

WRITE A STORY WHERE SOMEONE STANDS IN FOR, OR REPLACES, SOMEONE ELSE



EMANCIPATION

Maria wasn't waking up. This is bad. The spell was supposed to bring her back, alert and full of energy. I fumbled through the pages of the spell book, tracing my fingers across the well-worn page with instructions on how to make "Eternal Dreams", a spell used to cure insomnia and give its victims a good night sleep, a well-deserved reward after countless sleepless nights, haunting and driving them to the brink of insanity.

Everything was going so well. I had practiced the spell numerous times, successfully performing them on the squires, many of whom relied on me to give them a decent sleep that would fuel their body to continually serve the army for days, in hopes for a bigger chance at promotion. If only I hadn't grown so close to the young princess, if only my pride and judgement didn't cloud my head, my ego the size of a hideous monster, whispering at my heart to grasp the opportunity to cure the princess and the praise that came with it, enough to make me the apprentice of the royal physician.

Panic ran through my veins, adrenaline pumping my brain as thousands of scenarios spurred across my mind, all accompanied by the same message: I killed the kingdom's only heiress to the throne. Thousands of punishments awaited, once the guards noticed the princess hadn't come out of the room for the past few hours, let alone find her passed out with a barely palpable pulse and unresponsive, blown pupils. I could already feel the king's stone cold eyes prickling my skin, watching me like a hawk while the blade was brought down, slicing my head off in one swift move as the guards mounted my head along the walls of the moor to serve the other severed heads some company.

I would go down in history as a murderer. The one who ended the royal bloodline with a premature mistake.

"What's taking so long?"

It was the voice of the guard upfront, captain of the royal squadron. The single line hung in the sultry air, the urgency of the message taking a chokehold of my mind, stopping my incoherent jumble of thoughts and silencing my mind, unable to find a single good excuse to buy more time.

"I'm not going to ask again, you puny little witch. His Majesty has requested the presence of the princess to attend supper."

The impatient tone was evident, as annoyance trickled into a quiet stream of anger, poisoning the atmosphere of the West Wing.

"She'll be out before the clock strikes again sir."

That came out much less casual, more like a tiny whine. I quietly braced myself for the usual streams of insults, accompanied by wooden doors slamming against the stone walls, overwhelmed by the sheer force of the guards. A few moments had passed when I heard the grunt, signalling I had little time before his patience ran out. Gulping, my fingers trembled, unable to swiftly obey my will. This had to be done, my eyes scanned as I scanned through pages, skimming to find the desired spell.

The Devil's Exchange.

A soul for a soul. An eye for an eye. Unbound your mind, let slumber die!

Opening my eyes, I struggled to get a hold of myself, jerking the unfamiliar body up with stiff movements like an animated marionette.

It worked.

Slowly blinking, my eyes wandered. Dainty, pointy fingers with rosy fingernails. Skin as white as porcelain. Lush gold locks cascading down my shoulders. Running a hand through my hair, I stood up and looked at the lifeless corpse, the body I had left behind. It lay still on the ground, eyes dilated and frozen, no humanity left in them. Shifting my focus back onto my newfound body, I smoothed the ruffles of the rose gown, adjusting the hoop skirt underneath, squirming as I finally took in the stiffness of the suffocating corset, squeezing my midsection and squashing my organs. Taking a few steps forward, shy steps turned into confident strides as I crossed over to my old body, heaving as I laid it between the tight gap of the bookshelves.

It would take a long time before anyone found the body. Perhaps a week before one of the unaware chemists would find it, already rotting away, as the eyes, devoid of life stared back defiantly at their horrified faces.

Taking a deep breath, I pulled the golden rings of the wooden doors, the weight of the doors soon alleviated by the guards standing nearby as my gaze fell upon the captain, standing stiffly, waiting to accompany me from behind.

I was no longer just a puny maid, scurrying around the halls of the castle and scavenging for the daily banquet's scraps.

I am Maria Rozanov. The soon-to-be queen. Future ruler that will guide the kingdom to prosperous times ahead.

Taking a deep breath, I held my head high as I crossed the hall, heels clacking against the hard stone floor. I entered the courtyard, basking in the warm, golden light of the setting sun, welcoming me to the bright future that lay ahead.



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GRADE 10

