

Girl of Magic

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A girls' grandfather is murdered in a raid when she is away hunting. She decides to use her powers to seek revenge.

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1. Blood red sky

The sky was turning. Slowly but surely the cool spring day was giving into night. Streaks of red were drawn across the golden hemisphere. The indigo night sky was already pushing through and the sun was throwing its last golden rays across the Sanchon forest. A faint silver moon shone up above, waiting for the sun to disappear. Then it would be in its full glory. Deep in the forest, a girl stood silently. She was watching a deer and her fawn pick their way delicately across the dense undergrowth. The mother came slowly. The animals here were not unintelligent. The mother was wary and with good reason. The fawn was unaware of everything and was happily ambling along beside his mother. Slowly, the girl unhooked a leather sling from her belt and fitted it with a stone from her pocket. As usual this one had the familiar elfin words flowing across it. Her grandfather had given a very powerful stone this time. It struck with the force and speed of the wind, and never missed when aimed appropriately. There was a slight breeze blowing in from the east. This was the reason that the deer had not already bolted, as the girl was standing down wind of them. It gave her a great advantage. However, the girl was not without fear. When provoked, deer could give a powerful, sometimes fatal, kick that even her magic couldn't heal. Standing upright she slowly started to swing the sling. Before she could let the stone loose the mother deer suddenly looked away in the opposite direction and started to flee, the fawn followed suite. The girl swore under her breath. She had promised her grandfather that she would bring him something to eat. She slipped the stone back into her pocket and wondered whether to follow the deer or not. She decided against it, but before she could turn away a huge shape dashed out of the trees ahead of her. The girl only just stopped herself from crying out in fear or running away for the commotion would have alerted the creature. It raced towards the deer but strangely was not catching up. The deer had already disappeared and the creature was still in the clearing. With a howl that brought shivers up the girl's spine the creature lay down on the ferns in defeat. Though the girl was too scared to move, she could not help but feel a little interest. She could now see that the creature was a wolf, but it had no pack. Though it was uncommon, it was not unheard of for a wolf to be living alone and it was not this that the girl wondered about. Normally wolves would have hunted and captured deer with expert skill, but why had it not been able to? Why had it been standing upwind of the deer? It would have normally crept up downwind, same as she. Only a starving wolf would have been so quick to charge the animals. The girl looked at the wolf. The head had not turned towards her and she did not think that it had seen her. It certainly looked starved. The shape of its ribs was clearly outlined, and the fur was matted and dirty. The animal was big, however and if it had been in better condition it would have been magnificent. With a lift of its head the wolf and the girl's eyes met. The girl was stunned. The wolf's eyes were green! Wolves' eyes in Canada were normally amber or brown never had she heard of a wolf's eyes being green. Now she noticed, the wolf had foreign markings, though the shape and breed of wolf in it was unmistakable. Someone had obviously tempered with this wolf with magic, though she hadn't heard of it. This was probably why the wolf was an outsider. It was

desperately weak, the girl could see that, but could she dare to run now? Her magic could only protect her so much; she still had lots to learn from her grandfather. Slowly she muttered the incantation and a ball of blue fire materialized in her hand. Her question was suddenly answered for her as the wolf/dog gave a yelp, rose unsteadily to its feet and ran into the forest.

The girl gave a low whistle and turned away. It wasn't a miracle that she was alive as most animals were frightened of fire, but still, this was a magical animal! What a story she could tell to the others in her camp now! She suddenly noticed that the sky was turning black and the moon was hidden in cloud and quickened her pace. It was not a good situation to be in if you didn't know the way back to the camp blindfolded, and wouldn't have been able to hold the fire much longer.

She arrived back at the camp and gave a call to the watchman. The camp had recently devised a series of calls and codenames as they had felt that they had been watched during the past couple of days. There was no answer. The girl called again. No answer. She was only slightly worried as the town watch often finished early. She walked into the village. The village consisted of only thirty or so wood cabins, and a village hall. A fair arrived every two years or so, and the villagers often bought meat or other goods there. The girl had been born there, but as her mother had died giving birth, she had lived with her grandfather. Her father was on the far side of Uron helping the king with the upbringing of the empire. The girl or any others in the village knew not what her father did; many believed him dead. After that, a few other people had arrived. The Kaylan was a good hiding place, whatever you wished to hide from. Apart from the legendary Laylon, Kayla was the last surviving hidden village. Seasons ago, there had been plentiful meat, vegetables and game, but recently the animals and birds had simply left. Now the villagers survived on vegetables and only a few animals kept on farms. Winter was the hardest time, when all vegetation froze in the ground. The wind and snow could howl for days on end and then suddenly stop, revealing a white wonderland. Some villagers had been pushed to venture into the forest. They had returned empty handed, wounded or not come back at all. The girl carried on through the camp. It was unusually quiet. A knot of fear was twisting her stomach now. Where was everyone? Her pace quickened and her heart started beating loudly. A stench filled the air and everything was silent. She turned the corner into the centre of the camp and just stood, stunned and shocked. Then she screamed, a long, howling scream that racked the night and carried on the wind. It was one filled with agony and pain, of anger and of fear. Animals in the forest curled up in their sleep, animals out hunting crouched low to the ground or howled to block out the terrible sound. The scene before the girl was one from a nightmare. Bodies littered the ground, some covered in arrows, others in slashes from a knife. Many were not marked at all, killed by the work of magic. It was a bloody and terrible scene. Suddenly, she remembered. The girl ran through the clearing, only one thing on her mind Grandfather! she screamed frantically, Grandfatherrrr! she raced towards their log cabin. The door was open. Inside, pots and pans were scattered, curtains torn and worktops and cupboards slashed. His grandfather was lying on the floor, an arrow in his gut. It was an evil

thing. Black magic was spiked across its black shaft. It was one made for killing without mercy, for inflicting pain before death. Her grandfather was dying, slowly but surely. Grandfather sobbed the girl don't leave me. Please, please! She sobbed the last words and put her head in her hands. Slowly, and with a grimace of pain his Grandfather turned his head up towards the girl. Ferrin, he groaned, his face contorted with effort, Ferrin you must go& find your&get the book and go& to the elves&much I haven't told you& nothing you can do& leave, there is danger here, they will come back&I am so sorry&

Grandfather please! Don't go, I need you. I forgive you Grandfather, I love you, oh please& please. Ferrin put her arms around the old man's neck. I can heal you, please let me heal you She held her hand over the wound and muttered the words through her sobs. However the words were to no avail. She didn't have the strength to heal a magic wound. The old man, who had lived for so long drew a last, shuddering breath, then no more came. Grandfather! Grandfather! You can't, you just can't! Come back& please, please. Where are the elves! Who will guide me! I can't do this alone Grandfather! With tears rolling down her face, Ferrin gently let go of her grandfather's hand and stood up. Her tears were coming in steady rivers, but she was now infused with anger as well as sadness and her fists were clenched. Whoever did this she muttered with vehemence whoever did this, they will pay.

Ferrin first found a white, unmarked cloth and placed it gently over the old man's body. As was custom she said the words which released the soul from the body and let it fly free. She could not do it with all the villagers, so she just said the general incantation for all of them, and hoped that their spirits would not be angry with her. Then she returned swiftly to her cabin and gathered some food, a water bag, clothes, rugs and beloved knife. She also picked up her bow and arrows, her grandfather's warnings still ringing in her ears. Finally, she entered her grandfather's room and lifted the mattress of his bed. Silently she let out a breath that she hadn't known she had been holding in. Ser For, the elfin book of magic, was still lying untouched under the wooden frame of the bed. The book itself was small and compact, easily small enough to fit inside a fold of her tunic if the need arose. It was the teacher of all magic, only a few had been given to men from the elves. Her grandfather had been one of the men, and had never shown the book to anyone, not even Ferrin's mother, until Ferrin had conjured a fireball by mistake by speaking the ancient words in a game with her grandfather. From that day on she had been sworn to secrecy and in return her grandfather had taught her nearly all of the elfin language. She had not actually learnt any more spells yet, only the fireball, but she had been taught some basic words for healing. The death words and life words were also magic, but everyone knew and used these. Ferrin smiled at the times when she had been learning with her grandfather. The book belonged to her now, and she must now also carry the responsibility of it. She placed it in her pack in between two sheets of cloth, so as not to damage it. She was wearing her hunting clothes: a short but warm tunic, soft trousers, cow skin boots and her belt and knife holder. The knife had been her grandfather's, but he had given it to her when she had

reached ten. It was a beautiful piece of work, one of her grandfather's finest. Elfin inscriptions swirled across the blade, catching the light and shimmering. The hilt was made out of pure silver inscribed with beautiful markings and pictures. It was probably the most expensive thing she had ever owned. Finally equipped, she left the cabin, and with a soft farewell to the place she had lived all her life, she left the village.

Ferrin wondered which way to go. On her right was the hidden entrance to Kaylan, which led to Uron, which was presumably where her father was. However, he might not recognise her, as he had left when she was only a baby. Also, her grandfather had told her to find the elves, and they were rumoured to live somewhere in Alamas, which was through the Sanchon forest and over the Medmas plains. Finally she made up her mind. She had to go to the elves.

2. A fateful meeting

Ferrin entered the forest with a heavy heart. All the things that she had known, loved and cared for were gone. Destroyed by someone or something. A noise to her right made her freeze and slowly draw her bow, reaching for an arrow. She cursed under her breath. She had been so wrapped up in her thoughts that she hadn't been watching or listening to the forest. Her grandfather would have been extremely disappointed in her. That was one of the first lessons he had taught her – always be on your guard, Ferrin. You must look and listen to what your surroundings are telling you. She pointed her bow in the direction of the noise. Nothing happened, but she waited as still as she could for another minute. Finally she withdrew her bow, still cautious. Shaken by this encounter she pushed on, ever aware of her surroundings. She hadn't noticed that the moon was up as it was so bright, filling the forest with its silvery light. It was full. Ferrin decided that she was far enough away from the village to pitch camp for the night. Making it was easy enough, she had done so only a few days ago when she was tracking the deer.

She lay down in her rug and looked at the stars. She had decided against a tent as she was exhausted and it didn't look as if it was going to rain. The fire crackled merrily a few meters away; casting flickering shadows around the ring of trees she was in. Suddenly a pair of green eyes flashed in the shadows, but didn't venture into the ring of light created by the fire. They surveyed the sleeping girl, then melted back into the darkness. Ferrin slept on, unaware of anything.

Ferrin awoke and stretched. She looked around her and noticed that the fire was out. It was a cool and crisp morning. She rolled up her blanket, covered the remains of the fire and munched on a couple of biscuits. Then she set off, heading southeast towards the Medmas plain. The forest became thicker as she walked, the trees pressing in on her. In some places it even became too dark to see, so she had to create a fireball to guide her way. It was nearing lunchtime, so she stopped and sat in between the roots of a huge oak. She felt secluded and quite peaceful as she ate her bread, listening to the wind whispering through the trees. It was still quite cool, as winter hadn't quite faded away, and she pulled a cloak around her for extra warmth. She grudgingly finished her bread and started up again, heading through the dense,

dark trees. She carried on walking tirelessly, finishing one league, then two. The sun was low in the sky when she finished the third one and she knew that she would soon have to stop. She felt that she had been going down for the last half-league. Suddenly the edge of the trees was visible. She wondered if it was the Medmas plains, but then wondered how she could have covered nine leagues when it seemed like only three. It just wasn't possible. Following her path she eventually reached the edge of the trees, then groaned out loud. The river Sial rested a few hundred meters downhill of her. It was on its way to Uron where the town's people would use it for washing and drinking. Ferrin realised that she had been heading down a large valley side in the forest, and she had almost reached the bottom. The sun was almost down now, and she knew that she would have to either press on in the dark through the river, or pitch camp and try in the morning. She shuddered the Sial was extremely large and fast in this point, and she didn't particularly want to try to cross in the dark. Sighing, she headed towards the forest to try and get some wood the dew on the grass was slowly turning into frost in the chilly air and she needed to light a fire.

Ferrin lay in her blanket. She was wondering how to cross the river without being swept away or drown. The river looked to be about a hundred meters wide. A thought suddenly struck her. What if there was a spell in the book which could help her with the river? She eagerly unpacked it, unwrapping it carefully and laying the cloth on the floor. Then she muttered the incantation for a fireball, throwing it into the firewood. Flames blazed up immediately, light and warmth spilling over her. She looked at the book. This was the first time she had opened it on her own, although she had seen her grandfather learn spells many times and knew what to do. Mehm nem rind sayt she murmured, asking for a spell to cross water. The book opened and emitted a silver light. The wafer thin pages turned as if in a wind and rested on a page marked rind sayt. She read each word slowly, discarding spells; one to breathe underwater&one to make it fast or slow& one to dry up lakes. There was one that caught her eye how to open up the water. The incantation was nelev cunan. She memorized the words, muttering them under her breath then closed the book and packed it away again in its cloth. Then she leant back into her rug and fell fast asleep, clutching her pack.

The morning arrived with the first streaks of pink in a light sky. Gradually it turned and started to become blue. Ferrin was extremely nervous about stopping the river. She had never been taught by her grandfather the rules of magic, and wondered if there was anything that could not go wrong. A great lump of apprehension filled her stomach, and she felt quite faint. Then she steadied herself and took a deep breath. She packed up and walked down to the river. The sun shone down on her and dispersed the last of the cold she felt from the night before. Eventually she stood in front of the Sial. It tumbled past her, filling the air with spray. Ferrin paused for a moment. Compared to the Sial, she felt tiny, insignificant. She wondered how on earth she would be able to stop such a mighty being. The moment passed and she stood nervously before the water. Slowly she raised her left arm and let her palm face the river. Nelev cunan she shouted, trying to make herself be heard above the roar of the river. Nothing

happened. Ferrin was confused, she had uttered the right words and used her left hand, her magic one. Then a thought flashed in her mind. When she created fire, she was always calm and focused. Smiling, Ferrin turned to the river again. She was completely calm. Holding up her hand, she drew up all the energy and magic that she could and focused it on her palm, which became white hot. The words were burning on her tongue. Nelev cunan she shouted again, and she felt the magic flow through her body and out of her palm. It flew through the water a silver blinding light and with a crash, opened up the river. The Sial's waters now flew upwards; curved at about twenty meters in the air, then fell back to the riverbed a few meters on the right. A clear path was illuminated in silver through the river, and semi-transparent silver walls and ceiling held the river overhead. Ferrin shuddered, she force of the river was enormous and she could barely hold it with her energy and magic. She groaned with pain, then stumbled slowly into the river. She kept going, ten steps, twenty steps, twenty five steps& she lost track of the meters and was losing energy fast. Suddenly something made her look back, and her heart nearly stopped. Standing there was the wolf she had seen when hunting. She simply stopped thinking, and almost fainted. However, she was extremely aware of the water pressing down on her, and forced herself to turn around and start walking again. She expected to feel the wolf attacking her at any moment, and only the thought of it behind her kept her going. Eventually, when she felt that she couldn't carry on much longer, she saw the end of the tunnel. She stumbled towards the grass at the edge of the river, holding on to the magic and her strength as much as she could, and then she was only meters away from the end. She gave a short, painful grin at her accomplishment and dragged herself on. Suddenly, the wolf gave a gigantic leap and landed in front of her, out of the tunnel. It turned and faced her. Ferrin almost cried in despair. Even if she got out of the tunnel, she would die at the jaws of the wolf. She knew that to just give way to the river would be less painful than being eaten alive, so gratefully and finally, she blacked out. She never saw the mountain of water rushing down with the force of a thousand winds.

Ferrin's mind woke up. Inwardly she groaned. Am I dead? She wondered. No. Not yet. Said a voice.

What? Who's speaking? Cried Ferrin.

You people call me Wolf. My name is Shadow.

Who? Wait, are you the wolf that crossed the river with me?

Yes.

Then did you die too?

I have said. Neither you nor I are dead.

Oh. Then why are you talking to me? And if I am not dead, why won't I wake up?

You will wake up as soon as I leave your mind.

What&?

Ferrin opened her eyes. She was staring up at the sky. The white, fluffy clouds rolled lazily across the clear blue space. She moved a hand to see if it shot pain up her arm. It did. Ow, she groaned. Luckily it was her right hand, not her left she thought automatically. She sat up, and looked at her hand. It had a large gnash in it, and there seemed to be tooth marks. Half of her sleeve on that hand was ripped off. What in Kayla? She gasped. Then she looked around her. The wolf was standing a few feet away from her. Did you do this? she asked it. It didn't do

anything. Ferrin wondered if it had heard her, or if her communication with it had not been real. Something suddenly entered her mind. Obviously you haven't learnt to speak with your mind yet then. Well why don't you consult that little book again. It helped you last time. Ferrin stared at the wolf. It stared back with its fathomless green eyes. She reached for her pack, found it surprisingly dry and unwrapped the book again. She had not heard of speaking with minds from her grandfather. Mehm nem&inchnos seraphel she whispered. The book sent out the silver light, and then turned to a page with a simple heading seraphel. Ferrin read the page. When she understood the writing she realised that it was extremely simple. She emptied her mind of all other thoughts and directed a question at wolf. Can you hear this?

Yes. Came the reply.

Oh. Ok. Well& wolf&

Call me Shadow. Ferrin looked at the wolf. She couldn't decipher if it was annoyed or not.

Sorry& Shadow.

It matters not.

Well, I was wondering how I didn't die, and how I got this she pointed to the cut or how you could talk to me.

You have a lot of questions for such a little one.

I was hoping you'd give me answers.

Very well. Since you put it so nicely. Ferrin thought that he sounded a little sarcastic. You didn't die because I pulled you out with my teeth before the river fell. My teeth gave you the gnash when I pulled you out and I can talk to you because we share an eternal bond. The wolf grinned. Ferrin couldn't see what was funny.

What? What do you mean we share an eternal bond?

Joking. Not eternal. Until either of us dies.

That doesn't answer my question.

Ferrin couldn't hear the wolf's thoughts and when she tried to enter them again she found that she couldn't. The wolf looked at her. Fine. She snapped, See if I care. I have to go somewhere. You wouldn't understand. She stumbled away from the river, tears stinging her eyes. Aren't you going to thank me for saving your life? The question surprised her and she turned back to the wolf, Oh. Thank you.

And by the way, I would understand if you want to tell me.

Mmmm.

Is something bothering you?

No. Well, something is. Are you a male or a female?

Ferrin looked at the wolf.

That was unexpected. Male.

Oh.

Now follow me.

Ferrin, who was too tired to rebuke, followed the wolf up the slope of the valley. When they were about halfway up Ferrin dropped her pack and said I m going to make camp now, I am too tired to walk any more. She got no reply and so gathered some firewood.

As soon as the camp was set up, she fell asleep. Nothing woke her slumber.

3. Into the village

Ferrin woke and looked around her. She had fully recovered from her exhaustion but her scar still hurt from where Shadow had pulled her back. She glanced at the burnt out fire and saw him still sleeping by it. She wondered if her magic worked again and muttered the incantation for a fireball. With relief she saw one blossom in her hand, the blue flames wavering in the breeze. With a contented sigh she let it melt back into her palm. Shadow suddenly spoke to her. That s a pretty decoration.

Ferrin glanced up, she still wasn t used to his interruptions.

Not a decoration.

Oh, well it s still pretty. What do you do with it?

Um. You can light fires with it. Shadow yawned. Haha. Well you can also throw it. She conjured another fireball and hurled it at a nearby rock. It struck with complete accuracy and blasted it a few feet back.

Impressive. For a little one. Commented Shadow. They chatted amiably for a bit and then

decided to set off. It was still far to go through the forest, which continued on the other side of the river.

Each day passed like the next, there was twice as much food now with Shadow and Ferrin hunting and they both went to bed with their bellies full. On occasion Ferrin thought about her grandfather and the other villagers. This often made her cry, a feat which Shadow found fascinating. She began to regard Shadow as a friend and guide, and enjoyed her company with him. On the third day Shadow sniffed the air. How far have we gone?

Not sure. Maybe eight or nine leagues. We should be reaching the edge of Sanchon forest either today or tomorrow.

Mmmmm.

Why?

I smell people. There are huts and fires.

Oh. Well, isn't that a good thing?

Were you intending to cross their village?

Yes I guess.

Well it is good then.

They stopped talking and carried on through the forest. The sky started to turn black, and the grey clouds lay heavy in the sky. It looked as if it was going to rain. Shadow suddenly ran ahead and then returned a few minutes later. Nearly there. Was his comment. Ferrin frowned. She knew that she would have to only go in for supplies, and then leave as soon as possible. Shadow would have to come with her, as the shortest way to the plains was through the village. They suddenly stopped at the edge of the forest. In front of them was the village. It was almost three times as large as Ferrin s. She took a deep breath and turned to Shadow. Please if I get into trouble, do not reveal yourself. I don t want us to get into an even bigger mess.

Whatever I must do to protect you. Ferrin was touched by his remark. She looked at him and nodded. Hang on, was that an ok or not? She remarked. Shadow did not answer. Ferrin chose to ignore him. As the sweet smell of wood smoke filtered through the still air, the girl and wolf walked slowly into the village.

