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Elizabeth

Eighteen years ago.

As I rocked the two of us back and forth in the chair, Finnley pressed her head against my chest. Her eyes drooped harder and longer with each motion but she was determined to stay awake. She popped them open again, looking up at me with her sparkling green eyes to see if I was still watching her. I didn't think I could take my eyes off my beautiful daughter ever again.

This was the third time tonight she had woken up screaming. Finnley had to be the strongest three month old child ever. Each time I came in to her room to pick her up, everything in her crib had been tossed out. But whenever she saw me, she was the sweetest little angel, playing innocent and smiling up at me like she hadn't just screamed with all her might to get my attention. I think she just liked my company.

Just like I did, she liked to give her dad a hard time. Richard had finally installed a nanny cam so we could watch all of her shenanigans

since she never fussed when I was around and I didn't believe my sweet little girl could ever throw a real fit. Tomorrow's video would include a lot of me coming in to put her back to sleep.

Finnley wiggled in my arms again, trying her best to fight the sleep pulling down on her eyelids.

"I know, baby girl. You're afraid you'll miss something while you're asleep. But wait until you can remember your dreams, then you'll never want to stay awake. You can fly, you can travel, you can live in a fantastic world of your making."

She smiled up at me, her eyes finally winning the battle as they closed gently.

"You, my darling, are going to be so strong. You'll live your life with an amazing power, I just know it. When you are old enough you can choose that power. Then you won't need your dreams anymore. You can fly, you can travel, and you can live in a fantastic world of your making, all while you are awake."

A small hiccup escaped from her mouth and it took so much strength to not laugh and wake her up. I slowed the rocking, careful not to move too quickly, and set her on her back with her blanket. Laying in the crib, she pulled her knees up, wrapping her arms tight into her chest. It was a common position for her unless I was holding her; like she was shielding herself from the world, or maybe she could actually remember nightmares. But with my healing power, I could only help her so much, and it broke my heart to think there was something I couldn't protect her from.

I reached down under the crib to grab her toy keys. They were her

favorite thing to play with. No matter what soft blanket or teething animal we gave her, she always reached for the keys. Even as I set them down next to her, she uncurled to grab the keys, pulling them back into her body. I didn't want to leave but I had slept in the rocking chair for the last three nights just to keep her quiet. I turned away from Finnley, headed back to the door, but froze in the middle of the room.

The door slowly closed, clicking into place quietly. Richard wasn't up and I hadn't done that. There was a giggle behind me and I spun, suddenly wide awake.

Finnley wriggled on her back, her hands swiping the air as she reached for her toy keys... that were floating over her head. She laughed and reached and kicked her legs as the keys bounced softly in the space above her.

That's not possible.

She couldn't have powers. No one could have them until they were eighteen. Finnley was just three months old, how was this possible? No Trials, no power source, but here she was closing the door and playing with her keys in the air.

Finnley must have thought she was showing off because now the rocking chair started to sway.

"Ellie?" Richard pushed through the door behind me. Finnley dropped the keys on her head and started crying.

"Richard, did you see that?" I turned and saw his stunned face.

"That was Finnley? How is that possible?"

Finnley's wails got louder and I scooped her out of the crib, holding her close.

"I don't know how she can do that. What do we do? People are going to find out, she can't control it." I was panicking.

"We need to call Angie. Now. She's the only one we can trust right now. She's part of The Assembly at The Complex but she can keep our secret." Richard's eyes were wide.

I passed Finnley over to him and hurried to get the phone as she screamed louder.

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Angie and Tom stood over the crib, watching Finnley curl and uncurl around the toy keys. She wasn't going to show her powers to them but they believed us. Angie looked worried, maybe because she was about to be a mother herself. I paced around the room, unable to keep my legs or hands still. Richard sat in the rocking chair, studying Angie and Tom as they watched our daughter who had just displayed powers that she absolutely shouldn't have had.

"I've never heard of this happening without the power sources, without the Trials." Tom spoke to Angie but loud enough for us to hear. "No one has ever been born with powers."

"I've never seen or heard of anything like this." Angie turned to me. "Did anything happen while you were pregnant? Any signs of power? Contact with anything strange?"

"Nothing, everything was fine." There was panic in my voice but I couldn't hide it. My best friend would have been able to tell anyway. Angie reached out and held my hands to steady me. I hadn't noticed they were shaking as her fingers wrapped around mine.

"Have you heard of the Blue Star?"

I shook my head.

“It rejects anyone who tries to use it, either at the Trials or if they try to take the power later.” Richard looked down at his feet as he spoke. “It is also rumored to drive people mad with visions and headaches. It’s the most powerful source known to The Complex.”

“What does that have to do with Finnley?” Now I had a right to be panicked. I knew where this was going but I didn’t want to believe it.

“Ellie, if Finnley touches the Blue Star, it will take her powers. She won’t be able to hurt anyone since she can’t control it right now. It will protect her.” Richard looked back up at me and my panic grew into anger.

“You want to give the most powerful source that causes visions and headaches to our daughter?” I yanked my hands out of Angie’s. How could she even suggest this?

“Finnley will never know. Her powers will go away. When she turns eighteen, if she passes the Trials, the sources won’t give her power. She will never know the real reason why. But she could still be able to step into a leadership role.” Angie stepped back and held her hand over her stomach, stroking the child she carried. “This will keep her safe. She shouldn’t face the side effects. The Blue Star only does this to steal powers and then it leaves the person alone.”

Tom reached his arm around her, remaining quiet, but I could tell he agreed.

“My baby could do great things with her gifts.” This was a battle I wasn’t going to win. They were right, she was a danger. A little baby who couldn’t control what was happening to her. What if she hurt

herself? What if she hurt others?

Richard stood up and took my face in his hands.

“Finnley will do great things as a leader. We will raise a kind and passionate woman, someone to protect our power and inspire others. One day her daughter will have the chance to be something great, just like her mother. Just like her mother’s mother.” He kissed my forehead as I cried, grabbing my arms and wrapping them around him.

Tom and Angie left to make sure the path was clear. The Blue Star was the power source that would take Finnley’s dreams away from her. She would grow up hoping that on her eighteenth birthday a power source would give her fantastic gifts. But she would never get to know what it was like. She would be stuck in her dreams, unable to bring them to life.

But Finnley was my daughter and I wouldn’t raise her that way. I would make her a fighter, the brightest and fiercest, so one day she could raise her daughter with the same dreams and the same strength.

Finnley reached her fingers up into my hair as I held her close, grabbing a piece of my purple nightgown in her fist and tugging gently. Her eyes refused to close now, she was too busy enjoying the attention she was getting. Richard leaned in the doorway, watching us, and smiled when I looked up at him.

“Our darling daughter will be just as amazing as you, I promise.”

The front door opened and my heart dropped into my stomach. Everything was real now, Finnley was going to touch the Blue Star and lose her gift. Richard left the room and Finnley released her grip on my hair. Her dark green eyes stayed glued on mine as I whispered to her.

“I know this is going to protect you but it still hurts. You are going to be amazing and I’ll do everything to make that happen for you.” I kissed Finnley’s forehead and rocked with her until Angie, Tom, and Richard walked in, ready to take my daughter to her fate.