

She reached up to touch his face. Roshan's whole body glowed, her every nerve attuned to his, the sound of his blood pulsing in her ears. Sweat beaded her forehead the way it always did when performing life magic, especially when she needed to transfer some of her own energy to someone else.

The boy's breathing quickened and he coughed sharply, black lashes flickering open to reveal eyes the color of molten gold, their pupils not round but elliptical like a cat's.

*Peri eyes*, Roshan realized as they slowly focused on her, taking in the turban that covered her hair and the mask that shielded her face.

She had not seen a peri before except maybe in old scrolls or paintings. Peri were supposed to have wings; they were among a race of part-human and part-animal beings called the Pashu, who lived in the kingdom of Aman, northwest of Jwala.

The spare prince had no wings. Nothing to indicate his heritage except for those eerie gold eyes that made her want to pull away from him and simultaneously draw closer.

"Speak," she commanded.

"Are you sure about that, Roshni?"

Roshan started. Surely . . . surely, he couldn't know her name.

But he was still watching her, examining her from covered face to glowing arms . . . and that's when she understood. He had called her *Light* in the Common Tongue, referring to her illuminated form, completely unaware that he'd referred to her by a variant of her real name.

"Or would you prefer I do something else for you with this very gifted mouth of mine," he went on, his voice like honey, sinuous and smooth. "I hear the bandits of Ashvamaidan are rather . . . lonely . . . most of the time."

In the background, someone snorted. Roshan suppressed the urge to roll her eyes.

Normally she would have told the boy to bite his tongue—or better yet, magically forced him to bite it himself. Yet, if this boy was who she thought he was . . .

“Your name,” she ordered.

He raised a thin, perfectly arched eyebrow. “You don’t know who I am?”

“I can guess. But I’d rather you tell me yourself,” she replied, perfectly mimicking his arrogant tone.

“Well, then,” he murmured. “Let it be known that I am Rajkumar Navin of Clan Behram, the first of his name and second in line to Jwala’s throne.” As the prince spoke, his voice seemed to magnify in volume, sending shivers up her skin. “I command you to unhand me now and take me back to Prabha.” The words vibrated in her ears, hammered painfully under her skull. *A soul magus*, she realized, as tendrils of his magic began curling around her brain like a vise.

“I then command you to surrender to the authori—” the prince’s voice cut off abruptly as Roshan’s hands locked around his throat.

Her grip wasn’t *too* tight—she did not want to choke him by any means—but it was firm enough to silence. Sweat slid between her breasts and heated her back, magic and anger burning her body with a red light, until she turned it chilly and blue, her fingers numbing painfully at the prince’s throat, freezing his voice until nothing emerged from his mouth except for gasps.

“Sometimes, the best thing for a mouth to do is to remain shut, Rajkumar.”