

Created by: Zeto (He/They), 25











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Don't Die Wondering

one week, I saw some graffiti; "don't die wondering," scrawled in loud, messy letters on a park bench, and I thought of days, years, and months wondering:

is it worth facing my dreams and my nightmares to feel whole? if I cut my hair, if I buy new clothes, if I bare my soul and tell the world-

I wondered if I would fold, if fear would come, if I would run, lie and say, "I was wrong," hide myself again in shadows. But then, then, I wondered if I would bloom, if creating myself would free my mind from that wrongness, and if I would stand tall and not alone.

I stand on the edge of a leap of faith after many others. I wonder; if I do not love and sculpt my heart to his true shape, will I die wondering?

- Martin Meinert (He/They), 20

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The Princess and the Knight

Part 1



There once was a princess who wanted to be a knight. Now, in those days of high chivalry, such things were not uncommon. Princesses were raised on stories of mighty and heroic knights going out to fight monsters and slay dragons. Indeed, the kingdom in which she lived had a rather famous story about the greatest of the old dragons, who dwelt on the very borders and had clashed with numerous knights only to send them home one after another defeated. It was hoped one day, there would be a knight mighty and heroic enough to slay the dragon.

But the princess was told this knight would not be her.

"You are too small," said her father, an old and weary king. "You cannot wear armour. You will fall off your horse."

"I can learn to wear armour!" She said. "And I can learn to ride a horse! I can be taught!"

"Perhaps you can be," he said. "But you will never be big and strong like a knight. You will always be small, and so, you will always be worse. A knight is a grand thing to be, my love, but it is not your fate. One day, you will rule over the kingdom as a queen. Ladies will look up to you across the land, you will be the very image of grace and poise. Is that not a grand thing to be?"

"I suppose it is," the princess agreed, though her heart was not in it. It seemed to her that it was a horrid thing to be. She didn't want to be poised and graceful! The thought of balls and dresses filled her with a primordial dread she couldn't put her finger on. But it seemed to her that her path had been chosen before she was even born, and so she saw no point but to argue.

The next day, she went to the champion of her father's knights, the High Lord of the Order of the Broken Horn was a strong, stout man. His face was scarred from when he had encountered a bear in his mouth, and his brown hair was streaked with early grey as a result of the stress from the battles he'd fought.



"You cannot be a knight," he said. "For you are already a princess."



"I don't want to be a princess! I want to be a knight!"

"Yet a princess is what you are," he said gruffly. "And you must accept it. You were born to wear that dress and bear that crown. That is your duty. Just as mine is to heft a sword and wage war in the name of your father. I cannot take you and make you into something you are not. You cannot be a knight."

"But...but why?" The princess was in tears now. She heaved and sobbed in desperation and - to his credit - the Knight Commander was not a cruel or callous man. He reached out to her and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"We cannot always be what we want," he said softly. "I would not have been a knight, but my father was a knight, and so was his father. I hate war and blood, and I hate killing, even in the name of duty. But war is in my family, and death traces my line. What can I do but follow along? Such as it is with you. You were born for gold and silk. You will have a fine life; a beautiful life. One day, I will die in some muddy field and be forgotten, and you will raise good, strong sons and daughters. Is that truly such a bad thing?"

And the princess had to concede that it was not. At least, not the way that he put it. She didn't want to die, after all, and the image he conjured made her sad. For though, he was a sad and taciturn man, he had always looked out for her even when her own father didn't. The Knight Commander was a hero and a legend, and the fact that he did not feel happy made her even more upset.

Yet, for all that, it made her want to be a knight even more. For if even he was not happy, then why should she follow the same steps and condemn herself to a life of this? Silver and gold? It sounded like chains!

