

# JESTER by Brielle D. Porter

## EXCERPT

“Get out of my way,” I snap, but he just stands there, barring the door. A heavy gold snake winds its way across his shoulders, a scaled stole. I ignore the way its slitted eyes follow my every move.

“I didn’t know you were married,” Luc says, a lazy smile on his lips. “And to John Ellington, no less. That makes you his fifth wife in six months. Lucky man.”

So, he saw everything then.

“Move before I disembowel you,” I say, meeting his arrogant gaze, making sure he sees the glint of the knife in my hand.

“Such a lady,” he chuckles. “How did you like my show?”

“Getting a bit predictable,” I bite out, finally shoving past him. To my great annoyance, he follows me out into the street.

“We can’t all be wizards with a knife, can we?” he calls after me. “Pity you can’t do any real magic though.”

I whip around to face him, pleased when he almost stumbles.

“Even so, I did notice you still had to resort to name-calling to steal away my audience,” I say, trying not to wince when the snake lets out a low hiss.

Luc strokes the snake on his shoulder, enjoying my evident disgust.

“I’ll be honest, not my finest moment, but it worked better than I could’ve imagined. Headliner at the Panther now, thanks to you.”

I scowl. That should have been me.

“Soon to be Jester,” he murmurs near my ear, and it’s then I realize how close he is. The snake on his shoulder sways, half its body suspended in the air. I stumble backward quickly, as I realize it’s bridging the gap between us.

“Oh, I do apologize,” Luc says, letting the snake slide down his arm and twine around his fingers. “Do you not like my snake?”

“I have no interest whatsoever in your snake,” I reply scathingly.

“Shame,” he says, white teeth glinting.