

Chapter - 5

Ned entered his private solar after many moons, and it looked much more inviting than the makeshift tents he had stayed in during the rebellion, as long as you ignored the large stack of parchment waiting for him to tackle. Just as he thought he could deal with that headache tomorrow, he saw his wife and Maester Luwin approaching his solar and realized that he probably wasn't going to get much rest today. He sighed and sat down in his seat, waiting for them to enter.

Maester Luwin spoke up first, "We know you have just arrived, Lord Stark, but there are a few issues that require your attention."

"It's alright, Maester Luwin, carry on," Ned replied.

He then went on to discuss some of the main issues that needed taking care of like overseeing shipments of grain, providing more metal for the blacksmiths to repair and replace everything that was damaged or lost in the war, addressing bandit attacks on the roads, and repairing harbors that had been attacked by the Ironborn.

Thankfully he only had to send a few ravens to deal with the main problems even though there were a lot more smaller issues to answer, Luwin had the sense to push it back by a few days and Ned was thankful for it. But he couldn't rest just yet.

Ned noticed Cat's eagerness to bring up the last concern of the night. He turned to her and said, "I assume you want to ask about the boy and his direwolf?"

Cat's distress was evident on her face. "Ned," she began, her voice rising with frustration, "who is that boy? Why does he have that monster with him? It's dangerous and could kill anyone nearby at any moment. Yet, you've invited him to stay in the keep. Why?"

Ned calmly explained, "The boy possesses the ability to heal anyone with a touch, a skill that proved invaluable to the men in our army, a skill that I have witnessed with my own eyes, and he saved Jon's life. Without his healing, many would still be suffering from broken limbs and could have even succumbed to fever and Jon would be dead. And I have observed that monster ever since I first saw it. It has not done anything dangerous so it would be safe to assume that it is tame."

Maester Luwin, curious, asked for more information. "This is... most unusual, Lord Stark, could you tell me more about how he healed the men?"

"There's not much to say, Maester Luwin. He simply touched the skin near the wounds with his fingers and the wounds instantly closed themselves. In case of broken limbs, it would take a bit longer. When I asked my men what they had felt during the healing they said that their limbs

went numb during the healing and felt perfect afterwards. The only thing he told them was that they might have to eat more than normal for the next few days." He explained

Maester Luwin was still uncertain. "I'm not sure what to tell you, Lord Stark," he said. "I'll need to observe him healing someone and ask him some questions before I can make a conclusive determination on what the boy is capable of. But I'm certain there must be some secret to his abilities."

"Maybe so, Maester," Ned responded with a strange look in his eyes. "But what I have seen that boy do is not something I can explain as anything other than magic."

"So, you've seen him use magic?" Cat exclaimed in disbelief. "Ned, what were you thinking? He could be using his vile magic on us, on our children, right this very moment inside our home!"

Ned let out a sigh and leaned back in his seat. "My decision is final, Cat. He has not given me any reason to suspect him of foul play, whether he can use magic or not. I will not cast him out for something he might do. His actions in saving Jon's life and the lives of my soldiers have earned him the benefit of the doubt, at the very least.

"He has told us that he is just passing through Winterfell," Ned continued.

Cat was quick to jump on that piece of information. "How soon is he leaving?" she asked.

"I plan on trying to convince him to stay in Winterfell," Ned replied. "He doesn't seem to have any long-term plans, just aimlessly wandering from place to place. From what I have seen, he could be of great help to the people of Winterfell if he continues to use his abilities."

Cat was clearly not happy about his decision, but she knew that once Ned's mind was set, there was no changing it.

Ned looked at Cat, who was still unhappy. He decided to throw in a compromise, "However, he is still new and we don't know much about him. He lied to me when he said he was from the North. His accent is very off and not something I have ever heard before. And the fact that he doesn't use his last name along with how well he speaks makes me think that he is the son of a minor lord who kicked him out when he started using his powers. Therefore, I want him watched, discreetly. You can assign a few of the house staff to keep an eye on him, but stress that they are not to interfere with anything he might be doing."

"Maester Luwin, you can meet with the boy tomorrow and ask him your questions and see his magic with your own eyes" Ned continued, turning to the aged Maester. "I would also ask you to not inform anyone of the boy or his powers, I'm sure that word will eventually spread about the matter but for the time being I would rather not have to deal with that particular mess"

Maester Luwin hesitated, but agreed to Ned's request.

"Good," Ned nodded, shifting his attention from Maester Luwin to the pile of paperwork on his desk. "That's all," he declared.

Cat was the first to leave, still obviously mad, but Ned hoped that she would come to see reason soon enough. She walked out of the solar with her head held high, with Maester Luwin following closely behind her.

Once he was alone, Ned buried his head in his hands and prayed to the old gods that he wasn't making a mistake. Despite his doubts, he knew in his heart that he was making the right choice. 'If he can do even half of what I believe, he is far too valuable to let go,' he thought. 'A healer capable of performing the feats I've witnessed is unheard of.'

I let Fenrir run off into the nearby forest. He wouldn't be comfortable staying in the castle and I doubted that he would be allowed to stay in the stables, given how much the horses were scared of him and I didn't want to make my hosts any more uncomfortable than they already were.

The servant led me to a small room, which was surprisingly spacious, with only a bed and desk as its furnishings. I rearranged the furniture to accommodate my OCD. Behind a partition, I spotted a chamber pot and I had to fight the urge to gag. "Alright...first things first. I need to either find a way to make a toilet or find a place to relieve myself in the forest. There's no way I can live my life using a bucket for my waste," I thought to myself.

I then opened a window, and Skitter flew in. I hadn't seen her all day and felt guilty for ignoring her, so I petted her for some time. For some reason Jon had completely forgotten to mention Skitter to his Father and I was perfectly ok with that. She was going to be my assassin in the dark and I would eventually give her the perfect abilities for it. I fed her some of the food I had kept on me.

I had initially planned on staying in the forest or staying on the move until I had a good grasp on my powers, but one night in the forest had me throwing away that idea very fast. Being on the move would affect how fast I improved my powers, so the smart thing to do was stay in a place where I could get a constant supply of people to subtly experiment on without much effort. I also needed to make sure that I only showed my healing powers or things might get complicated. My knowledge of this world was purely based on fanfiction and a few initial episodes I had watched, so considering all I knew, I had decided that staying in Winterfell where Eddard Stark wouldn't bother me too much would probably be the best option.

I wake up the next day to the sunlight hitting my face, I lay in bed for a few minutes, thinking about the things I need to do today.

I will need to talk to Lord Stark and Maester Luwin to probably answer some questions about my powers, I will definitely need to stick to the story that I can only heal people and nothing more as admitting to anything more was plain stupid at this point at least, and discuss where I can set up my clinic to continue healing and improve my powers.

I have thought of some ideas in this regard, like a sonic radar to sense people better and even night vision, but I would need to scan a bat first. I also need to develop some kind of ranged attack, but haven't figured out how to go about it yet.

I also consider incorporating something like photosynthesis into myself to get more energy efficiently because I have noticed that I was getting hungry twice as fast as before due to the energy I am using to maintain my improved body and healing powers.

Maybe I could ask for training in how to use a sword because swords are cool and it would be nice to have a way to protect myself better without overly relying on my powers and it would also help me not stand out too much.

Anyway, all of this could be done later because I was hungry again and needed some food.

That's when someone knocks on my door, and as I open it, I see a girl about my age standing there nervously.

"Lord Stark has invited you to break your fast with him," she says.

I nod and she then leads me to a room where I see the entire Stark family having their breakfast.

"Good morning, El. I trust that the room was to your liking," Lord Stark says.

"It has been a long time since I have slept on a proper bed, Lord Stark. It was quite refreshing,"

Lord Stark nods. "You can break your fast with us, then we have important matters to discuss."

"Thank you"

I smile at the kids staring at me and looking behind me, trying to look for something.

"Where's Fenrir?" Arya asks.

"I let him out into the forest, my lady. He does not like being cooped up inside for too long," I explain.

"Was that a good idea, letting the wolf run around without supervision?" Catelyn Stark asks in a tone that I was starting to find annoying, but I knew I had to be polite because I am in their house.

"He knows not to attack anyone unless provoked, my lady," I say in my best HR voice.

She still doesn't look happy but lets the matter go for now. Some of the kids look like they're going to ask me more questions but stop themselves when they see their mother giving them the look. I don't get asked any more questions after that.

I laugh internally at the absurd situation I've found myself in and just eat my breakfast in peace.

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After having my breakfast, I accompany Lord Stark to his solar to address the matter at hand. He looks at me with a stern expression and poses his question.

"Your answer yesterday about your plans made it seem like you're just wandering from place to place."

I shrug, "That's pretty much it."

"Do you want to stay in Winterfell?" he asks in a serious tone.

"I might consider staying, but I have something I want to do, and I need your permission for that," I reply.

"What do you want to do?" he asks.

I responded confidently, "I want to set up a house of healing and provide medical care to those who are injured or sick."

Lord Stark ponders my answer for a moment before speaking with a touch of sarcasm, "And you plan to do this purely out of the kindness of your heart?"

Anticipating his reaction, I reply, "While I would never turn away someone in dire need of my healing, I do need to make a living. Therefore, I would charge a small fee for my services to those who can afford it. However, I'm open to suggestions, Lord Stark. Perhaps you could kindly suggest a reasonable fee for my services, as this is an uncommon case, and I'm not aware of the standard charges for such services in Winterfell."

"Before we delve into any discussions of fees," Lord Stark declares with a note of caution, "You will need to demonstrate your healing in front of Maester Luwin and answer any questions he may have for you. He is the castle's foremost authority on the art of healing."

Lord Stark continues, his brow furrowed in contemplation, "Should Maester Luwin find nothing amiss with your methods, I will grant you a manse near the castle to set up your house of healing."

I respectfully nod, "That sounds fair, Lord Stark."

"Best get this done immediately," Lord Stark declares, rising from his seat. He gestures for me to follow him to Maester Luwin's chambers.

Maester Luwin awaits our arrival in the castle's grand library, surrounded by shelves of books and scrolls. Upon my introduction, I can't help but feel a sense of familiarity, as if I'm participating in some sort of job interview. But unlike my previous interviews, I have knowledge that the Maester could only dream of.

"Could you give me a simple explanation of your healing methods?" Maester Luwin asks with a curious expression.

"I have the ability to channel my energy to heal others," I reply confidently. "By tapping into a person's own natural healing processes, I enhance them and speed up the healing process, bringing relief to injuries and illnesses."

I am aware that my explanation is a watered-down version of my powers, but I don't want to overwhelm the Maester with information he may not understand, such as the concept of cells.

Maester Luwin looks at me skeptically and asks, "Could you demonstrate?"

I reply, "Yes, I can demonstrate. If you have a knife, I can show you how I heal myself."

He looks to Lord Stark for permission, and upon receiving a nod, he reaches into a drawer and pulls out a knife. He hands it to me and I use the knife to make a long cut on my palm. I concentrate, slowing down my regeneration so that Maester Luwin can clearly see the healing process. I don't want everyone to know just yet how fast I can regenerate.

Maester Luwin watches in utter fascination as I demonstrate my powers. He then asks, "How far does the regeneration work? Can you regrow limbs or organs? And do your powers give you knowledge on the anatomy of the human body?"

I reply, "I am not sure if I can regenerate limbs or organs, but my powers have granted me knowledge of the anatomy of the human body. Although the names that my powers give me for the different parts and functions are not ones I have ever heard before." Maester Luwin is taken aback by my response, clearly intrigued by the extent of my powers. He continues to ask questions, eager to learn more about my abilities and how they can be used to help others.

Maester Luwin asked, "Can you tell me about the different organs in the body?"

I go on to explain the different organs in the body and their functions. He asks me various questions about anatomy and I answer with confidence.

"What about herbs?" he enquires.

I pause for a moment, "I have no knowledge of herbs, I have never needed to use them in my healing."

Maester Luwin nods, moving on to more complex questions. These questions may have seemed difficult to someone in this medieval world, but to me, they were concepts I learned back in tenth grade.

"How do you heal diseases?" he asks.

"I have only treated a fever caused by an infected wound that wasn't properly cleaned," I tell him and try to explain the concept of germ theory and bacteria to Maester Luwin.

"So, let me get this straight," says Maester Luwin, "you're saying that if wounds aren't cleaned with alcohol, these invisible insects can enter and cause fever and death?"

"That's right," I nod. "The fever is the body's attempt to kill off the germs. Sometimes it succeeds and the fever goes away, but sometimes it doesn't. Also, the insects aren't invisible they are just smaller than dust so we can't see them"

Maester Luwin is fascinated by this new information and starts writing it down. He begins muttering about how he needs to read more books on anatomy and observe more patients to validate my claims. I am happy to have shared my knowledge and helped Maester Luwin understand the principles of modern medicine. He seems to be the type who genuinely likes to learn, rather than someone who just wants knowledge for the sake of lording it over others.

His enthusiasm somewhat made me want to help him more, but I had no idea how to help him confirm the existence of cells and bacteria. I doubted that I could figure out how to create a microscope anytime soon.

As Maester Luwin and I discuss the intricacies of modern medicine, a serving girl rushes into the room. She announces that there has been an accident in the courtyard, a young boy has been run over by a wagon. We follow her as she leads us outside.

The scene before us is devastating. The boy lies on the ground, his right leg bent at an unnatural angle and his right arm badly mangled. He cries in pain, his voice hoarse from screaming. His mother, who kneels beside him, is crying uncontrollably and a crowd of onlookers stand around helplessly.

I follow Lord Stark as he makes his way next to the boy. I look at Lord Stark, as if asking for permission, and he nods. I get to work.

I kneel down next to the boy and touch his hand. I first put him to sleep before beginning the healing process. As I do this, the boy's mother starts screaming hysterically. I reassure her that he is just asleep and that I am going to heal him.

Seeing her calm down a bit, I continue. I first stop the bleeding and check what needs to be done. The leg is the easiest, it is only dislocated and has a few bruises, so I just set it back in place and move on to his hand.

The boy's hand is a more complicated matter. The most serious issue is that two of his fingers are only hanging on by a thread and are otherwise detached from his hand while the rest of his hand looks like it has gone through a meat grinder. But my powers are pretty broken, so it only takes a few minutes for the boy to look as good as new.

I wipe my face and get up to see the entire crowd staring at me in shock. I ignore them and look at the boy's mother, who is in the same state as the others. "He's fine now. He should wake up in an hour. He'll probably need to eat enough for three people for the next few days though," I say.

After everyone snaps out of the trance they are in, a few guards help move the boy into one of the rooms in the castle and Maester Luwin checks up on the boy. He gives the same verdict I have given and the boy's mother thanks me profusely.

After receiving a nod of approval from Maester Luwin, Lord Stark nods satisfied with my demonstration. He informs me that someone will come to find me later and take me to my new home.

I express my gratitude and as I begin to ponder on my next steps, my stomach growls reminding me of my hunger. I head towards the forest where I know my companions, Fenrir and Skitter, are lurking. Finding them is easy as I always have a sense of their whereabouts. I see Fenrir eagerly devouring a boar while Skitter munches on some leaves.

I decide to join them and with Skitter's help, we start a fire. As the flame crackles, while I cook the meat, I suddenly realize the issue I am faced with. My appetite has increased to the point where I would need to eat six meals a day, and I fear that it may cause a problem in Winterfell where food is scarce during the long, harsh winters.

That's going to be a problem. I consider my options and the first idea that comes to mind is the one I had earlier about incorporating photosynthesis into my skin. Although it's not the best solution, since it's not very sunny in Winterfell and I can't just lay in a field all day, it's the best temporary fix I can think of. I've found ways to make it more efficient, and I was told earlier that summer has just started and the seasons in Westeros last a few years. So, I won't have to deal with winter problems for a few years and have time to come up with a better solution. For now, this will have to do.

I touched the nearest tree and used my powers to analyze it. It took me about an hour to get all the small details and it was time to start experimenting. I started small and created the plant cells on my palm and directed the necessary inputs for the process to begin. It took a few tries

until it started working and I could feel the energy being produced in my cells. It was a lot faster and more efficient than eating food, and that was in this dodgy sunlight. I knew of a few ways to make the process more efficient like making use of the carbon dioxide directly from the blood in my veins instead of the air.

A few hours later, I converted most of the skin cells in my arms and shoulders into photovoltaic cells. I was going to observe them for a few days for any adverse effects before covering my entire body with them. Plus I don't have a proper way to store all this energy produced yet so I have to figure that out first if I don't want to waste all that energy.

My initially pale skin still looked the same, unless someone looked very closely they would find a green tint to it.

All of this didn't mean I could just give up on eating, though. I still needed food to get the inputs for photosynthesis to occur. Since I couldn't get them from the ground like trees do, I had to get them from eating normal food. But, I only had to eat about as much food as a normal person does to maintain my enhanced body and continue using my powers.

Done with my tinkering for the day, I smother the fire and rise to my feet. Just as I'm about to go back into the town, Jon and Robb burst into the clearing, their expressions full of excitement.

"El, where have you been?" Jon calls out. "Father told us to show you your new house of healing!"

"Oh, I see," I reply, a smile spreading across my face. "Lead the way, then."

I follow Jon and Robb as they lead me to my new house. It's an old blacksmith's workshop, made of sturdy grey stones, with a sloping roof and a chimney. The building is situated in a prime location, nestled between the castle entrance and the bustling market. I can hear the sounds of people and animals coming from the market and the distant clanging of a blacksmith's hammer. As I look at the workshop, I think to myself, 'Wow, this is some prime real estate.'

I explore the building with Jon and Robb. It has three rooms, and I decided to convert them into a bedroom, a lab, and a clinic. I know I'll have to use all the coin I got from the bandits to buy furniture for the clinic and the bedroom, but I can worry about the lab later.

"Thanks for showing me the place, Jon and Robb," I say as they prepare to leave.

Once they're gone, I start cleaning up. I found a carpenter's workshop nearby and commissioned a bed, a table, and some chairs. I work until nightfall and then call Fenrir and Skitter to my new home. Exhausted from the day's work, I finally go to sleep.

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Four years had passed since the day I woke up in this world, and I had fallen into a routine. I spent my time either tinkering in my lab or treating patients who came to my house, charging only a silver for my services because I felt a little guilty for using them to enhance my powers and conduct experiments. When I wasn't in my lab, I roamed the forest with Fenrir and Skitter, gathering data on various animals.

I had also learned a lot about my powers since acquiring them. While they were largely similar to Panacea's powers, there were a few key differences.

The first obvious difference was that I could use my powers on myself, a highly beneficial trait. The second big difference that limited my powers greatly was the absence of the "Queen Shaper" shard. On one hand, it probably meant there were no Entities in this world that would destroy the planet after they obtained enough data from me. On the other hand, because I did not have the shard, which was essentially a planet-sized supercomputer, I had to process all the data my power fed me through my very slow human brain.

Even though I had already optimized my nerve conductivity to increase my reaction time and thinking speed, it still wasn't close to shard level processing and I wasn't confident enough in doing more changes to my brain at the moment. This significantly hindered my progress, but I knew it should start growing exponentially once I began working on enhancing my brain.

I was starting to understand why Panacea avoided working on brains. Half the time, it was impossible to correct any mistakes made, and since I had grown to enjoy living here, I no longer saw people as acceptable targets for irreversible experiments. Perhaps I should go north of the wall or to Essos eventually, as cannibals and slavers were very much acceptable targets.

This all meant that if I ever wanted to carry out a full-scale genocide, I would have to stick to boring, existing diseases and improve them instead of creating fun, new ones like a zombie virus. While I could theoretically create a zombie virus, the time and effort required would not be worth it.

The third difference was that I still couldn't shape plants or trees. I could analyze them like anything else, but attempting to make changes left me exhausted. I got the feeling that there was some sort of prerequisite I needed to achieve before having a crack at that particular wall.

The exception to that rule was the Weirwood, that annoying piece of shit was basically a blind spot to my powers. I had thought that if I could scan it then maybe I could figure out how to do actual magic, but that wasn't as easy as I expected.

Whoever dropped me into this world had tried to nerf me, but was very lazy about it. It did annoy me sometimes, but I couldn't really complain much because my powers were still pretty broken for this world. Nevertheless, I utilized my time effectively and made numerous improvements to myself, rendering me nearly indestructible.

I began by strengthening my bones using carbon lattices, giving me added strength to withstand heavy blows. To protect myself from bleeding out in case of physical trauma, I installed micro hearts and shut-off valves around my arteries.

I then fixed a long-standing problem with my eye tissue, ensuring the nerves wouldn't obscure the light-sensitive side of my rods and cones. I increased the redundancy of my anti-cancer genes by adding several more copies of the p53 gene, making it even harder for cancer to survive. Living in a place like Westeros, I adjusted my enzymes and immune system to counteract poison more efficiently.

To reduce aging and improve the effectiveness of my immune system, I also stabilized my thyroid and kept stem cell stockpiles to prevent degradation. I enhanced my immune system's ability to store the DNA record of infections and countermeasures, so my body would never forget a disease it had fought off before. And finally, I doubled my DNA checker and repair system to minimize the chance of full DNA severance due to errors.

In my pursuit of a ranged attack, I made some progress. I acquired an electric eel to research bioelectricity, but my dream of throwing bolts of lightning was short-lived as the sparks always fizzled out a few inches from my fingers.

However, I discovered a much more potent AOE attack, though I hadn't had the chance to test it on people yet. I was still confident it would work fine when I needed it.

Additionally, I had started learning swordsmanship with Jon and Robb under Ser Rodrick, but I quickly became too skilled with my enhanced body. I had to stop training because I didn't want to draw attention to my abilities beyond healing. While I suspected that some people might have already realized my enhanced capabilities, thankfully, no one had approached me about it.

There had also been one more development although it was unrelated to my powers.

"You're telling me you have figured out how to make Myrish Glass!!?" Lord Stark exclaimed in shock.

"Well, I have not seen Myrish glass so I'm not sure if it's that, but it's a type of glass," I replied with a hint of smugness.

It was a humorous episode from my college days that taught me how to make glass. During a phase when my friend and I were trying to outdo each other by creating bongos out of random materials, I ran out of ideas. So, I decided to try making a glass bong myself and did extensive

research on how to make and shape glass. Although I wasn't successful in creating a bong, I did learn how to make simple glass.

He stared at me and the sample I had created in disbelief. It wasn't anything impressive, just a badly made asymmetrical vase made of murky glass. He sighed and accepted the ridiculousness of the situation. "What do you want in exchange for the process?"

"I started trying to make it because I wanted some glass vials and plates for my lab, but I don't really have the time or patience to do it myself. So, I figured you could pass it on to someone who can get better at making it. In exchange, all I require is the equipment for my lab and a reasonable favor at a later date," I said with a shrug, not overly concerned about the financial aspect of the deal.

He readily agreed to such a one-sided offer, and I wasn't really in need of money at the moment because my healing was bringing in more money than I needed.

Two years had passed since that incident, and I still had another four years until the plot began. During that time, my healing house had gained immense fame, attracting patients from all over the North and even some from the South, which was surprising given the general negative attitude towards magic outside the North.

Due to the large number of patients I was seeing daily, I had to hire an assistant. I found one in the form of the daughter of an old couple I had healed on the first day of my clinic. Her name was Freya. She visited me some days and helped out around the clinic sometimes.

I agreed to hire her mostly because she was one of the few people in the town who knew how to read and write. It had *absolutely nothing* to do with the fact that she was pretty and had enchanting gray eyes.

Stopping myself from going down that rabbit hole I look at Fenrir at my side and Skitter flying overhead somewhere, over the years I had given them some of my upgrades like the photosynthesis and the bioelectricity and I had given Skitter a camouflage ability with some poisonous pincers too to stick with the assassin theme. Whereas Fenrir was almost as big as a horse and scared the shit out of anybody who was not used to seeing him on a daily basis. He was insanely fast and agile for an animal of his size, but he had also grown lazy. I think it was the photosynthesis upgrade that just makes him lay in sunlight all day, like an overgrown cat.

Fenrir was also the reason why no one caused trouble at my clinic. A Septon from the south had come and was trying to start some shit by screaming to patients waiting outside my clinic that the Seven would strike me down for using my "blasphemous magic" and anyone who sought healing from me would burn in hell for eternity. But Fenrir, who had gotten annoyed by the man as much as everyone else outside, just came out from behind the clinic and stared at the Septon. The Septon froze in shock and fell on his backside, and pissed himself. Fenrir then

picked him up by the back of his collar, dragged him through the market, and dropped him outside of town. None had tried to cause any more disturbances after that incident.

As I walked towards the clinic, I couldn't help but chuckle at that funny memory. I was pleasantly surprised to find that there was no line outside the clinic, which was a rare sight but then i remembered what day it was. I had previously informed everyone that I wouldn't treat anyone on every seventh day, unless it was an emergency. I couldn't give up my Sundays even if the concept did not exist in this world because I needed some time to rest.

Upon entering the clinic, I noticed Freya deep in thought, going over the books that I had written for her. The books were meant to help her handle minor cases or at least keep patients stable until I arrived.

The idea of teaching her came to me during the harsh winter, when the Winter Chill, a deadly viral flu, had affected nearly half of the population. The disease was highly contagious and had a devastating impact, killing seventy-five percent of those it infected in just four days.

After carefully analyzing the virus from the first patient who came to me with the illness, I was able to develop a vaccine for it. Although the disease was easy to cure, the sheer number of patients who came to me with the Winter Chill was overwhelming.

To simplify the process, I took a large amount of biomass and produced a large number of tablets containing the vaccine. I instructed Freya to give the tablets to patients who presented symptoms of the Winter Chill.

Freya often found herself at a loss for words when it came to describing El. He was an odd character, acting more like an eccentric child than a powerful sorcerer. This was not what she had imagined a healer to be like, especially given his youth, which was surprising considering his abilities. Instead of the old and wrinkled stereotype, El was younger than Freya, though not by much. This only added to the sense of oddity that surrounded him.

She still remembered the day she first talked to him. She had just come home from working in the kitchens at the keep, when she saw her parents talking excitedly with some of their neighbors.

"Mother, what happened?" She asked casually, not expecting much.

"Your father almost cut his hand off this morning, so we went to the sorcerer everyone has been talking about to see if he could help," her mother replied in an excited voice, which didn't match what she had just heard.

She was filled with worry. "What happened? Is Pa okay? Why did you go to the sorcerer? You could have come to the keep to see Maester Luwin."

"Yes, yes. He's fine," her mother showed her the hand, which was fully healed and had no scar.

"Wow, that's amazing," she said, still in shock and relief. But then she became worried again. "But how much did it cost you?"

"That's the strange part," her mother replied. "All he asked for was what Maesters typically ask for in exchange for healing normal wounds, and to send anyone else we knew who needed healing his way."

"That doesn't make sense," she said, confused.

"That's what we thought too. But he seemed genuine when he said it was because we were his first patients," her mother explained.

To get to the bottom of things, she decided to visit the healer herself, and had the perfect excuse to do so. She was filled with curiosity, confusion, and a bit of suspicion. She picked up a few loaves of fresh bread from her parents bakery and made her way to the healing house.

She made her way to the healing house, knocked on the door, and entered after hearing a muffled "Come in."

She saw the healer muttering to himself and nervously approached. "Mister Healer, I wanted to ask you something," she said.

He looked at her for a few seconds and responded awkwardly, "Um, yes."

She thought about how to ask her question. "Mister Healer," she began.

"No need to be so formal," he interrupted. "You can just call me Ei."

"Ei, my name is Freya. My parents came to you for healing today, and I just wanted to know why you didn't ask them for coin in exchange," she asked, feeling curious and confused.

"Ah, nothing sinister, I assure you. They were my first patients, and they answered some of the questions I had. They also agreed to spread the word about the house of healing," he explained, ending sheepishly and feeling a bit embarrassed.

"I see. Then, you can have this bread as a thank you," Freya said.

"Thank you, it smells delicious," he replied. "Ah bread, if I could have some pasta, life would be bliss," he muttered.

Freya was confused. "What's pasta?" she asked.

He tried to explain, but he started using words she had never heard before.

She looked at him as if he had gone crazy.

He sighed, having given up, and said, "Nevermind. Thanks for the bread."

After that awkward first encounter, Freya visited anytime she could, using the excuse of delivering bread, and helped him around the healing house from time to time.

A few moons later, he surprised her with an offer, "Do you want to work here?"

She was ecstatic and agreed immediately, but nervously added, "I only know the basics of reading and writing."

He smiled reassuringly and said, "It's alright, you can learn on the job." She was filled with joy and gratitude, and eagerly accepted the offer.

As she sat reading one of the healing books El had written, she heard him come in.

"Anything happen while I was away?" he asked.

"Your lab exploded and a deadly plague has been unleashed into the world," she replied with a straight face.

"Nothing seems to be on fire and you look awfully fine for someone infected with a deadly plague," he deadpanned, looking around.

"As if a deadly plague is enough to make me look anything less than perfect!" she haughtily replied.

As they continued looking at each other with the same expression, she couldn't help but break out in laughter first, unable to keep up the joke anymore.

Their inside joke had started when she heard El laughing maniacally from his lab while she was reading. Out of curiosity, she entered the lab and was shocked by the sight of shelves filled with dead animals in glass vials and the occasional smoke rising from some of them. Freya was horrified, but El quickly explained that they were just ongoing experiments and what they were for, calming her down. From then on, she only entered his lab if it was absolutely necessary.

"Oh, I almost forgot," she said after discussing some mundane things. "Lord Stark asked for you to come see him. It sounded important."

Chapter - 8

Jon Arryn walked into the Small Council chambers, his shoulders heavy with the weight of his responsibilities. He was meant to be surrounded by those who would work tirelessly to keep the kingdom running, but all he saw were false faces and self-serving interests.

As he took his seat, he scanned the room, his eyes first landing on Stannis Baratheon, the Master of Ships. He was the only man in the council he could trust, someone who was strict and acted with efficiency while also knowing how to do his job.

In contrast, Renly Baratheon, Stannis's younger brother and the Master of Law, was a disappointment. He barely fulfilled his duties and spent most of his time frolicking with the Tyrells being easily manipulated. Despite Jon's efforts to bring this to King Robert's attention, the King seemed to pay it no mind.

Next, his gaze fell upon Petyr Baelish, the Master of Coin. Jon knew that Petyr acted only in his own interests, lining his pockets with gold at every opportunity but he was someone who he had appointed to the council after seeing his work in Gulltown so he at least knew how to do his Job.

Then there was Varys, the enigmatic Master of Whispers. He was a skilled information gatherer, but no one knew what secrets he kept or where his loyalties lay. Every time Jon attempted to probe further, Varys would simply reply with a cryptic answer about his loyalty to the realm.

Finally, Jon's gaze settled on Pycelle, the Grand Maester. Despite the pressing issue plaguing the city, he seemed uncaring, continuing to act as if he were a weak old man, instead of dealing with the matter with the best of his abilities. He was sure that the Grand Maester was not going to have a good time today.

As Jon sat there, surrounded by the members of the council, he couldn't help but feel a sense of disappointment in the state of the kingdom and those who were meant to lead it.

Seeing him sit down, Baelish was the first to start talking, but before he could, the door to the chamber was thrown open violently and Robert entered with a cup of wine in his hand, followed by Ser Selmy.

Jon saw that everyone was surprised to see the King, he would have been surprised too if not for the fact that he had asked Robert to attend in the first place. The king had made it no secret that he did not like attending the "copper counting" meetings, as he put it. However, the issue at hand was dire, so Jon was able to convince his former ward to attend.

As the king entered, the members of the council rose to their feet in unison, bowing their heads in respect. "Your Grace," they said in unison.

"Bah, sit down all of you," the King of the Seven Kingdoms grumbled dismissively, taking his seat.

"So, I'm here. I'm assuming it's about the plague going on in my city? Pycelle. What news do you have about the issue?" Robert asked, already annoyed.

Pycelle shifted nervously in his seat, stuttering as he began to speak. "The smallfolk in the capital are being devastated by the Winter Chill, Your Grace, and even some of the servants in the Red Keep have fallen ill."

Jon sighed, already aware of the extent of the epidemic. "Have the Maesters at the Citadel discovered any way to slow its spread?"

"We are doing everything in our power, Lord Hand, but this is a very old disease"

"It first appeared on the Three Sisters in late 132 AC and quickly spread through the major ports of the east coast, including Gulltown, Maidenpool, and Duskendale. It even reached Braavos. In King's Landing, it first struck the riverside workers and then spread throughout the city. Despite being less potent as it traveled south, it resurfaced in Barrowton in the North in the second half of the year."

"However, unlike last time when it appeared in the middle of winter, this time, because it began its spread after winter ended, we had assumed that it would not spread very fast," Pycelle replied with a shrug.

"So, you were wrong. Now, what are you going to do about it?" Robert asks, getting more annoyed.

"We just need to weather the storm, Your Grace," Pycelle says as if it was the most obvious thing in the world and they were the fools to even ask such a question.

"All I'm hearing from you, Pycelle, is that you are fucking useless, so we should do nothing," Robert summarized the situation in a crude but accurate way.

"And what the Grand Maester seems to be conveniently forgetting is that the Winter Chill is known to be deathly, killing three out of every four people who were stricken," Jon added, "and it's estimated to have killed almost one fifth of the population of King's Landing the last time it struck."

Pycelle sputters, trying to come up with excuses.

Varys takes the opportunity to chime in "I may have some news regarding the issue Lord Hand"

Jon gestures to him to continue "I'm sure you all have heard the rumors of the White Mage in Winterfell who can heal all wounds with a touch, well this time he seems to have created a cure for the Winter Chill".

Pycelle finally seemed to have found his voice again. "Your Grace," he interjected, his voice filled with disbelief, "you cannot take such rumors seriously. This White Mage is nothing but a fraudulent charlatan, exploiting the ignorance of the northern smallfolk to rob them of their coin."

He had begun to notice that the Grand Maester would jump on every opportunity he could get to paint the Mage in a bad light it probably had something to do with the fact that all Maesters hated Magic, but this time he had timed it badly, especially after the incompetence he had just shown.

So he decides to finally shut him up. "That is unlikely, Grand Maester. I got a raven from Ned two days ago about the White Mage. He's a boy of ten and eight name days, and he was found on his way back from the Greyjoy Rebellion. Ned assures me that the boy is capable of all the things the rumors say."

"I verified the fact myself a few moons ago after I first heard about him. I sent one of my knights, who had lost two fingers in battle long ago, to seek healing from the White Mage. He came back with all five fingers."

"Ned had also sent me some of the pills made by the Mage. I gave them to one of my maids who was dying to the chill, and today she is back to resuming her duties."

"As for your accusations regarding the boy robbing people of their money? He only charges a silver for his healing no matter who asks for it. The only reason he made those pills was because he was getting annoyed by the amount of people who were coming to him with the Winter Chill. Instead of healing them one by one, he made the pills to speed up the process," He stated, fixing the Grand Maester with a glare that shut the old man up.

"Since his arrival in Winterfell, the White Mage has become beloved by the people of the North and even some from the South. He has created a cure for a disease that the Citadel has not been able to cure in a century, and the best advice they could give was 'Let whoever is going to die, die. Hopefully, we don't die with them.'" With that final barb he ends his case.

Apart from the healing that the White Mage provided accompanied by the influx in population, the North, of all places, had figured out how to make glass that was on par with anything they could currently purchase from Myr. Ned hadn't told him how he got his hands on the process, but he figured it had something to do with the Mage based on the timing.

Glassmaking may seem inconsequential to many in the warmer kingdoms who thought glass was just a luxury item, but for the people of the North, it was a major breakthrough. With the

ability to produce their own glass, they could now create glass gardens at a faster and cheaper rate to help them produce food even during the harshest of winters.

While he was happy with Ned's good fortune he was also a little annoyed by the problems it was causing him. The Tyrells, who had been profiting greatly from selling their excess grain to the desperate people of the North, now found themselves with a shortage of buyers. Although he felt a slight satisfaction at their misfortune, he knew that he would soon have to deal with their complaints and demands. The thought of it was not a pleasant one, and it was a headache he was not eager to face.

Coming back from his musings he sees that Robert has come to a decision reading the matter.

"Aye, the bloody Mage seems to know what he's doing. He can't be worse than Pycelle at least," Robert grumbled, waving his hand dismissively in Pycelle's direction, ignoring his complaints.

"Send a raven north and summon this Mage to King's Landing, hopefully he'll be able to reach the city and deal with the outbreak before half the city is dead."

Ned sat in his solar, staring at the letter from King's Landing. The missive brought a mixture of emotions to the surface. On one hand, he felt happy that he could help his friend the King, even if it was indirect, and the people of King's Landing. On the other hand, he was filled with apprehension at how El would receive the news. If he agreed to travel to King's Landing, Winterfell would be without him for several moons, and the people would not be pleased with that.

Unknowingly, everyone had come to rely on him, as the line at his clinic grew longer every day, with people from all over the continent seeking his help. The entire population of Winterfell had increased by quite a margin, even in the winter. While he knew that some of them were spies sent by other lords, he couldn't do anything about them unless they started trouble, but no one really wanted to start trouble after they saw the massive direwolf lazing about in front of the healing house.

The people of Winterfell had come to adore El for his work, even Cat, who always criticized everything he did, had stopped complaining after Bran fell ill with a fever. Convincing Cat to let El treat their son had been a battle in itself. On the first day, the battle was lost, but as a mother, Cat could not bear to see her child suffer, especially when her prayers to her gods went unanswered. The next day, before he could even attempt to convince her, she took the initiative and went to the healing house herself to ask El politely and desperately to heal her son. One day later, Bran was running around the keep again, trying to climb its walls.

That incident had caused some problems with the septa, who had tried to convince Cat that their son was now cursed and had to be purified else he would burn in the seven hells, but Cat just straight up threatened to kick her out of Winterfell if she didn't shut up.

As Ned was lost in thought at that entertaining memory, a knock at the door interrupted his musings.