

Chapter 13

Brena

Brena just starts walking, she knows not where she goes, but she needs to not be here. Brena's thoughts are scattered, she reaches for a thought but it turns to water and pours through her fingers. Once she catches her bearing she looks up to see that she is no longer in the camp. The torches of the camp light glow a short distance away. Right now the only light guiding her is the silver of the moon. Or at least on this night the deep blue of the moon. She touches her lips and trembles. Brena squints, and through the parted branches Brena spots a shimmer of light. She follows the shimmer until it leads her to a pond. A pond under a waterfall. The waterfall is no great wonder, its barely enough to be called more than a trickle, but its enough to cover the entrance to a small cave.

Brena goes to the left of the cave, and presses herself flush to the rock. She scuttles along a lip in the rocks until she reaches the mouth of the small cave. Inside the cave Brena sits on a small hip height rock. For a second Brena focuses on the cold mist splashing from the waterfall. As it cools her clothes her mind slowly comes to order, and one thought sits far above the rest. *'That was amazing'*. Brena blushes at the thought, and then a second after she goes cold. *'That's not right.'* Brena thinks of the consequences: the white order purges, the steak and the noose. Yet the cacophony of voices screaming at her to stop, are all silenced by a deep warmth she feels in her chest.

Yet one thought stands opposed from the rest. Sitting obscured by the many other larger thoughts, suddenly they diminish and this one grows. Eventually it towers over all the rest.

“Brena!” Alyks yells.

Brena looks towards the cave mouth. He is distant, and the water has distorted him, but Alyks is definitely there. Brena stands up, but there is a hesitation. Brena takes a breath and walks out from under the waterfall, and back into the clearing. Alyks runs to her and embraces her. She flushes deeply, and a fire erupts in her stomach. He has never wrapped himself so tightly. She can feel his heartbeat through his tunic.

Lets see if that wench poised her against me.

“What happened?” Alyks asks.

“Sorry, Aleiri and I got into an argument and I had to leave.” Brena lies.

Oh so that woman and her are not on good terms. Interesting, I can use this. I don't like how close those two have gotten. I see it in her eyes, she can see right through me. She can see that darkness within, just like father, all they do is see the monster. They refuse to see me. Locking me up is easier than helping. But Brena you don't see me like that. What a divine and tortuous experience it is. To be able to see you, to be able to admire you, but not to touch, not to hold, not to consume.

“You scared me, never do that again.” Alyks orders.

“Of course.” Brena says.

Brena backs away then sits on the coast of the pond.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Alyks asks.

“No.” Brena says.

Brena sits at the edge of the pond and stares into the water. Alyks sits next to her. Brena pulls her legs into herself, and plants her chin on her knees. She stares into the reflection of the stars and moon. Alyks stares into it with her.

“Which one do you favor?” Alyks asked.

“Which one of what?” Brena asks.

“Constellations.” Alyks says.

“Oh, I don’t know any. What’s yours?” Brena says.

Alyks looks into the pond. He squints and holds his hand out tracing the differing star patterns until he lands on one.

“That one.” Alyks points to a cluster of stars in the pond.

“What is it?” Brena asks.

Alyks gets behind Brena and grabs her hand. He maneuvers her hand into a point, then directs it to connect the stars. As Alyks moves her hand, the stars form one, then two stick figures, then at last he connects the two in the center. Brena looks into the stars and her mind fills in the gaps of endless space. She imagines two people with one of their arms wrapped around the other. Alyks steps back.

“It's beautiful, What’s its name?” Brena asks.

“Elska Boam, the name is Dennish.” Brena gasps.

“The dennish were here long before us, and long before the wizards before us. Their stories are carved into the very land we sit on right now, although Broun frowns upon their pagan values, their stories are still just as powerful as ever.” Alyks says.

“What’s the story?” Brena asks.

“The constellation is based on the story of Ioun and Hrafin. These two were gods, when the land was untouched by man. For a time eternal they lived along with their people in a land of true beauty. Yet the world started to turn, and everything died. Their people came up with a plan to save the world they knew. The only thing they could do was to root themselves in the ground, and keep the earth from souring itself. They refused to let go of each other and become one with nature. So when they tried to run off together, they were found and their families split them apart, and forced them to change. So now they are trees across the continent from each other, and at their base is a small pond, created from their tears of longing.” Alyks says.

Brena tears up. Alyks smiles.

“It's just a story, if we believe the white book, then the trees are just mockeries of the divine. Yet I love the story nevertheless.” Alyks says.

Brena opens her mouth to say something, but a knot forms in her throat as she looks at Alyks.

“I should take you back to camp.” Alyks says.

“Thank you.” Brena responds.

Together they walk back through the forest into camp.