

THE LOST RULER

(NO COVER YET)

Chapter 1

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Sixteen is the worst number in Viltus Pasaule.  
It is the worst age to be. It is worse time to live, and it is worst time in history.

It truly is a cursed number

.~\*~.

I laugh as fresh red wine is poured into my glass, and push my curly mess of red hair back.

“Please do not get *too* drunk.” A firm voice behind me grumbles.

I looked up and over and roll my eyes. “And if I do?”

Lerés Nobels thinks for a moment.

“I would like it if I didn’t have to carry you back to your room.” He says with a small sneer.

“Come on,” I snicker, elbowing his armored arm. “Its Epha’s wedding. Have fun.”

“*Fun* is a concept I am afraid that I *don’t* understand.” He mutters. “Especially as your personal guard.”

I roll my eyes, and look up. I spot my sister dancing with her new husband, Prince Nigellus Hearth of Rosier, a kingdom to the north.

My sister has dark skin, and her curly black hair is tied up into a bun. She is plastered in gold and a white gown. Her golden sun diadem is in her brow, and her shoes are off— as are mine.

In Viltus Pasaule, we do not wear shoes at weddings.

Nigellus spins my sister around and I watch him grin. For a man of few words, he loves my sister. He’s a pudgy man who can’t hide his large gut. He is tall, with nice blonde hair that parts perfectly. He uses a crutch under his right arm since he’s missing a part of his leg. From under his right knee, there is nothing there— I think it’s from a war he was in not long ago. Nigellus has these light brown eyes are soft and warm too, and his long pointed ears move as he dances with Epha.

Everyone in Rosier has long ears.

Every Rosier is an Elf.

Lerés takes a deep breath and I look back at him.

“Is someone feeling lonely?”

He stared at me for a moment then rolls his dark eyes, grumbling, “Why must you always tease me?”

“Because I can.” I say, folding my arms, and taking a sip of my wine. “And because I am your princess, and you are my guard.”

Lerés rolls his eyes, but I catch a small turn in the corner of his lip. He’s trying not to smile.

“And, as my best friend, it is sort of my job to tease you till you break out of your solider character you out on.” I say, looking away from him.

“Soldier character?” He asks.

“Yes.” I say, looking back at him with narrow eyes. “Your *pathetic* soldier character.”

“*Pathetic?*”

I look at Lerés who is leaning close. I look at him and smirk. His shoulder length wavy black hair is almost in my face. His dark eyes gave their own smirk, and his bronze skin reflects the candle light.

“Yes.” I say. “*Pathetic.*”

Lerés rolls his eyes, and he glances at a near by clock in the room. I watch as whatever sternness he has leaves him.

“I am officially off duty.” He says with a small voice.

“Are you?” I tease. “Because, you still in your pathetic uniform— and shoes at a wedding.”

I see Lerés give a eye roll. He loves giving me those as if I’m a stupid girl— which at times I am.

“Give me a moment.” He says.

I watch as he walks away and to my father, King of Viltus Pasaule. My father is like Epha. Dark skin, and curly black hair. My brother Evert, and my mother is like that too.

I hate to be the one to pull the, ‘I’m adopted card’, but I am— actually I don’t care. I love pulling that card.

Lerés bows to my father and the two speak for a moment before I watch Lerés leaves the party room.

“Oi!”

I look over as my eyes fall on Nike Skye. Her dark brown hair is pulled up in a long ponytail. She is wearing a blue gown, and her brown feathered wings are out. Her pale skin, similar to mine, is glowing a little in the candlelit room and her orange eyes match the light.

Nike Skye is from the kingdom of the east, Frostives. They all have wings there.

“Well well well,” I say leaning on a pillar. “If it isn’t Nike Skye.”

“And if it isn’t Elane Birmingham.” She says with a little grin. “Princes of Viltus Pasaule, queen of drinks.”

She holds up her glass, and gives me a look I know *too* well.

“No.” I say with a sigh. “I am not getting too drunk tonight.”

Her face falls and she blinks with wide eyes. “You? *Not* getting drunk at a wedding?”

I give a shrug, and sip more of my wine. “Lerés doesn’t want to have to carry me to my room tonight. I figured I might as well help him out.”

“Oh... Lerés?”

I give a nod, and catch Nike lifting her eyebrows. I feel my face heat up and go as red as my hair and wine.

Suddenly I feel like getting drunk.

“You still haven’t told him have you.” She grumbles.

“Of course not.” I say quickly. “He’s my guard. It wouldn’t work out, especially since I am permeated by law to say away from relations with *them*.”

“You could.” Nike utters with a sly tone. “Just tell your father. I bet he’d change a law for you.”

“That’s not how it works.” I mumble. “It is the law given to us by Tlāltēuctli.”

“Boo.” Nike sneers. “But, can’t your father change his laws?”

I shake my head. “No. Tlāltēuctli’s laws are above the laws of man.”

“And Frostives?”

“Yes.” I utter. “Even Frostives such as yourself.”

Nike gives a small sigh, and I look to the ground. I chug down the rest of my glass of wine, and take a deep breath.

"Plus, who'd want to marry *them*? *Their* not even worth marrying." I utter.

"Your talking to yourself to convince yourself that your not in love with your guard."

I glare at the ground. "Why must you always be so precise?"

"Because I just am. You hate hearing the truth." Nike says, stretching her left wing out.

"Do not!" I snap.

"Lie."

"Is not!"

"Boom. There it is."

I stare at Nike for a moment, before going to take a sip of my wine. Sadly, none is left.

*I never promised Lerés I wouldn't get very drunk.*

I walk across the room, and find the barrels of wine. I roll my green gown sleeves up, and dip my glass into the wine. I start to drink again.

Drinking is my weakness. I enjoy being drunk, especially when angry or anxious. It's the one thing that makes my problems disappear.

I feel a gap on my shoulder as I drink more, thinking it's the alcohol settling in, before a hand grabs my shoulder.

I look up and over and my eyes lock Lerés.

"Seriously?" He asks.

I can't answer him. All I can do is stare.

He is no longer in his armor, but in a different outfit. He stands in front of me in black trousers, and leather boots. His white long sleeved tunic his tight against his muscular arms and chest, and I can see the outline of his tattoo— Piedra del Sol, the symbol of loyalty to Viltus Pasaule. Best of all, he is shoeless

Lerés is not nearly as well dressed as any of us, but I suppose my father didn't mind. Father likes Lerés. He sends him on missions some days, I h he doesn't do with any of the other guards sworn to protect members of this royal family.

He takes the glass of wine from my hand, takes a sip, and sets it aside.

"Why must you ruin my fun?"

"Why must you drink your troubles away?" He asks.

I'm silent.

"Exactly." He utters.

"What do you want?" I snarl at him.

His bronze face narrows, and gets a deep shade in his cheeks. I'm either drunk, or taking notice to the fact he hasn't shaven in a few days. Or both— I could very well be both.

"I erm... noticed you looked bored." He says softly. "But I suppose I can't help you."

I stare a him, as he leans against the wall. He's much taller than me, and as he leans against the wall with that look in his eyes— UGH.

Now I know I'm drunk, especially when I want to kiss him— not that I don't ever want to do it, but the thought sounds a lot easier to do.

"What?" I ask. "What were you going to do?"

"Oh, nothing." He mutters with a shrug.

"Lier." I grumble. "Tell me."

He glances away and gives a shrug. "I dunno. You just seem like your having fun with your wine."

"Not yet." I say with an eye roll.

"Good."

I look up as Lerés grabs my hand and pulls me to go dance. I can't help myself and I burst out in laughter. Lerés's left hand goes to my waist, and I wrap an arm around him, as we dance. He spins me around, pulls me back, and we keep dancing to the music. We skip and jump along with the others as the best turns up.

I look up at Lerés who is grinning like a maniac. He rarely grins like this, and I find myself laughing more.

He spins me around, and I feel my ankle roll. I fall backwards, and feel something wrap around my calf, and someone grab my arm. My hair is on the floor, but my body is not.

I look up at Lerés who pulls me back to my feet, and I glance down.

His long tail unravels from my calf, amid I watch it go back behind him, moving around carefully and freely.

I forgot he had a tail.

I forget he's from Ainjr.

"Ah, Elane!"

I look up and over as King Nashaaj walks over. He is Nigellus's father, and one could barely tell— other than the blonde hair. His hair is long and tied back into a braid, and he's pale like me. He's much shorter than his son, and is as thin as a young tree. He is dressed in blue and gold, and his long pointed ears have golden earrings.

"Hello..."

"Father in law." Lerés whispers in my ear.

"Father in law?" I ask, a little to loudly.

Nashaaj laughs, and shakes his head with glee.

"I suppose so Elane." He chuckles, catching his breath. "I watched your fall, and this man's quick reaction."

I glance back at Lerés, as my face heats up.

"Yes, he's my guard." I say calmly.

"I sorta have to be quick to help you." He teases in a small whisper in my ear.

My face heats up, and I jab my foot through his legs and slam it in his tail. I hear him grunt, and swear under his breath.

Nashaaj glances over past me, and looks carefully at Lerés.

"Your a Ainjrian." He utters in a small voice.

Lerés looks up, and reaches behind him. His tail goes up into his hand, and he sends me a death glare.

"I am." He says carefully.

I stare at Nashaaj who gives a small look around. He looks at Lerés's tail, then me, then back at his tail.

"Interesting." He mutters. "I didn't think Ainjrians were allowed to leave Ainjr."

I glance at Lerés who shuffles uncomfortably.

"Well, he did, and got a cool job." I say firmly. "Also, you need a drink— by that I mean I need a drink."

I bust out laughing, and Nashaaj gives me a weird look. I reached behind me and yank Lerés's arm and start pulling him with me.

"I don't want a drink." He says firmly.

"Well I do, and you clearly wanted out of *that* conversation."

Lerés remains silent, and I find my wine glass where it was. I grab it, chug some down, and slump back against the wall. My head slowly starts to ring, and I drink more to make it go away. I glance over at Lerés, who is staring out at the party.

So, being the great friend and boss I am, I look to where he's looking to see Nashaaj is speaking with my father.

Oh.

"If it makes you feel better, I have wine." I say holding up my glass. "Wine makes everything better."

Lerés glances at me, and gives a small sigh. "I don't want wine."

"Okay then. Suit yourself."

I take a sip, and watch as Lerés takes the glass from my hand. I watch as he chugs the rest of it down, then hands it back.

"Better?" I ask.

"No." He mutters. "It takes a lot of wine to get me drunk."

"Me too." I snicker, dipping my glass back into the barrel. "I just do it more often than you."

"No, not that." He sneers, glancing down between his legs at his tail. "Not that."

"Right," I mutter looking at him. "You can't get drunk— on wine at least."

He gives a small nod, and flicks his tail back up to his hand. He looks at it carefully before glancing at me.

"Your lucky it's just a bruise." He mutters.

"And if it wasn't?" I ask with a smirk. "You wouldn't do anything. You love this job too much."

Lerés gives me an eye roll, but nods his head slowly. I give a small sigh, and look around.

Epha and Nigellus are gone.

I glance back at Lerés then his tail. It's long, and thin. It would be touching the ground most days if it didn't swerve up on its own. There is no hair except for at the end where it's a tuft of hair like a lion's tail. It's just his bronze skin, then dark wavy hair.

All Ainjrians have tails.

Ainjrians are not welcome in other kingdoms but their own— all except Lerés.

He doesn't talk about how he got to be in Viltus Pasaule. All I know is that when I was ten years old, he became my guard.

He never speaks of Ainjr, and I don't blame him.

From what I know, Ainjr was once the most important ally to have in war— being that the country is full of warriors, and natural fighters— but they betrayed everyone. They started killing the kingdoms. Ever since the final battle of Ghandina, they've been banished. Never to speak, see, or trust again.

I drink more of my wine and my shoulders slouch.

"When are you leaving the wedding party?" I ask.

Lerés glances over, and gives a shrug. "When you do. I think your sister and brother in law already left."

"They have... I think." I say, looking around. "Ernest and Fia left too."

Lerés gives a nod, and takes a deep breath. I take one too, and drink some more till my glass is empty.

"Okay." I say, looking to him. "I'm ready."

"No more drinks?" He asks.

"Nope." I mutter. "Don't tempt me."

Lerés rolls his eyes, and gives a small snicker. I know he's trying to seem upbeat.

I sit up, take a step, and stumble. Lerés grabs my arm, and sighs, "Do I need to carry you?"

*Yes. Carry me in your strong arms and kiss me. Tell me you love me.*

*No. Shut up intrusive thoughts.*

"No, I can walk." I say with a shrug. "Sort of."

Lerés gives a small chuckle, and holds my arm.

"I'll take you to your very comfortable bed, your drunken highness." He says snarkily. "Then you can dream of wine as red as your hair, and wake up with a hangover."

"I won't be hungover." I grumble.

"Mhm. Sure you won't."

"Just take my hand and walk me to my room." I sneer.

"Yes, Ms Birmingham."

Lerés walks me out of the room, and through the Templo Mayor— my home. Beautiful Corinthian stones surround us and gold decoration as we walk.

I stumble every few steps, and Lerés's arm tightens around mine to hold me up. Eventually his tail reaches up and wraps around my waist.

I suppose I did drink a little bit more than I thought I did.

My memory goes fuzzy as we walk, and my mouth starts to run. I don't know what I'm talking about half the time.

"Is my waist too small?" I ask.

"No." Lerés says firmly. "Your waist is fine."

"How come chickens can't fly?"

"Because they carry extra weight."

Then I start talking about things I usually wouldn't talk about. My brain starts to fog up more, and I start to wonder if the wine was normal wine, or Rosierer wine.

That wine doesn't truly effect you till you *stop* drinking.

"Are my breasts too big?" I ask.

"Erm... what?"

"My breasts." I say letting go of him.

Lerés yanked my arm back, and I collapse into his arms.

"Your breasts are fine." He mumbles. "Why do you ask?"

"Well mine are larger than Epha's and Mother's." I say, my mouth starting to slow down.

Lerés's tail unwinds from my waist, and he picks me up in his strong arms.

We make it to my room, and Lerés opens the door with his tail. He walks in, and sets me down on my bed.

"And your gift is on the counter." I say, as he starts pulling my covers up over me.

"My what?" He asks.

"Your gifts." I giggle. "It's your birthday stupid."

Lerés stars, and looks on the counter to the silver box.

"It is." He utters softly.

I watch as he walks over to the silver box and picks it up. He looks inside it, and I see him give a small closed mouth smile.

"Your old too." I say, my eyes blinking. "Your twenty."

"I am." He utters. "At least I'm not cursed sixteen like you."

"I'm not cursed." I giggle.

I can't stop giggling.

Lerés, keeping his small smile, walks over to me.

"Thank you very much for remembering." He whispers softly. "Even on your sister's wedding."

"Anytime moron." I say, ruffling his wavy shoulder length hair with more giggles.

Lerés gives me a smile, takes my hand, and kisses it softly. He usually does, since it's a sign of respect.

This time he is holding my hand a little bit longer. His kiss lasted longer.

*Your drunk. This isn't real.*

Lerés takes his lips from my hand, pushes the hair out of my face, and smiles his closed mouth smile.

“Good night.” He whispers softly. “And my you have the best hangover.”

“Good night.” I giggle. “I wooonnn’t... get hungoverrrr.”

I don’t remember him leaving my room. Instead I pass out.