

How to Adopt a Wizard  
A Hall of Blood and Mercy Short Story  
By K. M. Shea

“Ah.” The sound Ling, my driver for the evening, made was so soft I would have missed it, if not for the infinitesimal rock of the brake being stepped on.

I looked up from my cellphone.

“I Apologize, Your Eminence,” Ling said.

I ignored the apology and peered out through the front windshield in time to see a short, blonde-haired young woman sprint to the sidewalk, cutting it so close that the breeze created by Drake Limo stirred her hair. She looked back—not at the limo but across the street—with wide blue eyes.

“Slow down,” I ordered.

Ling slowed the SUV to a crawl as I took in the scene before me.

I didn’t immediately place the woman—I was more distracted by the singed hole in her shirt that encircled her shoulder, which she held at an odd angle.

*Someone shot magic at her. Idiots—they’re fighting in public, in the middle of the day?*

I followed her gaze across the street to the wizard that had most likely attacked her. He glared at the woman, though his shoulders visibly tightened with fear when he glanced at the emblem on the limo that marked it as my property—and the property of the Drake Family.

I didn’t even need a moment to place Gideon Tellier as an easily recognizable man-child due to his distinctly flat face that looked as though someone had repeatedly smashed him with a shovel in an attempt to get any sort of intelligence wedged into his empty brain.

Most wizards are useless. They worry a lot, or live in dream worlds where they think everything is safe and secure. As if magic wasn’t dying out at an unsustainable rate that would soon make our society crumble.

As I watched, Gideon’s lips moved as he said something—something stupid, most likely—and turned on his heels and ran off.

I didn’t know much about Gideon—except that his intelligence was pretty lacking and he covered it up with a lot of bluster about his magic. Which probably meant the woman was his victim.

I shifted my gaze back across the street, to the blonde who’d almost gotten herself hit by the empty limo I usually ordered at the front of my motorcade procession. (It was a lure to bait any of my enemies stupid enough to attack me, as most everyone mistakenly assumed I rode in it. An illusion I was happy to keep.)

It was the look in the woman’s eyes that made me realize who she was, Hazel Medeis, the Heir of House Medeis.

I make it my business to recognize all the leaders of the magical community—it was how I recognized Flat Face. For the wizards, that meant knowing the leaders’ child that would inherit the House after their parents croaked as humans are all-so-prone to doing.

Hazel Medeis stood out in my mind because she was such an unusual case. She had less magic ability than her parents—which had become common as of late—but while her parents were notably strong in their magic, she was practically a dud.

That would have been enough to make me write her off, but in the pictures included in the reports my staff gave me, there was a very pronounced look in her eyes.

She didn't have the dreamy happiness or the studied politeness most wizards wore. Rather, she had the eyes of a hunted animal determined to survive and willing to fight for it. It was an odd look given how complacent our supernaturals had become.

I leaned back in the bench seat and thoughtfully watched her as she jogged down the sidewalk. "She was running from the man, wasn't she?"

"I believe so, Your Eminence."

I narrowed my eyes. *She knew what she was doing when she crossed in front of the motorcade. It seems there's a reason she looks hunted. It's because she is.*

"Very interesting," I said.

"Your Eminence?"

"Nothing. Drive on."

I didn't care about wizards—or anyone besides the vampires, really. And so Hazel Medeis slipped from my mind with ease, until several weeks later.

\*\*\*

"It is not my intention to offend. Rather, I am here to request refuge. A member of my House has staged a coup," Hazel Medeis said. She half-cowered, half-bristled with her back set against two doors on the far side of the room.

She had introduced herself after bungling her way into the large, vampire assembly meeting I had called to address the rampant murders of lower leveled vampires and those who worked for us.

I didn't need the introduction, though. The hunted look in her eyes had become even more pronounced since I last saw her. Now she resembled a cornered rabbit, and though I couldn't hear it across the room, I was fairly certain her heart was pounding in fear—of the vampires she faced, and the wizards who knocked on the door behind her.

"No self-respecting Family would take on a refugee of your diminutive and unimportant status. We don't bother ourselves with the politics of ants." Louis, Elder of the Lorraine Family, sneered.

"I am aware of this, which is why I would like to request a servant's position," she said as she tried to push the bargain.

Louis looked down his obnoxiously large nose at the wizard. "What use would a *rat-blood* be to us?" he scoffed.

While a few other vampire Elders piped up to question the wizard, I tapped my fingers on my desk.

A wizard, offering to serve the vampires?

It was a tempting proposal.

Although fragile and terrible at fighting, Wizards had their uses. And with the Night Court picking fights with me, it would be useful to have a wizard—even one as poorly skilled as Hazel Medeis—on hand.

Besides, even if she was on the run, she was the Adept of House Medeis. I could manipulate wizards through fear—a single look and most of them cowered—but I wasn't opposed to having a legal hold on them as well...

But was she *too* fearful? If she didn't have a spine she'd be useless. There wasn't really a way to know for sure. Granted, she apparently had the guts to face a roomful of vampires, but it was clear we were her last resort. And she seemed prone to running from her problems instead of fighting them.

"You really are useless. Off with you," another Elder told the wizard as I tuned back in

The man who was probably responsible for the coup Hazel Medeis had mentioned called through the door. “I beg your pardon, but I believe a dangerous renegade has impeded upon you. Please allow my men and me to peacefully retrieve her.”

Hazel Medeis had given up on the vampires. I could see her studying the walls, looking for an alternative exit.

*She may be a runner, but at least she’s smart about it.*

“You were told to leave, rat-blood,” a female vampire—one of the House Richardson underlings who had come to represent her lazy elder—snarled.

I studied the frightened wizard for another moment or two.

Would she be worth the work and the effort? I didn’t know. Weighing out my options, the chance that she *might* become something would override what little trouble I’d have to put myself through to get her.

I smiled.

*This could be fun.*

“The Drake Family will accept your pledge of servitude.”

The wizard froze, then slowly raised her gaze to me.

I could see the fear drowning in her eyes, and her shoulders hunched.

Good. At least she was smart enough to be afraid of me. And I wanted the name of Killian Drake to be dreaded by outsiders.

I raised an eyebrow as I studied her. “A pet wizard sounds amusing—even one so weak as you, Adept Medeis.”

She appeared frozen for several long moments, then abruptly started to lower herself to one knee.

*Ahhh, she’s going to take it.*

“Come closer, Adept Medeis,” I said. “You should see the eyes of your new master as you swear fealty.”

Now, it was only a matter of time to see if this gamble was going to pay off.

\*\*\*

I left Hazel Medeis to stew among my staff. I had enough to handle with the murderer running loose, and I didn’t want to bother training her until I knew she’d be worth the effort.

She proved herself after roughly a week when she took down a fully grown mantasp—a large fae creature that was a disturbing mix of wasp and praying mantis.

She’d occupied it so two maids could flee. They’d found one of the vampires on guard duty, and it took than an exorbitant amount of time to tell the vampire what was going on between their tears and babbles.

I came because I could smell the disgusting scent of the wizard blood—Hazel had shed so much of it she stunk up the front yard—from where I was watching a few of my vampires train.

I—and the vampire the maids had notified—reached the fighting wizard at roughly the same time.

The mantasp was turning in a circle, thrashing around the underbrush of the forest as it tried to yank out what looked like its own claw that was stabbed in its abdomen.

The wizard was flat on her back, her eyes no longer focusing, and her shoulder bleeding heavily.

Tasha—the vampire that the maids had informed—roared fiercely and launched herself at the mantasp.

The ferocity was unnecessary. The mantasp had collapsed and was now twitching, although its stinger was coated with blood.

It seemed the wizard got herself stung in the process of fighting the monster. She'd need a few doses of fae healing draughts—mantasp stingers were poisonous.

Still...she'd taken the creature down. And with very little magic.

Not many wizards could do that.

As Tasha beheaded the monster, I prodded the wizard's forehead, but she didn't react.

"Tasha, call Celestina and tell her to prepare a fae healing draught."

"Yes, Your Eminence."

I grimaced as I looked down at the wizard. She reeked like a decayed carcass thanks to the magic in her blood that naturally repelled my kind. I wasn't that eager to touch her as she bled like a wounded animal, but this was the proof I was looking for.

Hazel Medeis wasn't mindless prey.

When backed into a corner she'd fight. And if the mantasp's own claw sticking out of its carapace was any indicator, she'd be *vicious* when incentivized enough.

I could work with that.

There was the matter of her tiny amount of magic, but I had my own theories about that. For now, this was enough.

I kept my expression smooth as I scooped the smelly wizard up.

"Your Eminence?" Tasha said in bewilderment, her smartphone almost dangling from her grasp.

"Make the call."

"Yes, Your Eminence!"

It was settled. I was going to make Hazel Medeis into my attack dog, and train her up the right way. She'd be a weapon.

\*\*\*

It was my mistake to think that.

I never considered that she could be amusing and entertaining, and would manage to ingratiate herself among my Family. I never thought I'd come to *like* her, much less that she would ever stop reeking to me and would instead begin to smell as enticing as the sun itself.

The repercussions of my decision would rock the Drake Family, House Medeis, and magical society for years to come. All because I decided to adopt a pet wizard.

The End