

Keep your friends close and enemies closer

The kingdom of Osiris. It is the strongest and most prosperous kingdom, sure, but at what cost? I'll tell you. The death of countless children, whether small or big, boy or girl. How do I know? Because Osiris was in a book I read in my past life! And I... Am a princess of Osiris. The 5th and youngest princess, to be exact. She dies to showcase the brutality of this succession process. Currently 7. Being the youngest at 7, you'd think I'd live a life of luxury. No need to worry about the throne, there are lots of people before me. A carefree life of a princess of the wealthiest kingdom there is, right? Yeah, I wish! You see... Being a royal in Osiris means you follow the rules of the jungle with a grace period of 10 years. Every time a child is born, they are given to a nanny and can be raised in any method the nanny desires. However, the children are locked in their rooms. The locks open when they turn 10, which is when they can explore the castle. However... Once the door opens, you must kill your other released siblings to survive and ascend the throne. We all look somewhat similar. Silver hair and blue eyes. But our likes, dislikes, and personalities couldn't be further. And once this door opens 3 years later... They'll all be my enemies. But... Why? Must the battle for the throne be this brutal? I have no interest in ruling anyway. In fact... Why can't I have the luxurious princess life everyone expects the youngest princess to have? Spoiled rotten by her older siblings, a opulent and lavish lifestyle, why can't I have that? After all, I'm a princess. All right. I've decided. I'll break this cruel, outdated custom and live a spoiled life being fawned over by my whole family! Well, that's an exaggeration, I don't need my family to be at my beck and call. It's pretty shameful and embarrassing to expect that. What I mean is, I'm not letting my siblings kill each other or me. We are going to stop this stupid survival of the fittest throne ascension trial. Which means... I have to get close to them. For that, I need information on all of them. Which is why I asked my nanny for information on my siblings. There were introductions in the book, but it was short and uninformative. After all, this system only served to explain why the male lead was so cold and ruthless and blah blah blah. And even if I fail... There's a famous saying. Keep your friends close but enemies closer. In this case, my siblings are my enemies, so let's become close to them either way within my grace period of 3 years.

"Princess Evangelina, here is what you asked for."

I turn around at my nanny's call.

"Ah, thank you!"

Evangelina Osiris ↓



Straight silver hair
Blue eyes
Youthful and innocent

... Let me see... Most of my siblings are already over 10, since I was an unexpected pregnancy and born later than my siblings with a considerable age gap.

Princess Elise, 18. Methods are... Poison?! Okay... Better study up on poison. Personality... Self absorbed and vain. Well, she is quite the beauty. And likes... Oh , jewelry and clothes like tiaras, shoes, etc.

Princess Elizabeth, 17. Methods, traps. Okay... Best be careful. Personality, calm and collected. Likes... Tools for making her traps, books that give her ideas. Also for her traps, I presume...?

Prince Elijah, also 17. Our father has multiple wives, which is why some of my siblings are the same age but have different birthdates. Personality, intelligent and calculating. Methods, magic. Likes... Books, magic tools, learning new spells.

Prince Elliott, 16. Personality, sharp tongued and sensitive. Methods, unknown, likes... Oh, interesting. Music, specifically singing. He must have a beautiful voice.

Princess Evelyn, also 16. Personality, straightforward and blunt. Well... No trickery, I guess. Methods... Suffocation?! She's going to choke me to death?! Likes... Flowers... She can choke people to death, but she likes taking care of flowers...

Prince Eden, 15. Methods... Stabbing people with his sword... Personality, serious , brave... Loyal and... Fair? What do you mean by the last two? Okay... I think we can work with this. Likes swordplay and collecting weapons. Mainly swords.

Princess Estelle, 14. Methods, also poison, but apparently pigmented poison. Her favorite is... Paris green...? Personality, creative and cunning. Likes cooking and

baking. Especially baking. Interesting... Paris green uses arsenic, right? So that's how she poisons people.

Prince Easton, also 14... All my siblings are like... 11 to 7 years older than me? ! This sucks! And none of them died yet? Amazing. Well, maybe some died, and my nanny brought the ones who were alive. Anyway... The second youngest. His methods are unknown. Also 0 claimed kills. In other words, he killed no one or did kill but didn't say he killed. Personality, quiet and strategic. Likes... Books, specifically books on medical knowledge.

And that's all of them. Now, the doors are securely locked with chains, and there's no way a 7 year old would be able to open it. It's enchanted with magic anyway. My nanny can open the chains freely, but the magic makes it so that I can't until I'm 10. Even if I used the same key as my nanny, it wouldn't work for me. However... The windows are not. Apparently... No one ever thought of using the window. But then again... You'd only be able to explore the outside, the garden, which is considered a safe zone. Unless, that is, someone with access to the rest of the castle were to let you in their room through their window and let you explore, with or without them. In case you haven't noticed, that's what we're aiming for. All the children have these big windows that show a beautiful garden. So... According to my memory... Girls on the right, boys on the left. It really doesn't matter to me who I visit first, as no one can hurt me. It's against the rules, and whoever hurt me or killed me will also be killed. No child under 10 can be harmed by their siblings. This is why I said grace period of 3 years. However, the boys seem less dangerous. I open the window and climb out while my nanny is gone. She'd never let me do this. I quietly climb out and start looking into all the windows. The 2 safe zones are the garden and your childhood rooms. Well, your childhood room is semi safe. It's the safest within the castle, but no place in the castle is completely safe. Therefore, I believe most would stay inside their room unless necessary. Hmm... Judging by all the swords on display, this is probably prince Eden's room. I climb up on his windowsill and knock on the glass. Prince Eden, who was tending to his sword, abruptly turns around, his eyes widening when he sees me against his window. He opens his window and lifts me up in his arms, still looking confused.

"Hello, little girl. You are?"

"Evangelina Osiris. I'm 7~!"

"7? Why are you here?"

"I wanted to see you!"

"... You wanted to see me?"

I nodded, smiling brightly.

"Yes! I heard brother Eden was a genius swordsman and thought he was so cool!"

He looks away.

"My swordsmanship... Isn't cool at all. Do you really think a blade drenched with the blood of your kin could be cool?"

Oh. He has morals. Maybe that's what it meant when it said he was loyal and all. But... I didn't say that.

"I didn't say your sword was cool. I said your talent in swordsmanship itself was cool. Yes, a blade drenched in your family's blood isn't cool. It's cruel and brutal. But... That's not the only thing your blade can be used for, is it?"

"What...?"

... Is he seriously telling me he hadn't considered he could use his sword for something else other than killing?

"A sword can be used to kill, but it can do so much more than that."

"It can...?"

"Of course! Why do you think knights are hailed as heroes and celebrated? It's because they used their swords to protect their country! A sword can be used to deal harm, but it can also protect the things you care about the most! Throughout history, swords have been used for ceremonial purposes, a sacred symbol for power, authority, and social status. Why do you think knights are nobility?"

"I..."

"But... This is really heavy, I can't even move it... I can't believe you can swing it around with ease... Brother must be really strong to use all these swords..."

"Haha, no. It's just because you're little. When you grow up, you'll be able to swing it around just fine."

"Really?"

"Of course."

"Then... Will you teach me?"

"If you become old enough, sure. But... I do admit the sword is kind of heavy, even for me, though I can still swing it."

"Brother?"

"Hmm?"

"When's your birthday?"

"Oh... A few months from now. Why do you ask?"

"On your birthday, I'll visit again and give you a sword that's really light and easy for you to swing."

"Oh, will you now?"

"Mm- hmm! I'll design it and ask a blacksmith to make it for me!"

"Haha, sure, sure. Now. Don't you think we should get back? I think I hear your nanny looking for you. I'll cover for you this time, but you really should plan your visits more carefully in the future."

"... D- Do you not want me to come anymore?"

"Now, who said anything about that? I never told you to stop. I'm just telling you to not get caught. If you do, your nanny might never let you out of her sight, and our little meet ups might have to stop entirely, even if it's against your will."

He gathers me up in his arms and calmly walks up to my nanny.

"Looking for her?"

My nanny looks like she's going to faint.

"Hey, hey. Why so surprised? I didn't hurt her, she's only 7 after all. See? Not a single scratch on her. You liked chatting with me, didn't you, princess... Evangelina, was it?"

I nodded.

"Right. Evangelina. Sorry. As you know, I have access to the entire castle, so chains disappear with one touch. She was just so adorable that I couldn't resist."

"I- It's alright, y- your highness."

"My, my. Why so scared? I'm not going to hurt the person taking care of my dear little sister, you know. Alright, Evangelina. Off you go. Seriously, you shouldn't worry your nanny like that. She looked like she was on the verge of fainting dead away."

He bends down and sets me back on the ground as gently as possible and lightly pokes my forehead. He then winks at me, waves goodbye, and walks off to his room. My nanny starts scolding me after he leaves.

"Princess! I know you're only 7 and it's against the rules to hurt you, but you still can't go off with anyone! Do you have any idea how worried I was when you suddenly disappeared while I was gone?!"

I pretend to listen attentively and act all sorry, hanging my head and stuff, but I'm thinking about brother Eden. Serious seems a bit off to describe him. Rather, he was carefree and mischievous. Maybe he's usually serious and I caught him on a good day or he was just humoring me. My nanny finally stops with her lecture and I go to my bed and lie down to pretend to take a nap. Hmm... Who should I visit next? I'm debating between prince Elijah and Elliott. Elijah because I think magic is really cool, and Elliott because I want to hear him sing. Since Elijah is older, I guess I should go with him and then Elliott. I'll have to make sure I don't get caught by my nanny though. She'll never let me out of her sight if the same thing happens twice in a row. I climb out the window again and go spy on other rooms. Ah. This looks like Elijah's room. It's filled with spellbooks, manuscripts, and magic stones and tools galore. I gently knock knock knock on the window and it automatically swings open. Was that magic?

"... Hello?"

I'm stunned.

"You can climb inside on your own, can't you? Or should I help you?"

I quickly come to my senses and climb inside the room.

"There you are. You're not yet 10, are you?"

I shook my head from side to side.

"Good. It'd be troublesome for me because it'd be easy to kill me, especially as I can't hurt you. The only reason I've survived this long is because of my caution and magical talent."

"What?"

"We're not allowed to harm someone for their first week of being 10. A grace period of a week is given to "get used to it". But you're not 10 anyway, so no matter, although we're not allowed to harm anyone under 10 either. As for why it'd be easy to kill me, I have a terminal disease that renders me bedridden for a majority of the time."

Terminal disease... Why do I feel like that was mentioned in the original work? Ah! I remember now! Elijah's disease was mentioned very briefly, because the male lead heard that a cure for his terminal disease was found. Unfortunately, Elijah had already died by that time. I didn't remember it at first because it was only mentioned in one sentence, but it's coming back to me now that I hear Elijah talking about it. The disease is called Interitus, and it causes the body to slowly decay from the inside, leading to organ failure and death. It starts off with headaches and joint pain, the stage Elijah is currently in. Some people think this illness is a curse from god because it's such a terrible way to die. If we can administer the cure to him in 3 years, he should be fine. The disease, after all, worsens over the course of years until leading to death. It starts off very slow. And Elijah didn't die from his illness anyway. He died because of the succession process. Anyway, the cure is actually quite simple once you have the ingredients. You use 3 herbs, Renata, Palin, and Neith. You crush them into a paste along with holy water that is blessed by a saint or anyone with divine power. The herbs were quite common and easy to be found. In fact, they were thought to be weeds, which is why no one ever thought they could be the cure. Holy water can be found at the temple, which I can ask my nanny for. If you take a teaspoon of the medicine after every meal, 3 times a day, you'll be cured within a month. Elijah was diagnosed with it at... 13 or 14? It doesn't specify, just says it was a few years after Elijah turned 10. However, Elijah started learning magic from a very young age, so he was already a proficient magician by that age. Plus, the first stage, the stage he's in now, doesn't prevent him from learning more magic, which explains how he was able to kill others using his magical powers.

"Excuse me? Are you listening?"

"Ah, S... Sorry... You were saying?"

"Nothing important. I was asking for your name and age."

"O- Oh! Evangelina. I'm 7."

"I see... Evangelina, you say... Ah, I think I remember. You're the youngest. By the way, Evangelin--"

"Eva."

"Pardon?"

"You can call me Eva... If you want to..."

"Alright then, Eva. Luckily for you, you caught me on a good day. So, I can spare a bit of time for you. Would you like to stay in my room or go to yours?"

"C- Can you walk?"

"Yes. I told you that you caught me on a good day. One of the few days I can walk."
"

... Right. Interitus is a truly terrible illness. Things that are easy for us, such as walking, are activities they can only engage in if they're lucky. Although still in its beginning stages, the joint pain makes it difficult to get up, let alone walk.

"Can... Can we go to my room?"

He shrugs.

"I don't see why not. Since my little sister spared no effort to see me, it is only polite to humor her and do as she'd want."

"Oh... I... Thank you..."

"Eva. Can't you at least show me to your room? I don't know a lot of rooms."

"A- Ah, yes! Please follow me! Here we are, this is my room!"

"I see... Oh, interested in magic?"

"Huh? Yes, but... How did you--"

"Your books are all about magic. Take a seat. You don't mind me sitting on your bed, right?"

He gently pats the space next to him as he very naturally sits on the edge of my bed like he owns the place, without even waiting for my permission. However... With his disease acting up without notice, it's really much better for him to sit down. Not to mention, it's bad manners to let a guest stand in the first place even without taking his illness into account. As such, I obediently sit without commenting. Brother Elijah raised his hand in the air.

"Watch closely. Let me show you a cool trick you can do with magic. Granted, it's quite easy, but the effect is very pretty. The kind of thing little girls like you adore."

"How do you know what little girls like?"

"Your older sister by... Ah... 11 years was quite enamored by it."

"Sister Elise?"

"Yes. I was practicing in my room when she suddenly came walking in, presumably trying to kill me, when she saw my magic. She said she would spare me if I put on a magic show for her. It was absolutely ridiculous, a 11 year old demanding a show from her 10 year old brother with his life on the line, but I had no choice as I didn't want to die. She was satisfied and left me alone after."

He then proceeds to put on a very pretty magic display full of lights and sparkle.

"Wow... So beautiful... But couldn't you just... Protect yourself with magic?"

"I didn't know defense or offense magic at that time. Well, I did, but I wasn't proficient at it and it was liable to backfire. Besides, even if I was, it was far more efficient to give her a show because it consumes less of my energy to give her what she wanted than putting up a barrier or attacking her."

"I see... How interesting. I didn't know different types of magic meant different amounts of energy consumption. Hey, brother Elijah?"

"Sorry, say that again?"

"I didn't know—"

"No, after that."

"Brother Elijah?"

"Yes, go ahead."

"Do I have magic?"

"Could you give me your hand for a moment, my dear?"

I confusedly place my hand on top of his. He closes his eyes and a bright light flows out of his hand. It started off white, but it turned a light blue. He opens his eyes.

"Congratulations. You have healing and purification magic, which only saints are supposed to have. It's practically the same thing as divine power. You must be a very kind and pure soul, which is very fitting of a little girl your age."

He gently ruffles my hair.

"What I mean is... Your magic suits you."

"Haha, thank you. Brother?"

"Yes?"

"Is there truly no cure?"

"That's what terminal means. But it doesn't really matter. I'm going to die either way. I'll either die from this illness or from the hands of one of my siblings."

"No!"

"I'm sorry?"

"Don't say that! I hate seeing you talk as if your death is already predetermined! Well, all people die eventually, but I don't like hearing you talk as if you'll die soon!"

"It's true. I will die soon. The disease in its current state progresses slowly, but after that stage I was told my condition will worsen very quickly. If I don't die due to the disease, I'll die due to one of my siblings killing me to not die themselves."

"No, don't say that! I'll cure your disease before I turn 10, I swear! So don't you dare die or try to die, I won't let you! I'll visit you 365 days a year and stay from early morning until late night unless you promise not to die and keep that promise!"

"... Haha..."

"I'm not joking, this isn't funny!"

"... Alright. I promise."

I stick out my little finger. He looks at it, confused as to what I was doing.

"Do the same!"

He still looks confused, but does as I ask. I gently wrap my little finger around his.

"Am I also supposed to do the same to your finger?"

I nodded.

"Okay, then... I still have no idea what you're trying to do, but..."

He wraps his finger around mine as well.

"This is called a pinky promise! It means you absolutely can't break it! If you break it, you have to break or cut off your finger, so you have to keep it, okay?"

"Yes, I understand. I'll definitely keep my promise to you. Ugh..."

"Are you alright?!"

"I... I'm fine. It's just a headache... Give me a minute, I'll be okay..."

His face is as pale as a sheet and cold sweat is running down his face... Interitus... I just know the basics, and it was just an illness in a book, so I never imagined I would be seeing the symptoms happen in front of my eyes like this... Prince Elijah, after all, was not a very important character to the plot. That's when it finally hits me for the first time since I woke up in this world. This world... Isn't a book. To me, this book is my actual life. There are going to be people with their own struggles and problems that weren't addressed in the book because a book is always going to be focused on the main protagonists. I know information that isn't yet available, but... I can't rely on the contents of the book all the time. Just because someone was insignificant to the plot of the book... Doesn't mean they're insignificant to me. Whether or not my siblings have influence in the book, they're still my older siblings who I adore.

"Brother... Are you sure you're alright?"

I gently start running my fingers through his long silver hair. Surprisingly, he calms down as soon as I touch him.

"... Brother?"

"Ah... Thank you. I feel much better now."

"Really?"

"Yes, great job. As expected of my little sister, what a talented little mage."

"I... Sorry, what?"

"My headache, which is caused by my illness, never subsides this quickly, and especially without any medicine, which are really just painkillers as there's no cure. However... As I told you, you have healing and purification magic. You stroking my hair probably numbed my pain as you activated your healing unconsciously. A lot of people find it difficult to even use their power without proper training, but it seems you have a natural talent."

"Brother, brother!"

"Yes?"

"What can I do with magic? Is healing the only thing I can do?"

"Oh, no, no. It's not like that. Healing and purification are abilities you naturally have an affinity for, so they're like your specialty. However, that doesn't mean you can't practice any other kind of magic. You just have a natural talent for healing and purification and will likely be better at them than other kinds with less practice. None of my other siblings have the gift of magic, so it seems we're the only ones."

"You haven't tested anybody else?"

"I don't need to. I can sort of... See if someone has magic or not, kind of like a sixth sense. I just can't tell which kind they have. That's why I did the testing, to see what kind you had. If you had no magic, I would have told you so outright when you asked if you had magic, not even bothering to test you just in case."

"... Why can't I see that?"

"Haha, it's an ability I acquired after a few years of practicing magic, you'll get it as you go along. You learn to sense whether someone is a magic user or not once you become familiar with your own magic. Right now... You don't even know how to use it, it just happened, didn't it? Don't worry about it, Eva. You'll see it very soon."

He runs his fingers through my own silver locks the same way I did before. That's when my nanny opens the door with a tray of my food in her hands. She takes one look at brother Elijah by my side and the tray starts dropping to the floor and freezes just barely above the ground. The bowl gathers up all the soup that was about to splash all over the floor, the other types of food rearrange themselves neatly on their plates, the glass of water does the same thing as the bowl, and the eating utensils such as the spoon and fork leap up on to the tray. The tray, with all the food intact, floats over to me and settles down on my bed. I stare, shocked.

"It's a relief I wasn't too late. It would have been quite the hassle to clean up the food, sweep up any broken plates, etc, not to mention it would be a waste of food. Miss, are you okay? I apologize for surprising you. Hello? Are you there, miss?"

"That's my nanny."

"Ah, I thought as such. Do we wait until she's back, or do you have a way to speed up the process?"

"This never happened before, so..."

"I see. Let's wait then. Meanwhile... Aah~"

The spoon floats in front of me with a mouthful of soup.

"A- Are you trying to feed me?"

"Hmm? Is there a problem? I always wanted to try this, you see."

I open my mouth and let him feed me. It's been a while since I've been so pampered, so this honestly feels kind of nice. By the time he's almost through with feeding me, my nanny's eyes come back into focus.

"P- Princess...?!"

"Ah, she's back. Hello, miss."

"What... How..."

I start shaking my head at Elijah, signalling to him to not tell what actually happened. He nods and gives me a wink before spinning some elaborate but believable story as to why he's here. My nanny thankfully buys it and accepts his explanation. I breathe a sigh of relief as he tries to hide a laugh at my reaction, which, I admit, was a little overdramatic. He finishes feeding me and stands up.

"I should go. See you later, Eva."

"Okay! Bye, brother~!"

He waves and snaps his fingers. He's gone in the blink of an eye.

"Princess! Honestly... You were such a good girl up until a few days ago. Why are the first and third prince both so interested in you all of a sudden?"

Sorry, nanny... I want to live...

"I don't know, hehe~!"

My nanny sighs.

"I guess it doesn't matter since they're the ones who visited you and not the other way around, but please be careful princess. I know you're not yet 10, but some of your siblings could harm you."

"Yes, I got it. I'll be careful. Nanny, could you get me a book on holy water and how to make it?"

"Holy water? Yes, princess. I'll go looking for it tomorrow morning."

"Thank you~!"

My nanny's gone, so... Time to go visit Elliott! His room is... This one, I believe. I climb through the window and into his room. He quickly turns his head and his face turns into a scowl the moment he sees me.

"Leave."

... Uhh... Gosh, that was sharp. And unnecessarily rude.

"Why?"

"Leave. Now."

"But why?"

He grabs my wrist and roughly throws me out of his room while slamming the door in my face... I can't go back in unless I go back to my room and go through the window to window again... I go back to my room. Let's try this again tomorrow.

- A week later

"And that kept happening!"

"He kept throwing you out of his room?"

I nodded while brother Elijah laughed.

"Well... To be honest, Elliott is very... Shy. He's never talked to me either, and he doesn't have a nanny, nor does he have maids or servants. Prince he may be, but he has no one beside him to help."

"Do you think I wronged him?"

"You? Wrong someone? There's absolutely no way. Ah. I have an idea. Why don't you pretend to be physically hurt when he throws you out next time or cry?"

"..."

I stare at him disapprovingly while he tries to convince me to guilt trip his little brother. I thought Elijah would be more mature about this and help me find a good solution, not tell me to guilt trip! He backtracks a bit when he sees I'm unimpressed with that idea of guilt trip.

"Okay. Nevermind about pretending to be hurt. But you're upset he keeps throwing you out, right?"

"Yeah?"

"So... Cry. That makes sense, right?"

I still don't like it, but it's better than faking an injury and I don't have a better idea either, so I agree to it.

- Next day

"Leave me be. Seriously."

As he throws me out, I begin to cry. But not loud wailing crying. The kind of quiet crying that makes me look pitiful. He looks a bit surprised and slowly reaches out before stepping back a little.

"You... Okay?"

I don't say anything, continuing to cry and sniffle. He sighs and looks conflicted for a second before he crouches down and starts to stroke my silvery locks.

"Shh..."

"Brother... Why do you hate me?"

"Hat- I do- No."

"N... No?"

"I don't hate you."

... He speaks in such short bursts. I don't think I've ever seen him speak more than 4 words in one go. His voice is great though. Very beautiful. I look up and am absolutely floored. I thought his voice was beautiful, but his face is on another level entirely. Our family is full of attractive people, but he's so beautiful it's practically hypnotizing. His beauty transcends that of a human being. He's still pretty young, only around 16, but I can still tell he'll be able to make anyone fall in love at a glance once he matures a little more. From what I know, all my siblings and I have the same father, the emperor, which is why we have silver hair and blue eyes, a symbol of the royal family, so his mother must've been a beauty for her son to turn out like this. Well, it's not really a surprise. The tradition is to have as many children as possible with many wives so the children may inherit what were perceived as good qualities of their mother, be it looks, talents, or anything else. Then the children fight it out until one kid remains, cycle repeats. Well, I hope I can break it though.

"Then... Why do you keep throwing me out? It means you hate me..."

"That's not... No."

"Then why?"

"I'm dangerous."

"Danger...?"

"Yes. So leave."

"Why are you dangerous? And... You're a prince, right? Why don't you have any maids or servants to keep you company? Aren't you lonely?"

"No."

"No, you're not a prince or no, you're not lonely?"

"The latter."

"So... You are a prince, my brother."

He cocks his head to the side.

"Don't you know danger?"

"Uhhh... I know what it means, if that's what you're asking."

"Then why not leave?"

Despite him speaking as little as possible, he still makes sentences with perfect grammar, albeit some of them meaning something different. Is it because he's a prince? I think he meant don't you know what danger means and why don't you leave, but... Oh well. I got what he was trying to say, and that's what's important.

"I like you."

His eyes widen, so I reiterate.

"I find you interesting and I want to get to know you. Besides, you're my big brother, right? There's no way I would dislike you."

"Age."

"Sorry?"

"Your age?"

"Oh, 7. Everyone asks me that and I don't get why. Is age that important?"

"Ye- Nevermind. No. It's not."

Haha, of course I know. But let's pretend to be an oblivious and innocent little girl. I chatter on about this and that, mainly trivial and lighthearted topics like my hobbies or what happened today, while he stays silent but lets me talk, which is a huge improvement from before.

- A few days later

knock knock

"Coming!"

I sent my nanny out on an errand. I actually do that very often these days because I need to sneak out in secret.

"Hell- Brother Elliott?! What are you doing here?! How do you even know where my room is in the first place?!"

"I didn't."

I tilt my head to the side in confusion.

"I opened every door."

"Pardon?"

"I opened every door."

"No, I heard you the first ti--"

"Until I found you."

"I... Yeah, but why would you do that? You just humored me most of the time, I don't see why you'd actively seek me out."

"... I was touched."

"Pardon?"

"Most ignore me."

"... Okay?"

Brother Elliott. I like to think I'm a very patient person. However. You need to be less cryptic if you want me to understand what you're saying. But on another not

e, this feels so therapeutic in a way. I know I've already mentioned this, but... Elliott is, hands down, the most beautiful person I've ever seen. No, he's so beautiful he's not even human. It's like he's from the realm of fairies. And his voice is another story entirely. Just looking at his face and listening to him talk, no matter how short, is therapy in and of itself. At this point, I wouldn't be surprised if his mother was a famous singer or performer renowned for her beauty and equally enchanting voice.

"You didn't. Why?"

"Umm... I think I told you already, but if you want to hear it again, well... You're my older brother, so we're family. I love my family, so I could never ignore you."

"... You're not scared?"

I shook my head from side to side, my pigtails swinging with the movement too. He reaches out and gently tightens the ribbon on my left pigtail. Ah... Was it becoming loose? I didn't notice.

"Thank you."

"...?"

This is so random...

"Thanks to you... I wasn't alone... Anymore."

... He pauses every 3 words or so, but that's the longest he's talked to me in one go, so great! Progress!

"Uhh... You're welcome...?"

"I will... Accept you..."

"That's good...?"

"If you still... Like me after... Learning of my... Origins."

I slightly tilt my head.

"... Brother's origins?"

"My parents."

"Isn't our dad the same? That's why we're brother and sister, no?"

He thinks for a moment before talking again. He backtracked a little and eventually settled on

"My mother."

Which made a lot more sense. But...

"Brother?"

He makes eye contact with me to indicate he's listening.

"Why do you always pause after speaking around 3 words or so?"

"That has to do... With what I'm... About to say... About my mother."

"Oh... Okay. I'm sorry for interrupting. Please continue on, big brother."

He gently strokes my head as if saying there's no need to apologize.

"My mom's a siren."

"A... What? You mean that half fish—"

"Half- bird."

"Oh, well, half bird half woman creature with a voice that lures people to death?"

"Uhh... Well... Essentially, yes... But... Uhh... I wouldn't say... Lures to death ..."

"Eh? But that's what I heard in the books I read about sirens! And... How do sirens have kids anyway? Are their kids like... 1 quarter bird or something?"

"I'm not part bird."

"Right, sorry!"

"I don't know... About the kid part."

"Well, yeah, of course not."

"She shapeshifted... Into a human."

"Oh... I guess that explains why father had a kid with your mom..."

"And... Sirens lure people... To them... Not necessarily... To death... Just them."
"

"Oh... I see... So, a siren's voice is so hypnotizing people are drawn to it, even if going to that sound will kill them?"

"Yes."

"Oh~! I see! That's so cool! Since you're the son of a siren, can you sing too? You must have the most beautiful voice! If you do sing, can I please listen?"

"I... You're not scared?"

"Hmm? Why would I be? You're not going to try and kill me, right? I mean, if it's so beautiful it's hypnotizing, I'd love to hear you sing, as long as you don't sing with the intent of trying to kill me! But brother Elliott is really kind and considerate, so I'm sure brother would never do anything bad, even if he inherited the ability to hypnotize people with his voice from your mother."

Before I know it, I'm suddenly wrapped tightly in his arms. And no, I'm not in mid air. In case you forgot, I'm 7 and he's 16, so clearly there's quite the height difference. We're 9, so practically 10 years apart after all. Jesus Christ, I forgot all my siblings are much older than me. The youngest of all of them is twice my age. Anyway, what I mean is, he knelt down and wrapped me in his arms tightly. I was stunned at first, but then calmed down and started to stroke his hair. A warm liquid dripped down on my clothes. Is he... Crying...? I don't know what to do or say, so I just continue running my fingers through his silver locks, so similar to mine. By the way, he has long hair too. He gently pulls away.

"My song can hypnotize people, but I can control it, so it only does so when I wish. It's the same story when I talk."

"So you can talk normally?"

"... Yes, of course I can."

"And you didn't until now because...?"

"Most people already know about my mother and run away when I try to talk to them. So, I developed a habit of saying as few words as possible while still getting my point across. Of course, that didn't really matter since everyone left me, includi

ng my nanny, maids, servants, and even my siblings, who should be trying to kill me, just let me be in my room.”

“Sorry, you want them to kill you?”

“Well, no, not particularly. I wouldn’t mind if they succeeded, that is the selection process, but I don’t want to die. Although it would be difficult considering I developed immunity to poison anyway.”.

“Wait, what?! How?!”

“Oh, when I was young, I didn’t know how to control my hypnosis. My nanny was so scared of me she fed me every type of poison known to man in hopes of killing me so I wouldn’t kill her instead. But because I’m half siren, I’m stronger than most human babies, so I survived and developed immunity along the way. I can tell if something has poison by the scent or taste, but I don’t die even if I ingest it.”

“... What?!”

“Is that... Really so shocking?”

“Of course it is! You could’ve died!”

As tears start to form in my eyes, brother Elliott seems quite stunned. He awkwardly strokes my head.

“There, there... It’s fine. I didn’t die and I’m alive and well now... Ahh... Gosh, what should I do...? Oh. This could work. Maybe. Hopefully. Evangeline, my dear.”

I look up.

“Yes?”

“Would you like to hear me sing?”

“Really?”

“Mm- hmm. Despite it being the root of all my problems, I still love to sing. So, how about it? Do you dare to listen to the song of the son of a siren, princess?”

I nodded excitedly.

“Alright then.”

He opens his mouth and starts to sing. I'm spellbound. It doesn't have any magical properties or anything. I don't feel a sudden urge to do something, nor does my brain feel foggy. Besides, he pulled me onto his lap and is holding onto me tightly, so he'd probably stop me if I did feel compelled to do something dangerous. Even so, his voice itself is like a spell all on its own. It's the most beautiful song I have ever heard, in my past or current life.

"So... How was it? Did you enjoy the show, your highness, princess Evangeline?"

"Yes! Your voice is so beautiful~!"

"Haha, I'm glad to hear it. Hmm... You know, you have a pretty voice yourself. Maybe I could teach you how to sing when you're a little older."

"I- I know how to sing!"

"You do?"

I nodded. When I was a child, I used to be very shy. My mother sent me to singing classes since I was 5 so I could gain more confidence and gain a skill along the way.

"Really? In that case, why don't you sing me something?"

"So. Eva will have her 10th birthday in a week and we need to come up with a plan to protect her."

"I thought this was birthday party prep."

"It is that too."

"But mainly to protect her."

"So, no one's going to hurt her for at least one week, right?"

"Oh, no. Eva has been attacked. She just has been extremely lucky because we were there to prevent any harm. That grace period doesn't work for her."

"Ah, true. Elise tried to poison her tea when Evie invited me over for a tea party. I still remember Evie apologizing, saying she truly had no intention of poisoning me. Needless to say, I didn't doubt her for even one moment. I told her I was immune from day 1, not to mention she would've poisoned herself as well."

"Right... Evelyn tried choking her too. I had to press my sword against her neck for her to stop suffocating her."

"No kidding. Elizabeth got so upset I wasn't going to die because Eva cured me, leading her to set up a trap. I was able to protect her as she was taking a walk with me when Elizabeth let the trap fall. I think she thought she'd be able to take us both down in one go. How foolish. Even if we had been caught, I'd be able to get us out easily with one simple flick of my wrist."

"Anyway... Point is, there's no grace period for her. She's been attacked since she was 7 for goodness sakes."

"Well... This is my gift."

"A... Magic stone?"

"Yes. I casted a protective spell on it. If she were to consume something dangerous, the necklace would heal her. If it was something like a trap, the necklace would form a shield around her. You can only use it once though."

"Hey! What happened to my book!"

"I... I'm sorry, brother!"

"Oh... Was it you, Eva?"

I nodded apologetically. I truly didn't mean to spill water, it was an honest mistake. I suddenly feel a hand ruffling my hair and cautiously look up to see brother smiling.

"Don't worry about it, I'm sure Eli knows at least some way to fix it up good as new. He has even more books than me and has magic. Even if not, I practically know it by heart, I can recognize the words just fine."

"You're... Not mad?"

"Oh, trust me. I would. But it's not anyone else, but Eva. It's okay because it's Eva."

Brother Easton ruffled my hair again.

"Eve, don't look so guilty. It's fine~! I'll read it to you daily to prove it doesn't affect my reading if it'll make you feel a little better."

"Ah, seriously! Our sister is so pretty it's troublesome."