

## The Slave's Father

Anna waded through the cool water towards the sandy bank. The smooth stones gently massaged her feet, and the clear water rushed over her ankles. She paused in the middle of the stream, and drank in the sunshine. A cool breeze swept through the air, playfully tugging on Anna's knee-length brown hair. After one last deep breath of the delicious air, she continued making her way to the other side. She stepped onto the warm sand and wiggled her toes, letting her feet warm up. She wandered up a little hill covered in soft blades of pale, green grass. Anna sat down and ran her fingers through the dew-covered field. Slowly, she reached into her pocket and extracted a warm roll. Anna held it up to her nose, and breathed in the delectable scent of a freshly baked delicacy covered in warm butter. She slowly sank her teeth into the soft roll and savored every bite. When she finished it, she lay back on the sweet grass. Closing her blue eyes, she took one last deep breath before dozing off.

“Anna! Anna! What are you doing? D'Artagnan is looking for you.”

Anna groaned. “Leave me alone, Sylas.”

A shadow fell across Anna's face.

“Ah. Sleeping, I see,” came the chuckled response.

“What do you want?” Anna huffed.

“You, of course. D'Artagnan is getting impatient for his dinner to be served.”

Anna slowly opened her eyes, and looked up into the face of a boy around her age. His green eyes sparkled with mirth.

“Are you coming? Or shall I tell the Master that his favorite slave decided to take a day off?”

Anna bolted upright. “No, that will NOT be necessary.”

Sylas chuckled once again. “If you say so.”

They started walking back towards the little villa, where they were both employed as slaves to the feared D’Artagnan. Ever since Anna could remember she had been a slave in the kitchens, bringing food to the Master and his guests. Sylas also worked in the kitchens, but as an errand boy. His job was to bring all of the necessary ingredients to the kitchen. D’Artagnan was a very harsh slave master, and was known for whipping his slaves for no reason at all. Anna and Sylas had had their fair share of being whipped, even though they were only 15 years old.

“So, what were you doing out here? I don’t believe the Master gave you leave,” Sylas said with a grin.

“What I do is none of your business,” Anna replied hotly.

“Of course, M’Lady,’ Sylas declared with a mock bow.

Anna rolled her eyes, but couldn't keep the smile from spreading over her face. “You are- Why did you- Ugh!”

Sylas just laughed.

Soon, they made it to the villa. They both hurried into the kitchen, where they were both given jobs to complete. Anna barely escaped the Master’s wrath a few times. Thankfully, he had guests over, one of which was completely against the idea of slaves. After she was done working, she trudged up to her room.

“Anna.”

Anna’s head whipped around at the whisper.

“Sylas!”

“Shh! Come with me. We need to talk.”

Anna curiously followed behind Syllas for a few minutes, before they came to a door. Syllas took a rusty key out of his pocket, and inserted it into the lock. The door squeaked open, a beam of light landing on a staircase.

“Where are we?” Anna asked, confused.

“The stairs leading to the attic. Do you want to escape?”

Anna blinked. “Well, yes, but how can we?”

A man stepped out of the shadows. “With my help.”

Anna slid behind Syllas. When her eyes adjusted, she noticed that he was one of D’Artagnan’s guests.

“Who are you?” she asked fearfully.

“A friend. I don’t like the idea of slaves, and I want to help you. Come with me, and you’ll forever be free.”

Anna pulled Syllas aside. “How can we be sure that he will actually help us, and that he’s not just lying?”

“He’s my dad, Anna.”

Anna gasped. “What? How do you know? Why don’t you live with him?”

“He thought I was dead, but when he saw me, he knew.”

Anna took a closer look at the stranger. Now that she thought about it, Syllas and the man did look similar. In fact, Syllas looked like a younger version of the man.

Anna took a deep breath and turned to the stranger. “When do we leave?”