**ELMINSTER’S MYSTERIOUS DROW APPRENTICE**

Susprina Arkenneld [“Suss-PREEN-ah ARR-ken-neld”] is the daughter of the drow lich Calimar Arkenneld, the Master Emeritus of the School of Enchantment and Charm in the drow city of Sshamath [Ssh-SHAM-math”], and a former member of the ruling Conclave of Sshamath (he resigned from both to devote himself to magical studies, tiring of politics and endless gossip and scheming). Calimar was born in the year 2 DR, and didn’t become a lich until 996 DR. In 994 DR, he wed Meiyaralea Santruvel [“Mee-YAR-ah-lee SANN-troo-vell”] of Sshamath, who had the wild talent of shapeshifting, and was in danger of being slaughtered by her own kin as a “monster.” Their only child, Susprina, was born in 996 DR.

When the Santruvels murdered and dismembered Meiyaralea in 999 DR, and stuffed her head with obliviax to (successfully) try to eradicate her beyond recovery, Calimar resolved to avenge her by hunting down and eradicating all of the Santruvels. To keep Susprina safe from them, and to give her a new life “aside from the Underdark, and the sick race I am part of, a new road that could take her to brighter things,” Calimar worked a mighty magic to put her into indefinite stasis, and vanished from Sshamath, allowing the Santruvels to destroy his residence and three clones of Calimar he’d left behind, and so fool themselves into thinking they’d wiped out the “stain” on their heritage, and anyone who might speak for her or reverence her.

Using utmost caution, stealth, and his arsenal of enchanted items, Calimar stole into the Citadel of Tomes, Candlekeep, from beneath, coming up into its crypts and catacombs with infinite patience and care, seeking to get past any barriers and alarms, and up into where he could access some of the hidden chambers where the Avowed kept powerful items and tomes in isolation. He managed it (a hard task, but not as hard as it would have been had Miirym the Sentinel Wyrm, then alive and bound to defend Candlekeep aboveground and in the air by Torth, already been a ghost dragon tied to Torth’s casket down in the catacombs). Calimar managed to place his daughter Susprina in a not-yet-used sealed chamber, wearing a sash with the unsigned notation: “Disturb not the stasis, but deliver this greatest of treasures to Elminster Aumar, Chosen of Mystra, when he asks for it. If he is destroyed, then wait not, but deliver her to Khelben ‘Blackstaff’ Arunsun. If he is no more, to another Chosen of Mystra, so that the stasis be lifted and training in magic follow.”

Then Calimar returned to the Underdark as carefully—and as undetected—as he’d come, and set out to slowly and ruthlessly exterminate the entire Santruvel family, making very sure he got them all.

He managed it, though it took him just over three hundred and fifty years.

And then he went on another journey to the World Above (the surface Realms). Using his disguises and accumulated arsenal of magic items, Calimar traveled to Shadowdale in the Dales, to call upon an archwizard he’d long studied from afar: Elminster of Shadowdale, the man said to be a “Chosen” of Mystra, goddess of magic (and what did that truly mean, anyway?) and even to have worked with a fellow Chosen who was a female drow, the Dark Sister of the Seven Sisters, Qilué Veladorn.

Calimar came to the door of Elminster’s Tower one stormy summer night in the late spring of 1352 DR, and was astonished to be calmly and informally invited in to sit in the most comfortable chair, to chat, drink (and eat, though Calimar declined the food), and watch the storm sweep over the dale with its lightnings and rolling thunder.

Moved nigh to tears by such kindness from a stranger, Calimar begged Elminster to listen to why he’d come, only to be dryly told that El figured he could guess. “Ye need thy daughter raised by a mage ye can trust as much as ye dare trust anyone, in a place like this. She’d be that bundle ye hid in Candlekeep. Worry not, the Avowed kept to thy instructions; I farscryed thy visit, unbeknownst to them. We watch, we Chosen.”

At that, Calimar broke down, and Elminster held him and comforted him like a father until the drow lich recovered himself enough to say, “That IS my need. I know it is too much to ask, and yet I will ask it, and have brought all the enchanted items I own to offer in payment, because I have nowhere else to go. And I would ask even more of ye: that ye keep my daughter in the stasis I have put her in until ye deem the time right for her to walk this world.”

And Elminster smiled and replied, “I knew not how much longer ye would last, with all that spell-battling ye’ve been doing. For her sake and thine, I wanted her to know her father. Come with me.”

And he led Calimar outside, as the tail of the storm passed rumblingly out of sight and left the night sky clear with dawn hinting to the east, to a spring-fed pond beside and behind the tower, where a drow lass was floating alone on her back, at ease.

“Susprina loves storms,” was all Elminster said, as Calimar ran to the water, dumbfounded.

The Old Mage then smiling and silently withdrew, to allow father and daughter to reunite in privacy.

Calimar and the seventeen-year-old Susprina enjoyed an entire day and night of catching up, with no sign of Elminster (or Lhaeo, who’d been in hiding over at Storm Silverhand’s farm since El had farseen Calimar’s approach) but food left ready for them. During this time, Calimar learned from her that Elminster had awakened her seventeen years earlier (in 1335 DR), raised her, and made her an apprentice.

Calimar was impressed by the mastery of magic she’d achieved in what to him seemed a brief time—and intrigued by her soft-spoken, shy, and gentle manner (so different from the ice-cold and difficult manner cultivated by the drow of Sshamath). Susprina also told her father firmly that “He has touched me not, though he is the WORST flirt in all the Dales, and he did bed a silver she-dragon one night; I couldn’t resist peeking, and he WINKED at me in the midst of it!”

She added that she now thinks that she-dragon was The Simbul, and admitted to her father that she was terrified of The Simbul (which Calimar dryly told her he thought it was very wise of her to be).

Calimar got another, smaller surprise when Susprina served him spiced wine from Sshamath from her own private stock (“El gets it for me. He goes there himself, in spell-guise, and picks me up spider-sweets, and roast shelf-shrooms, and the latest fashions, even underclings.”)

Later, Susprina took herself off to Storm Silverhand’s farm (“She’s teaching me swordwork, and styling my own hair with cantrips as well as combs. I thirst to master making my hair move to my bidding, as hers does”) and Calimar wept as he thanked Elminster.

Who told him he was always welcome at the Tower, which had hidden rooms and passages belowground where there were seldom-used bedchambers he could claim one of, and that he can and should visit whenever he desired.

And he did, and visits there still, which is one of the reasons (Storm and her Harpers are another) that very few dare to venture within Elminster’s Tower when he’s not around. Calimar and El have become firm friends, and the drow lich is a little in awe of how easily Elminster can see through or shrug aside enchantments and charms, and more in awe of the Weavemaster powers and silver fire that El possesses.

For her part, Susprina decided to hide her drow nature from most humans and others as she dwelt in the surface Realms. Her rare visits to Sshamath (mainly to buy at the Dark Weavings Bazaar, though she had a good look around, not revealing her lineage to anyone), and even rarer glimpses of other, Lolth-dominated, drow cities, made her firmly prefer the World Above and its mixed society of the Heartlands to the always-violent, scheming Underdark world of the drow. Her father, and a few Eilistraee-worshipping drow who betimes visit Storm Silverhand or Elminster on their travels, are the only drow she often has contact with. She has come to cherish her times with her father, often spent roasting a boar out behind Elminster’s Tower, with a sideboard of his wines and cheeses to hand. She’s addicted to a cinammon-flavored, soft-to-the-point-of-being-syrupy (*note from Ed*: like runny peanut butter) cheese called *quelth*, that Calimar brought her from the tiny drow hold of Sreestarl “Spiderhaunted,” that’s in the Upperdark almost directly above Blessed Seahaven (and beneath farms just inland from the south coast of Sembia).

In her true form, Susprina is a white-haired, ruby-eyed, obsidian-skinned, fine-featured, and rather tall and slender drow, who by nature is quiet and shy. Lithe and nimble, she has learned to “fade back into the distance” without attracting notice, and to be a good actress so she can play garrulous old women or (her favorite) arrogant nobles or wealthy would-be nobles of Cormyr or Sembia (Storm even gave her a Cormyrean noble identity, as Salvarauna Immerdusk, an unmarried aunt of that family, and persuaded the current Immerdusks, led by the strong-willed matriarch Taressa Immerdusk, to accept her; Taressa and Susprina have become fast friends).

In the 1490s DR, Susprina Arkenneld is a CG drow female Wiz16 who wears a small, nondescript arsenal of magic items El has given her or that she’s crafted herself under his tutelage or that she’s gained in her adventuring. She even has an enchanted tattoo that she can use, if she crosses it with her own blood (for example, slashing a blood-dipped fingertip entirely across it), to *teleport* herself without error to the bedchamber El reserves for her under his Tower.

She walks her own way in the Realms, no longer El’s apprentice but returning to him often for advice or just visits, or when she needs healing or solace (she’s been unhappy in love, and currently is most attracted to Taressa, though she considers bedding someone who’s her adopted relative somehow wrong).

Susprina often makes common cause with the Harpers but is a trusted ally rather than a member, is welcome in Cormyr thanks to some missions she’s undertaken for the War Wizards (though she’s not a member of them, either), and to her own surprise has found she wants to be in Shadowdale every harvest time, in magical human disguise, to sweat along with the locals to help bring in the harvest; it makes her feel she belongs. Increasingly, as her father grows more frail (his lich body breaking down over the years despite his best enchantments), she worries about bringing him to Shadowdale, and how he’ll be accepted when his true nature is inevitably discovered, if she does. She increasingly turns to Storm Silverhand for advice when dealing with men, romantically—and Storm increasingly throws her visiting trainee Harpers at Susprina to be bedmates, to get her over loneliness and randiness and feeling lovelorn.

And so she forges a life which isn’t as lonely as she feared it would be. She has homes in Shadowdale and in Cormyr whenever she wants them, and was fascinated (and a trifle frightened and overwhelmed) by Waterdeep on her lone visit there, though Laeral sought her out and took her to a night of dancing with the drow of Eilistraee in Ardeepforest that thrilled her, and then to a secret club in Castle Ward, the Smiling Mask, where drow are wont to meet when in Waterdeep, where she got into a scrape with a male drow who mistook her for an old foe, but was rescued by Mirt the Moneylender (backed up, to her astonishment, by Elminster). She found herself rather miffed at the thought that the Old Mage was watching over her, but he used magic to share his thoughts with her to SHOW her he hadn’t been, and she was not only reassured by that revelation, but frightened that such magic existed—and at the same time flattered and thrilled that he’d shared so much with her, and that she could herself see and trust his love for her.

Susprina still looks young and sleek, in her true form, but increasingly favors aged and doddering human personas when in disguise, as the reactions of others (including whether or not they respect old folk, or seek to take advantage of infirmity and perhaps wandering wits) reveal so much about them. She can readily earn coin by casting spells for fees or making and selling scrolls, and always has enough to meet her daily needs—which is really all she wants. When she has need of horses or a coach or something of the sort, Elminster can and will provide. As she once ruefully observed, “the old man is LOADED.” And if she needs tiaras or gowns, she can borrow Immerdusk finery, or better yet call on Storm, who is taller and more muscular than Susprina, but has a lot of overlapping or pleated gowns that can “contract” without looking like someone carved them up.

Her one weakness is boots; Susprina loves elegant, well-made footwear, preferably pointed-toed and high (thigh-high or at least over the knee). She now has enough coin to have skilled corvisers make them for her, and is slowly assembling a stable of suppliers, from Sembia and the Moonsea to Waterdeep and Scornubel—and all points between.

Susprina is also increasingly interested in crafting her own enchanted items, and modifying existing spells to be “more her.” If her adventures allow her more time for such things in the years ahead, she’ll take it.

Yet for right now, she’s still an adventuring wizard. With powerful friends and allies.

Don’t cross her.

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