

Runaway Princess

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this isn't exactly my favorite story, but it's quite decent and input for reviewers can only help it (i think...)

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1 - Prologue

She was screaming. Her mother lay next to her; slowly dying from the mortal wound her father had given her. Her father suddenly stood up. He attempted at throwing the knife at her several times, each time he had missed.

"You filthy half-blood! You and your kind will never survive to take control of this nation! Never, you hear me!" screamed her father as he lunged at her. She was frozen in place by terror, and her instinct for survival had kicked in and, even though she was only a child of 2 years, she reached out her mind to the knife flying towards her. Not knowing what she was doing she threw it with her mind to the general area of her father's heart. It hit, true to its mark and he fell over onto the luxurious feather bed behind him. She quickly ran to her mother.

"Never forget who you are, little one. Your day will come and you will do extraordinary things, never doubt that," her mother said. She was quiet for a while as she spasmed. "I ask only one thing of you, little princess, live your life without the lies that they will try to teach you." Her mother was dead. The little girl started to sob uncontrollably.

Then a woman walked into the room and gasped, "Kiralinda! What happened?"

"So, you've decided, you are joining the army tomorrow. Why don't you go any pack your things, Tarja, that way you can get into town early," said a woman holding a basket of eggs on her hip.

"Fine," mumbled an eleven years old boy. He had very little to pack; only a silver ring that his mother had given to him when she died a change of clothes. He was the youngest of the family and no one but his mother had ever expected great things form him, and now she was dead, she had been dead for two years now. His father had remarried only a year after that and they already had a child coming. "I'll go say goodbye to everything and everybody," he said, but he had no intention to do so, he was going to visit his mother's grave.

As he walked down the path to the tree-lined glade where his mother rested. Right before the grave was a perfectly smooth stone where he sat every time he came here. "Bye mom, I'm going to join the army. Maybe I'll do something great, I'll be a war hero or something. I'm going to miss you." Suddenly he stopped talking he had heard a crack coming from the woods.

"I told you that he would be perfect!" said a strange fluid voice.

"He's still young, he will have a lot to learn. But I do believe that this is the one the prophecy talks about." Said another voice, this one sounded male, though.

"Who are you? What do you want?" cried out Tarja, terrified.

"We are but humble forest dwellers trying to tell you about a prophecy that you will take a major role in." said a man stepping out of the trees. He looked young, maybe in his twenties, but his voice resounded with the knowledge of old age. "But where are my manners? I am Galen and this is Faraday." He said motioning to the beautiful woman on his left.

"You are the one who will find the star-child, my sister. You have to lead her here so that she can be trained. Please bring her here whole!" said the woman almost begging.

"Calm down Faraday, he doesn't know the prophecy. The prophecy was given to us hundred of years ago. We have read the stars and we believe that you play role in it. And this is it:

A half-breed child will be born,

From the womb of a human,

And the blood of one of the horn,

She will be superhuman.

She will be betrayed from every side.

Her future will be sealed.

Only with one will the treason subside,

That one will become her shield.

You will know her by her sapphire,

And the enchantress' ring she will later receive.

She controls water, air, earth and fire,

We can only imagine what she will achieve."

"Yeah, you have your little prophecy but what am I in there?" asked Tarja, not really believing what he was hearing, or seeing.

"We believe that you are the `shield' that the Prophecy talks about. You will meet the Half-breed child and when you do, you must make sure to bring her here. Her magic will need proper training. The

prophet mentions something of grave importance that she will do, but we don't know what." Said Faraday gravely.

"So, I'm going to meet this girl and she's going to do something big that could affect the world. Are you serious?" exclaimed Tarja thinking that they were all a little crazy.

"This is no joke! It will happen and you will take a part in it," she said then she turned to her companion, "let us go, this young child needs to get ready for his departure to the army."

"How did you know-?" said Tarja, his eyes wide in surprise.

2 - Chapter 1

"Wake up Kiralinda, wake up!" a voice said, "You have to get dressed, breakfast is served in an hour."

"Yes, yes. I'm up. Haven't I told you I want you to call me Kira, miss Agnes? I hate my full name." Kira said to the old wrinkled mass that was the woman in front of her. Her maid picked out a rather revealing blue and silver dress with transparent sleeves, which complemented her obsidian hair and unusual pale bluish silver eyes. She had instinctively started to braid her hair as her aunt walked in

"No, this can't be I like the dress, but your hair! You have to do something nicer than a braid! You are going to be spending the day with nobility, not walking around the palace doing whatever you do during the time I am not supervising you." Kira's Aunt said as she started to twist the dark mass of hair into an intricate pattern on the back of Kira's head. "We are going to have to do something with your face too. You can't walk in, your face completely plain. What do you think of blue eyes and red lips... we might as well add blush, it'll look better," she said.

"That would look beautiful on her, your majesty Aurella!" praised Agnes.

"You could also tattoo the rest of me while you're at it." Answered Kira

"Don't be daft girl, tattooing is only for men. I heard that it hurts," said Aurella in an in-charge tone of voice while adding 20 pounds of jewelry all over Kira's ears, neck and wrists.

"That's why I got one," muttered Kira under her breath eyeing the indigo ring on her right arm.

Once she was done she was led to the main hall where she was seated with the wealthiest of the nobles visiting the palace for Yuletide. She recognized Roland the Duke of Ichtar, a province to the north of Avalon's Capital and Palace. There was also a man of about 40 who called himself the Prince of Krynn, a certain Frederick. The third man was young, extraordinarily young. He was said to be Theodore, the Duke of Achar, and was at the tender age of 12. None of these suitors seemed very interesting, one was 4 years younger than her and the others were 16 and 24 years older.

As she scanned the room to find somewhere else to sit she spied Tarja, the new Commander of one of her uncle's forces. He was said to be the youngest Commander since as far as anyone could remember, and was only two years older than Kira. And he wasn't a bad one at that, he had a natural skill with almost every defensive weapon you could come up with and his unit was amazed to know that his tactics almost always worked. He was also the object of much gossip among the girls at the palace; apparently he never intentionally talked to women. Some thought that he already had a wife and was very loyal to her, but the idea wasn't as popular as the rumor that he was playing hard to get. She had

been invited to watch him practice in the courtyard by one of the noble's daughter, Emily of Kanran. She had been forced to decline by her aunt.

As Breakfast was served she cautiously wiped her face free of makeup, all that was left of her mother's delicate and hard work was a faint red tinge to her lips. The old Prince attempted to serve her but she casually placed her hand across the plate telling him to back off. He looked humiliated after a couple of girls giggled at him a little bit down the table. As she served herself, she conscientiously avoided the meat and took a bowl of oatmeal. It was generally considered army food but it was the only thing that was not doused with dead animals. Roland gave her a sideways look as she took her food, but he got back to his own business after she glared at him viciously. The young duke sat slumped in his chair hardly touching his food.

"Don't worry Theodore, you'll get used to this quickly. You'll learn how to escape it too." She said taking the opportunity to spare a lance at Tarja. Giggling girls who were trying to force him to talk to them surrounded him. He shooed them off by telling them that if he wasn't left alone an attacker might as well kill the entire court before he could do anything. They swiftly left after that. When he looked over to her she nodded in approval.

"Lady Kiralinda, would you like some pudding?" asked Frederick.

"No, I don't eat pig's blood and horse bones. I consider killing animals cruel." Kira said with an air of satisfaction when everyone around her pushed their portion of the pudding away.

They were currently walking towards the stables because Roland was obsessed with his purebred mount, and wanted to brag about it even more. As they crossed the courtyard she spared a glance at the two men fighting in the center. Tarja was a very good fighter; the other man already had bruises all over his chest and legs. Suddenly he grabbed a knife from his boot and threw it with fierce intensity at Tarja. He smashed to the ground and the knife missed by a hair, but it kept on flying through the air directly at Kira.

"Kiralinda, watch out!" screamed someone in the background but she didn't hear him. She lapsed back into memory, in front of her stood her father grinning as he watched the knife sail through the air. She felt the rage bubble up inside her. How could he? He was gone he could not have come back. She then reached out with her mind, her eyes blazing white. No, wait her father was dead, it could not be him. She reached out a hand and the knife glided smoothly between her fingers.

When she finally looked around her, everyone was staring at her. Her three suitors had fled for their lives behind the stable door and the gossip girls had finally fallen quiet. But not for long, suddenly a loud whisper came from the group, "I heard that her mother died with a knife in her throat and her father one through the heart, she must be reliving memories!"

"Well, I heard that she almost died too. It must have been terrifying!" said another, with deep sympathy.

Suddenly Tarja got up from the ground and walked over to Kira. The courtyard was totally quiet, even the horses were silent. It was the first time Tarja had even intentionally approached a girl.

"I have never seen that much skill or calm in any of my soldiers, not even the most courageous. Most

hide, or panic like your ever so valiant suitors. I am amazed at your talent, Lady,” said Tarja.

“Such elegant talk for a man who was once a peasant living near the Coloary Mountains, Sir Commander. I see court life really does change you,” responded Kira.

“So, you've done your research, young Lady.”

“It is considered necessary to know this kind of information if you are the only heir to the throne. And I am not so young, you are only two years older than me.” She answered back, offended at being called young.

All of a sudden cries rose from behind them, “she's flirting with him!” and “he with her,” “they are lovers,” “they are betrothed!” the empathy was fully gone from their voices, they were jealous.

“I heard that she spends her time in the forest, the dark and forbidden forest!” Kira knew that voice, it was Emily's! They had been friends for about a year. Kira knew it was just because Kira had no interest in the men Emily ranted about, but recently Kira had started to trust her.

A collective gasp rose out of the crowd, as Kira turned away and ran into the stables. She saddled up a horse and when a young stable boy came up to help her, she pushed him away. She didn't even bother to lead the horse out of the stables before mounting it. When she rode out stables people were already getting back to their own business, whispering as though she couldn't hear it. Some even pointed and stared.

She rode her horse at a gallop for about a league, until the start of the forest loomed tall before her. Every so often a trader or storyteller who happened to be at the palace would entertain the court with stories of deadly creatures and man eating trees, but Kira had never seen any of those in the forest. Infact the trees and creatures seemed to call to her. Her horse also loved this place; he knew exactly where to go to get to the small glade at the edge of the forest. For some reason nobody could find her when she was in the forest, no matter how close she was to them.

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She really was beautiful, more beautiful than in the vivid stories of the soldiers who had seen her around the stables. Of course Tarja had seen her before, she was a regular at court, always surrounded by the dim-witted and rich. She was always eerily quiet. He had never associated her with the title of princess of Avalon. It was probably because she had never ambushed him in the hallways or started flirting with him in mid-sentence. All the other noble's daughters did that, and even some of the servants who were bold enough to approach him, but never her. Now she was even more amazing, she had shown a lot of courage, or stubborn idiocy as one of his soldiers put it, facing that knife that even he did not dare to take on. And when she had talked to him...

“Wake up from your little daydream, we found something,” said Jenga, Tarja's second in command and best friend since he had come here. They were on a `mission' to find the missing princess. The Queen had refused to accept the fact that Kiralinda might be in the forest and she had ordered search parties

sent out. Until now they had found nothing. The King was convinced she could not have gone very far, she was a woman after all. Tarja thought otherwise, she had an extraordinary skill with words as well as weapons and no one had found anything within half a league of the castle.

“Jenga, why don't you go back and tell the king, Priam, that we found his precious niece?” said Tarja.

Tarja had ordered the farther and they were now within a 100 feet from the forest. The rest of his party shied away but timber and twigs did not intimidate Tarja.

“Sir, she can't survive very long in there. She'll have to come out soon. Why don't we just wait?” asked George, his voice shaking.

“Sure, we'll wait,” said Tarja. He had never seen people as afraid of anything but these trees, even death was not a powerful a deterrent as the forest.

As they waited, Tarja observed the landscape around him. He knew that the forest encircled the palace everywhere but where the river went. That way the river merchants made gigantic profits and were as rich as the lords.

“Sir there's a noise in the woods, are we going to die?” said a young man of 13.

“No, it's probably Kiralinda coming out of the forest, I'll go get her, “ he said the raised his voice a little bit higher, “I want to go alone, she'll feel cornered if a lot of people go at once.” The rest were fine with the plan, they didn't want to go closer to the trees.

When Kiralinda came out of the forest, she looked even more beautiful than he had last remembered. Her hair was in one single braid down her back and the only jewelry she still had on was one tiny sapphire on a silver chain around her neck. She looked as if she would bolt at any moment, and with her horse right next to her she probably would have if Tarja had stepped forwards. Instead her remained where he was trying his best not to look threatening.

“You don't need to act like you're not dangerous, I know very well what you are capable of.” She said as if she had read his mind. She seemed angry... maybe even scared. She wanted to leave.

“May I escort your lady home? Your aunt is very worried about you,” he asked as gracefully as he could

“Yes, we have to go now!” she said, as if impending danger was near.

“Why do we-” said Tarja unable to finish his sentence before Kiralinda pitched forward, an arrow protruding from her shoulder. “Attack, we're under attack!” He screamed as a shower of arrows fell from the sky. An arrow skimmed his head as he saw Kiralinda get back up, the arrow removed. Then everything was black.

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His eyes shot open and he immediately tried to sit up. He grunted as he did so, and Kira could feel the pain surging through his body.

“Get back down, you have a cut on your head and you have made it bleed again. You have lost enough blood, you don't need to lose more,” said Kira as she leaned over to see to his wound. As she worked on his wound she felt his eyes searching her face, she looked down at him and smiled.

Once she was done he tried to get up again, and again she told him to lie back down, “I just told you that that will make your head bleed, do you want to die?”

“But- how did you get rid of that arrow wound?” he said eyeing the hole in her gown, now the only remnant that she had been hit.

“I don't know, I just felt better and I got up. The arrow was on the ground right by my feet.” She answered back as if she wasn't really sure what she was saying.

“Why are you treating me? Aren't noble ladies supposed to be inept at anything useful?” he asked straining to see the place where his men were last as well as staying on the ground.

“I see you still have your sense of humor, but it won't last long. We are the only ones who are still alive, the attack killed everyone else. I only counted 8 dead; if I remember correctly there would have been ten of you. One managed to stay alive.” She responded somberly.

“It was Jenga, I sent him to the palace to tell your uncle that we had found you. If we don't return soon he'll come for us.”

“Then we will have to wait for him because you can't go anywhere in your condition and all the horses ran away,” she said sitting next to him. Suddenly Tarja moaned.

“What's wrong?” asked Kira frantically.

“My head feels like hell,” said Tarja, still moaning.

“Here, stay still,” Kira said as she placed her hands on both sides of Tarja's head, carefully avoiding his cut. Her eyes blazed white and a `wave' of appeasement went from Kira to Tarja.

“That feels good,” said Tarja before sinking into blissful unconsciousness.

As they waited Kira spoke of many things, even when Tarja was unconscious she spoke. From the dim-witted suitors her aunt chose for her to the rumors going about the palace. After Tarja lapsed into sleep, she leaned on a near by tree, resting, before attempting to clean his cut. She had pushed a lock of hair away from his eyes when she heard hoof beats. Her head snapped up. She saw men riding in the distance, eleven of them.

“Lady what happened here?” asked the closest one, but he was still 100 paces from the tree line where Kira and Tarja were.

"We were attacked by some unknown assailant, Tarja and I are the only ones still alive," said Kira. There was a collective gasp from the crowd. She didn't know whether it was because of the coldness in her voice or because of the horror that had happened before they came.

"Oh dear, what is so wrong with Tarja so that he can't get up?" asked the man she presumed to be Jenga.

"He had a cut to the head and if he moves too much he will bleed to death." Kira said grimly.

"You seem to know a lot about medicine, what should we do to bring Tarja back to the Palace?" asked Jenga as the others walked over to the corpses.

"Our best try would be to make some sort of stretcher and make the horses walk to the palace, unless you have a better idea." Kira said hesitating, "the only problem is that a bump could make him bleed again. We will have to go really slow."

"We'll do it. Boys, I need some of you to build a stretcher, then tie it across the backs of two horses. Don't worry we'll get him, and you, home whole." Jenga said, as if that was any help.

Then walked back to the castle at a pace slower than a crawl. They had been walking for almost three hours and they were still 500 paces away from the palace. They had sent a messenger out before them so they could get the doctors ready and possibly get some of them to help them carry him.

Soon the gates loomed before them. There was a crowd gathered at the doors as the doctors rushed over to Tarja.

"Dearie, I was so scared! What happened? Are you all right?" asked Aurella, as she looked Kira over.

"You were only worried because I would not be worth as much dead or scarred!" cried Kira, "And what happened? I just saw eight people be shot down and one slip in and out of consciousness! I am perfectly fine."

"Calm down, were are in a crowd. Come I'll lead you to your room," said Aurella, grabbing Kira's arm and dragging her inside. Just then Tarja tossed around in his stretcher, moaning. Kira wrenched her arm from her aunt's hand and ran to him.

"Shush, it is okay. You are going to be fine, just calm down." She whispered to Tarja and he calmed down immediately.

Her mother came up behind her and said, "Come inside now."

"No, I'm going with him. I want to see if he's fine, and it is not like I can't wait for the lecture you have probably planned for me," said Kira walking away with the doctors.

"You are coming with me!!!" said Aurella, now enraged. She grabbed Kira's arm so tightly until red

marks appeared where she was gripping.

"Your majesty, we would like to have Kiralinda come with us, she might have some cuts or bruises that we should treat," said a young doctor's apprentice.

"You may go, but I want to see her tomorrow." Aurella said glaring straight at Kira.

"I owe you for that one Colin," said Kira to the apprentice.

"No, I've always wanted to do that. Our queen has such a temper!" said Colin, walking into the examination room where they had put Tarja. As they walked the doctors were getting the leaches out.

"What are you doing?" asked Kira, shocked beyond reason at the doctors' horrible understanding of the situation.

"We believe that this man has been poisoned by bad blood, we are going to take it out. Now leave, we know what we are doing!" said one in the back.

"He's close to death because he's been bleeding for too long, taking more blood out is not going to help." Kira yelled as she pushed herself towards Tarja.

"If you know what's right for you, you would leave her alone," said Colin from the back of the room. "I'll stay here and call you if anything happens." The doctors grumbled a lot but eventually they left the room, probably awaiting a warm meal.

Kira then sat on the bed where Tarja was laid and looked at his cut. She sat there for several minutes before falling asleep herself. Colin was confident that if anything happened, Kira would take care of it. She had an extra-ordinary gift with healing, and she had absorbed al his teaching very well. She would do fine. And he could use a nap right now too. He fell asleep on the couch in the corner of the room.

3 - Chapter 2

When Kira woke up, Tarja was sitting in bed, careful not to wake her up. Collin was still asleep in the corner of the room and the entire palace was quiet.

"How long have you been awake?" asked Kira.

"Only about an hour, but my legs are starting to feel numb, Lady Kiralinda" he said eyeing her foot that was placed on his legs.

"Oh, sorry. You could have pushed me off, I wouldn't have minded. And call me Kira, my full name is really too long to say it all the time"

"I'll know next time. I want to work my legs, can we go for a walk?" said Tarja massaging his legs.

"Are you sure you feel up to it?" asked Kira, worried for his health.

They walked out of the room after Tarja gave her a stare. They walked across the courtyard and sat by the fountain in the center.

"Before this morning, I never really knew who you were, you were just 'the one who doesn't flirt'" he said ashamed.

"How could you possibly not remember this pretty face?" asked Kira, giving him a hit to the sides with her elbow. He was trying not to fall and he grabbed her shoulder. In a couple seconds they were both covered in water, gasping for breath. Kira was suddenly next to him. "What are noble ladies supposed to be like?" she asked.

"I don't know. All the others are covered in jewels and are all obsessed with getting me to talk to them. Life is like a game to them." Said Tarja, "but you aren't like them, you're..."

"I am what? You can tell me, even if it is bad," asked Kira, suddenly very interested.

"What are you kids doing in there? You will catch a cold! Oh god, what will your aunt say about this, miss Kiralinda? Oh god, oh god!" said Agnes, Kira's maid.

"I will see you soon, if I survive what my aunt will do to me," said Kira. Then, unexpectedly, she kissed Tarja on his cheek and pushed him playfully back into the water. When he sat back up Kira was gone and Agnes was murmuring to herself, "She's getting worse and worse every day. First the healing lessons, now this. She's always been a wild child, but she's getting out of control."

Eventually Tarja got out of the water and walked over to the barracks, where Jenga was waiting for him.

"I knew you'd never last long in that room. Why are you all wet? What just happened?" he asked.

"Kira pushed me into the fountain." He said dropping heavily onto his bed. When he finally sat up he told Jenga the story of the entire day, at least what he knew of it.

"I don't know much about women but I think she might like you," said Jenga, smiling.

"I wouldn't be sure of that. She's different from the other girls. She'll be joking around, then the next second she'll be totally serious." Tarja said hesitantly.

"Sounds like you like her though," said Jenga, making Tarja blush. All of a sudden Tarja yawned, and he layed down on his bed and pretended to fall asleep. This was a subject he did not want to talk about, even with Jenga.

"Aww, come on! You were just asleep for the past 18 hours!" asked Jenga, sad that the conversation had been ended when it finally got good.

Tarja secretly smiled to himself.

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Kira was walking to her doom but she didn't care. She had had fun this night and nothing could ruin it, not even a lecture, iron poker, or some other form of torture her aunt could do. Tarja was different from the other men around here. They always wanted her hand in marriage and they always worked her position or wealth into every conversation. He had only mentioned that he had not known who she was before. Without warning she stopped.

Before her stood the Oak door of her aunt. Kira sighed and walked in. Agnes was already in the room and was retelling the events that had just happened. Aurella looked furious, even more so than before, if that was possible.

"What were you thinking? You were already in a load of trouble before but now... I do not even know what to do with you!" screamed Aurella across the room. "You know that you will never be with him so why do you spend so much time with him? Your reputation is ruined. No one will want to marry you know!"

"Dear auntie, if you have not noticed yet, I have a life of my own! You may think that my only point in life is to be married to the highest bidder, you are wrong. I have a life and I will live it as I want." Kira said cruelly.

"You impudent little...you will be punished for this!" said Aurella as she lunged towards Kira. Her nails

dug deep in Kira's skin and she soon had long trails of blood running down her right arm. "What is this?" asked Aurella seeing an indigo mark on Kira's arm. "A tattoo! You little dog, what else have you done? Agnes get her out of my sight! And I want to see that commander she was with. Tell him to come during breakfast."

After Kira was lead to her room she undressed and then slipped on a new gown, one that did not have tears and splotches of blood. The one she wore now was a dark blue that looked almost black and it had long sleeves and a high collar to hide the marks her mother had just made. Kira then pretended to sleep so that she could think in peace. Kira already knew that nothing good would come out of the meeting between Tarja and her aunt. He would probably be sent away or tortured. Her aunt had cruel ways of taking care of people who disobeyed or angered her. Kira was only alive because she was the heir to the throne and with her she could control who would be the next king.

Agnes walked in, "miss, you need to go to breakfast."

Kira sighed and braided her hair. Then she was out the door and into the dinning hall. When she walked in the whispers intensified, but she ignored them completely. Emily steppe out of the crowd and asked, "what happened yesterday?" but Kira just kept on walking. She was in no mood to talk. Once she had her food she sat on the foot of the pillar in the far corner of the room. She heard footsteps behind her. When she turned around she saw Tarja.

"What are you doing here?" she asked surprised to see him.

"I have to go in a couple minutes, I decided to come and see you first." Tarja said.

"She will destroy you in there. Try to stay away from her." Kira said.

"What did she do to you?" asked Tarja. She rolled her sleeve up and showed him her cuts. "I'll..." he started but Kira interrupted him.

"You will do absolutely nothing. You don't want to do anything to make this worse. I want you to stay alive."

"But, what she did to you, how can you just let her go unpunished?" he asked quietly, trying not to be noticed. Too late a girl had seen him and a hoard was running towards them.

"I've survived with her giving me cuts and bruises all my life. I just don't want you to die in there."

"I've got to go if I ever want to get out of here," he said

But before he could do anything Kira kissed him fiercely on the lips. "Stay safe" was all she said. He nodded and left as silently as he had come. The girls had just arrived at the pillar and they were staring at her accusingly. Emily grabbed her right arm, and Kira hissed in pain.

"What did you do to him? No sane man would fall in love with the likes of you!" she shrieked accusingly.

All Kira did was give her a murderous glance that, if looks could kill, she would be dead several times over. Emily stepped several paces back. That was all it took for Kira to get angry. Her power took control of her and Kira created a small fire on the hem of Emily's dress. When Emily shrieked Kira grinned cruelly. A girl to the side of Emily screamed and fainted. Everything was going fine, but Kira could not stay there. She turned around and left the same way Tarja had. She ran to her room and screamed into a pillow, just before shredding it to bits.

At around Noon she came out of her room and stalked across the courtyard. Whispers floated in the air around her. They were all about her. She never stopped, she had a goal and nothing would dissuade her from it. She walked directly towards the barracks. She found Jenga at the entrance, only then did she stop. Jenga had previously been talking to two younger men but they were all quiet now, the entire world was quiet.

"Where is Tarja?" Kira asked fiercely.

"He in our room, why?" asked Jenga calmly. But Kira ignored him; she walked into the barracks and ran directly to the room Tarja was in. She stopped at the door and knocked on it. Tarja opened it and brought Kira inside, he then he closed the door. She burst out crying in his arms.

"Calm down, calm down. Nothing happened," he said kissing the top of her head. After a few minutes she stopped crying.

"What did she do to you?" asked Kira, sitting on his bed.

"I've been demoted. I have to go home within the day. Wait a second, I thought you never cried," he said trying to cheer her up.

"You really don't know anything about females," she said smiling.

"Well, you aren't exactly like everyone else," he said sitting next to her.

"What am I like, you didn't manage to tell me yesterday." Kira asked.

"Kira, you can't be described with words. You are an extraordinary being, unique and amazing in so many ways." He said just before kissing her on the lips.

"At least you know how to flatter a girl," she said, "that has to count for something."

"I was being serious Kira. You really are remarkable," said Tarja. This time she could feel that he was entirely sincere. "Before I leave I want to give you something." He said digging into his pack. "Close your eyes." And she did so. He took her and she could feel something cool being slid onto her finger. When she opened her eyes she saw a tiny silver ring on her middle finger. It had an intricate design that looked like writing of some sort on it.

"It is beautiful! Thank you!" she said amazed at it's beauty. "But are you sure you can give it to me, it

looks extremely expensive and..."

"My mother gave it to me when she died. She said that one day I would feel an extreme urge to give it to someone. And I did," he said

"I have nothing to give you, even though I have so much. I can only give you this," she said taking off the necklace she was wearing. "You could probably sell it and you could get something from it."

"I need to go, the Queen said that I couldn't see you and I won't want her to hurt you anymore." Tarja said kissing Kira for the last time.

"I will see you again, I will make sure of it," said Kira, tears coming back to her eyes.

When Tarja was gone, she layed back in Tarja's old bed and cried herself to sleep. An hour or two later Jenga walked in and woke her up.

"Lady, it's almost night, you need to go to your own rooms. I will lead you." He said

"I know the way, I don't need help!" she said furious that he deemed her in need of help for such an easy task.

"You know the way that will make you walk in front of many people, and I don't believe that you would like to be seen in your present state. I know a... more discreet way." Jenga said, his tone of voice telling her to stay quiet about it. "Follow me."

They walked to the back of the barracks and into the armory room. In the back of the room there was a door with a hole at eye level. Jenga knocked three times on the door and an eye appeared at the hole.

"What is she doing here?" said the person belonging to the eye.

"She is here because I am leading her to her rooms. I also grant her complete access to these corridors. Now, the password is Lily. Can we go in?" asked Jenga smiling the entire time. It seemed that nothing could ever make his anything but happy.

"Yeah, whatever, just go." Said the man as the door opened.

"Kiralinda, this system of corridors is basically, an emergency system. If something happens in the palace we can get there quickly and without anyone knowing. There are two passwords, Lily and Rose. Lily is for when you want to go in, and Rose is when you are being forced to tell someone where the passage is. We never have used Rose, but you never know. Before you say the password you need to knock on the door three times. That tells the guard that you want to come in. this system extends to pretty much the entire palace, and you are the first female to know about it. Tarja wanted me to tell you about it." Jenga said.

"You can just call me Kira, and thank you for letting me know about this place. I promise never to tell

anyone about it." Kira was happy to know that she now had a system of escape, "where is the closest door to my room?"

"You are right next to the library right?" asked Jena already knowing the answer.

"Yes... why?" asked Kira, scared that she would have to drop from the ceiling because she knew that there was no door in that room.

"The door is in the study," said Jena seeing her worried look in the darkness.

Kira was now in her room Agnes ranting on about how she was a very foolish young girl. Kira did not care. She stared blankly at the fire burning in the grate, wishing that she could see Tarja again. Suddenly an image created itself in the flames. It was Tarja eating his meal in front of the fire. Kira crawled off the bed and sat in front of the fire. She started to reach out a hand towards the image of Tarja. She could feel the warm embrace of the fire around the tips of her fingers.

"Stop! What are you doing?" Agnes screamed, she caught hold of Kira's arm and pulled her away from the grate. The image disappeared immediately. Agnes grabbed her hand and inspected it for burn or blisters, the skin was perfectly smooth.

"Lady, you must be tired. Try to get some sleep." Said a shocked and terrified Agnes. Today was becoming the weirdest day of her long life. This girl was just as strange as her mother.

Kira slept until dawn, dreaming of running off to find Tarja. She was running across the barren plains of Avalon, she never tired and never gave in. She ran and ran eventually she saw the faint light of Tarja's campfire.

"Ah, my dear little niece, soundly asleep! What a beautiful thing," said Aurella walking into the room.

"Not anymore, don't you have anything better to do than wake me up?" asked Kira.

"No, our great king is always talking to his commanders, he believes that the evils in the forest are trying to kill us. He's also angry that I demoted and sent away his best commander." She said as if she didn't really care.

"He's not the only one..." muttered Kira as she got dressed in a Navy blue gown that covered just about every part of her body but her face. She didn't really care what she looked like anymore. "I'm going to get my breakfast, if you don't mind." But she didn't wait for an answer; she was out the door in a flash.

When Kira arrived into the dining hall, everyone became quiet. Emily stepped up and walked over to her.

"Are you happy now? Tarja's gone and it's because of you!" she said just loud enough so that everyone in the room could hear.

"You think I wanted him to go? The world does not revolve around you," said Kira, angry, no infuriated at Emily. But Emily had a new object of conversation.

"What is that on your finger? It looks like a ring! Where did you get it?" asked Emily envisioning it on her finger.

"You would like to know wouldn't you?" said Kira glad to have made Emily jealous, but sad that it was at Tarja's expense.