

Possessed by the Knight

By

Sadie Dane

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Chapter 1

Kalista slipped from her room into the quiet corridor. The early morning air, still crisp and sharp forced a shiver from her even as sun flooded through the castle windows. In moments her servant, Francine would be skipping to her room to help her prepare for the day. Kalista still wasn't used to being waited on rather than being the one doing the waiting. There was definitely something to be said for being pampered, but it still made her uncomfortable.

She tiptoed through Harrington Castle, as different to Covard Castle as was possible, and her new home. Where Covard had been narrow and dingy, every corner of Harrington was open and bright. Even Ceravique, as pristine as it had seemed, surrounded by fields and meadows, had not been as beautiful.

"Miss, my Lady Kalista," her servant rushed towards her out of breath and bright red.

"Hello, Francine," Kalista said, somewhat sullenly.

Francine twittered like a bird on a branch. "You were not there, are you... oh but yes, you are dressed. Your hair though, I could..."

Kalista slowed so that Francine could catch her breath. "I think this will do for today."

"My Lady, you are correct of course, but, the tournament. The opening ceremony is tonight. Wouldn't you want something fancier to gain more requests for your favor?"

The only favor she gave two shakes about would be from a knight that wasn't participating. Honestly, Kalista had forgotten about the tournament that King Braden had announced shortly after his wedding to her dearest friend and now Queen of Harrington, Georgianna. Her first request as queen had been to grant Kalista the title of noble. Just like that, Kalista had gone from the rags of a lady's maid and servant to the luxurious satin dress she wore now.

"There's plenty of time, Francine. Why don't you spend the day planning in my room?"

Francine's tiny, birdlike face lit up. "I will, my Lady. You'll be the finest one there, except of course, the queen." Francine blushed and dropped her head. Kalista hated the way the girl almost flinched from her as if afraid of punishment.

She set her hand softly on the girl's arm. "I have every faith in you."

Kalista could be wearing the finest dress in the kingdom, weave bright flowers in her hair and she still knew *he* wouldn't even look at her. He hadn't since their arrival to Harrington. As frightening as their escape from Covard had been, Kalista would gladly go back to that time if it meant having her knight look at her again.

She stopped at a door, raised her fist, and was in the act of knocking when the door suddenly opened.

Kalista felt the air rush out of her body as she stood face to face with the cause of her anxiety.

"Lady Kalista, good morning." Caldwell recovered first, his tone polite and his expression as impassive as ever. He swayed back as his dark eyes flitted from side to side down

the corridor. He stood in front of the king, his customary position as a lethal wall of protection. He towered over her, not just with height, but also with muscle. Cunning, dark brown eyes peered at her through chin length black hair. Kalista knew well enough how deadly he could be when the situation called. She also knew how gentle he could be. Not that he'd shown that side of himself since their arrival.

"I apologize." Kalista found her voice and bowed to the king. She pretended that her eyes had slid right past Caldwell, though she noticed how he stood back, trying to put as much room between them as was possible. "I was on my way and wondered if Queen Georgianna would like to—"

"Come in, Kalista," Georgianna called out from inside the room. "They were just leaving and I am nearly ready."

Kalista dropped her head and moved to the side. Caldwell passed, oblivious to the way her heart beat like it would burst out of her chest, the way her skin sung at the memory of his nearness. She wished she could lean forward and take his hand easily in hers as he had done as they slept amongst the trees of Covard Forest.

"Nothing yet?" Georgianna whispered gently in her ear once the men had disappeared down the corridor.

Kalista let her queen take her hand. "Not a word."

Georgianna grasped her in a delicate hug. "For a man who is said to see everything, he is blind if he does not see what he's missing out on."

She wanted to lean into the hug, take every ounce of sympathy as was possible from her dearest friend, but sympathy wouldn't change her plight. "Enough of my issues how is your father? Your brother?"

Georgianna's beautiful face brightened. "Ever since the roads between Ceravique and Harrington have been laid down they've been doing exceptionally well. My brother wishes for us to make a royal visit soon, once the perimeters have been reinforced."

"Is there a cause to ensure the perimeters are secure?"

Georgianna shook her head and frowned. Her loose brown curls fell over her shoulders. "Not that my brother will tell me. He's quiet with his affairs, wishing to only inform me of the good that happens." Georgianna launched into a full report on the improvements happening in Ceravique. She was slightly worried for her father's health, but Kalista assumed part of that concern stemmed from the recent death of Braden's father.

Even after they kneeled for prayers, Georgianna whispered progress reports out of the corner of her mouth. She was as proud as any of the recent developments in Ceravique. Understandable, since Georgianna had loved her old kingdom so much she'd agreed to a loveless marriage with the Prince of Covard just to ensure Ceravique's safety. Luckily for her, Braden had stormed into her life and claimed her as his.

Kalista felt a pang of longing. Would she ever feel the contentment that shone so brightly on her friend's face? She looked back to the line of servants waiting with bowed heads and blushed. She was already blessed. The fine clothing that she now wore was a testament to that.

Kalista knew with irrevocable certainty though, she'd give it all up, if it meant she could feel Caldwell's skin against hers.

* * * * *

Kalista sat patiently as Francine fussed over her hair. She combed it until Kalista feared there wouldn't be any strands left. After, she braided it in a complicated plait that swooped around the crown of her head while allowing most of her hair to fall free over her shoulders. When Kalista finally gazed at her reflection, she had to admit the style was not only pretty but noble and made her look less like the peasant suddenly turned into a lady.

"You've done a marvelous job," Kalista said.

Francine beamed at the compliment. "You'll make the room pause with your beauty."

Kalista shrugged off Francine's words. She wasn't beautiful, never had been. She was a hard worker. Back at Covard Castle, that was all she needed to be. Now, she wasn't expected to do *anything* but be a lady, the one thing she found most troublesome.

These thoughts were in the front of her mind when she entered the large hall. With wide, arching windows that let in the cool breeze and waning sunlight, the room was well lit and inviting. Brightly colored flags and tapestries adorned the walls. The long tables were covered in cloths of bright yellow, red, orange, and green.

Normally, she sat at Georgianna's right hand but the queen had explained that with so many new faces coming in for the tournament, they would be separated for the first feast. Francine led her to a table disconnected from every other person she cared to know in the room. She looked over at the queen who gave her a covert wave and a reassuring smile. Georgianna was a picture of perfection. Kalista knew she would never quite master the way the queen always looked so calm, so self-assured.

The other seats filled. She offered a polite smile to each person, and was rewarded with silence. They ate, talking only amongst themselves. So, when the band began a jovial tune, signaling the time for eating had passed and the moment for dancing had come upon them, Kalista felt relief. Perhaps now she could slip away, unnoticed.

Braden and Georgianna were the first to rise. As they began their dance, others rose. Lords and knights alike chose their dance partners. Maybe she enjoyed the pain. There could be no other reason for why she let her eyes fall on Caldwell with hope. He stood at the edge of the dance floor, almost hidden by shadow. He seemed to feel her gaze as his dark eyes met hers and then slid away. Kalista's heart, already fragile, splintered.

"If there is no other," a deep voice rumbled from beside her.

The man was a knight, his emblem shone from the front of his tunic. She had yet to memorize the different insignias within the kingdom. His dark hair and eyes were familiar and handsome, yet his expression held a twinkle that shone a little too brightly. He gave her a lopsided smile and held his hand out towards her in a confident, charming gesture.

Too charming.

"I...uh..." She found Caldwell once more, diligently watching the king and queen dance.

"My Lady, please, you'll wound my honor by refusing." The charming knight stepped over, blocking Kalista's view. "I'll never be able to show my face again. And with this face, wouldn't that be a pity?" He winked playfully.

Kalista's first instinct was to shove the knight away and tell him what he could do with his honor, but that was her peasant blood rearing its head. She was a noble now and needed to act like one if she ever wanted more than one friend.

She accepted his hand. His long fingers instantly enveloped hers in a warm hold as he pulled her from her seat and led her to the dancing area where the other couples had formed circles. The second number began. The charming knight bowed as Kalista curtsied, stumbling while she stepped back taking her place in line.

He didn't seem to notice her slip as they joined hands. That was, until Kalista began falling through the twirling steps. It felt as if her feet were always one step behind the beat. In his hold, he spun her around, effortlessly guiding her through the steps. "Has anyone ever told you that you have two left feet?" he asked with a sly grin.

So much for not noticing.

"Not to my face," Kalista replied with a polite smile. She enjoyed watching his reaction as she step out of his hold, spinning and into another dancer. When they rejoined Kalista was sure he held her a little tighter.

"You seem like an interesting woman, Lady Kalista."

"That *is* unfair. You know my name, while I don't know yours."

"You strike me as the type of girl who enjoys mystery." They separated again.

Kalista ignored her new dance partner and followed the charming knight with her eyes. He winked at her and she felt a small smile form at her lips. Her attention fell on an imposing figure behind the knight. Standing in the shadows, she had to squint to clearly see Caldwell scowling at her as he leaned against the wall.

Kalista wondered what he had to scowl about. She'd often caught him brooding. He stood now, perfectly still, a frown creasing his eyebrows and narrow, menacing eyes. He blinked, shifting his gaze towards her. His eyes held a hunger that had her gasping.

Instantly, Kalista returned to that dark cold cellar where the only thing that had kept her alive, kept her sane, had been his hold on her. Hard footsteps had searched for her as angry voiced had called out her name. She was no wilting flower, but during those terrifying hours, the only thing that had calmed her had been his whispered assurances that they would survive. She would be safe.

And she had believed him.

When he'd held her hand as they scurried out under the cover of night, she'd taken it to mean something more.

Every moment since then had proved her wrong.

Kalista dropped her gaze. Only then did she notice the music had stopped. She felt a hand against the small of her back. "That one is terrified of fun," the charming knight whispered in her ear. He guided her away from Caldwell's glowering form. "Luckily, I am just the opposite."

She stiffened in the knight's arms. Everyone clapped politely. Kalista curtsied and quickly walked away from him back to her seat.

Georgianna sat across the room, a curious expression on her face. Her wavy brown hair cascaded over her shoulders framing a perfectly proportioned face. Kalista watched her call a servant over. The servant nodded once and approached Kalista.

"The Queen requests you sit next to her."

The servant escorted her to the chair next to Georgianna. As soon as she sat, King Braden stood, welcoming the lords, ladies, and knights to the tournament.

“Are you enjoying the feast?” Georgianna murmured while her eyes never left the King. To the crowd she would look attentive and adoring.

“Yes, of course,” Kalista replied just as quietly.

“I saw you dancing.” There was no accusation in her tone, but a healthy dose of curiosity.

“I’ve never met him before. He is a little too friendly.”

“Hm,” came Georgianna’s noncommittal response.

“Compete with honor, with dignity and you will be the one to secure your fortune,” Braden ended his speech to an eruption of applause.

Kalista saw Georgianna’s lips move in a question she couldn’t hear. “What?”

“Did you know—”

“Are you finished, my love?” Braden had disentangled himself from the crowds and stood now with his hand outstretched towards his wife. Kalista looked away from the obvious expression of love and desire on his face.

“I’m...” Georgianna gave Kalista a concerned look.

“Go, I’m tired also,” Kalista said, though she doubted the queen and king wished to leave because they were tired.

Georgianna gave her one last meaningful look before being enveloped in the arms of her love.

Kalista averted her eyes as quickly as was politely possible. During their escape through the forest, it had been easier for her to be near them. Now, it only reminded Kalista of what she didn’t have and what she wanted dearly. Once they were out of sight, Kalista made her way towards the corridor that would lead her to the safety of her room.

“My Lady!” Francine rushed up to her.

“Please, Francine, I can take my own clothes off.”

Francine swayed back, away from the force of her words. “But, everyone will talk. I’m your lady’s maid. This is my duty.”

Kalista swallowed her frustrated sigh. Not very long ago, she’d *been* Francine, but that didn’t quell her desire to be left alone. “I need that dress for tomorrow’s events. The blue one? It should be in the wash, consult the laundress, please.”

Francine let her eyes quickly fall on the people around them. Kalista knew then that she was trying to help her, make her seem more normal. “I could retrieve it after we prepare you for bed,” she said so quietly Kalista was sure no one else could hear her.

Sweet Francine, trying so hard on her behalf... Kalista responded in a tone just as low. “It would do my heart a kindness to know the dress is ready for tomorrow. Please, if the laundress is not there, search the piles for it.”

Francine jerked upright. Kalista knew that she understood now that she had been charged with a task of seemingly great importance she would meet it with enthusiasm. She felt a pang of guilt as Francine hurried down the corridor giving Kalista the freedom to travel the lonely trip back to her room alone. She glanced one last time back at the festival. This hadn’t been her first feast as a noble, but they all seemed to end the same. With the other nobles keeping to

themselves and all pretense of friendliness disappearing as soon as Georgianna retired for the night.

She'd never felt more like a fish out of water. Even now, when there were so many new faces from the surrounding areas, they all still knew each other. She couldn't even see Caldwell in the crowd.

Kalista did see the charming knight, surrounded by a mixed crowd of people. He said something and the entire group erupted with laughter. When the laughter waned, he turned his head, as if feeling her gaze. He winked at her, lifting his hand in a beckoning gesture.

He *was* handsome. Guilt nibbled at the back of her mind. Kalista was loyal to a fault and at this moment, her loyalty angered her. There was no one who claimed her. *He* never claimed her. She should be able to meet a pleasant distraction head on while ignoring what had become of her life.

Kalista took a confident step towards her newest distraction. He smiled, though his eyes flitted to the space behind her and his expression turned dark. Kalista felt someone grab her hand and yank her back. Into the shadows. Away from the feast.

"Who do you think you—" She yanked free and spun around. "Caldwell?"

"Stay away from him," Caldwell ordered through the darkness. He stood against the wall. Kalista stepped into the light of the torch. She heard the celebration continuing on behind her.

"Who?" He didn't respond and Kalista pieced the moment together. "That knight? Why?"

Caldwell turned from her, slinking down the corridor. She watched his motions with astonishment. He'd probably realized whom he was talking to and thought four words were quite enough.

That moment, having his hand on her arm, was the closest she'd been to him in weeks, the first time they'd spoken alone. An emotion too angry to be desire pumped through her body. That he would dismiss their time together so easily had her surging forward. She reached him and with her hand on his elbow, yanked him around much in the same way he had just done.

"Why do you care?" she spat.

Kalista suspected Caldwell had allowed himself to be spun the same moment he stepped easily out of her hold. His silence infuriated her. She met his dark, knowing eyes and yet he refused to speak on his knowledge.

"I see." She nodded and sat back on her heels. "*You* don't care. Did the Queen ask you to warn me?"

"No," he responded though it was clear he didn't want to.

"The King?"

"No, Kit, I speak for myself."

She felt as if lightning had struck her. He'd only ever called her Kit in the forest. As quickly as the feeling came, she needed only to look at his impassive face and it left. "I'll need more than an empty warning. For what reason should I stay away from him? I can think of many people who should be avoided. He didn't seem like one of them."

"He isn't good for you," came Caldwell's begrudging reply.

Kalista rolled her eyes. "If that's all."

She turned her back to him and towards the sounds of celebration. “You forget I’m not a precious flower having been kept on a ledge. Most of the people I’ve met in my life weren’t good for me. I’ve managed this long on my own wits. I imagine I’ll last a while longer.”

In a flash, Caldwell moved in front of her, blocking not just her path but the corridor back to the feast. He’d moved out of the shadows and she could see his face. His eyes bore into hers. His full lips set in a grim line of determination. Kalista remembered the heat of his body, as he was now nearly flush against hers. A single step would bring them together. “Why can’t you simply trust me?” His words came out muted.

She had trusted him. Now, she was only confused by him.

“Words can be strung together to mean anything. I enjoyed his company. But, if you can tell me, simply why I should refuse his company in the future, I will listen.” She folded her arms in front of her and closed her mouth. She’d give him every opportunity.

Caldwell continued to stand as stiff as a statue. “He isn’t good for you,” he repeated as Kalista’s heart fell.

She pursed her lips together. “I’ll thank you to let me decide upon that point.” She navigated around him, more intent than ever to rejoin the party.

“Kit, please.” Frustration laced his tone as he grabbed her arm above the elbow, holding her back. “You’re new in this kingdom and to your status. I’m simply trying to—”

His words made her feel dumb, naive. It had been a long time since she regarded herself as either. “You are right.” She didn’t bother to jerk her arm out of his grasp. “I’ve not long been waited on, nor have I the experience of being regarded as more than a servant. But I am not stupid. I know what those men and woman say about me. I’ve heard it! What I do not know is why you feel it is your duty to remind me. You have no claim on me.” She thought to add that he could have a claim if he desired, but at that point, Caldwell released her arm, only to push forward until her back flattened against the cold, stone wall and his hands were planted beside her body.

“Stop it.” His command brushed against her face. “When haven’t I had your best intentions in my heart? I may not have a legal claim on you, but that doesn’t mean I don’t care for your wellbeing. So, when I tell you to stay away from someone, I tell you as a friend who should be trusted.”

As close as they were, she could barely hear his words. His nearness made her deaf. It made her want to lean forward, capture his lips in hers. Her body felt strung tight. Her eyelids fluttered, but then what he had said, jerked through her. *As a friend.*

“Why.” She swallowed her emotion and tried to sound as reasonable as was possible. “I must at least ask that if I’m to trust you implicitly.” Kalista expected his silence this time. She ducked forward, trying to catch his gaze. “Why can’t I dance with him?”

“Family jealousy,” a deep voice answered her.

The charming knight strode towards them with confidence, smoothly inserting himself between herself and Caldwell. He grabbed her hand and lifted it to his lips. “Forgive my manners, my name is Edward Caldwell. Caldwell is our family name, though James here has adapted it as his persona. It’s very nice to finally be on familiar terms with you.”

A long moment passed before Kalista realized he still held her hand. She hadn't known Caldwell had a brother. More so, she'd never known Caldwell wasn't his given name. Kalista gently pulled her hand out of his grasp and gave him a quick curtsy. "Likewise."

"Everything he said, all lies," Edward said with an affable air. "In fact, let me prove it to you. It's much too early for our beds, come back, there is plenty of food, drink and music left." Kalista got the same feeling as she had before. There was something too charming about Edward. She couldn't dismiss the stiff way Caldwell stood behind them, on alert. She'd seen him like that before, but they had been in a forest, crouching behind bushes as the Prince's men searched for them. She couldn't see what it was about Edward that had him on edge.

Edward looked from her, to his brother. "Ah, I see perhaps you aren't done with your conversation. Well, Lady Kalista, when you *are* done, please come and find me." He was gone as quickly as he had come, leaving Kalista alone once more with Caldwell in the dark corridor.

"I didn't know you had a brother," Kalista said into the silence.

Caldwell stared at the doorway that Edward had passed through once again bathed in shadow.

"I didn't know your name is James," she said with accusation in her tone. Again, he didn't look at her. Kalista felt her anger boil. "Well, you're busy. I'll just go enjoy the party."

"He only told you because he knew it would bother me."

"I don't care why he told me. I care why you *didn't* tell me. You say you're my friend, and yet, I don't even know your true name." She planned on spinning from him in a righteously haughty way and re-joining the party, but found herself no longer standing. Caldwell had wordlessly stalked forward, and without warning, heaved her body up and over his shoulder. She now could do nothing but watch as the stone floor bobbed in time with his march that took them down the hallway and away from the festival.

Her lips formed words of protest, but with his shoulder against her abdomen, she couldn't find the air to utter them. She thought to wiggle, drop like dead weight until she could find the floor and gain her footing. Before she could, her body registered the way Caldwell's fingers splayed against her back, holding her in place, each fingertip a separate point of pressure that rubbed slightly with each step. Her own hands were braced against his wide back. His muscles rippled beneath her. But, it was his other hand that firmly gripped her ass that kept her from trying to escape.

Her body exploded like a cannon. Every repressed desire, every unfulfilled fantasy assaulted her. A wave of carnal hunger took her over. She was no longer dead weight on his shoulders, furthest from that. She'd never felt more alive. Her limbs were as light as feathers. An ache began to throb between her legs. Caldwell repositioned the hand on her ass into a firmer hold and Kalista couldn't stop the moan that escaped her lips. It lingered in her ears. She licked her lips as her hands moved across Caldwell's broad back.

He made no indication that he'd heard her other than to quicken his steps and tighten his hold. He reached her room, hastily shutting the door behind them, cutting them off from prying eyes.

She clung to him. He smoothly sat on the edge of her bed, swinging her body around as if she weighed less than air. His breath came fast as he settled her facing downwards across his lap.

“I tried to warn you.” His voice trembled between anger and desire. Kalista heard the sound of air being sliced in two before she felt a smack against her clothed bottom. The dull thud was not nearly as satisfying as she hoped it to be. Still, her body sung, held so closely against his. His erection threatened to impale her and she pressed down as much as she could, eager to finally feel that part of him.

“You could’ve listened but instead you were irritable.” He yanked her skirt up. A guttural noise surged past his lips as his hand fell once more against her fragile skin. “Do. Not. Ignore. Me.” Each word was accentuated with its own slap.

Her ass burned. Her first instinct was to cry out, tell him she was sorry, but as the pain increased, it gave way to pleasure. Caldwell continued to punish her. His words distorted, blocked by the sound of his rapid spankings.

Kalista felt her nipples tighten into buds of sensation, scraping against her dress with each smack. The space between her legs throbbed. As her body rippled, her center rubbed against his lap resulting in torturous caresses too small to ebb her desire.

She had never been touched this way by a man and definitely never by one so dominant it made her whimper. “Please,” she quietly wailed, needing him to touch more of her, all of her.

All at once, Kalista was unceremoniously thrown from his lap. As quickly as the pleasure had come, it all ceased.

“Kit,” his words came out strangled. “This was... I shouldn’t have let—”

Kalista tried to adjust to the turn of events. She sat on her rug in the exact position she’d landed in, legs folded beneath her body, leaning on her hands for support. She felt discarded, lying on the ground like rubbish. Indignation was not a strong enough emotion, though it was the first that came to her mind.

“Get out!” she said when she found out how to speak again. When he didn’t move she wrenched forward and grabbed his wrist, hoping to jerk that dumbfounded expression off his face at the same time. “Go!” she screamed as his arms wrapped around her. Kalista ignored the way he soothingly shushed her. She struggled at what to call him. She couldn’t call him a liar or a traitor. She could only respond to the embarrassment surging through her. “Leave.”

Kalista watched his transformation. The confusion that had etched his features was replaced with an expression that was completely arrogant male. “No.” His response was as fast as it was deadly.

She balled her hands and hit him. They bounced, ineffectually, off his chest. “You’re—” Her words were choked by emotion as her ass still stung from his sensual assault. “You’re—”

“Mine.”

Her immediate thought was that she’d imagined his response.

Maybe she had.

Caldwell hauled her upright. He wrapped his arms around her and crushed his lips against hers.

She opened her mouth before she had a chance to think about it. It was as if her body responded to his on an instinctual level. What he wanted, she would give, freely. She didn’t need to tell her hands to rub up his back, grasp the back of his head. They were already there, handfuls of his hair in her hands as she sought to deepen the kiss.

Her feet left the ground as he lifted her, carrying her towards the bed, never breaking contact. She met his tongue, thrust for thrust, sucking on it as if it would give her life. She had no experience in this sort of kissing, having only exchanged a few chaste pecks with some of the boys back home. Caldwell was neither chaste nor hesitant in his exploration of her mouth. She clung to his shoulders, cherishing each lick.

He stopped in front of the bed. The fabric that separated their bodies was unacceptable. She still couldn't reach the ground, but bucked back and slid her hands into the space between them as she tried to reach the clasp at the front of his pants. Her hands worked furiously at the fastening, encouraged by a deep rumble of pleasure from Caldwell that vibrated through her.

He bunched up her skirt and sat down guiding her body so that she faced him on his lap. Skin slid against skin, so close to giving Kalista what she wanted. What she needed.

Caldwell pulled back and examined her with dark, eyes full of desire. Kalista knew her lips would be swollen and red, her cheeks flushed. His gaze traveled down to the front of her dress. He lifted a hand and almost reverently pulled her sleeves down, exposing her breasts.

"How can I deny myself this perfection?" he asked, but more like he spoke to himself. "I need to taste you." With his eyes never leaving hers, he urged her forward and bent his head, drawing a tight nipple into his mouth. He suckled at the tender bud, alternating between gentle licks and fierce tugging. "Harder?" he growled and suckled her nipple so severely his cheeks hollowed.

"Yes." The word ripped from her mouth. She could say no more as sensation assaulted her. His lips nibbled at her skin, biting at her neck, returning back to her swollen nipples. She became all too aware of his insistent member. Hesitantly, she lifted her body up, searching for the position that would allow him inside. She looked down at his swollen cock. The tip leaked droplets of clear fluid. Curiosity had her wondering what he would taste like, if he would like the feel of her lips around him.

But, desire was an impatient mistress. Using his shoulders as leverage, she lifted further up. His hands found her hips and he guided his erection towards her entrance.

As his tip pressed nearly inside of her, Kalista realized, in moments she would no longer be a virgin. She wondered if it would hurt, if she should feel shame, but any thought was quickly discarded as she wiggled downwards, easing him inside. Kalista thought she screamed loud enough for the whole castle to hear. It didn't hurt, not yet, but the feeling was so unfamiliar, yet so erotic. She concentrated on working more of him inside of her. So intent on watching him, she noticed his eyes widen as his mouth parted into a surprised expression.

Kalista held her breath and eased her way down. She felt something inside of her body shift. Painful, but not unbearable. Caldwell's hands were at her hips again, locking himself inside of her.

She shuddered. Her arms and legs shook. Caldwell stilled as she adjusted to the feeling of being completely and utterly filled by him. He wrapped his arms around her. A thin layer of sweat covered her body and a tear threatened to fall. She blinked it back and looked up at him.

There were too many emotions in his face to decipher what he was feeling. "My poor, Kit, I had no idea," he began, but Kalista refused to hear his pity. All she could do was live in that glorious moment and take what her body told her she needed.

She bit her bottom lip and used her legs to withdraw a short way. Her thighs shook. Slowly she descended back down his shaft.

“That’s it, take what you need. Slowly, Kit,” Caldwell said as he rubbed her back, never pushing her to go faster. The pain was already less and was being replaced by the throbbing need she had felt earlier. Once more she experimentally rose her body and lowered it back down, finding the pain to be almost non-existent as her body burned brighter than ever for a release she wasn’t sure how to achieve. She hovered above him, hesitant, unsure. She sought the comfort of his gaze and found his dark eyes. Her mind swirled with a thousand questions, what was she to do next? How could she ease the terrible ache between her thighs? She couldn’t ask any of them though. Instead, she leaned forward and licked his lips.

Caldwell growled. His hands fell back to her hips and no longer guided her but became restraints. He rolled them over, pinning her beneath him. “Kit, I can’t be what you need,” he said as he held himself above her. “You deserve gentle and I am barely holding back from burying myself so far inside of you.”

“Please,” she wailed and hoped it was intelligible. His hair brushed against her cheek. His breath was harsh against her face. Kalista pleaded again, not sure what she was begging for but instinctively knew, despite his reservations, that he could give it to her.

He drove inside of her and Kalista clasped a hand over her mouth. She’d felt filled before. Now, with him in control, she felt like there wasn’t a place in her body that he wasn’t touching. Her body sank into the bed even as her hips thrust forward. It wasn’t enough to fulfill a need she couldn’t name, something that was so very near.

Caldwell grabbed the back of her head, pulling her forward in a kiss as he continued to thrust inside of her. Each impalement sent her to a higher place, closer to that feeling of unknown release. He broke the kiss with a gasp. “Come for me, my Kit. Come for only me.”

His words brought her to that place she couldn’t find on her own. She opened her eyes but wave after wave of sensation made her blind. She’d never felt so weak as she wrapped her arms around him and held on. He thrust twice more and remained in her embrace, her name a litany on his lips.

Kalista bucked through tiny surges of pleasure that raced through her body even after the initial explosion had passed. As they eased, she thought she should say so many things, but nothing could form on her lips.

A minute passed. She sensed Caldwell trying to regulate his breathing as he too came down from the cloud of desire.

“I’m sorry.” Guilt colored his tone. “Kit, I swear, I didn’t....”

Any of the warmth she had felt escaped as he spoke.

Caldwell pulled out and began to rearrange his clothing. He never looked at her, his eyes remaining downward. “I...” When he was fully dressed he turned towards her, she lay as she had been left, splayed against the bed. “Lord....”

Kalista knew what he meant, even if he didn’t say it. He regretted what they had just done. He regretted being her first.

“Will you not look at me?”

She grabbed the corner of her blanket, pulled it over her cold body, and turned away from him hoping that the sob that threatened to escape would wait.

It did.

She heard her door open and then shut. Only then did she cry.