

There was a groan of exasperation and the sound of a lock turning. The door opened just a crack, the security chain still in place. Warmth and light radiated from the room beyond. The small head of an older woman appeared in the space, her glasses magnifying the size of her eyes several times.

"I'm just finishing up some book keeping. I'm not one of the social workers."

"Perhaps not, but you're a grubber, aren't you?"

"A what?" the woman asked.

"Do you have a name?"

"Mildred; Mildred Hornbower, and as I said..."

"Mildred Hornbower. Yes, a fine Outworld name. Now then, Mildred, I am leaving you this female child. Please keep her safe. Good day." She set the basket on the stoop and turned away.

There was the sound of mad scrambling as Mildred unlashed the chain and threw open the door. She stepped out onto the stoop and glanced inside the basket. Wrapped snugly in a blanket was a sleeping infant. She appeared to be only a few weeks old yet had a full head of dark hair. "What are you doing?" she shrieked. "You can't leave a child on the doorstep. That isn't how it works. There are papers to sign and forms to fill out and—wait, come back here!"

The woman stopped at the sidewalk and looked back. "I'm sorry, but I don't have time for papers and forms, the door will not wait."

"Well you had better make time or...I'll call the police. Yes, that's just what I'll do; I'll call the police."

The woman raised her hand and drew back her hood. "And how will that help us?"

Mildred's expression went through several emotions before freezing in place somewhere between fear and wonder. The figure before her was obviously a woman, or at least female. But her long hair was white as milk, and her eyes were so blue they seemed to glow. It was her skin however, that made the older woman stop and stammer. It was the color of polished silver.

"What... what are you?" Mildred gasped.

"My, what a gracious question. What am I? Right now, I am tired and burdened with sorrow, but mostly what I am, Mildred, is running out of time."

"No, no. You know what I mean. Where did you come from?"

"Neverworld."

"I've never heard of it."

"Which probably accounts for its name, don't you think?" The silver woman sighed. "But it wasn't always so. There was a time all the Outworld knew of us, but you've forgotten." She looked around at the gray, colorless buildings. "You've all forgotten. Then again, that's what grubbers do best, isn't it? They forget." She turned again to leave.

"Wait, the baby—is she...?"

"Is she what? Human? Yes. Well, more or less. Now, I really must go."

“But you can’t just abandon her here.”

“Nonsense. I’m not abandoning the child, I’m leaving her in your care, and you know all you need to care for her properly.” She lifted the hood back over her head, peering from beneath the shadows with bright blue eyes at the older woman. “And please see that she is cared for, Mildred. She deserved far better than this.” Turning swiftly, she disappeared into the night.