

Creak. The young girl cursed herself silently as she held her breath, as if the small movement of her lungs filling with breath would be enough to wake a horror she in no way would enjoy. Counting slowly to ten, listening intently as the silence seemed to grow louder, she crept around the edge of the kitchen's counters. Her ears were open to every sound the unknown darkness made; if hearing was a skill, Farren would be the undefeated master. Closing her eyes and releasing the breath, the small body of a pre-teen darted for the wooden door, open wide, and filled with uncertainty. Bare feet tapped on the cold stones as sweat, regardless of the fall cold, dripped down her brow, her eyes darting at every movement, from the scurrying rats to the whispering winds that promised freedom. Her accomplished feelings weakened against her hardened logic to obtain complete certainty before any kind of celebration, she needed a focused mind. However, her slight achievement still left a small grin brightening her dirtied face. Her eyes shone a happiness that made her entangled, rusty, and once-fair hair seem like a problem she didn't fuss over in every thought. Pondering escape couldn't be helped; one could only do so much with empty time filled with chores; for months she planned, configured, and gathered information for an adventure she never imagined she could achieve.

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Two years, she pondered, Two whole years have passed since I left... Farren takes a long breath, her patience giving off serenity, pride, and internalization, *no... escaped.* Presently, she sits on a bale of hay, looking down at the simple, ignorant animals feeding on the dry, crisp, sweet-smelling hay while her survival instincts forced her thoughts to the emptiness of her stomach and made the green-looking crop smell appetizing, but she eventually settles to listen to her stomach pronounce its opinion on the scarcity of nutrients. It had been her eighteenth birthday, nearly the tenth anniversary of the day she was sold, stolen, as a slave, translation is more along the lines of a maid, but Farren would be on her deathbed before admission left her lips. She often thought of going back to the place she had been forced to call "home" during the difficult parts of her trip, but knew the punishment for her escape would be much worse; psychological torture with sly comments of her inability to survive, Farren would be forever indebted to Annabeth to take her back. Even her name, which most thought lovely, and her appearance, leads to a deeper malevolent truth; the small body of Farren cringes at her past experiences. Never in her life, short notwithstanding, would she encounter a more demanding heiress. The woman made a lashing look and feel like a field of flowers.

Brushing her fingers through her freshly cropped, dyed hair, she lain her body down and began to rest her entangled fingers behind her head while unfamiliar strands sit on her face until her breath blows them back. Her mind slowly drifts to her adventures over the past year. She had walked through busy streets of a parade and sat at a banquet for a queen. She helped out at a few farms and continued on to visit an actual school. She learned about history and math; these, she found, are so much more important than learning to sew a dress or make a fine dinner for house guests. After she was sure no one would find her, she traveled east, the direction she was told would lead her to her most prized possession in this world. On her travels, she rarely stopped except to buy a piece of fruit or scavenge through trash. She recalled the night she had chopped off her hair and took on the disguise of a young boy, giving her an advantage in walking during the day as well as night,; it really hadn't been that difficult--

“Farren?” the sweet voice nearly knocked the young girl off her seat until she steadied herself.

Her attention, brought to the opened barn doors, saw through the immense light of the shining sun and its large contrast of the dusty and dark barn to reveal the shadowed face of a adult woman, around the age of Annabeth, but much more... good and beautiful. The slight light gives way to round dimpled cheeks; kind, smiling, and wrinkled blue eyes; wide and familiar smile. With the wisp of a smile, Farren climbs down, her refreshingly cut, dark hair hugged to her face as she embraced the familiar body of her mother. Her mother, whom she was stolen from so long ago, who was the one person she dreamed of seeing once again and traveled far and wide for, her mother who was presently sending for an outfit of Annabeth's best guard to obtain Farren once again, for the debt her mother owed to the cold-hearted woman could never allow to be known. As she held tight to her child who would once more be forced from her hands, she pondered if the choices she had made were right as silent, guilty tears streaked her aged cheeks.

The yells from outside caused the heart of the mover to tighten in her chest as the thought of her daughter being taken from her, once more, arose. How she had given up her pride and joy escaped her as she held Farren in her arms, her cheek sat on her daughter's dark hair, her own long blonde hair enveloping the young girl's light roots. However, sadly, she did know what had happened. Annabell had found her stealing from her farm, her husband in tow. They were beggars and had nothing to their name to give to Annabell in return for their thievery. The only way that Annabell would forgive their thievery and even tolerate it was if they allowed the evil

woman to have their first born –it was known that Annabell could not have a child of her own, it was also known that she was a wicked and selfish woman. At first, Lavinia had refused to accept this proposal until her husband had convinced her that they could have other children, unless they died of starvation or in jail. She begrudgingly agreed, with the threat of her family at her throat, to the terms as long as she could name the child as well as have a home and food supplied to her and her family.

As the woman looked back on the past, she ignored the yelling of her dear husband and held her baby in her arms once more. Her eyes and arms closed tight, as a child would before reluctantly giving up their childhood stuffed bear, their pride and joy. As she combed the hair of her child, she wondered how soon it would be to ever see Farren again, if that was even a possibility. It was so long ago, when Farren had found a letter from Lavinia about seeing her child that Farren's suspicions of parentage were questioned and she escaped to see her family. It was then that Annabell demanded that Lavinia moved herself and her family elsewhere, far away. A sad smile glazed her expression, her child was completely innovative and adaptable to any problem she faced; her heart ached to be like that.

Lavinia's mind drifted to the word sent of Farren's residence for the last three months; she knew she could hide her child for at least two or three months, but Annabell's spies were everywhere and it wouldn't be too much longer until they were at her door. A messenger was sent out a few days ago, that would mean that Annabell would be sending troops and be attending the carriage personally to obtain Farren in a week or two. Lavinia hoped to correct her mistake from last time and have her daughter far away from her home, no matter the pain that shatters her heart or the nightmares that haunt her eyes whenever she blinks. Taking a deep breath, she released her daughter and closed the barn door.

"What are you doing, mother? Hasn't father called to us?" her innocent smile shone appreciation to a family that called and cared for her.

"I know, my love. But, I must speak to you privately." Lavinia collapsed her hands behind her back; she was trying to control her nerves. "I love you more than you could possibly imagine. When you were taken from me the two times before now... It was devastating."

Farren interrupted with a dimpled grin, Lavinia reflected that it was like looking at herself in an immortal mirror, "That will never happen again. Don't worry. It's all in the past now."

Lavinia's brows furrowed with an uncontrollable and sad smile until she looked to their carefully covered feet upon the hay ground, "You must leave, my Farren. You must leave and I don't know when you may come back. Perhaps you may be able to find me when you have a family of your own and we have moved to a safer place." The hurt in her daughter's gaze was enough for Lavinia to reach out and grip Farren's face, to stare into the eyes that refused human contact.

After a few moments of silence, Lavinia struggled to speak as Farren's voice held strong, her own hands upon her mother's, "You don't want me... anymore? Did I do something wrong?" Tears threatened the youthful and adolescent round eyes.

Lavinia reached out and cradled her daughter in her arms, "No, never! But, Annabell will know to come here, she has too much power over us to run, your father and I are far too old, she controls everything she wants. However," Lavinia pulled back and placed her forehead against her daughter's, "you are young. You can run and never look back, never get pulled down. You live, Farren Lavinia Faye. You thrive and fight for a life you control. I will always.... always, be proud of you."

Farren nodded uncontrollably as the tears fell, her lip quivering, and her mother's thumbs brushed the sadness from her puffy cheeks, "You will always be ours, my Farren. Stay true to yourself. Learn things we could never teach you and have experiences you can tell your grandchildren."

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Farren walked upon the dirtied path beneath her feet, her leather satchel leaning against her cotton and leather clothed hip from her opposite shoulder, filled with a notebook, makeshift pencil, water canteens, a couple coin pouches, and food to last her for the next few cities to the south. She stopped, the moon hanging high as she looked back abruptly to her home, her real home. Closing her eyes, she felt the soft touch of her mother and father's last hugs; both of them failing at brave smiles in return to her saddened tears. She appreciated everything they had done for her, all for their daughter; she was so proud but would give anything to spend more time with them. The moon and stars were the only witnesses to her silent tears of grief for the time she couldn't have for more than a few nights as she worked to fulfill her mother's last wish for her daughter.