

## Preface:

The one trait that I'd always considered my biggest flaw-my moodiness, was to prove my greatest asset. The one that led me to joy, love and my happily ever after. If only that was permitted to be.

## Chapter One.

### Prince of the Broken

I caught the bouquet, it's the first time it's ever happened to me. All the guests looked on, amazed. It's just a bunch of flowers. That was last summer and I'm still single.

I've seen this guy I like. His eyes struck me like a lightning bolt. He had me from the very beginning. He's physically flawless but a secret lurks beneath. That's what intrigued me, this masquerade of perfection.

I've only ever wanted this one man. I thought I might be asexual, but now I realize that I'm not. I see him everyday around the school. I won't be just another girl falling for this untouchable human being. I've said 'hi' to him in the hall out of politeness but that's it.

Books are my thing .I have a favourite spot in the library, *my* table. I go alone to do my assignment. I pour over a Sociology book, devouring the facts before I evaluate them.

"Hi," a male voice interrupts my study.

I look up and see *him* in front of me.

"Hello," I say shyly, wondering what he wants.

"Can I sit with you?"

"Sure, okay," I say baffled.

"What's your name?"

"Seren, and you?"

"Calix."

"I've seen you around. I had to ask you, are you happy?" he asks.

"I'm okay, just bored by all this studying, " I reply.

"No. I mean in life in general, have you ever been happy?"

Now I am confused. Why is a person I've hardly ever spoken to asking me this question?

“Why do you ask?” I enquire trying to find his motive.

“Just answer the question,” he persists.

Honestly I’m not sure I want to answer.

“I guess I’m not truly happy. There’s a lot in my life I’d want to fix,” I reply honestly.

“Okay, I’ll speak to you again tomorrow,” he says getting up to leave.

“What?” I ask as he walks away, stalked by female eyes.

“Tomorrow, library, lunchtime,” he says in a matter of fact tone.

That was bizarre. This guy makes me feel like I have to question who I am.

After school, I go shopping. I cannot stop thinking about him, he’s so unusual. I wonder why he wants to speak to me again. Maybe he’s a philosophy student and has asked loads of students this question.

I curiously check social networking websites but I can’t find him. What baffles me is that he paid attention to me. No guys ever do. But I consider his question. “Are you happy, have you ever been happy?”

Maybe I look depressed. I’ve always been told I don’t smile much but that doesn’t necessarily equate unhappiness. Perhaps he’s a psychology student researching depression. I’ll ask him tomorrow.

I’m late for class so scuttle in, trying to be invisible. It’s sociology. I sit next to Charlotte. I talk about her boyfriend to wake her up.

“How’s it going with you and Adam?”

“Good thanks. Have you seen any guys that you like?”

“Most guys in school are dating, and the ones that aren’t... well there’s a reason for that,” I smirk.

“That supermodel -alike is single, have you seen him?” She asks and I know instantly who she’s referring to.

“Calix?”

“Yes.”

“Why is he single? He can’t be short of candidates,” I say.

“Maybe he is foreign,” says Charlotte.

“Actually I spoke to him yesterday. He’s definitely not foreign.”

“Really? I’ve never even heard him speak,” she says sounding surprised.

“Does he study philosophy?” I ask hoping to clarify this.

“No, he studies history. I’ve seen him in Professor Thornton’s class,” she says.

“Oh.” I say, slightly concerned that he has targeted me specifically.

“Calix is really brainy .We were taking IQ tests and he got 149,” Charlotte says.

“Wow, isn’t that genius level?” I ask impressed.

“Yes, I think so,” says Charlotte.

“Gorgeous and smart, that’s a rare combination,” I say and Charlotte nods in agreement.

Walking to the library at lunchtime, I feel daunted. This is why he wanted to speak to me. He must have seen me in here reading and figured that I’m as brainy as him. He’s probably expecting some intellectual debate, but I’ll end up feeling like a fool. I walk over to my usual table, a spot where few people go. He’s already there waiting for me.

“Hi.”

“Hey,” he says softly.

“So what’s all this questioning about?” I ask.

“You’re unhappy Seren, I know you are. You’re sad and lonely.”

I am horrified, this guy has got a nerve.

“Excuse me, you can’t tell me how I feel. You don’t even know me.” I screech but he ignores me.

“Are you doing some sort of unhappiness assignment?” I probe.

“No. I’m saying this because I can tell how you feel. You know I’m right.”

I don’t answer because what he’s saying is true .I do feel lonely.

“Will you meet me tonight at seven?” he asks abruptly.

Is the best looking guy on campus asking me on a date? I can't help but do a mental victory dance.

“Okay, where?” I ask. I should tell him to get lost, but no sane girl ever would.

“By the gate next to the Graveyard,” he says.

The Graveyard is directly opposite the school. Seems like an odd place to meet a date.

“Umm okay.” I say, hoping I won't have to wait long in the dark.

“Where are we going after I meet you?” I ask.

“You'll see,” he smiles knowingly.

“Let me ask you something.”

“Go on,” he says smiling his enigmatic smile.

“Are you speaking to me because you think I'm a genius?”

“No. I'm speaking to you as I have something to show you, and tonight I will,” he says.

After school, I go straight home to plan what I'll wear tonight. I want to look good but as it's a cold night, I need to be warm. I choose a black skirt, woolly tights and a pink top.

I feel a bizarre combination of livid at being called lonely and euphoric for being asked out by *him*. How unromantic of him to pick a graveyard as a meeting place. I hope he's not going to murder me. Despite my doubts, my curiosity gets the better of me and I head towards the school/graveyard at 6:50.

The graveyard doesn't bother me in the daylight, I'm not fazed by death. But in the dark it's a different matter. I hope this isn't some twisted joke he's playing. Pick some pathetic girl, get her to come to a graveyard alone at night, then just don't turn up.

Just as I am letting my imagination overtake my rationality, I see him standing by the rusty gate that is situated next to the cemetery. It has had a padlock around it for as long as I can remember.

“Hey you’re right on time,” he smiles, looking surprised as though he thought I might not come.

“So are you. I was worried you might stand me up,” I say relieved that I don’t have to wait for him.

“No, of course I wouldn’t. You intrigue me so much you know,” he says charmingly.

I intrigue him? I don’t think I’ve ever felt so complimented.

“So what did you want to show me?” I ask still wondering why he brought me to this location.

“Wait and see,” he says retrieving an antique key from his coat pocket.

He unlocks the padlock and the gate creaks as it opens, startling me.

“Where does this lead, another part of the cemetery?” I ask because it’s hard to tell what lies behind the gate. Bushes have grown up all around.

“No. Follow me and be careful,” he says holding out his hand.

It looks as though no one has entered through this gate for a long time. Even though I’m with Calix, I feel scared.

We walk through what I take to be an overgrown garden. I try my best to avoid the thorns and branches but it’s not easy. His navigation does help though, he seems to know this place well.

“I hope I’m not standing on anyone’s grave,” I say because it’s too dark to tell.

“There are no graves in here,” he reassures me.

As the overgrowth gets sparser I can see streetlamps ahead of me. Maybe this is just a shortcut to town.

We head through a clearing of trees and find ourselves in a new part of town. The first thing that catches my eye is a black skyscraper. Actually, every building is black. One shop has a neon purple sign, although every outfit in the window is black. This is extreme. Every person I see bustling about is wearing black. Have I gone colour blind?

“Is this where all the Goths hang out?” I ask

“This is the City of the Broken,” he says as we walk further in.

A large sign of varnished black wood with purple lettering reads “Welcome to the City of

the Broken”.

“I haven’t heard of it before. Is it a trendy part of town?” I ask, baffled.

“No. You can only find out about this place if you are invited by the Prince himself,” he informs me.

“Well who is the Prince?” I ask before the realization of what he has said hits me.

“Wait...you?” I ask

He nods .

“You’re a Prince?”

He nods again, looking as though he’s trying to gauge my reaction as good or bad.

“Who rules with you?”

“My Father is King. My Mother died when I was young. I don’t have any siblings so I’ll be King one day .”

This guy is too much for my ordinariness to take.

“So why do you come to our school? Surely you should be privately educated if you’re a prince,”

“That’s what my Father wanted but I insisted on going to a regular school,” he says.

“So that you could be ‘normal’, ”I say guessing his answer.

“No. Actually it’s so I could scout potential citizens,” he says

“Citizens?” I ask not really understanding what he means.

“Citizens to join our city,” he smiles at me.

“So you want me to be a citizen?” I ask.

“Exactly!”

“Why?”

I feel idiotic for thinking His Royal Hotness would want to date me. This is just business to him.

“Remember how I asked you if you were happy?” he asks.

“Sure. How could I forget?”

“I see you in the corridors. You never smile. You look lost, lonely and depressed.”

“And?” I ask feeling more insulted than ever.

“Those are the features we look for in citizens,” he says.

“What?” I ask in disbelief.

“We are the City of the Broken. We want broken hearts, depressed people, rejects and the like,” he says in an official tone.

“Okay, you want me to be a member of your city because you think that I’m a reject?” I ask feeling on the verge of bursting into tears or punching him in the face. I should have known he would never want me.

“It really isn’t like that, the city is thriving. I’m well aware it’s the quiet and melancholic types who actually have the most potential,” he says convincingly.

“Okay then, Prince, if you’re ruler of this city, do you have the qualities needed? Are you broken?” I ask.

“Yes, of course. As the head of state, I make it my mission to embody the traits of the city,” he says in a formal tone.

“This is absolutely crazy. Goodbye,” I say turning back towards the overgrowth.

“Wait, there’s something else,” he says longingly.

“What?” I yell, losing my patience and self confidence by the second.

“Would you like to go out with me?” he asks.

And suddenly my interest is rekindled.

Now I am confused .He has exceeded even my expectations of him.

“But you’re a prince, I felt out of your league even before you told me this.”

“But Seren I like you. I’ve been curious about you ever since I first saw you. I knew I’d have to pluck up the courage to ask you to be a citizen. That was my formal reason to ask you here, but casually it was always my intention to ask you to date me.”

This boy fascinates me in a way no human ever has before. It’s because there is a mystery or charisma I can’t put my finger on.

“Okay, yes,” I smile shyly



“Brilliant, I’m so pleased. I’ll meet you tomorrow in school, then afterwards we can come straight here and I’ll give you a guided tour” he smiles, his eyes glowing with expectation.

Wow. He makes me feel so alive.

We walk back through the thorns and through the gate.

“Are you *really* a prince?” I ask. This is so overwhelming.

He opens up his blazer and inside is a stitched coat of arms, C.B with a dagger through a broken heart.

“I’ll show you the palace tomorrow if you don’t believe me,” he says.

“So, library tomorrow at 12?” he asks.

“At my table,” I smile

“Your table,” he says as he takes my hand and kisses it.

He’s like a chivalrous knight. I feel like a Maiden. I flush from embarrassment and joy. If you have to be depressed to be a member of this city, he isn’t going about it in the right way.

## Chapter Two.

### The City of the Broken

After returning from my eye opening experience, I reflect on what I have encountered. Should I be offended that I've been asked to be a member of a city where it's necessary to be 'broken' to join or be elated that I'm dating Calix? I feel a connection to him like I've known him from before.

Tomorrow I want to look stunning. I go for my red crochet dress.

Next day in school, there's only one person I'm thinking about. The boy who last night transported me into another world.

At break, I head over to the tuck shop. Waiting in the queue I overhear a conversation.

"Do you know Calix in Amy's history class?"

"Oh yes. I know who you mean," says her friend enthusiastically.

"Well, Amy used to date him and she told me he's a pathological liar."

"Really? He doesn't seem the type."

"I know .She's better off without him," says her friend as they walk away.

I'm left shell shocked, what an odd thing to say. I pay for my chocolate and head back to class.

I thought I'd spend the rest of class excited about seeing him at lunchtime. Instead I'm worrying. Pathological liar? Perhaps the whole prince thing.

Of course! What a fool I've been to believe an 18 year old high school student to be a prince. He's probably been sniggering behind my back all day. This is must be his idea of a joke, messing around with the feelings of plain girls like me. How childish. So he wants to play Prince does he? Well today I'll be a warrior queen. But as I'm preparing to go into battle, a

cloud of doubt crosses my mind. He couldn't fake the city, I saw it with my own eyes. But it does not make him a prince.

As I enter the library I march to my regular table ready to unleash my outburst. But he's not there. He would have let me down anyway, even if I hadn't overheard that conversation. I'm just about to leave when he bursts in.

"Sorry I'm late. My teacher just doesn't stop talking." And seeing him innocently apologetic, my rant is forgotten.

"It's okay, I'm always late too," I giggle, like those girls whose brains have turned to mush.

"So you're a prince, are you?" I say coldly, raising my eyebrow in a questioning manner. That's more like it.

"Yes. We established that last night, is everything okay? You seem a little distant," he says sounding concerned.

Oh don't act innocent with me.

"Well what proof do you have? Anyone could just say they're a prince," I say, hoping he'll confess to this prank.

"I'll show you my palace today if you want proof but I have to say, it saddens me that you don't trust me. I wish you'd just like me for me rather than the title," he says looking genuinely upset.

Don't try and turn this on me.

"I wanted to go out with *you*. I went on a date with you before you started pretending to be a prince. Do you actually think you need to be royalty to get girls to like you or did you just want to make a fool of the lonely library girl?"

There I said it. Frank and honest, unlike him.

"I'm not making this up. I only told you because I wanted to be up front from the start. Surely it's better like this?"

This lie has gone far enough.

"You're not a prince. I heard people call you a liar. I'm serious now, this prince act is grating on me."

“I really don’t like liars. If you don’t believe I’m a prince I will prove it to you today if you insist.”

I’m not letting this go, if he’s keeping up this pretence.

“Oh I do. I look forward to seeing this palace of yours,” I say trying to keep the sarcasm out of my voice.

“But if we are going to date, I do ask one thing of you,” he says.

“What’s that?” I ask

“Don’t listen to what people say about me.”

Is he really this self obsessed?

“Okay,” I say.

We head back to class. I’m feeling a little mean because he looks disappointed, much different from the bright eyed excitement he exhibited when he arrived from history. Maybe he’s telling the truth? I guess I’ll find out today.

When I’m in maths class, I stare out of the window. In the school car park, I spot a black vintage Rolls Royce Phantom. Then I see him. He’s taking some books from the back of the car. It must be *his* car.

I’ve gone from dismissing this guy as deluded or untruthful to feeling guilty for harsh judgement to having concrete proof thrust in front of my eyes, all in an hour. Such conflicting emotions in a short space of time.

When I head out of school, it’s a fine day. The mountains are highlighted, and the gravestones have a golden glow. I didn’t tell anyone about my date because they’d only talk and tomorrow the whole school would know.

At the gate, I’m greeted by a gothic beauty. He’s dressed all in black, looking very Victoriana.

“Hi,” he says.

“Hi,” I reply in a softer tone than lunchtime.

“Let’s go, I want to give the grand tour,” he grins.

I follow him and we walk through the gate. Even though it's sunny, it's cold. I shiver.

"Cold?" he enquires

"Yes."

Now I'm here in the daylight, it's a different experience. Not sinister at all. This really does look like a garden, alas one that is unkempt. There are rose bushes, that explains the thorns. Crab apple trees, hedges, bushes and weeds. A bank of trees stand like protective guards remaining perfectly still. The doorway to the city.

We walk through the archway of leaves and branches and behold, the city. Here it is, black and graceful. But there's something that didn't occur to me before, an eerie feeling. It feels like a dark forest or maze, unexplored, forbidding.

"Hold my hand," he offers.

He has the longest, most elegant hands. I oblige. One thing that catches my eye is the black post box, it even has a Royal Mail logo on it.

We go into the centre of the city. There is a spiralling escalator that leads to a glass arcade. Every person on it is dressed head to toe in black. They stare at me. At first I think it's because I'm with the prince but then I realize, it's because I'm wearing red. I must look like a freak to them. The people here look so pale and mournful and broken. I've always felt the moodiest in the room now I feel like a sunbeam in comparison.

"Let's go to my palace," he says.

Oh yes, I'm on a date with a prince. It feels like a funeral.

"We'll take the underground," he says pulling me in another direction.

"Do you take it often?" I ask

"No, this is so exciting. This is the first time I'll take it," he says exuberantly.

The underground has the same circular logo as the one in London, although in keeping with the local charm this one is black, as are the trains. We jump on. He looks surprised at the amount of people. We sit there ignoring everyone, with eyes only for each other. But everyone

is staring, at my clothes and at him. I hear whispering.

“Isn’t that the Prince?”

“Yes it looks like him.”

He is getting increasingly anxious, clinging tightly to my arm, staring anywhere but at our fellow passengers. I hold his gaze for a moment and he looks sad and distant, a look I haven’t seen before.

“Are you okay?” I ask

“Sure, hey it’s nearly our stop.”

We get up and get out. As we step onto the platform, he slips on a beanie hat- his disguise. It seems to help, but I can still see people staring.

We head up from the underground. When we exit we are in a more affluent part of the city. We head through a beautiful park and there are black birds on the lake.

Past the mighty trees, I see a palace made entirely of black brick. At the top of the flagpole is an ebony flag, with a purple ‘B’ in the centre. It’s stunning. A citadel of the broken.

“Dad’s home, the flag’s up,” he smiles innocently. This is everyday life to him.

“This is really your palace?” I ask in awe.

“Yes,” he nods

“Impressive,” I say at a loss for words.

Two guards dressed in black stand either side of the tall gate.

“Which is the way in?” I ask

We walk up to the soldiers and I feel nervous as they stare menacingly at me, probably thinking I’m harassing the prince.

“Hey Jim, this is just my guest.”

Jim opens the gate and we walk through. Simple.

Suddenly a crowd of tourists start flashing away realizing the prince has just walked through the gates. Although they are taking pictures, they are unlike what you’d expect of a mob of fans. Far from being screaming girls, they are detached, melancholic.

We walk through the grand entrance. The lengthy hallway has black carpet running down it, it could be velvet it's so luxurious. There is an extensive array of ornaments and vases, everything black, purple or gold. The only light comes from the crystal chandeliers that line the hallway. Bizarrely there are no windows.

"This is fantastic," I smile.

He smiles back and takes my hand. Enchanting music plays faintly in the background. It sounds like a harp.

"Who's playing?"

"That's Mrs. S, Dad's secretary. She practises whenever she gets a break, she's an accomplished musician."

He leads me into another room. A ballroom, lined with mirrors. He turns the light on and it illuminates a polished black marble dance floor. There are candelabras everywhere. It's simple but exquisite. He walks over to a gramophone and plays Mozart.

"Dance with me," he asks.

"No! I cannot dance," I squirm. I cannot think of anything more embarrassing.

"I'll lead, I'm sure you dance well," he says politely.

He always says the right thing. He's such a gentleman.

We dance. Well, he dances, I pretend that I can. I'm actually enjoying it, much to my own surprise. I feel like a literary heroine from the classics.

At the end of the dance, he switches the record player off and we leave the ballroom.

"We tend to hold banquets in there, it's all very formal. Dad even insists on a gramophone, he's so traditional. I liked being in there with you, I felt at ease," he smiles at me.

"Good evening Prince Calix, who is this young lady?" a stuffy woman regards me coolly in the hallway.

"Hello Jane, this is Seren, I wanted to give her a tour of the palace."

"So nice to meet you dear," she says holding out her hand but it feels insincere.

"Nice to meet you," I say out of politeness.

“Your majesty,” she says nodding her head in acknowledgement at him and arching an eyebrow at me, before strutting down the corridor.

“Who was that?” I ask him once she’s left.

“That’s Jane, she’s a lady in waiting. She’s quite old fashioned,” he laughs.

“Come on, I’ve still got so much to show you,” he says, pulling me excitedly by the arm.

“You’re not going to show me every room, are you?”

There must be a hundred.

“No, but there is one thing I really want to show you, come on,” and he starts running.

I follow, feeling like a carefree child racing through the palace.

“We can take the stairs or the elevator, which would you prefer?” he asks

I don’t hesitate in choosing the elevator.

We stare at each other in the slick elevator. He chooses the top floor. His eyes flashing at me with wondrous excitement. The elevator halts and we step out. This must where the bedrooms are. There are low lit lamps which give a soft, calming effect. The carpet is black, this time with a purple ‘b’ hologram pattern through it. It makes me feel dizzy.

“This way,” he smiles beckoning me to follow him. He opens an oak door.

“This is my bedroom, do you like it?” he asks.

It’s black but it seems lighter in here than the other rooms. There is a king sized bed with a black satin duvet emblazoned with the purple B. Glossy black floorboards are covered with woollen rugs. Books line the walls.

“Dad says I should keep these in the library downstairs but I like them in here with me,” he says, observing my fascination.

“This is what I want to show you.” He leads me to the window.

“You know, this is the only window in the whole palace. Dad won’t allow them anywhere else.”

I thought it seems lighter in here.

Opening the glass doors, we step out onto a vast balcony that overlooks the palace garden.

“This view is absolutely breathtaking.”



“Yes, I like to sit out here sometimes in the night air and read for hours.”

This boy is the most fascinating being I’ve met and it isn’t because he’s a prince, he’s like a human masterpiece. Sometimes I think he’s not even human, his jet black hair shines in the moonlight. His blue eyes have changed to violet and I’m yet again alive, struck. All this from the girl who thought she would never find anyone who interests her. He’s an enigma.

As I gaze into his luminous eyes, we embrace and kiss- sweet, tender, perfect.

This palace is an otherworldly dream. Marvellous as it is, it sets me on edge. It’s eerie, hidden. I know it has a secret.

After our kiss, my first kiss, a sweet introduction, we head back into palace grounds. I see some beautiful swans on the lake among the black ducks. It’s a striking monochrome scene. He holds my hand and we walk among the flowers, violets. They are a deep purple like the ‘B’ on the flag.

“So do you believe I’m a Prince now?” he asks.

“Well, I think if I still doubted you I’d be a very sceptical person,” I smile.

He smiles back and we walk back towards the underground at midnight.

Back at the gate that leads to ‘reality’, we kiss once more. Wow.

It’s evening and we are sitting by the lake, the lamp light illuminating the water, the musical song of the water birds playing as the background theme. Just my prince and I. He leans in close and just as I think he is going to kiss me, he whispers in my ear “I break girls hearts so that they can join my city,” and suddenly his face is dark and calculating, a professional heart breaker.

I wake up with tears streaming. Whoa!

Getting dressed for school, I cannot get that nightmare out of my head. Is there an element of truth to this notion? You do need to be broken to join and who better to break a heart than a beautiful-genius-prince? I bury the thought into my subconscious.

Even though I have had many conversations with my prince, I still don’t really ‘know’

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