

Klemondion

Elven Clans



Book 1

by Elyatha Eli

KLEMONDION: ELVEN CLANS

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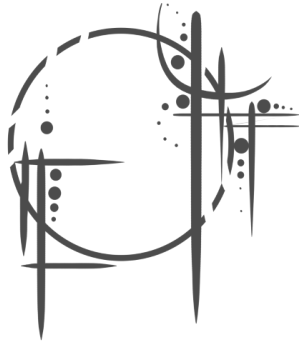
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THE DREAMER





K I M

PITCH-BLACK DARKNESS EMBRACED THE EMPTY ROOM. Only a few flaming candles surrounded the bathtub full of red rose petals. Gently floating around my skin, they left my body tingling with excitement. Although I was fully submerged in the warm water, the cold air tickled my neck. I caressed the graceful petals as if they were the most precious treasure I had ever seen; only then I realised I was still wearing a dress. Crimson latex covered my wet skin, exposing enough of my body to enjoy the water.

I was unable to recall how I got there and why the beautiful dress was still on me. Looking across the dark room, it appeared empty. A sudden shiver full

of pleasure went down my spine as a gentle hand touched the back of my neck, slowly moving down my shoulder. I closed my eyes, enjoying the moment as if there were no tomorrow.

I released a soft moan and bit my lip as playful fingers danced over my skin, sending more flaming shivers down my spine. I opened my eyes to see the hand that kept me under this spell: majestic, long fingers, smooth skin and sharp nails—painted black. An exquisite golden ring with a blood-red gemstone sat on the middle finger.

“A female?” I jumped, splashing the water in panic. I tried to get out of the bath, but the person held my arm so tight, I could no longer move. Another soft hand wrapped around my chin, keeping my head straight. I tried to kick my bare feet out of the water, but I failed. The warm liquid turned bright red and started to shine like toxic poison.

My heartbeat became louder as I tried to resist the urge to see who held me so forcefully. I tried to lean forward to get the girl into the bath so I could have at least a little hope of fighting back, but my attempts were pointless. The red water kept me

imprisoned. The mysterious girl laughed softly, but her voice was hypnotising.

Her hands lowered on my collarbones, yet I still couldn't move. I was paralysed, but not the way I expected. I was immobilised by pleasure. No matter how much I tried to get out of the bath, I was hungry for more touch as the playful strokes danced around my skin. I closed my eyes again, surrendering to the moment. I allowed the warm water to cover my face as I lowered into the bath.

“Kim,” a familiar voice called out my name, “Kimberly!”

I wanted to say something, but the words left my lips completely mute. My mind tried to recognise the voice, but it couldn't be the girl that was holding me under the spell. It couldn't be any girl at all because the voice belonged to a boy.

“Kim, stop being silly!” the voice repeated my name.

Silly? How was I silly when some stranger held me under the toxic water?

“Kim, we will be late!” the voice sounded a little worried, “Kimberly, if you don't wake up now, I will have to drag you to the White Garden in your

pyjamas! Kim-brella, wake up!”

I forced my eyes open, gasping desperately for some air as I woke up in my bedroom. A bright silhouette was still leaning over me, watching me with dark amber eyes. It was a boy with the most mischievous smile I had ever seen. His messy platinum blond hair fell right in my face, and I knew he did it on purpose.

“Syn!” my voice came out surprised as if I didn’t expect my best friend to be at my house just like any other morning. I tried to get his hair away from my face by kicking him off to the other side of the bed. The push was much more successful than those in my dream. Like a pro, Syn landed on his back right next to me.

“Did you dream about Tyler again?” Syn laughed so big that his perfect white teeth burnt my eyes. He had the most cheerful laughter. The type that made you smile even when you were angry. The tips of his elven ears reddened whenever he laughed.

“Why do you think I would dream about him?” I sighed, glaring at Syn’s clothing. He was dressed all in white. The colour suited him but wasn’t

something he would typically wear.

“Because you were biting your lip with passion and making those feminine moans as if you were having wild sex in your imaginary world!” Syn smiled like a fox.

Wrong choice. I swiped my pillow at him.

“You’re such a pig!” Blushing like a tomato, I took the blankets off, throwing them over Syn and making a gay burrito out of him.

He was right about some things. Normally, I would dream about Tyler Nightbloom like he was some kind of celebrity. As if a Pure elf like him would ever date an Amdroven elf like me. Our types were never meant to be together.

Sighing loudly, I got out of the bed and glanced across my bedroom. One of the tall windows was slightly open, bringing in the fresh breeze of spring air. Rubbing my sleepy eyes, I moved closer to my wardrobe, removed my panda pyjamas and threw everything on the floor, searching between my clean clothing for something decent to wear.

“You know, you could at least warn me before you decide to burn my eyes!” Syn murmured, trying to get out of the blanket burrito, “You

wouldn't want me to strip naked here!"

"Why are you so grossed out about it? It's not like I'm offering you sex or anything!" I giggled, continuing to search for a dress.

"Just because I'm gay doesn't mean you should walk around me naked, Kim. Would you want to see other girls flashing their boobs at you?" Syn finally managed to get out of the bed. Like a perfect housewife, he made my bed and arranged the pillows.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Your Gayness!" I bowed at him with my boobies still enjoying their freedom. "I didn't think you would care much after all these years of waking me up every single morning."

A pinch of sad memories punched another hole in my chest. For a moment, I froze, dwelling on the past—back when I first met Syn. It was the same day I lost my younger brother when Klemondions broke into our house.

I was only four years old. My father was away on the Guard's duty, and my mother had a fight with my older brother, Lathan. Mom was shouting at him so loud I had to keep my baby brother's ears shut or else the crying would never stop. Lathan

ran away to the beach not far from our house. That was the last time I remembered our family being together.

The next minute, a bunch of wild Klemondions broke into our house. They tried to take me away, but my mother attacked them. She was a powerful Amdroven and took down three of the Klemondions before they could blink. I took my baby brother in an attempt to run away and hide, but another beast showed up right in front of me, taking my little brother away. I could still remember their ugly voices—inhuman. Like no animal, they sounded hungry and demonic.

Before I could understand what was happening, the beast placed my little brother into a mysterious pair of hands, and that was the last time I saw him.

Two other Klemondions attacked my mother at the same time. One of them tore her face open and started to drain her spiritual energy. I was terrified, but I could still remember my mother screaming. When Klemondions fed, their victims became paralysed and unable to move. Usually, they wouldn't even shout, yet my mother was yelling, full of agony.

Thankfully, my father showed up. It was his last day in the Guard's position, and he had returned home earlier than we expected. He managed to kill all of the Klemondions apart from the ones that kidnapped my baby brother. Dad went after them, but they were nowhere to be found.

I panicked and ran after Lathan in the hope he would be alive and unharmed. Instead of my older brother, I ran into Syn. He was alone at the beach, playing with some seashells. Dirt and blood covered my face, yet Syn showed no signs of fear. He approached me immediately, offering help, and he calmed me as we searched for Lathan.

Years passed, but my baby brother wasn't found. Since that day, Mother became ill. Both—physically and mentally. The older I got, the less she would recognise me. Three years ago, on my fourteenth birthday, she tried to attack me with a kitchen knife, saying that I killed her son. If not Lathan, I would probably lose my face. He stopped Mother's hand and made her snap out of whatever was happening in her imaginary world.

"Kim, please come back to reality!" Syn took a white dress out of my wardrobe and handed it over

to me. “Leave the past in the past. We need to hurry to the White Garden, or else we will miss the Oracle’s arrival.”

Oh.

I forgot about the Oracle. The previous one passed away a few months ago. The woman was probably older than dinosaurs and crazy as hell. She used to run after students, exclaiming her prophecies and scaring everyone. She would speak in puzzles, and most of the time, nothing she said ever made any sense.

“I wonder if the next Oracle will be a woman, too. Or even an old man!” I forced a giggle, trying to push down the sad memories. I hated my birthdays; to me, they were like any other days. Unfortunately, today happened to be one. I tried to ignore it. Instead, I focused on the white dress Syn chose for me. It was beautiful, and I put it on without any hesitation. “Sometimes, I don’t understand why the White Garden even needs an Oracle. It’s just a school, after all!”

“I suppose it’s an old tradition. The Oracles have always guided the White Garden, and all of its students have succeeded in life.” Syn’s amber eyes

seemed carefree as always. He brushed my long black hair, letting it complement my dress. “After all, the Oracle protects our school from Klemondions. If not for them, the White Garden would have been drained to the core, leaving nothing but a school of corpses.”

“Why do you always need to be so dramatic?” I giggled, this time for real.

Syn handed me a shiny, black mask. I glanced at it, remembering what it was for. My smile disappeared instantly.

“You are strong.” Syn said in a soft voice, “If you didn’t hate your birthdays, I’d wish you a happy birthday right now.”

I took the black mask and hid my sad face behind it, ignoring the birthday comment. After all—I’d have to face her sooner or later.

Both of us headed downstairs. Dad had prepared some breakfast for us. Extra plate with food chopped into tiny pieces lay on the counter.

“Morning, Mr Raynsfold!” Syn chirped.

“Synnieth!” Dad replied with a smile on his face, “Sometimes it feels like you live here!”

“What do you mean?” Syn sat down at the table

and finished his breakfast in no time.

“This is what I meant!” Dad laughed.

While Syn and Dad were chatting, I slowly chewed my breakfast, forcing each piece down my throat. Father was a fantastic cook, but I had lost my appetite since that day. Only Lathan could make me feel hungry, but since my fourteenth birthday, our relationship was not as smooth as it used to be. He left home to live in the Oracle’s house—the Elite. I wasn’t sure if he hated me or didn’t care, but since he joined the top students of the White Garden, he no longer spoke to me.

“Kim, can you take this to Seraphine?” Dad gave me the third plate once I had finished my breakfast.

“I can—” Syn wanted to help, but Dad stopped him.

“She has to do it herself. It’s her mother, not yours, Synnieth!” Dad smiled at me softly, yet I wanted to puke. Feeding Mother was my least favourite part of each morning.

The plate in my fingers trembled as I moved closer to the living room. Mother was sitting in an armchair, gazing into emptiness. I knelt in front of

her to feed her. As long as I wore the black mask, she wouldn't see me. Instead, she would look right through me as if her own shadow fed her.

I wished I could embrace Mom and tell her how much I loved her, but that was impossible. I was too scared to irritate her with my voice, so I remained silent.

Once she swallowed the last piece, I was ready to walk away, but a cold, pale hand grabbed mine.

"More!" Mother's eyes pierced mine, "May I have some more, please?"

"It's okay. I will take over from here!" Dad took the empty plate and looked at Syn and me. "You two should hurry up!"

That's what we did after I removed the mask.

Once my skin met the fresh air and sunshine, all my worries fluttered away. Syn always knew how to cheer me up as long as I wasn't inside my house.

When we arrived at the White Garden, my jaw nearly dropped to the ground. The place was crowded. Most of the students gathered outside the school, but some of them hung outside the windows like curious monkeys. Everybody was dressed in white as it was the tradition to welcome

the new Oracle while wearing the purest of all colours.

Syn hated being around too many people, and his face became serious almost instantly. I wasn't a fan of crowded places either, yet it didn't make me feel uncomfortable. I was friendly enough to start a chat with anyone, but for some reason, I chose not to. I preferred to stay in my own world; that way, it was easier to face reality with a smile.

"Kim! Syn! Over here!" a familiar voice shouted out from the crowd. It was our good friend Aalya. She was a cute blondie with a curious personality. She was from my elven clan—an Amdroven.

We joined Aalya and stood under an oak tree. It was a perfect spot to see the main entrance where principal—Desmond Lucreen—and other teachers gathered, waiting for the Oracle's arrival.

"I love your dress, Kim! You look gorgeous!" Aalya smiled at me with her dazzling green eyes.

I was about to reply to her, but I wasn't quick enough.

"There is no other girl more gorgeous than you, love!" a sudden voice broke out from the oak tree branches. A boy, slightly taller than me, jumped

down and landed right in front of Aalya. His dark skin and muscular body towered over her like a bodyguard. His golden eyes gazed at Aalya's lips as if there was nothing more precious in the entire world.

"Cyrus..." Aalya blushed.

Cyrus was an Amdroven, but his dark skin originated from the ancient Wood Elves—the forest spirits who could glow in the dark. I found it pretty cool.

"Aww, our sweet lovebirds!" Syn giggled, climbing up the tree. After finding a comfortable spot, he helped me to get up there too.

I looked at Aalya and Cyrus kissing as if it were a romantic comedy playing out in front of me. For a moment, I wished I had somebody as they had each other. A glimpse of Tyler and I bolted through my mind, and I had to shake it away before Syn would make fun of it.

"There you are!" another feminine voice joined us near the tree. It was Ivy. A tall girl with a perfect model body, dark hair and chocolate skin—the same as Cyrus had. Her golden eyes made her look a little insidious, but no other girl in the entire

universe could keep a secret better than her.

“Ivy Lazaro, you are late!” Aalya grinned mischievously.

“I would’ve been here earlier, but I wanted to skip your cheesy smooching with my brother. It’s disgusting!” Ivy sounded a little mean, but we all knew it was just a joke. Aalya was her best friend, and sometimes, Ivy and Cyrus ended up fighting for Aalya’s attention. “Is the Oracle here yet?”

“No, but I can’t wait to see the new Oracle!” Aalya admitted.

“Ladies, are you performing today?” Cyrus faced me. “You have prepared a dance, haven’t you?”

“We can’t perform until the Oracle has arrived.” Ivy joined us on the tree. “The principal doesn’t allow any activities until it’s safe. He’s worried we’ll attract some Klemondions with our energy.”

“Unless the Oracle approves the ball, we won’t be allowed to perform. At least not at the White Garden,” Aalya added.

“Actually,” I smirked, “We will perform tonight!”

“What?” Ivy sounded pleasantly surprised.

“Principal Desmond has received a letter from the Oracle, saying there will be some Guards

arriving today, too. They will protect the White Garden and the Oracle, of course!” I explained.

“How do you know this?” Cyrus glared at me suspiciously. “What were you doing in Desmond’s office?”

“Well...” I tried not to blush. I wanted to see my brother Lathan, but I knew he wouldn’t speak to me in public, so I broke into the Elite house and accidentally destroyed a few costly items and got caught by one of the maids. I ended up in the principal’s office. To escape the punishment, Principal Desmond and I agreed that we would keep the incident a secret. I told only Syn, but I couldn’t risk exposing it to anyone else. Not even to my closest friends.

“She went there to find out if Desmond would allow the girls to perform for the Oracle!” Syn covered up smoothly.

“I can’t wait for the ball then! I hope Lathan will arrive, too!” Ivy had a crush on my brother, but there was no chance he would ever pay any attention to her. We lived in two completely different worlds.

Lathan was born as a Pure. To keep their powers,

Pures never dared to taint their blood with Amdrovens. My dad was one of the rare ones who did. Lathan was born from Dad's first marriage with another Pure, but his wife died giving birth. A few years later, Dad met my mom—an Amdroven. I used to get along with Lathan when we were children, but things changed after Mother attacked me.

“Don't be silly, Ivy!” Aalya's voice brought me back to reality. “Pures never hang out with Amdrovens, not even a word about dating!”

“Syn does!” Ivy pointed out. “He's a Pure too, but he doesn't act like a dick towards any Amdroven!”

Syn's family was well known for being the superior Pures that had kept their bloodline clean for ages. His parents were the face of the Ministry of Pures, and they hated all Amdrovens with passion. Syn was too rebellious to care about politics. However, I was not allowed to visit their house—that's why Syn always came to me instead.

“Well, even if Lathan did turn out to be Amdroven-friendly, you wouldn't stand a chance! He dates twenty different girls each day, and there are not even that many in the White Garden!”

Cyrus hissed like an angry lion, although what he said about my brother was false. Cyrus was very protective of his sister. “You’d stand a better chance with humans than with a Pure like him!”

“You’re exaggerating!” Ivy groaned.

I remained silent.

“The Elite is here!” Syn shouted out suddenly. People closer to our group started to act like wild animals. Girls and boys tried to push closer to the pathway to have a good look at our top-performing students.

The Elite arrived full of grace. All dressed white, they moved closer to the White Garden as one. Lathan was their leader, and he walked in front of the other members. His hair was black, the same as our dad’s. The white cloak around his shoulders made him look like an elven prince, and he was the brightest of Pures and the most respected by the faculty. Lathan’s blue eyes shimmered with power and poise.

As a tall, dark shadow appeared behind my brother, following him with graceful movements, my heart froze. Most girls started to scream as if a rock star passed through. The irresistible bad boy

was my brother's best friend and the most popular Pure between the girls—Tyler Nightbloom.

He wore a perfectly polished white suit. He looked like a rich rebel: the right side of his hair was pitch black and long enough to reach his hips, but the other side of his head was shaved short. Dark tattoos covered the left side of his body. They reminded me of some ancient symbols as they occasionally moved to change their positions. Sometimes, his tattoos would disappear altogether, but most of the time, they danced around the left side of his body as if commanded by a spell.

His eyes were pinned down as if he tried not to hypnotise the other students with his mysteriously red gaze. Or perhaps, he was somewhere far away, minding his own thoughts. Tyler's steps were confident, dominant, and I could only imagine his muscles tensing under that white suit. Every movement was a complete knockout.

“Stop drooling,” Syn whispered, poking his fingers into my bones, deep enough to bring me back from my imaginary world.

An elegant girl walked next to Tyler. Her blonde curls hovered in the air freely as if invisible fairies

danced between the strands of her hair. Her bright smile was the most cheerful I had ever seen. The girl radiated welcoming energy. Unlike other Pures, she would even speak to Amdrovens.

“Look at Crystal, she is so beautiful!” a girl not far from our oak tree whispered to her friends. Indeed, Crystal Lockhart was stunning. Most of the other girls wanted to be like her. She possessed power over three magical elements and was able to use different artefacts to strengthen her abilities.

Another girl appeared behind Crystal. Her hair was short, but her dark skin had a bronze shimmer that covered her firm body. Her movements were quite vigorous. Like a true warrior princess, she moved with forceful energy. Her name was Nicole Venonn. She was the only Amdroven who had mastered two magical elements. Usually, we—Amdrovens—were weak to compare with Pures. Although both races looked similar to humans, Amdrovens were closer to the human-kind. We could only summon one element, if any at all, and our lifespan was a hundred years on average. Pures could live up to eight hundred years. That was one of the main reason why they avoided dating

Amdrovens and considered us weak.

Nicole was different. She had gained her respect and acceptance to join the Elite as the first and only Amdroven. When it came to fighting, nobody would want to mess with her.

The last member of the Elite was Ethan Abriel. He was handsome, proud but most importantly—remarkably intelligent like a walking encyclopaedia when it came to spells and history. His strategy skills were incredible. Unlike Lathan and Tyler, Ethan was much shorter and had a never-fading smile. His red hair made him look cunning. For some reason, his crafty nature attracted other Pures as much as flowers attracted bees.

As the Elite gathered at the school's entrance, the principal announced the arrival of the Oracle. Tyler whirled his fingertips in the air, creating a melody—the Hymn of the White Garden. I was sure some of the girls fainted when they saw him move.

A mysterious drumbeat followed the melody. Everyone started looking around to see where it came from, but the drummer was nowhere to be found. A thick mist appeared on the pathway near

the gate. Six masculine men walked out of it, carrying a massive white sedan chair; white silk curtains covered its windows.

I watched the men walk closer to the White Garden, and my chest started to tremble as I tried to see through the silky curtains. A cold shiver went down my spine, and my knees lost all balance. I had never felt so hot and cold at the same time. I fell off the tree branch, hitting my head.

“Kim!” Syn cried out. He jumped off the tree to check if I was still alive.

I touched the back of my skull to discover blood trickling into my hair. Cyrus immediately knelt next to me and used his sound magic to heal me, and in less than a second, I was fine again. Friends helped me stand, and my eyes started to search for the mysterious energy that made me lose my balance.

The robust men placed the sedan chair at the school’s entrance. My chest tightened when I noticed a little boy leave the shadows of the silky curtains. He couldn’t have been older than ten; his pale skin seemed delicate like the petals of cherry blossoms, his white hair had silver brilliance, but

his pale blue eyes seemed almost blind. The entire White Garden, including the principal and the teachers, knelt in front of the boy. Only I remained standing there, absent-minded and stunned.

I was ready to kneel to show my respect, but another person left the white silk of the sedan chair, stealing my attention. My heart froze. The most beautiful girl I had ever seen stood by the Oracle's side. Her long lashes opened up to let me discover her obsidian eyes that pierced through me as she noticed me standing on my feet.

The girl was dressed like a priestess of a wild tribe, yet uniform white as everyone else. Her tight top barely covered her full breasts and pale skin, but her long skirt had massive cuts running up both sides, revealing her tall legs. She had no footwear, only a red bracelet around her right ankle and just one earring, matching the gemstone in her pierced belly. Her red hair hung freely, covering her toned body. For a second, I wondered how she could manage such long hair as it reached over her knees, but then, I realised I was still on my feet like a rebel.

The girl lifted her hand in the air with a graceful

movement. Her energy forced me down to the ground, and my face landed in the grass. I had never been hit by such great power, yet I deserved it. Nobody should disrespect the Oracles.

The girl's energy overwhelmed my spine with a blazing wave. My soul was under a spell, and I had to find out who she was. I had to speak to the mystery girl and get to know her. It made me hungry in a way I had never imagined.



T Y L E R

I WAS NAKED IN THE MIDDLE OF A CROWD OF faceless heads. Only empty silhouettes surrounded me, trying to touch my skin. Each one of them took away slices of my energy. The faceless people laughed in their inhuman voices as I became empty, like them.

Suddenly, a slender hand with long and sharp fingernails appeared out of the darkness and grabbed my neck. At first, I tried to fight it, but only then I realised it was trying to help me. The soft skin that touched me slid down my chest, pushing me away from the howling crowd.

The sharp nails dug into me, yet I felt no pain. The mysterious hand wrapped its fingers around my soul, and I was ready to be destroyed, drowned in my own fear, yet the hand remained calm. Instead of hurting me, it left a comforting flame that I had lost long ago. I closed my eyes in relief and felt another pair of warm hands land on top of my eyelids. The silky touch caressed my skin like velvety petals. For that short moment, I was able to forget my past—the day Klemondions slaughtered my family.

I was caught off my guard as a pair of scorching soft lips caressed mine. I surrendered to the passionate kiss, feeling flaming energy leaving my body. I opened my eyes to see nothing but darkness. That was the moment I realised I was being drained by a Klemondion. I tried to fight back, but I was powerless. My body felt heavy, pinned down to the ground, and there was nothing I could do to set myself free from the Klemondion. I was paralysed by fear.

Suddenly, I took a sharp breath and opened my eyes wide. As soon as I noticed I was still in my bedroom, I released a thankful sigh.

“Just a nightmare,” I murmured. My heartbeat raced with madness.

I examined my left arm as a sharp pinch of pain stabbed through it. Another black symbol had appeared on my skin, but I was unable to read it. There was only one person who could translate it for me—Ethan. He was a good friend, but he never shared his knowledge for free despite his wealth.

A knock at my bedroom door startled me.

“Come in, Oscar!” I allowed my butler to enter the room.

“Yes, sir!” Oscar stepped in, walking slower than a snail. His wrinkly eyes curved into a pleasant smile. “Why didn’t you sleep over at the Elite?”

I wondered to myself. I was unable to recall the previous night as my mind was overwhelmed by the nightmare.

I looked up at Oscar and smiled back at him.

“Rough night?” Oscar grinned, trying to prepare my suit for the Oracle’s arrival. His old hands trembled. Without any hesitation, I stood up to help him. Oscar had been a loyal servant of my family for as long as I could remember. He was there long before I was born and stayed with me

even after my parents got killed. Oscar was the only family I had left.

“As usual.” I helped him to prepare my clothing. “Why don’t you sit down? I will get other maids to prepare some breakfast for both of us!”

“I have already prepared it, sir!” Oscar moved closer to the windows and dragged the curtains open. Slowly. Very slowly.

“What? When? You should be doing less and resting more!” A bright ray of sunlight arrowed through my eyes, blinding my vision. My room was too white and bright for my taste, but I didn’t want to change anything about it. It made me feel at home. I loved my white, fluffy carpet and white furniture. It reminded me of winter and the happy moments from my childhood when my family was still with me.

“You don’t come home very often anymore. I couldn’t miss a chance to feed you, sir!” Oscar poked my stomach with his wrinkly fingers. “Look at you! Only skin and bones! You have no meat on you, sir.”

“What are you on about? My body is godlike!” I looked down at my six-pack and laughed. Oscar

would always try to feed me; if I'd let him, he would make sure I got round and squashy. "Let me have a quick shower, and I will join you at the table!"

I took the towel that was prepared for me and slid into the bathroom. Only then I remembered the promise I had made to my best friend, Lathan. I was supposed to bring him a book, one of my father's collections. That was the main reason I stayed over. I tried to hurry as I hated being alone for too long. These walls made me overthink too much, and thinking was never healthy for me. Solitude was too dangerous.

When I finished showering and returned to my bedroom, Oscar was sitting in an armchair facing the window. His eyes were shut in a tight line, and he was snoring loud enough to scare inhabitants on the other end of the world.

Instead of waking him up, I let him rest as much as he needed. Being quiet was not my strong side, but I managed to get dressed without making a sound. My skin was burning because of the damn symbols, but I didn't dare to scratch it. Last time, I spent ages at the healer to ensure my nails hadn't

left any scars.

I ran downstairs to pick up my breakfast and the book for Lathan and disappeared back to my bedroom before any of the maids managed to notice my presence. Oscar was still asleep. I sat down on the soft surface of the window seal right in front of him.

His snoring stopped.

“You are very fast, young sir!” Oscar acted as if he hadn’t fallen asleep. “This white suit makes you look gay!”

I nearly choked on my food. Gay?

“I’m sure all your ladies will love it,” he continued.

“You’re a bully, Oscar!” I smirked.

“Thank you, sir,” he laughed like a cheerful child.

“I must go now,” I announced once my plate was empty. “Please don’t die from old age while I’m gone, okay? I still need you!”

“We will see, sir. I will try not to, I promise!” Oscar laughed again.

I ignored his dry sense of humour and left the room, trying to disappear unseen by the maids.

I failed.

“Sir!” an alluring voice stopped me.

I turned around to see Amanda. Her caramel blond hair was tied up at the back, but I couldn't care less. All that mattered was her unforgivably short dress.

"I should punish you for dressing up inappropriately at work." I glanced at her legs.

"I was hoping so!" Amanda wrapped her arms around my shoulders and pushed herself closer to my body. I promised myself I would stop sleeping with the maids, but I was about to fail. Again.

Damn, I was such a failure when it came to resisting pleasure.

"I want you to whip me," Amanda whispered.

Gladly, friendship was more important to me than anything else. I pulled back and squeezed the book tighter to my pants, trying to control my nature.

"I will punish you by not doing any of that!" I glanced at her legs once more and managed to turn around. Such a good boy!

I escaped my house quicker than ever. Lathan was already awaiting me, lying on top of my car as if he sunbathing.

"I hope you haven't left a scratch on my baby!" I

examined every inch of my vehicle.

“Oh, you’re early today! Were there no women in your house?” finally, the asshole spoke.

“No, I just chose our friendship instead!” I threw the book at him.

“Very generous of you!” Lathan laughed, “Do you think you will be able to choose it all day long? I mean, you are important to me. I don’t want you to die from the lack of activity!”

For a second, I imagined smashing my fist into his face.

“It’s not like I’m an addict!” I pushed him off my car. Lathan landed on his feet like a big cat, yet I was proud of myself for managing to ruin his forever-flawless hair. “Why are you here so early?”

“We have an assignment from Desmond,” Lathan announced in his serious voice. “As you know, the new Oracle is arriving today, but not on his own.”

“So it is him?” I asked.

“Actually, the Oracle is a very young boy,” Lathan replied with no emotions.

“What? Seriously?” I was surprised. “How old is he? I thought only adults could become the Oracles!”

“Don’t be ridiculous. Anyone can become an

Oracle at any age.” Lathan opened the book I gave him and went through it with an expressionless face. “The boy will turn twelve at the end of summer.”

“So, what is our assignment?” I wondered while getting inside my car.

“The Oracle will have a few guards with him. They will protect the White Garden from any possible attacks.” Lathan joined me in the car. “However, there is one more person we must keep an eye on. She is the Oracle’s bodyguard and a professional assassin. We must make sure she feels comfortable and familiar with the surroundings, rules and the students.”

“An assassin in the White Garden sounds very wise.” I started my car and sighed at the idea of looking after an experienced killer. “Is she at least a Pure?”

“I don’t know. Desmond thinks there’s nothing to worry about as the assassin is there for the Oracle’s safety only. We cannot allow anyone to hurt the boy!” Finally, Lathan demonstrated at least some sort of expression on his ice-cold face.

“So we must gather more information and make

sure the Oracle's guardian angel murders no students?" I groaned.

"No." Lathan put the book down. "Our duty is to keep the bodyguard happy with life in the White Garden. She will be a part of the family."

"What? Is she going to stay at the Elite?" I asked, dissatisfied.

Lathan remained silent for a while. I sighed.

"Yes," he broke the silence, "She will be residing on the top floor with the Oracle. That's why we must go there now and prepare everything before they arrive."

I hated the idea of a young boy being an Oracle and leading the White Garden because it would be lonely for a child to leave the family to look after an entire school. However, the concept of an assassin staying at the Elite every day and night made me uneasy. I wouldn't be able to sleep, knowing that my friends might be in danger. It made me feel sick.

After a long while of silence, we finally arrived at the Elite. Nicole was already carrying some heavy furniture by herself as if it were weightless, and Crystal was probably organising everything, typical

of her. Only Ethan stood outside, gazing at the top floor. Seeing him reminded me of my new symbol that stung like hell.

Before getting out of the car, I scratched my arm a little to ease the pain. Lathan glanced at me with a worried look on his face.

“Another one?” he asked quietly, placing his hand on top of my arm where the new symbol was.

“Yeah.” I sighed, feeling the pain vanish slowly. Lathan was good at many things and possessed control of numerous elements. His presence could make anyone feel safe. When I was younger, I always looked up to him as if he were some kind of hero.

“What does it say?” Lathan asked.

His voice changed, and I could sense his concern. It reminded me of the day when the first symbol had appeared—I was only an eight-year-old boy. Back then, the Elite did not exist, and Lathan was a stranger to me. I knew about him as the top students at the age of eleven, but we never spoke until the day my family got attacked by Klemondions and Lathan’s father—the Royal Guard—saved my life on his last day of duty. I was

taken to the healer and spent a few weeks unconscious. When I awoke, the first symbol had appeared, and I was in agony. Some powerful magic had temporarily blinded me. My body was weak, and I was terrified.

An older boy was sitting by my bedside at the healer. His voice was full of concern yet surprisingly calm. It eased my pain, and I felt less lonely. Only later I found out it was Lathan, the son of my saviour.

“Tyler, I’m speaking to you! You know I hate being ignored,” Lathan growled, staring at my scratched arm.

“Sorry, I just remembered something.” I tried to stop digging my nails into the new symbol. “I can’t read it. I’ve never seen it anywhere else!”

I wanted to discuss the meaning of the symbol with Lathan as he had taught me to read different languages, including ancient ones. Sadly, Crystal interrupted us.

“Are you going to help us or chit-chat here all day?” She leaned lower to our windows. Surprisingly, she was still not dressed in white. Only an expensive golden dress barely covered her

sinful body.

I got out of my car without saying a word and headed to the top floor where the Oracle would be staying. Nicole was there, moving some extra furniture for the assassin.

“Need any help?” I asked, already knowing the answer.

“Does it look like I need any, Pure?” Nicole glanced at me with a sarcastic expression.

“I’m just trying to be polite, okay?” I rolled my eyes. This Amdroven was seriously hard to speak to, and I wasn’t even the kind of Pure that hated Amdrovens.

“What happened to your arm? It looks disgusting. If you are allergic to anything, you shouldn’t eat it!” Nicole added, “You should look after yourself!”

Ahh, there it was—her friendly side! Nicole could be mean at times, but she always took care of her friends. Unfortunately, I couldn’t tell her the truth about my arm.

“Thanks for the advice. I’ll try to keep it in mind!” I smiled awkwardly.

I preferred to wear black, but it was a tradition to be dressed in white for the Oracle’s arrival.

Unfortunately, I got my suit ruined by blood from scratching, and I needed a new one as soon as possible. Hoping to find a clean shirt and jacket, I went to my bedroom. Unlike the one at my family's house, this room was as black as a Klemondion's ass. Only a few photos of beautiful landscapes and happy moments of my life painted the darkness with colours.

I opened my wardrobe and froze with suspicion. The smell of strawberries tickled my nostrils, and I knew who to blame.

"Crystal, I know you're a crazy stalker. What do you want?" My eyes followed the trail of the sweet scent.

"If I told you, that would destroy my good-girl image and make my mouth filthy." Crystal walked out of my private bathroom. Her golden dress was already gone—only lace underwear covered her perfections.

"Don't worry. I can keep a secret." I removed my bloodstained jacket and shirt. "If you heal my wounds, I promise not to ruin your hairstyle."

It had to be a sign from above because having a healthy sex life helped my symbols to heal faster.

The same worked for any other injuries, and Crystal was well aware of it. Her body moved in a seductively slow motion closer to mine. I knew she was doing it on purpose, but it worked damn well.

Sorry, Lathan, I needed the exercise after all. My conscience would not allow me to leave the girl without any pleasure when she was kind to offer me some healing.

“Good thing I can fuck away any pain,” Crystal whispered.

Her lips gently touched my neck, sending hot shivers down my body. I could feel the new symbol cooling down.

Without a second thought, I lifted Crystal and carried her to my bed. She wrapped her legs around my waist and moved her hips closer to me. What a tease! In response, my hand caressed her skin, my lips landed on her collarbone, sliding towards her breast. Crystal released a soft moan, and I removed her bra and felt as if we had all the time in the world. I was wrong.

“Tyler!” Lathan’s angry voice stabbed by ears. He knocked at the door hard enough to break it. “Nicole told me you need a new jacket, so I brought

you one of mine since your wardrobe consists of pure darkness.”

“Why do you sound so angry about it?” I shouted back at him.

Crystal giggled and bit my ear. Her hips kept moving closer to mine.

“Because I have a feeling you are betraying our friendship right now!” Lathan giggled from the other side of the door.

“What is he on about?” Crystal whispered, confused.

“It’s nothing. He’s just stupid,” I whispered back, continuing with the kisses.

I expected Lathan to give up and leave. Wrong again.

The door opened. The shameless asshole stepped in as if I were reading a book instead of lying on top of a naked girl.

“Can’t your sports wait?” he glared at us with his deep blue eyes.

I could feel Crystal’s body tensing with rage. She kicked me off using the air element, and I flew across the room.

“How dare you, asshole!” she hissed at Lathan,

trying to cover up her body.

“Go!” Lathan commanded in a strictly dismissive voice.

Crystal growled and left the room, taking my blanket with her.

At that moment, I hated my best friend and wanted to strangle him.

“Get ready and try to keep your dick quiet, at least for a day!” Lathan’s face was too serious to argue. He placed his white jacket on my bed and stood next to me with his arms crossed over his chest. Instead of leaving, he kept watching me with a violent expression on his face.

I hated to be told what to do, but Lathan was not just my best friend; he was also the leader of the Elite, and I had to obey him at the White Garden’s premises. A part of me was angry at him, but the other part was mad at myself for not controlling my temptations.

I sighed and got up from the floor. The passionate mood was destroyed entirely, leaving me intolerably grumpy. After a few moments of intense silence, I managed to get dressed and make myself look decent.

Lathan kept following me like a shadow, watching my every move. He made sure I helped others to prepare for the Oracle's arrival without any side activities. By the time we finished, my anger and dissatisfaction had settled. I even forgot what I was angry about in the first place when Lathan prepared breakfast for all of us. In my case, it was already the second breakfast.

We sat down at the dining table like a real family. The Elite made me feel complete.

"Wow, this is the best thing I had ever tasted!" Crystal announced, eyeing Lathan joyfully. Her memory was as shit as mine when it came to anger.

"Can I have a second portion?" Nicole prepared the plate, holding it up as if praying to the gods for another perfect meal.

"No. That's enough. We must go in a minute. The Oracle shall be here shortly." Lathan started to clean up the table. "After the Welcoming Ceremony, there will be a ball in the honour of the new Oracle. There will be plenty of food, and it would be disrespectful not to have any after such a rich breakfast!"

"Are the parties allowed again?" Ethan sounded

amused.

“Yes, but we must stay alert. It will be the first one in a very long while, and Klemondions might sense the energy. We must be ready for anything!” Nicole added.

“I wouldn’t worry about Klemondions so much. The Oracle has approved the ball himself, and there will be more security guards starting from today. The White Garden shall be safe,” Lathan explained, dispersing the dirty plates in a mist-like shadow.

I always wondered why he made me ask Oscar to order new plates. Well, now I knew!

“Tyler, are you coming to the party?” Ethan smiled with his mischievous eyes.

I was about to say no.

“He will!” Lathan replied instead. “Everyone must! It is a tradition, and nobody is allowed to break it. Especially us, the Elite!”

“Great,” I murmured unamused.

“Anything works for me as long as there is more food!” Nicole giggled.

I loved food and parties, but social events at the White Garden sucked primarily because the lower

class students and girls were trying to find out private details about my life.

It was time for us to arrive at the school. All of the students and the teachers had piled up in a giant ant nest, and the idea of passing by a massive group of screaming girls truly terrified me. I loved attention, but too much was too much. Who wouldn't like to be adored and wanted? Only boring people. Yet, I was unamused by the idea of crazies exclaiming their love for me.

There was only one type of shouting I enjoyed.

"Holy fuck!" Ethan's jaw tensed when he noticed the number of students gathering around the school. "Our eardrums will be broken tomorrow, that's for sure."

I couldn't agree more as we got outside the car.

Suddenly, a fresh spring breeze embraced my skin, submerging my senses in strange unease. My left arm became numb for a second, and all of my symbols exploded simultaneously. It looked as if the entire left side of my body had covered in tattoos. I didn't mind the looks, but the feeling was revolting. My skin was overwhelmed by stabbing pain, and it took all of my energy to stay focused

when my body started to tremble.

“Great timing,” I whispered to myself.

Lathan observed me with suspicion but remained silent. He could sense my suffering, but it wasn't the right moment to give in to the pain. I had to stay calm and pretend everything was fine.

We nodded at each other, and after a sharp inhale, Lathan stepped onto the footpath. I followed his graceful movement with my eyes pinned down. I could not focus on anything, and the girls who were shouting my name didn't help either. I was about to faint or even die. I wasn't sure what was happening to me, but I had no time to think about it either, so I hoped it would pass soon enough.

By the time we finally arrived at the entrance of the school, I was ready to collapse. Lathan released a low energy wave towards me to help me stand on my feet. I was supposed to use my music element to announce the Oracle's arrival, but I wasn't sure if I did it. My consciousness was already gone.

Somehow, I remembered my nightmare. The crowd around the school seemed as faceless and empty as it did in my dream. The void silhouettes were hungry for energy.

The Oracle arrived, but I was unable to glance up, feeling relieved when everybody had to kneel to demonstrate our respect. My symbols were on fire and ice, and I could feel my sanity slowly drifting away. Twenty different emotions mixed inside me, and I wasn't even sure if I knew the definition for any of them.

Unfortunately, I lost control. The remaining pieces of my shattered mind dissolved into the darkness as I collapsed.

When I woke up, it was already evening. I was in my bedroom at the Elite. My clothing was nicely folded and laid next to me on the bedside table, but only one person was good at folding and cleaning in this house—Lathan.

I sat up slowly, trying to hold my brain in one piece. After observing my empty room, I finally remembered what happened. I checked my arm and body to see if the symbols were still there, but I was clean. There was not a single spot of the ink-like curse.

I managed to slide over to my wardrobe in a slow zombie walk to get my leather pants and a random t-shirt. The disturbing noise of a hungry stomach

awakened my mind. I started to sniff the air like a hungry dog and allowed it to lead me.

Following the scent, I ended up on the first floor, where the kitchen was. Somebody was cooking, although it seemed like the middle of the night. I was hoping it would be Lathan or Nicole, but the figure I saw was unfamiliar.

Before I could enter the kitchen, I noticed a faint light coming from the lamp. My chest started tingling with a strange excitement. A girl with long, red hair stood by the oven. First, I could only see her bare feet and beautifully tall legs. Her hair was curtaining the rest of her body, and I wasn't sure if she wore any clothing at all.

I wanted to ask her who she was, but as I stepped forwards, a kitchen knife landed at the top of my t-shirt, nailing me to the wall in a matter of seconds. Before I could react, the girl had jumped over the table and pulled the knife from the wall to squeeze it against my throat.

I glanced down at her as she was slightly shorter than me. Her eyes were black like obsidian stone mixed with a universe full of stars. Her lashes were unbelievably long and made her eyes look bigger.

Her lips were irresistibly plump, and I could only imagine what they would be capable of doing. Her high cheekbones made her face look graceful, yet her violent glare was worrying as she pushed the knife deeper into my skin.

The girl's lips parted as if she was about to ask me something, but no words came out. My eyes lowered to scan her body language. Only then I realised she was wearing only a nightgown—short enough to reveal her beautiful legs and too light to cover any part of her body. The fabric was too thin, as I could see her breasts as if she had no clothing on at all.

Her appearance left me shocked, and I forgot the reason I came downstairs in the first place. Instead of examining her fighting skills and body language, I ended up staring at her like a hungry dragon. Speaking of which, the one resting in my pants awoke with complete ignorance of the knife in my throat. The excitement filled my blood, and it was wrong on many levels. I wasn't sure what was worse—being excited when a beautiful girl could easily kill me or being such an experienced fighter in zero distance from an exotic assassin that

prepared steak in my kitchen.

“I cannot decide if I should pierce your eyeballs first or slice your throat,” the girl finally spoke. She had a beautiful accent, foreign to my ears. It seemed as if it was hard for her to speak. Perhaps the assassin was not used to having conversations with her victim. Who knew? Regardless of her speech, the voice sent pleasant vibes down my neck. Something about the way she moved her full lips was far more mesmerising than her nightgown.

“What’s your name?” I asked curiously. What was wrong with me? I couldn’t believe my thoughts. I would have been fighting anyone who dared to attack me at the Elite in any other situation.

“None of your fucking business!” the way she said fucking made me even harder.

“Okay, *Miss None Of Your Fucking Business*. Why are you trying to kill me in my kitchen?” I asked, smiling provocatively.

“Would you prefer to die in another room?” She tried not to smile at my compelling sense of humour, but I could see the corners of her lips twitching. “You shouldn’t be sneaking behind me. I have a very short temper. Where I come from, it is

easy to die if you're not careful enough."

"And where is that?" I asked, trying to ignore her poorly covered breasts squashing into my chest. Damn, she was gorgeous.

Suddenly, her eyes opened up wider. With another flexible move, the girl pushed herself away from me as far as possible. Her cheeks became red, but her dark eyes filled with frenetic energy.

"My name is Evelyn Snow!" she shouted out, waving the kitchen knife in the air as if to erase her embarrassment. Her eyes didn't dare to slide anywhere higher than the floor. "Leave before I kill you, Nightbloom!"

"Wait, how do you know my name?" I froze.

"I'm the Oracle's assassin. I know everyone's name at the White Garden." Evelyn's eyes finally met mine again. Her confidence was back, and I could sense her energy piercing into me. At that moment, I realised I was right about her.

She was going to be a danger to our society.

She was going to be trouble.



E V E L Y N

I CRAWLED THROUGH AN ENDLESS HOLE OF MUD, trying to catch my breath. My heart was so loud I could hear a horrifying echo surrounding the cave. The stone walls overwhelmed my senses as a faint ball of guilt and anger knotted up in my throat. After countless times running and drowning in the same pool of dirt, I finally reached a wooden door in the middle of the cave. A faint shiver weakened my grip of reality. I tried to understand how I had gotten there as the endless maze of mud made no sense. It had to be a dream. Unfortunately, I had no power over it. Instead of thinking about it, I opened the mysterious door and surrendered to the vision.

It was so lucid I kept forgetting it wasn't real.

On the other side of the door, I could see a mirror—it was calling for me. Like a clueless animal, I followed my instincts. I was curious yet too scared to see my own reflection, so I tried to run away, but the vision did not allow me to escape. The moment I turned around, another mirror had appeared, forcing me to see my worst enemy. The reflection showed me a five-year-old girl. My father was still alive there, and he stood by the girl's side, teaching her not to feed like an animal—teaching me. He told me, if I were to feast like a beast, I'd become one.

With tears burning my eyes, I touched my father's silhouette in the mirror. The little girl changed, becoming the terrifying creature her father had always feared. She made a howling sound, and the mirror exploded into millions of tiny pieces. Small enough to mistake them for snowflakes.

Nauseous and horrified, I closed my eyes. My heavy breath turned to frost. Blood tainted the glittery pillars of icicles that grew from each exhale I made. The sensations of fear choked me, and I

finally realised it was just another test of my imagination.

“It’s just a dream,” I whispered to myself, “This is not real. This is not what happened nor what will happen.”

As I kept reassuring myself, the ice melted, and the blood stopped staining the surreal images. I inhaled slowly to regain control over my emotions. I was not supposed to have them anyway.

My heartbeat came back to normal, and the strange scenery dispersed. I opened my eyes, this time for real. Lucca was sitting next to me as calm as always. His childish fingers played with the white silk inside the sedan chair that was supposed to take us to the White Garden. Lucca’s silver-blue eyes were dwelling somewhere in the thoughts, and I wasn’t sure if I should mention my dream at all. He probably knew about it long before I saw it.

“You have a puzzle to solve, I can see,” Lucca spoke calmly. His gaze was still glued to the curtain. “What is that you seek in my face, Snow?”

His words were riddles, but I had learned to listen to him carefully enough to understand what he meant.

“I had a dream. A surreal one where my emotions had mixed with the past and fear of the future,” I admitted. I trusted Lucca since the day he granted me forgiveness of my sins. I only wished I could forgive myself, too.

“Are you still thinking of revenge?” Lucca’s eyes landed on me. His face remained emotionless, and his white hair made him look like a beautiful sculpture of a god incarnated into a child’s body.

“I am. I must avenge my father’s death. I’m just surprised you are not trying to stop me,” I replied, unsure if Lucca would get mad. I had never seen him change his facial expression to anything else but calm.

“I cannot change fate by force. I change it by enlightening the blind ones.” He replied with another riddle, “You, my dear Snow, are blind. But I worry not. Your eyes will come clear. The death of you will save many trees yet to grow. If you follow the path that’s been destined for you, the girl with the sleeping hunger will kill you. She will make your eyes clear.”

He had repeated these words so many times, and I had memorised them as my own name. It wasn’t

just a suggestion from an Oracle. It was an immaculate prophecy. A few weeks ago, Lucca had told me about his vision of my death. He had foreseen that a girl from the White Garden would kill me. It was the exact reason why I wanted to go there myself and assassinate her before the prophecy would come true. Lucca had always told me that fate would find its way to me, but I had a different opinion. If it were my destiny to die, then I'd rather die trying to change it than sit and do nothing about it.

“I will kill her first. I am not afraid of anyone. As long as you are safe, my heart is at ease.” My words were true, and Lucca knew it. I was his protector by my own choice, and I had no obligation to obey. I followed him willingly. I was his servant in public but not behind the closed doors, and I had a mind of my own when it came to killing and protecting. “I will eliminate the girl before the prophecy awakens. And I will avenge my father’s death by killing the Nightblooms.”

It was their family that made me an orphan. The name itself sickened me. The Nightblooms were naturally powerful, and I stood a very faint chance

of eliminating them.

“There is only one of them left,” Lucca added.

“That makes my task even easier then.” I smiled, although I wasn’t sure of what exactly I was about to do. Honestly, I was lost. Without Lucca, I was nothing.

In the White Garden, I had to be careful. I had to be clever and many steps ahead of the Nightblooms to succeed. Although I had gathered a considerable amount of information about each student of the White Garden, I still had no clue who was the girl that would end my life. As long as she was not a Nightbloom, I was safe. And since I had memorised the list of the student names, I knew the last Nightbloom was a male.

I was confident in my strength, although Lucca kept reminding me of my death.

“You are too weak to resist your temptations. Unless you learn to control yourself, my words cannot be unspoken.” Unexpectedly, Lucca’s face changed. His lips curved into a smile as if his visions of my death were cheerful. “Your temptations will betray your secrets.”

I took a deep breath. Lucca was right. I had a dark

secret that I wasn't sure if I would be able to keep. But I had to.

Finally, we arrived at the White Garden. The air swelled with a pleasant aroma. I could sense the powerful energies gathering in one place. The guards brought us into the school's premises and carried us towards the entrance, where people were shouting in excitement and impatience. I had never seen anyone so happy about Lucca's arrival before.

The energy released by the two elven clans—Pures and Amdrovens—rose higher, making my skin tingle with untamed electricity. The moment I'd reveal my face to the crowd—nothing would be reversible. I was either one step closer to fulfilling my dream or ten steps closer to my end.

We finally arrived at the entrance, and Lucca left his seat. The White Garden welcomed his beautiful face with loud applause. I followed Lucca's lead and stood next to him to ensure nobody would attack the boy. The crowd knelt in front of us to demonstrate respect towards Lucca. Only one girl remained standing on her feet.

Her black hair fell freely over her shoulders and down to her elbows. A body as fragile and thin as

only a fairy could have, she stood on her feet completely frozen. Her white dress shimmered in the sunlight, reminding me of winter. It was simple yet complimented her body. She was no warrior, that was for sure. Her long fingers were too gentle to know how to fight; her slim legs were too graceful to endure running. She was weak.

Her pale blue eyes gazed at me like I was some statue. In her amusement, I looked right back at her, hoping she would come to her senses and kneel, but she didn't.

"It's her that you seek," Lucca whispered, almost quiet enough for me to think it was only my imagination. Hearing his words made me lift my hand unconsciously and force the girl to the ground. Vigorous fury boiled my veins, and I had to steel myself not to kill her. I could not embarrass Lucca in front of everyone because I swore I would do everything quietly, so nobody found out it was me. I had to keep my promise.

I watched her kneel in front of me with her face deep in the grass. If I could, I would make her drown in the ground beneath her, but that would be too obvious. Instead, I sent a warning glare

towards anyone who would dare to show any disrespect.

Still forcing her face into the grass, I kept staring at the girl. The prophecy no longer made any sense. I could not believe that such a weak, fragile fairy could ever hurt me. Or anyone, unless she managed to stab me in the eyeball with a pencil while I was asleep. However, injuring someone would still require some strength, and this dolly had none.

Lucca placed his hand on mine, and I had no choice but to release the girl.

The principal of the White Garden approached Lucca with opened hands and started his welcoming speech. The students were allowed to stand up, too. I examined the crowd with suspicion. The Amdrovens and the Pures divided into two large groups as if unable to get along with each other. I sensed no tension between them, so it must have been the usual atmosphere, the order of how things worked for them.

“For many years, the wisdom of the Oracles has led the White garden to ensure no Klemondions would endanger our dear land.” The principal

spoke loudly. His mature face was proud, no less than three hundred years old—unmistakeably, he was a Pure. Something about the way he moved reminded me of my father. “It is a great honour to have you here!”

Lucca smiled at everyone. It was one of the rare moments I could see his face change, although it was already the second time during the day. I wondered if he felt blessed to be a part of something so great. Leading such an enormous school was a huge responsibility, but I was at ease as long as Lucca was happy.

We were introduced to the teachers and the Elite, but I had already memorised everyone’s names and faces long before we arrived. The top students came over to Lucca one by one, handing a small present each. That was the moment when I noticed him—the last Nightbloom.

Even with my eyes closed, I could see the hunter’s symbols vigorously appearing across his body. Like inky serpents, they warned me to stay away. Even underneath his white suit, I could see those symbols gleaming clearly. My body tensed when I noticed my name written on his left hand.

Like a blossoming tree, it entwined with his veins.

Nightbloom approached Lucca as slowly as if each of his steps hurt him, yet he moved like a mighty knight. His crimson eyes were pinned to the ground, and I could barely sense his energy. Unlike any other Pure I had met, he radiated surprisingly low power. Something was wrong with him, and it would have been a perfect opportunity for me to attack him. I could easily imagine my fingernails stabbing through his chest to rip out his beating heart. Or wrapping my legs around this neck to suffocate his entire existence—I did none of that.

Like a curious fool, I fixed my gaze on him. Nightbloom stood up in front of Lucca and handed him a tiny box wrapped in silver. A sudden, anxious tremble overwhelmed my heart. Something was about to happen; I could sense it.

Suddenly, Nightbloom collapsed, hitting the hard ground. The rest of the Elite members immediately surrounded him, trying to help. Their leader examined him for injuries, but there were no obvious ones.

“Lathan, is Tyler going to be okay?” one of the

girls asked, nervously touching her blonde curls.

There was no reply. Lathan looked worried. At that moment, I realised it was out of his powers to heal something he could not see. I inhaled the air to sense Lathan's energetic frequency rising above his body. He was about to use magic, but Lucca stopped him.

"Snow will take care of your friend," Lucca suddenly announced. "She can heal him."

I looked at Lucca with confusion. Why would he entrust me with the healing of somebody he knew I was planning to kill? The more I thought about it, the less I understood.

"We can take him to the healer's clinic! There is no need for us to cancel your Welcoming Ceremony and the party because of somebody feeling unwell," said the principal, stepping forwards. I agreed with him and hoped Nightbloom would be taken far away from my sight to lower my temptation of murdering him.

"No. I'd rather see everyone at the ball," Lucca objected. His pale eyes landed on me as if he were expecting me to do something selfless, "My guards will keep an eye on the White Garden and protect

everyone here. Snow will heal the boy.”

Why, Lucca?

“We will have the ball on the full moon. All souls are invited,” he announced to everyone and glanced at me one more time.

I could not believe he wanted me to heal Nightbloom. My veins boiled, but I managed to retain a calm exterior. I had no obligation to obey Lucca’s will, yet I chose to do so. Lathan volunteered to take Nightbloom and me to the house of the Elite. If I had a choice, I would have killed them both, but Lucca could read my thoughts, and I sensed he wasn’t impressed by them.

I sighed and accepted Lathan’s help. He carried his friend to the car and sat him on the back seat. I was about to get in the back of the car, too, but Lathan opened the door for me at the front. I glanced at him suspiciously.

“Please,” he invited me to sit down. “I can see you don’t trust anyone, but I mean no harm.”

Something about his words made me worried. His eyes pierced through me as if he could see who I truly was. Impossible! I sensed his powers, and

mind-reading was not one of them. Lucca had chosen to stay together with his crowd, and I wished he was next to me to tame my anger and violent thoughts.

“I am not afraid of you!” I tried to sound confident, “I’m an assassin, and you should be the one considering your safety, not me.”

Lathan giggled.

“You wouldn’t harm me!” He pointed at the seat with his eyes.

“How can you be so sure?” I asked him, stepping closer. I was exceedingly tempted to prove him wrong. One broken rib shouldn’t be too bad.

“Because you are the Oracle’s assassin. Unless I harmed the Oracle, you wouldn’t touch me,” he replied with a face as calm as only Lucca could have.

I had to admit he was clever, but I had promised Lucca there would be only two victims—the last Nightbloom and the girl.

“If you give me a reason, I can kill you without blinking,” I added, smiling shamelessly.

“See? Then I’m perfectly safe. I mean no harm to you, so I’m safe.” Lathan explained. His answers made it clear why he was the Elite leader.

I sat in the car and remained silent. Lathan didn't say a word either and made the trip extremely easy. The silence was my friend, and it seemed as if it was Lathan's, too. Without looking at him, I tried to study him. His body was not tensed even the slightest bit. He was confident. Just by looking at him, I could tell he trusted only a few people.

His silence was pleasant, but it made me want to break it.

"How did you two become friends?" I asked, glancing up at Lathan's blue eyes. His face reminded me of someone, but I was unable to recall who exactly.

"It was meant to be," his answer was as clear as a dirty puddle. "What about you? How did a girl like you become an assassin?"

"It was meant to be." I turned my face to the window. He won. I had no wish to talk any longer. Lathan was too dangerous to speak to. He knew what he was doing, and he obviously chose his words far too wise for me to play with them.

Finally, we arrived at the Elite. It was a beautiful white mansion surrounded by a breathtaking garden. Unlike the energetic atmosphere of the

White Garden, the Elite was incredibly peaceful. I could see the forest not far from the house, and I was pleased to find out I'd have a place to rest if I had to escape the charade.

Lathan invited me into the mansion and carried Nightbloom to the second floor. I followed them, observing the surroundings. There was an enormous kitchen on the first floor, fit for at least five chefs at the same time. It was the best place to find weapons. A dining room was also near, but the only object suitable for the killing was a large vase with a small tree. Instead, I would use a chair to smash somebody's skull if I had to.

The only other place worthy of my attention was the open living room. The soft chairs and sofa were worthless for a fight, but the glass table was useful. Nothing was more painful than smashing somebody's back into a firm pane of glass.

On our way to the second floor, I saw some paintings on the walls. I would not use them to attack anyone as they were too beautiful to be tainted by blood.

"This is Tyler's room!" Lathan announced, pointing at the black door on the second floor, "He

will be there mostly, but if the door is locked, believe me—you don't want to break it.”

“Why is that? Maybe I enjoy breaking random doors?” I had no clue where the awful joke came from.

“If it's locked, he is not alone.” Lathan opened the door and carried his friend inside.

I entered the room carefully. It was black—only a few photographs of people and nature decorated the dark wallpapers. I studied them to see if I could find any helpful information.

“He loves nature. Those are pictures from the forest next to our house,” Lathan mentioned without me asking. He placed Nightbloom on the bed and remained standing by him.

I had a glance across the room. A massive window unfolded a picturesque view of the forest. The bed was near the beautiful scenery, but a few ancient books laid on the bedside table. There was a large wardrobe with more photos of Nightbloom and the Elite, a double sofa with a few cushions and a pile of even older-looking books. Not far, there was another door; it has to be a bathroom. Finally, there was a desk with different daggers placed next

to each other in perfect order.

“I will leave you two here.” Lathan walked to the door. “If you need anything, I will be downstairs.”

Lathan shut the door behind him as he left, and I closed the curtains, sighing loudly. Finally, I could breathe. Nightbloom was still unconscious, and I wanted him to remain that way forever. However, my loyalty towards Lucca would not allow that.

I walked closer to Nightbloom and placed my hand on his chest. A pale blue light left my fingertips. I closed my eyes to help myself concentrate on the healing, but something was different about him. His chest moved up and down slowly, but his heart was racing loudly. Yet, despite our proximity, I could not sense his energy as if he were already dead.

I opened his jacket and unbuttoned his shirt. His skin seemed perfectly healthy, and there was not even a drop of sweat. Only his symbols circled the body in an insane motion. If there was no physical reason for him to feel unwell, it had to be the magic.

After a long while of reading the symbols and failing to understand their meaning, I hoped to find another clue about helping him. I was also hoping

to find a hint of how to kill him later.

Suddenly, Nightbloom grabbed his chest with both hands as if his heart was in agony. I tried to hold him down, but his physical strength was far greater than mine. I had taken down many strong warriors, but Nightbloom felt stronger. Almost inhuman. Although I wanted him dead, I forgot who he was and genuinely tried to help. Left without a choice, I got on top of Nightbloom and forced his hands down by magic. He was in pain, evident in his face.

I could not believe what I was about to do, but a part of me knew it was right. I trusted my instincts more than I had ever trusted my sanity as they saved me more often. This time was no different. I surrendered to the electric feeling floating through my body and allowed it to lead me. When it came to magic, I was not the one controlling it. I let it control me.

I lowered my body closer to my sleeping enemy, letting his bare skin touch mine. I was unsure what magic guided me, but I could feel its great force squeezing me closer to Nightbloom. Once my breast touched his chest, the symbols exploded all

over his body and started to glow toxic blue. The light tickled my skin, making it extremely sensitive. My breath became shallow. I could hear both of our heartbeats daggering through the walls as if my senses had suddenly intensified more than I could ever imagine. The energy between us was unknown to me, and I could not help it.

His glowing symbols started to move in a slow-motion, and my skin reflected them like a mirror. I could feel them sinking inside me, crawling into my blood. Like a drug, the symbols compelled me to be glue myself to the enemy's skin. The closer I moved, the more power I could feel. Like an enchanting spell, the markings made me feel high, and I lost my sense of reality. As if the past, present and future stopped existing, I took a sharp breath and lowered my lips on top of his.

The energy between us created an even stronger ray of light, causing electric bolts to pierce our bodies. I released my energy to feed Nightbloom. Like a breeze of air, a pale light left my mouth, slowly sliding into his. If I could feel the same way every time I healed someone, I would become a healer instead of an assassin. I would constantly feel

ecstatic. I would feed on pleasure.

Suddenly, Nightbloom's eyes shot open. I expected to see them crimson as before, but they had turned to a blinding gold. I could not stand looking at them as the gaze made me feel powerless. I closed my eyes and continued to heal him, but his hands wrapped around my body, sliding over my skin gently. The symbols had made me incredibly sensitive, and his touch seemed to tingle my whole being, my spirit. A moan full of pleasure escaped my mouth.

That moment, his lips brushed over mine, taking in more of me. The pale light of my healing energy started to flow out of my mouth much faster as if he sucked it out like a Klemondion would. I was expecting to feel weakened, but I ended up feeling even more drugged. His kiss deepened, and I was unable to resist. I kissed him back as passionately.

Suddenly, a faint memory of reality awakened me, and I realised I was kissing my enemy. I was supposed to murder him, yet I was in his bed, squeezing my body tightly to his and trembling with lust. I tried to push back, but his strong arms wrapped around me like silky ribbons. The

sensation sent molten shivers down my legs, making them powerless.

Was I being drained by a Pure? Was it even possible? These questions floated somewhere in my rapture-filled mind, yet not strong enough for me to try to resist harder.

Nightbloom rolled me over, and we swapped positions. My mind screamed to stop me, but the enchanting sensations held me under the spell. The lips that I would never even consider kissing were caressing mine, taking away my spiritual energy, yet feeding me in return. His body moved seductively against me, making me shiver.

Unexpectedly, it became hot in the room. The air started to burn my skin, and the fabric covering my body became unbearably uncomfortable. Even Nightbloom's trousers were rubbing against my legs like blades. I wanted to take everything off. I wanted to be naked, and I wanted him to be naked.

It was impossible to influence Nightbloom's actions, but I could control mine. With my hands quivering with sensations, I unzipped his trousers and managed to pull them off with the help of my feet. As if he could read my mind, Nightbloom

pulled off his jacket and shirt to assist me. His hands slid under my skirt, and I wanted him to destroy every inch of clothing I had.

I wanted him.

Then it hit me. Lucca's words came back to my mind. "You are too weak to resist your temptations. Unless you learn to control yourself, my words cannot be unspoken. Your temptations will betray your secrets."

For the first time, I was so happy I grew up surrounded by assassins. My fighting skills were incredible, and I used them to get back on top. Nightbloom's hands were still trying to seduce my body to stay close, but I managed to resist. I pushed myself away from his lips and immediately stopped healing him. His body seemed healthy enough already and no longer required my support.

Unwillingly, I managed to get away. The moment our bodies no longer touched, the blue lights dimmed, and the magic symbols disappeared. My job was done, and I was free to leave, but I was unable to catch my breath. My heart was hammering. I tried to grasp what had just happened, but my thoughts were racing like chaos.

My legs were still trembling from the touch, and I could not believe I had kissed somebody I was planning to kill.

Amazed by my stupidity and weakness, I tried to calm down by taking Nightbloom's clothing and folding it nicely. There was no blanket on the bed, but I noticed one on the sofa, so I used it to cover up the body that nearly seduced me into an enchanting energy exchange.

Once the rhythm of my heart calmed, I went downstairs to face Lathan.

"I can see he is as healthy as always." Lathan giggled after glancing at me.

"What do you mean?" I hoped I didn't blush.

"Nothing." He laughed. "Your hair is a mess, and Tyler is very popular with the ladies. Nobody would ever blame you if you fell for his tricks. He is crafty that way."

Lathan's words made me want to go back upstairs and strangle Nightbloom with my bare hands. Or choke Lathan first and then head upstairs.

"Are you hungry?" Lathan asked, moving towards the kitchen.

"No." I followed him, grumpy. The images of the

symbols sliding over Nightbloom's muscles wouldn't leave my mind.

"What do you eat?" Lathan opened the giant fridge and wandered through it with his gaze.

"What do you mean?" I probably sounded more worried than I should have, but I was not used to living a charade.

"I mean, what is your favourite food? Do you eat meat? Are you a vegetarian? Vegan? Are you allergic to anything?" Lathan asked calmly.

Although his questions were simple, something about him told me he knew. I had to be careful around him.

"I love meat. Steak is my favourite, but anything else would do, too. I'm not picky towards food," I replied, trying to sound relaxed.

"Since you will live here with us, I want you to know that any food you see in the fridge is free to take. Usually, I cook for everyone, but you are the Oracle's private guard, so I don't know what your schedule is like. I hope you will feel comfortable around the Elite." Lathan smiled, and I sensed no danger. His words were genuine. "I heard the Oracle calling you Snow. Is that your name?"

“No,” I groaned, still dwelling in the thoughts about the passionate energy exchange.

“You’re not very chatty, are you?” Lathan asked, taking some food out of the fridge and starting to prepare it.

“My name is Evelyn Snow. Where I come from, it is pronounced as *Eve-rly-ryn*, but since my mother and I shared the same name, mine was shortened to Evelyn.” I decided to give him at least some information about my life to make me less suspicious. “My mother died when I was a baby, and only my dad would call me by my name. After he got murdered, I cannot stand hearing my name. It sickens me. That’s why Lucca calls me Snow.”

“I see. Snow.” Lathan smiled, not bothering me with more questions and not creating awkward silence either. “My mother is no longer alive, either.”

“What about your father?” I asked curiously. He was good at keeping a conversation.

“He’s still alive. I don’t talk to him.” Lathan chopped the vegetables like a professional chef. His face remained calm regardless of what he spoke about, “There are things I cannot forgive him.

Things I cannot accept.”

“Is that why you live here?” I wondered.

“I try to stay away from my family.” Lathan smiled faintly.

After a short while of chatting and eating together, Lathan showed me the top floor where Lucca would stay. It was luxurious and bright. The entire floor would belong only to us two, and that was a lot of space. I could see Lucca’s bed in the far corner. It was placed on a large pedestal where snake-like columns held silky white curtains. Beautiful pots with different plants decorated the bed area. Instead of a wardrobe, there was an additional room for clothing and jewellery, surrounded by crystal clear mirrors. On the left side of the bed, I saw a beautiful balcony with a garden on the rooftop. On the other side of the room, there was another bed, much smaller than Lucca’s. Mesmerising plants and decorations also surrounded it. Next to it, there was a door leading to the bathroom.

A round pool full of water in the middle of the room glimmered like diamonds, and a tall fountain—a sculpture of a gorgeous mermaid

poured water from a seashell. A few white sofas and different statues stood around the water.

I glanced up at the ceiling; fire imprisoned in luxurious chandeliers sent beautiful and cosy lights over the room. As if it weren't too much already, there were two golden trays full of sand on each side of the entrance—a complete set of main magic elements had been placed around the top floor to empower the Oracle's strength.

I spent the rest of the day there; Lathan left me on my own. My belongings were already prepared for me and brought to the Elite, so I grabbed my nightdress and robe and took a shower while I was alone. Afterwards, I sat in the garden on the balcony; nature calmed me more than anything, and I was happy to have such a beautiful place to live. I knew it would not last long, but I had to try and enjoy it while I could.

I was uncomfortable leaving Lucca alone for the whole day, but his task was clear to me. He wanted me to stay at the Elite, although I couldn't understand why. I wasn't sure if he knew about the energy I would get from Nightbloom or if he genuinely wanted me to feed Nightbloom with

mine. I was unable to stop thinking about it. The vivid memories of our bodies touching had me under a spell. I kept replaying them in my head all day long.

Without knowing it, I had fallen asleep. I woke up in the middle of the night, and Lucca was already there, sleeping in his new bed like a little prince. In my eyes, he indeed was royalty. I knew I should have gone back to sleep, but I couldn't. My mind was racing, and the symbols kept playing images of what had happened earlier that day. My skin was tingling again, and anxious thoughts wouldn't let me go. They made me hungry.

I headed downstairs to cook something for myself while everyone else was asleep. I couldn't risk them seeing my hunger. My stomach was rumbling like an angry beast as I entered the empty kitchen and opened the fridge to take a few pieces of raw steak. The hunger made me feel unbearably hot, but the memories of the healing left me feeling even hotter. I removed my robe and started preparing the food.

When I nearly finished cooking my steak, I heard somebody walking down the stairs. Hunger made

my senses stronger, so I could hear, see and smell things much better. My heartbeat became uneasy as I realised it was Nightbloom slowly approaching me. His steps were quiet and careful. I closed my eyes and waited for him to come closer as my hand reached for the largest knife near me. I healed Nightbloom earlier that day, and everyone else was asleep. Nobody would suspect me if I finished him quietly.

I turned around and aimed for his heart, but at the very last moment, I changed my mind and threw the dagger slightly higher and nailed him to the wall. As quickly as I could, I jumped over the table and ran to the knife before Nightbloom would realise what I had done. Without even blinking, I pulled the knife out of the wall and placed it at Nightbloom's throat.

He was taller than me and had the physical advantage, so I had to use my body to push him against the wall. His eyes were blood-red, and I could see no symbols, yet I still sensed no energy from him. It made me anxious because I was unable to read him.

I wanted to ask him if he remembered anything

about what happened between us, but I resisted. I shouldn't let myself think about it either. I had to attack, but I remained paralysed. I kept staring into his crimson eyes like a hypnotised fool, and I could feel him eyeing me in return. Both of us remained awkwardly silent for a while—frozen and tense.

“I cannot decide if I should pierce your eyeballs first or slice your throat,” I broke the silence, hoping he couldn't feel my heart racing madly against his chest.

We exchanged with a few other clever words, but none of them made any sense. As if both of us were enchanted by a mysterious power, we kept scanning each other's bodies. I was unable to read his energy; therefore, I had to use my logic. It was hard to tell what fighting skills he possessed as it seemed like he didn't resist being under my dagger. His body tensed when mine did, but at no point, he tried to disarm me. He showed no aggression.

While examining Nightbloom, I realised something hard had dug into my groin. Flashbacks of our previous body contact overwhelmed my mind. I remembered how drugged I felt when I tried to heal him. I recalled how scorching it was

lying under him with my legs wide open. A warm shiver went down my entire body, and I pushed back immediately, jumping over to the other side of the table.

“My name is Evelyn Snow!” I mumbled my name as the embarrassment burned me from inside out. I had realised I was half-naked in front of Nightbloom, and there was no way to take it back. My own body and magic had failed me by wanting something my mind had forbidden. “Leave before I kill you, Nightbloom!”

“Wait, how do you know my name?” he froze like a statue of a graceful asshole.

“I’m the Oracle’s assassin. I know everyone’s name in the White Garden.” I forced myself to meet his eyes. I was a warrior, and I had to act like one. Yet, I failed to swallow my hormones. I was unable to resist his charm and jumped over the table for the third time, slamming my body into his; right before I kissed him. *Passionately.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ELYATHA ELI'S PASSION FOR BOOKS, PARANORMAL romance and fantasy stories began at thirteen. While other children feared vampires, werewolves, even elves and other mythical creatures, Elyatha spent her free time creating fictional characters and alternative worlds.

Her stories are based on supernatural dreams with magical beings (and often dark romance between vampires). Elyatha believes that stories run

through her blood to inspire other dreamers to be who they are deep within their core. She believes that every tale has a purpose, and if it falls into your hands—it is meant for YOU.

Elyatha Eli writes stories with passion and hopes to inspire your imagination with magic, unconditional love (either it's about friendship, straight couples, LGBT+, polyamory or mythical creatures). Her goal is to give you a key to a fantasy world and let you escape reality. Enjoy stories written from the heart.

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