which only pressed my breasts forward, and as much as I wanted to squirm and find some way to hide my most intimate parts, I also didn't want to give the man the satisfaction of knowing how much my nudity upset me.

His eyes finally settled on the tiny patch of curls between my legs. With my legs spread wide, I could only imagine what my silky folds looked like stretched and opened before him. I wanted to attempt to close my knees, but I also knew the effort would be pointless. I had no choice but to sit in the chair with my tits out and my pussy exposed. Troylus licked his lips as if he could taste what the liquid oddly dripping out of me tasted like. A deep throbbing emerged from my core and pulsed through my pussy. Once again, the unfamiliar feelings had me just as perplexed as before. Although this time, the intensity of the ache that seemed to be in need of quenching had my breath coming out in ragged puffs.

“Queen Zelladine.” His words rumbled from his chest. “What a majestic beauty you are. Too bad we are going to have to dirty up that creamy skin of yours.”

The flurry of emotions, sensations, and uncontrollable reactions of my body were my own worst enemy. I was weakened by far more than the enchanted purple haze, and I realized that the mortal feelings raging through me were far more savage than any dark force I could summon.

Mustering all the pride I had left in my body, I raised my chin and stared him straight in the eyes. With a smirk and a raised eyebrow, I seductively asked, “Do you like what you see, Kingsman?”

Instead of pushing my knees together as I still wanted to do, I resisted the urge and spread them wider, revealing my pussy even more to Troylus' hungry stare.

“Why don't you get on your knees and crawl before me like a good subject would do,” I said, “and serve your queen.”



Troilus' loud, boisterous laugh reverberated off the stone walls of the dungeon as his head tilted back and his mighty chest shook. "Oh, Zella, I do enjoy the spirit in you, lass." He cut his laugh short, his face hardened, and his eyes darkened as he took a step forward and leaned down so he was inches from my face. "I am going to so very much enjoy breaking you. And when I do, and you are nothing but a million broken pieces, my fellow kingsmen will come and pick up the pieces...only to break you again."

## CHAPTER 4



I had cast many a spell upon poor men. I had enjoyed watching weak mortals held captive under my control. But never before had I experienced being on the other end until now. Troylus did not chant, he did not recite passages from a book of invocations. He did, however, cast a spell over me. Every heavy step he made toward the table that held his leather strap had me fascinated. Every breath he took, every glance he made my way, held me motionless...nearly breathless. I was spellbound, and I knew the hex was just beginning.

“You never answered my question, my queen,” Troylus said as he folded over the leather strap into his hand. “Have you ever screamed?”

I swallowed hard but refused to show any sign of weakness or fear. “No.”

Troylus walked up before me, kneeled before my outstretched legs, and stared directly at my pussy which only made it throb more. The cool air against my moist curls, along with shivers of anticipation, caused raised bumps to cover my skin.

“What about moan? Have you ever moaned in pleasure, your highness? Have you ever moaned so loudly that it’s difficult to tell the difference between your moans and your screams?”

I refused to answer his vile questions but instead watched him as he continued to examine my sex mere inches from his

face.

He then surprised me when he inhaled deeply and said, “The scent of a queen.” He looked into my eyes as he ran his finger along the outside of my pussy. “I like.”

My body tensed, and I struggled to conceal the gasp that forced its way through my pursed lips.

Rubbing his finger in strokes up and down the lips of my pussy, he said, “You will. You will be moaning and screaming by the time I’m done with you. The question will be which one you prefer the most.”

Troylus pulled his finger away and stood. The absence of his touch infuriated me more than being shackled to this chair in the dungeon.

“You are a fool to think you won’t suffer because of this,” I spat. “It is only a matter of time until I will rise and reign over you once again. I’m warning you—”

“Yes, my queen. You have already told me that there will be a price to pay for my actions,” he interrupted. “If I am to die, then let’s make damn sure I leave a legacy.”

He snapped the leather strap in between his hands to get my attention and then slapped it down on my mons. I flinched at the small biting sting with wide eyes. Before I could process the sensation, Troylus brought the leather down upon my pussy again. My breath whooshed from my mouth as my eyes closed tight. A small burn erupted along the surface of my flesh, only to intensify when he lashed my throbbing and delicate skin with the leather again. Not pausing, but altering his assault, he then struck one breast and then the other with the leather.

“Before I truly begin, I will give you one last chance to tell me where Briar Rose’s body is,” he said as I opened my eyes to stare up at his towering frame.

Confusion over the flood of powerful vibrations of mortal feelings rattled me, but I refused to bend to his will. I smiled with a tilt to my head and said nothing at all.

“So beautiful and elegant when you smile, *my highness*,” he said as he used the leather belt to brush loose strands of my black hair away from my reddened breasts. “Let us see how pretty that smile is drenched in your tears.”

The leather came crashing down upon my breast again, licking my nipple with its painful bite. He repeated the action again on the other breast, and then again, and again, and again.

My body flinched, though my soul did not.

I stared down at my red and raw flesh and examined his work with morbid curiosity. The fiery pain was so foreign to me that I almost felt detached from this outer shell of mine.

An unexpected gasp laced with a hint of a moan released from my lips when Troylus returned his attack to my pussy, which still quivered from the lashing only a short time ago. The sound of leather connecting with vulnerable flesh echoed through the torture chamber.

The only other sound was me.

I couldn't help it.

No matter how strong I tried to be, and how much I fought not to utter even the slightest sound of discomfort, the gasps and even hisses of pain emerged. Damn Troylus to hell for causing me to act like a mere mortal female.

Following a more severe lash, Troylus said with a devilish smirk, “Ah, there are the moans I was waiting for.” He brought the leather strip to my nose. I could see the wet marks from my juices. “Smell your arousal, my queen.”

When I turned my head to the side, refusing to do as he asked, he snapped the leather against my pussy again. This time, the surprising sting had me crying out.

“Oh yes, those are the sounds I have been wanting. The smell of your cunt, the sound of your cries...far more enchanting than any evil spell you could cast on me.”

Closing my eyes and trying to steady my breathing, I did everything I could to try to not focus on the throbbing in my pussy. The pounding inside my sex was like the drumbeat of

an approaching army announcing a war was about to commence. I was truly at war. At war with my own body.

Troylus took hold of my face and squeezed my cheeks firmly. “Look at me, Queen.” He squeezed tighter until I fluttered my eyelids open and stared into his deep emerald eyes. “Are you ready to tell me where you cast the poor princess’ body?”

I jerked my face from his grasp and then narrowed my eyes as I said, “Is that truly the best you’ve got?”

Rather than seeing fury in Troylus’ face as I expected, I saw amusement. “Oh, my queen, we are just beginning. I told you that I plan to hear screams mixed with your moans. I won’t stop until I do.”

Dropping the leather strap, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a key. Circling behind me, he unfastened the shackles of my wrists. I brought them forward and began massaging them to regain proper blood circulation. I was tempted to try to conceal my nudity now that I had my hands and arms free to do so but decided against it. It would reveal that Troylus had succeeded in casting a sense of humiliation into this torture session. Troylus then knelt and unfastened the chains around my ankles as well. The man had said he wasn’t finished with his torture, yet he was freeing me.

He then picked up my naked body as if I weighed nothing and cradled me as a mother would cradle an infant. The hold was tender, though by the clench of his jaw and the storm brewing behind the green in his eyes, I knew the moment of closeness against the warmth of his chest would be fleeting. My assumption was correct when Troylus sat me on the cold wooden table, pressed his calloused hands on my tender breasts, and pushed me back so I was forced to lie down. My legs dangled over the edge of the table, and I had never felt so defenseless before in my life as my captor spread my legs and towered over my prone body.

Not sure if now was the time to fight back or not, I tried to clear my head from the cloud of confusion caused by all of Troylus’ so-called torture. I had to be smart and tactical. Not a

fool and rush to attack like a mere mortal would do. No, I may have had my power suffocated by the purple haze, but my intelligence and mastery of the art of war was still very much breathing.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the dagger that Troylus had used to slice through my clothing. It was so close. So close. With one quick reach of my hand, I could have the dagger plunged in the man's jugular before he even saw it coming.

As if reading my mind, Troylus said, "You can try if you want. Reach for the knife, my queen. Shall we test your power against me now that your magic is gone?"

Hating the fact that this man enjoyed taunting me, and he truly was a mighty foe, I retorted, "I don't use the weapons of men to destroy my enemy."

"Well then," he said as he loosened his pants and pulled them below his hips without breaking his stare, "I will do the same. I will not use a man-made weapon to destroy my adversary either. I will only use my body."

I propped myself up on my elbows enough to see Troylus' large cock spring free from the restraints of his clothing, hard and ready. Focusing on the length, the girth, and the way it stood at attention, I nearly didn't hear his next words.

"You have met your match with the kingsmen, Queen. This is a battle you cannot win."

Summoning every last ounce of wicked strength I still had in my body, I tossed my hair over my shoulder with a flick of my head and smiled. "So you say." I allowed my smile to grow and spread my legs even wider than he had. "So you say."

"Zelladine, you have no powers here. None whatsoever. I realize that all you have is the illusion, a false mysticism, and the façade that you are indeed not frightened. And maybe you truly are fool enough not to be afraid, but I will change that." He ran his finger down the lips of my pussy and then thrust his finger into my tiny hole. The intrusion had me gasping out of

shock more than anything else. He kept it planted deep inside of me as he said, “This body of yours is unclaimed. I can tell. But I will also change that.”

Removing his finger, Troylus took hold of my hips and pulled my ass closer to the edge of the table. The quick movement had me falling onto my back, forcing me to stare at the ceiling as Troylus lifted my legs and bent my knees. He positioned himself between my thighs and pressed his dick to my entrance that had never been penetrated before.

“Scream, my queen. Scream. This will most certainly hurt.”

He pushed his member into my body, spreading my hole more than I could have imagined possible. Not sure if the biting pain was from stretching, or if he was ripping his way in, I clenched my fists at my sides and closed my eyes to fight against the pain.

“That is just the tip of my cock,” he said, as if warning me to prepare for more pain. “Are you ready to scream?”

I shook my head, refusing to look at his face. I would endure this act in complete darkness as I kept my eyes closed.

He thrust his cock all the way inside of me in one firm push, shattering a barrier that I knew to be my purity. As a pop reverberated through my core and worked its way to my ringing ears, and as a bright light flashed behind my eyelids, I did exactly as he wanted.

I screamed.

I screamed not only in pain, but in fucking delight.

Yes, yes, yes. This pain. This fucking pain.

Arching my back, I welcomed the burn and bite far more than I’d welcomed anything before.

Troylus pulled his cock out only to thrust inside of me again, and again. My scream turned to moans just as he warned it would do. Holding my hips and keeping my legs lifted with his arms secured at the crux of my knees, Troylus claimed me with driving thrusts of his body. The slickness of

my pussy aided in the push and pull actions of his assault. No longer able to take such ecstasy in the dark, I opened my eyes to see the hunger in Troylus' eyes cast down above me.

“That’s right, Queen,” he grunted as he drove his dick balls deep inside of me. “Scream again.”

I submitted to his command and screamed as he pulled out just enough that he could thrust back into me with all his force.

“Now moan,” he commanded as he released one hand on my hip, brought his fingertip to my clit, and circled the sensitive bud—shooting bolts of electricity through me. He then pinched my clit and demanded, “Moan!”

I did what he asked as I thrust my hips toward his hand, wanting more. I wanted more bite. More sting. I couldn’t get enough. My body could not get enough. Waves of desire savaged through every inch of my body as a fire increased in my destroyed and claimed pussy.

“Scream and moan. Scream and moan,” he grunted, fucking my body with no ounce of tenderness, no gentle touch.

He was a warrior slaughtering his opponent lying weakly before him on a cold slab of wood. His power, his dominance, and the driving force of his cock completely mastered my body.

I moaned, I screamed, I moaned again as the waves of painful pleasure conquered whatever fight I had left in me. With every painful thrust of his large cock spreading my punished hole wide, I never once begged him to stop. No, I wanted more.

Harder, harder...

Fucking harder.

The pain lit my body on fire, and I wanted to do nothing more than burn from the blaze.

“You like the pain,” he said as he released the hold he had on my clit and slapped my sore, whipped breasts.

When I moaned even louder and arched my back even more, Troylus pinched my nipple as he pushed even deeper



inside of me.

Closing my eyes again, I saw shards of white light as I screamed. Wicked, painful, delightful pleasure washed over me, and I screamed again. Torture. Perfect and painful torture.

Fucking torture in the best way possible.

Troylus thrust one last time and joined my fading scream and moans with a loud groan of his own, filling me with his seed.

A few moments later, as the waves of sexual pleasure left my body, I opened my eyes and looked into Troylus' sated ones. His cock was still inside of me motionless, but I could feel the beating of Troylus' heart in the mass that still spread me wide.

If this was what the kingsmen had in store for me...

If this was the torture they had planned to force me to speak...

If this was the power they thought they had over me...

Breathing deeply as the delicious pain eased, I couldn't hide my smile as I stifled a wicked and evil laugh.

Oh, this time with the kingsmen would be so much fun.

This little game of theirs would be fun indeed.

## CHAPTER 5



I was so captivated by Troylus' claiming that I hadn't heard the footsteps of another man approaching. It was the clearing of his throat that called my attention to him. I lifted my head to see Sigmun watching us with a mischievous glimmer in his deep blue eyes. I wondered how long he had been standing there, and if he had watched the entire act of Troylus stealing what I hadn't realized was so pleasurable to give.

"Did she tell you where the princess' body is?" Sigmun asked.

Troylus pulled up his pants the remainder of the way and walked away from my naked and used body. I could feel his seed seeping out of me and running down the crevice of my ass, but I still felt no need to conceal the forced exposure. In fact, I didn't want the hum still radiating through me to end.

"Not yet."

Sigmun chuckled. "I thought you said breaking the queen would be as easy as breaking a twig."

I sat up on the table in time to see Troylus scowl. "I may have misjudged her stubbornness." He walked toward the entrance of the dungeon and turned around. "But it's only fair for all of the kingsmen to have their turn with her. Beware, Sigmun. She's a feisty one."

Sigmun took a step to where I sat watching their exchange. "That's pleasant news. One of my favorite things to do is tame

our wild steeds. I've yet to find a mare or even a stallion that can't be pacified with the flick of my whip."

"Well then, I will leave you be. An ale is calling my name." Troylus opened the door and exited without even taking a second look my way. He had come, claimed, and now I was nothing more than a prisoner of another kingsman again.

Not his. Someone new.

The sense of loss, and even hunger for more of Troylus' touch, was interrupted when Sigmund approached me and ran his fingertips along the raw flesh of my breast.

"None of this would have to happen if you simply told us where the king's daughter is," he said softly as his touch turned to a deeper caress.

The rough surface of his palm scratched against the punished area near my nipple, and I hissed in pain, yet my pussy throbbed once again. It seemed that with even the smallest taste of pain, my body hungered for more.

"I will tell you the same thing I told Troylus, which is nothing," I snapped, raising my chin in defiance. Though I was sitting naked on a wooden table with the signs of a man's arousal coating my pussy, I imagined myself in the finest gown and the most elegant of cloaks.

Pain yes. Shame no. Never.

"Don't worry, Zell," Sigmund said, patting the top of my thigh. "I'm not here to try to pull an answer out of you. My job is to take you to your chamber and prepare you for tomorrow. We like to savor our meal, and not a single one of us is in any rush."

"Queen Zelladine," I spat. The way he shortened my name as if I was a young schoolgirl with a juvenile nickname set my blood aflame.

"I prefer Zell."

"You are not to call me that!"

He laughed and patted my leg again. "It's funny that you believe I was asking."

Before I could respond, Sigmund lifted me off the table and cradled me in his arms as Troylus had done earlier. For a moment, I considered resisting, but with the size of his arms, the hardness of his muscled chest, and the determination set in the features of his face, I knew it would be futile to try to escape. I refused to hang on to his neck, however, so my arms dangled limply instead. I also refused to rest my head against the warmth of his body, so I defiantly turned it to the side and tried to ignore the smell of masculinity oozing from every inch of my new captor.

He walked in silence as he carried me down a series of halls and up several flights of stairs. I attempted to take stock of my surroundings, though there was very little to see other than gray, stone walls, and dark wood doors. The hallways were illuminated by fire torches and candlesticks, but no sign of art, tapestries or rugs. Cold. Barren.

When he opened the door at the end of the hallway and crossed the threshold with me still in his arms, he said, “Welcome to your new home.”

“No dungeon?” I asked snidely, surprised to see the comforts of a bedchamber.

“You are still a lady, my queen. We are the mighty kingsmen. Not beasts like the wolves in the forest who fight your dark forces.” He chuckled lightly. “We can sometimes be gentlemen, and I suppose this is one of those times. A lady deserves a bed and a warm fire while in slumber. But when awake”—his chuckle turned to a full laugh—“you are no lady, and we are no gentlemen.”

He stood me on the cold stone floor and walked over to the fireplace. I was still by the door and considered running, but the purple haze from outside illuminating the room through the window reminded me of my lack of power. I could run, but he would catch me. I was no fool and had to plan my attack strategy wisely.

“You surprise me, Zell,” he said as he squatted down by the hearth and began building a fire. “I thought I had a chase in store for me. I was prepared to at least break a sweat.”

“If you think I am afraid of—”

“Oh, I would never presume a woman of your power would be afraid of us...yet,” he interrupted. “But give us time.” He never looked at me once while he stoked the burgeoning fire. “There’s a water basin over by the bed. Clean yourself.”

I walked over toward the small table beside the bed where a basin full of clean water sat. I did so not because Sigmund commanded it, but because I did want to maintain some sense of dignity, and standing naked in a room with the smell of a man’s completion on me was not the way to do so.

When I finished washing my body and cooling the heat from my punished breasts and pussy, I turned to find Sigmund standing by the bed with a dressing gown in his hand.

“You can wear this tonight. You’ll be sleeping in here until tomorrow.”

Surprised by the fact that the man was truly treating me more like a guest than a prisoner, I walked over to the edge of the bed with my hand outstretched to take the purple garment.

“But first, I must prepare you for tomorrow.”

“Prepare?” I asked, dropping my hand by my side, realizing Sigmund was just teasing me with the clothing and the thought of resting my head on the pillow and finding comfortable sleep which I desperately needed.

“You’ll thank me for it, Zell. You will most certainly thank me for it later.” Sigmund snickered, clearly finding amusement in some knowledge I was not privy to. He pointed to the bed. “Bend over the edge.”

I opened my mouth to speak, but no words came out.

“Troilus focused on punishing the front half of your body, but the back side is just waiting to be claimed as well. I have a feeling that tight little arsehole of yours will need some stretching before one of my fellow kinsmen does so.”

Any retort that would have shot out of my mouth in disgust was swallowed up by shock and morbid curiosity. When I

didn't move, the light in Sigmund's eyes and the smile that had been mostly on his face since meeting him dissipated.

"I am a jovial man, Zell. I can even be a kind man. But I am not a patient man." He pointed at the bed. "Bend over the bed, or I will force you to. And trust me, if I must force you to, there will be consequences."

I stood my ground. Not out of defiance per se, but because I really couldn't muster the strength to do as he asked. Bending over the bed would take...submission. Something that, though I seemed to enjoy the pain caused by Troylus' hand, was not something I possessed. Sigmund said he was not a patient man...well, I was not a submissive woman.

With a loud sigh, Sigmund approached me. "Very well. I see this mare before me is in need of my whip."

Swooping me off my feet, he effortlessly flung me over his shoulder, carried me to the bed, and tossed me onto the mattress. Before I could resist in any way, he flipped me onto my stomach and pinned me by pressing his hand down on the middle of my back. I heard the familiar sound of Sigmund removing his leather belt from his pants as Troylus had done. But unlike the lashing to my front half, I was shocked to feel the sting of leather on my bare behind. There was more force, and more pain, as Sigmund began whipping me with rapid cracks of his belt against my ass.

I involuntarily cried out and kicked my legs back in a feeble attempt to stop the assault. Sigmund simply countered my moves by using his muscled leg to trap my flailing ones.

"Has no one ever punished this bare arse of yours before?" he asked as he licked my fiery skin again and again with the awful leather.

"No! No!" I screamed. I had never felt such torment before.

Such deliciously sinful torment.

My body had been starved.

Though my ass and the backs of my thighs throbbed from the whipping, it did not match the throbbing in my pussy that

had been ignited once again. The cadence of his discipline nearly matched the beating of my heart, and the only thing I could do was cling to the fabric of the bed, bury my face in the mattress, and mewl in agony. Agony that awoke something so deep, dark and demanding. I wanted more, even though my poor punished backside did not.

“Now the color of your arse matches the color of your tits. A pretty sight indeed,” Sigmund said, pausing in his whipping. “The question I have for you is, have you learned your lesson? Will you obey the next time I, or any of the kingsmen, tell you to do something?”

I nodded my head. “Yes,” though I doubted the truth of my statement.

He laughed loudly. “I do not believe you, Queen. But I won’t whip you again for your dishonesty. I suppose I would lie as well if I had a tanned backside like you have now. Self-preservation is a powerful motivator.”

I heard the heavy thud of the belt falling to the floor and released a sigh of relief.

“But we still have to stretch this arsehole of yours. I won’t leave before I have completed my task.” He spread my legs wide, which I didn’t resist. I remained perfectly still. I wanted to see what was next. I wanted to see exactly what he meant when he said he would stretch me.

It was then that I realized the kingsmen had the greatest weapon of all. My own masochistic desires.

“Suck my finger,” Sigmund said as he leaned over and forced his index finger past my lips. “Get it nice and wet.”

I did as he asked, uncertain what he planned next, but his command seemed simple and easy enough.

He then pulled it out of my mouth with as much force as he had used to put it in. Moving his hand to the juncture between my legs, he dipped his wet finger to the folds of my pussy and began caressing.

With a snicker, he said, “Oh, Zell, it appears that I didn’t need to have you lick my finger at all. Your pussy is plenty

wet. It seems that you actually enjoyed that whipping.”

His continued laughing filled me with shame. I didn't like revealing my true feelings to him. I did not want my captors to know that my body was responding in ways that still mystified me.

“Well, this will make my job, and *your* situation, so much easier.” He moved his finger to my tiny pussy hole and pressed in.

I gasped as renewed pleasure erupted. My gasp turned to a moan when he pumped his finger in and out of me a few times. Although the pleasure was short-lived, because Sigmund pulled his finger from my pussy and placed it on my anus.

“Time we open this little hole of yours a bit.”

I tensed and tried to buck up and off the bed, which was useless since Sigmund's other hand held my back down like it had done during the whipping. “You will not! No!”

“I'm doing you a favor, my queen. A favor indeed. Because one of the kingsmen will most certainly claim this tight arse of yours, and you don't want your first opening of this hole to be with a cock. Trust me.”

As he pressed his fingertip past my tight, puckered entrance, I shouted, “Please!” The sound of such a weak request leaving my mouth sounded foreign.

He continued to ease his finger all the way inside of me, stretching me, invading such an intimate part of my body.

“Oh yes, this hole is tight. You are nearly cutting the blood off at my knuckle.”

“It hurts,” I said between clenched teeth.

“From a finger?” Sigmund chuckled. “Come now, Zell. You are a woman whom nearly every man and woman fears. Surely, a finger up your arsehole isn't going to be your undoing.”

The humiliation of such an act was made worse when I glanced up and saw a black raven sitting on the ledge of the window. As much as I was happy to see Hrafn there—with the



light of the purple haze behind him—I also was mortified that he had to see his mighty queen splayed out on a bed with her captor’s finger shoving in and out of her in long, fluid movements. All I could do now was close my eyes and hope this torture would end soon.

As Sigmun’s finger inched deeper and deeper with every tiny thrust into my channel, I moaned uncontrollably. I didn’t want to like what was being done to me, but I did.

“Yes, that’s it, Zell. Loosen that hole of yours. The more you relax, the easier this gets. You’ll want to remember this when a cock is buried balls deep inside of you.”

“Please stop,” I begged softly, hoping Hrafn couldn’t hear me through the glass of the window. “I’ll submit to any other punishment. Whip me again. Do anything but this. It’s... unbearable.”

“Only a few more moments. You are opening up nicely. Let us see if you can take two of my fingers.”

As he pressed another to join the first, the pain had me crying out. “It’s too much. I’ll tear!”

“No, you won’t.” He pressed down harder onto my back when I tried to wiggle free. “Stay still and relax. Once I get this second finger all the way in you, I will have mercy and call it good for now.”

Knowing there was at least an end to such a mortifying act, I buried my face in the fabric of the bedcovers to conceal my whimpers as he stretched my bottom to what I believed to be an impossible size.

Feeling both fingers shoved all the way inside of me, I sighed between my moans, knowing that at least this part of Sigmun’s punishment was over.

He pulled out his fingers from my ass, took hold of my hips, and flipped me over onto my back. He then helped me to a standing position as my vision blurred a bit from standing too fast.

“Kneel,” he said as he shoved me down to the floor.

Switching positions with me, Sigmund sat down on the edge of the bed and pulled out his hard cock from the confines of his pants. The contrast of his thick member against the leather of his clothing truly was a sight. My pussy throbbed in anticipation of having it put inside of me like Troilus had done.

“Put your mouth around my cock and show me your appreciation for what I just did for you,” he said, reaching out and taking hold of the back of my head and pulling my face toward his crotch.

Appreciation? Was the man mad? He had whipped me and invaded a part of my body I’d never imagined being touched by anyone before. But before I could respond with a snide remark, Sigmund was pressing his rigid shaft into my mouth and lowering my head upon him.

“That’s right, Zell. Up and down. Run your tongue all along the length. Keep your mouth open wide and keep those teeth away. One nick with your fangs, and you will truly see the beast come out of me. The whipping you just got will be nothing compared to the punishment for such an offense.”

His warning was enough to have my belly flip, and the tone of his voice had me opening my mouth as wide as I could, paying close attention to not touching his cock with my teeth. I struggled to breathe through my mouth as Sigmund’s size jabbed the back of my throat with every downward motion of my head. If I didn’t go down far enough with each up and down movement, he would press the back of my head, making sure that I did so.

Up and down, up and down, I sucked, I swirled my tongue the best I could, and I often gagged against the size of his mass so big in my mouth.

“I’m going to spill my seed into your mouth, and I expect you to swallow every last drop. Otherwise another whipping will follow.”

Moments and a few more forceful thrusts of his hips later, Sigmund’s seed coated my tongue as he groaned loudly in

completion. I swallowed the salty fluid as fast as I could as Sigmun pulled out from between my lips.

Placing his cock back inside his pants, he said, “Very good, my queen. I think you have earned yourself a warm meal... something besides just the warmth of my seed,” he said with a wink and devilish grin. He then reached out and stroked my hair in a loving fashion. It reminded me of how I would stroke Hrafn who still sat on the windowsill watching. I just hoped that with the angle, and the bed blocking some of his view, he was not able to truly see how Sigmun had debased my mouth.

Sigmun stood up and walked over to the fire to stoke it. “Regin will be here later with your meal. Consider this a small reprieve, my queen. We will not be through with you until you tell us what we want to know.”

I remained kneeling until Sigmun had left the room. The moment the door closed behind him, I stood and walked over to the window. Opening it up, I spoke before Hrafn could. I didn’t want to hear anything he had to say anyway. “I have a mission for you, Hrafn. You must be fast. Go retrieve these items for me at once. A bite of Snow’s apple, water from the hot spring, soil from my mother’s grave, and fur from the enchanted wolves.” When Hrafn didn’t leave right away, I hissed between my teeth, “Go! Hurry, before it’s too late.”

## CHAPTER 6



Over the whistling of the wind outside I could hear the slight, hesitant scrape against the windowpane. Sparing a glance at my bedchamber door, I crept off the bed. Giving my leg a shake to straighten the heavy iron manacle around my ankle, I bent to lift the chain. It wouldn't do for one of the men to hear it drag along the stone floor. Stepping to the window ledge, I undid the latch, bracing myself for the blast of frigid air. A dark shape flew over my shoulder into the room. Landing on the mantle above the lit fireplace, Hrafn gave his feathers a shake, sending small ice crystals floating to the floor.

“Did you get what I asked for?”

Twitching his head to the side, he made a clicking sound with his beak. “Have I ever failed, my queen?”

Smiling, I stroked my warm hand down his chilled, sleek back. “No, my pet.”

I carefully untied the scarlet ribbon around his leg which held a brown suede pouch.

“I nearly lost my tail getting the tuft of wolf's fur. Did you know they have a new mate?”

I nodded. “I believe she is called Red.”

“Vicious little thing. You would think she was the one supposed to protect the wolves instead of the other way around. She launched rocks at me when she caught me in their den.”

“Yes, I hear she is very protective of them and that she is with child. Perhaps it is time to return the dark force to the time of the ancients.”

Hrafn fluffed his feathers as his claws tapped the mantle. “Is my queen softening?”

I bristled. It was true my time spent as a mortal had enlightened me to the powerful sensations that one could experience when feeling both pleasure and pain. That I learned it was both exhilarating and frustrating to be forced to submit to one of superior strength. Still, I resented the idea that it was making me weak.

“Nothing of the sort. I merely meant that if the wolves have time to fuck and create a spawn then perhaps the dark force is no longer powerful enough to keep them occupied.”

Hrafn made another clucking sound with his beak.

“Stop that,” I snapped, annoyed he knew me so well. Turning my back on him, I reached into the bag. Seeing that all was as it should be, I returned to Hrafn.

“You have done well, my pet. Now go back to the forest where it is safe. I will join you as soon as I can.”

“Can I not wait here with you?”

“No. I don’t want to risk them seeing you. Now do as I command.” I opened the window and gestured for him to leave.

With a bow of his shiny black head, Hrafn obeyed.

As soon as he was gone, I walked back to the fire, giving my chain an irritated yank as it pulled tight. It was no matter. As soon as my powers returned, I would make short work of my shackles.

Kneeling before the fire, I used the tip of my finger to trace an intricate symbol in the scattered ashes. Soon the swirls and slashes began to take shape.

“Hear me now, oh ancient ones. I call upon the spirit of the forests to free one of your own.”

I tossed the soil taken from the grave of my mother into the fire.

The flames turned from a bright orange to a weak, milky green.

“Hear me now, oh ancient ones. I call upon the spirit of the forests to free one of your own.”

I then tossed the fur from one of the cursed wolves.

The green flame became stronger.

“Hear me now, oh ancient ones. I call upon the spirit of the forests to free one of your own.”

I placed the piece of apple touched by the woman they called Snow, who can communicate with the beasts.

The flames shone like grass in sunlight.

“Hear me now, oh ancient ones. I call upon the spirit of the forests to free one of your own. With this water, extinguish the cursed purple fire which keeps me imprisoned.”

I poured several drops collected from the hot springs deep within the forest.

The green flames snuffed out. The room was cast in darkness. I waited. Hardly daring to breathe. Slowly there was a spark nestled deep within the charred logs. Then another. Another. The red glow of the fire returned. Standing slowly, I curled my fingers into claws and waved my hand over the iron manacle around my ankle. The metal bubbled and dripped as it melted away. The heat never touching my skin.

I could feel the rumble in my chest as I chuckled deeply.

My powers were back.

The heavy tread of a footfall was just outside my door. It must be Regin with my evening meal. I wondered. I wondered if all the troubling feelings of the flesh would feel the same now that my powers had returned?

It would be a shame not to take one more taste before I vanquished them all.

## CHAPTER 7



Striding over to the bed, I pulled the red brocade covering down so it pooled on the floor and around my feet, concealing my ankle. The heavy bolt drew back with a clatter as Regin strode through the door. He was carrying a tray. The earthenware bowl was filled with something that smelled rich and savory with the added sweet scent of sage. There was also a plate filled with strawberries so ripe and full they were flushed a deep crimson. Regin placed the tray on the small table before the fire. I held my breath and cast my eyes downward, lest I give my apprehension away. Would he notice the symbol scratched into the ashes and guess at its significance?

Just as he leaned over as if to get a closer look at something, I called out to him.

When his dark emerald gaze turned to mine, I placed my fingers inside the collar of my dressing gown and drew it open and over my shoulders, exposing my breasts and navel.

His eyes flashed with awareness. I could see the bulge between his legs lengthen.

“Have you finally learned your lesson from your punishments, lass? Are you ready to submit?” he asked as he pulled his linen shirt over his head, exposing a chest sprinkled with light brown hair and the white crisscross patterns of several battle scars.

Taking a deep breath, I shook my head. “No.”

His brow knitted. “No?”

Licking my lips, I boldly declared, “I want you to force me.”

Taking a step toward me, Regin grabbed my hair and pulled my head back. The corner of his lips quirked up. “Your wish is my command, *your majesty*.”

Using his grip on my hair, he pushed me down onto my knees. “That’s right. Kneel before me,” he quipped.

My stomach knotted and flipped. While my mind said I needed to distract him so that I could flee the fortress before they learned I had broken the enchantment, I knew that was not the only reason why I was kneeling before him. I was curious. Curious to see if I would still feel...anything. In my short time with the kingsmen, I had already become addicted to the rush of emotion and physical pleasure. My immortal self had never felt such things before. I needed to know...would they still have the same effect on me now that my powers had returned?

Keeping one hand twisted in my hair, he lifted his jerkin and unfastened his breeches with the other, freeing his engorged cock. Wrapping his long fingers around the shaft, he shifted his hand up and down. “Open your mouth,” he commanded.

I knew what he wanted. I had already been forced to taste Sigmund’s seed.

Slowly shaking my head, I whispered, “No.”

Regin hunched down before my kneeling form. Taking me by the chin, his thumb stroked my bottom lip. “It does not have to be this way, Zella. Don’t force me to be cruel when I could be kind.”

I lowered my eyes, not wanting him to see the truth. *I needed him to force me.*

With a sigh, he raised up to his full height, towering over me. The feeling of being small compared to their large builds still gave me a thrill.

Regin grabbed my face again, this time digging his fingers into the sides of my cheeks. The edges of my teeth cut my



mouth inside, my jaw was pushed open...wide. Grasping his cock, he pushed the head past my lips. I could taste his earthy essence on my tongue already. He slid in deep, my lips stretching painfully around his girth. He was thicker than the others. A small drop of spittle tickled my chin as I struggled to accept his shaft. He rubbed the head along my tongue, pressed it against my cheeks. As if he wanted to mark the inside of my mouth with his scent. I placed my hands on the tops of his thighs, loving the difference between his warm skin at my fingertips and the cool leather that still encased his legs pressed against my palms.

Still...it was not enough. I craved more.

As if sensing my agitation, Regin pulled free.

“Get on the bed,” he ordered.

I rose from the floor and gingerly sat on the edge of the bed.

Grabbing my breast and giving the soft flesh a squeeze, Regin then forced me onto my back, my legs still dangling. Slapping my inner thigh, he forced my limbs open. Without warning, he shoved two fingers inside my still sore and swollen passage.

My mouth opened on a shocked gasp.

“Your cunt is wet.”

The short, crude remark sent a shock of awareness down my body. *Yes.*

Regin forced a third finger inside of me.

I groaned as my body opened for him.

Using his grip between my legs, he pushed forward with his hand, guiding me onto the center of the bed with my own sex. I could hear him kick off his boots, could hear the slide of his breeches as they hit the floor. The bed dipped with his weight. His fingers pulled free and I felt empty. Instead of lying beside me, he straddled my head, his knees resting on my long hair, holding my head immobile. Roughly grabbing

my face again, he once more pushed my jaw open before shoving his three fingers into my mouth.

I bucked upward, my shoulders hunching as I gagged from the intrusion. He pulled them free and I coughed as spittle glistened on my lips. The moment I took in a harsh, ragged breath, he pushed his fingers back into my mouth.

“That’s right. Open that mouth up.”

Leaning over my prone body, he whispered roughly into my ear, “I’m going to skull fuck this beautiful mouth of yours.”

I tried to speak but the words were garbled and nonsensical with half his fist forcing my lips open.

Rising on his knees, he pulled his hand free and replaced it with the head of his cock. Tilting his hips forward, he placed both of his hands on the headboard.

My body tensed in dreaded anticipation.

Pulling back slightly, he thrust his hips forward with one powerful movement, driving his full shaft deep into my throat. I tried to scream but no sound escaped. My throat felt like it was on fire. He pulled back and drove in again, crushing my nose against his body. My legs kicked out in vain as my nails scraped down his exposed thighs, wetting my fingertips with his blood.

He thrust again. And again. And again.

Each time with more force. Each time depriving me of life-giving air. Each time pushing deeper and deeper down my resisting throat.

I felt used. Bruised. I was only an open vessel for his own pleasure. The thought made me clench my inner thighs as my cunt tingled and contracted.

Still it was not enough.

I needed more.

Regin pulled free. Rolling my body onto my front as I gasped for breath.

“Up on your knees,” he ground out, giving me a slap on my bottom cheek for good measure. I felt a warm sting, but it was not sharp. It wasn’t biting.

It was not enough.

My heart dropped at the thought that with my powers I may never experience that intense, overwhelming feeling again.

Positioning himself behind me, I could hear his grunts as the bed gently moved. Sneaking a peek over my shoulder, I saw him fisting his cock, moving his hand violently up and down the shaft.

“Open your ass cheeks.”

“What?” I asked, confused by the command.

Using his free hand, he gave me another slap on my other cheek. “Hold open your ass cheeks.”

Resting my cheek against the bed covers, I shifted my shoulders and reached my arms back. My fingers dug awkwardly into my own flesh as I tried to do as I was told.

“Wider. Hold them open wider.”

Pushing my fingers deeper between my cheeks, I pulled them open wider. My small forbidden hole puckered and clenched at the unaccustomed exposure.

The bed shook as he rose up on his knees. I felt the warmth of his hand as he placed it on my lower back. The chamber filled with a low, guttural groan as I felt his thick white liquor pour onto my body, covering my quivering dark hole and slipping down to join the moisture between my legs.

“Stay like that. Do not move,” he ordered as the bed dipped. Tilting my head, I watched over my shoulder as he strode naked across the chamber. I could not help but admire the firm look of his ass. How the flesh dimpled and pressed in on the sides with each step. From the glow of the fire, I watched his dark silhouette as he poured himself a glass of wine from the flagon on the mantle. Despite the warmth of the chamber, his seed was cooling against my skin. As I watched

his dark profile in silhouette against the flames, I could see his cock begin to rise. Straight and true like a beast come back to life. Swallowing the last vestige of wine, he returned to the bed.

With a sigh, I rested my cheek on the slightly scratchy red brocade. It did not matter what else he wished to do to my body. It was obvious that whatever power the men had held over me had vanished when my own powers returned.

The bed rocked with his movements as he knelt behind me. I could feel something large sliding between my still-open cheeks.

“You are covered in my seed,” he murmured.

I didn't respond.

After a moment, the gentle press of his cock became more insistent. He was pushing against my dark hole.

“Wait! What are you doing?”

“I'm fucking this tight ass of yours.”

“You can't do that!” I responded, appalled. I tried to rise but his hand on the back of my head kept me in place.

His cock pushed again.

I felt a sharp, biting sting.

Pain.

*Pain.*

I could still feel pain.

My body resisted but Regin kept increasing the pressure. More and more.

The pain became even sharper. There was a hot shock as the head of his cock popped inside me. Inside my bottom. My body tensed as my stomach clenched.

Groaning, I fisted the covers on either side of my head.

Regin slid his cock inside me.

I opened my mouth, but no sound came out as the painful pressure inside my body increased. It was a sharp ache as my inner muscles clenched and stretched around his cock.

“That’s it, my Zella. Take my cock.”

I could only groan.

After what felt like an eternity, I felt the warmth of his body pressed against my chilled one. He was fully seated inside of me. Pulling on my hair, he forced my shoulders up, my head back.

“Where is my cock?”

“Inside of me.”

He pulled on my hair harder.

“Where is my cock?”

“Inside my...my bott—”

“No.”

“Inside my ass.”

“Good girl. Tell me to fuck your ass. Ask me to make it hurt.”

I clenched my teeth. Wanting the words but not wanting to say them...to admit it.

Regin slapped my outer thigh. “Say it.”

“Fuck my ass,” I cried out. “Make it hurt.” The truth was ripped from me.

Air hissed through Regin’s teeth as he shifted to grasp both my hips. Pressing his fingers into my flesh, he began to relentlessly pound into my body.

I screamed as the bed shifted under his assault. Each powerful thrust was like a hot spike being driven deep inside of me. My body collapsed under his driving pressure, only his grip on my hips kept me partially upright.

This was what I needed. The forced submission. The pain. The humiliation. My body hummed with pleasure that only pain could free. I wished I could see what he was seeing.

Wished I could watch his thick shaft as it disappeared inside my stretched hole. I wondered if my skin turned pink with pain due to the violence of his thrusts.

“Touch yourself.” His voice was low but cracked like a whip in the chamber. “Reach between your legs and stroke your cunt.”

Without thought, I did as he commanded. As if he were my king and I a mere servant pressed to do his bidding.

Sliding my arms along the covers, I reached between my legs. My lips were slick with my own arousal. Pressing with the tip of my finger, I found the soft nub which had given me so much pleasure before. Swirling my fingertip over the nub, I bit my lip as waves of pleasure poured over me.

“Push your fingers inside.”

I tentatively pushed my middle finger inside myself.

“Deeper. Use two fingers.”

I did as I was bid.

“Press against the slick top. Do you feel that?”

My mouth opened in shock. I could feel the press of his cock from inside my hot, wet sheath.

“I want to feel your fingers pressing against my cock through your cunt as I take your ass.”

Curling the tips of my fingers, I pressed harder. I was rewarded with a deep-throated groan from Regin. He thrust harder.

The macabre dance of pleasure and pain rolled over me.

“I’m-I’m.... I....”

“Yes. That’s it. Come for me,” he demanded.

The pressure crested then crashed over me as I obeyed.

Regin continued to thrust. My body open to him now. Sliding his hands along my back, he gripped my throat as he roared his own release. His body pressed close to mine, his cock deep inside filling me with his seed.

Rolling onto his side, he took me with him. Reaching around to my front, he gripped my breast as he playfully bit my neck. “Next time, I’ll force you to taste your own ass as you swallow my cum.”

The vulgar promise of such a humiliation brought a secret smile to my lips.

## CHAPTER 8



Unable to resist taunting my captor, I shifted my hips, rubbing my ass against his cock. Delighting as I felt it harden a third time. There was something very satisfying in knowing I had such a power over this part of their bodies. *Most intriguing.*

Regin chuckled as he swept one large, warm hand over my hip and down my thigh.

Then, the atmosphere of the room changed. The air became charged as his whole body tensed. With his fingers digging into my thigh, his voice was low and controlled when he asked, “Where is your ankle shackle?”

Damn. I had become careless.

Not bothering to respond, I tried to roll away but Regin was too quick. Thrusting my shoulders flat, he straddled my hips as he raised my arms over my head. “I know one of the other men would not have been so careless as to have left you unchained,” he reasoned as he stared down at me, his eyes two hardened pieces of jade. “What have you done, Zella?”

“What I had to,” I hissed.

Regin’s grip on my wrists tightened. “You little fool. Can you not see that as our prisoner you are under our protection? Do you think King Basil is the only one who wants to see you dead?”

“Yes, and the only thing keeping me alive is my knowledge of Briar Rose,” I sneered as I tried to pull on my arms and break his grasp.



“You are denying a father the right to bury his child.”

“I am denying a pompous ass the right to use his grief for his political advantage. He does not and never did care for that girl.”

Regin leaned back. The underside of his shaft pressed between my legs as his powerful thighs tightened against my hips.

“Careful, Zella. If I hadn’t been told you had heartlessly killed Briar Rose before her father’s very eyes, I would think you cared for the girl yourself.”

Clenching my jaw, I lowered my eyes as I turned my head to the side. In my anger, I had revealed too much.

Regin leaned down. Tilting his head to the side, he captured my gaze. “You did kill her, did you not?”

I stayed silent.

“Zella, we can protect you. Tell me the truth. Does Briar Rose live?”

“Enough of this,” I cried.

Green sparks flew from my fingertips. Regin was forced off my body and thrown across the room. Grabbing my dressing gown, I quickly pulled it on as I kept my eye on his prone body. I hadn’t thrown him hard enough to crack his skull against the stone walls of the fortress, so I was certain he was just momentarily knocked still. I could hear rapid steps coming down the hallway outside my door. The sound of Regin’s large body hitting the floor must have alerted the other men that something was amiss.

The long metal bolt across the door began to shift as the latch was being turned. Raising my hands, I watched as the metal bolt and hinges melted then hardened, sealing the door.

“That should hold them,” I murmured. Taking a step, I reached out for the bedpost as a wave of dizziness assailed me. My powers were not quite up to full strength and dispatching Regin as well as melting the bolts of the door had taken their toll. I had to leave now. Racing to the window, I threw open

the sash. Closing my eyes, I summoned all my reserves as I stretched my arms out straight before me. My body trembled as sweat broke out over my brow. Clenching my teeth, I groaned as I gave up a silent plea to the ancients. Finally, opening my eyes, I saw before me a great, green cloud. Lifting my skirts, I stepped gingerly over the sill, onto the cloud.

As the cloud began to float away from the fortress embattlements, I could hear a terrible crash from inside the bedchamber. Moments later, the dark visage of Troylus appeared.

“Dammit, Zella. You know not what dangers you have called down upon yourself,” he called out before he turned to bark orders over his shoulder.

I bristled at the implication. “I have been taking care of myself and my own for thousands of years, Troylus. I do not need you or anyone else.”

At my words, my stomach gave a curious flip. I wondered at my strange feeling of sadness... almost a wistfulness. It was as if I wished it could be true. That I could lean on these men. That I could finally have someone to protect me instead of me always being called upon to be the protector. It was all nonsense of course. While it was amusing to play along with their punishment games while I awaited the return of Hrafn, it was ludicrous to think I would actually crave something like that in my life.

*Nonsense! The very idea of Queen Zelladine needing four male mortals!*

Deliberately turning my back on them and the fortress, I turned my attention to the forest as the green cloud carried me toward its dark, bristled treetops.

\* \* \*

MY POWERS WOULD ONLY GET me to the edge of the forest. Running through the trees, I hastened to the glen. I would find the forest witch and have her cast a binding spell to protect me from whatever black magic the men may use. Given rest and

time, my full powers would return, and I would no longer be as vulnerable. In the center of the forest, the trees gave way to a beautiful open field. Small and almost hidden, it was filled with sweet grass, flowers, and a tiny trickling stream down the center. Nestled among the rocks by the creek bed was a small thatched cottage. The home of the forest witch. She benefited from my protection and benevolence, so I knew she would not turn me aside. I had a great affection for the old crone. She was as much a part of the forest as I.

Striding straight through the creek, ignoring the coldness of the water on my bare feet and uncaring as the train of my purple gown became saturated, I called out for her. “Theodora. Theodora, I need you.”

The roughhewn wooden door opened. Instead of the bent form of Theodora wearing her cloak of animal skin and moss, I saw woven blue silk and waves of tawny hair.

“Briar Rose! What are you doing here? It is not safe!” I cried out as I hustled her back inside the cottage. Turning, I scanned the glen for any sign of danger but there was nothing. No startled bird cries or warning snaps of branches. Satisfied, I stepped into the cottage and bolted the door.

With my hands on my hips, I turned to face Briar Rose.

“Don’t be mad, Zellie,” she said with a pout.

“Oh no. Don’t Zellie me,” I shot back, ignoring her childish endearment for me as I began to pace the small confines of the cottage. I had to keep shifting to avoid the various herbs and flowers which were hung in bunches from the rafters to dry.

I had befriended Briar Rose the day I found her wandering alone in the forest crying. She had just lost her mother and the poor distraught child had wandered away from the castle in her grief. I saw that she was returned to her mortal keepers yet despite my warnings and chastisements the child insisted on returning to the forest whenever she could, in search of me. She was such a sweet, innocent thing, I could not turn her away. Especially when I learned what a boorish, uncaring man her father, the king, had become since his wife’s death. It

seemed he thought his daughter's only purpose in life was to marry someone who would bring him more riches and power. So, I allowed the child to play in the forest, with the strict admonishment that she was never to tell a mortal soul.

It would always be our secret.

When Briar Rose was a little girl, her father's machinations did not mean much, but then almost within a cycle of the moon, she had grown into a beautiful woman. Once more, I found her crying in the forest. Her father was forcing her to marry a decrepit mortal not long for this world. Caring nothing for his daughter's wishes or future happiness, he wanted the lands promised to him by the old baron.

I could not let such a hateful fate befall my precious Briar Rose, especially not when I knew she had formed an attachment to a young prince. They had met at a spring ball several seasons ago. Their attachment grew stronger despite the necessity of secrecy and distance.

So, we had come up with a little deception. We would fool her father into thinking Briar Rose was dead, knowing if he thought there was a chance she still breathed, he would chase after her. The subterfuge would give us a chance to spirit Briar Rose away into the arms of her true love. Once she was married, her father the king would no longer be a threat to her.

The plan had gone wonderfully well...except I had never considered the kingsmen. I did not know they possessed the knowledge to bind my powers and worse, to affect my mind and body so.

Still, I would risk all again, for never in the time of the ancients and beyond had my kind refused a request of pure heart from an innocent. I was a protector of the forest and my realm. It was my duty as queen.

Yet again, I felt a pang of sorrow at the thought. Once more, unbidden, the cry leapt in my breast.

*Who protects you?*

*The kingsmen.*

*My men.*

No! No, this was foolish and dangerous thinking. I had to focus on the task at hand.

“Hrafn is to blame for this,” I said as I pointed an accusatory finger at her.

“Don’t blame him,” she pleaded. “I forced him to tell me. Zellie, how could you? I never would have asked for your help if I thought my father would be so cruel as to call the kingsmen down upon you. Oh, the terrible tortures you must have faced and all because of me!”

With a cry, she buried her head on my shoulder as she wrapped her arms tightly around my middle. I stroked her hair and made soothing sounds.

I felt a slight stab of guilt at her obvious distress. Briar Rose was far too innocent for me to explain to her that the tortures they visited upon my body were not quite as torturous as she supposed.

Leaning back, I placed a finger under her chin and tilted her tear-stained face up to me. Affectionately brushing a lock of hair behind her ear, I said, “You are not to worry about me. Please tell me you have married that prince of yours by now?”

Her lower lip protruding in a pout, Briar Rose shook her head no. “His family insisted on reading the banns. We were worried it would alert my father, but Frederick’s family is worried that if all the protocols are not followed then my father will use it as an excuse to have the marriage annulled.”

Knowing that the reading of the banns at least three times was a mortal custom of announcing a pending wedding in their churches before a couple could be joined, I understood her frustration. Why did mortals have to complicate things so? If there was a connection of body and spirit, then that should be all that mattered. Who cared about the rules of society or silly customs?

Perhaps I should follow my own advice.

*Was I not complicating my feelings for Troylus, Regin, Gripir and Sigmun? Had these men not proved to me that we all shared some sort of connection? Wanted or not? Was I not*

*still fighting them and it? Fighting the delicious thrill of pleasure and pain that each encounter with them brought me?*

“His family probably knows best. You must not return again till you are safely married.”

“But Zellie!”

“I am resolved, Briar Rose. This is my duty and I will not be swayed.”

“Very well.”

“Where is Hrafn?”

“He figured you would seek out Theodora once you escaped the fortress, so he brought me here after I insisted. Theodora must be collecting mushrooms by the dark cliffs, so he went in search of her.”

Before I could respond, the thundering sound of hoofbeats shattered the calm of the glen. I never imagined they could track me down so soon. “Dammit. It is the kingsmen!”

Briar Rose gripped my hand. “Perhaps we can fall upon their mercy? They may help us.”

There was a part of me that was certain they might do just that but there was still a risk. My newfound feelings of pleasure may be blinding me to reality. If it were only my life, I could perchance take that risk, but I could not with the life of Briar Rose and the others.

“No. I am still not certain they can be trusted. I must continue to hold them off and distract them until you are safely wed.”

“Zellie. Please, there must be another way.”

“No. I am resolved. Now stand back. I do not have the power to return you to Frederick’s side, but I can send you to the dark cliffs where you will find Hrafn and Theodora. Remember, stay on the north side of the cliffs,” I admonished. “The south side leads to the den of the enchanted wolves and therein lies danger.”

Briar Rose nodded, having heard my warning about the wolves countless times since she was a child.

“And do not speak to any of the huntsmen if you should encounter them. They are no friend of the king’s or any monarchy for that matter, but we cannot have them spreading tales.”

Again, Briar Rose nodded. She gave me one more earnest hug before taking several steps back. Taking a deep breath, she nodded.

Raising my arms, I began, “Hear me now....”

A swirling green cloud enveloped her middle; with each revolution, it became larger and larger till only the top of her head and the hem of her dress were apparent.

Just then, the door of the cottage crashed off its hinges onto the floor.

The tiny cottage was quickly filled with four very large, very angry men.

But they were too late.... with a clap of my hands the green cloud disappeared...with Briar Rose.

## CHAPTER 9



“*B*y all that is evil! It’s the princess!” cried out Regin as all four men stared in disbelief at the vanishing form of Briar Rose.

In unison, they turned their infuriated gazes on me. It was obvious from their disheveled and bedraggled appearance they had made great haste in their pursuit of me.

“Well, well. I must admit I *am* impressed. How enterprising of you all to find me so very quickly. Should I be flattered at the *heat* of your pursuit?”

Troylus approached the scarred wooden table in the center of the cabin. Keeping his eyes on mine, he carefully placed a black crystal in the center.

It was both a threat and a peace offering.

“We all saw the proof with our own eyes, lass. Enough of your games.”

“That hardly seems fair. I’ve been playing your games for several days now,” I countered with mock affront. “When will it be time for my game?”

“Why do I have a feeling it is *us* who’ve been played by *her* this entire time,” grumbled Sigmund to Regin. I gave them both a knowing wink.

Regin sighed with frustration. “Zella, enough. It is obvious Briar Rose is alive if not unharmed. Release her. We will protect you. We have brothers-in-arms in faraway lands. There is no need for you to stay here.”



It was a shame I had to continue deceiving them. If it were only me, I would have actually been inclined to believe them. For all their faults, they were loyal men of their word, that much was obvious. It especially pained me to continue to deny Regin. Out of all of the men, he seemed to be the one most determined to have me bare my soul. I also seemed to be forever disappointing Troylus, who continued to hope I would see reason. I was not as concerned about Sigmun. I doubt he took much of this very seriously and seemed to only be amused. I did so enjoy that about him.

Now, Gripir was a bit of an enigma. Unlike his brother-in-arms, Sigmun, he seemed to take all of this infuriatingly seriously. I could feel the fury radiate off him every time I delayed or prevaricated. Even now, he looked as though he were barely keeping a tight rein on his anger.

“My answer has not changed, men. I will not lift my curse off that odious man nor will I reveal what I have done with his precious daughter.”

Gripir charged straight for me. I was forced against the wall by the press of his body.

“You have gone too far this time, Zelladine,” he ground out.

Inhaling deeply, I could smell the musky scent from his exertions, a mixture of animal, sweat and leather. Like the others, his jaw was scratchy with stubble, giving him a wilder and unkempt appearance than his soldier profession would normally allow. Raising my dark eyes defiantly, I slowly and deliberately pushed out my hips. Brushing the thick ridge of his shaft with my stomach, I watched as his bright blue eyes turned a deep midnight.

“You play with fire, woman.”

Rising on my toes, I whispered, “Then burn me.”

Reaching into his pocket, he pulled free another black crystal. Taking a step back, he smashed it at my feet.

I did not try to resist as the tendrils of purple smoke twirled about me, once again forming a cage. All I could think

of was that Briar Rose was safe, the kingsmen were distracted with me....and without my powers I would be able to feel the full weight of whatever punishment Gripir was surely about to mete out. I bit my lip in anticipation of the deliciously wicked blend of pain and pleasure which awaited me back at their fortress.

## CHAPTER 10



“Queen Zelladine,” came Gripir’s voice, stopping me as I prepared to rise from the chair I sat in by the fire in my bedchamber. The kingsmen had placed me in the room to await my punishment. They had removed my dressing gown, but I was becoming accustomed to being naked around them, so it was hardly a punishment. The wait, however, was. “Did you think you could escape without anyone following?” The candlestick he held in his hand highlighted his masculine features.

Defenses raised, I rose and faced him. “Did you really believe that I would *not* try to escape?”

“I suppose you are right in that regard. We did expect you to try to escape, but we also expected a much harder opponent in you than what we have received.”

I bristled, anger brimming then overflowing at Gripir. How dare he? I was a vicious opponent and the kingsmen should quake in their boots. “And I suppose you think that I’m a weak-willed woman who cannot destroy you if I truly wanted to?” I was shaking now, knowing that the kingsmen had not only controlled my body, they had also dominated my strength. They were winning, and there was nothing I could do to resist. And the truth of the matter was, I didn’t want to resist.

“I do not think you are weak-willed at all,” he confessed. “But it is time for you to tell us where Briar Rose is. Tell me why you led us to believe her dead. I am done with your little

games. I demand answers!” His eyes darkened as his voice boomed throughout the room.

The way he stared caused me to take pause, but I held firm. “No.”

He walked toward me, so he towered mere inches from my rapidly beating heart. He still held the candlestick, burning bright, in his hand. “What was it you told me to do to you in the forest when I told you that you were playing with fire?”

I swallowed the lump in the back of my throat. “To burn me.”

His stare bore down on me.

I raised my head so I stared directly in his eyes. I would not cower, though I shook inside.

Gripir grabbed me firmly by the arm and pulled me down to the stone floor so I was on all fours. “Yes, Queen Zelladine, you did. I am about to show you that I am a man of my word.” Before I could even protest, he placed the sole of his boot onto my bare back. “Stay on your hands and knees, or your punishment will be far worse.”

I looked over my shoulder in shock at being treated like a mere animal. “How dare you?” The edges of the stone floor scraped against my palms and my knees, and the coolness of the room wafted over my damp sex. I was completely exposed to his view, as well as his mercy. Something from deep within held me in position.

He answered with a drip of the candle to my naked flesh, and then three more drips before I even knew what was happening. I tried to collapse to my stomach to somehow avoid the burning wax. He pulled me back up and said, “The burn has just begun. Stay in position.”

I turned my head to stare into his eyes before he slowly poured more searing wax upon me. The pain of the heated wax droplets caused me to gasp for breath. “Gripir, please! This has gone far enough!”

“No, my queen. You will learn that you are not to request something you do not mean. I warned you that you were

playing with fire. I am now simply giving you what you quite literally asked for.”

The dripping of the wax continued, and I did everything I could to remain in place. The palms of my hands, my knees and my wax-covered back and ass screamed for mercy.

The candle continued to rain erotic pain down upon me. Each drip to my sensitive skin brought an alarming desire I couldn't contain. His dominance and sensual discipline milked the wetness from my deepest core. I pressed my legs together, desperately hoping Gripir wouldn't see the moisture dripping down my inner thigh. It would give him far too much power—more than he already had over me. I rocked forward, each searing cascade of liquid torture causing tiny mewls to escape my clenched teeth. My body buzzed with life, even as my core blazed with heat.

“Gripir!” I hissed as hot wax ran down the crack of my ass.

“You are a woman, Zelladine. A beautiful, exquisite woman.” He paused with the dripping of the wax for a moment, a dead silence in the air. “I admire your strength. I respect your ability to defend what you feel is yours. I have even feared your power at times. But you are still a woman.”

I looked over my shoulder with daggers in my eyes. “So what if I am a woman?” I spat. “Does that mean I should submit to a man? That I should tell you kingsmen what you want to hear just because you demand it so? Never!”

“There is nothing wrong with submission, Zelladine. A powerful queen, and an even stronger woman, would understand that.”

He placed the candlestick on the windowsill and assisted me to a standing position. Staring at the floor, I tried not to focus on the burning on my backside and between my legs. Looking at him now would cause such embarrassment. The act had humiliated me. Not because of the discipline, but because of how it lit my body with a passion I had come to love.

He tilted my chin with his finger, so I had to look into his eyes. “So tell me, Queen. As a feared ruler, what would you

have me do to you?” I waited, staring at him. Seeing that he had my full attention, he continued. “For your persistent defiance and resistance, what would you have me do? The kingsmen and I have all spoken. It appears as if you almost enjoy all these punishments. Is that true?”

I nodded, causing Gripir to drop his hand from my chin.

“I like the pain,” I confessed.

He pulled away enough so he could study my face. He raised an eyebrow in response.

I made eye contact with him. I refused to let my pride get in the way of my need. “I like the bite, and the raw and brutal sensations.”

I stood naked before him and whispered, “Hurt me.”

Never in my wildest dreams would I imagine myself being so bold, so open. But I had always been one to take the power into my own hands to get what I wanted. If I desired something, I always did what I had to in order to make it happen. This was no different. I wanted to surrender to Gripir’s discipline, and I didn’t want him to go easy on me at all.

Gripir adjusted his body so he was on the edge of the bed. He patted his lap, silently ordering me to obey.

Without hesitation, I laid myself across his lap and awaited his punishing touch. I had once seen a submissive butcher’s wife do this act with her angry husband, watching with fascination from afar. Never would I have thought then that I would someday be in the same position, choosing to do so of my own free will.

A loud slap bounced off the stone of the walls, followed by another, and another. Gripir took no time to pause between spanks. My body tensed with each searing swat, and my hands reached for the fabric covering the bed to squeeze. His hand felt as if he were using solid wood against me, from the intensity of the strike.

Gripir swatted one cheek and then moved to the other. The rhythm burned my hide but soothed the raging emptiness and

darkness that had forever been inside of me. My mind relaxed even though my body gave birth to a new kind of life. The pain of the discipline made me cry out his name, but never did I beg him to stop. I wanted more. I wanted so much more. I wanted to feel the pain until I could take no more.

As Gripir used all his strength to deliver blow after blow with his hand being the only weapon, he was truly defeating me. I squeezed my eyes shut and clenched my teeth together. With time, the punishment almost became too much to bear. But I wanted to reach the edge of complete surrender and then dive in headfirst. Complete submission to my captor...to all my captors.

The sounds of a thorough punishment blending with the sounds of a sensitive, delicate woman crying seemed foreign to me. What were these sounds? Never would I show my weakness. Never would I show my pain. But in this moment, across Gripir's lap, I allowed myself to be the softest, most feminine woman I could be. I became mortal in more ways than from a spell cast by a crystal.

When tears mixed with the sweat from my brow, Gripir finally stopped the simplest, yet oddly one of the most severe, of the disciplines. He pulled me up so I was sitting on his lap. He brought his lips to mine and mastered my mouth as only someone with Gripir's power could do— fierce, powerful, and conquering.

“Fuck me now,” I begged between the kisses. “Make me cry in a different way. Make me cry out your name.”

Gripir froze and took a deep breath. “In time. Oh, my queen, you will not only cry, you will scream. But first, show me your submission. I want to see it in your actions. Then, and only then, will I grant you this cock in your tight little hole.”

I rested my hand on the bulge of his pants, feeling it flex beneath my touch. Resuming my position, kneeling on the stone floor as I had done with Sigmund, I knew exactly what I was to do to honor Gripir's demand.

He freed his hard cock from his breeches before my face and placed his thickness to my lips. I looked up into his eyes.

No word needed to be said. I opened my mouth and allowed his cock to lay against my tongue. My natural instinct—so unfamiliar to me, yet so right in feeling—was to pleasure him. Nothing got in the way of how badly I wanted to make him scream out my name. Watching bliss blanket his face filled me with a purpose I did not know existed. As I sucked up and down his ready cock, I fully submitted to my captor. Up and down, I moved my mouth until I was rewarded with my name escaping his lips in the most passionate of ways. My name never sounded as good as it did right then.

I added my hand and began to pump his cock while licking it all around. His body shook and tensed, and with a large groan, Gripir spent his satisfaction into the back of my throat. I swallowed his seed with the gratification of the most submissive of women.

Gripir picked me up off the floor and placed me onto the bed. He then lowered me to my back and lay on top of me. His weight, his closeness, and his heat caused my body to beg to be taken.

He paused and took a deep breath. Renewed animalistic desire of only a moment ago soon danced along his sated features. His tongue danced with mine again, claiming my mouth as he slowly gyrated his renewed hardness against my responsive clit. The tip of his cock made small circles, pulling the sexual need from my body. He kissed his way down to my breasts. He sucked on my hard nipple, moaning around the softness. He devoured my flesh with his mouth as if my breast gave him life. The wetness of his tongue circling the nipple caused my body to burn far more than the wax discipline had. An inferno blazed inside my core to match the little burns on my flesh.

He positioned his body so his hardness rested against my wetness, the tip of his cock at my entrance, not yet pressing in. Kissing me again, Gripir pressed his cock into my tight hole in one fluid motion. I tensed for a moment, taking in the pain of the intrusion from the large size of his cock. He paused so I could adjust to his girth buried inside of me. When the discomfort diminished, I began to move my hips.



In and out, Gripir thrust his cock past my silky folds. My pussy stretched with each thrust of his hips, sending jolts of lightning to my core. I could feel the orgasm building at a speed that threatened to take my breath away.

“Gripir,” I gasped, clinging to his back with my nails.

He continued to drive deeper and harder, picking up the pace as my orgasm grew nearer.

“Gripir,” I gasped again, arching my back to meet his ramming cock.

The sound of his balls slapping against my wet pussy tantalized my senses. I could smell the musky scent of my arousal. My punished ass and back moved against the bed, reminding me of his dominance over me. My body radiated with energy, and the building orgasm exploded.

Not caring if the other kingsmen heard, for they had all had their fair share of my pleased sounds, I screamed in wild abandon. Gripir continued to pound his cock into me at a frenzied pace until he too called out my name in a guttural moan. He released his seed inside of me for the second time.

Breathing heavily, we both held each other in silence.

A captor. A man.

A queen. A woman.

## CHAPTER 11



What seemed like hours later, I stirred and my eyes fluttered open. Plush bedding was wrapped around my body, and I saw Gripir asleep on the bed beside me. Hearing the sound of hoofbeats approaching underneath my window, I bolted up. I glanced around the room, briefly forgetting where I was.

Gripir stirred, but didn't wake. He merely rolled onto his side, his tousled hair falling in his face.

I carefully stood up from the bed, careful to not wake him, and I glanced toward the window when the sound of horses approaching grew louder. I ran my fingers through my hair to comb out all the knots, preparing for company. I could feel it. Sense it.

“Queen Zelladine?”

I whipped around to see Gripir sitting up in bed, rubbing his forehead with his hand. He blinked sleepily and looked at me with a small smile playing over his lips.

“People are approaching,” I said as I sat down on the edge of the bed.

Gripir stood up, stretching slowly. “No one can enter through the purple haze,” he informed me as he slipped on his clothes. He ran his hand through his hair again and looked at me with stern eyes.

“Stay here.”

I nodded as I watched him leave the room, closing the door behind him. I then walked over to the window and peered outside through the thick amethyst fog to see Troylus, Sigmund and Regin standing below, greeting the approaching horsemen. Squinting, I could see there were five of them, and they carried the king's colors.

I pushed the pane of glass open, so I could hear the conversation.

"It's King Basil," Troylus said.

"We told him we would bring the information to him. Why is he riding out here?" asked Regin.

It wasn't long for that question to be answered, because the five horsemen, led by King Basil himself, approached just as Gripir walked outside to join the others.

"King Basil," Troylus greeted. "What brings you all the way out here?"

"I've come to retrieve the evil queen," the king announced, not dismounting, nor did his men.

"We told you that we would get the information out of her, and also have her lift the curse," Troylus countered.

"And have you?" the king asked.

"With time," Troylus said calmly.

"I do not have time," King Basil countered, readjusting himself in the saddle. "My patience has run out. I expected Briar's body by now, and most certainly the end to the curse. You all have failed me."

"We have not failed in our mission," Sigmund said with a cross of his arms. "We simply have not completed it yet."

The king glanced at his men who flanked each side of him. "Yes, well, I'm here to complete it for you. Give me Queen Zelladine. I'm positive my ways of convincing Zelladine that I am not a man to cross will be more convincing."

"We are not handing her over," Gripir stated simply.

The king chuckled and looked at his men who also smiled in trained and puppeteered amusement. “Maybe you are confused as to who makes the rules around here. I am king, and what I dictate will be followed. It would be wise for you *kingsmen* to remember that.”

“And what exactly would you do to Zelladine that we could not, or have not, done already? You can’t simply kill her. Her death would not give you what you want,” Troylus said.

“I would have revenge!” the king shouted. “I would whip her publicly in front of all the villagers, then have them throw all their waste upon her. I would make it very clear that one is never to cross my rule or threaten my family. If her death is to come before I find Briar’s body, then so be it. The respect for my throne and reign is far more important than my daughter.”

It took all my might not to shout out from my window and unleash all the rage I felt inside with words. This man was far more a monster than any dark force I had ever encountered. I vowed to make this man pay someday. With something far worse than just a curse.

“King Basil,” Regin said as he took a step toward the line of horses. The action had all the guards placing their hands upon the hilts of their swords in preparation. Basil raised his hand in peace. “We cannot simply hand her over to you.” He pointed at the fortress. “Do you not see the spell-thick purple fog? If we were to remove Queen Zelladine from the fortress, the spell would be broken, and all of her powers would return. You and your men would not stand a chance against her.”

I stared down in fascination, wondering why the kingsmen didn’t simply hand me over. I couldn’t understand their resistance. I also believed that Regin was lying to the king to prevent an attack. Yes, the purple haze held me captive, but the kingsmen had proved that they could use the crystals elsewhere. Yet they were not sharing that information with the king and his men.

The king looked up at the window. I backed away, not wanting him to see me, fearing that the sight of me would only

make the situation worse. I could see the tension was high, and Regin was trying his best to avert the impending storm.

“I mean,” Regin looked over his shoulder at his fellow kingsmen. “We would hand her off if we could. But we cannot risk her regaining her strength and destroying us all with very little effort if her magic was restored.”

Sigmund nodded and added a smile to help Regin’s story. “Aye.”

The other kingsmen did not seem so willing to appease the king, remaining silent.

“Plus,” Regin continued. “No one but the four of us can enter the fortress. You and your men could try, but you would fail. And I can’t say that you would survive trying to do so.”

“What is this dark magic of yours?” the king asked.

“It takes dark magic to fight dark magic,” Troylus countered. “And we are doing as you originally asked. We will find out what Zelladine did with Briar and have the curse lifted. But none of this can be done if we don’t have the queen in our possession.”

The scowl on the king’s face revealed he was not pleased in the slightest. He pulled his horse forward and began walking along the edge of the thick purple seeping all around the stone structure of my prison. He never once got close enough to touch, but you could see that he was looking if there was a way to penetrate the smoke.

“You men would be wise to not deceive me,” the king said with skepticism washing across his face.

The kingsmen said nothing but allowed the king to circle his horse around them in the hope of quenching his doubt.

Troylus finally spoke. “King Basil, we will complete our mission soon. That is what you sought our services for, and that is what we shall do. We will break Zelladine as we said we would do, but it will be *us* doing the breaking and no one else.”

King Basil guided his horse to join his men. “Do not fool yourselves, men. You cannot stand against me. Don’t allow your arrogance or your reputation alone to convince you otherwise.” He paused and looked at each of his men on steeds. “My patience is growing thin. Remember that.” Kicking the sides of his horse, he rode off with his men riding behind him.

When the king and his men were gone, Troylus was the first to speak. “Pompous ass.”

“I don’t think we made his royal ass happy,” Sigmund added with a chuckle.

“I think he was trying to figure out a way in,” Gripir said.

“Yes.” Troylus nodded. “I have a feeling the king will return. But this time, with a far greater army than four men. I don’t think he was expecting us to not hand over Zelladine.”

I walked away from the window and sat back down on my bed, wondering why the kingsmen had fought to keep me here with them. It was unlike any man to not cower before the king’s will, and I had never seen anything like it. These men had shown me that they were far stronger than I had anticipated, but watching them below my window proved it so much more. I had always considered men weak when it came to the rule of a king.

With the kingsmen, I was wrong.

## CHAPTER 12



“*F*oes on the hills ahead,” Troylus announced, sliding off his steed as he entered the fortress.

He nodded, glancing over the kingsmen. His eyes then fell on me standing beside them near the well. The kingsmen had agreed to allow me to get some fresh air and sunlight in the exposed courtyard, and we were drinking some water pulled from the well when Troylus came storming in.

Scowling slightly when he glanced down at my ankle and saw me free from my shackles, Troylus continued, “There was word of an approaching army with the intent to defeat the mighty kingsmen. I rode out to see if this were true myself. Indeed, there is an army approaching. Smaller than most armies, but there are far more of them than us. But we will not cower. Zelladine, remain at my side. Men, form in front of the fortress and be sure to protect the queen. If she falls, so do we. She is ours to protect at whatever cost.”

Animated by the prospect of a fight, the kingsmen scattered to their positions. I stood alongside Troylus waiting to see what was about to unfold. He led me toward the entrance of the fortress but would not allow me to exit as the kingsmen had.

“You do not need to be afraid, Zelladine. If we fall in battle, I want you to close these gates and hide behind the fortress walls. They may not come in here if we remain outside to fight.”

“Oh, I am far from afraid,” I said with a hidden smile. Licking my lips, I schooled my face to remain expressionless as a movement caught my eye. Several hundred yards away, a head poked from the top of a hill then ducked down in a hurry.

“A scout,” Regin said, keeping his voice down so only the kingsmen and I could hear him.

Gripir nodded, before calling out, “They will be here soon. Be ready.”

Reaching back, Sigmund grabbed his bow and strung it. The quiver was accessible, hanging just behind his right shoulder. Positioning himself in battle stance, Sigmund silently waited for victory or death.

We did not have to wait long. Over the grassy hills and through the light of the setting sun charged a mixed body of men. Twelve had horses and the rest were on foot. But leading the army was a woman. A woman I recognized, though I wasn't sure yet if the kingsmen had, for her identity was hidden by her helmet. The only sign of femininity was the long blonde hair that flew from underneath the heavy metal.

Sigmund drew back his shaft, watching those on horseback. As the attacking army—led by the woman on a mighty white steed—drew near, the kingsmen raised a wavering cry and prepared for battle. One of the horsemen came within range. Sigmund smiled as he released the shaft. The arrow sped true, piercing between the slit of the horseman's visor to send him crashing to the ground. The first casualty signaled that the war had truly commenced.

Troilus pushed me back further into the fortress and said, “I must fight with my men and cannot stay here to protect you. Do not leave these walls no matter what. Even if we all perish, you stay behind these walls where you are safe.” He didn't wait for me to say a single word. Nor did he notice that I followed him out so that I could watch the battle from afar.

The other horsemen reined back with shock at seeing their fellow men shot one by one from Sigmund's sharp aim. The rest of the kingsmen had yet to fight due to the aim and precision of Sigmund. It was quite clear few fighters could fire a shaft as



Sigmund could. The attacking army had thought themselves safe with their numbers, but slowly those numbers dwindled. Sigmund continued to smile, loosing arrows at random among the advancing foe, most of whom had left their faces completely unprotected thinking four kingsmen would be no match.

The kingsmen dodged some arrows with shields drawn, and Sigmund returned fire, taking out one of the archers.

“They are closing in,” Gripir called to the men.

“Prepare for hand-to-hand!” Troylus called, gripping the hilt of his sword. Regin made quick eye contact with him and nodded, drawing his own sword and holding it easily in one hand.

They both sprang up, followed by the rest of the men, whirling their weapons into the faces of their rivals. Shocked, the leading rank stumbled backward from their attack. With the lust of battle filling them, the kingsmen charged into the center of the fight. Dodging many of the blows aimed at each one of them, the kingsmen fought bravely, releasing everything they had upon the much larger enemy.

I watched Regin face off with one of the armored men who had dismounted. As sword rang against sword, he ducked a blow, leapt another, and spun into a whirlwind of blocks and parries. The man never let up, and I couldn't take my eyes off such glorious strength and skill.

A movement to the right of Regin caught my eye. Troylus drew one of his smaller and lighter axes from a holder along his spine. Spinning rapidly, he blocked a sword coming from the side. Leaping back, he engaged two foes. Now hard-pressed, he permitted himself to be driven back. Two horses stood behind him, by about ten yards I guessed, and just in front of them were the other two mounted men prepared for kidnapping with a length of dark cloth. As the enemy thrust at him, Troylus dodged, letting a sword glance off the cloak roll on his shoulder. Spinning sideways, he turned and ran for the two remaining mounted men. Quicker than thought, Troylus hurled one of his axes at the man on the right while drawing

his sword once again. The thrown axe flew true, striking the slits of the visor and hurling the man dead off his horse. Planting one hand on the horse's neck, Troylus vaulted up. Drumming up renewed energy, he kicked the other man in the chest. The force of his kick knocked the enemy off the horse as Troylus' sword found the weak spot at the joint of his armor and helmet.

I scanned the battle before me and saw Gripir sprinting forward. He charged his opponents, now nearly upon him. Dropping onto his back, Gripir avoided a swiping blow meant to slice him in half. Twisting up, he hurled a dagger into the man's face. He then charged at the remaining man who was trying to mount his comrade's horse.

I then watched Sigmun aim his arrow directly at the female—her identity still hidden by her helmet—who had retreated a bit when the battle fully engaged. On her shoulder was a black raven—Hrafn. I saw her lips moving, her hands rising, and as she did so, the purple haze around me lifted just enough that I was able to step out from its suffocating hold. Hrafn was having her lift the spell. I glanced back at Sigmun and saw he couldn't get a clear line of fire, but he was dodging swords and bodies to try to get his shot.

It was time I ended this. A little human death was inevitable in battle, but...enough. I had the power to stop this with a raise of my arms, and a few spoken words. The kingsmen were all too engrossed in battle to see that I had emerged from the fortress and the purple haze. But as I chanted the last word needed to freeze all the men engaged in war, Sigmun was able to fire the arrow directly at Briar Rose.

Her cry was the only sound I heard as I watched the arrow pierce her skin.

The sounds of battle suddenly ceased as every single man was forced by my spell to become as still as stone. They could see, they could breathe, they could hear, but there was nothing any of them could do until I deemed it so. For the first time in a long time, I was in control. They were all at my mercy. But my attention was on something far more important.

Briar.

She swayed on her steed, able to move because only *men* were cursed by my spell.

Grasping the pommel tightly, Briar leaned forward. Her breath became shallow and fast. Glancing down, she realized she was wounded. Barely able to keep her balance, she slid off the horse's back and leaned against its side.

I ran up, worry pounding against my heart. Briar raised her hand, stopping my panic before it could begin.

"I have a leg wound, and it feels like a few other scrapes and cuts. It doesn't seem that serious except for the blood loss and drop in excitement. I'm just a little lightheaded."

"Briar," I said, wrapping my arms around her. "You could have been killed! What were you thinking of, charging the kingsmen like that? You are wounded, and you are a fool. If you were not hurt, I would take a lash to your foolish backside and whip some sense into you." The memory of Sigmund's lashing had me blushing, and I hoped that Briar hadn't noticed.

"You are my friend, Zellie," Briar retorted.

I shook my head and sighed. "This is my fight."

"That you need a good friend by your side to help with," she countered, dabbing at her leg with a piece of cloth she pulled from a bag hanging off her saddle. She looked up and around at all the frozen men, including her prince. "How long do you plan to keep them all like this?" She giggled. "I have to hand it to you, Zellie. This is one of your finer spells. The looks on their faces." She leaned over to where Frederick sat motionless on his horse and poked him in the thigh playfully. "I could have some fun with this."

"Be careful," I warned. "They can see and hear us."

Briar froze, then stroked the area that she had just poked. "Sorry, my love," she said to Frederick, her prince and now husband, with another giggle.

I tightened my grip around her tired frame. “I guess we better decide what to do now. When my spell wears off...the kingsmen are not going to be pleased.” I took the time to look at each one in their immobilized stance, knowing they were sizzling with rage inside.

Briar sighed, blinking against the dizziness that the blood loss caused. “Let’s get them locked up before that happens, and then I will leave it up to you to decide.” She looked around with sad eyes. “I hate to see all those who have lost their lives. But I will do anything to repay my debt to you, Zellie. Anything.”

Men had fallen in battle, and more were wounded. From all appearances, Briar’s were among the less severe, although her leg wound from Sigmun’s arrow was rather deep. She had another slight gash on her upper arm, and one across her face along the cheekbone.

“Do you have enough strength to help me get the kingsmen locked away in the dungeon?” I asked.

A mischievous smile washed over Briar’s pale face. “Oh, I would take great pleasure in doing so.” She laughed loudly as she made her way to Sigmun. “I may have to toy with this one a bit for wounding me. What great fun we could have.”

Oh yes. What great fun I would have with these men. I planned on enjoying every single, wicked moment of it.

## CHAPTER 13



“Well, well. Isn’t this positively cozy?”

The small room echoed with the bang and clatter of chains as each of the men strained against their bonds. They had been stripped down to only their leather breeches. Pressed standing against the hard stone wall, their arms were raised and shackled above their heads. Their tanned skin glistened with sweat from their exertions to be free. Their faces streaked with dirt. All their bodies showed signs of battle. A deep red scrape across the chest of Gripir. A bandaged shoulder gash on Sigmun. A cut above Troylus’ eye. A purple bruise along Regin’s jaw.

It was probably wrong, but I felt a surge of awareness with such obvious displays of masculine strength and vigor barely restrained in front of me. As I observed before, none of my men were the typical puny mortals of the kingdom. Their vitality and fight set them apart.

All of them stayed stubbornly silent.

“No witty rejoinder? Not even from you, Sigmun?” I looked from man to man. Their eyes sparked with bright fury, one and all.

I sighed...just a tad dramatically. “Fine! You win. I *suppose* I owe all of you an explanation and *perhaps*...an apology.”

I was still met with the silent treatment.

“You all are now aware that King Basil is an odious toad who never cared a whit for his daughter beyond what she

could do for him,” I began as I started to pace in front of their stretched and bound forms. “Thank you by the way for tossing that man out on his considerable ass when he insulted me. It really was terribly sweet and noble of you all.”

I peeked at them from under my lashes.

Still nothing.

“So you must understand, when Briar Rose came to me asking for help, I couldn’t possibly refuse her. In order for her to have time to sneak away from her father’s clutches and marry the man she loved, I had to make him believe she was dead so he wouldn’t search the kingdom for her. Now I know you are all probably angry with me for not trusting you with the truth about Briar Rose’s death, but...well...I was having such a terribly good time playing our little game that I didn’t want to.”

This finally got a rise out of them. “This wasn’t a game, Zelladine,” responded Troylus. His brow lowered and jaw tightened as he admonished me.

“Unshackle me and I will show you just how serious we were,” threatened Gripir.

“Yes...I don’t think I’m going to be doing that just yet,” I said as I wrinkled my nose and shook my head.

“You should have entrusted us with your secret, Zella,” sighed Regin as he uncomfortably shifted on his feet and rolled his shoulders.

“I know that...now...but you have to admit we all had a rather inauspicious start,” I explained.

“Well, now you do know, so get us out of these damn chains,” chimed in Sigmun. “The jest is over, Zell.”

Shaking my head side to side, I said, “Not till you forgive me.”

“Fine. We forgive you,” sighed Regin.

“See...I’m not feeling the trust or forgiveness,” I teased as each of their features remained hard and implacable.

There was a low, dull rumble around the chamber when, to a man, they seemed to growl at me.

Clapping my hands, I cried out, “How about another game?”

“It was never a game. She’s impossible,” said Gripir as he turned to address the others.

“When we get free of these chains, you will pay for this, Zelladine,” warned Troylus.

His warning sent a special thrill down my back to my toes knowing they would be making me pay in the most painfully pleasurable way possible. I bit my lip in anticipation. I hoped it was imaginative. I did so enjoy the creative imagination these men put into their punishments.

Yet, for now, they were not in control. I was.

“Tut, tut. You better be nice to me, after all, you are chained to the wall right now, and I do have my powers back.”

“For now,” said Sigmun.

I just smiled.

Tapping my fingertip to my lips, I observed each one of them. There was the unmistakable hard ridge pressing against their leather breeches. No doubt they were already thinking of ways to punish me for my insolence. Perhaps there was a way I could show them I was apologetic.

“I think all of your dispositions would become much sweeter if you were a little more comfortable.”

Striding up to Troylus, I gave him a saucy wink before reaching for the laces of his breeches. His arms jerked against his chains, but he stayed bound. As the laces loosened, I reached in and pulled his thick cock free.

I then moved to Sigmun. “Shall I also make you comfortable?”

“By all means,” he said with a jaunty smile.

I unlaced his breeches as well and gave his cock a few strokes before moving to Regin.

“You know eventually we will get free,” he warned. Regin was forever warning me against my bad behavior. Good thing for both of us I never listened.

Leaning up on my toes as I handled his shaft, I whispered, “I’m counting on it.”

I felt a little tingle of apprehension as I approached Gripir. His cold, flinty stare never left my face. Knowing he would not appreciate a light-hearted remark, I simply undid his breeches and almost reverently pulled his engorged member free.

Taking a few steps back, I wondered at how powerful they each looked despite their chains.

Keeping my gaze trained on them, I slowly undid the silver clasps down the front of my purple brocade gown. It opened to reveal my unbound breasts and flat stomach. I was hoping the dark violet of the gown would compliment the pale cream of my skin and the stark onyx of my hair. Judging by the further lengthening of each of their cocks...I was right.

Letting the gown fall open, I stood there displayed before them. The air in the chamber was charged with suppressed tension and heightened awareness. Despite my frivolous tone and in spite of their chains, I knew that they were still in charge. That to truly gain their forgiveness I must show penitence...submission.

Kneeling before Troylus, I reached to grasp his cock. Placing my lips around the bulbous tip, I swirled my tongue around his soft flesh before taking his length deeper into my mouth. Grasping his thighs, I moved my head up and down his shaft. It was strange not feeling the press of his hand against the back of my head, forcing me. Opening my jaw wide, I swallowed his length till I felt the press of the head against the back of my throat, gagging me. Reflexively, I started to pull back.

“Keep your mouth on my cock,” ordered Troylus.

I looked up the length of his powerful body to meet his stern gaze.



“Don’t let it out of your mouth.”

Shifting my hips, I pressed my inner thighs together. This was what I needed.

Once more, I swirled my tongue over the head, wetting it before letting it slide along my tongue.

“Push it. Force it. I want to see you gag on my cock.” His voice was ragged and harsh with command.

Digging my nails into his strong thighs, I breathed deeply through my nose before pushing my head forward, taking him deep. Spittle sputtered out of the corners of my mouth as I coughed and choked but I refused to relent.

“Keep it there. Don’t pull back,” groaned Troylus as he shifted his hips forward.

The movement caused me to choke, my jaw closing slightly on his shaft. The scrape of my teeth caused him to hiss with pleasure before shifting his hips forward again.

Panic twisted in my breast as the desire to please warred with the primal need to breathe.

I could feel the slightest movement of his cock on my tongue. It began to swell and became even more rigid as I moved my head back and forth again. Shifting my hand, I moved to grasp his shaft at the base to give my throat some relief.

“Place your hand on my cock and I will make you regret it the moment I’m free,” he warned. “You’ll use only that pretty mouth of yours.”

With the memory of the harsh feel of his hand and leather lash on my ass, I immediately obeyed.

My jaw burned as tears watered my eyes. Still I forced myself to swallow his cock deep, past my own endurance. I could feel the ripple of his release moments before his seed burst into my mouth.

“Swallow every drop,” he growled.

Keeping my mouth open, I swallowed his thick white cum.

Pulling free, I wiped the back of my hand across my mouth to clean away the spittle and drips of cum. Without a word, I replaced his britches.

As I made to rise, Sigmund's deep voice rang out. "Crawl to me."

Raising startled eyes to his, I could see he was in earnest. Taking a deep breath, I crawled on the hay-strewn stone floor, dragging my purple dress along with me. When I was kneeling before him, his rigid cock bobbed and swayed before my eyes.

With the taste of Troylus' cum still on my tongue, I reached for Sigmund's cock.

"Lick my balls first," he ordered.

Lifting his shaft, I pushed out the tip of my tongue to gently lick the smooth, loose skin of his balls. He smelled of musk and leather.

"Take them into your mouth."

Opening my jaw wider, I sucked one ball into my mouth. It was odd feeling the softness of his skin wrapped around what felt like a hard walnut.

"Both of them."

Sending him a plaintive look, I hesitated.

"Both of them," he repeated more firmly.

With his cock still in my hand, I used my other hand to push his second ball into my mouth. My shoulders heaved as the cheeks of my mouth bulged. I could only move my tongue from side to side as his flesh filled my mouth. The sole sound in the chamber was the harsh breathing of all the men and the heavy rattle of their chains.

"That's it. Now lick further back."

His balls popped out of my mouth one at a time.

"Further back?" I asked, confused at his command.

"Slip your tongue beneath my balls and move it deeper between my legs."

Sigmund shifted his stance so his legs were opened wider.

Still confused, I lifted his flesh and ran my tongue under the soft, loose skin and lower.

“Kneel between my legs with your back against the wall. I want to feel your tongue deeper.”

Struggling to obey, I clenched my teeth as the cold and rough stone wall pressed against my back. Awkwardly I tilted my head back as Sigmund shifted his hips forward as far as his chains would allow.

“That’s it, *your majesty*. Tongue my ass.”

My cheeks flushed at his use of my title while I was in such an ignoble and humiliating position. Still, a part of me thrilled at being treated so roughly. Placing my hands on the underside of his bottom cheeks, I used my thumbs to open him slightly. With my nose pressed between his cheeks, I pushed out the tip of my tongue to press it against his puckered entrance, grimacing as I did so. He was truly seeing that I paid for my deception. My tongue flicked over the ridged skin as I could feel the vibrations of Sigmund’s groans as they rippled down his body.

I moved my tongue in circles before swiping it down to almost touching his balls and back up.

“Dammit, Zellie. Dammit. Keep moving your tongue, just like that,” groaned Sigmund.

As I obeyed, it occurred to me that perhaps in one of my games with Sigmund he would enjoy feeling the press of something in his ass as much as I did.

I flicked my tongue in earnest now, spurred on by the thought of future painfully pleasurable games. My cunny ached as the press of my thighs no longer kept my rising desire at bay.

“Push your tongue into my ass,” he cried out tightly.

I obeyed. Pressing my fingers into his bottom cheeks, I pushed the tip of my tongue against his dark entrance till the ridges felt smooth. His ass gave slightly.

It was all he needed.

I could feel his body shift as he went up on his toes, hips out. Between his legs, I could see his cock straight and proud as streams of thick white cum shot out, splashing onto my thighs. Crawling from between his legs, I went to wipe it off.

“Leave it there and get over here,” ordered Regin.

Glancing up, I could see Sigmun resting his head against the wall, his eyes closed. Sated.

Crawling over to Regin, I knelt before him, awaiting his further command. It enthralled me that, though these men were chained and bound, they still had the power to command both my mind and body. It was as if the fact that their wrists were bound but they could still will me to obey only strengthened their hold over me.

“You know what I want,” said Regin.

Kneeling prone before him, I thought for a moment. Then I slowly rose. Boldly meeting his eyes, I ran my right hand over the tops of my thighs, collecting Sigmun’s cum on my fingers and palm. Turning my back on Regin I bent over at the waist. Using my left hand, I pried open my bottom cheeks. Then, I smoothed the cool cum over my bottom hole.

“Shift your hips back, Zella.”

Watching over my shoulder, I shimmied backward till I could feel the press of his cock against my own flesh. Reaching between my legs with my right hand, I grasped his length and guided it to my bottom entrance.

“Fuck your own ass with my cock,” he ground out.

Shifting till I felt the head press against my dark hole, I pushed my body backward. Breathing heavily as his shaft began to thrust against my tiny, tight entrance.

“Oh! Oh! I...can’t...” I breathed.

“Do it, Zella.”

Gritting my teeth, I willed myself to use the pain as I jerked my body backward, impaling myself on his cock.

Crying out, I almost lost my balance as I doubled over, my fingertips scraping the floor. Taking a deep breath, I braced my hands on the tops of my thighs and leaned backward, pushing his cock deeper into my clenching passage.

If possible, it hurt even worse than the last time. With my body bent in half, everything felt tighter and more restrained as his thick staff pushed deeper inside of me. My stomach cramped as I could feel my body clench and grip him. Reaching between my legs, I rubbed my fingertips along my cunny, trying to ease the ache in my bottom with pleasure elsewhere.

After several deep breaths and slow shifts, my bottom cheeks pressed against his stomach. He was fully seated inside of me.

I was dizzy with pain and awareness.

“Start moving. Fuck my cock.”

Whimpering, I did as I was told. Rocking my body back and forth, I fucked back onto his cock. I was both the master and the slave—in control, yet causing my own torment. Wave after wave of cramping pain shot up my back as my body struggled to accept his long girth.

“Faster,” he barked.

My mouth opened on a silent cry as I moved my body faster. His cock swelled wider, further straining my tight passage before he roared his release, coating my insides with his seed. Gingerly, I shifted my body forward, pulling free from his cock.

“Kneel.”

Twisting my body back around to face him, I winced as I knelt, my heels pressing into my now sore bottom. I could feel his cum as it slowly dribbled out of my dark hole.

“Lick me clean.”

I looked from his cock to his face and back. He had warned me the last time he fucked my ass that he would make me clean off his cock afterward. Hesitantly opening my

mouth, I closed my eyes as I took his cock into my mouth, cleaning off the taste of my own bottom.

When I was finished, I crawled to Gripir. My heart beating so hard and fast in my chest I feared it would burst. My jaw and bottom both ached. My cunny clenched from unmet need. Despite my fear of him, I knew my penance to Gripir was the most important of all four men.

“I will mete out my true punishment later when I am no longer fettered by these chains,” he warned. “For now, grab my cock. Jerk it hard and fast in your hand.”

Not sure whether to be grateful for the small reprieve or fearful of the future, I gripped his cock. Swiftly moving my hand up and down its length, I awaited his instructions.

“Keep moving your hand. When I cum, I want to cum on your face. I want your eyes on mine as I spill my seed on you.”

Holding my breath in anticipation, I worked my hand over his length. After several moments, he threw his hips forward on a groan. Then, his bright azure eyes clashed with mine as strings of hot cum hit me in the face, covering my cheeks and mouth.

Not a word was uttered in the chamber.

Drained both emotionally and physically, I slowly rose, not daring to wipe the evidence of Gripir’s passion off my face.

Turning, I sought the solitude of my chamber, leaving the men still bound in chains against the wall.

## CHAPTER 14



“**S**now is here. She’s brought some stew for the kingsmen,” said Briar Rose as I strode into the main hall refreshed after a hot bath and some rest.

“Well, isn’t that kind of you,” I said as I watched Briar Rose make strange slashing motions with her hands behind Snow’s back.

Ignoring Briar’s antics, I asked, “What kind?” as I reached for the lid of the large earthenware pot she held.

Briar started to spasm as she waved her hand violently behind Snow. I immediately knew why the moment I raised the lid. An unholy stench emanated from the pot. Surely the warm flesh of no beast of Earth or sky was capable of making that smell! I watched in horror as the concoction bubbled and burped noxious, sickly puffs of gray smoke.

Taking a step back as I pulled a perfumed handkerchief from my sleeve to wave beneath my nose, I coughed to cover my discomfort.

“It is rabbit stew. My specialty. I don’t think it is too much to state that I am rather famous for it throughout the forest,” offered Snow proudly.

“Of that I have no doubt, dear.”

Snow beamed from the perceived compliment.

“May I take it to the kingsmen? I had heard from my men that you had them imprisoned here and I thought perhaps a little home cooking would cheer them up.”

Knowing I had already done a great deal to *raise* their spirits, I only nodded my assent. “I think that is a fine idea!” Motioning to a servant, I had them relieve Snow of her burden. “Won’t you take tea with me and Briar Rose while the men enjoy your repast?”

“Oh, that would be lovely!” exclaimed Snow. “Surrounded by seven burly men and a baby all day, I am simply starved for feminine company. Red is sweet, and I absolutely adore her, but I fear some of the people from my village think I am going quite daft from talking to a large red wolf all the time!”

Aware that Snow was friends with the enchanted wolves’ new mate, I laughed at her jest.

As Briar showed Snow into the drawing room, I motioned for the servant to return. Turning my head away, I quickly lifted the lid off the stew and slipped a large iron key inside, sending up a small prayer that the odoriferous meal would not melt the metal.

“See that the warden releases their wrists and only manacles them by the feet so that they may eat their meal with relish,” I ordered.

\* \* \*

LEAVING Snow and Briar chatting about being newly married wives, I tiptoed down the dungeon stairs to see how my men were getting along.

Peeking around the corner, I observed them unnoticed.

They were all sitting in a circle around Snow’s pot of stew. Their arms were free, but each had a heavy ankle manacle.

Well, I wasn’t about to make it too easy for them. What fun was there in that?

“I think the huntsmen may be trying to kill us,” said Troylus as he poked at the fast-hardening stew.

“What kind of animal could this be?” asked Regin.



“Somehow it seems crueler to not just kill the beast but to make it suffer the indignity of becoming...whatever this is,” offered Sigmund as he sniffed at his bowl before turning his head away with a grimace.

“Seriously, do you think the huntsmen are trying to kill us? It’s the only explanation I can think of as to why they would send Snow here with this...hateful weapon,” observed Troylus.

Ever the thoughtful one, Regin offered, “Maybe Snow is just a bad cook?”

“No one. *No one*...is as bad a cook as this!” chimed in Gripir. “I think this is definitely an act of war.” With that, he pushed the whole pot over to let the stew ooze over the straw and down the drain in the center of the chamber.

“A key!” called out Troylus as they all scrambled to rescue the key from the gooey mess before it fell between the drain slats.

Shaking the gloppy gray substance from the shaft of the key, Troylus tried it in his lock. The manacle clicked open.

With a cheerful shout, they pushed out their shackled legs for Troylus to unlock the chains as each of them began to talk over the other with plans on how to retrieve their weapons and escape the castle.

Turning, I headed back up the stairs. I did not have much time.

Making my escape, I fled into the forest.

Now I would learn the truth about my men. Either they would chase after me...or they would return to their mercenary pursuits.

I did hope they chose the former. I had grown quite fond of each of them...as well as the games we played. I realized now how tiring and uneventful my life had become before them. There was something numbing about always having someone at your command...to bow and scrape. Never anyone to challenge or cross you. It had become boring!

Then these men forced their way into my life and everything came alive.

My blood charged at just the thought of their coarse words and rough commands. How they forced me to bend to their will. It was infuriating and thrilling all at the same time. I loved the rush from feeling the bite of pain followed by the relief of pleasure. The exhilarating confusion of being both bound and free.

I now wanted it...needed it...craved it.

*I would hate to give it all up just because of a tiny misunderstanding over me lying about killing their princess and then trapping them in a dungeon!*

## CHAPTER 15



A deep rumbling noise broke the quiet of the forest from the north.

They had found me. They had chosen me after all, I thought with a smile.

Knowing my men would be resourceful in securing weapons and their horses once I gave them a little help with those pesky ankle shackles, I headed to the hot springs. I had recently spied the huntsmen disciplining Snow there. I shall never forget her look of blissful satisfaction as each man took a turn pleasuring her.

I wanted that.

After doing my penance before the men earlier, my body still hummed, needing release. The kind of release only my kinsmen could give me.

The kinsmen stormed into the clearing, each astride a mighty beast. Gripir had barely waited for his horse to slow his stride before leaping from the animal's back.

Stalking toward me, he grabbed my gown by the front and yanked me to his chest. "Get these damn clothes off right now."

A thrill danced and swirled deep in my breast as I boldly leaned forward and whispered, "You're going to have to tear them off me."

Gripir smiled. It was the first time I had ever seen him express such a cheerful emotion.

A moment later, he fisted the material of my gown and viciously wrenched it from my body.

*Let the games begin.*

Smiling, I raised my arms. A soft green mist rose in a circle around the clearing, enclosing the large rocks of ice with the pool of warm water nestled in the center. The huntsmen would just have to wait before they returned to their favorite spring. Each of the kingsmen stripped off their torn and dirty clothes. When they stalked before me, I both felt and saw their hunger.

Troylus lifted me high in his arms before stepping over the boulders of ice into the warm water. We both let out an appreciative groan as the heated liquid rushed over our chilled skin. Regin, Gripir and Sigmun soon followed.

“I didn’t know what I wanted more, Zell’s tight cunt or a bath,” teased Sigmun as he splashed water over his face.

Troylus did the same, washing away the dried blood from the gash over his eye.

Floating in the warm water, I enjoyed watching the men bathe their strong, heavily muscled bodies. The calm after the storm of battle. Or was it the calm before another battle?

“Does this mean I am forgiven?” I asked saucily.

Four pairs of hostile eyes turned to me.

“Not even close, Zella,” intoned Regin as he made a move toward me.

“What do you say, men? Shall we show Zelladine how displeased we are at her subterfuge?” asked Troylus.

“Absolutely,” responded Gripir as he reached over the stones for a knife secured to the waistband of his breeches.

My mouth opened but words failed me. Fear crept over me as he unsheathed the knife and flipped it around in his palm.

Keeping his eyes trained on me, he raised his arm high and stabbed the boulder of ice to my right. Small flecks of ice hit the tops of my breasts and shoulders as he worked a large

piece of ice free. Tossing the knife aside, he held the ice in his palm. Rubbing and shaping it. The ice transformed from a jagged chunk into an oblong object from the heat of his hands.

Fascinated, I watched the play of light as it bounced and sparkled off the smooth, shining piece of ice crystal.

“Men,” said Gripir with a nod.

Hands gripped my shoulders as I was hauled backward. “Hey!” I cried out as Troylus and Regin reached beneath the water to raise my knees high.

Pressed between their two large bodies, I was held aloft, my legs spread and open. My cunny on full display.

“Put me down! What are you doing?” I cried out.

With the backs of his fingers, Sigmun stroked the fine hair of my cunny. “It’s time for your punishment, Zell. You’ve been very, very bad, indeed.”

Troylus and Regin effortlessly tilted me back further, forcing my hips higher above the water. I felt Sigmun stroke a single fingertip over my tight, puckered hole.

With horrified clarity, I realized what my punishment was to be.

“No! No! I don’t want to play this game!”

“You have no choice! And remember...using magic is cheating,” warned Troylus gruffly.

I knew better than to try my spells on them. Still, I was not sure I would be able to endure what they had planned for me.

Sigmun placed his hand under my bottom on my lower back, steadying me. Stepping aside, he nodded to Gripir who took a step before me. The hot spring was shallow on this end, so the water barely reached above his hips. I could see the head of his cock as it bobbed with each movement of the water. Holding the large piece of ice aloft for my fearful gaze, he then lowered his arm and positioned the ice rod at my hidden entrance.

My legs clenched, trying to close as I fought against Troylus' and Regin's grip. The first kiss of the ice sent a bolt of pained awareness up each of my limbs.

“Oh! Damn! No! It's cold! You can't!”

Gripir touched the ice to my dark hole again, this time applying pressure. My body trembled from overexertion as much as from the icy contact.

As he applied more pressure, the ice melted and became slicker. With a final push, the tip popped inside my body. Everything inside of me tightened and clenched. I started to whimper as I still weakly struggled against the hard grip of Troylus and Regin.

“Thrust it in deep, Gripir,” cheered on Sigmun.

Gripir's teeth clenched as he tightened his grip on the slippery ice rod and pushed harder, forcing the object deeper into my warm body.

I screamed in agony as the ice caused painful cramps up my back and around my stomach.

“Take it out! Take it out! Please!” I begged.

None of the men listened. This was my well-earned punishment and I was going to take it whether I liked it or not.

Sigmun pried my cheeks open wider as Gripir used the center of his palm to push the ice shaft all the way in. My body swallowed it whole.

This was worse than any pain I had experienced so far. It made me long for the heat of their palms from a spanking or the warmth of their cocks inside of me. Anything to stop the piercing bite of the ice.

Troylus and Regin released their grip on my body. I slid down into the warm water. Instead of comforting me, it only increased the disparity between the warmth of my skin and the frigid shaft up my bottom. I squeezed my eyes tightly shut as I gritted my teeth. My whole body began to tremble and shake from the strain.

I felt several hands on me but didn't open my eyes, too lost in my own pain. I was being pulled to the deeper end of the pool. My body floated back as someone placed themselves between my legs. I felt another one of them behind my head, supporting my back.

"Open your eyes, Zelladine. I want you to watch what I do to your body," murmured Troylus.

Slowly my eyes flicked open. My wet skin glistened, its pale, creamy texture tinted a light pink from the warmth of the water. Troylus was standing between my legs, his open mouth poised over my cunny.

"I want you to cum on my mouth," he said, his voice a harsh rasp.

Moaning, I shook my head no. "I can't. The ice. The ice hurts too much. My stomach...everything is cramping."

"Use the pain, Zelladine. Turn it into pleasure."

Troylus used his thumbs to part the folds of my cunny. Leaning down, he flicked the tip of his tongue over the sensitive nub. My whole body jolted from the impact. As Troylus continued to torture my cunny with flicks and swirls of his tongue, the other men joined in.

The harsh cracking sound of crunching grabbed my attention. Gripir and Sigmun were on either side of my floating body, holding my arms. They opened their mouths to show shards of ice slowly melting on their tongues. Sigmun winked at me before leaning down to capture my nipple and pull it deep into his mouth.

"No! Oh! Oh!" I cried out as his cold tongue bathed my warm flesh.

Gripir then did the same. With a dark glint to his eyes, he used his teeth to gently bite down on my nipple as he swiped a shard of ice from inside his mouth over the tip.

It was too much. I felt overwhelmed and confused. Dizzy with emotion.

I was at once hot and cold. The warmth of the water as it floated over my body only heightened the chill of the men's mouths on my nipples and the ice rod placed firmly inside my tight bottom. All the while, Troylus feasted on my cunny, forcing a response from me.

Regin leaned down to whisper in my ear. "Get used to this, your highness. We have finally captured our queen. The game is won. You are ours now. Submit. You have no other choice."

The guttural rasp of his voice as he uttered his possessive words sent me over the edge.

Screaming, my body bowed upward in their grasp as I cried out for more pain. "Bite me. Harder. Harder. Make it hurt! Oh! Yes!"

"With pleasure," breathed Gripir against my flesh as his sharp teeth almost pierced my skin.

Sigmun did the same to my other nipple as he reached under my floating body and painfully forced two fingers inside my cold, clenched bottom.

At that moment, Troylus scraped the edges of his teeth against my clit.

My world exploded in a shower of color and light as pleasure was torn from the grasp of pain.

\* \* \*

AFTERWARD, we all lowered our bodies deeper into the hot springs, letting the water lap at our necks and shoulders. With my eyes half-closed, I looked at each of them. So similar in bearing and purpose yet each his own man. I really had grown quite fond of all of them...and our games.

"So, what happens now?" I asked, almost afraid of the answer.

"What do you mean?" responded Gripir, his eyes still closed as he leaned his head back on one of the icy boulders.



“Well, you no longer serve that odious man, Basil. You now know that Briar Rose is happy and safe. So...I suppose your work here...and with me...is finished.”

I was surprised at the feeling of sadness that enveloped me at my words. I had always assumed it was my loss of powers which made me susceptible to mortal emotions of pain, love and loss but that was not so. My powers were fully restored and yet I still felt those same vulnerable emotions. It must be these men. I'd known from the moment I'd met them they were different from all the other mortals I had encountered and now I knew why. They were the ones who truly had all the power...over me.

“Now why would you think something like that?” asked Sigmund.

“Well...I....”

“Tut, tut,” teased Regin, using one of my own favorite phrases. “Does she really think we are done punishing her for her transgressions?”

“Punishing me? But I...I made my penance with you in the dungeon and you have punished me just now for my lying!”

Troilus shook his head. “There is still the running away to consider.”

Regin chimed in. “And the putting us in the dungeon in the first place.”

“And don't forget that disgusting fare she had Snow feed us,” offered Gripir.

“You can't blame me for Snow's terrible cooking!” I objected.

“Yes, but I *can* blame you for subjecting us to it,” countered Gripir.

He had a point there.

All four men began to inch closer, circling around me, closing in.

“The fact is, Zelladine, I think it will be a long...long... long time before we have finished thinking of reasons to punish and pleasure you,” warned Troylus.

“And we are duty bound to see this task through,” reasoned Regin.

“Well, well,” I said with a dramatic sigh. “It looks as though we are stuck with each other.”

Sigmund nodded, playfully looking despondent. “Alas, I believe we are.”

“Well, if we are going to continue our little game, I should continue to play my part,” I said with a mischievous smile.

Raising my arms high above the water, I flicked my wrists and disappeared....with their clothes and horses.

*I cannot wait to see what my punishment will be this time!*

## EPILOGUE



“*Y*our highness,” formally intoned Hrafn. “Your highness!” he called out louder.

It was difficult to hear him over all the laughter as I ran from tree to tree, peeking around the dark branches trying to spy the men.

Gripir, Regin, Sigmun, Troylus and I were playing a very naughty game of cat and mouse. Each time the cat caught the mouse, they were allowed to remove a layer of clothing. The only problem was it was four against one, and I was not allowed to use my powers. So not fair!

“Your highness, I must speak to you,” called out Hrafn.

Ever since meeting the kingsmen, my life was now filled with new experiences, both painful and pleasurable. I was loving every moment of it. Unfortunately, I was having so much fun with my men that I had been shamefully neglecting my duties. It was all Hrafn could do to get me to focus on something other than them. I really should take pity on my poor friend.

“Yes, Hrafn, what is—” I stopped with a shriek as Gripir grabbed me around the waist from behind and was at once removing my sash and playfully biting me on the neck.

Laughing and out of breath, I cried out, “Halt! Halt! We are torturing my poor Hrafn.”

Each of us stopped our game and moved to the small feast that was laid out upon some rocks. Roast beast, wine, fresh

berries. Grabbing a flagon of wine which was offered to me by Regin, I turned my full attention to Hrafn.

“Yes, my pet. What is it you need to speak to me about?”

“It is the wolves, your majesty,” said Hrafn with a much put-upon sigh as he ruffled his sleek black feathers.

“What about them?” I opened my mouth and Troylus tossed a sweet ripe berry into it.

“They are terrorizing the entire forest. Everyone is at their wit’s end. The huntsmen can no longer take their pranks and Theodora is threatening to turn them all into toads if they don’t stop knocking on her cottage door and running away.”

Since meeting my kingsmen, I no longer felt the same animosity toward the mortals of the kingdom as I once did. It was no longer as much fun tormenting them with the dark force, so I sent it away. Besides, the wolves had been beating the dark force into submission for several generations now, so it was all becoming rather boring. The only problem was that now, with no dark force to fight, the enchanted wolves had become restless. They had taken to playing silly pranks on the others in the forest and picking fights with the huntsmen.

Hrafn cleared his throat. “Theodora is threatening to turn you into a toad as well if you don’t reverse the wolves’ enchantment.”

“Is she now?” I chuckled. Theodora did not have that kind of power, but it wouldn’t stop her from trying. It was actually a blessing that Red had not yet learned it was I who was capable of reversing the curse imposed upon the wolves long ago, not Theodora.

“Very well. Tell Red and the wolves to come to me later today, and I will reverse the enchantment.”

“But not Snow! They can’t bring Snow,” said Gripir, his arms crossed over his chest.

I turned a questioning look on him.

“Every time Snow visits, she brings more of her cooking. I’m tired of choking it down just to be polite,” he replied with

a stubborn tilt of his chin.

“You heard the man, only Red and the wolves.”

Hrafn bowed his head and flew away to do my bidding.

Turning to the men, I clapped my hands. “Let the game begin again!” I said, laughing with frightened glee as the men slowly began to circle me, a determined glint in each man’s eye.

I did so enjoy playing with my four kingsmen!

**THE END**

# ABOUT ALTA HENSLEY

Alta Hensley is a USA TODAY bestselling author of hot, dark and dirty romance. She is also an Amazon Top 10 bestselling author. Being a multi-published author in the romance genre, Alta is known for her dark, gritty alpha heroes, sometimes sweet love stories, hot eroticism, and engaging tales of the constant struggle between dominance and submission.

She lives in a log cabin in the woods with her husband, two daughters, and an Australian Shepherd. When she isn't battling the bats, and watching the deer, she is writing about villains who always get their love story and happily ever after.

## Gods Among Men Series

[Villains Are Made](#)

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## Secret Bride Trilogy:

[Captive Bride](#)

[Kept Bride](#)

[Taken Bride](#)

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## Wonderland Trilogy:

[King of Spades](#)

[Queen of Hearts](#)

[Ace of Diamonds](#)

\* \* \*

## Dark Pen Series:

[Devil's Contract](#)

[Dirty Ledger](#)

[Dangerous Notes](#)

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Top Shelf Series:

Bastards & Whiskey

Villains & Vodka

Scoundrels & Scotch

Devils & Rye

Beasts & Bourbon

Sinners & Gin

\* \* \*

Evil Lies Series:

The Truth About Cinder

The Truth About Alice

\* \* \*

Breaking Belles Series:

Elegant Sins

Beautiful Lies

Opulent Obsession

Inherited Malice

Delicate Revenge

Lavish Corruption

\* \* \*

Gold In Locks

Sick Crush

Secret Bride

Spiked Roses

Captive Vow

Ruin Me

Delicate Scars





# ABOUT ZOE BLAKE

Zoe Blake is a USA TODAY Bestselling Author  
of Dark Romance and Romantic Suspense.

She delights in writing dark romance books filled with overly possessive billionaires, taboo scenes, and unexpected twists. She usually spends her ill-gotten gains on martinis, travel, and red lipstick. Since she can barely boil water, she's lucky enough to be married to a sexy Chef.

## DARK OBSESSION SERIES

*A Dark Romantic Suspense*

### **Wicked Games**

She's caught in my game... she just doesn't know it.

For weeks, I've been watching her. Stalking her.

Now it's time to start playing with my beautiful little pawn.

From the moment I first saw her from afar, I knew she would become my prized possession.

I will gaslight her into thinking she is my obedient ward, trapped in the Victorian era.

She is my unwilling captive, forced to play my sadistic game for her own survival.

She will have no choice but to bow to my rules and discipline.

In time, her memories of a modern life will fade.

If not, she will pay a painful price.

Her pretty mind is so caught up in my nightmare, she will never escape me.

The most wicked deception of all?

This isn't the first time we're playing this game.

### **Sinister Games**

She's trapped inside my twisted game.

And I am never letting her go.

I've started a new game. This one more sinister than the last.

Every time she tries to fight what we have, I just pull her deeper into my deception.

The slightest disobedience to my rules brings swift punishment.

I've pushed her to the edge.

She wants to kill me.

The only problem is... she loves me.  
Against her will, she loves every punishing, controlling thing I've done to her mind  
and body.

She's caught in my web; the harder she struggles, the more entangled she becomes.  
My beautiful girl will have no choice but to accept that I am her new reality.  
She is just a pawn in my game.

### **Savage Games**

She broke the rules of our game... she ran.  
Now she will pay.  
When will my pretty pawn learn that I am the master of this game?  
And only I will be the victor.  
She thinks she can hide from me.  
She thinks she can escape my wrath.  
She's wrong.  
This time when I catch her, there will be no escape.  
I no longer want her as just my beautiful captive.  
She will now become my wife, even if I have to drag her down the aisle.  
I want her under my complete control.  
I want her every breath, her every movement, her every thought to be only of me.  
This is no longer a game.  
She changed the rules, but I will win.

### **RUTHLESS OBSESSION SERIES**

*A Dark Mafia Romance*

#### **Sweet Cruelty**

*Dimitri & Emma's story*

It was an innocent mistake.  
She knocked on the wrong door.  
Mine.  
If I were a better man, I would've just let her go.  
But I'm not.  
I'm a cruel bastard.  
I ruthlessly claimed her virtue for my own.  
It should have been enough.  
But it wasn't.

I needed more.  
Craved it.  
She became my obsession.  
Her sweetness and purity taunted my dark soul.  
The need to possess her nearly drove me mad.  
A Russian arms dealer had no business pursuing a naive librarian student.  
She didn't belong in my world.  
I would bring her only pain.  
But it was too late...  
She was mine and I was keeping her.

### **Sweet Depravity**

#### *Vaska & Mary's story*

The moment she opened those gorgeous red lips to tell me no, she was mine.  
I was a powerful Russian arms dealer and she was an innocent schoolteacher.  
If she had a choice, she'd run as far away from me as possible.  
Unfortunately for her, I wasn't giving her one.  
I wasn't just going to take her; I was going to take over her entire world.  
Where she lived.  
What she ate.  
Where she worked.  
All would be under my control.  
Call it obsession.  
Call it depravity.  
I don't give a damn... as long as you call her mine.

### **Sweet Savagery**

#### *Ivan & Dylan's Story*

I was a savage bent on claiming her as punishment for her family's mistakes.  
As a powerful Russian Arms dealer, no one steals from me and gets away with it.  
She was an innocent pawn in a dangerous game.  
She had no idea the package her uncle sent her from Russia contained my stolen money.  
If I were a good man, I would let her return the money and leave.  
If I were a gentleman, I might even let her keep some of it just for frightening her.  
As I stared down at the beautiful living doll stretched out before me like a virgin sacrifice,  
I thanked God for every sin and misdeed that had blackened my cold heart.

I was not a good man.  
I sure as hell wasn't a gentleman... and I had no intention of letting her go.  
She was mine now.  
And no one takes what's mine.

### **Sweet Brutality**

*Maxim & Carinna's story*

The more she fights me, the more I want her.  
It's that beautiful, sassy mouth of hers.  
It makes me want to push her to her knees and dominate her, like the brutal savage I am.  
As a Russian Arms dealer, I should not be ruthlessly pursuing an innocent college student like her, but that would not stop me.  
A twist of fate may have brought us together, but it is my twisted obsession that will hold her captive as my own treasured possession.  
She is mine now.  
I dare you to try and take her from me.

### **Sweet Ferocity**

*Luka & Katie's Story*

I was a mafia mercenary only hired to find her, but now I'm going to keep her.  
She is a Russian mafia princess, kidnapped to be used as a pawn in a dangerous territory war.  
Saving her was my job. Keeping her safe had become my obsession.  
Every move she makes, I am in the shadows, watching.  
I was like a feral animal: cruel, violent, and selfishly out for my own needs. Until her.  
Now, I will make her mine by any means necessary.  
I am her protector, but no one is going to protect her from me.

## **IVANOV CRIME FAMILY TRILOGY**

*A Dark Mafia Romance*

### **Savage Vow**

*Gregor & Samara's story*

I took her innocence as payment.  
She was far too young and naïve to be betrothed to a monster like me.  
I would bring only pain and darkness into her sheltered world.  
That's why she ran.

I should've just let her go...  
She never asked to marry into a powerful Russian mafia family.  
None of this was her choice.  
Unfortunately for her, I don't care.  
I own her... and after three years of searching... I've found her.  
My runaway bride was about to learn disobedience has consequences... punishing  
ones.  
Having her in my arms and under my control had become an obsession.  
Nothing was going to keep me from claiming her before the eyes of God and man.  
She's finally mine... and I'm never letting her go.

### **Vicious Oath**

*Damien & Yelena's story*

When I give an order, I expect it to be obeyed.  
She's too smart for her own good, and it's going to get her killed.  
Against my better judgement, I put her under the protection of my powerful  
Russian mafia family.  
So imagine my anger when the little minx ran.  
For three long years I've been on her trail, always one step behind.  
Finding and claiming her had become an obsession.  
It was getting harder to rein in my driving need to possess her... to own her.  
But now the chase is over.  
I've found her.  
Soon she will be mine.  
And I plan to make it official, even if I have to drag her kicking and screaming to  
the altar.  
This time... there will be no escape from me.

### **Betrayed Honor**

*Mikhail & Nadia's story*

Her innocence was going to get her killed.  
That was if I didn't get to her first.  
She's the protected little sister of the powerful Ivanov Russian mafia family - the  
very definition of forbidden.  
It's always been my job, as their Head of Security, to watch over her but never to  
touch.  
That ends today.  
She disobeyed me and put herself in danger.  
It was time to take her in hand.

I'm the only one who can save her and I will fight anyone who tries to stop me,  
including her brothers.

Honor and loyalty be damned.

She's mine now.

For a list of All of Zoe Blake's Books Visit her Website!

[www.zblakebooks.com](http://www.zblakebooks.com)

