8. Lord of Ice

Guinevere

I finish lacing up my dress and grab my cloak and basket by the door.

“Missus Cromwell!” I shout as I unlock the front door. “I’m going on a walk up north. Don’t wait up for me!”

“Alright, darling. Earth Goddess be with you!” She shouts back from the parlor.

The cool morning air nips at my cheeks as I shuffle out of the cottage and make my way towards the woods.

I had completed my training with Missus Cromwell but I could not bring myself to leave. I was allowed to move on years ago, but I refused. Missus Cromwell would be all by her lonesome and I didn’t like the idea of her being on her own, even if she was a powerful witch. The nearest town was over 20 miles away and the only person who came anywhere near the cottage was Master Thomas when he came to drop off supplies.

So I stayed…I stayed to keep her company but every so often I went off to seek adventure. Her territory was expansive and despite spending so much time here, I’ve only recently ventured out to explore it.

I make the trek out past the little creek and fetch myself a drink. The sounds of birds and tiny creatures bring the forest to life as I sit to rest and listen. Several blissful minutes trickle by before I dust myself off and continue on my journey. I find several healing herbs along my path and collect what I can; mostly St John’s Wort, plantain, lavender, and chamomile.

A couple miles later and I find myself resting against a large rock, pulling out the lunch I packed for myself. Whilst eating an apple, I hear a loud shriek in the sky and look up to see two large blue figures flying over me. Just as suddenly, one of the blue figures comes crashing down into a clearing nearby, the other disappearing into the horizon.

My mind screams at me to run in the opposite direction and hide but before I know it, my legs carry me down the path to where the blue figure crashed.

The ground shakes with every breath the creature makes, gusts of cold wind blowing past me. As the sounds of wheezing grow louder, I slow down and tread onward with caution, grabbing a tree branch for protection.

I stop dead in my tracks when I come upon the blue creature. It was a dragon with a long serpent like body, no wings and gorgeous blue scales covering its entire length. Two large horns grow from each side of its head, draped with tufts of blue and white hair. Rows of sharp porcelain teeth line its mouth and two long whiskers extend out from its snout. It was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen in my life.

While it was only mid May, icicles and snow coat the surrounding trees, a cloud of cold air blowing out of the dragon's nostrils. His piercing blue eyes lock with mine and he wheezes once more, his entire body shivering. The dragon attempts to get up, but roars in pain as blood pours out of a wound by one of its limbs. The dragon looks up at me again, a bit of fear flickering in its eyes.

How could a dragon be afraid of me? I wonder.

The look in his eyes tugs at my heart strings and I drop the branch in my hands, raising my arms up to convey I was not here to hurt him. Slowly, I approach the dragon, muttering to myself that I was an i***t for even considering helping it.

"It's okay," I murmur, my voice shaking slightly. "I'm not going to hurt you."

He seems to understand and allows me to get close enough to touch his injured arm.

"Ummm..ok…ok…ok," I mutter to myself, trying to calm my racing heart and focus on the task at hand. Suddenly the herbs I had been carrying come to mind and I look up at the dragon. "I-I'll be right back. I just need some supplies…"

The dragon continues to breathe in and out slowly and I rush off to find the basket of herbs. When I return to the clearing, a naked man lays where the dragon once was, his arm still bleeding profusely. He looks up at me as I approach, his gorgeous blue eyes looking right into my soul. He looks like a Greek god, with rippling muscles, long blonde curls and strong features on his face.

I involuntarily blush as my eyes travel up and down his beautifully sculpted body.

The man smiles up at me, my entire body shivering from the gesture.

"Ummm excuse me, darling…but perhaps you can gawk and stare after you help me?" he says, his voice deep and sultry. A tiny smirk curls on his perfect lips. "My arm still bloody hurts…"

My pale skin erupts into a deep red shade as I rush up to him and rip small strips of cloth from my cloak. I wrap the cloth around his bicep to stop the bleeding and clean the wound itself. He groans as I work but says very little to me. I begin to grind the plantain leaves with a smooth stone and pour some water over the leaves until I make a nice paste. I apply the paste directly to the wound. He winces as I tie a strip of cloth over the poultice to keep it all in place and I begin to hum a healing chant under my breath.

"You're a witch," he says after I remove the cloth from his arm to reveal red skin showing signs of proper healing. "You're not at all what I expected a witch to look like," he adds.

I don’t respond and instead drape the remainder of my cloak over his waist to cover up him and his…manhood.

"Thank you…for helping me," he says, the sound of his voice making butteries burst in my belly.

My voice runs dry so I simply nod and dust myself off as I get to my feet.

"What's the matter?" he asks, catching my wrist and tilting his head to the side in an adorable manner. "Dragon's got your tongue?"

It had been years since I had seen a man my age, or any other man for that matter, other than Master Thomas. I didn't know the first thing about speaking to boys so I knew it was best to keep quiet so as not to make a fool of myself.

I pull my wrist out his grip and bow, hoping he would understand that this interaction was over; but to my dismay, I hear his footsteps walk after me.

"Can I at least know that name of the witch who just healed my wounds?" he calls after me.

I stop in my tracks. Missus Cromwell would be furious if I gave away my name to a perfect stranger, a dragon no less. Dragons were vile creatures not to be trusted according to her. I shouldn't have even healed his wounds to begin with.

But he's cute, a tiny voice echoes in my head. What's the harm of telling a handsome stranger your name? You'll probably never see him again anyways!

A battle wages in my head and before I know it, the man is standing right in front of me.

"It's alright if you don't want to tell me," he shrugs. "But I am grateful to you."

His blue eyes seem to sparkle in the sunlight and I stupidly lose all common sense.

"G-Guinevere," I stutter, curtsying for him. "M-my name is Guinevere Wright."

His lips curve into a smile and he bows for me. "Well Miss Wright…pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm Prince Alderon, Lord of Ice. But you," he smiles, taking my hand and kissing it. "You can call me Roman."

My knees buckle as his lips graze my skin, all of my thoughts jumbling into an incoherent mess.

"L-Lord…of…Ice…" I mumble, Roman's smile deepening. I realize he's still completely naked, no longer wearing my cloak. "I-I should go," I mutter, taking my hand back and forcing my eyes straight ahead to keep them from wandering. "Good day, my Lord."

"Roman," he reiterates. "Just Roman for you."

I would never forgive myself for turning a brighter shade of red. "R-right. R-Roman… Good day."

I walk around him and towards the trees, counting to ten before chancing a glance back at the beautiful man only to find him watching me walk away, a perfect smile still on his lips. I can't help but smile back, completely charmed by his beauty and elegance.

I return to the cottage and lock myself in my room, unable to brush off the sense of euphoria that washed over me every time I thought of the beautiful dragon man in the woods. A pleasurable tingle crawls down between my legs as I think of his exquisite body pressed up against mine. Outside, the world grows quiet as the night spills into the day and I lay in bed restlessly, feeling hot and frustrated. In hopes of relieving myself, I slide my fingers between my folds, exploring the sensation that caused tiny waves of pleasure to ripple through me, but I was very inexperienced. Missus Cromwell said it was perfectly normal to get hot and bothered over a man. On the few occasions that she left the territory, Missus Cromwell said she'd find release in a man or two. She's asked on many occasions before if I wanted to join her into town to relieve myself, but I was never interested in such a thing; that is until I saw the man in the woods.

I continue to play with myself, imagining his lips against my own but unfortunately, my inexperienced hand never brings me to my destination and I settle back in bed, completely unsatisfied.

The following week, I venture out for another expedition of the territory, a small part of me hoping to see Roman the Dragon Prince once more.

I return to the clearing again where I come across a large ice formation, a sleeping dragon inside the crystal walls. Upon hearing my footsteps, the dragon crawls out of the ice and shifts into the man, his long golden curls resting on his shoulders.

Those crazy butterflies flutter in the pit of my stomach as I take in his beauty. He was unnaturally handsome and I could feel my knees buckling again.

"Miss Wright," he calls out, wrapping my cloak around his waist. "I-I was hoping I would see you again."

I press my lips firmly together and curtsy for him, Roman doing the same in return.

"You look lovely," he smiles, my skin deepening in red hues.

"T-thank you, Lord Alderon," I mumble, tucking some of my hair behind my ear. "I-it's nice to see you…Ummm too."

A small awkward pause ensues and I look around the forest, searching for an escape.

"I-I should really get going," I mutter, pointing to some random tree in the distance. "Good day…"

"Leaving so soon?" he grins, chuckling to himself. "I was kind of hoping to get to know my savior a bit more before she runs away again."

"I-it was just a flesh wound," I reply, shaking my head. "Just a basic healing spell. I would hardly call that saving you."

"And yet," he says, suddenly standing mere inches from me. "I still feel like I owe you my life. Besides, a beautiful lady such as yourself should not be wandering the woods on her own. What if something were to happen to you on your walk?" he asks.

He takes my hand, my skin burning up with heat from his touch.

"Please, allow me to accompany you on your journey. It's the least I could do for the fair maiden who took pity on a poor fallen dragon," he says, kissing my hand.

I could hear Missus Cromwell screaming at me to run, but the small voice in my head persuades me otherwise and I let the Dragon Prince take me by the hand and lead me into the woods.

If only I had listened to Missus Cromwell's warning, my life would have turned out a bit different and I would have never fallen for Roman Alderon, the Dragon Prince, the future Mad King…And my Husband.

Salvador's voice jolts me out of my head, my mind returning to the present.

"Who are you running from?" Salvador whispers again, feathering kisses along my jaw. "Who hurt you?"

I cup his cheeks and push him away. "I think this game is over."

He doesn't protest and climbs off of me without a fuss, allowing me to gather air back into my lungs.

"What's wrong?" He asks, his fingers grazing my cheeks. "D-did I offend you?"

His green eyes cloud with worry and I gently peck his lips.

"No," I murmur, wrapping a blanket around my bare body. "I just want to make one thing very clear, Salvador."

He sits up, giving me his undivided attention.

"I like you, Salvador," I whisper, staring at him and watching his cheeks flush with joy. He opens his mouth to speak but I raise a finger to silence him. "I like you a lot…but I cannot be your mate."

The smile that had curled on his lips disappears.

"I-I'm sorry, but a casual encounter is all I can give you…" I sigh. "I gave my heart to someone once…and he broke it into a million tiny little pieces. I'll never do that again."

He stares at me for a long time, an eerie silence engulfing us as I wait for his response.

"Please say something," I plead, holding back my tears. "If you can't do casual…I suggest you reject me now and find another mate."

He scoffs at me. "As if finding a second chance mate were that simple."

I hear the bitterness in his voice and I pull my knees to my chest. "You should go."

I sit in silence, expecting him to storm off but he simply remains by my side.

"In our culture, you get one mate. One person to spend the rest of your life with…" He murmurs. "We hardly ever get second chances…" His warm hands engulf mine. "Moon Goddess chose you for me…and I do not intend to question her judgement nor throw away her gift so easily." He pulls me to his chest, wrapping his arms around me.

I love feeling the warmth of his body and listening to the pounding of his strong heart.

"And Gwen?" he sighs. "Should you ever give me your heart, I would die protecting it."

I wanted to believe him…but I had once been promised the world, only to receive a world of pain. While his words were gentle and sweet, I had learned long ago that the words of a man were nothing more than just words.