

## Tour Excerpts – LIVE LIKE LEGENDS by Kate Cornell

### Excerpt #1:

“A shout rang out.

Emmett cried out, pulling back the curtain and leaning out to yell at the driver. More speed, more haste. Get away.

Emmett turned to me. “Whatever you do, do not leave this carriage.”

“We shouldn’t be here.”

“I agree, but the king made his decision.” Emmett produced a knife from his cassock. “Take this. If *anything* comes for you, aim for the soft bits.”

“Soft bits?” Oh, sweet Aris.

“Eyes, groin, throat. If anything gets that close.” Emmett shook his head. “Aris save you.” He forced the knife into my hand. It was cold, heavier than I thought it should be. Too heavy to wield.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m getting us out of here.”

With that, the monk wriggled out the window.

He left me.

I clutched the dagger.

He left me.

Alone.

My throat tightened, my stomach left somewhere back with the rot and ruin.

The carriage started faster, then faster still.

We were leaving the carnage behind us. I was safe.

Something screamed.

Something inhuman.

The carriage surged forward again, and I was thrown against the seat, my only thought to keep my grip on the dagger.

The scream sounded again, right on top of me.

The roof caved in.”

### Excerpt #2:

“I worked at the laces cinched up the side of my gown. The knot ended in the pit of my arm, and I couldn’t reach it. I needed to call for a chambermaid to assist me.

Somehow.

The humming had stopped.

I spun, clutching my arms to my chest as though to cover myself.

Carson was on his feet and almost next to me.

Big and silent. Shadowbear.

My face went hot. I was surprised someone who couldn’t understand me could make me so self-conscious, surprised that I could feel his gaze running the length of me like it had in the barracks, on the dance floor, without looking

"I can't reach the laces," I muttered, still clutching myself as though protecting my modesty while fully clothed. As if I still had any modesty to protect.

But being this close to him set off a flurry of butterflies within me.

It was silly, counting his toes and failing to take off my own dress. I didn't want him to see me like this. I didn't want him to get to know me this way.

If only I knew what he was thinking, if his face wasn't so impassive.

He hummed that song again and stalked closer.

Almost unconsciously, I backed away from his approach.

It was a pleasant tune, reminiscent of one I'd heard before. He reached for me, cupping my shoulders in his enormous hands and turning me. He spoke, but I didn't need words to know what he wanted. I lifted my arm.

He attacked the laces.

He did poorly.

At least it proved a formidable adversary for us both.

With each tug of the laces, the dress grew tighter and tighter. I winced on the next pull, gasped.

Carson spat out a word, another instance where his intention seemed clear.

I laughed, filing the word away for later use, in case I wanted to shock Emmett. The monk probably didn't intend to teach me the curse words.

I said it back to him.

Carson stopped, looking at me, shocked. After a moment, he nodded and smiled. "Yes."

"It's hopeless. I guess it's never coming off."

Carson drew his knife. He held it up, his eyes shining with mock fury, grinning. "Is one way."

Yep. That would do it.

With a flick of his wrist, he cut the leather cord below the knot. The dress was still cinched tight enough to stay on, but now it would need repair.

He grunted and nodded with satisfaction.

"Thank you," I said. "I'm sorry." For what? Inconveniencing him? But the words were the ones I was now most practiced with.

He grunted and nodded again.

He was very close.

It was different when there wasn't an audience. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him swallow.

His fingers touched my forehead, catching a loose lock of hair and brushing it back. My head followed the sweep of his hand until I finally met his eyes. I imagined that glow inside the helmet, piercing, intense. Was there no part of him that was vulnerable? Did he ever drop his guard? Even the dance was a sort of war, a competition not unlike shooting targets for Reeven peerage.

Maybe it was easier not knowing what he thought, not knowing what he wanted, just believing that he and I performed our duties, our royal and religious obligation, creating a monster-slaying child of destiny. We were two players acting out prophecy. Our thoughts and wants didn't matter.

He lifted my wrist. "One, two." With each number, he slid one of his fingers between two of mine. "Three, four."

"Five," I whispered and he closed his grip with his thumb."

