

Aurora's Promise by Eve Jameson

Aurora flung open the passenger side door of her convertible, then slammed it shut and stomped to where Connyn was unloading her suitcase from the back of the car. "What the hell do you mean, *no*?"

He glanced around the hotel's parking lot. "Keep your voice down. We'll discuss this in the room."

"Whoa. In *the* room? As in one room for the two of us?"

He didn't answer. Instead, he pulled out her red leather carry-on, and after shutting the trunk with a controlled *froomp*, he headed toward the motel. For a moment, Aurora's world flashed red and before she thought to stop it, the magic she'd been born with snapped into life and two light bulbs in the vacancy sign popped and sputtered out.

Shit. She had to be more careful. Not wanting to blow up the entire sign or draw unwanted attention to that particular secret, she consciously quashed the surge of power boiling inside her. There were obviously some things Connyn didn't seem to react well to and now was not the time to test the limits in that arena. But this macho be-a-good-little-woman-and-do-as-I-command nonsense was going to stop now.

Taking a deep breath, she raised her voice high enough to be heard over the wind and said, "I swear by all your Ilyrian gods that if you don't stop walking away from me this instant, Mr. Heir to the Third Royal House, I'll scream so loud it will wake the dead from Maine to California."

Connyn stopped. Even from the back, the anger that snapped through his body electrified the air and Aurora glanced at the midnight sky to check for stray lightning bolts headed her way. Her suitcase hit the ground with a dull thud. Slowly he turned around. His eyes had darkened and narrowed to a feral intensity, his mouth set in a grim line. Light spilling through the motel's front windows outlined the massive shoulders squared on her position.

Though it only took a couple of steps for his long-legged strides to bring him back to within inches of her, everything suddenly seemed to shift into slow motion. For a brief moment, she wondered if perhaps it was normal for time to turn into decidedly measured seconds before one's own death so that every last heartbeat could be felt and heard as it thumped in your chest and pushed the blood through your ears in one roaring wave after another.

The flashing pink neon from the motel's sign cast Connyn's features into sharp angles and shadows, erased them for an instant with the darkness, then with the next burst of light brought them to eerie psychedelic life again as he moved closer. The gravel crunched loudly under his footsteps and the west Texas wind was doing its level best at filling the night air with a lonely, ghostly moan. With his hair now freed from the restraining braids, it whipped around

him in the relentless wind. All in all, Connyn created quite an arousing and terrifying picture, reminding her of paintings she'd seen of ancient gods sweeping out of the heavens on clouds of fire, wielding in their hands the power and will to avenge and wreak indescribable havoc.

Aurora glanced down at the man's hands. Even in the dim light, they looked strong and well able to wreak the havoc of ecstasy on a willing woman's body. A streak of lust went through her, which she did her best to ignore. Thoughts that teased her erotic fantasies were not helping her concentrate on getting to Ilyria.

If the plan she'd come up with in the car was going to work, she'd have to be careful not to let her smartass mouth screw it up. Especially when she was pissed off. *Especially* since it looked like pissing people off was this man's specialty.

By the time he stopped, she had to tilt her head back to maintain eye contact. Propping her hands on her hips, she returned his glare and held her ground. If he wanted a fight, she sure as hell could accommodate him. All she had to do was funnel all this sexual tension he kept stirring up in her and focus it into an angry confrontation. She'd had lots of practice on *focusing* thanks to the unique abilities passed down through her mother's bloodline.

Connyn was so close, she could feel the heat from his body. The temptation to lean into it was strong and her thoughts took a quick little side trip imagining running her hands over his broad chest and pressing her breasts against that wall of solid muscle.

For a moment, she thought he was just going to try to stare her down. Braced for some form of assault, she was totally unprepared when he reached up and brushed his fingertips down her cheek. Shocked by his action, she flinched back from his touch. He frowned and slid his hand around the back of her neck, holding her gently but firmly. The staring contest ended when his gaze roamed over her face and his thumb gently stroked the side of her face.

"Aurora."

The way he said her name, a deep rumbling like a whispered roar, made her feel both wholly protected and completely vulnerable at the same time. A very unnerving sensation.

Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath. Mentally, she pulled away from the emotions he had pinging around inside her like a pinball machine on full tilt. She needed to keep her balance through this if she intended to—

All thought flew out of her mind as Connyn's mouth settled over hers in a kiss that sent electric heat zinging through her body, riding currents of lust that converged between her legs with a desire so strong she wondered if he hadn't drugged her at some point. His mouth moved over hers and her knees threatened to give out. In a reflexive attempt to keep upright, her fingers dug into his leather coat. Until now, she hadn't even realized she'd been hanging on to him.

His hand moved up her back, holding and supporting her as his tongue slowly but lightly traced the line between her closed lips. It was a gentle, sensual caress that sent a full-body shiver through her.

He pulled away from the kiss but enveloped her in his arms, hugging her close. "It's too cold to be out here without your coat."

Aurora was enjoying being pressed against the heat and solid muscle of his chest too much to inform him that it wasn't the weather making her shiver. "About the room..." she mumbled against the soft cotton of his shirt. He even smelled sexy. Something close to warm sandalwood but with a wild edge she'd never associated with that scent before.

Setting her back from him enough to look her in the eyes, he said, "We're staying in the same room."

The warm fuzzies still floating through her stomach from his kiss immediately did a nose dive and fizzled out. The man might have noble intentions, but he sure as hell could use some etiquette lessons. She was not about to let him think that he could mow her over whenever his gears flipped into Mr. Macho Man mode.

She opened her mouth to protest his high handedness but he cut her off. "I will not argue when it comes to your safety. In that regard, you will do what I tell you to do."

His last words were hard and clipped, leaving her with the distinct impression he expected her to snap to attention and bark out a *yes, sir!* Instead, she crossed her arms over her chest and raised her eyebrows at him.

"And if I don't?"

Holding her gaze with a look that reminded her of Superman's heat vision searing through solid metal, he leaned into her space until his wide shoulders blocked the light and put her completely in his shadow. "You will."