

In *Pathways*, I tried to introduce many of the characters that would be appearing in future stories, but do so in a natural way so as not to detract from the story. Unfortunately, meeting this character interrupted the flow, so I cut the scene. This takes place in the library scene towards the end of the book between when Princess Lavena and Princess Seren confront Eileen.

~Deleted Scene: Meeting Anwen~

Behind us, the raised voices had turned into shouts. Princess Elodie released my arm and turned around with a worried frown.

"Oh dear. If you'll excuse me, I have to be sure the two don't kill one another." She hurried gracefully away. After staring after her for a moment I headed in the opposite direction, trying to put as much space between me and the conflict as possible. I turned another sharp corner in the labyrinth of shelves and ran right into Princess Lavena herself.

She gasped and tumbled backwards and I was only spared from falling myself by seizing hold of the nearby shelf, causing it to teeter precariously. "Oh my goodness, Your Highness, I'm so sorry." I offered my hand to help her up but paused. *Wait...this* couldn't be Princess Lavena, whose shouts with her intended were still ringing in the distance.

I looked more closely at the girl who I'd tumbled into and upon closer examination recognized her as the Princess's handmaiden. She looked more like the Princess up close—same heart-shaped face, brown eyes, and dark hair. The two could certainly pass for sisters and almost pass for twins. It was uncanny, really.

She offered me a sweet smile as she accepted my hand. "I'm not Princess Lavena but it's not the first time I've been addressed as such and it certainly won't be the last. My name is Anwen." She brushed off her uniform and smoothed out her hair, whose proper servant's bun had begun to come undone.

I continued to stare. "You two look very much alike."

She wrinkled her nose. "Yes. It's a rather unfortunate twist of fate I've cursed several times over the years. The Princess finds it delightful and uses me as an unwilling accomplice in her many schemes, forcing us to switch places for various reasons. It's gotten me in many messes already and will likely only continue to do so." She looked at me curiously. "You're in a bit of a mess yourself, aren't you?"

My mouth went dry. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, please don't be alarmed." She rested a light hand on my arm. "I've been watching you ever since you arrived. As such I'm rather curious..." She nibbled her lip before leaning closer to whisper, "are you really a Princess?"

My breath caught at her question and my pounding heart skittered to a stop. Oh no, it had happened, just as I knew it would; I'd been found out. But Anwen's kind expression caused my worry to melt away. There was something about her that invited me to trust her.

I took a deep breath. "No."

And then the entire story tumbled out. I spoke quietly and rapidly, telling her everything, feeling it a huge relief to unload the heavy burden of my secret on someone. She listened with rapt attention, and when I finished, she took my hands to offer an assuring squeeze.

"Don't worry, I'll keep your story in confidence. Goodness, what a peculiar situation. A magical moving forest forcing you to arrive and an outrageous claim forcing you to remain. I wonder how it'll all turn out."

It was a question that had haunted me every moment since my strange situation had begun. Although so far I'd remained undiscovered, I obviously hadn't fooled this handmaiden, and she likely wouldn't be the first to uncover the scheme that I'd been thrust into. Who else would discover I was an imposter before this charade ended, and what would happen to me if it was by someone less kind than Anwen?

Anwen must have read the worry in my expression for she leaned closer and lowered her voice. "You should know there are whispers about you. Others are wondering if you're not who you say you are. Do be careful. I'd hate to see any harm befall you simply because you've found yourself entangled in a mess not of your own making." By the knowing look in her eyes I knew she'd experienced that very horrible scenario many times herself.

Anwen turned to go, pausing only to stoop down and pick up the book she'd been carrying when we'd run into one another.

"Oh, I believe this one is yours." She handed me the volume about noble lineages. I picked up the book at my own feet and frowned at the cover.

"*The Wonderful Large World of Tiny Insects?* Is this yours?"

"Oh yes, it's a fascinating read." Anwen's eyes brightened as she exchanged our books and held her own against her chest as if she were hugging a friend. "I steal

whatever moments I can to study. Unfortunately, as the Princess's handmaid, those moments aren't many. While I feel sorry for the poor Crown Prince's confrontation with her, I can't help but be grateful it gave me a few moments to read...as well as allowed me to meet you." She gave me a warm smile that I returned.

We conversed for a few moments more. The more I talked with her the more differences between Anwen and Princess Lavena I noticed. Anwen's expression was more open and soft, her eyes brighter and full of kindness, and she smiled more readily. I liked her immensely.

It wasn't too far into our conversation when we were rudely interrupted. "Anwen?" Princess Lavena's impatient shriek came from several shelves away and it was getting closer. Anwen sighed.

"Oh dear, I'll have the unpleasant and nearly impossible task of soothing her after what sounded like an epic fight. It was a pleasure meeting you, Eileen. I wish you luck in your own endeavors." She gave my hand another reassuring squeeze before disappearing down the row.