

# The Sorcery Code

Dima Zales

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate *The Sorcery Code* to my wife. Without Anna, this book would not have been possible. I am the luckiest husband in the world. I am also grateful to our families and friends, both in New York and Florida, for being so supportive of our dream.

I want to give special thanks to our beta readers (Tanya, Erika, Fern, and Kelly) and all the bloggers who are reviewing the book. And last but not least, our readers!



## CHAPTER ONE

### ※ BLAISE ※

There was a naked woman on the floor of Blaise's study.

A beautiful naked woman.

Stunned, Blaise stared at the gorgeous creature who just appeared out of thin air. She was looking around with a bewildered expression on her face, apparently as shocked to be there as he was to be seeing her. Her wavy blond hair streamed down her back, partially covering a body that appeared to be perfection itself. Blaise tried not to think about that body and to focus on the situation instead.

A woman. A *She*, not an *It*. Blaise could hardly believe it. Could it be? Could this girl be the object?

She was sitting with her legs folded underneath her, propping herself up with one slim arm. There was something awkward about

that pose, as though she didn't know what to do with her own limbs. In general, despite the curves that marked her a fully grown woman, there was a child-like innocence in the way she sat there, completely unselfconscious and totally unaware of her own appeal.

Clearing his throat, Blaise tried to think of what to say. In his wildest dreams, he couldn't have imagined this kind of outcome to the project that had consumed his entire life for the past several months.

Hearing the sound, she turned her head to look at him, and Blaise found himself staring into a pair of unusually clear blue eyes.

She blinked, then cocked her head to the side, studying him with visible curiosity. Blaise wondered what she was seeing. He hadn't seen the light of day in weeks, and he wouldn't be surprised if he looked like a mad sorcerer at this point. There was probably a week's worth of stubble covering his face, and he knew his dark hair was unbrushed and sticking out in every direction. If he'd known he would be facing a beautiful woman today, he would've done a grooming spell in the morning.

"Who am I?" she asked, startling Blaise. Her voice was soft and feminine, as alluring as the rest of her. "What is this place?"

"You don't know?" Blaise was glad he finally managed to string together a semi-coherent sentence. "You don't know who you are or where you are?"

She shook her head. “No.”

Blaise swallowed. “I see.”

“What am I?” she asked again, staring at him with those incredible eyes.

“Well,” Blaise said slowly, “if you’re not some cruel prankster or a figment of my imagination, then it’s somewhat difficult to explain . . .”

She was watching his mouth as he spoke, and when he stopped, she looked up again, meeting his gaze. “It’s strange,” she said, “hearing words this way. These are the first real words I’ve heard.”

Blaise felt a chill go down his spine. Getting up from his chair, he began to pace, trying to keep his eyes off her nude body. He had been expecting *something* to appear. A magical object, a thing. He just hadn’t known what form that thing would take. A mirror, perhaps, or a lamp. Maybe even something as unusual as the Life Capture Sphere that sat on his desk like a large round diamond.

But a person? A female person at that?

To be fair, he *had been* trying to make the object intelligent, to ensure it would have the ability to comprehend human language and convert it into the code. Maybe he shouldn’t be so surprised that the intelligence he invoked took on a human shape.

A beautiful, feminine, sensual shape.

*Focus, Blaise, focus.*

“Why are you walking like that?” She slowly got to her feet, her movements uncertain and

strangely clumsy. "Should I be walking too? Is that how people talk to each other?"

Blaise stopped in front of her, doing his best to keep his eyes above her neck. "I'm sorry. I'm not accustomed to naked women in my study."

She ran her hands down her body, as though trying to feel it for the first time. Whatever her intent, Blaise found the gesture extremely erotic.

"Is something wrong with the way I look?" she asked. It was such a typical feminine concern that Blaise had to stifle a smile.

"Quite the opposite," he assured her. "You look unimaginably good." So good, in fact, that he was having trouble concentrating on anything but her delicate curves. She was of medium height, and so perfectly proportioned that she could've been used as a sculptor's template.

"Why do I look this way?" A small frown creased her smooth forehead. "What am I?" That last part seemed to be puzzling her the most.

Blaise took a deep breath, trying to calm his racing pulse. "I think I can try to venture a guess, but before I do, I want to give you some clothing. Please wait here—I'll be right back."

And without waiting for her answer, he hurried out of the room.

\* \* \*

Leaving his study, Blaise briskly walked to the other end of his house, to 'her room' as he still thought about the half-empty chamber. This was where Augusta used to keep her things when they were together—a time that now seemed like ages ago. Despite that, entering the dusty room was just as painful now as it had been two years ago. Parting with the woman he'd been with for eight years—the woman he'd been about to marry—had not been easy.

Trying to keep his mind on the task at hand, Blaise approached the closet and surveyed its contents. As he'd hoped, there were a few dozen dresses hanging there. Beautiful long dresses made of silk and velvet, Augusta's favorite materials. Only sorcerers—the upper echelon of their society—could afford such luxury. The regular people were far too poor to wear anything but rough homespun cloth. It made Blaise sick when he thought about it, the terrible inequality that still permeated every aspect of life in Koldun.

He and Augusta had always argued about that, he remembered. She had never shared his concern about the commoners; instead, she enjoyed the status quo and all the privileges that came with being a respected sorcerer. If Blaise recalled correctly, she'd worn a different dress every day of her life, flaunting her wealth without shame.

Well, at least the dresses she left at his house would come in handy now. Grabbing one

of them—a blue silk concoction that undoubtedly cost a fortune—and a pair of finely made black velvet slippers, Blaise exited the room, leaving behind layers of dust and bitter memories.

He ran into the naked being on his way back. She was standing near the entrance of his study, looking at a painting his brother Louie had made. It was of a village in Blaise's territory, and the scene it depicted was an idyllic one—a festival after a big harvest. Laughing, rosy-cheeked peasants were dancing with each other, a traveling harpist playing in the background. Blaise liked looking at that painting. It reminded him that his subjects had good times too, that their lives were not solely work.

The girl also seemed to like looking at it—and touching it. Her fingers were stroking the frame as though trying to learn its texture. Her nude body looked just as magnificent from the back as it did from the front, and Blaise again found his thoughts straying in inappropriate directions.

“Here,” he said gruffly, entering the study and putting the dress and the shoes down on the dusty couch. “Please put these on.” For the first time since Louie's death, he was cognizant of the state of his house—and ashamed of it. Augusta's room was not the only one covered with dust. Even here, where he spent most of his time, the air was musty and stale.

Esther and Maya had repeatedly offered to come over and clean, but he'd refused, not wanting to see anyone. Not even the two peasant women who had been like mothers to him. After the debacle with Louie, all he'd wanted was to be left alone, to hide away from the rest of the world. As far as the other sorcerers were concerned, he was a pariah, an outcast, and that was fine with Blaise. He hated them all now too. Sometimes he thought the bitterness would consume him—and it probably would have, if it hadn't been for his work.

And now the outcome of that work was lifting the dress and studying it curiously, still as naked as a newborn baby. "How do I put it on?" she asked, looking up at him.

Blaise blinked. He'd had practice taking dresses off women, but putting them on? Still, he probably knew more about clothes than the mysterious being standing in front of him. Taking the dress from her hands, he unlaced the back and held it out to her. "Here. Step into it and pull it up, making sure that your arms go into the sleeves." Then he turned away, doing his best to control his reaction to her beauty.

He heard some fumbling.

"I might need a little help," she said.

Turning back, Blaise was relieved to see that all she needed help with was tying the lace on the back. She had already figured out how to put on the shoes. The dress fit her surprisingly well; she and Augusta had to be of similar size,

though this girl appeared more delicate somehow. “Lift your hair,” he told her, and she did, holding the long blond locks with unconscious grace. He quickly laced the dress and stepped back, needing to put a little distance between them.

She turned to face him, and their eyes met. Blaise couldn’t help but notice the cool intelligence reflected in her gaze. She might not know anything yet, but she was learning fast—and functioning incredibly well, if what he suspected about her origin was true.

For a few seconds, they just looked at each other, sharing a comfortable silence. She didn’t appear to be in a rush to speak. Instead, she studied him, her eyes roaming over his face, his body. She seemed to find him as fascinating as he found her. And no wonder—Blaise was probably the first human she’d encountered.

Finally, she broke the silence. “Can we talk now?”

“Yes.” Blaise smiled. “We can, and we should.” Walking over to the couch area, he sat down on one of the lounge chairs next to the small round table. The woman followed his example, taking a seat in the chair opposite him.

“I’m afraid we’re going to have to work out the answers to your many questions together,” Blaise told her, and she nodded.

“I want to understand,” she said. “What am I?”

Blaise took a deep breath. “Let me start at the beginning,” he said, racking his brain for the best way to go about this. “You see, I have been searching for a long time for a way to make magic more accessible for the commoners—”

“Is it not accessible currently?” she asked, looking at him intently. He could tell she was extremely curious about anything and everything, absorbing her surroundings and every word he said like a sponge.

“No, it’s not. Right now, magic is only possible for a select few—those who have the right predisposition in terms of how analytical and mathematically inclined their minds are. Even those lucky few have to study very hard to be able to cast spells of any complexity.”

She nodded as though it made sense to her. “All right. So what does it have to do with me?”

“Everything,” Blaise said. “You see, it all started with Lenard the Great. He’s the one who first learned how to tap into the Spell Realm—”

“The Spell Realm?”

“Yes. The Spell Realm is what we call the place where spells are formed—the place that enables us to do magic. We don’t know much about it because we live in the Physical Realm—what we think of as the real world.” Blaise paused to see if the woman had any questions. He imagined it must all be overwhelming for her.

She cocked her head to the side. “All right.

Please continue.”

“Some two hundred and seventy years ago, Lenard the Great invented the first oral spells—a way for us to interact with the Spell Realm and change the reality of the Physical Realm. These spells were extremely difficult to get right because they involved a specialized arcane language. It had to be spoken and planned very exactly to get the desired result. It wasn’t until recently that a simpler magical language and an easier way to do spells was invented.”

“Who invented it?” the woman asked, looking intrigued.

“Well, Augusta and I did, actually,” Blaise admitted. “She’s my former fiancée. We are what you would call sorcerers—those who have the aptitude for the study of magic. Augusta created a magical object called the Interpreter Stone, and I came up with a simpler magical language to go along with it. So now, instead of reciting a difficult verbal spell, a sorcerer can use the simpler language to write his spell on cards and feed it to the stone.”

She blinked. “I see.”

“Our work was supposed to change society for the better,” Blaise continued, trying to keep the bitterness out of his voice. “Or at least that’s what I had hoped. I thought an easier way to do magic would enable more people to do it, but it didn’t turn out that way. The powerful sorcerer class got even more powerful—and even more averse to sharing their knowledge with the

common people.”

“Is that bad?” she asked, regarding him with her clear blue gaze.

“It depends on whom you ask,” Blaise said, thinking of Augusta’s casual disregard for the peasants. “I think it’s terrible, but I’m in the minority. Most sorcerers like the status quo. They have wealth and power, and they don’t mind that their subjects live in abject poverty.”

“But you do,” she said perceptively.

“I do,” Blaise confirmed. “And when I left the Sorcerer Council a year ago, I decided to do something about it. You see, I wanted to create a magical object that would understand our normal spoken language—an object that anyone could use. This way, a regular person could do magic. They would just say what they needed, and the object would make it happen.”

Her eyes widened, and Blaise could see the dawning comprehension on her face. “Are you saying—?”

“Yes,” he said, staring at her. “I believe I succeeded in creating that object. I think you are the result of my work.”

They sat there in silence for a few moments.

“I must have the wrong understanding of the word ‘object’,” she finally said.

“You probably don’t. The chair you sit on is a regular object. If you’ll look out the window, you’ll see a chaise in the yard. That’s a magical object; it can fly. Objects are inanimate. I expected you to be something like a talking

mirror, but you are something else entirely.”

She frowned a little. “If you created me, does that mean you are my father?”

“No,” Blaise denied immediately, everything inside him rejecting that idea. “I am most certainly not your father.” Somehow it was important to make sure she did not think of him that way. *Look at where my mind is going again*, he chided himself.

She continued looking confused, so Blaise tried to explain further. “I think it might make more sense to say that I created the basic design for an intelligence—and made sure it had some knowledge to build on—but from there, you must have created yourself.”

He could see a spark of recognition in her gaze. Something about that statement resonated with her, so she had to know more than it seemed at first.

“Can you tell me anything about yourself?” Blaise asked, studying the beautiful creature in front of him. “For starters, what do you call yourself?”

“I don’t call myself anything,” she said. “What do *you* call yourself?”

“I am Blaise, son of Dasbrow. You would just call me Blaise.”

“Blaise,” she said slowly, as though tasting his name. Her voice was soft and sensual, innocently seductive. It made Blaise painfully aware that it had been two years since he had been this close to a woman.

“Yes, that’s right,” he managed to say calmly. “And we should come up with a name for you as well.”

“Do you have any ideas?” she asked curiously.

“Well, my grandmother’s name was Galina. Would you like to honor my family by taking her name? You can be Galina, daughter of the Spell Realm. I would call you ‘Gala’ for short.” The indomitable old lady had been nothing like the girl sitting in front of him, yet something about the bright intelligence on this woman’s face reminded him of her. He smiled fondly at the memories.

“Gala,” she tried saying. He could see that she liked it because she smiled back at him, showing even white teeth. The smile lit her entire face, making her glow.

“Yes.” Blaise couldn’t tear his eyes away from her luminous beauty. “Gala. It suits you.”

“Gala,” she repeated softly. “Gala. Yes, I agree. It does suit me. But you said that I am daughter of the Spell Realm. Is that my mother or father?” She gave him a hopeful look.

Blaise shook his head. “Not in the traditional sense, no. The Spell Realm is where you developed into what you are now. Do you know anything about the place?” He paused, looking at his unexpected creation. “In general, how much do you recall before you showed up here, on the floor of my study?”

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