

FROM THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF *FOURTH WING*

BRAVE THE DARK.

ONYXX STORM



REBECCA YARROS

THE EMPYREAN SERIES

MORE FROM REBECCA YARROS

THE EMPYREAN SERIES

Fourth Wing

Iron Flame

Onyx Storm

ONYX STORM



REBECCA
YARROS



PIATKUS

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*To the ones who don't run with the popular crowd,
the ones who get caught reading under their desks,
the ones who feel like they never get invited, included, or represented.*

Get your leathers. We have dragons to ride.

Onyx Storm is a nonstop-thrilling adventure fantasy set in the brutal and competitive world of a military college for dragon riders, which includes elements regarding war, hand-to-hand combat, blood, intense violence, brutal injuries, gore, murder, death, animal death, injury rehabilitation, grief, poisoning, burning, perilous situations, graphic language, and sexual activities that are shown on the page. Readers who may be sensitive to these elements, please take note, and prepare to face the storm...

NAME

BONDED

SIGNET/SPECIALTY

(if applicable)

| | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| VIOLET SORRENGAIL |  TAIRN AND ANDARNA | LIGHTNING WIELDING |
| XADEN RIORSON |  SGAEYL | SHADOW WIELDING, READING INTENTIONS |

SECOND SQUAD, FLAME SECTION, FOURTH WING

| | | |
|--|--|-------------------|
| IMOGEN CARDULO | GLANE  | MEMORY ERASING |
| QUINN HOLLIS | CRUTH  | ASTRAL PROJECTION |
| RHIANNON MATTHIAS | FEIRGE  | RETRIEVING |
| SAWYER HENRICK | SLISEAG  | METALLURGY |
| RIDOC GAMLYN | AOTROM  | ICE WIELDING |
| SLOANE MAIRI | THOIRT  | SIPHONING |
| AARIC GRAYCASTLE <i>(AKA Cam Tauri)</i> | MOLVIC  | NOT MANIFESTED |

AVALYNN, BAYLOR, AND LYNX - *FIRST-YEARS WITH UNMANIFESTED SIGNETS*

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------------------|
| CATRIONA CORDELLA | KIRALAIR  | MANIPULATING EMOTIONS |
| MAREN ZINA | DAJALAIR  | |

BRAGEN, NEVE, TRAGER, AND KAI - *GRYPHON FLIERS*

WORLD LEADERS

KING TAURI THE WISE - *THE KING OF NAVARRE*
HALDEN TAURI - *FIRST IN LINE FOR THE NAVARRIAN THRONE*
QUEEN MARAYA - *THE QUEEN OF POROMIEL*
VISCOUNT TECARUS - *FIRST IN LINE FOR THE POROMISH THRONE*





The following text has been faithfully transcribed from Navarrian into the modern language by Jesinia Neilwart, Curator of the Scribe Quadrant at Basgiath War College. All events are true, and names have been preserved to honor the courage of those fallen. May their souls be commended to Malek.

Securing Basgiath and the wards has come at great cost, including General Sorrengail's life. Strategy must adjust. It is in the realm's best interest to ally with Poromiel, even temporarily.

—RECOVERED CORRESPONDENCE OF GENERAL AUGUSTINE MELGREN
TO HIS MAJESTY KING TAURI



PROLOGUE

Where in Malek's name is he going? I hurry through the tunnels beneath the quadrant, trying to follow, but night is the ultimate shadow and Xaden blends seamlessly into the darkness. If it wasn't for our dragons' bond leading me in his general direction and the sporadic disappearance of mage lights, I'd never think that he's masked somewhere ahead of me.

Fear holds me with an icy fist, and my footing grows unsteady. He kept his head down this evening, guarded by Bodhi and Garrick while we waited for news about Sawyer's injury after the battle that nearly cost us Basgiath, but there's no telling what he's doing now. If anyone spots the faint, strawberry-red circles around his irises, he'll be arrested—and likely executed. According to the texts I've read, they'll fade at this phase, but until they do, what could possibly be important enough for him to risk being seen?

The only logical answer sends a chill up my spine that has nothing to do with the cold stone of the corridor seeping in through my socks. There hadn't been time for boots or even my armor after the *click* of the closing door woke me from a restless sleep.

"Neither of them will answer," Andarna says, and I yank open the door to the enclosed bridge as its counterpart on the far end snicks shut. Was that him? *"Sgaeyl is still...incensed, and Tairn smells of both rage and sorrow."*

Understandable for all the reasons I can't allow myself to dwell on yet, but inconvenient.

"Do you want me to ask Cuir or Chradh—" she starts.

"No. The four of them need their sleep." No doubt we'll find ourselves on patrols for any remaining venin come morning. I cross the freezing expanse of the bridge with increasingly uncertain steps and jolt at the view outside the windows. It had been warm enough for thunderstorms earlier, but now snow falls in a thick curtain, concealing the ravine that separates the quadrant from Basgiath's main campus. My chest clenches, and a fresh wave of seemingly endless tears threatens to prickle my painfully swollen eyes.

"It began about an hour ago," Andarna says gently.

The temperature has fallen steadily in the hours since... *Don't go there.* My next breath shakes, and I force everything I can't handle into a neat, mentally fireproof box and stash it somewhere deep inside me.

It's too late to save Mom, but I'll be damned if I let Xaden get himself killed.

"You can grieve," Andarna reminds me as I pull open the door to the Healer Quadrant and enter the crowded hall. Wounded in every color of uniform line the sides of the stone tunnel, and healers dart in and out of the infirmary doors.

"If I wallow in every loss, that's all I'll ever have time for." I've learned that lesson well over the past eighteen months. Passing a set of clearly intoxicated infantry cadets, I cut through what's become an expanded sickbay, searching for a blur of darkness. This part of the quadrant didn't sustain any damage, but it still reeks of sulfur and ash.

"May your mother be remembered! To General Sorrengail, the flame of Basgiath!" one of the third-years calls out, and my stomach twists tighter as I forge ahead without reply.

When I approach the corner, then turn it, I see a patch of darkness enveloping the right side of the wall for a stuttering heartbeat, and then the stairwell to the interrogation chamber appears, flanked by two groggy guards. Shadows slip down the steps.

Fuck. Usually I love being right, but in this instance, I was hoping otherwise. I reach for Xaden mentally, but there's only a thick wall of chilled onyx.

I have to get past these guards. What would Mira do?

"She would have already slain your lieutenant and been confident in her choice," Andarna answers. *"Your sister is an act first, ask questions later kind of rider."*

"Not helpful." What little I'd eaten for dinner threatens to reappear. Andarna's right. Mira will kill Xaden if she finds out he's channeled from the earth, regardless of the circumstances. But confidence? That's not a bad idea. I muster every ounce of arrogance I can scrounge up or fake, straighten my shoulders, lift my chin, and stride toward the guards, praying I look steadier than I feel. "I need an audience with the prisoner."

The two men glance at each other, and then the taller one on the left clears his throat. "We're under orders from Melgren not to allow anyone down these steps."

“Tell me”—I tilt my head and fold my arms like I’m strapped with every dagger I own...or am at least wearing footwear—“if the man directly responsible for your mother’s death was a flight of stairs away, what would you do?”

The shorter one looks down, revealing a cut beneath his ear.

“Orders—” the taller one starts, glancing at the ends of my sleep-loosened braid.

“He’s behind a locked door,” I interrupt. “I’m asking you to look the other way for five minutes, not give me the key.” My gaze darts poignantly to the key ring hanging on his bloodstained belt. “If it had been *your* mother, and she’d secured the kingdom’s entire defense system with her life, I promise I’d afford you the same courtesy.”

The tall one blanches.

“Goverson,” the short one whispers. “She’s the lightning wielder.”

Goverson grunts, and his hands flex at his sides. “Ten minutes,” he says. “Five for your mother, and five for you. We know who saved us today.” He motions toward the stairwell with his head.

But he *doesn’t* know. None of them realize the sacrifice Xaden made to kill the Sage...their *general*.

“Thank you.” I start down the stairs with wobbling knees, ignoring the pungent scent of wet earth that claws at the outer edges of my composure. “*I can’t believe he came down here.*”

“*He probably seeks information,*” Andarna notes. “*I cannot blame him for wanting to know what he is.*” The longing in her voice startles me on multiple levels.

“*He isn’t a soulless venom. He’s still Xaden. My Xaden,*” I snap, holding tight to the only thing I’m certain of as I make my way silently down the stairs.

“*You know what channeling from the earth does,*” she warns.

Know? Yes. Accept? Absolutely not. “*If he’d completely lost himself, he would have drained me at any number of points tonight, especially while I slept. Instead, he ensured our safety and risked exposure to sit at my side for hours. He channeled from the earth once. Surely we can repair wherever his soul may have...cracked.*” It’s the most I’m willing to admit. “*I already know what Tairn thinks, and the possibility of fighting both of you is exhausting, so please, for the love of Amari, be on my side.*”

The bond directly between us shimmers. “*All right.*”

“Really?” I pause on the stair, splaying my hand on the wall to catch my balance.

“I am as unknown as he is, and you still trust me,” she says. “I will not be another battle you have to fight.”

Oh, thank gods. Her words seep into the marrow of my bones, and I hang my head in relief. I hadn’t realized how badly I needed to hear that until she said it. *“Thank you. And you have every right to know about where you come from, but I have no doubts about who you are.”* I start down the remaining steps, sure of my footing. *“You alone should make the choice to find your family, and I’m worried that Melgren—”*

“I scorched the venin during the battle,” she interrupts in a rush of words that run together.

“You...did.” My brow puckers as I spiral downward toward the interrogation cells. I’d been too shocked at her appearance, the way her scales had shifted, to think about the burning dark wielder. As far as I know, we’ve never caught one on fire. Tairn hadn’t said anything, either.

“I’ve been thinking about it all night. Magic feels different when I change color. Maybe my use of power in that moment altered the venin, weakened her enough to blister.” Andarna slows enough to enunciate her words, but not by much.

“That could alter...everything.” Muffled voices sound beneath me, and I quicken my pace. *“It’s definitely worth investigating later.”* Not that I’m willing to risk Andarna by shouting that she might be our newest weapon, especially not when the rumor has already circulated that we’ll seek an alliance with Poromiel. What could be worse than leadership endangering Andarna? The whole Continent’s leadership seeking to do the same.

“You can fight it all you want, but that power streaming through her veins?” Jack taunts, his words growing clearer as I near the final few turns. “There’s a reason the higher-ups want her. A little brotherly advice? Fall in line and find someone else to fuck. That infamous control of yours so much as flickers in her direction—”

“I would *never*,” Xaden retorts, his voice lethally icy.

My heart rate doubles and I halt just before the last curve in the stairwell, keeping out of sight. Jack’s talking about *me*.

“Even you don’t get a say in which parts of us are taken first, Riorson.” Jack laughs. “But speaking from personal experience, control goes quickly. Just look at you, freshly fed from the source and already down here,

desperate for a cure. You will slip, and afterward... Well, let's just say that silver hair that has you so besotted will be gray like the rest of her, and those weak-ass initiate rings in your eyes won't just last a few days—they'll be permanent."

"Not going to happen." Xaden bites out every word.

"You could deliver her yourself." Chains rattle. "Or you could let me out and we'll do it together. Who knows, they might let her live just to keep you on a leash until you turn asim and forget all about her."

"Fuck you."

My hands ball into fists. Jack knows Xaden's channeled. He'll tell the first person who questions him, and Xaden will be arrested. My mind spins as the two start to argue only yards away, their words blurring in the whirlwind of my thoughts. Gods, I could lose Xaden just like—

I can't. I won't. I refuse to lose him, for him to lose *himself*.

Fear fights to rise and I snuff it out, denying it air to breathe or grow. The only thing stronger than the power prowling within me is the resolve stiffening my spine.

Xaden is *mine*. My heart, my soul, my everything. He channeled from the earth to save me, and I'll scour the world until I find a way to save him right back. Even if it takes bargaining with Tecarus for access to every book on the damned Continent or capturing dark wielders one by one to question, I'll find a cure.

"We'll *find a cure*," Andarna promises. "*We will exhaust every closer resource first, but if I'm right and I somehow altered that venom inadvertently while changing my scales, then the rest of my kind should know how to master the tactic. How to change him. Cure him.*"

My breath stutters at the possibility, the cost. "*Even if you're right, I'm not using you—*"

"*I want to find my family. We both know the order to locate my kind is inevitable now that your leadership knows what I am. Let us do so on our terms and for our own purposes.*" Her tone sharpens. "*Let us follow every possible path to a cure.*"

She's right. "*Every possible path may require breaking a few laws.*"

"*Dragons do not answer to the laws of humans,*" she counters in a tone that reminds me of Tairn. "*And as my bonded, as Tairn's rider, you no longer answer to them, either.*"

“Rebellious adolescent,” I mutter, forming half a dozen plans, half of which might work. Even as their rider, there are still some crimes that would demand my execution...and that of whomever I trust to involve. I nod to myself, accepting the risk, at least for myself.

“You’ll have to keep secrets again,” Andarna warns.

“Only the ones that protect Xaden.” Which currently means preventing Jack from revealing this conversation without killing him, since we can’t afford the manhunt the death of our only prisoner would cause.

“You sure I shouldn’t ask Cuir or Chradh—”

“No.” I start down the stairs. There’s only one other person besides Bodhi and Garrick I *can* trust to prioritize Xaden’s best interests, only one other person who can know the truth in its entirety. *“Tell Glane I need Imogen.”*

~~I will not die today.~~
I will save him.

—Violet Sorrengail's personal addendum to the Book of Brennan

