



# The Tale of the Doctor's Daughter

by

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I wake to the rising sun. Pouring through my window like liquid gold, it drips over my bedsheets, bronzing my arms. I soak it up, this first sun. It has been nothing but storms these past days, just rain and black clouds and wind slicing the air. All I've done is gaze out of the window as droplets slowly trickle down the pane of glass and form tiny rivers and streams. Such an easy distraction from the chaos outside. From the Plague.

But for now, sun.

The thought is cheery enough that I change into my clothes slowly, taking care to brush my hair and let it hang like a silken waterfall down my back. Father always appreciated my hair. He smiled and stroked my head when I loosed it from its pins to rub my aching scalp. Often, dealing with patients made me sweaty, and my hair would stick to my damp neck and face, and hang down like a curtain. So, I started to pin it back when I was helping Father with the sick, and I realised it was much more efficient. It kept the blood from getting caught in it, anyway.

I race downstairs, careful to avoid the gaping hole where drunken Henry Turner fell off the table and smashed his head on the wooden planks. I wince, remembering the dull thunk of his head on the floor, narrowly missing the nail that poked out precariously. Oh, Henry. Most of the time he didn't know what he was doing. And when he did, he was always doing it wrong.

I can smell breakfast cooking, the aroma of bread and ale wafting down the hall. Father and I are luckier than most. We have a spacious house, fresh food and clothes and bedding. Our house is perched on the top of a hill, its bricks and thatched roof peering down at the town below. Some see Father as a saint, with all he's done for the town. But I know him best. And he is a doctor. He helps people. He makes them better. That's what Father says and he's always right. Always. Or was until the Plague swept through the village like the wind.

Father couldn't help people quickly enough. I never asked about the bodies, but the acrid smoke drifts by my window and coats my mouth every so often. When that happens, I sneak out to see Alexander. We huddle under blankets and hold our breaths to avoid the stench. When the screams and shrieks start, we grab each other's hands and squeeze, our fingers slick and slippery with panicked sweat.

The cures seemed to work in the first stages when the symptoms started to show. There was a fever, swelling and vomiting. Father sometimes called me to help him pin down a patient, and I'd press my hand to my mouth in horror as their eyes rolled back in their heads with the pain. Few survived. Now he calls no longer...

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