

When Shadows Seek Light
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Sample Line Edit
British English

Silence followed as the Lightners waited for the Thorn to respond.

The woman stared straight ahead towards the guards from her kingdom. She motioned her head to the left. "About a mile that way in the forest is a small tear . . . now let me go."

Adalia eyed her prisoner for a few more moments, determining whether the woman was telling the truth or not, deciding to give her the benefit of the doubt she hoisted the Thorn soldier to her feet. Untying her hands, Adalia pushed her towards the Gate, warily eyeing the guards as the woman passed them and entered through to Oscuro.

Taking a few steps back, Adalia faced the Oscuro guards. "Keep your kind out of The Grey or we are going to have issues."

The Thorns snarled in response.

Moving to her company, Adalia let out the breath she'd been holding in as she climbed back into the saddle. The group pulled their horses around and took off toward the centre of the village. She knew that other generals may not have been as lenient as she'd just been but that part of Adalia that kept her true to her beliefs of always choosing good over evil allowed the female Thorn to live.

As they made their way back to the village, Adalia thought about the tear the female Thorn had reluctantly told her about and decided she needed to see for herself.

"You all go on ahead and alert the healers. I am going to have a look at the tear in the Veil. If it's true, I will mark the area so the healers can find it easily."

"Would you like some company?" Shiloh asked.

"No, it's fine. You go ahead and start the paperwork up for this incident and I will be back before you know it," Adalia replied with a grin.

Her best friend nodded, and they went their separate ways.

Adalia mapped out the area in her mind as she travelled beneath the shady canopy of eucalyptus and willows. Pulling her mare to a stop, Adalia tied her to a low-hanging branch and started to scour the area. Approaching the Oscuro Veil, she carefully looked for a discolouration in the milky curtain. Tears were often hard to locate and required a keen eye to spot the weakness in the shield. Noticing disturbed foliage, she stooped down to survey the ground closer. At that moment, she noticed it—a black rose petal crushed upon the forest floor. Running its silky texture between her fingers, Adalia lifted it to her nose. The scent was different to the roses that grew in Lucius. The top note of the scent was sweet, like cherry blossoms, the second had more tang, sort of like green apples. She took a wiff again, it was the bottom note that scrunched her nose in distaste. It was almost like a burning smell, as if the rose itself was made of ashes.

Little bumps skittered across her skin and Adalia sensed she wasn't alone. Standing, she turned just as a large black boot connected with her hip. Pain unleashed its fury through her body and with great force, Adalia was kicked through the Veil of Oscuro.

Pain pulsed from her side as she twisted her body, trying to gain her footing. Adalia's face hit the ground as she fell through, her body sliding across the rocky surface of the enemy kingdom. She lay there wheezing from what she suspected was a possible broken rib as a shadow fell across her face. Cracking an eye open, above her loomed the face of the woman she'd freed only moments ago.

"I bet you wish you'd killed me when you had the chance," the female sneered.

Chapter 3 – The Lightner

Matthias pov

Seated on a stone bench under the shelter of a Whispering Aspen, Matthias threw a large stick across the length of the courtyard. Bones dashed after it, returning it to his master's side with haste. They'd been at this for the last hour or so. Brushing his fingers over the wolf's white fur, Matthias praised him.

They could do this all day if they wanted to; it's not like there were urgent matters for him to attend to. His father usually dealt with those, choosing to leave Matthias out of such dealings. Not that those said matters ever went unnoticed. If anyone in the kingdom complained about resource allowances or inadequate services, Matthias would know about it. He made it his business, whether his father knew or not. Only this morning he'd caught a conversation between his father and a villager who was whining about the boundary line on his neighbour's property. Two grumpy old men fighting about who owns what. Matthias rolled his eyes at the memory.

It was quiet in the courtyard – peaceful even, despite the constant clanging from the forge below. Out here Matthias usually went undisturbed. Peering at the markings upon the back of his hands, he smiled. There were a few small patches of bareness left that could use a tattoo. It had been too long since he'd visited the woman who offered inking services for a small price. She was the best in the trade and Matthias used to frequent her studio over the years. Not only to fill his skin with designs that inspired him but because the burning pain would dull

his internal ache. The sound of the needle scratching against his flesh was a comfort to him. The pain, a longtime friend.

Bones growled and looked toward the entryway of the courtyard. Matthias followed his gaze as a woman sauntered through, her hips swaying with confidence.

"Well, if it isn't my two favourite boys, playing a little game together," she mused.

"What do you want, Jes?" Matthias picked up the stick again and threw it for Bones, who hesitantly trotted off to retrieve it.

Jes stepped beneath the foliage canopy and circled behind Matthias dragging her slim white fingers with her blood red nails between his shoulder blades. Avoiding where his black wings protruded from his back. Sliding up into the hair on the back of his head, grabbing a fistful, she yanked it towards her roughly.

"I want to play too," she whispered into his ear before licking it with the tip of her warm tongue.

Matthias jerked away from her and stood to his feet, his wings brushing against the ground. "Leave me alone Jes."

"What's wrong prince, you don't want to play with me?" Jes smirked as she walked two fingers up his chest, staring at him beneath her dark lashes.

There was no doubt Jes was a beautiful woman. Her black hair and green eyes striking against her pale skin, her body curvy in all the right places, but in her case beauty was only skin deep. Besides, she was his father's lover and sharing lovers was the furthest thing on his mind. She often tried to weasel her way into his bed unsuccessfully. Jes had been around for many years and could often be found down in the archery range competing against Thorns or upon the lap of the king.

"I don't like the games you play, Jes. You're a liar and a cheat," Matthias growled as he took a few steps back from the woman.

Jes placed one hand on her hip and the other across her heart as she pouted. "I promise to play by the rules."

Matthias ignored her facial expression. "My rules say it's game over."

Bones emitted a low, threatening growl as she dared to draw near Matthias once more. Her audacity stoked the fires of his irritation. Her fingers, like venomous tendrils, slithered up his arm. Her hand clasped his face. A mockery of a caress, laden with insinuation.

"Well, do let me know if you ever tire of this little game," Jes taunted, her smirk oozing with disdain, a calculated cruelty that she wielded with glee.

The stench of her need was a constant reminder of how undesirable she was to him. Whether she wanted him to spite his father or if it was because she found him attractive, the prince was never quite sure. Matthias had never given her any indication that he was interested in what she so desperately offered him, but that never stopped her from offering all the same.

Matthias's patience, already fraying, snapped like a brittle twig. With a swift, dismissive gesture, he swatted her presumptuous hand away. His purposeful gaze, cold and unyielding, locked onto hers, a challenge and a warning melded into a single piercing glare.

In response, he stooped to pick up the stick Bones had brought to his side. "I can assure you," his voice dripped with scorn, "that such an eventuality will forever remain in the realm of your delusions."

Walking away from her, each step held a resolute assertion of his indifference. He sensed her lingering gaze like a heavy weight, her animosity a festering wound that he paid no heed to. The venom in her eyes, the resentment that clung to her like a shadow, meant nothing to him. Let her wallow in her hatred; it was of no consequence to him.

A bell sounded through the Kingdom and Thorns from all over the place lifted their voices in a unified roar of victory. Matthias huffed.

A child had chosen Oscuro. His father would be pleased.