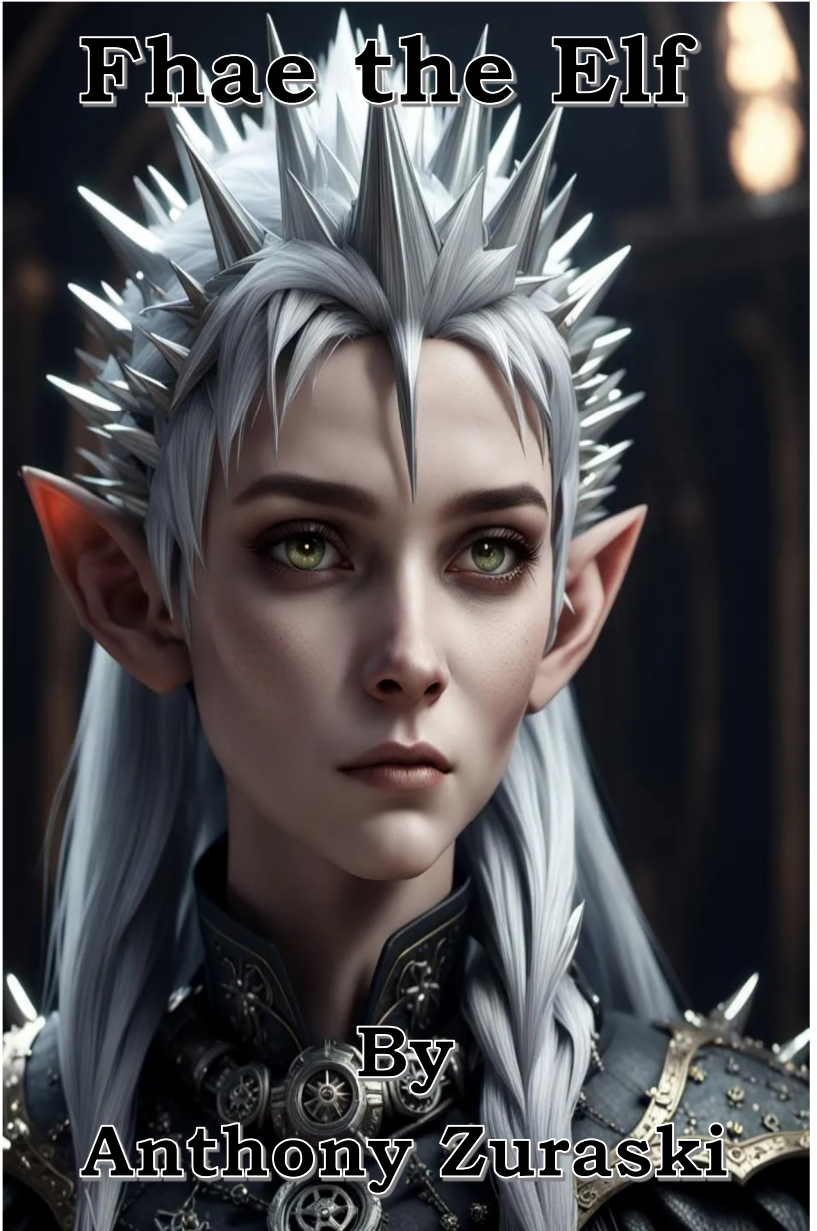


Fhae the Elf

By
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Feanor Arborshate stood outside the temple of Eilcaryn, Goddess of the Elves. With his daily prayers complete, Feanor was looking forward to a good meal before going out on patrol. He donned his helmet before straightening his dark blue with gold armor. Satisfied, he started down the stairs when a burst of light had him averting his eyes as he drew his shield and spear.

Laying on the ground at the bottom of the stairs was a female elf dressed in the robes of a mage. She had short silver hair that always seemed to point in every direction. Her chest was covered in blood, part of an arrow sticking out of it.

“Fhae!” Feanor cried out recognizing his sister’s face. “Get the healers!”

He raced to her side, gently lifting her head, cradling it in his lap. Her eyes were wide, staring in the distance at nothing. He placed a hand on her head, closing his eyes.

“Wake,” he said quietly.

Her eyes blinked as her body convulsed. Two of the temple healers rushed to her side, chanting their prayers to Eilcaryn for healing.

Fhae’s body started to glow a light blue as her body began to feel a prickling tingle throughout it. One of the healers nodded to Feanor. The warrior pulled the remains of the arrow out as her wounds which began to close.

"It's ok Fhae, we're here," Feanor said, his voice fading out as the world around her faded to darkness.

Fhae woke with a start, gasping for air, a panicked look in her eyes. After a heartbeat she relaxed, laying back down in the bed. She blinked several times, trying to clear away the blurriness.

"It's ok Fhae, you're safe," a voice said.

She looked around trying to focus on her surroundings, but she was having trouble. She felt so tired, and was having trouble staying awake. She took in a deep breath, letting it out slowly. She focused on the last thing she could remember. The cave!

"Mithos!" Fhae said, her eyes popping open.

"We don't know where he is, but we've sent a messenger to the tower," the voice said.

Fhae was an apprentice mage at the Ivory Tower of Sorcery, Mithos was her master.

"Feanor?" she said looking around, finally recognizing her surroundings. "How did I..."

"We don't know, you were in Silvada when you appeared on the temple steps, I had to force you out of it," Feanor said. "We were hoping you could tell us what was going on?"

Silvada was a trance like state, some elves went into when they received a mortal wound. It slowed their body functions down in an effort to preserve it.

“We were... attacked,” Fhae said not wanting to reveal too much of what Mithos had been trying to do. Mithos was sick with Plague Rot, a sickness that no one had yet been able to cure. The plague spread throughout the body, rotting the flesh as it goes, eventually killing the infected. Not having much time left, Mithos decided to turn himself into a lich, a spell caster that bound his spirit to an undead form. The ritual to do such a thing was forbidden by most people, and extremely dangerous. Mithos had searched for a cure for months, but his time was almost up. Fhae had supported his decision, mostly because of her feelings for the man.

Fhae looked at Feanor. “I was shot with an arrow,” she said touching her chest. “And then... I’m not sure. I remember Mithos being there, telling me he was sending me... here.”

Feanor nodded. “And a good thing he did, I will have to thank him the next time we meet.”

Fhae tried to stand up, but a wave of dizziness washed over her. “I have to get back...”

“No,” Feanor said. “I told you, we already sent a messenger to the tower. You need rest, let them handle things for now.”

“Why am I so...” Fhae started but the dizziness continued to assaulted her.

“It’s the Silvada, it takes a toll on you.” Fearor explained. “All you need is rest. When we hear anything, I will make sure you are informed right away.”

Fhae nodded, not knowing what else to do. She managed a smile as she laid back onto the bed.

“Thank you Fearor.”

He stood up to leave, a warm smile on his face. “Anything for you little sis.”

Fhae finished packing the last of her supplies. She had been bed ridden for over a day, and she was anxious to get moving. She anticipated going on the road as soon as she found Mithos and Javek, given that the tower were the ones that attacked them trying to stop Mithos from performing the ritual.

She walked through the doors of the Arcanum, Tower of Elven Sorcery. She smiled, dropping her pack as she embraced an elderly female elf standing just inside.

“Lia,” Fhae said. “I have missed you so much!”

“Ah sweet Fhae, how are you child?” Lia asked.

“I am doing well,” Fhae said.

“Don’t lie to me child,” Lia said with a raised eyebrow. “Remember who taught you magic for years before you ran off to that tower of theirs.”

Fhae smiled. “It’s nothing, I am just a little tired yet.”

Lia stared at her for a moment. “Come, tell me over some tea.”

Fhae shook her head. “But I...”

“Who do you think is teleporting you back to the tower?” Lia said as she started walking away. “Come, take your pack before a goblin finds it.”

Fhae stirred her tea, staring into her cup. She had told Lia everything and was having trouble looking at her former mentor. She knew Lia wouldn’t tell anyone else, but she still feared what her mentor would say to her about it.

“So, that is what all this is about,” Lia said before taking a sip. “You must really care for this man. I can’t blame him though; the Plague Rot is a horrible thing. I can only imagine how he felt about everything. Still his mentors were right to be leery of the ritual. It is a dangerous and unnatural thing to do.”

Lia took another sip of her tea as she sat back, scrutinizing her former apprentice. Fhae looked up then back down at her tea.

"Oh, don't fret little one, I will say nothing about this," Lia said. "I can understand your desire to help him. Are you sure you want to go back to the Ivory Tower? No doubt they will interrogate you about the events within the cave."

"I will not hide," Fhae said. "Besides, I want to find him."

Lia sighed. "Very well, let us be off then."

"Us?" Fhae asked.

"Of course," Lia said with a smile. "You didn't think I would let you go into that den of vipers alone, did you?"

Fhae drank the rest of her tea in a single swallow. "Thank you master."

"Just Lia, you are no longer the little girl I taught magic to all those years ago," Lia said with a smile. "Now, let's find your friend."

"What do you mean, under arrest? What charges has she committed?" Lia asked.

"That isn't your concern," the mage said.

"Do you so quickly forget who you are talking to Obasek?" Lia asked. "I am Lia Silvermane. A high

mage in the Ivory Tower, one of the five high mages of the Arcanum, advisor to King Gilwen Celothor, the Light Bringer.”

Obasek held his hands up defensively. “Yes, I know who you are Lady Silvermane, but the fact remains she aided a traitor to the Ivory Tower and must be questioned about... certain events that transpired.”

“Ask her your questions then, there is no reason to arrest her and treat her like a common criminal before any facts have been established,” Lia said looking at another mage approaching them. “Or has the Ivory Tower slipped into more... barbaric practices these days?”

“Lady Silvermane,” the other mage said taking her hand, kissing the back of it lightly. “I assure you that we have not changed since the last time your beauty has graced these halls.”

Lia smiled. “You always were the charmer Inir Maeldaer.”

Inir was one of the council members of the Ivory Tower, and a high elf from Brightwood Forest like Fhae and herself.

“The matter of which we speak must be spoken behind closed doors, I’m afraid,” Inir said. “The matter is close to Obasek, which is the reason for his small lapse in judgment.”

Obasek stood silent, a scowl on his face.

“Why don’t you join the investigation team Obasek, while the council asks Apprentice Arborshate some questions on the events of the other day,” Inir said, not leaving any room for debate.

Obasek bowed. “Of course, Master Maeldaer.”

Inir motioned to the right. “If you would follow me, the council is already waiting for us.”

“I see,” Devin Blackstone said stroking his beard.

Fhae had been answering questions for several hours in the council chamber, Lia sat next to her. The council chamber was circular, with Lia and her sitting in the middle, the council members sitting in large chairs on a raised platform around them. Everything in the room was white, the chairs walls, even the large chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

The council members were Devin Blackstone, Keldor Grum, both human, Metrion Boompants, a goblin, Aven Viserra, a halfling and the elf Inir.

“Apprentice Arborshate, you do realize that attacking a mage of the Ivory Tower is grounds for dismissal,” Keldor Grum said.

Fhae looked to Lia, but the woman just smiled at her. “We were defending ourselves. Obasek and his mercenaries were the ones ambushing us giving us little choice.”

“Obasek Whitestone ain’t on trial here,” Metrion Boompants, the goblin female said with a scowl.

“But Master Whitestone’s actions against Mithos Tamikin and Apprentice Arborshate should be part of this discussion Master Boompants,” Inir said. “If his actions did force them to defend themselves.”

“But Master Tamikin was performing a ritual that is forbidden,” Devin said.

“We don’t know that for sure,” Inir said. “The testimony provided by Torrin Stirim says otherwise. The ritual he provided is not on the list of forbidden practices.”

“Does da same thing as da other one,” Metrion said.

“It still isn’t listed forbidden,” Aven Viserra said. “Besides, the rituals might be similar, but there may be differences in the results. If Apprentice Arborshate’s testimony is true, that means Master Whitestone broke protocol by attacking Master Tamikin and Apprentice Arborshate before attempting to question then take them into custody.”

All five council members went silent for several minutes, thinking on what was said.

“What is your opinion, Lady Silverman?” Aven asked. “On the matters of Master Whitestone’s actions and the ritual used by Master Tamikin.”

Lia raised an eyebrow in surprise. “My opinion?”

“Yes,” Aven said. “You are currently a high mage of the Ivory Tower in good standing. If you were in our position, what would your judgement on these matters be?”

Lia thought about it for a minute before responding. “While I don’t condone lichdom, I can understand Master Tamikin’s desire to... live. And if the ritual he performed was not forbidden by this council, I can see no reason he should be prosecuted for it, despite anyone’s personal feelings.”

Lia stood up. “As far as the matter of Apprentice Arborshate, I would like to hear Master Whitestone’s testimony before I would make any judgement on her actions.”

Fhae was surprised by Lia’s statement, but wisely kept it hidden from her face. The council members nodded as Lia spoke.

Finally, Devin Blackstone stood. “We shall render out judgement after some deliberation, please wait out in the hallway Apprentice Arborshate.”

Fhae and Lia stood up, bowing to the council before leaving the room.

“You don’t believe me?” Fhae asked once they were outside the chamber.

Lia raised an eyebrow. “Of course I do child. But in a matter of importance like this, belief isn’t enough, proof is what is needed. Gaining testimony from the

magés at the cave, evidence left behind, this is what will convince the council.”

Fhae thought about Lia’s words for a moment as she sat on the bench in the hallway. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

Lia smiled. “You have feelings for this young man, and want to protect him, it is natural. But remember, those council members don’t know Mithos, or you. They will only value facts, not opinions.”

The council deliberated until the next day before rendering their judgements. One judgement was that Obasek had overstepped his authority and the attack on Mithos was a breach of protocol. They also ruled that Mithos, Javek and her were innocent of any wrongdoings, although the ritual Mithos used would be reviewed at a later date.

Fhae stood in Mithos’ room, none of his personal items were left. Fhae didn’t know where Mithos had gone, or how to contact him. Many of the magés, including the council members tried locating spells, but they could find no trace of Mithos. To make matters worse, Obasek disappeared. Fhae feared that he would go after his former apprentice, her master Mithos.

“What can we do?” Fhae asked Lia.

“For the moment, nothing,” Lia said. “We will be patient and hope Mithos tries to contact you.”

“But I already told you, I think he believes I am dead,” Fhae said, the frustration seeping into her voice.

Lia smiled. “Be calm child. Now that he is a lich, he will not be easily killed, even if Obasek manages to find him. If you truly want to help him, then you need to focus on your studies. Learn new ways to find him or help him.”

Fhae’s shoulders slumped slightly. “I know you’re right, it’s just...”

Lia patted her on the shoulder, “I know.”

The goblin held her arm straight out, palm facing the human charging her. A bolt of fire shot out her hand as she finished the spell. The human twisted his body, avoiding the fiery bolt, but tripped on his own feet falling flat on his back. The goblin held her quarterstaff next to the man’s throat.

“I yield!” he said with panic in his eyes.

Fhae sat close by, reading a book on the undead. It had been ten years since the incident in the cave where Fhae had been injured defending Mithos. Obasek, Mithos’ former mentor and friend had his

membership at the Ivory Tower revoked. He was now a wanted person by the tower for several violations, including attacking other mages from the tower.

Rumors popped up here and there about Obasek's pursuit of Mithos, but every time a team was sent to investigate, they were both gone.

The Plague Rot had been cured a year after the incident in the cave by Lia. After getting the sickness herself, Lia scoured the Ivory Tower's library finding some old tomes that led her in creating the cure. Fhae had never been more proud of her former mentor than that day. Fhae glanced over to the goblin, Cliaz Boompants, her apprentice. Cliaz was the daughter of Metrion, which made things interesting around the tower.

Fhae smiled. "Very good Cliaz, that is your seventh victory today."

Cliaz bowed. "Thanks master."

Fhae stood up, setting her book down on the chair, a staff appearing in her hand. "Are you ready for another round?"

Cliaz smirked with a small ball of fire in her left hand. "I'm always ready."