

# The Price of Poverty

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Dressed in a worn out shirt and tattered pants, Keldirk waited outside his parents' house. Torrential rain fell. His worn out shoes did nothing to keep the water from seeping through. It was freezing.

The thought of running crossed his mind. He glanced at the thick forest that bordered the village. If he did flee, he'd soon be caught by the village tracker. If not him, then by some wild animal. Or worse, the elves.

He'd never felt so helpless.

He peered through the window at the man talking to his parents. The stranger was tall, like his father, but, unlike him, the man was thick, strong, and powerful. They were negotiating. Haggling over the one thing of value they owned.

Him.

His father, like most men in the village, was a fisherman. Each day he took his small boat out onto Elgar Lake to cast his nets. Most days he'd catch just enough for his family to last one more day. Occasionally he'd return with a haul large enough to support them for a week.

Then, it all went bad.

Fish were scarce, and food became a luxury. They weren't the only family starving, the entire village suffered. Nobody knew why. But, because of it, he couldn't stay.

Money was being counted on the table. He'd never seen so many coins in one place. His father usually received payment in food, or other household

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goods. His mother cried as his father scooped them up. He dropped them into a purse at his side. When he was finished, the man shook his hand.

Just like that, it was done.

He knew they didn't have a choice. His life here was over. His future now belonged to a stranger. The future wasn't something he really thought about. Until today, there was no reason to.

The door swung open, and the man stepped out. Keldirk began to shift from foot to foot, his heart hammered in his chest. The stranger drew up beside him.

His mind raced, it was too late to run. He didn't know what to do.

The tall man looked at him, his dark eyes held Keldirk's gaze. He felt trapped, unable to breathe.

"You're mine now, boy," the man said. He didn't sound cruel, he just stated a fact.

The boy nodded.

With a grunt, he lifted him onto the wagon. The man checked that the rest of the cargo was secure then climbed to the driver's seat next to him. With a flick of the reins, the horses started to move.

Keldirk's mother came to the window. She looked upset. He probably should've waved or something. The truth is, he couldn't be bothered.

He owed them nothing.

The wagon rolled through the village that used to be his home. As they passed by the small cluster of houses and other buildings, it occurred to him that He'll probably never see my parents again.

In the end, he realised that he didn't care.