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ONYXX STORM



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ONYX STORM



REBECCA
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PIATKUS

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To the ones who don't run with the popular crowd,

the ones who get caught reading under their desks,

the ones who feel like they never get invited, included, or represented.

Get your leathers. We have dragons to ride.

Onyx Storm is a nonstop-thrilling adventure fantasy set in the brutal and competitive world of a military college for dragon riders, which includes elements regarding war, hand-to-hand combat, blood, intense violence, brutal injuries, gore, murder, death, animal death, injury rehabilitation, grief, poisoning, burning, perilous situations, graphic language, and sexual activities that are shown on the page. Readers who may be sensitive to these elements, please take note, and prepare to face the storm...

NAME

BONDED

SIGNET/SPECIALTY

(if applicable)

VIOLET SORRENGAIL	 TAIRN AND ANDARNA	LIGHTNING WIELDING
XADEN RIORSON	 SGAEYL	SHADOW WIELDING, READING INTENTIONS

SECOND SQUAD, FLAME SECTION, FOURTH WING

IMOGEN CARDULO	GLANE 	MEMORY ERASING
QUINN HOLLIS	GRUTH 	ASTRAL PROJECTION
RHIANNON MATTHIAS	FEIRGE 	RETRIEVING
SAWYER HENRICK	SLISEAG 	METALLURGY
RIDOC GAMLYN	AOTROM 	ICE WIELDING
SLOANE MAIRI	THOIRT 	SIPHONING
AARIC GRAYCASTLE <i>(AKA Cam Tauri)</i>	MOLVIC 	NOT MANIFESTED

AVALYNN, BAYLOR, AND LYNX - *FIRST-YEARS WITH UNMANIFESTED SIGNETS*

CATRIONA CORDELLA	KIRALAIR 	MANIPULATING EMOTIONS
MAREN ZINA	DAJALAIR 	

BRAGEN, NEVE, TRAGER, AND KAI - *GRYPHON FLIERS*

WORLD LEADERS

KING TAURI THE WISE - *THE KING OF NAVARRE*
HALDEN TAURI - *FIRST IN LINE FOR THE NAVARRIAN THRONE*
QUEEN MARAYA - *THE QUEEN OF POROMIEL*
VISCOUNT TECARUS - *FIRST IN LINE FOR THE POROMISH THRONE*





The following text has been faithfully transcribed from Navarrian into the modern language by Jesinia Neilwart, Curator of the Scribe Quadrant at Basgiath War College. All events are true, and names have been preserved to honor the courage of those fallen. May their souls be commended to Malek.

Securing Basgiath and the wards has come at great cost, including General Sorrengail's life. Strategy must adjust. It is in the realm's best interest to ally with Poromiel, even temporarily.

—RECOVERED CORRESPONDENCE OF GENERAL AUGUSTINE MELGREN TO HIS
MAJESTY KING TAURI



PROLOGUE

Where in Malek's name is he going? I hurry through the tunnels beneath the quadrant, trying to follow, but night is the ultimate shadow and Xaden blends seamlessly into the darkness. If it wasn't for our dragons' bond leading me in his general direction and the sporadic disappearance of mage lights, I'd never think that he's masked somewhere ahead of me.

Fear holds me with an icy fist, and my footing grows unsteady. He kept his head down this evening, guarded by Bodhi and Garrick while we waited for news about Sawyer's injury after the battle that nearly cost us Basgiath, but there's no telling what he's doing now. If anyone spots the faint, strawberry-red circles around his irises, he'll be arrested—and likely executed. According to the texts I've read, they'll fade at this phase, but until they do, what could possibly be important enough for him to risk being seen?

The only logical answer sends a chill up my spine that has nothing to do with the cold stone of the corridor seeping in through my socks. There hadn't been time for boots or even my armor after the *click* of the closing door woke me from a restless sleep.

"Neither of them will answer," Andarna says, and I yank open the door to the enclosed bridge as its counterpart on the far end snicks shut. Was that him? *"Sgaeyl is still...incensed, and Tairn smells of both rage and sorrow."*

Understandable for all the reasons I can't allow myself to dwell on yet, but inconvenient.

"Do you want me to ask Cuir or Chradh—" she starts.

"No. The four of them need their sleep." No doubt we'll find ourselves on patrols for any remaining venin come morning. I cross the freezing expanse of the bridge with increasingly uncertain steps and jolt at the view outside the windows. It had been warm enough for thunderstorms earlier, but now snow falls in a thick curtain, concealing the ravine that separates the quadrant from Basgiath's main

campus. My chest clenches, and a fresh wave of seemingly endless tears threatens to prickle my painfully swollen eyes.

“It began about an hour ago,” Andarna says gently.

The temperature has fallen steadily in the hours since... *Don't go there.* My next breath shakes, and I force everything I can't handle into a neat, mentally fireproof box and stash it somewhere deep inside me.

It's too late to save Mom, but I'll be damned if I let Xaden get himself killed.

“You can grieve,” Andarna reminds me as I pull open the door to the Healer Quadrant and enter the crowded hall. Wounded in every color of uniform line the sides of the stone tunnel, and healers dart in and out of the infirmary doors.

“If I wallow in every loss, that's all I'll ever have time for.” I've learned that lesson well over the past eighteen months. Passing a set of clearly intoxicated infantry cadets, I cut through what's become an expanded sickbay, searching for a blur of darkness. This part of the quadrant didn't sustain any damage, but it still reeks of sulfur and ash.

“May your mother be remembered! To General Sorrengail, the flame of Basgiath!” one of the third-years calls out, and my stomach twists tighter as I forge ahead without reply.

When I approach the corner, then turn it, I see a patch of darkness enveloping the right side of the wall for a stuttering heartbeat, and then the stairwell to the interrogation chamber appears, flanked by two groggy guards. Shadows slip down the steps.

Fuck. Usually I love being right, but in this instance, I was hoping otherwise. I reach for Xaden mentally, but there's only a thick wall of chilled onyx.

I have to get past these guards. What would Mira do?

“She would have already slain your lieutenant and been confident in her choice,” Andarna answers. *“Your sister is an act first, ask questions later kind of rider.”*

“Not helpful.” What little I'd eaten for dinner threatens to reappear. Andarna's right. Mira will kill Xaden if she finds out he's channeled from the earth, regardless of the circumstances. But confidence? That's not a bad idea. I muster every ounce of arrogance I can scrounge up or fake, straighten my shoulders, lift my chin, and

stride toward the guards, praying I look steadier than I feel. “I need an audience with the prisoner.”

The two men glance at each other, and then the taller one on the left clears his throat. “We’re under orders from Melgren not to allow anyone down these steps.”

“Tell me”—I tilt my head and fold my arms like I’m strapped with every dagger I own...or am at least wearing footwear—“if the man directly responsible for your mother’s death was a flight of stairs away, what would you do?”

The shorter one looks down, revealing a cut beneath his ear.

“Orders—” the taller one starts, glancing at the ends of my sleep-loosened braid.

“He’s behind a locked door,” I interrupt. “I’m asking you to look the other way for five minutes, not give me the key.” My gaze darts poignantly to the key ring hanging on his bloodstained belt. “If it had been *your* mother, and she’d secured the kingdom’s entire defense system with her life, I promise I’d afford you the same courtesy.”

The tall one blanches.

“Goverson,” the short one whispers. “She’s the lightning wielder.”

Goverson grunts, and his hands flex at his sides. “Ten minutes,” he says. “Five for your mother, and five for you. We know who saved us today.” He motions toward the stairwell with his head.

But he *doesn’t* know. None of them realize the sacrifice Xaden made to kill the Sage...their *general*.

“Thank you.” I start down the stairs with wobbling knees, ignoring the pungent scent of wet earth that claws at the outer edges of my composure. “*I can’t believe he came down here.*”

“*He probably seeks information,*” Andarna notes. “*I cannot blame him for wanting to know what he is.*” The longing in her voice startles me on multiple levels.

“*He isn’t a soulless venin. He’s still Xaden. My Xaden,*” I snap, holding tight to the only thing I’m certain of as I make my way silently down the stairs.

“*You know what channeling from the earth does,*” she warns.

Know? Yes. Accept? Absolutely not. “*If he’d completely lost himself, he would have drained me at any number of points tonight, especially while I slept. Instead,*