

SIDES FOR ERENI

The stow-away

Ereni: "I met a woman with hair that cascaded across the hills of the battlefield. Matted on the inside, her hair lay like the aftermath of patience during a forest fire. It is cold, and she wears nothing but interwoven fabrics. Like a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed and shut down. I sat next to her, admiring the simple effect of life on a corpse. She stirred, gasped, settled, then slept. My heart stirred for warmth. My heart is leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. Warmth is the closest thing to kindness. She opened her eyes with discomfort and fear. Anger was nowhere. Only a silent acceptance of her faith.

"There were chains around her ankle, planted to the ground by a fallen branch. As if broken from a stronger tree. As she stood, blood dripped slowly from her hands. Made patterns on the ground, marking her submission. I knelt to cradle the ground with my fingers, matching the patterns with a prayer.

Kailia looked at me with concern, and my smile answered an unspoken question. A book. She handed me a book. Her only possession. "A payment," she said. "For protection, for safety". I accepted, and she was mine."

END OF ERENI SIDES