

GETTING SLAYED

Anya Bast



Dedicated to all who read these lines. Without you, my words would be bottled up inside. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Chapter One

Still a virgin.

Was I destined to remain a virgin for the rest of my pathetic, royal life?

I entered the grand ballroom and ran a finger over the backs of the plush velvet chairs that lined the banquet table. The chamber was bedecked in its finest. Satin and brocade draped the walls, upon which flickered shadows cast by the guttering candles in the sconces and taper holders. The long banquet table had been set with china and crystal, ready to receive Cook's mouth-watering feast.

But the chamber would remain empty of guests.

Just as my chastity belt would remain locked and my body would remain untouched.

I flicked one of my royal fingernails against the rim of a crystal goblet and heard the ring echo through the chamber. Then I pulled out a chair and collapsed into it with an expulsion of breath. My locked chain mail smallclothes—my chastity belt—chafed my skin and made me wince. It was lined with silk, but it was still uncomfortable.

"Jeweline, cease your dramatics," said my father, the king, as he bustled into the chamber. His ermine robes swirled around him as he made dramatic hand motions, revealing from which parent I'd contracted my love for hyperbole. "We'll find you a new husband, one who hasn't been charbroiled by dragon's breath."

My intended, Prince Albert Von Dinkenburger, had been traveling to the castle this very day to wed me, but along the way a fierce dragon had attacked his entourage, scooped Albert up and flown him away on gossamer wings. We didn't really know if he'd been charbroiled or not, but the odds weren't in poor Dinky's favor.

"He was the seventh one, Daddy!" I yelled. "Someone needs to take care of that dragon! Where are your slayers?"

"Uh, pumpkin, they've all been charbroiled."

I hid my face in my hands and fought the tears rising in my throat.

"Anyway, Prince Dinkenburger always did smell a little funny," continued my father. "Perhaps you should count your blessings."

"But he was the *last one!*" I wailed from the sanctuary of my hands. The truth of that forced me to give in to my tears.

Yes, he had smelled a bit strange, a little like burnt onions and ripe oranges, but he'd held the key to my chastity belt! I was a twenty-five year old virgin.

If I didn't get laid soon, my sex would shrivel up.

If I didn't get laid soon, I'd go insane.

“There, there, dear.” My father absently patted my heaving shoulder.

I looked up at him accusingly. “If you don’t take this chastity belt off me, soon you’ll have nothing but a lunatic daughter to wed off to some fop of a prince!” I declared.

And they *were* all fops. Nancy-boy, scream-like-a-girl fops. But they were fops with cocks, even if they didn’t know how to use them. They were fops with the power to unlock my chastity belt. That was all that mattered.

“No, my dear,” the king chuckled. “You’re far too headstrong and curious a girl to risk that.”

I wanted to scream at him that I was no longer a girl, but a woman grown. A woman with *needs*.

Cook called from the kitchen that the frosted gingerbread was still warm from the oven and Daddy wandered off in that direction, forgetting me, his poor, over-aged and under-sexed daughter still sitting forlornly at the banquet table.

All the dragon slayers charbroiled, I fumed. How could that be? The wimps. How hard could it be to slay one little dragon? One reptile with wings!

I slumped on the side of the table as much as my chain mail smallclothes would allow and drummed my fingers on the tabletop. That dragon was the source of all my trouble. It needed to die and it needed to die now.

I sat up a little, an idea formulating in my mind. How hard could it be to slay one stupid dragon? The pointy end of the spear went into the soft underbelly. I had good aim. Plus, I was motivated, *far* more motivated than any of Daddy’s dragon slayers had been.

A motivated woman was very dangerous, more dangerous than any stupid warrior with a pointy stick.

I sat up straight, thinking I knew exactly where all the castle’s weapons were. I knew where the dragon’s lair was. If I left now and hurried, I could make it there and back by nightfall.

By this evening I could be free of all my problems.

All I needed was one dead dragon.

* * * * *

Approaching the cave under the gloomy, storm-filled skies of late afternoon, I began to doubt my plan. The forest seemed ominous and dark. My hair had completely frizzed. I’d ruined my best pair of *Houncho Baolo* slippers. My ass hurt like hell where the horse’s saddle chafed it against my chastity belt, and the light mail I wore over my dress was becoming heavy.

Could it be that my decision to sneak out of the castle to take on a ferocious, fire-breathing dragon with only my lily-white hands had been a tad hasty?

Nah.

I felt sure I'd be standing triumphantly over a dead dragon very soon. A week from now, I'd find a man with a nice, hard and ready cock to marry.

I steeled my nerves, gripped my spear and guided my horse through the last bit of woods separating me from my quarry.

I didn't know what I'd expected, but it wasn't the silence I received as I guided my mount through the tree line and into the clearing in front of the cave where the dragon made his lair. I shrugged. Perhaps I'd caught the dragon while he was out burning innocent animals to a cinder or something.

Relaxing, since dragon slaying was not an immediate priority, I looked up, watching twilight paint the sky in a riot of pinks, blues and purples. It would be dark soon. I hoped the dragon showed. The sooner I killed him, the sooner I could get home.

In the same moment I wished it, my horse sniffed the air, whinnied and danced to the side, unnerved. I struggled a moment to regain control of the startled beast. As I battled my horse, a shuffling, snorting sound came from the trees opposite me. Heart pounding, I lowered my gaze to glimpse a huge dragon staggering out from the tree line. My gaze drifted down from its massive head with its enormous green eyes, flaring nostrils and very sharp teeth, all the way down to its massive body and deadly, curved claws.

Suddenly I knew without a doubt that in my desperation, I'd made a very large, very suicidal mistake.

I was going to die a virgin.

Shocked and numb, I watched the dragon stagger toward me. It appeared injured...or drunk. It seemed to not even notice me as it made its way toward the opening of its lair.

My horse snorted and reared in fright. It was then the dragon noticed me. As I struggled with my mount, the great beast's head swung around.

I hefted the spear and, with a shrill scream, launched it through the air toward the dragon. It was an automatic reaction, one born of fear. The beast's head snapped up at the sound of my shriek and locked its eyes with mine.

Suddenly, the dragon collapsed to the ground.

My horse reared again, obscuring my vision. I felt myself tumble backward and land on my ass in the dirt. The only thing that saved my butt from a bad bruising on the rocks was my chastity belt. The stupid horse bolted into the woods, leaving me alone with the dragon. As soon as the dust cleared, I sat stunned at the scene before me.

The spear lay on the ground, apparently never having made contact with the beast. Only...it was no longer a beast that lay there.

It was a man.

A *naked* man.

I picked myself up from the dirt and approached him, as quietly and carefully as I could. He was buck nekkid, I enthused as I drew closer. Nice tight ass, strong legs dusted with dark hair, muscled back and shoulders. He was gorgeous and strong. Not a fop in sight.

If only he hadn't been lying facedown.

Damn.

Was he some kind of shape shifter? Had an evil witch cursed him? Was he, himself, an evil witch and enchanted himself? It happened from time to time. The questions shot around like arrows in my head.

He groaned and I stilled, my gaze skating over the back of the man's head where his long, dark hair spread over the ground.

"Uh...sir?" I queried uncertainly. "Excuse me, sir?"

He groaned again, and then mumbled, "Where am I?"

I knelt beside him and laid a hand to his shoulder. His skin felt warm and muscles bunched under my fingertips. Oh, nice.

"Sir, are you hurt?" I urged him to flip onto his back. Just to check his injuries. Really.

"I'm fine. The shift always leaves me down for a moment." He gave a groan that seemed to come from the very heart of him and turned over.

Holy mother of the universe and everything that was good and wonderful...*and large.*

He was beautiful. My pussy twitched in the confines of my chastity belt at the mere sight of him. Even flaccid, he was enormous. My fingers twitched and I restrained myself, only barely, from touching him. His face was shadowed by a few days' growth of facial hair. His eyes flickered open at just the same moment I managed to drag my gaze away from his enormous cock.

I narrowed my gaze at him. "You were just a dragon," I accused.

He closed his blue eyes briefly. "Did I kill anyone?"

I glanced around, looking for charred remains. "You mean, besides seven of my fiancés? I don't think so."

"Fiancés?" His face went ashen. "You mean all those fancy fops on their way to their weddings?" He shook his head and swore under his breath. "I apologize for your fiancés. However, I don't think I killed them." He put a hand to his forehead and sat up, wincing as though in pain. "Although I'm never sure what hell I've caused during the day."

"What do you mean?"

He looked at me. "I mean that during the day I'm a dragon. At twilight I turn back into a man. As a dragon I remember little of being a man, and when I am a man I remember little of being a dragon. Right now I'm like a man who'd dreamt he'd been a dragon. I only remember bits and pieces. It's been that way for years."

Aha! He *was* cursed. "Are you a man, or are you a dragon? I mean, originally."

He hesitated. "A man, though sometimes it's hard to remember."

"What did you mean about not having charbroiled my suitors?"

"They're shiny. They're covered in jewels. Such treasure is irresistible to a dragon. I spy them glittering in the sunshine and I can't resist. I scoop them up and bring them back to my cave. Sometimes when I change in the evening, the noblemen and women I've stolen are still here. Usually, they just stumble off into the woods, traumatized. I prefer cows."

"Excuse me?"

"Cows. To eat. To charbroil. People taste funny."

"Uh. Okay." I put my hand on my hip. "So why haven't my suitors shown back up? You'd think they'd end up back home at some point. I mean, since they weren't charbroiled and just misplaced."

The man put a hand to his forehead like he had a headache. He sighed. "You'd be surprised how many noble people don't enjoy their nobility. They take the opportunity to flee and start again. I know for a fact that Prince Hepplebottom has settled down with a pretty, plump milkmaid in a village south of here. He has a whole passel of children now."

I drew a sharp breath at the name of the first of my disappeared suitors. Did they not wish to marry me? How could that be? I was the prettiest woman in all the seven kingdoms. Everyone said so. I had fair, blemish-free skin, long dark red hair and flashing green eyes. The bards sang of my luscious bosom from here to the edge of the Great Blue Sea. Did my beauty count for nothing? What of the hefty dowry I came with? The land, the gold, the political alliances?

I frowned down at him. Hard.

Would I *ever* get laid?

"So, what will it take to break the curse you're under?" A kiss? A good, hard fuck? My eyes swept down his body, and I tried not to look too much like a predator. "I'm a princess and may be of service," I simpered innocently and smiled.

"Help me into the cave," he said.

I helped him up, happy to touch him, and he staggered into the cave.

What a strange turn of events my trip had taken, but if I got sex out of it, it would be worth it. Now that I knew that my suitors hadn't been eaten, but merely misplaced, I figured I was owed it.

When we entered the cave, the man walked to a sputtering fire and fed it some branches. He stood, seeming unaware of his glorious state of nakedness. All to the better as far as I was concerned. My gaze flicked down, noting that he'd become a little aroused. His massive cock was partially erect. My mouth watered.

He cleared his throat. I glanced up and blinked, realizing I'd been staring.

Again.

“My name is Marcus. It would be nice to know the name of my slayer,” he said in a rich, smooth voice that had the power to drop my smallclothes...perhaps enough power to break the lock on my chastity belt, as well.

“Jeweline. Princess Jeweline of the Kingdom of Hask, actually.” I curtsied. The hem of my now filthy white gown dipped into the dirt.

He let his eyes roam my body at length. The look on his face grew heated and his cock grew harder. Perhaps I wasn't the only one who yearned for physical companionship. His response to me only heightened my own arousal. My sex inside its metal casing grew hot. My breasts suddenly seemed very sensitive inside the tight bodice of my riding gown.

He looked down at himself, suddenly realizing his state of undress and went for a pile of clothing in the corner. “Forgive me. I'm not used to having visitors, especially not princesses.”

With a frown, I watched him dress. “You don't have to—” I blurted, taking a step forward. I paused, reminding myself that I was, indeed, a princess and should act like one. Even though in reality I was far more a desperate woman in need of a long, hard fuck. This man certainly had all the right equipment to give me what I needed. “I mean, I'm in your home. You should dress in whatever manner you choose.” I smiled my most winning smile.

He stilled with his hands in the act of buttoning his trews. His feet and chest remained bare. “You came here to kill me, didn't you?” A note of a curiosity had crept into his tone.

I straightened my spine. “You've misplaced seven of my suitors in the last seven years. All the eligible men in all the seven kingdoms! I'm twenty-five and still wear my chastity belt!” I lifted my skirt to show him the thin burnished metal of the horrid chain mail my nurse locked me in every morning and every night after bathing. “I want it off!” I declared.

A slow smile spread across Marcus' shapely lips. My heart started to pound. “I can take care of that,” he said in a silky voice. Something flipped in my stomach.

“How?”

“Remove that over-armor and come here to me.”

My pussy pulsed at his words and the arousal that seemed to glimmer in his eyes. I pulled the light chain mail armor I wore to protect my chest over my head and let it fall to the ground beside me with a series of soft, ringing clinks. I walked over and stood in front of him.

He stared down into my eyes. “When I'm a man, I still have some of the senses and abilities of my other self. I can scent that you are ripe and ready for sex. I can see that you're aroused by me. Your father has done you a great disservice by locking you in that belt. You need to be fucked, and badly.”

“Why do you think I came here?”

A slow smile spread across his full lips. "I think you came here to kill me," he answered.

I answered him back with a smile of my own. The seductive one I'd practiced so many times in the mirror. "It's true I'd like to give you a little death," I quipped in a husky voice.

"Do you want me to fuck you?"

"After displacing all my fiancés, I think you owe it to me. In fact, I command it of you," I said in my most imperious voice, the voice of a righteous princess.

All he did was grin. His arms came around me and lifted me as though I weighed nothing. He lowered me to a blanket spread out by the fire. I felt breathless lying there, staring up into his whiskey-colored bedroom eyes.

He leaned over me, brushing his lips lightly against mine. I closed my eyes awaiting a deeper kiss, but it never came. Instead, he touched a finger to the lock on my chastity belt. The metal melted enough for him to pry it apart. A moment later and the horrible belt was gone. Air bathed my sex, teasing my needy, swollen labia and aroused clit.

He stood. "You're free. Our debt is settled."

I rose up to rest on my elbows, my hopes fading fast. "But—"

"You think I should sleep with you just because you command it? Just because you think I *owe* it to you?" He shook his head. "No one commands a dragon, not even a princess." He turned and walked away.

I lay there with my skirts thrown up around my waist, finally freed from the dreaded curse of my chastity belt and with a perfectly useable cock just feet away. Emotions roiled inside me. Disappointment. Degradation. Discouragement.

He was denying me? How could that be?

"What's the matter? Don't you want me?" I shrieked at the top of my lungs.

He turned and gave me a measured stare. "It's been years since I've been with a woman, and you are a—" his gaze swept down my body and his cock hardened under his trews, tenting them, "a beautiful woman, but you are also a spoiled brat of a princess." He turned away. "I will not be commanded by you."

I lay there stunned for several heartbeats, and then struggled to my feet. I took a moment to heave the belt into the fire to melt before rounding on him. "Spoiled, you say? Well, perhaps I am. But," I sputtered, trying to find a suitable insult, "at least I'm not...not a stupid, cursed dragon shape shifter!" I stormed past him with my head held high, the sting of his rejection bringing tears to my eyes.

I stomped out the cave and into the woods. I heard him call behind me to come back because the woods weren't safe at night, but I didn't care. All I wanted was to get away from him and his hurtful words. He didn't want me, I fumed as I pushed branches away from my face and tripped over stones and logs in the darkness.

Prince Albert Von Dinkenburger didn't want me. Nor did Prince Hepplebottom, or any of the other suitors that the dragon had stolen and allowed to start new lives...away from me.

Tears stung my eyes. Was I really so horrid? Was I really so repulsive? Had all the bards lied in their flattering songs?

I tripped over an exposed root and nearly fell, so distracted was I by my sudden crisis of self-identity.

Finally, I found my mount in a clearing, munching grass by the silver moonlight. "Coward," I muttered at him as I climbed atop the beast, found the stirrups and headed him back home.

Chapter Two

I didn't tell my father of the shape shifting dragon or my attempts to slay him. I told him instead a story of a faulty lock and long ride through the forest to blow off steam over the latest fiancé-charring. I begged and pleaded with my father not to allow nurse to put the belt back on. I cried and cajoled and then finally used reason, saying that all the eligible men in the realm were now gone and there was no one for me to seduce.

My father had rattled off the names of the castle baker, the stable boys, the physician and even the executioner. As if! He told me that when I lost my virginity, it would be to the man who would be my husband and none other.

The belt had gone back on.

One month of moping and I'd awoken to a royal decree. The first man to slay the dragon would gain my hand in marriage. He would garner the title of prince and obtain land and gold. Eventually, he would become king and rule at my side.

A higher reward had never been set for the head of a dragon, and since the decree many a would-be slayer had died trying to gain it.

I should've been happy, but all I could see were Marcus' whiskey-colored eyes and the twist of his gorgeous lips. He hated me, yet the last thing I wanted was to see him harmed. Not even the prospect of finally losing both the belt and my pesky virginity were enough to console me.

I didn't know what was wrong with me. Perhaps I really had gone insane from a lack of sex.

Now I sat at my father's left hand, the chain metal of my new chastity belt chafing my skin as I shifted in the bejeweled throne. The sunlight from beyond the walls of the receiving chamber glimmered in from the stained glass windows. I turned my gaze skyward, staring out past the panes of green and gold, wondering if the dragon named Marcus flew the skies right now, wondering if he might be hunting a slayer.

"Darrion the Brave," intoned the herald.

I sighed. It sounded like yet another hopeful dragon slayer. Marcus would have him charred to a crisp by noontime, most likely. The dragon hadn't been merely displacing those who meant him harm, he'd been charring them.

I let my gaze wander with boredom to the next item on Marcus' menu.

Whoa.

I sat up a little straighter in my chair, my eyes widening. A piece of beefcake supreme stood before me, looking all delicious and edible in his purple silken doublet and tight hose. I drew a sharp breath as I perused him from head to toe. He had a really big spear.

That is, he held a really big spear in one capable-looking hand.

Darrion the Brave bowed low and rose gracefully, inclining his head first toward my father and then toward me. I noticed the square set of his jaw and the cleft in his chin. I noticed the dark hair that fell artfully around his handsome face, and that when he smiled his perfectly white teeth gleamed.

"My lord," Darrion intoned in a manly voice. "I have heard of the challenge you have issued for the hand of your," he turned and favored me with a smile that I swear sparkled, "lovely daughter. I heard about the decree far from here, across the wastes of the Kingdom of Akmatt and over the Great Blue Sea. I am the greatest dragon slayer there ever was, and I intend to lay waste to the creature that now scourges your land."

Well, he certainly didn't have any lack of self-confidence.

"This is very powerful dragon, Sir Darrion," my father answered.

"I am no *sir*, Your Grace," Darrion said. "Only a common man born with a lust to spill dragon blood."

"As you say. If you slay this dragon, you'll be worthy to be a prince and eventually a king. I simply wish you to know that the dragon has already barbequed many slayers who have made the same claim. Understand the risk you run."

Darrion pulled a chain from beneath his doublet. It rattled with many large, ferocious looking teeth. "This speaks for itself, does it not?"

"Err, I suppose so," replied my father in a voice of awe. "Know that if you bring me the head of this dragon, you will win the hand of Princess Jeweline."

Darrion turned his gaze toward me and I instantly felt undressed. I shifted uncomfortably in my seat. It did not make me feel aroused as it had when Marcus had done that trick. It just made me feel kind of...slimy.

Darrion bowed low, then straightened. He held my gaze steadily as he said, "That is indeed my intention, Your Grace."

"Go in peace and, uh, may you shed blood," my father dismissed him.

Darrion turned and exited the royal receiving chamber. My father patted my hand. "I feel you have just met your husband, daughter. I anticipate that beast's head mounted out in front of the castle in short order."

Panic shot through me. Could it be that Darrion might succeed? He certainly did appear to have experience slaying dragons. What if...? I shuddered. No, I couldn't even bear to think of Marcus' head mounted in the courtyard, even if it was his reptilian one.

I had to warn him.

That night, I snuck out of my chambers just as soon as the moon was up and ventured back into the woods.

By the time I reached the dragon's lair, Marcus had already shifted. I could see him from where I stood at the mouth of the cave. His broad back was to me as he stood in front of his fire. From this angle, the flames seemed to lick at his body. Shadows danced on the walls.

"Fiery-haired princess," he said without turning. "You've come back. Are you certain that's wise?"

Frowning, I pushed back the hood of my black cloak. "How did you know it was me?"

He turned. "You smell of hyacinth."

"Oh."

His gaze raked my body and I suddenly felt nude despite the heavy cloak. My nipples stiffened, and I grew very sensitive of the fact that he was a man and I was a woman.

Darrion couldn't elicit such a reaction in me, but the dragon he sought to slay could. He paused for a moment before speaking. "Why have you come?"

I took a step forward, remembering my mission. "You must leave these parts, Marcus. My father has offered my hand to the man who can kill you. His announcement is luring the best dragon slayers from around the world. Soon you will come up against one you cannot defeat."

Marcus took a step toward me. The small smile I'd been fantasizing about twisted his lips. "Ah. That explains all the men who seek to kill me of late."

"There is one, Darrion the Brave, he seems very set on winning my hand and is proven many times over in slaying," I said with concern clear in my voice.

For several moments, he said nothing. He only regarded me with a curious and heated look on his face. I shifted uncomfortably under his intense gaze. Did he not comprehend my warning?

"Truly, I fear for you," I said. "You must leave so you will not be harmed. I have no wish to see your head mounted in the castle courtyard."

"But if I am killed, you will be married. Your virginity will be no more," he answered. "These are your heart's desires, are they not?"

"That's true, and yet I will not have you harmed to obtain them."

Again with the curious and heated gaze. I wanted to scream at him. Finally, he said, "These men want you for your lands, for your status as princess." It sounded more like a statement than a question. "They want you for your claim."

"Yes," I answered.

He licked his lips and lifted his chin at me. "Wouldn't you rather have a man who wanted to be with you for you?" he asked silkily. "Someone who appreciated the swell of your bosom and the sweet curve of your hip? Someone who loved the fire in your hair and appreciated it in your heart as well?"

"Uh," was all I could say at the smoky hot look in his eyes.

"Someone who loved *you*? Saw you for who you really are? A fiery, beautiful, giving, compassionate pain in the ass?" He took another step toward me, and then

another. My heart skipped a beat. "How could you be satisfied with a man who only wants you for your lands, your dowry and the title that comes with you?"

"That's a-a duty of a princess," I said breathlessly. "I'm bred to accept such."

"Duty?" He stopped in front of me, reached out and fingered a tendril of my hair. "Perhaps you're not as spoiled as I'd presumed, my princess so fair. You haven't commanded me to fuck you once since you've arrived," he finished speculatively.

I closed my eyes momentarily, enjoying his hot breath on my cheek and the heat that rolled off him like a full-body kiss. "I didn't come here for that." Though fucking him didn't sound so bad...

He leaned forward and brushed his lips against mine. "What if I commanded you to take off your gown for me right now, princess, would you do it? What if I commanded you to let me take off that prison you're wearing and part your sweet thighs? What if I commanded you to let me lower my head and lick up your honey, lick until I make you scream?"

My nipples grew erect and sensitive and every breath I took rubbed them against the material of my bodice. *But...* I frowned. There was something wrong. I fought through the haze of my passion and became suspicious. "You don't like me. You're just making fun of me. You-you're cruel to tease me this way."

I tried to back away, but he grabbed my upper arms. "I never said I didn't like you, Jeweline. I said you were spoiled and I would not be commanded by you."

I raised my chin, ready with a retort, but he raised my skirts and melted the lock on my belt. The action seemed to steal all my words and breath along with them. The hated chain mail smallclothes fell away. Next off was my cloak. He hefted me into his arms.

"What are you doing?" I cried in alarm. He was so strong. It was as though I weighed nothing. It felt both exhilarating and unnerving at the same time.

He sat down in the chair near the fire and placed me on his lap. I started to get up and move away, but he held me fast against him, one hand on my hip and the other fisted gently in the hair at the nape of my neck.

"I never said I didn't like you," he repeated softly as he guided my mouth to his.

Heaven. Oh, sweet heaven.

His mouth was hot and his lips skillful. He parted my lips easily and swept his tongue within to tangle with mine. I whimpered low in my throat as his hand strayed to the ties of my bodice and undid them. I felt the air on my bare breasts and then, blessedly, his hand. He cupped one of them and rolled the nipple between his fingers.

The sensation shot a rod of pure longing to my cunt. I ached between my thighs so fiercely. I almost hurt from years of needing to be fucked.

I ground my hips down and gasped as I felt the long, hard length of his cock stabbing into me. Desperately, I fought the pleadings that rose up in my throat. I would not beg him. I would *not*.

Suddenly, I found myself facedown across his lap, my skirts thrown up over my head. I heard him groan, then felt the hard slap of his open palm against my buttocks.

I gasped in surprise and indignation and felt the cheek he'd tapped redden. Heat spread out from where he'd spanked me, warming my cunt and drawing moisture from it. Pleasure came with the heat and the slight sting of it. I moaned low, unable to stem the sound.

"I said you were spoiled," Marcus said, right before spanking me again.

I gasped again, though this time it was less from surprise than it was from pleasure. My clit pulsed and my cunt throbbed. I squirmed in his lap, filled with urgent, erotic need, but he kept me still.

"So pretty," he murmured. He rubbed the sensitive cheek and then dipped his fingers down to tease my aching pussy. He found it hot and eager to be stroked.

"This makes you wet," he purred. "You have such a pretty cunt, my princess. So sweet." His voice sounded ragged and aroused. It, in turn, aroused me even more. "Spread your thighs for me a bit more."

Lost in a place where I could barely think, I did as he asked. He rewarded me by brushing his finger against my needy opening. He stroked me, drawing circles around my swollen clit and between my aroused labia. I couldn't stop myself from bucking on his lap. He held me mostly immobile, one strong hand on my back, the other delving between my spread thighs, dipping into my honey, driving me crazy.

"What do you want, my princess?" he purred. He breached the opening of my cunt with a fingertip and I moaned. The muscles of my pussy clamped down hard and needy around his digit. "Do you want me to take you? Your father would have my head off, I think, whether I were a dragon or not."

I moaned and bucked again, trying to fuck his finger.

"You may just be worth it, however," Marcus murmured. He speared his finger deep into the heart of me.

I cried out at the exquisite pleasure of it.

"No maidenhead?" he asked, sounding surprised.

"Riding," I managed to gasp. My maidenhead had broken long ago. Riding my horse had done it, according to the castle physician. My virginity had been monitored monthly since the age of my feminine flowering.

"Mmmm, what have you been riding, my princess?" he asked in a low voice. He added a second finger to the first and eased them in and out of my cunt. Pleasure flirted hard with me, ebbing and flowing and growing greater and greater.

"Please," I sobbed, not really understanding what it was I wanted. I'd promised not to beg, but found the word tumbling from my lips despite myself.

"Please? You beg me, princess? Do you want to come? Shall I allow it?"

"Please! Harder, faster," I gasped.

“Like this?” He thrust his thick fingers in and out of me faster and harder, as I’d requested, until I could almost make believe it was his cock inside me.

The pleasure crested and broke over me. I screamed as it took me full-force. My cries echoed through the cave and I bucked frantically in Marcus’ lap, soaking his hand as I came.

When the waves had passed, I lay limp across his lap. He stroked my sex idly, teasing me until I squirmed.

“I never knew,” I gasped. My first climax. I could barely speak I was so overwhelmed.

I wanted another.

Marcus made a noise as though something tasted good. I turned my head enough to look at him and saw him licking my juice from his fingers. For some reason, the sight was incredibly erotic. He found me delicious. My breath caught in my throat.

“So sweet,” he groaned. “You’re so tight, hot, and sweet. I want more of you. You’re worth losing my head over.”

He lifted me and lay me down on his makeshift bed—a thin mattress covered with blankets by the fire. He worked the ties of my gown until he had the whole garment off me. I lay with the air bathing my skin and Marcus’ hot gaze roving over me. His eyes and the expression on his face clearly said he found me as beautiful dressed in only the cool cave air as he found me in my silks.

His gaze still on me, he drew his shirt over his head, tossed it aside, then unbuttoned his trows and slid them down and off. I stifled a whimper at his lovely cock and my fingers curled once again, aching to touch it. This time I might actually get the chance.

For a moment, he looked down at me speculatively. Then, encircling one of my ankles with his huge hand, he pulled me toward him. He eased himself down over my body and my skin slid against his like satin on satin. I groaned somewhere from the center of my being. He felt so good against me.

“You never should’ve come back, princess. You should’ve known I wouldn’t be able to resist you a second time.”

I bristled. “You seemed to resist quite well the first time.”

“I’m a good actor,” he murmured before he slanted his mouth over mine and plunged his tongue between my lips.

A fire started between my thighs that Marcus used his fingers to feed. He stroked over my clit and damp folds with a sure, masterful ease that stole my breath. He seemed to know exactly where to touch me. I moaned into his mouth and gripped his broad shoulders, feeling drunk on the feel of him against me, feeling helpless against his tongue in my mouth and the press of his hard cock against the juncture of my thighs. It seemed like he was asking a very serious question, one I very much wanted to answer.

Just as I was ready to explode in climax once more, Marcus released my lips and placed his mouth down further. I wriggled with surprised pleasure and gave a little squeak of alarm. He grabbed onto my hips, holding my thighs spread and locked, so I couldn't close my legs.

And he feasted.

I arched my back as his skillful tongue lapped and licked my cunt. Never had I known such a thing possible and, if I had, I never would've guessed how good it would feel. He toyed with my clit with the tip of his tongue, and then laved my labia. Over and over, he licked me. I felt ready to scream.

When I finally exploded, I did it in his mouth. As the tremors rocked my sex, he speared his tongue deep into the center of me, right where a cock should go. I nearly screamed from the exquisite intensity of being so filled, and by a tongue as skillful as his. Keeping my thighs spread wide apart by his strong hands, he laved over my cunt again and again and again. I thought I would surely die of pleasure.

When my body had come so often and so hard that I felt limp, Marcus kissed me hard. I tasted myself on his tongue and loved it. Twining my arms around his shoulders, I whimpered and deepened the kiss, rubbing as much of my body against his as I could.

I felt the head of his cock kiss my entrance. My hips bucked at the contact, and I speared my tongue into his mouth to rub against his. I tried to resist, but I couldn't help it. I ground my hips up, seeking Marcus' cock within me.

He slipped inside.

I threw my head back and moaned as his body rocked softly against mine, driving his cock within to fit like hand to glove. God, it felt so good. I felt stretched and filled up with him.

It was even better when he eased himself out and thrust back in, setting up an easy rhythm that soon sent me to a place where I could barely think. I could do nothing but toss my head, moan and grasp his shoulders. I canted my hips up on natural instinct, searching to meet him thrust for thrust.

He buried his face in my neck and scattered kisses on my skin. "So sweet," he murmured drunkenly. "So hot and sweet. You feel so good."

I came twice more as his cock moved piston-like in and out of my eager slit. By the time he spilled himself on my belly—something I was supremely happy he'd had the presence of mind for—I was ready to faint dead away from the sated lethargy that had stolen over my body.

I would ache sweetly from the encounter, I could already tell. I wanted my dragon to cause more ache before this night came to an end. I gave a soft, tired laugh as Marcus cleaned his seed from my stomach with a rag.

"My dragon," I murmured.

I felt the soft slide of a blanket over me. A moment later, his body cuddled mine. "My princess," he murmured in response and kissed my cheek.

I slept.

When I awoke, a small bonfire had begun between my thighs. I felt slick and needy there. Marcus suckled my breast, I realized in the same moment. His finger deftly stroked my clit between my spread thighs. I wriggled beneath him in delicious pleasure and moaned.

Slowly, surely, he brought me to climax under the ministrations of his fingers and tongue. After the waves had receded, I wondered how many times a woman could orgasm in one night. I wanted to find out.

As I lay breathing heavily, Marcus settled himself beside me. His cock shot up hard and rigid into the air. I turned on my side, resting my chin on his chest and wrapped my fingers around the length. He shuddered as I gently stroked him from his balls to the smooth head of his shaft. The fire had burned itself almost to ash, though dawn had not yet broken outside the mouth of the cave.

"I know almost nothing about you," I said softly. "Tell me of yourself. Tell me how you became what you are."

Marcus remained quiet for several moments before he finally spoke. "I have been cursed for a hundred years, my princess."

I gasped and removed my hand. I propped myself up on my elbows and stared at him. "You jest!"

He shook his head solemnly. "I bedded the daughter of a witch. I took the young woman's maidenhead and planted a child in her belly, a bastard child. In retribution, the witch cursed me to my current half-life." He sighed wearily. "There is a way for me to regain my full humanity, but the witch never did see fit to tell me and she and her daughter are long dead."

I settled back down and set once again to stroking his cock. I couldn't keep my hands from him. "What of your child?"

"He lives far from here, across the Great Blue Sea. He is old now, my son. I wish I could've known him. The witch stole all from me." His voice held a heavy note of sorrow. "I loved the girl, though she was no highborn. I would've done everything I could to marry her, though it's true such a prospect was bleak."

"Why?"

"I was a prince and betrothed to another. A loveless political alliance."

Shocked, I again rose up on my elbows to look into his eyes. "A prince?"

"Aye. I was prince of the Kingdom of Elbay, across the sea. I am a prince no more, though, only a dragon."

I felt badly for him. He'd bedded the woman he'd loved only to gain a lifetime of loneliness and sorrow. He'd traded one night of happiness for an eternity of grief. I planted a lingering kiss on his lips. "A fierce dragon," I murmured. "My dragon. By

stealing my fiancés, you saved me from a lifetime of horrible sex, I suspect, and replaced it with a night of pure wonder. For that, I thank you."

He cupped my face and kissed me deeply. "So help me, your father will have my head for certain, but I would have more of you." His voice shook with emotion.

He kissed me until I couldn't see straight and the cave itself seemed to spin. He broke the kiss finally and I licked my lips. They felt swollen and probably looked red.

"I want you again," I whispered.

His hand cupped my mound and I shivered with pleasure. "Are you not sore?" he asked.

"Mmmm. I am. I would that you make me sorer."

His pupils went dark and then seemed to explode, the black center consuming the amber. With a growl-like sound in his throat, he kissed me again. He pulled me against his body and fisted his hands in my hair. I trembled against him in anticipation.

I stroked my hungry fingers up and down his length, and a low groan of desire bubbled up from the back his throat. Pre-come beaded the plum-shaped tip his cock. I spread it over the crown, massaging it into his smooth skin and reveling in its slickness. At the same time, I nuzzled his throat, enjoying the masculine scent of him and hard brush of his stubble against my lips.

He pulled me underneath him and covered my body with his. When he lowered his mouth to my breast, I felt the rub of his muscled stomach against mine. I twined my hands in the hair at his nape as he sucked one of my eager, hard nipples between his sensual lips.

He groaned in the back of his throat as he teased the nipple back and forth with the tip of his skillful tongue. I knew now just how very skillful it was. At the same time, he parted my thighs and slid a finger deep inside me. I gasped and arched my back as he eased it in and out of my slick heat.

He raised his head and stared at me with those dark eyes. "I'm going to fuck this sweet pussy so well you'll need a week to recover," he rasped.

I shivered, the coarseness of his words sending fingers of wicked pleasure dancing up my spine.

I moaned as he added a second finger to the slow, easy thrust in and out of my cunt. He twisted them until he brushed his fingertips against some spot that had me instantly dancing on the edge of a climax. All the while, his thumb softly teased my clit.

He kissed me again, taking my mouth in a near bruising kiss as his hand worked between my spread thighs, driving my desire higher and higher. His tongue speared between my lips, tangling savagely with my tongue as we fought each other, dueling with each other.

He shifted and I felt the press of his cock against the slick folds of my pussy. I spread my thighs wantonly as far as I could get them, eager to have him inside me. I fought a rising whimper as the head of his cock teased my tender entrance.

“Take me, Marcus,” I murmured against his lips. “Please.”

He surged into me, hilted himself to the base of his cock. My spine arched involuntarily as a climax overwhelmed my body. I’d danced on the edge of it for so long. Being filled with him made it explode immediately. My body trembled and shook from the force of the pleasurable spasms that racked it.

Marcus slowly eased his length in and out of my pussy, lubricated well by my juices. He buried his face in the crook of my neck and groaned, “So good.” Then he reached down, grabbed my buttocks with his broad, powerful hands and began to thrust into my body in earnest.

I sank my fingers into his shoulder and dug my nails in, reveling in the long, hard strokes with which he favored my eager cunt. My whole world had narrowed to this man’s possession of my body. I would have it no other way.

He rose up and grasped my wrists. He raised them over my head and pinned them to the blanket, so I was stretched out beneath him, unable to move. The sensation of being restrained by him aroused me even more.

He stared down at me while he slid his cock in and out of me. The weight and intensity of his gaze mesmerized me. I couldn’t have looked away even if I’d desired it.

“Princess, you feel like heaven,” he groaned. “So tight around my cock. So hot and so sweet.” Marcus lowered his mouth to my nipple and rasped his teeth over the hardened nub.

It made me climax again. I cried out, feeling the muscles of my pussy milk and pull at his cock. When the orgasm had loosened its hold on me, I lay limp for a moment, my heart pounding. It appeared I was making up for all those sexless years.

He pulled free of my body “Turn over, princess.”

I didn’t move. “Turn over?”

He stared at me with half-hooded eyes. “On your stomach.”

I hesitated for a moment, wondering why he would want me thus. Finally, I did as he’d asked. He grasped me by my waist and pulled me to my knees. “Part your gorgeous thighs as far as you can.”

I did and felt utterly, deliciously exposed to him. At his mercy. I put my head down to the blanket and raised my hips, letting him have a full view of my aroused sex.

His fingers traced my swollen folds. “So pretty.” He eased a finger within me from behind, then added a second and began to fuck me with them.

“Ah, Marcus,” I moaned into the blankets. I was starting to see the advantage of this position. The penetration was much deeper.

I felt the slick head of his cock pressed against my opening in place of his fingers. He pushed into me and came down over me back. I felt the hard, perspiration-slicked expanse of his chest against my spine.

“Slow and easy, my princess, or fast and hard? How would you have me?”

“Fast, hard,” I gasped.

He rose up and dug his fingers into my hips, driving his cock into my wet, suctioning flesh. Every stroke reverberated through my body. I rose up, laying my hands flat on the blanket, and pushed back at him, driving his thick cock into me as deep as it could go.

He dipped his fingers down, coating them in my slippery juices, and then rubbed them over my clit. He stroked relentlessly with the pads of his fingers as he took me from behind.

My hips bucked and I moaned loudly. He continued to work my clit, stroking it again and again until I screamed out his name in a climax that near robbed me of consciousness. My orgasm tipped Marcus into his. I felt him pull out and spurt on my buttocks as he groaned out his pleasure.

My knees no longer able to support me, I collapsed face-first to the blanket.

A few moments later, after Marcus had cleaned his seed from my skin, I felt him turn me over.

"The day soon dawns, my princess," he said softly. "I will soon shift, and I cannot send you back to your castle in such disarray." His voice sounded rich and warm, and held a note of amusement. I probably looked well loved to him. I certainly felt well loved. He brushed a tendril of my hair away from my face, and then lifted me.

He carried me out of the cave to a swift-flowing stream in the nearby woods and washed me with a bar of strong soap. We kissed and teased each other in the hip-high water. We nuzzled and cooed at each other like a man and woman in the first rosy-hued throes of love.

I was quickly coming to care deeply for this dragon. He was so strong and dominant, yet so gentle and considerate at the same time. There was a depth and complexity to this man that I had not seen upon our first meeting. He intrigued me. I wanted more time to unravel the secrets of him, to get to know him better.

He and I had chemistry. I suspected that our relationship, given time, could flourish into a deep and abiding love. It saddened me to know that we would probably never have the opportunity to see where our feelings for each other might lead us.

Marcus dressed me by the embers of the dying fire, and welded me back into the dreaded chastity belt so well I doubted nurse would ever suspect a thing. He laid a gentle kiss upon my lips and fingered a lock of my hair. "I could come to love you, I think," he murmured.

"And I, you."

A look of sadness overcame his features. "If only I weren't a dragon."

I sighed. "If only I weren't a princess. I would stay in your cave and wait for you to return to me every night." I favored him with a forlorn smile.

He hesitated, as though about to say something. He pursed his lips. "And this Darrion, is he good man? Would he make you a good match?"

I shrugged. "He is handsome, strong, brave and young. A princess could be less lucky. However he does not make me feel the way you make me feel, and he wants me for my royal claim and nothing else."

"But would he treat you well?"

I shrugged. "He is insufferably egoistical, I think, but I have no reason to think he would not treat me well."

He stroked his chin, deep in thought. "As you say, a princess could be less lucky."

Fear spiked through the center of me. He would never sacrifice himself to the slayer on purpose in order to settle me with a half-decent man, would he? No...why would he make such a gallant gesture for me?

I embraced Marcus. "Let us hope his luck fails him when he comes after you, shall we? I could not bear to see you harmed," I finished hoarsely, tears pricking my eyes.

It was too true that he'd claimed part of my heart in a very short time. I wanted many more nights to spend with him, getting to know every part of him and allowing him to know me. The thought of him hurt in any way clenched like a knot of coldness in my stomach. I closed my eyes and held him tighter.

A ray of morning light shining in through the mouth of the cave made me open my eyes. I felt Marcus' body quiver. He drew a deep breath. I backed up, thinking I understood what might be happening.

Shimmering enveloped Marcus' body as he stood before me. The silver waves of magick obscured exactly what was occurring to his body, but I could tell he was transforming. The shimmering cleared and Marcus the dragon stood in front of me. Now that I knew what he was half the time, he did not frighten me so very much.

I reached out and stroked one of his green and gold scales. He spread his massive gossamer wings, tipped his head back and blew fire out his nostrils. It hit the ceiling of the cave, startling me. I staggered backward and ended up my ass. The dragon pawed the ground once, nodded his head at me, then turned and walked out the cave.

I noted the singed ceiling and the heat that hung around me, then bolted to my feet and followed him. I arrived at the mouth of the cave just in time to see the dragon take to the air with powerful strokes of his wings. He circled the cave once, and then flew to the north.

I hoped he planned to travel far from here today.

Chapter Three

Darrion tangled with the dragon and lost for five straight days.

Every one of them was hell for me.

Each day, I fretted and worried and paced in the confines of my chambers morning to evening. My maids danced on the fine edge of my temper as I awaited news of the day's conquest. The dragon never charbroiled Darrion. He and the dragon seemed evenly matched.

My father thought I fretted because I feared marriage to Darrion. No matter how hard I tried, I could not dissuade him from the misconception.

I told my father that the dragon was a shape shifter. That I knew for certain this was the case. I told him that if he murdered Darrion he would be committing. I begged and pleaded for my father to demand that Darrion cease his conquest, but my father only furrowed his brow at me in worry and sent the castle psychologist to attend me. I felt hopeless and powerless.

The nights were far better.

Every night I traded castle for cave to spend time with my dragon. Every night he made love to me sweeter than the night before.

Every night I grew to love him even more.

Some nights we spent talking for the most part, or cuddling. One night Marcus had found a ripe peach and we'd mock-wrestled for it. The wrestling had turned into something more carnal and we'd forgotten the fruit for a time. After we'd sated ourselves, Marcus had fed me the peach slice by luscious slice and I thought I'd never tasted anything so sweet.

I sighed and drummed my fingers on the stone window casing of the solar. The day had dawned bright and full of sunshine. I was very tired since I was not getting much sleep these nights, but I couldn't drowse during the day knowing that Darrion might return to the castle with Marcus' head.

I shuddered at the thought.

Someone entered the chamber and I turned to see the slayer himself. My teeth on edge at the mere sight of him, I inclined my head in greeting.

Darrion bowed and then went to one knee before me. He clasped my hand in his. "Today is the day," he said with a confident smirk that I wanted to knock away with my fist.

"What did you mean, kind sir?" I asked with my head tipped to the side and a false smile spread across my lips.

“I have hired a large dragon net made and five strong men to aid me in wielding it. I will have his head today, my princess.”

I withdrew my hand.

I stood there stunned for a moment with a fake smile pasted across my mouth. He wouldn't notice my smile was false. Marcus would, but not this one. This one was far too in love with himself to notice anything like that about another person.

He babbled on about his prowess and cunning and how he wanted the entire realm to see him slay the dragon. He wanted the bards to sing of his conquest.

I listened to every slimy word with rapt attention. Luckily, Darrion liked to hear himself speak. I got all the details I needed. No way was I going to stand by and allow him to trick the dragon into death. I let a vapid expression linger on my face all the while I plotted.

He reached out and took my hand once more. I flinched, but recovered my courtesy in enough time not to offend him or make him suspicious. Darrion kissed the back of my hand lingeringly. He raised his eyes suggestively as he did it. I felt my skin get up and try to walk away at the erotic promise in his gaze.

Finally, he released my hand and backed away. He made a sweeping bow. “Soon, my lady,” he said.

“I can hardly wait,” I replied, almost choking on the words.

He turned and left the room.

I waited for a moment, to make sure he was gone. In that moment, I mused about how if I'd never met Marcus, I would've swooned at that look in Darrion's eyes. Now Marcus' touch was the only one I craved.

How different my life would be if I'd never tried to slay the dragon.

When I was certain that Darrion had left, I slipped out of the ladies solar and back to my chambers. Quickly, I traded my silks for a pair of trows and a heavy shirt for which I'd given a stable boy good coppers. It was easier to slip out at night dressed thus.

I tied my hair back in a knot and proceeded to sneak carefully out the servant's entrance of the castle and made my way to the field where Darrion had said he planned to trap the dragon.

A crowd had gathered in the open area. Darrion's men had made announcements in the village square. The presence of all these people would surely draw the dragon's interest. That was part of Darrion's plan. I wondered if my father and his men would also show themselves.

A roaring and beating of wings filled the air and I looked up to see the dragon swooping low over the field. I could see fire burning in the back of his throat. The beast's strong green and gold wings beat the air and his tail whipped angrily as it banked to the left and rose higher into the sky. Around me, the people gasped and screamed. Some cowered, others fled.

The dragon swooped low for another pass and I glimpsed movement in the tree line.

Probably close to twenty men rushed out from the trees bearing a huge net. Before I had time to voice the scream of horror birthing itself from the back of my throat, the men had snagged the dragon.

The beast screamed in rage at the same time I screamed. A bellow of smoke and fire rolled out from the dragon's mouth, burning a hole through the net, but it wasn't enough to free him.

His magnificent wings flapped as he tried to rise higher into the sky, but they were caught in the netting. Instead, he plummeted to the ground. I watched in horror as the dragon hit the earth in the center of the field and began to thrash.

Darrion rode out from a nearby stand of trees with my father's banners flying. He rode with a spear in one hand and a sheathed sword glimmering in the morning sunlight. He rode like a prince, or a conquering warrior.

If I didn't do something, he'd soon be just that.

Spurred by the thought, I pushed through the throng and ran full tilt toward the dragon and Darrion.

I watched with dread clutching my heart as Darrion raised his spear and thrust it into the writhing dragon. The dragon screamed again, fire shooting from its mouth, missing Darrion by a just a breath's space. The dragon sounded as if it were in pain.

Oh, no.

"No!" I screamed. "No!" Tears blinded my vision as I ran.

I reached the dragon as Darrion was raising his spear for the second time. I noted queerly that dragon blood dripped from the point as I pushed my way between the dragon and his would-be slayer mid-strike. I saw the tip of the spear flash down toward me. I cringed, but shielded the dragon all the same.

I was ready to die to protect Marcus.

I felt the sharp point rip through my upper arm. Pain exploded and hot blood welled. I screamed in agony, put my other hand over the wound the spear had made and sank to my knees.

For a moment all was confusion.

I closed my eyes and willed myself not to pass out. Hot blood dripped between my fingers, soaking through the material of the rough-spun tunic I wore. I heard Darrion step back and drop the spear on the grass.

"Princess Jeweline?" he asked in a confused tone of voice.

I looked up at him in a haze of pain.

Behind me the thrashing of the dragon ceased and all went quiet. Darrion gasped. The entire crowd echoed him, and then rippled with muted conversation.

I felt the touch of a warm, strong hand on my shoulder. "Jeweline," said Marcus.

I gasped and turned around.

Marcus lay tangled in the netting where the dragon had once been. A wound marked his upper arm in almost the exact same place where I had one. My first thought was that we'd have matching scars. My second thought was that it was daylight.

I looked up at the sky. "But I don't understand."

Marcus reached through the netting and pulled my face toward his. He kissed me long and well. So well I forgot about the pain in my arm. I forgot about the gathered crowd and Darrion, who all stood watching us.

We broke the kiss and he bussed his lips against my forehead. "The curse is broken."

"But how?"

He smiled and nodded at my wound. "You were ready to sacrifice your life for mine. I suspect that's what broke the curse." He hesitated. "You love me...as I love you."

I kissed him. "I do. I do love you very much." I was crying again, but my tears had nothing to do with my wound.

"Jeweline," came my father's sharp voice. "Darrion. What is going on?"

I turned my tear-stained face toward my father. Castle physicians rushed in. One knelt by me and the other helped Marcus free himself from the netting so they could treat and bandage his arm.

"You see, Father, I told you the dragon was a man, but you didn't believe me." The words tumbled from my lips. "He was cursed, but now that's over. He's a man for all time now." I paused. "I love him, Father, and he loves me. He's a good man and would make a good king. He has the heart of a dragon."

My father looked stern. He said nothing in response to my declaration. My heart sank.

"You love the dragon?" asked Darrion incredulously.

"Yes." I answered without hesitation. "With all my being." I looked at my father and pointed at Darrion. "Father, he stabbed me."

The set of my father's face became more severe than I'd ever seen it. "I saw. So did half the village thanks to Darrion's pride. That poses a problem."

Darrion immediately held up his hands in a gesture of surrender. "I didn't know it was her, my lord. I swear it. I didn't mean to hurt her. I thought her only some simple-minded doxy from the village." His eyes grew wide and his mouth snapped shut as he realized he was likely making things worse.

"All the same, the villagers saw you and I must make an example of you. I can't let those who harm my only daughter go unpunished, no matter the circumstances in which it occurred. You are hereby banished from the kingdom of Hask, Darrion."

Darrion hung his head. I almost felt sorry for him and his big ego. He lost the dragon and the chance at kingship.

“As for you,” my father said, looking down at me. “You say you love this man?”

“I do.” I looked at the ground. “I have been sneaking out at night to meet him, Father. I’m sorry.”

My father remained silent. I grew nervous and fidgeted so much under my father’s gaze that the physician who was treating my arm lost his grasp.

Marcus stood. “My lord, I must apologize for encouraging your daughter to come and visit me. Her beauty and her charm blinded me. I was blinded by my growing love for her. If you wish to behead me, I will go willingly. I deserve no less.”

My father harrumphed and remained silent. I hung my head.

“Well,” my father said at last, “at least you are an honest man and seem to be no fop. You have a strong heart, I can see. The heart of a dragon, as my daughter said. You and Jeweline will no doubt produce strong, determined offspring, considering how pigheaded my daughter is.”

My head snapped up. “Father?”

My father smiled at me. “I trust your judgment more than you think, my daughter. He will make a good king.” My father nodded. “Marry the dragon.”

My heart sang with joy.

I stood, now with a bandaged arm. Marcus swung me into his arms, laughing. We kissed each other deeply with the entire world looking on.

The herald who had accompanied my father to the field blew his trumpet. “Introducing the Princess Jeweline and her fiancé, Marcus Dragonheart!”

The villagers cheered and my heart filled with happiness.

I’d found true love with the dragon I’d wanted to slay.

Life is stranger than we’ll ever know.



About the Author

Anya Bast is a multipublished erotic fantasy & paranormal romance author. Primarily, she writes happily-ever-afters with lots of steamy sex. After all, happily-ever-afters with lots of sex are the very best kind.

She enjoys the study of Celtic myth, dreaming, and shamanism and incorporates what she learns into her paranormal stories.

Anya got her start writing fantasy romance. Since writing a little hotter seemed to come naturally to her, she had no trouble making the move to erotic romance. She loves writing books that are heavy on plot, emotion and character development, and also have spicy, no-holds-barred sex scenes. Exploring the elements of dark sexual fantasy in her writing is what Anya does best.

She lives in the country with her husband. They share their lives with eight cats and one perplexed dog.

Anya welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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