



Running With Bells

By Bex MacArthur

Introduction

Deep in the misty mountains sits a magnificent kingdom hidden by powerful magic and ruled by an invisible King. A young slave girl, Mazie, has been marked for death, and the only person she can turn to is a stranger who saw through the King's magic and promised her freedom on the other side.

Can she escape with her bells giving away every step, and find that life in Chêl is far from ordinary?

Historical Background

King Anarawd rose to power in a tiny wandering kingdom over six hundred years ago. He fought with his people across the country against bandits and outlying villages of other kingdoms for food. He promised those who followed would find riches in the mountains. His numbers grew, and once they completed their journey south, he stood with thousands of men and women behind him.

Anarawd quickly announced his plans for wealth and happiness. Going into immediate effect was the following decree:

The Royal Decree

No one must ever leave the mountains.

Magic in any form is strictly forbidden.

Lords are men from within the castle who will either operate the academy, the brothels, breeding centers, or the different factions in the mines.

Those living in the castle are except from commoner roles.

Roles

Miners, farmers, and ranchers are men over sixteen but under forty-five, who will be sent to work in surrounding mountains to mine copper and iron, grow crops, and raise animals for practical use.

Husbands are men over forty-five that will run the kingdoms businesses with their wives at their disposal.

Wives may live alongside their husbands in total obedience.

Breeders are kept in breeding centers and must produce a child every year.

Harlots will be stripped of their fertility and provide pleasure inside brothels.

Identifiers

Breeders will wear white canvas gowns with slits for easy nursing and no shoes. If they don't produce a child yearly, they will be reassigned as a Harlot.

Harlots will wear a yellow cloak with no clothing underneath. If indecent outside their brothel, they will receive twenty lashes and resume work immediately.

Slaves will be marked with a mark and bells embedded in the back of their ankles. If they should remove the bells, poison will be released into their system.

Children of Breeding

Girls will be sold off by no older than three to work in stores, taverns, and other businesses. At sixteen, girls must be sold to the highest bidder and take on one of the abovementioned roles.

Boys will be trained in mining, farming, cattle, and fighting in the academies. At sixteen boys will be assigned roles given by their academy's Lord.

Those who disobey will be executed immediately

Little did his people know Anarawd was an immortal magic user cloaking their existence from the outside world. With no one knowing they existed, there were no wars. His laws became more tolerable along with this peace and the steady coin from mining. One day, everyone accepted his law as normalcy, and magic became a myth.

To keep appearances, Anarawd faked his death, and his eldest son assumed his position. This happened many times over with his direct line as Anarawd silently remained in power.

Under his invisible control, slavery of young girls and women and the overworking of young men became the lifeblood of his kingdom hidden in the mountains, Chel.

The Main Characters



Mazie

Quick facts: Timid, Frail, Looks Like McKenna Grace, ENFJ-T/Scorpio, 15/16

Mazie is a shy girl who blossoms with song and dance, the feeling of water on her skin, and the idea of running far, far away. She is frail with blonde hair and pale skin that hasn't been touched by daylight in 13 years.

She often has panic attacks and finds comfort with her pet rat, Munchie. Her ideal day would be floating in the water, watching clouds pass by, and eating all the food she wants. It's something she has dreamt about ever since she was little.

She is afraid of getting in trouble, so she does everything she can to please those around her, her Keepers more than others. When challenged to take charge, she readily takes up the role, even though she is shy at first.

Ultimately, she believes that she is given more than she deserves, and her dreams are something she feels guilty about.

Important History

She was born to a water fairy and a mine worker. With no way to explain her existence without physical punishment, they left her outside a breeding center and never looked back.

When she turned three, they sold her to an upscale Tavern at the heart of the kingdom. They trained her to cook, clean, wait on guests and keep the ale going to the tables with the most coin. She found happiness in song and dance and with the company of a boy named Jones, who would bring his grandfather's books and teach her how to read about magic, one of the kingdom's most deadly topics.

If she made even the slightest error, she would be beaten and locked in the broom closet, where she had to fight for space with cleaning supplies. She was kept there for days, weeks, and even months without food, light, or communication. When she got older, a loose stone behind the water tap contained her books and magical tools.

When she was thirteen, a drunken old patron attacked her and tried to remove her clothes. Unsure of how to protect herself, she hit the man over the head with a cast iron pan. When she realized she had killed him, she reached out to Jones, and he helped hide the body. She felt as evil as her Keepers, who

she had witnessed murdering others, and she knew that if they found out, she would be killed too.

Rhys

Quick Facts: Prince, Most Likely to Get the Girl, Hero Complex, Looks Like Milo Manheim, ISTP/Aries, Early 20's

Rhys grew up as a take-charge prince in his father's kingdom. He taught smaller kids how to fight for themselves and prepared them to defend against bullies and maybe one-day wars. He believes everyone has the heart of a warrior if given a chance.

His perfect day is riding horses and hunting big game with the sun shining and birds whistling.

He has the unique ability to dismantle magic without knowing it and can see through any spell.

Once in Chêl, he is horrified by what he sees and is moved into action once he gets to know Mazie, who he believes to be his true love.

Important History

Rhys was raised by the King and Queen, though he saw far more of his caretakers on a daily basis. He grew to be independent and wanted to do things on his own from a young age. He knew he would be King one day and wanted to be able to rule the kingdom, using his experiences in life to guide his decisions.

When he was ten, he got a baby sister. He dedicated every waking moment to make sure she was tended to. He taught her how to eat, walk, and play with toys he made for her out of sticks and twine. Right before his 14th

birthday, she fell ill, and despite his best efforts, he, like everyone else, was unable to heal her.

After his sister's passing, his mother shut herself away for nearly six months, with only her maids allowed in. He saw the pain it brought his family and their people and shouldered the blame.

He vowed to help all those in need. No soul was unworthy of his trust, even criminals that meant him harm. This came to bite him when a man snuck into the castle and tried to assassinate the King. The assassin was stopped, but Rhys believed he could be changed and was tricked into letting him free from the dungeon. Later that night, his father was killed in his sleep. He was then forced to bow to the regent, who was nefarious and greedy, which ultimately led to his departure and the discovery of Chêl.

Supporting Characters

Jones

Quick Facts: Fighter, Best Friend, Looks Like Joshua Bassett, ESFP/Gemini, 15

Jones grew up at the academy for fighting due to his natural display of quick reflexes and brute strength. He has a keen eye for magic and can spot it from two hundred feet away if someone uses it.

He turns into a puppy dog around his best friend, Mazie, and would go to the ends of the earth if he were allowed to for her. He likes to play by the rules, but he is willing to break almost all of them for her. However, just as quickly as he would do that, he would do whatever it takes to keep Mazie to himself.

Sara

Quick Facts: New Harlot, Shy, Wishes She Could be a Healer, Looks Like Zendaya, ISFP/Pisces, 17

Sara was born in a Breeding Center and sold off to a Healer and his wife. She learned about herbs and became very skilled in the craft. She was treated fairly if she stayed in line and was even allowed to go to the marketplace with her Keepers, unlike most slaves.

When she turned sixteen, she was sold at an auction to a Brothel and forced to become a Harlot. She was beaten and raped on a daily basis as a part of her new role. She tended her wounds and did as she was told to avoid further punishment.

King Anarawd

Quick Facts: The King, Deceptive, Immortal, Magic User, Looks Like Cillian Murphy, ENTJ/Aries, 907

Anarawd was born in a poor fishing village cast out by their King. He watched everyone in his family die trying to keep him alive. By fourteen, he was the sole survivor when he attempted to take his own life. As hard as he tried, he couldn't end his life. Every attempt only made him feel more alone. Finally, he lost all control and caused a magical explosion that leveled the forest around him.

That's when he learned he was a magic wielder and began his mission towards power.

Locations



The Misty Mountains

As the name suggests, the mountains are shrouded in mist. Though mist should come and go, the dense low-lying fog never leaves here. It clings to the vibrant moss, drips off the willows, and keeps the ground moist. Under the mist, the moss, and the rock are mines that scatter through the range like spider webs, making them dangerous and unstable.

Valleys nestle on the inside with rushing rivers, endless waterfalls and cities and castles peppering the borders.

The range stretches over 1,000 miles and borders the ocean. However, due to magical means, people and animals don't enter the mountains and will go a long way around to reach the sea cliffs, keeping the residents safe and hidden.



The City of Chêl

This city surrounds the great Castle of Chêl. It is the only city in the kingdom and holds 12,000 subjects. Farms and fields of cattle slither between buildings, residential, and businesses alike.

There are eight academies, two for each trade that they teach: Fighting, mining, cattle, and farming.

Four large Brothels, one on each side of the Castle, keep the residents happy and are recognizable by their flat cobblestone sides and vast size.

Breeding Centers are erect in the outlying portions of the city and look more like large homes.

Fifteen commendable Taverns service the city from all areas. You can recognize them all from the laughter and the loud music that plays nonstop.

One Tavern, a sixteenth Tavern, sits near the entrance to the Castles courtyard. It is called Dibrin.



Dibrin Tavern

Dibrin is the largest Tavern in all Chêl. There are tables outside with holes in the sides of the building to slide dishes in and out. They sit under awnings of thin cloth with wooden stumps as seats. Around the back is a stable with room for ten horses, the blacksmith, and all their equipment.

Once inside, on the far wall is a giant hearth with two round tables in front and a bearskin rug. On the left is the counter where the Gregor, the Tavern Master's wife, and their young slave tend to the needs of their patrons. There are banquet-style tables on the right, and the space between is room to dance.

Behind the counter is a small doorway that leads to the back, where food lines the walls. There are three doors, one leading to a cellar, one to the Keepers' quarters, and one to a broom closet where their slave sleeps.

About The World

Inside the mountains

The subjects feared Merlin. According to their kingdom's history, Merlin was a fearsome wizard that used to rule the world. He agreed to protect and bless all those who cast out magic, leaving him the one true power. Though the belief in magic has slowly faded, they still praise Merlin and pray to him for protection and good harvests.

Hidden amongst the mountains are Fae of several types that rarely show themselves to humans. On occasion, they mate with the miners and have Half-Fae children who are thrown back into the kingdom to live everyday lives with no knowledge of the powers they possess. Common types are water fairies and mining fairies.

Owls are commonly used to send messages across the kingdom's vast mountain range allowing miners to send letters back to the cities.

Outside the mountains

People are free to do as they please so long as they don't cause harm to others. Most Kings rule with kindness and justice in other kingdoms and allow the use of magic with little to no thought.

Some Kings are corrupt with power and challenge others in the name of greed. This leads to wars that devastate millions of people causing many kingdoms to retreat and pay taxes to the larger domains to avoid further harm.

Many mythical creatures roam freely and live in harmony with humans; some even aid them as partners—Phoenix, Hounds of Annwn, Griffins, Unicorns, and Giant Serpents, to name a few.

The most common religion practiced is paganism, and they believe in a death-life cycle where you pass on to Summerland and await there until a body

reclaims your soul on earth. There are some Christian practitioners, most of which are extremist and force their ideals on those around them.

Humans generally speak English with borrowed words from Welsh. The fairy folk speak mainly Welsh with some English understanding, allowing for accessible communication among the different kingdoms.

Story Synopsis

Mazie was raised as a slave in a high-end tavern outside the castle walls. On her sixteenth birthday, she will be relocated as a Harlot in a nearby Brothel when she meets Rhys, a prince from another kingdom who offers to help her escape. When she is discovered with forbidden magic items, she is sentenced to death, and Rhys must set fire to the tavern and smuggles her and Munchie out.

Sara, a Harlot from the Brothel next door, sees them and helps them find shelter for the night, tending to their wounds. Realizing it isn't safe to stay, Mazie leaves her best friend Jones and heads for the abandoned mines.

They discover Mazie can control water, and Rhys trains her and Sara to fight and utilize their strengths. They grow stronger as they travel the mountains, fighting against bandits and guards.

Once on the other side, Mazie decides she must go back for Jones and sends an owl asking him to meet her. The Kings army intercepts them before they reach the city. With their magic, they fight them off until King Anarawd, once considered dead, steps forward with Jones. He threatens to kill him if they don't surrender.

They are captured, and Jones is killed. Sara is next, but Mazie harnesses the water from the lake, takes out the army, and impales Anarawd. Mazie, Sara, and Rhys escape in the chaos and return to Rhys's kingdom as honored guests in time for Rhys to take the throne.

Excerpt

Freedom teases me as I catch a glimpse outside the tavern when the door opens wide for a plump old man as he shuffles in. Mist is caressing the cobblestone, but that's all I can see. I cross my ankles and use my big toe for scratching around my bells; the harsh ringing and open door send my Keepers eyes darting towards me. I just bury my head and continue sweeping as I listen to the jingle of each step mix with the chatter and laughter of the drunken men. The smell of sweat and booze swirls in the air. It's pungent, but it's familiar.

"Girl," Mrs. Keeper says. "The young gentlemen at table four needs his order taken. Hurry up before I dock your dinner again."

"Yes, ma'am," I say. I balance the broom in the corner and wipe my hands on my canvas skirt. As I walk up to him, I feel nervous. He holds himself differently than the other men that come through here. I hope my tardiness to his table doesn't offend him, or that's another dinner docking for me.

"Welcome to Dibrin, sir. Can I start you off with our Ale of the day?" His smile is soft and, for some reason, pointed at me. I look around to ease my

discomfort and smooth my skirt, but he hasn't spoken a word, and his smile still stares in my direction.

"I can come back," I say as I start to turn away, but his hand grabs mine. It's a gentle touch, but he startles me, and I jump. A croak-like squeak escapes my lips, and embarrassment masks my face.

"I'm so sorry," I say, bowing and hugging my chest. It seems all the chatter has stopped, and the drunken faces all fall on me. A tear starts to slide down my face, but I mustn't let any more fall, or I will surely get docked again.

"My name is Rhys. I didn't mean to frighten you. I just thought you were someone else."

"I am just me, never left here before. I didn't mean to trick you, sir," I say. Mr. Keep walks up behind me. His presence is heavy, like five sacks of potatoes falling from the top shelf. I can barely breathe.

"What has this maggot done now? Back to your closet now," he barked at me. His words snapped and boomed hollow and heavy all at once.

Rhys stands abruptly, towering over my Keeper. "How dare you speak to another human so poorly. I wish her to sit at my table, and if you send her away, you will surely lose my business, sir."

Mr. Keeper's brows furrow, and his skin redness. "Suit yourself, shes an awful wench," he says, spitting at my feet. "Sit down girl, you heard him."

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Notes

Coversheet created by Nikayla Carrillo using Adobe Photoshop

Royal Decree created by Nikayla Carrillo using Adobe Express

End cover created by Nikayla Carrillo using Adobe Photoshop

