

# Helm's Forbidden Castle

By AdventChild13

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*longer chapters, but not so many. Enjoy and please tell me if there is anything I can work on!*

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# 1 - Neville the Great and Theo the Not so Great

## 1 - Neville the Great

The woods surrounding the dark sinister castle were quite dangerous. So dangerous in fact, that Neville Reed, one of the bravest, strongest men for 100 miles around, never came back out from those woods. Stories were passed on (legends of course) that Neville came out the other side of the woods, found the edge of the Earth, and decided to stay there because of the peaceful surroundings. Other stories (or, legends) said that Neville was killed by an ogre that guarded the castle, or that he got into the castle, and it shifted like an ancient Egyptian pyramid, and trapped him.

But of course, since the forty men he took with him never returned either, then none of these stories were true... Or were they?

Well, that question was what Theodore J. Webster set out to answer.

He definitely was not brave, maybe he was strong in some ways more than one, and he DEFINITELY didn't have any man, woman or child backing him up. Other than his grandfather, whom swore, he himself was one of the 40 men Neville Reede took with him into the woods twenty seven years ago, and he was the only one who returned alive. Edgar C. Webster was his name. Theo looked up to him for inspiration, even though sometimes his stories about seeing purple animals and flying cats in the woods seemed ludicrous. Edgar filled Theo's head with wonderful, mysterious and mystical tales when he was a young lad.

He told him how Neville's bright, long blond hair shone brighter than the sun, and his pure black eyes struck fear into your hearts the minute you saw them, and how with each step, the ground itself shook. People bowed only to him, and he bowed only to one person.

Mira Cray, the love of his life.

But she was no one of importance; she was only the daughter of a book binder and a merchant. The only exception in her importance was she studied a great deal of medicine and herbs, and by the age of 17, everyone in the village came to her when sickness took over, and she always managed to heal. Theo would have liked to meet her, his grandpa said she was more beautiful than a full bloomed rose in the summer. She had pale skin, black hair and green eyes. She spoke so softly and yet had an aggressiveness about her that made you listen intently to whatever she said.

But she disappeared a day after Neville went into the woods, and sickness quickly overcame the people in the village. Many died and many left. Only Theodore's family stayed, because they practically ran the town after Neville left.

And so, with only 100 people left in the village, part travelers who stayed, and part the Webster family, Theodore J. Webster was the only willing person, whether be called man or boy, to venture into the unknown.

## 2 - The Book and the Bookshop

One day, when Theo was rummaging around in one of his grandpa's old trunks, he found a pure gold key with a blue ribbon tied to it, and then he found a book tightly wrapped in a black cloth. When he took the cloth off it revealed a book with gold serpents spiraling all over the front, and one big one in the middle with a blue sphere in his mouth. But there was no place for a key, and it was locked... somehow. He asked his grandfather many times about it, but all Edgar did was sit in his rocking chair on the porch of their hut and stare out into the road that disappeared into the distance. He said, "Theo... It was a grand sight, that castle... Neville rode his black horse so elegantly."

"Grandfather... Don't you know anything about this book? It was in your red trunk. Come on, tell me!" Theo kept on.

"Theo... Neville once said to me... 'Edgar, have you ever seen a rose, a black rose? Well, if you ever do, don't touch it. It's so desirable and it will scar you terribly.' I never fully understood what he meant, but I imagined he was speaking of that Mira woman. She was absolutely beautiful."

"Grandfather Stop! The book! Focus on the book, please help me."

"Theo. I can't help anyone and no one can help me. So don't waste your time."

It crushed Theo and yet it made him want to search more fervently to find out what this book really was.

So he went to the abandoned book shop previously owned by Mira's mother.

It was surrounded by many vines and thorn bushes and spider webs. No one went near it, it was easy to avoid being in the corner edge of the small village.

He kicked open the door and the sunlight beamed through the windows onto the broken shelves of dusty books, and broken glass on the floor.

It was empty and creepy, yet wonderfully mysterious.

He walked in and.....

The floor caved in even before he put both feet down on the floorboards.

He went plunging down and hit his side hard on the concrete floor.

He looked up and saw a gaping hole in the floor, and around lay glass, books and a key. Another one, silver this time, with a pink ribbon tied to it. More of the floor above came crumbling down so he jumped up and moved against the wall just in time. The whole library floor came crashing down, barely not crushing him. He climbed up the pile of wood and pulled himself up onto the door opening. He sat there with his legs dangling down, and sneezed because of all the dust.

He saw one book on a shelf hanging on the wall opposite him. It was just an ordinary, black book, sitting on a pink piece of cloth and it didn't look important- PINK!

He tried crawling on a small piece of floor left but he was too big, so he stood up and staggered back to the door, almost falling into the hole again.

"This really isn't worth it," He whispered, trying to catch his breath.

So he crawled out of the doorway and underneath the bushes with thorns scraping his face.

He stood up and looked at the old library/bookshop.

He shook his head and walked away.

### 3 - Village Camosa and the People in it

Their village was very simple.

The roads were... Well, ok, there really weren't any roads; Just flattened grass where the people normally walked.

Theo and his grandfather's hut had two levels, but the second level was only Theo's bed and his book shelf and his extra large trunk.

On the lower level there was a large fire pit in the middle of the room, surrounded by large cushions for sitting on. His grandfathers bed sat in a small nook under Theo's ladder (which he made himself from bamboo and hemp). There were two windows, one above Theo's bed and one above his grandfathers. The hut was made out of bamboo, mud and grass, the only one made with those materials.

It did look out of place, compared to the other huts that were made from animals skin and bamboo, but it kept Theo and his grandfather warm on cold nights.

Beside their hut, resided Theo's four sisters, Camille, Henrietta, Rena, and Jade. Camille was the eldest, being 22 years old, and was the only teacher at the village school. She had black hair, brown eyes and dark skin.

Henrietta was younger than Theo, being 17; she was a dress maker for the Mayor's wife. She had dark brown hair, green eyes and dark skin.

Rena was 15 and studied literature with the librarian at the mayor's home. She had light brown hair, blue eyes and pale skin, since she spent most of her time indoors like Theo.

Then there was Jade. At ten she could make a cake that would please the mayor himself (harder than it seems). Now 11, she makes cakes for fun and sells five a day to the mayor. She has red hair, brown eyes and pale skin.

Josiah, he librarian at the mayor's home was 20 years old, and was the only man in Camosa that had blond hair. Theo believes that the only reason Rena studies at the library for five hours a day is because she is madly in love with Josiah. But she would NEVER admit to that.

Then there was Haron, then gardener at the Mayor's home. Camille had caught his attention, and he sent her a rare purple rose every day, to prove his love for her. She did like him, nut she said she was much too busy to meddle around with love.

The shopkeeper Jenka was an old woman, but the nicest one in Camosa. Her son and his wife, John and Lily, were farmers, along with Lily's parents and brothers.

Theo's aunt Marbell worked at the Mayor's home as a maid, and her husband was a chef at the Mayor's home.

These people were basically what made up Camosa, along with few travelers that came every year and stayed for a few months, but left with half of Camosa's women whom had been swept away by the young traveling men.

And now that the mayor was leaving, how would these humble and poor people survive?

## 4 - Alone?

Theo watched his sister in disbelief as she packed her things into her red trunk.

"Theo," She began. "I'm sorry, but just think of how much better everything will be here for you, no more people bothering you and grandpa... I know you'll enjoy the peace, and there are still many people staying here."

"Hen, there weren't that many people here to begin with.... Forty at the most! And now we're down to fifteen... How are we going to survive?" Theo said solemnly.

"Well, if you're worried about surviving then come with me, with us! You won't have to worry about anything, you'll be safe with us!"

"No, I'm not leaving. You know gramps would NEVER leave and there is NO WAY I would leave him behind... And I suppose Rena is going too, being as she's in love with... What's his name?"

"Josiah... And yes Theo, she's coming too. But maybe I can persuade Josiah to stay here and then maybe Rena will too," She looked hopeful up at Theo as she shoved one last quilt she had made on top of her other things.

"No, they'd be miserable here..."

Henrietta picked up her trunk by one handle and dragged it out the door.

A small wagon met them outside, along with Gilderoy, who sat twiddling his thumbs.

"Hen...." Theo whispered. "Go back inside for a minute."

"Why?"

"Just do it."

She slowly went back inside the hut, leaving her trunk sitting there.

"Gilderoy, I want to talk to you."

Gilderoy looked up and sighed.

"Look, if this is one of those, "Hurt Hen and I'll rip you head off", talks then I know already," Gilderoy said.

"Listen you little half brained vermon!" Theo said furiously. "I don't like your attitude and since your taking my sister away, you'd better straighten up!"

"Ok, ok.... I get that your mad at me, but, Hen sees her chance to be happy, and free, and she's taking it. Somehow I don't think you OR me has a say in what she chooses right now."

"Are you going to marry her?"

"Yes, I am and my intentions are good Theo, I swear."

"I can't trust you Gilderoy... Your father may be a good man, but he's a little oblivious to what his children do..."

"Are you referring to my brother?! You have no right saying anything like that!"

"Yes, I AM referring to your brother... You know what he did was extremely wrong, and still you stick up for him."

"Because he's my brother Theo! You think Hen leaving is wrong but you're still telling me that is I hurt her I'm dead, isn't that what people call sticking up for one another?"

Henrietta came storming out of the house.

"Stop you stupid ignorant children!" She shouted.

Gilderoy lowered his head and Theo crossed his arms.

"I think the whole village can hear you two carrying on like babies... Now Theo, shake Roy's hand, and tell him honestly how you feel about him."

"HEN!" Gilderoy looked up and squeaked at her.

"With pleasure Henrietta..." Theo smile and grabbed Gilderoy's hand.

"Roy," He began. "I think your a low, coniving, scum bag that just wants my sister to show off. I think you think of yourself as a high and mighty man, in a better position than your father, and I think your pig headed too."

"Now Roy, you do the same," Henrietta said.

Roy grabbed Theo's hand and said, "Theo, you should be smart and come with us, but I realise now that you're not capable of something like that. I think you're stupid and crazy like your gramps, and I hope you rot here like everyone else."

Theo looked at Roy and smiled.

"Somehow..." He said.

"Somehow what?" Asked Roy.

"Nothing, nevermind. Just don't screw up Roy."

Several days had already passed since the mayor's leaving Camosa, and taking almost everyone with him.

Theo spent hours sulking in his room. He had absolutely nothing to do, and so he filled the already pitiful hours of his days sulking.

Edgar came into the hut, holding a rope and at the end of the rope was a....

"What is THAT?" Theo said loudly.

Edgar looked up and smiled a very toothy smile.

"This, my son, is a Dupper."

The creature was very small, and looked much like a small pug dog, but he had a blueish sheen to his white fur, and his paws had small tallons. Theo couldn't quite tell, but he thought he saw small clear wings on the Dupper's back.

"Where is it from?"

"I'm not sure, I'm taking him to Flowers today, maybe she'll know something... But I doubt it."

"Then why do it? Why not find out yourself... Like, by reading about it... And how do even know its called a Dupper?"

Edgar glanced up at him and perced his lips.

"Come down here and hold him while I get some food for the poor thing."

Theo hopped from his ladder and landed with a loud thud and the Dupper shrunk back and whimpered.

"Oh, poor little guy!" Edgar scooped him up and the Dupper nuzzled his nose in Edgar's loose shirt.

He handed the Dupper to Theo and the Dupper licked his fingers lightly and then began nibbling on them. He then bit down hard and Theo yelped, dropping the little creature.

It too, gave out a loud cry and darted under Edgar's bed.

"Theo, be careful now, he's very small!" Edgar shouted.

"The stupid thing bit me!" Theo held out his finger, which was gushing blood around his knuckle. "I'm sorry, but I'm not helping out with that thing!"

"Fine... I'll feed him and take him to Flowers..." Edgar grumbled.

Well, he did take the Dupper to Flowers, but made Theo tag along.

He sat outside the shop, sulking once again. After a while Edgar came out holding the Dupper, and a large basket of lettuce, carrots, bread, flowers, honey and something green in a jar.

"Theo, please take the Dupper for me for a while... I need to talk to Flower about something... erm..."

personal and I can't because the little guys squirm so much."

"Fine, but don't take too long..." Theo groaned.

But the words he had said before Edgar went back inside the shop probably had no chance. An hour passed slowly, then two..... then another half hour.

Theo was pleased only about one thing; the Dupper slept for about two hours.

But when it woke up it started eating his jacket and he popped its little short nose.

It laid on his lap looking up at him every second as if it was saying he was being too mean.

He grabbed some lettuce and laid it in front of the Dupper.

Quickly, the little guy gobbled it up. Theo kept passing it more and more and more until it was completely gone. The Dupper sniffed around the basket and started licking the honey jar furiously.

Theo opened it and dipped his finger in it..

"Not a good idea," He whispered and poured a little bit of honey on the ground.

The Dupper lapped it up savoringly and then flopped on its side, panting and full.

Rainclouds rolled in and it started sprinkling lightly. But Theo wasn't paying attention... Neither was he paying attention to the Dupper wondering off towards the woods.

The rope slowly began dragging out of Theo's hand and finally he noticed it wasn't there anymore.

He jumped up and ran to the Dupper, who bolted away.

Theo followed the Dupper into the woods for at least ten minutes. Then the rope snagged on a tree and the Dupper wriggled its head out of the collar.

It ran behind a very large tree that was at least seven feet wide.

Theo poked his head around the tree to see something of great shock.

A girl, younger than him, had the Dupper in her arms, cuddling it and saying, "Oh Dory, I can't believe I found you! You little monster, don't scare me like that again."

She had long light brown hair that had a red sheen to it, and there were weird markings around her eyes, like black dots and swirls. Her clothes were definitely odd too.

She wore a short green skirt with flowers wrapped around it like vines and her green lacey shirt was covered in sparkles and black swirls like the ones on her eyes.

Suddenly, as if on purpose, the Dupper, who seemed to be called Dory, looked in Theo's direction and barked and yelped.

The girl looked up quickly, fear sweeping over her face.

"We're alone Dory... Hush, we're alone..." She whispered.

Then, Theo, leaping out of sight too quickly, lost footing on a giant root that seemed to move itself in his path, and fell with a small yelp.

One of his feet showed itself and she gasped. He quickly pulled it back in and stood up.

When he looked around the corner again, she was doing the same on the other side.

"Who are you?" She said.

"No, who are you?"

## 5 - Helmina Reed

"I asked first mister," She said.

"Theodore Webster. Now tell me who you are, there aren't any villages around here for miles, did you walk here?"

"I'm Helmina. Helmina Reed," She said with her chin in the air. "Who are YOU?"

"What? Why are you looking at me like that..."

"Reed?....Who-who are your parents?"

Then she froze and began stuttering excuses.

"Oh, d-do you hear that? Mum must be cal-calling me with her h-horn... I must go quickly..."

"Wait, I hear nothing... Why aren't you answering my question?"

"Oh, well.... I-I usually run off and mum's h-horn is very... erm... fa- familiar to my ears." She smiled a fake smile and stepped back. She began turning around when suddenly she lost her footing and fell back, disappearing.

"Helm... Hemlina?" Theo whispered as if she would hear it.

He stepped passed the tree and was faced with a large drop off... a cliff.

Helmina was holding onto a vine and the Dupper named Dory was sitting on her shoulder, barking madly and whimpering.

"Oh crap..." Theo shuddered.

"Help..." Helmina squeaked. "Please help."

"Don't worry... Uhhh.... J-Just wa-wait a minute."

"Oh tell that to the vine Theo, I think its tearing... Hurry!" She yelled as he disappeared. A couple seconds later he returned with a long stick that was thick and splintery.

"I can't grab it! There are thorns and they hurt!" She cried.

"Calm down and grab it now!"

"I can't, I'm slipping! Theo... The vine, its rip-" But she failed to finish the sentence for the vine completely ripped apart and she seized the stick, but Theo realized what was happening all too late. He and Helmina were descending down, further and further.

"THEOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" Helmina shrieked louder than anything he had ever heard.

He hit first, her falling right on his stomach, and Dory the Dupper smacking her face and rolling off.

Theo groaned and pushed her off. The breath was knocked out of him, and he wheezed slowly and painfully.

Helmina was just shocked so badly by falling she passed out, and Dory the Dupper was whimpering and crawling close to her.

There was a small necklace laying beside Helmina, with words on it.

Theo picked it up and read: "To our dear Daughter. With Love, Your Father, Your Mother, Neville and Mira."

Theo dropped it and quickly regained his breath.

It was too great of a surprise to Theo.

Helmina... Neville's daughter? It seemed impossible to him, but as he thought more on his grandfathers stories, it began to seem not so completely impossible that Neville was still alive, and Mira as well.



But when he saw the great castle his grandfather talked about, he nearly fainted, just at the thought of NO ONE finding it, for it was so inconceivably large. But he saw it. He was standing in front of it, staring at it with his own eyes. No one would believe him of course, but how could NO ONE ever have found this monster?

His thoughts quickly scattered as Helmina dragged him behind the great, metal doors that swung out so slowly because of their weight.

"Helmina!" Came a bellowing voice from the other end of the courtyard.

A man in black robes stepped forward, with his eye brow raised. He stopped abruptly when he saw Theodore.

He cleared his throat.

"Come here Helmina," He said.

Surely this isn't Neville, Theo thought to himself. The man was older than what Neville would be, or at least he looked older. His hair was short and black, and his face not as Theo's grandfather had described Neville's.

Helmina walked slowly to the man and he began talking to her.

After a couple minutes of a quiet conversation, the man and Helmina came over to Theodore.

"Theodore, this is Mr. Knobb, he's my teacher... I- I've told him about you- Well, all I know about you- and he's agreed to let you in inside, but..."

"But what?"

"Oh, I can't tell him Mr. Knobb, I can't!" She said.

"Tell him Mina, you're the one who brought him here, so tell him now please," Mr. Knobb said firmly.

"Theo, if you do come in... Well... Y-you erm..... may not g-go b-ack out..." She said so quietly he could barely hear her.

"What do you mean?"

"Well... I- What I mean is that... Y-you, don't know who my parents are, do you?"

"No," He lied.

"Well.... They are King and Queen to a secret world, one not very different from your own, but this world is forbidden because of the things in it. It has a very secret location, one that's VERY difficult to find, but when it's found, the finder's memory is erased and they... Well, they don't ev-ever go h-home..."

"Wha- But, but, but I haven't FOUND this place... YOU'VE brought me here, it wouldn't be fair if my memory was erased... And how are they erased anyways?" Said a distressed Theo.

"I know, we'll have to take the problem up with my parents... But first, let's eat!" She said eagerly.

Mr. Knobb gave a disapproving glare at the both of them, but waved his hand on to let them go.

Helmina grabbed Theo's hand and darted off through the nearest gate in the courtyard, into a bright hallway with pictures of people ALL over the walls, all royal, guessed Theo. Then they came out of the long, bright hallway, into a pink room that was bigger than all of the huts from his village put together.

"This is the tea room... My mum's least favorite room, but she promised to keep it all pink and frilly for.... Well, sentimental reasons I guess," Said Helmina quickly before they darted to the end of the Tea Room,

into a dark and wet stair case that sprang up from the marble floors. There must have been at least fifty steps, and Theo was about ready to collapse, but Helmina seemed pumped and ready to keep going. They darted through the only door at the top of the steps, through a doorway behind a large marble column (one of many in a long and broad hallway), down about four or five steps, through a small hallway, and into a great dining room.

The black marble floors gleamed as the honey golden walls reflected in them. There was a very large, real ivory table that seated probably thirty or more, adorned with blue plates, gold goblets and utensils, and four very large bouquets of black roses inside black and blue marble vases.

The walls were covered with many windows that left barely any room for the large pictures that some

one had managed to squeeze in.

The ceiling was gold, blue, and scarlet. There was a mural of an animal on it, but Theo couldn't tell what it type it was, then quickly he excused his wonderment when he smelled something.

Helmina was sitting down and man was bringing out a pot full of something bubbling and delicious smelling.

"Sit down Theo!" She said and waved him over.

"Sorry, I've just never seen anything so... so grand... Its amazing," He said and sat down right across from her.

"I know, its gorgeous. I only wish I had been here when they built it over eight hundred years ago... All the pictures you've seen in the rooms we passed through... Are royalty thats lived here in that time period," She said and dipped a ladle inside the pot, and pulled out some chunks of meat- or so he thouht ehat looked like meat- and poured it into his bowl.

"Oh... um, thanks."

"Anyway, every single child from the King and Queen from eight hundred years ago has ruled and their faces have been put on these walls."

"Where do the children marry from?" Theo asked as he spooned the weird stuff swimming in his bowl.

"Well, I'm not really supposed to be telling you ANYTHING since we haven't seen my parents yet... But... Ok, there is one rule, that every second child that is born from the King and Queen, can marry one outsider. There is another kingdom two hundred miles from here that knows of our secret kingdom and allows one of their children to marry on of our royal children."

"Wait... I don't quite understand about the second child thing," Theo said.

"Ok, the King and Queen of THIS kingdom are allowed one child ONLY. For example, me, I'm my parents ONLY child, and I must marry a man by my twentieth birthday, so that I can become Queen. Well, I can't marry a man from the other kingom-"

"Wait, the kingdom's names?"

"Sorry, I get ahead of myself... Ours is Helm, the other is Jahd... Ok? So anyway, my grandparents had a son, my father, and he was allowed to marry one of Jahd's daughters, because his father had to marry an outsider woman. So, me being the second child that has NOT been born from and outsider, I'm allowed to marry an outsider."

"What do you mean second child? I thought your parents could only have one child?"

"Yes, but my grandfather married an outsider, and since my dad could only marry royalty, he married my mum from Jahd. And, like my grandfather, I'm the second child from each generation that can marry and outsider... Get it?" She said and swallowed a spoonful of soup.

"Yea I think..."

"Well, hurry and eat, we'll have to meet my parents in.... Exactly 6 minutes," She said looked above his head at a clock he didn't even notice was there.

Slowly, he inched the spoon towards his mouth and ate the soup. He had no idea what was in it, the meat tasted like flowers, and the broth tasted like.... Oranges. But it was satisfying and they both ate the whole pot in five minutes.

## 6 - The King and Queen of Helm

"Well, hurry and eat, we'll have to meet my parents in.... Exactly 6 minutes," She said looked above his head at a clock he didn't even notice was there.

Slowly, he inched the spoon towards his mouth and ate the soup. He had no idea what was in it, the meat tasted like flowers, and the broth tasted like.... Oranges. But it was satisfying and they both ate the whole pot in five minutes.

It was very dark in the court room. But Theo could see all the gold adorned chairs and tables.

When the great chandelier's candles were lit, the whole room sparkled.

He had never seen anything as grand as the rooms in Helm's castle. It was so extraordinary, he still couldn't fathom everything.

And when the King and Queen came through the doorway behind the stage, Theo about died.

There was Neville, his beautiful long, blond hair swaying as he walked regally and set himself down on his throne. The Queen came behind him, her long, scarlet robes softly wisping the ground, her long black, wavy hair bouncing happily. Their faces seemed so young, even after 20 years.

How is the not a dream? Theo thought... Its so impossible.

Mira sat beside her husband, and he smiled at her.

"Stay back here until I say to come out," Helmina whispered and walked out from the shadows of the balcony overhead.

She bowed respectfully low and then straightened.

"Helmina," Neville calmly said. "I wasn't so surprised by your running off again, but your mother and I have decided to take a more cautious approach to your freedom."

"Yes father," Helmina said quietly.

"The forest is NOT safe anymore," Her mother said firmly. "We love you very much, and thats why we have decided to..."

Neville and Mira looked at eachother.

"Ban you from leaving the castle to go into the forest," Neville said. "You may go into Helm on a weekly basis, but not the forest. If any of your pets runs off, we'll have someone fetch them for you."

"Mina, I know it might be hard to understand now, but believe me, when you're older, you may go wherever you like," Her mother finished.

"Yes, I understand mother," Said Helmina.

"One more thing, Helmina," Neville's voice hardened slightly and Helmina looked at the ground.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Knobbs told me something... about ten minutes ago, that you've brought a friend with you... Who is it?"

"Well, fa-father... H...He comes from a v-village outside of the w-woods... And his name i-is..."

The-Theodore Webster."

Neville stood quickly, his eyes fixed on his daughter.

"Theo... Theodore... WEBSTER?" He whispered in disbelief. "He did return."

Neville smiled.

"Well, lovely surprise then huh?"

"Yes father."

"He may stay for..." He looked back at Mira, who gave a nod.

"For a few days. But no more than that. He must return..."

"And his memory... You won't erase it will you?" Helmina stepped forward.

"I will think on it Mina. In the mean time, I'll tell Mr. Knobbs to keep him occupied."

"Yes father."

And keep him occupied he did.

Mr. Knobbs never let Theo out of his sight, yelling orders and smacking the back of his head when he messed up.

One afternoon, after Theo had been there a day, Mr. Knobbs came trotting into the garden, watching Theodore plant the bulbs of emerald trees along the gate.

"Theo, don't forget to water the plants AFTER they're planted, the get mighty thirsty you know!"

"Yes Mr. Knobbs," Theo replied respectfully and yet reluctantly.

"And when you're finished, make sure Dory hasn't soiled her bed again... And if she has, then... Well, clean it up. And feed the horses."

"Mr. Knobbs... Can I ask you something?"

Mr. Knobbs looked at Theo with suspicion.

"Ok..."

"Well, why do I have to work so hard if this isn't my home? I mean, I'm not staying here right?" Theo carefully wound the words into sentences so that Mr. Knobbs wouldn't suspect Theo was in the Courtroom with Helmina the day before.

"You work... Because you came, and you're sleeping here and eating here right? So, working is... Well, I guess you could say its "paying for room and board."

"My what?" Asked Theo.

"You're room and board son... you know, like a hotel, or an inn? Never been to one?"

"Nope."

"Well, I can't expect you to have been," Mr. Knobbs mumbled and strolled back into the castle.

The sun's rays constantly shone over the garden that afternoon, hotter than ever. It was like he was being punished for something he didn't do, and the sun was in Cahoots with Mr. Knobbs.

He cursed the sun as he dug further into the ground, further and further to plant the stupid, gigantic emerald tree bulb. He had never seen an emerald tree, and didn't much care for whatever its purpose was. All he wanted was to see Neville face to face, and then get home.

But the next day, Mr. Knobbs kept him so busy he couldn't think. He didn't eat until dinner, he didn't see Helmina until dinner, and he didn't sleep until after dinner.

In bed, he laid there thinking about his grandfather, Neville and the secret city of Helm. The next day, he would face Neville, and go home with his memory... Possibly.

## 7 - Mr. Christophe Gavin

Minutes passed slowly as Theo tapped his fingers on the ivory chair arm. He was sitting in a room right outside the courtroom, apparently an office or something, because in front of him was an enormous desk, with books shoved in every nook and cranny to be seen, and there were bookshelves filled with globes of all sorts, mother of pearl, jade, onyx, big, small, round, square, flat, and spinning ones too. The room was very dark, and cramped. Theo felt he was breathing in all the air in the room and might soon suffocate.

But then, Mr. Knobbs came bursting in.

"Get up! Now come on get up!" He bellowed.

"Are you always like this with Helmina?" Theo asked as Mr. Knobbs as he was shoved out the small doorway by Mr. Knobbs' meaty hands.

"Watch it boy! You've got a mind of your own, and sometimes thats a bad thing!"

They entered the courtroom, and the chandelier candles were lit so that every gold adorned chair and table gleamed with life.

A skittish man waddled from table to table, filling a water pail and dusting the chairs.

He waddled away quickly as Mr. Knobbs approached him.

"Theo, come sit here and do NOT move until you're told to... Understand?"

"Perfectly," Theo said as he sat him bottom down in a chair Mr. Knobbs pulled out for him.

An hour passed and slowly, men in short black coats and powdered wigs came strutting in, giving Theo a cold glance.

They all filled the seats around Theo, and after an hour more, the door behind the stage opened with a loud creak.

All the men stood, their chairs sliding loudly back. Theo stood abruptly and stumbled, then a few men gave a snort at his action.

Neville appeared first and the men bowed so that their noses touched the table top. Theo bowed too.

Then Mira came, and they bowed the same way again.

Neville searched the crowd of men with his black eyes, and then they stopped. But not on Theo. Neville was looking to the left Theo, at a desk where a very skinny and tall man stood.

Mira sat, but Neville walked to the edge of the stage.

He cleared his throat.

"Thank you for coming gentlemen... But it seems our case will be post-poned for just a minute or two. You may sit though," He said.

The men pulled their chairs close to their behinds, and sat then scooted forward.

One man jumped up with a yelp. It was the tall skinny man Neville had looked at earlier.

Everyone looked at him.

"Th-Some-Its," Was all he managed to say, because Neville came down quickly from the stage and reached under the desk.

His eyebrows were raised and he smiled. He stood up again and said, "Come on out... NOW please." Slowly, from under the desk, came a person.

It was Helmina. Her hair was sticking to her red face and she had a black coat on like the courtroom men.

Some of the men laughed, some snorted, and some sneered.

"Crazy, unruly girl..." Theo heard someone to right of him mumble.

He glanced over his shoulder and saw a young man with blond hair like Neville's not covered by a wig. He looked very snooty and princely.

"Mina, what ARE you doing?" Neville asked, and looking as though he was suppressing a laugh.

"I-I was... Well, I w-wanted to hear what was going on, but M-Mr. Knobbs wouldn't let me listen through the door... So I hid myself before hand... But I didn't know I would be under the desk of such a leggy fool who couldn't keep still for two seconds," Helmina bravely said.

Neville chuckled.

"Dear child, I'm sorry, but I'm giving you into Mr. Knobbs' hands for now, just until we're done."

"But father-"

"No Mina, go out now."

"Yes father."

The man with blond hair behind Theo snorted and seated himself.

"Shall we continue?" Neville asked.

All the men sat themselves and Neville walked back up on stage.

"Well, the problem that faces us today, is.... There is someone here, that doesn't quite belong," Neville began. "But, we can't return him home."

"The case of Theodore Jay Webster," One man read from a parchment. "Arrived here exactly two days ago, and is the grandson... Of Edgar Webster."

Most of the men in the room shuddered and took in a deep breath.

"Well, we all know how this will eventually pan out!" Bellowed one man.

"The loony family! In Helm! Unheard of!" Said another.

"Its all a matter of time before Edgar finds this place again and threatens us!"

"I say we erase the boys memory now and throw him in the cities streets!"

"Now wait a minute gentlemen!" Said Neville. "We haven't asked the young Mr. Webster what he would like to do... Mr Webster?"

Neville was looking straiight at Theo. He sunk lowly in his chair and blushed.

"Oh come now! Don't be shy son!" Neville said with a smile.

Theo reluctantly stood up.

"That's better... Now, if we were to erase you memory and throw you into the streets og Helm, how would you feel?"

"I-I would feel... erm... Lost?"

"Yes, as would all of us. Do you know why we've considered this an option though?"

"No Your Majesty."

"Well, I suppose your Grandfather has told stories of this castle. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are right."

"Ok, tell us what he's told us."

"Oh... well, he stopped telling the storied when I was about twelve... So I don't really remember any of them... But there was one that I always remembered."

"Tell us."

"Your Majesty, I don't think is getting us anywhere," Interrupted the blond man behind Theo.

"Well, Mr... Gavin, perhaps you would like to take the stand and answer some questions about how your father and Mr. Edgar Webster aren't so far from eachother?" Neville said.

Mr. Gavin was silent.

"Resume, Theodore."

## 8 - A Secret Plan

"What did he then say?" Helmina's big eyes peered at Theodore curiously.

"Well, he told me you might ask what was said.... Then he made me promise I wouldn't tell anything," Theo replied. He couldn't look into her eyes for he knew what the future was to behold from the meeting prior to this day. Helmina didn't, and now Theo felt quite uncomfortable around her. He was to be her husband.

Mr. Christoph Gavin objected greatly to the match, but Neville insisted it was a good match considering Theo was a man not from Helm City nor was he royalty.

"Oh Theodore you know I'm going to butcher the truth out of you!"

"Well, I won't go back on my word, so don't waste your breath," He stood up and began walking out of the library.

"Oh Theo, please tell me one thing. Is it good? Was father good to you?"

"Yes... Yes, it is good and he was good to me."

"Well, I don't see why he should marry her," Mr. Gavin told his servant. "He's not right for her and he's not fit for the throne.... I shall over rule him soon enough. Even if it means the ruination of the King and Queen."

"Mr Gavin must be careful," His servant admonished. "I must say I admire your courage, but do remember what you're fighting for."

"Oh I remember... Vividly... The revenge on my father's rightful place on the throne which he was denied... "

"Yes sir. He would be proud to see you've made a place in the royal Courtroom."

"I've devised a plan Darson.... I'm going to make Mina fall in love with me, then I'm going to... Well, take my rightful place on the throne, no matter what may try and stand in my way. I WILL not let this family take over. It's not their place to."

"Mother, whom shall I marry? I don't want to wait anymore, I'm ready."

"Mina dear, you know it shall only be on your 20th birthday your husband will be named."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes. But not very well."

"Do I?"

"I shan't tell you."

"Will he love me? Shall I love him?"

"I believe the match is a fair choice."

"You're not telling me much," Mina was irritated.

"Mina, that's what I'm instructed to do. You know, before I knew your father was to be my husband... I knew him and he was my best friend. I was only allowed to live outside the Helm city because at the time, there was a great enemy to many people in Helm and Jahd. Many died, and as the only heir to the Helm's throne, I was to be protected. So, I was sent to a village and there I met your father. I fell in love with him the minute I met him and saw his kindness. I implored my mother and father to let us marry, and after many tries, they accepted."

"How did you know you actually loved father?"

"I don't know. He was a kind and gentle man, very strong too. I just felt my heart had wings when he was

around, and I was miserable without him. When you fall in love, you'll know. Its not only the outside actions that make you feel close to a person, but what is inside their heart and how they make you feel." "I should like to feel that way about my husband when we first meet." "I'm sure you will darling. Now hurry and finish your stitching, Mr. Knobbs is ready for your arithametic."

Theo felt so light hearted and dizzy since his deal with Neville. To be his daughters husband, and King of Helm. What was it like to be King? Especially of an unknown city? What would he tell his grandfather? Helmina's birthday was only 1 month away, and time was passing quicker than usual.

Preparations were already beginning for her party and the announcement of their engagement. How would she feel about it? She wouldn't know they were destined for eachother until her birthday.

Theo was so nervous and yet content with the idea. He hadn't known Helmina for very long, and they had become friends very quickly.

And as he looked up into the cloudy sky while taking a break from diggin in the garden, he felt at ease knowing his future was secure and safe.

For now.



## 9 - The Serpant's Diary

Another day passed slowly.

Theo had forgotten about the book he found in his grandfather's room- the one with serpants on it, and he had forgotten about the strange keys he found.

Until Mina came hopping down the hallway to greet him with a small book in her hands.

This book made his jaw drop when he saw it. It had intertwining serpants on it just like the other one, but the middle serpant had a red sphere in his mouth, not a blue one. And this one was pocket size.

"Mina... Where did you get this?" He asked before she had time to say hello.

"This? Oh its been in this castle for years and years! My father said I could have any book in the library I wanted, isn't that great?" She was so giddy.

"What's it about?"

"I don't know, I was just about to start reading when mama told me go find Mr. Knobb and tell him.....

Oh, no... I forgot what I was supposed to tell him. Oops!"

Theo was quiet. The book looked like it was locked just like the other one.

"Whats wrong?" She asked.

"No-nothing... I'm just, tired."

"Oh... Well, you want to read it together?"

"O-ok."

She grabbed his hand and darted down the hall way, and went into a dark room. She hopped over to the window and pulled open the drapes, letting sunshine flow in.

Theo squinted, and looked around, realizing they were in the biggest library he had ever seen.

"Wow," He whispered as he gazed at the shelves upon shelves upon shelves of books.

"This is my library, father gave it to me for my birthday last year. He's so generous and kind, I don't deserve half of what he gives me," She sighed and plopped down in a large, velvety chair, which her legs hung out over the edge. "Sit," She said and patted the chair next to her. Theo sat, his legs touching the granite floor.

"I'm not sure how to oper it, I've seen Mr. Knobb try, and try, and TRY, to get it open, but he's never succeeded. Silly old man."

And then, just like that, the book made a clicking noise and Mina opened it.

"There!..... Oh wow, look Theo, look at the pages, they're REAL paper, not parchment! Oh, my, goodness... Theo, this-this isn't a real book... Read."

She handed him the open book. The letters on the paper were handwritten in great, elagent penmanship.

The first page said:

### Collidus Day

Father told me I'm to stay indoors today. Its a dangerous day. Collidus day is when all the raving creatures of the forest come out, and feast on eachother. Some even get into the village. I've never seen a real beast, and I want to. I think I can tame them. I mean, I tamed my pet Salizar, the alligator. And mama has always told me I have a gift with animals. I'm almost 18, and I know my father only wants to keep me safe. But I am strong, Mr. Drake told me I have great wisdom and knowledge concerning animals, and my archer skills have improved greatly. I'm not defenseless, and my father knows it. I wouldn't do anything too stupid.

Every Collidus day my fathers hunting party goes out into the woods, and all of them come back, they even bring meat. Their caravan is about to leave, and I think I might stow away. I'll have my bow and arrows, my emerald dagger father gave me for my birthday, and my book on medicine. Just in case.

"Mina, whose is this?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I've never heard of Collidus day. Have you?"

"No. Why don't you ask your father or mother?"

"I guess. But isn't this interesting? A diary from one of my ancestors! I wonder who they were."

"Mina, I.... I found a book exactly like this one on my grandfathers house. But it was much bigger and the sphere wasn't red, it was blue. It was the day I came here."

"Really? Well, then, we'll go back to your grandfathers and find it!"

"What? Are you serious?" His eyes widened and he choked. "Won't we get in trouble?"

"I will, you won't, I'll tell father it was my idea."

But since Mina didn't know they were engaged and that Neville had entrusted her to Theo, he had to object.

"No Mina. It would be better to ask your parents permission first."

She looked at him with her big brown eyes and her pouty lips.

"But, its an adventure Theodore. And you haven't seen your grandfather in a long time."

"Don't try and bribe me Mina. We'll ask permission first."

Then she got up and left.

## 10 - Enemies

That night at dinner, Mina didn't so much as glance in Theo's direction.

She had funny ways of showing her emotions, and sometimes it pissed Theo off.

He wanted to say something to her, but her parents were present and seeming to have a very nice time.

"Mina, next week you can go into the village with Heidi," Her mother began. "She's going to the Tea House to buy herbs for medicine, and she asked if you could come along. You'll have a lot of fun, the tea House is an amazing place."

"It sounds great, mother," Mina smiled.

"Oh, dear, you wouldn't believe what I heard about Miss Castro," Mira said to Neville. "She was attending Lord Pastridge's gala, and she arrived as drunk as a bum and insulted four of his staff. Then, oh dear! And then, she sat on his tea-cup dog!"

"She certainly isn't a lightweight either!" The both busted in laughs, but Theo and Mina remained unmoved for that was not even remotely close to being funny.

But the King and Queen had been enjoying the gift of wine for most of the evening.

"Mina," He said quietly.

She ignored him.

"Mina, acknowledge me."

Nothing.

"You're acting like a child."

"Oh shut up! You only speak to hear yourself!" She hissed as quietly as she could.

"Let's not argue over something petty, I don't even remember why you're mad at me."

She grunted. "Just like a guy."

"What?"

"Nothing..."

"I'm sorry ok?"

"Don't apologize if you don't know what you're apologizing for... Mother, Father, may I be excused from dinner?"

"Yes Mina," Her father replied and returned to his giddy conversation with his wife.

Mina shot up from her chair and darted away.

Theo sighed.

"Mi-Might I be excused?"

"Yes, my boy..." Neville said.

Theo searched all the rooms on the main floor of the castle for Mina, and then he searched her library but she wasn't there. She could be anywhere, considering how huge the castle was.

He was walking up the stairs to the third corridor in the west wing, towards his room when he saw someone dart out of the shadows in his peripheral vision and stopped. He turned and saw a short figure go inside a doorway and then heard a clunking noise.

He paused for a moment and took a deep breath.

"This castle is freaky," He whispered, and decided to follow whoever -or whatever- that was.

The room it went into was fairly dark, and expectantly larger than he thought. It was a circular room full of chairs and bookcases. No one was in there though.

Suddenly, a light came from the left wall, and someone went into another doorway.

Theo ducked, hoping they didn't see him following them.

He waiting a few more seconds and tip-toed to the door. He then pressed his ear against it and listened hard. His heavy breathing and pounding heart were the only things he heard. So, mustering the courage from somewhere deep inside of himself, he placed his hand on the door handle, and opened it.

He was greeted by a yard of statues, and he felt confusion sweep over his face. 'What in the world?' He thought as he stood on his toes to see how far back the yard went. Pretty far.

He then realized that it wasn't a yard, it was a balcony with no ledge or staircase or anything to it. He walked to the edge and looked down.

About 40 to 50 feet down. The wind was blowing and the sun was setting.

It certainly was an odd place, but Theo didn't think twice before he started walking to the other side.

All the statues were of people, and they were tall. They weren't just plain, carved images, they were extremely detailed and even had names and a few paragraphs long description carved into the base.

He didn't stop to read any, because he was too busy with excitement to notice the two men standing in plain sight about 20 feet away. One cleared his throat and Theo jumped out of his skin.

"Well, what have we here?" One asked with a sinister smile.

"I think he looks like he don't know where he is..." The other said and pulled out a short blade.

Theo's heart skipped several beats and his feet began running when his body wasn't ready.

He fell on his face and then got up, his mind finally in focus as to what was going on. He barely turned his head before he saw the two men running after him.

'I have to get to Neville.' He thought and burst through the door he came out earlier. He tripped over several chairs and almost hit a bookcase, but he made it out just as the other guys were coming into the room.

As he ran down the flights of stairs towards the dinning room, his mind was running faster than his feet. He tried slowing down so he wouldn't fall, but he couldn't. He was so scared, all he want to do was find Neville, and make sure that Mina was safe.