

Deleted Scene from Unruly Magic chapter one

About this scene: This scene occurs in Chapter One and was cut from about midway through – the part where Stella is sat on the porch of her neighbour's house, eating breakfast with Annalise and Gage. While I wanted to show how Stella was getting on with her new life and being quite ordinary, and also how she's dealing with feeling attracted to Gage despite still searching for Evan.

I realised this long scene slowed the action down but it's here for you to enjoy as a bonus extra.

Deleted scene:

"I'd like that, though you know I'd be no use to you." I took another big bite of my pastry and tried to taste it, tried to feel something. It seemed like my senses had been dulled for months and I was only just beginning to recognise, taste and feel again. Every day I had to ask myself if I wanted to. If I wanted to feel again. If I could let myself.

"Pshhaw," said Annalise as she took a bite. "If you can tie a pretty bow and add price tags, you'll be a big help to me."

I bit into my pastry again, chewed and swallowed. It tasted fresh and the sugar was sticky. I licked my lips and then, strangely aware that Gage was gazing at me, wiped them with a napkin. He probably thought I was a sloppy eater. "I'll be glad to help."

"I have the day off," Gage said, reaching for another pastry after wolfing his down.

"What'cha planning on doing, honey?" Annalise asked.

"Working on my bike, mostly," he said and when I looked over at the gleaming hulk of metal, I wondered what exactly what was wrong with his bike. It seemed to be working fine to me. Three more bites and the second gigantic Danish was gone. I hadn't even got through half mine.

"You and that bike," Annalise chided though it didn't sound like she minded much. "Did you get the stuff for tonight?"

"In the bag." Gage nodded at his rucksack, asking, "Are you coming over, Stella?"

I started to say that I hadn't made plans too when Annalise interrupted me. "Well, of course you are, aint'cha, Stella? We can't keep on having poker night without our favourite neighbour."

“I’m your only neighbour,” I laughed.

“All the more reason you should come on over. I hope you weren’t waiting for an invitation? Oh no!” Annalise peered at me and rolled her eyes. “Like I keep saying, sweetpea, we don’t wait on ceremony here. If you want to come, come, just like everyone else. I don’t think any of them have ever waited for an invitation.”

“Are you sure you have room for me?” They always seemed like they had a house full.

“We sure do,” said Annalise though I noticed Gage didn’t say anything. She reached over to ruffle his hair. “Gage’d like it if you came too.” He looked at me and sort of shrugged.

“Oh, ignore him. He said only last night that I should invite you, in case you were waiting.”

I felt my cheeks flush and when I looked up, he was looking at me. He didn’t say anything but held that imperceptible half-glare of his steady. He didn’t look that interested if I came or not.

“I’d be happy to. Thanks,” I said, lifting one shoulder and letting it fall like I wasn’t bothered too and Annalise grinned at me, knowing that my day was set.

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I ended up not going home at all for the rest of that morning and well into the afternoon. Annalise tugged her baskets of goods out onto the porch and we sat there drinking coffee – she was much better at hospitality than me, but then she’d had a life time of doing it – well into the afternoon. As we sat there, Annalise directing me to add a tag here, to parcel up some coverlets with ribbons there, her soft voice gossiping about the various things going on in Wilding. Every so often I would look up and there was Gage, ignoring us as he lay on his back on the grass tinkering with his bike. I couldn’t help wondering if my nice, simple life would stay just this.

Slipping another tag on to ribbon and threading it through the zip of a cushion cover , my thoughts drifted to the days I had spent practising control of my magic at the safe house I’d lived in for a few weeks earlier this year. Despite the level of control I had achieved, I had barely used magic over the past few months. Firstly I didn’t want to draw attention to myself; secondly I just didn’t need to. I wasn’t practising for a fight, or to save myself. I was anonymous and no one knew I was here. Instead I focused on healing myself, every little day growing a bit stronger as I dealt with the pain of loss, the terror of that last day fading a little bit more. I didn’t even need to teleport myself anywhere, especially now I had my car for some conventional travel. One thing had changed though. I hadn’t had a single accident with my magic thanks to

my new control – Evan had left me with that, to go along with the ache of missing him.

Of course, there was one more crucial element that made me think twice every time I thought about using magic. Every time I used my magic, a little bit of its trail would seep into the ether. I didn't know for sure that I wasn't being tracked, that somewhere, something hadn't caught the scent of my magic. Instead, I hoped everyone would have forgotten about me, Stella Mayweather - massive imposition, runaway witch - by now but I couldn't be sure.

When the last basket had been stuffed with beribboned, tagged and sorted parcels, Annalise let me off. It was past lunch and my stomach was starting to grumble in protest. "I'm such a taskmaster, and you must be bored silly," she chided herself. "I don't know why you put up with me."

"I don't put up with you," I laughed. "You're my favourite person."

"You're just saying that!"

"Annalise, come on, you've been nothing but fantastic to me."

"Yup, ever since you just blew up out of nowhere." I'd never really explained to Annalise where I had come from, or why I had come here after the house had been shut up for so long. To her credit, she didn't pry but just absorbed me into her life until it looked like I belonged.

"I came by car," I protested, but I knew that wasn't what she wanted to hear. Annalise looked like she was going to ask me something as she opened her mouth, then closed it and shook her head. She looked at me with her big green eyes and finally said. "How come you don't work, or are you some kind of nightshift worker or home-worker and I haven't noticed?"

I reached for my coffee cup with my cold hands and took a big sip, letting the liquid warm me. "My parents left me some money and that's kept me going. And I don't have to pay any mortgage on the house so it's kinda cheap to live." I thought about whether I would like to always spend my days drifting around and it didn't appeal. I'd always been a good worker and I'd barely spent a day out of work in my previous career as serial temp. I said, tentatively, "I'll be looking for a job soon." Though what I'd do, I really didn't know. Wilding didn't seem big on office jobs for magical klutzes and I wasn't exactly qualified for much else.

I looked over to my house, stopping to glance at Gage. He was examining some chunk of machinery that he had laid out on a tarpaulin on the front lawn. His cheek sported a streak of oil and it just added to his swarthy look. From what I'd gathered from Annalise, he worked in a nearby city. I wasn't sure what he did but I was pretty

certain he wasn't a blue collar worker. He seemed smart and well spoken. I guessed it meant Annalise could keep up her craft business and not have to worry about money too much. It must've been nice to have someone to rely on. I felt the familiar little pang again. I'd have to keep that in check.

"What time should I come over tonight?" I asked wrenching my gaze from Gage only to see Annalise looking at me curiously again. I wondered if she had seen me looking at Gage and hoped not. I wouldn't want to make our friendship uncomfortable. He may have been eye candy but he was off limits. Plus, I'd barely had chance to mourn. Again, I'd need to seriously check the way I looked at him. It wasn't right to find someone else attractive this soon. It felt like a betrayal and, for a moment, I was angry at myself.

"Around seven would be fine," she said, gathering up her baskets to stack them by the door.

"I'm going to head home and do some cleaning. Maybe make that list of repairs." I stood up and stretched my arms above my head feeling my muscles protest. I was getting soft what with all the loafing at home. When I relaxed, I saw Gage watching me from across the porch, his face absolutely unreadable. He dropped his head when he realised I'd seen him. I pretended not to notice.

"Bring it by later," suggested Annalise as she tucked a beautiful patchwork quilt under her arm, and bumped open the door with her hip. I had to search my mind for what she might mean for a moment but then she paused in the doorway and added, "Someone will be able to do your jobs, and, if not, they'll know someone who can."