

Princess of Wishes and Midnight

by J. Penelope Baker



Story Premise:

Isabelle de la Grange wants nothing more than to avoid her stepmother's notice and to earn enough that she can finally flee her home with her friend for the capitol city, where she plans to open her own dressmaking shop. So far, everything has been going to plan: her father's absence and stepmother's disinterest mean that she can go wherever, whenever. Even her stepsister hasn't caused any trouble.

Then Isabelle directs the wrong gentlemen towards the Fae Wood, where they will almost certainly go mad or be killed. This leads Isabelle and her best friend Ophelie on an adventure that will change everything. Will this transformation be for the better?

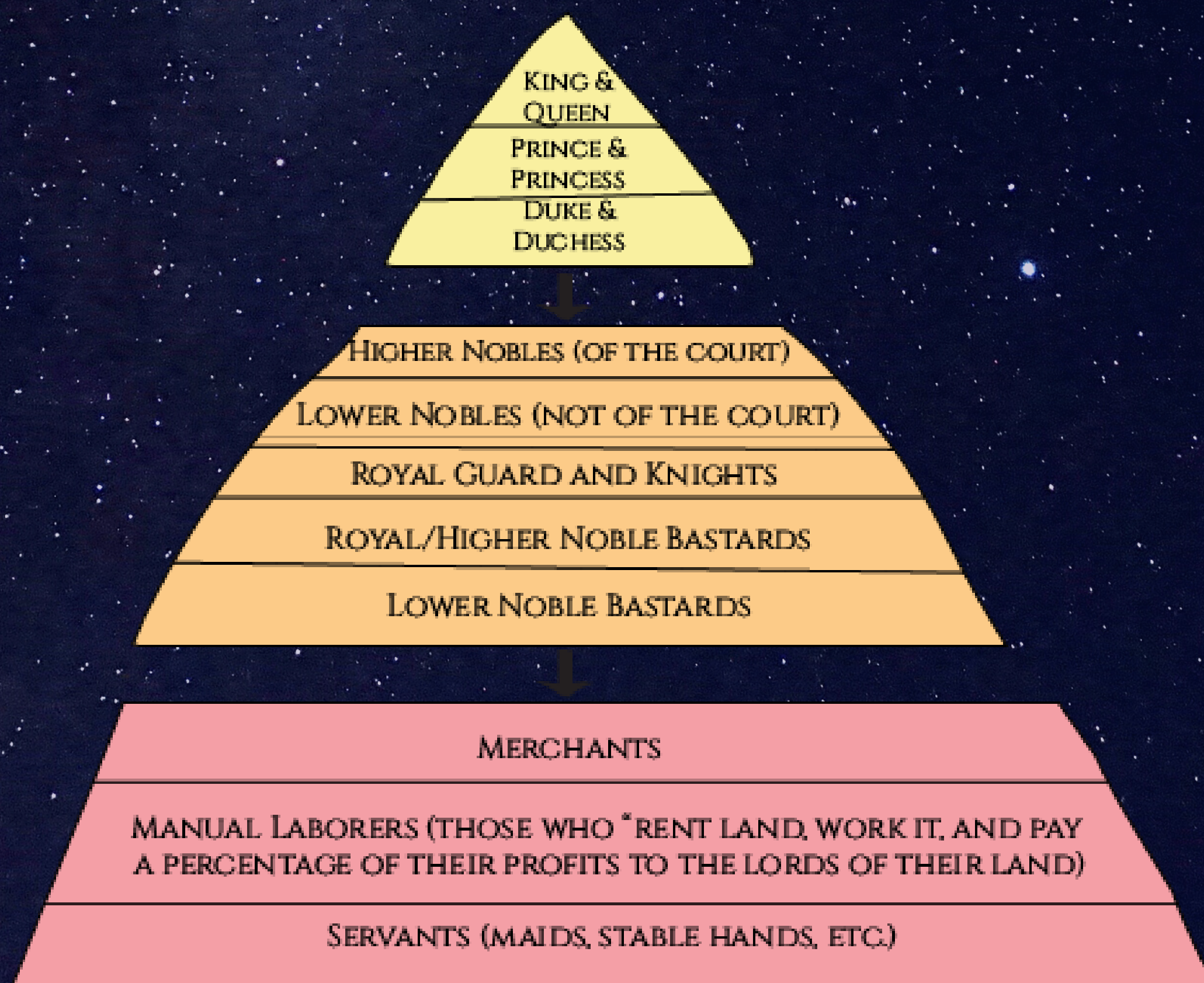
What do you need to know about Medioterre before our story begins?

The Fae

There used to be a large, thriving population of fair folk in Medioterre. They lived alongside the humans. Then, about 500 years ago, the monarchs died without an heir, and a new family was crowned as rulers. This new dynasty, the Echelles, started off their reign by banishing the fae from most of Medioterre, relegating them to a forest at the edge of the country. With the fairies themselves gone, the monarchs then took it upon themselves to raze any mention of the fairfolk in Medioterre's history and institute a law stating that any educators who attempt to dispute this new, fae-free history would be sentenced to death. As time passed, less and less people knew about the fae. Eventually, the fairies were only known as mythical creatures from children's tales, and not as an entire race of intelligent beings who had been forced off their land.

Societal Structure

Medioterre has a social structure similar to Europe's classic feudal system and France's Ancien Regime (the three estates). It is a patriarchal and heriarchal system, with the male reigning monarchs on the top and the serving class on the bottom.





Lady Isabelle Angelique Magalie de la Grange

Other names: Lady Isabelle, Miss Isabelle, Isabelle

Age: 20 years old

Height: 5' 6"

Prominent features: lots of freckles on face; reddish hair, which is unusual in Medioterre

Body type: average, with slight muscle build in legs and arms from riding and sewing

Family & Growing Up

Growing up, Isabelle had a close relationship with her mother. Her father wasn't often around, as his diplomatic duties kept him abroad, but when he was there, he was kind to her.

Everything changed when, at the age of 11, Isabelle's mother passed away from sudden illness. Her father left after the funeral and stayed gone for about a year, leaving Isabelle to the care of the household staff. When he finally returned, it was with a new wife and daughter in tow.

Lenore, Isabelle's new stepmother, and Sydney, Isabelle's stepsister, were very different people than anyone Isabelle had known. There was immediate, mutual discomfort and dislike between the two parties, and Isabelle suffered the consequences of this poor relationship.

Who is she?

Isabelle is a member of the noble class of Medioterre. While her family aren't members of court, they still enjoy all the privileges of the upper class. Isabelle herself is a proud, spirited young woman, who unfortunately lacks any depth of understanding of the many advantages she possesses simply by virtue of her birth.

She greatly enjoys fashion design, and dreams of moving away from her family estate and opening her own dressshop in the capitol with her best friend Ophelie. Aside from fashion, she loves horseback riding and long walks in her mother's garden.

Miss Ophelie Mirielle Vincelette

Other names: Ophelie, Lee

Age: 21 years old

Height: 5' 5"

Prominent features: thick, dark, wavy hair that is often down, rather than up in bun or hairstyle (as is traditional)

Body type: average, no particular muscle build as most of time is spent doing domestic duties



Who is she?

Ophelie is an opinionated young woman. She is a member of the serving (lower) class and is currently a maid in the de la Grange household, where she's been working since age 14. Ophelie has mostly educated herself by reading any piece of writing she can get her hands on. When she's off-duty, she likes to chat and walk with Isabelle in the garden. She also enjoys embroidery, which she will sometimes do for Isabelle's designs.

Family and Growing Up

Ophelie Vincelette is the first-born daughter of two first-generation immigrants from Merimerria. She has 4 other siblings, 3 sisters and 1 brother. Mrs. Vincelette used to work in the de la Grange household, and had a close relationship with the previous mistress of the house (Isabelle's mother). Mrs. Vincelette would bring Ophelie with her to work, and Ophelie and Isabelle would play and be educated together. When Ophelie reached the age of 14 (the legal age at which she could hold a job), she found a position at the de la Grange house, where she's remained ever since.



Prince Auguste Hercule Benjamin Lamont Echelle

Other names: Prince Benjamin, Ben, Herc,
His Royal Highness

Age: 23 years old

Height: 5' 7"

Prominant features: shorter and more built
than other men of status; appearance is
unremarkable, not what most expect from
prince

Body type: strong and stocky

Who is he?

Prince Benjamin (though he prefers simply "Herc") is someone who has no desire for the power and status of his station. In fact, he would do just about anything if it meant he didn't have to be a ruler and could instead live his own life, free from the burden of responsibility for his people. His only friend is Estienne, who grew up alongside him in the palace and currently is a member of the royal guard.

Herc has no particular passions in life. He hasn't enjoyed most of the things he's experienced thus far in life, though he is unsure if it was the actual activity he didn't enjoy, or the fact that he was forced to do the activity because he's a prince. This complete ignorance of his own inner workings has made Herc appear feckless and stupid in the eyes of many in the palace, including his own father.

Family and Growing Up

Prince Benjamin is the first and only son of King Karim and the late Queen Jessamine. The queen absolutely adored her son, and spent every possible moment with him up until the day she died, when the prince was only 6 years old. The king never desired a close relationship with his son, only wanting a strong heir to continue on the family name. The result has been a tense father-son relationship, worsening as the prince grows older and desires more independence (which means he's not bending to his father's every whim).

Sir Estienne Louis

Fils-Aime

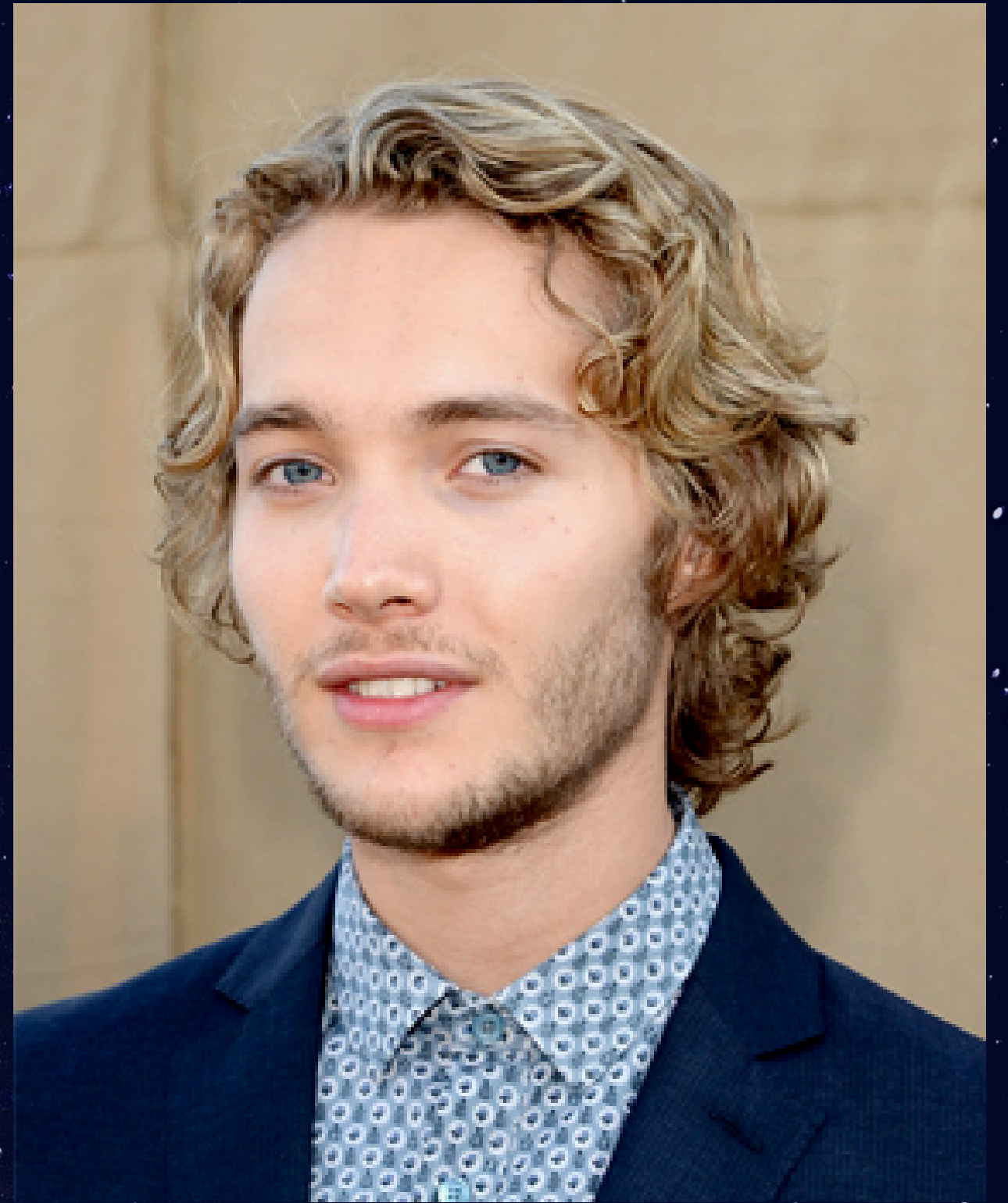
Other names: Sir Fils-Aime, Estienne

Age: 22 years old

Height: 5' 11"

Prominant features: typical golden."prince charming" hair

Body type: tall and muscular, very solidly built



Who is he?

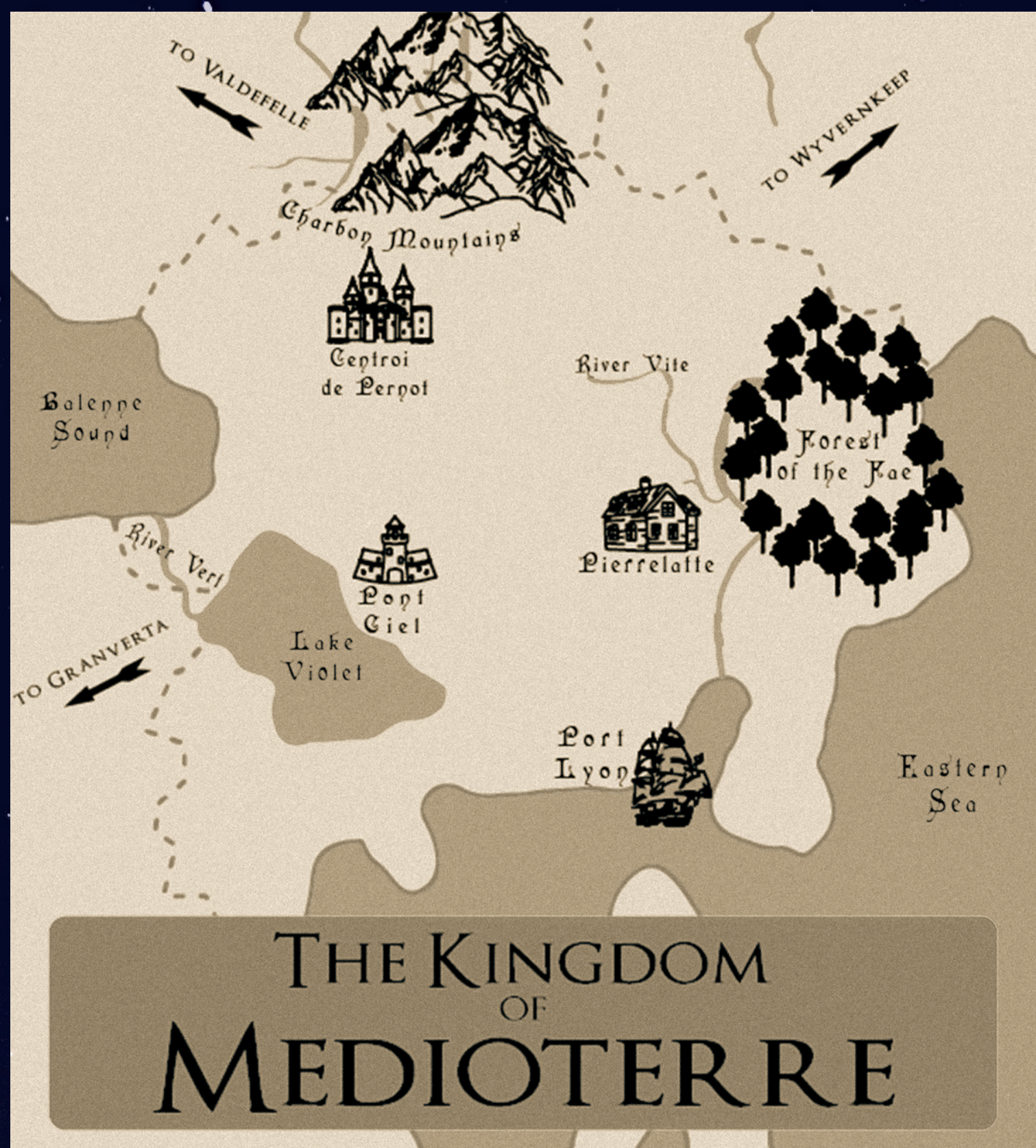
Estienne is a dedicated, kind man, loyal beyond reproach to the crown and all that it represents. He considers Herc to be a brother and would do anything for him. Estienne, though young, has risen through the ranks of the guard and was granted an honorary title. His current ambition is to one day become captain of the guard, protecting his adopted brother to the death.

Family and Growing Up

Estienne was raised in the palace alongside the prince by the captain of the royal guard. He has no knowledge of his blood family, as he was left as a newborn in front of the palace gates.

As a result, Estienne was raised to have absolute faith in the monarchy and the royal guard. He educated alongside the prince, though while the prince had additional tutoring in subjects like etiquette and various languages, Estienne was included in some of the training given to the new recruits for the palace guard.

The Kingdom of Medioterre



The entire story is based in Medioterre, a French-inspired kingdom. Within the country, there are several important locations, including Pierlatte (the hometown of Isabelle and Ophelie), the Fae Wood (hometown of Marigold, the fairy godmother of this tale), and Centroi de Pernot (the capitol and hometown of Herc).

Medioterre is a mid-sized monarchy (with a total population of 10 million), located near Granverta, Wyvernkeep, and Valdefelle. Currently, it is ruled by King Karim, and the next-in-line is his son, Prince Benjamin. No particular allyships with other nations. There are ongoing negotiations with Wyvernkeep over a marriage alliance between Prince Benjamin and Princess Elizabeth. Medioterre's largest industries are textiles and agriculture. They trade their goods internationally and have many established trading routes:

Medioterre is ruled by an absolute monarchy. The Echelle dynasty has entwined themselves with Medioterre's religion, ensuring their reigns are unquestioned, as they claim themselves to be the personifications of Sollum (the primary deity). This absolute rule is enforced by the branches of government monitoring and controlling both the law enforcement and the public temples.

Pierlatte

Pierlatte is the hometown of Isabelle and Ophelie. Much of the story takes place within the town. It is not quite city-sized, as it is a country town (with an approximate population of 40,000) with much of the local economy relying on the agriculture products exported by local farmers. Most of these farmers are actually tenants of Isabelle's father, essentially renting the land from and paying a share of their profits to the de la Grange estate.

In the more densely populated town center, there is one large plaza surrounded by 3 different neighborhoods. Winesteps to the North, which is populated by some food merchants (those who act as middlemen, selling both imported and local produce, meats, and some refined products) and a few bakeries and resturanteurs.

The Neighborhoods

Eastward to the East of the plaza houses most of the wealthy families. These individuals aren't titled, but most of them have made their money in mercantile endeavors. South of the plaza is Southward, where several important industries are based. There are several apothecaries and healers in this area, as well the official temple of Pierlatte. Additionally, there are a couple inns here, where traveling merchants, guards, and nobles have been known to stay.

Past the plaza, following Lamont Avenue, there are large silver gates that give way to the West District, where the poorer individuals and manual laborers reside. There is little organization or care given to the surrounding environment here, and crime unfortunately runs amok, as the local guards and knights do not patrol this area.



Religion in Medioterre

Medioterre has a compulsory polytheistic religion, where the central tenet is that almost everything in the natural world has some spirit or deity attached to it. The major gods they primarily worship are the temperamental Sollum and the beneficent Viterre, who grant them life and light. Sollum, the god of light, inhabits/speaks through the ruling monarch, much like the ancient Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were deities. Most households will have shrines to some sort of patron spirit/deity, but the bulk of their worship is done at the state-funded temples (which mostly feature Sollum and Viterre). There is no formal requirement for citizens to actively practice this religion, but it is illegal for them to be members of/actively practice any other faiths.

The Rules of the Fae and Their Magic

The fairfolk of Medioterre, despite having been relegated to the Forest of the Fae and erased from history, still exist. Now, though, they are all bound to certain rules and restrictions, some of which are simply natural laws of magic, others of which were instituted by Oberon and Titania (their king and queen). First, the natural laws: magic cannot be used to manipulate others' emotions or change time, no magical effect is permanent (though the length of time it remains is dependant upon how powerful the caster is and how much magic the effect uses up), and magic cannot be used to cross the boundaries between life and death. The fairy monarchs put a few rules in place, both before and after being forced to live in the forest. Fairies are not allowed to use their magic for other races without asking for some form of payment (commonly called a "deal"), though each individual fairy can decide what it is they ask for. Fairies are not allowed to make these deals with any individual who has yet to go through adolescence/reach maturity. The age varies by species, but for humans, this is around 18 years of age.

Synopsis

In the small town of Pierlatte, Isabelle de la Grange has just turned 20, when she learns that she unwittingly helped the crown prince run away. To prevent a cruel man from gaining power (and significant monetary gain), she and her friend Ophelie set off to see that the prince is safely returned to the palace. On their journey, they meet a bright faery named Marigold, who helps them find the prince once within the Fae Woods. Together, Ophelie and Isabelle convince the prince and his friend to return home with their escort. They make the long journey to the capitol and separate, the prince and his friend bound for the palace while Isabelle and Ophelie return to the chateau, where they discover Isabelle's father lying in wait. Isabelle and Ophelie are punished. Isabelle is miserable, until her household receives an invite for the Royal Ball. When the ball rolls around, Isabelle is excluded from attendance. Desperate, she and Ophelie call upon Marigold for help. Marigold gives them beautiful dresses and sends them on their way. Upon arriving in the ballroom, they both learn that they had made a mistake: they had switched up the prince and his friend, Estienne. The night is magical, until midnight when Marigold's gifts begin to fade. After a tumultuous escape, Isabelle and Ophelie put their fun behind them—until the next day, when a banquet is announced. The prince is looking for them! When the night comes, the fae Queen and King show up. They discovered what Marigold did and now want retroactive payment for the magic she used. Isabelle and Ophelie are told they must attend the banquet. Helpless, the girls do as they are told. Soon after their arrival they uncover the fairies' motives. It's an ambush. The fairies slaughter Medioterre's nobility. Isabelle and Ophelie are able to escape with their partners. The country is left in devastation, the entire upper class having been murdered. Isabelle and the prince come up with an idea that is quickly put into action. Ophelie and Estienne take over rule of Medioterre with the support of a nearby country's monarchs, leaving Isabelle and the former prince to their sensibilities.

Story Excerpt

Isabelle pushed the back door open and was immediately comforted by the scent of her kitchen. She breathed it in, letting the familiar smells fill her up with joy from a time passed. She stepped over the doorframe and closed the door behind her, putting her picnic basket on the nearest countertop. She smiled and nodded in reply to the maids who muttered out greetings, walking out of the kitchen and towards the long staircase at the end of the house. She had just reached the front hall when a familiar voice called out in greeting. Isabelle turned to see Ophelie rushing towards her. "Hey, Lee." "Belle! How was it?" Ophelie reached her friend and balanced the laundry basket she held on her hip. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. It just..." Isabelle sighed and played with her black dress. "It never gets any easier."

"I'm sorry."

"I wish she could've been here to celebrate with me today." All was silent for a few moments, both friends lost in their own memories of Isabelle's mother. "Anyways. Let's move onto other, less depressing topics. What are you up to?"

"Oh, just the usual. I finished washing Sydney's laundry, so now I'm headed out to the clothesline." Ophelie responded, glaring ruefully at the laundry basket she held. "And you know how I feel about laundry."

Isabelle suppressed a grin. "Well, at least you've nearly finished!"

"Yeah, I suppose." Ophelie sighed. "Oh! I just remembered! I have something for you!"

"What? I told you not to get me anything," Isabelle said. "Unless it's the money for a place of our own, I don't want it!"

"Oh, hush. It's too late, I already bought it. It's just in the other room, inside my bag. Wait here, okay?"

Before Isabelle could say anything, Ophelie rushed off, setting the laundry down in the corner. Within few minutes, her friend's bright face reappeared. She was holding a small gift wrapped in brown paper.

"Here." Ophelie thrust the square into Isabelle's hands. "Happy birthday!"

Isabelle gently unfolded the parcel while her friend nervously babbled.

"It's not much, but it's all I could afford. I hope you like it."

She finally got through the paper wrapping and found a beautifully bound leather sketchbook. "Lee, this is amazing!"

"Are you sure?" Ophelie bit her lip. "I could try to return it and get a new one. I just saw it and thought of you because I know your current one is getting full and stuff-,"

Isabelle interrupted her friend by wrapping her into a tight hug. After a few moments, she pulled back, "Lee, I love it. Thank you so-,"

A sharp rapping on the front door interrupted her gratitude. Ophelie and Isabelle both glanced at each other, confused. Then another rap made them jump into action. Ophelie walked over and cautiously opened the door, then widened it once she saw the kingdom's seal on the armor of the men standing there.

After a few moments of silence, it was clear that neither party was going to initiate the conversation, so Isabelle spoke up. "Hello, officers. How can we help you?"

The shorter, more muscular one spoke. "We are here under the authority and order of King Karim to ask all the households in the area whether they have any information concerning Prince Benjamin's whereabouts at the present time."

"No, sir. We weren't even aware he was in the area. Although," Isabelle paused thoughtfully, "I don't suppose we would even realize if we had seen him."

The taller guard cocked his head. "Begging your pardon, my lady, but why is that?"

"Well, you clearly didn't come with a portrait of him, and we live so far from the capitol that I doubt anyone in town would be able to recognize him on looks alone. He'd be able to move in total anonymity."

The guards looked baffled. It appeared that Isabelle's point was completely novel to them.

God, the palace search team was hopeless. She began to ease the door shut when it became apparent that they had no ready response. "Okay, well, good luck—"

The short one grabbed the door, preventing it from closing. "He traveled in a party with one other gentleman, and they stole palace horses. You would've been able to recognize them because the horses bore the royal seal."

Unbidden, Isabelle's mind flashed back to the men she had run into at the graveyard, the well-groomed horses they'd been riding, and the golden glints of the horses' chest plates...

When no one spoke, the men began to give quick bows indicating their imminent departure. Before they made their escape, Ophelie asked, "How long has he been missing?"

The man said something in response, however Isabelle was too focused on her realization to even pretend to be listening. *Had she really...?*

Ophelie touched her friend's arm. "Isabelle?"

She snapped out of her spiral to find the men and Ophelie staring at her, evidently waiting for some sort of response. "Sorry, what?"

Ophelie came to Isabelle's rescue. "They wanted to know whether or not there was a chance that the other household members or staff had seen him."

"Um... no, I don't think so. My guardian and sister are still asleep, and the rest of the staff arrives here very early in the morning." As it was now well past noon, Isabelle very seriously doubted that they would have crossed paths with the prince, whom she privately knew had only come through town in the past hour or so.

"If you happen to come upon any information, there will be guards posted in the town center." He and the other man, who remained silent, both gave brief bows. "We'll be taking our leave now."

Ophelie eased the door shut as they retreated down the road and whirled to face Isabelle. "Can you believe it?"

"Believe what?" Isabelle asked.

"The crown prince is missing! And from the sounds of it, he ran away! Did he even think about his people? His country?" Ophelie ranted.

Isabelle was so busy trying to piece together from where in the conversation her friend had drawn that conclusion that she didn't even notice her stepmother descending the long staircase.

"The crown prince is what?" Lenore gasped, clutching her chest.

Isabelle rolled her eyes. Her stepmother had always had a flair for the dramatic.

"He's missing, my lady." Ophelie dipped into a curtsy. "The palace officers were just here looking for information on his location."

"Do you know if there are any current leads on him? Or how close they are to finding him?" Lenore pried.

Why does she care about whether or not the prince is found? Isabelle thought.

"No, ma'am. The guard said that his trail led into town and then went cold. No one has seen him, so they aren't terribly sure what to do, except wait for more information."

"Interesting." Lenore drew out the word, staring out the large windows that bordered the front door. After standing there in awkward silence for a few moments, Lenore finally broke out of her spell, and smiled at Ophelie. "This news is most enticing."

Now Isabelle knew something was up. She couldn't remember the last time Lenore had *actually* smiled, outside of the simpering grin she wore at parties and balls in her pathetic attempts to charm the few wealthy, titled people in the area. "Is it really, stepmother? Why is that?" she asked.

Lenore saw right through Isabelle's act. "Well, that's none of your business." With that, she disappeared in a swirl of skirts, striding down the long hallway with a sense of purpose, although Isabelle knew that she was probably just going to yell at some servants over nonsense.

After letting out a sigh, Isabelle turned back towards her friend, who had picked up her laundry basket. "Wait, Lee, aren't you going to finish telling me whatever you were saying before she interrupted us?"

Ophelie opened her mouth, then shut it, and Isabelle knew she was debating whether or not she had the time to waste before resuming her work. Evidently, she did have the time, because she eventually said, "Well, I was just saying that it's alarming, but not surprising that the prince ran away."

"Why isn't it a surprise?" Isabelle furrowed her brow. "He has literally everything at the castle. What could he possibly be unhappy with?"

"I wish you actually would read and learn some stuff about your country." Ophelie sighed, she continued, "Rumor has it that Wyvernkeep has been putting pressure on King Karim, and because of these rising tensions, he was going to arrange a marriage alliance between the prince and Princess Elizabeth, the only legitimate daughter of Wyvernkeep."

"Oh, so you're saying the prince ran away to avoid the marriage? What a little shit," Isabelle said unthinking, and then hurried on when she saw Ophelie flinch. She hated cursing. "I mean, idiot. I can't believe that guy would jeopardize the safety of the entire country just to avoid a marriage."

"Yeah, well, our current leaders are pretty terrible. Did you know that King Karim has been executing people without even giving them trials? Who does that? How could someone act so cavalier about people's lives?"

"I didn't know that... I mean, you know me. I don't really get politics, nor do I care that much." Isabelle shrugged. "To me, it just seems stupid. You know what we should do instead? We should have a country without any rulers. Just a total free-for-all." She was only half-joking, but Ophelie didn't notice and laughed.

"I hope you know why that wouldn't work."

"I think it would work just fine! Everybody just does whatever they want. It's perfect."

Ophelie just shook her head and sighed. "Okay, Isabelle." She picked up her basket, still full of soaking wet clothes. "I have to go hang these before they start to wrinkle." Waving goodbye to Isabelle, she quickly disappeared, and Isabelle was left to her own devices.

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