

9 | Blood Oath

My heart was racing when Conrad growled loudly, bringing me back to reality and concentrating on the most pressing matter.

"What the hell is wrong with this bird?!" He was about to smack it, and this was something I couldn't afford. Filin ew towards me and landed on my shoulder, his claws not even scratching me. The little demon was a professional, but I could feel how tense he was.

"It's Zion's bird!" I reminded my fake father. "A lot is probably wrong with it, but you still chose to accept it!"

The owl gave out an offending sound, and I bit my lip. This wasn't the time to have him angry with me. If anything, I needed Filin on my side... If this was at all possible.

"Take it out of my sight!" Conrad snarled, and I rushed up the stairs and went straight to my room with the bird still attached to me. "And don't think for one second that you aren't attending the Moon Goddess Gala! You are, and you'd better be chosen as the Moon Queen that day!"

Ugh. There was also that contest.

I would have to deal with it later. After all, I could get sick right before all that happened. Maybe even fake the fake pregnancy and all that.

I made it to my room; Filin ew in and landed on the headboard of my bed, looking away as if he didn't understand what had just happened.

"Good little bird," I cooed. "Smart little bird."

I wasn't buying it, though. There was only one bird in the book, and that was Filin, the demon owl who could talk and spy on people. And now he was spying on me. If he told Zion I knew his name; that would only arouse more suspicions. I was already on the main villain's list, and I didn't want to stay on it. Right now, I would have to make that bird side with me, or I may as well jump off the window. There was no difference!

"I like the window option!" the voice in my head said, and I groaned. Not this again.

"Shut. Up!" I hissed, and the owl looked at me with curiosity in its eyes. Luckily, at least there was no red light, for now, meaning that Zion wasn't watching this show.

Right. I had to act. I had to do something. I had to get that bird on my side. If I could get Filin to be my ally, at least temporarily, my chances of survival would increase significantly.

I paced around the room, ready to bite my nails, but stopping at the last moment each time. Then nally, I breathed out and turned on my heels to face the demonic creature.

"I know you can talk!" I blurted out loudly, waiting for his reaction.

Only to receive none! He was making those little bird noises and feigning ignorance with me, which only fuelled me more.

"Cut it!" I said as I was right next to him. "I know everything! Speak to me!"

Nothing.

He may have been the demon in the room, but I felt like I was slowly turning into one too. After all, my life depended on it. And I wanted to keep going with it even if I had to live in this book forever. I could make this work.

"Hmm, I guess I was wrong then, and you aren't that demon owl that helps Zion to spy on people." I eyed him, and he remained quiet, but I could see that he was watching me with some kind of amusement. "So, you really are just a gift. This means you aren't dear to him or anything, and I was overthinking it the whole time. I guess I can do whatever I want with you. I love your sparkly white feathers by the way." I stalked closer to the bird and brushed my ngers over one of his wings. "They are truly beautiful and gives me an idea for a dress to wear at the Moon Goddess Gala. I think a white feather dress with an owl mask would suit me greatly. We are a family with a very dark reputation, of course, so I can't disappoint, and it has to be the real thing. Your feathers will probably be enough for just one mask, though, so I would have to get more owls who look like you."

Now he was staring at me with his eyes wide once again. My little speech made some effect, after all, but he still wasn't saying a word.

I felt like the worst being in the world when I clenched my ngers around one of his feathers and plucked it mercilessly.

"Mother of gods! &^%\$%^&^%\$!" Filin screamed, some of his swearings were new to me. He ew away to the other side of the room, where it would be hard for me to reach him. Hard, but not impossible.

I crossed my arms over my chest, playing with his feather as he gawked at me.

"What is wrong with you, lady?" He hissed in his croaked owl voice, and I smirked at him.

"Look who can talk!" I chuckled at him and took a few steps in his direction. "So, you are Zion's demon pet!"

"Yes, and you should be afraid of me!" He tried to sound more important than he actually was, which made me smile. Somehow, this gave me the condence to continue with my plan.

"I am terried!" I rolled my eyes and made sure my voice sounded like steel. "Down! Now!" I ordered and pointed at the backrest of the nearby chair. "We have to talk."

Luckily, he decided not to test my patience and simply obeyed me.

Good. Great. What now?

"You aren't that simple, Onyx Tynan!" Filin said after observing me for some time.

"Neither are you, Filin," I sat down in front of him, still playing with his feather.

"How exactly do you know who I am?" He taunted me.

"I could tell you," I shrugged my shoulders, "but only if we reach a certain level of understanding."

"Whatever you say will be passed to Zion," he interrupted me, and I frowned. This wasn't the response I was counting on. However, I wasn't losing hope. After all, I was the one who knew things that others didn't. Not even the almighty Zion.

"Let's see what we can do about that." I smiled menacingly and placed both my elbows on the table, resting my chin on my palms, the white feather right next to my face as a warning.

"There is nothing that can be done about this!" Filin assured me with pride. "Zion has been my master for hundreds of years. I'm loyal to him and--"

"What if I promised that I could give you your freedom? I can help unleash you from this bird's body."

I could do that. Theoretically speaking, of course. All I needed for that was a drop of Zion's blood, given to me willingly and a special crystal. This was the only way to break the spell that binded the demon to his current body. Other than Zion letting him go willingly, of course, but that wasn't happening.

Getting the Scorpion's blood willingly would be a problem for me. But that would be a problem for another day. Right now, I had to make Filin join the dark side. And by that, I meant my side.

"How on earth could you promise me that?" He scoffed, but I knew that he was interested because otherwise, he would simply say no.

"I have my means," I sneered. I wasn't going to give away all my cards this early. I knew he was already intrigued about me. I was just a simple daughter of the Tynan family, yet I knew too much.

"So, what exactly are you offering?" Filin asked, his tone business-like.

"A deal," I murmured with a sly grin. "I help you, and you help me."

"As I have already said, I serve Zion," he cleared his throat. "I can't go against his orders."

"That wouldn't be required." I nally placed the feather on the tabletop and leaned on the back of my chair. "I am pretty sure you know how to work around them."

I knew that he could! He did it all the time for Melody. He was charmed by her. She hasn't arrived yet though, and I could use some help from him before that happened.

"Fair enough," he admitted. It was obvious that he wanted to use his one and only chance to become free again. Who wouldn't? "How do we do this?"

"A blood oath," I answered nonchalantly, and the owl choked on the air.

"How did you--"

"Does it matter?" I giggled as I stood up and strode to my chest of draws to get out a slim but beautiful silver dagger. The handle was made from pure gold with leaves and Onyx owers entwining together. It was a work of a true craftsman.

I knew very well from my own books that only a blood oath would make our deal binding. As in, we would both have to do our best to keep the promise, or the magic of this world would come for us. I was able to remember this pretty well, as I had dreams about it a couple of times while I was writing the book.

"Ready?" I asked the owl, and this time he nodded seriously. No jokes, no questions.

"I promise you that I will do all I can to set you free and you promise to keep my secrets, whatever it costs, and help me if it doesn't go against your direct orders from Zion. Deal?"

"Deal," Filin replied dryly. He probably had some doubts.

I pricked my nger with the knife and then plucked one more feather out of the bird.

"Geesh!" he yelled at me, but I saw a tiny droplet of his blood in the place where the feather used to be just a second ago and pressed my own bleeding nger there.

"I swear," I said

"I swear too," Filin joined me without any hesitation, and I breathed out.

"Very well!" I chirped and returned to my place. "So, where do we begin?"

"Begin with explaining how you know so much! Nothing in Zion's research showed that you are supposed to be this informed of his deeds," the owl pointed out, waiting for me to speak..

"Oh, that's a long one!" I sighed, but then decided to simply go with it. I needed someone to tell me everything that happened to me. It was driving me crazy, and even if there was still a chance of Filin betraying me, I felt like it was time to share my situation. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to handle it.

"So, this world," I chewed on my lip nervously, "I wrote it."

"Meaning?"

"This world is a book, and I am the author," I explained, and he let out what sounded like a laugh.

"No, you are not!" Filin stayed stubborn.

"Yes, I am! This is how I... know things."

He didn't say a word anymore and I started telling everything there was to tell in one go. His beak was somewhere on the oor by the time I was done, and it was getting late. I probably even missed dinner, but this was more important.

I looked at the owl, awaiting his verdict.

"This--" The bird coughed. "Unbelievable!"

"Do you not believe me?" I asked, almost regretting this move.

"Why wouldn't I," Filin muttered. "Some parts of what you told me don't make sense, but most of it does. I know better than anyone that soul swapping is possible. I have been locked in this foreign body for centuries. You are different from what Onyx is supposed to be, and just knowing my name proves that. Zion never uses it in front of anyone. For most people, I am a nameless, pretty bird. But that book thing... it's ridiculous."

"Right?" I snorted.

"If you wrote this world, you have to have some sort of power in here. Do you feel anything?" he wondered.

"Not really," I confessed, feeling disappointed. Some superpower would be great right about now, but instead, I had... "Just this voice in my head."

"Yeah, your wolf is mean," Filin said, and something snapped in my brain.

My wolf! That voice... that entity inside of me that tried to kill me, sabotage me and set me up multiple times... it was my wolf!

"I am not your wolf," she hissed in my mind. "I am Onyx's wolf, and you aren't her!"

I swallowed. That was denitely a revelation. And a dangerous one!

I didn't have time to think about me being a shifter. At some point, I just assumed I wasn't one since it was a new soul in this body. It was one more reason why I had to hide and escape this place. But this... this made so much sense.

"Onyx, we will talk tomorrow. Zion wants to see you, and I have to obey. Make sure you act normal!" Filin warned me and I gulped as my lips twitched in an unnatural smile. This was too fast! I had hoped we could talk more!

"Act normal," he said. Normal! Who could act normal knowing they were being watched?!

We still didn't get to "why" he was interested in the rst place. Hopefully, it was just a quick check, so I ran to one of the bookshelves, grabbed the rst book I could nd, then jumped into a cosy chair and pretended to read.

The owl's eyes shone red and my whole body tensed. I kept reading, though. During the past few days, I got better at acting. From time to time, I would turn the pages, thinking of everything that happened today. Ruhn came to my mind a lot, and my cheeks ushed slightly as I remembered my hand on his bottom. A very rm, toned, perfectly shaped bottom. It was hard to ignore as my hands were all over it.

I slapped the book closed, as I couldn't think of the Lycan Prince. Not in that way. It was too dangerous.

To my surprise, I found Filin right next to me, watching me intently from the backrest of my armchair. I gazed at him, and the red glow disappeared. But as I looked back at the book, I could feel it with my skin; the glow returned. Zion and Filin were pros at this.

However, it quickly became irrelevant to me. I had nally noticed what I was actually holding in my arms. The title of the book sunk in, The Virgin's Night With Triplet Alphas And A Beta. I gulped, observing a girl with very generous breasts in a skimpy red dress, being touched by four shirtless men. She really didn't look like a virgin to me. But that was beside the point.

Was I... just reading po.rm in front of Zion?

Why would Onyx have that on her bookshelf?!

"Oh, how did that get in here?!" I squeaked in a very high-pitched tone and sent the book to the bin.

"Yeah, sure!" the voice in my head cackled. "Now he would believe that you were reading that for an hour by mistake. You are a genius!"

"And you need to introduce yourself if you would like to speak to me!" I hissed at her in my mind for the rst time. Now that I knew it was my wolf, it would help me to control our conversations better.

She wasn't interested in chatting with me, as I pretended to do some random things around the room. Silver brought me some snacks since I missed dinner and left as soon as I was done with those. There had been no reaction from the bird. All of this was making me tired.

I took a quick shower and walked out of the bathroom, suddenly realising one thing. The owl was still staring at me and I... had to drop my gown and put the night slip on.

Filin begged me to act natural. I couldn't take it to the bathroom and change in there; it would be weird. No one was doing that here. However, I also didn't want to give the Scorpion a show. So, I lowered the dark canopy from the top of my bed and went inside, turning my back to him. It gave me some coverage, at least. And just like that, I threw the robe off and quickly pulled the black lace nightgown onto my body.

Then I switched off the lights and got under the sheets, pretending to fall asleep. Trying to do this for real was a challenge when two eyes still gleamed in the darkness. I waited and waited for this to be over, but it looked like Zion had nothing better to do this night. Which was odd.

After a couple of hours, I nally gave up, and the darkness consumed me.

~***~

I wanted to leave the mansion today and go to the city. I needed to explore it more so I could come up with some kind of plan.

Silver was helping me do my hair when the door into my room opened without as much as a knock. My fake father walked in, beaming.

"Onyx, you did not disappoint!" He showed me two enveloped in his hand. One was completely black and the other was golden. "I have some great news for you, daughter!"