



THE FOUNTAIN OF
ETERNAL YOUTH

Vol 2

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Chapter 1

Mark couldn't believe his dream had finally come true. He was a knight in the king's army, King Harold's army. But things were way better than he had ever dared to hope for. He was engaged to Lizzy, the young and beautiful sorceress who turned out to be the king's daughter. So he was to marry a princess. But she was nothing like her step sister Milly who was cunning and selfish. As for John, he was Milly's step brother and he was in fact Lizzy's brother as king Harold finally revealed after he got his youth back and those things wouldn't

have mattered anymore as he would continue to rule his own kingdom.

Milly knew that John couldn't have been her brother as her mother died when she gave birth to her and John was younger than her but it wasn't her business to ask her father. As long as Harold knew and acknowledged John as his son, it didn't matter that he wasn't the late queen's son.

Now the kingdom of Karaland had a queen once again, Gabriela, and a young and powerful king, Harold. He was indebted to his daughter, Lizzy, and to his future son in law, Mark, as they had made all these possible. And let's not forget Gabriela, the once again young and beautiful sorceress, his wife and queen.

But not everyone was happy with how things had turned out. Milly was the least happy. All her dreams of ruling her father's kingdom had crumbled in a heartbeat. And it was all Lizzy's fault as far as it concerned her. Furthermore, she didn't have Roman anymore to rely on him for her dirty jobs. She would have to find someone else, she couldn't get her own hands dirty. Nope, she was a lady.

Now she wouldn't only have John in the back of her mind, who could aspire to the throne when their father would eventually get bored with a lifetime of ruling the kingdom, but she had Lizzy to worry about too. Her step-sister. Why couldn't her father keep his pants on? Wasn't she enough? Why did he have to have other children and with another woman? Gabriela, her step-mother. And it turned out that John was in fact Lizzy's brother.

Things were looking bad from Milly's point of view. First of all, her father was young and strong again. And now Lizzy could also claim the throne in case something unfortunate happened to the king, their father. It was even difficult to put Lizzy in the same sentence with her father. She couldn't conceive that they were step sisters. Step sister with a witch. She hated her. And her future husband. And everything that had to do with Lizzy. Yes, even her father for putting her through this. She was the most able and wise of all. She should rule....

Gabriela on the other hand was thrilled to be reunited with her son, John. King Harold had taken him when he was born as Gabriela couldn't have taken care of him because he was a boy. The sorceresses of her line never kept baby boys. All her ancestors either gave their sons to their fathers or sacrificed them in weird rituals to

increase their magic powers. They would only keep the daughters, future sorceresses like themselves to continue the line of magic and witchcraft. But Gabriela was different, too. She could have never sacrificed her children, even if she had a boy. She left him with king Harold while she remained his mistress and his witch, but not his wife although he was already a widower back then. Still he hadn't been ready to marry her as she wasn't a queen and he would have been perceived as weak by the other kings of the world. And he was proud and stupid. Good thing it wasn't too late to make amends. At least now in his old age he saw things clear and wanted his youth back, wanted Gabriela back. And with her help and her daughter's help, king Harold got a second chance. They both got a second chance. This time Gabriela knew things would be different. He had learnt his lesson...and so had she. Yes, she loved the old fool. And she couldn't believe they were both young again. They had their whole lives ahead. A life together as husband and wife.

John too was excited to find out that he had a mother and that she was alive. Gabriela seemed nice but she looked almost as young as himself and she was a sorceress. He wasn't sure what he felt about her, about

the whole situation. He tried to understand why she had left him with king Harold, why she had abandoned him. After thinking and pondering, not too much because thinking wasn't his strong point, he decided to forgive and accept her as his mother, to her joy and wonder.

Chapter 2

Milly was restless. She was trying to find a new assassin, someone else she could turn into a weapon to do her bidding. This time she would have to choose wisely. Roman had been pretty good, but not perfect. He had been killed by that boor, Mark, Lizzy's future husband. And had linked her to the murders of her father's two counsellors. Good thing her father had got his hands on the water and was reunited with his witch, if that could be called a good thing, as he forgot about what she had done and seemed to have forgiven her. Or at least she hoped so. This time she would choose more carefully.

There was a secret guild of assassins she had heard about. That is where her father, King Harold, had found Roman and had hired him. He had been one of the best assassins the guild had. But there were others just as good. She just had to find a way to get in touch with a member of the guild. Or their leader. The leader of the assassin's guild. That was who she needed if she wanted a job well done. And take her revenge on Lizzy for prolonging her father's reign.

Milly knew the assassin's guild had its headquarters somewhere outside town, somewhere in the Teyush Forest. It was a place avoided by most people as it was well known the assassin's guild resided there. Not even the king meddled in their affairs, especially as he himself hired assassins when he wanted to take care of certain problems. Their guild was protected by the king himself.

That was where Milly had to go if she wanted a new assassin. So she put on a hood to hide her identity from prying eyes and when the moon was up, she exited the safety of her chamber to venture alone in the darkness in search of a new assassin. She was a bit scared but she had her dagger with her in case she needed it. It was a small golden dagger encrusted with beautiful and expensive gems and it was worth a little fortune. It had

been her sixteenth birthday present. It was what she had asked her father as a gift. King Harold thought it was an unusual gift for a girl, but if it was what his daughter wanted, then that's what he bought and brought her. When Milly first put her eyes on the beautiful weapon, her eyes gleamed with joy and happiness. It really was a perfect gift, she had thought. And even now she marveled at the beauty of the dagger. Its simple presence in her pockets gave her confidence, made her feel protected. She had never used it but she was sure she had what it took to use it in case she needed to defend herself. Better safe than sorry, right?

So Milly took her horse from the stables and galloped to Teyush forest. It was such a dark night that even the trees seemed distorted and spooky. And the night animals and insects were making constant noises that gave her the creeps. But she was determined to find a new assassin, she needed a new assassin to protect her and to kill for her. So she gathered all her courage and went on in the dark of the night. She galloped for a while until she realized she couldn't find the assassin's guild. Upset but not willing to give up just yet, she stopped her horse and looked around for any sign of the assassins.

Besides the crickets and occasional owls, the forest became as silent as death.

Milly listened for any signs of humans nearby but no matter how hard she tried she couldn't distinguish anything that would mean the assassins were anywhere close by. She started to doubt that she would find what she came looking for when she felt the cold blade of a sharp dagger at the base of her neck and someone putting his hand over her mouth so she wouldn't yell, although she thought that even if she screamed, no one would come to rescue her anyway. She started sweating in fear and water formed on her frowned forehead, dripping down her long nose. Her heart started racing as she was thinking that maybe this had been a bad idea after all. It was too late now anyhow, so she would just have to wait and see what happened next.

Then Milly heard a low and calm voice whispering in her ear:

- If you scream, you'll be one head shorter. And nobody would hear you, anyway. Nobody that could help I mean. So when I take my hand from your mouth, you will stay calm and answer my questions, understood? Then he slowly took his hand off her

mouth, allowing her to speak. He could feel her trembling with fear and could hear her breathing heavily.

- Ok, Milly could hardly mutter, but she didn't scream. She was trying to be brave and remind herself why she was here in the first place.
- So who are you and what are you doing here in the middle of the night? Are you a witch?
- No, she answered while thinking about the irony. Her sister Lizzy was a witch, not her. She was born and brought up as a princess, taught good manners and stuff. Unlike Lizzy who was a witch and had another witch as a mother and lacked education and good manners. Lizzy had been taught magic spells and how to kill stuff while she was the real princess who should rule over Karaland when King Harold would be ready to pass down the reign of the kingdom.
- Then who are you and what are you doing here? Milly heard the same voice asking her the same questions again.
- I am Milly, King Harold's daughter, she answered boldly this time. And if you are already thinking about a ransom for me, forget it. I am here to find

the assassin's guild. I want to hire the best assassin. He will be nicely rewarded for his time, that I can assure you of. And who are you, asked Milly and turned around to see her captor.

He was a muscular tall man but his face was hidden behind a hood, just like hers. By the way he was clad and armed, she was sure he was one of the assassins. Which meant he could take her to their leader and she could then hire the best money could afford.

- Ok, follow me, Miss, he said then and he showed her the way through the dense forest. He led her to the assassins' headquarters. Their headquarters was well hidden among the tall trees, somewhere up on a steep hillside, making it almost impossible to stumble upon it by mistake. There were high wooden fences connecting the trees and forming a real fortress. And a really huge reinforced wooden gate, standing like a barrier between the outside world and the assassin's guild.
- Ok, she heard him speak again, we are here. Then she heard him whistling a nice tune. Then the huge gates started to creak as they began to open slowly. Milly was wondering how many assassins were

behind those wall like fences. Finally, the gates opened and they entered through them. There were some hooded men going about their business, but she couldn't distinguish anyone's face.

- Come, the man spoke again, this way, and he showed her inside a medium sized house.

It was evident that the house was where the important members of the guild resided. Where decisions were being made. Once inside, the house looked a lot larger than it seemed only minutes ago from the outside.

Milly quickly saw that there were doors to private chambers on each side of the large room. And also stairs leading to an upper level of the house, but that was guarded by two assassins. It probably led to the chambers of the leaders of the assassins' guild. The two guards were heavily armed and looked really dangerous. They had their faces covered and the interior of the house was badly lit, but Milly could feel them watching her, analyzing her, following her with their gaze.

At the end of the long house, where the rooms ended on both sides, there was a large square wooden table and a few assassins sitting there. All

chairs were the same except one which was higher than the rest and had more sophisticated carvings on it. An assassin was seated there and Milly figured that was the leader of the guild, the one she had to talk to.

Nobody had spoken anything yet, not even her captor, and the silence was deafening. She couldn't take it anymore, she was going to break the silence first, show the leader that she wasn't afraid although she was all alone in their den. So as soon as she got in front of the big wooden table, she coughed first to clear her throat, then she said in what she thought was a commanding voice, the voice she used to order her servants around:

- Hello, sir, mister... and seeing that he still said nothing, she went on: hello! I am here to hire you as my personal bodyguard and assassin!

Now the assassins seated around the table burst out laughing. But the leader was serious and kept silent. Maybe he didn't have a developed sense of humor, Milly thought, as obviously the others were having a good time on her behalf. Instead of making her uncomfortable, their laughter relaxed her a bit.

Made her feel safe. They wouldn't kill her if they were laughing, right?

- So who are you, Miss... the leader finally spoke in a husky voice.
- Milly, King Harold's daughter. I know my father hired his assassins from your ranks, from your guild members. Now I wish to do the same.
- Yes, King Harold... the leader said. He paid us well for our services.
- And so will I, Milly said putting a purse of coins on the table to show him that she meant it.
- You can call me Drae. I am the leader of the assassins. They all answer to me. We form recruits and we house whoever doesn't have a home or a job and wants to become one of us. There is always need of good trained assassins as this job is not without risks, even for us. Some come here since childhood and train hard to become good assassins. We offer them shelter and food and at first they work for us. When they have paid their debts for the shelter and food and they become good enough at what they do, in case they don't die first, then they can work for themselves. Earn for themselves. We have strict rules here.

- Aha, interesting, Milly said pondering. So how much would it cost to hire you!?
- You can't afford me, young lady. I am their leader, I train them and the generations to come. They need me. But you can hire anyone else from among our ranks. They are just as good, Drae said showing a large grin which let big white teeth to be seen.
- Uh, ok.... Said Milly a little upset by his refusal. She wasn't used to not having things her way. But she would have to get used to it. So whom would you recommend? You must know them best so please recommend me the best skilled assassin you have.
- Hmm, Drae said after a few minutes, that would be Dorian. But don't be fooled by his appearance. He may be short and a bit plump but he is good at what he does. And he is a master of disguise.
- Can I see him? She asked wondering how good this Dorian was. But Drae must know his own people best, right?
- Sure, Rudy, go get Dorian please. Tell him someone is interested in him. And tell him to be quick about it.

A skinny silhouette left in a jiffy. Milly figured that must have been Rudy. The rest of the assassins were paying attention to the discussions, trying not

to miss a word of what was being spoken. Some minutes later two shadows were approaching fast. One was tall and skinny and the other was Short and rather fat in comparison to the rest of the assassins that were surrounding them. And also had a funny gait. But even so it looked like he was able to keep up with the other guy who must have been Rudy. They were an odd pair.

- Yes, did you ask for me, Drae? Milly heard his husky voice and the words seemed to rush too fast out of his mouth, almost unintelligible. But perhaps Drae was used to him and understood him easier and faster than she could. He almost seemed to babble rather than speak.
- Yeah, you might have work. This young lady here wants to hire an assassin and I recommended you. You can thank me later, Drae said bursting into laughter.
- What's so funny? Are you making fun of me? Milly asked and stomped her feet. She wouldn't let anyone mock her. Was this a joke? Was this short guy even an assassin or was he the janitor of the place? And was Drae taking her for a fool??

- Told you not to be fooled by the way he looks...forgot to mention the way he talks. That was all. But no, nobody is making fun of anybody. And your father used to be our best client and he is the king! So no, no one is mocking his daughter!
- Good! Milly said simply before discussing her terms with her new right hand man.

Chapter 3

Lizzy was so happy and grateful for everything. It was like a dream in which she was a princess.... only it wasn't a dream. She really was a princess and her mother was the queen now. And King Harold was her father. It almost felt unreal. And Mark...she was in love with the wannabe knight and hero. And she knew he loved her. Anybody could see that.

But Mark wasn't the problem. The problem was her step sister, Milly. She had tried to kill her once when she sent her assassin to do the job for her and failed. If she

tried once, it was very likely that she would try again, probably hire a new assassin. So she would have to be very careful if she treasured her life, which she did. Maybe even hire a maiden to taste her food for her in case Milly's new assassin would poison it. And she knew just the girl for the job: Manda, a young and reckless girl who had grown up without her parents' guidance as she had run away from home when she was just a child. She was strikingly beautiful but very quick tempered and sometimes even rude. She was a fighter as she had her share of hardships from a young age when she decided to run away and live life the way she wanted it, making and following her own set of rules. She had known hunger and poverty at first but now things were better as she got a job as a cook at King Harold's court.

Lizzy liked her and decided to hire Manda as her personal food taster and servant. Manda was glad to work for the princess herself as she liked her more than Milly. Manda knew that tasting Lizzy's food could be dangerous otherwise Lizzy wouldn't have hired her for that, but she accepted the job anyway. She got tired of always smelling of food. Now she would have to taste the food, not cook it. And of course clean Lizzy's room and so on which wasn't that bad.

In time, Lizzy trusted Manda and started to care for the girl as if she was her sister. She acted more like a sister than Milly, who really was her step sister. But you can't choose family, right?

Manda went wherever Lizzy went. And Mark also trusted her. She had proved to be loyal more than once. Mark was relieved to know that Lizzy wasn't alone when he had to join King Harold's army in different missions. He was their general, after all. And in time, he had proved his worth and earned their respect. He had become a very skilled warrior and King Harold was more than happy to have him among his men. So it felt good to know that Lizzy wasn't completely alone while he was away. She had Gabriela, too, but Gabriela was busy enjoying her regained youth and her marriage to the king so Manda had been a very good choice.

So one beautiful summer morning, when the king asked for Mark, he was sure there was a new mission in stock for him. He kissed Lizzy and told her the king might send him on a mission again, then he answered the king's call. All his other generals were in the room, so it obviously was something of great importance. He didn't know all the other generals personally, he knew most of them only by reputation. But if the king had summoned

all of them, Mark figured it had to be serious. And the looks on their faces confirmed his hunches.

He took a seat next to Scarrino, King Harold's most trusted general. Scarrino's face was tensed and he didn't even blink while listening to the king's words. The king and him had fought many battles together side by side, saving each other's lives countless times. Mark had heard lots of stories about Scarrino's bravery and intelligence in battle. He admired him and looked up to him. He hoped that this time maybe the king would deploy them together so he could learn from the best.

- Good, King Harold's voice resounded in the room, so everybody is here. Then he made a pause to make sure everyone was paying attention to his every word. After he made sure that they were all listening carefully, the King went on. Some of you are aware of the threat coming from the North. But not all. So I will say this for everyone in this room: my sources have informed me that the trolls dwelling in the Northern regions have gathered an impressive army and are marching our way as we speak.
- Trolls? An army of trolls? Bobby, another general in King Harold's army asked wondering how was that even possible. Excuse me, Bobby went on, but as far

as I know, trolls are stupid creatures. Yeah, I mean they are huge and strong, but they couldn't put up an army and attack us... I don't want to underestimate anyone, but trolls are...big hunks of muscles, but idiots nonetheless.

- Yes, king Harold answered him. They are indeed known to be strong but stupid, but they have a leader now, a leader who is not a troll, a leader who has the brains to command an army and who now has an army to command.
- Who? Asked Scarrino, not even a single muscle on his face moving to betray his real state of mind.
- A powerful elemental wizard. He can summon elements of ice and fire to his help, creatures of extraordinary power besides the trolls he has under his command. So besides his army of trolls, he will also have the aid of the elements. We probably have to expect an army twice as big...
- Who is this wizard? Mark asked getting up from his seat. All eyes were on him now, on him and on the king, everybody waiting for the answer.
- His name is Kain!

The moment the king had uttered his name, the whole room went quiet. Everyone was familiar with

the name. It brought cold shivers down on their spines. He was the most powerful and evil wizard of the lands. He was especially renowned for his habit of pulling the still beating hearts of the generals he defeated from their chests before setting them on fire in front of the remaining of their troops which were already his prisoners.

- Kain? Is he still alive? I mean he must be looking like a mummy by now, all wrinkled like a raisin. I heard stories about him when I was just a little boy and he was already old back then so now he must really be...all dried up, said Mark making the rest of the generals smile in spite of the situation. He was planning to conquer the kingdom even then... he should be tired of trying by now, why doesn't he just give up?
- Maybe because now he has the army of trolls, too, said King Harold in an attempt to make the generals focus again on the problem at hand. He is more powerful than ever now. He is not to be underestimated. Never underestimate your enemy, you hear me? Asked the king, looking sharply at each and every one in the room to make sure he was being taken seriously.

- So do we have a plan? Asked Scarrino while his mind was already racing, searching for a battle plan, a solution for them to be the winners, something to give them an advantage.
- I thought that was your job, Scarrino!! We all know you develop the best tactics to bring us victory! So I expect you to do your magic and come with a winning plan in spite of the odds! Bobby, you gather the troops, Mark, you go with Bobby.

Chapter 4

- You will have your room next to mine, Milly was informing Dorian, her new assassin, once they reached the palace. I want you to be almost invisible, so to say. Don't draw unnecessary attention. Always be ready to answer my call.

- Yes, my lady, Dorian answered bowing his head. No worries, I will be as silent as a shadow.
- You'd better be if you don't want to become a shadow, Milly whispered clenching her teeth. You'd better not disappoint me, little man...
- No, I won't!
- Your main objective for now is to follow my step sister, Lizzy, and inform me every evening of everything she did during the day.
- That's it? Just follow her?
- Yes, for now. And when the right time comes, you will get rid of her, of course. But for the moment, all you have to do is follow her everywhere she goes, learn her habits, learn everything you need so when the right time comes, it will be easier to kill her, ok?
- Ok my lady! And Dorian bowed his head again.
- Ok, you can go to your room now and start tomorrow. Have some rest now, I for one surely need some rest. Don't forget, you will inform me every evening of her whereabouts.
- Sure, my lady, have a good night! And Dorian entered his room and locked it behind him.

Milly was more confident now than ever that her plan would eventually pay off. Dorian seemed reliable and capable, in spite of his small stature. But looks can be deceiving. This time she didn't want to take any chances. It was better to plan everything in detail than fail again because another attempt on her sister would mean her own end this time. So this time she decided to learn everything about her first before ordering the strike. It was either her or Lizzy. There was no middle way. And she didn't like to lose. So Milly started taking notes of everything Dorian was feeding her, everything Lizzy did and everywhere she went. In the meantime, she was trying to seem friendly towards Lizzy, trying to fool everyone. But there was one person she couldn't fool: Gabriela. Although she was young again, her soul was old and she was no fool. She could read Milly like an open book, she could see that she was faking. So she opened Lizzy's eyes regarding Milly, put her on alert when it came to her.

Gabriela knew that Milly was a threat to her own peace too, as she couldn't stand the fact that her father, King Harold, was still ruling the kingdom instead of her. And of course that he was finally

happy and remarried. But Gabriela wasn't afraid, it just meant that she would have to be extra careful with Milly because she played dirty and Gabriela was afraid that Milly might still have something up her sleeves.

Chapter 5

- Manda, it's been two weeks since our armies have left for war. And still no word from Mark. I have to know if he is ok. I should have gone with him from the start even if father said that the war is no place for women.
- Lizzy, I hope he is ok for your sake. But what can we do?
- We? You mean you'd follow me?
- Of course, my lady. Wherever you go, I go.

- Thank you, and Lizzy kissed the girl's forehead.
Maybe we can still do something about it. Pack a few things and meet me by the palace gates at midnight. And take which horse you like most from the stables. I will ride Joy.

- Yeah, was getting bored anyway, Manda whispered while cleaning the table.

A shadow crept from their open window in a haste...

- What was that? I thought I saw something move behind those trees, said Manda who indeed had caught a glimpse of something or rather someone but she didn't know what it was.

- I didn't see anything, relax, said Lizzy trying to calm herself too. Oh, and don't tell a soul that we are going to follow Mark's footsteps to the battlefield. We will disguise ourselves in man clothing, this way it will be a lot easier to infiltrate among the fighting men and find Mark. See you later tonight Manda, please don't make me wait for you!

Half an hour later, in Milly's room.

- So Lizzy is going to war!?! Oh, this changes everything. You are going to follow the foolish girl and her servant and make sure she dies on the battlefield, but not before. You will kill an enemy soldier and take his armor and then kill Lizzy and her servant girl. There can be no witnesses. So everyone will think they were killed on the battlefield by the enemies. Just be careful, she is a witch, in case you forgot. She is powerful. So you will have to be smart.
- Yeah, no worries, we both know you didn't hire me for my good looks.
- Don't come back until you've finished the job, got it? Your reward will be worth it.
- Of course, my lady. I won't disappoint you!
- You'd better not! Milly uttered for herself but Dorian had a keen hearing and heard her. He knew she was dead-serious about it and that she would probably have him killed if he didn't succeed in killing Lizzy. So he bowed his head and left the room as quietly as he had entered.

Chapter 6

Lizzy and Manda were riding side by side in deep silence. Lizzy was clearly worried for Mark and Manda didn't want to disturb her thoughts. They had been riding all night and now they were pretty tired but Lizzy wasn't ready to take a break yet. Manda was trying to keep up with her but her heavy breathing betrayed how tired she really was. Finally, Lizzy couldn't pretend she didn't notice how tired Manda was and decided to allow both themselves and their horses the well deserved rest.

They tied the horses and stopped by a wide river for rest. The cool water refreshed them and the shade of the trees was more than welcome. They ate and then they both fell asleep. When Manda woke up, she saw Lizzy frowning at a piece of paper and turning it on all sides as if trying to find something which wasn't there. So she decided to just ask her what the problem was.

- Well, Lizzy answered trying to keep calm, it seems there was a bridge a few meters down the river. I searched for it while you were asleep and it seems it's gone. It probably collapsed and was taken away by the river.
- So how are we going to cross over, Lizzy? Now Manda was scared as she couldn't swim and the river was flowing rapidly. She didn't want to drown.
- Well, I guess I will have to make my own bridge.
- What do you mean? Asked Manda even more afraid as she had no idea what Lizzy was talking about.
- I will freeze the river for a narrow portion but it will have to do. So we will cross to the other side this way...
- Wow, what if it melts while we cross and we drown? Manda was shaking all over at the nasty thoughts in the back of her mind. She hated water. Or maybe it wasn't hate but fear.
- We won't be dancing our way to the other side, right? We will cross as fast as possible. We have to. There is no other way. You will have to trust me on this.

- I trust you Lizzy, magic is what I don't trust. But I heard stories that you are good at it. I hope the stories were true...
- We will find out soon, won't we? And Lizzy giggled. She wasn't upset that Manda doubted her powers, instead she was glad that people talked about her, and as for Manda, she will see for herself how great her powers were.
- Ok, I will untie the horses and will saddle mine and take yours by the bridle too till we get to the other bank while you focus on keeping the river frozen.
- Sounds like a plan!

Manda took the horses and Lizzy focused on the running river. She started mumbling unknown incantations and magic spells and to Manda's amazement, the river started to freeze slowly in front of them. It was like a bridge of ice was stopping the water from flowing. It was magic!!

- Go Manda! I won't be able to keep the river frozen too long. Take the horses and go! I will cross when you are safe on the other side.
- Ok, and she started to cross over the frozen river even though she couldn't stop thinking that she was afraid of water. Manda could feel the ice beneath

her creaking from time to time, but this didn't stop her, quite the contrary, it only made her advance even faster. She got safely to the other shore together with their horses. She felt she could kiss the ground beneath her feet but instead she yelled for Lizzy to start crossing too.

- Great Manda, Lizzy said proud of the girl, now I will also cross. And Lizzy began to step over the ice then she made a run for it. She ran as fast as she could. She had to reach the other side before all the ice melted and the river would start flowing again. She couldn't maintain her focus anymore and now she would just have to be fast. Or at least faster than the thawing ice. She could feel the ice bridge starting to become unstable. So she ran even faster. When she was almost on the other bank of the river, she heard a man screaming behind her. She turned her head and saw a man in the frozen water up to his waist. He was struggling to get back on the bit of frozen bridge in front of him but he was clearly not doing well. Lizzy stopped in her tracks and focused harder once more. The water around the man started to freeze once again until he was able to get up on it. Then he began to run towards her as fast as he

could. But it was too much for Lizzy. Sweat was dropping on her face and she felt she would faint if he wouldn't be on the other bank sooner. Then everything went black. Before she fell on the ice the last thing she heard was Manda's panicked voice calling her name.

- Help her!! Manda was yelling to the man.

The man ran as fast as his little legs allowed him. When he was next to Lizzy, the ice was almost gone again and he could see her sliding towards the raging waters of the river. There was a battle inside him as he stood there looking at her for what seemed an eternity for both him and Manda who hadn't taken her eyes off him this whole time. Then, to Manda's relief, she saw the man picking Lizzy up in his arms and with a jump he was safe next to her on the bank of the river which was flowing again menacingly.

- Thank you for saving my friend, Manda slowly uttered not knowing what to think of the mysterious man who had come out of nowhere.
- Truth is she saved my life first, she finally heard him speak. I just returned the favor. But to Manda's bewilderment, he didn't seem too happy about it. It was as if something more was going on. As if he was

almost sorry for having saved Lizzy. Or was it just her imagination running wild?

- Who are you? They were both startled by Lizzy's voice as she was slowly coming back to her senses. And what were you doing just a few paces behind us? Were you following us? Who sent you?

Both women saw the color from the man's face slowly fading away until he was as pale as the earth beneath their feet.

- Answer me! Lizzy kept pressing him for an answer as the fact that the color disappeared from his cheeks wasn't working in his favor. She realized he was clearly hiding something.
- Uh, he said after a long pause, I'm a hired assassin. I am here to kill you.
- Pardon me? Lizzy asked puzzled while looking at the strange looking man. Then why didn't you let me drown?
- I couldn't. You saved my life. So my life is yours to command. I was supposed to kill you and frame it all on the enemy soldiers. Then I saw that the bridge over the river was no more. And then you made a bridge of ice over the water. I had to take a quick decision. If I hadn't followed you, I may have never

found you again and my mission would have been doomed. And my reputation and probably my life. So I decided to take my chances and run after you but then the stupid ice bridge began to melt under my feet and...well, you know the rest.

- Sorry to interrupt your nice story but WHO are you? Asked Manda obviously pissed at him.
- Dorian, he said in the simplest possible way. Hired assassin, as I already told you.
- Who is your employer? Answer me!! Lizzy yelled at him, her hands shaking as she felt a rush of magic energy going through them, ready to burst in any second if his answers weren't true.
- It's your step sister, Milly! But I guess she will have to find someone else now. As I said, I owe you my life. And I will die protecting yours if need be. You could have left me there to drown but you risked your own life to save mine. My life is your now!
- I don't need it! Lizzy said upset by all the information. You are free. You can do whatever you want. I don't care!
- Ok, then what I want is to accompany you and your skinny friend and protect you on the battlefield. I

may be an assassin, but I am an honorable one! I live by certain codes of honor!

- Can you believe that, Lizzy? An honorable assassin! Geez! Manda said and started laughing at him to steam out all the negative vibes. So when you kill someone for money, do you do it with honor? What's honorable in that?
- It's what I do. I don't know anything else. This is how I make my living and what I've been trained for all my life. It's who I am and I can't change it, but this doesn't mean I lack honor.... And as I said it already, I owe you..
- Just stop it, ok? Lizzy spat at him. You can come if you want, I don't care. But there are two conditions: first of all, when we get to the palace, you will testify against Milly so my father will finally see what snake he has raised and second, you take care of yourself on the battlefield. I will protect Manda and myself of course while trying to find my future husband so I won't be needing any burden, got it?
- No worries, lady! I can take care of myself! As for the other thing, I will do it if it is what you want! The king might sentence me to death afterwards though, but ...

- No, he won't! If anyone should be sentenced, then it is his evil offspring, Milly! She hired you! And Lizzy was now trembling with all these emotions while thinking that Milly was a dangerous person and something had to be done about it.
- I'll do it, Dorian said one more time.
- Then what are you waiting for? Spring? Let's go!

The three of them left together towards the battlefield in the north, in search of King Harold's army, or more precisely, in search of Mark. Lizzy wanted to make sure he was ok, Manda wanted to make sure Lizzy was ok and Dorian wanted to make sure everyone was ok, in spite of his original orders of killing both Lizzy and Manda!

Chapter 7

- Bobby, look out! Mark warned him while he plunged his sword through a big fat troll, green blood oozing from the troll's deadly wound.
- Thanks, I owe you one! But no sooner had Bobby said it when he saved Mark too, already paying his debt. Another troll tried to cut Mark's left arm off while he was with his back at it fighting off other trolls when Bobby saw it and with a high jump, cut off the troll's head just before it could cut Mark's arm.
- Uh, thanks! We make a good team! Wish Lizzy could see us fighting! Said Mark proud of the man he had become since he had first met Lizzy.
- This is no place for women! Too much blood!
- But you don't know how tough she is! Mark went on, trying to make a point. She could be of help. She is a powerful sorceress.
- Yeah, but don't forget that she is also King Harold's daughter. So things have changed. The King doesn't

want his daughter in the middle of the fight, not as long as there are brave men available to fight!

- Yeah, I guess you are right, Mark agreed with Bobby this time. Just that I miss her so much and she is probably worried sick about me.
- Less talk and more fight, focus on your enemies, Mark! Said Bobby in an attempt to take his mind away from what was bothering him. Let's show Kain and his army what we are made of!
- Uh, flesh and blood? Asked Mark giggling.
- No, man.... I meant to show them that we are brave and strong and willing to sacrifice our lives for the welfare of the kingdom...said Bobby wondering if Mark had made a joke earlier.
- Ha, gotcha! I know what you meant, I was just teasing you!

Then both friends went on sharing sword blows left and right, cutting trolls in their way. All was pretty smooth as the trolls were strong, but they lacked agility, stamina and speed. But then they saw the other enemies they had to confront, namely water and fire elementals, magical beings made of water and fire. The water elementals could freeze things and throw icicles and

were immune to water spells while the fire elementals could throw fire arrows and were immune to fire spells. And Kain had summoned lots of them in what he knew pretty well was his final attempt to conquer Karaland. If he wouldn't succeed this time either, with his mighty army of trolls and elementals, then he was prepared to die on the battlefield. So he was determined to do his best to win this war once and for all.

Mark had a big lump in his throat at seeing the magical army approaching. He examined Bobby's face and he could see the concern in his eyes.

- What do you think now, Bobby? Do we stand a chance? We've lost many soldiers already while fighting against the trolls and now these...beings... I mean look at battlefield. God, he exclaimed, some of our soldiers are fleeing towards the woods!
- It looks pretty bad, Bobby uttered, but if we make it out of this alive, I promise you I will personally hunt down the deserters and have them executed for treason! This is unforgivable! To desert like that, when things got bad and when every soldier is needed badly! I will...

- Oh, shut up! Never mind the deserters, now I am telling you to focus! How do we kill these creatures? Asked Mark although he doubted Bobby had any clue.
- With my help, of course! Said a soldier from behind them. Then the soldier took off his helmet to reveal his face to the astonishment of both Mark and Bobby!
- Lizzy? Is this you!? But how..... Was all Mark could say before she kissed him and then answered him.
- What did you think? That I would let you have all the fun?
- Oh, Lizzy, I'm so glad you are here! And not a moment too soon! We could really use a sorceress to fight this wizard! But who is this? Mark asked pointing towards Dorian as he already knew Manda.
- He is an assassin. Sent by my beloved step sister to kill me. Stop! Lizzy had to yell as Mark already had his blade against Dorian's neck.
- What? Didn't you just say he is sent to kill you!!??
- Yeah, but could you let me finish before you do something stupid? Said Lizzy kissing Mark again to calm him down.
- Oh, so there is more to it? What did he do?

- No, silly! I saved his life and now he thinks he owes me his life. So not only he won't be trying to kill me anymore, but he will do his best to protect me and least but most important thing, we need him alive as he will testify against Milly when all this is over! Father will have to do something about her this time, or I will!
- Oh, why didn't you say so? Mark said lowering his blade.
- Because you didn't give me the chance...
- Uh, Bobby finally said, you guys know that water and fire elementals are coming our way, right? Just making sure, not rushing you or anything.
- Leave them to me, you just take care of the trolls! And saying that, Lizzy took off her heavy armor and let her long sorceress dress be seen from underneath the armor. She needed to be able to use her hands for the spells and the armor was thwarting her.

An epic battle ensued. While the men were slicing the trolls, Lizzy was destroying the elementals one by one and Manda, well, I would like to say something nice but she was just hiding behind Lizzy, trembling with

fear. As Kain himself and his elementals were approaching, fire balls and ice shards started flying everywhere. Sometimes his elementals would even hurt or kill, by mistake, no doubt about that, the trolls, which were on their side. But Kain hadn't given his elementals the brains to care and shoot their magic more carefully as not to bring down their own army. Anyway, the trolls were diminishing in numbers slowly but effectively so now Kain was only counting on his magical beings for victory.

The trolls had managed to bring down lots of good Karaland soldiers, either by killing them or by maiming them so bad that they were dying somewhere on the battlefield, but weren't fighting anymore, anyway. So the trolls had done their part helping Kain's odds to win the war. Now only few of King Harold's army remained to face Kain and his elementals.

Scarrino and his soldiers had also joined the fight as they had killed the trolls on their designated part of the battlefield and now they came to Bobby and Mark's help. And of course were pleasantly surprised to see they had help from Lizzy. Everybody agreed that she was really needed on the battlefield if they wanted to stand a fighting chance against Kain and his elementals from hell.

It was a magic battle. Lizzy was throwing ice spells at the fire elementals to neutralize them and fire spells at the water elementals. But they kept coming. Kain was pushing the battle to the limits. His temples were sweating and throbbing with concentration but he wasn't ready to give up just yet. He couldn't accept defeat from a young sorceress. Because if it hadn't been for her, the outcome of the battle would surely have been different. But as it was, with such a great sorceress fighting him, he wasn't so sure about victory. She was killing all his elementals and she didn't seem tired at all. Whereas him, well he was probably too old for this. But if he started it, he had to finish it. Victorious or not, he would end this today. So by the end of the day, he would either be victorious or dead. There was no other way.

Lizzy, on the other hand, was just getting warm. She loved the thrill of the fight and the fact that she was next to Mark again. She would keep him safe. And Mark had really become good with his sword, just as he had dreamed of. But he couldn't fight Kain's magic army with his sword. He needed her. King Harold needed her for this battle although he hadn't asked her to join his armies in order to protect her. But she was here now and helping the armies towards victory. She looked majestic

in her long blue dress, an apparition in comparison with the rest of the army which was clad in heavy armor and had weapons. But unlike the rest of the army, which in spite of having weapons and armor, was useless against Kain's magic army, she with her bare hands was casting spell after spell after spell putting the elementals down in a killing spree.

Blood was everywhere. Even the last of the trolls had been killed. And large part of King Harold's army was also dead on the ground. But the battle was not over. Kain himself was now face to face with our heroes. He just couldn't accept defeat. Defeated by a mere wench. He stopped his mighty horse in front of her and spoke from behind his protective magic shield that was enveloping him while the last of his elementals was being turned to ashes.

- Who are you, girl?
- I am Lizzy, King Harold's daughter and protector of these lands which you have come to conquer. Surrender now and your life will be spared, but you will spend the rest of it in the cold dungeons. Enough have died already, it is time for you to pay!
- Ha, do you think I've come before you to surrender? Kain said while examining her face. But her face

didn't betray any emotion of any kind. She seemed as cold as a rock.

- Give up old man, demanded Mark. My sword may have been useless against your creatures but if Lizzy lowers your shield, I bet you bleed just like everyone else.
- Be on your guard, Mark! Lizzy said not knowing what to expect of it, but ready for just about anything from a conniving wizard like Kain.
- You may have won, girl, but how I die is entirely my choice! I wanted to see you up close, the one who has defeated my army. This was my last try. I am too old for this... I see determination on your face. You were brave. As for this young man, I can see a great future for him, Kain said while looking at Mark. Then he took a small bottle from one of his pockets and drank its contents in a swift move. The next minute he was lying dead on the ground.
- What happened? Asked Bobby and Scarrino, both wondering what had just happened.
- He poisoned himself, Lizzy answered simply. He chose death rather than imprisonment. As simple as that. Victory is ours! Karaland is safe once more!!

- Let's go back home.... Said Mark obviously tired from all the fighting and everybody agreed.

Chapter 8

King Harold was proud of his daughter, Lizzy. She had brought him victory, as he was informed by his generals. As for his other daughter, Milly, things were entirely different. Dorian had testified that she had hired him to murder Lizzy. He had to punish her. He had to make an example of her even if she was his own flesh and blood. Because so was Lizzy. So the king asked for Milly to come before him and answer for her deeds. But when the servant came back to inform him that Milly wasn't in her room or anywhere in the palace for that matter, everybody realized that she must have fled the moment Lizzy and the other

generals came back victorious. So the king took another decision:

- Dorian! The king spoke calmly but bitterly. You have a new task now: you will hunt down and bring my daughter Milly before me to answer for her crimes! Don't you dare do otherwise or you will be judged instead of her, understood? Is it clear enough for you?
- Yes, you highness. She will be brought before you, Dorian answered lowering his head.
- Good, the door is that way, you can let yourself out, the king sneered in his face. After Dorian left the throne room, the king addressed Lizzy in a mild, loving voice:
 - Justice will be done. She will answer for everything, this was the last straw. I warned her not to do anything stupid but I guess her ambition was above everything else. When she will be brought back here, you, Lizzy, will decide her fate!
 - Oh, father... wouldn't it be wiser if you did that? She is your daughter after all and I don't think it's my place to....
 - No, she may be my daughter but she has wronged you, again! So you will decide her fate even if she

will beg for her life! I don't care anymore! She is like a snake! How long till she would have turned her ambition against me if she had got away with killing you? No, this has signed her downfall.

- As you wish, father!
- Now I want everybody to clear the room, except my wife, of course. And I am not to be interrupted for the rest of the day!

Everybody got out of the room in a hurry as it was more than obvious that the king was nervous and not in the mood for any more discussions. Gabriela was by his side, trying to sooth him, to calm him. As she wasn't doing such a good job, she too decided to leave him alone till he would manage to calm himself so she politely excused herself and went to her own room.

Chapter 9

Dorian left the palace with a new mission: to track and bring Milly back to the king's court. It was such a funny twist of events as he was supposed to track his former employer, princess Milly, the one who had initially hired him. Now, instead of hunting Lizzy, he was hunting her. It was fair as the other assassins from his guild had been hired before by the royal family, but never to murder someone of their own, as Lizzy was king Harold's daughter just as much as Milly was, whether she liked it or not.

Dorian followed her horse's tracks towards the outskirts of the city and into the Forest of the Doomed. It was a cursed place, one avoided even by the common thugs. Bad things were said to take place there. But Dorian was certain that Milly had gone there which meant that she was desperate if she was willing to take such a chance. So he had to follow her, no matter how much he disliked the idea. Because the alternative was even worse: going back empty handed before the king would mean his

demise and he wasn't ready to die yet. He was still young, had a long life of assassinations before him, people to kill. Yeah, maybe it wasn't the best career in the world, but it was what he was good at.

The forest was quiet. Maybe too quiet. Not a leaf seemed to move and no animals could be heard. Nothing. Only silence. Nothing stirred from its place. But Dorian felt strange, as if he was being watched. He looked everywhere, but again there was nothing. He decided to tie his horse to the nearest tree and go on foot the rest of the way as his horse was making too much noise and in that silence, his noise was deafening. His hooves touching the ground were like thunder. So he decided it was best that way although if something were to attack his horse, then he would have to make the whole journey back to king's palace on foot. And to drag Milly after him, too. But it was a risk he had to take. He couldn't afford to make such a clatter because it was as if he was banging drums along the way so everybody knew where he was. Better to jeopardize the horse than himself.

He saw the panic in his horse's eyes the moment the beast realized that its master was going to leave it there in the eerie silence. But it was the only way if he was going to survive this. Maybe Milly had already died here

somewhere in some distant corner of the spooky forest. Anyway, he had to find her. He had to give something palpable to the King, either bring Milly back, or her body. He was hoping he wouldn't have to drag her body, though. Then he heard a faint noise, a muffled sound. Now he was sure that someone or something was watching him. He felt for his blade, ready to strike. He focused his eyes and searched everywhere around him, but he still couldn't discover the source of the noise. He was getting jumpy when half a dozen undead soldiers emerged from behind the trees and bushes and attacked him. At least now he knew where the noise had come from and knew what to expect which was way better than the wait for something to suddenly attack. At least now he finally saw his enemies. He drew his sword with a swift move and in a leap he cut off the head of the first undead. It fell with a loud thud, sticking to the soft ground.

The remaining five undead all attacked at once, plunging at him. Their rotten flesh was hanging from their bones and dried red dark blood was covering almost their entire bodies. Despite that, they moved pretty good for corpses. They were wielding their weapons with the same agility as when they were alive.

But Dorian was alive and intended to stay that way. So he started giving blows right and left, cutting the undead into bits and pieces until he was sure they were dead for good this time. But one of them had managed to bite his left arm before he could kill it. He didn't think much of it at the time but now that he was safe from any imminent danger, he felt a sting where the bite was. He examined the wound and saw that it was festering. It looked as though it was decaying. As the hours went by, the decaying flesh on his arm was getting larger and larger until it covered his arm up to his elbow. He realized he had to cut his arm from a little above the rotten flesh if he didn't want to turn into an undead, a zombie. Good thing the undead hadn't bitten his right arm, if he was to find anything good in such a thing. He made a small camp fire, while all the time praying no one would see the smoke, and then he put his sword in the flames to disinfect it. Then, when he considered it was hot enough, he cut off his own arm so the disease wouldn't spread. This way, with the burning sword he also cauterized the wound so he wouldn't bleed out. Then he swooned and fell in a deep sleep.

Later when Dorian woke up, the fire had burnt out but fortunately for him, he was still alive. He had no idea

for how long he had been unconscious but it was dark now. By the position of the stars, he figured it was well past midnight. He took his sword and got up, ready to continue his quest, to fulfill his task. But after what he had been through, he doubted that he would find Milly alive. These creatures didn't give a damn if she was royalty or not. If they found her, she was as good as dead. Or worse...

He treaded carefully as he didn't want another encounter with those creatures. He had already lost half of his left arm. So if he could just find Milly and return to the palace before anything else happened would be great. If Milly was still in the Forest of the Doomed, then she was probably hiding somewhere. So he should look for caves or other spots where she could have hidden.

After what seemed an eternity, he saw the entrance to a small cave. He headed its way in a jiffy wondering if he would be so lucky as to find Milly there. He entered carefully and in a nook of the cave he found her all right. Or something like that. He found someone who resembled Milly just that now she looked different. When he got close enough, he realized what was wrong with her: she was one of the undead now. She was hideous. She saw him and she turned her head. Her eyes

were bulged out of their cavities and she just stared at him. Cold shivers ran down his spine. She was never beautiful but at least she was normal but now she wassomething else. Maybe this was her punishment even before King Harold could punish her. Anyway, he knew he had to bring her back and let the king decide what to do with her. But how? Because as she was, she surely wouldn't come willingly.

So Dorian approached her carefully, not knowing what to expect from her. And he had already lost his left arm, he didn't want to risk losing other limbs. Which meant he should be careful and not give her the chance to wound him and turn him into an undead too. He would have to tie her and drag her back to his horse, if it was still there, if through a miracle his horse had survived.

- Hi, Milly, Dorian said in a husky voice, I am here to bring you back to king's court. Do you understand me? But there was no response. She just continued to stare at him as if she had lost her mind.
- I am going to come to you, ok? Dorian said again trying to smile not to scare her but he only managed a gruesome grin. Then he saw her eyes focus on him and not stare through him. He saw anger and

confusion in those eyes and he stopped for a moment to consider the situation. But then he continued to advance towards her. She got up and attacked him in a frenzy.

Dorian ducked just in time or she would have slashed his other arm. Then he hit her hard in her back and she kneeled due to the blow. He then quickly took his rope from around his own waist and tied her hands. He had that rope with him in case he needed it but he hadn't thought he would use it to tie down princess Milly with it. Then he tied her legs till she couldn't move freely at all. And then when he was about to put a gag in her mouth, she spoke asking him to help her. For a brief moment, she was herself again. But when he looked at her and wanted to answer her, he saw that same stare and knew she wasn't there anymore. So he gagged her and tied her and put her on his shoulders. She was heavy but he had no choice.

It took him hours till he got back to where he had left his horse. To his utmost surprise, the poor thing was still there grazing peacefully around the tree it was tied to. He could almost cry with joy

because he couldn't have carried her all the way to King Harold's court. But now he was saved.

Chapter 10

Back at the king's palace there were rumors that Dorian was back and that he had indeed brought Milly with him. But there were other rumors that something was amiss with the princess.

King Harold was informed of Dorian's return. But he was also informed that his daughter Milly wasn't the way he knew her, that was all his son had had the courage to tell him. He figured that the king would see her himself in a matter of moments anyway. When King Harold asked John, his son, what he meant by that, John told him that he would see her for himself and then he excused himself saying that he was sick. Truth was he couldn't stand to see her like that for a moment longer. She was his sister,

no matter what, and now she was... he wasn't even sure what she was.

Everyone else involved in the matter was there as well as the king's most trusted men: Gabriela, his wife, Lizzy, Mark, Scarrino, Bobby and ten guards. They were all waiting for Dorian to walk through the throne room doors with Milly. And they were all looking at those doors attentively as they had all heard about Milly, that there was something wrong with her.

Finally, the doors opened and Dorian entered carrying someone on his back. First thing everybody saw was that he was missing his left arm. Then Dorian put Milly down before the king and queen and everybody else and ungagged her. But left her arms and legs still tied with rope.

The king couldn't believe that the thing before him was his daughter. He examined her for what seemed like an eternity to make sure it was her. She was almost beyond recognition by now.

- What happened to her? The king asked when he finally was convinced that the creature standing before him was his own flesh and blood.

- She is an undead now, answered Dorian. This is how I found her, hiding in a cave. This is how I lost my arm, I was attacked by some of those creatures and that's why I know. I kept my promise and brought her back..., said Dorian waiting for the king to let him free now that he had done his part of the deal.
- Undead? The king repeated like in a trance. Well, he finally went on, I wanted to punish her for what she tried to do but I guess the undead that turned her were faster than me. I can't see her like this! Will someone put her out of her misery, please?
- Wait! Lizzy said all the time praying to God she won't be sorry later for what she was about to do.
- What is it, child? Asked King Harold who was sorry to see Milly like that. He was going to exile her, but not kill her. But now, he had no choice.
- There might be a cure for her, father! And then she looked at everyone's faces as they couldn't believe it. Truth is they couldn't believe she was trying to save her after all Milly had done. Even king Harold was stunned and relieved.
- If there is anything you can do to turn her back, please do it! And then you can punish her as you see

fit, but don't let her die like this! A small tear rolled down her father's cheek.

- I don't know if it will work, but we could try... Lizzy said again. I might have the cure in my pocket.

Everyone was waiting for her to go on as they were all breathless after her statement.

- In your pocket? What is it? Please hurry and try it, I can't stand another moment seeing her like this, and king Harold kneeled before Lizzy and Milly.

Lizzy took the small bottle of magic water from the fountain of eternal youth, the one she was saving for when she and Mark would grow old and would need it. Then she slowly approached Milly who was shackled on the floor. She thought she saw a spark in her eyes, as if she understood. Then she poured the content of the bottle down Milly's throat. She started to moan and whine as it was obvious she was in pain. Half an hour later Milly stopped moving and collapsed to the ground as if dead.

- You killed her! King Harold yelled! You couldn't forgive her, couldn't you? I won't blame you but... but he couldn't say anything else because the next

moment Milly got up from the floor, cured. She was her own self again to everyone's bewilderment.

- Thank you, Milly could barely utter. Thank you for allowing me to take my punishment as a human being and not that thing that I had become. And the worst part was that I was sometimes conscious but only briefly and then my mind would wander off again....
- Milly! Was all the king could say.
- I forgive you for everything that you've done but if you ever try to kill me again, you're done! And Lizzy searched Milly's face to see if she could be trusted not to do anything foolish again. And she saw the remorse on her face and knew that she had been right in giving her another chance.
- I promise I will be the sister you never had, thank you again, I wasn't expecting this and I don't know what else to say....
- That's enough and I am sure you mean it, so if father has nothing against my decision, then you are free.
- You have proven wise beyond your years, Lizzy, and let this be a lesson to everyone! And as for you, Milly, if you ever dare to lay a finger on her, you will

know no mercy in your punishment! Now leave before we change our minds!!

With the kingdom saved from Kain and Lizzy safe, everything went back to normal. And Lizzy and Mark finally had their wedding which was the most beautiful and most expected event in the kingdom.

The end!!

As a bonus to this short ebook, I will add two stories for children, in rhymes, which I wrote when I was 17 years old and which I stumbled upon when going through my old notes. I think they are cute, so here they are:

The Princess

Once upon a time,
There was a famous castle,
And around it, a great rustle
Due to the swamp that surrounded it,
Which was full of crocodiles that usually had nothing
to eat.

And in this castle, there lived a princess
Who was the castle's only heiress.
But the princess was a spoilt brat,
Even since she was a little girl she hated the cat:

She used to call the cat to her
Just to pull her by its fur,

And then the cat would scratch her skin
And the little princess would turn pale and green.

This happened day after day for a whole week
Until the princess got tired and sick
And caught the cat by its tail,
She even broke a little nail,

And threw her out of the window
Right into the mouth of one of the hungry crocs.
So this was the end of the cat
And this is the story of a spoilt brat.

And this princess had a heart of stone,
Nothing could touch her to the bone,
Nothing could pierce her cold heart to make her cry,
Not even if someone related to her would have died.

So when her parents told her she should get
married,
She answered she would, but just to the one who
this task carried:
He had to make up a story so sad

That when told, her heart would melt.
Only to this man would she marry,
Whom afterwards would have to make her life
merry.

Because she knew in her heart she was bad
And wanted to do something about it before she got
mad.

But day after day her sadness grew so deep
That she feared she might really weep
Because she thought she would never find such a
man
Who could make her life be merry again.

But however this mood didn't last long
Because one evening something was heard: it was a
song!

A handsome brave knight
Ventured towards the castle that night
And entered singing through the gate
That you might have thought he was a clown
And not a brave knight, at any rate.

When asked by the princess why was he singing with joy,

He answered rather coy:

- Because, dear princess, you'll soon be mine!
- How come will I be thine?
- Because I know a story that will affect you so deep
That I'm sure it will make you weep!
May I share it with you?
- Oh, please do!

- “Once, there lived a tiny bug

That was called, let's say, Og!

And it thought it was the most important creature on Earth,

It thought it had probably been marked at birth!

It was so shallow and so proud

That it couldn't see it was just a creature in a crowd,
It thought it had no reason to be alarmed,

It thought no one could do it any harm.

Until one day by a little boy it was seen

Who took it in his palms with a grin!

Then after thinking of it just a bit,
He threw it on the road and stepped on it!”

- So, you see, my little princess, that just as today we live,
Tomorrow we can be drifted away by a gust of wind?

The knight looked the princess in the eye
And the marvel happened: she began to cry!
And the reason why she began to cry
Is that she was young and thought she would never die!

Then, she threw herself on the rug
And realized she was just like the bug!
But what more can we say about the knight?
In the end, he proved he was right!

So, the very next day
He took her away
And made her his wife
For the rest of her life!

And the second rhymed story for kids if you,
whoever reads this, want to read and I haven't bored
you yet:

The butterfly queen

A very long time ago,
There was a boy who from his home had to go
As his family was very poor,
His father being only a boor.

So he left his home with a sour heart
And wished to take everything from the start.
He was planning either to find a hidden treasure
Thinking that this way, his family's future he would
be able to ensure,
Or to rescue a damsel in distress
Who afterwards would have to do for his family
none the less,

As she would reward him for his courageous act,
And he knew this for a fact.
So, with these thoughts on his mind,
He left the ones he loved behind
And took the first steps on a journey called "life"!

After a pretty long time of wandering,
He realized he had to sit and do some pondering.
So, while he was thinking of what he should do for
his next step,
A doggy came close to him and jumped in his lap.

Then the doggy began to lick his face
But he immediately wiped it off till there was no
more trace.
Afterwards he took his bag and drew out some
bread
With which the doggy he fed.

And after they had eaten,
Both the dog and the boy felt beaten
And fell asleep on the damp ground
Without making the faintest sound.

A few hours later, the sun was high in the sky
And the boy woke up, looked back and said his last
“Good bye”!
To the land that had been his home for so many
years
That it made him drop some tears.

Finally, he took the doggy which from then on he
called his,
He even gave the dog a little kiss,
And they both continued on their way
Going together very, very gay.

After almost a two days' walk,
The food was gone so the boy knew they had to
stop.
But it grew dark and they were in a forest
And the boy felt the need for a rest.

However, he thought he saw a little spark
Somewhere, not far, in that pitch-dark,
And he and the dog continued to walk

Until they finally got to their stop:

They were standing in front of a spooky hut,
When the little boy finally dared to knock.
But, when the door opened, he had a shock!
An ugly old man was standing in front of him
And, at first, the boy thought it was a bad dream!
But the man spoke and invited them in!

After having conquered his fear
The boy entered the house, keeping his best friend,
the dog, very near.
Then, the boy looked around
And thought the old man wasn't sound!
Because in his home, there was a big book for
witchcraft, a huge pot and a bowl
And a large beautiful butterfly, which who knows
why, had to crawl.

And the pot was full of some sort of green water
Which was boiling and making weird sounds, like a
clatter.

Then the old man told the boy he was a wizard,
And to prove it, he changed the boy's doggy into a
lizard.

He then told the boy that from then on he had to be
his slave,
Because, you see, the wizard was a knave.
Afterwards, the wizard locked him up in a cage
Which made the boy cry with rage!

But, later in the night, the butterfly
Told the boy why it couldn't fly!
It told the boy it was bewitched
And that to turn back into the girl she had once
been, was all she wished!

After that, the butterfly said a magic spell
After which the boy was out of the cage and well.
Because the butterfly had once heard the wizard say
it
And now, at the right time, she had remembered it.

Then the boy looked around and took

The most precious thing in the house: the magic book!

Then he looked in the book for the spell
That could turn everything back to normal and well
And after this, to avenge his dog,
He changed the sleeping wizard into a frog.

Now, that everything was back to what it had once been,

The girl confessed she was in fact the queen.
So, the boy fulfilled his dream
As he had saved an important person,
Namely the queen!

Who in her turn rescued him from poverty
By making him very, very wealthy.
Then, whenever they remembered the wizard,
The butterfly, the frog or the lizard,
They would burst into a ripple of laughter
And they lived happily ever after!

The end!!

