

## Ever After

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair,” Don laughed, as he climbed through my tower window.

“Do you have to say that every time you come in?” I asked, trying hard not to smile, but failing. I wiped my hands on my long, aqua dress, leaving a white stain of flour behind. I moved away from the gingerbread dough I was kneading at my large oak butcher block table.

“Of course, but it would take all the fun out of climbing up your tower,” Don gave me one of his toothy grins.

I looked down at my long blue puffy sleeves, pushing them back up as they slipped down my arm a little bit. I was mostly trying to hide the blush that I could feel on my cheeks. I started doing that about a year ago. I couldn't figure out why. I guess Don could be considered handsome if I ever got out of my tower and saw another boy to compare him with. He had ruffled brown hair, gleaming gray eyes, and a firm jaw. He was a year younger than me, but at sixteen his muscles were defined. Don looked like a pirate with his sword that was strapped to his blue pants by a red sheath, and the white fluffy t-shirt he always wore. In my mind though he looked like all the heroes in the Brothers Grim books.

I have read those stories more than four hundred times out of sheer boredom. Those fairy tales were my life, literally. When I said tower before, I meant a *tower*. A real Rapunzel tower in the middle of nowhere. When I looked out one of my windows I saw that I was in a small clearing, twenty feet in the air. A patch quilt of green forest was all around me. It stretched as far as my eyes could see even to the west where the purple mountains touched the sky. I've been stuck in this tower for my whole life. The only thing I knew about the outside world was what Don and my stories told me.

Sure, it was cozy. Couldn't complain with my comfy canopy bed in my bedroom and a balcony. I usually spent most of my time in the big circle room. It had my kitchen in it with the

butcher block table and my metal wash basin. To the left was my large stone fireplace where I had a caldron hanging, cooking beef stew for supper. The savory aroma filled the whole room. On the far wall, I had my long tan couch and my bookcases crammed with books.

“I have the best idea for a present for your birthday tomorrow,” Don said taking a hunk of cookie dough and eating it.

“I’m not leaving this tower,” I said crossing my arms and raising my left eyebrow. Ever since Don found my tower three years ago he has been trying to convince me to come down with him.

I tried to keep my face serious as I thought of the time we first met. Don happened upon my tower on a hunting trip. He tried the small door which Aunt Lily comes in, but she locked it when she left so I wouldn’t be disturbed. Or, that I wouldn’t wander off. Don proceeded to climb up my ivory tower and came through the window. Unfortunately, at the time I was super bored and had propped my feet up on the wall. I had managed to get up into a hand stand. My dress had fallen down, exposing my pasty legs and underwear. He startled me and I fell over as his rumbling laughter sounded. I was so scared I grabbed the closest weapon, which was a pillow, and threw it at Don. I never had seen another human being besides Aunt Lily before then, but Don opened a whole new world for me. I made sure to keep him a secret from Aunt Lily, she would have never approved.

“Why not? You’d think a girl who’s been trapped here for almost seventeen years would want to go out,” Don argued, breaking through my thoughts.

“Aunt Lily would never approve, and I’m happy here,” I stated firmly.

“Have you gotten a haircut? It looks nice,” Don tried to flatter me while he had a hunk of cookie dough shoved into his mouth.

“Yah, a week ago,” I said, not moved. I ran my hand threw my thick brown hair that curled naturally at the ends. Don has told me ever since we met, that my long bangs

were no longer in style. I had asked Aunt Lily to cut my hair this way ever since I read one of the heroines in my book had bangs. I didn't realize it was unfashionable and I didn't care. I loved my bangs. Anyways, it's not like I was going to see anyone with "stylish hair".

"Come on. I'll take all the blame," Don pleaded finishing off his cookie dough. He reached for more, but I slapped his hand.

"I'm not going, and I doubt that you could convince Aunt Lily otherwise."

"Challenge accepted," Don clapped his hands, his gray eyes shining.

"Wait, no I didn't-," I stammered.

"Too late. It's time your Aunt Lily met me. I will convince her to let you go."

"But-."

"But nothing. You didn't even know that you lived in the kingdom of Argon until I told you."

"Argon, with a hard *r*. It sounds cooler." I corrected

"Whatever," Ben waved my comment aside. "It's my duty to show you the world. So it is said, so it shall be done." Don leapt towards the window ready to make his dramatic exit. There was no use trying to stop him when he got like that. Tomorrow was going to be interesting.

"I will be back for you tomorrow my lady. Don't worry."

"Oh, I'm worrying," I shook my head.

"That's the spirit," Don jumped up onto the window sill, his left foot hanging off the edge. "I'll be back at noon or my name isn't Don Charming!"

"Oh I'm sure you'll be back."

"Fair well till better days."

“Or till I have a nightmare.” Don didn’t hear my last comment. He had already started his decent down my tower.

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“This is a horrible idea,” I moaned. Don sat on one of my red chairs in front of the small arched oak door Aunt Lily always entered through. With his legs crossed and his fingertips touching next to his lips, he looked like what Puck, from *Mid-Summer Nights Dream*, looked like, in my head. His gray eyes even gleamed impishly as he stared at the door.

“Do you stand over little kids beds with that face?” I teased.

“Not unless I have my scythe with me,” Don answered, not taking his eyes off of the door.

Aunt Lily’s light tread echoed up the stone steps. A lump of anxiety stuck in my throat. I started biting my lip as the golden door knob turned and the door creaked open. I watched with bated breath as Aunt Lily stepped into the room. She was the picture of sweetness with her short plump body, long blood red skirt that would of only went down to my knees, and her kind blue eyes. The kind, understanding smile that always went across her rosy cheeks was instantly whipped away as she stared with wide eyes at Don.

After a short pause Don, happy with his creepiness, stood up. He held out his hand to the larger than life Aunt Lily. He smiled his toothy grin down at her. I could see the laughter in his eyes as he greeted the aunt who had locked me in a tower for my whole life. “I’m Don Charming, it’s nice to meet you.”

Aunt Lily’s eyes became huge. A tiny squeak escaped her lips as she placed her hand on top of her brown hair that was up in a tight bun. “Lavender, what did I tell you about strangers?” She said, in a soft whisper.

I looked down at my feet as I answered timidly, “That I shouldn’t talk to anyone I don’t know.”

“But I’m not a stranger. Lav, and I have known each other for three years,” Don argued, his smile never wavering.

“Yes, but you were a stranger at one point, dear,” Aunt Lily answered calmly, not looking to surprised that I kept this big secret from her for three years.

“Lavender, do you know who this boy is?” Aunt Lily asked tentatively.

“He’s my friend,” I answered not getting the point of the question.

“That may be, but he’s a Charming. His father, Sir Charming, is the king of Argon the Kingdom where we live. Don is the heir to the throne.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?!” I snapped at Don, whacking him on the shoulder.

Don winced and rubbed his shoulder more out of surprise than pain. “I didn’t think it mattered,” Don shot back, but he looked at the ground and mumbled the next sentence more to himself than to me, “You’re the only person I know who doesn’t treat me like the future king.”

“I didn’t even know what kingdom we lived in, why would I care if you’re the future king?”

“You obviously care since your yelling at me!”

“I’m not yelling!”

“There’s more,” Aunt Lily said firmly, interrupting our argument. “I was going to tell you next year, when you got your wings, but I think you’re ready.”

“Ready for what?” I shouted, my sanity level going lower every second.

Aunt Lily looked at me, sympathy welling up in her eyes. She held out her palm, running her right hand over it. A long white wand appeared in her hand. It was wider at the handle and skinnier at the tip. She handed it to me. The wand was smooth and I could feel a thrill run up my fingertips.

“I’m a fairy godmother,” Aunt Lily continued, “I was assigned to protect you in this tower until you were eighteen and your wings grew. When that happens you will be allowed to leave the tower and join the rest of us fairies. We are each assigned to a member of the Charming family for life. We are immortal, we do not die unless we die in battle. You were going to be assigned to Don Charming. It must have been fate that you two met,” Aunt Lily gave this shocking news as if she had practiced this speech for years.

“This is so cool!” Don exclaimed. “Can you do magic? Are you my bodyguard now? Are all fairies girls? When you get your wings can you take me flying?” Don was rambling in his excitement. But me? I was freaking out. I was in a real life fairytale. If I hadn’t met Don, if I had listened to Aunt Lily about stranger danger I would have had another year to be human, to sit around my tower all day, with not a care in the world. Now I’m going to have to protect Don and, do who knows what else? What do fairy godmothers do all day anyway?

“You are all insane!” I yelled at them both.

I was so angry. I didn’t mean for it to happen, but I flicked the wand in my hand at the red chair Don was sitting in. It burst into flames. Don jumped away from the chair his smile as giddy as a child on Christmas day.

Aunt Lily waved her hand and the flames disappeared leaving an unharmed chair in its place. “In time you’ll learn how to control your magic.”

“I have magic,” I breathed.

“Yes, since now you two know, I think it will be best if you go back to the castle with me. I always thought fairies should get a year of supervised training with the person they had to protect. I’m glad you’re going to get this opportunity,” Aunt Lily smiled at me fondly.

“I’m going to leave this tower?” I asked, not willing to believe it. It all felt like a dream.

“Yes dear,” She answered, gently stroking my hair.

“See I told you I could get you out of this tower,” Don smiled proudly. “I’ll expect your gratitude to be paid off in flights when you get your wings next year.”

Ugh, wings, but I have to focus on one problem at a time. I wonder how I can turn Don into a frog.