

## The | Anomalous | Girl

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My mother, the Queen, allowed me- just once- to attend an actual school. It resided, and I suppose *still* resides, in a small village some miles beyond the castle walls. Of course, this was not in line with the Queen's plans for me. Though, an armistice was eventually drawn, only *after* my having embarked on a *campaign of chaos* the likes of which had never been seen within the castle walls. The sort of terror which brought even the most patient of my tutors to tears.

It was decided that I would be amongst the other children at last, though at years end, I would be tested. Were I to pass, I would be permitted to continue on at the school with those of my age. Should I fail, I would be expected to recommence my royal confinement *and* my tutoring, with not even so much as a displeased *sneeze* leaving my tiny lips.

I was ten years old at the time, but by no means simple. I realized before acknowledging the terms of the agreement that my mother's standards would never have been met by anything taught in a common school. I agreed nonetheless. Arguments such as: "that is not fair," or "but I *want* it" were of no use on my mother. I took that which was given, and expected no more.

I would begin the following week.

As if my slim odds warranted any further thwarting, my mother had her knight- and *trusted* advisor- Sir Lawrence Nulfric accompany me, in addition to my being introduced absent any guise obscuring my true identity. Fatuous inquiries abound, we somehow managed to complete the occasional lesson.

It was readily apparent that their studies amounted to naught but a review of the most basic of basics to me, but that was not why I had struggled so to be there. My solace would be found only when the children were all at play.

Every day, when the sun met its peak, the doors were thrown wide. My classmates would scream with delight, and *I* with the biggest grin of them all. My head would spin as they sprang up from their seats, toward lush fields and freedom from even the *notion* of soporific studies. Unfortunately, it was in the playfield that I would stand out the most.

In addition to being more advance academically, we were all of us equally surprised to find that I was also stronger and faster than every boy and girl in the school. Not by any small margin either, I am afraid. My physical acuity was *far* more developed, and it was then that I would begin to realize the effect my *knightly* training had taken. I would also begin cursing my mother, under my breath, each time one of the normal children would sneer in my general direction.

Though, I digress. More to the point, it was at this place that I received my first dose of rejection. I recall only one detail with regards to the boy I had been taken with:

His fragrant scent.

Whenever I would find myself close enough to feel his warmth- which I recall as being *quite* often, I would be overtaken by the sweet smell of berries. To this day I know not which, as I have yet to ever come across that particular aroma again.

As for that which had brought about my rejection, it was a simple matter of pride. Wherever one travels, the fact remains that children will do as they are apt to do. Often times this amounts to a modicum of cruelty directed at those picked out as weak or different. I know not which of the criteria my boy had met, but I would watch with an unforgiving scowl as he was hectorated by another boy. Unfortunately, there would be no reasoning with the oaf, as he was far too old to owe his presence at that school to anything *but* a diminutive mental capacity. Though, after witnessing his treatment of my lovely boy, any dialogue would have been doomed to suffer my flickering temper.

Amusingly enough, in his plight, my fated boy only managed to intensify my affection for him. I saw in him a kindred spirit, as he rose from the ground to dust himself off, wiping away any tears as he moved to continue about his play, seemingly unscathed. However, it was not long before I found myself utterly incapable of simply *watching* any longer.

It had been raining that day, but to the delight of the class, the sun had returned in the nick of time. The vicious smile on the brute's face as he shoved my boy into the largest puddle he could find- and the haste with which I moved, as I stepped between them in a huff when he approached to continue his barbaric ritual- are the most vivid memories I have of that time. He scoffed at my sudden intercession, setting out to push me away. As his hand made contact with my shoulder, I saw red. In an instant, he was on the ground, and bawling over a broken arm.

Had it been a fairy tale, the likes of which my mother does naught to hide her unrelenting disdain, I would have turned about to find a companion for life. As is often the case, I would only be greeted by yet another scowling countenance. As I reached out to aid him to his feet, there was a sharp pain in my forehead. His arm was out, and hand open, though not in the fashion I had been expecting.

He had let fly some object from that outstretched hand, his positioning merely a reflection of a past action. My extended hand recoiled to my face, coming away from it with more red. I inspected the ground before me to affirm that which I had surmised, and found quite the large stone.

*I dun'na remember askin' for your help, freak!*

In exchange for not raising a ruckus, Nulffy- Sir Nulfric- had me agree to return to the safety of my private studies immediately. Had I not been so very stunned, perhaps it would have occurred to me that I ought to have put up a fight. Honestly, I had also found myself all too consumed with a new desire.

The entire trip home, I pondered nothing else but just *how* to convince that boy to fancy me, and not only that, but how- indeed- I would force them *all* to accept me.

Even as I returned to my solitary studies, I refused the possibility that it was far too late for that.