

# Chapter 8

Brena

On top of a small hill in the middle of a field right outside a forest two men sit eating off a plate of cheeses and meats. Both men wear gambesons with the crossed feathers of house light feather sown in. Three stacks of plate armor sit in a pile on the other end of the carpet. Standing on the other end of the carpet holding a pitcher of wine, Brena stands shaking, unable to pull her eyes from the cottage at the other end of the field. She wishes that the cabin was a little further, maybe if it was she would not be able to make out the hollow looks on the faces of three fresh corpses right outside.

“Pour me another glass wench.” Frenden says.

Brena stoops over and fills the man's glass. Her shaking causes her to spill on the man's leggings. The man scowls and bears his teeth. Brena quickly puts down the pitcher and immediately goes to clean the stain. Brena tries to avoid the hardening organ around where she is cleaning. The man peels apart his lips into a predatory smile.

“Move a little to the right, and maybe I can spare a few coins for you.” Frenden says.

Brena shoots up and grasps her cleaning rag for dear life. The men start laughing. From behind Brena another man scrambles up the hill holding a small pouch. He is tall and fit, with short brown hair and blue eyes. He has a very attractive face, with sharp angles in all the right place, but sitting on it is an expression of mad glee that ruins any

other attractive qualities that he may have otherwise possessed. He stares at Brena fiddling with her cleaning rag and the two other men laughing. He frowns,

“Did I miss something?” Alleric asks.

“No, just playing with your serving girl Alleric.” Frenden says.

“Ah, but you see now right?” Alleric asks.

“Yes, in fact I do, she sure is something to look at.” Frenden says.

“She’s a bit young for me.” Benric says.

“She’s young for me too, but an unripe fruit only gets sweeter with age.” Frenden says.

“I could not agree more.” Alleric says.

The other man hides his frown with his drink. Alleric tosses the sack onto the carpet.

“On another note, I am here to announce that Benric has won our little game.” Alleric announces.

Benric’s frown disappears as he looks at the pile of silver. Benric immediately grabs half and stuffs it into his pocket. Alleric shoves the other half into his pocket. The other man frowns.

“What tipped you off?” Frenden asks.

“His wife was too fair to marry a man who looked like that and was poor.” Benric says.

“Ha! I can’t deny that. He had a face only prostitutes could love.” The other man says.

“They give you any trouble Alleric?” Benric asks.

Alleric gets up and lifts his sleeve. Running along the forearm is a thin cut going from elbow to wrist. The cut is not bleeding heavily, but it is straight, and deep.

“No, but that woman sure knows how to use a kitchen knife.” Alleric says.

“Yeah, it sure is a shame that they were tree speakers, because I would have had half a mind to make her mine.” Benric says.

“You could have had a lady like Prince Alyks.” Frenden says.

Alleric chuckles and Benric goes pale. Brena’s shaking turns from fear to rage.

“Prince Alyks would never do that!” Brena yells.

“Oh the lady speaks.” Frenden says.

“Prince Alyks is kind, generous and not like you!” Brena yells.

Frenden calmly stands up, walks to Brena, then backhands her so hard she collapses to the ground. Over her Frenden laughs, on the ground Brena stares up at her, and smiles.

“I talked to one of your servants. She said outside Brikin Burg you hired a prostitute, and when you brought her to your tent she had to wait an hour before she left. Then the prostitute told her she had to leave, because you couldn’t harden.” Brena announces.

Alleric chokes on the wine he was drinking and Benric still looks shaken. Alleric does his best to hide the smile, but fails, then he starts laughing. Frenden scowls, then he bares his teeth and reaches for Brena. She tries to crawl away, he grabs her by the collar and starts dragging her towards the cottage. Alleric and Benric scramble up to follow.

Brena writhes and screams as she is dragged towards the cottage. Once at the foot of the entrance Frenden wrenches her forwards and forces her to look into the eyes of the dead man outside the door.

“Look at her!” Frenden yells.

Brena tries to turn her head away, but Frenden grabs the back of her head and forces her to look forwards. She stares into the hollow lifeless eyes of the dead body. It used to be a beautiful woman, her red hair spilling all over the floor in rivulets mirroring the blood seeping from her abdomen. Brena closes her eyes and Frenden tosses her to the floor.

“Alyks is a rapist, look at me and say it.” Frenden says.

“No!” Brena screams.

Frenden picks her up and throws her back down at the floor.

“Alyks is a rapist. Say it!” Frenden yells.

“No!” Brena cries.

Freunden picks her up, but before he can slam her again someone walks into the cottage. Everyone turns to face them. A man at arms wearing the light feather crest stands in the doorway.

“I have a message from Marshal Crowbeak, sir Whitehawk.” The man at arms says.

“We are leaving for Crannog Burg tonight, make sure your troops are ready.” The man at arms says.

Freunden nods, then turns to Brena.

“We are not done here little girl.” Freunden says.

He spits on her then leaves the cabin, Allerik follows. Benric stays, after a few moments pass Benric kneels down next to her.

“Don’t tell Alyks I said that, please don’t, I’ll pay you anything you want. Just don’t tell him I was a part of this. I know he is a kind and generous man, and he is loved by all. Just don’t tell him, please I am begging you.” Benric says.

“Get out!” Brena screams.

Benric stands up and walks out of the cottage. As soon as Benric is out of earshot Brena starts crying. Hours pass as the sunset pours through the windows. The dust in the cottage makes the rays of orange light seem tangible. They move across the room to the rhythm of Brena’s cries. Once they have made it to the far end of the room Aleiri walks in.

“Oh, Broun” Aleiri says.

She runs to Brena and grabs her in a deep embrace. They rock together as the light slowly fades.

“I heard what happened, are you okay?” Aleiri asks.

“I’m fine.” Brena says.

“You don’t seem fine, I think we should go home.” Aleiri says.

“No! ” Brena says.

Aleiri pushes Brena to arms length and looks her in the eyes.

“No man is worth this.” Aleiri states.

“He is.” Brena says.

“Who is he then? If you don’t tell me then I’m taking you home right now.” Aleiri says.

“It’s prince Alyks.” Brena says.

Aleiri frowns.

“Does he know you exist?” Aleiri asks.

“Yes, we are actually friends, or at least I think we are.” Brena says.

“Well, then tell him you are here.” Aleiri says.

“I don’t even know if he likes me. If he knew that I stalked him all the way here, he would no longer feel indifferent, he would hate me.”

Aleiri frowns, then pulls Brena into a deep hug.

“Even a prince is not worth this.” Aleiri says.

“He is worth it.” Brena says.

“Fine, but if anything like this happens again, I am going to tell him.” Aleiri says.

Brena frowns.

“Fine,” Brena says.

Aleiri looks at the setting sun.

“We should go, army heads out at sundown.” Aleiri says.

Brena nods, then they both get up and walk outside the cabin. As they walk back to the camp Brena stumbles on a stick. Aleiri catches her and grabs her hand. She pulls Brena back to her feet. Brena does not let go, they instead walk the way back to camp hands interlocked.