

FAIRY TALE'S END

Episode 1 - Pilot

"Strangers in the Wood"

Written by

Vesper North

FADE IN:

EXT. ENDLESS FOREST - DAY

Vast uncivilized wood, wild and empty except for--

THE STRANGER (early 30's), tall, dark, and weathered with scruff on his face and hair in a tangle. He wears well traveled clothes atop dirty, long unwashed skin.

He runs, navigating through the trees like an expert.

SUPERIMPOSE: CARROLLSTON - the Ember Queen's Land

He ducks low behind a boulder for cover. His chest heaves, out of breath.

Several feet behind, TWO GUARDS (scouts) appear in a clearing in chain-mail and black tabards with a flame emblem on the chest. The Stranger listens in on their faint mumbling. He tries to peek around without exposing himself too much.

A shadow looms over him and the Stranger raises his fist; clocking a GUARD in the face and rendering him unconscious.

THE STRANGER  
(to the unconscious guard)  
Apologies.

He returns his attention to the guards in the clearing.

GUARD #1  
...deserted. Come on, let's head  
back.

The Stranger takes a deep breath and continues running in the opposite direction of the guards as fast as he can.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

The Stranger slows to a stop. He examines the area.

He kneels down beside a small pile of brunt wood; hovering his hand over to check the freshness. He then looks around at the ground and spots two flattened areas of dirt and twig about the shape of a human body. Someone slept here.

A HOODED FIGURE sneaks up behind him and places a dagger to his throat.

THE STRANGER

Now hold on...

(holds his arms up in  
surrender)

I have no quarrel with you.

The hooded figure nudges the underside of his chin with the blade, urging him to stand.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

(stands)

I don't want to hurt you.

But the hooded figure does not sheath the blade.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

But I will if I have to.

He grabs the dagger wrist of his attacker and elbows them in the gut with the other. He swings the hooded figure around in front of him and the hood falls.

BEAUTY (mid 20's), fair but fierce with a stone cold demeanor. She wears more masculine clothing.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

I apologize, miss.

(releases her)

It is not in my nature to harm such  
a fair creature.

Beauty lifts a leg and kicks the Stranger onto his back. Before he can regain his stance, she draws a bow and loads it with an arrow.

BEAUTY

Explain your presence in these  
woods.

THE STRANGER

(mocking)

Apologies, I wasn't aware that  
these were your woods.

She pulls back further on the arrow.

HANSEL (O.S.)

Hold on! Hold on! Hold on!

HANSEL (late teens, early 20's), boyish and thin, runs out of hiding and jumps between Beauty and the Stranger.

She rolls her eyes.

BEAUTY  
Get out of the way, Hansel.

THE STRANGER  
No, Hansel, please stay.

HANSEL  
Does he look like he's part of the  
Ember Queen's guard?

BEAUTY  
The Ember Queen enlists more than  
just soldiers. Her wrath stretches  
far and wide.

THE STRANGER  
From the sound of it, I have as  
much reason to fear this, Ember  
Queen you say, as much as you do.  
(beat)  
I'm on my way to the south trail.  
If you let me go, I promise I'll be  
on my way.

HANSEL  
What a coincidence, we're--

Beauty nudges Hansel and he shuts up.

BEAUTY  
We'll see you to the south trail.  
Try anything out of turn and it'll  
be the last thing you do.

Beauty lowers her weapon, still not convinced, and the  
Stranger gets up off the ground with Hansel's assistance.

THE STRANGER  
Thank you.

The Stranger watches Beauty, curious.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)  
(to Hansel)  
Charming that one.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

The Stranger and Hansel take the lead while Beauty pulls up  
the rear; keeping her eye on the Stranger who happily munches  
on a square biscuit.

THE STRANGER

It's good to have friends out here.

HANSEL

(light-hearted)

Says the stranger traveling alone.

THE STRANGER

It's best that way.

(beat)

Is she your sister?

HANSEL

No. We're not close like that.

THE STRANGER

But you are close?

HANSEL

She rescued me from some guards just over a fortnight. We've been traveling together ever since.

THE STRANGER

I see.

(beat)

So why risk life and limb out here?

Hansel looks back and forth, as if someone might be listening.

HANSEL

(whispers)

We seek the witch.

THE STRANGER

She's not a myth then?

HANSEL

We have not seen her. But if we find the witch, she may be able to locate my sister.

(beat)

What do you need the witch for?

THE STRANGER

A cure.

HANSEL

You ill?

The Stranger nods and Hansel steps away.

THE STRANGER

Don't worry, nothing you can catch.

HANSAL

We would do better to get what we need from her in numbers.

THE STRANGER

(considers)

I'm sorry to hear about your troubles. I lost my brother not long ago...I know your pain.

(beat)

If you need my assistance, I will be happy to give it.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

BEAUTY

Absolutely not.

She kneels down by the river to fill her canteen.

HANSEL

But Beauty, he could help us. He's big, strong--

BEAUTY

And a stranger.

HANSEL

He said he's ill. We can't leave him on his own.

She stands and looks to the Stranger who kneels beside the river, cleaning his face with the clear water.

BEAUTY

Did you not stop to think that maybe he works for the Ember Queen? We drop him at the start of the south trail and find another way to the witch.

Beauty shakes her head at Hansel and stalks off.

BEAUTY (CONT'D)

What were you thinking...

THE STRANGER

(approaches)

Everything all right?

Hansel jumps, caught off guard.

HANSEL

Fine.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Hansel lays passed out. The Stranger relaxes across from him.

A ways off, Beauty wanders the camp perimeter. She tenses at the sound of a twig crunching. She draws her dagger and holds it out, ready to strike.

THE STRANGER

Why don't you rest, I'll take watch.

Beauty puts her dagger away and turns her back on the Stranger.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

So why do you call her the Ember Queen?

BEAUTY

You must not be from here.

THE STRANGER

I've been away for a long time.

BEAUTY

Well you were better off staying away.

(beat)

They call her the "Ember Queen" because if one incurs her wrath, that's all that'll be left. Embers lightly burning so you can watch what's left of your loved ones fade into nothing but ash.

THE STRANGER

You speak from experience.

She ignores him.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Mind if I ask your name?

Beauty doesn't answer.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)  
All right, I'll guess.

He circles around Beauty, looking her over.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)  
Hmmm... By the sound of it you're from Grimmerie-- No, Beaumont. So that means your name must be an Evelina.

(a moment)

No? All right... Oh! Genevie.

(a moment)

Hmmm... Ah! I have it. Rosaline.

Beauty walks away from him.

THE STRANGER (CONT'D)  
Fine. If you won't tell me I'll just have to call you "Cherie".

Beauty stops, turns, and gets in his face. He raises an eyebrow at her.

BEAUTY  
If you're so keen on swapping names then tell me yours.

The Stranger pulls back, unwilling to speak.

BEAUTY (CONT'D)  
I see then.  
(beat)  
You may be able to fool Hansel, but you can't fool me.

She shakes her head and turns to leave. As she moves, voices echoing nearby grow louder.

The Stranger grabs Beauty and pulls her into hiding, covering her mouth. She tries to shove him off but he tries to keep her from getting them noticed.

GUARD #1 (O.S.)  
Trail's cold.

GUARD #2 (O.S.)  
We should keep looking. The Queen said--

GUARD #1 (O.S.)  
We're not going to find anything in this dark.

Beauty suckerpunches the Stranger.

THE STRANGER

Ow!

GUARD #2 (O.S.)

Did you hear that?

Beauty covers the Stranger's mouth to keep him quiet.

GUARD #1 (O.S.)

Probably just some animal.

Footsteps echo as the guards continue on.

The Stranger checks to see if they've gone.

THE STRANGER

They're gone.

BEAUTY

(a moment, then)

Thank you.

THE STRANGER

You're most certainly welcome,  
Cherie.

She stares at him, not amused, and heads back to camp.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Beauty, the Stranger, and Hansel stop at the south trail.

THE STRANGER

Be careful on your journey and I  
wish you the best of luck.

Hansel nudges Beauty in the side.

BEAUTY

You... You may join us. We will be  
stronger in numbers.

(takes a deep breath)

I was...

THE STRANGER

Wrong to not trust me?

Beauty stalks off down the path.

HANSEL

She doesn't like to be wrong. Don't take it personally.

THE STRANGER

Don't worry, I don't.

He pats Hansel on the shoulder and follows Beauty down the south trail.

EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT

THE QUEEN (mid 20's), ravishing beauty with a sinister gaze wrapped in fine dark clothing.

DAMIEN GRIMLOCK (early 30s), tall, dark, and overcompensating, stands a few steps behind, watching over her.

She steps over and removes a pouch from a tree branch. She opens it and pulls out a square biscuit, the same as the one the Stranger ate earlier.

THE QUEEN

(sniffs it)

The trail is fresh. Our little spy is holding up their end. I'll have myself a little sea witch in no time, wouldn't you say Captain?

DAMIEN

Yes, my queen.

THE QUEEN

Queen what?

DAMIEN

Queen Cinderella.

FADE OUT.