

No, thought Anya as she stared at her derelict hamlet. Fire flooded the land; the burning flames slowly crippled the remains of Efendia. Fog towered over the dying village. The murky skies were gradually getting fiercer, wind swept away rags and straw and animals lay dead in the lake where they had attempted to escape from the evil Feidna. It was the end, the end of Efendia. Anya fell to her knees and wept. A sharp pain stabbed her chest; she couldn't bear the thought she had no one, no one to protect her, no one to comfort her.

The beautiful glow of Efendia was gone, for the village was now in ruins. A falcon sat on a tree nearby, his beady eyes glaring at her, his glossy feathers shimmering and his curved beak waiting in anticipation. Anya wanted to scream and shout but her throat had dried up.

Scrambling down the collapsed rockery, she wanted to find some evidence where the Feidna had gone. It felt like a different world; fire had invaded the village, so Anya stayed close to the rocks. Why? Why had they come to plain old Efendia: what did they want? Suddenly a swoop of crows glided down and over Anya's head. They huddled up, pushing and pulling at one another, so she walked towards them clapping her hands. Once they had all flown away, Anya peered at what the crows had been attacking. It was a man. Upon his face were black bulbous lumps and his lips had gone deep purple- the plague! Anya knew this very well; her father used to cure the unfortunate ones who had the terrible disease. A tear trickled down her rosy cheeks from thinking of her beloved parents.

Trudging through the dead land looking for a trace of the evil ones, she remembered her sister, Berma. Had she escaped and survived, or had she died like her mother and father? These thoughts left her full of heartache and despair. Now Anya was entering the birch forest where she always used to play hide and seek with Berma. It had always been a welcoming, happy wood, but it seemed to be hostile and

deserted today. She would camp here soon as it was coming to dusk. She had to overcome her sorrow and survive for herself. Although it was tough, she tried to remember that her family were now her guide: they will always be with her.

Anya's raven black curly hair was blowing in the wind, her body was stiff with cold and she was desperately hungry. Shaking, she gathered some logs and to light a fire she used the precious flint and steel which her father had once passed on to her. Then she bent two boughs and tied them down to create a shelter and scrambled into her sleeping sack.

That night Anya was restless for her mind was full of grief. Recalling the look on her father's face when the arrow had struck him made her feel sick- his eyes had gone dark and his red cheeks ghostly pale. Anya had been so furious that she threw herself onto the warrior who had killed him. It had been horrifying. A single tear drifted down Anya's cheek. She watched the flames of the fire flicker then wander off into the vast skies. Was she to stay in this ghastly place; the nearest town was Blanda that was at least 60 miles away. There was no hope in finding the Feidna for they could be anywhere.

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The sun peeped up over the horizon and Anya had barley slept. Yesterday seemed like a disturbing dream and all was well now.

The last time Anya had eaten was the day before last; she was ravenous. Climbing over rocks, weakness sunk through her body: if she had to survive like this Anya would simply starve. Finally, she came across a juniper bush; its blue berries inviting her forward. Gobbling the berries and slurping down their juicy texture, she felt slightly stronger. The forest still seemed dark, even in the beautiful morning. Heading back to the shelter, Anya spotted fresh hoof prints upon the thick mud. She followed.

It seemed to be half an hour since she started tracking the prints and the feeling of worry laid at the bottom her stomach. Anya had a terrible knowledge of this forest. She needed to hire a steed to travel to Blanda for she had a beautiful sheepskin that she could easily trade for a goodnight's sleep and food. But where could she find a horse stable in the middle of a forest?

Hours and miles past by and Anya was exhausted; she was coming to the end of the forest and into a vast opening. The sun glistened and birds chirped. She approached the opening, but it led to a sheer drop- she almost toppled over the ledge. Leaning over the edge, the cliff travelled down about 1000 feet until it stopped at the edge of a cornfield full of crows. Anya knew it was wise not to jump so she headed back for a different path.

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Some time later she found herself heading down a road; the dirt was slowly turning more solid and tidy as she walked- she was much more certain to find a horse here. She remembered the words her mother had once said to her, "always be brave, the past is the past, we cannot do anything about it." Her mother's voice echoed in Anya's mind, soaking up some of her grief and encouraging her, so she charged on. A little later she came to a neat path: at either side of her were little picket fences and lush fields covered with sheep and lambs. Mountains stood majestically beyond and in between them was cradled a shimmering lake. Soon she came to a bridge with running water flowing underneath. The bridge was made of solid stone and ivory covered its pillars. When she got to the bottom, Anya felt a sudden giddiness and felt she had to sit down. To soothe this feeling she went down to the stream and took a huge gulp of water- she felt revived.

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Two days past by and Anya's feet were burning; she had grown big blotchy blisters on her heels. She had come to towering mountains, and was walking into a giant wood. Beyond them, hopefully, would be Blanda.

The skies were growing darker and more and more thunderclouds were appearing. Anya needed to find shelter. Within an hour, she had discovered a cave. It led into darkness so she lit a candle. The light illuminated the area which looked fairly comfortable for the night although it was bitterly cold. Clutching her precious lambskin, she slowly fell into a deep sleep.

Anya was awoken late in the night by a heavy rumbling noise outside the cave. She shivered in fear as the noise grew louder and louder until it was unbearable, as if a stampede of elephants were trampling over the cave. Dust started to fall from the ceiling and stones vibrated on the ground. Grabbing a pointed stick, Anya peered outside. To her utter shock, five bears were plodding, sniffing hungrily towards the mouth of the cave. Horror spread across Anya's face and the bears were approaching nearer. They had red gleaming eyes of a devil and great razor fangs. Anya scrambled back inside and searched desperately to find a passage leading from the cave. Suddenly, the bears had reached the cave, and Anya had found no way out. Their coal black noses sniffed at the entrance, and one by one, they plodded into the cave. The banging of her heartbeat was very loud, attracting the bears towards her. When they were about two feet in from her, poised to strike, Anya grabbed a long stick from the cave floor and swiped it towards their faces. The front large male was struck in the eye and piercing roars flooded the cave; now was her chance to escape. But with one swipe of the leader bear's paw, Anya was flung back onto his powerful shoulder. She fainted.

Everything was blurry; Anya could just make out a colossal figure towering over her. She was on a gigantic cliff and the

bears were peering over her. She was nestled in a grass bed, lying on her back. There was no chance of escape, not with several bears standing in a ring round her. The biggest bear stood in front of her licking his paws. Anya's heart skipped a beat as his mighty paw was about to strike but suddenly something wrenched him back. One of his fellow bears seemed to have disagreed about killing Anya. She felt as if a hole in her stomach had been healed. Slowly she crawled towards the edge of the cliff while the bears fought, the sleuth of bears snarling and backing away. Anya quietly turned on her front, her legs dangling of the side and her arms firmly upright. She found a ledge for her to balance on, seeming quite fragile as small pieces of rock were crumbling down; Anya looked down and gulped, seeing a drop into nothingness. Suddenly the ledge she was standing on was