

Gideon stared out the window at the mountains in the distance. Dark ominous clouds hung over them.

He sighed, remembering gazing at the mountains with Rayna. She'd been exiled three months ago and he missed her more every day. Grandmother was nearly three hundred years old. How long could she continue to live?

He hoped she would return soon. He didn't know how much longer he would be able to stay within Augeas.

Last week, Lady Lavenna's funeral had thrown the city into mourning. Everyone loved her for she was a fine lady.

Dorjan, another of the guard, had reported that Lady Lavenna had been kicked in the head by her horse. A good reason for sealing her casket, but, the night before the funeral, Gideon had gone to the mourning room. Surprised that no one guarded his lady, he'd slipped inside and managed to open the coffin. Something had nagged at him and he had to have one last look at his lady. The coffin had been filled with rocks. Gideon turned from the window, running his hand through his hair. He needed to report for duty. Once he had been one of the chosen ones who guarded the lord. Now, he stood upon the stairs most of the day making sure no one who didn't belong in the upper part of the castle entered. It was duty for a young guard with little training, not a guard of thirty who was a sword master and master archer.

Lord Culain's health concerned Gideon. The lord never

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seemed to leave his rooms. Even at his lady's funeral, his face seemed vacant. At first, Gideon thought his lord mourned so deeply for his lady, he'd become unaware of his surroundings. Now, he wasn't so sure. Dorjan seemed to always be in attendance of the lord and no others were allowed near him.

Rumor said Dorjan had been trying to learn magic from the Ancient Ones. They never shared their secrets with anyone, but maybe he had learned something anyway.

Gideon sighed as he left his quarters and glanced toward where the Lady's Guard had been quartered. For the first time in hundreds of years, there were no Lady's Guard. Some had fled. The rest had disappeared. He feared what had happened to them, but he couldn't prove anything and worse, he couldn't do anything.