



THE STAR OF JIOR

A KINGDOM OF JIOR
PREQUEL

***This is the creation story of a demon prince-
of hope abandoned and sacrifice demanded.
Hearts will break. Kings will fall.
The truth will be buried.***

WENDY L. ANDERSON

Copyright © 2026 by Wendy L. Anderson

All rights are reserved worldwide. No part of this publication may be replicated, redistributed, or given away in any form without the prior written consent of the author/publisher, or the terms relayed to you herein.

No part of this book may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means including: digital copying, data mining, or the use of artificial-intelligence systems for training or content generation without the prior written permission of the author.

This story, its characters, and world are the sole creation of Wendy L. Anderson. Unauthorized use, duplication, or distribution in whole or in part is a violation of applicable copyright law.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Published by Wendy L. Anderson Books, LLC



THE KINGDOM OF JIOR SERIES

Enter a world of fallen kings, forbidden love, and redemption. Experience destiny that will shape the fate of an entire kingdom.

The story begins here...

Of Demon Kind

A fallen prince. A broken kingdom. A destiny no one can escape.

Continue the saga...

Redemption of the Fallen

Hope rises where darkness once ruled, but redemption comes at a cost.

Heirs of Jior

Ancient bloodlines awaken as the next generation faces a dangerous legacy.

Iron and the Arrow

Three heirs. Three choices. One legacy to uphold or destroy.

The Last Ny-Failen

The final battle begins as destiny is fulfilled and the future of Jior is decided.

Krickgold

Jior

Ondrea

Skod

Owenmarsh

Celtica



M OF JIOR



Gavnsig

Skoria

gvr

Sorn



AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Kingdom of Jior is a harsh world, and its stories reflect that reality. This novella contains adult themes, including intimacy and danger, and is intended for mature readers.



FOREWORD

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM OF JIOR

Before legends are written, they are earned with blood, through sweat and tears, and sometimes they leave the world a darker place.

The Star of Jior is a **prequel** novella set *before* the events in The Kingdom of Jior series. It is the story of a child who was never meant to become what the world would one day fear... and the mother who could not save him.

In a land shaped by evil ambition, power, and the weight of destiny, even love is not always enough to change what must be. From what becomes a kingdom of darkness rises a half-man, half-demon whose name would one day be hated and only spoken in the light of day.

If you are drawn to epic fantasy filled with sacrifice, dark beginnings, danger, and the fragile thread of hope that survives even in the shadow of ruin, this story offers a glimpse into the moment everything started.

This is the story of how that fate began.

This is not the end of the tale.

It is where it truly starts.

CONTENTS

Chapter One	1
The Controlling Need	
Chapter Two	7
The Heart and Desire	
Chapter Three	11
The Collector of Sorrows	
Chapter Four	17
The Compelling	
Chapter Five	19
The Corruption of the Innocent	
Chapter Six	23
The Magic	
Chapter Seven	27
The Softening Hope	
Chapter Eight	29
The Wedding	
Chapter Nine	33
The Queen of Jior	

Chapter Ten	37
The Heir	
Chapter Eleven	43
The Ne'amh chomhara	
Chapter Twelve	49
The Prince of Demons	



CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTROLLING NEED

King Kullorn was born an oddity in the world of men. With the purest white skin and white hair, he was completely without pigment, and his eyes were a bright red. They called him *albino*, weak, pale, and useless. As a young prince, he was treated with fear and rejection because of his strange looks. Even his father, who sired him in a time of disobedience and darkness, treated him with scorn. Kullorn used that anger as a catalyst against those who ridiculed him.

When his father died and Kullorn became ruler of the small Kingdom of Jior, he immediately was overcome with the drive to become the greatest king ever to rule the island continent of Vedt. The nobles and people of Jior saw Kullorn as a weakling because of his strangeness, but his will and undeniable ambitions were overpowering. It was his main goal in life to show everyone in the kingdom how wrongly they judged him.

Lan-Loe had sought his position in Jior after he was granted the red robes of a Strategist Sorcerer. He excelled in his studies, and his successes instilled a need for even more. Upon recognizing potential in the newly

crowned King Kullorn of Jior, Lan-Loe saw an opportunity for his own advancement when he recognized the tenacity Kullorn had to become the greatest king that ever-ruled Vedt.

Together, they began to plan for the complete takeover of everyone and everything. It would start with building a better Jior by expanding its borders with an unstoppable military force. Kullorn wanted every knee to bend to his rule.

It was an easy feat to convince Kullorn of the need to find a mysterious book only spoken of in legends by men who only understood dusty scrolls, chanting, and endless conjuring. Lan-Loe was one of them. He wove stories and made promises and spun a tale that Kullorn would find irresistible. Finding the book meant that Kullorn would have the means to build his kingdom and Lan-Loe would gain the ancient knowledge contained therein.

Thus, after two years of searching, much pillaging of ancient libraries and other sorcerer's lairs, they finally had The Book of the Fallen in their possession. It cost valuable time and resources but meant that the first stage of their plan was complete.

Now, at the dawn of Jior's greatness, King Kullorn was finally ready to take the next step toward his destiny. His plans were set in motion and his heart thrummed with anticipation of glory.

A small feeling of regret plagued his mind. He wished his father was still alive to see Kullorn reach the pinnacle of greatness. These were the thoughts that drove him, but he was a realist and pushed them away as a load of sentimental rubbish. Until he had an other-worldly, magical queen, an unstoppable heir, and demons at his command, Kullorn was nothing but the ineffective ruler of an insignificant kingdom. This made him furious, and he developed a taste for power and a cruel streak for vengeance.

Rested, bathed, and clothed in a fine white ceremonial robe, Kullorn waited for Lan-Loe to come and instruct him on the next steps he needed to take. Kullorn's bedchamber was in the top of one of the towers in his black castle. The furnishings were ancient and had been in his family for generations. Carved with symbols of power and creatures of legend, the

large four-post bed took up most of the room. The fire had been stoked and the flames climbed high within the large fireplace so that the balcony doors could remain open as an invitation for the mystical being Kullorn intended to summon.

There was an argument between Kullorn and Lan-Loe as to whether they should call a female from the Heavens or a female demon from the hells. The advantages and disadvantages were all laid out and examined thoroughly. Kullorn argued for a female demon to make his queen. Lan-Loe pointed out that a female from the Heavens would be more submissive and less likely to rip the king's throat out with her sharp talons. Kullorn was more interested in an enthusiastic bedpartner than someone meek. In the end, Lan-Loe's argument won out. He guessed, but presented as factual, knowledge that demon females could not create life.

Now, Kullorn stood in his chamber ready to perform the compelling spell from *The Book of the Fallen*. He had no wine that day to befuddle his thoughts and was prepared to speak the words of the compelling. The most difficult part was opening himself up, and revealing the depths of his desires, the contents of his heart. Lan-Loe had pounded him with this important detail until Kullorn wanted to pound the sorcerer.

Deep down the fear that such a pure being would not respond to him, was significant. Also, he feared that he would not be able to do what was necessary to compel a woman of such purity to come to him. Once there, he was sure he could entice her into bed because he was fine-looking, with a superior build and, above all, he was a king. She would be his queen. That should be inducement enough to his mind.

A knock on the door indicated Lan-Loe had arrived. The servants and guards were instructed not to bother the king under any circumstance until further notice. The precious book was carried in Lan-Loe's arms with reverence and care. He laid the book on a table and lit a small lamp next to it so that King Kullorn could see the words.

"How long will this take? An hour? A day? Two?" King Kullorn tapped his fingers impatiently.

"My king, you must be patient. This could take days, or it could take weeks. The book does not give a time limit, nor does it suggest the best

place to perform the ritual. It is not within my power or knowledge to say with certainty when she will come. More than likely, and you may behead me for saying so, but it is up to you and your willingness to expose your hidden heart which is the most powerful thing that will call her. Be sincere, be vulnerable, and open. It is the *emotions* you radiate that draw the perfect mate to you and will bring your plans to fruition. If we succeed, you will be the greatest king Vedt has ever seen. The name of Jior will ring through the ages as a symbol of strength, power, wealth, and magic!”

“I may behead you for putting me through this anyway, sorry sorcerer. I’m sure a demon lover would have been easier to entice into my bed than some weak frightened being from the Heavens.”

“As you say, my king. Sadly, The Book of the Fallen is more about beings from the Heavens and I’ve still much to learn about the underworld.” Lan-Loe bowed, realizing they had this argument before, it was pointless to continue. “Shall we begin?”

“Very well, begin.”

“Read these words. The language is strange, but I have translated them phonetically so that you can pronounce them perfectly. When the spell is cast that is when you must begin your prayer using your own words. Repeat them endlessly, pour your heart out until she comes, and she will be yours, bound to you by the spell until it is fulfilled. I have interwoven some of my own strengthening spells to amplify the compelling to *help* things along. I am confident that it will work much faster, as you wish.”

King Kullorn nodded and watched as Lan-Loe bowed out of his presence. The door clicked shut behind him. Turning, he was flooded with self-doubt. The reprimands and abuse heaped upon him as a child, tried to surface now, but he pushed all that away as a weakness.

Silencing the echoes of his father’s abuse he began to read the words. They were strange on his tongue and as he read, he stumbled and had to start over multiple times. His fury built within, and he felt ridiculous. He desperately wanted to break something but started again.

As he repeated the strange words, he remembered why he was going through with this. Taking a deep breath, he started over once again. He

repeated the ritual until he thought he would lose his voice, and his mind, altogether.



CHAPTER TWO

THE HEART AND DESIRE

For three days Kullorn repeated the words until he knew them by heart. He had not eaten or slept the entire time. His body was stiff from standing in one place and was hardly relieved by sitting in a chair. The fire had long since gone out. The balcony doors remained open and empty. The room grew frigid cold. He hardly felt the temperature but continued to drone on. As the morning of the fourth day dawned in the east, Kullorn slammed the book closed. It was apparent to him that his spell had not worked. Striding to the door in a fury, he threw it open. Lan-Loe was slumped in a chair in the hallway outside his room and jerked awake when King Kullorn wrenched the door open.

“It’s not working!” He bellowed. Even with his energy depleted from lack of food, water, and sleep, Kullorn was a force to be feared.

“My king,” Lan-Loe jumped to his feet. “You should eat and rest. Then tell me everything you’ve done for the past three days, how you felt, what you have seen. We will go over the ritual again and perhaps we can determine where the spell went wrong.”

The king glared at his sorcerer with tired red eyes that promised retribution. Nodding once, he retreated into his bedchamber. Lan-Loe ordered food and wine. After the king had eaten, he slept for the rest of the day and all the next night. His dreams were plagued with memories of his childhood, being bullied and beaten by his peers. The face of his father swam before him in a blur. Kullorn realized he had not remembered what the old king looked like until the past was dredged up. He heard his father's voice sneering, ridiculing, and calling him a weakling. The fear of failure smote him like a fist blow.

Kullorn's mother had died in childbirth, and his father never spoke of her, so he knew nothing about the woman who had brought him into the world. Every weakness he felt or hid, and every shortcoming he had, he attributed to her.

When the king had rested Lan-Loe appeared and they discussed the details of the spell Kullorn had spent so many days performing. Lan-Loe feared that the emotion and soul-bearing required by Kullorn were not possible. The king was cold and unemotional, a veritable wilderness of soul and not capable of the honesty required. Lan-Loe proceeded very cautiously.

"My king, I instructed you to say the words once and then add your heartfelt prayer. What you have done was simply repeat words that mean nothing to you in a language not your own. It is the bearing of your heart and soul that will call the creature, not useless repetition with no meaning behind it. You should try again when you are ready. Remember my instructions and you will succeed!"

The compelling required a complete opening of the heart within the spell in the form of a prayer, for that is what it was. Lan-Loe sagely advised King Kullorn, with some trepidation that it might not work and so he pressed on.

"You must pour out your need, your wants, and desires honestly, revealing the depth of the pain and suffering your need causes you. The prayer attracts the creatures like bees to honey. However, if the spell is not done with openness, humility, and revelation, then it will not work. In short,

my king, you must lay open your inner-self and let *goodness* flow into the essence of the compelling to be successful.”

Neither Kullorn nor Lan-Loe had a name for the being they would call and so called her a creature. The Book of the Fallen had a name written in a script the sorcerer could not translate. They did know that she would be a pure being of light though that knowledge did not deter them.

“What rubbish is this?” The king lashed out. “Is there no way around this! You are a sorcerer can’t you just force one of those women to do my bidding! I have no magic to cast spells, be compelling, or anything else! If you are trying to make a fool of me Lan-Loe, I swear I’ll have you skinned alive, and your bloody flesh burned before I allow you to die!” The king vented his fury loudly.

“I would do it for you my king, but the compelling only works if it comes from the supplicant with the need. I must also reveal that the spell takes time, days may pass, possibly even months. To capture one of these beings from the Heavens is similar to... ah, throwing a fishing line into an ocean. It takes time and patience to snag one of them. It must be done this way, or the compelling will not work. The woman will only come for the one she is meant for and that, my king, is *you*.”

“Days? Months?” the king hollered and pounded his fist on the nearest table making implements and tools upon it clatter. “I have not got time for days and months. Is there anything I can do to hurry this up?”

“I will instruct you in the ways that can hopefully accelerate the process, but it will depend upon the sincerity of your compelling and the depths of your need. I suggest we start tomorrow after you have had nourishment and a good night’s sleep, my king, for you will need it.”

“This had better work as you promised me Sorcerer or else you will pay a high price. I warn you, do not make a fool of me or I will delight in ways of making you suffer.”

Lan-Loe bowed to the king and when he straightened, he smiled and raised a finger. He paused with his lips parted in a way that indicated he had much more to reveal to King Kullorn.

“It may make you happy, my king, to know that within the pages of this book is the secret of commanding demons. They are unstoppable in battle.

With them, you will gain untold wealth and power. All will be subject to you and your queen from the Heavens once you succeed in calling one and compelling her to your will.”



CHAPTER THREE

THE COLLECTOR OF SORROWS

Kullorn began the ritual again. He spoke the words which he knew by heart now and then he began to talk. He told the empty room of his resentments, of his anger. He raged over the treatment from his father, the loss of his mother, and the injustice of his life. The words poured from him and the terrible stories of his childhood, the aching need for acceptance from his father, and the unfairness of his pale, colorless appearance. Three more days he spoke until he collapsed upon the floor in exhaustion, a pale and broken thing.

The next time he spoke to Lan-Loe he threatened him with horrific torture if he did not come up with a better plan or find the secret from the Book on how to *make* it work. They discussed in vague terms everything King Kullorn revealed this time in his attempt.

Lan-Loe was exhausted as well. Listening at the door he wanted to bang his head against it and yell at the stubborn king that he was still not saying the correct things in the needed way. A litany of wrongs brought against

him his entire life would not entice a being from the Heavens to give herself to him and rule by his side.

The king rested for a week after his last attempt. It seemed to him the more he spoke the ancient words the more it became clear to him what he had to do. He had to be a man and not a king.

The sun was setting when King Kullorn locked himself in his bedchamber yet again. The Book of the Fallen lay open, waiting. He threw open the tower's balcony doors. The cool evening air entered and chilled the room. Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes and forgot he was a king. Standing there as a man who was in search of something he had never revealed to anyone before. Now, as he repeated the words from the book, he knew exactly what he had to say. Then he did something he had never done before. *He knelt* before the open doors stripped to the waist, barefooted, and vulnerable. He let the wind blow cool caresses on his pale skin, then emptied his mind and opened his heart. It was turning twilight when he began. He set his red glare upon the first star twinkling in the night. Spreading his arms and bowing his head, he began.

"I am the collector of sorrows. I consume them like darkness swallows light. My head is cast back, and my throat is laid bare. I scream to the Heavens for release. Give me succor from pain, end my loneliness, relieve my fear, and show me an end to my unhappiness. The weight of my need has stripped me naked under the sun and I am bleached white, left loveless under the starry sky. Show me my love!"

The wind picked up outside and blew into the room making the dark, heavy curtains sway. The last sliver of the sun was impaled on the sharp mountains. Slowly, it fell and faded giving way to night. A blanket of more stars began to appear as Kullorn's closed his eyes and continued his litany of truth.

"I am the collector of sorrows. Tears flow from my eyes and sweat from every part of my body as I search for you. The heart under my flesh beats hard..." he beat on his chest with a clenched fist, "harder, hardened. There are no choices left to me, and I have never forgotten that first desire that I have always hidden, until now.

I am the collector of sorrows. I confess my desire to be a great king, I confess my want of a queen who is my equal, but I am in the end-just a man. Underneath the desires that are the very blood of me is that need... to be loved!" Those last words were issued in a whisper.

"I am the collector of sorrows. I am Kullorn of Jior. Come and save me from myself, save my soul from destruction." He threw his head back and cast his arms open in supplication.

"I am the collector of sorrows. I shall have no peace until you, my love, are with me."

Kullorn felt scoured clean, naked, and vulnerable. He shook with exposure and the cold wind gusted and made him shudder. Then the room became still, and the wind died unexpectedly. A stillness settled within him, and he sensed *someone* in the room with him. For one second more he remained kneeling with his eyes closed, chest heaving as if he had just run miles. Taking a deep breath, he opened his eyes and dared to hope.

Behind her, the stars swelled with brightness and night held its breath. The sun's rays had faded making way for a dark and moonless night. The quiet that she brought was thick with a peaceful, heavenly presence, and anticipation.

Astonished, Kullorn rose to his feet and stared. She was a young woman with great white wings that pulsed lightly behind her. Never in his life had he seen anything this beautiful, this ethereal. He knew that at any moment she could take flight and he remained where he was, unmoving, so he did not frighten her.

Still raw with emotion and vulnerable, his body tingled with magic, he swallowed struggling to find something to say. Her beauty was beyond compare. Her skin was as pale white as his own, as was the long braid that hung over her shoulder. She was the feminine to his masculine completely.

The clothing she wore was like nothing he had ever seen before. Tight-fitting trousers, a breastplate, and armor that looked as if they were made of the iridescent scales of a mythical dragon. A bejeweled long sword and an equally bejeweled short sword were sheathed at her side. She was his equal in every way, and he shook with a desire to embrace her. Striking amethyst eyes looked him over with a curious gleam. Kullorn had the

terrifying thought that she *knew* him, knew the secrets of his heart because of everything he revealed in the compelling.

“My lady, I have waited... so long... *for you*.” Kullorn was not sure what to say next. His body wanted to act, but the wings pulsing on her back reminded him he must be extremely cautious, or she could fly away without hesitation. He reached his hand out and held his breath waiting for her to take it.

“Come to me.” He said gently. “Come and be the love that I so desperately need.”

Drawn by his words, the winged woman stepped hesitantly into the room. Her cheeks flushed red. Her breathing was rapid. Then suddenly, she was standing in front of him, and he dropped to his knees again, overwhelmed by her closeness and her majesty. Her eyes were wary and narrowed at him as she weighed and assessed him. Slowly, with a steady hand, she drew her short sword and held the tip at the base of his throat.

His eyes flashed with vulnerability, confusion, and anger. Had anyone ever drawn a weapon on King Kullorn of Jior, he would have them drawn and quartered. This beautiful creature from the Heavens did so without fear in her eyes.

“Why have you compelled me here?” Her voice was sweet, but she was obviously displeased. “You know not what you have done.”

“My words were pure, truthful, and I spoke the desires of my heart. I would ask you to be my queen, my wife, and bear my children. You will be the breath in my lungs and the blood in my veins for all our days together. I compelled you here to marry me and end my loneliness, to be my love. If you will not consent, then drive home your blade, my lady, and end me because I would rather die than be without you.”

Something flickered in her eyes and Kullorn realized he was laying it on a bit thick but there was some truth to his last words. He felt the compelling magic between them swelling and binding them the more he laid bare his soul. Tethered, it spun around them, binding them both. He was drawn to her and she to him like a being caught in a web. When she did not kill him, Kullorn rose to his feet. He towered over her smaller form, but the strength that she exuded was not to be ignored. Slowly she sheathed her

sword and looked up at him. Amethyst eyes stared at him looking into his heart and soul.

“Love is a gift not lightly given. It is a lightning strike and burns hot and pure. It can also drain and damage if abused.” She spoke wisely. “I am bound by the compelling to grant you your heart’s desire. I think I could love you, but if I am to stay and be your queen, you must give me your promise never to misuse my love, and I only require yours in return.”

Kullorn’s heart soared and his mind whirled. Finally, after all he had done to stand there in that moment with a woman brought by his spell, promising to love him, was an undeniable victory. He had never loved anyone, and it was not until that very night when he opened himself up for the compelling, that he realized what was missing in his life. If this woman could bring him conquest over his enemies, grant his every wish and give him a son and heir, then he would promise her anything. His desire for her was beyond just the physical, but his body was also loudly screaming for satiation. If he was to be the great king he knew he could be, it all could be accomplished with this woman by his side.

He examined her beautiful face, saw her lips redden, her cheeks flush and her breath sped as if a change, physical, and demanding were surging through her.

“I promise to love you for as long as I am able.” Kullorn’s voice shook and, at that moment, he meant it.

The woman shrugged her shoulders, and the large white wings rose. In front of him she shapeshifted and her wings vanished into her back then she stood just as a woman. The tension between them crackled, was overpowering and Kullorn could not help himself. He stepped close, took her in his arms, bent his head, and kissed her.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE COMPELLING

She likened the compelling to a butterfly flying innocently in a spring day; full of nectar without a care, indulging in the joy of flight, and rejoicing in the warmth of the sun. Suddenly, being caught in the inescapable threads of a spider's web was frightening but the least of the danger of being ensnared. The descending spider was almost beautiful, attractive, and dangerous, spelling her doom. It trapped not only her body, but her heart. That is how it was when Twilight Star, a being of light, became ensnared by King Kullorn of Jior, a being of pure evil.

He never spoke of his origins, but she had a sense that he was one of the descended. She chose to ignore this revelation which may have been because she was ensnared. Kullorn's father was a man who chose to ignore his Creator during an ancient and dark age. Desire for power, riches and control were the consuming drivers that caused the son to continue the father's legacy. Kullorn of Jior, wove a mighty web of deceit without thinking about who his actions may harm and were done to satisfy his dark desires. Of such was the casting the compelling.

During their time together, Twilight Star loved him completely, believing she could save his stained soul, but it was their *love* that became tainted, his soul irredeemable. If there was ever a moment that Kullorn could have been saved, his salvation became a lost cause. Their love turned out to be nothing but a sorcerous lie. Worse, the fruit of their union, a young prince, might have been saved where it not for the dark ambitions that corrupted what should have been loved and protected. In the end, the light was extinguished.

If her capture could be blamed on anything, it was the unbridled joy of flight and the straying too far from her home. Her downfall could also be blamed upon her youth and love of nature, but the main cause was the evil spell. The compelling captured not only her mind by drawing a veil over her freewill but also entrapped her heart.

Within the pages of a book whose author was lost to time, the words and the key to the spell were written to cast a wide net not easily evaded. Once caught by the compelling, how to undo its damage would determine which of the innocents could be saved and which could not.

The Book of the Fallen had a soft brown cover, chrysolite gems set in gold filigree on the front and side binding that gave it a faint glow. Gilt in gold artistically drawn wings and intricate swirls embossed the cover. What was written on those gilded pages could cause the strongest of wills to covet the book and thirst for the knowledge within. The weakest of wills would be ensorcelled into hoarding it for purposes the book's author never intended.

When it fell into the hands of Lan-Loe, the Red Sorcerer and advisor to King Kullorn of Jior, they saw an opportunity to put it to use in a way meant for seduction and evil gain. So, it was when Twilight Star was called by the roaring sound of a massive waterfall outside of Jior, she also was captured by the compelling that would shape a kingdom.

She did fight the web of the spell at first, but her downfall came from his complete baring of his soul and his confessions of love. It was too strong and she became the King's ensnared.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE CORRUPTION OF THE INNOCENT

K ullorn, King of Jior, had never made love to a woman in his life. Multiple women had shared his bed since he first came of age, but the act had only been for his physical pleasure and release. In the past, he had fallen into bed with women he had known for a long time, women he had known for a short time, and women he had just met. As king, it was his prerogative. With any woman, and in all the years since, he had never sired a child. He held a secret fear that, being the pale creature as he was, he could not.

It was on his mind now as his lips descended to lightly brush those of the beauty in his arms. She closed her eyes and sighed innocently. In truth, he had not thought beyond the compelling and getting the heavenly woman to consent to be his queen. Now the pull she exuded was strong and he wanted to sweep her into his arms and carry her to his bed. He had no idea that he could feel this way. Fear began to creep into his mind, and he felt like an untried boy. Could he be gentle enough and loving as this delicate

woman deserved, as he just promised? Kissing her again was all he could think of doing, but should he? He did.

Her response was overwhelming. She reached her arms up and slid them over his bare chest. He had expected her touch to be cold, but her hands were warm and delicate. He lost all ability to think clearly and crushed her against him, kissing her passionately to bind her more securely to him. She responded. Her taste and warmth were a compelling all their own and he was lost, beyond the ability to stop or think clearly. The clank of her sword belt was barely noticeable as it hit the floor, and he lifted her in his arms. Her wings were *hidden*, and her slim body was as light as a feather. She was kissing him with the same feverish desire as Kullorn, and she gasped when he lightly smoothed the back of his fingers over the delicate skin of her neck.

The strange breastplate she wore was light, almost like a tunic made of metal with small silver buckles at the side. Kullorn's fingers were working at those buckles before he consciously knew what he was doing. It all seemed like a dream to him, and his body was anxious for her.

"Have you ever..." Kullorn thought to ask, between kisses.

"I have not." Slightly breathless, she looked him in the eye, and he saw desire and trust there.

He closed his eyes and a thrill ran through him. His hands ached to feel her bare flesh against his, and his heart stuttered with the realization *he* would be her one and only lover, *forever*. Then as if doused in cold water, his ire froze. Should he despoil this beautiful being of gentle purity and light? *Yes*, he decided he would. He had to. His face reflected a moment of doubt then his hesitation was replaced by a surge of indifference, fueled by raging desire that needed to be quenched.

"If you are to be my wife, I will be your only lover. Please never fear me, never betray me, and never leave me. I will be gentle with you for your first time."

She smiled and nodded... trusting again. As soon as he had her consent, he took her to the large bed. Gently he sat her down and finished unbuckling her breastplate. It slid to the floor along with the sheer silvery-white blouse underneath, then her boots and sleek trousers were next. Kullorn

stared in awe at the beauty of her pale skin. Skin like his only more lovely, glowing with a pearly hue. At that moment he did love her with all his heart.

At first, he thought it was a trick of the warm lamplight that gave her skin the pearly, luminescent glow. He was in awe; it seemed to be part of her natural color. She was his equal in every way and this similarity they had between them was more than he ever expected. When she was completely undressed, he could not take his eyes off her. In awe of her perfection, he caressed her soft skin from the top of her shoulders to her small delicate feet. The magic of the spell was a heavy presence in the air between them but neither acknowledged its impact nor thought of the consequences.

King Kullorn was a warrior. Years of sword fighting and horse riding had given him a lean muscular build. As he slid his trousers off and stepped out of them, he let her look at his body as he had done to hers. Never having been modest or ever caring if the females of his acquaintance approved of his physic or not, now he felt anxious and wanted to please her. Lowering himself to the bed, he began, for the first time in his entire life, to make love.

A desire to possess her overwhelmed him. She caressed his face and smoothed his long white hair back from his face. With each touch of his hand, every inch explored, she gasped with pleasure. It pleased Kullorn that she was so responsive and willing. He surprised himself by hesitating to give her pain.

When the moment came and he lowered himself to her body, he kissed her hard and gently entered her. Gasping with the feeling of her warmth and the tight way her body held him, Kullorn was astonished. It was the perfect embrace between a man and a woman. Slowly, she began to move beneath him. Kullorn's body rippled as he undulated with her. They were in perfect rhythm together. His mouth met hers in passionate kisses and she breathed with him. He inhaled her sweet breath as he moved with her gently but firmly. Then she delicately bit his bottom lip, pulling his hips hard against her as the climax of his loving hit. He felt the pulse and squeeze of her intimate flesh holding his hardness and could hardly believe it.

For the first time, this physical act was simply perfect in Kullorn's heart and mind. He could not believe that finally, he was making love to his future queen. She was beautiful, soft, and exotic. He was surprised that his reactions to her were calm and patient. Typically, such gentle lovemaking was not to his liking. He left his old ways behind. The way she moved with him now, the scent of her hair and strange pearly skin, the taste of her lips, made him mad with need. With her, he had the sudden desire to be a better man... for her.

Finally, Kullorn pumped his seed into the heavenly woman he had called, loving every minute he was within her. He planned to have many, many nights repeating this act with her. He gave her his seed, and she would give him a son. Together, they would rule Jior and the entire continent of Vedt. His heart soared with victory.

"What is your name?" He thought to ask as they lay entwined afterward.

"My name is Twilight Star."

"Ah, perfect, you shall be my Star of Jior." Kullorn smiled.



CHAPTER SIX

THE MAGIC

Lan-Loe was surprised when late in the night of Kullorn's third try at the compelling spell, the king abruptly yanked the bedchamber door open. He was shocked when he saw the king standing with nothing, but a blanket wrapped around his hips. The king barked an order.

"Prepare the wedding!" Then he slammed the door and left Lan-Loe blinking in astonishment.

King Kullorn had done it and he was *smiling!* Truly, Lan-Loe had not been sure the spell would work. The Book of the Fallen was strange, unclear, and the language was unintelligible and, he thought, untranslatable. If it were not for notes written on the side of the pages in his native language, he would not have been able to decipher the correct spell. He guessed at the pronunciation when he wrote out what King Kullorn should say and thought there were further instructions not attempted. He employed a lot of speculation and guesswork, and he was never quite sure it was going to succeed. A plan was in place for him to flee Jior

if the compelling spell failed this time because he knew Kullorn would ultimately make him pay with his life.

Standing a little taller, staring at the king's closed bedchamber door, he realized that just inside that room, was a being from the Heavens like no one else on earth. Lan-Loe sat down in the chair he had occupied for the last several days and contemplated what he had just done. He felt powerful! Unstoppable! Invincible! His skill as a Red Sorcerer had set in motion the creation of a great and unbeatable kingdom. Who knew what greatness lay in store for Jior now and who knew the heights of wealth and power they could reach! History would revere and worship them!

He gave a moment of pause thinking about the woman King Kullorn was obviously with because of the compelling. Surely a great reward was awaiting Lan-Loe for playing his part in bringing the heavenly female to Kullorn. He wondered what she was like. Was she beautiful to behold? Did she truly have wings like the pictures in the book revealed? Thinking swiftly, he laid new plans for himself and King Kullorn as well. Together they would be unstoppable. Now all they needed was an *heir*.



King Kullorn spent every dime in his coffers to celebrate his victory with the woman who would be his queen and mother to his heir. He contemplated if she had conceived with their first-time lovemaking but wasn't sure if that was possible. He looked forward to many nights assuring that his seed took hold in her womb. If she was pregnant at the wedding, then more the better. If he was truly impotent... well, that is simply something he would not allow.

When he returned from giving his order to Lan-Loe, he took her in his arms again. They lay quietly together sharing gentle kisses. He knew his lust was not satiated but hesitated to press himself on her again so soon after losing her virginity. As his thoughts strayed to her beautiful body, he grew ready to have her yet again. It was not his way to deny himself for anyone, but she was delicate, and he hesitated, trying to rein in his desire.

Twilight Star noticed his aroused state and rose on her elbow smiling at him. She moved up and straddled him. Taking him into her body she arched back and Kullorn was frozen at the sight of her in the throes of passion. She glowed like a pearl in candlelight and her perfection was indescribable.

It gave him a moment's pause to have her on top of him in a place of dominance which he usually disdained. She was in control of her body and his at that moment. He *never* allowed a woman to gain this position over him and for a moment he contemplated flipping them so that he could dominate her. Her breasts were larger than he first noticed, and his hands naturally cupped their heavy weight. When she moved on him, his body thrilled like never before and he let her continue. He realized he genuinely loved her in those moments and felt strange.

After slowly undulating on him she began to pick up the pace, and he realized he was going to spend. His skin flushed and his body tightened and suddenly both were caught in a climax of ecstasy that he had not experienced before. He closed his eyes and gritted his teeth as a wave of erotic sensation laid him out boneless and breathing hard.

Twilight Star collapsed over him, breathless from her exertions. When she looked at him, she was smiling, understanding that she had given him the most satisfying moment of passion he had ever known.

He pulled her down to him and wrapped his arms around her. Kissing her with thanks and praising her with poetic words he never imagined he could compose. Kullorn shut the world out of his mind, putting his plans and desires aside. For now, he would revel in the presence of his new queen and get to know her body, capturing her heart as well. He would make love to her until she begged him to stop, and the rest would come later, now she was here. Called by magic, she was his and he hers.

"You are the breath in my lungs and the blood in my veins for all of our days together." She repeated the words he had spoken to her earlier. Kullorn's eyes flew open in shock, a chill spread over his skin and he lay awake in the darkness, listening to the sound of each breath she took.



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SOFTENING HOPE

King Kullorn was a new man. For the first time in his life, his smiles were genuine, and his joy was complete. The compelling magic had worked and now the winged woman was *his*. Twilight Star was heavenly he mused. She had a delicacy that appealed to his strength and protectiveness, and an intuition that satisfied his bodily needs. The surety of an heir was overwhelming as was the thought that they would have ample time to keep trying to conceive. He would never admit that fear of his, that he could not father a child, but if that was the case, he hoped his new queen had magic that could cure him. His albinism was not a deterrent to her and their passion for each other was as unstoppable as it was a surprise.

Twilight Star began to believe that she had succeeded in softening his heart and that their love would win the day over what was meant for evil. She imagined that it was a compelling magic that brought them together, but love blinded her to the full truth.

Over the next few days, Kullorn lavished time and attention on his betrothed. Wedding preparations were well underway. He smiled, laughed and was kind, to the shock of everyone in Jior.

Twilight Star was an enigma. Her ability to calm Kullorn and her unimaginable beauty, sweetness and softness of heart were unseen before. She spoke very little, never expressing any doubts about him and seemed content. The glow about her never doused and seemed to be a part of who she was. When her violet eyes rested on Kullorn, they glittered with devotion and worship.

Now, all that was left to be done was to announce their betrothal to the lords of the kingdom, reveal Kullorn's great plan for Jior and wait for an heir.



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE WEDDING

There were moments in the days before the wedding that Twilight Star had some clarity. Part of her mind understood she was under the magical influence of a compelling. Fear turned her blood to ice, and she longed for escape before it was too late, but she was ensnared. The overwhelming need to complete her purpose for being there kept her bound by the web of the spell and her heart would always overrule her mind.

The day of the wedding dawned in the splendor of a pink and gold sunrise that painted the hidden valley of Jior. Giving the sun back its colors and devouring its warmth the castle's black crystal walls caught the light and glittered deceptively. The strength of the compelling spell made the hesitant bride swoon, but she was stronger than her body felt at that moment and she readied for the joyous ceremony.

Obedying King Kullorn's instructions she waited until she was summoned. When it was time, she went hoping love would prevail and that

maybe she could bring light to the darkness she feared was in his soul but had yet to fully see.



The wedding of King Kullorn of Jior was a much anticipated and grand affair. It was held at a northern castle at the edge of Jior's border closest to Skoria. Everyone wanted to see who had been chosen to be the next Queen of Jior. All the lords of Jior were in attendance. Kings and queens, nobles, and ladies from all over Vedt were invited to attend and a feast like none other was prepared in an abundant display of things to come. The smaller castle was elegantly decorated from the lowest courtyard to highest tower. King Kullorn had taxed heavily and borrowed dearly to finance such a royal wedding that would be spoken of for generations to come.

Many of the neighboring kings gave excuses not to attend and sent small gifts in replacement of their royal personages. For every king that did not attend, Kullorn made a mental list of those showing a disinterest in celebrating his nuptials. Silently, he promised himself that those kingdoms would be the first to fall in his strike to take over as king over all of Vedt.

Few had yet seen the new queen, but many rumors circulated of her great beauty. Seamstresses toiled day and night on the bride's fine wedding gown, for the new queen must look spectacular on her wedding day.

Kullorn's jewelers were put to task to create magnificent jewels to adorn her throat, ears, and fingers. He sent strict instructions on a set of his design and even sent a box of his mother's jewels to be melted down and remade into something perfect for the new queen.

On the day of the wedding, blue skies overhead dominated a cloudless sky. Strangely, trees that were withering and dying only weeks before were suddenly bursting with snow-white blooms. The petals fell like snow and littered a long walkway that led to the ceremony. Scaffolding had been built on either side of an immense field behind the castle gardens so that everyone would be able to see the new queen. Every citizen of Jior gathered from far and wide to see the spectacle of the King of Jior's wedding.

The hour had come. Kullorn adorned in white and gold finery, rode a spirited white horse that pranced on gold shod hooves. Through the vast gardens and down a wide walkway he rode to where a brown-robed sorcerer stood solemnly waiting to perform the ceremony.

It was a spectacular entrance as was ever seen in the Kingdom of Jior and Kullorn enjoyed acting in contradiction to tradition. The crowd hushed as the king dismounted, and everyone looked toward the gardens waiting for the new queen to walk down the same path Kullorn just took. The wind rustled the trees, and the fair day seemed to hold its breath, waiting. The gardens gave a view that would allow the bride to be seen coming from a great distance. When they did not see her coming at the precise time as expected, they began to murmur in consternation. Moments passed in which people began to wonder where the King of Jior's bride was. It was not until they all turned to the dais where Kullorn stood that some of them began to wonder if it had all been some sort of farse. Kullorn smiled knowingly and as soon as all eyes were upon him, he looked up.

From the blue skies there suddenly appeared a vision in sparkling white. Crystals sewn to her long flowing white dress, glittered like a myriad of daytime stars and a woman with huge white wings slowly *flew* into view. Her long white hair blew back from pearl white shoulders, and her red lips held a sweet, expectant smile. The wings caused a stir in the air before she landed, and the long sparkling skirts settled around her like the petals of a white flower sprinkled with dew.

The wedding gown was of a cut and style never seen before. It hugged her slender curves from her hips down, like a second skin. A bodice made only of pearls and diamonds hugged her breasts and her pale pearly white skin revealed underneath. She seemed to glow with an inner light. Most wonderous was a heavy necklace of diamonds with large amethysts the size of quail eggs.

The audience gasped upon seeing the stunning, winged woman who now stood beside King Kullorn and took his hand. She looked upon him with eyes full of love bordering on worship.

No one could believe their eyes as they looked upon the bride who glittered beside a very happy King Kullorn. Everyone in the crowd gasped

as she shrugged her shoulders and shape changed right in front of them and her wings reached up to the sky and then disappeared into her back. Some of the women fainted and many of the men gapped in awe over the strange sight.

The Brown Sorcerer waiting to marry them sweated profusely. As a keeper of the law and a scribe of the Order of Brown Sorcerers, he stood waiting to do his duty and bind the new king and queen together, thus securing the kingdom and ensuring its future as the law demanded.

Kullorn smiled at his bride and then the betrothed couple turned together, and the Brown Sorcerer began the ceremony. He spoke the law of the land, the devotion of the people for their ruler, and the love of a man for his wife.

“You are the breath in my lungs and the blood in my veins for all of our days together.” Kullorn said his final vow.

“You are the breath in my lungs and the blood in my veins for all of our days together.” The bride said her final vow.

Last, the Brown Sorcerer spoke of the need for an heir, and then the deed was done. King Kullorn now had a queen. The stunned audience rose to their feet and applauded loudly as he kissed the bride. Turning toward the crowd, Kullorn raised his hands for quiet and then in a loud voice, introduced his wife.

“My good people...” he began, “I give you, my wife... Queen Star of Jior!”

Twilight Star blinked at Kullorn as he truncated her name, but then smoothing her features into a radiant smile, she realized he must have had his reasons. People murmured and commented on the lovely queen and applause once again broke out. Trumpets sounded as King Kullorn led his new queen down the long aisle, and they only had eyes for each other. The celebration began as soon as the hall was filled.

There was dancing and merriment that lasted until dawn. The name of the queen spread rapidly across the land, as did word that she was a strange, winged creature as only whispered of in ancient legends. Spies of the foreign kings who had not attended fled Jior to report back on the new queen. She quickly became known simply as the Star of Jior.



CHAPTER NINE

THE QUEEN OF JIOR

Twilight Star had one part to play as Queen of Jior and that was to provide an heir. Kullorn demanded it and his vigorous lovemaking became rough and desperate. He despaired that his pale seed was not strong enough and they would remain childless despite his efforts.

The new queen, for the most part kept to herself and would often disappear into the clouds to quench her desire to fly. Always, she came back to Kullorn whom she loved with an unexplainable appetite. If she ever questioned it, she did not let on. The other place she frequented was the training ring. She practiced with swords and bow and arrows until Kullorn put a stop to her sparring in the event that it risked any possible pregnancy.

Many called the queen simple because she rarely spoke and slowly the people began to be less in awe of her and felt sorry for her more than anything else. Months passed and she showed no sign of carrying the heir of Jior.

Kullorn had an unnatural obsession with her and took every chance he could to bed her, but feared she was barren. Twilight Star, for her part, was

an enthusiastic lover and never denied him. When they talked of an heir, she fell silent and the sad look on her face brought Kullorn to his knees. It was only when they were together that he could accept that they had not conceived and when they were apart, he fumed. As the time passed Kullorn grew dissatisfied with his winged wife.

Kullorn's power increased and the Kingdom of Jior grew. He became greatly feared and rumors began to spread that he had enlisted blue-skinned demons in the ranks of his soldiers. Kullorn of Jior became feared like no man had ever been in the history of Vedt.

Lan-Loe, the Red Sorcerer, became equally feared for his magic. A sense of evil prevailed over Castle Jior and the roaring of blue-skinned demons could be heard issuing from his chambers. They became a common sight and every shadow and hall held menace.

Jior's forces marched further into the lands of Vedt and ruthlessly burned and destroyed everything in its wake. The Lords of Jior grew rich and supported their king with enthusiasm because it profited them to do so. Entire cities and villages were wiped out. People were taken as hostages and slaves, and the kings of the bordering countries gathered their armies to fight the threat that was Kullorn of Jior, now called the King of Demons.



It was the nature of Castle Jior that *hurt* Twilight Star, she felt it heavily. These dark towers, black crystalline walls and shadowed corridors had been built by the hands of the descended. The blue-skinned demons added to the king's army, struck fear in the hearts of the humankind. She began to suspect that their presence harmed her in a way that was most important and she would never conceive. Her heart feared Kullorn would set her aside and their broken love would devastate her. The effects of the compelling spell fed those fears to the point of despair and kept her ensnared.

Strengthening her resolve that only desired to please him, Twilight Star went to Kullorn and expressed her worry.

“My love, my king,” her delicate voice pleaded with him, “it is this place, this black castle, hidden in the Violent Mountains, built by the descended demons that closes my womb. I fear I will never give you that which you desire most and I long for... a son.”

Kullorn considered the meaning of her words and could not disregard her fears. He wanted what he wanted for his own schemes. This beautiful creature, his queen, held that small bit of his heart that contained his love for her and gave him a glimmer of hope. If leaving his castle would guarantee him an heir, then she would leave to a place of his choosing.

Long campaigns away from Twilight Star meant that, not only did he build his kingdom and further his bid to become High King of Vedt, but it caused a longing in him that he could not name. That part of him that was evil whispered that his love for his queen was weakness. Regardless, he must have an heir and so, he agreed to take her away from the demon-built walls of Jior.

Neither of them could know that it was the compelling spell that bound their hearts in love. It was part of who she was as a being of light, to love. Also, it was completely opposite of who he was as a son of the dark. She would never express this to him, but her prayer and her hope was that she could save him, bring him light and dispel the darkness within him by giving him a son he could love as well.

They headed out of Jior on a mist covered morning and made for a place where they hoped she would finally conceive his heir. They returned to the small castle where they were married. Queen Star rode a horse rather than fly, so that she could stay by King Kullorn’s side. Her eyes held him in loving glances, and her smiles filled him with anticipation that finally he would have his heir.

They went to a small castle where Kullorn put her in a high tower. A four-post bed brought for the express purpose of their comfort and love making took up the better part of the room. He gave her jewels and fine silks and furs to show his love. Flowers decorated the halls and pillars. The place swarmed with the queen’s handmaidens and servants whose only purpose was to serve Queen Star of Jior.

Despite days of travel and months of war having kept him busy, Kullorn was up to the task of satisfying his wife. Their first night there he did not allow her to rest. He ordered a scented bath and hardy satisfying meal to be brought for him and his queen. They dined together and in a completely contrary manner to his usual ways, he bathed her with his own hands as if they were newlywed.

His hands caressed her pearl-white skin, and he could not help but praise her beauty. Twilight Star blushed under his attention and absorbed the clean fresh air and felt revitalized. She quivered under his touch, and he carried her to their bed with strong arms and heated kisses.

Their naked bodies came together as he lowered himself over her and let go of his usual tenseness. When they joined, him undulating and she holding him as only a woman can hold a man, they let go of all doubt and embraced hope. If it were a trick of the light, he could not tell, but she seemed to glow and her eyes sparked violet when she threw her head back and cried out with completion.

Kullorn's hand caressed her cheek and for a moment the intensity fled his features, and he looked like a young man whose hopes and dreams were beneath him crying out in joy. When his climax came upon him, he thrust within her and his breathing was harsh as he let go and emptied within her. Kissing her passionately his need and desire took over and for one long moment he forgot himself and confessed, *"I love you, my Star!"*

An unseen crash of a magic exploded and together they rode a storm of completion, and something moved, clashed, and took hold. It was this time of lovemaking that Twilight Star knew in her heart and body, something was different and then, time would reveal, they finally conceived a son!



CHAPTER TEN

THE HEIR

Kullorn waited for months, but his patience was almost at an end, and he was at war within himself. Every night he took joy of Twilight Star's body more desperately, each time he hoped that their efforts would create that which he desired more than anything. If real love grew between them, they didn't stop to consider, just the joy of being together fed their hearts and their joy was complete in their moments together.

Twilight Star began to believe that her love succeeded in changing him. That the madness and evil she glimpsed at Castle Jior in the heart of the Violent Mountains, was finally dispelled. These were the most glorious days of their marriage and their happiness was complete.

When King Kullorn's generals came and they planned war, he hid his actions behind closed doors and sheltered his queen from his plans. Unbeknownst to her, a terrible violent, evil war was being waged by King Kullorn, and the people of the Land of Vedt feared the name Jior.

With news of their victories, word came that the queen had finally conceived. She never believed that she would regret every kiss, every caress,

and every joyful cry of release, in the name of bringing a new life to the line of King Kullorn.

Kullorn did not rejoice loudly, he only smiled and kissed his wife with relief. With the news she was with child, his appearance in her bed slowed and often, she awoke alone. As the child grew, he spent less time with her and more time away, bringing destruction to the land and securing his place as High King of Vedt.

When Twilight Star was in her last month of pregnancy, King Kullorn summoned her. She was now commanded to leave the castle where she spent the last months lovingly nurturing her growing child and planning for the birth. He called her back to the black tower with orders that his heir should be born within the black crystalline walls of Castle Jior. Her heart surged with loneliness and the greatest desire to see her husband, but her flesh crawled with thoughts of the evil place.

Twilight Star was warrior of the air but so great with child, she dared not fly. Lan-Loe was sent to escort her back to the demon-made castle. He was a frightening man she feared. He often bragged about owning The Book of the Fallen and told her he knew of spells to bind her wings and stop her from ever leaving Jior. He demonstrated his power by casting spells on the forests, rocks and trails they traveled back to Jior hiding the path from their enemies. The way to Jior was secreted and the Red Sorcerer gave her many warnings that, should she ever leave Jior, even the skies would stop her. Twilight Star felt in her bones the dark magic he employed would prove his boasts.

When they reached the black walls surrounding Jior, Twilight Star felt the dark magic and the evil that prevailed even more than when she left. She feared that somehow it would affect her child and immediately went to the highest tower in the castle and did not leave it. She hid from the evil and decadence within the halls and despaired for her son who would be born living in such a place.

Weeping in her tower room, Twilight Star felt the first stirrings of pain fluttering within her womb. Her tears were from fear of the prevailing stench of death seeping from the castle where she struggled to bring new life. Finally, King Kullorn's son was brought into the world during a raging

ice storm. Twilight Star thrashed on sweat soak sheets in the throes of labor while below in the massive hall, the king drank and celebrated with his lords and his men. A great fire crackled in the hall's long hearth and laughter could be heard echoing up from below competing with the sound of the storm.

When at last to her relief, she brought forth the baby, she sighed with maternal love. The midwife and the two women helping her smiled and exclaimed how beautiful the boy was. Twilight Star stared at the torrents of ice falling from the skies outside and she longed to fly. Reaching her arms out she demanded to hold him, and they placed him in her arms.

'Forlorn Icefall' his name rang out in her mind as if shouted as soon as she touched him. She knew in her heart that this son would be a curse and a blessing to the world. Carefully turning him over she pulled aside the soft blanket he was wrapped in and prayed to find what she hoped with all her heart would be there. A ripple of relief poured through her heart as she saw silver lines in the shape of wings on his back. Her son would be winged.

Someone left the tower to go and inform the king he had a son. The shouts of elation mixed with the sharp sound of the ice hitting the windows. She slept for a short time and when King Kullorn came to see her in the early hours of the morning, she flinched.

As if a veil had been torn from her eyes, she saw him with a new revelation. She felt it, knew within her veins and sinew that she had been under a spell and the magic was now gone. The compelling had been completed with the birth of her son. The feeling of undying love no longer smote her in King Kullorn's presence and, as he stood at the bedside, she felt nothing but dread.

Kullorn placed one hand on the wood carved roses of his queen's bed to steady himself as he leaned over and stared at the pale, downy white head of his son. He suckled at his mother's breast, and she tightened her arms protectively around him as her husband scrutinized them both.

"Queen Star, you've given me a son. I am well pleased." His words were slightly slurred as he leaned closer to get a better look at the babe at her breast and the scent of wine drifted toward her.

“Yes, a son. He is strong.” Twilight Star tried hard to find an ounce of the love that had propelled her through this marriage since the day she took her vows. The memory of those words left a sour taste in her mouth now and she knew with certainty that she had been tricked by the compelling into loving this man.

“Is he... is he like you? Will the boy have wings?” Kullorn looked intently at her waiting almost feverishly for her answer.

“Yes, he is like me.” She hesitated before going on, not quite fully knowing what it all meant to her son’s future. “He is winged. I will teach him to fly and...” Twilight Star’s words faltered as the thought came to her that she could take her son and fly away with him any time she wanted.

“When? When will he be strong enough to fly?” Kullorn was quivering with anticipation.

“He will not be able to call the wings until he has reached the age of five. It is rare that it happens before then.”

“But you said he is strong. Perhaps they will come before then? I need him strong enough to lift a sword and take his rightful place by my side?”

“He will be strong, but the *ne’amb chomhara* cannot be forced.” Twilight Star deliberately spoke the language of the Fallen and did not bother to translate. “You must be patient with our son.”

“We shall see.” Kullorn grumbled. He began to think frantically, when she said, “*he will be like me*,” a spark of fear kindled in his breast. Twilight Star was good, pure, a creature from the Heavens, with no violence or anger in her, and so *his* son, would be like *her*. This set his mind alight like a raging inferno.

“Whatever these words are you are speaking in your language do not teach them to my son. Do you understand? I do not know it and so he shall not either. He was made to command armies and to strike fear into the hearts of men. I will not tolerate anything that will lead him down a different path.”

As a parting gesture, Kullorn leaned down to place a kiss her upon the forehead.

Twilight Star possessed enhanced senses, and suddenly, she could smell a strange fragrance on her husband. Her nostrils flared as she realized it was the scent of another woman.

"You promised not to misuse my love." Her voice caught. "You've betrayed me with another." She closed her eyes in pain, but no tears came. Her heart lurched with understanding and fear of the future.

"You have done well, my queen, now rest and regain your strength." Kullorn did not acknowledge what she said as if he had not heard, only turned away, and strode toward the door.

"His name is Forlorn Icefall." She had one last word for her husband who had not even bothered to ask.

King Kullorn stopped and turned back, his shoulders stiffening. A look of rage briefly crossed his face and his eyes glared red at her.

"We shall call him *Lorn*, Prince Lorn of Jior after his father."

She watched him go, the veil now torn from her eyes completely, and her next words revealed the truth she should have acknowledged all along.

"Now, *I* am the collector of sorrows." A lone tear fell down her cheek as she whispered to the emptiness left by the king's retreat.

As Kullorn opened the door to leave, Twilight Star saw the flash of red robes outside. Lan-Loe appeared on the threshold of her chamber. Kullorn's voice dropped low and his anger flared as he gave instructions to the Red Sorcerer.

The queen looked back down at her son who had fallen asleep at her breast and pretended she did not hear the king command his sorcerer to cast spells so that his winged wife could not fly away. She shuddered as she heard him say, "I have future plans for her," and the door closed her in.

"*Ilskedur Sonnur*," Twilight Star whispered, "beloved son" to her sleeping baby. A tear slowly fell down her cheek.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE NE'AMH CHOMHARA

Twilight Star awoke in her tower room with a feeling that something was missing. The small bed next to hers was empty. She rose in a panic and a premonition that something was wrong struck her hard.

It had been three years since she gave birth to Forlorn Icefall and each day, she spoke secret words to him. She whispered secrets of flying and told tales of their people. He was still just a child but was big for his age and she hoped that soon he would be strong enough to fly away with her.

The evil of Castle Jior depleted and weakened her, or she would just take the child and fly. She feared Lan-Loe's evil power and the things he threatened her with echoed in her mind.

King Kullorn had left her and the boy alone for the most part, but recently he had made repeated attempts to return to her bed. She refused him revealing she could smell the scent of other women on his skin. He would shout and revile her promising retribution but each time he made to force his will upon her, the child would stand silently between them. Even at three years of age, the boy was proving to be unnaturally strong

and was very protective of his mother. Eventually, Kullorn would give up and leave them alone.

He had grown worse, darker, and so far from the man she thought she loved when first ensnared. Though, in hindsight, she knew it was the compelling that forced her to love him and had been no true love.

Quickly she rose, dressed, and went in search of her son. The corridors of the castle were dark, damp and the shadows moved with menace, but she had grown used to it. Quietly, she strode toward the room where her instincts told her, her son could be found. She paused at the door which was cracked open when she heard the king and Lan-Loe discussing her.

"My king, I overheard the queen is teaching your son to be like her. She will make him a being of light and goodness." Lan-Loe's voice held a note of derision. "He will be weak and useless to our cause."

"Not if I can help it." Kullorn growled viciously. "I need him to be the leader of demon hoards, not some kind, benevolent weakling."

"Then you must do whatever it takes to alleviate her influence. You'll have to send her away for good. Separate them before he is old enough to form more of an attachment to her."

"I'll take the queen to the old castle again and get her with another child whether she likes it or not. I will sire a hoard of winged children and we will be unstoppable!"

"My king, it is possible that she will just fly away. My powers cannot truly stop her from leaving if she wants. The compelling spell dissipated when the prince was born and neither you nor I have more power over her anymore."

"She'll not fly away while I have her son. As long as she cooperates with my wishes, she'll have the hope of seeing him again. It is settled. Have her prepared to leave this afternoon. Bind her if you must so that she cannot fly away. I'll have bars installed over her windows to keep her in. It will be as I commanded and not a detail changed."

Twilight Star was struck with fear over what they planned for her and her son. She had to think of a way to get him out of there. It would be easy once they reached the open skies, but she would not leave her son behind, and he had not flown yet. She had been lost in her terror and did not notice

someone approaching until Lan-Loe yanked open the door and grabbed her arm. He pulled her into the room and dragged her toward the king who stood beside the prince.

“Ah, the queen is here. Judging by the look on your face you heard our plans. I will warn you, my dear, that I am tired of being thwarted. You’ve denied me your bed for long enough. I am willing to be lenient. If you bed me, give me another child, I will allow you to visit Prince Lorn. If you do not or if you fly away, you will never see him again. It is as simple as that. Now, the boy is three years of age, make him sprout his wings or do whatever you have to do. I need him winged and able to fly as soon as possible. His training as my heir will begin immediately. I’m tired of waiting.”

The king was demanding Forlorn Icefall fly. Twilight Star’s flesh went ice cold as she realized they wanted the boy to shapeshift and call forth the wings before it was time.

“You will hurt him if you force the *ne’amb chomhara* before it is time. He may never fly as a result.” Twilight Star kept her voice neutral while her mind tried to think of a way out of this situation. Getting the boy out of there was her priority.

“This book says otherwise.” Lan-Loe brandished a brown volume covered in pale green glowing gems. She could read the title from where she stood, The Book of the Fallen. She closed her eyes in defeat and took a deep breath.

“Let Forlorn Icefall come to me and we can try.” She knelt and held her arms out beckoning to the boy who looked back at her with large violet eyes filled with love. “Come to me Forlorn Icefall.”

“No, my dear, you may instruct him from there.” King Kullorn seemed to be holding his temper.

She waited for a minute weighing her options. There was only one clear path and that was to take the boy and fly now that she knew she could. The lies and deceit that had kept her prisoner were now revealed and no longer kept her from acting.

It was then that she looked down and saw that they had an iron shackle around his ankle. They were taking no chance that she could do what she

had been contemplating nor take him and fly. Her shoulders drooped with sorrow.

Lan-Loe had been watching and saw her eyes darting toward the open window. He moved to place himself between her and escape. Staring at the iron shackle on the boy's ankle she realized she had no choice but to do as they asked, for now, but she would watch for her opportunity.

"Ilskedur Sonnur, Forlorn Icefall, do as I do and call the wings you know are there." Twilight Star shrugged and shapeshifted. Her wings grew from her back and spread wide.

The prince looked at her with wide violet eyes that held love and amazement and then leaned forward. He shrugged his small shoulders and strained. It took a few minutes, and Twilight Star encouraged him while her heart raced. She waited for a moment when the men's attention was on the boy's shapeshifting and not on her and planned to lunge forward and grab him. In her winged form, she could break the chain and fly away with her son in her arms. It was the only desperate plan she could think of.

The prince closed his eyes tightly in concentration and his whole body began to shake. He shrugged and strained and cried out in pain. King Kullorn looked triumphant as slowly two small gray mottled wings began to appear. Lan-Loe was watching in fascination as, with a small splattering of blood, Lorn flapped his new wings.

Now was her chance. Twilight Star snapped her wings, lifted off, and swooped toward the boy. Grabbing the iron chain in her hand she tugged. The iron burned her hand, but she did not care she had to get her son and fly. There must have been a spell on the iron because it would not break and as the metal burned down to her finger bones she screamed in pain and let go.

The king and the Red Sorcerer lunged toward her and tried to grab her, but she clutched her hand to her chest and whirled. Realizing she was forced to come back for her son, she flew toward the windows. Lan-Loe blocked her path, but she kicked out and her booted foot caught him under the chin and he fell back. She put on a burst of speed and crashed through the window. The freedom of the skies called her and she answered.

Heartbroken tears flowed down Twilight Star's face like rain as she disappeared into the clouds... leaving her son behind.

His cries, "Mamma, Mamma!" followed her until she could no longer hear them.



CHAPTER TWELVE

THE PRINCE OF DEMONS

Prince Lorn was only three years of age and though he felt the fantastic weight of his wings on his back, he stood staring at the window where his mother had disappeared. She left him despite his cries for her to come back. He did not stop crying until his father grabbed him painfully. Glaring at him with frightening red eyes, the king threatened to beat him if Lorn did not stop with the useless tears.

Then he told him something he would never forget. Words that would be drilled into his head for years until he believed them. His mother was a demon. She did not love him and was not coming back for him. It was revealed that he was half-demon and half-human, a one-of-a-kind creature on the earth, and would grow to be a great warrior. His destiny was to rule Jior by his father's side, to bring destruction to the land and death to those who would not comply.

In his younger years, when he asked about his mother, he always regretted it. Like a damning litany his father and Lan-Loe drilled it into his head that she left him to pursue selfish demon pursuits and that she did

not care for him, had never cared for him. If he asked anyone to describe her, they told him she was a *blue-skinned* demon. As he grew older and at the young age of 15, he no longer remembered anything about her and he stopped asking. Being surrounded by blue-skinned demons at Castle Jior, he understood that was his true nature and the truth of his abandonment by someone he could no longer remember was his past.

Eventually, Prince Lorn grew to tower over every man he knew. He had no friends and all he knew was training to fight, battles, death, and sorrow. His ultimate duty was to make his father High King of Vedt, and he attacked that duty with fierce determination.

Prince Lorn became feared throughout the land. He was unstoppable in battle and felt the cries of the dying in his bones. He was outfitted in special demon armor and wore a dragon-winged helmet, the sight of which struck fear into the hearts of men. The feeling of elation when the blue-skinned hoards roared in recognition and bowed to him was addictive. He grew vain and prideful and led the blue-skinned demons with an iron fist.

The numbers of men he led, were full of nameless faces, though every one of them did have a name, Prince Lorn never knew any. He had no friends, only his father and Lan-Loe the Red Sorcerer. Every man among them had been born into the world with pain and water, and each had been held in the arms of a woman they all knew as ‘mother.’ He had none of those memories except for the ones manufactured by his father and the Red Sorcerer.

Lorn trod the bloody battlefields wielding a black demon forged sword with ruthless skill. If his father ordered it, he led the soldiers of Jior, men and demons, to constant war and he felt the thrill of victory.

Kullorn’s cruelty out shone the viciousness of his troops, and his arrogance knew no bounds. He took every opportunity to quash any goodness or kindness in his son possessed, hardening his heart against everyone and everything.

Always lurking in the shadows and kept back from the fighting was Lan-Loe, an evil Red Sorcerer whispering in the king’s ear. Together, they created a monster from King Kullorn’s own flesh and blood and raised him for the sole purpose of growing his father’s power, riches, and glory.

In the Kingdom of Jior, the prince was alone in body, heart and mind, a solitary creature like none other created. On the eve of the final battle, King Kullorn and Lan-Loe celebrated a sure victory to be won over all the forces of Vedt.

Out in the cold night, Prince Lorn stood alone, a huge silent figure on the mountain crest high above the campfires of their massive hoard. He turned his face into the wind. Prepared for battle by reaching inside himself for the satisfaction and the bloodlust battle brought him. He was made who he was made to be, an evil black creature with no vestige of light in him.

For only a moment, he wondered at the sense of doom that overwhelmed him. He stared up into the glittering purity of the first twilight star of the descending night and ached.

Finally, as the sun rose awakening the red dawn, he spread his great wings, and flew toward his destiny, as the Prince of Demons.