

CHAPTER ONE of DAMSEL - The novel

played by
Millie Bobby Brown
in the Netflix film *

ELODIE

The cool thing -
or one of the many cool
things - about the book is you
have a lot of space to include
details. The movie / screenplay of where
Elodie came from, so I got to
expand on that a lot in the book.

INOPHE WAS THE sort of place for which the globe moved backward. While the rest of the world progressed, barren Inophe slid further and further into the past. Seventy years of drought had reduced the duchy's meager croplands to endless sand dunes. The people harvested their gardens of cacti for water, and they existed in a system of bartering—a length of homespun cloth in exchange for the chore of mending a fence; a dozen eggs for a tincture to ease a toothache; and on special occasions, a goat in exchange for a small sack of precious imported flour.

"It's a beautiful place, despite everything," Duke Richard Bayford said as he rode his horse to the edge of a plateau that overlooked the soft brown landscape, broken up here and there by the lean branches of ironwood trees and the yellow flowers of acacias. He was a tall and wiry man, his face wrinkled by four and a half decades under the relentless sun.

"It's a beautiful place because of everything," his daughter Elodie chided gently as she rode up beside him. At twenty, she'd been helping him with the Duchy of Inophe for as long as she could remember, and she'd one day inherit the role as its stew-

This establishes
Elodie's
father's point of
view & how he
sees this as a
land of hard ship.
It sets the
foundation for why
he brokers the
engagement of
Elodie to
Prince Henry.

Which is
KEY later on
in the story!

Contrast
Elodie's more
optimistic point
of view. She sees
the beauty of
their harsh
environment.
This begins to lay
the foundation of
her ability to thrive
in difficult
environments.

Her father has long recognized Elodie's wisdom.

ard.

Lord Bayford chuckled. "You're right as usual, my dove. Inophe is beautiful *because* of everything it is."

Elodie smiled. Below their plateau, a long-eared fox sprang from the shade of a desert willow and chased something—probably a gerbil or lizard—around a boulder. To the east, undulating dunes rose and fell, mountains of sand cascading toward a glittering sea. Even the dry heat on Elodie's skin felt like the welcome embrace of an old friend.

more scene setting that I could do in a book, whereas there isn't time to luxuriate in these details in a movie. (otherwise the film would be 100 hrs long (haha!))

Establishes that Lord Bayford is in charge b/c he's addressed first.

There was a rustle in the scrub behind them.

"Pardon me, Lord Bayford." A man emerged, carrying a staff. A moment later, his herd of bearded gray desert goats followed, indiscriminately biting off the heads of spiny flowers and their thorned stems and swallowing them whole. If only the people of Inophe had such gums and stomachs of iron, they'd be able to survive much better in this harsh clime.

But Elodie is well known & also acknowledged.

"Good day, Lady Elodie." The shepherd swept off his tattered hat and dipped his head as the duke and Elodie dismounted.

"How may we be of service, Immanuel?" Lord Bayford asked.

"Er, your lordship . . . My oldest son, Sergio, is about to be married, and he'll be needing a new cottage for his family. I was hoping that, uh, you might be able to . . ."

Before the pause could grow awkward, Lord Bayford jumped in. "You need building materials?"

Immanuel fiddled with his staff but then nodded. Inophean tradition held that fathers gifted their sons with new homes on their wedding day, and mothers gifted their daughters with handmade gowns. But decades of impoverishment meant it was harder and harder for the old ways to continue.

Another place where the book got to expand / create the world where Elodie came from. I love imagining the traditions of different places.

"It would be an honor to provide the materials for Sergio's cottage," Lord Bayford said. "Do you need assistance with its

*note: these pages came from my "first pass" proofreading pages, so the text might not be exactly the same as the book.

But it's easier to write my annotations on these pages (rather than taking a photo of the pages in the published book!)

So consider these "first pass" pages a bonus glimpse behind the scenes of what author's do. ☺

Internal document numbers for my publisher. Refracted here b/c they're irrelevant.

This shows the reader right away that Elodie is good at hands-on, practical solutions. Also VERY IMPORTANT later in the book!

construction? Elodie is particularly good with rigging solar stills."

"True," she said. "I'm also good at digging latrines, which Sergio and his wife can use after they've drunk the water they collected in the solar stills."

Immanuel's eyes widened as he stared at her.

Elodie cursed herself under her breath. She had, unfortunately, a gift for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. When faced with social interaction, especially the expectation that she say something, Elodie seized up—her shoulders tightened and her throat went dry, and her once coherent ideas tumbled on top of one another like books from an upended shelf. Then she'd end up blurting out whatever thought had landed at the top of that pile, and it would inevitably be inappropriate.

That wasn't to say she was unappreciated. The people respected her devotion to Inophe. Elodie rode several days every week under the scalding sun from tenancy to tenancy, checking on what the families needed. She helped with everything from building rat traps around henhouses to reading tales of princesses and dragons to children, and Elodie loved every moment of it. She had been raised for this. As her mother used to say, giving yourself to others is the noblest sacrifice.

"What Elodie means," Lord Bayford said smoothly, "is that she doesn't mind getting her hands dirty."

Thank goodness Father is still in charge, Elodie thought. One day she would be duchess of these lands. But for now, it was a relief that the duchy had the charismatic Richard Bayford at its helm.

Elodie kept an ear on the conversation as Immanuel detailed how much wood and how many nails he would need, but she turned her body so she could look past the dusty landscape to the open water beyond. Ever since she was a child, the sea had

OMG, Elodie!! :)
Why did I make her say this?!?!
Because otherwise, her character was too perfect. She can build things, she's a genius with languages & puzzles, she's strong & beautiful, she's wise etc. etc...
It's actually no fun to read characters who are too perfect. They're actually annoying!
So I wanted to give her a trait that made her relatable.
BONUS - this dovetails nicely at the end of the book when she really comes into her own true self. (No spoilers... You'll see what I mean once you finish reading the book!)

here's a simile that bookworms will appreciate. Hello, fellow book nerds!

I slipped this in so that readers who already know the premise of the story would get a satisfying smirk here.

At the start of the story, Elodie doesn't feel ready to be in charge yet. But that's going to have to change & will be a huge part of her character arc.