

## Epics of Isavoire

### Chapter 12: The Glamorous

“Madam Cheryth! Madam Cheryth!” Victoria called out, concerned. “Your Grace!” The attendant was less than thrilled by the sudden disappearance of her liege. “Sigh, must she always do this? Today of all days?!”

Victoria Alice Morganne was flustered. Today was the Victor’s Carnival, a five day festival that was a tradition within the duchy of Galais. It was also one of the busiest days in one of the most crowded cities Victoria had ever seen, and the duchess was nowhere to in sight.

“Duchess Montrose!” Victoria shouted again in frustration, but there was no response and there were just so many people. It was overwhelming her and she felt lost. “Just my luck...”

Victoria tried to step out of the main streets to avoid getting pushed around by the citizens and visitors. Normally she knew the city well enough to traverse it easily, but with all the music and all of the stands, it was becoming impossible.

“Where is she...?” Victoria noticed a large crowd around a pale Heofonite woman with black hair and matching wings. The woman was playing a strange harp, the music fast and energetic, as opposed to graceful and calming. While it had a certain charm, Victoria had to pry her focus from the tune.

“That music really is something special, isn’t it?” asked another woman.

“Yes, but I have bigger concerns.”

“Like?”

“Finding my liege. How is that your business?” Victoria turned and was startled to see a woman with bright pink hair and a pale face covered in make-up. Her cheeks had a notable blush, while her outfit was white and pink. It struck Victoria as garish and loud, noticing a number of heart patterns on it.

“Just curious.” The woman grinned before holding out a gloved hand. “Maybe I can help.”

“Doubtful. I appreciate the offer, but you likely have business to do and I can’t be delayed. Still, I thank you, miss.”

“Please. Call me Charmaine. The Princess of Punchinellos, Lady of Laughter, Guardian of Giggles, Advocate of Amusement, and-”

“I understand. You likely earned every one of those titles, but sincerely I must find the duchess!”

“A duchess?” Charmaine beamed. “Wow, are you her friend?”

“Friend is probably a bit of a stretch,” Victoria replied. “I’m her attendant and I was her classmate at Culoste Magical University.”

“Culoste? The famous magician school? I thought only rich and snooty folks got in there. Are you rich, because you aren’t very snooty.”

“No.” Victoria was barely paying to the stranger, and chose to ignore her mildly sarcastic statement. “Normally you would be right, but I was just very fortunate and very studious. The Montrose family vouched for me, but really I haven’t the time to-“ Victoria tried to leave, but Charmaine managed to keep up.

“Wait! Let me assist you, please! I want to hear your story! It’s so interesting I’m sure others would, too!”

“Not now, please!” Victoria walked faster, trying to escape, but her pursuer was persistent.

“Please! I promise I’ll find the duchess if you let me!” Charmaine was keeping pace with Victoria, despite the exaggerated heels on her outfit.

“Fine, fine! Just please promise not to distract me.” Victoria slowed down, reluctant, but not willing to argue more.”

“Hurrah! We’ll make today memorable for sure!”

“For sure...” Victoria muttered. “Let’s just continue our search.”

“Agreed!” Charmaine smiled before holding up her index finger. “So, where will we look first?”

“I believe she would go to the Teamaker’s tent. They have a very wide selection and she said she might try some.”

“Tea? But she has that every day, doesn’t she?” Charmaine asked. “What if she went to see something fun like a performance?”

Victoria paused and mulled over the stranger’s suggestion. “Oh! A play! Of course she w-“

“No, no, no, no, no!” Charmaine had a look of utter exasperation on her face. “Victoria, if she goes to plays and tea parties regularly, then why go now when there is so much she may not see again? The games, the food, the people! This is the spice of life that draws others to things like this.”

“If you say so, but really, I’m sure I know where the duchess would go. She and I have been acquainted for more than eight years.”

“Well, I know how people think!” Charmaine winked, a small heart appearing as she did.

Victoria paused. It seemed like the performer was a mage, and on second glance it appeared that she was using a glamour spell. “Well, if you would kindly show me instead of flaunting your beautification magic, I would be obliged.”

“Allow me to obligate you, then! Follow me!” Sauntering ahead cheerily, Charmaine led the duo.

Victoria made sure to stick close to the mysterious woman, who was very easy to keep up with in the multitude of people. They passed by many others, eventually coming to a collection of food stands.

Victoria was startled by the selection. “Deep fried cocatrice wings, jelly slime pudding, and salted caramel apples?”

“Yes, they’re all delicious! They even have a few hard to find treats here too!” Hastily, Charmaine paid for several of the delectable delights, taking a sample of the jelly slime pudding. “Ah, an absolute marvel! You should try one!”

“...If you insist. I am hungry.” Taking a treat from Charmaine along with a disposable spoon, the attendant tried it, surprised by how good it was.

“Hmm...Maybe Duchess Cheryth would like these!”

“I’m certain she would, but it seems as if she isn’t here.” Charmaine then placed the rest of her food within a bag on her hip. “For now, why don’t we check the stage mage’s plaza? I’m sure she wanted to see all of the magic they had to offer.”

“Very well.” Victoria followed Charmaine once again. She had to admit the girl’s blithe spirit kept her from being too bothered.

Eventually they made it to the Mages' Plaza, showing several people wowing the crowd with their use of spells and spectacles. Victoria even noticed that there were magical baubles and trinkets on sale, including the fabled Witch's Brew...or so it was claimed to be.

"Would Duchess Cheryth actually be here?" Victoria asked herself, before turning to Charmaine. "I'm growing worried."

"You really care about her that much?"

"Yes. I just want to be sure she isn't lost or kidnapped or fainting from hunger. Duchess Cheryth isn't used to being out among normal citizens and I don't want her to experience culture shock."

"You make her sound so sheltered," Charmaine muttered before regaining her cheery disposition. "Perhaps ask a salesperson?"

"An excellent idea." Taking Charmaine's advice, Victoria managed to speak with a woman covered in robes. "Excuse me, did a young woman around my age with black hair and green eyes-"

"-Like mine-" Charmaine interrupted.

"-come by?" Victoria finished.

"Hmm. I believe so." The woman nodded. "She purchased a few charmed items and mentioned something about a performance later."

"I see..." Victoria paused a moment. She tried to process the information and come to a decent conclusion. "Charmaine, you're a performer, maybe you..." Victoria paused yet again, suddenly she realized something. Looking closely at Charmaine, past the glamour magic as best she could by focusing, she saw the woman really did

have the same eyes as Cheryth, and was the same height as her. "...Duchess Cheryth?"

"Shhh...." Charmaine winked, the illusory heart appearing once more. "You finally figured it out, but let's not spoil it for everyone else."

"Spoil it?! Your Grace, you let me worry myself sick about you! You could have been lost or kidnapped or any number of things and you play pranks on me by dressing as some type of clown!"

"Well, I am a stage mage, here to entertain!" Charmaine winked once more

"Stop winking, Your Grace! This is serious!" Victoria had tears in her eyes.

"Why, why would you trick me and embarrass your family by dressing as a common entertainer?"

"Because, this is what I want to do!" Charmaine turned and folded her arms.

"I've decided I will pursue my calling as a performance magician."

"B-but what of the duchy? What of your title as an Archmage?! You'd really waste that title?"

"Is it a waste to have free will?" Charmaine stared at her assistant seriously.

"Victoria, I am not asking permission or for advice. I was going to ask you to stay and act as my proxy."

"Y...you can do that?"

"I am the Duchess, this is my duchy, I'm pretty sure I can bend rules."

"Your Grace, I'm honored. You'd really let me rule in your stead?" Victoria was now crying in earnest, a smile on her face as tears fell from her eyes.

Charmaine wiped the tears from her assistant's face and nodded. "Yes, if you would accept."

"I would, but I cannot." Victoria smiled softly, her violet eyes trained on her liege. "I can't imagine you being off on your own. Let me at least accompany you."

"Very well, but only after my debut tonight. It is time for Charmaine to make a name for herself!"

Victoria giggled. "So she will, Your Grace, so she will."