

# *Bear Coast*



**REFUGE CROSS**

S. Grams

- CHAPTER ONE -

**Be careful what you ask for...**  
(The tale of Sara)

Sara gazed out of the open, glassless window of her classroom. A few brightly coloured leaves gently floated down from the large trees that surrounded the small, rural school-house compound. Leaning forward lazily with her elbow on the desk, Sara's propped-up hand was all that was stopping her head from hitting the timber table she sat at. The brown-furred Anthro wolf was oblivious to the commotion of the rest of the class around her and completely inattentive towards her teacher.

Sara's eyes scanned over the bright red and yellow autumn landscape outside. It was getting colder. Summer's energy was almost spent for the year. But somehow, even the idea of being out in the cold was more inviting than her immediate surroundings. There were a lot of empty desks around Sara at the back of the class, only her friend Jameen sat relatively close by with her brother Jammet. The two twins acting almost like a bridge between the class and the lone Sara at the back.

The teacher gave a sharp command to bring the restless class to order.

Sara sat up automatically, turning her head forward with unseeing golden eyes as the teacher began to distribute reports. Sara's brown pointy ears drooped to the side a bit, communicating her level of enthusiasm well.

The classroom itself was a very basic setup, the bare wooden floors and simple desks and chairs all faced a large chalk board behind the teacher's desk. To one side was a single bookcase, were a few large older volumes sat solemnly, being pretty much the only decoration in the room.

In front of Sara on her desk were placed a slate tablet with accompanying chalk and a tattered scroll near a small inkpot with a tattered feather pen stuck into it.

Though there was enough paper on the Anthro world to provide a reasonable amount of affordable books, the supply of paper was still controlled by the printing guilds. This was particularly the case in the Wolf Kingdom, making unprinted paper a valuable commodity.

The uninspiring surroundings were of no interest to Sara, who was lost in her own thoughts in any case. It seemed odd to Sara that after all that she had been through, the saving of Sage Filfia, the whole adventure with Trex only a few months ago, to be back to this... her normal, boring, life. Wasn't something meant to have happened!? Wasn't her life supposed to have taken a major turn? Sara had not honestly believed that she would be received as a hero or anything like that, but she had also not expected... nothing at all.

Sara had been surprised at how disappointed she had been when she had found out that the entire thing, the exiles, the attempt on Filfia's life and the Mintury society conspiracy were to be all but completely covered up. In particular, her and Trex's part in the matter was completely removed. Supposedly, the main reason for this had been for the protection of Sara's and Trex's families. Something that Sara had reluctantly come to agree with, if only because it meant that she would never have to divulge her trespass in the inner city of RefugeCross. Sara grimaced a bit at the thought that she and Trex had been mostly kept in the dark. Seemingly left out in the cold by the same adults they had just saved!

In fact, Sara had not seen Trex since she had returned from the western wilderness. She had also not had a chance to talk to her recovered grandfather alone, something which had proven most frustrating.

The one thing that had developed as Sara had expected was the reaction of her mother. Sara was pretty much under house arrest and watched like a hawk most of the time. The only Anthros who she had been able to talk to about the adventure had been her two close friends and neighbours Jameen and Jammet... the female half of which was trying to get her attention with a low hiss.

"Psssst!" hissed the sandy blond haired Jameen.

Sara blinked a few times as her eyes focused.

"I fear your efforts are wasted, Ms. Satlison" said a gruff figure sarcastically to Jameen as she stood in front of Sara.

Sara focussed on the standing figure in front of her desk, recognising her plump teacher.

“Welcome back to the real world Miss Kelgorn” said the teacher sharply, gazing disapprovingly with two squinting eyes over her wide snout.

The other students in the class sniggered in the background, obviously enjoying the idea of Sara getting into trouble.

Though not wearing official uniforms, the other students, like Sara, wore similar clothes, including blue blouses and shirts and knee length mauve shorts and skirts.

Sara frowned automatically, returning the stern gaze of her elder teacher challengingly.

“I am grateful that your ever increasing lack of attention is not contagious” said the teacher, “otherwise I would have to start worrying about the average grade of the class.”

The venomous, old, grey-furred female Anthro wolf dropped the last report in her hands onto Sara’s desk. She turned away sharply, her greying black-haired bushy tale flicking close by Sara’s desk as a sign of contempt.

Sara looked down at the cover page, instantly recognising the low mark, barely a pass. Sara’s eyes quickly focused, and her ears sprang to attention. Still not really thinking clearly, Sara instantly stood up as a reflex, causing her timber chair to tip over with a racket.

“You have got to be kidding me!” said Sara angrily.

The class immediately went silent, not that Sara challenging the teacher was anything unusual, more that it was always very heated.

“Is there a problem Miss. Kelgorn?” asked the older Anthro calmly, not turning around, her tail flicking back and forth a bit.

Disrespect was not normally tolerated in a typical Anthro classroom, either lion or wolf. A long, thin cane in the corner near the teacher’s desk was a testimony to that. Due to her frequent run-ins with the teacher, Sara had developed the talent of knowing ‘the line’ and prodding it mercilessly while just avoiding a socially justified punishment.

“This mark is ridiculous Mrs. Fintlick” said Sara angrily, snatching up the paper with one hand roughly. She was really testing the teacher’s patience today.

There was a pause before the teacher replied.

“No more ridiculous than the work itself” she said, the tone in her voice indicating she was finding the challenge most disrespectful.

Already the air in the room was becoming thicker with the growing conflict. The other students could feel it too.

Sara fumed, roughly opening the document to look at a couple of heavily marked pages.

“Do I have to ask for a review of your work again Mrs. Fintlick? Just so that I can get a fair grade?” threatened Sara openly.

It was no secret that Sara and her immediate family had long been disliked and discriminated against because of Sara’s aunt’s marriage to an Anthro lion. And this was not different in school itself. All in the class also knew that Mrs. Fintlick had had a stern review thanks to Sara’s Grandfather’s influence, though it was not something spoken about openly.

The temperature in the room seemed to fall by a few degrees.

Mrs. Fintlick turned slowly, open hostility being projected freely. Though her façade was ice cold, the effect was seemingly amplified by the conservative grey dress she wore

“Go right ahead” said Mrs. Fintlick chillingly, “even your grandfather, the honourable Mr. Thorntreck, would not give that report a higher grade than what it is worth.”

Sara was momentarily caught off guard about being called out. Actually reading the comments in her report, Sara quickly had to admit to herself that her work had been below standard, and most likely only worth a little more than what she had received.

Mrs. Fintlick immediately detected the uncertainty in Sara’s voice, a cruel smile spreading across her tight lips.

“You’ll have to learn your place young lady” said the teacher condescendingly, “If you paid more attention in class, you might learn it sooner.”

Sara stared at her teacher with conceit, matching the older woman’s level of intimidation.

Mrs. Fintlick simply ignored the challenge, knowing she had won.

Turning away, she added.

“To help you on your way, you can kindly volunteer to clean the classroom tonight.”

Sara picked up her toppled wooden chair and slumped back into it with a huff. Looking forward, she saw a few of her female classmates pointing and gossiping. Sara gave the leader of the group a rude gesture, which was immediately met with a scowl and more sniggering.

Sara ground her teeth, knowing she had just made even more trouble for herself, but at this point, she honestly didn't care.

Nearby, they light brown furred Jammet gave his twin sister a concerned look, having seen the reaction of the girl Sara had insulted. Jameen too was also looking a bit worried.

The school day was over and Sara had quickly swept up the dirt from the bare wooden floor of the simple classroom. Considering how often she ended up 'volunteering', it was no wonder that she was so proficient at it.

Roughly returning the straw broom to its closet, Sara walked out into the small courtyard of the isolated rural school.

The school day was long over and Sara had pulled out her tucked-in blouse, letting it flutter in the breeze.

The school itself was a small compound made up of two large class buildings and a small house which served as a residence for the caretaker and a teacher. The construction of the buildings was simple but thorough. Cut logs and planks sat on top of a stone base, topped by a high angled roof to ward off the winter snow. Immediately surrounding the fenced-off compound was a mixture of fields and forest. There were no other buildings or Anthros close by.

Since her little adventure with Trex, Sara's parents had felt it necessary to 'escort' her home from school each day, much to Sara's annoyance. They were obviously running a little late today. Instead, Sara was greeted by the sight of the girl she had given an obscene gesture to in class. The unhappy looking girl was currently surrounded by three of her little posse, all of them rather rough looking girls, like their leader. They had obviously been waiting for Sara.

Looking around, Sara could see Jameen and Jammet in the distance with the horses over by the water troughs, both were looking a little worried. Sara's horse Flint neighed in the distance as a greeting. There was no one else around as all the other students had long gone and Mrs. Fintlick had entered her house. She was unlikely to come out to assist in any case.

Sara huffed, seemingly accepting the situation. She walked towards the girls. A light autumn breeze blew a few colourful leaves across the dirt courtyard, the sun's rays disappeared behind one of the many white fluffy clouds sailing overhead.

The leader, an ash brown furred girl with shorter light brown hair smiled menacingly, her nasty looking group standing either side of her. The tails of the four girls were flicking back and forth aggressively. They made no effort to hide their annoyance.

“You want to try your luck again Katya?” said Sara to the leader with a cocky smile, obviously unimpressed. Sara folded her arms across her chest, putting her weight on one foot to lean to the side a bit.

“I see you’ve convinced Lixt to join your little gang” Sara continued.

Sara then specifically addressed Lixt.

“I thought you were smarter then that... obviously I gave you too much credit.”

Lixt frowned menacingly, sneering to indicate her displeasure.

“Shut it Sara” said Katya hostilely, “you just keep making enemies for yourself don’t you.”

“I don’t remember doing anything to any of you...” replied Sara defiantly with a higher-then-thou tone, “until you started picking on me that is.”

Katya smiled threateningly.

“As Mrs. Fintlick said, some Anthros just don’t know their place. We were just helping you to find yours.”

Sara flashed her teeth in annoyance, as far as she was concerned there was only one way to deal with bullies.

“I’ve taken three of you down before, one more shouldn’t be too much of a problem” Sara said arrogantly.

Sara ears flattened and she went directly into a fighting stance, reading herself physically and mentally for a fight.

The four girls advanced, their combined hostility building quickly.

The four girls wore robust and simple clothes in regulation colour and style. They were obviously farmers children, and had no problem with getting down and dirty.

“Leave her alone!” came a determined shout from the side as Jammet came running across, also preparing to fight. He faltered a bit as he got closer, however, as the combined intimidation of the four girls became more powerful, his formerly alert ears sagged a bit and his tail dropped down low automatically.

Jameen was close behind her brother and looked less certain, able to better judge the strength of the four girls then her brother.

“Stay out of this Jammet” said Lixt threateningly.

“Keep your brother in check” said Katya towards Jameen, effectively ignoring the male wolf “or we’ll have to teach the boy a lesson.”

Jameen’s hesitation was broken by the threat towards her twin brother. She stood in front of her brother protectively, channelling her aggression and need to protect in preparing to fight.

Jammet was suddenly stunned at the hidden power of his physically smaller twin sister, having never been confronted directly with her turned-up projected emotions before.

Sara waved the two away, knowing that their involvement would only lead to more trouble for them later on.

Jameen hesitated for a moment as she assessed the situation. She reluctantly nodded before calming down a bit. Jammet was stunned when his sister grabbed him by the arm, dragging him backwards.

“What? Wait!” protested Jammet.

“I’ll be fine” said Sara with a cocky grin.

“You won’t” interjected Katya “but at least you saved them from a beating.”

Without another word said, the four girls attacked.

Sara hadn’t actually fought again since her adventures with Trex all those months ago. Considering that she had been in combat fighting for her life against exiles with weapons, she was reasonably confident in her ability to take on four schoolgirls in a fistfight.

This misconception quickly showed itself, however, as the numbers quickly began to take their toll. Though Sara was blocking and moving well and her hostility projection was matching that of the four girls, she was taking a number of hits.

This was no untrained fight, involving the pulling of hair, slapping or grapping of tails. All adolescent Anthros received basic combat training, meaning even schoolyard brawls were more refined, and possibly more dangerous.

Sara landed a good kick to knock one girl down but was then pinned from behind. Sara struggled to break the hold but received a nasty blow to the side of the head.

Enraged, Sara raised her anger levels even higher to gain more strength. Unfortunately, this also led to her almost instantly losing control. With adrenalin taking over her system, she shouted with rage. The extra strength allowed her to break the hold and throw her



former restrainer onto the ground. The other girls were momentarily stunned, their pointy furry ears falling a bit to the side.

Katya shouted in an attempt to snap her gang out of the initial shock.

“The psycho’s lost it! Focus!” she shouted confidently.

Sara lunged forward wildly and without control, Katya was able to easily out-manoeuvre her and land a few hits, including a blow that stunned Sara out of her emotional overflow.

Panting and sweating as she came out of her daze, Sara was no longer fit for fighting, crippled by her loss of control despite still being on her feet.

“Now we make her pay” said Lixt darkly, getting up after having been thrown onto the dirt.

“Not today” came a commanding voice from the other side of the courtyard.

All turned to see Sara’s mother Sallice as she rode towards them across the courtyard. A relieved Jammet and Jameen followed behind her on foot.

Sallice dismounted and walked up to the girls.

Sara was still disorientated and the four girls regrouped between Sallice and her daughter. Still in a fighting frame of mind the four girls were reluctant to back down.

“She’s had this coming for some time” said Katya as a reflex, still aggressive.

“Possibly true” said Sallice calmly, walking up to the group confidently.

The four girls were still projecting hostility, despite being confronted by an adult.

“Honestly thinking of fighting an adult?” said Sallice with a shrewd smile, her long brown hair playing in the wind.

Sara had regained enough of her composure to realise what was happening around her, though she was still too shaken up to act.

“No one cares about what happens to a Kelgorn” said Katya arrogantly, though it was more posing than anything else.

“If you think it is that easy” challenge the older Anthro wolf, throwing her hands open to the side as an invitation.

Before the girls could react, Sallice calmly stepped forward, her voice suddenly taking on a seductive tone.

“I’d relish the opportunity to tangle with you four” she almost whispered, her hand raising to lightly touch the tip of Katya’s chin. The older wolf’s tail swished back and forth playfully.

The physical act was enough to unsettle the concentration of the four girls. Sallice instantly turned her emotional projection up overwhelmingly, though not with hostility, but first seduction, quickly and skilfully followed by revulsion.

The four girls reeled back, Sallice also let out a wave of aggression, to show just how powerful she could be, before switching her projection once again to empathy. The emotional manipulation was even more imposing due to the complete lack of an obvious visible change to Sallice’s expression, despite the diverse emotional projections she was sending.

The four girls were in complete disarray, taking an uncertain step back.

“You’re sick” said Katya backing away, her voice uncertain and a little bit shaky.

“Pass on my regards to your mother for me” said Sallice sweetly, then her facial expression turned serious, her piercing glare staring right through the four girls.

The last glare was enough to send the girls packing.

Jammet and Jameen took a step to the side as the girls ran past to their horses.

“Wow Mrs. Kelgorn” said Jameen approvingly as she ran up to Sara’s mother, “you sure showed them!”

Sallice smiled at the compliment.

“Where did you learn to switch your projections so quickly?” asked Jameen with genuine interest.

“Growing up in a Wolf Kingdom orphanage might be tough,” stated Sallice, feeling no shame in referring to her past, “but it does force you to develop a few additional skills quickly.”

Jammet had made his way over to Sara. He was not in high spirits, seemingly disturbed by the display of emotional power he had just witnessed from the females.

“Are you ok Sara?” he asked with concern, placing a reassuring hand on her shoulder.

Sara was leaning forward a bit in an attempt to compose herself.

“I’ll be fine” replied Sara.

Sara's golden eye's lifted back up to look at her mother as she moved closer. The young wolf was having trouble figuring out if she was more annoyed at being saved by her mother, or more impressed with the powerful control she had just seen her mother use. Sara was also annoyed with herself for losing control so easily, she had remembered using much higher aggression when fighting with Trex... what had just gone wrong?

"You know that you shouldn't turn up your aggression too quickly" Sallice reminded her daughter in a neutral tone.

"I know that" snapped back Sara in annoyance.

Being reminded of her error had helped her decide in which way she wished to react to her mother.

Sallice recognised that she was already on the wrong foot with her daughter, but that was nothing new. The older woman frowned.

The temporary silence compelled Sara to add another comment.

"I've beaten three of them before. I just misjudged it, that's all..."

The edge to Sara's tone lessened and she stood up straight, a deep breath getting her composure back.

"So this happens more often then, does it?" asked Sara's mother, obviously referring to the fighting.

Sara didn't immediately reply, and the way Jammet and Jameen avoided the gaze of Sallice confirmed the matter.

Sara recognised that her friends had divulged the answer with their body language. Frowning, she felt it necessary to clarify the situation.

"Why should the kids here treat a Kelgorn any differently then the rest of the wolves do?"

The comment stung Sara's mother, who knew very well that social stigma often hit children the hardest.

"It has gotten a lot better" offered Sallice lamely.

"Not everywhere" replied Sara sternly.

Sara had not had the time to sit back and wait for things to get better for her at school. With the help of her grandfather she had fought back, and although things were still tough for her now, they were still considerably better than they had been. And at least this way, she had some semblance of control.

There was a moments silence as Sallice was lost in her thoughts. The sound of rustling leaves in the light breeze was the only thing audible. Sallice suddenly seemed to make up her mind.

“I’m going to have a talk with Mrs. Fintlick” said Sara’s mother, “tie Zars up for me would you”

Sallice was referring to her horse Zars who was standing in the middle of the courtyard. Without another word said, she then walking towards the schoolhouse.

“You had better not talk about the fighting” half demanded, half pleaded Sara to her mother on the way past.

Sallice stopped for a second to reply.

“I wouldn’t do that” she said before moving on.

Sara looked on in a mixture of confusion and concern.

A few minutes later Sara found herself sitting on a small retaining wall next to the stables in the shade of a large old tree. Either side of her sat her friends to keep her company. Their horses milled around in front of them near the trough.



“You have to admit that you’re mother was pretty cool” said Jameen, leaning back with one leg up on the wall, the other dangling over the edge.

“Yeah, I know” said Sara in a defeated tone, she had obviously made some type of peace internally, and her expression was much more relaxed.

“I bet that’s the first time Katya had anyone show attraction towards her, even if it was only staged” continued Jameen in a jovial manner.

“No wonder she was so shocked” said Jammet with a chuckle, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees.

Despite his jovial voices, his posture clearly showed something was on his mind

Jameen laughed at her brother’s jibe.

“It’s still embarrassing though” said Sara quietly.

She couldn’t help but slight smile herself though, remembering Katya’s expression. She sighed to herself, before looking at her two friends.

“Thanks for coming over to help by the way, even if I did then send you away” Sara said honestly.

“Sure” said Jammet, though not positively.

Jameen hesitated to reply, as she had really been dragged into the situation by her brother. But she was sure she would have stepped forward had the situation gotten too out of hand.

Now not caught up in herself anymore Sara examined Jammet more closely, he was far from his more enthusiastic self.

“Is everything all right?” she asked kindly towards the young light brown furred wolf, his sandy blond fringe falling in front of his eyes.

“Yeah, it’s just...” started Jammet as he composed his words.

Given the close bond between the three it was not unusual for them to share their inner feelings.

“I just felt so useless, I wouldn’t have stood much of a chance against any of them” he lamented openly.

Sara frowned, unsure of how to console him.

“I think the days of being able to mix it up with the girls in the playground are long over” said Jameen honestly, less concerned with protecting the brothers pride.

“Thanks” said Jammet with huff, not consoled at all.

Sara looked from Jameen's honest goofy smile over to her dejected brother, trying to figure out how to cheer him up.

"You haven't really ever faced emotional projection before have you?" she asked the young male.

"Not like that" admitted Jammet, "only what you get normally from adults and some older girls on the street, or from mum or Mrs. Fintlick when they're angry with me."

"I would hope so" interjected his twin sister, "the idea is that no-one has to deal with such aggression."

"Doesn't help you if you are confronted by it though" continued Jammet.

There was a pause as Sara thought.

"It's a shock the first time" she said sympathetically, "it's difficult to realise how strong an individual has become emotionally when there are no real physical changes to match."

"It must be even harder for males, considering you are actually bigger than the females that are stronger" Sara continued, following a train of thought.

"Maybe I should get rougher with you more often" suggested Jameen to her brother.

Jammet gave his sister a frown, the idea that she was now much stronger than him, even if she didn't show it, was somehow annoying.

Sara felt a bit of sympathy for the male wolf, knowing deep down that they didn't always have it easy.

"It's just a matter of getting used to. My father could easily have dealt with those four, one way or the other" said Sara.

"But he's still no match for your mother" countered the young male beside Sara.

"I doubt many are" interjected Jameen honestly from the side.

"You can only be so strong, after that, it's all down to skill and training" continued Sara.

She was thinking laterally as a means to cheer her friend up, and was actually repeating a line she had heard from her grandfather. Sara continued to adapt the training she had received from her old relative, as it actually fitted well in this case

"Girls have naturally more strength thanks to their emotions" continued Sara, "but if they just sit back and rely on it, eventually your skill will be more than a match, particularly once weapons are involved."

Jameen cringed a bit at the word weapons, not really liking the idea of violence, let alone more intense violence.

Jammet looked up with interest.

“Just take that male Sage for example. Or even that crusty older exile I told you about, they would be more than a match for most female soldiers.”

Jammet thought about this for a second, obviously somewhat motivated.

“It’s not worth becoming an exile just to be able to beat a female in a fight though” interrupted Jameen with an air of authority. She then continued.

“Remember that most wolf females don’t like the idea of an overly strong male” she stated, “and a single male still doesn’t get far now a days, even if it has gotten much better since dad was a cub.”

Jammet seemed to accept this, though Sara’s words were still comforting on some level.

“Thanks” he said simply.

There was a pause before Jammet’s sister Jameen spoke up again.

“So what happened?” she suddenly asked Sara, “you know, before... with losing control?”

Jameen judging that enough time had passed to be able to ask the sensitive question.

Sara thought about this a bit before answering.

“I’m not sure...” she said simply, “I was sure that my aggression was much lower than I had been able to manage with Trex against the exiles, but somehow... I just, don’t know. Maybe I’m just out of practice. I haven’t really been in a fight since my parents have come to pick me up each day...”

Sara was not really certain herself.

“What do you think your mother is talking about with Mrs. Fintlick?” asked Jammet, now more up beat and changing the subject.

“I really don’t know” said Sara honestly “I’m not really told what’s going on anymore, I’m just told what to do.”

A slight annoyance was noticeable in her tone.

“That sucks” said Jameen honestly.

“Well here she comes” announced Jammet suddenly, spotting Sallice as she emerged from the schoolhouse.

Sallice made her way over to the three, walking up to them with a determined expression, obviously something more important had taken place.

“Jammet, Jameen” Sallice said to the two youngsters, “could I talk to my daughter alone?”

The three youngsters looked at each other, what was about to be discussed had to be interesting.

It was a few minutes later and Sallice and her daughter were riding slowly side by side down the dirt road. Leaf-litter was strewn over the occasionally muddy track.

Far ahead up the road, Jameen and Jammet were just in sight on their horses. They obviously wanted to keep an eye on the two out of pure curiosity.

“You are not going to ask me what I discussed with your teacher?” asked Sallice, the two having ridden in silence for a while now.

“You’ll tell me when I need to know” replied Sara coolly, more as a protest against seemingly always being kept in the dark by her mother.

The older brown furred wolf gave her daughter a side glance before continuing causally.

“You won’t have to worry about those girls anymore.”

Sara’s head snapped around, but she bit her tongue.

“I’m transferring you to the mixed school at Bridgehead” said Sallice.

From her tone and body language, it was apparent that the decision had obviously not been an easy one, or a sudden one.

Sara was too confused to reply, not expecting this development at all.

“Is that even allowed?” Sara asked eventually, still in mild shock.

“Me and your father have been thinking about this for a while” said Sara’s mother, “we came to the idea when Fera talked about how good the schools in Bridgehead were. We’ve checked with both sets of officials and there’s no rule directly against the transfer, even if it is unheard of.”

Sara’s mind was racing, due to the unusual political agreements between the Wolf Kingdom district of Torstberg and the Lion Empire controlled RefugeCross and the lower planes, wolves



taught under the lion system were recognised by the Wolf education bureaucracy, if only to allow the occupied wolves the ability to repatriate if necessary. But Sara had never heard of an Anthro wolf from the wolf territories ever going to an occupied territories school before. Sara also mused darkly that it would have not been too much trouble to convince Mrs. Fintlick to allow her to leave.

“Bridgehead is twice as far as it is to school” said Sara automatically, her thoughts still racing. The thought of losing her friends was not an issue for Sara as the only ones she had were her neighbours, who she saw mostly out of school anyway.

“I know” said Sallice coolly.

Sara’s mother was also fully aware that Bridgehead was in the opposite direction from Sara’s grandfather, and also much easier to police.

Sara suddenly realised what her father had been doing on those few trips away recently.

“But you might only be attending it part time anyway” continued Sallice.

Sara gave her mother a questioning look.

“We have accepted an offer from Sage Filfia to potentially take you as an apprentice.”

“You’ve what!?” said Sara in shock, partially at what her mother had said, and partially due to such a large decision having been taken without her.

“You can’t do that!” shouted Sara in amazement.

“I can’t?” replied her mother, one eyebrow raised.

“Not without talking about it to me first” continued Sara, struggling to keep up with the new information.

On their own, Sara may actually have found either one of the developments favourable. But as they had been forced on her, and so suddenly, she could only see that she was being ordered around once again.

“Sara” said her mother seriously, “I do have some idea of the trouble you’ve had at school, and this is a good opportunity for a new start. Also, Sage Filfia came to us with the request to take you as an apprentice, do you know what kind of an honour that is?”

Sara was lost in her own thoughts. She had to admit that her position at school had been difficult, even her grades were slipping due to the amount of ‘distractions’ she had to deal with each day.

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