

A KING WILL RISE

BY L.H. NICOLE

He took a step closer, but kept a cold distance between them. "I think it is good that we are apart. It is easier this way."

Aliana felt cold. "What?"

"Besides, I have never been the kind to settle down with one woman."

Voices jarred her from the blackness that had held her tight—for how long, she didn't know.

"Aliana?"

Quick bursts of tingling pain assailed her face. Bubbles of pink filled her vision, bursting against her like tiny spits of fire. A moan reverberated all around her as she fought to escape the darkness.

"Look! Her eyes are opening!"

There were faces in front of her, but they were blurred, half hidden in a strange orange glow of color that felt like an attack on her senses.

“Why isn’t Dawn waking?” A different voice demanded, sounding on the borderline between frantic and desperate.

Why was that name so familiar to her? Why did both names seem like something she should know? She tried to move her hand, but it wouldn’t budge. She turned her head from the orange rays that were becoming a pounding sensation on her temples.

“Aliana, look at me.”

Silver sparks flooded her like a rushing river soothing away the pounding ache and helping her vision go from a blurry construct to clear images and faces. The man touching her so gently was the most gorgeous man she could ever remember seeing. His blue eyes were dark, turbulent like a raging storm, marred only by the worry that painted his face. His whiskered jaw was a contrast against his pale skin, compounded by the longer dark brown waves of hair that went past his ears and touched his neck.

Who was this Aliana he spoke of? Who was this man holding her?

“Merlin, what’s wrong with them? What did that blasted magic do to them?”

Her eyes shifted towards the outraged voice, finding the second most handsome man she’d ever seen. His own lighter brown hair was shorter than the other man’s sweeping forward to hang over his forehead. Like the other man his skin was pale, his jaw sharp and angled, but his nose looked a little crooked, like he’d been hurt and it wasn’t properly tended to. Strength radiated from him, leaving his golden brown eyes almost aglow like liquid gold.

“I don’t know, Arthur. Imps are crafty but also secretive. Not much is known about their magic even among the Druids. If Puck was here, he might be able to tell us, but we have no way of reaching him!”

Aliana closed her eyes again, trying desperately to figure out who these men were, what they were talking about, but mostly, who this Aliana person was.

“Give her space.”

Aliana looked to the older, wiser voice, her eyes shooting open wide as a silver-marble colored Dragon came into focus. Her body reacted, propelling her to a sitting position as she fought to scramble away from the little monster.

“Calm down, Aliana!” Strong arms circled her, caught her wrists, pinning them to her chest with one large hand as silver sparks flooded her again, fighting to calm her fright. “It’s just Lord Daggerhorne, your Dagg.”

She looked up at the man holding her then back to the Dragon that was supposedly hers. Sucking in shallow breaths, she looked around the people gathered around them. They were all somehow familiar, like she should know them, but nothing came to her. It was like her mind was an endless black void. A void slowly and curiously being filled with silver sparks.

“Who are you all? Who is this Aliana you keep calling to?”