

It was the fourth time this week that she had slipped her guards.

Every time, she had come to the same grove, a good several miles from High Silvermere. It was in the perfect spot, just far enough for whatever she did to be dismissed as mere tricks of the imagination, even by the most paranoid and anti-magic Demacian, and close enough that she could access with ease. She stood in the center of the grove, and held her hands in front of her.

With a deep breath, she looked within, and once more, Luxanna drew open the blind she kept around the shining light in her mind.

She immediately threw it shut, as her hands lit up with blazing light, blinding her for a moment. Yelping, she began to rub her eyes, trying to get the spots out of her vision. After a minute or so, the teenager was ready to begin once more. Breathing deep once more, Lux held out her hands - this time pointing her palms down - and began to draw back the curtain once more.

The visualization exercise worked wonders for her control over her magic, and it proved its worth again here. Slowly, her palms began to glow, the light growing in intensity as she pulled back more and more of the divider between her magic and the outside world. Biting her lip in concentration, she concentrated on fixing the light in place, putting an immaterial pin through the shining of her palm. After a moment, she drew her hand slowly away.

The light hung steadily in the air before her, a point of illumination in the early morning forest. Lux smiled happily, having succeeded in the endeavor on the first try only once or twice before. Her control was growing stronger, slowly but surely. Leaning down, she picked up a length of wood that she had brought with her. It was almost perfectly straight and completely smooth, about a yard long. Lux was self-taught - she needed to be, given her homeland's attitude towards the mystical arts and its practitioners. Out of all the things she had discovered, this one was one of the most useful.

She spun the rod in her hand a few times, before taking a loose hold of it, and breathing deeply once more. Reaching inward, she opened the blinds, and swung her rod in an easy arc. From it, a bolt of prismatic magic, roughly the size and shape of her forearm, leapt, flying towards a tree on the other side of the grove. Impacting the trunk, it let out a dull crack. Lux jogged over to the oak, and examined the effect the basic spell had on the bark. While it seemed the magic had little to no physical force, the bark did seem to be blackened and burnt, even faintly smoldering in places. Taking her sleeve, she smothered the embers before it could grow into a flame.

Sighing in relief, she leaned back up, placing her hands on her hips.

“Let's try not to do that again,” Lux murmured to herself, before spinning around.

She spent no small amount of time there, practicing magic both with the rod and without. Over the weeks between now and when she had decided to begin trying to harness her gift in earnest,

she had discovered that the rod - any sort of implement, really, but it got easier the more she used the rod - acted like a funnel of sorts for her magic. She couldn't muster up a great deal of power and release it all at once, but she could manipulate her magic in far more interesting and precise ways. It was one of these experiments that she was conducting when she heard the voices.

They were still a good distance away, but not far enough that she could conceivably get away in time. Staying here was out of the question; after all, the bark and grass was scorched from where her magic had slipped her control for a moment. No one would be likely to believe that Luxanna Crownguard was a pyromaniac, and even if they did, she didn't have flint and steel on her. Gulping, she looked down at her newest experiment. It could save her. If it worked.

But she didn't really have a choice, and so ducked within without a moment's hesitation. Everything went black, and Lux panicked for a moment, looking about frantically. Her eyes were open, she could feel them, but she couldn't see anything. She bit the inside of her lip in anxiousness, and curled up in the fetal position, making herself as small as possible, trying to make sure she was within the bounds of her magic.

The footsteps and voices came closer, and she could make them out now.

"I'm telling ya, Quince, I saw it! Lights, flickerin' about, right here!"

A snort came.

"Like hell you did. Don't think I can't smell that booze on you. You were just drunk again."

"No, no, look!"

A silence reigned for heartbeats, before the sound of flesh on flesh rang out.

"There's nothing there, you damn boozehound! What are you, some Bilgewater sailor?"

Grumbling, the two faded away. Lux waited far past the time their voices stopped, counting to five hundred before she felt it safe to emerge. Scrambling out of her magic, clothes dirty with grass stains and dirt, she brushed herself off quickly, before turning to the experiment.

A bush sat there, green and leafy, impeccably trimmed, just like the one outside her window on her estate. Reaching forward with her rod, she poked through the bush, the immaterial leaves glimmering as the wood pushed through the magic bending the light. With an expression of her will, the bush faded away, dispersing into motes of light that slowly winked out.

Looking at the places where the men had trampled on the grass in the grove, Lux gulped.

Maybe it would be better to find a different grove. Just in case.