

A Corruption Most Divine

Chapter 2

It started small. A simple tugging in the back of Alora's mind, a weight gripping her chest. The sensation of her fingertips on a cool, smooth, hard surface.

Then, as she focussed on the Celestial Shard, she *felt* it.

Her awareness opened, spread slowly outward. She felt the entirety of the jagged, mystical rock. Then the natural, rocklike podium it hovered above. Then her own body. Skin and hair and dress, bones and blood and *everything*.

A gasp escaped her lips, and she sensed it from *outside* her own body. Felt the shift in the air between her lips.

Her heartbeat thrummed, and the Celestial Shard echoed it.

The sense widened, Alora becoming aware of the full cavernous room. Her and the servant standing in it. All the stalactites and stalagmites, the mild dampness that permeated the natural cavern. And still the awareness continued to expand. Pushing out in all directions like an invisible bubble, Alora and the Celestial Shard at its centre.

The further it pushed out, the more resistance it met.

At first, Alora thought it was the Celestial Shard not being powerful enough, stretching itself too far. And, while that was true, it wasn't the *whole* truth.

The Celestial Shard's area of influence was *pushing* against something. Struggling to force that *something* back.

Her new sense continued to expand and grow, though slower now than it had been just a few heartbeats before. The further it pushed out, the greater the resistance until, finally, the Celestial Shard reached its limit.

Alora sensed the Palace. Every room she'd ever been in. And many rooms she'd never seen. She sensed the legion of servants. Dozens and dozens, easily over two-hundred people; mostly girls. She felt the marble and stone, the strands of fabric that made up every piece of cloth. She felt the heat of the sun on the grounds, the chill of an underground food storage chamber.

Too much. Too many things for her to focus on.

Her senses ended at the walls surrounding the palace. Everything beyond that was hidden to her.

Under her fingertips, the Celestial Shard thrummed.

It pulsed, vibrated in her senses. Attuned itself to her racing heart until the pulsing and her heartbeat were one in the same.

Alora drew her hand away.

At once, the new sense vanished. She was back in a cave-like room, staring at a window into the night sky, a servant standing just a few feet away. One of her many tutors.

She stumbled. Collapsed.

The world went black.

Alora woke to the sound of bell chimes.

Servants fanned her, as always. And the bedroom floor was covered in the same pink petals it was every day.

And yet...

Something was *different*.

Alora rubbed her sleepy eyes, looked around her spacious bedchamber. Her lips pursed, mind too sluggish to see the obvious for far too long. But, finally, she realised what that source of that unusual, spine-tingling feeling was.

The servants.

They were *looking* at her.

It was brief. Subtle.

The moment her eyes fell on one, that servant turned their eyes down. But, out of the corner of her eyes, she could see it. The servants were *looking* at her.

Her face... Her body...

Alora flushed, sucked in some air.

Heat flared to life inside her.

She turned her gaze to one of the servants, tried to meet the girl's eyes. But the girl refused, looked down at the floor. Alora snapped her head to one side, tried to get a different servant to lock eyes with her. Again, the servant looked away before their eyes could meet.

The heat inside her grew, spread along her arms and legs.

She bit her lip, slowly pulled her blanket down.

The nightgown she had on was a modest thing. White silk that covered her from collar to ankles, full sleeves that extended past Alora's fingers. Delicate, comfortable cloth, certainly. No doubt, it was made by one of the most talented dressmakers in the world to fit the latest fashions.

But, for as modest and chaste as the nightgown was, it didn't conceal *everything*.

Her nipples, stiff as they were, poked the thin silk. When Alora looked down, she could clearly see their protrusions under the white fabric. And, if *she* could see them...

Her face tingled with heat.

Quickly – lacking the steady, refined dignity of her position – Alora clambered out of bed.

As she did, her chest bounced.

She felt several pairs of eyes on her bust as her breasts hopped up and sprang back down.

The tingling heat spread down her neck.

Her heart thrummed.

Bare feet crushing petals, Alora strode towards her bedchamber door. Every pair of eyes followed her, lingering on places no servant should ever look.

By the time she stood with arms outstretched, ready for servants to slip off her nightgown and dress her, her legs were trembling with arousal. Her heart thundered in her chest. She was so lost in the hazy heat, the sensation of eyes exploring her body, that she didn't notice the knife-wielding servant at first.

It only registered in her mind as the older woman, sharp knife raised, grasped the front of Alora's nightgown.

Panic shot through Alora. She froze, unable to react.

The servant brought the knife down slowly, slicing through the fabric of the nightgown. From neckline, down between Alora's breasts, all the way to her crotch.

The blade never touched Alora's skin. Yet, she flinched all the same. Had to push down the urge to back away.

The daughter of the God-Emperor did not shy away from *servants*.

Rough hands grasped the cloth on Alora's shoulders, pushed it aside. The nightgown slid off her shoulders, down her back. Fell to the floor in a sad heap.

Alora glanced down at it, eyes wide.

Destroyed.

She wouldn't be wearing *that* gown again.

When her eyes came back up, took in the sight of her dressers staring at her naked body, Alora gasped.

Naked.

She was *naked*.

And they were *looking* at her.

Her knees trembled, heat flaring between her legs.

She sat on a little hill covered in pink petals, staring at her palace while servants fanned her with massive palm leaves.

The Celestial Shard. That hadn't been a dream, had it?

Whosoever sits the Throne, be they of the Maker's Blood, shall rule the world in its entirety.

The Celestial Throne. The Divine Bloodline.

She knew the stories. Knew them better than just about anything. She *knew* the powers her ancestors had possessed. And yet she *still* couldn't quite believe it.

A Celestial Shard. A lesser fragment of the Throne.

Whosoever sits the Throne.

Her father. *He* was the man who sat the Celestial Throne. The God-Emperor of mankind. The one to whom the world and the hearts of men submitted to.

A kind, benevolent God-Emperor would lead to prosperity and happiness, a world of peace and plenty.

A cruel God-Emperor would corrupt the hearts of men, twist nature in ugly ways.

A lazy God-Emperor would infect mankind and the natural world with that same lacklustre intent; causing plants to grow slow and bear unripe fruit, men to stop working and leave their fields abandoned.

The world and its people were a reflection of whoever sat the Throne atop the Midnight Mountain.

Midnight Mountain...

Alora scrunched her nose in thought.

Midnight. As in the same night's sky that the Celestial Shard had possessed?

She tried to imagine it. An entire mountain that was a window into the night's sky. Its outline clear, but the shapes of its cliffs and cracks and walls indistinguishable.

Why had her tutors never shared *that* with her?

Another thought occurred to her.

When the Celestial Shard's area of influence had been expanding, it'd been as if it were pushing up against *something*. The larger it'd gotten, the more it'd had to resist the other invisible field until, at last, it'd reached its limit.

The thing she'd been pushing against... It'd been the Celestial Throne. The power that enveloped all the world.

Her *father's* area of influence.

Demi-God Princess.

That's what the tutor had called her.

An ache behind Alora's forehead let itself be known. The endless questions and confusion thrust itself against her skull, made her brain throb.

The palace and its grounds weren't under the influence of the God-Emperor's heart any longer, were they?

They were under *her* influence.

Which might go some way in explaining things...

The servants looking at her body. The odd way her dressers had decided to remove her nightgown. Even the frowns those same dressers had shown when putting Alora in today's dress.

An unremarkable dress; no different from the dozens she'd worn over the last weeks. Modest, high-necked, skin-concealing. Boring.

The frowns and disapproval that'd been on her servants' faces when they'd put it on her – Alora felt something similar about the dresses. They were so *bland*. Compared to some of the things her ancestors had worn, the dresses she wore seemed so lifeless and dull.

Alora's eyes flicked from the palace to one of the servants fanning her. A quick snap to catch the girl off guard.

The servant didn't react fast enough.

The pair of eyes that'd been glued to Alora's chest flicked up to her face in surprise. Meeting Alora's gaze before her natural instinct kicked in.

Quickly, the servant looked down at the ground.

Alora flushed.

Her heart hiccupped, chest buzzing.

A servant had looked into her eyes!

Warmth pulsed through her body. A radiant glow that heated the area between Alora's legs like an oven, made her limbs tingle and her lips part in a breathy gasp.

A *servant* had locked eyes with her!

Just the notion was scandalous!

Alora closed her eyes. Basked in the feeling of so many eyes upon her. All the servants fanning her. The ones holding petal baskets. Gardeners and cleaners. All of them!

If not for the constant fanning, Alora might've passed out from the molten heat of her arousal.

As it was, she sat there panting. Thoughts melting away.

The next day, her dresser servants surprised her with a new style of clothing.

A sleeveless white dress with sapphire embroidery. Unlike her usual dresses, the skirt of this one didn't extend all the way to Alora's ankles. The loose skirt reached just passed her knees, exposing naked calves to the world. Likewise, the neckline of the dress was unlike anything Alora had worn before. Her neck and collar were uncovered, a narrow slit down the front of the dress exposing a hint of cleavage.

It was a more revealing, sexual, illicit dress than even her nightgowns. And she was expected to wear this around the *palace*? Where every servant would be able to see her?

Alora trembled with excitement as she left her dressing chamber.

As she walked, servant girls scattered petals for her to tread on. The servants all glanced at Alora, peeking at her exposed skin and appreciating her curves.

Alora bit her lip, slowed down.

Rushing to her first lesson of the day would mean less time for her servants to sneak glances.

And... And why go to her lessons at all?

Laziness, she warned herself. *Lessons are important*.

To be so arbitrary about her education, indifferent about her responsibilities, was a very bad thing. Traits like those – callous, corrupting traits – would lead to a very bleak and dark world for everyone one day, if she allowed herself to adopt them.

Still... One day could hardly hurt...

She walked to the end of a corridor, watched as the petal-scattering servants rounded the corner and left a neat trail of pink petals in their wake.

Alora stopped, turned to face the other way. Waited.

It took the servants longer than usual to realise Alora's intent.

Secretly, Alora hoped it was because they'd been too busy staring at her backside. Distracted by her round, protruding bottom. The thought of them looking at her like that, to the point they forgot their responsibilities, sent pleasant tingles thrumming through her.

When the servants rushed around her, haphazardly tossing pink petals along her new path, she smiled. Held her head high. Walked onward.

Towards the bathhouse.

The temptation to use the swimming pool was strong. Floating there on her back, enjoying the eyes on her. With the newfound *interest* her servants had for her body, Alora could only imagine how pleasant such a swim might be.

But, though it was exceedingly tempting, it wasn't to be.

Today, another craving dominated her thoughts.

As soon as her new dress had been removed, Alora led the way through the bathhouse. Dutifully, the bath servants followed.

One was a pale, petite girl. The other a buxom girl with a natural tan. Both looked slightly older than Alora herself, though the petite girl was still a half-foot shorter. And, of course, both servant girls were as naked as Alora.

The small room she led the servants to had no pool of water for Alora to lounge in. She simply walked to the middle of the room and stood on a square indentation in the floor.

The tiles were warm against her bare feet.

Pipes under the floor filled with flowing warm water. A masterwork of engineering put in place for no other reason than Alora's comfort. It wouldn't do, after all, for one with the Divine Blood to have to deal with uncomfortably cold floors.

As soon as she was in place, Alora held her arms out and waited.

The servant girls quickly went to collect buckets of warm, soapy water. A big sponge floating in each bucket.

Alora closed her eyes, braced for what came next.

One of the few times a servant was permitted to *touch* her skin directly. Save for servants dressing and undressing her, *this* was the only time any servant could touch Alora without it being an immediate death sentence. And, even now, the servants would use those sponges rather than their-

A hand squeezed her bottom.

Alora's eyes shot open, body tensing at the new sensation.

No-one had ever- Who would have dared-

Too stunned to look over her shoulder at her groper, Alora stared forward. Eyes so wide, it felt like they were bulging out of her head. The only thing that kept her from gasping or flinching or reacting in any way were the small fingertips digging into her firm bottom, keeping her frozen in place.

Another hand started groping her other buttock.

And, a moment later, a third hand reached around and cupped one of Alora's moderate breasts.

Slowly, not quite believing what was happening, Alora looked down at the hand. Saw the soap suds between tanned fingers, bubbles clinging to Alora's pale skin wherever that hand explored.

It moved from one breast to the other, soapy fingers gliding over Alora's soft skin.

Behind her, a single fingertip slid into the valley between butt cheeks. Parting the firm buns as it moved up and down, exploring that private place.

The other hand on Alora's bottom moved down, along Alora's thigh. Gentle but firm, the hand pushed Alora's thighs apart and pressed into the gap between them.

All she could do was stand there as the servants 'cleaned' her.

Bare hands on her naked body. Wet hands squeezing and groping her. Alora let out a breathy gasp when one of the hands pushed its way between her legs to her crotch. Warm fingertips probed an even warmer area.

Alora moaned. Her knees wobbled, almost gave out.

She stumbled, had to steady herself.

As she did, the hands retreated. Pulled away from Alora's body and left a disappointing emptiness behind.

Alora righted herself, held her arms out once more.

This time, the servants brought wet sponges to her body. Rubbing her arms and legs and back and tummy, avoiding all the lewd parts of Alora's body until the end. And, even then, they rubbed methodically. The sponges moved without passion, only there to

clean Alora's divine body and nothing more.

Alora opened her mouth, wanted to ask for their hands again.

Instinct bred from a lifetime of etiquette lessons stopped her dead. Her tongue, heavy in her mouth, refused to form words.

Then, abruptly, the sponge bath was over.

The servants splashed warm water onto Alora's face, quickly set to washing her hair. Then they dried her with towels so soft they might as well have been clouds.

Alora hid her disappointment and regret as she left the bathhouse, began the walk to where her tutors waited.