

# *Deleted Scene – The Celebration*

This scene was added near the end of the publishing process, intended for insertion between the chapter 'the dreamwalker' and 'the fire'. The logic at the time was to provide a false ending to the story, thus hopefully increasing the tension when trouble did strike next chapter.

However, the editor felt, and I soon whole heartedly agreed, that in the end it wasn't necessary. It introduces characters that have no bearing on the story very late in the book (the crown prince). It confused the issue of the intruder and his/ her nature. It brought out powers of the rod that had not been clarified previously. It didn't 'fit'.

However, even after its removal it still has influenced the story. To make the character of Maylee plausible, she was made the angry guard captain who took Kialessa from the inn, adding to gender balance in the story telling (he was a guy). She threatened Kialessa in the bathtub, which was not in any early draft, but was kept to colour the story and really give the reader the impression of how hated the Tae'anaryn race is. I added a piece where the captain bemoans about complaining guards, as a reference to tension in the ranks. Again, this is kept in order to give the story more richness and variety, developing the sense of a world existing beyond the view of the main characters and her readers.

I have the deleted chapter here for all those reasons, and to help young writers see what *doesn't* go in a story, as good as it may be. This chapter is not cannon, in other words, it never happened in the fantasy world. But is the guard Mayalee still discontent and tempted by evil... time will tell.

## *The celebration*

*You'll see in life few endings are happy. But they are endings, that is all.*

*– Prayoth: High Priest of Serros at Emer'el.*

The party was in full swing.

Another week had ended at the college, and King Dunnkan's grandson was turning seven, so the King had decided it was time to have a celebration. Everyone had to be there. Well, as many nobles as the Grand Hall could accommodate, which wasn't enough. Most only popped in to show their respects, which was good since the hall couldn't possibly fit everyone who was invited. And everyone was invited, since King Dunnkan couldn't possibly risk offending anyone who wasn't.

*That is probably a good thing,* Kialessa thought as she looked around at the coloured banners of silk and gossamer lace. The room was filled with lively music, and people drank copious amounts of fruit juice made bubbly by magic.

She watched Piex as he smiled to himself and danced energetically with the six year olds, still too young at heart to feel ashamed. Posk was helping serve at the food tables, or at least pretending to, so he could better shovel food into his own mouth. Allastassia was talking with the grownups about nobles and gossip, while Darrix found himself being introduced to the guards by his father.

Kialessa had spent time with each of her friends, but now found herself waiting quite alone in the corner. The people at the party were friendly, though they either stared at her or pretended they didn't, and the noise was beginning to thump inside her ears. With all the stomping and music she had just begun to think it might be time for her to slip away.

No sooner did she think this then she noticed a small boy looking at her, blocking her way out. It was the young prince; the one who was turning seven.

'Good evening, gentle,' he said in a quiet voice.

She smiled in reply. It *was* his party.

'Good evening young prince,' she said. 'Many happy returns.' She wasn't really sure what to say to a prince.

He regarded her with large, dark eyes. His hair was the colour of the ocean sand. He was only just seven, so he looked quite young, but he had his grandfather's smile. Just as Kialessa was beginning to feel a bit self-conscious, wondering if the prince wasn't pleased to see a Tae'anaryn at his birthday party, he smiled and walked toward her.

'You are Kialessa,' he said. 'Grandfather likes you.'

Well, they were off to a good start. 'Thank you!' she said. 'I like your grandfather, too.'

The boy smiled again. 'Some people say we shouldn't have a Tae'anaryn around the castle. They say it brings evil spirits.'

That made her frown. It wasn't a very nice way to start a conversation. *Besides,* Kialessa thought, *surely it would be their own fear that would attract bad spirits, not anything I would do.*

'It's all right. I'm a *nice* Tae'anaryn,' she decided to say.

The young prince smiled. 'Yes. I think so.'

She was about to say more when he spoke again. 'So, what is it that you do?'

She wondered what that meant. Did this young prince enjoy finding out what people did so he could categorise them, just in case he was their ruler one day? She didn't know if she was pleased he wanted to know, or just a bit offended he wasn't asking about whom she was, or where she was from, or what she liked. Perhaps it was just the way he learnt about people?

'I...' she began.

Just then a dark shadow flew across the window. It brought with it a feeling of nervousness she had only known once before, in the presence of the intruder. She'd almost forgotten he was still a threat.

Everyone was here tonight: the king, his heir and his grandchildren. It would be the perfect time to strike.

'What is it?' the young prince asked.

'I think ....' But, she didn't want to tell him what she thought because she didn't want to worry him. 'I think I'm just going to take a look around,' she said.

The prince was quiet for a moment, and then he said, 'You're a strange Tae'anaryn,' and walked off.

*There are more important things right now,* Kialessa decided, and ignored him.

Suddenly the shadow flittered past another window. It *was* the intruder, or an intruder, that was certain. He was being very clumsy this time. Perhaps he was rushing deliberately? Or perhaps this time he was finally moving in for the kill.

With a stab of fear and regret Kialessa suddenly remembered her dream with Kiel. It had been a warning. Now King Dunnkan was standing at the edge of the dance hall, prancing merrily with his youngest granddaughter, who was only three years old. Kialessa realised his guards were several paces away, relaxed and unalert, while King Dunnkan was only a dozen paces away from the furthest window. The captain was nowhere to be seen.

With a sudden shock of terror, Kialessa saw the window fill with the dark silhouette of the intruder. She saw his face again and his crooked smile. He pointed a bow right at the king.

Kialessa was about to scream out, but she had no idea how little time she had. Even as she drew breath, the intruder let loose his arrow and it shattered the glass. Time seemed to slow down as the arrow sped towards the king.

But then, as if out of nowhere, the steward leapt from his chair and swung a short rod out from his robes: a glowing rod topped with a diamond sphere. A translucent shimmer of energy glistened into existence from the end of the rod and right at the last instant smashed the arrow to splinters mid-flight.

With a hateful growl the intruder leapt through the broken glass. A dark aura of magical power surrounded him. Citizens and nobles screamed in panic. The guards rushed to try to form a protective phalanx around the king. A second later the captain, who had been helping himself to egg and cream dessert, leapt over the table and charged the intruder head on.

They traded mighty blows for only a few seconds before the captain's sword shattered, sundered by some magic held in the intruder's broadsword. In the next moment his sword pieced deeply into the captain's chest, and slowly the noble warrior sank to the floor.

The intruder was obviously moving in for the kill tonight.

The guards tried to get the king out but the doors were held fast by magic. The intruder laughed confidently and threw a bag full of power at them. A choking dust filled the air, and most of them sunk to the floor or stumbled away.

Kialessa didn't waste any more time. She picked up a dinner plate and tossed it at the intruder. It shattered against the back of his head.

'Leave us alone!' she screamed.

He said nothing. He just turned, and looked at her in dark anger.

Then he lifted his broadsword high and charged the king once more. This time the steward got in his way, parrying the intruder's harsh and mighty blows with nothing more than the glowing rod and a golden dagger. The intruder tried to get around to the king, but the steward wouldn't let him. The wizard was beside the king, uttering spells of protection on them all.

Just then Kialessa noticed the high priestess making her way to the fallen captain. Gently she touched his brow, drawing him back from the brink of death, and his eyelids fluttered open. She uttered another prayer, holding out her symbol of faith, as the captain stood and silently picked up his sword again. A gentle white light settled on his shoulders and wound.

The intruder cursed in a high pitched, harsh voice, frustrated by the steward's success at protecting the king. As for his part, King Dunnkan stood, calm and dignified. One hand was on his sword, and the other held his granddaughter. She was almost too young to know how much danger she was in.

Suddenly the captain, fully healed and enraged with indignity, rushed the intruder and put his long sword through the man's heart. He fell dead without a groan.

It all happened so fast. The entire battle was all over in a matter of seconds, although it felt like much longer to Kialessa. Some people didn't even know there'd been an intruder.

'Secure the area!' the captain boomed.

'Get the people out,' the priestess urged. The party was well and truly over now. People ran everywhere trying to make sense of the mess.

That was when Kialessa felt a little hand squeeze into hers. It was the prince, his eyes brimming with tears. She bent down to hug him, but he didn't return the embrace.

'Is Grandfather alright?' he asked.

'Yes,' Kialessa replied.

'That's good,' the young prince said, but he didn't let go of her hand. He pushed her forward, wanting to know more. Either he was very curious, or wise beyond his years.

He was, after all, the crown prince.

'It seems, my liege, that we finally have the intruder,' the wizard said as he examined the fallen man, who was wrapped in a night grey cloak.

'Who was it?' people asked.

Kialessa and the prince pressed their way through the crowd.

'No!' she gasped as soon as she laid eyes on him.

It was no man at all! It was the angry guard leader who'd brought her from her mother's inn only three months before.

'But why?' Kialessa asked. She marvelled how the guard had disguised her voice to sound like a man in the forest so that Kialessa would report a clever lie that had them all looking for a male intruder.

'Her brother was slain by trolls during his first ever sentry duty on the western border,' the steward said. 'I fear she has never forgiven King Dunnkan for it.'

'Mayalee,' King Dunnkan said, a tremendous sorrow in his voice. 'I cannot believe it has

ended this way. I'm so sorry.' A gentle tear ran down his face. 'But, thank you, steward, you saved my life. Thank you all!'

'It is no more than I must do, my king. I am, after all, your protector.'

'Indeed you are!' the wizard agreed. 'You stood up even before the glass shattered.'

The steward looked thoughtful for a moment. 'I thought I was going to get some drinks.'

Then he whispered in a voice so quiet only those nearby could hear, but loud enough for Kialessa to hear as well. 'I can't take credit for gifts I have. I was simply following the calling of the divine for me. I am, after all, the king's protector...' he said, and glanced over at Kialessa meaningfully.

The others didn't seem to notice.

Kialessa now realised that she had felt it too. She'd known that the king was in danger, but she hadn't been in the right place to save his life. The steward had. And, even if she had been, she doubted she could have made the kind of difference the fully grown steward, with his years of experience and powerful magic, could. The intruder just couldn't get past him. Not one step. Not even with an arrow he couldn't even see.

She looked down at the guard, Mayalee, as they carried her from the hall; the sharp curved blade that had cut her practice arrow by her side. The mood in the room was terribly melancholy. Someone once trusted had turned to evil. But, it was over. The intruder had been stopped.

Kialessa breathed a great sigh of relief.