

**Mrs. Pavus**

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# Mrs. Pavus

by [xDomino009x](#)

## Summary

Just shy of her eighteenth birthday Evelyn Trevelyan finds out she has been promised in marriage to the son of a Tevinter Magister, even though she had other plans for her future. He had different plans too. Now an ex-templar, Cullen has been hired as her escort to her new home, and bodyguard until she is married.

## Notes

Hello! This is super different from what I usually write! I usually write about gay ladies being gay, but this concept seemed fun to play with so here it is. I can't promise any regular updates since I'm the worst, but hopefully it's worth any waits that may happen. hopefully you enjoy this!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

Evelyn Trevelyan had never enjoyed mornings. They're always filled with too many things to do, like getting out of bed and washing and dressing and attending breakfast with her parents and older brothers if they were free from their Templar duties. Today she wasn't sure if either Conrad or Vincent would be free, recently the Templars had been busier than usual following unexpected visits from a Seeker to the Circle of Magi. It wasn't that she didn't want her brothers there, but there would be less people to critique her choice to not join the Templar Order without them sitting around the table. Her father was the only one who had supported her and he was all the support she'd needed.

Instead she was a lay sister at the Chantry. Her father had forbidden her taking any vows and becoming a fully fledged sister until she was certain it was what she wanted, and she was certain but for him she had been holding off. He'd asked her to wait until she was at least eighteen to take her vows, and honestly she knew it was because both her brothers had taken their vows when they had completed their templar training at eighteen. He probably hoped she would have changed her mind, but she hadn't. If anything her decision felt more right now than it ever had.

And today was the day when she could speak to the revered mother about taking her vows, in front of the brothers and sisters of the Chantry, in front of Andraste and the Maker. She wasn't sure when she would be taking them, just that she could make the decision today and the preparations would be made.

It was an exciting day.

She threw the covers off her, yawned, and swung her legs out of bed. It took some effort to not recoil at the cold stone under her feet, but she made it up and walked over to her wardrobe. She had been working at the Chantry long enough to know how to get herself dressed. The servant girl who would usually have helped her had been dismissed from that particular duty sometime maybe three years ago, much to her mother's disapproval. Now the same girl just tended to her rooms, kept them neat and tidy and kept her wardrobe stocked with clean clothes.

She decided on a plain dress today. Sometimes she was very glad she didn't have to wear any of the fancier clothes that the Arl's daughters might be forced into wearing. She was perfectly happy with her station, a lesser noble who had lesser responsibilities. What did it matter to her if she doesn't have a voice in any council, she was happy on the sidelines where she was safe and could just worry about herself.

When she arrived downstairs her parents were already seated around the table, her father at the head and her mother beside him. "Good morning father," she said cheerily as she passed behind his chair to reach her own, hand on his shoulder as she kissed his cheek, "Good morning mother."

The servants very quickly moved to pull out her chair opposite her mother and then push it back in beneath her, bringing her food and drink. She'd always found it annoying how the elves who worked the kitchen and brought the food couldn't just leave it in the middle of the table for her to get, she'd much rather act like she was at least a little self sufficient. After all she would have to when she was living in the Chantry. Chantry sisters didn't get any of the benefits of the nobility.

"You seem very happy today, Eve," her mother pointed out.

Elsie Trevelyan was sitting with her hands folded in her lap over a white cloth. In front of her was her empty plate, which looked like it had hardly been filled at all.

Evelyn nodded and thanked the servant who brought her over a selection of pastries, telling her they were baked with an Orlesian recipe. immediately she wasn't sure if she could trust the food, but nibbled it anyway before asking, "Is that a problem, mother?" She didn't try to keep the bitterness from her voice as she regarded her mother from across the table, reaching for a dish of fruit jam and taking a scoop to have with her pasties.

"No" Lady Trevelyan replied curtly, "I just don't like that you're so happy to get away from us and throw this life away."

Evelyn scoffed into her breakfast, a few flakes of light pastry blowing away from her mouth. She had to hand it to the cooks down in the kitchens, they'd really turned these Orlesian cakes into quite a good breakfast, although they were much more sugary than the foods she usually ate in the mornings. "I don't want to get away, I just want to join the Chantry. I'll be right down the road."

The Chantry that she had been going to since she was a child was just a short walk from the grounds of their home, maybe a ten or fifteen minute walk at the most. She didn't understand what her mother was so annoyed about, both her brothers had gone off to join the Templars, and they were further away most of the time. Was it because she was the youngest of three children, because she was the only girl. It wasn't like she'd be marrying up if she joined the Chantry - she'd be taking a vow of chastity so there'd be no point in her mother trying to get her to marry some noble boy. More than once the name Fergus Cousland had been mentioned to her in passing, and after doing some reading she'd found out he was the son of Teyrn Cousland, or maybe he was the Teyrn of Highever now since the Blight and the attack on Highever.

Lady Trevelyan turned sharply to her husband, glaring daggers up the table towards him. "You didn't tell her?" she asked, horrified, "You said you would tell her last night!"

"Tell me what?" Evelyn asks. Suddenly the pastries don't taste so good and she drops the half eaten croissant down onto her plate. Her father looks awkward, weary, likes he's gained a few decades since the morning started. "Father?"

"Cedric!" her mother begged, reaching to grab his hand over the table. She looked imploringly into his eyes and he sighed, "Please, Elsie, this is hard enough."

For a while there was no talking, no noise beside the servants moving around the outside of the room, refilling jugs of wine and bringing food to restock the plates. After opening and closing his mouth several times, trying to think what to say, Lord Trevelyan finally began to explain, only after waving the servants away and watching the doors close behind them. "When you were younger you... you had a sister. An older sister, Erica. When she was six we realised she had been born with magic."

"Did you send her to the Circle?" Evelyn asked, fully aware she was interrupting but not caring at all.

Cedric Trevelyan shook his head and lowered his gaze like he was ashamed. "No." was he ashamed of Erica, of her magic, of not telling Evelyn sooner? He continued slowly, making sure he picked his words carefully so he didn't upset either of them, although from the way she'd been talking Evelyn assumed her mother already knew the full story, how could she not. "I made a deal with a," another pause before he spat out the word, "Magister." Beside him his wife looked down shamefully and shook her head, while Evelyn raised her hands to her mouth with a gasp. "Only so that he would look after her and train her in Tevinter as his apprentice!" Lord Trevelyan added quickly, trying to justify his actions.

"You made a deal with a Magister?" Evelyn asked from behind her hands, wide eyes as she looked at him like he was a whole new person. Cedric opened his mouth to reply, but his daughter interrupted him again, "And how come you never told me about her?"

"Because he wanted something in return for her safety. Evie he wants you to marry his son. It gives him a foothold here, in the Free Marches," he raised a hand to shush her as she made to talk again, knowing that she would be about to object to his agreeing. "It was that or watch them drag your sister away, do you think I wanted to put your brothers through that?" He looked close to tears at this point, his eyes were red and watering. "They'd have had to drag their own little sister off to the Circle."

Elsie rubbed his hand, trying to soothe him. She was a proper and well-to-do noblewoman, her husband should not be crying at the breakfast table. His emotions were valid, but best kept until he was in his own chambers.

But across the table from her, their daughter seemed to find his reasons lacking. "So instead you're sending me away to Tevinter?" she asked incredulously.

"Evie..."

It was too late, the damage was done. Evelyn stood up, pushing her chair back so abruptly it fell over with a clatter. One of the doors in the side of the hall burst open and a guard rushed in to see what the noise had been. The young noblewoman escaped through the same door, ignoring her parents as they tried to call her back to the table.

She was done with this, sick and tired, and she knew exactly where to go to try and fix it all. There was no point being the dutiful daughter if it meant she was going to get shipped off to the worst place in the world. Tevinter was like hell on earth, where blood mages and demons could walk the streets freely, where people were still kept as slaves and treated like dirt.

She'd rather have nothing and live in the Chantry where she would be safe and happy than live there in luxury.

That's why she was heading to the Chantry. She was sure the Revered Mother would see her and take her before the statue of Andraste where she could take her vows.

It was what she wanted, it was all she wanted, and that had to be enough for the Maker and his bride.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

Hey look it didn't take me a year to update! Enjoy the next chapter!

It had been three weeks since Evelyn had walked out of her home with nothing but a bag of clothes and some sovereigns in a coin purse on her belt. She had hardly worn the clothes she'd brought, they'd stayed in her case under her bed at the Chantry and instead she'd been wearing the robes of a Chantry sister, even though she was still a Lay Sister and didn't have to wear them. When she had been faced with the prospect of being sent to Tevinter though, wearing the robes of a fully committed Chantry Sister was nothing, she'd even take all the vows right now if she could.

But she couldn't, the Revered Mother had asked her to live within the Chantry for a month before she took them, to make sure she was ready to leave her comfortable life at the estate behind her and move into the Chantry full time.

She was already sure, she thought as she held a small flame up to the end of several incense sticks, blowing the flames out so they were just smouldering. She sniffed them with a smile; she was getting used to their smell and she was looking forward to many more years with the smell of the incense and the singing in the mornings as the doors opened.

She listened to the tapping of heeled shoes on the tile floor behind her as she knelt down in front of the statue of Andraste to pray, hands clasped in front of her lips as she bowed her head. She didn't speak as she spoke to the Maker and his bride, whichever was listening right now.

"Evelyn, I need to talk to you."

She finished her sentence in her head and then pushed herself to her feet. After rolling her eyes she turned round to face her mother. She was wearing one of her best dresses, obviously trying to show off that she was nobility, coming to see her noblewoman daughter who was such an amazing person coming to work in the Chantry. Wasn't her daughter the best? Maybe Evelyn wouldn't have minded if she thought her mother was actually proud of her choice to come here. How it was Evelyn was just annoyed at her.

"Not now mother," she told her, looking behind her to the door where the city's people were starting to file in, "A service is about to begin and I can't miss it. It will be my last as a Lay Sister." It would too, she would be taking her vows in the morning before the next one. By the time she was aiding in the next weekly service this time she would be a Chantry Sister who had taken all her vows.

She was turning away from her mother even as she spoke, determined in shutting her out of her life at least until she had gone through with her vows. It was the most important thing to her right now.

“It’s your father Evelyn.”

Evelyn groaned audibly and started to walk away, saying over her shoulder, “He’s already done enough, don’t you think?” Her tone drew the attention of a few Chantry Sisters who were walking by towards the statue of Andraste. Evelyn had hardly realised how far away she’d drifted from the golden figure, but she had moved with her mother following down between the pews and away from the shrine of the bride of the Maker.

She had to get back up there, it was important she was seen taking part if she was to become one of the women meant to lead these services once she’d taken her vows. She didn't need to listen to -

“Evelyn, he’s dying,” her mother burst out. Evelyn finally looked around and properly looked at her mother, not just her clothes, but her face. She had tears in her eyes, her bottom lip was wobbling slightly as she fought to keep her composure. “If you don’t say your farewells now you might never get a chance. Please,” she grabbed Evelyn’s hands and clutched them tight, “I know how important this is for you but the doctor’s say he might not live through the night.”

They rushed into the estate, the doors flung open by the doormen who saw them coming and hurried to grant them entry. Evelyn obviously knew where she was going, even though she hardly ever went to her parents’ wing now she was old enough to endure the dark nights and storms without running to their bed, it wasn't like her mother rearranged the rooms with her army of all that often anymore.

She reached the room before her mother, not looking at the worried faces of servants and junior doctors who were standing in a group outside the closed double doors. They had not been permitted entry but that didn't mean they weren’t worried about their master or morbidly curious as to his fate. Lady Trevelyan came up the stairs behind Evelyn, ushering the rabble away from the door and barking orders while her daughter pushed through them and let herself in.

Inside she could see her father, laying on his bed and propped up on a small pile of pillows and cushions, buried under silk covers. The senior doctor was standing by him, scribbling notes down on a small board, a candle fixed firmly to the top to give him light while he wrote in black ink. The scratching of the quill was the only thing she could hear besides Lord Trevelyan’s ragged breathing.

The doctor looked up as the door closed behind the two noblewomen.

“How did he fall so ill so suddenly?” Evelyn asked as she moved beside her father. He looked up from the bed at her, lips moving but no sound coming out. It hurt, seeing him so weak.



The doctor regarded her through his spectacles, two circles of crudely shaped glass that made one eye seem bigger than the other. "I'm not sure." it was the last thing Evelyn had wanted to hear. "It may be magical, but it's difficult to say without consulting a mage from the Circle. I have sent for a mage, she should be here in an hour."

Evelyn nodded and knelt at her father's side, taking his hand and biting back a remark of how cold it was, how clammy his palms felt. He held her as tight as he could, but even that seemed feeble in comparison to how she wished she could hold him. But she was gentle, not wanting to hurt him.

The doctor placed a hand on her shoulder and sighed, "For now let him rest, and have hope. The Maker will decide his fate."

Evelyn nodded, squeezed her father's hand silently and exited the way she had come into the room. Behind her she could hear her mother whispering reassurances to him before she followed, the curtains on the bed being drawn around him slightly to afford him some privacy from any prying eyes that may still be outside the door. But she hardly noticed the men and women who had come back around the doors as they pretended to get back to the jobs they hadn't been doing.

She felt numb.

It was a waiting game now, until this mage from the circle could reach them. She wondered how long it would actually take her to get here, and what kind of mage she was. She knew there were many schools of magic, she knew some was destructive while others were restorative, and then some were evil and gifted to mages by demons bent on destroying the world.

*The first of the Maker's children watched across the Veil,*

*And grew jealous of the life,*

*They could not feel, could not touch,*

*In blackest envy were the demons born.*

That was how the Chantry spoke of Demons, she had read it in the Canticle of Erudition many times, heard it in many sermons. She had spent a week reading the entirety of the Chant of Light aloud in practice and in prayer, she knew it well. She would not let any mage who consorted with demons near her father.

But for now all she could do was sit and wait, or pace in front of the fireplace in the entrance hall. She was impatient, but the mage was on time, with an escort of armoured Templars.

"My name is Grace, from the Starkhaven Circle." She introduced herself as she shook out her wet hair and one of the footmen took her travelling cloak and hung it to dry on a hook by the door. It dripped. Beneath her cloak she was wearing a set of dark purple mage robes, embroidered with vague patterns that gave the impression of magic. It made Evelyn uneasy just watching her move, she may as well have come in here casting hexes at them.

But Lady Trevelyan rushed forwards as Grace bowed, taking her hand and quickly explaining what was wrong. She tried to describe some of her husband's symptoms, but Grace held up a hand, silencing the woman immediately. "Please may I look at him, Lady Trevelyan? I cannot help from here."

It was Elsie's turn to look at her suspiciously. She didn't like being hushed in her own home, and especially not by some mage girl whose name meant nothing. It was a matter of pride that kept her rooted to the spot, while Grace looked at her coolly and waited for a decision to be made.

"Mother," Evelyn whispered from behind her, tugging at the woman's arm gently, "let her up."

Lady Trevelyan didn't say anything, but she moved aside in the way Evelyn had pulled her, casting a sideways glance to her daughter. It conveyed her worry, and Evelyn tried to look as comforting as possible. If this mage was going to try anything they had those knights here to deal with them. Evelyn was under no illusion that she was any match for the mage. Even the lowest apprentice was an opponent to be feared without the proper training and a good shield, even the toughest Templar could be taken down by a well timed blast of fire.

The Templars followed her, nodding their respects to the noble ladies as they passed and walked noisily up the stairs behind Grace. They didn't introduce themselves, but that wasn't their job. And besides, Evelyn knew one of them already from their shared time in the Circle. Carol was a good man, if a little odd. He'd transferred from Ferelden after the Circle there had been destroyed in a Rite of Annulment. The other one Evelyn had never met, but she assumed he was from Starkhaven while Carol now stayed in Ostwick.

After a while Grace came back out of the Lord's room and stood at the top of the staircase so they could see her. The Templars beckoned for the women to join them. Carol had pulled his helmet off and Evelyn saw her mother flinch as they realised it was sitting beside a vase on a small table outside the bedroom. Rough metal didn't belong with the decorations, and even if Elsie was stressed she was still annoyed. Maybe being annoyed was making her feel better.

Grace led them into the bedroom and brought them beside the Lord. he was laying asleep now, and Grace apparently hadn't seen the need to wake him. Evelyn could hardly see him breathing.

"It's as I thought," Grace turned to Elsie and explained, "Your husband is suffering from magic. I believe it is blood magic."

Lady Trevelyan gasped, rushing to her husband's side and tearing the covers down to expose his neck and chest. She checked his wrists as well for signs of harm where a blood mage might have cut across a vein. Grace pulled her gently away and guided her to a chair by the wall while the Templars tightened their grips on their weapons.

Evelyn was still and silent, staring at her father as he lay motionless on the bed, as Grace continued to talk to her mother, "Do you know where he might have come into contact with a mage who wields such power?" Elsie shook her head, looking blankly into space as though keeping the world out of focus would keep any of this from happening, might take it all back.

At that Grace sighed and looked over her shoulder at the sick man. “Likely only blood magic can lift the spell, and I am no blood mage.”

Again the Templars shifted uncomfortably in their armour at the mention of blood magic.

“So you can do nothing?” Elsie asked, her voice a little too loud, a little too emotional. Evelyn could see the signs that her mother was slowly reaching hysterical and moved over to her slowly while Grace apologised and cast worried glances at her armoured Templars.

When she reached the chair and put a hand on her mother’s shoulder, the noble lady stood up. She brushed by her daughter without a word, and remained silent as Evelyn followed her out of the room into the quiet hallway outside. The girl hurried to catch up to see what was wrong. She opened her mouth but her mother held up a hand to quieten her.

“This is your fault.”

Evenly had cried for hours. She’d been told the whole story by this point, how her sister had almost killed herself and her father would have done anything to keep her safe, how he’d made a contract with the Magister, how it had been signed in blood. And now this ‘illness’ seemed to be some kind of punishment for the Magister not having a bride for his son.

She was sitting by her father’s bed, waiting for him to wake up, hoping he would. It was dark in the room, her candle was burning low and making the long shadows dance across the walls like the demons that had been used to cast this lasting contract were watching them even now. She knew that the one over on the far wall was just her, and it moved with her and grew and shrank as she went closer to the light or further away, but it was still creepy.

“The one who repents, who has faith, Unshaken by the darkness of the world, She shall know true peace.”

She was still whispering her words to the Maker when she felt a shift beneath her arms, her father moving to take her hand. He pushed himself up, giving up as a few hacking coughs stained his hands with spots of crimson. Evelyn watched as he wiped them on the covers, dying them red as well, and reached for her arm.

His blood was probably getting on her Chantry robes as she sat there.

“Father.” They stayed as they were for a long while, Evelyn still shaking as she sniffed and tried not to start crying again, while she worked through her fear about what she was going to say next. She took a deep breath. “I came to say goodbye. You’ll tell mother for me won’t you? I can’t let you die because I’m too selfish to uphold a family debt.” Her father tried to sit up again, but she held him back. He was so weak, normally he would have overpowered her easily but he was so sick he could hardly put up a fight against her. “Don’t try to change my mind,” she told him, “I’m going to marry the Magister’s son.”

She stood up, ready to go and head out of the room. He caught her hand and pulled her back - she allowed him to, expecting him to try to talk her out of it in his guilt.

He spoke to her through his coughing, splatters of blood landing on his clothes and the covers. "If you must," he stopped to wipe his mouth of blood again, "If you must go, go to the... the village. Honnleath. Find... former Templar, Cullen Ruther... Rutherford. I had planned for him to escort you to Tevinter before you..."

Evelyn tried to calm him, tried to push him gently back against the bed and take her wrist from his hand. But his grip was tight, if this was the last thing he would say to his daughter she was not going to cut him off. "He knows the plan." Evelyn stopped struggling to get free and sighed. Of course there had been a plan already made, she didn't doubt it had been drafted since she was promised to the Magister. How old had she even been that she didn't recall this at all?

Finally he let her go and she made her way to the door without another word. "Goodbye, my sweet girl," he called after her, voice cracking.

Evelyn brushed the tears from her eyes. She had to do this.

## Chapter 3

Evelyn had heard of Honnleath, apparently it used to be the home of a mage named Wilhelm Something. She'd read about him in some of her father's books; he was a hero of the rebellion against Orlais, a Fereldan hero so naturally the Orlesians probably hated him and spat any time they said his name. He'd proven himself fighting alongside the fereldan king, Maric Theirin, personally and after the fighting was over the King let him stay in the village instead of forcing him into the Circle like all the other mages.

If choices like that existed for all mages, she wondered if she would be in the kind of position she was in now, her life traded for her sister's freedom from the chains of the Circle of Ostwick.

She left her carriage behind, letting the driver know she would be back soon. He had worried about her being here alone, a noble woman among common men who might take advantage of her. It was true that she had no way to protect herself, she was no fighter, she was definitely outnumbered. But she had her status on her side - no sane man would raise sword against nobility and hope to avoid punishment.

But she was here, in foreign lands, further away from her end destination than she had been months ago, and as lost as she'd ever been.

"Excuse me," she called out to a man dressed in grubby breeches and a grubbier tunic. He stopped and scowled at her, but she tried to tell herself it was just his face and wasn't a reaction to her. She wasn't really dressed for a village though. "Sorry, I'm looking for the Rutherford house?"

The man looked her up and down, taking in her clean dress and her fine, slightly muddy boots. With a grunt he jabbed his thumb over his shoulder, hardly looking towards the building he was looking at. "That's them just over there. You looking for Branson? Him and his lady just had their baby, there's been a few friends coming to visit recently."

Evelyn smiled, pleased she was managing to get along with the locals. It had been a while since she had ventured away from cities, talking to people in Amaranthine - which was where her ship had dropped her off - and places like Redcliff had been fine. They were city folk, they understood that some people among them were born into lives that seemed better, but they knew the nobility were people just like them. But in the villages, these people hardly ever saw someone new who was anything more than a traveller passing through or a peddler.

"No, sorry I'm looking for Cullen," she told him, not entirely sure who this Branson was but assuming he'd be either a friend or relation of the man she was looking for.

The man scoffed, as if she was joking, then took a double take when he realised she was not. "What do you want with that lay-about?" he asked, his tone accusatory like she was in the wrong for even wanting to associate with him, "Ever since he left the Templars he's done nothing but sit around at home doing nothing. Wouldn't even come out to the party we threw for his nephew's birth."

“My father employed him as an escort, hopefully he’ll live up to his expectations.”

Again the man laughed, half disgusted and half incredulous. “Don’t hold your breath My Lady.” he spat the last two words at her, like they left a foul taste in his mouth before he could get them out.

The people of this small town didn't seem to like her being here, she didn't miss the sideways glances and the muttering behind their hands. It was almost as bad as the way the younger ladies would talk when her great aunt threw her famed summer gala. It didn't bother her, she was much too used to ignoring the petty comments her relatives made as if they were Orlesians in court. The looks and whispers followed her through the village, up the bottom of a small hill towards the house the man had been kind enough to point out to her.

She hesitated slightly at the door, standing with her hand raised to knock but taking her time to actually bring her fist against the wood. The door was old, like the rest of the house, and honestly it took her a moment to recognise it as a house rather than a storage shed for the groundskeeper’s tools. The wood was slightly rotten around the edges, the corners more curved from wear than straight edges.

Finally she knocked.

From inside the house she could hear voices, tapping footsteps against the wooden floors and a muttered curse as a baby began to wail. The door opened to reveal a very tired looking man, a mess of blond hair getting in his face as the baby in his arms kicked and thrashed and tugged at him. He stared at her wordlessly while he struggled with the infant.

“Hello?” She felt like she was intruding, “I’m looking for Cullen, is he here?”

The man sighed as he shifted the baby from one arm to the other and offered Evelyn an apologetic smile. “Yeah, he’s... sorry,” the baby had begun to scream as loud as it possibly could and the man - Evelyn assumed this was Branson - looked around behind him before shouting through into the house “Mia, come take the baby a moment!”

After a few seconds a pair of arms reached from out of view behind a wall and scooped the baby from Branson’s arms. Maybe it was his wife. Branson turned back to her and brushed his hair back away from his face with one hand while he blew air up into his face. “Come on in, it’s cold out there.” He stepped aside and after a few moments of pause Evelyn followed, glancing back towards the carriage she had arrived in and realising as the door shut behind her that it was out of sight.

While she had a look around her Branson moved to the bottom of a rickety staircase and shouted up, “Cullen! There’s a pretty lady looking for you.” Evelyn was sure he was only referring to the state of her clothes, vibrant and freshly laundered in contrast to the slightly dirty commoner clothes he was wearing. Beside her the woman who had taken the baby admired her clothes and her jewels while she bounced the now happily gurgling baby in her arms. She looked much too like Branson to be his wife, probably his sister.

“Brother, get down here!” Branson shouted, and eventually Evelyn could hear the clatter of things moving on the top floor, then footsteps, slow and heavy as if someone had just woken

up, above her. She waited and listened as Cullen banged around upstairs. Soon after a scruffily dressed man, younger looking than his brother, was walking down the stairs to meet her. His hair was blond, just like his siblings', but currently his was much messier even than his brother's. He rubbed his eyes groggily as he stumbled down the last few steps.

"Do I know you?" he asked as he looked at her through bleary eyes. Evelyn regarded him distastefully, somewhat disbelieving that her father would have wanted her to travel with this dishevelled and apparently disgraced templar. She wondered why he had left or been kicked out of the Order, but she supposed it wasn't her business really.

Realising she'd spent too long lost in her thoughts Evelyn quickly answered him. "My name is Evelyn Trevelyan, my father reached out to you?" Cullen looked slightly vacant, but she couldn't tell if that was due to his tiredness or his lack of recognition at the name. "You're to be my escort north I understand."

At that Cullen nodded and rolled his shoulders, stretching up so his hands pushed flat against the ceiling above him. "Yes, your father told me you'd decided against going, I got the letter just before I was to set out." He sounded bored, but he was standing to attention. You could take the warrior from his order, but you couldn't take away his discipline.

"Well I changed my mind," she told him matter of factly. At this he raised his eyebrows and smirked, like she was just another spoiled noble brat who could bend others to her whims without a second thought. And yes, she had been that girl once, but that girl was gone now and she wasn't here out of any petty desires. She was here to save her father and keep her family's honour. But of course, Cullen and his family needn't know that.

From beside her she felt the baby's chubby little hand reach and grasp at strands of her hair, pulling hard but not enough to actually hurt. Mia apologised quickly and pulled the infant away - Evelyn still didn't know whether it was a girl or boy - but the young Trevelyan waved away her sorries and turned back to Cullen quickly.

"Are you ready to go now?" she asked him hopefully, honestly wanting to be away from the smell of the village and the sounds of the people bustling by. No matter what sacrifices she would have made by joining the Chantry, be it giving up her finery or her wealth or all the things that came with it, but she never would have had to walk on dirt tracks or live in a run down shack like this.

Cullen sighed and nodded again. He seemed to be a man of few words, or at least that was the impression he gave off. Evelyn watched him as he began to make his way back upstairs. "Let me get my armour." He had only gone up a few steps when he turned back to her waiting awkwardly in the centre of the small house. Again he sighed and this time even rolled his eyes. "Come with me out of the way," he told her, and not wanting to just wait around with her escort's family Evelyn followed him as she was instructed. She almost had to duck to get up the stairs, while in front of her Cullen had to duck quite a bit to avoid hitting his head.

Upstairs Cullen led her through to what she assumed was his room. It was small, and she only had to take one quick look around to see all there was.

He had a bed with brown sheets, probably made of some coarse fabric she'd hate to have against her skin, a chest at the end of the bed that seemed well maintained but had been cluttered with metal beaten into the rough shape of plates and bowls, a few pieces of cutlery in among the mess and a half finished bottle of wine laying on its side. On the opposite side of the room from the bed was a rough hewn chest of drawers, clothes piled on top of it and most of the drawers open and quite empty. Evelyn would have been scolded by the housekeepers if she kept her rooms in this state, but then she would have been scolded by her mother for following a man into her private rooms by herself and without having met him before. There were certain rules that could be overlooked in some situations.

Cullen went to the chest as soon as he was in his room. He already seemed to be wearing the right tunic and breeches to go beneath a set of armour, Evelyn had seen what the Templars in the Chantry at home wore in their downtime, and honestly the pile of clothes on the drawers looked to be mostly similar garments.

The chest creaked as he opened it, and Evelyn peaked inside over his shoulder. Whatever was stored in the chest was covered with a carefully folded crimson fabric, which Cullen removed carefully and set aside on the foot of the bed. Beneath it was his armour, the chestpiece at the top emblazoned with the flaming sword of the Templar Order. She wondered if it was okay for him to wear his Templar armour when he had left the Order, but it didn't matter really. If it kept him alive to protect and escort her then so be it.

He pulled the cuirass from the chest and lay it to the side, finding the tassets and buckling the two metal guards to the bottom of the faulds. Before he tried to put it on he neatened his tunic, pulling it taut over his chest and then holding the plate against himself.

Evelyn watched him struggle for a moment, and took pity on him. He seemed tired, and down on his luck, and judging by the bottle that he'd knocked to the floor when he'd opened the chest without moving anything from the top of it. "Do you want a hand with that?" she asked, stepping towards him with one hand outstretched already.

"No I can do it..." Cullen replied, shifting away from her and trying to fasten the buckles on the side of his armour. He struggled alone a few minutes longer while Evelyn watched sympathetically from the sidelines before resigning himself to accepting her help. Evelyn only knew what to do since she had seen her brothers getting ready to go to their Templar duties so often, she'd even helped them get ready sometimes. She helped Cullen into his vambraces and spaulders, but he refused the rerebraces and couters, choosing instead to just wear what he thought would be necessary to travel with and fight should they need to.

Once they were done upstairs - Cullen had ushered Evelyn out of his room ahead of him so he could exchange his breeches for a pair that seemed more suited to a fighter than a farmer - they both stood in the main room of the downstairs so Cullen could say goodbye to his family. Mia especially seemed sad to see him go, Branson just seemed relieved that he'd have one less person to look after and feed.

After all the goodbyes had been said Cullen hefted a bag onto his back, one he had packed hurriedly while Evelyn had been waiting for him, and made his way to the door, calling back a final time, "Okay, goodbye. I'll see you both soon enough."



Evelyn was about to follow after him with polite nods to the two adults in the room and a small wave to the baby when Branson took her arm gently. He retracted his hand as though she had burned her and flushed a deep shade of red like he was embarrassed. But Evelyn turned to him all the same and smiled while he tried to remember what he wanted to say.

“You look after him out there okay,” he told her sternly, like he was maybe talking to his daughter. And sure, she was probably many years his junior.

She nodded and squeezed his arm reassuringly, “Don’t worry, I’ll protect him.”

Cullen knocked on the still open door, staring hard at Evelyn. He seemed eager to get going, impatient already. Evelyn could just tell this would be an interesting journey, especially if they had to travel the whole way without another soul accompanying them. Why couldn't her father have hired someone fun or someone who at least seemed like they'd enjoy a decent conversation.

“Let’s get going then,” Cullen said, motioning to the dirt tracks Evelyn disliked, “come on.”

They reached the carriage, which would take them at least part of the way through the Frostback Mountains even if it couldn't take them the whole way. The mountains were dangerous, and cold, who would be foolish enough to venture out there alone and on foot? Definitely not Evelyn Trevelyan, that’s for sure. While they rode along the bumpy paths that would lead them to the Orlesian side of the mountain range Cullen divulged his plan for seeing her safely to Tevinter.

“So we’re meeting an envoy in Nevarra,” he told her, pulling a map from his pack. He pointed to roughly where he assumed they were now, somewhere in the faded area that was the Frostbacks. It was an old map, a lot of the words had been erased by age. “We’re going to be travelling to Jader to get a ship across the Waking Sea to Cumberland. Then we’ll head towards Nevarra City and from there to Hunter Kel. that should be where the envoy meets us.”

For a moment Evelyn found herself fuming. Why in the Maker’s name had her father sent her half way across Thedas, to that small forsaken village in the middle of the mountains when she was just going to travel back to the Free Marches anyway? What was the point in it all? Why not have one of the local Templars escort her to Tevinter, she was sure some of them would be suggestible enough to do it and never mention it again.

Instead of ranting about it at Cullen she just sighed and fell back in her seat. “How long will it take?”

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

Hello! New chapter incoming, although the next one may be a ways away since I currently have no laptop. I'm borrowing one right now to post this (I totally forgot this chapter was on my google drive and not just on my dead laptop)  
But chapter updates might not be happening for a while, goes for all the longer fics, and it's why it's taken a while for any other fics to be updated. But when the laptop issue is sorted I'll be back with the old ones and this one. Thanks for baring with me!

And sorry for any mistakes, I'm a bad self-editor

They had been travelling for months.

The journey from Honnleath through the mountains to Jader had been slow and boring. The carriage had rattled along on it's way with nothing for the riders to do but sit in an awkward silence. Occasionally they had talked, Cullen had told her about his time with the Templars and Evelyn in turn had told him about her time in Ostwick. But other than meaningless tales of their pasts the two hardly spoke to one another though.

They'd had to stop for a day or two on the side of the road while the driver fixed up one of the wheels that had somehow buckled on a rock they'd hit. Other than that though there had been few interruptions besides stops for food in villages or breaks for the passengers to stretch their legs or relieve themselves. Cullen especially welcomed the breaks, since he refused to take off his armour even while they were just riding in the carriage. Evelyn was glad her defender was so stalwart but she would have appreciated if he'd let his guard down for a while and maybe had a good chat with her.

Then they had reached Jader, and the city had been such a pleasant change for Evelyn that she'd wanted to stay for a week. As it was Cullen only allowed them to stay for three nights, giving them one day to book passage across the Waking Sea, a second to gather new supplies and a third for him to outfit Evelyn with a pair of daggers and buy them both thick woolen cloaks that would protect them against the cold while also making sure they didn't stand out in the crowd. He'd already forced her to change from the gowns she'd been wearing into something more befitting one of the servants from the estate.

After that they had sailed across to Cumberland, and Evelyn felt she was among her people once again. Or at least she was among people who came from a similar area. In reality the people of Cumberland and those of the Free Marches didn't find much common ground, much like the Free Marchers themselves didn't unite until there was a threat to the Free Marches as a whole. The Marchers were too proud of their individualities to let other cities cultures blend into their own.

In Cumberland they found themselves horses, and rode together most of the way to Nevarra City. Despite her complaints that a carriage would be more preferable, Evelyn agreed to ride on horseback for the journey even though after a few days she was stiff and sore from all the riding. He had good reasons to subject her to this though, a carriage would be much more noticeable, and while they were still relatively close to the Free Marches, close enough that maybe a well read or overly curious noble would recognise her.

Her being noticed was not an option.

Their travelling was mostly uninterrupted though, aside from the time they'd had to slow their progress to avoid a potential dragon.

Cullen had heard the beast roaring in the night and took them around it as best he could. He might be a good fighter but he was no dragonhunter. Maybe the Nevarran nobility would hunt it down, Evelyn had heard stories of how they were famed hunters and especially of dragons. So for the rest of the ride to Nevarra City she had been daydreaming about strong fighters charging down a dragon, shields up to avoid the flames, angled like her brothers angled their shields to defend against magic. It would be a true spectacle to watch, but she doubted she'd ever see a dragon slain.

But they had arrived safely in the city, and even with the chill in the air Evelyn hadn't realised the steady slip into autumn until she noticed the coloured fabrics draped over the many statues that lined the main walkways of the city. She walked with Cullen, who had his cloak drawn right around himself to hide the Templar emblems on his armour, between rows of black marble columns, all brought to such a shine the cool sunlight bounced between them.

Between every two columns was a carved statue, men and women, each with a plaque beneath them. Some were not adorned with any kind of festive cloth.

Evelyn had read about this celebration, and thanked the Maker for her good fortune to have arrived in Nevarra City on this day. It was the ancestral pageant, which she had never found an exact date for in any of the books she had read. As they went she stopped at the statues that caught her interest, reading the plaques and trying to see if she knew any of the names.

Of course she recognised the Pentaghast name and Van Markham. They had been kings of Nevarra in times gone by and both were still influential now. But a lot of the names she didn't recognise, the names of famous dragon hunters whose achievements would always be remembered in Nevarra. Beneath the names were inscriptions of their deeds, some had very few but they had been great, others had a long list of things they were known for. Most of the hunters were simply remembered for killing dragons, some killed dozens while others only a few.

Cullen didn't seem to care about the festivities that were going on around them. He walked right through the columns, fast enough that Evelyn had to jog to keep up after each time she stopped.

They walked through the streets until they came to a small inn, which seemed much too rowdy for Evelyn's tastes but since Cullen was heading in she supposed she had best follow. He marched right up to the bar and leaned against it. Some of the patrons on either side of them

parted slightly, and Evelyn was very self conscious suddenly of how much she must smell. She hadn't bathed since leaving Cumberland, and neither had Cullen. They'd definitely need to get cleaned up before heading off to Hunter Kel.

"Welcome to the Dragon's Hoard!" the barkeeper called over to them from where he was filling a small pewter tankard with ale. It was probably warm ale, but Cullen nodded all the same when the man behind the bar held the filled tankard up as if to ask if he wanted one. Evelyn shook her head. She'd rather drink from her half full water-skin.

The barkeeper walked to them, put the ale down with a clatter and beamed at his newest customers. "You travellers interested in a room? We have a few spare, just thirty silver for the night.." Cullen wordlessly fished some coppers from his coin pouch for the ale and lets them fall onto the counter, before also sliding over a golden sovereign. The bartender's eyes widened slightly as he looked at it, but he nodded as he collected the money together and tells them he'll have them shown to the room and then have meals brought to them when they come back down.

Evelyn was suddenly interested. The thought of good food, warm and cooked in an actual building instead of over one of Cullen's makeshift fires, was very appealing. She wondered what they served here, she was used to being made whatever she wanted at home but she was sure she couldn't expect the same here.

"Come on."

Cullen grabbed her arm and led her towards a door at one end of the room, following a young woman who was wearing a plain dress beneath an apron. She had rags shoved into the bent around her waist.

They walked in silence, other than the tavern girl talking about their room. She handed a key to Cullen, who pocketed it without a second thought, and then opened the door with a second key.

The room was small, with a bed taking up most of the space in the middle. There was a small dresser against one wall, and a foggy mirror propped on top of it to turn it into a vanity unit. Evelyn assumed this was to be her room, and looked around it slowly while trying not to let her disappointment show on her face. At least the bed was bigger than the bedroll she'd been using for the last few weeks, it was something of an improvement. And she'd have a roof above her head.

The tavern girl left with a small wave after wishing them a good evening.

"So where's your room?" Evelyn asked as she sat down on the bed to test it. By now she had gotten used to not acting the graceful noble woman around Cullen, after all they had been riding and walking for almost a month together, he had seen her covered in mud and grime from the forests and drenched from stumbling into rivers. He didn't care anyway, it's not like he really had any preference between escorting a commoner or royalty. He was in it for the money at the end of the day.

He looked at her like she was deranged. "What?"

“Where are you sleeping?” she asked, like it was the simplest question in the world. Which really it was, and Evelyn wasn't sure why he didn't understand.

The ex templar stared at her and sighed, shaking his head. He was probably just thinking about how she was a silly noble girl with too many questions. Too naive and foolish for the big wide world outside the walls of her estate. “Here,” he told her, “We'll share, it's more cost effective.” Evelyn made to argue with him, but he held up a hand and added, “And I can protect you better if we're in the same room.”

But it still wasn't enough for Evelyn to just accept it. She snapped, “You expect me to share a bed with you?”

At that Cullen just laughed dryly. “Don't worry My Lady,” his tone was already mocking, “I'm sure I can control myself.” While Evelyn was too busy looking flustered to make much of a retort Cullen changed the subject, unbuckling his dirty breastplate and dropping it at the foot of the bed. “We should go down to eat,” his vambraces and spaulders followed the cuirass, “Let's go.”

After that Cullen seemed to shut off to her protests. Whatever she said he just grunted in response, like he was done listening to her now and obviously he wasn't interested in anything she had to say.

Once they had found themselves a table and taken a seat the bartender had their food sent to them. Apparently the sovereign Cullen had given the man had paid for the finest food the establishment had to offer. Their plate came laden with meats and root vegetables that were in season, rough cuts of mutton and nug-meat sausages piled up beside cut carrots and turnips. A bowl of lumpy gravy was left in the centre of the table with a wooden ladle beside it.

While Evelyn somewhat turned her nose up at the mess of food on her plate, even though it was the first proper meal she'd eaten since setting out from Cumberland, Cullen looked like he hadn't seen anything so amazing in his life, grinning and tucking in right away. He drowned his food with several scoops of gravy, his meat and veg swimming in it.

Evelyn was more sparing with it, only taking a scoop and drizzling it sparingly over her food. She ate slowly. The nug tasted odd compared to how she usually had them, sausages were not something she was served often and normally they were made from finer cuts of finer meat.

They ate in silence until Cullen was finished and leaned back in his seat with a happy groan, a hand on his stomach and a content smile on his face. Like this Evelyn could almost imagine he was just a friend she'd decided to spend time with and not the man tormenting her and guarding her on her father's orders.

“I want a break from travelling Cullen,” she told him between mouthfuls, “I want to stay here for a while.”

Cullen glanced over to the bar and nodded in response to her. “I paid for three nights, that should be enough.”

“Three nights?” she asked incredulously, dropping her cutlery beside her plate, ready to fight for what she wanted, “Cullen we’ve been travelling for months!”

Across the table Cullen sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose between his thumb and fingers. He leaned forwards and then looked up to her. “And I have to get you to your destination as quickly as possible.” He held up a hand to stop her as she opened her mouth to argue again, “I’m sorry, but I was hired by your father and not you.”

“I’m so tired of travelling though.”

Cullen scowled at the whining noble girl in front of him. “There’s nothing I can do about that,” he told her sternly, sounding as though he was giving orders to a new recruit he’d found complaining that a training exercise was too hard. “We’ll be getting a carriage to Hunter Kel in three days so be ready.” At that he stood from his chair, pushed it in and walked back towards their shared room, leaving Evelyn alone at the table.

Some bodyguard he was, leaving her here like that. But then, Evelyn doubted anyone would try anything in the middle of a busy inn.

## Chapter 5

Evelyn was still angry when she got up to their room. Cullen had left her alone and that definitely went against what he was supposed to be doing as her protector. He had already changed to sleep by the time she had finished her meal and her drink, a little early to be turning in but then they had spent a few long week travelling endlessly. It would be nice to sleep in a bed tonight, even if she did have to share with Cullen.

When she opened the door he was sitting on the edge of the bed, sword in hand, polishing the blade. She wasn't sure if the amount of shine actually did anything to the weapon or if it just made it look sharper than before. But either way she imagined that on seeing the weapon there would be less men willing to take them on. Cullen had lain the two daggers he'd brought for her down on the dresser, both already polished to a perfect shine.

She appreciated it, but she was pretty sure she'd never have to use those blades. They were just for show. And besides, she didn't even know how to fight with daggers. Her father had insisted she learn how to fire a bow at least, the only weaponry he could manage to convince her mother that a lady could use. But she wasn't very good even at that; her mother had made sure she had as few lessons as possible.

Cullen rose to his feet and moved to the window, looking through a slim crack in the ratty curtains while Evelyn stripped down to her shift and then climbed under the covers.

Tomorrow she would bathe, when she could shoo Cullen out of the room for an extended period of time. He would probably just wait outside the door, close enough to hear her splashing as she washed herself and so he could hear if anything should happen, but there was some amount of privacy at least. Her mother would be scandalized to learn she would be bathing with a man on the other side of a thin wooden door, and would be sharing her bed with the same man for the next three nights. Truth be told she was slightly scandalised herself.

Cullen walked over and climbed into the bed beside her. She jumped as his foot brushed against her calf, edging further to one side of the bed. He muttered an apology quickly and sighed, trying to draw some of the cover around himself. They're so far apart that it doesn't work very well, and they end with the blanket only over their sides and their fronts exposed. Instead of freezing overnight, Cullen reached down to his pack which he had left by the side of the bed and grabbed his cloak, giving all the cover to Evelyn and wrapping himself in the woolen cloak instead. Honestly it looked a lot warmer than the moth eaten blanket, but Evelyn wasn't about to copy him.

They lay there in silence for a long while, long enough that Evelyn was sure Cullen had fallen right asleep. She couldn't stop shifting though, turning from one side to the other while beside her the ex-templar stays very still.

"I shouldn't have left you like that," Cullen said suddenly.

Evelyn almost jumped at his voice, she had been so sure he was sleeping, but she managed to scoff slightly and turn her back to him indignantly, "No, you shouldn't have." she liked this feeling, being the one who was right while Cullen was in the wrong. And it wasn't a misplaced smugness, he had been very in the wrong leaving his charge alone like that. What would he have done if something had happened to her - although she was sure nothing would have in the inn.

Cullen sighed and rolled over to face her. "I'm trying to apologise, could you at least act like you don't have a superiority complex for five minutes?" He sounded frustrated, like he's somehow at the end of his tether with something. Evelyn rolled her eyes at the wall in front of her but remained silent.

Eventually, with a deep sigh, she turned back to him. Or at least she shifted so she was laying on her back instead of her side, and forced out the words, "I'm sorry." Apologising had never been her strong suit but she had done it.

"Apology accepted."

They lay still for another few minutes, and then Evelyn decided while she was talking she may as well not stop. It wasn't like she was going to drift off to sleep any time soon, not with the man right beside her taking up so much room with his broader build. "And I'm sorry for being such a brat," she added, "You've done as much travelling as I have."

"I'm used to it. I was a templar remember?"

Evelyn wasn't sure if he was talking about he being a brat or the travelling when he mentioned being used to it, but she decided it didn't matter and she would let it go. "I remember."

Another long pause, they were getting quite good at these awkward silences now.

"Why did you leave the Order?" she asked, knowing full well when she was prying. But while



they were doing this talking thing she may as well try her best to extract whatever information she could get from him. This might be the only time when he was off guard enough for her to actually get a straight answer from him.

“Thats...” he took a moment and Evelyn heard him swallow beside her, could practically hear him thinking it over beside her. “It’s not a story I like to tell.”

Evelyn hadn't expected him to tell her, but she was restless enough to push him once. Just once. “But how do I know you weren’t kicked out for some crime you committed?”

She could almost hear the smile in his voice when he replied, “You don’t,” and she decided to leave it at that, if he didn't want to talk about it that badly it must have been something bad. She began to speculate what it might have been. Maybe he had defied orders. Maybe he’d helped a blood mage escape from the Circle. Or maybe he’d just made enemies with the wrong person and been framed for something he didn't do. There was just no saying what was hidden in his past, and that put Evelyn on edge. This man could be anyone.

But her father had trusted him to see her safely to Tevinter and that would have to be enough for her. It was all she had.

“Fine,” Cullen announced to the room. He hesitated for a moment or two, while Evelyn turned slightly to face him and waited patiently. He took a deep breath, like he was bracing himself for something terrible, and began to explain. “My first post was in Ferelden’s Circle after I’d taken my vows. I was asked to join a kind of test for one of the mages-”

“The Harrowing?” Evelyn interrupted.

Cullen looked surprised, but nodded all the same. “Yes.” For a few seconds he tried to find his flow again, so he could get it all out as quickly as possible with as little judgement as he could. “Well, one of the mages got through it fine, Amell I think her name was. But the other one, an elf girl, she... didn't. A demon got hold of her and I had to...” His voice faltered and he swallowed his emotions quickly, just ending with, “Well, she was an abomination.”

The silence that followed seemed different than the ones that had come before it. Heavier and more pressing. Cullen seemed to be holding his breath, like he was waiting for her judgement to come.

“You killed her?” Evelyn asked, her voice no more than a hushed whisper.

Beside her she felt Cullen’s posture stiffen, he withdrew to himself a little, pulling his knees up slightly and wrapped his arms around himself. “I killed it,” he mumbled, defending

himself weakly from the accusation, “Or what she had become. But I couldn’t look at the others anymore. I couldn’t stay in the Order if I’d have to do that again.”

They fell into silence for a moment while the weight of the admission hung between them.

Evelyn reached out, putting her hand on his arm and tried to turn him round to face her. He refused to face her and Evelyn settled instead for edging towards him instead. “You did the right thing Cullen,” she made to hug him but thought better of it, keeping her voice low, “She was dangerous, she wasn’t her anymore.”

Again silence took over and Evelyn began to wonder if Cullen had fallen asleep. He managed to sleep much better than she did most nights, even if they’d made hasty camp under a tree and he was keeping his armour on.

“You know a lot about this.” His face was half in his pillow, muffling his voice.

Evelyn was glad she wasn’t the only one awake, since she knew this new story she’d been told would stick with her through the night. “Both my older brothers are templars, and I worked in the Chantry for a while.” She’d never seen an abomination before but of course she’d read about them and been told about them while she was in the Chantry. Other Templars had told her about the horrors they’d seen, hoping to scare her. It had been a past time for the younger Templars, trying to scare the Chantry girls.

“You were a Chantry sister?” He sounded somewhat incredulous.

“Only a lay sister, but I was ready to take my vows and become an initiate.” While she spoke she played with the frayed edges of their blankets and didn’t look at him, instead staring at the ceiling.

Cullen sighed and rolled onto his back. Together they stared blankly at the ceiling as if they were stargazing. “I suppose we all serve the faith in our own wany, a shame I failed.”

“And what of me?” Evelyn laughed and stopped playing with the covers, turning slightly to face Cullen and turning away again when she realised how close he was to her, “I’m set to marry a Tevinter Magister, do you think the Maker would approve of that?”

Cullen chuckled and put his hands back behind his head, taking up way more than just his half of the pillows. “You have a point.”



# Chapter 6

## Chapter Notes

Been a while, but after being pestered for chapter 6 (you know who you are) here it is!

Cullen stopped in the centre of the city, dropped the rucksack from his back and stopped lugging the trunk behind him. Evelyn had afraid for her clothes and other belongings every time the trunk had bumped over a large stone or down a rough step in the fifteen minute walk from the carriage.

Compared to Nevarra City, Hunter Fell was insignificant, although somehow it was still a seat of power, or so Evelyn had been told. She had believed it, but being here she wasn't so sure. Compared to the elegant and striking marble of Nevarra City, Hunter Fell was in shambles, wooden buildings and dirt tracks. It looked more like a large town than a city, only the oldest buildings seemed to give any hint that it was more. These were made from rough stone, and one building up on a hill even had a few granite pillars.

Evelyn assumed this was where the Lord of Hunter Fell stayed. She didn't know his name.

“Well this should be the place.” Cullen jabbed his sword down into the dirt and left it standing there while he adjusted his pauldron. They’d been ambushed one night by bandits when they’d set up camp and one had taken a swing at him and dented it. It still fit, if a little uncomfortably, and he wasn’t about to throw away.

The two of them glanced around, standing almost back to back. They had fallen into this habit whenever they would enter new places recently. Cullen had proven a more than capable defender, and Evelyn had come to the conclusion she must trust him with her life just as he father obviously had, but she was still going to watch her own back. Even if she couldn’t fight. Even if she had little more than a small dagger at her hip, only at Cullen’s insistence.

“I don’t see anyone who stands out.” Cullen patrolled the area, hand resting on the pommel of his blade. His hand seemed relaxed, but Evelyn knew he was ready to tear it from its scabbard if need be. He returned to her after a brief reconnaissance, “Do you recognise anyone?”

Evelyn stopped looking around. She had been busy taking in the view from the top of the hill, looking town on the rest of Hunter Fell like some minor deity surveying her lands. She wished she could be back in Nevarra City, gazing out over a magnificent spectacle of dark marble and pale granite, polished to a shine as the sun gleamed on the sides of buildings, too dazzling to look at directly. Instead, the dull wood looked sullenly back at her, groaning under the dry heat of a blistering sun. She turned to face Cullen, arms folded in front of her. “How would I recognise anyone? I’ve never been this far north before.”

The Templar copied her stance, armour clanking as he did. “Then how are we supposed to-”

“Lady, Trevelyan?”

The voice was soft, barely more than a whisper from the shadows beside a thick marble pillar. An olive skinned man stepped from beside the ornate stonework, dressed in fine robes, a fine cane in one hand and the other shoved deep in a pocket. His robes were navy, almost black, trimmed with silver. Evelyn wouldn't be seen willingly wearing anything of the sort, she was disappointed enough with the plain dresses Cullen had asked her to wear for the last week while they tried not to draw attention to themselves in possibly hostile territory.

As the stranger strode from his hiding place Cullen moved between them and his ward, drawing his sword with the hiss of metal on metal. “Keep behind me, my Lady,” he said over his shoulder, eyes never leaving the man. When he had come to a stop Cullen regarded him warily for a moment before asking, “Who are you, and how do you know my companion?”

The man barked out sharp laughter and waved his hand, giving the sword and cursory glance. “Sword down Templar.”

Cullen lowered it at a touch from Evelyn against his arm.

“Good boy.” The robed stranger smirked and looked right past Cullen as if he wasn't even there. Instead his attention was focused on Evelyn.

By now Evelyn, and she was sure Cullen too, had worked out who he was. This was the escort to Tevinter, another total stranger her father had entrusted her life too on her journey to her new married life. There was something about him she didn't like, something about the glint in his dark eyes or the curve to his smile or something else she couldn't quite put her finger on. She waited in silence for his next move, seeing no weapon besides the walking cane. It reassured her that her guard was better armed than him, maybe even she was with her little dagger.

“Your carriage to the Imperium awaits my Lady.” He bowed deeply, the smirk paling to a placid smile. Without another word he turned on his heel and walked away, expecting them to follow.

Once he was out of earshot but not out of sight Evelyn stepped out from beside Cullen, who sheathed his sword with a huff and rolled his tensed shoulders. He'd been completely ready to strike at the slightest sign of bad intentions.

“Do you think we can trust him?” Evelyn asked, her voice much smaller than she would have liked.

Cullen scoffed. “I wouldn't trust anyone from the Imperium, but you're going to learn who you can and can't trust in time. Until then you have my blade.”

“Let's go after him, I trust you to protect me valiant knight.”

They two of them walked in the stranger's footsteps, Cullen's heavy boots raising small clouds of dust and the trunk dragging along behind. Evelyn had thought of grabbing the bag from him, but she'd offered in the weeks before when they'd been forced to go without a carriage, and he'd always refused with an offended note to his voice.

The man stood beside a dark painted carriage. Two light grey horses stood stamping their hooves at the front, their reins held in the firm grasp of an angry looking driver, his arms bulky and his skin pale. Evelyn thought he looked more like a thug than a driver from a nobleman's household, but she wasn't going to judge Tevinter standards too much if she was to live there. The first man, acting as a doorman, had opened the door to the carriage, the dark stained glass casting strange speckles of light on the ground as the sun danced through it. The carriage rocked in the dirt as Evelyn placed her foot on the step, her hand in Cullen's as he helped her up.

"Templar," the doorman suddenly spoke up, stopping both the travellers in their tracks, "Rutherford wasn't it? Here is your payment for delivery, I'll be sure to pass your regards to Magister Pavus." A pouch of coins in hand, the man made to place himself between the noblewoman and her guard. Cullen gripped her hand tighter, moved closer. Her elbow glanced across his chest, her wrist at an odd angle with how close he stood.

"My task was to bring her to the estate of her new family, I'll have my pay when I know she's safe."

"It's not necessary, she would do better to trust the guards sent by her father-in-law than a sellsword."

"His name is Cullen," Evelyn interrupted, releasing the ex-Templar's hand and standing in front of him, staring the tall man in the eye, "and I want him with me. He is my guard, chosen by my father, and I would not stain his honour by sending him away his task half done." Her voice was steady, shoulders back, head high.

The Tevinter shot a final venomous glare towards Cullen before bowing his head, deeper than the last time, and heading to the front of the carriage with the driver.

Cullen once more took her hand and aided her into the carriage. The smile was clear in his voice; it was clear he had enjoyed the display of authority. Once she was safely in the carriage Evelyn watched Cullen hoist the trunk onto the roof and strap it down with several thick leather ties. She couldn't see what he was doing up there, just had a view of his torso as he heaved and heard the creaking as the box was secured.

Cullen's face came back into view as he climbed in beside Evelyn, who quickly glanced out the window. The warmth in her cheeks was unexpected as Cullen leaned close to her, his voice halfway between a pant and a whisper, "I didn't know you could talk like a proper lady."

Evelyn continued to look out the window, laughing as she replied, "I didn't know you wanted me to take back what I just said."

“Easy now,” Cullen laughed as she turned to him. She noticed his brown was sweaty even from his brief few minutes of exertion, his cheeks bright red. He’d already been burned by the sun in the few days of extreme heat. “Your new life awaits.”

Evelyn nudged him, laughing. The sound was strange to her ears, disjointed in her current situation. She had imagined the road to Tevinter would sap her of all joy. She had left everything behind her, family, chantry, her dreams and ambitions lay in tatters like the hem of her dirty gown shoved roughly into the bulky rucksack slung on the opposite seat. Cullen removed his armour, piece by piece, at her insistence and dropped them beside the coarse bag.

She was glad for his company, she had come to appreciate his presence over the last few weeks. She’d be sad to see him go once she arrived.

Her smile faltered, even as Cullen cracked a joke beside her.

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Notes

Finally another chapter, this one is a short one though... hopefully more to come now I've ended up with some free time!

The ride had lasted around a week.

The carriage had hardly stopped other than the necessary breaks for the occupants to stretch their legs, stock up on food and relieve themselves. Evelyn had never thought she would be so jealous of Cullen and his Maker given ability to piss standing up wherever he pleased, but the long carriage ride had certainly changed her mind. She was tired of having to wait until they passed some small village or went close enough to a city. As it turned out, their path took them by very few civilised areas, and Evelyn was curious how many towns would be close to her new home in Minrathous. How many of them would bring revenue to the city, to the family she was to marry into, to her? She wasn't materialistic, not when it really came down to it, but she would need the funds to hire the coaches and horses and drivers and -

"Evelyn?"

She looked up suddenly. Cullen was staring at her, his face set with a grim smile. As she met his gaze he nodded and pointed through the crack in the curtains.

"I didn't think we'd get here so fast, what with the weather taking the turn it did. But here we are."

They both looked out through the same window, Evelyn pulling the curtain back. She had closed it to hide away from the rolling countryside and grey clouds. She gazed out at the city in the distance, and the crashing waters which seemed like a great chasm between the carriage and its destination. The ocean churned at the foot of the great cliffs which the carriage now travelled right beside, sea spray flying into the air as waves smashed against the rock face below. Evelyn recoiled as salt water splattered on the window. She had seen a rough sea before of course, but never one which seemed so cruel and bleak.

The towers of the great Tevinter city speared the darkening sky, illuminated with sparks of red which seemed to shift like slow lightning. Evelyn's eyes widened; the city seemed ablaze.

"Don't be alarmed," Cullen muttered, failing to keep the bitterness from his voice, "It's just magic. This damnable city is practically held together by the stuff."

Evelyn knew this must be hard for the former templar, walking into the dragon's lair and being able to do nothing but sit pretty. His hatred of magic seemed almost as strong as her



hatred of this entire situation. It looked as though they would both be facing challenges, but they would weather them together for a short time.

The carriage rattled along. Over the trip one of the wheels had started to come loose, and it now caught in every pothole and every slight bump in the road. The driver had not seen any need to stop and get it fixed, which might have hindered their journey, and insisted that the wheel would hold. It seemed he was correct, and Cullen's arguing to the contrary was for nothing. He seemed to have forgotten all about his annoyance with the driver and Tevinter guards in favour of glaring towards the city. Evelyn joined him in staring out the window silently, although less angrily. She was afraid, but somewhat in awe of the city that reached up into the sky in front of her.

Evelyn felt her breath catch as the carriage rolled to a stop at the start of a wide bridge that stretched over the distance between her and the city.

“This carriage stops here, Lady Trevelyan. Another will be here soon to take you across the bridge to the city.” The driver had appeared at the window, his voice was muffled through the door and partially snatched away by the wind. He was soaked through from the rain, his hair plastered to his reddened cheeks and the brim of his cap drooping into his face. His clothes dripped, but he was hardly shivering.

“So you’re just going to leave us here?” Cullen asked, cracking the window open. The two of them could finally hear how loud the wind was as it whipped into the carriage as best it could. Evelyn shivered.

The driver shook his head, “Your next driver will be here shortly, My Lady, we will stay with you until then. Please stay in the carriage.”

Evelyn didn't have to be told twice. She nodded silently and closed up the window once more. The sound of the wind faded into a dull rumble, the window went back to trembling against the assault. They sat in silence while the rain lashed down around them. Not the carriage had come to a standstill there was no bouncing around to distract them from the noise of the torrent pounding on the roof above them. The hollow drumming echoed around them.

“Are you nervous?” Cullen asked, putting a hand on her knee and looking at her with concern all over his face, “You look ill.”

Evelyn chuckled softly. Just what she wanted to hear before meeting her future family. She nodded though, may as well pretend she was okay and hope it would all go away. But the churning in her stomach didn't fade away.

## End Notes

Thank you for reading! I'll be updating this as often as I can while I fight against the evil forces of Writer's Block (honestly if Corypheus had attacked Thedas with that I'd have failed the game)

But any feedback is welcome since I'm not very confident writing different characters, although I am enjoying writing this as much as I'm hoping you're enjoying reading :D

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!