

THE CURSED KING  
AND THE GIRL WHO  
BECAME A GODDESS

SNEAK PEEK  
WYNTER RYOT

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# NOTE TO READERS

This is a fictional story with dark, violent, inappropriate, and disturbing elements with sexual, dysfunctional, morally grey, and morally bankrupt characters. There is assault and child abuse in this book and series. There are no heroes or heroines. For more information about this series, check out the FAQ section on my website. I will see you in the next book.

To my husband,  
who always remembered to hit save  
before putting away my computer when I fell asleep with it in bed.  
I love you BoogieBear.

*I will devour her. Flesh and bone.*

*-The Beast*

# THE WORLD AND CHARACTERS

## Hierarchy

**Grey Gods** – The original gods who created everything. Can split themselves into two beings. One being good and light and the other dark, immoral, and chaotic. Currently imprisoned due to rebellion from the Firstborn. Immortal.

**Firstborn** – Gods created by the Grey Gods. Cannot split themselves like the Grey Gods. Have the power to create worlds, realms, and other gods. Immortal, but can be destroyed by Grey Gods by being absorbed into their being.

**Secondborn** – Gods created by the Firstborn. Unique in power. Not as powerful as the Firstborn. Can create a body of flesh to be around mortals and Demigods. This makes them susceptible to pain



and such. Immortal but can be destroyed by the Firstborn and Grey Gods by being absorbed into their being.

**Demigods/Devoted/goddesses/Guardians** – Beings of extraordinary power given to them by the Secondborn they were created by. They vary in appearance and power and have a body of flesh. Weaknesses vary. They have long lifespans of tens of thousands of years. Difficult to kill by mortals. They are considered gods among mortals. They reincarnate after they die.

**Witches** – Appearance and power varies by type. Lifespans vary. They reincarnate after they die.

**Empowered/Touched** – Those born with limited power. Power varies and depends on the realm they are born in. They reincarnate after they die.

**Mortals** – Powerless beings that can live up to one hundred and sixty years. Created by the Secondborn. They reincarnate after they die.

## Gods

**Helkithor** (*Hell-ca-thor*) – Firstborn god who left Earth to create his own gods and world. He considers the Secondborn he created to be his children. They call him Father. The process of creating them has made him weak.

**Feyri** (*Fair-re*) – Secondborn created by Helkithor. Goddess of Creation. Also known as the Mother of Creation. She created the realms. Each realm has a strong amount of her power within it. She convinced the others created by Helkithor to aid her in the creation of mortals. She created Guardians, Goddesses of Knowledge, Goddesses of Healing, Goddesses of Creation and Goddesses of Tranquility.

**Oryn** (*Or-ren*)– Secondborn created by Helkithor. A Creation God like Feyri. He created land, plants, and animals. He created the Landborn, Waterborn, Fireborn, Beastborn and Airborn.

**Saelethil** (*Sail-la-thil*)– Secondborn created by Helkithor. He is the God of Death, Plague and Misery.

**Sial** (*Sea-ale*) – Secondborn created by Helkithor. She is the Goddess of War and Carnage. Often found fighting alongside mortals. Does not help Demigods or Empowered in war.

**Korym** (*Core-rim*)– Secondborn created by Helkithor. Korym is the God of Luck and the only god to often switch gender when taking a body of flesh though prefers his male form. Whomever he lies with is guaranteed good luck throughout the remainder of their life. He

can also give luck through touch. Does not have sex with or touch Demigods or Empowered. Favors mortals.

## Characters

**Goddess Princess Yunaesa** (*U-na-es-a*) – She is affectionately called Yuna by God King Gaelin. Often referred to as Goddess Princess Yunaesa or Princess Yunaesa, depending on the person's status. She is the daughter of Guardian Queen Maketanoon and King Astraston.

**God King Gaelin** (*Gay-lyn*) – A Demigod. Referred to as God King Gaelin or King Gaelin depending on the person's status and Gaelin by those close to him. Affectionately called Wolfie by Goddess Princess Yunaesa. He is the brother of Farryn and the son of the late King Maelstrom and late Queen Nindr.

**Guardian Queen Maketanoon** (*Ma-ke-ta-noon*) – She is queen of the Realm of Eera. Mother of Goddess Princess Yunaesa and the wife to King Astraston. She has the power to create and manipulate fire. She is a Guardian.

**King Astraston** (*As-tra-son*) – He is King of the Realm of Eera. Husband to Guardian Queen Maketanoon and the father of Goddess Princess Yunaesa. He is a mortal.

**Lady Disir** (*De-seer*) – She is the former queen of the Realm of Neverending Night. The governess of Goddess Princess Yunaesa.

**Commander Farryn** (*Fair-n*) – She is the sister of God King Gaelin. She is a Grave Witch.

**King Azaryth of the Landborn** (*Az-er-rith*) – He is Oryn's Devoted. His power is based in nature.

**Queen Hadersyr** (*Ha-da-seer*) – She is a goddess married to King Faelar. She was adopted and raised by King Azaryth as his daughter.

# PROLOGUE

Feyri stood naked on the balcony, whistling back at the small gray bird sitting in the palm of her hand. On its chest was a plume of cream feathers. Her wavy hair blew in the breeze, strands dancing gently against her bare skin.

“Come back to bed.” I sat up against the headboard.

She glanced at me from under her dark bangs as she gently stroked the bird, a finger tracing from its head down its back. “If I do, we will be there for another four days.”

“Well, you were gone for three seasons.”

“Maelstrom...” The way she said my name made me want to pull her under the sheets and never let her go again. Slowly, she walked back into the room. Her eyes locked on mine as she crawled onto the bed and moved to straddle my lap. “You missed me?”

“Yes.” I pulled her down for a kiss. “Did you miss me?”

She pressed her full lips against mine. “Yes.”

“Feyri...” I whispered. She closed her eyes, her lips parting as she seemed to melt on top of me as my fingers danced lightly up and down her spine. “Stay.”

She took my face in her hands. The look in her eyes told me her answer before the words came out of her mouth. “I can’t.”

“I love you.”

“And I love you, Maelstrom, but I am a goddess. I cannot abandon my people.”

“Do you love them more than me?”

“A goddess takes care of her people.” She pressed a finger against my lips. “Don’t scowl.”

“Do you love them more than me?” I asked again, pushing her hand away with more force than I meant.

“How could I love anyone more than I love you? You have my heart.” She tried to kiss me, but I turned my head away. “Maelstrom?”

“Do you know what you have done to me?” In one quick motion, I pushed her onto her back. “Do you know how I suffer when you are not here with me? When you leave, it is as if you take a large part of me with you. I am not myself when you are not by my side. I need you here with me.”

Her eyes began to glow. I knew mine were responding in kind. A recent development in our relationship and only realized when our emotions ran strong.

“You consume my every thought. My dreams. My nightmares. Food has no taste. I can barely sleep and when I do, I awaken feeling restless. Stay, Feyri. I will build a grand temple for you here in Nefayre for your believers to come and worship and pray to you. Will that keep you here by my side?”

She stroked the side of my face with her delicate fingers. “Some birds cannot be caged.”

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Only a god can be both perfect and flawed. When we take mortal form, we are vulnerable and yet, we are not. Some gods are orbs of light, much too bright for mortals to even stand in their presence. Some are orbs of energy that turn mortals into dust.

My godly appearance looked mortal, but was made of a combination of light, energy, and power that caused mortals to dissolve if they stood before me. Very rarely did I take this form for I lived among the mortals I had created with the other Secondborn gods. When I did transform, I only did so when I was with the other gods. I much preferred a body of flesh. There were things I could feel and enjoy in a mortal body that I could not in my godly form. I loved this body, but recently, I grew to abhor the feeling of flesh.

Maelstrom watched me from his chair outside my cell; the cell he had put me in.

*“I clipped your wings because I love you,”* he had said when I first awakened here a year ago.

Being in mortal form makes gods susceptible to all mortal experiences. Sickness. Lust. Pain. Even death. But it was only the flesh we were in that died, forcing us to return to our godly form. We could always create another body to dwell in and travel the realms and live among mortals and other creatures.

But Maelstrom wouldn't let me die.

I should have never answered his wife's prayers. I should have let him die.

I had heard of gods that held the knowledge of all things past, present, and future. Gods that were omnipresent. I envied them. Helkithor, our creator, thought it best that we maintained a more intimate relationship with mortals and, in a way, grow with them,

making us quite different from many of the others. I could not blame him for my current predicament. It was I who fell in love with this man. Who shared my power with him when he was nearing death's door.

"Why are you not sleeping in the bed I had made for you?" he asked.

My bare feet slid across the damp stone floor as I hugged my knees to my chest. At the other end of my cell was an ornate wooden bed with soft linens and furs. Nearby was a small hide rug on the floor and a single chair made of plush fabric, filled with feathers. On a wooden table beside the bed sat a tray of food and a pitcher of wine for me to drink. At the foot of the bed was a large metal tub for me to bathe in.

I never went to that side of the cell. I refused to accept any of his *comforts*. I looked down at my pale skin and stared at my arms and legs. My veins had turned a sickly green from the poison.

"Are you still angry with me?"

I peeked up at him from under overgrown bangs. He looked dreadfully weary. His long black hair was unkempt. No crown set upon his head. Gone were the layers and layers of embellished, regal clothing. Maelstrom sat in his chair wearing a simple gray shirt, untucked, over night blue pants and dark brown boots.

He kicked the bars hard. I flinched and my cheeks immediately burned with embarrassment for what sort of god feared a mortal. But things had changed, and he was mortal no longer.

"How is it that you are here, right here within reach, and yet, it feels as if you are not here at all?"

I remained silent.

"What did you do to me, Feyri? What have you done?"



I hadn't noticed at first. I missed the signs. Maelstrom was the first mortal I ever gave power to. I made him a Demigod. He was the first of his kind. His power was unlimited. All was well in the beginning. The once mad king, known for his love of war and killing, had begun to calm. I stayed by his side as long as I could, only leaving to answer the prayers of my people. To sit in the temples built for me and accept their offerings. To give them comfort in their time of need. To be their goddess.

Each time I returned, things worsened between us. I could not bathe on my own. Everything I wore was chosen by him. Servants were not allowed to look upon me without fear of being punished. His obsessive behavior became so frightening I lengthened the time I spent away from him. During that time away, I thought of him often. Ached for him. Craved him. I found myself becoming restless. I longed for his touch. To hear the sound of his voice. I felt as if a part of me was missing. I assumed it was just my heart breaking. I should have known it was a sign that something was wrong.

“What do I need to do to make you love me again?”

The desperation in his voice pulled at me. I pushed down my desire to go to him and sink into his arms.

“Let me go, Maelstrom. You have to let me go.”

His eyes began to glow. Something in him called to me. I refused to answer. He growled and hit the bars with his bare hands. Just seeing him being able to do so without suffering as I did angered me. The cell and everything within it were covered in poison. He told me he had an antidote; that he would make sure to take it after he came in to sit with me. Talk to me. Touch me. The poison weakened my body so

much that trying to use my power exhausted me to where I would be unconscious for days at a time. The mortal body is weak, so very weak.

“Your eyes no longer glow for me.” His voice was strained, like he was in pain.

“I doubt they ever will again.”

“I didn’t want to do this, Feyri. I didn’t want any of this, but you wouldn’t listen. Look at us. You may be here in a cell, but I am in a prison of my own out here. You left me in darkness. Took my peace. My sanity. It was you who changed me. It’s because of you that I am this way now.”

Though Maelstrom was a Demigod, his eyes could not see what mine had recently discovered. A thick chain linked the two of us. At some point, it had been created without us knowing, although some of the links were now broken. Still, I knew looking at it, that even if I were to find a way to free myself from this cell, I would never be free of him, just as he would never be free of me. Not unless the remaining links were destroyed.

*If* they could be destroyed.

# KING GAELIN

**M**onsters birth monsters.

I was the creation of beings and situations so gruesome and devastating, I had no choice but to become a walking nightmare in order to survive. My name was synonymous with death and chaos. The blood on my hands would never wash away. Thousands died by my hand alone and many more under my orders. I was known through many realms to be a vicious man. Some even called me The Bringer of Ruin. Son of Maelstrom. The God King of Chaos and Destruction. I was all of those things, but even so, I never would have hurt her. It was simply a misunderstanding.

Ten years had passed since I last saw her smile. Since I heard her laugh. For anyone to think I would harm someone so delicate, so important to me; it made me furious enough to tear apart a mountain.

I did not regret my actions, for I did nothing wrong. I kissed her. She asked, and I obliged her innocence. A brief touch of two pairs of lips, quicker than a wink. It was not love or lust, nor was it an act of depravity. A kiss as short as the word itself and yet a kiss misinterpreted by a new servant. She saw a man, a king, giving a kiss to a young princess, who only wanted what she'd heard from books. Stories of princesses being rescued from dangerous places by strong knights and

kings who defeated monsters. All rewarded with gold and a kiss. She had given me a gold coin that day, but it was the kiss that caused the trouble.

I remembered that day well.

The evening sky in the Realm of Eera was streaked with pink and orange. I sat on the edge of a round marble fountain. Standing on the pedestal in the center of the fountain was a stone carving of a woman. The Goddess Feyri. Many called her the 'Mother of Creation' and built temples where they worshipped her with song and prayer.

I despised her.

The water in the fountain was filled with small creatures covered in iridescent scales. Some had fins, while others had tentacles. Sitting crossed legged at my feet in a simple white dress was Princess Yunae-sa.

At six years of age, she was already excelling in reading and writing. She was adventurous. Obstinate at times. The constantly curious look on her face was framed with beautiful, wild curls. It was almost magical the way the sun reflected on her hair, a deep red so bright it was as if it were on fire, and those eyes...

Golden eyes that always stared at me with adoration focused on me as I read her story after story. She looked at me like a second father. Although we were not related by blood, our relationship was more of that of an uncle and niece. I often doted on her and gave her almost anything she asked for just to see her smile.

We sat there at the fountain's edge, surrounded by yellow flowers with long, feather-like petals and red flowers with layers of overlapping circular petals. The princess fiddled at the hem of her dress as I described how the dragon trapped a princess in a cave. She giggled

when the knight was knocked down by the dragon's tail and sighed with relief when he was finally able to rescue the princess.

"The princess gave the knight a kiss, for she was happy and grateful that he had saved her life. He was given much gold by her father, the king, in appreciation for rescuing his beloved daughter," I read.

"What is grateful?" She put a gold coin on my knee.

I laughed and placed the coin on the fountain edge beside me. I was not going to take her gold. She stood up from the ground and placed her hands on my knees. There was a curious expression on her face as she leaned forward. I laughed again as she began jumping up and down on the stone ground with impatience. I closed the book and laid it beside me.

"It means that the princess was thankful. The knight did not have to save her, but he did."

She scrunched her face in a way that made me chuckle again.

"I am grateful to you for reading to me, King Gaelin. Should I kiss you?"

I was taken aback. Looking into her eyes, my mind raced with how to respond to this innocent request. I did not want to offend by rejecting her. While everything was quiet in my head that day, the beast within me, a curse from the Goddess Feyri, was always a threat and would have no problem devouring children.

"I am a princess," she explained, as though I had not caught on. "Do I kiss you?" Her impatience grew with each bounce.

That day and in that very moment, I was weak. I was a king with the blood of tens of thousands on my hands. I feared no enemy. I ran from no monster, but this face, this princess; I would have given my life to

just to keep her smiling. If she had told me she wanted the moon, I would have brought it down from the sky just for her.

She was pure light. Untainted by the wickedness of others. Even by the darkness in me. I had felt the need to protect her from the moment I felt her kick in her mother's womb. She put me at ease. Death and suffering had been a constant in my life. Until her.

After a moment of hesitation, I leaned down and kissed her in a similar way I had seen her parents do before. Butterfly kisses, they called it. I pulled away as soon as our lips touched and smiled at her as I patted the top of her head. She grinned, and I tapped her nose with my finger. The moment was ruined by a servant screaming her name and running towards us. She misunderstood what had happened and accused me of things outside of my character. I was a monster, but even I didn't do things like that with children.

As the princess was picked up and carried away. She cried as she reached out for me. The confusion and fear on her face made me want to set that servant aflame. I was afraid that she would be taught to hate me; taught to fear me.

My ship creaked as it turned, pulling me from my memories. We would be in the Realm of Era soon. I had heard that Guardian Queen Maketanoon tried to have the portal destroyed to prevent me from returning, but lost to her husband, King Astraston. Such foolishness. Portals were the only way for people to travel from realm to realm and had she destroyed that portal, I could have found my way back through another. As much as she despised me, she could not destroy all the portals, because once they were gone, they could only be rebuilt by a god and the gods were not known for charity.

Guardian Queen Maketanoon wanted to banish me from the realm. King Astraston argued against it. After a long discussion, I left of my own accord. There were problems arising in my kingdom. Fools dared to challenge my power and there were realms that needed conquering. I hadn't expected to be away from the princess for so long.

During my absence to secure my kingdom and right the wrongs of my father, the late King Maelstrom, I sent her various foods, beautiful fabrics, along with talented dressmakers. I also sent pounds of precious metals and stones with blacksmiths and jewelers to create whatever she desired. I searched the realms for the best teachers to educate her in all she wanted and needed to know. Those that impressed me were sent to her realm. I had even given the princess a governess who was a skilled swordsman to keep her safe.

The creaking of my ship grew louder as waves crashed against the ship's hull, signifying that we were now entering the portal that would take us to the Realm of Eera. I would see her soon. Ten years had passed since I heard the sound of her voice. We wrote to one another often throughout the years, and while I cherished her every response, nothing would compare to seeing her.

"Brother!" Farryn called for me. "We made it through the portal!"

I hurried up to the deck. The air was warm, just as it was on the day I left. I went to the bow where my sister stood looking up at the sky. Gray clouds were slowly gathering. Her ash blonde hair whipped around her face, the damp ends curled under her chin. When she looked at me, she did not smile. I doubt she ever would again.

In our family, it was tradition that siblings married one another. Only those that did so could sit on the throne. When I killed our father, I'd allowed many of our traditions to die with him.

I had once thought of marrying my sister. I had kissed her pink lips. I had sunken my teeth into the flesh of her shoulder while filling the deepest part of her as I laid with her many times, leaving her in delicious pain. She enjoyed the hurt. She needed it. We needed it. Sex with violence was our way, but being with her put me on the path our father once walked; a path I had fought hard to get away from. Farryn was a beautiful and strong warrior, but she was darkness. I had killed our father when she was young and even though he was not around her long, she still somehow inherited his love of death, pain, and destruction, as I once did. I desired such things no longer.

I no longer wanted to watch the blood of my enemies seep into the ground or kingdoms lay in ruin at my feet. I still fought, but I only went to war when every other option was exhausted. I wanted to be better than those that came before me.

“Do you think she will remember me?” I asked my sister. She did not respond.

My hair was the same color she would know, as it had not changed since my birth. A deep gray, the color of ash, only it was much longer now. My body was sturdier and defined. Ten years. Would she remember my face? The sound of my voice?

The shore slowly came into view as we moved out from the portal. The pale sand on the beach reminded me of snow as it shimmered under the white sun. Further away, dark storm clouds spiraled above the land, a foreboding shadow stretched towards the ocean.

“A storm is coming. It doesn’t seem to be natural,” Farryn said with some annoyance.



I watched the wind blow sheets of sand across the beach. The waves in the ocean picked up in size. “We are in the realm of a Guardian Queen. Nothing is natural here.”

# PRINCESS YUNAESA

When an animal becomes conscious of the many creatures living among them, do they become envious? Do they wish to shed their skin and trade their life for that of another?

On the morning of my thirteenth birthday, my governess came to wake me. She rubbed my arm gently and called my name. I would have usually yawned and stretched before going with her to prepare for the day. But that morning, I vomited all over my bed the moment I opened my mouth.

Because sickness was not something Guardians were known to suffer through, my parent were troubled. Especially my father. While my mother did her best to be encouraging and comforting; my father could not hide his fear behind kind words. As I struggled to move, eat, and even breathe, my father wore a worried expression. Every sigh or gasp from pain seemed to make him ache as well.

Mortals do not handle death well, even though we all will be reincarnated; it is a fear they share, unlike my mother and I. Guardians are born of a Demigoddess and a mortal father. Mortals may live as long as one hundred and sixty years, but Guardians lived for tens of thousands, which was why the condition I was in was so unusual.

Sleeping soon became difficult. I would awaken feeling cold and yet I would be sweating.

Guardians have some power to heal, but my mother could not bring me any relief from whatever it was that was tormenting me. Days passed, each bringing with it more vomiting and nightly convulsions. The affliction upon my body was unnatural. It was as if my body was fighting against itself. For five days I was weakened by fever. Sunlight hurt my eyes. I did my best to be strong, but there were times I gave in to despair and cried.

My governess, Disir, wanted to write King Gaelin to come see me, but I argued against it. I didn't want him to see me this way. She pushed, but I was adamant. She argued that King Gaelin had come before when I was unwell. He had, but that time was different.

I was five years old when I started having nightmares that woke me up from my slumber.

Guardian children are unable to control their healing power until around eight years of age. A light radiates around our bodies. We become a beacon to those in need of healing. People came from all over to relieve themselves of what ailed them. They would roughly grab my hands, my hair, desperation plain on their faces. I began having nightmares about people chasing me and screaming, and I would always wake before they caught me. Feeling frightened, I wrote a letter to the one person who always made me feel safe. When I had seen him last, he had told me he was meeting with royal families, so I was surprised to see his ship the next day. He demanded my parents stop allowing people to come for healing and he spent every night in my bed. When I would wake screaming, I would find myself in his arms being held tight as he whispered that I was safe.

One night I had the same nightmare again, but it ended differently. The people that were chasing after me finally caught up, but instead of grabbing me, they ran past, screaming. As they ran by, I saw some were burned. Some were covered in blood, and some were even missing limbs.

I heard the sound of a woman laughing. I turned around and was struck by her golden eyes and red hair. Large gray wings rose over her shoulders. She had sharp claws instead of nails. Feathers covered her breasts and below her navel. Her skin was splattered with blood and when she smiled, I noticed two rows of sharp, pointed teeth. As she walked towards me, her eyes turned white. When I asked who she was, her response made me tremble.

*“I. Am. You.”*

A burning sensation spread throughout my body. I screamed. When I finally came to, I found myself enclosed in a barrier with King Gaelin and Disir. My scream had apparently shattered everything that was glass and fragile in my bedchamber. I slept with King Gaelin and Disir for several more nights. The nightmares stopped and I never saw that woman again. I never told him or Disir about her; I didn't want them to worry more. When I was finally able to sleep peacefully, King Gaelin returned to his meetings.

This time was different. There was the possibility of me dying. I didn't want my lifeless body to be his last memory of me, so I did not write to him.

Eight days later, I found myself unable to speak. My voice had dissolved into something guttural. There was pressure on my chest, making my breathing shallow.

*I'm dying. This is what it's like to die.*

But I didn't die. On the ninth day, I woke feeling very much like myself. The pain was gone. I could breathe. I could speak. My governess and my parents were elated.

I ran towards my balcony doors to take in the sun, only to fall onto my knees screaming before I could reach it. I clawed at the floor as a burning pain ran up my back. Blood spilled onto the wood as my skin tore open and large wings ripped through my gown as they forced their way out. I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. My eyes were pure white. Feathers grew and covered my breasts and the lower parts of my body. I thought of the woman from my nightmare, but looked to see that I had no claws; my wings were pure white, and my teeth were unchanged.

My mother sighed with relief. My father looked as if he was about to collapse. I had evolved. I was no longer a Guardian; I had become a goddess. A Goddess of Creation.

When I was a Guardian, I could not only heal people, I could create and manipulate fire. Becoming a goddess made me more powerful. Instead of living for tens of thousands of years, I would live for a few hundred thousand. Goddesses were powerful beings, but we were not immortal. We aged slowly, our physical appearances stopping after thirty-five. When our bodies of flesh finally died, we received a new body impervious to mortal creations.

There was another distinct difference between a Guardian and a goddess. A Guardian could take a seed and increase the bounty it would bring, while a Goddess of Creation could bring forth a harvest with just a thought. This power difference made us more valuable, and we were highly sought after for marriage. As a Goddess of Creation, I could retain information from everything I read. I could heal and

bring a person calm, but being able to create food, water, plants, and even animals from nothing was my strongest ability. Not every Guardian became a goddess, and those that did were treated as superior.

The sky rumbled above, and rain threatened to fall at any moment. This was a storm I had created with just a thought and a wave of my hand. After much practice, I had finally created a moving storm successfully. As I watched the storm clouds move out towards the ocean, I couldn't help but feel a bit jealous of the small green birds flying away from it. They lived such simple lives. Eat. Fly. Nest. Sleep. They could go wherever they pleased and be who they were without worry. I did not hate what I was. I was fortunate to be born into a life where I could help so many live full and peaceful lives. I just wanted more.

I looked around at the forest I stood in. Those that came from other realms to visit passed through here on their way to our palace. I was often told by them that our realm was peculiar and unlike anything they had seen before. That our forest was unique with its trees with thick gold trunks rising up from dark blue grass. I hid my envy behind my smile, for I had never stepped foot out of my realm. I only knew of other realms from what I read in books from my father's library and from King Gaelin. My mother had told me many times that it was too dangerous for me to leave. That I was not yet strong enough, but wasn't that what our Guardian-born guards were for?

I peeked through the trees at my home on the hill. It was a rather large palace made of smooth cream stone. Many admired its beauty, the large Guardian statues and tall towers. I lived in such a pretty cage.

Just as I started my walk home, I heard voices and the sound of something heavy sliding across sand. I thought of continuing to the palace, but curiosity turned me back towards the ocean. It felt as if something was pulling me there.

I hurried towards the beach, only slowing when I neared the border of trees that lined it. Halfway onto the sand was a large ship with a dark blue painted hull. Its keel was dark wood. There was a symbol of what looked like a seven-pointed star wrapped in thorny vines on the white sails. The ship was trimmed in gold and vines were elegantly carved onto the three masts. Large golden antlers were carved on the front of the ship. In the center of the antlers was a wood carving of a long-haired naked woman with a blindfold over her eyes. It looked like a palace on the water.

Hidden by the trees, I watched men and women unload items from the ship onto wagons tied to large horses. Their clothing was of a dark color. Some wore loose fitting black pants that tied at the ankles with a matching tunic and waist sash. Others wore more fitted light brown pants with a leather vest over a long-sleeved tunic. My eyes wandered until a familiar face caught my eye.

The man was of a significant height. I had thought he was a giant as a child, for he was even taller than my father. I remembered sitting on those broad shoulders, being held by those strong arms.

He wore a black coat that stopped at his knees. Gauntlets of leather and metal on his forearms matched boots that came up to his calves, where his slightly loose pants were tucked. The tip of his boots looked as if they were dipped in dark metal, and running up the leather were buckles of the same color. On his side was a large, sheathed sword. His

black tunic was untucked with a leather vest over it that had leather straps and dark metal buckles for closures.

I felt my heart jump. The last time I saw him, his hair barely reached his shoulders. It was now past his shoulder blades and looked majestic against his lightly sun-kissed skin. He walked around as he ordered the people about. I closed my eyes and let the sound of his voice wash over me like waves across the sand. It seemed deeper, more rugged, but still comforting after all of these years. When I opened my eyes, it seemed as if he were looking straight at me. My breath caught in my throat. He turned his head to speak with a man holding a basket.

Those eyes. He had such lovely eyes. It had been ten years since I had looked into them. They were so light blue that they could pass for silver.



# KING GAELIN

What a silly creature to think I would not notice her copper dress peeking out from behind the trees. I continued to pretend not to notice her. If I were closer to the palace, I may not have noticed, but nature was of a more common color the further away it was from it. The trees that lined the beach had mud brown bark and dark green leaves shaped like arrow heads. The grass was a lighter shade of green and the flowers were small with pale yellow petals.

I noticed the storm clouds coming in our direction. We would all be a bit wet soon.

“Farryn,” I called for my sister. She walked over to my side.

“Yes, brother?”

“Take over. I need to step away.”

She raised an eyebrow, then shook her head. “That girl...”

I didn’t bother to respond. I closed my eyes and thought about the forest in front of me. The same forest I used to walk in with Disir by my side and the princess sitting on my shoulders. The air shifted around me and when I opened my eyes, I was standing between the trees, facing the direction of the palace. I turned around and saw the princess with her long wavy reddish brown hair down her back, crawl forward

towards the beach. Her head moving left and right as she searched for me.

Slowly, quietly, like a predator hunting its prey, I moved closer until she was nearly within my reach. I crouched down and grabbed her. With one arm around her waist and my other hand covering her mouth, I held her tight against me. She struggled and tried to break free of my grasp. She was strong, but I was stronger.

I lowered my mouth to her ear. “Do you think I would ever harm you, Yuna?” I released my hold on her. She whipped around to face me and looked me up and down several times, as if in disbelief that I was standing in front of her.

“King... King Gaelin?” The princes took a cautious step forward. She reached up and cupped the side of my face with her soft, warm hand and as she held it there, a tear slid down from the corner of her eye.

“Yuna...” I placed my hand on top of her head and looked into the golden eyes of the now very grown-up princess.

“You’ve returned?” She sniffed.

“Yes. Are you not ha—”

Yuna’s hand slid from my face. I stumbled back when she suddenly threw her arms around me. I ran my fingers through her hair as she sobbed. How many times had I thought of this moment? All my worries and anxiety about how she would feel about my return melted away as she cried and muttered nonsense against my chest.

I kissed the top of her head. “What are you doing out here alone, Yuna? Where are your guards?”

She wiped her nose on my coat and dried her eyes on my shirt. “Putting my lessons into practice.” She pointed at the clouds that were nearly on top of us.

“You did that?” I asked.

She nodded.

“That is not possible,” I told her. Guardians inherited their power from their mother. The same power was passed down from generation to generation. Some Guardians could manipulate water. Others could do the same with air. Some had power over land. Yuna’s mother, Guardian Queen Maketanoon, had the power to create and manipulate fire. It shouldn’t have been possible for Yuna to create a storm, unless...

I grabbed her by her shoulders and forcefully turned her around. I slid my fingers under the straps of her simple dress and pushed them down her arms quickly. It was when I moved her hair to the side that I saw what I had hoped not to; there were raised, curved lines near her spine.

***‘She is one of them,’*** the beast within me growled in disgust. ***‘She has transformed into one of those revolting creatures.’***

“Goddess?” I whispered as I traced the scars with a finger. The princess shuddered under my touch.

***‘Kill her.’***

*No,* I thought in response to the dark creature inside of me. A wild beast that fed off flesh. An immoral creature that could only be sated by violence.

***‘Then give her to me. Let me out and I will devour her. Flesh and bone,’*** he chuckled.

I took a step back from her as she pulled the straps back over her shoulders.

“You’re a goddess now?” I asked. Light rain began to fall upon us.

She nodded. “I wanted to tell you, but I still lack control over my wings. I wanted to wait until I mastered them before I wrote to you.” She folded her arms across her stomach and bit the corner of her bottom lip. “You do not seem pleased.”

I forced a smile. Her becoming a goddess changed things. During my many travels, I had come across many Guardians and goddesses. None of them could rid me of this cursed beast, and none could bring me peace. Not even a Goddess of Tranquility, which was their main ability; to bring peace and calm to those around them. No one made me feel like Yuna did. She brought me calm, and while she could not do anything about the beast inside me, Yuna did help quiet my mind. She gave me peace from the horrors of my past that still haunted me.

“You’ve evolved into a more powerful being. Was it not I who sent you the Master of the Sword? Did I not send you those of great renown in their field of study to educate you? A linguist, a navigator, a botanist... so many I have sent to you. Of course I am pleased, Yuna. I’ve always wanted what is best for you. To be knowledgeable. To be powerful.”

She smiled widely and hugged me again. The rain became heavier, soaking our hair and clothing. Her dress was beginning to cling to her body just as my hair began to cling to the back of my neck and the sides of my face. I pressed my fingers against my lips and whistled. It wasn’t long before I heard the sound of hooves pounding the wet ground. Calamity, my tall, stocky, black horse with black eyes, ran through the trees toward us.

“Let me take you home, princess.” I helped her up onto the horse and climbed on behind her. She relaxed back against me as I took hold of the reins.

# QUEEN MAKETANNOON

It was here, in the highest room of the taller tower, where I was most happy. Through the small round windows cut into the cream walls, I could look out at the realm I ruled over with my husband.

On the curved walls were specially made shelves holding books I had brought from the realms I had visited and small figures I made out of clay. My favorite creations were the winged horse and three-headed lizard.

The dark floor had spots of paint of various colors from the times I painted on canvases and linen tapestries. When I just wanted to read, I relaxed in my gray and white fur chaise. It was made from a Kyoti. A warm-blooded creature twice the size of a horse that stood on its hind legs. Its tail was thick at the base and tapered at its end and was covered in small poisonous spikes that could paralyze someone with just a single prick. My husband, King Astraston, killed one of them and gave its fur to me as a gift before asking me for my Consideration; a tradition similar to what mortals called courting, which could lead to a proposal and engagement.

King Astraston was a good man. A loving father and a wonderful husband. He was well respected. Known as “The Wise King”,

many came to him for guidance because our realm was peaceful and prosperous. We were the only realm known to be attacked by God King Gaelin and not fall into ruin or become part of his ever-growing kingdom.

Many royals thought my husband had somehow tamed the monster known as the God King of Chaos and Destruction. They were just as fooled as he was, for I knew that there was no taming that abomination. My husband indulged him. Taught him ways to rule with minimal bloodshed. He thought he was helping God King Gaelin become more civilized. He called him friend, considered him family. But could a man who used his power to keep someone alive while they were skinned and submerged in a tub of heavily salted water—a punishment for lying—be called civilized? He was a man who tore flesh from bone from his enemies and ate them. He was a savage with a sister known for bathing in blood and torturing people for her own amusement.

I absolutely abhorred that man with everything I was, but my daughter adored him. She, like so many others, was being fooled. Murderous, vicious beings like him were incapable of change and if they tried, it was only a matter of time before they returned to their old ways of blood and death.

When I passed by my window, I noticed something dark rushing towards my palace in the distance. I watched, and as it drew nearer, I saw my daughter on a black horse with God King Gaelin. It felt as if my heart stopped.

Ten years he'd been away. Now he had returned and already had my daughter in hand. They were always together when he visited Eera. No matter how hard I protested or threatened him, it was impossible

to separate them until that day at the fountain. I convinced him that because he still lacked control over the cursed being inside of him, he could have severely hurt Yunaesa. I reminded him of how important, how valuable she was to him and told him that if he truly cared for her and his own peace, he would return home. Thankfully, his sister was also there to remind him of his duties as a king. His kingdom was becoming unstable. His people thought he was becoming weak. They boldly decided to rise against him. Farryn was able to persuade her brother to return to Nefayre.

The slaughter of those who challenged the God King gave me time to find a way to save my daughter from being corrupted by this foul being. I had worked tirelessly to rid her of her rebellious nature, which was very much unlike our kind. She was spirited and stubborn. Yunaesa questioned everything, so much so that she was regularly admonished by her goddess and Guardian tutors during her lessons. Our kind were known to be calm, compassionate, and obedient to the laws of our goddess, Feyri. We put all of our trust in her and showed our appreciation for our power, her gift to us, by caring for all she created. While Yunaesa did enjoy being in nature and helping heal people of what ailed them, unlike other Guardians and goddesses, she sometimes seemed resentful of what she was.

However, a few years ago, I began to notice a change in her. She was reading more about our people and working towards improving her control over her powers. I was relieved that she had finally stopped fighting and accepted what she was. She was now of marrying age and a Goddess of Creation. Many mortals of royal blood sought her Consideration. God King Gaelin's return threatened everything.



I ran towards the door of my sanctuary and hurried down the stairs. Guards and servants were a blur as I quickly moved through the palace, only stopping when I reached the door of my husband's study. I turned the knob and pushed open the door to see him sitting behind his desk, looking over a letter. I slammed the door behind me. He didn't even flinch at the loud bang.

"You're angry," he said without looking up.

"Did you know?" I asked. "Did you know he was returning?"

He looked up from the letter and raised a brow. "Who?"

"God King Gaelin. Did you know?" I asked again.

A smile grew on his face. "Things must have gotten better in his kingdom. That is wonderful news!" He stood up from his chair and walked around his desk. "Do not make that face, Maketanoon. His return is a surprise to me as well."

"He has Yunaesa. That monster has our daughter!" I told him. He slid his glasses up into his messy, short hair, which was recently beginning to turn gray. He rubbed the sides of his temple and the skin on his forehead wrinkled.

"Ten years, Astraston. What do you think he wants?"

"Forgive me, I do not understand your fear or your anger." He reached for my hands. I swatted him away.

"I do not understand your calm. Just as I do not understand your trust in him. He built his kingdom on the blood and bones of those that refused to submit. He is immoral, carnal, and a violent brute."

"King Gaelin is our friend and ally."

"No, husband. He is not. Yes, he smiles and bows and shows himself to be friendly, but he is the son of King Maelstrom. God King Gaelin's reputation has exceeded that of his father and all of those that

have ruled Nefayre before him. How can you call that vile monstrosity a friend?”

“After all these years, after everything he has done for us, for our daughter...” He sighed. “What does he need to do to prove that he is not our enemy?”

# SIXTEEN YEARS AGO

The excited father-to-be, King Astraston, sat on the throne holding the hand of his beautiful wife, who sat beside him. Their happiness was contagious throughout the realm. When Guardian Queen Maketanoon became pregnant, her husband threw her a lavish party each month to celebrate the child growing inside her. Today, he surprised his six months pregnant wife with a new crown, necklace, and earrings made of a rare blue stone that softly glowed, looking otherworldly against her dark skin. Her gray eyes lit up and she could not help but smile at her husband's love and adoration. She reached over and playfully tousled his shaggy brownish red hair that framed his pale skin and green eyes. He placed a hand on her round stomach, and she placed a hand over his.

"I love you." The king leaned over and kissed her gently.

"I love—" The sound of horns interrupted the queen. Soldiers came running into the throne room.

"Get the king and queen to safety!" shouted one of the soldiers before being struck in the head by an arrow that broke through the window.

The throne room doors were slammed open. King Astraston drew his sword and stood defensively in front of his wife. Though powerful,

her pregnancy made it difficult to use her power to do anything but protect and grow the child within.

People screamed as men and women dressed in dark leathers, furs, and metal removed heads from bodies with their swords. An arrow flew into a woman's eye, and the man beside her cried out as a sword was plunged through his back. When he fell to his knees, the same sword cut through his neck. Blood spilled on the floor and splattered against the pure white walls as the people of Eera were killed without mercy.

The queen looked for her Guardian soldiers to help the mortals, but they were quickly outnumbered and outmaneuvered when they tried to make their way into the throne room.

A tall man with broad shoulders and short, dark ash gray hair walked through the open doors. His eyes were solid white. Blood was smeared on his face and dripped from his fingers. He walked slowly through the chaos towards the king and queen. A soldier, armed with only a bow and arrow, ran over and stood between his king and the intruder. The man smirked as the soldier aimed the arrow at him and shot. It spiraled toward the man's chest before being caught in the air and dropped to the ground. The man shrugged his shoulders, pulled a small ax from the belt on his waist and threw it at the soldier, who fell down dead with the blade embedded deep in his skull. Queen Maketanoon screamed.

"Who are you?" King Astraston demanded.

The man's lips twisted in disgust before turning into a smile. "God King Gaelin."

"What do you want?" the queen yelled.

God King Gaelin walked closer to them. King Astraston swung his sword. Avoiding the blade, the invading king grabbed the King of Eera by the wrist and squeezed it until the feeling of his bones snapping could be felt under his hand. The pain forced King Astraston to drop his sword. God King Gaelin threw the king to the floor. Though the queen's eyes swelled with tears, she stood there defiantly as he looked her over. The invading king then whistled. The fighting ceased. Everyone turned to look at the brutal king, who then reached his hand out to the queen's belly.

"No!" King Astraston yelled out, only to be kicked several times in the ribs by one of the God King's soldiers until he was spitting up blood.

The God King knelt down and placed his hands on the stomach of the trembling queen. "Say that again, little one." He closed his eyes and pressed his ear against Queen Maketanoon's stomach. Everyone in the room watched quietly in fearful curiosity. He chuckled. His eyes changed from white to silver blue. "What... calm..."

The queen looked over at her husband, who was still on his belly on the floor with a soldier's foot on his back.

"We are done here. Return to the ships," the God King demanded as he rose to his feet. He looked down at the queen's stomach. "I will return, little one. I promise." He looked at the queen and then at the king. "And I *always* keep my promises."

"What? What is...? Why...?" the queen stuttered.

"The little one has requested I return, and I shall do so. For now, I am done here." He turned and began walking away.

"You delay our deaths to return and steal my child?"

The God King walked over to King Astraston and waved away his soldier before helping the injured king up from the floor. “I will not be returning to kill you. I will be returning to see her.”

“What a waste to come all this way for so little,” complained a soldier. God King Gaelin calmly walked over to him, grabbed his chin, and ripped his bottom jaw from his face before tearing out his tongue and tossing it to the side. The soldier fell down to the floor, gurgling as blood spewed from his mouth. The queen turned her head and vomited as her husband staggered over to her side.

“My apologies, little one. His words meant nothing.” He looked back at the king and queen before leaving the throne room and the palace with his soldiers.

“Astraston? What...?” She wiped her mouth.

He shook his head. “I don’t know.”

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Forty-two days after King Gaelin’s assault on the realm of Eera, the God King returned with five ships full of soldiers. King Astraston went to the shore with an army of twelve hundred heavily armed soldiers behind him. King Gaelin levitated from the deck of his ship and descended onto the sand to greet the king.

“So, you have returned?” asked King Astraston.

“As I said I would.” God King Gaelin looked past the king at the army behind him and smiled. “I could defeat an army of this size alone.” He gave a toothy smile. “Tell me your name.”

“King Astraston of Eera. You are God King Gaelin, the God King of Chaos and Destruction. Son of King Maelstrom.”

“Ah, so you do know me?”

“I have done my research.”

“Well, unlike my father, I am a man of my word. I am not here to fight.”

“Do you think I would let you take away my child?”

God King Gaelin raised an eyebrow. “What good father would allow such a thing? Has the queen given birth?” King Astraston did not respond. The God King shrugged. “I can always go and find out for myself.”

“What do you want?” King Astraston said as he stared at the men and women looking down over the rails of the ships.

“To rebuild.” God King Gaelin whistled. Soldiers walked off of the ships carrying tools and lumber. Some held bags of grain in their hands. Others had baskets of fruits or dead animals over their shoulders.

“You expect me to trust you?”

“Yes.”

King Astraston shook his head and stroked his chin. “Why are you doing this?”

“For her. For the princess.” Seeing the king’s hesitation, God King Gaelin suggested that they go where they could speak alone.

“My palace,” King Astraston demanded, “but your people stay here.”

God King Gaelin chuckled at that courage this king possessed and turned to address his soldiers. “Stay here. Keep your swords sheathed. I will return soon.”

King Astraston turned to his soldiers. “Remain here and maintain peace.” He looked back at the king. “Do you have a horse?”

God King Gaelin whistled again. His large black horse ran upon the deck of the ship, then down the ramp to his master. He mounted the horse and followed King Astraston to the palace. Startled servants froze in fear as the two kings walked by them and entered King Astraston's study.

"What do you want with my child?" King Astraston closed the door behind them and went to stand in front of the large window behind his desk.

God King Gaelin sat in one of the chairs in front of King Astraston's long wooden desk. "Do you know how many Guardians and goddesses I have killed?" A smile crept across his face. "Thirty-eight. Thirty-one Guardians and seven goddesses."

"You plan to kill my child?"

"No. I want her to kill me."



# THANK YOU!

Thank you for reading my debut dark fantasy romance novel. I truly loved writing this story. Would you believe I wrote this story before, a long time ago in 2014 and it was horrifyingly bad? How bad? King Gaelin name was King Night and it was about angel human hybrids and demon human hybrids. Booooooring... Though I kept some elements of that story, I changed it quite a bit. So...

What if it were all real?

That was the first question I asked myself. What if all the gods, goddesses and mystical creatures we call myths and legends today were actually real? And what if Earth became an overpopulated chaotic place causing a war between the gods? And what if many of those gods left Earth to create worlds of their own, taking most if not all of their believers with them along with their creations such as mermaids and dragons, and the stories and drawings we have today were what really existed? What would those gods be like? Those doors to nowhere carved in stone, what if those were the portals the gods left for their devoted to leave through and now they're sealed shut?

As someone who watched Xena and Hercules when I was younger and was, and well, still am a history lover, I was inspired by gods who were slightly flawed and somewhat human. What if the gods who ruled in this new world were not omnipresent and omniscient? What if they had to travel and live among their own creation instead of always watching over them from far away? What human habits would they pick up?

I knew that I didn't want to write a love story. I wanted to write a story around the question of, what if love didn't conquer all? No true love's kiss. No soulmates. None of that. What if love just screwed everything up and ruined everyone's life? What if it corrupted all that was beautiful and innocent? What would happen to someone who was cursed and found peace in the strangest of places? Can curses, like power, be passed down through generations? Can a childhood crush turn deadly? What is life if what you are doing isn't all of your own will?

So many questions, I can't even list them all, or this would be a short story itself! But I wrote this series based on many questions as well as wanting something a little different. I wanted a world where monogamy, polyamory and polygamy were normal as was bisexuality and nudity. As trendy as Fae currently are, I wanted a story about gods and demigods. I wanted to write a dark fantasy and I wanted it to show serious consequences because there is something really amazing about diving into the mindset of a character when they know they are doing something wrong, and they are called out for it but it's not within their power to stop. I also wanted to play with a childhood favorite of mine, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. And I wanted to write a book with some serious mind fuckery or maybe better said as, brainwashing. Hi Yuna!

I love a good curse, but I wanted to do something a bit more grounded. I didn't want something that could be solved with love or a kiss or with a journey to a mystical place to find some ancient trinket or spell book. I wanted something hard to fix and what is worse than being cursed to suffer the sins of a parent by having to walk their destructive path? Not only that but having a pure and innocent relationship become corrupted and having that one person you really care about suffer the same curse too.

After I wrote my book, I walked away for a few months and reread it with fresh eyes and saw that this series explores the consequences of a parent's "good" intentions, awful family dynamics, abuse, the cycle of abuse and its effects and Stockholm syndrome. This became a story about how so many lives were ruined because two people fell in love with one another and it went really, really bad. There are no heroes, no heroines and no truly moralistically good characters. The "villain" doesn't even want the girl he's forced to be with. He just wants a peaceful death, but the gods had other plans.

I know that some people will enjoy this book. Some will use it to start a conversation about real life, relatability, and such. I am also aware that this series may make some people uncomfortable. I think dark fantasy should be uncomfortable at times as well as a bit disturbing and not all about death and gore. I hope this book makes people feel something.

Seriously, I am completely in love with this series! Totally in love with my characters! I wasn't going to call it a Dark Fantasy Romance because I wouldn't call this romantic but with the couples in this series, I am curious to see what pairing people really enjoy because there is love here.

Book two, *The Beast and His Little Bird* will be out soon and I'm several chapters into book three. I'm really awful with social media, because I much prefer to be writing, but check out my website and Instagram for updates! Thank you again for reading and remembering that **this is a work of fiction**. No people or animals were hurt in the writing of this series, but I did lose sleep and ate way too many Twizzlers.

Thank you for buying from indie writers like myself. Not only are you supporting an independent artist, you are also supporting the amazing freelancers that have done stellar work in helping me publish this series. I couldn't have done this without them and I am very appreciative of their hard work.

See you in the next book!

Wynter Ryot

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