

Telyn swallowed hard, suddenly edgy now that she was completely alone with Nacaris.

“I don’t know how to do this,” she admitted quietly.

“Shh.” He touched a finger to her lips, stilling her. “I understand there are things you can’t share with anyone. I’m only asking to be a part of what you *can* share.”

His face filled her vision, and Telyn’s eyes widened as his lips replaced his touch against her mouth in a soft, gentle kiss she never expected from this battle-hardened man. Enclosed in his embrace as he released her lips, Telyn allowed herself to sink against the leather of his tunic and breathe in the scents of man, horse, and travel that clung to him. It was a comforting scent, underscored by something dark, dangerous, and uniquely Nacaris. She sighed regretfully. “I wish—”

“What?” He nuzzled her hair, and stroked a hand lightly over her back. “Talk to me, Telyn.”

She stifled a mirthless laugh. He had no idea how much she struggled to keep her thoughts from him — she already feared they were doomed. “I wish it could always be like this.”

“What, always on the hunt? Roaming endlessly, without a home?” He squeezed her lightly. “Be careful what you wish for, *balnyt*. Nature is both a capricious and mischievous mistress. You may get what you want, in ways you least desire.”

Telyn shuddered, hearing the ring of prophecy behind those teasing words. She wasn’t fool enough to test them just now. Instead, she burrowed into his embrace and allowed herself a rare moment to be something other than a warrior.