

SHE'S THE ONE WHO THINKS TOO MUCH by S.R. Cronin

Exclusive Excerpt

To my surprise, much of the talk centered around the Mongols and the coming winter. The Velka had few if any contacts outside of Ilari, but they had plenty of dealings with those inside the realm. Bringing information back into the forest seemed common, and even expected.

It appeared the decision had already been made to hide ourselves when this invasion occurred. The only debate was about how thoroughly to do it.

“If we’re lucky, they’ll never even try to enter the forest because they won’t know we exist,” one woman said.

“Good thing we won’t have to count on that,” another replied. “Word is they get their power from their horses. They’re weak without them.”

Another laughed. “Horses will not be charging through the perimeter we’ve got.”

“No perimeter will matter if they manage to set fire to the forest,” a woman even older than my grandmother said.

“We tell you every single meeting. We’ve got that handled. Our perimeter won’t burn.”

“Well we need to improve it,” she replied. “It not only needs to be inflammable, we can make it much more impermeable and we should.”

“Don’t forget there are those of us who’d like to be able to leave occasionally. And let others in,” a woman who had yet to speak up said.

“That may be a luxury we can’t afford until this threat passes.”

I was starting to pick up two different camps. It looked like one group wanted to close our forest completely and cut all ties with Ilari until the Mongols were long gone. I gathered those were the women who never left. Others not only wished to maintain contact, but also felt an obligation to help the rest of Ilari in what little ways they could.

“You’ve joined us at a difficult time,” one of the kinder women said to me. It was the first acknowledgment that night of my presence. “What do you think?”

They all turned to me and I understood the importance of my answer.