

“FEATHERED MAGIC”

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CHAPTER 1

It all happened on a Wednesday afternoon. There were 12 gentle thuds and next thing I knew, I was staring at 12 dead doves on EL's balcony.

The bright sunlight made the feathers look shiny. I checked for any signs of blood or damage. There weren't any. I hardly walked to the edge, bent a little to see if there were any other balconies with dead birds on them. Nothing. EL lives in a tower in the middle of the big city. Her apartment is located on the 7th floor. It's a tiny one-bedroom, cozy and full of light. I looked down, EL was sitting on a bench next to the water fountain square. When I called out her name, she looked up. Even from this far away, I could see her eyes were sad. She's not the type of witch to be ok when animals die.

EL is my best friend; I've known her for 10 years now. She's a modern witch. Not a classic witch with a hat and a broom, but a good one. If you ask her, "Why did you choose to be a witch?"

She'd simply say "To help. Because I like helping. I like it when the light overcomes the darkness and my mission is to make that happen."

EL looks like most of the country girls in the middle east; wavy thick black hair, quite long; and she wears her hair down, always.

Her skin is light but not pale. Her body is strong and slightly curvy. She calls me a tiny ant because I'm skinny and I look petite when standing next to her. She has a few freckles on her cheeks, which flush a rosy red under the sun.

She's got thick black eyebrows, big brown eyes, a tiny nose and a tiny mouth. Her face is heart shaped. I think that says a lot about her. She cares so much about spreading love, even her face looks like a heart.

"Being a witch isn't an easy path" she says. Ever since she lost her ability to fly, things have been different in her journey. It was almost a year ago, midsummer, an old lady in a village reached out to her and we travelled to see her. The old lady was cursed to never see again, by a dark witch named "Moness". EL did all the rituals in her power, to give the old lady her eyes back. Then she went to fly up a mountain as she always did after breaking a spell, and the angry Moness captured EL's wings in the mountain. She hasn't been able to fly since that day, and it's been rough for us ever since.

Every weekend, EL wakes up at 5 am and goes 50 kilometers away from the city. She used to fly but well, now she drives. Then she climbs up a mountain to find the best spot for meditation. She talks about her journeys with me, but this week, she came back from the mountain in a different way. As if she's seen something

she couldn't forget; She's been in her head a lot lately. I believed the dead birds on the balcony had something to do with that.

I poured the lemonade I've already made for her; She doesn't like the hot weather, so I make her lemonade in a big pitcher every day and store it in her fridge. As I was getting dressed to go downstairs to deliver her fresh lemonade, I saw a note she's pinned on her bedroom wall:

"Feathers remember the sky,

Even when they rest on earth –

A soft map of wind

Drawn in quiet lines..."

"Her handwriting makes me want to frame everything she writes and hang it on the wall..." I thought. I read the poem again. I remembered when she came back home from the mountains last time, she sat down with a jar of wildcrafted hair tonic and her notebook on the table. Her practice to write without using her hands was finally paying off. Although she didn't need help, I still offered to rub the tonic on her hair as I did before. I wanted to be a part of the whole experience, and I liked the smell of wild plants on my hands.

I started to do hair care; she started moving her eyeballs and words started to appear on the paper:

"Feathers remember the sky..."

“Even if I had the magical power to apply this scented oil on her hair without using my hands, I would still choose to have my hands touch this perfect hair.” I thought.

CHAPTER 2

“Another annoying spell, huh?” I said as I handed her the glass of lemonade. The fountain was running; I have always loved the feeling of sitting near a fountain on a sunny day. The sound of the splashes, the breeze coming from the cold water, tiny drops of water flying all the way to sit on my skin, having EL on the other side of the bench.

“I love you, but please don’t ask any questions yet. I’m trying to figure things out.” She answered.

I held her hand. Her skin was burning, which was not a good sign. She gets hot when something is bothering her. I mean, saving the world doesn’t sound easy anyways.

As we were sitting on the bench and I was asked not to mention the dead doves on the balcony, I looked around to entertain myself as she was thinking and drinking the juice. For some reason, I started searching for feathers on the ground. There were

not many, but still I found some interesting ones. There was this long gorgeous gray feather laying under an evergreen tree, with a narrow line of white on it. I picked it up, it was light, as a feather should be. I ran my fingers all the way through the feather, it left some dust on the tip of my fingers. The low end of the feather, felt like a bone, but not exactly a bone. I was wondering how this beautiful piece of art once was attached to a bird's body, and how did it fall off? Will the bird miss this feather and come back looking for it? "Yeah, maybe I should leave it right where I found it." I dropped the feather to watch how it lands on the ground. "It moves like it's flying." I thought.

*"Feathers remember the sky,
Even when they rest on earth..."*

I turned around to check if EL needed another glass of lemonade. She looked like she was deep in thought. When she noticed me walking toward her, she jumped out of her thoughts and gave me a nice smile. It seemed like she was ready to talk.

"We should be home before sunset." She said. "Before you ask, there's a good chance I can fix things before it gets totally dark out. My ancestors will be able to get in touch at twilight, and I need their help."

I reached out my hand to get her up on the bench and she noticed the new color on my nails. I've had painted them red that morning. "I love it!" she said.

"Always a pleasure receiving compliments from you, ma'am." I said.

She laughed and we started walking home.

Going back home, I realized I've never seen white doves before; and I've never heard EL say she needs ancestral help with a ritual.

CHAPTER 3

Later that evening, 12 wooden boxes were sitting by the door.

The smell of burnt herbs and scented candles was stronger than usual.

EL had been sitting in her room with the door closed. It was officially twilight, so I guess she was contacting her ancestors. I knew her grandma used to be an amazing witch. I've seen a picture of her once, she looked like the kindest grandma ever, with a remarkably sweet smile.

EL walked out of the room and gave me a sweet smile. She was wearing nothing but a long loose white shirt; I watched her in silence, knowing rituals are sensitive matters. Usually, I would sit on the couch until she needed a hand. But this time, I had a feeling that I should stand by her side. She washed her hands in her "new moon water", Which literally is a water that has been sitting under the new moon light. Then she dropped myrrh oil on her palms and rubbed her hands together with her eyes closed. She placed a bay leaf in each box, asked me to hand her a sheet of cotton paper as she picked up each dead bird off the floor. She wrapped each dove in cotton paper and put them in a box as she said:

"What was borrowed is returned.

What was living is honored.

Rest here, small one."

Then she sealed each box with beeswax. I saw a teardrop fall down her chin as she was sealing the last box.

CHAPTER 4

An hour later, we were on top of a hill, a few kilometers away from the city. Fortunately, there was a car road to get there, so I didn't have to climb in the dark. There was a full moon. EL put the pile of wooden boxes in the middle of a circle that she's drawn with a stick. "Can you help me build a fire?" she asked.

"Only if you tell me what is going on here." I said, with a smile and my eyebrows lifted while looking into her eyes.

She smiled back. "These poor doves came to me in the mountain, a few days ago." She said.

"Woo is this the story of your last adventure?! The one that you told me nothing about?!" I said, excited.

She smiled again, but it was a less happy smile. "They've been cursed by dark magic." She said as she was staring at the boxes. "All white doves lost their ability to fly due to this spell..."

"Is this... Is this what I think it is?" I said with my eyeballs bigger than ever.

She nodded her head Yes. "Moness" she said.

"So... things got personal this time. No wonder you've been acting so weird this week."

"No, it's not about me or my dark minded sister; I just knew the doves' pain, and I really wanted to help them. Moness's spells are

powerful, and hard to break. I looked everywhere to find the best way to break this spell. My sister's spells are brutal. The only way was for twelve of the doves to sacrifice their lives, so that a portal would open to carry the spell out of this world. The white doves are suffering, and it was a tough decision, But the twelve agreed on it. Now it all depends on me. I'm fearful I won't be able to break this one..."

I put my hand on her shoulder. "Hey! You know you got this, right?"

"Yeah, my grandma knew how Moness's spell works, so she gave me a few tips. You keep your eyes open for a red tulip. Whenever you see a red tulip, it's a sign that things have worked in a good way." She said and started stretching her hands all the way up as she inhaled a deep breath, she did it annoyingly slow and I wanted to see what happens next, restless. She kept her hands stretched out for a while, then her fingers started to dance as she brought her hands back down, the deep breath hadn't been exhaled yet. The dance of the fingers got at a faster pace as if power was being activated; she reached forward to where the pile of wooden boxes was sitting, brought her hands back and let out a big exhale toward the boxes. A big flame appeared in the middle of the circle.

I was mesmerized, speechless. She looked at me, I looked at her and she winked.

"Tell me about the red tulip" I said.

"Sacrificial love, blood-bound devotion, life-force, rebirth through loss, you name it." She answered.

That got me thinking.

The wooden boxes started to burn, EL started walking around the fire chanting in a language that sounded like Turkish to me.

I grabbed my sketch book and started drawing the feather that I've seen earlier that day, I put it right in the center of the paper, then I drew 12 birds on top of it. The birds were not dead in my drawing. In fact, they looked full of life.

The weather was a little cold on the hill. I stood up and walked closer to the fire, but I didn't step inside the circle around it. I was thinking about what to draw next. It's hard to describe warmth, power, magic, darkness and light in a drawing. I drew a circle on the right top of the paper. I wanted it to represent the light, the warmth and the love that exists in this world. I added a few little circles around it, as if the small pieces of light and joy were on their way toward the doves in the night sky. At the lowest edge of the paper, I drew a mass of black energy that was striving to reach the other side of the feather, where the birds were flying happily. The black mass was formed by countless chaotic and tangled

lines. On the highest edge of the paper, I drew a big oval in the sky, as if a portal was being opened, and rays of light were coming out of it. Well, I only drew a few diagonal lines to show that the portal was spreading light on this frame. I didn't really know what this drawing was trying to say, but I kept adding details to find out the truth behind things. I decided one of the birds should carry a red tulip, so I drew it, but I didn't have any red colors to add. I drew a teardrop falling from the white circle on the top right of the drawing. I didn't know where I was going with that drawing, but it was the only way I knew to show my thoughts. When I was done, EL took my sketchbook to look at it. She was silent as she did so.

As the smoke danced all the way up, I kept thinking about the doves. I thought of how nice it would feel to be able to fly. I bet it feels like Freedom. If flying had a taste, it would be sweet, like honey.

The sun was rising and I was barely awake. The fire had almost gone out. No fire cracks, no heat. "EL" gazed at the ashes. There was a piece of ash that looked like the gray feather I've seen under the evergreen tree. I gently grabbed EL's head and placed it on my right shoulder. Her hair smelled like the wildcraft toner mixed with fire smoke. Looking at the 12 white birds that had turned into gray ash, a heavy lump was sitting in my throat. All I wanted was for a red tulip to show up, to make sure the black magic was gone.

“Moness and EL had nothing in common, except being born out of the same womb.” I thought. “One takes away what’s the most precious to a creature, and one sacrifices to save other creatures.”

I could tell her eyes weren’t glowing, EL was about to give up hope, as the sun was rising and the red tulip was still missing. I was too. We didn’t say a word, just sat there quietly.

The dark of the night was being replaced with the orange and pink beams of the morning sun.

“Doves have a mysterious homing ability, able to find their way home over hundreds of miles. In folklore, this has sometimes been called a kind of innate magic of direction.” EL said in a low voice, her head resting on my shoulder.

I nodded and gave her a kiss on the head, gently pulled her into my body. “It’ll work out eventually.” I tried to be as soothing as possible.

A couple of minutes later, the ground was trembling underneath, we held each other tight, EL said try to keep your eyes closed, a strong whirlwind is about to appear. I didn’t want to close my eyes; I had to see the whole thing. So, I resisted as I was holding EL tight, our heads buried in each other’s shoulders, clinging to one another, the wind was getting stronger, I could barely see anything, the wind had lifted everything from the ground. EL was

murmuring something I couldn't clearly understand. As I was fighting the dust in my eyes, A strong whirlwind fell from the sky, I looked up over EL's shoulder, the whirlwind was coming out of a big white hole in the sky. The whirlwind drew the fire's ashes into itself and then spiraled back upward. It all happened in only a few seconds. Things went back to normal quickly and we let go of each other.

I looked up as I heard wings flapping above. Hundreds of white doves were flying towards the East.

I was lost in what I was seeing, frozen, speechless. I'm not sure if I was even breathing at the time. EL tapped on my shoulder and said: "now watch this..." She was pointing to where the fire was.

A red tulip slowly grew out of where the ashes used to be, then it bloomed and turned into a fully grown flower.

I jumped and hugged EL, we were laughing with tears in our eyes, jumping high in a circle. I've seen magic happen before, but this was a true miracle. A miracle done by the white doves and my best friend, and hopefully me. I tried my best to be a part of it.

"Don't you dare doubt your powers ever again, you witch!" I shouted while gently punching her arm. crying and laughing at the same time. After a couple of minutes jumping and shouting and celebrating our victory, we were ready to head back home.

"Time to go home, baby." I said as I got in the car and started the engine.

"Let's race." She said. Two fancy light gray wings grew on her back, and her feet were lifted off the ground.

"Brag!" I said and I drove home with her flying up high.

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