

Holly Stellaris

Holly is a young man, 20 years of age. He has wavy dark hair, and olive skin, darkened by the sun. His features are pretty (think Jon Snow but like not pale), and he keeps his hair a little shorter than shoulder length, cutting it by grabbing the hanging bits and chopping it off with a knife when he feels it gets too long. He is a bit taller than Rowan, at 5'11", and before the cancer struck, was stronger as well.

He was born to human parents in a nomadic tribe, where children were taken care of communally, but his adopted brother was Rowan, born into the tribe and abandoned by his mother soon thereafter. Though not related by blood, in their early years they were bound at the hip. Rowan was quiet and often took care of Holly, who was his junior by 2 years. Holly clung to Rowan, his natural protector, and whenever Holly was hurt when playing with the other kids (which happened somewhat frequently; Holly was reckless as many younger siblings are) Rowan was the first to appear on the scene. At the age of 5 however, was when Rowan began to show his penchant for healing magic, after healing one of Holly's most recent injuries miraculously. Holly would see less and less of Rowan after that, but they remained very close for a while. Rowan's lessons at first were quick and easy, and Holly would leap on him after the lessons, often tackling him to the ground in a joyful manner after he would return, leading him back to the other kids to have him join midway to the most recent game they were playing. Holly looked up to Rowan in the way that younger siblings do, with admiration, tinged with jealousy.

As the years went on, Holly would still try and cling to Rowan, but as Rowan's training got more and more complicated, he would be taken away for longer and longer periods of time, and was no longer able to play with the other kids as he once used to. Holly would see his brother come back from the medical tents, his face gray, his hands shaking, shocked from whatever grisly injury that he had been shown to treat, and drained from the magic it took to heal the malady.

Holly, an observant child, saw the impact that this life was having on Rowan, and, like the earnest kid he was, decided he would help. He would begin to try and do magic in secret, taking time away from other children, in hopes that he could ease the burden on his adoptive brother. After trying some time to imitate the healing magic that Rowan did on him that first time he cast magic, it was to no avail. Years would pass (and Holly was coming up on 13, 4 years after Rowan had shifted for the first time) and a day would come when Holly, as teenagers are wont to do when frustrated, wandered off into a nearby forest. For the first time in years, he would, no longer remembering the words that he had tried to memorize as a child, would sit next to a bubbling stream, and focused, harder than he ever had before, and the air crackled around him, and the world slowed for just a second. Thunder crashed out from him, bending the trees around him, sending rocks flying into their trunks, a small wave of water pulsing away from him. As had happened with his brother, Holly upon this outpouring of magic passed out instantly, dropping to the ground. However, when he came to, he was no longer on the forest floor. For a moment, he had been transported to the astral plane, and just as soon as he had arrived in this place, a terrible gaze fixed itself upon him. Practically frozen in fear, Holly looked. He looked upon the terrible face of a demon, its face obscured by a flowing black hood, and he would never forget the face that emerged out of the shadow, its eyes boring into his soul, long outstretched fingers reaching for him, just beginning to wrap around his

chest. And as soon as it had begun, it ended, his soul slamming back into his body. That memory would haunt him for the rest of his life, and so Holly would not try magic again.

However, a wild sorcerer cannot go without their magic, for it doesn't stop growing within them. Peaceful years set upon the group. Life resumed as normal, and some nights, Holly wouldn't dream of the demon's eyes. Holly had grown into a teenager, dependable and hardworking. He never told the group about his magic, and they never asked. He was strong, and as best as he could be, was level-headed, and earnest. He would read the books brought along by the tribe, settling for accounts of the world, and drowned himself in work. He spoke less, and sometimes, one of the others he had grown up with would catch him in rare moments of idleness with hollow eyes, staring at something that couldn't be seen. At the age of 18 and a half, he noticed something. A small pattern on the side of his ribs no larger than a gold coin, looking like dark ivy, growing out from between his ribs, clinging tightly to his skin, and in a flash, his vision turned to his time on the astral plane. This was where the demon had begun to grab him. If only he had never tried magic. If only he hadn't looked. The teenage anxiety within him swept through him; he couldn't tell anyone about this. Not even Rowan, especially not Rowan, not with what he had to go through every day. (Rowan had adjusted, just as doctors adjust to their practice with time and experience, but in Holly's mind, he could still see the pale face, the shaking hands). And so he kept it a secret. Every day, it grew, and Holly grew weaker. He hid it as best he could, and he tried so hard, but one day 6 months later, it was too much. Holly collapsed on the dirt in the middle of the caravan, pale and feverish, and just like when they were kids, Rowan was the first to appear. They moved him to the medical tent, and saw what had been ignored, day after day, week after week. The dark ivy had spread, his flesh tinged green, covering his entire chest, and reaching upwards towards his neck, having overtaken an entire shoulder. Rowan tried all the healing magic that he knew, and Holly saw his brother in the same state that he had all those years ago, drained and in shock. Holly finally told Rowan what had happened, that he was a sorcerer, and that he had visited the astral plane. The cancer that had grown and spread through his body (identified by a wizard doctor in the nearest city) was just that: a cancer. It was his own flesh turned against him. The wizard was able to give him some medicine, but it would only slow the spread of the cancer. It could not stop it, and he estimated that Holly would not live to see 30, if even that. Holly tried to resume his work with the caravan, hoping that letting off some of the wild magic inside him would alleviate the cancer in some way, but, still terrified of the consequences only used cantrips (a little bit of metagaming but eh). It was too little, too late.

Rowan disappeared for longer and longer amounts of time, seeing Holly every time he came back, giving him medicine that he had found, strange tinctures (that never harmed him), foods that were clearly not of this plane, but nothing worked. Eventually, Rowan disappeared altogether, unbeknownst to Holly in search of Revelations Hospital. Holly felt abandoned. His father had left years ago, and he had been used to that. But someone who had always been by his side when he was hurt, or terrified like he was now, was gone.