

Chapter 12

Aleiri

Aleiri stands on the edge of a clearing in the tents. She watches her eyes fixed on Brena's moving form. She passes from stance to stance with conscious effort. Every move is calculated, recalculated then settled upon, lending it this jerk in motion whenever she moves to the next stance. On the other hand her partner stands a few paces away practicing the same motions. Although he does not seem like he is practising stances, he is dancing; moving from every step with the grace of a swan, every motion carrying from one another like water flowing from brook to brook, then they strike forwards. His sword flies faster than lightning, stinging the very air itself. Brena lifts her sword to do a similar thrust, but she stumbles and collapses on top of Alyks.

Brena looks up at Alyks mortified, Alyks grasps her tight and smiles. His teeth bared like a wolf at her. He starts laughing then she catches on. Aleiri shutters at the contact, then turns around to leave the clearing. Over the past two weeks Aleiri has made it her business to follow Brena and Alyks. At first they did not converse at all. Aleiri had Brena all to herself as they talked through day and night. Brena had even made it her business to teach her a few sword stances. Aleiri did well, but then while in the woods practicing Alyks came by and corrected Brena's teaching. For a time Alyks joined the lessons, instructing them both, but her stomach flipped every time she saw Alyks and Brena teaching. It was clear that she was not wanted, so she left, but she has yet to stop watching. She knows that Alyks is not what he seems.

After everything going on with that Feydra girl he musn't. After the lessons Aleiri went around the camp asking about Alyks. Seeing if they knew anything about his relationship with Feydra. The rumors were abound, all from a simple personal maid to his personal sex slave, but all the rumors came down to this; Feydra was his. This has all led to this point, where Aleiri spends every spare moment watching Alyks and Brena.

Aleiri storms out from the clearing with the image of Alyks and Brena's embrace burned into her mind's eye. Aleiri walks through the tents of the camp. Initially she was afraid to walk through the camp alone. She would never admit it to anyone, but the only time she left the tent was when Brena was on her arm, but as she walked out she realized that people gave her a wide berth. The maids, servants and men at arms she used to talk to now avoid her at all costs. So now when she is walking through the camp the men part like water to an invisible ship she is captaining. She does not know where she is heading, her head is filled with contradictory feelings, but the image of Brena and Alyks in each other's arms is common amongst all her thoughts. Once she is able to find a heading she spots Feydra cleaning a pair of shiny black boots outside of Alyks' tent.

Aleiri walks towards her, but then shutters backwards. She overcomes this invisible force and pushes herself forwards. When she stands in front of Feydra, she notices that Feydra has yet to look up at her. Aleiri clears her throat obviously, Feydra does not respond.

"Feydra?" Aleiri asks.

"Yes." Feydra squeaks.

"Can we talk in private?" Aleiri asks.

Feydra darts her head to face her.

“No thank you.” Feydra squeaks, then scuttles into the tent.

Aleiri grumbles then something taps her shoulder. Her heart races, and she turns around to face Alyks.

“Good afternoon Aleiri, is there anything I can help you with?” Alyks asks.

Aleiri opens her mouth, but spots Brena standing behind Alyks staring at her with her head askew.

“Nothing, thank you for asking.” Aleiri says.

Aleiri stomps off, fuming. Aleiri doesn't notice Brena peel off from Alyks and walk towards her. When Aleiri steps into her tent Brena grabs her arm.

“Is everything all right?” Brena asks.

Aleiri turns around and sees Brena's angelic face.

“No, it isn't all right.” Aleiri fumes.

“What's wrong?” Brena asks.

“There is something wrong with Alyks I can't put my finger on it, but I know.” Aleiri says.

“Is this about Feydra?” Brena asks.

“No, maybe, why?” Aleiri responds.

“I asked him about it. He said that since she was dennish she was the victim of many assaults, so he took her in, and now people won't touch her.” Brena says.

“You believe that.” Aleiri says.

“Yes, what are you supposing?” Brena says.

“Nothing.” Aleiri says.

“Just say it.” Brena says.

“No.” Aleiri says.

“I know what your going to say. You’ve been stalking me like a fox for two weeks.

I see that way you look at him.” Brena says.

“What way do I look at him?” Aleiri asks.

Brena sighs.

“Don’t worry Aleiri I haven’t told him. He’s the catch, but hes a prince, you are a commoner. There can’t be anything between you.” Brena says.

Aleiri’s mouth falls agape.

“What?” Aleiri asks.

“Alyks and I love each other, and you can’t come between us. You can’t convince me that he is evil, so there is no point trying. I love him and that won’t change.” Brena says.

“Is that true?” Aleiri asks.

Brena hesitates.

“Yes.”

Aleiri sags, then collapses onto the bed, tears threaten to leak out, but Aleiri quickly dabs them away.

“I’m sorry Aleiri but I won’t let you get between us.” Brena says.

“That’s not what this is about.” Aleiri mutters.

“What is it then?” Brena asks.

Aleiri looks up at Brena. *‘There is nothing more beautiful on this earth. How could she ever compare herself to her sister?’* Aleiri’s stomach ties itself in a knot, then the knot breaks and releases a torrent of butterflies. Brena frowns looking down at her.

“Is there anything I can...” Brena is cut off when Aleiri leaps up and kisses her. Immediately after words Aleiri pulls herself away, then stumbles back on the bed. Brena’s eyes are wide, then she touches her fingers to her lips. After a moment of complete stillness Brena turns and runs out of the tent. When Brena leaves the light leaves Aleiri’s eyes, and she crumples into a ball on the bed and cries.