

CHICKEN LEG

CHARACTERS FROM THE BOOK: "LEGEND" BY MARIE LU

(CHARACTERS ARE TESS AND DAY)

By Nicole Lin, 8th grade Russell Middle School

My gaze had latched onto a bronze chicken leg, which had been glazed with honey and sprinkled with rich spices. I had watched intently as the girl lifted the hunk of meat to her mouth, anticipation twirling with the steam. I had watched as she tore into the chicken, juice oozing down her arm as she hungrily ripped into the leg, mouthful after mouthful. I had peered over at the stand next to her, the stand that sold the glorious, glowing chicken. Perhaps I was desperate, or maybe it was the fatigue that had blanketed me, but before my brain could calculate even the slightest hint of a plan, I lunged.

Heavy footsteps soon pounded the pavement, and the chatter quickly settled as people were shoved out of the way. Through the sudden stillness and tension of the midnight-market, one yell pierced through the night, confirming everyone's suspicions, "Thief! Thief! That boy's a thief!"

Let me tell you, regret instantly bubbled inside me the instant I had scooped up the chicken. I knew very well that I was in no shape to outrun the merchant, let alone the hundreds of people at the market. Exhaustion had slowed my sprint, and even with adrenaline pumping through my veins, my eyes were heavy, and my legs felt like I had weights strapped to them. Heck, I was so tired I didn't even feel someone tackle me until I was on the ground, my lungs empty of its precious air. The pain was delayed, which made it so much worse. I had gasped, choking back a scream as my back felt like it had just exploded. Miraculously, I never let go of that chicken.

Through the haze of sleepiness and the throbbing of my back, I studied my attacker. You'd be pretty surprised to who it was. It was that girl, who had been eating the chicken leg that triggered me to react. She still clung to it, the expensive delicacy still unfinished in one hand. I would've laughed at how ridiculous we looked if I wasn't hurting so much.

I had glanced behind her, where a mob of angry people, including the merchant, were making their way toward us. My heart had leaped into my throat, and panic had swelled in my chest. In that moment, I had one thought: I couldn't let them catch me. No, if they took me away, what would happen to you?

My eyes traveled back to the girl, and I remember croaking at her, "Let me go, cousin," And when she had scoffed at me, I threw a handful of dirt in her face. She cried out in alarm, her hands shooting up to her eyes. As soon as her control over me loosened, I sprang to my feet, black specks threatening to take away my consciousness, and I ran. I ran so fast that fatigue and pain couldn't catch up to me until I was about a fourth of the way here. When they finally did catch up to me, it was like a huge boulder had been chucked at me. I basically had to drag my way here, to our alleyway.

When I had finally arrived, the sun was just creeping out, ready to bask the land in its light and warmth. Your soft snores had weaved with the bird's morning songs. Then you opened your eyes, you saw me, all beaten and tattered and tired, but holding out to you an intact chicken leg.

“Happy Birthday, Tess.” I had managed, before the sun decided to go back to bed, and the world went completely black. I didn’t know if I had passed out from my back injury, if I had passed out because I was too tired.

However, what I do know is that it was completely worth it, seeing you happy and full when I finally swam back up from the bottom of my dreams and gasped for air.