

# The Alpha's Harem

## Chapter 1. The Onyx Throne

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"I need to see the High King!" The woman slammed her fists on the iron palace gates. The rain fell like a heavy wall, turning cobblestones into a glistening mosaic. "It's urgent!" "Go away!" The guard yelled, peering at her drenched, tiny form through the small window. Her footwear and the edges of her dress were caked in mud, the worn coat appearing even more dismal as her dark hair hung in lifeless, damp strands. "It's important!" She pleaded, but the guard closed the window, indicating that she would either have to sleep right here in the dirt or leave. The latter wasn't an option, so she began slamming her fists over the heavy metal until her knuckles bled. "The King would want to see me!" That was an overstatement, of course. Cerese did not know that. In fact, she could have died tonight meeting the notorious Shahanshah, but it was better to die trying to save her sister than to do nothing at all. To her surprise, the tiny window opened again and a set of bright blue eyes flashed in the darkness, warning her that each word could be her last. No one dared to arrive here like this. No one dared to summon the High King. Even if someone had, they likely would have never to be seen alive again. "Who dares to bother the palace guards at this hour?" The man asked, his tone laced with mockery. "Wishing to die? Turn around and walk away while you still can!" Cerese felt like this was the defining moment, so she straightened her back and tried to arrange her wet hair to look a little more presentable, to no avail. "Let me in," she urged, her voice steady despite the storm. "I need to see the Shahanshah. I am the oldest daughter of the Viceroy of the Nytherys, Conradion Sorensen." The guard let out a hearty laugh. "So?" Well, she had hoped her father's name would produce more of an effect than that. "My sister was taken to the King's harem," for the first time her voice trembled. "But it's a mistake." "Oh, really?" The blue-eyed guard chuckled. "The Shahanshah makes no mistakes!" It took all her willpower not to reply to that. The tyrant King who drowned their kingdom in blood was making plenty of mistakes in her humble opinion, but it was neither the time nor place to share that. The tiny window closed again and she thought that this was it. Cerese leaned her back over the gates and slid down to the ground, covering her face with her hands. Elowen would not be able to survive here. Her little sister had barely turned eighteen when she was taken. That sweet gentle child could not serve the High King, notorious for his cruelty. She could not

navigate the harem, where each woman was ready to kill their rivals. Elowen loved to sing and play the violin. These two talents weren't enough to make it in this place and each time Cerese thought of that, her fists clenched. Her stepmother shouldn't have cheated the system to send Elowen here instead of her, the firstborn child of the Viceroy. That nasty woman wanted to get rid of them both, but Elowen took the priority since now that she was eighteen, the local nobleman's son who was madly in love with her could finally propose. Sadly, the stepmother wanted this marriage for her own daughter, Elyssa, so Elowen had to go. The gates opened so suddenly that Cerese lost her balance and plummeted to the wet ground, landing right at the feet of the blue-eyed guard. His eyes shone like two blue galaxies with threads of violet. Great. Just great. Now she looked even dirtier and less presentable than before which was hard to manage to begin with. "Ouch," he commented calmly, not bothering to help and waiting for her to get up on her own. Cerese did not waste this opportunity, hoping that the heavy rain would wash some of the dirt away. "I—" "Daughter of the Viceroy blah-blah." He rolled his eyes. "I know. Serasker Jahn Voltamlar. Follow me." This was the Serasker? The High King's second in command? She gasped, studying him closer. The tall man was undeniably attractive, with the sides of his head cleanly shaven and tattooed with ancient runes, while the middle section was intricately braided, giving him the defined warrior look the King's men were famous for. He smirked at her, revealing two dimples on his cheeks and gestured for her to follow him. Fortunately, Cerese did not have to be asked twice. To her surprise, he led her straight into the palace, where ancient white marbled floors sparkled and her dirty boots were leaving muddy footprints. She wished it could have been different, that she could have been more presentable, alluring even to impress the Shah, but at least she had a chance now. However, passing a tall mirror on the wall, she cringed at her own reflection. This was not the look needed for seduction. Still, she unbuttoned her coat, hoping to reveal her cleavage to up her chances. This wasn't even her gown; it belonged to her stepmother, meaning she couldn't adequately fill the bralette cups, yet she still yanked the fabric down to expose what little she did have. The notion did not escape the Serasker, a little chuckle rumbling through his chest. A few servants passed them, their eyes widening as they saw her, which only caused Cerese to raise her chin higher. This was no time to show weakness. Soon, they entered a spacious hall that breathed luxury. Their small castle on the Nytherys islands had nothing to rival this place. Moonlight spilt through tall arched windows, caught in gauzy silks that turned it to molten silver. Below, polished marble gleamed, broken only by velvet divans strewn with jewel-coloured cushions and low tables inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Above were balconies curved along the second floor like a crown, their latticed railings so intricate that it probably took years for the craftsman to carve them. Two women stood upstairs, their conversation ending abruptly as they noticed the Serasker and Cerese. One of them leaned over the railing, curling a black strand of her hair around her index finger as she arched her brow at the unexpected guests. "Serasker Jahn, who is this?" She asked,

but the man ignored her. So did Cerese, to the woman's displeasure. Her pretty face turned into a vicious scowl, but they had already left the hall, entering yet another dark passage. Until, finally, the Serasker pushed open two heavy doors and she recognised the room at once, seeing it so many times in the papers, carefully drawn by the best artists allowed to see it in person. The throne room of Fenrisar. It was just as dark and imposing as she had always imagined it would be. The rich black marble veined with gold created a truly ominous atmosphere. The air here was cold and heavy, as if the very walls were infused with the weight of countless deaths and secrets. Towering obsidian stairs, wide and grand, ascended to the throne itself. The Onyx Wolf Throne. The snarling wolf, the giant black wings carved of the dark stone... it was all there, but somehow it was even more imposing in real life. Perched upon it was a tall man, his outline discernible against the dim illumination of dancing torchlight. His head rested languidly on his fist, his expression inscrutable as he observed them approach with his piercing eyes. There was no mistaking him for anyone else. The High King, the Shahanshah, King of all Kings and Alpha of all Alphas Orhan Velkhanor was hard not to recognise, considering that one of his eyes was as black as night, while the other the lightest shade of amber, with deep scars marring that same side of his face. His black locks fell onto his forehead as he sighed, already annoyed with the disturbance. "Jahn, what's all this?" He asked, voice deep with notes of displeasure in it. "My King," the Serasker bowed politely. "This is the eldest daughter of Nytherys' Viceroy Conradion Sorensen." "And?" The King raised his brow, a deep scar slicing right through it, but Cerese tried not to look at it. No one could look in the Shahanshah's face unless explicitly allowed to do so. This man, just like his father before him, has drowned the Thirteen Kingdoms in blood. "She said it's urgent," the Serasker shrugged. "Considering her state and how she arrived I thought that—" "I see." The King interrupted his subject and waved at her. "So, tell us what's so urgent and so important that it couldn't wait till morning." Cerese felt her heart ready to jump out of her chest. "Your Majesty," she began, realising her voice sounded too weak, so she cleared her throat before continuing. "Your Majesty, my Shahanshah, the King of all Kings and—" Jahn loudly cleared his throat, gesturing for her to speed up. "I believe that a mistake was made, and the wrong girl was sent to your harem," Cerese cut straight to the chase. "Is that so?" The King visibly straightened in his throne, sounding amused. "And who would that be?" Cerese closed her eyes before replying. This could go terribly wrong. "My sister, Your Majesty. Elowen Sorensen." "Ah—" The King nodded understandingly, a cruel smirk curling his lips. "A sister. Tell me, why is she the wrong girl for me?" Cerese clenched her damp skirt, seeking courage to do what she came here to do. "It was supposed to be me, Your Highness. You sent for the daughters that were of age and Elowen—" "Isn't she eighteen?" The King addressed his Serasker. "She is," Jahn replied with a curt nod. "But she wasn't on the day we received your summons," Cerese reasoned, knowing that her argument was weak at best. "And you were," the King concluded. "Yes." Finally, Cerese dared to look at him, knowing it could be the wrong

move considering his temper, but she had to demonstrate her resolve. She met his gaze and felt the weight of it as the King shamelessly scanned her whole figure. She felt bare to him, words leaving her until he was done studying her body. One word from that man and she would be dead. "But don't you have another sister, who was also of age on that fateful day?" The King tilted his head as if he was testing her. "Or am I confusing families, Jahn?" The Serasker was already looking in a large leather bound book. "No, my King, you are not confused at all. It says here the Viceroy of Nytheris has three daughters. Cereese Sorensen, twenty two years of age, Elissa Sorensen, twenty, and Elowen Sorensen, the one who has just turned eighteen." "So, I will ask again," the King clicked his tongue. "Why you?" Cereese took a step towards him. "I am my father's firstborn child. Everyone knows that firstborn children of strong bloodlines produce the strongest heirs. This is how the High King's concubines were always chosen. This was supposed to be me, not my little sister." Cold laughter echoed through the throne room and the blood chilled in her veins. "Do you realise that your family's daughter was summoned out of pure courtesy for your father's great service? I have no need for an heir connected to Nytherys and eleven other women I actually do need heirs from." The King leaned over the backrest of his throne. "It makes no difference to me which daughter is here and what kind of heirs any of you would produce. If any." Cereese clenched her fists. She knew all that. "Elowen would not be able to last here for long," she finally said. "And I—" Her voice broke seeing the King's indifference. She was probably foolish to think that this could ever work. The Shahanshah stood up, his bronze skin glimmering in the torchlight as he slowly descended the stairs. One move and he would break her neck. Cereese's breath caught in her throat. She did not dare move as he approached. "And you?" He circled her, his scent of smoky cedar and silver sage enveloped her, its predatory pull unexpectedly enticing. It was deep and warm, with the grounding strength of the forest, the sharpness of the mountain air, and the undercurrent of wilderness that whispered dominance. He stopped right in front of her and she dared to raise her eyes at him, chest heaving. "And I will not break." Her answer made him clench his lips. If he was surprised by her audacity, it certainly didn't reveal itself. "As you have said, Netherys has no political weight, we do not align with anyone and simply want to exist and have your protection. Elowen is weak, but I can take whatever life throws at me. I will be your most loyal servant and do whatever you need me to do. You can even—" Her treacherous voice broke again but she regained strength fast. "You can even kill me, but please, let Elowen return home. She is destined for something else. Please, I beg you." The king turned away, killing the last strands of her hope. "Beg? I don't see you begging. You are just demanding things for now." Without hesitation, she fell to her knees. "Please, my Shah. Please!" He stopped, but did not pivot to look back at her. "You will die here." He sighed. "If that is what is needed of me, I am ready for that too," she promised, and he went up the stairs again to the throne that belonged to him and him alone. "When the time comes, remember that you were the one who asked for this." Cereese couldn't

believe her own ears, not sure whether this was a yes. The Serasker offered her his hand and she accepted it, rising slowly. "Welcome to the Alpha King's court, Moon Lady," the man smirked, using the official title of the King's concubines. Cerese bit her lip nervously, trying to contain the storm of emotions inside her. No words were used but the doors at the side opened again and a young woman with light brown skin and dark hair in loose braids walked in. She was a maid, judging by her expensive but strict uniform with a high close collar framing her neck, knot buttons going all the way down her brocade dress with a silver line of embroidery down each hem. The sheer flared sleeves were cuffed at the wrists and a silk sash hung on her belt. "Take the Moon Lady to her new quarters and send Elowen Sorensen home as soon as possible," the Serasker commanded. "They can say their goodbyes, but make it fast. You know the rest, make her presentable for the next time anyone sees her." "Understood," the maid curtsied briefly and finally raised her head to look at Cerese, stunning the new concubine. The young servant had moon phase tattoos going over her cheekbones on both sides, with a glowing moon sign on her forehead between her brows, the sign of lowest slaves destined for the hardest labour. It made no sense for her to be here in the palace, let alone be allowed in the presence of the King. Yet, this was none of Cerese's concern. She had to escape this room before the King changed his mind. She had to make Elowen leave. "Follow me, Moon Lady," the maid offered, and Cerese smiled at her, awkwardly bowing before the King, who already paid her no attention. "Thank you—" she muttered, unsure who this was addressed to. The two women left, leaving the Shahanshah and his Serasker alone. "I have to admit I was sceptical, but you were right once again." Jahn folded his hands over his chest. "She is here. Your plan worked." King Orhan sighed, hating all this already. "That poor girl—" "You heard her, Orhan," Jahn threw the old book he was pretending to read away. "She made her choice. Same as you made yours."