

73. Blood Ties

AZRAEL

I was turning away when I heard Morgana shout, I looked back sharply as I sat upon my horse, staring through Olen's Arch. I knew Morgana no matter what she wore or if her face was covered. She always held the grace and power of an Araton Royal; the way she held her swords, the way she fought and the way she struck down her enemies. She was one of the finest swordsmen of our kind.

She was doubled over, gripping her waist as she fought off a Fae. Jaylen, the dick I was talking to and one of the four fae princes, raised his hand, motioning for them to storm through the arch that no longer stood where it once did.

Morgana...

"Your majesty, We need to go!" One of my men called out to me.

I hesitated, staring back through the arch. I turned away, my heart racing as a memory from long ago flashed in my mind.

(FLASHBACK)

"Brother! Brother, look what I caught!"

I glared down at my little sister. She was almost ten now, and although she was still just a fledgling, her talents were beginning to show through.

"What is it, Morgana?" I asked, irritated.

I hated how everyone always compared her to me at that age. It was irritating.

She smiled brightly, a smile far too innocent for this world, as she held up the butterfly she had caught.

"Useless, go make more use of your time!" I scolded, walking away.

She didn't reply, un-phased as she ran alongside me, letting the butterfly free.

"Brother, weren't you happy I caught a butterfly?" She asked, her large eyes full of sadness.

"No! It's stupid and useless! If you want to impress me, then go and learn to bear arms!" I stormed away, hating her irritating behaviour, but her vexing reply followed me.

"Ok brother! I'll become the best bearer of arms in the kingdom and make you proud!"

(END OF FLASHBACK)

I pulled at the reins of my horse as I broke into a trot, putting distance between me and the fae, but with each passing moment, my stomach knotted uncomfortably and my hesitation grew.

She may have forgotten it, but the child in her always strived to please me... She had once looked up to me... Yet...

"Your majesty, what is it?"

She had surpassed me without even realising it, and slowly, she stopped looking for approval from me. What approval was I to give when she was more admired in the court than I?

"Your majesty?"

I frowned realising I had stopped moving, all my life I took the easy way out... I knew I would never be known as the greatest king of our time... I never did anything to be remembered for... by anyone.

My brows knitted together, I stared at my gauntleted hands.

Then perhaps my sister may remember me...

"We turn!" I said suddenly, looking up through the blizzard of snow that whipped around us.

My men stopped, looking surprised, but to my utter shock, several of them smiled and nodded.

"We fight alongside our allies, Clair De Lune. You fight for your king, for your people and for your princess! The Queen of Clair De Lune! To war!"

As one, we all turned, raising our swords and galloping back down the hill, meeting the fae army with a clash. I raced through, slaying Fae as I went. My aim was not the Fae but to reach Morgana.

She looked up, her eyes showing through her veil and wide with shock. I smirked as I pulled on my reins, bringing my horse to an abrupt stop in front of her.

"You really are too foolish, sister!" I scoffed, "Can't even hold your own in battle."

MORGANA

My heart was hammering as the pain faded away, Kian had gotten injured but Reuban told me he was ok. I returned to focusing on the throng of Fae attacking as I moved west. The thickest of the Fae army were attacking the centre flank, which was led by Kian.

I glanced off into the distance, watching wolves fighting Fae... I could see Kian, the biggest of them all, his dark grey fur standing out as he tore through the army.

I cut down another fae, glancing around my own area. The fae were still strong, and thanks to them bringing down Olen's arch, the barrier between us was gone. I realised Reuban was the only one not shifting, I knew it was to keep me in the loop since I didn't have the mind link like the rest.

But the most shocking thing was when Azrael came galloping towards me, his army right behind him as they fought the fae.

"You really are too foolish, sister! Can't even hold your own in battle." He mocked as he sliced two Fae's heads off in one go, his black hair flicking in his eyes and the jewels in his crown-like helmet glittering.

My heart thrummed as I stared at him, an influx of emotions hitting me, unable to comprehend what was happening. I simply smiled, this was a miracle of the gods, yet I won't complain. With the vampire army on our side, we would surely win this.

The ground trembled and my horse neighed in panic as large cracks began tearing through the earth.

"Earth Fae! Abandon your horses!" Azrael shouted.

I jumped off my own horse, watching the animal fall into the bottomless pit. Unlike us, they weren't as lithe.

Blood. Screams. Loss.

In every direction it was all I saw; Fae clashing against Vampire, Elf and Werewolf... There was no longer any flanks, the trembling earth beneath us was causing havoc and disruption, everyone was fighting for their own survival.

"Luna, fall back, Alpha's orders!" Reuban shouted from somewhere far off.

"Ok!" I shouted, about to turn when I felt a powerful aura behind me. My heart skipped a beat, raising my hand just in time as the man I had seen Azrael talking to earlier sent a storm of ice shards at me. They hit my force-field with such impact that I was thrown back, gasping as I fell and rolled into the thick of the fae. My back was hitting something hard. Pain lashing through it, fuck...

"LUNA!"

"I'm fine!" I shouted, I didn't need Kian to worry. I...

The trickle of blood down my back told me my armour had been pierced. I groaned as I rolled onto all fours, realising I had fallen on some sort of axe that had been upended in the snow.

"The queen..." The Fae man murmured, his platinum blond hair falling into his dangerous yet beautiful face.

Shit... he knew who I was.

"Kill the queen... kill the king." He said quietly, a small smile crept across his face...

Fuck...

I got to my feet but the pain in my back wasn't helping. I could feel Kian's emotions, his panic and fear. I tried to calm myself down, hoping he thought I was ok.

"Why do you hate us so much? What is your purpose behind this war?" I asked, readying myself.

Scanning the ground, I had dropped my swords somewhere and I couldn't see them.

"The world is ours." He said, and with that, he sent a strong blast of shards of ice at me.

I raised a force-field, but his powers were far too strong. Fuck!

I was forced back, another fae attacked from my left and I lost concentration, stumbling back just as my vision blurred slightly.

Clair De Lune, the kingdom at the heart... The one with the most prosperity... Claim it and the world is yours... I remember those words from long ago. So, it's all greed for more power....

I grabbed a discarded sword from a fallen Fae, blocking another attack as their leader advanced.

"Long may his reign last." He whispered, mockingly raising a sword that looked as if it was made of pure ice.

"Jaylen!" Azrael shouted, I took the moment to swing a kick at his ankles.

I struggled to my feet as he jumped back. The fae's eyes darkened, the energy around him growing as he faced off with Azrael. I raised my sword, blocking another fae who was trying to attack Azrael from behind. 2

I glanced around. I could see a few wolves, the odd elf, and one or two vampires, but we were a little too in the thick of the fae and the ground was far too unstable.

I spun around, turning my back towards Azrael's. Back to back... Who would have thought that one day my childhood dream of fighting alongside him would come true? A dream I long gave up on as I grew up and our relationship changed so much. Yet unlike my fantasy of the glamour of war, the reality was different. There was nothing magical about it, survival and victory were all that was on my mind.

We fought in sync despite never ever doing this before, but... He was the first ever man that I ever watched, I used to hide behind the pillars or up on the balcony watching him train... back when he was the brother I so admired.

I had forgotten...

A smile graced my lips as I plunged my sword into a fae, but he grabbed the blade, yanking me forward. Tendrils of fire surged up the sword, wrapping around my arms and making me gasp as the flames burned my skin.

"Morgana!" Azrael shouted as I tried to rip free futilely.

Another fae took the chance to attack, I blocked with a blast of my own power, but there were far too many...

"She will die and with her, the Alpha King!" Jaylen hissed, raising his hands as he sent another wave of thick, sharp ice shards towards me.

Kian... no! I...

I closed my eyes, struggling to get out of the way, but it was pointless...

I flinched when the sound of the shards impaling flesh filled in my ears. But... My eyes flew open as I stared at Azrael's back, five of them piercing through his body.

He protected me...

"I may not be an ideal king, but I am still one of the finest swordsmen!" Azrael grunted, raising his sword as he plunged it straight into Jaylen's chest, before pulling his sword free and killing the Fae.

My heart was ringing in my ears as Azrael fell to his knees.

"Azrael!" I cried, dragging free and slicing off another Fae's head as I caught my brother before those shards went right through him. "You... Why?!"

"I don't know myself." Came his haughty reply, making my heart clench.

"You cannot do this!" I shouted, my voice breaking, "You hate me... So why?" A broken sob left my lips as I slapped his shoulder lightly.

My hands trembled as I clutched his head. I half knelt, tears stinging my eyes.

"I know." He grunted, his breath heavy.

He can't die unless, his heart has to be ok!

I stared at the stake of ice that was embedded straight into his heart... My stomach twisting.

"You..." Our eyes met and he reached up, tugging my veil off.

Sadness and regret were clear in his eyes.

"I was never a good brother, nor a good king or husband... Tell Anastasia that I love her and... raise my son to be a fine king, that at least the world knows the son of Azrael was a worthy man."

"Azrael don't... I..." I hated this. No, don't die, I don't like you but you're still my brother, I still love you.

"You are strong, sister... and the world needs Morgana Araton more than Azrael Araton... I love you ... as much as I hate you.... I do...."

His eyes fluttered shut and I didn't even realise the scream that pierced the sky was mine as I clutched his head to my chest. Not like this, please not like this...

He was gone. The passing of another of my family members... Gone... I closed my eyes and for a moment, everything was quiet. He died for me...

Anger surged inside of me and I felt a wave of power flare inside. I slowly placed his head down on the ground, picking up his sword.

"For our king." I hissed, knowing that every vampire here would follow me.

Those who were close, turned, realising the loss of their king and looking to me, ready to fight and to die.

I turned, my eyes blazing, my heart thumping with rage and sorrow as I raised my sword, ready to kill.

71. Rivers Of Blood

KIAN

Bloodshed. In every direction, people were fighting. Bond after bond was snapped as I lost men, knowing that with it their mates would soon die too.

I ripped through a Fae, we were winning but... We needed to defeat the commanders, the four Fae princes, because we were still losing far too many.

I was battling one of them right now, growling as I ripped his arm off before my claws sank into his body, tearing him to pieces. The sun was beginning to rise in the sky and morning was close.

Pain suddenly shot through my back and my heart pounded.

'Morgana! Where is she?! She's hurt!' I shouted through the link to Reuban, trying to control the fear that filled me.

'I'm getting to her! Her brother's joined the battle, Alpha! He killed one of the four commanders! The Ice Prince!'

I was shocked that he actually did... For Azrael to turn around, that was no small feat. 1

'I'm trying to get to her! She's back up! Her brother is-'

'Reuban? Reuban? Fuck! What is it!?'

'The Vampire King's dead, Alpha. He died shielding the Luna.' He sounded shocked.

My stomach lurched, Morgana. If her brother hadn't protected her... would I have lost her?

'Get her to me!' I growled. I had placed her at the arch, thinking the enemy was slightly thinner through there, but clearly, they had been able to break through in masses.

'Yes, Alpha!' Reuban replied just as I saw Luca being thrown to the ground in his wolf form.

'Luca! Behind you!' I shouted, but he wasn't moving.

Worry for my closest friend consumed me. I leapt over the bodies of Fae, werewolves and elves all mixed together. Dawn was approaching, yet the rivers of blood were still flowing.

I was so close to Luca when a fae drove their sword through him, just as he shifted back. A vicious growl of rage left my mouth as I ripped the Fae's head off, feeling another link snap within me...

Luca...

I shifted back myself, looking down at the body of someone who had been important to me.

Fuck... no!

I dropped to my knees, my heart thundering, feeling another few bonds snap away. Maybe it wasn't him, maybe-

'He's gone Kian.' Thanatos said quietly as I stared at the lifeless body before me.

No heartbeat...

"No... Fuck..."

I took a deep breath, exhaling slowly as I stared into the eyes of someone I considered my best friend. One who would never speak to me again... I closed his eyes, knowing I'll never see them again.

There was no goodbye... Fuck...

I got up, my eyes blazing as I assessed the situation. Orrian had killed one of the princes, as had I, and Azrael. Then there was one left. Where was he?

I scanned the area, my men keeping the Fae away as I realised that he may be in the back flanks... The fire fae was the strongest of the four... The future king of the Fae...

I was about to shift back into my wolf form, frowning as my attention was drawn to one of my men, who was fighting clumsily. Was he injured? He hadn't shifted at all and unlike most of my warriors, he had remained in human form. From his build, it was clear he was young. Who the fuck was he? I couldn't pick up a scent. The smell of blood, dirt and charred skin was strong in my nose.

"Fall back!" I growled. He was just going to die at this rate.

He didn't respond, and I realised that through the battle this boy had remained by my side. I frowned, trying to focus on his scent, but... nothing.

From the corner of my eyes, I saw another fae rush towards me and I turned, tearing them to pieces. Another four ran towards me, I managed to kill two, grabbing another, but the fourth... I tried to turn, sensing him coming from behind, when I heard a strangled gasp from behind me. I killed the fae in my hold, spinning around before his body even hit the ground.

That voice... I glanced towards the boy in shock, seeing him stagger back, a stake of wood buried in his chest. In a flash, I tore the Fae's head off, turning to the warrior who fell back and hit the floor.

I bent down, pulling their helmet off, my heart thrumming as I looked down at the full head of brown hair.

"Sage..."

Her eyes fluttered open, tears trickling out of the corners of them.

"Kian." She whispered. I looked down at the stake, wrapping my hand around it but I knew if I pulled it out... she would still die...

"Sage... What the fuck are you doing here?" I asked, my heart thudding, guilt and worry filling me.

"I wanted to be by your side." She whispered, coughing up blood.

Fuck. I was the reason she was here...

"You aren't a warrior!" I growled.

There was nothing I could do for her...

She smiled weakly, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"If I was to die... I wanted it to be for you... I love you, Kian... I really do."

She gasped, her eyes widening, her body stiffening before she became limp, the light fading from her hazel eyes. I closed my eyes, feeling the pain of her loss rip through me.

I had promised her a life of happiness... and then took it away. Making her give up her mate and ultimately, her life...

I closed her eyes and stood up, staring down at the woman before me. One more death...

I turned away, shifted and ran towards the fae. I needed to find the fire prince... He was said to be the strongest of his brothers, the most powerful...

I kept going, knowing many of my men were following, and it was then I saw him. He was dressed in dark maroon that looked almost black, his arms crossed, his flaming red hair in a high ponytail. His dark orange eyes met my own and a smirk crossed his lips.

"The Alpha King himself comes to me." He whispered and without him even moving a ball of flames rushed towards me. I ducked, rushing past and leaping over the other fae. With a menacing growl, I tried to reach him, but another blast of fire threw me back.

"The Werewolf race will fall." He said, advancing as he unsheathed the huge sword from his back.

I don't think so.

I snarled in rage, expressing my opinion as I padded towards him, letting my own aura roll off me. Our eyes locked as I lunged at him, blocking his hits. I tried to rip his head off but he was fast, moving with an agility that even his brother that I had killed, did not have.

He was at another level, his eyes fixed on me as we seemed to dance around any proper attack. I was fast enough to avoid his fire, yet his sword was dangerous and the long length of it didn't help. He managed to throw me back, it frustrated me that I wasn't able to get to him. The entire ground around us was burning with flames, burning the bodies of our dead as it spread.

I hissed when his sword sliced into my left flank, wanting to wipe that smirk off his face. I jumped, grabbing his sword in my teeth. As he summoned his firepower, I felt a light foot on my back, someone I recognised used me as leverage, flipping above me just as I was thrown back. My eyes widened as I saw none other than Morgana spin in the air, a long sword in hand that she now raised, throwing it down at the Fae prince in the exact manner she had attacked me long ago. I felt the surge of power she put behind it, making sure it reached her target in a flash.

It was almost as if it was in slow motion... Watching the Fae prince smirk as I hit the floor, clearly not having noticed the figure above him. The large ball of flame came blasting towards me just as Morgana's sword impaled his neck, only seconds before she landed. Grabbing the hilt of her sword, she spun around, slicing his head off in one clean sweep. Her helmet was gone, her hair was open, her face covered in blood and those eyes of hers blazing as she turned to stare at me. The flames rose high around her, and the rising sun illuminated her from behind making her look beyond beautiful.

71. Rivers Of Blood

A true warrior queen...

My queen.

Our eyes met, and she smiled victoriously.

We had won.