



# *Stars that Shone Brighter*

A Can Of Pecans

Magic

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“You shouldn’t be using such colloquial language here, Min,” my mother reprimanded. “You’re going to be given a great responsibility, you must not underestimate it.”

I, a 16-year-old princess of the country Magvel, rolled my eyes at mother’s remarks. She had repeated this sentence countless times already. I was getting frustrated over it.

“Queen Lea, we have a dilemma. We need you to come to the discussion room immediately. Likewise for Min, she will need the experience before she becomes Queen,” the guard blurted.

“Thank you, Zei, now let us be on our way,” dismissed my mother. “Shall we?”

My mother extended her hand; I held it in mine. Her fingers were cold.

The loud clicks of my mother’s heels echoed through the corridor. Even for a castle, there seems to be a significant lack of people. Then again, it is Raudnir Castle, the largest castle in the country. The only castle in the country. This could be one of the thousands of corridors which we have and coincidentally, we didn’t bump into anyone. As we approached a huge mahogany door with golden borders, the noise level had a severe spike. The blaring of guttural, harsh and raspy voices were not contained very well by the supposedly soundproof room.

Knock. Knock. Knock. The door opened, albeit slowly. The room fell silent, as if someone had muted everyone in the room. Each person present in the room bowed simultaneously.

“Your Highness,” they greeted.

“Sit. Let us get straight to the point. What’s the problem?” she asked, glancing towards a rather outraged man.

“Your Highness, I am Duke Silva, I would appreciate if I could have a word with you outside of the people’s prying eyes and ears,” he inquired.

“Of course. Everyone, please excuse yourselves from this room, except Min. Min, you stay,” she commanded. Everyone swiftly removed themselves from the picture.

“Click!”

The sound of the door’s lock filled the room. In an instance, metal bands wrapped around my wrists and ankles. Darkness, that was what the room was right now, the only things that were visible were mother and the duke’s faces, dimly lit by a candle.

I thrashed and screamed in my seat, to no avail. Mother didn’t even help me. She looked at me. If looks could kill, I’d probably be 6 feet under. Her eyes are black pools filled with so much bloodlust and so deadly. The duke was smirking, to my horror. Two people have conspired against me, especially one which I put a lot of trust into — my mother. How long has she planned this?

“Let me go! Let me go! Mother how could you!? HOW COULD YOU!?” I yelled at the top of my lungs. Mother chuckled; she walked over to me.

“Oh Min, why let you be queen, when I can be?” she said coyly. The dyad stood in front of me, sneering. Their malice-filled grins gleaming in the darkness.

“You’ll be here, until well, until we say so. Of course, your mother and I aren’t cruel beings, as long as you manage to get pregnant, we will let you out. We don’t want to harm the child. Of course, no one will be able to enter this room, as the door will be removed and the room is going to be sealed. So, good luck with that!” the duke finally spoke. I wish he hadn’t.

The dyad left the room; I was plunged into eternal darkness. I could hear the workers sealing up the door. A sigh escaped me. Was I fated to be a damsel in distress from the start? My mother had led me on, as if I was a donkey and my mother was the rider with a carrot on a stick. The one person who I trust most, turned against me.

It hurts.

It hurts.

It hurts.

It hurts

The pain has no full stop.

While I was grieving and making soliloquies, the wall opened. A castle servant handed me food on a silver platter, yet my hands are confined in this metal chair-jail. The servant released me from the chair’s vice grip. I thanked her, sincerely.

“Princess Min, I am Analiese, your personal servant. I will bring you your breakfast, lunch and dinner. I will try my best to assist you in your situation, eventually ensuring your escape from this prison,” Analiese mumbled.

“Now, there is a lake not very far from the castle called the Lake of the Pregnant Maiden. A swim in that lake will guarantee a pregnancy. Our goal is to find a way for you to take a swim in the lake and return to this room in time before the daily inspection.”

“When is the daily inspection?” I interrupted, not wanting to get her into trouble.

“In 10 minutes, basically 11am and 11pm. I cannot be seen with you during the inspection, so I have to get this over quickly. I will continue this in the evening. For now, stay strong,” Analiese explained, leaving the room

quickly afterwards.

True to her word, two men entered the room, armed with weapons. They walked around the room inspecting every nook and cranny. The duo left without uttering a single word. I was alone again.

I took Analiese's words into serious consideration while eating my lunch. The only exit I saw was through that wall that Analiese comes from, but that seems extremely risky. I paced around in the room, not realizing that it was nearing evening just as Analiese enters the room to hand me my dinner.

"Hello again, Princess. I have devised a plan for your escape, however, it is inordinately risky and may cost us our lives. Are you up for it, Princess?" she cut straight to the chase.

I nodded. A clear goal set in my mind.

"Very well. Follow me. We have to return by 9 am, so we have to reach the lake quickly," she blurted, dragging me towards the wall. "Remove your shoes, we don't want footsteps."

"Now, the inspectors are coming in 2 hours, I need you to familiarize yourself with the hallways so that you can return to your room safely, likewise for me. I will inform you when we have to return. So please, Princess, please remember the corridors. I will guide you through the important corridors, the others are to be ignored."

I trailed behind Analiese, absorbing all her information and directions, while imprinting the pictures in my mind. I don't want to disappoint her, and myself.

"Princess, it's time. We must return," she notified.

I returned to my room without Analiese's help, which was a huge feat. I thanked Analiese and sent her off.

Moments later, 2 men entered the room, armed with weapons once again, repeating the process like before. Once they left, I saw the wall open slightly.

"Princess! Let's go," Analiese whispered. I left my shoes at the entrance, and followed Analiese. Left. Right. Right. Left. Straight. Left. Left. Right. Straight.

“Princess, this is the exit. The lake is just a few meters from here,” Analiese informed. “Come on, we have to get going.”

Analiese pushed open the double doors, and my eyes were blessed by a starry midnight sky. My eyes trailed from star to star, like sequins winking on a black gown.

“Analiese... I haven’t seen such a beautiful sky before,” I exclaimed.

“Princess, the sky is always there, and it has always been like this,” she consoled.

“Mother never allowed me to look at the stars,” I cried. “To me, they’re beacons of hope for all the lost souls in this world, including me.”

I extended my hand towards the stars, as if I could grab one. The stars felt like they were actually on my palm. I wiped away the tears.

“Thank you Analiese,” I sobbed. “Thank you.”

Analiese led a shaky me towards the Lake of the Pregnant Maiden. Here the birthstone-blue stars shone like diamond dust, flashing and flickering on the surface of the lake.

“Princess Min, you will need to be in the lake for at least 3 hours, but make sure you don’t fall asleep. That is vital for the process to succeed. If you do fall asleep, you will be taken by the dragons that rest in the depths,” Analiese mentioned.

I bowed, thanking her for her kindness and stepped into the lake. I lingered around for a few moments, and my eyes start to become heavy.

No! Don’t fall asleep Min! Stay awake! Do this for Analiese.

“Min! I’ll be here to wake you if you feel sleepy. So, in order to pass time, let’s play a game,” she suggested.

“Rock, Paper, Scissors!”

“Aha! I won!”

“Darn. Again! Rock, Paper, Scissors!”

“I won again!”

“Wow Min, you’re pretty good at the game.”

“I doubt it, are you making me lose on purpose?”

“...”

“Oh no you didn’t!”

We played simple games and splashed each other with water. The 3 hour requirement has passed. I attempted to dry my clothes and we returned to the castle.

Days turn into weeks. Weeks turn into months. I lived my life as normally as living in a locked room can get, with occasional outings with Analiese. The Lake’s magic worked like a charm. According to Analiese at least. I have “morning sickness”, whatever that is. The inspectors that came in were not impassive anymore. They begin to show emotion. Mostly fear, I don’t know why though.

It had been 8 months since I was locked up here. My movements are sluggish, and my stomach felt extremely heavy. Analiese said this is a good sign. I couldn’t pace around frequently anymore. I get fatigued easily, which is why I spent most of my time speaking with the baby and sitting on the chair.

The inspectors came in the room again. However, instead of checking the place, they went straight for me.

“You’re pregnant, aren’t you?” the first man asked.

“Precisely, you are pregnant, right?” the second man inquired.

I nodded.

“Well, we ought to take you to the queen,” the first man said.

“Yes, the queen requests for us to bring you to her if you are pregnant,” the second man exclaimed.

The two men brought me to my mother. The look on her face was definitely worth lugging this baby around.

“B-But how?” she asked incredulously. “I made sure no one could ever enter your room.”

“You had someone working for you on the inside! Who is it. Tell me!” mother yelled.

“A deal is a deal, Mother,” I told her.

“If you refuse to tell me, I will kill you and your baby,” my mother muttered sinisterly. “I have a new execution method, and you can be honored to be the first people to try it.”

“I’ll give you 3 days, Min.”

I was escorted back to my room, my actual room, so that I could take care of the baby. I cannot reveal Analiese to mother, I can’t. The bed creaked under my weight.

Two days passed by rapidly. I was trembling in the room when a guard opened the door.

“Princess Min, the Queen has requested your presence in the courtyard,” the guard delivered.

I made my way to the courtyard, there were a lot of people gathered here, and there was a person tied up on a stick. I rushed forward; the person’s features were becoming increasingly defined.

Long jet black hair, a maid’s uniform, angled cheekbones...

“Analiese?” I screamed. “ANALIESE!”

Mother came up beside me.

“Dearie, with or without your help, we found out anyways,” she chuckled.

My mother walked up to the podium, with a microphone in her hand.

“People of Magvel, today you have been blessed to be able to watch a magnificent execution, the first of it’s kind. Anyone who objects will join her in the execution. We want a honest and clean country, yet this filthy liar

and conspirator kidnapped my daughter and held her hostage. This is just simple revenge for harming my daughter,” mother announced.

“So, Analiese Diagor, a servant of my own castle, I, Queen Lea Therese, condemn you, to die.”

“NO!” a guttural scream erupted from my mouth.

The ground rumbled. I felt a power surging through my veins. A large dragon burst from the ground. Everyone, including my mother, took a step back.

Except me.

I began to float. I could feel my body transforming. My clothes changed into a flowing dress; a wand materialized in my hand. The dress was as if someone spilled moonstone on it.

It shone.

It shone brighter than the sun.

I come to terms with my true self. I am Minor, Asteria Minor. The daughter of Asteria. I am the commander of the stars, leader of dragons.

“Mother. Stop.” My voice floated through the courtyard. Everyone stared.

“The only liar here, is you.”

“Polaris, heel.” I commanded. Polaris was the dragon.

I released Analiese from the clutches which my mother put on her. She walked over to me.

“Thank you, sister,” she muttered, before transforming into a dragon and flying away.

“This is it, mother. Your arrogance and thirst for power warped you. I cannot be with you, as you are not my true mother, neither do I want you to be. All I ask from you, is to reflect upon yourself. If you do that, you may take the throne. For the time being, this country will not be governed by anyone. All problems can be solved by working together,” I announced.

“Solar Storm!”

I cast a spell on everyone, making them forget about the scene which just happened.

I transformed into a dragon, and left into the skies.

A few years later, Magvel was one of the strongest countries, in every aspect. The city thrived from industry and agriculture. Asteria Minor was their patron goddess. Together, the people of Magvel lived in harmony.

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