

A long, arched hallway with a wooden floor and a door at the end. The arches are made of light-colored wood or stone, and the floor is a reddish-brown color. The hallway leads to a door with a window at the far end. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the architectural details.

GODDESS OF FATE  
**REUNION**  
BOOK 2

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR  
**BRENDA COTHERN**

# Reunion

Goddess of Fate

Book 2

Brenda Cothern

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By Brenda Cothorn © 2015  
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## Dedication

To my husband who loves me even when the voices in my head take control and encouraged me to write Zarkina's story since she has been a part of me for over 35 years!

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My wonderful Beta Team, what can I say that hasn't already been said? I don't know what I would do without you. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all your hard work on this novel!

## Chapter One

Zarkina felt trapped in the Lepidolite Palace. Felt like a prisoner even though she knew she was supposedly a guest. After the Queen's Fist had practically kidnapped her from the Shiny Mug Inn to bring her to Trigine at the request of her mother, the Queen, she had done little else but remain in the eloquent suites. The suites were too richly adorned and more lavish than anything she had ever experienced before. All the riches that surrounded her made Zarkina uncomfortable and long to return to her home in the Broken Arrow Mountain range.

For twenty-one years, she knew the Queen was her mother and Zarkina gave no thought to being the Queen's bastard. She was not neglected and never made to feel so. In fact, Zarkina knew that she likely had more love and affection than most adopted or orphaned children. All the credit for that and more went to Calthar.

Zarkina missed her adoptive father, Cal, but after experiencing the Queen's Fist during her *escort* to the palace, she could easily picture him serving the Queen. Cal being Fist also explained the lessons he taught her in combat but it did not explain why he had trained her so.

*Maybe it was just his nature and had nothing to do with me being the Queen's bastard.*

Zarkina did not know but she was grateful for Cal's training as it had aided her well as a woods guide.

Two long and lonely days passed without the Queen summoning her when there was a knock upon her door. Zarkina knew it wasn't Maggie, the palace cook, with a meal again since it was not the right time of day and she had just left a short while ago.

*Perhaps it was one of the others coming to check on me with the summons I have been awaiting.*

Zarkina hadn't seen Indearn, the Queen's Fist High Commander or Dwitt, his second in command since she was shown her suite. She had not seen or heard from Veselko, the tale-teller either, nor had she left her suite. Zarkina was starting to go crazy and the walls felt like they were pressing in on her. She needed to get some air and wanted to work on her stances. They always made her relax. If she could just get the meeting with her mother over with, she could leave. Leave her room, leave the palace, and return to the Broken Arrow mountains that were her home.

With hope that her visitor had come to tell her it was time, Zarkina opened the door to find an old man with kindly gray eyes standing there. He was smiling at her beneath his long salt and pepper beard that was bound with several gold rings. In his hand, he held an intricately carved staff. For being so old, surely old enough to be Veselko's sire, he stood tall and did not slump or stoop. His soft gray robes fell straight to the floor covering his thin frame.

"Greetings, my dear. I am Wirrel Thalcamp, the Royal Sage, and Indearn suggested I stop by to see you. Do you have a moment?"

Of course she had a moment, she had nothing but hours filled with moments that were full of nothing but more empty moments. Zarkina was surprised at Indearn's thoughtfulness as she smiled at her visitor.

"Please, do come in, Sir."

As they walked to the chairs, Wirrel chided her gently, "I am not a Knight my dear, so no Sir title for me but thank you for your politeness. No, my dear, please just call me Wirrel and I am happy to be of service to thee."

As they sat, Zarkina was not sure where to start and thought it might be rude to just start throwing

questions at the elderly man. Wirrel solved her problem for her by speaking.

“How are you enjoying your visit to the palace, my dear? Do you have everything you need?”

“Yes, I have everything I need, thank you,” she lied.

Zarkina did not want to tell this nice old man that she was going crazy being stuck within her rooms or insult him by expressing her desire to get the meeting over with so she could be on her way home.

Wirrel chuckled and was very amused at her reply. “He never lied well either, my dear. You are very much like him in that way. Your mother selected wisely when she bid Calthar to raise you.”

Zarkina did not know what to say. She knew she should deny the lie, or apologize especially after being caught, but her desire not to offend with more lies won out so she remained smiling and silent. At least she now knew that Indearn and the Queen were not the only people in the Palace who knew her true identity.

Wirrel tried to comfort her when he continued, “Now, there is no need to fret or feel uncomfortable. I am sure you have many questions that you desire answered and they shall be.”

The relief Zarkina felt at that knowledge barely had time to set in before he spoke again. “Have you remained in this suite these last two days?”

“Aye.”

“But why, my dear? Surely you must be curious about the palace or wish to partake in some of the activities?”

In honesty, Zarkina had no such curiosity. From what she had seen so far, the palace was the same everywhere: luxury, extravagant, refined, and full of wealth with the only difference being the colors of the rooms. As to the activities in which he spoke, she had no knowledge.

“I do not wish to offend, Wirrel, but it seems the palace is the same throughout,” she indicated the rooms around her with a wave of her hand. “One can only see so much of... this...” she waved her arm around again, “before one begins to tire of its sight. The shock of my arrival has waned and I miss the forest.” She dared to continue as though she could not stop “All of this is really of no interest to me. I am but a simple wood guide and lack for nothing. I have not left my rooms as there is nowhere for me to go. Until her Majesty summons me, I am stuck here. I would just like to find out what the Queen wants with me after twenty-one years, and then be on my way home.” Zarkina watched his reaction closely still worried she might have offended him but his smile indicated she had not.

“How refreshing you are my dear,” and for a moment she thought he was mocking her and her lips began to purse in anger. “Now, now. Zarkina, none of that now. Your mother has that same habit when her ire is sparked.”

He stood and Zarkina was sure she had offended the Sage with her bluntness, but it wasn't as if he didn't ask for her honesty.

“Come, my dear,” he offered his wrinkled old hand to her. “Let's continue our delightful talk outside of these walls that are closing in on you, I know just the place.”

Zarkina accepted his hand and he rested hers gently upon his arm as they left her suite. For seeming so frail, he was solid in his old age. They did not talk during their walk through the palace but Zarkina paid close attention to where he was taking her. Soon they were in a corridor that was lined with windows on both sides. One side showed a courtyard and the other side appeared decorated with dormant flower bushes before a tall hedge. As they reached the end of the hallway, Zarkina thought he would turn to the left so they could enter the courtyard. However, he deftly steered them through the large glass doorway on the right.

They passed the high hedge and Zarkina's breath caught once more when she received her first view of the garden. It was stunning with its natural beauty. It was hard to conceive this was part of the palace. They continued to stroll farther from the palace through the winter's leafless trees and various pines before they stopped beside a small pond. Several benches were arranged around the pond at discreetly different intervals as if to ensure the privacy of those who sought refuge here.

“Here, my dear, I can see you are beginning to relax already.” They sat upon the cushioned bench.

“Now, let’s continue our talk.”

“What does the Queen want with me, Wirrel?” Zarkina didn’t hesitate to ask bluntly.

“It is not my place to reveal, my dear, but I am sure you will be summoned soon.”

Zarkina remained silent for a few moments before asking, “Have you spoken to Indearn?”

“I speak with the High Commander daily, several times a day.”

She knew that he knew what she was asking him and pursing her lips again, thought he was purposely avoiding the answer she sought. He chuckled again at her reaction.

“It will be interesting when you meet your mother. You are so very much like her, my dear. You bear a striking resemblance to her in her youth and I am sure you hold her fiery temperament as well, but Calthar has done well in teaching you to control it.”

Zarkina could not help but smile at the mention of Cal and seeing this, Wirrel continued. “You gave him a proper send off, my dear, he would have been proud.”

She wondered how the old Sage knew of what she had done to put Cal to rest. *How much does he really know about my life with him?* “How do you know this, Wirrel?” she asked, while not trying to sound rude.

“I have seen the tree and I imagine it was one that he favored, probably with pipe in hand.” Her expression of shock prompted him to continue, “Yes, my dear. I made the trip to the cabin as soon as we had heard of what happened.” She couldn’t imagine this withered old man making such a journey but she believed he had. “You were long gone by the time we arrived and as much as your mother would have liked to go herself, she could not if she wanted to keep you safe.”

*Safe? Safe from what?* She did not know what he was referring to but knew that she needed more information before she met with her mother.

Zarkina asked, “Who would wish to harm the child of a woodsman? No one knew who I was, except for Cal, and his death was the result of poachers in our wood.” When he did not reply immediately, she began to question what she thought she knew.

“Tell me,” she demanded in a quiet voice, the memory of Indearn issuing his one and two word sentences popped into her head. “Please,” she added.

Wirrel scratched under his long beard and thought for a few moments more before speaking. “Let us discuss it further after you have met with your mother, my dear. There are many things she wishes to tell you herself and I am sure the story of Calthar is one of them.”

Zarkina began to fume. *Why mention it if not to explain?* They continued to sit in silence and although Zarkina had many questions she wanted answers to, she was getting angry and could not think straight enough to decide where to start.

Wirrel broke the silence, “There is someone who wishes to meet you, my dear. They have asked that I arrange the audience.” *Arrange the audience...like I am some kind of princess or something!*

The thought made her chuckle despite her anger because in hindsight she actually was just that. Her chuckle turned into a groan and Wirrel just watched her while she played through her emotions. She was indeed very much like her mother in her younger years.

“Who wishes to meet me, Wirrel? No one, save you, Indearn and my mother know who I am. Who would wish to meet a wood’s guide guest of the palace?”

“An emissary from the Isle of Destiny,” he stated plainly, watching her reaction closely. “Your mother wishes you to meet with the emissary before she summons you. Would you agree to the meeting?”

*The Isle of Destiny... Sisters of Fate...Goddess-Touched... oh Fates! What do they want? Were they responsible for her night terrors? Could they make them go away?* Her mind spun with swirling questions and Wirrel patiently continued to watch her. *Why would her mother require this meeting before seeing her? Was this why she was summoned?* She needed more information. It was like trying to navigate an unknown forest wearing a blindfold.

“Why do they wish this meeting?”

“They shall explain. They didn’t seem fit to share such information with a mere Sage but I believe

they may have the answers to some of your questions, my dear.”

Zarkina did not believe the Sage knew nothing but also knew she would not be able to force him to tell her. He did not seem concerned that the Sisters wished to meet with her. Since he knew who she really was, she had the feeling that if she were in any danger he would not have allowed the meeting. She had no choice, and she hated it. If she wanted her questions answered about the Goddess-Touched and about her the night terrors, she would have to meet the emissary.

“Very well, Wirrel. Arrange this meeting.”

“When shall you wish to meet with the emissary?”

Zarkina was taken slightly off guard by the question. She had assumed Wirrel would arrange the meeting then send someone to fetch her when it was time. It was only mid-morn so she might as well meet them as soon as possible.

“After the noon meal would be fine. The sooner met the sooner done.”

“Very well, I shall have the emissary meet you here in the garden an hour after the noon meal. Shall I escort you back to your suites or can you find your own way?”

She knew he must have sensed her desire to linger in the peaceful garden and was thankful for his consideration. “I shall stay awhile, Wirrel, thank you. I can find my way back.”

Zarkina smiled warmly but Wirrel wasn’t fooled. He could see her beginning to try and fit all the pieces of the puzzle together behind her deep green eyes.

*So much like her mother*, he mused.

“Very well then, Zarkina,” he stood. “I look forward to speaking with you again soon. Please don’t hesitate to call upon me, should you desire to talk.”

Zarkina thanked the Sage again before he strode out of the garden and left her with her puzzle to figure out.