

# Chapter 1: The Chandler

## Edyth

Candle making had always been a soothing, if sweaty, process for Edyth. Something about a familiar routine, a job she was good at, brought her deep peace, which was nice.

*Avan* knew she needed it at times.

Plunging what would become a wick into molten beeswax, Edyth drew a liquid candle forth before placing it on her drying rack. After doing this several more times, she hung that rack to dry while a bell tinkled in the next room.

Brushing her hands off, she smoothed her hair down with a faint smile. Her newest guest had had perfect timing.

"Evening!" her customer said when she emerged from the back.

"Good evening, Henry," Edyth said. "How's life in the castle?"

Leaning on her shop's counter, Henry gave her a fond smile.

"It would be better if you were there," he said. "Are you sure you won't accept your uncle's offer? Save me the trip into town every week?"

"You and he both know why I can't."

"Well, it's our loss," Henry said with a sigh. "You're the best chandler in Crinas, let alone Kester. Your father would have been proud. WE could use you."

"And I'm grateful to be of service," Edyth said, completing their weekly ritual. "Same order as always, yes?"

"That's right," Henry said.

"Give me a minute."

Ducking through a curtain, Edyth lifted a crate sitting beside the doorway with a grunt. As she hauled it to the counter, she noted another customer behind Henry, someone she'd never seen before.

Fantastic! She sorely needed a potential new source of income.

"I'll be right with you!" she called.

When she set the crate down, a louder thump, entirely too familiar, came from above, and Edyth winced, silently pleading for that to be the last of those noises. Please, let there be no more until she could get her customers out of her shop.

Opening the crate, Henry gave its contained candles a cursory glance before humming.

"Perfect as always," he said. "Your advance."

Digging through his coat's pockets, he retrieved a small chest, which was followed by a second thump through the ceiling. While her next customer glanced up at it with a frown, Edyth hurriedly checked the chest's contents: several cuts of meat lying beside a bread loaf.

"And the rest will come as always?" she asked.

"Jonathan and his cart will crop by later this week," Henry said before pausing. "Are you ok, Edyth? Everything all right up there?"

He flicked his eyes to the ceiling.

"Everything's fine," Edyth said. "Thank you for your concern."

Henry looked doubtful, but shrugging, he tapped the counter.

"I'll see you next week, then?" he said.

"Until then."

While King Wilfred's seneschal left her shop, Edyth smiled at the woman who'd been waiting behind him, but the object of her attention continued craning her neck to stare at the ceiling. After a moment, Edyth cleared her throat.

"Can I help you?" she asked.

Jumping, the woman stepped forward.

"Yes," she said. "I need candles for-"

A crash interrupted her while an angry shriek from above pierced the shop's innards. The woman's eyes went wide, and she took a step back.

"Wait! It's only-"

Whirling, the woman ran out of Edyth's shop, and she sighed. Another customer lost.

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