

Waiting for the Sunrise

By : Emma Richards

Anna Boux was just sixteen years old when she found him. A newborn baby lying in a nest of leaves deep in the forest surrounding her village. The only hint of the boy's past was the sliver ring in his tiny red fist. She took him in, gave him a home, and waited for someone to claim him. No one ever did. Fynn was like no other child. He grew faster and aged quicker. His extraordinary talents and thirst for knowledge was all too much for the other villagers to understand. In a society untouched by the modern world, Fynn grows up being accused of bringing bad luck to those around him. As hard as she tries, Anna can't help but wonder who Fynn really is..



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Waiting for the Sunrise : Chapter 1

The water brushed up against her bare feet, its cool and tempting touch filled her with excitement. There was only the slightest sigh of wind ruffling through the trees, the air pulling the waves toward the pair. Maybe the wind and the water wanted her to jump in as much as she did, Anna thought to herself with a playful smile on her lips. It seemed that way, like the gentle crash of the waterfall was calling her name, the rustle of leaves daring her to embrace the fresh water spring. She felt Kyle's hand squeeze hers. She glanced over at him, seeing his beautiful smile matching hers, his whole image left her weak at the knees.

For years, the two of them had been escaping from the village to relax by the water's edge. There were many creeks and springs throughout the forest but this one had always been their favourite. Maybe it was the pebble beach sloping toward the clear water, the waterfall across from them with falling droplets splashing against the moss covered rocks and spilling into the creek. But most of all it was the trees, gathered like an audience and they were the performers, or because they acted like curtains shielding them from the rest of the world - or from reality itself.

"Ready?" Kyle asked.

Anna grinned, seeing their reflection in the mirrored surface, knowing she couldn't bear to stand there for a second longer. "Ready."

At her word, they propelled into the air. Although the flight was only a second long, it felt like she was a bird and the air was her wings, it seemed to last forever. The water loomed from below and then swallowed them both. She kicked her legs and made her way through the glossy water to the surface, ignoring her heavy petticoat pulling her down.

The water broke around her, tiny drops lingered on her face and soaked her thick blonde hair. Kyle's hands wrapped around her waist, pulling her into his chest. She turned and wrapped her arms around his neck and could feel his muscles from underneath the wet fabric of his shirt. Anna felt herself melt into him out of pure content. She was in his arms, safe and secure, surrounded by the serene forest and calm water. Their lips locked together, the fire from within her roared with passion, their bodies entwined as Kyle pressed her against the moss carpet of the undergrowth.

It was moments like these, basking in the tingling ray of the sun above and lying on the damp soil with Kyle's arms wrapped around her shivering body, that Anna wondered why they were not betrothed. He had never asked, he hadn't even dared to entertain the idea, but Anna never gave him a reason to do so. It was all fun and games, that's what she told herself, they were just enjoying the time together while it lasted.

When the thought did ever cross her mind, she saw the beautiful happiness and love for a brief moment, then it burned away to pain and misery. She saw her own mother, broken after giving Anna life, ridden with disease and illness. Marriage was a game and the women always seemed to lose, that was how Anna saw it. She was strong, she refused to be broken, perhaps that was why the women of the village hated her so much.

"I love the feel of your skin against mine." Kyle breathed at last, his fingers tracing the outline of her hand, each stroke raised the hairs on her arms.

Anna ignored his remark and gazed past him. "I wonder what the real world is like..." She mused.

With a sigh, Kyle broke away from her; the atmosphere turning sour. "Dangerous. That's what they say. Dark, grey and miserable. The cities must reek of death."

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Such a dark subject on such a lovely day, Anna thought, regretting even mentioning the subject. She stared at the forest before them, faced with the idea that there was life beyond the trees, beyond the capsule village. Life that she had been denied access to from birth. People die out in the real world, that's what they were told. But people die here too. Death is inevitable; she knew that but couldn't shake the feeling that she was the only one who really understood that.

"I must go. I'm needed at the Blacksmiths." Kyle said, pulling her up with him. He was a head taller than her, his dusty blonde hair had dried from their swim and covered part of his face. She swept the hair from his eyes and kissed him tenderly before he departed. They said their goodbyes and Kyle left her alone in the dark forest.

Anna wandered aimlessly for a while, fighting her way through thorns and nettles, taking care not to rip her dress. When the route ahead began to look unfamiliar, Anna felt the intimidating emptiness inside her, she ached to find her way out of this maze. She felt eyes on her as she tripped over a tree root, bony fingers scrapping against her skin when she pushed back the branches of a tree, and hushed whispers in the wind. Loneliness was a dark and dreadful place. Her imagination was unsettling her, she no longer felt safe and the sun seemed to have abandoned her, all of her strength had seeped away.

At first she thought the shrill cry was another trick of her scared mind but when she pulled back a prickly holly bush she drew in her breath in surprise. She stood on the edge of a small clearing with only one large willow tree sat in the middle. To the right of the twisted tree trunk was a ring of charcoaled soil, blackened from what she assumed to be a campfire, and within the ring was a nest of freshly picked green leaves plucked from a distant tree. A small red screaming body lay huddled amongst the leaves. Anna gazed at the baby for a while, surprised to see a child here of all places, and mesmerised by his sky blue eyes. When she had approached him, he ceased to cry, and instead watched her with large eyes. She glanced around, the child's parents were nowhere to be seen, the poor boy had been abandoned.

She didn't know what to do. Never had she been faced with a situation like this. Anna counted her options. She could wrap the child in her shawl, take him to the village and wait for someone to claim him or leave him alone in the middle of a forest. It was getting dark and she couldn't bring herself to leave a defenceless baby on his own. She pulled the woollen shawl from around her shoulders and swept the boy into her arms. It was then she noticed the thick silver ring the child clutched in his red fist, she had no time to examine it now so she dropped the heavy band into the pocket of her dress, hugged the baby to her chest then turned on her heel to find home.

It didn't take them long. It was like the entire forest had shifted to form a clear path back to the village. The boy never stirred or made a noise, he continued to peer up at her with those blue eyes.

When they finally reached the edge of the small village, Anna felt the burn of eyes on her, she kept her head down and hurried home. She couldn't face them, not today.

The cottage she shared with her father was situated in the centre of the village, the street ran in a circle surrounding a crumbling old well with the church directly behind. She rushed past the well and groups of gossiping women, clutching the boy tight, her cheeks blushing a deep maroon. She didn't bother with knocking on the wooden door to her home she just pushed the door open and slammed it shut behind her.

"Anna, where have you been?" Her father called from the study. He was the local librarian and was always planted at the seat of his desk leaning over a manuscript or document of some sort. At times his occupation was helpful, such as when she had a test at school and needed the perfect book to study from, or when she ran out of books to read, but other than that it was incredibly inconvenient. Anna was always the one who had to cook, clean, wash clothes, all of the boring chores that every teenager dreaded.

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She barged into his study and nearly tripped over a pile of old books. He should really learn to organize his books instead of dumping them in the doorway, she thought to herself.

"I don't know what to do." She admitted, feeling small and childish. Her father turned and his eyes widened as he made sense of the tiny bundle in her arms. She explained what had happened, leaving out the meeting with Kyle as he didn't know about the two of them, and he listened wordlessly whilst staring at the angelic face of the child in her arms.

"Well then," He said when she had finished. "We'll have to find somewhere for him to sleep for the time being."

Anna nodded hopelessly, a tear gliding down her cheek. She hated the way he was looking at her, as if he didn't quite believe her, the sorrow in his eyes was almost unbearable to comprehend. This was one of the few moments when Anna really needed to be held and told that everything would be okay. But her father would never embrace her, not even when she was a child, and for her entire life she thought he blamed her for her mother's death.

A makeshift crib was made out of a drawer from an old dresser, padded with two pillows and a warm cotton blanket. Anna had searched the cellar for an old pinafore of hers from when she was a baby but had only been able to find a white christening gown. She pinned a napkin to the boy as a diaper then dressed him in the gown. It was far too big for him but it would have to do until she had sewn him a new outfit.

Her father and the baby had gotten on well, despite his doubts, he was fond of the light haired infant. "What shall we call him?" He asked, handing the overdressed child a rattle.

"I don't think we're in the position to name him. We should wait until his parents arrive." Anna replied assertively. Getting attached to the child would make letting go so much harder.

Father discarded her comment with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "He looks like a Philip or Peter."

Anna shook her head. "No, if we're to name him, we shall give him a unique name. For a unique child. His name is Fynn."

Her father smiled and nodded. "Fynn it is."

A/N

And there it is, the very first chapter of Waiting for the Sunrise! Did you like it? I certainly enjoyed writing it. I literally had my dictionary by my side for the duration, no joke.

Please comment? I'd love to know your thoughts on my first chapter and any advice is most welcome!

Chapter 2

Four months later...

Church was one of the few things that survived the death of her mother. The routine had always been there, it was a tradition. A young and widowed Edmund Boux made the decision, years ago, to raise his daughter as a God-fearing girl like the village expected her to be, even though any shred of belief had been ripped away from him the moment his beloved wife took her last breath... He was certain there was no God listening to the pathetic pleas and wishes; there couldn't be. He was sure of it.

The quaint village of Falhill was a cold and suspicious place, its inhabitants were patronising and studied vulnerable meat like vultures; Edmund's abrupt fear of the creaking pews was enough to fuel their wild imaginations. Despite his lack of faith, he took Anna to church. Either to protect her from the sticky web of lies the gossiping villagers had spun or to keep the memory of Catherine alive.

It was another typical Sunday morning, the frantic rush of finding everyone's best clothes, delving into deep caverns between bloated bookcases to unearth a tie or clean sock. Anna did the best she could to get the family organised as well as getting ready herself. Motherhood had been hard on her; she had no time to spend in the forest or to go to the schoolhouse, instead she had to look after baby Fynn and clean the constant coating of dust taking over the house. She did the best job a girl of her age, with no mother of her own, could do.

The past four months had been a battle. She fought against the prudish glares and hushed whispers. She fought for Fynn and the chance to start her own family. She fought against the idea of letting him go. And she fought with the pins in her dress as she sewed a patch over another hole in the cotton fabric.

"Mama?" A little voice called from behind her.

Anna set the dress down on the kitchen table and turned to face Fynn - who was stood in the doorway with his arms wrapped around an old teddy bear. "Fynn, what have I told you? Call me Anna." She said softly.

He stuck out his bottom lip and hugged the bear tighter to his chest. "Anna...drink?" His big blue eyes pleaded.

Fynn was only four months old but had learned to walk a month before, he had only begun talking a few days ago. Anna found it difficult to comprehend his progress, he grew so quickly her hands were becoming bruised and sore from all the new clothes he demanded. Four months and he seemed more like a toddler than a baby.

"No. There isn't much water, Fynn, there is only enough for two cups a day." Anna shook her head. The drought had come a week before, draining the crops and killing the grass, leaving the village with little food or water. It was okay though, a messenger was sent out to collect bottled water from a nearby city, there was enough for two bottles per household per week.

Falhill was one of the villages set up by the Government, there were several up and down the country, a village that lived by the rules of the old days. The initial idea was to prove that people can adapt to a different way of life. And because the cities were filled with poverty and crime - the only rational solution was the Heritage Scheme. England was an ideal place to set up the scheme, there wasn't many forests left after the construction of the hundreds of large cities, but enough to plant four replica villages. It was treated like the lottery. Only the fortunate won entry to a village.

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The villages had no technology, no cars, no mobile phones, no computers. Just stone buildings and farm land. The people who live in the villages protect it from the outside world and form their own bubble of paradise. Anyone who threatens to burst that bubble are eradicated without trial.

"Anna, it's time to go!" Edmund exclaimed, sweeping Fynn into his arms as he burst into the kitchen. Fynn erupted into fits of giggles as Edmund tickled him. His laughter filled the stale air and brought a smile to Anna's face. She couldn't remember a time when she had been able to laugh like that, the pure laugh untainted and unstained, only a naive infant could laugh like that. She hadn't been one of those. She had always been aware.

She tidied away her sewing kit, brushed her straight blonde hair back into a bun, then ushered the pair out of the house. It was a hot day, even in the early morning Anna could feel the burn of the dazzling sun on her skin, with no clouds to distract the intense glare of the golden light. The cobbled paving was dry and chalky, she was careful not to let her dress touch the ground to avoid wasting water on washing clothes, and took Fynn into her arms despite the sweltering heat. They marched over to the gates of the churchyard where a small cluster of people were chatting. She didn't stop to examine their faces but strode past them with her chin held high. Fynn snuggled closer to her chest when the group stopped their conversation to glare at them.

The graveyard was modest in size with fewer than a hundred marble headstones clustered around the base of the church. Tufts of dry brown grass nestled against the cool stone, dead flowers mangled between the unruly blades, washing the scene with a dull ashen glaze. Instinctively, Anna's eyes settled on a white modest headstone deep within the yard. She knew the inscription well; the chiselled words were forever imprinted on her mind. Like the others, the flowers by her mother's grave had dried up long ago, the crispy petals splayed beneath the twig-like stalks, bundled together with a soft red ribbon.

Her father tugged on her arm. "Come, we'll lay down fresh flowers after the service." He whispered in her ear. She hadn't realized until then that she had been rooted to the spot at the sight of the pearled grave. A tear glided silently down her cheek, she wiped it away as soon as it came and marched on to the large wooden doors.

The church pews were like the desks of a classroom. The eager and snide members of the community were seated closest to the altar, with the rest of the villagers -filtered by popularity and status- behind them. Edmund and Anna Boux perched on the bench beside the door; left wondering why they were the victims of the cruel hierarchy.

The service proceeded as usual. The vicar rambled on about God's love and generosity, promising that if they were faithful and lived without sin, God would give them water. When the vicar exclaimed something about the drought being a punishment for sin; everyone in the hall turned and glared at Anna and the boy in her arms. She stiffened and gazed past the angry faces, staring impulsively at the wooden carving of Christ on the cross, praying for forgiveness and acceptance. Praying for Fynn.

The service ended. The gentle hum of conversations filled the air to the arched ceiling. A stream of mumbling figures and faces pushed through the ornate wooden doors. With grim expressions and anguish heavy in their hearts, they trailed behind.

A/N

I'm going to leave the chapter there for now. I am so sorry I haven't updated sooner; reality has its way of catching up with me when I really don't want it to.

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Thank you to everyone who has taken an interest to the first chapter and the summary, it's not a lot to go by but I promise there is so much more to come!

Chapter 3

Fourteen months later...

Anna was only a baby when her mother died. An infant, not much younger than Fynn, but old enough to detect the swirling miasma surrounding the tattered remains of her family.

Edmund had tried his best to hide his tears from his daughter. But forgetting was hard when Anna was the spitting image of Catherine. There were days when he'd hold her to his chest, their hearts beating in unison, and he'd pretend that it was his wife in his arms. There were days when he'd wish it had been Anna. As soon as those poisonous thoughts had crossed his mind he'd regret even thinking about it. He loved Anna, of course he did, she was his little girl. His little ray of sunshine. The light in his darkness.

But sometimes the mask slipped.

"Anana?" Fynn whispered as he climbed on to the chair next to a busy Anna. She lifted her head from her work, meeting the young child's bright blue eyes.

"What is it?"

"I can't sleep." He pouted. Anna smiled at the boy's confession, ruffling his messy blonde hair with her exhausted right hand.

"Can't sleep?" She repeated quietly. "I have the perfect solution." She took Fynn's small dimpled hand in her own, leaving her school work splayed across her desk unfinished. Anna guided the boy into the kitchen, lifting his small body up on to the counter. He sat with wide weary eyes as she pulled out a clean glass and filled it with milk. She remembered the process clearly, swirling the milk with sticky golden honey, repeating the bedtime treat she had anticipated many times throughout her own childhood.

Anna could picture herself as a child the same age as Fynn - a sleepless sleeper longing for the warm embraces and gentle lullabies. Edmund used to prepare honey and milk for her on restless nights; they'd curl up by the fire and he'd read her a story about dragons, damsels in distress and charming knights carried by the loyal steed.

Those memories left the empty cavern of her heart aching. Happy memories were not common in Anna's thoughts, far too often she'd think back to all the times Edmund had pushed her away and told her to grow up, the times she'd seen him cry uncontrollably. There had been far too many times when Edmund had delved into the liqueur cabinet.

Anna could admit that her childhood had not been a happy one, hardly bearable at times. She couldn't count the times she'd stared at the edge of the forest wishing she could just escape into the sanctuary of the trees and never turn back. The amount of times she had dreamt of leaving the village and taking off for the city. They say people die out in the city. They say evil lurks in the city. But all Anna saw was freedom.

The forest had brought her Fynn and Fynn had brought her a glint of happiness. She gazed at his little face, the brightness of his eyes even in the dim candlelight, the pure innocence that radiated off of him. What would have become of her if it wasn't for Fynn? Would she have run off into the forest with her wild dreams of the city lights? Perhaps, she was capable of such things. But Fynn had come into her life; she knew it to be a blessing not a curse like the townsfolk swore it to be. And so he became her sole responsibility.

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"Anana, can you read me a story?" Fynn asked, placing the now empty glass on the surface beside him.

Anna nodded, "Of course. Which story would you like to hear?"

The boy cast his gaze across the swollen bookshelves; tortured by the decision. Behind each leather binding lay a magical world where dreams came true, adventures took place, and almost always had a happy ending. Fynn had each story memorised, he treated each character as his friend, he could read their thoughts as well as he could read the words printed on the page. He looked to Anna for help as he usually did.

"I don't know." Fynn muttered miserably.

Anna knew. She always knew what Fynn desired most. She swept Fynn into her arms, his small body fitting against hers perfectly; she cradled him with her right then reached out to the second highest shelf on the west wall with her left. Peter Pan had always been Fynn's favourite.

He had told her once - on a night very much like this one - that he envied Peter for his eternal youth. Fynn knew he was different. He knew that at his tender age of eighteen months, he shouldn't be able to read and write at the grade of a child four times his age, he shouldn't be able to play the works of Mozart on the dusty key of the piano in the hallway. Fynn was more than aware of the dirty looks he gained from the local villagers.

Anna settled in the leather armchair with the high curved back with Fynn on her lap clutching the midnight blue bound book. She opened the book, skipping the beginning and starting at the voyage to Neverland. Anna read the words aloud, her voice putting Fynn's demons to rest, the young boy leant on her chest and whispered the words with her until his voice wavered and his eyes closed.

"Bastard." Mrs Hill muttered under her breath as she passed Anna and Fynn the following morning.

Fynn pulled free of his protector's grasp and stared at the women who had insulted him. He knew very well what the word meant. He knew what she thought of him.

"Fynn, ignore her." Anna pleaded with him, her fingers entwining with his once more.

"Why do they say that about me?" He mumbled as he continued walking.

"They don't understand you, that's all." Anna explained. "They fear the unknown so they created a story to suit them. It isn't true so take no notice."

"I like stories."

"You wouldn't like this one." Anna sighed.

They finished their morning shopping; Anna carried a heavy paper bag filled with provisions to see them through the rest of the week. Money was scarce but money was always scarce. She'd learned to live with that since she was young. The tremble of hunger had long since disappeared.

The usual route consisted of missing out the Blacksmiths anvil but somehow the twisting streets had worked against her. The familiar sound of a hammer against iron filled her ears. Before she had chance to turn around, Kyle approached them.

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Fynn frowned at the messy crop of dusty blonde hair and emerald green eyes. He disliked Kyle; he didn't know why but he did.

"Anna!" Kyle exclaimed cheerfully. He opened out his arms as if to embrace her but he wavered when he noticed the shopping bag and the young boy with the bright blue eyes.

Anna smiled at the best friend she had barely seen the past eighteen months. She missed the warmth of her body against his, her mouth against his, she ached for it. But so many things had changed and she knew that any chance of them being together had been diminished the moment she had laid eyes on Fynn.

"Kyle." She breathed at last.

"Where have you been? I've missed you." His green eyes examined her face for a trace of the girl he once knew.

Anna's free hand settled on Fynn's mop of light brown hair. "I've been busy with this little one."

Kyle had barely acknowledged the boy beside her. As he met the young child's intelligent eyes, he felt a shiver run down his spine, the whispers of gossip echoed through his thoughts. Kyle swallowed back the rising bile. "I can see that."

The haunting child's eyes bored into his. Kyle yearned to look away but his body refused. A rush of images flooded through his mind. Images of Kyle and Anna together. Their bodies connected, the raw passion, the blinding love he held for her. When the blur of memories passed, Kyle gazed at the child and wondered where the flashbacks had come from.

"How have you been?" Anna said, breaking Kyle's trance. His attention switched back to the beautiful girl before him.

"Good." He lied. "I finished my apprenticeship, old John decided to keep me on full term."

Anna smiled, although it didn't quite reach her eyes. "I'm glad. You deserve to be paid for your work, you work hard for the old man, about time you receive something in return."

Kyle nodded lightly, lost in his thoughts of the past. "How are you doing with your school work?"

"Fine." Anna lied. She had had little time for school work, the slither of time she had she found herself unable to concentrate. "I've almost caught up now. Maybe I'll graduate soon."

School had been the last thing on her mind the previous year; she had a baby to look after and she treasured Fynn above the tedious lessons. After much debate, the Schoolmaster decided to give her a year off for her to look after the child she'd accumulated. When that year had passed - six months before - Anna returned to her work from the comfort of her own home.

Kyle looked to Anna and decided he'd had enough of the small talk. "Can I have a word in private?"

Anna agreed. She followed Kyle to the edge of the street, under the shadow of the Blacksmiths, leaving Fynn in the centre of the road staring after them with wide eyes of worry.

"What is it, Kyle?" She said, placing her hands on her hips, posing as a tired mother with little time for conversation.

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"I hear what people say." He began, avoiding her eyes. "Am I right to worry?"

Anna took a deep breath. She knew this day would come. She knew, deep down, that she couldn't avoid Kyle forever.

"Who do you want to believe?"

He didn't know the answer. He looked to the boy waiting in the street, the boy that had caused such a commotion in the quaint village he called home. The boy, who shouldn't be much more than a baby at his age, stared back with empty eyes.

"You know I can't answer that." He muttered under his breath.

Anna threw her hands up into the air in frustration. She was exhausted and wanted to go home - not stand and have idle conversation with the boy she thought she had loved. His answer only annoyed her. If he had answered truthfully, she'd know where she stood. Anna straightened her skirt and gripped the bag of shopping tighter in her arms and turned away from the boy who broke her heart.

"Fynn is not your child." She spat over her shoulder before walking away.

Chapter 4

One year later...

Fynn observed the steady stream of everyday life from his perch on the wall outside the school house. His bright blue eyes followed the patched up dresses and stained trousers with disinterest as if he were watching ants between blades of grass. A boy darted between the moving bodies, clutching a loaf of bread, the local baker chased after him with red puffy cheeks from eating far too much pastries, cursing the boy with as many foul words he could think of. Fynn smiled lightly at the disturbance, his eyes sparkling with amusement, he hoped the boy would escape the grasp of the grubby baker. It crossed his mind why the boy wasn't inside the building behind him like the other children, surely he wasn't in a similar situation to his own. He was certain that there had never been a circumstance like his.

The hushed argument caught his attention again. He turned behind him to see Anna huffing with frustration with the stubborn schoolmaster. Strands of her golden hair had fallen out of her bun, making her appear even more unkempt than she already was. The schoolmaster shook his head, apologising for the hundredth time, telling her that there was no place for Fynn at his school. Of course, Anna wouldn't stand for that, she had only just graduated herself and was desperate for Fynn to have the same education as she had. He turned away with indifference. The attempt was pointless, he understood that to be fact, no one wanted him in the village but Anna so why would they let him attend the school? It was silly to even try.

He grew tired of the enraged voices, it was beginning to get on his nerves and he wanted to put an end to it, so he slipped off of the wall and walked over the pair. Oblivious to Fynn's presence, Anna looked ready to pounce on the balding man, she wanted to shake sense into him. In her mind, everyone deserved an education, even someone as extraordinary as Fynn. Why could no one else see that? When she felt the small hand entwine with her own, she sighed with defeat.

"Stop it." Fynn murmured, pulling at her hand. The schoolmaster blinked at the boy, he had never heard him speak before, very few villagers had. Surprisingly, his voice didn't seem to belong to him. He spoke like someone much older than him. "This is ridiculous. We should leave."

Anna's eyes set upon the schoolmaster once more. "So be it. I'll have to tutor him myself." The strange pair turned away and walked at a brisk pace across the square.

Fynn found himself watching the crowd as he walked, how people absentmindedly turned their back on them, how the path cleared so very quickly. He wondered if they feared him. Perhaps it wouldn't be such a bad thing, at least they'd be wary of him rather than ignoring his presence entirely, but he did not wish to be feared. What was it that set him apart from the other children? Fynn was patient and kind; he'd smile politely at the others his age but all he got in response was a rally of odd looks and awkward glances. He was a freak.

Somehow, Fynn's grasp on Anna's hand had faltered, for he found himself lost in a sea of bodies. He rotated on the spot, balanced on the tip of his toes, peering through the ever-moving spaces between the faceless figures. A small boy like him could very easily be trampled on in a crowd such as this one. Instinctively, he turned roughly in the direction of home and took a tentative step forward. It was within that small uneasy step, where one foot was suspended in the air, that he received a brisk push. The phantom hands disappeared as quickly as they had materialised leaving Fynn to scramble for something to grab to anchor his balance. His small fingers enclosed around the canvas material of a purse, however the momentum of the fall caused his body to continue its path to the cobbled paving, the purse now clutched in hand fell with him.

"Thief!" The high-pitched voice of a woman shrieked. "The bastard child is a thief!"

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Lay in a crumpled heap on the ground, Fynn let out a low whimper, a trickle of blood seeped from a wound on his cheek. A plump hand pulled him up sharply, the rounded cheeks of the woman filled his peripheral vision, anger had stained the usually jolly face. Fynn held out the purse to her, his cheeks burning a violent shade of red.

"Has your whore of a mother been teaching you to steal? Or maybe her murderous father? Perhaps it was all you. A little swine who likes to delve his grubby little fingers into other peoples purses!" The stout woman accused, pressing her face closer to his, he fought the temptation to turn away and be rid of this ridiculous woman and her foul words. "Cat got your tongue, ey? What right have you, making off with my well earned salary!"

Fynn narrowed his eyes at the woman. He would not give her the satisfaction of hearing his voice. His time would be wasted trying to explain himself. Who would believe him? So he glared daringly into her eyes, hoping to scare her off like the others, his chilling blue eyes grated against her very being. Her stare diminished, her rage replaced with something else. The emotion she held so strongly in her eyes was foreign to Fynn; an untitled sensation infiltrated the space between them. It wasn't fear, he had seen that before, this was more than fear. She was aware.

"Fynn! There you are! Oh I am terribly sorry, Mrs Fletcher, I took my eyes off of him for one moment and he was gone." Anna's delicate hand found its way to Fynn's, breaking the hold the overweight woman had on him, she pulled him aside and smiled dazzlingly at Mrs Fletcher.

"The boy attempted to steal from me." Mrs Fletcher barked.

Anna's smile faded. "He would never do such a thing. You must have been mistaken."

"No, I'm afraid it is you who is mistaken. You cannot protect him forever, Miss Boux, a child such as Fynn does not go unnoticed." Mrs Fletcher said in a grave tone, her condescending gaze shifted over the boy with bright eyes once more.

"Well then, it seems we have a problem. For I will defend Fynn for as long as my heart beats. Good day to you, Mrs Fletcher." Anna turned from the narrow-minded woman with Fynn at her heel.

Fynn sat amongst the mountains of yellowed pages and dusty leather bindings, his lungs filling with the familiar scent of ageing books and cracked leather, his small body tucked into a dark corner with a large manuscript balanced on his lap. He could hear their hushed conversation echoing through the library; the books failing to muffle Anna's fury. He was used to her rants by now, they occurred almost every day, his ears barely detected the sound now. Edmund never raised his voice, not to Anna and certainly not to Fynn, but from his small haven hidden behind books Fynn could hear the boom of his voice.

"I don't care what she said, Fynn would never do such a thing!" Edmunds voice exclaimed from somewhere deep within the labyrinth of the library.

Then the faint thuds of footsteps sounded, the gentle tapping of sole-less shoes against the wooden floorboards, Fynn set the manuscript down and stood up. Edmund's eyes fell on Fynn in the poorly lit room; the tapping became closer. He gripped the young boys shoulders tight and kneeled in front of him so that they were at eyelevel.

"You didn't steal from Mrs Fletcher, did you?" Edmund asked.

Fynn shook his head. "I fell."

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From behind her father, Anna emerged and dropped to the floor, her skirts surrounding her in a dull halo of patched fabric. "What happened, Fynn?"

The boy sighed, his blue eyes finding a flickering candle on the desk opposite them, he watched the flame whilst he thought through his account. "We got separated in the crowd. I couldn't find you so I stayed still and observed my surroundings. When I finally located the direction of home, someone pushed me and I fell." He told them.

"What of Mrs Fletcher? How does she fit into this?" Edmund urged.

Fynn shrugged. "I tried to steady myself so I grabbed on to her. She thought I was trying to steal from her when I wasn't. It was all a misunderstanding."

Anna smiled with relief and Edmund nodded acceptingly, they both stood to address each other. The boy knew his role in the conversation was over, he picked up the manuscript from the floor and made his way to the chair beside the candle to continue his reading.

"What now? What shall become of Fynn?" Anna asked her father, her eyes wandering to the strange boy whom she loved and feared.

"We keep him away from the villagers. We confine him to the house and to the library. If he's out of the eye of the village, hopefully they will leave us be. Let us pray for Mrs Fletchers discretion." Edmund devised the plan. Anna agreed reluctantly, she didn't want him to feel like a prisoner who has to be hidden from the world, but she didn't want him to be exposed to the negligence of the villagers. Isolation was the only way.

At the desk, Fynn lowered the creased papers, his mind churning the new information. Was he that much of a monster? Did the villagers hate him so much that they'd rather be rid of him? He didn't want to hide, be restricted two buildings when there was whole world outside of these walls.

That night, Fynn left the warmth of his blankets, his small feet treading silently on the aged boards. He climbed silently on to the window seat and pressed his hands against the freezing glass. His breath left a trace of vapour on the pane of ice, his brow narrowed as he scanned the streets below, blue eyes darkening. He watched the night roll on.

Somewhere deep within the sleeping village, a woman's scream unleashed a new world of horror, that night a life was taken.

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