



Carrying the Sheikh's Heir (Heirs to the Throne of Kyr Book 2)

By Lynn Raye Harris



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Rashid demands marriage, but Sheridan isn't convinced—he's sinfully sexy, but his heart is encased in ice. Yet Rashid will not give her a choice—he kidnaps her!

Swept away to the desert sands, Sheridan desires escape. But when Rashid takes her to his bed, she soon craves something else entirely.... Can she thaw this proud sheikh's heart, or will she have to love enough for two?



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Editorial Review

About the Author

USA Today bestselling author Lynn Raye Harris burst onto the scene when she won a writing contest held by Harlequin. The prize was an editor for a year -- but only six months later, Lynn sold her first novel. A former finalist for the Romance Writers of America's Golden Heart Award, Lynn lives in Alabama with her handsome husband and two crazy cats. Her stories have been called "exceptional and emotional," "intense," and "sizzling."

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"A mistake? How is this possible?"

King Rashid bin Zaid al-Hassan glared daggers at the stuttering secretary who stood in front of him. The man swallowed visibly.

"The clinic says they have made a mistake, Your Majesty. A woman..." Mostafa looked down at the note in his hand. "A woman in America was supposed to receive her brother-in-law's sperm. She received yours instead."

Rashid's blood ran hot and then cold. He felt...violated. Rage coursed through him like a flame from a blast furnace, melting the ice around his heart for only a moment before it hardened again. He knew from experience that nothing could thaw that ice for long. In five years, nothing had penetrated the darkness surrounding him.

His hands clenched into fists on his desk. This was too much. Too outrageous.

How dare they? How dare anyone take that choice away from him? He wasn't ready for a child in his life. He didn't know if he would ever be ready, though eventually he had to provide Kyr with an heir. It was his duty, but he wasn't prepared to do it quite yet.

The prospect of marrying and producing children brought up too many memories, too much pain. He preferred the ice to the sharpness of loss and despair that would envelop him if he let the ice thaw.

He'd obeyed the law that required him to deposit sperm in two banks for the preservation of his line, but he'd never dreamed it could go so horribly wrong. A random woman had been impregnated with his sperm. He could even now be an expectant father, his seed growing into a tiny life that could break him anew.

An icy wash of terror crested inside him, left him reeling in its wake. He would be physically ill in another moment.

Rashid pushed himself up from his chair and turned away so Mostafa wouldn't see the utter desolation that he knew was on his face. This was not an auspicious beginning to his reign as Kyr's king.

Hell, as if this was the only thing that had gone wrong. His stomach churned with fresh fury.

Since his father died two months ago and his brother abdicated before he'd ever been crowned, it was now

Rashid's duty to rule this nation. But nothing was the way it was supposed to be. As the eldest, he should have been the crown prince, but he'd been the despised son, a pawn in his father's game of cat and mouse. In Kyr, the king could name his successor from amongst his sons. There was no law that said it had to be the eldest, though tradition usually dictated that it was.

But not for King Zaid al-Hassan. He'd been a cruel and manipulative man, the kind who ruled his sons—and his wives—with fear and harsh punishments. He'd dangled the possibility of the throne over his sons' heads for far too long. Kadir had never wanted to rule, but it hadn't mattered to their father. It was simply a way to control his eldest son. But Rashid had refused to play, instead leaving Kyr when he was twenty-five and vowing never to come back again.

He had come back, however. And now he wore a crown he'd never expected to have. His father, the old snake, was probably spinning in his grave right this minute. King Zaid had not wanted Rashid to rule. He had only wanted to hold out the hope of it before snatching the crown away in a final act of spite. That he'd died without naming his successor didn't fill Rashid with the kind of peace that Kadir felt. Kadir wanted to believe their father had desired a reconciliation, and Rashid would not take that away from him.

But Rashid knew better. He'd had a lifetime of his father's scorn and disapproval and he just simply knew better.

Yet here he was. Rashid's gaze scanned the desert landscape, rolling over the sandstone hills in the distance, the red sand dunes, the palms and fountains that lined the ornate gardens of the palace. The sun was high and most people were inside at this hour. The horizon shimmered with heat. A primitive satisfaction rolled through him at the sight of all he loved.

He'd missed Kyr. He'd missed her perfumed night breezes, her blazing heat and her hardy people. He'd missed the call to prayer ringing from the mosque in the dawn hour, and he'd missed riding across the desert on his Arabian stallion, a hawk on his arm, hunting the small animals that were the hawk's chosen prey.

Until two months ago, he'd not set foot in Kyr in ten years. He'd thought he never would again, but then his father had called with news of his illness and demanded Rashid's presence. Even then, Rashid had resisted. For Kadir's sake, he had finally relented.

And now he was a king when he'd given up on the idea years ago. Kadir was gone again, married to his former personal assistant and giddy with love. For Kadir, the world was a bright, happy place filled with possibilities.

Desolation swept through Rashid. It was an old and familiar companion, and his hands clenched into helpless fists. He'd been in love once and he'd been happy. But happiness was ephemeral and love didn't last. Love meant loss, and loss meant pain that never healed.

He'd been powerless to save Daria and the baby. So powerless. Who knew such a thing was possible in this day and age? A woman dying in childbirth seemed impossible, and yet it was not. It was, in fact, ridiculously easy. Rashid knew it far too well.

He stood there awhile longer, facing the windswept dunes in the distance, gathering his thoughts before he turned back to his secretary. His voice, when he spoke, was dangerously measured. He would *not* let this thing rule him.

"We chose this facility in Atlanta as the repository of the second sample for a reason. You will call them and demand to know this woman's name and where she lives. Or they will suffer the very public consequences of their mistake."

Mostafa bowed his head. "Yes, Your Majesty." He sank to his knees then and touched his forehead to the ornate carpet that graced the floor in front of Rashid's desk. "It is my fault, Your Majesty. I chose the facility. I will resign my position and leave the capital in disgrace."

Rashid gritted his teeth. Sometimes he forgot how rigidly prideful Kyrians could be. He'd spent so many years away. But if he'd stayed, he would be a different man. A less damaged man. Or not. His mother and father had been willing to use any weapon in their protracted war against each other, and he had been the favorite. The damage had been done years before he'd ever left Kyr.

"You will do no such thing," he snapped. "I have no time to wait while you train a new secretary. The fault lies elsewhere."

Rashid stalked back to his desk and sat down again. He had many things to do and a new problem to deal with. If this American woman had truly been impregnated with his sperm, then she could very well be carrying the heir to the throne of Kyr.

His fingers tightened on the pen he'd picked up again. If he thought of the child that way, as his heir, and of the woman as a functionary performing a duty—or a vessel carrying a cargo—then he could get through these next few days. Beyond that, he did not know.

An image of Daria's pale face swam in his head, twisting the knife deep in his soul. He was not ready to do this again, to watch a woman grow big with his child and know that it could all go wrong in an instant.

And yet he had no choice. If the woman was pregnant, she was his.

"Find this woman by the end of the hour," he ordered. "Or you may yet find yourself tending camels in the Kyrian Waste."

Mostafa's color drained as he backed away. "Yes, Your Majesty."

There was a snapping sound at precisely the moment the door closed behind the secretary. Pain bloomed in Rashid's palm. He looked down to find a pen in his hand.

Or, rather, half a pen. The other half lay on the desk, dark ink spilling into a pattern on the wood like a psychologist's test blot.

A cut in his skin dripped red blood onto the black ink. He watched it drip for a long moment before there was a knock on his door and a servant entered with afternoon tea. Rashid stood and went into the nearby restroom in order to wash away the blood and tape up the cut. When he returned to his desk, the blood and ink had been wiped away. Cleaned up as if it had never happened.

He flexed his hand and felt the sting of the cut against his palm. You could sweep up messes, patch up wounds and try to forget they ever happened.

But Rashid knew the truth. The cut would heal, but there were things that never went away, no matter how

deeply you buried them.

"Please stop crying, Annie." Sheridan sat at her desk with her phone to her ear and her heart in her throat. Her sister was sobbing on the other end of the line at the news from the clinic. Sheridan was still too stunned to process it. "We'll get through this. Somehow, we'll get through. I *am* having a baby for you. I promise it will happen."

Annie sobbed and wailed for twenty minutes while Sheridan tried to soothe her. Annie, the oldest by a year, was so fragile, and Sheridan felt her pain keenly. Sheridan had always been the strong one. She was still the strong one. Still the one looking out for her sister and wishing that she could give Annie some of her strength.

She felt so guilty every time Annie fell apart. It wasn't her fault, and yet she couldn't help but feel responsible. There'd only been enough money in their family for one daughter to go to college, and Sheridan had better grades. Annie had been shy and reclusive while Sheridan was outgoing. The choice had been evident to all of them, but it was yet another thing Sheridan felt guilty over. Maybe if their parents had tried harder to encourage Annie, to support her decisions, she would be stronger than she was. Instead, she let everyone else make her choices.

The one thing she wanted in this life was the one thing she couldn't have. But Sheridan could give it to her. And she was determined to do just that, in spite of this latest wrinkle in the plan.

Eventually, Annie's husband came home and took the phone away. Sheridan talked to Chris for a few minutes and then the line went dead.

She leaned back in her chair and blinked. Her eyes were gritty and swollen from the crying she'd been doing along with her sister. She snatched up a tissue from the holder on her desk and dabbed at her eyes.

How had this all gone wrong? It was supposed to be so easy. Annie couldn't carry a baby to term, but Sheridan could. So she'd offered to have a baby for her sister, knowing that it would make Annie happy and fulfill her deepest desire. It would have also made their parents happy, if they were still alive, to know they'd have a grandchild on the way. They'd had Annie and Sheridan late in life, and they'd desperately wanted grandchildren. But Annie hadn't been able to provide them, and Sheridan hadn't been ready.

Now Sheridan wished she'd had this baby earlier so her parents could have held their grandchild before they died. Though the child wouldn't be Annie's biologically, it would still share her DNA. The Sloane DNA.

Sheridan had gone in for the insemination a week ago. They still didn't know whether it had worked or not, but now that she knew it wasn't Chris's sperm, she fervently hoped it hadn't.

She'd been given sperm from a different donor. A foreigner. The sperm bank would give them no other information beyond the physical facts. An Arab male, six-two, black hair, dark eyes, healthy.

Sheridan put her hand on her belly and drew in a deep breath. They couldn't test for another week yet. Another week of Annie crying her eyes out. Another week until Sheridan knew if she was having an anonymous man's baby or if they would try again with Chris's sperm.

But what if she was pregnant this time? Then what?

There was a knock on her door, and her partner popped her head in. Sheridan swiped her eyes again and smiled as Kelly came inside the small office at the back of the space they rented for their business.

"Hey, you okay?"

Sheridan sniffed. "Not exactly." She waved a hand. "I will be, but it's just a lot to process."

Kelly came over and took her hand, squeezed it before she sat in a chair nearby and leaned forward to look Sheridan in the eye. "Want to talk about it?"

Sheridan thought she didn't, but then she spilled the news almost as if she couldn't quite help herself. And it felt good to tell someone else. Someone who wouldn't sob and fall apart and need more reassurance than Sheridan knew how to give. If her mother was still alive, she'd know what to say to Annie. But Sheridan so often didn't.

Kelly didn't interrupt, but her eyes grew bigger as the story unfolded. Then she sat back in the chair with her jaw hanging open.

"Wow. So you might be pregnant with another man's baby. Poor Annie! She must be devastated."

Sheridan's heart throbbed. "She is. She'd pinned all her hopes on me having a baby for her and Chris. After so many disappointments, so many treatments and failed attempts of her own, she's fragile right now...." Sheridan sucked in a breath. "This was just a bad time for it to happen."

"I'm so sorry, sweetie. But maybe it won't take, and then you can try again."

"That's what I'm hoping." The doctor had said that sometimes they had to repeat the process two or three times before it was successful. And while it seemed wrong on some level to hope for failure this time, it would also be the best outcome. Sheridan stood and straightened her skirt. "Well, don't we have a party to cater? Mrs. Lands will be expecting her crab puffs and roast beef in a couple of hours."

"It's under control, Sheri. Why don't you just go home and rest? You look like hell, you know."

Sheridan laughed. "Gee, thanks." But then she shook her head. "I'll freshen up, but I'd really like to work. It'll keep my mind occupied."

Kelly looked doubtful. "All right. But if you find yourself crying in the soup, you have to go."

Users Review

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