

TRICIA LEVENSELLER is from a small town in Oregon and now lives next to the Rocky Mountains in Utah with her bossy dog, Rosy. When she's not writing or reading, Tricia enjoys putting together jigsaw puzzles, playing Overwatch, and watching her favorite TV shows while eating extra-buttered popcorn. Her books include *Daughter of the Pirate King*, its sequel *Daughter of the Siren Queen*, *Warrior of the Wild*, *The Shadows Between Us*, *Blade of Secrets* and its sequel *Master of Iron*, all published or forthcoming from Pushkin Press.

Also by Tricia Levenseller

DAUGHTER *of the* PIRATE KING  
DAUGHTER *of the* SIREN QUEEN

WARRIOR *of the* WILD

*The* SHADOWS *Between* US

BLADE *of* SECRETS  
MASTER *of* IRON



*The*  
SHADOWS  
*Between*  
Us

TRICIA LEVENSELLER

Pushkin Press  
Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R 1LA

Copyright © 2020 Tricia Levenseller

First published by Feiwel and Friends, an imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC. All rights reserved

First published by Pushkin Press in 2023

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 13: 978-1-78269-372-7

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from Pushkin Press

Offset by Tetragon, London  
Printed and bound by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

[www.pushkinpress.com](http://www.pushkinpress.com)



*For Becki*

*I can't think of anyone more deserving of this Slytherin romance.*

*Thanks for reading it first!*



IT'S COOL NOT GROWING OLD. I LIKE BEING THE ETERNAL STUD.

—Damon Salvatore, *The Vampire Diaries*,

Season 1, Episode 4





# Chapter

## 1

They've never found the body of the first and only boy who broke my heart.

And they never will.

I buried Hektor Galanis in a hole so deep, even the devils of the earth couldn't reach him.

My dream was of him, of the day he told me it had been fun but he was done. Some other girl had caught his fancy. I don't even remember her name. At the time, all I could think of was the fact that I'd given everything to Hektor: my first kiss, my love, my body.

And when I told him I loved him, all he had to say was "Thanks, but I think it's time we moved on."

He had other things to say, too. When I sank my knife into his chest, words came spilling out of him almost as fast as the blood.

He couldn't make sense of it. I couldn't, either. I barely remembered grabbing the knife Father had given to me for my fifteenth birthday, three months previous, with its jeweled handle and silver sheen, but I do remember that Hektor's blood matched the inlaid rubies.

I also remember what finally helped my head catch up with my pounding heart: the last word out of Hektor's lips.

*Alessandra.*

His last word was my name. His last thought was of me.

I won.

That knowledge settles within me now just as it did three years ago. That sense of rightness, of peace.

I lift my arms into the air, stretching like a cat, before rolling over in bed.

A pair of brown eyes is only inches from my own.

“Devils, Myron, why are you staring at me?” I ask.

He presses a kiss to my bare shoulder. “Because you’re beautiful.” Myron lies on his side, his head propped up on a closed fist. My bedsheets cover him from the waist down. It’s a wonder he fits in my bed, he’s so tall. Floppy curls sprawl across his forehead, and he flicks back his head to clear his vision. The scent of sandalwood and sweat wafts over me.

With a hand, I keep the sheets held up over my chest as I rise to a sitting position. “Last night was fun, but you should go. I have much to do today.”

Myron stares at my chest, and I roll my eyes.

“Perhaps again later?” I ask.

He looks up at me, before his eyes flit meaningfully to my chest once more.

No, wait. Not my chest. To the hand holding the sheets in place and the extra weight I now feel there.

There’s a diamond on my finger. It’s beautiful, cut in an egg shape and buried in gold. It winks in the morning light as I tilt my hand from side to side. The ring is by far the most expensive trinket he’s ever given me.

“Alessandra Stathos, I love you. Will you marry me?”

Laughter fills the room, and Myron flinches at it. I quickly place my free hand over my lips.

“What are you thinking?” I say a moment later. “Of course not.” I



stare down at the gorgeous ring once more. With this gift, Myron has outlived his usefulness. For some reason, my lovers cease to give me expensive presents once I turn down their proposals.

Alas.

“But we’re so happy together,” he says. “I will cherish you every day. Give you everything you deserve. I will treat you like a princess.”

If only he knew I have my sights set a bit higher than that. “It’s a very kind offer, but I’m not ready to settle down just yet.”

“But—I’ve shared your bed,” he splutters.

Yes, he and three other boys this month.

“And now it’s time for you to leave it.” I move to rise from the bed when the door to my chambers bursts open.

Myron freezes with his hand outstretched toward me, and my father, Sergios Stathos, Lord Masis, looks down at what he can see of our naked bodies.

“Leave,” he bites out in a deathly quiet voice. My father is shorter than my five and a half feet, but he’s built like a bull with a thick neck, wide shoulders, and keen eyes that pierce to the soul.

Myron tries to take the sheets with him, but I’ve got them firmly clamped around myself. When he fails to wrest them from me, he reaches down to grab his pants.

“Leave now,” Father specifies.

“But—”

“Listen or I will have you whipped!”

Myron stands. Barely. He hunches as though he can hide his tall frame. He makes it halfway to the door before turning. “My ring?”

“Surely you want me to keep it? So I can remember our time together?”

Myron’s face twists. He has one foot pointed toward the door and the other toward me.

Father growls.

Myron takes off at a run, nearly tripping over my father's boots as he bolts over the threshold. Once he's gone, Father turns to me.

"You make it difficult for me to find you a suitable match when you're caught with a new bedfellow every night."

"Don't be ridiculous, Father. That was Myron's fifth stay."

"Alessandra! You must stop this. It is time for you to grow up. To settle down."

"Has Chrysantha found a husband, then?" Father knows very well the law forbids me to marry until my older sister does. There is an order to things.

Father treads over to the bed. "The Shadow King has dismissed a number of single women from the palace, Chrysantha among them. I'd hoped your sister would catch his eye, rare beauty that she is."

Oh, yes. Chrysantha is a rare beauty. And she's as dumb as a rock.

"But it was not to be," Father concludes.

"Myron's free," I offer.

Father levels a glare at me. "She will not wed Myron. Chrysantha will be a duchess. I've already made arrangements with the Duke of Pholios. He's an aging man who wants a pretty girl on his arm. It's done. That means it's your turn."

Finally.

"You've suddenly taken an interest in my future, have you?" I ask, just to be difficult.

"I've always had your best interests in mind."

A complete untruth. The only time Father bothers to think of me is when he catches me doing something he thinks I shouldn't. Chrysantha has been his focus my entire life.

Father continues, "I'm going to approach the Earl of Oricos to discuss the match of you and his son, who will inherit one day. Soon, I should think, given Aterxes's ailing health. That should make you happy."

“It doesn’t.”

“You’re certainly not going to remain my problem forever.”

“So touching, Father, but I’ve got my sights set on another man.”

“And just whom would that be?”

I stand, pulling the sheet up with me, before tucking it under my arms. “The Shadow King, of course.”

Father guffaws. “I think not. With your reputation, it’ll be a miracle if I can get any nobleman’s son to have you.”

“My reputation is known by none, save those whom it directly concerns.”

“Men do not keep the exploits of the bedroom to themselves.”

I smile. “They do when it’s me.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“I’m not stupid, Father. I have something on every man who has seen the inside of this room. Myron has an unfortunate gambling problem. He lost a family heirloom in a game of cards. Blamed the missing pendant on a servant and got him whipped and fired. His father wouldn’t be happy to hear of it. And Damon? I happen to know he’s part of a group of smugglers importing illegal weapons into the city. He’d be sent to prison if anyone knew the truth. And let’s not forget Nestor, who’s quite fond of the opium dens. I could go on naming all my lovers, but I think you get the idea.”

Though his face doesn’t change, Father’s shoulders lose some of their tension. “Such winning gentlemen you keep around, darling.”

“The point is, Father, I know what I’m doing. And I’m going to keep doing whatever I wish, because I am the master of myself. And you? You’re going to send me to the palace with the next wave of women to see the king, because if there’s anything I’m good at, it’s getting men to propose to me.” I flash the diamond on my finger in his direction.

Father’s eyes narrow. “How long have you been planning this?”

“Years.”

“You said nothing when I sent Chrysantha to the palace.”

“Father, Chrysantha couldn’t catch the attention of a rabid dog. Besides, beauty isn’t enough to catch the eye of the Shadow King. He has beauties paraded in front of him all year long.

“Send me. I will get us all a palace,” I finish.

The room is quiet for a full minute.

“You’ll need new dresses,” Father says at last, “and I won’t get your sister’s bride-price for weeks yet. That won’t be enough time.”

I pull the ring from my finger and stare down at it lovingly. Why does he think I’ve taken so many lovers? They’re fun, to be sure, but most important, they’re going to finance my stay at the palace.

I hold up the ring where my father can see it. “There’s plenty more where this came from.”



SEWING HAS ALWAYS BEEN a hobby of mine, but it is impossible for me to make all the new clothing required for my upcoming plans in such a short amount of time. Working with my favorite seamstress, I design and commission ten new day outfits, five evening gowns, and three appropriately indecent nightgowns (although those I make myself—Eudora doesn’t need to know how I intend to spend my nights).

Father takes no part in the planning, as he is much too busy with his accountant, worrying over the estate. He’s bankrupt and desperately trying to hide it. It’s not his fault. Father’s quite competent, but the land just isn’t producing as it once was. Disease swept through a few years ago and killed most of the livestock. Every year, the crops grow thinner. A well has already gone dry, and more and more tenants are leaving.

The Masis estate is dying, and Father needs to acquire decent bride-prices for my sister and me in order to keep his lands running.

Though I’m aware of the situation, I haven’t bothered to worry about it. My lovers all feel the need to give me nice things. Very expen-

sive things. It's been a fun game. Learning their secrets. Seducing them. Getting them to shower me with gifts.

But to be honest?

I'm bored with it.

I have a new game in mind.

I'm going to woo the king.

I suspect it won't be longer than a month before he's helplessly in love with me. And when he proposes, I will say yes for the first time.

For once the marriage is official and consummated?

I will kill the Shadow King and take his kingdom for myself.

Only this time, I won't have to bury the body. I'll find a convenient scapegoat and leave the Shadow King for someone to discover. The world will need to know that I'm the last royal left.

Their queen.

# Chapter

## 2

Father exits the carriage first and holds out his arm to me. I grasp it with one gloved hand, hold up my heavy overskirt in the other, and descend the steps.

The palace is a grand structure painted entirely in black. It's positively gothic in appearance, with winged creatures resting atop the columns. Round towers sweep up the sides, roofed with shingles, a recent architectural style.

The entire length of the palace is built near the top of a mountain, with most of the city winding its way downward. The Shadow King is a grand conqueror, spreading his influence slowly across all the world, just like his father before him. Since the surrounding kingdoms try to retaliate from time to time, a well-protected city is vital, and the grand palace is said to be impregnable. Guards patrol the grounds with rifles slung over their shoulders, a further deterrent to our enemies.

"I'm not sure black was the best color choice for your attire," Father says as he leads me up the steps to the main entrance. "Everyone knows the king's favorite color is green."

"Every single girl in attendance will be wearing green. The point is to stand out, Father. Not blend in."