

Her feet carried her as fast as they could, she ran up the cold stone stairs, up and up in circles that made her feel dizzy, so she slowed down for a bit, but kept running. She caught up to the little fur ball quite soon after, she came into a long corridor under the roof and could almost see herself holding Purity, but then the kitten stopped and went under her legs, forcing Hope to pull back and turn on her heels, running after the man-eating white ball of a kitten. She lunged after it just as the feline was about to run back down the stairs and caught it. Purity let out some sounds a kitten would make but calmed down soon after. *Best get back before Father comes*, she thought and ran.

She quickly opened and closed the door, thankfully no one had seen her. Purity went to the soft bed as Hope placed her down on the floor. Hope herself instantly turned her pillow over and hid the key.

"If only father knew I had that..." she told the kitten, rolled up on the bed already. She obtained the key from Father Grodd, he was a little man with almost no hair left, kind and hearty, he seemed to be the one bringing Hope her food when Augustus couldn't. She persuaded him to fetch a key, though for some reason Father Grodd seemed very reluctant to aid her, he did. Her father never spoke about his work, so she knew from Father Grodd that Augustus was in charge of the dead. She thought that was awfully cruel, but put it down to coincidence. Her father was coming less and less and for that she was thankful, she loathed this room she was forced to stay in. Day and night, week after week, she wanted nothing more to do with this room, but every time she told her father, he would always come back with:

"It's for your own safety Hope...I've nothing left but you, this city is a foul place. You've to be safe, no harm can come to you here."

That reply didn't change, word for word it stayed the same, always the same. Every single thing was always the same in here, she noticed that her prayers have begun growing stale and blending into one another. Though she loved chasing after Purity, she knew that if anyone saw her, it would mean the end of that key, possibly even the end of Purity...and Father Grodd.

Hope went to her window and saw what she saw every day, the crowd gathering for the afternoon mass, a few men standing near some benches, but strangely they never sat on them. Sometimes she saw a jester running about, up and down, coming and going, screaming. He was a grand deal of fun she soon found out, he made her laugh, even from all the way down there. She wanted to meet that man, but he seemed odd, father would never allow it. As she leant on the window frame there, she often thought of home...their home, the cave. *That was another life, this is my life now...up here, alone*. She sighed and moved from the window of freedom, that was what she missed most. Back home father allowed her to go where she please, as long as she told him where. He trusted her, but whether he doesn't trust her or the people sometimes eluded her in the city, her father had changed, that much was clear to her. She started patting Purity, stroking the curled up ball of a kitten. *He's changing for the worse, he was a monster before, yes, but he's worse now*. Purity only purred, caring or perhaps knowing not of the troubles that faced Hope day and day. She slept a lot, and thought a deal more. There were books, yes, but she read that and Father Grodd often brought her things that father allowed, no stories, too. *I never get what I wish*, so she sighed again and lay down on the bed,

closed her eyes and the next thing she knew it was night, the stars were up and the white lady too, their Light was enough, so she lit a candle.

“What am I going to do now...” she told Purity “I can’t go back to sleep...I...”

Then she stopped talking to the kitten, *Father would think that silly*. She went to her window and gazed down near a house, right next to the cathedral, *what was down there?* And as she asked that, she had enough of this room, she had enough of her ignorance, she had enough of Augustus and Father Grodd and even Purity. Storming to her wardrobe she pulled out a priestly brown robe, fastened it with a white belt, covered her golden locks under the brown hood, went for the key and before she knew it, she felt the breeze on her cheeks and she was free. Luckily, her father must have been home already. As fast as she could, without running, she went to the house, and finally found out that it was a tavern, called “The Drunken Priest,” *Oh how that makes father angry*, she giggled and decided to go in.

To her disappointment the jester was not in the tavern. To her disappointment the tavern was mostly empty, as it happens to be, The Drunken Priest was the tavern with the lowest income in the city, and few people ever came to drink near the cathedral. But the tavernkeeper seemed to be a comely fellow, well into his sixties. Leaning on the counter was a man, a young man she noticed. He and the tavernkeeper were the only ones. That seemed odd, alas she approached and what she saw was a common face, a blade sharp nose, thin lips and the most beautiful eyes she had ever seen. Those eyes made up for everything else, he was young and when she saw him, she blushed, quickly looking at the counter to hide it.

“What are you having?” the tavernkeeper asked and without looking up, for fear of showing the young man her blush, she replied

“Ale.” *Father will smell it...* She corrected herself, “Milk, rather.”

*That will make me seem odd...*there was little she could do now. She got her milk and the tavernkeeper leant down to the youth, continuing the conversation

“I’m telling you!” he started “She came in here and scared them all away!”

The young man laughed wonderfully and threw back

“Come no’, Alliana ain’t all tha’ frightenin’.” *His smile is gorgeous* “Bah!” The tavernkeeper spat and said

“F*** her!” He spat again “I have no business, and if I do, she comes and drives it away. I’m telling you Marcellus you have to help me! I’ll go out of business and Father Turkey would like that!” *Marcellus* was her first thought “Father *Turkey’s* payin’ me...you know tha’ Dido.” Tavernkeeper Dido spat down again

“I’ll pay you double.” Marcellus laughed again whilst Hope sipped some milk

“Ye cannae.” Tavernkeeper Dido grumbled angrily and walked away, going to some bottles. Then she felt the eyes on her and moved her own away.

“See Dido! Ye ‘ave another one!” The reply he got was “Slam your head into a wall Marcellus!”

The youth sat next to her, and suddenly she was without her hood

“Oi! Dido! This one’s worth three yer taverns!”

Dido yelled “Go f*** yourself!” She felt naked when Marcellus pulled down her hood, the golden curls brushing her shoulders, Marcellus smiled and asked

“So, little one. Yer name as pretty as ye’re?”

His eyes are beautiful.

"H-Hope." She muttered.

"Well Hope, wha' with the milk?"

Milk...why did I order milk, she thought what she could say before Marcellus went

"Canna drink milk without honey, can ye? Dido!" He yelled "Honey!" The tavernkeeper had no answer, so Marcellus yelled again and finally Dido answered

"Go to hell Marcellus!"

So Marcellus shrugged and jumped over the counter, getting a spoon of honey and dropping it into Hope's milk. She did not resist and when she took a sip it felt like pure bliss. Marcellus looked at her and asked

"Ow is it then? Good aye?" She smiled, blushed and looked back down.