

Born of Dreams

Swiftly leaving my hotel room minutes after my father left for his meeting, I knew I could get myself into a real mess if my parents knew that I'd disobeyed their one consistent rule:

Never leave the safety I was guaranteed.

But enough was enough. I had turned seventeen years old on June 20th, and right now it was July 12th. Over the past few years, ever since I turned twelve, I'd been thinking about breaking the rules I was always taught to listen to. I couldn't stay the same well-behaved girl. I needed to be something different.

"Amber, don't leave the house if we're not home unless we send you out with one of our guards," my father said once.

"Amber, don't go too far from the campsite with Rose," my mother said when I had gone camping with one of my best and only friends. "I'll have Rose's father make sure you're always safe."

I needed to start rebelling. My other friends had started years before, so I figured I wasn't too late to the party.

Leaving the hotel room was the beginning of my late rebellion. The next thing on my mind was something my father never answered: What did he do during his meetings in Ignis? I'd asked the question for years and tried asking my mom. She always said it was not her place to tell. Afterwards, I'd always ask my father.

Every time, he would smile, his crystal-blue eyes sparkling like the sun shining onto water. "Can't let you know that now, princess," he would say. "But you'll find out what your old man does when you're old enough, and you'll see what I've done for you."

Although I loved my father very much, I couldn't stand his vague explanations.

I was getting off track. Ignis was not only the city where the Lords of Skyfall would meet

and negotiate. Guards were taken into training here to become either Knights of King Diezel or knights of lords, and maybe even freelance guards that were hired by powerful figures.

Ignis was where the Heroes of Skyfall gathered. The most inspiring people in my life. I'd grown up listening to stories about how they saved entire cities, defeated corrupted lords holding more power imaginable, and saved countless lives. Some heroes didn't even fight with the magic that had been discovered in the world nearly three centuries ago. They were certainly worthy of their titles and reputations.

The unrealistic and embarrassing dreamer within me still hoped I could be a hero.

As I walked away from the hotel, I got a better look at the surroundings of the city. Having protective parents limited the amount of fun I got. Even though I was the daughter of the Second Commander, did I really need to be inside for hours?

The people walking around were dressed professionally or dressed with nobility. Most people wore rather expensive business suits, lugging thick leather briefcases containing highly classified information. Others, however, wore epaulettes on their shoulders with a red cape attached, trailing behind them in the wind. I definitely stood out with my ankle jeggings, checkered sneakers, and white shirt with rose gold words on them: Live, Love, Dream.

However, I could see not one hero anywhere. I became frustrated, knowing I had seen heroes on the sidewalk when passing by in our bulletproof, high-tech, spell-canceling, machine-gun-protected limousine.

There were several watch towers located throughout Ignis where the guards of the capital made sure there were no incoming threats. It was one of the few things I knew about this place.

If I could go to the top of one of them, I could try to look for any sign of a hero's base of operations, or try to at least see a hero. At this time of the day, they would most likely be on quests or missions, so encountering one could be difficult, especially since some of them could blend in easily with the crowds of businessmen.

An uneasy feeling began stirring in my gut. Standing out in this city wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, would it? Even though I was the only one who didn't belong in Ignis at the moment, there was no one who would intentionally harm the daughter of the Second Commander, unless they were looking for a world of misery. From where I was walking, I could only see skyscrapers piercing the sea of blue. The windows shimmered from the rays of the sun, and in turn made it difficult to look anywhere since there were more business buildings than anything. It was like Ignis had never been introduced to magic before.

The nearest watch tower was about four blocks away. I was halfway there when I realized that several people I passed were staring at me. I slowed down. At least now I knew why I wasn't feeling great anymore. It was like everyone who passed me was staring with a mix of fascination and fear. I crossed my arms, hoping they'd ignore the golden cuff on my right wrist. They must've recognized the craftsmanship as the work of one of King Diezel's personal blacksmiths.

Or did they notice my birthmark? Most of it was hidden under the short sleeve on my right shoulder, but the bottom of a heart was still visible to anyone around me.

Whatever was causing their staring dampened my adventurous spirit. I stopped walking and glanced at my birthmark to hide it.

That was when I noticed it. The birthmark was glowing. The outline of it was glowing with a crystal blue aura. The more time I spent looking at it, the brighter it glowed, and it could be seen from beneath the white sleeve.

What the hell was happening? Why was my birthmark glowing? Why did I think I could go on an adventure without anything going wrong?

I had to exhale. Hyperventilating in the middle of an afternoon would not help me look like anything besides than a lunatic. But I couldn't keep the panic in my throat. I was freaking out on the inside, and if I didn't get back to the hotel, I would be losing it in front of professional workers.

I turned around and clamped my left hand over my birthmark and began to sprint back to



the hotel. This had been a bad idea from the start. I wanted to kick myself for trying to be a rebel. I just hoped I could make it back to the hotel without any more consequences.