

THE GIFT

In Quill, a peculiar girl sat at the top of a grassy hill, drawing in her simple plain sketch book. Audrey, unlike everyone else in Quill, did not possess magic. She was a lonely orphan and hated every single minute of it. Quill was a small, lively town. All of its residents, except Audrey, had magic.

So Audrey sat there sketching ideas of wonderful worlds with dragons and fairies and demons when the annual meeting bell rang. She groaned and shut her sketchbook. She was not looking forward to the High Priest ranting and raving about her loss of magic again. Audrey trudged reluctantly to the docks.

Everyone that saw her pointed and muttered making her feel hated. Then the Head Priest gave his lecture about magic, the laws of magic. Magic, magic, magic. Then he did something shocking. "As a disgrace to the land of Quill, the magicless one shall leave...", the head priest looked Audrey dead in the eye, "...and never come back."

"Enchantmenters!" he called. They stepped up to rank. "Escort her." In unison, they aggressively charged at poor Audrey. She sprinted off into the town, ducking under enchantments and leaping over spells. In desperation, she thought to flee somewhere that anyone with common-sense wouldn't dare to go. She turned towards the Forest. As soon as Audrey stepped into its borders the Enchantmenters stopped dead. It was forbidden to enter.

Audrey stopped running eventually and sighed thankfully.

"Who are you?" Audrey turned to see a woman dressed in leaves and animal skins.

"A - a - Audrey" she stammered. Not the best first impression, she thought.

"We are Clan Nemesis. What do you want?"

Without thinking, Audrey blurted out, "A home". The woman's steely gaze softened.

"I am Amora, leader of the clan. We may give you one..."

Amora led the way until she heard birds' sweet songs and a stream gurgling nearby. They stepped into a clearing with log huts, people and the smell of damp forest floor.

"If you can undergo some trials, then you may live here."

"Sure." Audrey would attempt any trials given to her if it meant a home.

"Agility first!"

Suddenly, Amora hurled a rock at Audrey. She swiftly ducked and weaved as more rocks were thrown. At last the rocks subsided. Audrey was puffed. "How many more trials?" she asked in between breaths.

"Two. Next, trust."

She gave her a small round package which filled the palm of her hand. "Don't open it." One hour passed. Amora had a look of approval on her scarred face. "Good." Two hours. Amora walked away. Three hours. Four hours. Audrey was dying to open the package. She had never gotten a present before in her whole life.

Amora finally returned. "Last test, open it." Audrey ripped the paper off, revealing a smooth colour-changing stone. The stone flickered red for a moment, then settled into a peaceful green. Yes. Amora said rather gratefully, "This is now your clan."

A feeling of peace bubbled over Audrey. A home at last.