

# ~ Everlasting ~

by Mavis Appgewater

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Thanks to my beta reader, Mary.

As always this is for Heather.

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## Part One of the Everlasting Series

Rowan looked out upon the misty, blood marred land, the stale stench of the fallen hanging in the air. The battle was over; the kingdom was safe, yet the young knight stared out over the bloodied landscape with a heavy heart. Steel gray eyes drank in the despair left in the wake of battle. "A waste," the knight sighed sorrowfully as was done each time the warrior had emerged from battle. Fighting for small parcels of land or for the glory of the King only to leave death and heartache in the wake. Rowan's jaw clenched wishing that she had never strayed from the dingy blacksmith's shop where she had spent her youth.

Was it the glory she had sought when she joined the King's army fighting gallantly until she was knighted? Or was it simply freedom she sought? Rowan was adrift in a sea of confusion, wishing, once again, that she had run off and began her life anew as the person she truly was, a woman.

"Peregrine," she grumbled; the hair on the nape of her neck prickled sensing the meddling sorcerer was near.

Rowan's steely gaze never wavered when the sorcerer appeared before her. "I should have fallen in battle," she hissed at the gray haired mystic clad in a long, flowing black robe. Many considered him to be the guiding light that protected the kingdom, the King himself valued the sorcerer's advice. Rowan despised him blaming him for the life she led. In her heart she treasured her duties as a Knight of Lyennarian. Serving her King truly made her happier than she ever would have been if she had followed a traditional path living her life as a servant or wife to some witless man. What she hated was that she was never allowed the freedom to live as her true self.

"You wish for death?" Peregrine scolded her. "You who have bravely served King and country, a common blacksmith's apprentice knighted for your heroism? The King honors you above all others and has granted you the highest honor. This is your destiny."

"My destiny?" She laughed at the absurdity. "To be given the Princess' hand in marriage? Tell me Wizard does the executioner keep his blade sharp? I'd rather a swift end when my head is laid upon his block."

"Again you seek death?" Peregrine sighed heavily. "You are to be King, not beheaded."

"Is your memory dimming old man?" She challenged him, as no other would dare. "There is no stem on the apple; certainly my bride will take notice. My secret will be exposed and my fate sealed. Tell me why did you do this to me?"

She still felt the pain of being taken from her mother when she was no more than ten years old. Leaving behind her mother and the only friend she had ever known. *'Does my friend remember me or the promise we made?'* She questioned in silent bitterness still haunted by the memories of a girl who promised that they would share an everlasting friendship. It was so long ago before Peregrine's meddling back when she was just a girl laughing and playing with her friend without a worry in the world.

"I did nothing but lead you to your fate," Peregrine asserted his eyes growing dim.

"My fate?" She laughed coldly. "To be torn from my mother's arms and raised as a boy? Turning my entire existence to a life of deceit; this is my destiny? I am nothing more than a pawn for your amusement. I despise you and your magic."

"Would you not give your life to protect the people of Lyennarian?" Peregrine challenged her. "Would you not fall in battle in the name of King Hardwin or his only child Princess Alithea? Would you not give your very soul if it meant peace in this humble land?"

"You know I would," Rowan snapped, silently vowing to keep the promise she had made long before her life became a charade. "I give it all and more if it would bring peace to this land and to those who rule it. I've pledged my life and my sword and spilled the blood of others to honor my pledge. You know this. I just do not wish to marry."

"Does the fair Alithea not appeal to you?" He toyed with her while the knight's eyes narrowed.

"Oh the Princess is appealing," Rowan readily agreed recalling Princess Alithea's stormy green eyes and fiery red hair. She shivered slightly while she recalled the tempest that swelled behind Alithea's tumultuous beauty. The Princess was a vision of beauty whose strong will was not to be trifled with. "She has a kind heart and a strong will. When she discovers that I am not what I pretend to be she will have my head. I am already aware that she is displeased with her father's decision that she must wed."

"She finds you appealing," Peregrine snickered, his eyes dancing with amusement.

"She does?" Rowan gaped like a love struck schoolboy. "Perhaps in my armor but what will happen when she finally spies what is hidden beneath this metal and chains? She'll think I am a trickster set out to make sport of her. In a fortnight I am expected to bring her to my marriage bed, the cloak will fall."

"Is it possible that Sir Rowan, the knight who slew the dragon of Saladar, is afraid of a mere slip of a girl?" Peregrine teased the warrior.

"Yes," Rowan confessed. "I've seen braver men than myself cowering in her presence. How is this my destiny?"

"Lyennarian and the surrounding valley will be blessed with a hundred years of peace and prosperity," Peregrine sternly announced. "It is destiny that the guiding hand will be that of a woman."

"And I am that woman?" Rowan growled in disbelief.

"No, it is to be your bride who will rule in your name," Peregrine instructed her. "You will stand proudly at her side even when she passes the reign to your heirs."

"My heirs?" Rowan laughed wildly. "Tell me Wizard is there some charm or a potion hidden in your cloak that will make that unlikely event occur?"

"Patience," he scolded her once again.

"You have been pleading for my patience since you stole me from my mother's bosom," Rowan fumed. "Tell me why it is destiny that I live a charade? If I was born to be her groom, then why was I not born of noble birth or a man?"

"If you had been pride would have clouded your heart," Peregrine sternly informed her. "Your troops are approaching, time for you to lead them back. Clean the blood and mud from your boots; you must look your best when you greet your bride."

With a flash he was gone and Rowan was left with nothing but lingering doubts. "She is going to swing the axe herself," she sighed heavily before greeting her men. She addressed them individually praising their bravery while asking them to leave the horrors of battle behind them. "Home, I have a wedding to attend," she announced still wondering why the King offered Alithea's hand to her when there were so many suitors fighting for her favors.

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Hardwin's head was pounding while he watched his only child storming about. "Why?" Alithea bellowed in the most undignified manner. "I am not ready for marriage!" she shrieked.

"You are well beyond the age," Hardwin tried to reason with her. "Rowan is a good man who is now returning from a victorious campaign. He will be a good husband."

"I know of him," Alitheia hissed. "He is, from everything I've heard, an honorable man," she fussed. "And attractive," she added under her breath. "Yet he is not of noble birth," she argued in a vain attempt to stop the inevitable.

She knew it was a futile argument yet she felt compelled to try to free herself from marrying. It wasn't the tall, dark knight she objected to; Rowan was by far the only suitor that appealed to her. She just did not harbor a desire to be married. She was plagued by the knowledge that once she wed she would belong to her husband, the very thought of becoming some man's property made her sick.

"Please father," she pleaded.

"Alitheia you must wed," he finally scolded her after enduring years of listening to his daughter dismiss one suitor after another; it was time. Hardwin was stunned when Peregrine advised him to offer Alitheia's hand to Rowan. After years of trying to find the perfect match, endless lines of Princes and noblemen requesting the honor of his only child's hand, his most trusted advisor instructed him to offer the most precious person in his life to a commoner. Still Rowan had proven himself a good and righteous man.

"It is meant to be," Peregrine announced upon entering the great hall.

"I should have known you were behind this," Alitheia hissed at the Wizard. "What sort of magic is this?"

Hardwin crinkled his brow in amusement while his daughter defied the powerful wizard. "Alitheia, I had my doubts as well," he began carefully; a pair of emerald orbs glared at him. "So many men born of noble blood have vied for your favor and yet Rowan is more worthy than any of them. He is a brave and honorable man who would die to protect you." Hardwin explained the reasons he finally agreed to consider the young Knight to become his successor. It was all true; Rowan possessed what the other's lacked, strength and pure of heart who would give his life for Alitheia's. There was nothing more he could ask of the man who would take his daughter's hand.

Alitheia stood there in a stunned silence knowing her father's words were true. Rowan was all that and more. Her stomach fluttered. Her mind picturing the brave man who proudly served his King and country. A shy smile crept out when she recalled gentleness in his dark, gray eyes when he knelt before her when her father knighted him. Rowan was a warrior with a kind heart, whose striking good looks made her knees quiver whenever she saw him. No other man had ever made her body warm simply by the thought of him.

*'What if it is a façade?'* She silently trembled fearfully thinking that she was about to wed a man she had barely spoken to. She cast a pleading glance up at her father and for the first time in her life her pleas went unanswered. Hardwin's eyes spoke volumes; she was to be wed.

She choked back the tears while she nodded her assent to her father. "Ladies take the Princess to her chambers and help her prepare," the King instructed her court and with a wave of his hand he sealed her fate.

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Rowan stood before the looking glass her body trembling so violently that her newly polished armor and chain mail clinked in the most unnatural rhythm.

"Wizard," she stammered turning to find Peregrine standing behind her with an amused look on his face. "Tell me what is expected of me this morning?" Her voice creaking while her jaw quivered. "I'm polished, bathed and properly attired, now what?"

"Now you greet the King," Peregrine smirked. "He will give you his blessing and then you and the Princess will be afforded time together."

"Time together?" Rowan squeaked in horror. "For what?"

"Talk to one another, try and get to know your bride," Peregrine suggested. "After today you won't see much of one another with all of the feasts and festivals."

"Whatever shall I talk to her about?" she stammered. "She is refined and educated. All I know is how to shoe a horse, lead an army, and slay a dragon. I doubt these subjects will prove interesting to someone as worldly as the Princess."

"I swear by the heavens you are acting like a fatted hog on feast day," Peregrine noted in amusement. "I know that you are not unfamiliar with granting a lady your favor," he supplied knowingly.

"True," Rowan conceded. "I've granted women my favor, but as you know I've never been allowed the good fortune of shedding my armor. Though it would nice," she sighed. "I have dreamt of sharing that, yet this is Princess Alithea. She is a precious gem and I am nothing more than a fraud."

"Just be you," Peregrine reassured her while Rowan wiped the sweat from her brow. "Calm down before you need another bath."

"Calm down?" she squeaked; the beads of sweat growing. "And just how is it that I should be myself, I've never been granted that privilege?"

"Let her do the talking she's quite good at it," Peregrine suggested hopefully. "Relax it is just a stroll around the palace grounds."

"Today," Rowan argued. "But when the moon turns I will be her husband. A husband that lacks the proper armament."

"Simply enjoy today," Peregrine brightly offered before he vanished.

"How?" Rowan shouted to the empty room. "I hate you!" she added before trying to settle her jangled nerves. "Fine, I can slay a dragon a walk in the garden should be an easy task. I want to die."

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Alithea sat on the marble bench overlooking the garden wringing her hands while she awaited the arrival of her intended. Her ladies in waiting prattled on endlessly at how lucky she was to be marrying someone as good looking as Rowan. Silently she agreed with them and, for some strange reason, felt a slight twinge of jealousy while they discussed her future husband's good looks. *'My future husband!'* Her mind screamed out in horror as the maiden's voices suddenly became hushed.

She felt a knot growing in the pit of her stomach; her skin prickled. He was approaching; she didn't need to look up to know this. *'Strange that I know when he is near,'* she silently noted wondering if perhaps Peregrine's prediction was

true and that Rowan was the man she was meant to be with. She took a hard swallow while her court stood and left her side.

She felt her breath hitch when she glanced up and was captured by a pair of mesmerizing gray eyes. She felt a blush creeping over her. She blew out a terse breath. *'He truly is the man of my dreams,'* her heart sighed when he bowed breaking from her gaze.

"Milady," he softly greeted her.

"Sir Rowan," she dutifully responded curious as to why he was still bowing. She waited until he finally lifted his body. Again she was confused while his eyes darted around looking everywhere but in her direction. "Shall we walk?" she finally offered holding out her hand while her brow furrowed in confusion.

"As you wish," he stammered finally taking her by the hand.

The clammy feeling of his touch that somehow warmed her body while they strolled along the garden path surprised Alithea. Mere moments felt more like hours as they carried on in a stilted silence. The only sounds were the birds chirping and a strange clinging sound echoing through the air. Alithea's eyes darted around while she searched the wooded path for the source of the unusual sound.

She halted in her tracks as they stood by the lake and she discovered the source of the sound. Her eyes widened with surprise when she spied her betrothed standing before her shaking like a leaf causing his polished armor to clank. "You are nervous?" she gasped while her suitor kept his focus on his footwear.

"Terribly so," he quietly confessed still not meeting her gaze.

Alitheia smiled, a wave of relief washed over her. "Slayer of dragons, brave warrior afraid to embark on a stroll by the lake with me? How is that possible?" She smiled while she questioned her nervous suitor.

"My apologies." Rowan offered clearing his throat.

"No, do not apologize for sharing what I am also feeling," she tried to reassure him turning so that she was standing directly in front of him. "We are strangers who are about to be wed. Knowing that you are nervous comforts me."

"Tell me about your interests?" Rowan pleaded finally lifting his eyes to greet her curious gaze.

"You want to know my thoughts?" She gasped pleased that he had made such a gracious offer.

"Of course," he blinked with confusion. "I want to know all about you."

"And I you," she smiled up at him her heartbeat growing stronger with each passing moment.

"I fear there is little about me to share," he sighed with a frown. "I am simply a soldier."

"Why do I doubt that?" She sighed her face lighting up as she fell into his deep gaze. *'It is his eyes, they are so like hers,'* she thought causing her heart to race.

*'Where are you Raven?'* Her mind bitterly screamed at the memory of awakening one morning and finding that her friend had been sent away. It was the first time Alitheia had learned that she was different from everyone else. Raven her best friend and; confidant who bore a scar on her shoulder blade after saving Alitheia from falling while they were playing in the stables when they shouldn't be, was sent away. The reason for Raven's absence was simple; she was the daughter of one of the cooks and not someone who was suitable to keep company with a Princess. Since that morning Alitheia was plagued by Raven's departure. She spent countless hours over the passing years wondering where the dark haired girl was and how she would look.

Alitheia turned sullen when she once again found herself pondering Raven's fate and whether or not the lanky little girl even remembered her and if she still bore the crescent shaped scar on her shoulder? She shook her head clear when she realized that she was standing with her future husband and her mind was, once again, clouded with thoughts of Raven. She had to finally let go and not fantasize about how they promised to be together forever and if Raven grew up to be as beautiful as Alitheia imagined her to be.

It was his eyes that, once again, spurred her on and the princess began to prattle on about the garden. As they began discussing their thoughts Alitheia began to relax while she prayed that her husband would never discover that she spent many nights fondling her own body while she tried to imagine the woman Raven had become. *'It is a sin, he can make you forget,'* her mind pleaded to no avail. Still she found hope in Rowan's warm gentle gaze that was hauntingly familiar.

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Rowan stumbled towards the small room he had been given in the palace. She was feeling unsteady; the mugs of port she had drunk at the feast quickly caught up with her. She blinked her eyes in confusion when she realized that she had taken a wrong turn and was now lost somewhere in the castle. She gasped spying the small figure approaching her. She had seen her many times before still it always tugged at her heart when the elderly woman would bow before her.

"Sir have you lost your way?" Greta inquired with a slight bow.

"Do not bow to me," she choked out; the liquor overrode her good sense.

"Ssh," Greta cautioned her as Rowan's jaw dropped.

"You know?" she stammered while Greta placed a comforting hand on Rowan's cheek.

"How could I not?" Rowan wanted to weep when she tried to utter the name she had been unable to speak for far too many years. "Hush," Greta stopped her. "I'll guide you back to your quarters."

Rowan blindly allowed Greta to guide her back to her room the warrior's heart aching with each step. Rowan reached out and hugged the frail woman before Greta could slip away. "Mother," she whispered softly before reluctantly releasing her mother from her embrace.

"Sleep well my little one," Greta sniffed in a hushed tone before scurrying away.

"How is this for the best?" she choked out flopping down onto the small bed.

"Trust that it is," Peregrine informed her as he appeared.

"You again," Rowan snarled rolling over in an effort to ignore him.

"Rowan, trust me," he implored her while she kept her back to him. She rolled over when she felt his presence leaving the room.

Her eyes widened with surprise when she spied the gift he had left behind resting on her trunk. "Goodie a present," she snarled. "Lucky for you I know how it works," she shouted to the empty air holding up the harness that held the phallus. "I must admit this is a very nice one," she murmured while she ran her hand along the cool surface. "I just doubt that it is going to fool her on our wedding night not to mention the rest of our lives." Rowan couldn't stop the way her body was tingling while she envisioned the possibilities that awaited her on her wedding night. Then she shivered with fear when she realized that instead of making love to Alitheia, who truly held her heart, she was probably going to end up in the palace dungeon. "At least I will be granted one more kiss before I die."

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It was the night before her wedding and instead of sleeping blissfully Alithea was pacing in her chambers. Her heart was pounding with dread knowing that in a few short hours the sun would kiss the morning sky and then her life would be

forever changed.

"This won't be my room any longer it will be our room," she stammered while wringing her hands together. "Come this evening I will no longer be innocent," she squeaked feeling the jagged edge of what was to come encompassing her. "What if I displease him?" She trembled as her pace turned frantic. "Still he is very beautiful," she sighed feeling her stomach tingling. "He could be her brother," she whispered in wonderment before her heart sank. "Why do you haunt me so?" she spat out recalling the only kiss she had ever experienced. It was so shy and chaste born of innocence after pledging everlasting friendship only to have her heart ripped from her chest the following morning.

She felt an errant tear caressing her cheek recalling that morning when Raven vanished from her life. She had only felt pain cut her that deeply on only one other occasion, when her mother had passed from this life just a few short years ago.

"I need you Mother," she whimpered falling onto her bed. "I need to know that my wedding night will be the blessing you promised me it would be."

She felt her sadness ebbing as her thoughts turned to Rowan. She tried to imagine his touch and what treasures lurked beneath his armor. She sighed deeply while she tried to imagine how he would kiss her. Once again her stomach filled with knots as she worried that she would fail her husband. The wedding would be an easy task just another long ostentatious event similar to so many she had endured in her life. The wedding night when her body would be revealed to another for the first time and her bedding handed off to a handmaiden to be displayed for all to see that she was no longer untouched. Those thoughts terrified the normally confident young woman.

By the time the rooster crowed announcing the dawn the princess had failed to find sleep or comfort. She felt ill, while her bedchambers became a flurry of activity. Cackling women dressing and primping her all the while she fighting against the desire to flee to some far off land and hide from the world surrounding her. She had fallen mute during the ordeal, her words of fear choking her while she stood silently.

Her body turned rigid when her father took her by the arm and lead her through the melee of well-wishers toward the altar where her fate was nervously awaiting her arrival. She trampled the roses people tossed at her feet as she walked

aimlessly forward. The path was endless until she spied him dressed in the finest linen, his jet-black hair brushed back; his warm gaze following her approach. Suddenly her demons were silenced and she no longer stumbled along, instead she hurried her pace forward eager to link her hand in his.

"Rowan," she whispered stepping closer her body warming under his admiring gaze.

Alithea's smile grew brighter when her father placed a tender kiss on her cheek and linked her hand with the gallant knight's. She barely heard the blessings bestowed upon them. She simply fell into his eyes while they pledged their lives to one another. With Rowan by her side she earnestly vowed before all present and the heavens to give him her life and her heart.

She felt choked up when his rich soothing voice sincerely pledged the same. Her heart was racing as the ceremony came to an end and her groom, her love, bent down to kiss her. Rowan's lips were soft and gentle when they brushed against hers. The kindling sparked; and her lips moved against his eager to feel his touch. She felt his tongue teasing her lips. Instinctively her lips parted inviting him to take what was now his. She felt the air slipping from her lungs when his tongue caressed hers. The bouquet of flowers almost slipped from her fingers and she almost tore her ornate gown when she wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders melting in his touch.

The world around them faded away; she felt his heart beating in unison with her own. The sound of the Cardinal grunting with displeasure broke through her bliss. She stumbled slightly her head whirling as she allowed him one last taste of her lips. Her husband steadied her with a strong embrace while the crowd cheered when the new Prince and Princess of Lyennarian were presented.

The celebration dragged on; they were seated side by side only allowed to hold the other's hand while everyone indulged in the merriment of their union. Alithea kept her wish to be alone with her husband and know the joys of his touch silent as they endured the endless reverie.

"You are truly beautiful," her husband whispered in her ear while the party droned on.

"Thank you," Alithea blushed at the compliment.

Alithea studied her husband's profile. She felt her body warming while she drank in his beauty. Her body tingled when he clasped her hand tighter. She held a tight hold on his hand fearful to release him from her grasp. Her nipples hardened and her thighs quivered. '*All this from just gazing at him,*' she thought merrily while she watched him stealing shy glances of her. Alithea's stomach clenched when her court approached to lead her back to her bedchambers. Suddenly she felt all of her fears returning. Her knees were shaking when she stood, surprised when her husband kept her hand in his.

"I do love you," he vowed before he brushed his lips against the back of her hand.

She stared blankly at him uncertain if she wanted to cry or jump into his arms. His worried look alerted her that she was staring. "And I you," she finally confessed feeling her words to the depth of her soul.

Alithea was stunned by her admission, which she had not even realized was the truth until she uttered her declaration. '*I love him?*' she questioned over and over again while she was escorted

to the baths and readied for her husband, a stranger who had somehow won her heart. While she was dressed in a white lace gown and a fire lit in her room she pondered just what she knew about her husband. Rowan was truly a kind, gentle soul who had not asked for her hand, yet seemed truly honored when it was bestowed upon him. This was all she knew of the man who was about to share her bed. Neither of them had wanted this marriage and yet each seemed to have been led to their heart.

"Unless of course he is just a competent liar," she reasoned aloud while she nervously looked around her now empty room.

She fidgeted while she sat on her bed, brushing her hair and repeatedly adjusting her gown. She thought briefly of the gift Peregrine had given her. A strange charm she was to place under her pillow. She had a fleeting thought of casting it out the window before conceding to his request. She almost jumped out of her skin when the timid knock struck her door.

"Enter," she squeaked her throat closing.

Her heart leapt when the door creaked slowly open. Rowan stepped shyly into the room his gaze locked firmly on the fire. Alithea sat there nervously twisting her hair brush in her hands. Silently she wished that she were a common woman who could spew out a litany of crude curses that would somehow express the excitement and sheer terror that was brewing inside of her.

"I am married, " she suddenly gasped in horror.

"We are married," he muttered from the doorway stumbling when he finally sealed it behind him.

And there it was her brave knight quaking fearfully before her and her heart was lost once again. She smiled boldly watching him just standing on the other side of the room seemingly unable to move.

"Teach me?" she tenderly offered holding her hand out for him.

Her smile grew brighter when he tugged on the delicate fabric of his dressing robe. She set aside her brush and beckoned him to come closer. She wondered if it was possible that her bridegroom was innocent as well when he stumbled across the room.

*'No, he is far too beautiful not to have many a lady offer him her favor,'* she sighed bitterly hating that another had touched him.

She shivered when he carefully sat down beside her the bed creaking from his movement. "Husband?" she inquired while he kept looking at the fire with a forlorn expression that screamed of his desperation to flee. They sat there silently the room filling with a strange energy while Alithea's heart was pounding against her chest. She cocked her head and studied him carefully realizing that he would remain rooted in the same spot for an eternity if she didn't do something.

"Kiss me," she asserted; a sudden surge of confidence filled her.

He blinked with surprise; his lips quirked into a smile and his body finally turned to greet her. "Our roles have been cast," he whispered in wonderment.

"Yes," she boldly retorted. "Kiss me."

"As you wish," he nodded before cupping her face in his calloused hands. "Anything you wish," he whispered against her cheek as he drew her closer.

Alithea released a tiny whimper; her eyes fluttered shut and his breath caressed her face. The tender kiss was soft when his lips promised his devotion to her. Alithea's body was held captive by his gentle touch, leaving her yearning for more. She ceded to her yearning kissing him deeper while her hands caressed his surprisingly soft cheeks. She explored his delicate features while her tongue shyly discovered the warmth of his mouth.

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Rowan gave into the pleasure of her wife's passionate kisses and the feel of Alithea's fingers tracing her face before weaving through her hair. "So soft," the Princess whispered against her lips before reclaiming them in a searing kiss. Rowan could feel her body straining when her bride pressed closer. The phallus felt suddenly tight against her body while she caressed Alithea's shoulders. Her body soared when her bride moaned into the warmth of her mouth.

Each of them was left breathless when the kiss came to an end. Rowan fought against the throbbing calling to her from between her legs. Alithea was truly a vision of beauty as she gazed upon her face flushed with desire. She untied her robe and cast it aside trying to formulate a plan as to how she could pleasure her bride without revealing her true self. Rowan shivered; her fears clutched at her heart. She brushed Alithea's flaming red hair from her shoulders. Dipping her head and she began lavishing the creamy white flesh of her bride's neck with kisses.

The feel of twin buds pressing against her body clouded her judgment. She lowered her bride down onto the soft bed. Her tongue glided along the soft curve of Alithea's neck while the princess dug her blunt nails into the knight's broad

shoulders. Her mouth drifting lower until her face was nestled between her bride's supple breasts; Alithea's needy whimpers filled the room as Rowan tugged on the lace ties that held her bride's nightgown closed.

She slowly released the lace with her teeth drinking in the intoxicating aroma of her lover's flesh as her creamy, white breasts were slowly revealed to her eager gaze. Rowan was so enraptured to the taste of her bride's flesh she was

unaware of Alithea's wandering hands. She traced the swell of her bride's breasts with her tongue while Alithea's hands slipped under the long white shirt she was wearing.

She was startled when she felt shy fingers brushing against the binding that covered her true self. The gallant knight tenderly guided her bride's hands from her body her heart aching when she saw the confusion in Alithea's emerald orbs. She offered a warm smile before kissing her bride tenderly.

"Rowan?" Alithea stammered in confusion as the knight once again kept her bride's hands at bay.

Words escaped Rowan. She brushed aside the soft material of her bride's gown revealing her heaving bosom. She sighed softly drinking in the glorious sight. Her lips soon followed her gaze. Alithea cried out when Rowan's tongue playfully flicked against her nipples. Rowan felt her body crying out when she captured one of the tiny buds between her lips. Alithea's body arched beneath her own while she suckled the bud greedily.

The phallus pressed against her aching need while Alithea's body swayed gently against her own. Rowan was lost in the feel and taste of her lover's breasts. The Princess clung tightly to her body while they fell into a gentle rhythm. Her

desire pooled between her trembling thighs while she feasted upon Alithea's bosom. She was secretly pleased when the Princess released a whimper of displeasure when Rowan's lips departed from her flesh.

Rowan raised her trembling body and gazed down upon her beautiful bride. Her heart aching while Alithea gazed up at her with emerald pools glazed over with desire. Rowan balanced her body on one elbow; her fingers traced her lover's quivering flesh. Alithea shivered and moaned as the knight's fingers traced the swell of her breasts before teasing her rose colored buds.

"Rowan," Alithea whispered her voice dripping with need while the knight's fingers drifted lower opening more of her gown as she made her descent.

Rowan was filled with pride and pleasure watching her lover's flesh prickling beneath her touch while she slowly revealed Alithea's body. She brushed open the gown her heart soaring while gazing down upon Alithea's glorious naked form. Tenderly she removed the gown from her lover's body gently guiding her back down upon the soft mattress of the wedding bed.

She paused to drink in the wondrous vision before kissing her nervous bride tenderly. She felt Alithea's passion soaking through her shirt. She began to kiss her way down the princess' body. Once again she lavished her bride's bosom

with slow teasing before her mouth and hands drifted lower. She savored each touch and kiss while she made her slow descent. The musky aroma of her bride's aching need filled her senses. She nestled her body between Alithea's thighs. She blew a warm breath in the glistening red curls that were beckoning her closer.

Alithea cried out when Rowan parted her slick folds with her tongue tasting her bride for the first time. Rowan glided her tongue along her lover's throbbing pearl drinking in the ambrosia that was her bride's passion. She murmured with pleasure. She felt Alithea's hand pressing her closer

capturing the princess' engorged nub between her lips. She suckled her bride eagerly wishing to drown in her passion as Alithea's body pressed urgently against her touch.

Rowan feasted upon her bride lost in the pleasure of tasting Alithea's wetness. Her tongue slipped lower until she was pressing it against the opening of Alithea's warm, wet center. She curled her tongue before gently slipping inside her. Alithea's body tightened while Rowan slipped carefully in and out of her. Rowan teased Alithea preparing her body for more by gently caressing her taut veil.

Slowly Rowan withdrew from her cocoon; she could feel Alithea's body nearing the edge. Her lover was whimpering while Rowan clasped her bare backside and drew her back to her lips. She teased and taunted Alithea until her bride was begging her for release. Her features were painted with Alithea's passion while she kissed her way back up her lover's wriggling body.

Capturing Alithea in a searing kiss she squirmed while she lowered her trousers slightly and carefully revealed the phallus. She had played this game before and knew how to conceal the truth. She slid the long phallus between her bride's thighs. Kissing her deeply she clasped the shaft and slowly glided it between Alithea's slick folds. She moaned into her lover's mouth. She felt Alithea's legs wrapping around her body while she teased her with the shaft. Carefully she pressed the tip against the opening of her bride's maidenhood. Alithea's hips swayed against her touch. Gently she slipped the tip inside of her lover who gasped in response.

"I'll be gentle," Rowan vowed before slowly slipping deeper inside of her bride's passion. Alithea's body tensed and she trembled nervously. Rowan stilled her movements allowing her lover's body to become accustomed to her invasion. When she felt Alithea's body relaxing she slid the phallus deeper inside of her. Once again pausing until she felt her bride's body accepting her touch.

"I love you," she whispered, feeling the phallus greeting the barrier of Alithea's innocence.

Rowan kissed her bride deeply cupping her breast teasing her until she felt Alithea's body swaying against her touch. She rolled her hips; tenderly tore her wife's veil. She stilled her body when Alithea winced and clung tighter to her. She kissed her bride tenderly allowing Alithea's body to slowly ebb from pain to pleasure. She stared deeply into Alithea's eyes searching for reassurance that she had not harmed her bride. Alithea smiled up arching her body against Rowan's touch.

Slowly Rowan rolled her hips filling her bride completely. Rowan was filled with a sense of euphoria, as their bodies became one and their hips gently swayed in a sensual rhythm. Soon Rowan was caught up in Alithea's urgent thrusts. They ground together wildly, the passion consuming them. Alithea chanted her name over and over again while Rowan plunged deeper and harder against the princess' quivering form. She felt a sting in her shoulders as her lover's nails dug deeply into her body while she cried out.

Rowan's body refused to yield as she guided her lover into the abyss. Alithea thrashed beneath her while Rowan continued to pleasure her until her body finally collapsed. Rowan kissed her

bride's brow slowing her movements. She held her lover in a warm embrace. Alithea's body trembled; the passion slowly slipping from her body. Once she felt Alithea's body calming she carefully slipped the phallus from her center and tucked it back into her trousers.

"Did I hurt you?" she asked with concern when Alithea looked up at her with a dreamy expression.

"Heavens no, my husband," Alithea choked out reaching up and caressed Rowan's cheek. "You have shown me a world I never dreamed existed."

"I pleased you then?" Rowan shyly inquired as her wife smiled.

"Pleased is too small of a word," Alithea sighed happily caressing Rowan's face. "Now I must please you?" Alithea tenderly requested.

Rowan's face dropped and she felt the darkness encompassing her. "The sheets," she suddenly blurted out leaping from the bed. "We must," she continued to stammer as she felt her trousers slipping. She grasped them and yanked them up while Alithea watched her awkward movements with a confused expression clearly written across her features.

"Husband?" Alithea stammered wrapping her naked body with a blanket. "Now?" she spat out eager to know all of her husband's body.

"No need to keep the kingdom waiting," Rowan trembled in response.

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Alithea blinked several times before climbing off the bed and yanking the soiled linen from the mattress. *'Why is he acting this way?'* her mind screamed wondering if now that Rowan's duties had been completed he would abandon her. She crumpled the linen in her hands and threw open the door calling for Diana. She blushed when she handed the handmaiden the linen. She tried to calm herself as she closed the door and turned a wary gaze over at her husband who was cowering by the fire.

"Husband?" she repeated feeling the tears welling up in her eyes. "Have I failed you?" she choked out. Rowan's eyes flashed in the darkness. Before the tears could escape she was wrapped up in his arms.

"Never," he vowed nuzzling her hair.

"Then why?" she pleaded; her hand slipping between their bodies. "I wish to see the man I married," she tearfully requested as she slipped her hand in his trousers.

"There in lies the rub," Rowan wailed slipping from her embrace. His movement failing to be swift enough and Alithea's hand brushed against the leather harness.

Alithea stared at him in confusion trying to understand what strange contraption was hidden beneath his attire. "What was that? It felt like a chastity belt," she blurted out studying him carefully.

"Princess," Rowan muttered keeping a tight hold on his trousers.

"I am your wife," she barked suddenly angered by his formal greeting. "I can not command you to undress for me," she conceded. "Please tell me why?"

"You will be disappointed," he tried to reason with her.

"How?" she sputtered while she continued to study his body curious as to what secret was lurking beneath his clothing. "I don't care if you were scarred in battle. I love you."

"I do have one scar," Rowan absently mumbled. "Not from battle."

"Husband," Alithea began slowly fearing that her husband was embarrassed by his body. "Trust me. You are beautiful and I am certain that what lies beneath those garments are just as pleasing. I trusted you with my body, my heart and my soul. Trust me."

Rowan blew out a terse breath his eyes filling with tears. Finally he nodded his consent and removed his shirt revealing thick cloth wrapped tightly around his chest. "Promise me that my death will be quick," he begged while he slowly began to unravel the bindings.

"Such foolery." Alithea laughed when she gazed upon his taut stomach while he slowly unwrapped his body. Her eyes widened when the bindings fell to the floor. She fell to her knees her jaw quivering when she gazed upon Rowan's firm, round breasts. Her heart was pounding; her stomach flipped while her husband dropped his trousers to floor. "What is that?" she choked out spying the device strapped to slender hips. Her turmoil deepened as she watched Rowan releasing the straps of the harness and his manhood dropped to the floor. "What have you done?" she gasped. "By the heavens what have I done? You're a woman?"

Alithea remained kneeling on the floor staring at her husband's body. She was shocked and horrified not by Rowan's gender but by the way her body warmed when she stared at the knight. Rowan was truly a vision of beauty and she could not deny it.

"We're damned," she stammered unable to tear her gaze from Rowan's body.

"I refuse to believe that," Rowan argued folding her arms defiantly across her chest.

"Why did you do this?" Alithea fumed still unable to look away from Rowan's nakedness. "If anyone discovers the truth you will be executed and I'll be shamed banished to a convent."

"I never meant to hurt you," Rowan vowed crossing over to the bed and sat down.

"Then why?" Alitheia demanded as she jumped to her feet and stalked across the room until she was glaring down at Rowan. The knight hung her head in shame. "I can't love you and now the world knows that we have loved, what am I to do? Why did you have to deceive me and have those?" She demanded pointing to the two glorious mounds peering up at her.

"I happen to be rather fond of these," Rowan snapped; her head jerked up and she cupped her bosoms holding them up for Alitheia to see them in all their glory. "I hated the shame of binding them, not to mention the discomfort. This was not my idea. None of this was born from me."

"They are nice," the words slipped from Alitheia's mouth before she could stop them. "What am I saying? Who is behind this is, if not you then who?"

"Peregrine," Rowan hissed in response. "It was he who forced me to live my life as a man and it was he who told your father that I was the one that should be offered your hand. How could I refuse the King?"

"I should have guessed," Alitheia sighed tightening her hold on the blanket covering her body as she sat down beside the woman she had married. "I understand that you could not refuse my father, it would have been blasphemy if you had. If you had only trusted me before today then we could have found a way out of this dilemma."

"What was I to say?" Rowan sighed. "Dear Princess I am not the man you think I am."

Alitheia could not stifle the laugh that escaped her lips. "No," she smiled brushing a lock of black hair from Rowan's face. "And yet you are," she added in wonderment as Rowan glanced down at her naked body.

"I beg your pardon," Rowan quipped when Alitheia rested her head on the knight's shoulder.

"You are," Alitheia sighed contently while her mind and body tried to reconcile. "Everything I had prayed my Prince would be you are."

"Except?" Rowan dryly inquired.

"Nothing," Alitheia softly confessed kissing Rowan's shoulder. "There is nothing I find lacking in you my husband," she tried to reassure her while running her fingers along Rowan's shoulder.

"Children?" Rowan sadly countered. "Although Peregrine seems convinced that we shall be blessed."

"How?" Alitheia sputtered continuing to caress the firm flesh of Rowan's shoulder. "No, I do not wish an answer."

"Dare I be so bold as to inquire whether or not I am to be banished to the dungeon?" Rowan questioned in a solemn tone.

"Our union has been consummated," Alithea softly responded just before her fingers brushed against Rowan's back. "If I expose you I will bring about my own ruin. Even if I were spared from damnation, I still would not expose you. Rowan you are my husband, I do not understand how or why, but I do love you." Her voice trailed off when she felt the marred flesh on Rowan's shoulder blade.

She held her breath as the tips of her fingers traced the distinctive pattern. Suddenly she clasped Rowan's shoulders and turned her so that she could see the scar. "Praise the Heavens," she muttered staring at the crescent shaped scar. "You have returned to me," she choked out before pressing her fingers to her lips. Her mouth quivered beneath her fingers as she stared at her lover's back. "My Raven," she finally gasped removing her fingers from her lips. She dipped her head and brushed her lips against the scar as her heart swooned.

"You remember?" Rowan asked in disbelief turning to face the smiling Alithea.

"Remember?" Alithea sputtered. "Did you think I could ever forget you or my promise of everlasting friendship? Never. Not a day went by without you gracing my thoughts. You were my only love and today I gave you the one thing you always possessed, my heart."

Alithea became lost in the pleading look in Rowan's eyes. She cupped her face in her hands. Without thinking about the drama they had just endured or the consequences of what might come to pass she drew her lover to her. Alithea kissed her husband with a fiery passion pouring all her heart had held hidden into that one kiss. As the passionate kiss deepened her blanket slipped down her body.

She moaned when she felt the softness of Rowan's breasts brushing against her own. Hardened buds brushing against her flesh ignited her smoldering desires. She lowered her lover down onto their marriage bed. She felt Rowan's desire paint her skin as she slipped her thigh between her lover's legs.

"This is destiny," she whispered before she completely shed the blanket and covered Rowan's body with her naked form. "This is where I belong," she sighed happily before her hands began to caress Rowan's flesh.

"Is this truly what you desire?" Rowan gasped when Alithea's hand cupped her breast.

"This is what I need," Alithea asserted fumbling slightly until her hand began to massage her lover's breasts in a tantalizing fashion. The feel of Rowan's nipples pressing against the palm of her hand drove the princess insane with desire. She ceded to the desire as she began to kiss Rowan's neck and shoulders.

Their bodies swayed gently together. Alithea felt her nub rubbing against Rowan's thigh while her lover mirrored her movements. She drank in the salty taste of her lover's flesh as her kisses drifted lower. She moaned deeply when she filled her mouth with Rowan's breasts. Recalling the pleasure her lover ignited she repeated the pleasure Rowan had lavished upon her as she suckled the knight's nipple urgently.

She released her lover's breast from the warmth of her mouth; their bodies took control and Alithea became lost in a haze. She slipped her hand between their bodies and they rocked wildly against one another. Her stomach fluttered with excitement when Rowan's desire greeted her touch. She slipped her fingers between Rowan's slick folds gliding slowly while thrusting her hips in a need to match her lover's urgent rhythm.

Rowan guided her fingers until she captured her gallant knight's pearl between her nimble fingers. She stroked and teased her lover as she had pleased her own body late at night when the castle had fallen into silence. She slipped

deeper inside Rowan's overflowing wetness while her lover murmured her name. A thrill tingled throughout her body; her fingers glided inside of Rowan's maidenhood. She gasped with surprise when she felt the barrier halting her movements.

"Make me yours," Rowan uttered hotly in her ear digging her blunt nails into Alithea's flesh.

Alithea's body convulsed with pleasure when she gently tore Rowan's veil. She stilled her fingers when she felt her lover's body clenching against her touch. She stared deeply into Rowan's eyes. She could feel her lover's body slowly moving against her shy touch. She glanced down and watched her fingers gliding in and out of Rowan's womanhood. When Rowan's body began to arch and thrust in a more demanding pace her fingers eagerly matched the urgent rhythm.

Rowan's cries echoed throughout their bedchamber. Alithea became lost in pleasuring her lover teasing her throbbing bundle with her thumb while her fingers plunged deeper. She watched Rowan's body explode tightening against her touch. She felt her own body releasing with delightful ecstasy as the fire consumed her lover. She continued pleasuring her handsome knight until Rowan pleaded for mercy.

Their bodies were covered in a sheen of sweat while they held each other in a tender embrace. Alithea felt Rowan's heart beating in the same frantic rhythm as her own as they nestled together. Alithea felt she had touched the heavens. She rested her fair head on her lover's chest while Rowan caressed her back.

"What is this?" she heard Rowan question her voice still raw from the passion they had shared.

Alithea glanced up smiling at her lover's flushed features as she held up the charm Peregrine had given her. "A gift from Peregrine," she sighed happy to be nestled against Rowan's warm body. "He instructed me to place it under my pillow. Heavens only knows what magic he has brewing."

"Interesting," Rowan noted with disinterest before she tucked the odd charm back under the pillow. "My gift was my manhood."

"I beg your pardon?" Alithea gasped smiling as she followed Rowan's gaze to the sleek phallus still locked in its harness that was resting on the stone floor. "I see," she smiled. "You will show me how that should be worn won't you dear husband?"

"Once I catch my breath dear wife," Rowan promised before she kissed the top of Alitheas head.

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"Sorcerer!" Alitheas bellowed storming into the great hall startling her husband and father.  
"Where is he?" She demanded of her father while Rowan watched suddenly fearing for her life.

"Alitheas what is troubling you?" Rowan carefully inquired surprised that her normally happy bride was on the edge of a full-fledged tantrum. For the past two moons she and her bride filled their days and nights with unimaginable passion. Happily living as newlyweds and thankful that Peregrine had not been around to pester them. "Why would you beckon him?"

"The healer was in our chambers this morning," Alitheas fumed.

"I know that you have been feeling a little unwell, is everything alright?" Rowan fearfully inquired suddenly concerned with her brides well being.

"I am with child," Alitheas barked out while her father shouted with joy.

Rowan's jaw clenched her heart breaking as she glared at her wife. One look in Alitheas stormy eyes and Rowan felt her body relaxing. *'No she has not betrayed me,'* she silently sighed with relief.

"Rowan," Alitheas gasped when she spied the initial look in her eyes.

"Yes, Princess?" Peregrine smirked once he finally deemed to appear before them.

"Sire?" Rowan addressed her father in-law. "May we have a moment alone with Peregrine?"

Hardwin blinked with confusion. "Of course," he finally conceded before dashing off eager to announce to the court that he was about to become a grandfather.

"How?" Alitheas spat out.

"Why are you angry?" the wizard sputtered in confusion. "You are carrying Ravens son. I would think this event would bring you joy not anger."

"My son?" Rowan beamed; her wife still seemed too reluctant to accept the news.

"Yes your son," Peregrine acknowledged with a brilliant smile. "He'll have your raven hair and his mother's stormy green eyes."

"The charm," Alitheas mumbled in sudden understanding placing a hand on her stomach. "He will truly be our child?"

"Yes," Peregrine promised. "The Lyennarian lineage of peace has begun. I understand the distrust both of you harbor. How could I explain to two young children that their hearts were destined to be joined even though they were both women? Raven the daughter of a palace servant would have never been permitted to be your suitor despite the love you shared. Rowan the gallant, brave knight would. Your hearts were destined to be joined before your births. I have only been here to serve you and to guide you back to one another."

For the first time in her life Rowan honestly believed his words. "You did all this so we could be together? All these years I hated you, and I should have been thanking you," she offered sincerely clasping her hand over her wife's in hopes to connect with their child.

"It might have been nice," Peregrine snorted indignantly.

"Thank you," Alithea added smiling up at her lover. "Now go I wish to celebrate this joyous event with my husband and I don't wish an audience."

"Done," Peregrine nodded with a smile before he vanished in the mist.

"A child?" Rowan beamed proudly pleased that Alithea's face mirrored her emotions. "So, you wish to celebrate?"

"Raven, take me to our bedchamber," she smirked expressing her desires.

"As you wish," Rowan nodded taking her bride by her hand.

"Just keep saying that for the next fifty years and you are going to be the happiest married person in the kingdom," Alithea instructed before capturing her lover in a lingering kiss.

"As you wish," Rowan whispered against her lover's quivering lips.

The End.

This story continues in [Eternally](#).

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