

## Chapter 4: Chapter Four

Everything is happening very quickly, and Charming keeps apologizing for it. I hug Cherie before we are split up to go our own ways. I keep praying he will not lead me into a drug-infested, sex trade operation. That didn't happen.

Peirce glances back towards me. "How are you doing?"

"I'm excited," I deadpan. I think I would be more enthused if I didn't draw to be a slave. It might be a very long three months.

He smiles back at me. "You are going to a new world, and that right there is worth it. Delorith, though infested with evil, is very beautiful."

I can't say anything to that.

Room after room into long white hallways, I stop questioning how all of this can fit into a New Orleans historic building. Somehow, I don't think we are in Kansas anymore. We arrive, our destination is a large room with a very bizarre contraption sitting in the middle of it. It reminds me of an alien space pod ready to beam me down to this crazy planet.

"Viola, this is your briefing room." He pauses and opens another door on the opposite wall. It sounds like a pressurized space door. An agent walks through, and it's the one who looks like Sailor Moon. "This is Mort, your guide to everything you need." He continues, "It's time for your preparation. Have a seat, please." He is carrying a huge stack of papers a foot thick. He slams the stack on the little metal desk in the corner of the room. "This is everything you need to know about Delorith and its people. It also contains relevant information about Apollo." He waves his hand in the air. "You know—his likes and dislikes, that type of thing. Blond, redhead, brunette... is he a happy drunk or aggressive one. Does he like his mother, and how many people has he killed, if any. Boxers or briefs? And, does he have any fetishes?"

I can't tell if he is serious, but I think he is. "That's a lot of information."

"Isn't, though," he smiles at me.

His mood seems borderline unstable.

Charming laughs, dusting something off his perfect white sleeve. "We don't have time for anything. That is all the information you do not get to read before we thrust you into a very dangerous place. You must rely heavily on Mort as your sole lifeline."

I glance to my agent, knowing I must confirm this, in case I miss heard. "Your name is Mort?"

Her big eyes narrow. "Where I'm from, it's a lovely name." She raises her small chin. "Ignorant human."

I nod and glance back at Charming's amused face, reminding my composure. "So, you're saying I'm screwed."

His face brightens. "Yes."

I stare at him.

"Moving on, we have thirty minutes to get you dressed and ready." He claps his hands, and the machine in the middle of the room comes to life with glowing pink and blue lights. "You will automatically speak their language, so no worries there. But you can die in this world, so you have to be very careful." He walks up to me and leans in very close to my face. He smells like Old Spice. I could almost hear the Old Spice jingle. "This is important, so pay attention. You have three lifelines. Let's say you're about to be killed by a wild animal, for example, you may use your lifeline, and you will immediately transport out of harm's way. If you forget to use it, you will be mauled and die. If you use all three of your lifelines, on the forth, you will be ejected from the world entirely. No ifs, and's, or buts. You're too much of a liability." He held up his hand, "Not my rules."

I swallow and nod. "How do I use a lifeline?" I should probably know that.

"Very easy. You say, Lifeline activate!" His gaze holds mirth.

"That's it?"

"It has to be simple, does it not?"

I thought about that. "Okay, let's say they capture me, and I say the lifeline, and I disappear. Won't that mess with sensibilities? Like, what the hell? She just disappeared. "

"Yes."

I stare at him, waiting for him to respond.

Really though, I'm about to punch him.

"Leave that to us. This is not our first rodeo, and you only use it if you're going to die. It is not permitted using a life-line in less than desirable of situations." He winks at me, then walks over to the machine, or alien-fairy-pod. He bent down like he was getting the thing to start with elaborate waves of his hand. "You are to be a slave, congratulations."

"That's horrible," I say, wondering what I'm missing. "What kind of slave? I am not going to do sexual stuff against my will." That is a deal-breaker.

Peirce glances at me and nods.

"Peirce?" I bit out.

"Yes."

"Elaborate."

"Of course, do you think I would send you without informing you details of your position?" He had the gall to look offended. "I read over your file, and it is fascinating."

Mort stepped forward. "I have read and confirmed a plan of action."

"Perfect Mort. You can get into details once arrived." He turns toward me.

"Your position is simple, except for the fact that you harbor a secret. The secret being you are the long-lost princess of Galleon. Now, here's the kicker. Laura is the current princess of Galleon and an imposter, not the true birthright princess, but you are. I love it when Fate creates drama!" He claps his hands. "Now, this does not mean Laura is evil; she is not to blame for this mix-up. It's Laura's deceitful mother. You were lost as a baby, and the title has passed to your cousin, Laura. This is a competition. No one will know of this deceit unless you bring it to light. Which will be a task because Laura must stop you from exposing her. It can get rather a cutthroat out there."

"Oh, perfect," I say, looking at them both in awe. "I'm not only a slave, but I have to expose my birthright in three months and make Apollo fall in love with me?" I'm breathing hard, about to lose my mind.

"Yes," he says and moves his hands around. "It's not just you with obstacles. Each player will have them and must overcome them. It makes for a much better journey, Laura's obstacle? She is not the birth-right princess. April? She is an outlaw. Destiny? Is a Galleon spy. Ivy? Must save her brother, who the Queen of Garthorn wants to kill. Cherie? Is promised to another prince from Mont Gallow."

My mouth hangs open. "I see."

"Enjoy this, it can get hard, but it will be an experience you will not forget." He studies me with a serious expression.

I nod.

"Alright, you can pick three things to change about yourself. Look over this book, and I will be back in thirty minutes. I must see to the other ladies." He left with me, slipping through all the different trails I could gain or change.

Mort sat down on the metal chair across the room and examined her pointy nails. The silence is painful as I stare at her, and I realize she is pretending to ignore me.

I cleared my throat. "Any pointers?"

She looks at me like she is put out. "Get a nose job."

"Really?"

This Mort character is delightful.

She glances at me for real this time and seems to assess me. "I get a bonus if we win," she says matter-of-factly, and without emotion. "Number one: a master at riding a horse, which always comes in handy, two: being in the best physical shape, which gives you a killer body. For a human, that is. Three: being a master at archery, you need a defense. It looks like your face is okay, and you have decent sized breasts, so no need to change any of that."

"You are very blunt."

"I will confirm that," she says without smiling.

"Is he a breast man or butt man?" I must ask.

"Very hard to say, I am unsure of that at this point." She stares at me.

Right.

Peirce finally returns and relieves us of our awkward conversation about how not to eat anything blue in this world. Especially if it has spots—severe intestine issues. Apparently, gas for weeks, a deal-breaker, according to Mort. I wanted to add that it might be a deal-breaker for anyone. Charming claps his hands and stops in front of the alien pod, hands on his hips. "Okay! Not all of the ladies took the details of their position as well as you, but that is to be expected."

I can only imagine how Laura reacted to the news that she is not the true princess. "I'm ready. Mort shared her expertise and some other...interesting facts."

"Perfect, come over here and step into the converter." He orders and smiles at me.

I do so, and I feel like a character in the movie Alien when they're in their sleep pods. The pod shuts around me, and I feel a wave of nerves. I hear a loud pressurized sound, and I can see electronic writing on the screen in front of me.

I hear Pierce's voice come through the speaker. "Alright, which is the first trait?"

I falter for a second. "Master horseback rider."

"Nice choice, and the second?"

"To be in perfect physical shape."

"Always a favorite." He says. "Lastly?"

"Master at archery."

"Very smart. Okay, just give me a second and if I can have you close your eyes and take a deep breath."

I didn't even have time to ask if it was going to hurt! Bright lights flash before my eyes and my body feels hot and cold at the same time. I think I screamed but I can't be sure. I let out a loud gasp when I hear loud ringing and pink lights blinking and breathing. Right before I panic everything starts to power down, leaving me breathless. I feel dizzy. My skin is tingly and weirdly hot. The pod opens, and I walk out on shaky knees, Pierce grabbing my arm for support.

"I forgot to tell you that this process can cause dizziness and hot flashes." He grins at me and looks me over. "Very nice indeed, here's a mirror."

As I try to get my muddled thought together—did Peirce just check me out? I look down at my body, and I notice I am tone in all the right places, and my skin is so smooth and blemishless. I glance in a mirror that was placed in front of me and, Holy Mother of Mary! I look amazing. No need for foundation. My skin is gorgeous and flawless. "My skin?!"

Peirce nods and beams at me. "Airbrushed is a Fairy Godmother given, a freebee. It's in your contract, didn't you read it?" he laughs. "Here at FGI, we mean business."

I stare at him, this guy.

He's teasing me.

"I feel like this is cheating, no one looks this good in real life," I say breathlessly.

"Excuse me?" he says and tilts his head. "Honey, this is the Fairy Godmother Inc. We go big, or we go home. We can do whatever the hell we want because we can. Enjoy it. Your look stunning," he says and leans a hip in the desk. "Men are defenseless against our agents. We only need three months to complete FGI missions. And, that is not arrogance, it's just fact."

Mort snorts. "Yes. You look way better than before."

I shoot her a look.

I think she just insulted me.

"Ok, now spin, we are 5 minutes out!"

"5 minutes?!"

"You both are slaves that were recently on a merchant ship carrying silks that sunk. The ship was overtaken and destroyed by pirates. You are traveling to the Kingdom of Garthorn, where you are employed. You both obviously survived. Apollo's ship will intersect with your raft, saving you," he says quickly.

"Raft?"

"Mort will give you more details when you're there. Don't worry. You will be just fine, now spin." He places his hand on my shoulder.

"Spin?" I sound panicky even to my ears. I'm not sure if I'm ready for this, it's happening too fast!

"Yes, my favorite part, your dress!" He motions me to spin. "Where do you think Cinderella got her dress?" He continues, "Fairy Godmother?" No, it was my design. I design all the clothing here at Fairy Godmother Inc.," He beams. "Now spin."

I start to spin, wondering how cute a slave's outfit could be. My body starts to tingle, and I inhale as a flash of white light blinds me. I look up into the mirror, and I am wearing a provocative ship-wrecked, deep purple gown. A ragged slit exposes my thigh, and my bust-line is ripped, exposing my corset. Scandalous, to say the least. The corset seems to push my breasts high, making them very tantalizing if I must comment on them. "A slave wears this?" I ask, my heart pounding.

"No, but a ship-wrecked one does. The actual slave gown is very modest and covers everything, including the face. So, this is your chance to catch his attention, which is why I placed you in this particular situation." He turns to Mort. "You will be a very plain looking slave, nothing to draw attention. Ms. Flipper."

"You got it."

In one second, Mort is this cute little Sailor Moon creature, and the next moment she is a very non-descriptive woman. Mousy brown hair and plain features. Clothes ripped in all the wrong places.

"Whoa," I say.

Peirce touches his earpiece. "Yes, we are a minute out, yes I'm aware you idiot!" He nods and looks at me. "Your name is Ms. Viola Luna Stark under the Kingdom of Garthorn. You will be Ms. Stark, a sector 5 slave, which is high up, and I am ladies' maid or housekeeper. Here is your proof that you are a citizen and like a employ."

He hands me a bronze necklace with a falcon on it and shows me the tattoo on my wrist that I didn't see before. It's a strange symbol that I can identify, a G with weird inscriptions.

"That is the mark of your employment at the Garthorn Castle."

"Okay," I say meekly.

"Ready, and FIVE, FOUR—"

"I am not ready!" I panic.

OH NO.

"TWO, ONE!"

Blackness overcomes me.