

HIS STAR PRINCESS

SCOTTISH SUBMISSION - BOOK THREE



FINLEY BROWN



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

PROLOGUE



SCOTLAND, 1736

Entering the sacred space, Fianna bowed and offered a brief prayer to Cernunnos, god and protector of the forest, before shedding her dress. She stood inside the circle of mighty trees in quiet vigilance, the night sky above her, the light of the great star illuminating the full moon in all her glory, a gathering of tides and time. Tonight was a hallowed night, meant for ceremony and reverence.

She knelt before the Great Oak, the King of Trees. Thirteen trees made up the circle, thirteen cycles of the moon, the stars and the earth, a harnessing of power, knowledge and sacred energy. It was the season of the Chaste moon; spring was here. Finishing her prayer to the Oak, she went to the center of the circle and the great fire pit. A pile of wood was laid out for her. She pulled the silver bracelet from her wrist and added it to the kindling. It was an offering to the light of her mother goddess. She stood there completely naked, her hair unbound to her waist, her body thrumming with the energy of the stars, as her blood began to pulse. Crouching down, she picked up the flint and lit the fire, feeding it

until she could see its heart begin to beat. The smell of sage billowed up with the smoke, purifying the space and welcoming the goddess.

Fianna cleared her mind, ridding it of memories of the past and fears of the future, preparing herself only to occupy the realm of the present. She would be leaving soon for the first time in her life, going to the new world. Her grandmother said she must go, that she was needed for something of great importance. But it would come at a cost, having never left her village except to go to the holy island once a month for the ceremony. She would miss her ancient druid trees, her animals, and her grandmother and friends. Fate called; she was born for this. She had been preparing for this her whole life. She could not allow herself to be afraid. The acrid tang of the smoke brought her back to the present, and she let go of her uneasiness. The goddess would be with her.

Fianna sat quietly, and she could feel her body changing as the energy built within her. She stood and began to walk the circle. These trees were her friends. She knew them all, prayed to them, and asked for their knowledge. Her hand skimmed over their trunks as she passed by, gathering their energy and bringing it toward the center of the fire in an elegant movement. The flames grew higher, and a rainbow of auras danced in the dark. Fianna's skin began to glow with silver light, the vibrations within her strengthening. She knelt and began to chant, evoking the power of the directions—North, South, East and West.

"Tuath, Deas, Ear, Iar," she called out in Gaelic, guiding the goddess with the strength of the compass to rise. Her chant continued, calling upon the energy from above and below.

"Guh-ard, guh-iosal," she shouted to the moon as she stood up, her arms outstretched to the sky.

The fire exploded before her, and the four bright stars of the zodiac erupted in the night sky channeling their light into her.

Fianna called out to Andraste, the Celtic moon goddess, pulling her directly into herself. Her body rang out, charged with the energy of the night sky and the warrior spirit. They were one—she

and Andraste—her mind was infused with the moon and the wisdom of the stars. She fell to the ground as the gentle beauty of the heavens shone down on her.

It could have been minutes, hours, centuries before the strong arms of Angus Mor gently picked her up, covering her with the plaid over his shoulder. "I've got you, Princess," he said softly.

Her eyes opened suddenly, staring up at him in silver light. "I've seen the map. I know where to find the artifact. The night sky will lead me there."



A MAN STOOD WATCHING in the forest crouched behind a large boulder, his black priest's cassock blending into the darkness, the blood on the inside of his wrist freshly crusted from the symbol carved there. The invocation said, he picked up his ritual dagger and drew the seal of Lucifer in the air. The pact was made, his baptism performed, the darkness in his thoughts and deeds unique, granted by the lord of darkness himself. This girl would lead him to the object in question on the night of Beltane and the full moon, and he would seal the union with her royal blood and human sacrifice. Only then, could he make his claim as an apprentice to his master and rule the world.

CHAPTER 1



MAINE, 1736

F ianna clutched the hand of her friend as they hid in the hull of the ship. A passing boat boarded and seized control of them, and from the shouts overhead and the clashing of metal, a fight had ensued. She reached for her sword on the bed, strapping the leather holder around her small waist, and pulled the elegant blade from its sheath.

"Fia, you can't go out there." Brenna held on to her. The narrow cabin they shared was dank and cramped.

"I'm not afraid," she said. "I would rather look my enemy in the eye than hide in here."

"I know you're not afraid, but the Templars told us to stay put."

"The Templars don't control me." She put her ear to the door, listening for footsteps.

"I know they don't control you, but your information does them no good if you're dead. Let them deal with this. This is their fight." The girl gripped the sheets covering the small bunk she sat on, her knuckles white with dread.

Fia turned to Brenna, aware of her panic. "I'll be fine, my red

raven," she said, smiling. They were more like sisters than friends, having been raised in the same household. She ran her finger down the side of Brenna's face, pushing a deep red curl that had sprung loose from her plait behind her ear. "You worry too much," she scolded. Squeezing her friend's hand in reassurance, she cracked the door. "Wait here. I'll be back."

In the narrow hall, she came face to face with one of the warrior knights. "Where do you think you're going?" He stood tall, sword drawn and ready for attack, blocking her passage. "Get back in the room."

"I don't answer to you, Templar," she said sharply.

"I was told you were to keep below." A sheen of moisture glistened on his brow in anticipation of his part in the looming fight.

Turning her silver eyes on him, she gave him a piercing glare. "I'm not the one you should worry about." A loud blast and the splintering of wood shattered the air above them. The boat shook with force then keeled to the right, causing both of them to lose their balance for a moment. "Do your job, and stay with the princess," she said, pushing past him. Climbing the stairs two at a time to the upper deck, she entered the fray. Bodies lay across the worn planks, the Templar's white tunics stained red with blood, blending into the scarlet footed cross over their chests. Looking around, she counted three of the warrior monks down, two were still fighting, and two were nowhere in sight. The men from the raiding ship outnumbered them. Seeing a man heading for the galley below, she attacked, thrusting her blade toward his back. The man turned, raising his sword just in time to parry her strike. They stood there, blade against blade, locked in battle, looking at each other. He wore an eye patch, his black hair wet and matted with sweat and filth, the stench of his unwashed body, musky and rank. Lowering his blade, he looked her up and down. His mouth quirked up at the corner, giving her an appreciative sneer before he advanced. Fia took a step back, ready to strike. The man stepped forward. She continued to retreat until she backed into the broken mast of the ship, hard, against her back.

"Aren't you a pretty thing?" he said, coming closer, the eyebrow over his one visible dark blue eye raised in an arch. She swung her sword, cutting him across the cheek. "Tsk, Tsk. You'll have to do better than that, darling," he said, touching the wound, wet with blood. There was a commotion coming from the side of the ship. He turned to look. Taking advantage of the distraction, Fia swung again, this time catching him on his upper arm. He righted on her. "Naughty girl. Now I have to teach you a lesson." Dropping his sword, he walked toward her, grabbing the end of her blade, unfazed as it cut into the leather of his glove. Fia struggled against his strength, her weapon clattering to the deck of the ship. Reaching out, he pulled her in close, his breath warm on her cheek as his mouth lowered on hers to kiss her. Fia pushed against him, trying to break his hold on her.

"You bloody fucking bastard," she yelled upon her release, wiping her mouth.

"You're a feisty one. I only hope we meet again," he said before grabbing his discarded blade then turning and disappearing over the side of the ship. Hearing footsteps behind her, Fia picked her sword back up and turned, swinging. Striking metal, she found herself face to face with a Templar, his blade blocking her strike.

"What are you doing up here?" he yelled, lowering his sword. "You should be with the princess."

Fia glared at the man. He was the commander of the Templars, the one they called Master. She found him standoffish and rude if not arrogant. "I *was* protecting her." The fighting on the ship stopped, the pirates abandoned the clash and returned to their frigate. Sheathing her weapon on her hip, she made her way below. The hallway was empty, the guard gone and the door to her cabin ajar. Going inside, Brenna was not there; the room was empty, and their belongings askew, indicating a struggle.

"Where is the princess?" the Templar asked behind her, taking up most of the space with his massive frame.

"She's gone. They've taken her."