

Devil's Claw & Moonstone

By Emily Michel

Deleted Scene from the middle of the book

The middle part of *Devil's Claw & Moonstone* gave me a lot of trouble. I re-wrote it several times, trying to balance the two storylines and not get bogged down in too many details of Annie's training. There's a reason why there are training montages in TV and movies. I re-read *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* to see how JK Rowling handled it and realized she just focused on a few highlights. In my first draft, I had Annie tested and trained by each Chief. Even though she had no aptitude for weather magic, I figured Koslov would want to "train" her just to waste her time and keep her from her goals. In the end, all these scenes with the various Chiefs slowed down the narrative, so I focused on a few key interactions. The one below got cut, but I think it still tells a lot about Koslov and Annie.

The following morning Annie reported to Koslov in his office right on time. But she couldn't tell it from his sour expression. He seemed to like it best when she was isolated from the rest of the Community. Word must have reached him about her lunch with Alec.

"It's been more than a month, Healer Bauer," he said without preamble. "Let's head out to the courtyard, and you can show me how little you've learned." His tight grin did not reach his eyes.

Annie followed him out. Of course, he could've met her there after breakfast. She had to pass through the courtyard in order to reach his office. Koslov got off on the power trip.

"Begin," he commanded.

Annie could show him what she'd learned from the Guardians and blow him over with air. She could even try to conjure a mist, having almost done it the other day during practice. She could do it.

Annie chose not to. Some perverse part of her psyche just said, "Nope."

Instead, she pulled on her Gift, because he would know if she didn't try, and allowed the magic to slide through her grasp. No wind, no mist, just magic trickling away.

"Enough! Healer Bauer, you are the most useless witch I have ever had to train. Give me your hands."

She did as he said. He grabbed her hands, holding onto to them with enough force that she winced. Tendrils of lightning-like pain shot into her hands, through her body to the tips of her toes. Annie opened her eyes and tried to yank back her hands, but his grip was too strong.

"That, Healer Bauer, is a mere taste of what a Tempest can do. I can call lightning down from the sky, make a tornado, and protect a field of crops from flood."

He released her hands, a smug smile on his face. She returned the smile and his lessened, replaced by concern. Had he expected her to cower at this demonstration of his Gift? Run crying from the lesson? She allowed her smile to vanish.

"Touch me again, for any reason, and I will give you a taste of what I can do. And I don't need *magic* to hurt you, Koslov," she said, ice in her voice, fire in her veins.

He stepped back, his face ashen.

"Now, I believe today's lesson is over. In fact, I don't think I need any further lessons from you, Chief Tempest," Annie said brightly, a smile returning to her lips but never reaching her eyes.

"Only the Director can make that assessment, Healer Bauer," Koslov said peevishly.

"By all means, Chief Tempest Koslov, let's go talk to Director Girard. I'll make sure he knows every time you called me stupid, useless, and a waste of space. I'll let him know you used your Gift against me just now, for the sole purpose of causing me pain." Annie turned to head to the Lodge.

"Wait!" he said, reaching out for her. He thought better of it, her threat still hanging in the air, and pulled his hand back. "I will inform the Director you no longer need my tutelage."

He turned and walked toward the Lodge without another word.

Good-bye then, asshole, she thought. Annie wondered what might come of this morning's little battle of wills. *Nothing good. Shit.*