



**God loves
Angels**

Enrike Fluence

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God Loves Angels

«Издательские решения»

Fluence E.

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Roselyn is sent to study at a magic school, as she guesses, in order to protect her from the threat. A certain order of dark spells kidnap the children of wizards. Will Roselyn be safe at this school? She also has to unravel the secret of the educational institution concerning her family.

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Содержание

He. The youngest agent	6
Chapter 2. Travel	8
Chapter 4. Through the corridors	13
Chapter 5. Ismeralda Duerre	16
My first lesson	21
Chapter 9. Allan	25
Chapter 10. In Depth	27
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	35

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Dedicated to my grandmother

Did I appreciate the care that you gave me?

annotation

Roselyn is sent to study at a magic school, as she guesses, in order to protect her from the threat. A certain order of dark spells kidnap the children of wizards. Will Roselyn be safe at this school? She also has to unravel the secret of the educational institution concerning her family.

The long-committed deeds of people of the past, their thoughts and dreams, desires, passions and grief, still echo in the Universe. Sometimes they take on such a strange shape that, even by seeing them, it is impossible to determine the source. And this story will try to reveal the secrets hovering around us.

He. The youngest agent

Do you believe in love at first sight? I am.

I'm in my new room on the second floor in the boys' dorm tower. My neighbor, blond and smiling, has just left to hurry into the large hall of the castle. We met him five minutes ago, chatted on friendly terms. In half an hour there will be a festive dinner in the refectory hall. Or lunch. I don't know what time and customs in this country, but in my opinion, it gets dark quite late here. But first there will be a solemn part. Director Madame Brutilde Escalotte will give a speech in honor of the beginning of the new academic semester, congratulate the students who have entered and wish them success in their studies. I already saw this last year at my old school.

Now I am alone in the room and there is a moment to look at «her» again. I take a paper envelope and a photograph from my suitcase. They were hidden in a secret pocket behind the lining.

The photo shows a cute little girl's face. Beautiful eyes. I could not help admiring them. Again. Even if I hadn't been told who she really was, I would still have paid attention to her. Miss Burling! And her name?! A unique combination of letters that caresses the ear. I whisper it, repeat it again in a whisper. Then I hide the photo in my cache and go downstairs.

There is a noise and a din of cheerful voices all around. Lots of boys and girls, guys and girls. They are bustling about in the large hall, waiting for everyone to be invited to the refectory.

In my mind is a beautiful girl from a photograph. She should be a little older now than in the photo. Of course, a girl, and no longer a child. And probably even more beautiful. I really want to see her.

I look around the guys with concern, look into new and unfamiliar faces. «She» is not among the first-Grant students, not in the large hall. Maybe she was late and is about to come up? I turn around and wait.

Rose

Chapter 1. Breaking News

– New kidnapping. – The sorceress spoke in a business tone from the TV screen, leaving no doubt that the morning music program was again interrupted by breaking news from the wizarding world. Grandmother gasped and rushed past me, hastily wiping her hands on her apron, and turned up the TV.

«This time the incident took place in Hansville, northwest of Meldal County. At night, the young Alexandra Johnson, ten years old, was abducted from the Johnson home. A brigade of magical trackers arrived at the scene of the incident. This is all very similar to the incident that took place at the end of last month. Then a group of five people in black kidnapped a young wizard, Jeremy Cormen, twelve years old in the evening on the street. The Magic Police have made no comment on the Johnson case. But we believe that these incidents are related and are the case of the illegal organization Black Magicians of Mechanical Sciences. If you know something about...

It was a sunny morning and I was in a great mood. My grandmother was kneading the dough, and I had breakfast: toasts with homemade jam and washed down with flower tea, and looked forward to my adventure plans for the day. In the vicinity of the town of Wiggia, sunny days are rare. Therefore, today it was just great with my friend Jessica to go to the elephant cliff and admire the huge waves of the north sea from it, breaking against the rocks. Now it looks like this walk will not happen. Maybe my grandmother won't let me out of the house again for a whole month. Remembering the pile of old dusty books with which I managed to make friends until recently while in captivity, I felt scared.

Frowning at me and my grandmother from the screen, the sorceress news announcer continued:

«Our reporter was able to speak with Mrs Johnson...

The grandmother moaned softly and sat down wearily on a chair.

– Did you know them? – I asked. Grandmother pursed her lips and shook her head slowly. It could have meant no, «I didn't know»; and at the same time, «oh, poor Mrs Johnson! How she suffers!...»

Grandma looked at me with a hard twinkle in her eyes. I've seen a similar look before. Then, when she conjured complex spells that not every experienced sorceress was given. But my grandmother always does. No wonder she was considered one of the strongest sorceresses in her order.

«Oh, poor Elizabeth Johnson! Such grief ... – the grandmother lamented. I asked again:

– Grandma, do you know them, Johnson? Are they from your Order?

«Oh, I know... She doesn't belong to the Order, honey, no... I worked with her in the dungeons of Buckingham Palace. Then the Order learned that the Black Magicians had learned about the cache of books by magic. I had to urgently fly to England and take out the most valuable manuscripts under cover of night. To deal with such a body of knowledge captured on paper, you need to be a professional librarian and magic. There were only four of us then, but we got it done in the shortest possible time. It was a great team. I think that the «Blacks» showed up the next morning, they didn't find anything efficient and didn't even notice our interference. It was Elizabeth who cleaned everything with sweat magic and hid the traces of our stay. Nice woman.

Grandma sighed heavily and frowned.

«Oh, Roselyn, you can't wait any longer!

– Wait?

– Nordlig is not that far away. I don't want you to be kidnapped by the Black Magicians.

– But they have no proof that they are «black»?! And now, – I pointed to the TV. The news ended and now the entertainment program resumed at a high volume. I almost had to scream to be sure that my grandmother would hear me. – Why are you sure it's them? And what do they want me?

– You will go to this «school»! – Grandmother said imperatively, sternly shaking her index finger. Grandmother's voice sounded unusually loud. The TV suddenly turned off the moment she spoke. Of course, it was not without magic.

I froze at the sight of my grandmother's ring glittering with a green sparkle on her index finger. It was with this magical artifact, inherited from her mother, and from hers, that my grandmother did such magical things that I could only dream about. Probably, this ring will pass to me someday. And this thought was unpleasant to me, to put it mildly. Such an old-fashioned item will ruin my appearance.

– Don't argue with me and don't even dare stutter that you don't want to go! The Nordlig School of Magic and Occultism is the best in its endeavors and traditions! Now I will write a letter to Brutilde, my old friend. She has been the permanent director of this institution for a hundred years. Grandmother's face softened a little, and a slight smile touched her.

– I remember, I remember what Brutilda and I did during my youth. The teaching staff of that time had to endure a lot of our pranks. Especially Mrs. Fossil. Yeah... Hmm, I'd better email Brutilde.

Grandmother jumped up eagerly from her chair and jumped out of the kitchen. But then she came back.

– No, I'd rather call. The Internet is not a reliable medium. And you can't hesitate.

My grandmother picked up the receiver of an old rotary telephone set, and I finally realized: my «home days» are over.

Chapter 2. Travel

On the morning of the next day, grandmother fussed like never before. I packed my things for Nordlig school. And the blues attacked me. When I packed the most important things, I wandered from the hallway to the kitchen and back, yawned and looked sadly at my breakfast. I was not hungry. And even more – to leave home. I, of course, agreed with my grandmother, the school of wizardry is something to which I must finally devote myself and not hide from the unknown to me «Black magicians of mechanical sciences.» I didn't even know what it meant, «mechanical sciences». Grandma never answered my questions. And about them, and about dad and mom. More precisely, about their death. I was already sure that these «blacks» had killed them. I would not have thought that their goal was to kill me too, but the zeal with which my grandmother fenced me off from the outside world, the enchantment and isolation in which we stayed for a couple of years, told me more than my grandmother. The enemy needed me too. Perhaps they wanted to exterminate all Berlings. Or maybe there was more to it.

After the news breaking news about the Johnsons, Grandma became alarmed. She immediately decided to send me to the school where she studied herself. Granny was scared, that's for sure. She was more afraid now than ever. Why? She knew these Johnsons. All I knew was that someone was kidnapping children my age. And I can be next.

My grandmother phoned her friend the night before, who was supposed to help me get to school. So we got up early today. The friend waited two hours, but he never showed up. I already thought that he would not come for me at all.

And yet, I diligently combed my hair in front of the mirror. My chestnut locks fell in waves over my shoulders and shone in the light of gold. They always shone, even in rainy and gloomy weather. And I really liked that. Only I could boast of this. And also my grandmother. Her hair, too, had a golden sheen.

Now the bouncy hair was giving me a slightly messy look. Grandma came to the rescue. She pulled the strands behind my ears and secured with two thin hairpins.

«Never use magic on your hair, Rosie. And a pair of almost invisible hairpins will add more elegance than a curl spell or long-lasting hairstyle. Remember?»

– Sure. I will definitely consider. No hair magic.

– Franklin will be here soon! At any moment! – Grandmother suddenly exclaimed, looking at the clock in the corridor. Wait, though. Not. She looked out the window. Outside there was a clear sky and forest. How she saw Franklin, I did not understand.

– Who? Is this your friend who should come for me?

– One very reliable friend! – The grandmother specified with an important look. – And he is also an aeronaut!

I frowned. I don't remember that I've ever heard anything about Franklin or any balloonists. The first time I hear about him – here's your reliable friend. Sounds like a bodyguard. But I, and of course my grandmother, know perfectly well that I am afraid of heights. I don't want to float in the air, even with a trusted friend.

«Will this Franklin take me to school by air?»

– Not just to school. Do not forget! To Nordlig L & Payordkanten!

I nodded, agreeing that this very school is a significant institution in the world of wizards. And then she thought: shelter? What kind of school could it be that has the word «refuge» in its name? Was it not for nothing that my grandmother was going to define me there? And not just so she studied there herself? Maybe she was also hunted when she was a girl?

Then I realized that I was fantasizing and climbing into such a jungle that it is better not to meddle in. Breakfast! That's what I need to distract myself. I went into the kitchen and sat down

at the table. The oatmeal is already cold. And a glass of milk just came to my taste. A suitcase with my belongings stood in front of the front door. So does the sports bag. And I finally relaxed. Grandma disappeared from sight. And I, holding a glass of milk, indulged in dreams. School Nordlig. A beautiful castle. Against the background of mountains covered with snow caps, clouds, curly and imposingly floating over the horizon. A bunch of cheerful boys smiling at me... And where did my grandmother go?

I heard an unusual sound, a pop, and then a whistle of wind was heard.

– Grandmother? – I got up from the chair and ran out into the corridor. The whistle began to subside until it echoed over the trees. The door to the street was open. I ran to the threshold. Grandmother stood on the lawn and talked sweetly with a gray-haired little old man. And above them!.. A blue-red balloon hovered. Huge, but not blown away. And here it was not without magic. The old man nodded and smiled. Grandmother held his hands. So romantic! It was like meeting lovers. This is what a romantic date looks like in my opinion. The only thing missing is candles and a table with champagne. Then I noticed how my luggage jumped by itself into a square basket under the ball and fear attacked me. Is it possible for me to ride a balloon? In the clouds, high above the ground?

– Grandmother! – I exclaimed pitifully. But the rising wind drowned out my plea. I winced. Without losing hope to decide everything in her favor, she went to her grandmother.

– Rosie, there you are! – The grandmother smiled. – Obedient girl!

Old Man Franklin examined me with interest. His shaggy brows came together on the bridge of his nose. And the wind around began to intensify.

– Greetings, dear lady, and I ask you to board my ship! – Suddenly cried Franklin. I froze for a second, but immediately bowed. You must always be polite. Without this, no one will respect you either. I remembered this lesson of my grandmother.

– Honey, let me hug you, goodbye! – Grandmother stretched out her hands to me, I stepped towards her arms. The rumble of the wind died down. Then I realized. That this wind was magical.

– I'll miss you. – said touching grandmother. I pulled away and saw tears in her eyes.

– Don't, grandma. I hugged her again. I wanted to say something else, to find words of consolation that could calm my grandmother, but I could not. I got a lump in my throat, and suddenly it stabbed in my eyes. – I... not on... d o ... – I whispered stifledly. Thoughts were confused and I said nothing more. I just sobbed. And even louder than grandma.

Here I am so strong. Grandma stroked my hair gently. And I could not stop my tears.

– Rosalia, my dear Rosalia, my girl ... – Affectionately my grandmother calmed me down. I will miss you and I will also be calm knowing that you are at school.

– Don't miss me, please. – I whined. – This will make me very bad.

– Well, well, don't worry about me. – Granny said deliberately cheerfully. I heard that her voice had grown stronger, and almost no trace of sorrow remained in it. This made me happy. Still, grandmother is a strong person. And I came up with an idea.

– Promise that you will write me a letter. By email. – I demanded.

– Traditions! Remember this. Respect for tradition is part of discipline and proper parenting. Therefore, no internet.

– Well, grandma. Even one email?! You are the only native person! At least one is possible?

– I'll call you. On Saturday. Good? I'll ask Brutilde to call you on the phone, or I'll think of something like that.

– Good. So the phone is an old-fashioned thing?

– Rosalia!

– That is, I mean, traditional? – My lips slightly stretched into a smile.

– Yes. The phone is much closer to tradition than your internet. – Grandma was still holding me by the shoulders. Then she nodded in agreement and said: – Write me your email address.

– Grandmother? – I did not believe it and wiped my eyes.

– It's just in case. Suddenly Brutilde will be busy.

I ran to my room and hastily wrote my email address on a small piece of notebook paper.

– I'll hang it on the fridge. – I said, running past the open door and stopping for a second to triumphantly wave a leaf. Grandma was busy talking to Franklin. I ran into the kitchen, hung a piece of paper with a magnet in the very middle of the refrigerator (here my grandmother will definitely notice it right away) and ran back.

– Forward, on a journey! Franklin yelled at me quite cheerfully. My grandmother called me over, sneezed and spoke in my ear:

«I put you a little present in your suitcase. Don't look at it until you arrive at school!

I took one last look at my grandmother, into her watery eyes, and jumped into the basket of the balloon. I was bitter to fly away from my grandmother. It's even worse to see her crying in front of our house. The lawn remained far below and I, a coward, immediately fell to the bottom of the basket. I could not look at the distant land. Franklin exclaimed cheerfully:

– To the north! Wow-oh!

He pulled on the side cable. And the sails opened behind the ball. Blue and red. Semitransparent, as if not material, but illusions. The basket shook slightly. The sky above with a blue blue sparkled with green waves, lilac sparks. I closed my eyes. She bent her head to her knees, just not to see these glow. It seemed to me that the ball could fall and break on the ground at any moment. I started humming an unlucky children's song, just to distract myself and...

– Wow-oh! Great view! The northern shores and mountains are amazing as always! Grandpa Franklin wheezed. «Does the young lady want to see this picture? Nordlig Castle on the horizon! Majestic as always!

I caught the name of the school and leaned over to the edge of the basket. A gust of wind hit me in the face, and I immediately lay down on the floor again.

Grandpa Franklin stood over me and pulled one cable, then another. The wind tugged at his gray hair, and the wizard was happy.

– Let's sit down on the front lawn, young lady! And you, as I see, are already being met!

How? Already? So fast? Less than five minutes of flight? Then I noticed that the flashes of the blue sky disappeared, the green color too. A clear blue sky has appeared overboard and black trees can be seen at the edge of the view.

The pitching stopped. And I looked around the lawn with joy, and then jumped out of the basket onto the soft green grass. My suitcase and bag landed nearby. I waved goodbye to Grandpa Franklin.

– Thank you! – I shouted, trying to shout over the wind and glad that I left the aeronautical board. He rose higher and higher into the sky. Franklin waved to me too. He shouted something, and his balloon spread the sails. Another minute, and I have a clear sky over my head. Franklin was swept away in the winds in an unknown direction.

I turned to the gray stone building. The castle is really beautiful. On the steps by the door stood a lone figure in a blue robe. Enchantress. She looked at me. And I went to her.

«Miss Burling, Madame Director is expecting you. Please follow me. – She said and disappeared in the doorway. I turned to my things, and they obediently floated through the air past me to the door, as if it was said to them. I ran after.

Finding myself in the large front hall of the castle, I admired the huge bronze clock, towering between the columns and arches. On the wall hung a huge tapestry with the school's emblem – a huge gilded globe, against the background of the sun, whose rays in sharp lines diverged in all directions, and in the center there was a beautiful letter N with curls. Around this sun was the inscription: «Nordlig ly på jordkanten». This whole composition was cast in gold and glittered in the lights of a huge chandelier on the ceiling.

My suitcase crashed against the left wall of the hall. The sorceress who meets me is gone. I was at a loss for a minute, but realized that the door in front of which my suitcase stood was where I should go.

I went over and knocked on the door.

Chapter 3. In the office of Brutilde

I entered the office of the director, Madame Brutilde Escalotte, a sorceress of the highest order, as the golden plaque at the door said. The room in which I found myself was round, all in dark brown tones and with only one narrow window, filled with flowers so densely that it was impossible to see what was outside. The chocolate-colored bookcases filled with books and stacks of yellowed papers lent the cabinet a tangible library aura. A light rustled in the small fireplace. A chandelier hung over the table itself, illuminating the room, cabinets and table with the yellow light of an electric lamp, not penetrating into the shadows under the table and the mysterious gloom above the ceiling.

A thin lady was seated at the table on a high-backed chair. She was the same age as my grandmother, but in her stern form and sharp-sighted look, one could feel energy and power. Brutilde looked at me.

Hello Miss Burling. I'm tired of waiting for you. – said the director imperiously, calmly and unhurriedly. She tapped her finger lightly on the table. I noticed that on her thick wrinkled fingers large emeralds on the rings shimmered with a dull light. My grandmother has a similar ring. I greeted and handed to Brutilde a letter written by my grandmother, my application for admission.

– Have a seat.

On the left, I noticed a black figure. At first it scared me. I thought that someone was hiding against the wall. But it turned out to be just a raincoat hanging on a hanger. No, most likely, on a hook, because underneath the hanger legs were not visible. Someone from afar could have mistaken him for a man in a long cloak. But I saw that there were no boots under it. And the cloak itself was a thin shapeless matter and was too thin to hide a person under it. At the top of the cloak was a black head – a helmet-like mask, but made with small triangular ears and a pointed nose. The black eye sockets were empty. This made me happy. I felt creepy when the thought came that there was someone else in the office besides me and Madame Brutilde. This head itself was staring at the floor in front of it. She probably hung on the same hook as the cloak. To myself, I called this outfit «Black Fox». It was the fox that reminded me of the head-mask. I had no time to think why the director would need such an outfit. But this made Madame Brutilde seem even more stern and stern to me.

Brutilda unrolled the pages on the table in front of her. She put on her glasses and stuck her pointed nose into the large swirls of grandmother's ink.

– Thirteen years! Good age, but you should have enrolled a year early! – There was a remark.

All the stern look of the headmistress and her tough remark upset me. Really, they won't take me to school? Will they refuse, as if I have no magical powers? Is it because I'm late?! And what will grandma say? She will probably cry. How do I get home?

– Hmm, your birthday fell on an important astronomical date! Very rare. Appreciate it! I think your rebellious age will not be a hindrance.

Brutilda put the papers in a drawer and lifted her spectacles to her forehead, peering into a thick open book.

– Hmm, right and... Right. – Concluded Brutilde. At these words, the book rose above the table and floated in my direction. A large feather, probably a peacock, which served as a decoration for a gilded glass inkwell, suddenly hovered over the book. The book lay flat in front of me, the pen froze in the air. I was dumbfounded at the first moment.

This is the moment when I sign my magic contract. The moment from which I am under the tutelage and protection of the castle and at the same time I am responsible for my actions to the school and its director. My grandmother used to tell me about the importance of her signature. It was a long time ago. I didn't take her words seriously. And now, when the thick book lay in front of me, I felt

cold inside. Feeling the stern gaze of Brutilde on me, I obeyed my choice. My grandmother's choice, first of all. I will study at Nordlig and become a strong sorceress, a tall lady.

I took a long and fluffy feather floating in the air above the book and wrote my first and last name. I tried to print the letters more beautifully, but it didn't work. First, the plumage was constantly moving and blocked my view. And most importantly, the tip of the pen was scribbled over the paper. The result was like a chicken's paw. I looked at the signature with disappointment and resentment and hardly recognized my name in them. It was impossible to fix anything.

– well! – exclaimed Brutilde. The pen and the book spontaneously flew to a small desk cabinet in the corner of the room. The director handed me a folded sheet of paper. – This is your schedule. It lists all the assigned hours. Do not be late, we are strict with this. You can check the exact time of Nordlig with the clock in the front hall. We all live and work for them.

I nodded.

– Your new school uniform is in your suitcase. And Madame Rector, Mrs. Argento, will show you to your chambers.

Brutilde looked at the door. I turned around, but there was no one there. And it couldn't have been, I would have heard if someone had come in. I turned back to the director.

– Good luck in your first year of knowledge at Nordlig.

Brutilda smiled. Her eyebrows rose a little, and the gesture changed her face. It became kind and caring. Brutilda now looked more like my grandmother. A smile appeared on my face too. I feel better. I do not know what I expected from the meeting with the director, but my spirits improved.

– Thank. – I answered and left the office.

They were already waiting for me in the corridor. A tall, thin sorceress in a dark green robe; with a fashionable, miniature, the same emerald color, a hat shifted to one side, which did not hide the shiny bronze-colored hair, but emphasized their extraordinary splendor. Madame Argento.

Chapter 4. Through the corridors

«I am Madame Argento, rector of the Nordlig School. Follow me. I'll show you where the women's hostel is. Boys and girls live in different wings of the castle. And meals and some lessons are held together. You yourself will learn everything about this and many other things later. «And Madame Argento took me to the women's hostel. It was located right there in the castle. Great!

I turned around and noticed that my suitcase and small duffel bag were gone. This worried me. My stuff! Someone took them. By themselves, they could not evaporate. Or could they?

«It's afternoon.» Lessons will start in half an hour.

– Ah ... – I gave a voice. He sounded uncertain, aloof, – My things... Bag and suitcase. They... I didn't know how to say Gone. Wouldn't that seem like an accusation of theft?

– Do not worry. They are already waiting for you in the hostel. – answered Madame Argento, turning her face to me. Then she raised her hand and snapped her fingers.

– Voila!

I guess my mouth opened with confusion. Voila?

At the mention of dinner, my stomach rumbled. I immediately felt hungry. And I was ashamed to admit this to Madame Argento. I decided that I would survive one missed lunch. I also figured out how I could have skipped lunch: after all, I went in a balloon with Franklin at about eleven o'clock in the afternoon! And the flight itself took several minutes. So it seemed to me. What if the travel time actually took longer? This would then explain my awakened feeling of hunger. Yes, I didn't really have breakfast. But I would be hungry in a few hours. Or do they dine here much earlier?

Then the hurricane of thoughts about hunger, my suitcase, old Franklin disappeared. I was amazed at the beauty of the castle.

The heels of Madame Argento's footsteps thudded on the stone floor. Even thick red carpets could not drown out the rector's confident gait. I almost ran after her to keep up with her. Sometimes I stumbled because I didn't look at my feet. All my attention was absorbed by the castle. These corridors and walls, architecture and decoration. This was the pinnacle of creative thought. I guessed baroque styles and notes of older architectures. My eyes darted. I turned to the paintings, canvases hanging in the corridors and huge colored tapestries. A whole museum could be assembled from all these paintings. Stern faces in huge wigs. Ladies in lush dresses. The artists depicted in their creations in great detail gorgeous balls, festive meals, faces of significant persons of bygone times and art workers and perfectly reflected the spirit of the past era.

They depicted hunting scenes, and simply landscapes, and much more, than people lived many centuries ago. But for me it all seemed like a fairy tale, not connected with reality, the fiction of an unknown artist. How can a lady of advanced age wear such a cap on her head, more like a rubber bathing cap, together with such an expensive dress, and a choker around her neck? I think no. But at the time, it might seem fashionable.

High ceilings were propped up by semi-columns with lush bas-reliefs. Huge stained glass windows, bright patterns on the curtains, in which I dreamed of unusual colored embroidery, and mystical stories dedicated to important events of magical life.

I reluctantly left it all behind and stepped onto the flight of stairs, followed Madame Argento to the second floor. Here the splendor has diminished. The ceilings were of normal height, the paintings on the walls were not visible. The half-curtained windows threw in a faint light, but still chased away the melancholy twilight. There were few doors. This was more like a school in the world of ordinary people, if not for the exquisite carvings on wooden doors. I was sure that behind these doors were classrooms, devoid of the expensive decoration of the main hall of the castle and the adjacent galleries.

Madame Argento led me down a quiet corridor, opened the door, behind which there was a spiral staircase, and we climbed even higher. The steps went further, where above through an invisible window, blinding sunbeams lay on the stone wall. I smelled a hint of floral scent. Our path passed this welcoming sign. Now he was walking along a narrow dark passage, and my anxiety was growing. I was afraid to appear in front of other students. I'm new and I don't know anyone yet. How will other girls accept me?

Then the thought came to me that just as I am now walking along a castle that is new for me, one day my grandmother was walking. The young woman, probably unsure of herself, was heading to the women's hostel, and did not know what awaited her outside the door. And my mom? My grandmother did not tell me where she studied. But I'm sure it's also in Nordlig. Perhaps it was here that she met her dad, and they fell in love. These walls mean more to me than I thought. Here I can touch the past of people dear to me.

I clenched my fists for a second, trying to give myself confidence. The rector opened the door, entered, and stopped. I immediately bumped into her and stumbled on the threshold, taking a step back. I hastened to squeeze out an apology and stopped short.

We stood in a spacious room with about twenty girls of different ages. Their faces immediately turned to us. The din of conversation subsided. All girls were in school uniforms. And I stood alone, unlike everyone else in my usual clothes. A second later there was a loud greeting:

– Good afternoon, Madame Argento!

There was silence. The girls stood and did not move. It seemed to me that they were all gathered on purpose so that they would meet me. I could hear my heartbeat and the crackling of logs in the large fireplace. My suitcase and bag lay near the door.

The rector nodded:

– Good day to you, young ladies! – Then she made a gesture in my direction, I felt a soft push in my back and obediently took two steps forward.

«This is Miss Roselyn Burling. Your new colleague. I ask you to love, and favor, and help her become «Heflig Miss»!

Heflig miss! It meant: a polite miss, a well-mannered lady. I felt humiliated. If I were even in school uniform, I would not stand out from the general mass of students and would feel much more confident.

Everyone looked at me, and I felt myself blush.

– What should I say? Madame Rector asked quietly. And then a chorus of voices filled the room:

– Welcome, Miss Burling!

Greetings for me. It was more chaotic, not as well-coordinated as for Madame Argento. I was confused and speechless. Now, of course, I should have said something too. And it was not supposed to be «nice to meet you», but something more valuable. I was silent, felt helpless and burned with shame.

Madame Argento winked at me and headed for the exit. Her steps began to subside outside the door. Someone chuckled, apparently trying to suppress a chuckle. One girl nodded amiably. Most of the students looked at Madame Rector. And then they returned to their business, scattering around the room.

But a plump girl with a short haircut, with a round face and plump lips, looked at me unfriendly. She collapsed again in the armchair by the fireplace, where she had sat before my arrival. I read some inexplicable hatred in her black eyes. She whispered something to her neighbor and now both unkindly bored their eyes at me.

I didn't like these two girls right away. Especially a complete «toad». I wish I could conjure a fire spell and watch her scream while engulfed in flames.

I took my bag to distract myself from negative thoughts. My first day at school, my first appearance in this room in front of all the girls. An important moment on my journey to the lady. And I got angry seeing these two gossips like this. Bad thoughts must be extinguished, and it won't be easy.

One of the students came up to me. She was older than the other girls.

– My name is Suzanne. Suzanne Dorte.

I smiled at her and held out my hand to shake, but Suzanne bowed her head a little and lowered her eyes. A kind of half-bow. I immediately pulled my hand and bowed my head too. It turned out for me not so gracefully as I wanted. Suddenly Suzanne laughed and grabbed my hand herself and squeezed.

– This is such a joke! I hope you will forgive me for this? Although, in fact, this is how you need to say hello when you meet one of the elders in the hallway. I am the headman of the girls. Come on, I'll show you your bedroom.

I smiled back. I liked Suzanne. I have a good headman. Not sullen and not angry as it could be. Suzanne grabbed my hand and pulled me along.

– Bedrooms are upstairs. Yours on the top floor.

I followed Suzanne up the spiral staircase. We found ourselves in a small staircase tower, in which on each floor there was a vault and a round room with three doors. As it turned out, a turret with a spiral staircase was adjacent to another, larger tower. The bedrooms were located in it. Light fell only through narrow vertical windows above the steps. A cold wind blew into these cracks. I shivered from the draft and turned away from the light. I was afraid of heights and did not want to see the ground far below my feet.

Suddenly Suzanne released my hand and spoke cheerfully, jumping over the step cheerfully:

– You can always contact me. If you don't know something, it doesn't work, you feel unwell or something else... and in general, if you need any help, contact us. I will be happy to help!

Climbing to the third floor, we found ourselves under the very roof. The round area was less well lit than the others. Frozen, out of breath, Suzanne asked:

– Do you use pearl shampoo?

– What? Not.

And then she suddenly spoke in a very quiet voice, as if she was afraid to wake someone up:

– Sorry, but there is only free space here. Now, if you arrived early, you could choose a room and better ... – She pointed to the closed door. «My bedroom is in the next tower. The entrance to it is on the opposite side of the girls' tower living room. Bye then!

And Suzanne went down the stairs.

– Thank. I smiled at Suzanne. Although her words of regret about my room alerted me. So, I will have to live in a terrible closet with a leaking roof? Yes, I'll catch a cold right away, I'll sleep with a temperature! What's the matter with learning magic?!

Chapter 5. Ismeralda Duerre

I opened the door and looked around the room. To my delight, it was quite cozy, warm and clean inside. Two beds with thick duvets and duvets, two dressers, a huge wardrobe and a small fireplace. A couple of lamps hung on the wall. Their bright light finally drove away my fears about the terrible room. No ceiling leaks. No drafts.

On the left bed, knocking the blanket into a lump, lay the girl and looked at the ceiling. More precisely, her legs lay. She herself slid backwards onto the carpet between the beds, and her golden hair sprawled randomly across the carpet, dyed pink at the back. Quite a bit, just the ends. This surprised me. The school has rules. And hair coloring?! And in that color?! Pink! It definitely went wrong. She must be brave to show up at school like this.

My neighbor's skirt slipped a little, exposing her underwear. The girl twisted a magic wand in her fingers, in her other hand she held an open book, at the pages of which she poked with a stick from time to time.

Somehow I did not even think that I would have a roommate. But that didn't even upset me. Only alarmed.

I looked at the door. The only white plaque bore the words Ismeralda Duerre. I entered the room.

– Hello. My name is Roselyn. Rose, too. And you?

In response, the girl began to hum quietly to herself:

– Isme-isme! Isme-isme-e!..

I went to the other bed and put my bag next to me. The girl did not turn to me, but said in a melodious voice:

– What brings you to me?

– To you? – I was outraged by such impudence. And a little roughly answered: – I will live here!

– I have?

– Why do you have? This room is now half mine!

– Ah, but I thought ... – the girl's voice fell silent in mid-sentence. In the unspoken phrase, I caught notes of sadness or even sorrow in him. The girl sighed and continued to hum something to herself. I noticed that my bed was not made evenly, in the middle there is a funnel in a crumpled blanket. I glanced unkindly at Ismeralda, but didn't say anything.

I needed to change. I opened my bag and then I remembered that my suitcase with a school uniform was left at the bottom. I followed him, but before I could leave the room, I froze at the door. My eyebrows rose in surprise, and then I burst out laughing. Here is magic!

Another sign appeared under the name «Ismeralda Duerre». And it read «Roselyn Burling.» I began to go down cheerfully. And behind me there was a rustle of paper and a dull thud. Ismeralda tossed the book, and it fell on the carpet next to the fireplace.

Chapter 6. Acquaintance with Jamely and Matilda

In the common room of the female dormitory (living room), the number of people was significantly reduced. The fat, nasty little girl with short hair and her friend were still spinning around the fireplace. Two other girls at the table were copying something in their notebooks. One passed me and began to climb the stairs.

My suitcase stood in the same place where it had been waiting for me before. I was wondering how heavy it would be and whether I could drag it upstairs, when the laugh of an unpleasant girl who reminds me more of a toad than a lady-to-be caught my attention. Acrid disgusting sound. Her gray, short, messy hair made her look sloppy. And the only braid did not reach the shoulder blades and was a thin thin tail covered with black elastic. From this it was a little sorry for the " fat woman». But only until she turned to me. Large features of a round face. Big potato nose, plump lips twisted

in a disdainful grin. The grin of a predatory beast. She is fat, heavy and, probably, therefore, stronger than other girls.

I felt with a sixth sense that perhaps the source of ridicule was me. And, of course, the loud, ostentatious laugh was addressed to me. Who else?

The toad turned around at my appearance and, squeezing out a sour face, in a nasal voice stretched out the following words:

– You were going to sleep in pink pajamas?! Ha-a-ha-a!

I felt a sticky chill on my back, leaned over to the suitcase. The lid was ajar. I looked inside. My new school uniform has been crumpled and pushed to the edge. There were no pink pajamas. Someone rummaged through my things. And who – I already knew. With rage raging inside, I jumped to the Toad and pushed her away from the fireplace. On the logs, blackened with flames, lay my pajamas.

The toad sighed, but stayed on his feet. Although she had nowhere to fall, except in a chair. Her friend poked my shoulder and blurted out:

– Why are you fighting? Are you crazy?

This girl's hair was raven black, cropped short. She looked like a boy in features. Large, protruding eyebrows made the face stern.

I couldn't handle two, common sense told me, but the rage demanded immediate revenge.

– How dare you?! I pointed to the fireplace.

– And like this! I wanted to! What do you say? – Now the Toad pushed me in the back as I turned to her friend. I fell to the floor. I hurt my elbow badly and, rubbing it, I felt tears flowing against my will.

– There was a «queen» here! Comes to school whenever he wants. You will walk on my hind legs! Skinny heron!

From such a stream of insults, I went mad, kicked Toad in the ankle. The toad, to my triumph, could not resist and fell, clutching on the chair.

– Oh you!

– Khe-e! – Toad's friend hurried to help her up.

And I jumped up and grabbed Toad's hair. This was a mistake. My fingers immediately slipped out of my opponent's short tail. She, in turn, grabbed my hair and pulled me hard to the side. My head was spinning. I lost my balance, and immediately felt a blow to the back of my head. I was lying on the floor. Added to the pain in my head was the aching itch on the tips of the fingers of my left hand, these are my nails. I think I scratched my opponent.

– How dare you, you reptile? – The toad rushed to me. She kicked my suitcase, it's good that it wasn't me, and hastened to leave the common room. Her friend jumped out after.

I sat up slowly and looked around. Here is my suitcase, here is the fireplace in which my pajamas burned out. And no one is around. Only at the far table are two frightened girls looking at me. Then I realized that this skirmish had made enough noise.

My head was buzzing, the back of my head ached. I leaned against the suitcase to stand, then pulled it. It turned out to be heavy. I was able to drag him up. But in my current state, when a bruise on my elbow hurt, and my head was spinning, and I myself was inflated, it seemed to me an impossible task. I nevertheless pulled my load towards the stairs, did not want to leave my things here, but after two meters I gave up.

– Hey how are you? – It was one of the girls silently approached. – Where is your magic wand? Indeed, where? In my bag upstairs in the bedroom. It was there that I put it at home.

– I will help. – The voice caught genuine sympathy and determined desire. The girl drove her magic wand over the suitcase.

My suitcase, swaying, flew off the floor and floated upstairs. With a resounding thud, he hit the steps, but moved forward. The girl supported me by the hand and led me upstairs.

On the second floor, I hissed:

– How dare they?! I'll show them some more!

«This is Jamely Ports and Matilda Reinhart. You better stay away from them and that's it.

– I «hold on»? What have they done to my clothes!

The girl said nothing. And the voice of reason inside me noticed: of course, she is right: do not run into trouble. What do you say when it comes to Madame Argento or Director Brutilde? And grandma? I don't want her to know which lady I am.

Chapter 7. What is the punishment?

I went up to my room. Ismeralda jumped on the bed. The pillow and the book were still on the floor. And the girl was waving a magic wand over her head. Seeing my tear-stained face, she was surprised and asked:

– What happened?

I didn't answer. Ismeralda looked past me and asked in surprise:

– Monica?

My assistant appeared after me. The suitcase flopped to the floor, and I, exhausted and depressed, on an empty bed. It was impossible not to notice that they were also jumping on my feather bed. Of course, Ismeralda. I didn't give a damn about it now.

– My name is Monica. My bedroom is in the next tower. I am from the second Grant. – My assistant spoke in a cheerful voice and was silent for a minute. Ismeralda looked at Monica in bewilderment and waved her hand with a magic wand:

– Hi Monica!

Ismeralda sat down on the edge of the shifted feather bed and, breathing heavily, looked at my tear-stained face in surprise.

Monica glanced sideways at Ismeralda's wand and said, putting her hand on my shoulder:

«Don't think about Jamel and her henchmen. You can't cope with them. So try to forget this incident. And you shouldn't start a war either.

I rubbed my eyes. I felt grateful to Monica for helping me with the suitcase. I myself was now unable to conjure anything. Nodding to her, I noticed to myself that I would not give up so easily. There will be revenge for the insult. Monica turned to leave, but then Suzanne burst into the room, and Monica had to step aside.

– Rosalina! – Shouted Suzanne and jumped to me. She plopped down heavily next to the bed so that I almost jumped to the floor. Suzanne put her arms around me and began stroking my hair.

– Oh my God! I just found out what happened. I'm sorry! Lily found me and said that the new girl rushed to fight Jamely! Of course, I know Jamely. And I'm sure she did something bad again!

– They rummaged in my things! They threw my pajamas in the fireplace!

– Oh, poor thing! Did you get hit?

She touched my cheek. Pain stung the right side of my face.

– Oh! – I shuddered. The face was still burning. There may even be a bruise on the cheek.

– Sorry, I didn't mean to. – Susanna was alarmed and ran out of the room. – You need to put something cold on your cheek.

Monica barely had time to press against the door so as not to be swept out of the way, and then sadly shook her head and left.

Ismeralda said softly:

– This is a bad girl, Jamely. I always forget her name. Zha-me-li. It even sounds strange.

Ismeralda pointed her wand at her eye and, squinting, began to examine its end. Only now did I notice that Ismeralda's magic wand was broken off. Ismeralda struggled to see the core of her magical item.

Suzanne returned. She handed me a tube of cream.

– Apply to injury. It will get easier.

– He’s cold. Even icy! – I exclaimed.

– Yes. It was I who bewitched him with a chilling spell. Is that great? Suzanne, flattered by my surprise, smiled.

After a minute I felt better. The hands stopped shaking.

– This Zhamely. What do you advise me to do with her? Who can be informed that she...

– Not! What are you? Suzanne threw up her hands. – Do not tell anyone!

«What?» I couldn’t believe my ears. – She must be punished!

– I agree, but now you will not change anything, and you will only receive punishment.

– What?

– Listen to me! It’s better not to tell the older ones. Teachers, that is. – And Suzanne began to quickly explain her argument: – If they find out, they will punish all of us, all the girls, that is! Here are the rules. Do you understand? We’re going to have to sit all Saturday writing on Noble Conduct or something like that. If we’re lucky, we’ll get Mrs. Fossil. And if Mrs. Bennetti takes over our «education», then all Sunday will have to sit at work. She will arrange for us such «Rules of the correct tone for a real lady» that you will climb the wall! And an apology won’t help.

– This is unfair! Why should everyone be punished? Can’t I complain about them? I looked at Ismeralda, seeking her understanding or advice. I knew from her face that she was frightened. It seems that the threat to sit out on the day off for additional exercises was real.

– Yes, I remember how on New Year’s Eve I rewrote «One Hundred Rules of Lady Conduct.» It’s a pity I don’t remember them. Or was it for Christmas?

– I, as the headman, in turn will talk with Jamely and Matilda. I will forbid them to come near you. Good? Did you agree?

I nodded. What can you do about it. I was new to this learning environment and could be wrong. And I also didn’t want to spoil my relationship with my headman, Suzanne. She calmed me down, took my side, brought an ice cream tube. In a word, I tried to help everyone I could.

– Good. – I said so softly that I myself barely heard my own voice. And then all the weight of the resentment fell from my shoulders. I rubbed my eyes and noticed that the room was more welcoming and nicer than a minute ago.

– I think it was Christmas. – Thought aloud Ismeralda. – Susie, don’t you remember, huh?

– Ismerald, I don’t like being called that. You know.

– Yes, sorry. I forgot. You are half French.

– Right, half. And I’m proud of my French roots. And this «Susie» of yours sounds like a commoner from the English countryside. As if I were a laundress or some kind of cook!

I laughed. Suzanne’s business tone and her comparison with the washerwoman struck me as funny. Suzanne turned to me and smiled too.

– Hmm. And I like that name. It’s so kind.

– Ismerald!

– I understand you. I will try to remember.

– Yeah, try! – Suzanne snapped and in turn answered: – And buy yourself a new wand. This one is broken.

– I like this. Ismeralda tossed her wand and deftly caught it. At the same time, she had to flop down on the feather bed.

«This is how I feel the magic inside the wand. And I understand her better. Do you want to try? Ismeralda handed her wand to Suzanne. She pulled away:

– Thank you, I am not eager. I have to go. I have a lesson in five minutes. I don’t want to be late. Suzanne fluttered out the door. Before she had time to close, Suzanne’s head stuck back into the room.

– Check your schedule. Suddenly you too have a lesson now.

It was already meant for me. I hastily unrolled the sheet I received from Madame Brutilde and frowned. Numbers, a bunch of incomprehensible words. It takes time to figure out the schedule.

– Ismeralda, tell me what lessons I have today.

– So-ak. Ismeralda dropped her wand and took the leaf. – Look, right here. Today is the second day of the school week. The first one has already ended. He was yesterday. So-ak. At ten o'clock you have the Wizard's Water Course, the first Grant.

– Thank! – I was delighted. My first lesson at a magic school. Great.

– It's time for you to go. – Graduated from Ismeralda.

I looked at my watch on my left wrist. Twelve twenty, arrows pointed.

– Lesson in fifty minutes.

– It can not be. Look. Ismeralda slipped into her pocket.

– What time is it now? – I turned to Ismeralda, fearing that I was in the wrong time zone. What if here time goes an hour ahead?

– An hour of the day and five minutes. – Ismeralda glanced at the small gold dial and before hiding the watch back in her pocket, bent her left ear towards them.

– What about? Is it already 1 pm? – I didn't believe it.

– And five minutes. Ismeralda repeated slowly.

– You take it wrong.

– Not. Today, after breakfast, I put them on the big clock in the main hall.

Clock in the hall! I completely forgot. Madame Director, Brutilde, told me about this watch. The Nordlig school lives by the time set by this clock.

I began to quickly take off my clothes. I had to change into school uniforms as soon as I came.

Chapter 8. Introductory course of the wizard

I never thought that I don't know so much yet. My grandmother studied with me at home, I read books, and then I felt like a complete beginner.

My first lesson

I jumped out of my room onto the stairs and almost rolled head over heels down. I managed to grab hold of the window opening in the wall in time. So I just stretched out on the sharp steps and whined. My school bag flew further. It contained my new stick, my old grandmother told me to leave at home, notebooks and writing utensils. Plus a schedule sheet.

I rose gently and cautiously walked down to the common room. An alarmed girl was waiting for me near the door from the tower. She knew my name and babbled quickly:

«Suzanne asked me to wait for you. We ran quickly, otherwise we won't have time! – And the girl immediately jumped out the door.

I thanked Susanna in my mind and hurried after the girl. Her white hair was pulled back into a neat, short ponytail that bounced up and down with every step.

– Wait! I can't keep up with you! – I croaked, feeling pain in my knee after falling on the stairs. The girl stopped at the end of the corridor and shook her fists.

– My leg hurts. – I complained, fearing that the girl would run forward again and this time leave me.

– Hurry! – Begged the girl. – Cornelia and Bridget are probably already in class! And because of you, I'll be late!

– Do you know where we have a lesson? – I clarified, remembering the entry in the schedule.

– I know. Come on!

And the girl ran again. I hobbled along as fast as I could. And fortunately, the pain in my knee suddenly disappeared.

In turn, I tried to strike up a conversation, make friends with my guide and somehow distract myself from fear, appear at the door in front of the full class and explain why I came later.

– My name is Rosealynn. But you can also Rose. – Breathing heavily into the back of my guide, I whispered.

– I know, I know! – Suddenly whispered plaintively «my guide» and slowly trudged off, listening to the sounds in the empty corridor. I took a step, realizing that my steps are loudly echoing throughout the school. There was no one in front of the class. And now a solemn, strict silence reigned around.

To my deep relief, the door to the classroom was open. Perhaps we still made it?

There were only three boys and three girls in the room. They sat at their desks and turned when we appeared. I counted, we only have eight students. I breathed a sigh of relief. I have never liked large groups. Sitting down at the desk right behind the black-haired boy, I noticed that my companion sat down in the empty seat on the left. And then I saw «her». Matilda, my co-abuser and friend of Jacqueline! She was sitting in the farthest row from me. I felt a surge of anger again. Matilda glared viciously in my direction. I remembered what Susanna said.

And then I noticed the teacher. In a blue, seemingly airy robe, she seemed to float through the classroom and stopped in the center, next to the piano. A small table with a high, thin leg stood on her other hand. There was nothing on it. And I wondered what awaits us for the lesson? This whole hall breathed with the subtle charms of music, something sublime, but in no way the «Introductory course of the wizard.»

– I'm glad to see you all. – The lady in the blue dress spoke in a clear, not loud voice. I heard a slight accent that lent a melodic tone to her voice. It was pleasant to listen to.

– My name is Frau Mendelssohn, and I will teach you the very first and most important course in your magical development. «Introductory Course» of the first Grant. And so when you know how to contact me, let's say hello! I say: Hello, young wizards! You answer: Hello, Frau-u, – in the word of Frau and her name, I again heard notes of accent. I liked him. Definitely; – Mendlson!

I coughed softly, preparing to greet my first teacher and...

– Glad to see you, young wizards!

...together with all the students she loudly reported:

– Hello, Frau Mendelssohn!

– Well. Well done! – The teacher praised. I smiled. While the lesson reminded me of a game.

– And now let's get to know each other a little closer.

At this remark from the teacher, I was frightened. I didn't want to stand in front of the whole class and tell about myself, as it was in my old school on my first day. But to my relief, it wasn't necessary. Madame Mendelssohn simply read the list of names from her sheet, and the student got up for a second and immediately sat down.

– Allan White, James Clarence and Edge Lawrence...

I immediately got confused in these names. The last names of the last two guys seemed to me the same and difficult to remember, especially when you hear them one after another. There were not many guys in my class – only three. Girls – five:

– Lily Leng! «That was the name of my savior guide.

– Cornelia Snow, Bridget Oourd, Matilda Reinhart!

Matilda is that nasty and evil person, Jamely's friend. Ooh!

All the names were new to me, and I immediately forgot most of them. Hard-to-pronounce surnames – that's for sure. But the name of Matilda is etched into my memory. Reinhart! It even sounds unpleasant!

– Roselyn Burling!

I hurried to get up. And she sat down with joy. From a height above my desk, it was scary and a little uncomfortable when the whole class was looking at you.

Madame Mendelssohn put down the sheet of names on the table.

– I said that this course will be on your first Grant. Grants are academic years at a school. When you successfully pass all the exams, you will be admitted to the lessons of the second Grant, and so on. Look at the emblem embroidered on the left side of your school uniform.

I already had time to make out her. A beautiful capital letter H with curls, placed in a golden circle, from which rays diverged in all directions. And under H was a small star. I touched the star on my chest.

– Northern sun, and the first letter of our institution. Underneath you will find a star. This star is your pass to lessons. One star is the first Grant. In your second year of study, a new star will appear under the emblem. And then you will have two stars and a pass to the lessons of the second Grant. This is clear? Now let's get your magic wands, or artifacts, if anyone has them.

I took my wand out of my bag and looked at the other guys. They also had sticks similar to mine. The girl sitting next to me looked at my wand with interest. I noted that we have the same. Probably all the student sticks were similar.

Frau Mendelssohn walked between the desks, looking down at our chopsticks, but not touching them.

– Great, great. – She purred. After making a small circle around me, she returned to the piano and folded her palms across her chest.

– Magic wands are your magic artifacts. They enhance the power of the wizard, direct it outward. With them, you will quickly gain confidence and develop a magic vein in yourself! Magic wands are very handy for young learners. They are not as powerful as artifacts. You yourself will understand why the wand is what you need now. Adult magicians have more expensive artifacts. These are already precious heirlooms, passed down from generation to generation. For example, wands, in the cores of which rare minerals are hidden, rings, watches. Any item can be an artifact. But with the magic in it!

From the first desk came a thin, uncertain voice. I didn't hear what he said, and I got up in my chair to see better.

– I'm sorry, what? Speak louder, young magician!

Frau leaned over to the boy at the first desk.

– Well. Now let's go again. Just before you ask anything, raise your hand and wait until I turn to you.

The boy's ears turned red. I didn't see his face, but, of course, it turned red too.

A thin, trembling hand went up.

– Yes, young wizard? Stand up and introduce yourself, please.

– James Clorence. – His voice sounded much quieter than Frau Mendelssohn.

– Repeat your question!

– I wanted to ask you, Frau Mendelssohn, what kind of magic wand... Is there an artifact?

– Great question. You can sit down! – Frau Mendelssohn was delighted and raised her hand in front of her.

– I have rings!

I noticed the rims of the rings on Frau's thin graceful fingers. When the teacher turned her palm, the Sun jumped around the walls, ceiling and piano in bright bunnies. There were small stones on the rings, difficult to distinguish until this moment. I squinted at the black and red diamond, green like a cat's eye, a ball and white, like pearls, a stone on gold rings. So it seemed to me, at least from my last place. And I was sitting on the fourth desk from Madame.

– Great! – I heard a sigh of admiration. James Clorence said that. And I caught myself thinking that I myself am saying something similar, only in a whisper. James sat closest to Frau, and fell more under the spell of magic stones. Frau said nothing to James. She did not remark that he should raise his hand and wait for her attention, but smiled.

Then Frau told us how to handle our chopsticks. I didn't know, but they needed more attention and even respect. They are like little pets, animals that should be tamed. You can't throw. Then I remembered Ismeralda and the way she handled her wand. Keep only in a pocket near the heart. Rarely, but possible, to put in a school bag. Wipe clean with a silk cloth. I kept waiting to see if Frau would say that the sticks should be given a name, like these pets, but she said nothing of the kind. The cat has a name. And here is a magical artifact!

And you need to use it differently than I did it at home. You need to take it in the palm of your hand, try to feel the vibration of the stick, hold it evenly with straight fingers and speak the spell not to yourself, but to the stick. Somehow I did not notice anything like this behind my grandmother. Perhaps the grandmother's ring was more powerful or sensitive, that it worked like that. Or maybe he himself studied his owner so well that he did not need an appeal? I must ask my grandmother sometime. Only when will I see her again?

– Magic is a gift and a responsibility. – Frau Mendelssohn's words came through my thoughts. – You are just starting to learn and have no idea what hard work awaits you. It takes years to become a powerful magician and perform excellent spells. And in this school you will only lay the beginning of your path. Despite the fact that your magic is quite weak and the enchantment cannot seriously harm, never use magic recklessly. It is forbidden to use magic on other students at school. I know what I am saying. Temptations to resolve disputes or even joke are always present. Not once were students expelled for this, even from the elders Grant. Therefore, please remember this once and for all.

My dreams were crying to punish Zhamely with some kind of fire spell.

– Frau Mendelssohn, show us some powerful magic. – Asked Allan White. It seems this boy was braver than the others. He raised his hand and then stood up and said all this!

– Thinking, it can be arranged. You have just started school and a good incentive will be helpful.

Frau Mendelssohn slightly raised her palm with the rings, and already around the desks the wind blew, hundreds, thousands of small snowflakes swirled. I found myself in the snow in the forest.

Huge fir trees surrounded me and the other students. Behind the white shroud of the blizzard, it was not visible what was hidden further. And Frau Mendelssohn stood in the center of this whirlpool of snow and was absolutely calm. Another moment, and the vision, if it was it, and not in reality, was gone. I didn't have time to be scared, only amazed. I gripped my wand tighter.

– Wow! – I heard Allan's enthusiastic exclamation. He twisted his head, trying to figure out where the blizzard had gone.

The teacher smiled contentedly as she watched our reaction. Then she said:

– Of course, you will learn in more detail about the weather charms and the charms of movement in space in the lesson from Mr. Thomsen. It is he who teaches «Chary».

And then suddenly Frau Mendelssohn started talking about order at school. And I was afraid that somehow she found out about my confrontation with Jamely and Matilda. After all, it is not possible that the discussion about this would have gone completely by accident?

– The school has rules. All of them are aimed not only at discipline and order. Compliance with some has been credited for your safety. For example, don't leave your dorm at night. And outside the castle walls it is generally dangerous. And don't ask me why. And that's all. In turn, I want to add that Mr. Noel and his dog live and work in the castle. Of course, none of you have seen them yet. And it's good if you don't see. Well, Mr. Noel is the guardian of the castle. He protects these walls, the area around them up to the black forest. His work falls on night hours. But for Mr. Noel, it's even better. I can't imagine how he would have coped during the day. – And the corners of Frau Mendelssohn's lips twitched in a slight smile. – And if you think that Mr. Noel can not be afraid, then his dog is definitely worth it. She... How could I put it mildly? She's a ghost!

At the last word, the whole class froze. The teacher, focusing on the word ghost, swam along the piano and continued:

«Ghosts are not that rare. All the more so here. Frau moved her hand around her, as if pointing to the walls. – You probably remember that on the way to this castle you had to see the glow. You can find out for yourself what it is. It will be helpful to you. Let's see which path you have already chosen. You will find a book about this in the library. This is your homework. I do not require it, but I advise it. This concludes the lesson. Everybody's Free.

Chapter 9. Allan

At the end of the lesson, I felt myself yawning. I was attacked by a slight homesickness and weakness. Probably out of habit. When I sat motionless on the chair for almost an hour? Even my legs were numb. Therefore, I gladly accepted the end of the lesson. And she ran out into the corridor one of the first, waited for Lily. She showed up with another girl. Cornelia.

At the sight of Matilda, who went out into the corridor with a boyish gait, I stepped aside. She was saying something to the girl sitting next to her in class, I think Bridget, and she didn't notice me. Matilda was dissatisfied with something. And Bridget listened with great attention and exclaimed:

– Can not be!

Matilda repeated, and I made out her words:

– Northern Lights. That's what it is! And so much importance! As if the earth is enveloped in a magical flame!

Carried away by the conversation, they did not pay attention to me, for that I was glad.

The whole class was impressed by the lesson. The boy with white hair, his name was Allan, said:

– I think Frau Mendelssohn did the right thing by showing her magic. Now I will not rest until I start to get something like that!

He walked beside Lily. And waited for her answer.

– Yes. – Lily answered in a weak voice. She, of course, was flattered by Allan's attention.

– I have never heard such a parting word. I was told that the items for each are selected individually. And we must try, otherwise, instead of powerful enchantments, you will have to study something not so important.

Lily walked past me. I followed her and called out:

– Lily, what's our next lesson?

I was clutching the schedule sheet and already read the names of the subject, but the classroom number opposite the lesson on «Water Enchantment» was not indicated.

– Lesson? Ah, lesson. Let me have a look. Hmm, now there will be «Water enchantment», and where it is not written.

Allan looked at me, came closer and said:

– Me too. We need to get together in the big hall. I think about big hours.

Allan turned his paper.

– There is a note in my schedule: to gather in the main hall. And you have?

Allan looked over Lily's shoulder. She flinched as his cheek touched her hair and smiled.

– Right. Lily chuckled and handed the sheet back to me. – There it is written at the very bottom.

«I thought this meeting would be after class. – I explained, feeling uncomfortable, felt that I made myself stupid.

– Come on, let's see. Edge, Edge? – Allan called. – This is the Edge Lawrence.

Introduced a student from our class Allan. Edge looked out from behind Allan and said:

– Hello.

– And this is Lily and Cornelia. – continued Allan. Then he turned to me and fell silent.

– Roselyn. – Prompted Lily.

– Roselyn. – Allan repeated.

The edge nodded to me. I just said hello. And we with such a company went to the ceremonial hall.

– You see, – Now Allan turned to everyone, including me: – We have the same lessons! There is no individual approach yet.

– Exactly noticed. – Lily agreed, she caught every word of Allan.

– But I'm only glad of that.

On the stairs, Lily and Allan pulled ahead, and I nearly pushed on the narrow steps with James Clurence. He obligingly made way for me. I never saw him after I left the class. But the Edge breathed into my neck and did not lag a step. I was glad to get out of the narrow flight of stairs.

There was no one in the front hall. Allan's voice grew louder, and the echoes of the huge stone hall only added solemnity to his speech. He talked about his family of wizards of the White family. I've never heard of such.

I recognized the front doors of the castle. I only walked through them an hour ago, but they seemed to me to have aged, as if a hundred years had passed.

In the grand hall, we chose a place right under the clock. Now was a good time to check the time. My watch showed the time almost an hour ago. I set the time, glad that I had shown prudence and had not forgotten about it. Not far from us, Matilda was waving her magic wand. She tried to cast some kind of charm, but they did not work. Matilda was impatiently shaking her «artifact», and Bridget seemed to have lost all interest and looked sideways at us.

– This stupid school stick is to blame for everything! Matilda hissed. – I always did it! There are only problems with this piece of wood!

– Maybe you mixed something up? – Bridget told her.

– What is Bridget doing there? Lily looked at them. «I don't know this new one.

– Matilda. – I suggested dryly.

I noticed that James stands apart from everyone. The overhead clock chimed and began to strike. The ringing sound of a small bell shook the air menacingly. The whole mechanism of the clock seemed to tremble along with this ringing. All silently looked at the dial.

And when the echo of the last blow rang in the air, several unfamiliar students appeared in the hall. Three girls and one boy. They were older and from the second Grant, as I noticed from the stars under the emblem on the chest. They slowed down and now looked at us appraisingly. It seems that something confused them. When the ringing died down, a quick knock of heels was heard from the side of the main staircase. The Water Charm teacher was heading towards us.

Chapter 10. In Depth

– Good afternoon, class. I'm Mrs. Wannelsker! – The teacher said in an imperious voice. There was something about her that I didn't like right away. As I thought about what worries me about this sorceress, a chaotic chorus of greetings from my classmates was heard around me:

– Good afternoon, Mrs. Wannelsker!

I was confused and only had time to open my mouth, scolding myself for my forgetfulness. The guys from the second Grant saved the situation. Their voices sounded louder and more harmonious than anyone else. Our greeting, that is, Allan, Lily, Cornelia, did not resemble much the way we greeted Frau Mendelssohn. Just unsure babble! But Mrs. Wannelsker wanted nothing more of us.

– Please follow me! Mrs. Wannelsker said.

The teacher quickly walked away, and we all rushed after her.

Allan walked in front of me. Lily kept up with him. And I decided to stay close to them. Mrs. Wannelsker stepped around the front staircase, turned into an inconspicuous door.

Under the stairs, we woke up through a small door and stopped. Mrs. Wannelsker lit a flame in the air with a graceful wave of her hand. Bright flash. I covered my eyes with my hand, when the light became soft and even, to my surprise I did not see either a candle or a torch. Mrs. Wannelsker held a ball and chain in the palm of her hand. And I realized: «This is her artifact!» Although, having seen such a thing during the day, I would definitely have decided that it was a keychain or jewelry.

We crowded into a cramped, low-ceilinged room. And then the back door gaped. Our teacher stepped into the darkness, and immediately fell halfway down, went under the floor. One of the girls gasped. I leaned forward to see a new miracle, and saw a winding spiral of high, steep steps, and on them a teacher illuminated by a magic light.

She, like a firefly, fluttered on the stairs, going down below. The sound of her heels rang out over and over in the echoing room.

Lily took a shaky breath. Allan and one of the boys immediately rushed forward. I decided to keep up. Stumbling, leaning on the icy rough stone walls, I walked up the steps in almost darkness. The other guys were blocking my light. Their shadows slid across the floor. Everyone hurried after the teacher, afraid to fall behind her and find themselves in darkness.

The staircase wound in a spiral around the stone pillar and within a minute my head began to spin. It looks like the teacher led us through a vertical stone pipe, the shaft into which these steps were laid. I can't imagine that it would be a tower.

Descending in the twilight was difficult. Every now and then other girls stumbled, groaned, fell on me or their neighbors. And I was no better. Itself almost fell on Allan, who was walking in front of me, inadvertently pushed him in the back. After scratching my knee and nearly breaking a nail on my right index finger, I finally found myself on a flat floor.

Mrs. Wannelsker stood facing us and waited for everyone to come down.

– So, everyone here? Have you lost anyone? – And without waiting for an answer, she continued, looking around the guys a little strangely: – We are now at the bottom level. It runs below the dungeons and cellars of the castle.

The girls from behind were pushing me, striving for the light, or just because of a joke. They pushed me towards the teacher. I had to take a couple of steps forward. Then I felt a stronger push. Someone poked me painfully in the back. I gasped, looked around, but could not make out who it was.

Mrs. Wannelsker looked at me sternly, fixed her gaze on her soiled right palm and scratched knee. Her face was disapproving.

– Behave like a real lady! – She announced loudly, looking through me. The fussing behind him immediately subsided. And I felt insulted.

The teacher moved her hand along the walls of the dungeon, illuminating them with the light of her magical flame.

«As you may know, there is a lake called» Living Inshon «to the north of our school. In fact, it is a small bay from the north sea. It connects with it underground flooded caves. During high tides, the water level in the lake rises significantly. So, these flooded caves come close to the castle itself. We can say that the castle is on the water... Please follow me!

I was scared. These words gave me terrible thoughts. So, the castle is about to collapse under water?

Hurrying to follow Mrs. Wannelsker down the corridor, another thought struck me: why then is she talking about this so calmly and even indifferently?! It means that there is definitely no smell of flooding here.

We soon found ourselves in the vaults of the oval hall. Mrs. Wannelsker said to stop and wait for her. And she herself disappeared, and when she reappeared against the wall, the vaults of the hall lit up with a yellow-red light. About two dozen torches flashed together with fire, which rustled and caressed the ear. The vaulted arches reminded me of the vaults of a church. On the far wall I could see mountains of some kind of scrap metal. Large parts of an unknown mechanism. The large toothed discs were like train wheels.

I shivered. Someone touched my elbow, and I pulled my hand away. It was Bridget. Only now I noticed that I was trembling all over. I rubbed my palms. They were icy. Of course, it was cold in the dungeon.

Mrs. Wannelsker walked over to the metal door on the left. This door was «unusual» to say the least. Then I noticed that the entire left wall of this oval hall was special. It consisted of brown metal plates in which large rivets were visible.

Not without effort, the door gave in, and with a resounding groan, a creak showed us a black mouth. Mrs. Wannelsker stepped briskly into the new room.

Through the dungeon, amplified by the echo, a formidable rumble of thunder rolled, which immediately turned into a quiet uterine muttering. Everyone shuddered. And I even screamed out of surprise. For this roar also vibrated the floor beneath me.

A second later, in the bowels of the room in which the teacher had disappeared, a gray light shone, more powerful than the teacher's amulet or her conjured fire.

– well! Mrs. Wannelsker said, appearing in the doorway, and beckoned. – Come over here!

I didn't want to go inside, and I stepped aside. All the sounds that came from the new room were strange, with a kind of tinny echo. And it was more frightening than ever.

Other girls walked past me, someone pushed me. Matilda. But maybe this is one of the guys from the second Grant. I stood in the way, and it could have happened by accident. I stretched out my neck and tried to consider what awaited me inside the new room. The room looked more like a classroom than everything in the dungeon. But unusual. There were chairs, wardrobes, and electric lights. Half a minute later, I was left alone in the oval hall and looked back longingly, regretting that I had come down here. In the dark darkness of the tunnel, I dreamed of mysterious monsters waiting for me and hiding until a certain time, but now ready to attack and tear to pieces. And this mechanical rumble, quiet and uterine, still continued to tickle my nerves. There was no way back.

– Miss Burling. – The teacher suddenly spoke in a completely different tone, softer, which I did not expect from her. And also that she knows my name. She came up to me, but I did not notice it.

– Do not be afraid. This fear will pass. Sometimes students get scared of my lesson. But only the first. Come on.

She took my arm.

Oh, how I needed that touch. To feel that I am not alone, that there is a strong and fearless person nearby.

Unbeknownst to myself, I found myself inside a metal room.

All the guys were looking at me. In some eyes, I caught a contented malice and superiority. For example, Matilda and a girl from the second Grant. Someone has pity. Although James himself looked no better than me. Most of my new acquaintances, Lily, Cornelia and the other guys, looked scared themselves. It means that I am not the only one who crushes.

The teacher released my hand and walked across the room. Now I could familiarize myself with the environment of the classroom in new details. Tables and chairs lined the walls to the right and left. All have already taken their places. Above the tables, almost in front of their very surface, were large round windows that were not curtained. Behind them is darkness. Two closets stood against the central wall. One with books, the second had four doors that securely hid their contents. A strange smell reigned in the stale air. Synthetic rubber and cabbage.

Mrs. Wannelsker stopped in the center of the room at a round table with an elegant stool and commanded:

– Have a seat!

And it seemed to me that she was addressing me. I squinted at the tables in disbelief. Hesitating, I slowly walked over to the nearest free chair and sat down. The surface of the table was, as I imagined, cold.

Cornelia was sitting in front of me. And I was glad of this neighborhood. Say what you like, but she will be better than this Matilda.

– Why windows in the dungeon? What will we see in them? Cornelia spoke in a whisper, pointing to the round window above her desk. – Really ... – And, without finishing, she broke off.

A greenish glow appeared in these large round windows. I froze in amazement. And my neighbor too. Dense fog, thick jelly filled the entire space outside my window. And when the room shook and vibrated, this veil in the window stirred, slid to the side, opening up a huge space behind it. There was water outside the window.

In the light of the electric outdoor lights, long stems of bright green plants floated outside the window, hovering and enveloping my window. The light got brighter. The room, like some huge underwater monster, crept out of the stone tunnel.

Now I could clearly see the small fish disturbed by our light, the black surface of the stone bottom, strewn with stones and shells. A silver-glittering fish with huge blue fins swam past and sank as quickly as it appeared, leaving me wondering if it was real or was I blinded by something in the water?

– What is it? Cornelia whispered. I could not even shrug my shoulders and only with an open mouth looked at the new world that appeared outside the window. The first thought was that I was imagining it. That Mrs. Wannelsker somehow put a spell on me. But after the teacher spoke, I realized that all this is happening in reality. We're swimming underwater in this metal room. What seemed to me like a room from the inside was a submarine, a ship.

– This is Batiskaph! – Explained Mrs. Wannelsker. – We will use it in the lessons on the study of the «underwater world» and «water charms». Today is an introductory lesson. Therefore, we will not record anything, but simply enjoy the journey on our lake.

«Mrs. Wannelsker, is this a real submarine?» Like ordinary people? – Raising his hand, asked Allan.

– From the ordinary world? Not! – The teacher was surprised. – The Bathyscaph is a very complex magic apparatus!.. Well, what can you say? Has anyone seen this before?

– Great! This is the coolest sight! Here's a lesson! The best lesson! – The exclamations of girls were heard from all sides. It seemed that now the class grew bolder. The tension on the way here has melted. Cornelia chuckled. I saw Lily and Bridget. They smiled. And Allan left his seat and leaned across their table, showing something to Bridget in her window.

– In part, this is my creation. Bathyscaphius. – Flattered by the praise, said Mrs. Wannelsker, emphasizing the special «r» in the word creation. Like a purring cat. – There is a lot of enchantment

and magic imposed on him. And what artifacts! Any wizard will be jealous. Rare, powerful and possessing water spells!.. Look there.

These words of the teacher were met with indifference. Almost no one turned in the indicated direction. Even me. Because she was trying to make out through the water column something below. It seems alive.

– Attention please! – She said louder. I obediently turned to the teacher and immediately climbed into my chair in horror. The floor in the center of the room was gone. In its place was a huge hole, through which water was about to gush. The panic lasted only a short moment. Of course, my self-preservation instinct worked. I immediately realized that the floor was glass. It must be that while we were all fascinated by the contemplation of the external beauties of the underwater oasis through the windows, the curtain that protected it slid away. Or just magically evaporated. Nevertheless, I was not going to get up on the floor. It was terrifying to see five or six meters of water under my feet, algae adhering to the transparent bottom on the other side and...

– Look down. Do you see this hole?

The sight of the mouth of the round well made me uneasy. This is definitely not good. I felt dizzy and gripped the edge of the table with my fingers.

A lone lantern on the bottom of our bathyscaph, illuminating the bottom, could not illuminate what was in the well. Of course, Mrs. Wannelsker wanted to show us its contents. But the white electric light of one underwater lamp was enough for me to see in all its details such a miracle, which will definitely come to me in nightmares for more than one night!

At the sound or vibration of the engine of our metal underwater class, the stems of the plant were pulled from the well. I already saw similar ones five minutes ago. But these were alive. They hit the transparent floor and slid to the sides, as if feeling and studying obstacles, wanting to find a gap in it. And then a large flower appeared, most of all like a lily. She swam and froze in the center of the floor. Lily petals shimmered from pale pink to bright lilac. A huge beautiful lily.

– Orchidemius! Mrs. Wannelsker whispered, as if she was afraid to scare someone away. There was admiration in her voice and, as it seemed to me, even more. – This is a magical aquatic plant of the Asparagus fish family. Orchidemius likes to hide in dark caves, holes, nooks and crannies. It feeds on fish. Comes out to give offspring. Let your seeds flow. Oh, how lovely! Can everyone see the eyes? Here. They are covered with red petals. Mrs. Wannelsker stepped onto the glass floor and walked slowly over to the monster. Then she squatted down and reached for the orchidemis.

Such an act, undoubtedly, deserved admiration, but everyone was seized by tetanus. Indeed, what I took for dark spots, or dots, or features of the pattern on the petals turned out to be bulging pale eyes. Lots of eyes.

The underwater flower, seeing the movement, recoiled downward, fearing Mrs. Wannelsker, and hastily hid in its den, but did not hurry to remove its long tentacles. They floated a short distance from the glass floor, but no longer touched it.

– I brought him here. Mrs. Wannelsker reported as she returned to her seat. – And I cut this hole for him at the bottom.

I looked down in surprise. But with a peripheral vision I felt a smile on Mrs. Wannelsker's face. I got confused.

In the silence, broken only by the rumble of the bathyscaph, I heard a quiet voice:

– Now I'm not going to swim in the lake! Never!

I knew from the whiteness of Lily's face and her bluish lips that she would keep her promise.

Mrs. Wannelsker began to tell something. But my ears buzzed. The class floated before my eyes. I realized that the table had slipped out of my fingers and I was lying on the floor. I didn't even have time to be surprised and feel the pain of hitting the floor. Everything faded around. An impenetrable darkness surrounded me.

Chapter 11. In the ward. Mrs Doyle

I woke up. Feeling on my back that I was lying on something soft, I could not immediately open my eyes. The eyelids were heavy. I made an effort. The cotton body reluctantly yielded to my will. It took a couple of long sighs to gain strength and, finally, to open my eyes. I was lying on a narrow sofa. The room was in semi-darkness, but the rays of the setting sun made their way from behind the not tightly curtained windows. They crossed the table in a bright stripe and stretched across the floor towards me. By the wall, next to a tall glass rack filled with small jars and bubbles, stood a short sorceress in a white robe. Her snow-white image was in harmony with the decor of the room, with the wallpaper and seemed to fill the air with a silvery haze that I did not immediately notice her. The sorceress stepped aside, bending over her work. I heard a soft tinkle, as if she were stirring sugar in a china cup. As if hearing my thoughts, or maybe a changed breathing rhythm, the sorceress turned around. Calm and caring gaze of black eyes, a slight smile. She was overjoyed at my awakening.

– Hello. How are you feeling? She asked.

– Where I am? – For some reason, this is what escaped my lips. There was still a slight clouding in my head. And I was worried about what happened to me. – What happened to me? How old was I?..

I didn't want to call my condition fainting. I tried to sit up and immediately regretted it. The heaviness of my whole body pressed me to the sofa, and my eyes darkened.

– For a couple of hours now, as you are with me, in the medical rooms. – The sorceress returned to her bottles and again rustled with something. – What happened to you? Hmm, better tell me your version of what happened. I've already heard Mrs. Wannelsker's version. But, the truth is, firsthand is better. That way I can help you faster.

– Uh ... – I didn't know how to address my interlocutor and had no idea what happened to me.

– Mrs. Doyle. Sally Doyle. She seemed to read my mind again. – I am a witch doctor, nurse and doctor all rolled into one. – Softly said the sorceress. Her robes rustled as she walked to the far locker.

«Mrs. Doyle, I was cold... then my head started spinning. – I stopped short. It is uncomfortable to admit your fears. On the other hand, I liked Mrs. Doyle, and the longer I looked at her, the more she won my favor.

– Cold?! Mrs. Doyle repeated. – Add a warming broth. Did your ears ring?

– It was so. I was also dizzy. I skipped lunch and didn't have breakfast today. Maybe that's why I had this condition?

Mrs. Doyle came over to me, holding out a cup of sizzling liquid.

– Hungry fainting? The nurse bent over me. – How pale you are! Drink this. It will help right away. So, take your time.

I obeyed.

– Can you sit down now?

It was still difficult to sit down and hold the cup on my own. Mrs. Doyle held my palms and helped me take a couple of sips. The healing potion tasted good. It reminded me of flower tea. Although there was a hint of something tart and bitter in this drink. And it smelled like wood. I even felt sorry that there were so few of him. He reminded me of the forest near my grandmother's house. I felt that I really want to eat. Hunger awoke with renewed vigor.

– Well, great. Of course, you are tormented by various guesses why you fainted. But that was something else. In the lesson you were in the bathyscaph. Have you seen the underwater flower?! Of course I did. You fell under his spell. This miracle of nature has its own magic. Not everyone reacts like you. Most wizards are generally not sensitive to the enchantments of this, if I may say so, plant. Someone admires him, – I thought it was a note in the direction of Mrs. Wannelsker. Here she just fell under the spell of this monster, love. I won't be surprised if she's going to dive into the lake on a date with her orchidemis, unless she's done it before!.. – and someone falls into a trance. You are very sensitive to charms. Don't be afraid of this. This shows that you can be trained to be a good «spell finder».

I don't know what it is, but it sounds like a valuable profession. I felt much better. The healing drink worked. I smiled and dropped my feet to the floor. Mrs. Doyle took the empty cup and looked me over contentedly.

– I'm right?

– Yes. This «flower» scared me... I am hungry. What time is dinner served here?

– At six in the evening. And you missed it.

I was upset. I lost heart again. Now food was essential to me. Otherwise, I will lose my senses again, but from hunger.

– You need to eat. I'll arrange dinner for you just as well as for other students! So now drink this.

I obeyed. The new drink turned out to be bitter. Warmth spread throughout my body, my head cleared up, the noise in my ears disappeared. I looked at Mrs. Doyle gratefully.

– Thank you so much. I'm much better now.

– And the cheeks turned pink. Come on, I'll take you to the kitchen. Mrs. Doyle smiled. My stomach rumbled. I was delighted, eagerly jumped to the floor and followed my healer and savior from hunger.

Chapter 12. Dinner for the elite

It turns out that the castle was dim. This was partly because all the windows were covered with curtains. Partly because few lights were on. The lessons are long over.

I followed Mrs. Doyle down an empty, dark corridor, wondering which door was behind the kitchen?

Pretty soon we found ourselves in the large hall of the castle. Everything here was familiar to me. It was lighter, and a fully lit chandelier created a festive mood. The ticking of a huge clock in the silence gave the feeling of late night. Although I noticed behind the loosely closed curtains in the window that the sun was just setting over the forest. We went on.

Mrs. Doyle opened a low, inconspicuous door in a dark corner of the hall, hidden behind a wide pillar, and the warm stench of the oven and boiled potatoes smelled in my face. I walked a few steps down, and a rectangle of light appeared in front of me, revealing a bright room. And in it there is a long table, filled with dishes: pots, plates, behind it kitchen cabinets up to the ceiling.

– Good evening! Ah, Saimo-on! – Mrs. Doyle dodged a large vat flying through the air and disappeared into the mist of steam.

A chaos of sounds reigned in the room: the murmur of water, the clinking of dishes, some hiss and murmur were heard. The air in the room was dense and humid, but in it I caught the spicy notes of spices and meat broth.

On the right side, along the wall, were two sinks, water flowed from the taps. The dishes jumped by themselves first into one, then into the second sink. Swirling in the foam of the detergent and jumping out from under the stream of water already clean. Then the plates gave a ringing «dzin» and were stacked on the edge of the table near the shelves already filled with shiny dishes. A short young man in a long apron appeared in the kitchen. When he saw me, he froze and opened his mouth.

He had a pleasant face. Cheekbones, emphasizing masculinity and confidence, a slightly slanting cut of live brown eyes. The young man was wearing a white cap worn by cooks. Several strands of golden hair were streaking from under the hood. He was too young for a cook. His sweaty and tired face lit up with a kind smile at the sight of Mrs. Doyle and me. It seemed to me that at that moment even pots and plates clinked louder. However, maybe it was not a game of my imagination. The magic in the kitchen, of course, was his. I marveled at such a vast and powerful force. For me, at least for now, this was an unattainable limit. And I envied the young wizard. He was three or four years older than me, and he looked such a confident magician.

«This is Miss Burling,» Mrs. Doyle appeared behind the young man. – She needs to be fed.

– Of course, I'll just deal with all this! – The young man waved his hands, pointing in the direction of unwashed dishes, and rushed past me to the sinks.

I pressed myself against the table, letting him pass. The whistling stopped and the steam cloud melted.

«What's your name, Miss Burling?

– Roselyn... Just Rose. – I hastened to answer.

Simon just managed to grab a high stack of tilting plates and put them in the closet.

– So Rose. He smiled at me. And Mrs. Doyle nodded. «Your new assistant?

I shook my head and said modestly:

– Not. I'm a new student. I arrived today...

Simon waved his hand. The water from the taps stopped pouring, plates no longer flew around the kitchen. It has become much quieter. In the far corner, something else was happening incomprehensibly: a saucepan or dough mixer rumbled and quivered softly when another white bag flew up to it, reminiscent of flour packages.

– Not? Simon turned his gaze to Mrs. Doyle. «When will a witch be sent to help you, huh?»

Mrs. Doyle sat down in a chair and spread her hands.

– It won't happen soon. Definitely not this year. I spoke to Madame Escalotte. And she said that we cannot afford it.

Simon thrust his elbows into the sink and grunted.

– Well, of course! – He answered with glee. – What else will the director say?!

– I can handle it myself. Of course, extra magic spells would not hurt.

A mournful howl and a sharp sob came from the sink. Simon squinted over the sink, then turned back to Mrs. Doyle.

– No normal nurse will come here! – And immediately hastened to add: – This is not about you, Sally. That is, I wanted to say that you are a proven worker and a strong sorceress, capable of standing up for yourself and your students!

Simon winked at me and headed for the pots on the stove.

– And you, Simon, what's new? Mrs. Doyle asked.

– AND? Nothing. Everything is the same as before. Here our guard noticed something in the forest yesterday. I was worried.

– Mr. Noel? Have you noticed?

«That's what he said.

Mrs. Doyle frowned.

Simon waved the large lid over the pots a couple of times and returned with plates in hand. Mashed potatoes with meat. My eyes lit up. Simon, smiling at me, put down the plate and pulled a chair towards me.

– Have a seat, miss.

I was very pleased to be looked after. I smiled back at Simon:

– Thank.

I immediately, without hesitation, began to eat. I really liked Simon. He offered the second plate to Mrs. Doyle. She politely declined.

– I have done my supper. I'll stay with Miss Burling. After she eats, I'll take her to the women's tower.

– Oh. Got it. Hmm, why weren't you, Rose, at dinner with everyone?

Simon took a chair against the wall and sat down next to me. I didn't want to mention my «faint». And it was not possible to speak with a mouth full. So I looked up at him and chewed in silence. And he smiled.

Then there was a knock. As if someone were knocking on glass. Simon reluctantly got up from his seat and hurried away.

«Our guard has arrived. Who else?! – he muttered, taking off his apron on the go.

I wondered who else could have come to the kitchen at this hour. Guardian? Simon disappeared behind a tall cabinet. There must have been a passage or a door. I heard voices. But there were no people to be seen. Simon's tired but perky tone and heavy leisurely bass. I looked up from the food when the figure of a tall man in black floated out from behind the closet.

– I will hunt this beast. And I say, this is not a predator, but a werewolf!

– Well, werewolf, then, werewolf. Simon appeared. – And dinner is on schedule!

A man dressed in a black cloak walked towards me. He turned his face and his stern eyes immediately glared at me.

I looked down at the table. A small square tablecloth, a salt shaker a little away from Mrs. Doyle, who never touched the food. I guessed that I was sitting not at the usual kitchen table, but at the refectory. And my meal coincided with the supper of this formidable man in black clothes.

He came over and sat down next to me, but keeping his distance. I heard the creak of leather boots, the clatter of heavy metal, it seems, under the cloak. On the tablecloth lay a pair of large gloves of thick, rough leather. The yellow and scarred hands reached across the table to Mrs. Doyle's plate.

«Do you mind, Sally? The bass croaked.

– No, Noel, help yourself. I've already had dinner.

– Hmm. Noel scooped up the mashed potatoes.

Sine came up with two plates and a bottle of red wine.

«Noel, the food is cold. Here's a hot one.

– Do not worry. – Slowly chewing food, replied Noel. «But the blood sauce would be useful here. Is he still left?

– I'll take a look. Simon threw the plates under Noel's side and ran away.

Noel's left hand lifted, barely exposing his wrist. The rim of a silver bracelet with black stones flashed on it. The predatory fingers twitched as if they had caught an invisible apple. A fire broke out in the plate and immediately extinguished, leaving behind a little black smoke.

– Noe-ale! Simon walked over and put the saucepan on the table. «Don't burn my tablecloth. Dorothy will swear at me.

Noel smiled wryly with one half of his face and sniffed the saucepan.

– This is for you, Rose. – Said in a completely different tone Simon, softer, and put a mug of drink in front of me.

– Thank. – Barely audible I whispered, without touching the mug, and continued to follow this giant. I was afraid of him. Although Mrs. Doyle and Simon's behavior said my fears were unfounded, I could sense something tense in him. I peered with interest at the edge of Noel's bracelet. Here is his magical artifact. Maybe he's giving me an unpleasant tension? Noel himself was completely relaxed and enjoyed the meal. He poured all the bloody sauce onto his plate and looked at me. I immediately buried myself in my puree with meat and noted that I had already eaten everything.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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