

Chapter 13

Ealyn is walking across another dilapidated cobblestone room. Her legs are propped up on wooden stilts artificially carrying her weight. She is holding onto two wooden railings at both her sides. Bryden is sitting in a wooden chair observing quietly. She pushes forwards with every step, then stops in the center breathing heavily.

“I can’t take another step.” She says.

“Pain is the path to recovery.” Bryden says.

“What am I to assume this is not just a method of torture.” Ealyn says.

“If I were torturing you there would be no question about it.” Bryden says.

Ealyn scoffs then pushes herself forward. She keeps on doing that, tears leak from her eyes as she pushes herself forwards. With every step she shudders in pain. Then she makes it to the other end. Ealyn crumples to the floor. Ealyn scowls.

“You said this recovery would take a week.” Ealyn says.

“At the time I underestimated the damage caused by your malformed heart. It has led to an increased recovery period.” Bryden says.

“Increased recovery period! It has been three weeks!” Ealyn says.

“Don’t whine at me.” Bryden says.

“I am not whining, I am accusing you of lying.” Ealyn says.

“You can think I am trying to trap you if you must, but you will get better.”
Bryden says.

“If you hate me so, why are you even helping?” Ealyn asks.

“It is what Derk would have wanted.” Bryden says.

Ealyn's scowls evaporates.

"Is that what this was all about?" Ealyn asks.

"Yes." Bryden says.

"I'm sorry." Ealyn says.

"Don't apologize to me." Bryden hisses.

"Why?" Ealyn asks.

"It's your fault, no apology will do. I am not doing this for you, I am doing this for him." Bryden says.

Ealyn sinks back to the floor.

"Is there anything I can do?" Ealyn asks.

"You still owe me the secret to your control of the valdyr." Bryden says.

Ealyn sniffles.

"I have brewed a physic that makes one smell similar to beasts." Ealyn says.

"What is the recipe?" Bryden asks.

"Dreyra root, some sort of stabilizer, an accelerant, and beast oil." Ealyn says.

"Such a simple recipe. I would never have thought to use Dreyra root." Bryden says.

"Have you tried to make a similar physic?" Ealyn asks.

"Every sorcerer has tried to make a physic like that. Controlling beasts was one of the things that made Nareth the legend he was." Bryden says.

"Don't say the black wizards name." Ealyn says.

"Why, does the haze of belief still cloud your mind even now?" Bryden says.

"Maybe, maybe not, but I am not ready to take that step." Ealyn says.

"So, you have become disillusioned. When did it start?" Bryden says.

“For a time we were traveling with an inquisitor. We became dear friends, then he told me this story of how he executed a woman for consorting with a sorcerer. I did not put much thought into it at the time, but after I found you and Derk, I became that woman. Then I realized what that woman must have went through, then was murdered for a small slip of the conscience. I don’t think Broun would want that.” Ealyn says.

“Why do you say that. The white book says ‘a sorcerer is a representative of a wizard, they are just as far off the path as they, and should not be suffered to live.” Bryden says.

“You have read the white book?” Ealyn asks.

“Every sorcerer has.” Bryden responds.

“Why?” Ealyn asks.

“There are actually many of us who still believe in Broun.” Bryden says.

“Really?” Ealyn asks.

“Yes, they believe that Broun is a charitable god, and that wizardry and sorcery are manifestations of his brilliance, that all things should be cherished as no god would consciously create things just to mislead his subjects. That he created magic to help people.” Bryden says.

“Do you believe in Broun?” Ealyn asks.

“No, that was Derk’s business. I have lived too long to think that there is a plan.” Bryden says.

“How can you live like that?” Ealyn asks.

“One day at a time.” Bryden says.

A gadget on Bryden's wrist flickers.

“I must leave.” Bryden says.

Bryden gets up and starts to walk out of the room. As he steps foot in the doorway he stops.

“Do you still feel like this is a trap.” Bryden says.

“No.” Ealyn says.

Bryden nods, then walks out of the room. Ealyn stares at the doorway for a second, then drags herself across the floor to a slanted chair. She pulls herself up on the chair and sits down. Behind the chair is a desk covered in her alchemy supplies and old nearly tattered books piled high in the corner. Above the desk is an opening in the wall which was once a window. Through The last vestiges of autumn holding onto the air like the last of the leaves holding onto the nearly naked trees. A cold breeze blows in through the window disturbing the pile of paper that Ealyn has set in the center of the desk. Ealyn shivers, then fixes the pile back into a neat stack. Someone knocks on the doorway.

“Come in.” Ealyn says.

Ealyn turns around to face Gerard.

“How did it go today?” Gerard asks.

“Horrible, but less horrible than yesterday.” Ealyn says.

“It will get better.” Gerard says.

“I know that, but when I look out this window on a clear day I can see castle Talltree. I taunts me to know we are so close to killing Alyks, but I am stuck here walking from one end of the room to the other.” Ealyn says.

“Have you, forget it.” Gerard says.

“What?” Ealyn asks.

“Do you really think this plan will work?” Gerard says.

“It has to.” Ealyn says.

“But what if Alyks finds out and just kills you for the trouble?” Gerard asks.

“He will not kill me.” Ealyn says.

“Why not?” Gerard asks.

“He needs me.” Ealyn says.

“How?” Gerard asks.

“Don’t ask, just promise if I am captured and you are able. Kill me.” Ealyn says.

“No.” Gerard says.

“If you won’t do it, then there is no point having you come with me.” Ealyn says.

“How can you ask such a thing of me?” Gerard asks.

“I am not asking, I am telling. You will promise me this, or you will stay behind with Bryden.” Ealyn says.

“Fine, but I won’t let it come to that.” Gerard says.

“Thank you, the plan has to work. If it does not then my life is forfeit.” Ealyn says.

Gerard nods, then steps out of the room. Ealyn gazes out of the room, right on the horizon the tip of a stone castle peeks out. Ealyn grabs a paper off the pile and a quill then starts writing.

“Dear Brena

I know you don’t hold me in high regard. That our relationship has been strained for a while now, and I apologize for not mending it. I know what Alyks has said to you, and I know you don’t want to hear me, but I need you to hear this. I love you, I need you. I will always love you, no matter what Alyks says. There is nothing that I would not do if you asked it of me. Alyks has pulled us apart and has kept me from bridging the gap. He

is not a man but a monster. He has tortured me every day of my time with him. I need you to believe me. If you need proof just look in his personal journal. He keeps everything in there. Just promise me that you will be safe, even if I am gone, promise me that you will be happy. Promise me that, and I will die light enough to float straight into Broun's embrace.

Love you, Ealyn."

Ealyn folds up the parchment, then slips it into her pocket. Suddenly a red light fills the room. Ealyn turns around, it is pouring through the cracks in the door. Ealyn pulls herself off her chair onto the ground. She drags herself across the floor, then peeks out the door. The hallway is bathed in this red light, coming from flameless lamps planted into the walls. The light then ebbs away, then in another second returns. Something from the far end of the hallway is slapping rapidly against the cobble stone floor. The thing makes a turn. Ealyn takes a single glimpse of its hideous visage and ducks back into her room.

She drags herself across the floor as fast as she can. When she reaches her desk she grabs the box of alchemy supplies and pulls it to the floor. She starts rummaging through the box until she grabs onto the flask filled with small white crystals. The hideous beast barrels through her door. The beast leaps at her with mouth agape. The space between its large jaws enough to swallow Ealyn's head. Ealyn pulls back and tosses the vial into the beast's open maw.

The vial shatters, then the crystals pour out onto the wet tongue. There is nothing for a millisecond, then the crystal starts to light up. Then next millisecond the room is filled with white light. Ealyn ducks her head to the side, then the light turns red as what used to be the beast's head splatters all over the walls of Ealyn's room. Bryden runs

through the open door holding a long metallic hollow wand. Bryden looks down at the beasts corpse, then back up at Ealyn.

“Are you okay?” Bryden asks.

Ealyn nods. Gerard runs in the door behind Bryden. He runs to Ealyn’s side then wraps her in a hug.

“Are you okay?” Gerard whispers into her ear.

“Yes.” Ealyn says.

Bryden looks back at the corpse of the beast.

“How did you do that?” Bryden asks.

Ealyn perks up.

“There is this white crystal that is extremely reactive with water.” Ealyn is cut off.

“Sodium” Bryden says.

“I have never heard its real name, I bought a sample off a traveling salesman. He said that it could make a very powerful accelerant in certain reactions.” Eayln says.

“Ah, I see. Well sorry to spoil it, that travelling salesman was a sourcerer, and he probably meant for you to explode yourself, then rob your estate blind.” Bryden says.

“Do sorcerers really do that?” Ealyn asks.

“Yes, just as anyone, but that same person not using sorcery would have just stabbed you in your sleep.” Bryden says.

Ealyn nods.

“Never the less, that was impressive. I thought the physic you created was a fluke, but you have a sharp mind and are quick on your feet.” Bryden says.

“You think so?” Ealyn beams.

“What are you offering?” Gerard states.

“Why do you think I am offering something?” Bryden asks.

“I may not be a sorcerer, but a variation of these words have been used on me a time ago.” Gerard says.

“I am only offering a way to speedily recover your legs.” Bryden says.

“Why have you not offered it sooner?” Ealyn asks.

“Gerard I am not going to spill my secrets so liberally, please leave.” Bryden asks.

Gerard looks to Eayln, she nods. Gerard stands up then walks out of the room. Bryden closes the door behind him. He walks to Ealyn, then stoops down and talks in a hushed tone.

“There is an experiment that I have been trying to perfect, and I could use the expertise of an alchemist, and if you perfect the formula, you can be the first one to try it.” Bryden says.

Ealyn sits leaning against the wall pondering the decision.

“I want to see the experiment before I agree to anything, and I want to see all of it. If I sense that you are even holding a single thing from me I will not help you.” Ealyn says.

“Well then we have an accord.” Bryden says.

“Yes we do.” Ealyn says.

They shake hands, Bryden smiles Ear to Ear along with Ealyn. Ealyn thinks about how this is the first time she has been truly recognised for her genius, Bryden thinks the same.