

## Chapter 1580

"Elise, must your mouth run on without end?" Carissa frowned at her daughter, who had been chattering away beside Ryan from the moment he stepped through the door.

The little girl's face was flushed from the sun, her hair tangled into a messy nest that made it clear she had only just returned from playing outdoors. She hadn't stopped talking since Ryan came back from his travels, pestering him with questions about what he had seen and done. 1

Elise turned to Carissa with wide eyes, looking up with a face so innocent it could soften stone. She truly had inherited the best features from both her parents. 1

"Mom, I haven't seen Ryan in such a long time. Every moment without him felt like an eternity. We've been apart for so long, so of course I have a lot to say to him." 1

Carissa's frown deepened. "And who taught you to speak in such a ridiculous manner? An eternity—where did that come from?"

"Sage Isaac said it to Aunt Violet. He went back to Meadow Ridge for a few days and said it to her the moment he returned, while hugging her very tightly," Elise answered proudly. 1

Standing nearby, Violet immediately dropped her gaze, pretending great interest in the floor. She hadn't known Elise had been hiding up in a tree at the time. Had she known, she certainly wouldn't have let Isaac hold her like that, much less whisper such sentimental nonsense.

Children had such a talent for repeating everything adults said. And why were they so eager to eavesdrop on grown-up conversations? When

Violet was Elise's age, she would have rather stayed far away from adults altogether.

After replying to her mother, Elise turned right back to Ryan and resumed her stream of questions.

"Did you go to the Southern Hills, Ryan? Did you see the corpse herders like Chrissy said? The ones with a priest ringing a bell at the front of the group, while a line of zombies follows behind? Do they walk or hop? Do they only move at night? Is it because they're afraid of the sunlight? Can they talk? Do they need to eat? And I heard people there are good at witchcraft and curses. Did you meet any pretty girls? Did one of them maybe fall for you..." 1

"That's enough," Carissa said sharply, her voice suddenly cool and commanding. "Lulu, Joy, please take Elise away."

Lulu entered with a cheerful smile. "My dear lady, I heard Mr. York just brought back two cats. Shall we go have a look? They'll need names, right?"


At the mention of cats, Elise forgot all about her cousin and her many questions. She curtsied politely, then skipped out of the room after Lulu, full of new excitement.

Carissa pressed her hand to her forehead. What a whirlwind this child had brought into their lives. One little girl, and already the entire household had been turned upside down. Thank goodness there was only one. If there had been two, Carissa feared she might've gone mad.

The child was unusually bright and endlessly curious. Every day, when Elise wasn't tinkering with one thing or another, she would be pestering everyone in the house to tell her stories. No one could escape once she

latched onto them. She left them with no choice but to rack their brains and tell her everything they had ever heard, whether it was family gossip or tales of ghosts and gods.

She also had an excellent memory. Once she heard something, she would remember it perfectly and often double-check to see if it was true.

Carissa and Rafael had once joked about sending Elise to Meadow Ridge for a while, just to give everyone a bit of peace. So, they did just that. But after only a few days of being spoiled and adored by the folks there, someone brought up the idea of keeping her permanently, and every single person shook their head rapidly. 

Especially Everett. He took one look at her bright eyes and quick tongue, pulled out a beginner's martial arts manual, and shoved it into her arms.

"Take her back to the capital. A child this clever will teach herself. No need for a mentor," he said.

Those words really lit a fire in her. Elise dove into her training with great enthusiasm, but the moment she decided she had real skill, she became even harder to manage.

Once Elise had skipped off, Ryan finally turned to Carissa and Violet and spoke of more serious matters.

Carissa had always known Ryan was ambitious. To force him into a quiet, idle life would be a waste of his talent, and frankly, would have made him miserable. She agreed to his plans without hesitation.

Violet did too. She had been running Cloudwing Spire for years. It was strong and well-organized now, and she believed Ryan could take over the reins little by little without trouble.

They also checked with Rafael, who agreed as well. The head of the spire didn't need to appear in public, so it was the perfect position for someone like Ryan.

And so, Ryan formally became Winona's apprentice.

The first skill she taught him? The art of disguise.

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