

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

The Apothecary

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(NOTE: All roles are and may be played by any ethnicity)

STELLARIA: 30s/40s. Female. Apothecary. (stella - RYEa)

CALIS: 16-20. Female or non-binary. Farmer's child. (CAL - iss)

BENIFRIS: 40s/50s. Male. Farmer. (BEN - ih - friss)

NIKOLAI: 26-30. Male. Villager. (NIH - ko - lie)

SETTING:

A village. Too small for a name.

TIME:

Late morning. Perhaps afternoon.

CONTENT WARNING:

Violence.

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

The impoverished, but dignified and well-stocked hut of STELLARIA, the local apothecary.

Bottles and jars of colorful (and less so) liquids and herbs line the space, which clearly also serves as her home. There are just as many personal amenities about as there are business. For every mortar and pestle, there is a throw cushion. For every scale or measuring device, there is a teapot or piece of cookware.

At rise, STELLARIA looms over one of her apparatus, measuring, transferring some form of herb into a small bag.

Silence as she works. This is her trade. It is soothing for her. And she is at peace.

After a moment, a knock at her door.

STELLARIA
(Without diverting her attention)

You may enter!

The door opens and CALIS steps inside the hut.

CALIS

Miss Stellaria.

STELLARIA
(Again, without looking)

Calis! My dear. Hold just a moment, if you please. I am... almost...finished.

CALIS obliges, as STELLARIA finishes.

She does, and holds up the bag, inspecting it in triumph.

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CALIS

What is that one for?

STELLARIA

This, my love, is for an extra special concoction. This mixture strengthens your bones, calms your gut. It will give energy to most.

CALIS

Really?

STELLARIA

I do not lie.

Behind the women, a tea kettle begins to whistle.

STELLARIA

(Standing, removing
the kettle from the
heat)

Would you care for a cup?

CALIS

Very funny.

Yes. Thank you.

Over the following, STELLARIA prepares some tea to steep.

STELLARIA

Actually, I am glad you stopped by. I did just finish something you might be more interested in.

CALIS

Really? Well...

STELLARIA

It does not have the brightest of tastes compared to some of the others, but its effects might prove the most as of yet.

CALIS

What will this one do?

STELLARIA

I call it Widow's Caress. I have procured actual venom from a few of our many-legged friends, added a couple things of my own to amplify some of the properties. Have you seen Elsh?

CALIS

I have not, no.

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 3.

STELLARIA

No, you would not have. He's been bedridden for several days now, I think.

CALIS

Really?

STELLARIA

Oh, yes. Interested?

CALIS

Well...

STELLARIA

If not, I do still have some vials of the Miasma, normal price. I should warn you, however, you may want to ease back on your dosage, too much in a short period of time might have some unforeseen long term effects.

CALIS

I'm not here for more Miasma.

STELLARIA

You're not? Then disregard that. What can I do for you?

CALIS

...

STELLARIA

Are you alright?

CALIS

Yes.

Beat.

STELLARIA

Calis. Please. Be candid.

What is it?

CALIS

I am here...because I want the Elixir.

Beat.

The air has shifted. Fallen.

STELLARIA

Elixir has but one purpose.

You understand what it is you are asking of me?

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CALIS

Yes.

Yes, Ma'am. I do.

Silence.

STELLARIA

It will take me some time to prepare. Come back after dark.
In the early hours of morning. Ensure you are not followed.

Will you take it here or elsewhere?

CALIS

I--haven't thought about that.

STELLARIA

Well...you may take it here. I can be with you, if you would
like. If not...that is your choice, as well.

...

CALIS

That's it?

You're not going to ask me why? Talk me out of it?

STELLARIA

Do you want me to?

It is your business, dear Calis. None of mine. I am simply a
provider of services.

I would be lying if I said I do not feel a sadness in me
with respect to your decision. But it is yours. And it is no
place of mine to stand in your way.

CALIS

...

Thank you.

Silence.

STELLARIA

Tea.

*STELLARIA crosses to serve the
tea, but another knock at the
door interrupts her.*

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 5.

STELLARIA

(Calling to the door)

My apologies, my dear, I am closing for the afternoon.
Please come back tomorrow.

*A louder knock in response.
Impatient.*

STELLARIA

I am closing for the afternoon. You will come back tomorrow.

NIKOLAI (O.S.)

Open the door, woman.

CALIS

(To herself)

No.

Beat.

STELLARIA

And make acquaintance with such a vile sounding timbre? I have little desire for that.

BENEFRIS (O.S.)

You would prefer we set fire to your hut with you inside it?

STELLARIA

The door is unlocked. Open it for yourself.

NIKOLAI and BENEFRIS, the latter holding a hoe, wrench open the door and enter the hut.

NIKOLAI

(To CALIS)

Calisa! How could you?

CALIS

We were just talking!

BENEFRIS

A lie. Daughter. It seems my hope was in vain.

STELLARIA

Gentlemen, please. Let us not get ahead of ourselves, I have barely had opportunity to match timbres to faces. Can I offer you a cup of tea, I am just now--

BENEFRIS

We will have none of your filth, sorceress.

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 6.

STELLARIA

Then forgive me, gentlemen, if I do not offer you a chair.
State your business, please, I have work that needs tending.

NIKOLAI

Not if it is in this village.

Beat.

STELLARIA

No? On whose authority? Yours?

BENEFRIS

Yes. Your peddling of poison in our community is at an end.
We will not allow you to destroy it further.

STELLARIA

Destroy it? Gentlemen, I am a simple apothecary. A provider
of services, nothing more.

*BENEFRIS smashes something
with his hoe.*

CALIS

Father!

BENEFRIS

You will stay silent!

Beat.

NIKOLAI

Yes, we do not see it that way.

I do not think lies are becoming of women.

Wives.

That you admitted to your sowing of corruption, I would have
it so. But I do not think you will. I do not think you will.

STELLARIA

No. I will not. It is not. An unusual service? Perhaps. That
does not make it corrupt. There are many who find the value
in it.

I did not get your name.

NIKOLAI

...

CALIS

It is Nikolai.

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 7.

BENEFRIS

Calisa!

STELLARIA

Which would make you Benefris, yes, I have heard enough. Of
and from you. Good day, gentlemen.

BENEFRIS

DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK TO ME!

You will leave this village. And never return. If you do
not, we will burn your hut to ground.

STELLARIA

Yes, you mentioned that.

NIKOLAI

And make you wish you died inside it.

STELLARIA

Well.

You know, when I was a girl...my mother taught me a wealth
of things. How to wash my clothes. How to tell which
mushrooms were safe to eat. Which would kill me. Which would
do things in between. She taught me how to kill a deer. Skin
it. Cook it. Have you ever killed a creature, Nikolai? A
person?

That was a question, answer me.

NIKOLAI

Yes.

STELLARIA

A creature or a person?

NIKOLAI

Deer.

STELLARIA

Right. I have killed both.

I digress, the one--the thing she taught me that sticks
foremost in my memory is what man is capable of when he is
afraid.

Do not fear. Gentlemen.

Your threat is made. Come sunrise you shall never see me
hence.

Will that be all?

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 8.

*Silence, as if the men were
not expecting her to comply.*

STELLARIA

I will take your silence as a yes. You will see yourselves
out, please.

STELLARIA begins to tidy up.

BENEFRIS

...

NIKOLAI

If you do not--

STELLARIA

Yet you remain, Nikolai. I must see to packing. There is
much to be done.

You have won. Get out.

*After a moment, still unsure
what to do or say, NIKOLAI
exits.*

STELLARIA continues to pack.

BENEFRIS

Calisa.

CALIS

...

BENEFRIS

Calisa. Let's go home.

CALIS

How could you do this?

BENEFRIS

What?

CALIS

Father, what you're doing--

BENEFRIS

How dare you question me?

CALIS

It's not right!

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The Apothecary, Daniel Prillaman, 9.

BENEFRIS

Not right?! Not RIGHT?! The girl wants to question me about what is right!

CALIS

You know it isn't!

BENEFRIS storms to CALIS and grabs her by the face. He forces her to look at STELLARIA, who keeps her back turned, but stops packing.

CALIS

(Struggling)

...

BENEFRIS

Look at her! Look! That bitch offers you poison and you drink it like water--

CALIS

(Trying to get away)

...

BENEFRIS

And you say I am not right?! You give her MY money?! You vomit and leak blood in MY house?! AND YOU HAVE THE GALL TO SAY I AM NOT RIGHT?!

BENEFRIS releases CALIS and she falls to the ground.

CALIS

...

...

STELLARIA resumes packing.

BENEFRIS

Go home. Now. Not another word.

CALIS

...

BENEFRIS

Now!

CALIS slowly stands and crosses to the door.

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STELLARIA
(Before CALIS exits,
stopping her)

Benefris.

I will be packing into the early hours of the morning. I have some decisions to make regarding what to take, what to leave behind.

BENEFRIS

And?

STELLARIA

Well. My light will be on. Just to make you aware.

Tell Nikolai. It is just so I can see. Nothing more.

I would dislike if either of you thought I was up to something nefarious.

CALIS understands.

CALIS exits.

BENEFRIS

Hmmph.

STELLARIA

Your daughter.

She is a good child.

BENEFRIS

You will not speak her name again.

STELLARIA

No. I shall not.

Farewell.

*BENEFRIS exits and once again,
STELLARIA stops packing.*

She stands alone, still for a moment, taking everything in.

Making sure BENEFRIS is gone.

She does not continue packing.

She first returns to her work.

END OF PLAY.