

Wisdom beyond Measure...

Von Aylatha

Kapitel 2: Settling in

Elinor woke with a start and tried to figure out why she wasn't in her room, but inside a tent. Then she realised it wasn't a tent, but a four-poster with blue curtains. Her bed in the Ravenclaw tower.

That's right... I did come here last night...

With a soft moan, she tried to sit up. Lying on top of her many bruises surely hadn't helped getting rid of them.

Pulling one of the curtains aside, she noticed the other girls still appeared to be sleeping and she decided to use that to go to the bathroom. To her great relief, she found out that the showers were in separate cubicles she could lock from the inside. Similar to the toilets in here. There were also hooks for her clothes and a board for watches and such, and a mirror. More mirrors were hanging over the sinks outside.

Well, at least I'll have some privacy here.

It wasn't that Elinor was too embarrassed to undress in front of the other girls, in fact, she didn't care about that. No, it was the many bruises and remains of other wounds she didn't want them to see.

Even though she appeared cold and indifferent to others, Elinor was very much aware of her surroundings and so she had already gathered that Lilian thought her to be strange. And she didn't really want to increase that by letting her know how little she got along with her own parents.

After dressing in blouse, skirt and stockings, she went back to the dormitory and took a closer look at the cloak and tie. The tie was striped in the colours blue and bronze, the cloak black with blue and on the chest the Ravenclaw crest had been stitched. Carefully tracing it with her index, she admired again the combination of colours. The Gryffindor uniforms looked good as well, while she felt that Hufflepuff looked a bit plain and boring. Slytherin had an interesting combination of colours as well.

"Do you know how to tie your tie?", a voice behind her asked.

Elinor jumped and spun around to face Lily, who was just putting her tie around her neck.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. Do you need help?"

Elinor nodded.

"All right. Watch."

Elinor did as asked and tried to memorize it so she could mimic the other girl. Unfortunately, it had looked easier than it actually was, and soon she was at a loss what to do. "Wait, I'll help you", Lily said, reaching out to untangle Elinor's tie.

But as she brushed Elinor's shoulder and some of the bruises in the process, the latter flinched away, trying to avoid the pain. Frowning, Lilian pulled her hands back.

"What's the matter?"

Knowing she wouldn't get away with being silent, Elinor decided to lie.

"I-I h-hurt m-my shoulder..."

"I see. I'll try not to touch it."

After successfully straightening out Elinor's tie, Lily undid her own and stood next to Elinor so she could see it from her own perspective. This made it easier, and Elinor managed to tie it correctly.

"Good. This is just a matter of practise, in a few days you'll be able to do it in your sleep."

Elinor pulled her cloak over her shoulders, grabbed her bag and followed Lilian out of the dormitory.

At breakfast, Flitwick handed them their timetables as well as the books that had arrived for Elinor this morning. Not being happy about dragging the heavy books around all day, Elinor drew out her wand, pointed it at the books and stared at them intently for a while, until she felt she was calm enough to say the incantation aloud without stuttering.

To her relief, it worked out fine, and she put the books in her bag. Lily had watched her closely.

"Do you always use magic like that?"

"Y-yes. M-mispronouncing the w-words i-is dangerous, I-I know th-that."

"That's right... but what would you do if you ever were attacked?"

"N-nothing, I-I suppose."

"Nothing?! That's not very clever! You need to be able to fight back if you have to!"

Elinor decided not to argue with that. She had never fought back, not in her whole life. And she didn't see what good trying to change that now would bring her.

Checking her timetable, she saw they would have a double lesson potions with the Hufflepuffs, then Transfigurations and after that double Herbology with Slytherin.

After lunch, Elinor would have double Divination and her first lesson in Defence against the Dark Arts.

What a great way to start the week. Snape and Umbridge. Great.

Even though she hadn't shown it before, she greatly disliked the ministry witch. Simply because she worked for the Ministry and they thought Potter to be a liar. And Elinor had been taught to think of him as a hero, a shining figure in the fight against the darkness incarnated as Voldemort. Anyone who said anything against him was an enemy or simply crazy. That was what she believed – what she had to believe. She had never before questioned her parents' way of seeing things.

Elinor enjoyed breakfast, especially since Lilian had assured her there was no need to eat as fast as possible, as long as she was in time for classes.

"You can also take food along to eat during the breaks", the prefect had explained.

"You shouldn't eat during classes, though. Teachers won't like that."

After finishing breakfast, they made their way down to the dungeons, where Snape held his classes. The damp and gloomy surroundings didn't do much to ease Elinor's tension. Nor did Snape himself, when he finally appeared.

Elinor chose a cauldron at the back of the room, next to one of the walls on the side. She felt a little safer when not surrounded by other students. Lily had chosen a table at the front, apparently she wasn't scared of their professor at all. Elinor took out her book and the tools she would need for brewing. In the meantime, a wave of Snape's wand had made the ingredients appear on the blackboard and all students made their way over to the cupboards where they were stored. Elinor waited patiently until there

was some space, for she had no intention of getting shoved or trapped among the others. Once it was her turn, she quickly selected the ingredients needed while checking if they were still good. Spotting one that looked a little strange, she pulled it out and took a closer look. And indeed, this one would only serve anyone as fertiliser. Looking around, she couldn't find any kind of basket or something for waste, so she took it along to get rid of it after the lesson. To make sure she wouldn't accidentally put it into her cauldron, she set it aside.

All the time she had had the nagging feeling that Snape had been watching her and so she wasn't particularly surprised when he moved over to her.

"What do you intend to do with this, Miss Shiras?", he asked, holding up the soon-to-be fertiliser.

"Th-throw it o-out, S-sir."

"And why would you do that?"

Instead of replying – which would have taken ages – she carefully took the herb and showed him the spots that had alerted her to its decreasing quality.

Snape looked surprised. Peering down the length of his rather long nose, he took a closer look.

"Indeed", he finally said. "I must confess I almost missed that. You seem to have exceptional good eyes, Miss Shiras."

"Th-thank you."

"Five points to Ravenclaw."

Snape turned away, taking the herb with him. Almost the whole class was now staring at Elinor. Snape didn't miss that.

"What are you all looking at? Get back to brewing that potion, or you're all bound to lose some points."

He hadn't even raised his voice, but the students didn't need being told twice.

For the rest of the two hours, Snape left her alone. He passed her cauldron from time to time, but was apparently not displeased with her work. He seemed to generally like the Ravenclaws better than the Hufflepuffs, and one of the Hufflepuffs was his favourite victim. That boy managed to lose his house thirty points in one lesson.

I'm glad that didn't happen to me.

After class ended, they were told to leave a phial at the desk and leave. Elinor carefully filled some of her potion into a small phial and handed it in, taking care not to look at Snape in the process. Despite the fact that he had awarded her some points, she was still terrified of him.

Lily was waiting for her.

"That was a surprise, I admit", she told Elinor. "Snape usually prefers taking points to giving them – especially for something like that. You must've really surprised him."

Transfigurations turned out to be a bit more of a problem. At the beginning, McGonagall asked questions and occasionally called students to answer them if the ones raising their hands had already said enough (like Lily, who was eager to contribute something to every class) and so Elinor got picked a few times. And answering took her a considerable amount of time. McGonagall looked slightly impatient whenever asking Elinor, despite her knowing the right answer every time.

McGonagall was just as talented as Snape to make Elinor *very* nervous, and so some of her spells went awry. McGonagall of course wasn't pleased with that, which made Elinor even more nervous and it took her several minutes to calm herself enough to try another time. But this time, to her teacher's apparent surprise, it worked flawlessly. McGonagall eyed her critically over the rims of her glasses.

"Miss Shiras, would you please explain to me what just happened? Why couldn't you do it right from the start?"

"I-I-I - "

Feeling panic overcome her, she couldn't go on.

"Well?"

"Professor, if I might", Lily interjected.

"Yes, Miss Achura?"

"I think you're putting her on edge, Professor. Even if you don't mean to. She told me yesterday she doesn't like to talk because of her stuttering, and it makes doing spells right difficult for her. And I imagine that it gets worse when she's nervous."

Elinor gave Lilian a surprised look. She had actually figured that out pretty quickly.

I need to be more careful around her.

"Is that so, Miss Shiras?", McGonagall asked.

Elinor nodded, not trusting her voice.

"I see. So you couldn't do it right the first time because you were too nervous."

"Y-yes."

"I see. Well, I don't require you to do as many transformations or as quickly as possible in a limited time, it is enough if you finish every exercise until the end of the lesson. If it is easier for you to work at your own speed, feel free to do so. Show me the results when class is over."

"Yes, P-professor."

Well, that's good. If she insisted on standing here and watching me until I did it right, I probably wouldn't ever get it right...

This arrangement made it a lot easier for Elinor to do the exercises she was supposed to do, but she was still not at ease. Her strange method of using magic had made her classmates curious, and they kept looking in her direction, which Elinor found quite unnerving.

At the end of the lesson, Elinor put her stuff into her bag and then took the transfigured items to her teacher's desk. McGonagall examined each of them closely, before pronouncing her work a good one. Elinor slowly exhaled.

"However, Miss Shiras, you need to concentrate on what you are doing a bit more, your work can still be improved. But you have a great potential. And I will try my best not to 'put you on edge', as Miss Achura put it."

Her eyes were sparkling as she looked at Lily, who was waiting for Elinor. The latter rolled her eyes.

"Professor, please take into consideration that Elinor isn't used to teachers, or having classmates. I don't know how her parents organised her lessons, but I doubt it was anything like Hogwarts. And we had Snape in the morning."

"Ah. Now I can see how *that* would be unsettling."

"Exactly. Now, if you'll excuse us, we need to go to the greenhouses."

Elinor followed Lilian out of the castle and across the lawn to where the greenhouses were, near the Forbidden Forest. Not that she had any intentions of finding out why it was forbidden. She could imagine that rather well.

Most of her class as well as the Slytherins were already there and to her dismay Elinor recognised the pale-blond boy she had stumbled across yesterday. He didn't seem to recognise her, though, and ignored her. As a matter of fact, he ignored most of her house, only talking occasionally to some of his own house. They were all as mean-looking as Elinor had expected them to be.

Professor Sprout appeared and let them into Greenhouse 5. Like McGonagall she

started by asking questions, but was content to choose the students willing to answer. And she was much more ready to award points than the other two teachers had been.

Somehow, Elinor was disappointed that they didn't have any subjects with the Gryffindors, she would have liked to get a closer look at the The Boy Who Lived, but apparently, she would have to contend herself with seeing him at the meals. Not that she would have talked to him or anything. She was just curious as to what kind of person he was. He was a hero, after all.

Elinor's patience was tried by Draco Malfoy, the Slytherin prefect, badmouthing Potter and his friends – especially Hermione Granger, who, as Lily told her in a whisper, was a Gryffindor prefect. The reason for that was simply her being Muggle-born. Something Elinor couldn't comprehend.

Finally, it was over and they were free to have lunch. After finishing her meal, Elinor wrote a short letter to her parents and then spent almost her entire lunch break looking for the owlery. Her letter wasn't very long and written as follows:

I have been sorted into Ravenclaw House. Lilian Achura has been asked to look after me and she doesn't seem to mind that much. I don't know yet when the Quidditch try-outs will be, but I chose Divination and Ancient Runes. The first lessons were quite all right.

Elinor saw no need to tell them anything more, and her parents had instructed her not to write anything the Ministry would consider dangerous, for there was a possibility they would intercept owls and read the post.

And after that, Elinor managed to get lost on her way trying to find the tower where the Divination teacher resided. She had no idea where to go, and since she knew Lilian hadn't chosen that subject herself, going back to the Great Hall or the Ravenclaw common room wasn't an option. Elinor figured she would be able to find the hall, since all she had to do was descend to the ground floor and look for it there, but finding Ravenclaw tower was a different matter altogether.

"Have you lost your way?"

Elinor whirled around. The speaker turned out to be a female ghost, a young lady.

"You are the new Ravenclaw girl, are you not?"

"Y-yes."

Strangely enough, the ghost didn't particularly scare her, probably because she knew a dead person couldn't harm her.

"I am the Grey Lady, the ghost of Ravenclaw tower."

"I-I didn't know."

"Who I was, or that I was the ghost of Ravenclaw?"

"Both."

"I see. By the way, you seemed to be in some kind of distress. Where were you headed?"

"I h-have Divination now."

"Ah. I can take you there, if you like."

"Thank you."

The Grey Lady floated down the corridor and left at the next intersection. Elinor hurried not to lose track of her.

After climbing some stairs and walking down more corridors, they finally reached a landing without any doors.

"The classroom is up there", the lady said, pointing at a trapdoor in the ceiling. "You will have to knock, class has already started."

"Thank you very much."

"Hm." The ghost tilted her head to one side. "You are not half as nervous around me as around others."

So she's been watching.

"You are not scary."

She laughed.

"Is that so? Well, I suppose some of them can be scary, but they are nice people for most part. Well then, I will take my leave now. I am sure we will meet again."

As the Grey Lady disappeared through the floor, Elinor drew out her wand and knocked.

For a few seconds, nothing happened, but then the trapdoor opened and a ladder descended towards her. Elinor climbed it as quickly as she could.

"S-sorry", she told the woman who – despite her looks – had to be the teacher.

"Don't worry about it, dear. Filius told me I would have a new student, and all new students tend to get lost. Take a seat and relax, for the Inner Eye won't work properly if you let your surroundings distract you."

Elinor did as asked and sat down at one of the small tables, then she listened to what Professor Trelawney was saying.

Being totally new to the subject, Elinor didn't say anything, she just took down notes and listened. None of her classmates seemed too talented in that aspect and she suspected they had either chosen this subject out of curiosity, or because they thought they would be able to pass the exams without much effort.

Elinor's case was different. When her maternal grandmother had died, she had left behind a crystal ball among other things. Not being interested in it at all, Lydia had allowed her daughter to have it instead. Elinor had found it a fascinating object from the start. She had spent hours gazing into it and sometimes she had thought to see something moving in there. However, she hadn't been able to be totally sure this hadn't just been her imagination. Choosing Divination was an attempt to find out what it had been.

However, no sort of revelation took part during her first lesson and a rather disappointed Elinor followed the others toward the classroom now occupied by Umbridge.

That lesson turned out to be the most boring of all. Their teacher had decided that there would be no practical exercises during the whole year, which caused some people to frown, Lily among them. But no-one said anything. Umbridge found that it would be enough for them to know how to perform the spells in theory. Elinor basically agreed with that, but she would prefer to know whether she had memorised the theory correctly. And the only way to test that was to try it out.

But then again, Umbridge most likely didn't believe that Voldemort *had* returned, and was going along with the Ministry's plans. But why that included the students not learning to defend themselves Elinor couldn't understand.

She still did her best to pay attention, take notes and answer any question directed at her. She could learn something that way (even if it wasn't much) and earn her house a few points. Umbridge liked it if students answered her questions precisely and didn't argue. And Elinor had perfected that over the years. If Umbridge now believed her to be mindless and stupid, please. Elinor wasn't anything like that. But she was anything but rebellious. Any attempt at rebellion had always been suppressed by her parents.

After class ended, they made their way back to the common room, since it would be some time before dinner started. Lilian threw her bag into one of the chairs.

"I – don't – believe – it!", she fumed.

Elinor gave her a questioning look.

"That Umbridge! The Ministry! Not allowing us to learn how to defend ourselves!"

Elinor was a bit shocked to see that Lily's eye colour had changed. Usually, it was something between grey and blue, but now they were of a dark grey, just like clouds before the storm came.

"You do realise what is going on, don't you?"

"Sh-she believes the M-Ministry and n-not P-potter."

"Well, yes. Basically that's the problem. But you realise why they won't let us learn spells?"

Elinor shook her head.

"Let's sit down."

Lily led the way over to one of the chairs by the window.

"Fudge fears that Dumbledore may be planning to overthrow him, and that Harry is helping him."

"R-ridiculous."

"Totally. Now Fudge in his madness thinks that Dumbledore is building an army of students or something, and to prevent that from happening, he sent Umbridge here. She is to make sure we don't learn anything that could help us in overthrowing him."

"D-defence? H-how could that b-be d-d-dangerous?"

"The subject is called 'Defence Against the Dark Arts', yes, but that doesn't mean it only is about defensive spells. Some of them are quite the opposite, and they can inflict heavy damage – even kill. Of course, you can also use spells you learn in Charms or Transfigurations for fighting, but what you learn in Defence is best-suited for duels. There."

Elinor thought about that.

"B-but what can we do? P-practise without a t-teacher? D-dangerous."

"Yeah, that's the problem. And if we did it in front of someone going along with the Ministry, we'd be in trouble..."

So there is nothing we can do. Great.

"I'll think of something", Lilian muttered. "But for now we'd better keep quiet. Don't talk to anyone about that. If you're asked questions, don't reply. Should be easy for you", she added with a grin.

Elinor didn't smile in return. She wasn't used to doing that. And trying to do it surely would look funny. Instead, she sat down at one of the tables and took out some parchment, her quill and inkwell and her new books. She lifted the spell she had placed on them and instead worked some others on them. Protection against water, fire and theft. You never knew. She expected some of the Slytherins to be capable of doing something like that.

"Say, have you ever considered doing magic non-verbal?", Lily asked her.

"N-no. D-didn't know th-that was p-p-possible."

"We'll learn how to do that next year", the prefect explained. "And it would make things a lot easier for you. If you like, we could start early so you can use spells you already learned non-verbal, before learning new ones next year."

Elinor gave that some thought. It was an interesting idea, and it would make using magic not only easier, but also a lot less dangerous. However, Elinor wasn't sure if she was ready to allow Lilian to teach her. She seemed nice, but why would anyone want

to be nice to her? That didn't make sense. Aggression, hatred and being punished were normal. This wasn't.

"I-I'll think a-about i-it."

"Sure. It's your decision. I'm not going to force you if you don't want to. You could also ask the teachers for help, if you're more comfortable about that."

Elinor nodded, already certain she wouldn't do that, either. Opening her Potions book, she started with the essay Snape had given them as homework.