

Chapter Two

Mysta jerked awake. Her eyes refused to focus. Fear forced her to flail, fight for freedom. He held her down. She fought harder, but could not break free. Wanted to scream, but only garbled sounds would come. Her throat hurt so badly.

“Mysta, Mysta, you’re in the emergency room. You’re safe. I’m Doctor Cho. You were attacked. Do you remember?”

Her heart drummed as she worked to unscramble her memories. She stilled, unable to answer.

“Blink once for yes, twice for no.”

She blinked once, released a tear.

“Good. You’re going to feel something through your IV. It will help you relax.”

Cold rushed her blood stream. The flash of pictures being taken startled her. The doctor dictated her injuries.

“Emergency tracheotomy performed on scene to open airway due to swelling of the throat caused by cartilage fractures. Hyoid bone intact. Bruises and abrasions to both sides of the neck, jaw and collarbone. Capillary ruptures in both eyes, petechiae to right frontal region, under eyelids, on scalp and neck, indicative of a hard struggle. And finally, blunt trauma to the back of the skull resulting in a slight concussion. We are preparing to go in and repair several fractures to her larynx.”

Mysta heard another male voice ask the doctor if she’d been raped. Frozen, she waited for his reply.

“Rape kit incomplete. But now that she’s awake, we can proceed with her permission.”

A female nurse followed by a female cop came into view, explained everything. Mysta blinked her compliance, released more tears as she did. They wouldn’t stop. If she had been raped, she was glad she couldn’t remember.

Mysta

Finally, they removed the confines. The room cleared. She lay still as her fingernails were scraped for evidence, just the beginning of a long, embarrassing process. The kit seemed to take hours to complete. They found plenty of DNA evidence under her fingernails to help prove who had attacked her, but no sign she had been raped.

When she heard the news, she sighed, drifted into nothingness.

Floating on a cloud, spear sheathed at her side, the assassin caught her eye. She prodded her horse, streaked across the sky. The villain targeted the Commander, of course. Sigvarðr was her charge now, and by Odin, she would keep him alive! She'd never protected life before.

No, normally she dealt in death.

He battled skillfully, fighting two swordsmen who'd cut him off from the rest of his unit. Metal clanged with the intense struggle. The assassin snuck along the tree line for an attack with bow and arrow—the tip no doubt poisoned, ensuring its target would die regardless of point of entry.

Hiding in the fog of the forest, she snuck up on him. Liquid particles swirled. She materialized on her steed. Shock contorted his features. With her spear she ripped the long bow from his hands, plunged her weapon into his body, twisted, plucked his heart from within.

He wavered, fell lifeless to the forest floor.

She flicked the organ to the ground where lay the body of the coward who'd tried to kill her charge. His soul she cast into the Underworld.

A glimpse found the Commander watching. His enemies lay in a bloody heap at his feet. He gave a slight nod in thanks for her intervention. She returned the gesture from atop her horse, rode away, disappeared into the clouds.

The vapors turned dark and stormy. The wind whipped her long hair about her face. Her steed reared, tossed her to the ground. Brett appeared above her. She scrambled, but he fisted

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his hands in her hair, held her immobile. Her gown ripped from her body. She screamed, fought, but he pinned her down.

“You’re mine, bitch,” he growled against her ear.

She sat straight in bed, hissed in a breath past her sore throat, winced from the pain. Nervous as a cat in a room full of rocking chairs, she tried to remember where she was.

Hospital.

Dream.

Only a dream. Eyes clenched shut, she shuddered from the vivid memory, rubbed her eyes.

“How are you feeling?”

Her head turned toward the familiar tone, relaxed against the mattress when she found the head of security from her apartment building in the only chair in the room.

“Throat hurts.”

“I’m so sorry, Mysta. This is all my fault.” He rose, ambled to her side.

“What are you talking about?” she rasped.

“The new guard.” He squeezed her hand. “Two hundred measly dollars bought him.” He shook his head, face creased in agony. “I left him alone to check another unit’s control panel. Had I not interrupted him counting the money, I would’ve never been suspicious and checked surveillance to see he’d let Stanley in. He’s been fired, I assure you.”

Regret reflected in his eyes. “But you did check, and you can’t control what someone else does,” she whispered.

The door opened. A nurse entered, set a pitcher on the table, then checked vitals.

“How are you feeling? Your heart rate is a little high.”

“Bad dream,” Mysta whispered, worked to calm herself.

The nurse nodded. “After what happened, that’s to be expected. But you’re doing so well! There’s water in the pitcher, so drink plenty. That’s the key. You’re due for pain medication.”

Mysta declined. It could be the pain meds making her dream this crazy shit.

Mysta

The nurse shrugged. “Most of my patients can’t wait for the goods. The doctor said you can have a soft diet. Breakfast should be here soon.” She straightened the blankets, checked the IV.

“What happened?” Mysta whispered, flinched when she swallowed. “I don’t remember how I got here.”

“You remember the attack?” the guard asked.

Mysta nodded.

“Good. The police will be here later to interview you.”

The nurse added, “You were unconscious when they brought you in. This man here performed an emergency tracheotomy, got there just in time. Lucky for you he was a medic in Vietnam.”

She took his hand, held it to her cheek. “Thank you so much for saving me. But did they catch Brett?”

“He’s been arrested, arraigned and already made bail. That’s why I’m here,” he said. “Your grandmother wanted 24/7 security, so 24/7 security you’ll get. I’ll be outside the door if you need anything.” He kissed her forehead, strode out. The nurse followed.

Mysta drew her knees to her chest, rested her forehead against them. She’d been packing for a visit to her grandmother’s when Brett showed. The man had almost killed her, and they’d let him out of jail on bond. She shuddered to think he was on the loose.

The door opened, the attendant called, “Breakfast!” set down the tray.

“Thank you,” she rasped, grateful for the interruption from her wretched thoughts, reached to remove the cover from the plate.

Her hand went right through.

Gulp.

Palms held before her eyes, she stared in amazement.

Fog radiated from her fingers.

It groaned with lust and longing as her power intensified. Once a demi-god with the ability to shift from human to snake or dragon of its choosing, she’d deprived it of its rightful legacy, caused him to be cast into this dismal, dank place. Now she

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would redeem herself or die. Soon the plan would be implemented, and Ormer would rule the world.

It shivered in anticipation.