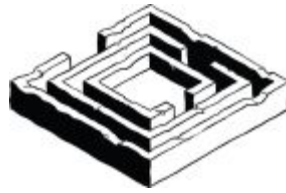




SEX & SORCERY

Sex & Sorcery

Volume One



Uruk Press

Uruk Press
Great Britain

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"Born To The Forest" by AW Freyr © 2015
"Elvish Inquisition" by Victoria Arius © 2015
"Norn's Cavern" by EC Reville © 2015
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Contributors

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Introduction

Fantasy was my first love. Some of my earliest school memories are playing He Man in the playground and some of my fondest are picking up the latest David Eddings or *Fighting Fantasy* book from the library.

Smut was my second love. My own wild imagination was stoked by reading racy racing thrillers by Jilly Cooper and Dick Francis at an impressionable age. Hey, a girl can like horses as well as books.

As I got older and sex became a bigger part of my life, I tried to merge these two passions; first by seeking out fantastic filth in bookshops then by discovering the vast cornucopia of erotic fiction that is the internet and finally by founding Uruk Press.

Setting up this publishing company has been hugely exciting and this book is intended to be a showcase of what we are all about. So I am very pleased to be able to include all our current authors in this anthology, alongside several new names. Likewise, it is a pleasure to publish such a spread of different stories. There really is something for everyone here.

So forget sword and sorcery, this Sex & Sorcery!

Philippa Martinez

July 2015

"Born To The Forest" by AW Freyr

Twilight was gathering quickly, the sun a reddish haze while Aelan chased the hare into stranger and stranger regions of the forest. He knew he should go home, taking what game he had before he got too lost. But it was pride that drove him — he refused to be defeated by his quarry, to see it tail into brush, leaving only a flash of its powder white rear.

He told himself: *Go home. Go home.*

But he knew he would need just the narrowest window of opportunity. And it would take only one mistake on the creature's part.

The chance came. The creature stopped in a ray of the falling sun, peering back with big black eyes to see if it was still being pursued. It was enough for Aelan to nock a little arrow and release. The force of the impalement threw the creature back, like a bull throwing a man with its horns.

Triumphant, Aelan wandered into the clearing.

The hare was dying at the foot of a mighty ash tree. With practiced efficiency he pulled the arrow out and threw the animal into his sack. As Aelan clapped the blood from his hands, his gaze wandered upward.

There was a woman's face, frozen beneath the wood.

And so was her neck, slender as it merged with her shoulders, arms outstretched and fingers tapering off into long, crooked twigs. The trunk swelled with her hips and her breasts, and finally her long feet hooked into the earth, anchored to the crest of the hill.

She was so stunning, Aelan fell back into the snow, unable to look at anything else. The plate armor of bark clad every inch of her, including her lips, nose and eyes, but even so it hinted at a stoic

expression and long, light hair. Mysteries swirled in his head. Who had carved her here? Was she alive?

He wished he was an artist so that he could truly appreciate such a thing as this, but he was a woodsman. And the woodsman in him said he needed to return to his cabin or be at the mercy of wolves. So he made note of everything around him — the biggest pine trees, still weighed by the snow two days ago, the pillars of worn rock rumored to be sleeping giants, and the icy stream that carried snowmelt to the local village — committed them to memory. Only by promising himself to return as soon as he could did he convince himself to leave.

With the very last rays of the sun he ventured back into familiar territory. But the excitement of such a find pounded deep in his chest. The woods were a vast and mysterious place, they gave life and death equally. He'd made many sacrifices to the spirits that dwelled here and if this was how they had finally chosen to bless him, every offering of meat and berries was suddenly worth it.

Perhaps, finally, he'd found his female counterpart. Another of his race.

* * * * *

They called Aelan “forestborn”, a man birthed not by a woman but by the woods themselves. There were many rumors about his origins — some said that the forestborn broke out from giant flowers, others that they were born from does or wolves, and others still that the forestborn were animals granted humanity by powerful and mysterious deities. As far as Aelan was concerned, any of these things could have been true. In his very first memory he was stalking the forest with bow in hand, like he'd been doing it for a million years.

Physically, he was human in every single way but one: Aelan had a pair of long, proud antlers that grew from his temples. They had grown larger over time. One time, they were small enough to disguise beneath a fur cap. That was when Aelan would sneak into the village and have dalliances with other men's daughters. It was one such girl who had given Aelan his name — she would readily accept Aelan's member but was disturbed she had nothing to call him by. It was "Aelan", some legendary hero apparently, an ancient warrior and lover. It stuck in his head, and it became as true to him as any a parent would have given him.

Those days were gone, he could no longer hide his heritage. The men of the village - tough, rugged and sun-burned with broad hands and rough faces - kept him well away from their wives and daughters. They all knew of his well-deserved reputation as an untiring pursuer of women, and so they kept a hawk eye on him as he came to trade. In recent years, Aelan had become itchingly horny. Anything could strike ardor, even steam from stew took on the plump lips and wide hips of young women.

Once he heard the rumors second-hand, as innocent questions posed by village maids. Now they came as rumors behind his back, picked up by his keen ears. Some thought he sacrificed virgins in the forest, some simply speculated on the size of his cock. Whatever it was, the villagers suddenly became wildly imaginative where he was concerned. It was like they had little else to talk about.

Only once had Aelan met a truly learned man. He rode in on a cart, and his purpose was to talk to Aelan and Aelan alone. The old sage was as crumpled as the papers he crooked over. He asked all sorts of questions, but it was the question Aelan asked him that proved more fruitful. It was a simple question: where were the other forestborn? He smiled thinly, pushed his spectacles to the crook in his nose, and told Aelan that only one forestborn was seen in a period that was just short a century. It was a "well-known fact among scholars of the subject", as he put it, that as forestborn got older they grew mossy beards and, for mysterious reasons, disappeared on

great journeys north, to endless wastes of frost where no plants grew.

The second question Aelan asked was, were there were any female forestborn? That's when the sage laughed, and told him he was about to ask him the same.

Dissatisfied, he was leaving the village, when he suddenly had the feeling he was being watched. He peered to the town council building where he saw two men staring at him through the window — the sheriff, whose oily black stubble threatened to engulf his cheeks and join his brows, and Quentin, the town's most experienced woodsman, sneering toothlessly from behind a veil of his own frayed, lanky gray hair.

From then on, neither of those men ever left the periphery of his vision.

* * * * *

Aelan had a dream that night that almost lifted him out from his fur blankets. He saw the woman in the ash tree, her face still placid even as a strange fog crept over her, tendrils first crawling over her roots, then climbing up her legs, her groin, stomach, breasts and neck. As it did, the bark curled and fell, as though burned off, and beneath was healthy pink flesh. She was exactly how he imagined her, serene eyes shut, delicate brows curved. When her eyes blazed open, he was so startled he flung himself from his pallet.

It took him some time to get onto his feet. The real world seemed intrusive, so he set about his chores in heated distraction. Chopping firewood felt less a necessity but a way to work off the boiling tension in his heart. The dream had to have been a message, that he knew. He had to see her, but there was too much he needed to do. He had to sell the furs before the traders closed for the night.

With sweat on his brow, he packed his wares and rushed the miles-long hike to the village.

As he crested the valley, Aelan suddenly became nauseous. A hawk circled counter-clockwise over the few dozen wooden shacks that comprised the settlement. Omens had to be learned through experience — the spirits were telling him justice had perverted. Something had changed. Smoke still swirled out of chimneys, but there was no one outside of their homes, no children laughing and playing, no women out doing chores, no men at their trade. The one long street, normally crowded by bales, animals and carts, was deserted. The only life he could see came from a line of men armed with deadly broadswords and axes, or with toes poking through the cocking stirrups of loaded crossbows. The sheriff leaned a sword over his shoulders, his round face a mess of broken teeth and swarthy features. He would've thought the men were bandits if he didn't know better.

Wary and ready to beat a quick retreat, he descended the valley to the edge of the village. The men watched him as he came into sight, the grips on their weapons shifting ever slightly. They must've been waiting for him, and him alone.

Aelan drew the pack up, made a mental note of where his knife was, and announced his intentions. "I'm here to see the trader."

The sheriff stepped forward. He said in a drawl, "No worries, Aelan. We ain't here to kill ye. The... heh... management's changed. So if you leave your stuff here, we'll take it to the trader."

"I'd prefer to see him directly," Aelan insisted.

The sheriff sniffed. "I'm 'fraid not. New management says no forestborn coming into town and causing trouble. So give us your furs, we promise when ye come back we'll give you half of what we sold it for."

Aelan thought for a moment, his grip tightening around his pack. "Perhaps the trader can come out and see me. That way I wouldn't cause trouble."

The sheriff sneered. "Oh, ye think yer so clever. Well, then... enjoy your trek forty miles to the next nearest village." The sheriff was about to turn around when he suddenly remembered something. "One more thing, Antlers, we got a new census going on. We'll need to know where you live."

"You know I won't tell you," Aelan shot back.

The sheriff shrugged. "Suit yerself, freak, I tried being fair. We got other ways of getting what we want, though until then I wouldn't come on back here, if I was you."

Aelan twisted on his heels, but then nearly toppled backward. The woodsman was so close he could have shivved him with the bone knife in his belt. Quentin gave him a toothless smile, his face shriveling with numerous weather-worn wrinkles. His eyes followed as the forestborn stumbled the long way around.

This could only mean bad things coming. Aelan was all too aware of the eyes following him, his pack weighed down with the goods he hadn't sold.

* * * * *

It was finally time to return to the ash tree. It made for a lengthy trek, but he was surefooted and could cover a lot of ground quickly, the sun was just at its pinnacle when he finally arrived. She was on the crest of a hill, the only tree in this strange place. He found a boulder to sit on, and for an unknowable length of time he took a good, long appraisal of her.

She was not carved into it, like he'd thought in the twilight. The tree had grown around her, every part of her covered in a layer of bark. Her emotionless lips, somehow plump and kissable, her serene eyes, her delicate nose were all discernible. The knots of wood swelled over her breasts and hips, and there was a triangular cover over her groin. Her arms lifted high into the air and sprouted

branches with spring buds at the ends. The sun filtered through the twigs, refracted as though through gems of water.

He ran his hand over her stomach. It was as rough as he would have imagined, but there was a warmth beneath it. It was the warmth of life and flesh.

He didn't know if she could hear him, but he said: "Lady, I'll free you from the tree, and I expect nothing from you. I only wish you'd consider living as my wife."

The tree woman said nothing, and her frozen, knotted expression contained neither excitement nor disgust. He imagined, somewhere beneath that armor of hers, she could hear him.

The dream told him there was flesh beneath. Hesitantly, he drew a knife out, and found a frayed bit of bark around her stomach. He slid his blade under and pried it off. He was horrified: beneath the bark was sticky, bloody flesh, dripping strands of skin.

He covered his mouth, appalled. "I should have known!"

He packed the woman's wound with herbs and balms, shame in his heart. He spent the rest of the day meditating on her, staring into her bark-covered eyes. The forestborn hoped fervently - no, he *knew* - that she would forgive him, and understand that what had happened was a mistake. She certainly showed no trace of pain on that face of hers. His imagination wandered. She could have been cursed by a jealous witch... or grown out of the tree like a fruit... or fallen into a magic trap. He imagined her proud and gentle, honest yet skilled with words when she needed to be. He would spend his days teaching her the ways of the forest, and they'd grow to love each other deeply. He knew it was probably just a fancy, but it gave him the motivation to think through this riddle.

He twiddled the bark in his fingers. Half was raw with dried skin and blood, the other was rough and hard. He closed his eyes and recalled how the fog had stripped the bark from her — but when would a fog like that come next, in this winter? As much as he tried to unwind the puzzle in his head, he couldn't think of a solution. His

antlers ached with the thinking and it was getting dark again. The smell of blood would attract wolves, so he smeared bear urine onto the roots and left for his home.

As he made his way, he spotted an owl twist her head both ways completely, her eyes shining meaningfully at him with every turn. Someone was stalking him. He snorted the wind, and took in only snow and pine. If there was someone around, they were safely downwind from him. He looked that direction, took his bow, nocked an arrow, and loosed it into a suspicious bush.

He was quick. There was nothing but a slight ruffle of leaves as the gray-cloaked ranger fled from the path of the arrow and pounced back in the direction of town. Fast and sure-footed for a human, and unless there was another that possessed Quentin's speed, it could only have been him.

The sheriff had tracked him to his home, then. Whatever designs they had on him, it would probably come in the night, bursting through the door. It was only a matter of whether they had clubs or swords drawn, and that depended solely on the sheriff's intentions. It was time to move deeper into the forest.

Aelan collected what he needed, and with a sack thrown over his shoulder he headed into the darkness.

* * * * *

Aelan camped by the tree that night, with whatever gear he could stow away at short notice. It turned out to be a wise decision. That morning, when he poked his head outside the tent, he saw a black tear through the sky, pointing like a jagged finger to his cabin. Smoke. The sheriff's men had done that, Aelan didn't have to think hard to know what they would do to him.

At least his path was set for him. This place would make his new home. He enjoyed the comforts of the cabin and hearth, but he

didn't *need* them. Besides, it was good to be close to a woman. It felt fitting that, wherever he lived now, it would have to include a space for her.

A stew boiled over a fire, inside a newly-caught hare and whatever herbs and mosses he could forage on short notice. The water was melt, he had to dig through aged, hardening banks to find good, clean snow.

He looked at the tree-woman frozen in the branches as the steam circled into the sky, and then his gaze returned to the bark. He could see enough of the raw skin to see it was peach, a shade lighter than his own, but bound to the damn bark. It was just a matter of stripping it without flensing her. Ideas came to him: from cutting the bark very carefully to rinsing her with water, but he poked the flaws of each.

He shut his eyes. He remembered the dream, how the fog rose and peeled the bark so easily, like fire curls papers and dried leaves. Was it fog he saw, was it—?

In curiosity, he held out the bark to the steam. With a plop the skin separated and fell into the stew.

In his excitement, he set about taking apart his tent, bedroll and whatever skins he could find. With a length of long sinew he stitched the various pieces together, a patchwork blanket. It was not nearly enough to engulf the woman. He would need more skin, from whatever skins he could find.

In an afternoon of hunting he bagged three hardy, healthy deer. He thanked for the forest spirits for such an extraordinary harvest, and skinned them back at camp. He could barely wait to tan them properly. After giving them a quick scrape he tied them with the rest of the patchwork. He would need more skin if he was going to cover the entire tree. He went out on the hunt again, looking for anything that he could add. He would need to make many sacrifices to make up for this wasteful hunting.

He bagged another doe. When he came back, he dropped it in shock, grasping for his weapons.

That gray-cloaked ranger crooked over the fire. Even as he warmed his hands to the smouldering embers, somehow, he knew that he was watched. Quentin turned toward him and gave him a terrible smile, eyes glittering to the dying fire.

He spoke with a weathered, hoarse voice. "If being born in the forest meant you were any better at foresting, I'd never catch any animals. How goes it Antlers?"

"You found me," said Aelan. His hand drifted to his knife.

"Of course," said Quentin. "You're the most heavy-footed thing out here. The forest don't care how you feel about it, how much you love its creatures or that tripe. Age, experience is what it cares about. And other than these here trees, I'm the oldest bastard in these woods."

Quentin put his ladle into the pot and took a long sip.

"Oh, no one makes rabbit stew like you can, Antlers."

Aelan winced, recalling how the skin slid off into the stew. "What are you here for?" he asked.

Quentin made himself at home, his long, crooked fingers patting dirt off his long jacket, sitting a log and dropping another ladle into the stew. "Oh, the only thing that brings me here is rangers' honor. Information is important, you know that, we gotta tell each other about new predators moving in and avalanches and fires. Sometimes, that new predator moves into civilization. There's a new order down in the village. Everything's gonna be very different from now on. That's what I'm telling you, and I'm telling you so's you can get on their good side real quick."

Aelan spat into the hard snow. "Whose good side? I'm not one of you. Your kind has never accepted me, never will."

Quentin shook his head as he rose to his feet. "Oh no, son, you're as human as me. I worked for the circus once, y'see, and

there, the creatures look less like people than you. I've seen folks as tall as trees others who can fit into jars. Men with pig noses, men with yellow skin, women with three tits, women with beards. A kid with antlers? Oh, you'd fit right in." Quentin chewed on his lower lip, as if considering something. "They're always buying freaks for their shows. Let me tell you, as a free man, I don't believe another man can be sold. But the others in our merry band, they don't have the same... principles. I don't mean to mince words with you. What I mean to say is, if they don't see a value in you, they'll rope you up and sell you quick. So's you've got to prove yourself."

Quentin grinned as he watched Aelan pull the string back on his bow. He then nodded to the tree.

"For starters, now — a tree that bleeds! That's something new. I know what you want, lad, 'snot much different than other young 'uns. Free run with the village girls, three square meals a day, and plenty of time to spare to cause plenty o' trouble. You show this to the sheriff, no one's selling you for chump change."

Quentin's greatest weapon was a simple offer of acceptance and it inflicted nothing but indecision on Aelan. Of course, acceptance was what he'd always wanted. But what had his kind always done? When they grew their big, mossy beards, they made their exodus north. To where, he didn't know. He'd never met one of his kind to ask. It must've been a good reason, though.

Really, there were two choices. He could give up his destiny to be chums with greedy peasants, or he could make the odyssey north — whether to die or start living, who knew.

"I'll take my chances," said Aelan.

"The chances aren't good. I was a gambler too, and these are odds I don't like. Especially since I'm now your enemy." Quentin rose to his feet. "Don't shoot me in the back as I leave, Antlers. I could've riddled you a dozen times from last sundown. It's fair you give me the same."

Aelan nodded. Quentin showed off his remaining teeth in a broad smile, then he tightened his grip on his bow and left in the direction of town.

* * * * *

They would be coming for him now. And soon. He would never be able to finish the project fast enough. And so he went from sewing skins together to digging pits for traps. Shallow ones covered by banks of snow and leaves, with sharpened branches at the bottom.

In several hours he'd made a dozen. He went to camp, stooped over pack, and carefully unwrapped a skin of weapons he'd saved for just this occasion. War arrows, made with proper steel heads, fletched with goosefeathers, twenty in all. A sword in a scabbard he'd found on a frozen body. A square shield covered with gouges but still serviceable. He felt the weight of each of them, and imagined how they would feel and handle in combat. In his fancies he sometimes saw himself as a warrior, but he'd never seriously imagined that he would be put to the test. He'd been in fistfights and fought cougars, nothing more.

As Aelan resumed work on the blanket, part of him hoped he could finish freeing the woman before they came, and another part of him wanted to fight now. In his heart he remembered all of the little humiliations he'd suffered: how they'd stare at his antlers and spit in his wake. It might even feel *good*. By the time dusk came, he'd convinced himself that the villagers had all, truly, been monsters, their smiles and good words just a cover for their hatred.

Some ruffling in the bushes and a bestial rumbling drew Aelan's surprise and attention. He looked toward the clearing, where he saw two strong stags pushing and shoving. Their antlers knit together in a death's weave, in their struggle neither could pry their antlers free, their eyes were filled with doomed rage, they didn't

understand they would be dying together. It was an icy omen, something that went straight into Aelan's chest. A battle where all would die. This was a dreadful thing for the spirits to say.

* * * * *

Aelan dreamed of beating hooves, crunching through snow, mounted men wielding torches and swords and crossbows. His eyes ripped open to those sounds, only quieter, muffled by the forest. As he lifted his head, he saw a procession of fires, flickering like ghostly swamp lights, all in a line and moving fast toward his camp.

It had to be them. They were coming at night. They were coming right now.

He had no time to be afraid. He simply took his bow and mounted a sturdy tree. There was a branch he could safely stoop on, like a raven.

The horse's scream came as a ghostly echo as it rang through the valley. The creature must've had fallen into his trap, because immediately after he heard the pound of a human body hitting packed snow and dirt. There was a tumult as the others came to his aid, just outside his vision.

He heard Quentin's voice. "Fools! Slow down, I'll find a path through the traps."

The men dismounted, a multitude of boots crunching through snow. Aelan sensed there were a dozen of them, more possibly.

"Where's this woman-tree then?" asked the sheriff.

"Hush! Antlers is listening!"

There was nothing but urgent whispering after that. Soon it was broken by a loud shout from Quentin.

"You're going too far!"

It was too late. A man emerged from the brush and Aelan unleashed the first of his twenty arrows. It was as if the shaft sprang out from his neck. There was a uproar, swords scraping from sheathes. There were twangs of crossbows going off, whistling through the foliage and doing little but dislodging snow. Only Quentin's arrow came anywhere close, it arced past Aelan's head. The shock of it made Aelan squeeze himself against the tree.

"He's up there!" cried out Quentin.

The crossbows were being reloaded. Aelan had to move before they shot their volley. Just as Aelan sprang from one branch to another, he was chased by four or five quarrels impacting the trunk. The force of it caused tree bark to explode outward.

"Stop shooting, he's gone!"

There was a whine. "Bastard killed Kell!"

"Shooting air won't help!" hissed Quentin, "Do what I tell you, alright?"

"I'm the leader here," said the sheriff, pained.

"This is my territory!" said Quentin, "You want to lead here, live in these woods for fifteen years then!"

The sheriff was silent briefly. "I'm gonna say something to Antlers."

"Do it, then."

Aelan heard the sheriff stepping forward.

The sheriff's voice boomed out. "Antlers, we's known each other fer a great deal of time. I hope ye've seen that I'mma man of my word. You killed one of us, well, that's fine. Kell was a bastard anyway, and we're a better band of brothers without him. As far as I sees things, ye got one chance to come down here and make amends. The second man you kill — that's going to be your fucking last. I'll drag ye by your antlers, mount you like a goddamn deer on my wall."

Aelan had been drawing his arrow, aiming for the source of the voice. When he was confident, he let it fly through the leaves.

There was a grotesque sound as it punched through leather into flesh. There was just a momentary pause after that — he was dead, or more likely taking in the shock of the wound.

“Fuck!” he screamed, “Shit!” Alive, then.

“Sheriff!”

“Kill the bastard, charge that hill!”

“Stop!” roared Quentin.

But the order was given. Swords left sheathes and a battle cry unleashed as the men charged the slope. They looked like nothing but ten shadows in a haggard formation, big wooden shields in front. The only things truly visible were their blades shining like pillars of moonlight. Aelan was a good shot, but not ten at once. He unleashed arrows as fast as he could, pulled back with as much strength as he could muster, working for power and not accuracy. He hoped at least one of them would strike home, but many of them sailed past or struck the shield. They landed with enough force to make the men snap backwards, but only one pegged flesh and made the man roll down the hill, howling all the way.

He was a hunter, not a soldier. It was his lot to run from a fight like this, not dive into it. There was but one thing that made him leap from the tree and draw his sword — he now had something to protect. They would cut her down and put her on display like an ornament, if just that. Before that would happen, either he or every last one of them would die. And so he impregnated his blade with that feeling, wielding it like conviction to bear on his enemies.

They were night blind, and they swung at the air while his blows connected. The first man poked at the charging darkness, while Aelan scythed his sword over the shield and got him in the jugular. There was a sickening feeling behind Aelan’s hand as he completed that arc. Another came to him, Aelan swept out with his shield, catching the man’s hand. The sword was forced from his

hand, and he was defenseless as Aelan sliced his arm at elbow and followed with a stab into the gut.

“You’re an animal!” a man cried from behind. Aelan turned. In the moonlight, his blade shone bright as fire as it flashed towards Aelan. The forestborn swung his sword at the man’s hand. There was a howl, and Aelan finished the job with an efficient cut across the neck.

The air whistled with a coming blow, and Aelan knew this one he couldn’t dodge. He lifted his shield. With a snap the ax bit into it, splintering half in a single chop. The axeman had to jump back to force it out, and then charged again. This time, it would take Aelan’s arm if he blocked it. He tossed what remained of the shield and parried instead. The force of the swing scraped Aelan’s sword, skittering it down toward his chest, sparks erupting all the way — Aelan got a good look of the man’s face, wild with anger, beneath his brow lay nothing but darkness. Aelan twisted just in time so the ax plummeted to the earth. He could have killed the axeman if Aelan hadn’t heard the creak of a pulled bowstring.

“Shoot for the antlers!” cried Quentin from the woods. One or two bolts flew from brush. They were inaccurate, but without his shield, they would eventually get him. He looked up at the woman, her face only lit by the moon, and apologized silently for the retreat he was about to make.

He turned his back and ran for the other side of the hill, chased by more arrows and quarrels.

“Get that hill!” shouted the sheriff.

“Wait!”

Again, they ignored the old forester. Against the silvery backdrop of the moon, Aelan found the soldier easy targets. The two arrows he loosed each got a kill, two men stupidly falling as they reached the crest.

“Fucker’s waiting for us!”

The sheriff roared. "A pouch of gold for the bastard who gets his antlered head!"

"Patience," advised Quentin. "The boy's not leaving his lover tree. Wait him out!"

Even from this far away, the sheriff's groan was audible, full of reluctance. "So be it." He cleared his throat and shouted, "Antlers! Antlers! You'll try and get that tree for yourself. And when you do, we'll be waiting. Damn it, Antlers, we'll wait."

* * * * *

Aelan counted his arrows. Eleven. He felled six that day. Strange, it didn't weigh on him like he thought it would. His only thought, before he shut his eyes and allowed himself to sleep, was how he'd deal death to the other half of the party.

Morning came slowly. Every sound could have been a sneaking enemy, and vigilance only allowed him lapses of unconsciousness. When he dreamed, it was a wild mix of reality and fantasy. He saw himself in those stag's hooves, his antlers caught in the death bind of another's. He saw himself growing weaker and weaker with the struggle, falling to his knees, and dying.

When he awoke, he found himself grasping his bow so tight that he'd actually been drawing his bow, arrow nocked. In his weariness, he heard what he thought were whispered words, but which revealed themselves to be simply twigs swaying to a gentle breeze.

He twisted, and looked to the tree.

They'd come in the night, with axes and saws. In horror, Aelan watched the first chop descend to the woman's ankles, and bite directly into the bark and flesh. The axeman planted a foot on the tree to pry the ax free.

“Shit, boss, it bleeds it does!”

Quentin whispered, “Quiet! It’s just red sap!”

Aelan wouldn’t allow a second strike. As the henchman nodded and lofted his ax, Aelan took an arrow and loosed it. The axeman fell back before he could finish his chop.

The remaining men went for their swords.

“He’s awake!” roared the sheriff, hidden just below the hill’s crest.

Quentin yelled, “Get behind the fucking hill! Don’t let him shoot you!”

Before Aelan could even nock the next arrow the other three men quickly rolled to the side.

Aelan spoke. “You see now why I protect her? She lives, damn it. You’ve got no right to take her.”

The response was a guttural laugh. “Oh, so finally Antlers speaks. Never known you to talk a man’s ear off, and I respect that. Term’s changed, beast-man. If you ever get in reach of me, the only thing I’ve got for you is a blade. But, you leave now, I can toss you a pouch of gold, we can call it quits and we never have to see each other again. I’ll tell you now, I’m seeing the end of this, one way or another, Antlers.”

“No deal,” said Aelan.

“Well, didn’t give that much thought to it, didja?” The sheriff’s voice boomed. “So be it, Aelan. More bloodshed. Let that be on your head.”

There was a pause, then Aelan heard a sickening chop. It sounded, for the life of him, like an ax against a trunk. He looked around, and then came another.

It was a grotesque feeling when Aelan realized that they’d positioned themselves on the other side of the trunk, out of his sight. They were using her as cover.

“Bastards!” screamed Aelan. He tossed his bow aside, and stamped halfway up the hill. The chop came almost in beat with his footsteps, and with each one he winced. He couldn’t see it, but he could feel it, each bite like a hack at his own legs.

“Does that make you angry, Antlers? Hearing your poor tree-woman get hacked down? Well, go on then, rescue her. Right into Quentin’s arrows, ye cocksucker!”

It was trap. It was the only thing it could have been. Quentin would shoot him as soon as he charged. But the lure they chose was so impossible to resist that Aelan would walk right into it, knowing full well what would happen. He steeled his breath, his hands tightened around the grip, and he charged, howling and screaming to draw the axeman’s attention.

And he did. When Aelan rounded the trunk, it took everything in him to not look at the woman’s wounds and instead concentrate on the axeman, the bearded one that nearly offed him last night. He lifted the haft to block an overhand chop, but Aelan’s blow went straight through the wood and split the axeman’s head. His pupils rolled apart while Aelan pried the blade from his skull.

It was then Aelan felt a tremendous, unfathomable force, pushing against, then into, his gut. An arrow, snapping from the impact, the quilled shaft dangling from a thread of wood. Enraged by the sense of violation, he threw a dark gaze in the direction the arrow had come from. Like a sore thumb was Quentin’s smile, black and white with snarls and gaps, but mirthful all the same.

A movement saw Aelan’s attention swinging around. The three remaining henchmen surrounded the prone sheriff, shields raised. The situation suddenly dawned on Aelan — they would slow him down, while Quentin shot at him, one arrow after the other. And already, Quentin was drawing back his bow, another shaft nocked. And he would not miss. There was only one thing to do — to attack, to get close where Quentin could not shoot without hitting his allies.

His sword had been dulled by combat, but still he launched himself into the shield wall, using powerful blows to create a gap through the shield. Swords rained down on him, but Aelan parried desperately. In his charge he'd succeeded in pushing the men apart, they surrounded him now, and at his feet was the sheriff, his oily face tensed with fear. The man tried to use his arms to plant his useless foot to the ground, but he couldn't do it fast enough. Aelan executed him with a thrust into the neck. Their commander gurgled his last words, blood bubbling from the wound, his hand going to a dagger but without the strength to pull it.

"Monster!" cried one of his men, charging into Aelan. Aelan simply stepped aside and swiped the back of his neck. The blow wasn't strong enough to decapitate him, but it didn't need to be. His head tilted unnaturally forward as he fell to the ground. The other two were more patient. They signaled each other with their eyes, taking furtive glances, as if debating silently whether to charge or not. The movements, guarded, shields tight to their bodies, showed they had grown reluctant. Meanwhile, Aelan paced around making sure that the two men were between him and Quentin.

If Aelan knew the old hunter well, he would be shifting positions now, angling for a better shot.

"Now!" one of the men screamed. He charged by himself, fatally misjudging his ally, and Aelan dispatched the clumsy attack. Aelan needed only give the last man a steely gaze before his resolve left entirely and he dropped his weapon.

There was little time to celebrate. No sooner than the last man turned tail when another arrow arced inexorably. Aelan could do naught but realize that he would be shot in the shoulder, and instead of nausea would come real pain.

The arrow sank deep, right into the flesh of his collar. Had the arrow been angled a degree downward, the tip might've pierced his heart. Aelan tried to lift his sword arm to break the shaft, but the pain was searing, like stones grinding against each other in his

shoulder. He settled the job with this left hand, breaking for the woods all the while, towards Quentin's hiding spot.

His right arm was worthless, but perhaps he could brace a bow with it. He nocked it as quick as possible, drawing with his left hand while his pained right arm held. The string creaked, the length trembled dangerously, but Aelan sensed, perhaps, his next arrow could fly true. It was just a matter of finding the bastard who shot him. The shafts dug into him as he rushed the forest, into the brush where Quentin hid.

Dozens of crows had come for the spectacle, all perched on a tree as though they were leaves. They cawed excitedly and leered, they well knew that they would be the winners no matter the outcome. Aelan was not comforted by the way they looked at him, beady eyes trending to the wounds in his gut and shoulder. The crows knew death keenly, but even birds were known to think wishfully.

Perhaps these crows could save his life.

He carefully watched them, as they were watching him. Their attention was divided between two spots, him, and somewhere in the brush. Aelan lifted his bow...

"Stop," said Quentin.

The man emerged as though from invisibility, like part of the forest suddenly came to life, his grin now completely absent. His bow was still pulled back, arrow unmoving, a little diamond blade that threatened to speed forward and catch Aelan between the eyes. All the old man needed to do was relax.

"You think you can get me?" said Quentin, his voice shaking, "With that arm of yours?"

"The second arrow, no. But I don't think I'll need it," replied Aelan.

"So you say, so you say," Quentin's voice drifted off.

"Will I need to shoot you, Quentin?"

“I have the same question for you. I knew you’d peg a few of us from afar, I didn’t know you’d get the whole bunch. But then again, they didn’t listen to me. They made bad, bad moves.”

“You’re still confident, then.”

Quentin shrugged. “Oh, somethin’ like that. I know the longer you hold that bow, the more likely the shot’s gonna stray.”

The crows were closing in, the trees filling in like stands at show. They were cawing madly, hungry. Still, Quentin never took his eyes from Aelan, his bow hardly shook. The only emotion he dared show was a tremor of annoyance.

“Damn birds,” he said.

“It’s up to you now. What you want.” said Aelan.

“I want to drag your body to the boss, Antlers. I want to leave you with another arrow, wait for you to perish overnight, and come back for you. That’s what I want.”

“If you take a shot at me,” said Aelan, “I take a shot at you.”

Quentin nodded. “Aye, fair ‘nuff.”

His bow creaked backward again, and Quentin loosed. Aelan didn’t even dodge as the arrow plunged into the other shoulder.

The pain was awful, but Aelan didn’t move. He knew if he let the bowstring go, there was no possibility he could draw it again. Even trembling made the alien objects bury themselves deeper. So he simply nodded, said, “Fine, my turn,” and loosed his arrow.

Aelan was impressed. The man winced only mildly as the arrow dug into the gut. “Fuck, good shot,” he hissed, Quentin looking at the wound. “Shouldn’t be lethal without some care. You, however... lost a lot of blood, haven’t ye?”

Aelan managed to nod.

“Don’t move too much, it’ll just go deeper. That’s why you should leave the shaft in, not cut it off like you did.” Quentin

struggled to put the bow on his shoulder. “Anyways, I’ll be back tomorrow to get yer head. Be dead or be not here, ranger. And luck be with ye.”

And with that, Quentin turned his back and ventured back into the forest.

* * * * *

The three arrows made their presence constantly known, the way they scissored in his muscles as Aelan moved. He only had it in him to crest the hill, before he dropped to before the tree, and put his head carefully on one of the roots.

The woman in the tree looked out to the horizon, a ray of sunlight giving her face a sort of bloom. It highlighted her delicate features and proud nose, lips that belied no emotion. Above her, the little branches filtered through a little sun. It was a good vision to die to, Aelan supposed. A much better sight than those two stags would get, forced to watch each other rot away.

Aelan closed his eyes, tried to feel himself getting weaker, tried to feel his life slipping away. But it was a restless sleep like many he had before. He even rolled impatiently, like his body was eager to get the work of the day done. When he realized he wouldn’t die just yet, he sat up like he might emerge from his bed, eyes blinking blearily at a bright sun.

The patchwork was still not large enough, and he had no strength to hunt more animals. Fortunately, he wouldn’t need to take more life. He had all the skins he’d need.

* * * * *

The sun was setting when Aelan was done. Flies buzzed aggressively around him, looking for a place to land on his festering wounds. The skin around them had discolored something grotesque, and they itched like mad. He knew he could've staved off infection if he'd simply treated the wounds earlier, but for some reason, it just hadn't occurred to him.

Besides, the blanket was finally finished. A vast quilt of animal skins, sewed up tightly with sinew. It was an appreciable work for a creature in his state, but Aelan only allowed himself a moment of reflection. He made a tent from it, throwing the skin over the tree's limbs. He dragged a cauldron of snow beneath it, and, with his remaining strength, set the kindling on fire. He only hoped it would be enough steam to strip the bark away.

When the task was done, Aelan finally felt the weakness coming, for good this time. He set his head down on a rock, closed his eyes, and let the crackling of the fire be his lullaby, safe in the knowledge that the woman in the ash would see the next dawn.

* * * * *

In his dream, the tree crumbled, the trunk toppled and crashed to the ground, the branches snapping as they flattened against the floor, like it had suddenly become hollow. In the end, it left only an enormous lump beneath the vast quilt he'd made. Something was born within, it pushed out, crawled on its belly, a squirming thing that slithered to the edge of the quilt. First, a hand emerged, its fingers long and delicate as it found purchase on the ground. Then its other hand, arm, and finally, a head.

When she'd emerged entirely, her entire demeanor was like that of a woodland creature. Her bright black eyes looked to and fro, searching for threats or prey among the canopy. On her hands and knees she loped, until, steadily and shakily, she got to her feet. At

first she walked as though her feet were gelatin, and it took several steps before she found it comfortable, until she walked like a human.

She used it to walk over to Aelan's prone form.

She knelt before him. Her features were the same delicate ones he found on the ash tree, thin nose, beautiful lips that expressed nothing, and deep, neutral eyes, skin a pale shade and mildly speckled. It was her hair that was the most striking — moss-colored, a rich, dark green, lustrous and full of moisture.

Curiosity consumed her, she undid the laces to his jerkin, and worked it off with as much care as she could. It was with a thin smile she admired Aelan's chest, but it quickly became a frown when she saw his wounds. She lowered her head to the one on Aelan's shoulder, she sniffed it, winced a bit, and then, carefully licked the length of it. As her tongue trailed upward, leaving a cool, sweet feeling on the skin, the wound closed and its color returned, leaving just a thin, white scar. She did the same to the other wound, kissing it closed, and the final one too, which lay on his muscular belly.

It was merely an attempt to stabilize herself, but her hand fell on his crotch. It was with surprise she encountered his hard-on, struggling against the linen of his pants. There was a moment of indecision before nature took over. She pulled a lace, and the pressure did the rest of the work. His cock prodded out.

The woman didn't question the instinct to grasp his hardness, or when she dropped to sniff the head of the cock. A short sniff to satisfy curiosity, and a second, longer one to appreciate the scent. She sniffed it again as she slowly jacked it, her nose so close to his erection he could feel the delicate warmth that passed between two people's skin.

She tested the scent with her tongue. It was simply a lap at first, like how a creature might drink water, but her second was luscious and used the entire length, so that the tip went from his shaft, and the pale back cupped his cockhead. It struck her to put his

entire length in her mouth entirely. And so she did, sucking gently while her fingers traveled to his prominent abdominals.

They lost track of time. The woman briefly looked up at Aelan, her eyes shone mysteriously beneath the veil of mossy hair. Perhaps it was mischief in them, as she continued to pleasure him with a great deal of contentment, only separating to slurp up a long, gooey strand of precum. There were beads of sweat all across her brow, Aelan could feel her heart thump madly, in the part of her chest that lay on his thigh.

He would have been fine doing the same all night, but the woman clearly needed something more, as one of her hand had been clawing on her groin nearly the entire time. She seemed apologetic as she got to her knees, already quite wet by the time she dropped onto Aelan's cock. It was a very tight fit, and she needed to twist subtly to get the full length inside. It was a wonderful sight, buried inside her, the coarse green hair over her groin ticking his, her breasts proud and forward, just heavy enough to bounce with each thrust.

It had been a while. A long while. But it couldn't have been simply time that made this feeling so good. It had to be her as well. There was something about her, the way he fitted so perfectly and securely, the thrill he got just knowing he was inside her was unlike any with the villagers. He'd saved her, and now she was saving him. How many people would have a bond like that?

If it was anyone else, he might've withdrawn, and relieved himself on her belly or breast. But he didn't have the power to do, he couldn't even warn her, as he unleashed. She must've felt him because she stopped, throwing her head back and cooing at the sensation. It was fine, then. This was what she wanted, and it was what he wanted to.

Post orgasm, it was as though she were caught in a powerful glow. The smile that came from her was irreplaceable, something he'd commit to memory forever as unconsciousness cloaked him again.

* * * * *

So it hadn't been a dream. As dawn came, he found the woman's arm was wrapped around his waist, her eyes closed. From her pursed lips came a soft snore, almost like a purr. He spent some time looking at her face, she was in some contented dream, the smile told as much.

In a panicked realization, he felt for the wounds, needing to know how they had festered overnight. But he found them closed, as they had in his dream. And, just in the manner of his dream, his breeches were also undone, his flaccid cock exposed in the cold air.

So they'd had sex. And he didn't even know her name.

Quentin.

The old man – probably the only man capable of killing him – had promised to return. A tough, clever man, who knew the woods even better than Aelan did. They had to move. If Quentin was not here already, watching, he would be soon.

Reluctantly, he pushed the woman's arm off, and began to lace himself up. That roused her, and she blinked tiredly at Aelan.

"Men are coming," said Aelan. "They'll kill us."

She seated herself against an old log. She must've been spritely, she didn't even stretch.

Aelan gathered himself, picking up pieces of gear and provisions, and loading them into a backpack. It was when he turned his head that he slowed down. He took another glance at her, and her eyes gleamed with intelligence.

"You know where to go," Aelan realized.

The woman's voice was clear, authoritative. A beautiful sing-song voice, with the best qualities of youth and age. But they were simple words.

“Yes. North.”

"Elvish Inquisition" by Victoria Arius

The man in the black robes hurried through the catacombs, his sandals slapping on the dark stone. The smell of fear permeated the damp air, as he sweated despite the cold.

The torch he carried sent flickering light out into the tunnels, forming insidious shadows and throwing the frightened expression of his face into relief, his shiny pate a halo in the darkness. As he turned left, then right, then left and left and right, it was as if his feet were marking out a complex pattern, which if seen from above, had some kind of spiritual significance.

Gaddiel knew better. He had been silently tracking the man for the last hour and, despite himself, was impressed at his prey's determination not to lead him to the headquarters of his sect. He was not particularly concerned, however; once he was bored of the chase and had captured the man, his mind would unfurl like a leaf in the warmth of the spring sunshine. Gaddiel had been Highest Inquisitor but One for many years and his ability to coerce his victims into spilling their guts - literally when absolutely necessary - was legendary. The bards of the court of Remus had composed many ballads glorifying his deeds and his autograph had become highly collectable, fetching many eschcol on the black market.

Deciding that his victim had more stamina than he first supposed, he chose to bring the hunt to a head. Muttering a spell to himself, the metal toe caps of his boots began to sound against the slabs of the tunnels. To his satisfaction, the sweating monk sped up. Things were becoming a little more interesting.

If Gaddiel did not perceive the irony of using the sadistic techniques of his people's former oppressors in hunting down them down, he could not be entirely blamed. As he carefully dodged the blobs of urine that were splattering from underneath the cloak of the fleeing man, his one thought was of revenge.

Born into a world largely free from the burning cross, the horrific stories of torture, death and abuse had made a searing impression on Gaddiel's brain. His own father had been killed by the brethren of this man and from an early age, he and his peers had been made to look into the crystal bowls of the Sibyls to understand the depths of the atrocities. Any child that flinched away from their past was taken to the sanatoriums, where the mutilated survivors showed them their scars as a warning.

As Gaddiel remembered the feelings of revulsion from being forced to listen to the violent chanting of the Orders in his history lessons at school, he decided to try a new experiment. Softly he began to whisper:

Parce, Domine,
Parce populo tuo:
Ne in aeternum
irascaris nobis...

As expected the words of the hymn began to echo around the walls of the passage in a frighteningly unearthly manner. Smiling cruelly he raised the volume of his voice, breaking from his relentless walk into a jog. The man ahead had now thrown down the torch and was blindly running through the tunnels, possessed by terror.

Flectamus iram vindicem,
Ploremus ante Judicem;
Clamemus ore supplici,
Dicamus omnes cernui!

Nostris malis offendimus,
Tuam Deus clementiam,

Effunde nobis desuper,
Remissor indulgentiam!

Gaddiel was pleased at the full baritone of his voice. Although his singing reverberated through the depths of the catacombs, drowning out any other sounds audible to clayman ears, his highly developed hearing could still detect the skittering heartbeat of his prey. As he turned another corner, he bellowed the refrain of the hymn once again.

Parce, Domine,
Parce populo tuo:
Ne in aeternum
irascaris nooobiiiiiiiiis!

As Gaddiel reached the crescendo of his song, he lit the tunnel with a Jair charm. In the light he could see his own dread image reflected in the pupils of the monk, who had collapsed in the corner of the passage. Although the young monk's bloodshot eyes were glued to Gaddiel's silhouette, his fingers were scrabbling at the stone of the walls, as if to dig himself into the safety of his own grave. Gaddiel, barely out of breath, noted to himself that although dressed as a Benedictine, the monk was as slender as a Franciscan under his robes and had the mad look of an ascetic. He tutted.

'Chasing fat little monk piggies is more sport. It may be difficult to crack your non-indulgent little mind, priestling, I see you deny yourself much.'

'Abomination!' the monk suddenly shrieked. Having given up on excavating the walls, he was making the sign of the cross over and over.

'Boring,' sighed Gaddiel. Drawing his hood from over his pointed ears he allowed the monk to see the full measure of his

countenance, a face carved from marble framed by curling black hair, hawk-like features without compassion. He was pleased to smell that the monk had now soiled himself properly, recognising who it was that had hunted him down.

With the last vestiges of strength, the monk began to curse Gaddiel in a most unholy manner, questioning his paternity and accusing him of sleeping with donkeys. Used to such foul language from the Sect of the Church of Peter, it did not anger the Inquisitor; rather he was once more impressed with the youth's spirit.

Having decided to remove his captive from the catacombs so he could question him at leisure, Gaddiel stuffed his mouth with a torn piece of cassock then wrapped him in his own cloak, rendering the slight man invisible and masking his disgusting stink.

As he made his way back through the catacombs with the monk carried carelessly on his shoulders, he passed the remains of the persecutors of the past. Again, he wondered why they could not purify the site with fire. His teachers had claimed that by allowing its existence, it served as a reminder of the horror of the past, but he and many others believed that it served as a symbol of revival to the fanatics. Their theory had been proved once too often.

* * * * *

A thousand years before, the carefully preserved balance of Gaia had been disrupted when the Emperor of Remus, a clayman, had converted to the faith of the Sect of Peter, under the influence of his mother. Previously the clays, coalmen, celestials, half-breeds and elves, has co-existed fairly peacefully, aside from the usual wars of the clays. Clays were good administrators and inventors and the elves had pretty much left them to get on with it, focusing on medicine and the arts, not often bothering with the less creative matters of state.

The elvish members of the Council had the foresight to warn the emperor that tolerance of the sect, although laudable, could result in persecution of other faiths. It was not long before the leaders of the sect had wormed their way into the Council and despite their claims of disinterest in secular matters, began to influence every aspect of decision making in the empire.

The elves and celestials had been stunned at the rate of conversion of the clays. Despite being outnumbered by the clays, their abilities had always protected them from harm. As they also lived longer than the clays, they often made the mistake of believing that their passions were only passing whims of the centuries. With hindsight they realised that many of the clays had harboured jealousies towards them and those with magical ability. It was the preaching of the Peterites that unleashed this hidden hatred in many. It had only taken seven hundred years, but by the time of Gaddiel's father, an elf had been blamed for the assassination of the Emperor Otto and the Peterites had unleashed a vicious campaign against elves, celestials, coalmen and the witches. The sect had expanded into many orders, and the religion not only had the power to appoint the emperor, but also validate any clay's claim for royalty.

It was in the three hundred year war against the Peterites following the Great Cull of the Elves, that Gaddiel's father had been killed. The orders had carried out atrocity after atrocity and although they were now defeated, the allies of the elves had not quashed every last member. In their wisdom, the current Council had decided that publicly Peterites would be allowed to exist, as long as they followed the teachings of their gentler prophet Joschka and stayed out of secular matters. However, in secret, the fanatics would have to be hunted.

Fortunately for the priest, the elvish inquisition did not resort to the methods of the old Peterite orders when questioning prisoners, unless they found that their captive had a particularly strong mind. Gaddiel did, however, find it psychologically useful to have the instruments of the Peterite's archaic torture about his

questioning chamber, a chamber which in the daytime was merely one of the rooms of the Museum of the Great Cull.

He enjoyed the confusion of his prisoners when they arrived, as after being shown the chamber in silence, they were then escorted by two of his handmaidens to a large candlelit bath chamber, tiled with imported ceramics from Hellenia and heated from a hot spring, the bath itself of Remusian style, with steps leading down into it.

Certain that the water was either boiling hot, or filled with some deadly poison, they often struggled before submitting to the ministrations of the girls. But Gaddiel was merely fastidious and did not want to deal any further with the unpleasant excretions of his captives, unless absolutely necessary.

As he now looked through the peep-hole of the room, he enjoyed watching the chained young monk attempt to hide his reaction to the beauty of the blonde ethereal sisters, who had decided to wade into the water with him. As they entered the water with the naked young man, the linens of their robes clung to every curve and crevice of their lower halves. Gaddiel could see that the monk was muttering prayers under his breath. He realised that his captive was either stronger of mind than he thought, or interested in more unconventional activities, as his well-formed cock, remained only semi-erect.

It had been decided at a conference of the elves of all the continents of Gaia one hundred years ago, that in keeping themselves apart from the clays they had unwittingly allowed resentment to build in the non-magical population of the world. At the time when Hellenia was at the forefront of the world, the elves and celestials had often consorted with the clays, and most of the heroes and heroines of myth were the result of copulations between them. As Gaia had entered the Black Ages, what to the elves seemed like a short-period where they were otherwise occupied, was viewed as a permanent rejection by the more mortal clays. Tale-telling around the fire no longer told of clays meeting beautiful fairies in the woods, but

of crusades and witch hunts. The Peterites had tapped into this resentment against their glamorous and now unattainable cousins. The elves realised that they needed to be attainable once more.

In turn, the prophets of the Peterites had realised that the rejection of sexual joy was the ultimate weapon against the elves and celestials.

With this in mind, it became quite a challenge for an elvish inquisitor to turn a Peterite and force them to abandon their ridiculous vows of chastity. As the monk continued to ignore the splendid charms of the nubile girls bathing him, Gaddiel realised he would have to resort to more sophisticated methods to tempt the man from his bigotry.

Using the telepathy gifted to some elves, he signalled to Paidia and Pannychis to lead the monk to the side of the bath. Using the manacles there, they chained him to the side. Almost as an afterthought he summoned Pandaisia to the bath chamber; if it was going to take a long time to break the monk, he might as well be entertained properly.

Paidia and Pannychis had already started to kiss each other, entwining their tongues and clinging together in the warm water by clutching and squeezing their voluptuous buttocks. The monk was attempting to shut his eyes but Gaddiel had charmed him with an inverse sleep spell and the ascetic was surprised to feel that he could barely keep his lids closed. His limbs began to shake in a potent mixture of fear and lust, causing the water around him to ripple. Pandaisia, laughing at the prisoner's discomfort, then filled an amphora of water from the hot spring gushing into the bath and poured it over Paidia and Pannychis as they caressed each other. The water soaked their clothes, revealing the glory of their smooth shoulders and heavy breasts. Pannychis crowed in glee, as if it was the first time she had ever seen her sister's delights and started to nuzzle and bite at her erect nipples. As Paidia leant back against the smooth sides of the bath arching her long neck, Pandaisia took the

opportunity to kiss her from above, her own ebony hair mixing with the blonde's.

As Gaddiel pulled his eyes away from the threesome, he was happy to see that the monk was now sporting a violent erection. As the man strained against the chains, every muscle in his finely modelled body was taut with exertion and the wiry hair on his chest and legs denoted that the man's nature was not that of a holy man, but of a satyr.

Gaddiel reached into the mind of the monk and was pleased to discover that the man, though distressed and confused, shared his own fantasy for the girls. He quickly issued a silent order to Pandaisia, who paused from kissing Paidia and started to remove her own clothes. Pandaisia was as dark as the others were blonde and she had a more athletically formed body, her breasts high on her chest, her stomach flatly toned and her calves long and slim. She poured another amphora of water over herself, making every part of her shine with the droplets and sat on the edge of the bath, spreading her legs to her companions who had stopped momentarily to admire her.

No longer hidden in the delicate curls of hair, Pandaisia revealed a beautifully formed cunt. Its folds were like the many petals of a rose and her two sisters, smiling at her, each dipped one of their fingers in the warm water and then began to gently stroke the outermost lips, which even Gaddiel could see were trembling in the semi-darkness. Pandaisia began to purr like a cat and lay back over the tiles, her moist mouth parted, caressing her own breasts feverishly, pulling at her nipples and stroking at her belly.

Gaddiel dipped once more into the mind of the monk, curious to find out what he wanted to see next. What he found in the recesses of the Peterite's mind would have graced the walls of many an Ancient Remusian temple and he realised that the young man's imagination must have been fuelled by illicit visits to the ruins, before his ardour had turned to fanatical religion.

He quickly issued silent instructions to Paidia and she abandoned her manipulation of Pandaisia to her sister, and on one of the shelves on the wall, found what she needed. Wading to the monk's side of the bath, she silently showed him the marble phallus and his eyes widened in surprise, as he realised his fantasy had been discovered. He pulled against his chains, attempting to touch the girl with any part of his body, his face contorted in frustrated lust, but she laughed spitefully and gracefully leapt away, splashing him with the water and returning to her sisters. She proffered the phallus to Pannychis, who pressed it to her full lips and started to suck on it voraciously, warming its cold surface. Then, as the monk groaned in suspense, she slid it inside Pandaisia's throbbing pussy, twisting it, plunging it in and teasing her sister by rubbing it on her pulsing clitoris.

As Pandaisia began to moan more loudly, Paidia gently caressed the hood of her clit and started to hungrily lap it with her tongue. Pannychis, not to be outdone, pulled herself from the bath, removed her wet clothes and lowered her own juicing cunt over Pandaisia, who obligingly flicked out her tongue as she wailed and squirmed. Gaddiel was marvelling at the monk, whose erection was wondrous to behold; if he was a virgin, his endurance was astounding and any lesser man would have jetted into the water by now. Deciding that the monk's mind had not been fully opened and irritated by his own erection that had been chafing against his cod piece for some time, he decided to interrupt the tableau with his presence.

As he strode unclad into the bathroom, the girls barely acknowledged his presence. So caught up were they in their own trinity of love, it was hard to see where each girl began or ended and their voices formed a heavenly chorus of moans.

As he knelt beside the monk and grasped his face roughly, he saw lust replaced with fear in his eyes. In a moment he had plumbed the depths of his thoughts and found one of the hidden keys of information that could unlock the other rooms of the novice's

mind. The monk's fear of Gaddiel, was mixed with desire, and the suppression of his desire for men, women and elves had led to his embrace of the extreme religion. His name was Durante, and when his family had been killed by the plague, the lost boy, so confused and twisted, had been an easy target for the Peterites.

Gaddiel felt little pity for Durante despite this. His kind had been used as scapegoats for too long and he knew that the boy had not shown mercy to the elves that the Peterites had captured and tortured while in hiding. Snarling into his face, disgusted at his prisoner's weakness, Gaddiel pinched both of the monks nipples between thumb and forefinger, twisting them sharply until they were erect. The novice sobbed and pulled once more against his chains, trying to rub against his captor's muscled thighs. Gaddiel pushed him back to the wall of the bath scornfully and instead beckoned to the cavorting maidens. He unlatched Paidia away from Pandaisia, wrapping her in his arms instead and sliding his thick cock into her warm pussy. Giving her a long kiss, licking the juices from her face and exploring the secrets of her body with his hands, he allowed his ass to brush against the monk's bobbing penis while his own slid in and out of the girl.

The monk began to hoarsely beg for release, chanting, 'Please sire, please, hurt me again, touch, me, please,' over and over.

The inquisitor found the monk's voice an irritation and willed Pannychis to silence him. Pannychis climbed from the ledge of the bath and walked to the prisoner this time, pulling his head back onto the tiles and lowering her pussy onto his face. Durante started to desperately explore her sopping cunt with his tongue and as he gasped and swallowed her briny sweet nectar, she began to buck against him. While Gaddiel continued to slowly fuck the blonde voluptuous beauty, the darkly glorious Pandaisia embraced her from behind, slipping her fingers into her anus and caressing her breasts. Realising from his expression that the monk was about the boil over, Gaddiel silently ordered Pannychis to move away from him. In his

abandonment, the prisoner began to wail and thrash in the water, the chains cutting into his flesh, spittle forming on his lips, his eyes protruding from his head.

The girls cast scornful looks at their prisoner and led their master to the steps of the bath. This time Pandaisia sat against the top step and held Pannychis between her legs, so she could pinch and caress her breasts. Pannychis then spread her gleaming thighs below the water and Gaddiel was able to kneel on the lower step and plunge his aching cock into her depths, while his eyes feasted on the embracing sisters. Paidia then sat next to Pannychis and started to fuck herself with the marble phallus matching her thrusts to the speed of her master. As Pannychis bounced and wriggled like an eel in the water, Gaddiel once more wondered at the endurance of Durante, who had still not ejaculated- that was until he realised that the young man was reciting the *Miserere* prayer in Latin, over and over. He smiled cruelly to himself, knowing Durante was happy to commit sacrilege for the sake of prolonging his desire. He believed then, that the monk was ready for the next test, ultimate submission to him.

With another silent command, Gaddiel ordered Pannychis to unchain Durante from the side of the bath but keep his hands manacled together. Then all but one of the three graces left the room.

The dark Pandaisia took her sister's place in the water and was hungrily kissing Gaddiel as he plunged his cock into her unremittingly, creating waves across the bath while the monk watched, frozen in uncertainty. As the inquisitor entered the new convert's mind once more, he confirmed what he already knew by instinct. He slowly withdrew his cock from Pandaisia allowing the water to drip from his vein-marbled member and he knew that the monk was not looking at the girl but fully focused on his own chiselled body and muscular arse. He slowly walked up the steps of the bath, lay back on the cool stones and waited.

Pandaisia led the monk from the bath and then chained his ankles to rings on the floor, allowing him enough slack to kneel and lie down. It did not take long for Durante to lie next to Gaddiel and then after waiting nervously, he started to submissively lick the elf's long ears with his tongue and then nibble on his lobes with his teeth. Gaddiel turned and faced him, cradling the head of the slighter man in one of his hands and staring into his burning eyes. After biting him on the lips, he then growled and pushed his head down to the level of his groin, signalling to Pandaisia that she should do the same to Durante by lying under him. Durante was a fast learner and Gaddiel was simultaneously disgusted and tantalised by the youth as he slavishly stroked the muscles of his abdomen with his chained hands and kissed the inside of his thighs, eventually stroking his balls with his tongue and then gently experimenting by slowly encompassing each one with his mouth.

Beneath his hips, Pandaisia had been mirroring the novice's every action and now she goaded him on, by sliding the full length of Durante's cock into her mouth, sliding it out again and lapping at his glans. Delighted by the feeling of Pandaisia's mouth, Durante decided to try it out on Gaddiel and soon the trio were a chain of thrusting and sucking flesh. Linked into Durante now, physically and mentally, Gaddiel was able to find what he wanted and he locked the location of the Peterite's headquarters into a recess of his mind. His work done, he focused on his pleasure and immersed himself in the feeling of being engulfed by Durante's hot mouth, while his balls were massaged by strong hands only recently dedicated to benediction and prayer. As Pandaisia also worked her magic on the youth, she dared to slip a well-lubricated finger in between his firm buttocks and Gaddiel felt the jolt of pleasure run through Durante and vibrate along the end of his own cock. As the former monk fell further and further into the abyss, his mind indeed unfurled and Gaddiel amused himself by learning more about his predilections, which included flagellation.

As the inquisitor explored the memories of Durante, he came upon a scene which unsettled the hazily erotic atmosphere of the

bath chamber. Durante was remembering his time as an initiate into the faith. The elf could see the boy, naked and chained to a wall, being repeatedly whipped by an evil and dark presence. Durante was in total submission to his tormentor and Gaddiel realised why the monk's fears and ecstasies were tied so strongly together. As the man with the whip stepped from the shadows, Gaddiel could see that he was dressed from head to toe in red and he was wearing a hat. The man's face was burning with lust and when he threw back his arm for one last time, his exertion caused his hat to fly from his head, revealing the pointed ears of the elvish. As the whip sliced into Durante's pale flesh in his memory, Gaddiel felt the youth shudder beneath him in a frenzy. The movement of his convulsed body caused his mouth to slide away from Gaddiel's cock, rolling away as he succumbed to the petite mort and drifting into exhausted sleep.

Disturbed by what he had seen and sexually frustrated, Gaddiel beckoned Pandaisia to him. She obligingly straddled him while he tried to work off the worry of the memory. Even her skill was not enough to draw him back to the present. He strode from the room, angrily dragging her after him and locked the monk in the bath chamber so he could be interrogated again later.

* * * * *

As he lay on the bed in his chamber, mulling over what he had seen, Gaddiel realised that he had been stimulated by the monk's humiliation and until he had been physically satisfied, his mind would not be clear. Receptive to her master's moods, Pandaisia called in her sisters and it was not long before the sight of the sisters kissing and caressing each other's full breasts had restored his lust.

He ordered Pannychis to fetch a red and black robe and a whip from the Museum. Paidia, wearing the Cardinal's robe, was soon arranged to his satisfaction over a simple looking bench and

with her ankles were tied to rings at its base about three feet apart. She was then ordered to bend over it, and her hands were tied together on the rings on the other side. Pannychis then lifted the skirt of the red robe which revealed Paidia's plump white buttocks high up in the air, displaying her swollen cunt and tiny pink anus framed in perfect contrast by the crimson silk.

Meanwhile Pannychis had put on the black robe, raising it's hood to cover her face but leaving it open, her white figure revealed teasingly as she moved. After a signal from Gaddiel she brought the whip down on her sister's white cheeks in a swift, slicing movement, drawing blood at the first stroke. The beautiful elf screamed, but it was a scream of harsh joy, as well as pain. Pannychis brought down the whip on her sister again and once more the girl screamed out, the juices of her cunt wetting the insides of her legs and mixing with the streaming blood. Gaddiel was possessed. Drawing Pandaisia to him, he pushed her onto the floor and started to her fuck from behind. He signalled once again and Pannychis's arm was like lightening - Paidia didn't scream this time, instead she moaned in ecstasy and Gaddiel watched in fascination as her anus dilated and her vulva pulsed in the candlelight. Casting Pandaisia to one side, he quickly walked to the prostrate girl and after slickening his cock with the juices from her straining pussy, carefully slid its end into her arsehole. He began to slowly ease his cock into her, with each stroke introducing more of its length as she began to increase her moaning.

Pandaisia then sat on her sister's back, rubbing her nipples against his face while her other sister kneeled behind him and cupping his balls, slowly inserted the marble phallus into his rectum. She began to plunge the dildo in and out and after a few more thrusts he exploded into Pannychis's arse with a roar, drowning out her own moans. Pandaisia then carefully untied her exhausted sister and together they left their master, who now satisfied was meditating with greater clarity on what he had seen in his captive's mind.

As he poured himself a glass of dark Raddan wine, the inquisitor began to smile at the potential intricacy of the conspiracy

that he had surely discovered that night. He had become jaded from the easy hunts of amateur fanatics and relished the challenge of using his intellect on something that was beyond faith. The interrogation of his captives aided by his handmaidens had been a small diversion but he knew that he hardly deserved his fame, as so far his achievements had been easily accomplished. He had always suspected that the survival of the extreme Peterites had depended on something beyond their claymen capabilities and now he knew that he had an adversary that truly warranted his attention.

Draining his wine, he swiftly began packing for a long journey by horse. In order to infiltrate Durante's sect, he would need a supernatural disguise composed of stronger magic than his own. With a little luck his friend Epimetheus, who lived in the far away mountains of the coalmen, would be able to help.

“Norn's Cavern” by EC Revelle

The cave yawned before Mag and his lizardfolk guide, a black maw that swallowed all light. It was a hole wide enough for three men to walk abreast, opening from the side of the rocky foothills at the edge of the thick, murky forest.

“In there?” asked Mag, pointing at the cavern mouth.

“There,” agreed the guide, the language of humans sounding raspy as his serpentine tongue struggled with his sharp teeth to form words Mag could understand. “I not go further. You pay.”

The guide tapped one open palm with the pointer claw from his other hand, indicating that Mag should fill it with gold.

“Ah. Yeah,” said Mag, stroking his darkly stubbled chin thoughtfully. “What’d we agree on, again?”

The reptile snorted derisively, and his tail began swishing with agitation.

“Mag man’s memory not that bad. Twenty gold pieces. We struck bargain!”

“Easy, easy,” said Mag, raising his hands palms out to mollify the guide. “Twenty it is. But how about this: I’ll give you fifteen now, and if you wait here till I come back, fifteen more to guide me home when I return.”

The guide hissed loudly several times in quick succession, the lizardfolk version of laughter.

“You not come back,” he said. “None come back. Pay twenty now.”

Mag pursed his lips and looked the guide up and down, eventually locking his own intent yellow eyes with the reptile’s icy green orbs. This lizard was smarter than most of his kinsmen, and

braver as well. His once bright green skin had dulled to an earthy shade tinged with brown, a mark of his age and experience. Lizardfolk shuddered at the very thought of Norn's Cavern, and most would do anything to avoid actually going there. *With good reason, I suppose*, thought Mag. *If half the tales about the abomination that lives in there are true.*

"What's your name, friend?" asked Mag, realizing with a sting of shame that he hadn't bothered to ask it before.

"Varak," hissed the reptile, pounding his bare chest with pride. "Bravest warrior of tribe."

Mag nodded in agreement.

"Listen, Varak," he said. "I mean to come back from in there. You say no one's ever come back; that's because I've never tried. Look at this."

Mag reached into his shirt and pulled out a sapphire pendant that hung from a chain around his neck. It sparkled dimly in the wan light that filtered down to them from the forest canopy.

"This blue stone is enchanted. No spell or arcane art can harm me while I wear this. The Duke of Seleca granted me this boon when he charged me with entering Norn's Cavern and returning with the head of the creature that cursed his family six generations ago. I mean to do it. So. Fifteen now, fifteen later. What do you say?"

Varak snorted again. Lizardfolk expressions were hard to read, but Mag thought the reptile was considering it.

Varak appraised the wandering fighter who had only six hours ago entered his village and politely asked for a guide to Norn's Cavern, a place no sane reptile visited. Mag was taller than average with shaggy black hair swept back by a headband and black stubble on his face. His once-youthful features had given way to maturity, like a sharp, angular rock worn smooth by the elements. Mag's hand rested on the pommel of his sword with the easy demeanor of a man who know how to use it. He smiled earnestly, but there was an

impish look in his eye that he couldn't hide from the lizardman's searching gaze.

"Fine," said Varak at last. "Fifteen now, fifteen later. I wait six hours, no longer."

Varak extended one clawed hand and Mag grasped it tightly. A bargain struck. Mag counted out fifteen gold pieces from his purse and gave them to the lizard, who gazed at them reverently before placing them in his own satchel.

Mag set about checking his armor and supplies. He fastened his steel breastplate tightly and re-laced his boots to be sure they wouldn't slip. His sword was well-sharpened, as always, but Mag drew it anyway to check. Then he drew and checked each of the four knives tucked into the bandolier slung across his chest. Lastly he re-tied his headband to keep his shaggy black hair from falling into his eyes. Many years ago when Mag was a young and fresh adventurer, the headband had once been a brilliant crimson, but now it was a dull, ruddy red, worn from use.

In his pack he had brought several unlit torches, as well as other necessities. After ensuring that none of the torches had gotten wet, Mag lit one with the flint and charcloth from his tinderbox. Once the torch was burning steadily, he turned to Varak.

"Wish me luck," he said.

Varak just laughed his hissing laugh.

Mag entered the cave, and in the light from the torch could see a long, downward-sloping tunnel stretching before him. *No turning back now*, he thought. *At least Varak bought the story about the enchanted sapphire. I'll have a guide to get me back home if I live.* The sapphire was the only jewel Mag was too fond of to sell, a good luck charm that had served him well on past excursions, but beyond that it had no special properties. Mag was working for the Duke, in a manner of speaking: like countless other travelers to Seleca, he had heard the offer of a reward and set out to claim it.

The Duke's family had been cursed so that no male lived past the age of 35, and this year the Duke was 34.

The first leg of his journey into Norn's Cavern was uneventful. Mag found his thoughts wandering to the tavern he had left behind in Seleca and the warm bed and lusty tavern wenches waiting for him on his return. Mag's funds had been running dangerously low when he heard about the Duke's offer of a small fortune for Norn's head. It seemed like a perfect opportunity for a seasoned mercenary like himself, but now in the dark passage he wasn't so sure.

As he descended deeper into the cavern, the shadows around him seemed to throb and coalesce. The inky blackness became a palpable thing, and the light of his torch seemed to retreat from it, leaving him illuminated by a wan oval of light around his person. He shuddered, feeling the darkness caress his face.

Mag heard a soft feminine sigh drift to his ears out of the gloom and felt hot breath on his neck, but when he spun around he found himself alone. *Calm down*, he told himself, but his heart was thudding in his chest. *You're just imagining things. Gotta keep moving forward.*

The stone path beneath his feet continued ever onward, ever downward, sometimes twisting left or right like a snake sliding across the ground. Mag began to entertain the idea that this cavern wasn't natural.

He lost track of time. Every so often he heard the same sighing half-moan, just behind his ears. It grew more distinct, insistent even, the deeper he went. He could feel her warm breath, could even smell her scent in the cavern around him: jade and honeysuckle, but with an earthy, spicy quality as well. He felt a twinge of arousal in spite of himself, a longing for the woman to appear before him. *You're going crazy, Mag*, he thought to himself. *It's a trick. Norn's just messing with your head.*

But the thoughts wouldn't go away. He walked as if in a trance, enveloped by the woman's scent and enraptured by her wordless voice, dripping with lust. He kept his eyes forward, focused on moving ahead, but he could feel the touch of her hands on his shoulder, the swell of her breasts pressing against his back, the heat of her lips on his neck. *It's a trick*, he repeated to himself like a mantra, refusing to turn around and acknowledge the illusion. *You have to keep going. It's a trick. You just miss the wenches back in Seleca, that's all.* But his manhood swelled in his constricting breeches in spite of himself. He focused on one plodding step after another, using all of his willpower to keep moving.

Eventually, after an interminably long walk, Mag saw a light from around a bend in the tunnel just ahead, and the illusions around him seemed to evaporate. He slowed, proceeding on tiptoes so as not to make a sound. As he drew closer to the source of the light he could hear two distinct voices: one a rough, deep, and guttural, the other breathy, soft, and feminine. *It's her*, he thought. *The one I've been sensing.* He was sure of it. Mag fought down the urge to plunge ahead into the unknown, instead using all of his willpower to hold back and move cautiously forward.

When he rounded the corner he found himself on a narrow ledge overlooking a large circular chamber stretched out about ten feet below him, accessible by a sloping path that ramped down along the wall of the room from the ledge on which he stood. The chamber was clearly that of a being well-versed in the arcane. Bookshelves lined the walls, covered in tomes of all shape and size. A large desk was pushed against one wall, covered in yellowed sheafs of parchment and dozens of rune-inscribed candles burned to various lengths. Another shelf contained glass vessels holding powders and humours in myriad hues. Rich purple and red carpets covered the chamber's stone floor. In the center of the room a large fire pit burned furiously, casting an orange glow about the space. The smoke that rose from it twisted itself into shadowy forms that tickled the edge of Mag's conscious memory, suggesting to him a veil blowing aside in a strong wind to reveal the unknown beyond.

On one side of the room was an enormous bed covered in cotton blankets and plump pillows. On top of it lay a woman, eyes wide with apprehension, and in front of it, panting with desire, was Norn.

Norn, the eater of children. Norn, the blood-guzzler. The tales said that he took many forms, sometimes a goat that walked on two legs, other times a bear with a man's head. The creature Mag saw below him was roughly man-shaped, but with two ursine ears atop its head and a patch of jet black fur running down his back to meet a tail that swished back and forth excitedly. He was enormous, standing seven feet tall at least, with rippling, well-muscled limbs and taut chest, but possessing a slight pudge in his belly. Norn's face was punctuated by a snarling muzzle full of sharp teeth and his sinister yellow eyes were fixated on the woman lying helpless on the bed before him. Norn was completely nude, and Mag couldn't help but stare at the impossibly large cock, at least a foot and a half long and near as thick as Mag's arm, jutting erect from his thighs. It throbbed visibly with each beat of the creature's black heart, the bulbous head bobbing up and down in the air.

The woman was clothed in a diaphanous silk shift which did little to hide the swell of her ample breasts and gently curved thighs, her long, pale legs stretched out from its high hemline. As Mag watched, Norn reached out a meaty hand, the fingers topped by razor claws and the back covered in the thick black hair, and gripped one of her ankles forcefully. She thrashed weakly, tossing her long, golden hair back and forth, but she seemed unable to command her limbs properly, as if drunk. She was breathing heavily, causing her erect nipples to press insistently against the thin fabric of her shift, and every few seconds let out a moaning, shuddering sigh. *She's under his thrall*, thought Mag. This was the woman he had sensed in the passage earlier. He was sure of it. *Norn's spell over her must have been projected back up the passage. That's what I was sensing before.* The waves of arousal emanating from the woman still roiled around Mag, but he shook his head, struggling to clear the fog.

With his other hand Norn grabbed the woman's other ankle, dragging her towards the edge of the bed and spreading her legs, causing her shift to ride up her hips until her sex was exposed to the air. A trim patch of golden blond hair sat atop her womanhood, which even from a distance Mag could tell was gleaming with wetness. Mag watched intently, the spell dulling his reason and will. The woman was no longer resisting, but simply gazed up at her captor intently, mouth hanging half open with arousal. Norn moved forward until the swollen head of his enormous cock brushed the lips of the woman's sex, and Mag realized with a start that she was probably going to be killed if the beast forced that thing inside her.

"Hey Norn!" Mag shouted, snapped out of his spellbound state. "You better put that thing away unless you want me to cut it off."

The creature whirled, fixed its eyes on Mag, and howled a savage, animalistic cry. It released the woman, who sighed out all her breath and flopped back on the bed. Norn charged towards the bottom of the ramp and began pounding up it towards Mag, heavy footfalls rumbling across the stone floor. Mag drew his sword and tossed the torch back into the passage. He pulled a dagger from its sheath, hurling it at the advancing beast. The dagger plunged into the exposed flesh of Norn's chest, and the beast let out a howl of pain, cursing in a savage animal tongue, but didn't slow his approach. Norn was still tumescent, his enormous manhood swinging like a javelin as he charged.

Mag stood ready as Norn bore down on him. The creature swung one claw-tipped hand, and Mag took a step back to avoid the strike. As he did his heel met the edge of the ledge, and Mag teetered precipitously on the ledge. Norn swung with his other claw, and this time Mag raised his sword to block the strike. The beast's razor talons clanged off the steel of Mag's blade, and the force of the blow sent the weapon spiraling out of his hands. Mag stumbled sideways and his right foot slipped over the ledge. He teetered precariously, desperate to regain his balance. In a flash of madness

or insight, Mag thrust both hands forward and wrapped them around Norn's cock to steady himself. He squeezed down hard, digging his nails into the appendage, and Norn let out a high-pitched yelp. *That's why you never fight naked with a boner, you moron*, thought Mag.

Norn swung savagely at Mag's head. He let go of the beast's cock and twisted to the side, feeling the tips of Norn's talons shred the skin of his neck in shallow red gashes. Mag reached for a knife out of his bandolier even as the beast toppled forward from the momentum of its swing. Norn stumbled to the edge of the precipice, unable to stop the inertia of his massive body from carrying him over, but as he fell he lashed out with his other arm, grasping the top of Mag's breastplate before he could react. Mag only had time to gasp in surprise as they both toppled off the ledge.

The ten-foot fall took but a few seconds, yet it felt like minutes to Mag. His brain, charged with adrenaline, seemed to act much faster than normal, noticing their rate of descent, likely landing spot (on a bare purple rug), the fact that he (Mag) would land right on top of Norn, and even, with a small part of his attention, the scent of the beautiful woman on the bed nearby. Mag brought up his dagger, steadying the grip with both hands, and waited for the impact.

When they hit the ground Mag used the force of gravity to drive the dagger into Norn's throat. The beast burbled a guttural curse as blood gushed out of its neck and mouth. Mag withdrew the dagger and aimed another downward strike at the creature's eye. It howled ferociously, and Mag felt a blast of hot feral breath strike him in the face. He drove the dagger down again, but Norn brought one arm up protectively, preventing the knife from striking home. With its other arm it clawed at Mag's side, finding a gap in his armor and digging deep into his flesh. Mag screamed in bloodlust and bore down with all his might, forcing Norn's defensive arm downward to his throat, and buried the weapon in the beast's left eye.

Norn shrieked again, but it was the pathetic, mewling cry of a dying beast. Mag rolled off the eater of children and lay panting

and bleeding on the carpet while the thing next to him expired. Without meaning to, he passed out.

* * * * *

When Mag awoke he was lying on the bed in the cavern. He experienced a momentary disorientation, and it took him a second to remember where he was and what he'd been doing recently. Bits and pieces flooded back to him: the dark passage, Norn's flashing claws, the scent of the captive woman. His thoughts were coming slowly, like honey rolling off the back of a spoon. Mag realized that he was clad in only his breeches - someone had undressed him - and tried to sit up. A sharp pain throbbed intensely in his side and neck and he groaned, falling back onto the bed.

"Don't try to move yet," said a woman's voice.

The captive young woman from before, the one he'd narrowly saved from being ravaged by Norn, entered his field of view and sat on the bed next to him, setting a small wooden bowl down on the covers. The damsel's golden hair fell in waves to her shoulders on either side of her flawless face. Her clever brown eyes focused intently on Mag and her red lips curled subtly into an amused half-smile, as if intrigued by him. She was still wearing the airy silken shift from before, and up close Mag realized the ethereal garment was half-translucent, doing little to hide her figure from him. He fought to keep his gaze from darting to her generous breasts, capped by small pink nipples, clearly still erect. Her legs were closed, shielding her womanhood from his view. For the moment words failed him.

She looked Mag up and down, the intensity in her eyes seeming almost hungry as she took in his well-defined torso and thick arm muscles, honed and sculpted by long years of soldiering and fighting. He had several small scars on his chest and one large white stripe along his right pectoral, a reminder to himself to be

cautious which he didn't follow as often as he should have. The wound in his side was still oozing, the blood taking on a nasty black tinge. He could feel wetness on his neck as well.

"Its claws had a mild poison," the woman explained, seeing the question in his eyes. "That's why you passed out."

She dipped three fingers in the bowl and scooped out a brown, paste-like substance which she applied to the wound in his side. He felt a sharp sting and flinched away instinctively.

"Don't be a baby," the woman said reproachfully, her amused smile widening a bit at his knee-jerk reaction. "This will neutralize the poison and close up your wounds."

A moment later the sting went away, and Mag felt a cool numbness spreading over his wounded side. He sighed, closing his eyes to relax as the pain melted away. *Not a bad way to wake up*, he thought.

"Thanks," Mag said. "What do I call you?"

He opened his eyes and looked up at her face. She'd cocked her head to one side and was gazing down at him curiously, her eyes seeming to look straight past his face and into his brain. Her smile widened a bit more, making her mouth look larger than he'd previously thought.

"Naris," she replied. "And you?"

"Mag," he said. "Pleasure to make your acquaintance. I came to slay Norn, lift the curse, and claim a reward from the Duke of Seleca. I guess I'm glad you were here, I don't know how I'd have handled that poison on my own."

"A brave warrior like yourself?" she said playfully. "I'm sure you'd have found a way."

Naris dipped her fingers in the bowl again, this time leaning forward to apply the salve to Mag's neck. As she leaned forward the neck of her shift slipped downward, giving Mag a clear view of her firm breasts dangling alluringly below her. His appreciation was cut

short when he felt the same stinging pain as the medicine took its course, and he winced, closing his eyes and gritting his teeth until it passed.

“There,” said Naris, sitting up. “All better.”

Mag opened his eyes again, nodding. The pain in his neck faded away as well, and he felt relaxed all over, at ease as if back in a cozy Seleca inn instead of a stone cavern with a monster’s corpse nearby.

“Amazing,” he said. “Where’d a fresh young damsel like you learn so much about herbs and toxins?”

Naris shrugged, her brown eyes glinting mischievously.

“I’m not as naive as I look.”

She reached down and rested one hand on his chest. Mag got goosebumps at her soft touch and felt his cock begin to swell, but his conscience, and the big scar on his chest, counseled restraint. He swallowed, trying to focus his mind, but lust was throbbing in his brain. *I don’t even know this girl*, he thought. *But gods, she’s stunning.*

“It’s a good thing I came when I did,” he said. “It looked like Norn was about to have his way with you. I’m not sure a girl like you could have survived.”

“Oh yes,” agreed Naris evenly. “Thank the fates you came along.”

“It looked like he’d cast a spell on you,” said Mag. “You were filled with lust for his monstrous member. I could even feel it reflected back through the passage to me.”

“It was a powerful magic indeed,” she said.

Naris began tracing his nipple with her fingernail, her breath becoming heavier as her heartbeat quickened. Her pink tongue darted out, wetting her lips, and her brown eyes focused hungrily on Mag.

“I think it's still lingering,” said Mag, his heartbeat quickening. “We should be vigilant against its effects.”

Naris replied by reaching down, grabbing the hem of her shift, and peeling it off.

As the gods will, thought Mag. He attempted to sit up, but felt a dull pain in his side. Naris pressed a hand to his chest, easing him back onto the pillows. She reached down, loosening his breeches, and dragged them off with both hands, freeing his growing cock. Mag was larger than average, but he couldn't help remembering the enormity of Norn's demonic tool and how the lust-crazed Naris had yearned for it.

“I'm afraid I'm not as large as Norn,” he said, flashing a playful smile.

“It will serve,” answered Naris.

She leaned down to kiss him firmly on the mouth, silencing further discussion, and her left hand grasped his shaft, stroking it gently up and down. He was erect in an instant, the hours of resisting the spell finally at an end as he gave into it.

Naris broke the kiss and swung her left leg over his thighs to kneel above him, steadying herself on her own ankles.

“Time to claim your reward,” she said.

Naris poised her dripping cunt above his cock and plunged down, easily taking Mag inside herself. Her mouth dropped open as his cock filled her sex, and she let out a soft, satisfied cry. Mag grunted beneath her, reveling in the feeling of being fully sheathed in her. Her quim was a furnace around him, tight yet pliant, quivering gently as he split her open. She didn't move for a moment, but merely held her pelvis against his own with a deeply satisfied look on her face. Then she dragged herself up slowly, letting Mag watch as his cock was slowly unsheathed from her, until only the tip of his head remained in her cunt. Naris looked down at him, red lips still curved into a coy smile, and dropped herself back down, taking him fully inside again in one motion. This time it seemed he went even

deeper, till his cock brushed something rough deep inside. He gasped.

"I'm so close already," Mag said, his voice strained with the effort of holding back.

Naris smiled wickedly, her lips splitting to show two rows of perfect white teeth. She held herself on top of him, grinding their hips against one another, and started flexing her inner muscles in a rhythmic pattern. Mag realized she was milking him with her cunt. She rolled her hips back and forth, her sex pulsating around his cock as it pressed against the mouth of her womb. That was all Mag could take. He grabbed her hips and held her in place, releasing a strained yell as his cock erupted inside her. Naris let out a satisfied sigh as she felt him go off, and continued massaging his cock with her inner muscles until he had nothing left to give.

She leaned down and kissed him fiercely, her hot tongue darting into his mouth. He kissed her back weakly, finding all his energy drained by the powerful climax he'd just had. When Naris leaned back up he saw her cheeks were flushed and her lips were spread in jubilant smile that nearly split her face. Her brown eyes flashed, seeming to glow brighter for an instant and then returning to normal. *I'm hallucinating*, thought Mag, trying to catch his breath. *It's the spell still.*

"Fantastic," said Naris, touching her fingertips to her abdomen, nearly purring with contentment.

"But you didn't come, did you?" asked Mag, panting. "You should let me get you off."

She shook her head and stroked his cheek affectionately with one hand.

"You're sweet," she said. "But don't worry about me. I'll come later. After I've had more"

Mag raised a curious eyebrow.

"More what?"

Naris' lips twisted into a coy grin and her eyes focused on him with catlike intensity.

"More of your seed, silly," she said. "I need it to replenish my strength. My power is lust-magic, and I've nearly run out. The thrall you slew could have filled me up in one go, but from a human I'll need at least four, probably five."

Mag suddenly felt confused and vulnerable with this woman, practically a stranger, astride his softening cock and speaking of making magic with his seed.

"Who are you?" Mag asked.

"You know," said Naris, cocking one eyebrow and pouting. "Don't you?"

Mag sighed, closing his eyes. The spell was wearing off as his cock softened, and he could feel the light of reason filtering into his mind now that the overpowering lust had fled.

"Norn," he said dejectedly. "You're Norn."

Norn leaned forward, pressing her breasts to his chest and resting her head beside him so that she could speak into his ear. It was an intimate position, but Mag felt powerless to push her away. It seemed pointless to resist the witch now that she had him naked and defenseless. *Maybe I don't even want to anymore*, he thought.

"Don't fret, Mag," she cooed. "I wouldn't harm such a brave warrior as yourself. But you did slay my thrall, and I have to make my magic somehow. I'd say you owe me, wouldn't you?"

He turned his head to face her and found her predatory brown eyes peering back at him, unblinking. Her expression had softened into a mockery of sympathy.

"That thing was your thrall?" asked Mag. "You were really going to fuck it?"

"Oh yes," said Norn. "I'd been looking forward to it. But you so gallantly saved me from the ravaging that awful monster would have visited upon me. Consider my situation: I need seed to fuel my

power, which is almost spent, and it could take me days to find another willing thrall. You've already given me one load -- what's three or four more?"

Mag felt overwhelmed by the witch-talk she was babbling, but his mind caught on the *three or four more* part of what she was saying.

"I'm but a mortal man," he answered. "Even two is asking a lot of me, let alone four."

"Let me worry about that," said Norn.

She gave him a soft kiss before sitting back up, his cock still inside her. The witch closed her eyes and placed her right hand on her abdomen. Her inner muscles clamped down firmly on Mag's cock, and he felt a sudden heat at the tip of his urethra. Molten energy seemed to pour into the head of his cock, filling his shaft from top to bottom, and he felt himself swell to full hardness again. He gasped at the sudden sensation and felt the familiar fog of the lust-spell settle over his mind. His heartbeat thudded in his head and he could think of nothing else besides her red lips, fully breasts, pink nipples, and hot cunt. When Norn opened her eyes to give him a smoldering look, he realized with a sinking feeling that he was running out of excuses.

"What do you say, brave and handsome warrior?" asked Norn, biting her lower lip. "Oblige me and I'll reward you handsomely. A good trade, wouldn't you say?"

Fuck me and fuck the gods, he thought. *If this is how I go, it could be a lot worse*. Mag sat up quickly, finding the pain in his wounds nearly evaporated, and brought his mouth to one of her hard nipples, biting down lightly. The action earned a grunt of surprise from the witch. Mag flipped her onto her back without exiting her sex and steadied himself with one hand on either side of her body. Then he pulled back so that his cock nearly exited her cunt before slamming himself back in. Norn moaned with pleasure as Mag took

control, roughly fucking her as her golden hair splayed out in waves around her head. *If she wants it, she'll have it*, he thought.

Her cavern was as hot and wet as before, and her muscles clamped and unclamped on him to match the rhythm of his thrusts. Mag's cock was achingly sensitive, despite the spell of rejuvenation she'd cast on it, and he felt desperate to come inside her warm depths again. His pace was hard and fast, hammering into the witch as she moaned and goaded him on.

"Yes," she groaned. "Just like that. As hard as you can. My body yearns for your seed."

He increased his pace, going so hard and rough he thought he would hurt her, but she only grunted with bliss with every stab of his cock at her womb. Mag quickly found himself at his limit, and his thrusts became strained and uneven as he neared his climax. Norn raised her legs and wrapped them around his back, pulling him in closer.

"Finish," she hissed. "Let it out. I want your cum."

Mag let out a strangled gasp and held himself inside her as his climax thundered over him. Norn clamped him in place firmly with her legs, grabbed his face with both hands, and pulled him in for a heated kiss, his tongue stabbing into her mouth as his cock erupted inside her. Mag's moans of pleasure were muffled by Norn's hungry lips. This orgasm was more powerful than his first, despite the short time between them, and he felt weak from the exertion of every muscle in his body tensing at once. His strength failed and he collapsed on top of her, panting weakly as his cock continued to spew, flooding her depths.

Norn's cheeks grew flushed again, and he saw her brown eyes flicker once more, turning a bright gold for just an instant before reverting to normal. She had a wide, toothsome grin, seeming more pleased with herself than with Mag's climax, though she still hadn't come.

He rolled off of her, hearing an audible, wet pop as his cock finally exited her cunt. He lay down on the bed, his heart thudding so hard he thought it might burst from his chest, and realized with amazement that his cock had not softened one iota. It stood up straight from his thighs, waving in the air slightly with each heavy heartbeat, the shaft red and the head purple from stimulation and arousal. *Am I crazy, or is it bigger than before?* Mag thought. His manhood looked swollen, throbbing with blood like a wasp-stung finger. It felt as if the heat the witch had poured into it was pooled near the root of his cock, and his climax had done nothing to remove it.

“That’s two,” said Norn, rolling onto her side so she could speak into his ear. “How many more do you have for me?”

The witch draped one leg over Mag’s own and laid a hand across his defined chest, as if they were familiar lovers. Her tongue snaked out to lick the folds of his ear before she started nibbling on his earlobe playfully.

“You’re the devil,” gasped Mag, still trying to catch his breath. “I can’t take anymore. I just came twice.”

Norn’s hand on his chest slid down to take hold of his erect shaft, giving it a gentle squeeze that earned a strained moan from Mag.

“Your cock disagrees,” she said. “I think he still has a few more in him.”

Mag felt his will to resist drifting away, carried off on a current of lust. His cock burned with sensation from her touch, on the verge of pain, and he wanted nothing more than to shove the tool back into her furnace and plow her until she screamed. Still, exhaustion commanded him to lay back flat, at least until his breathing slowed back down to normal.

“You just need a little motivation,” said Norn. “Like this.”

The witch sat up and rotated on the bed, kneeling beside him and leaning over so that he had a perfect view of her drenched

quim. Norn's clit was visibly peeking from between her engorged folds, the small, pink nub swelling with the intensity of the witch's arousal. She leaned over his thighs and planted a single, gentle kiss on the head of Mag's cock, still wet from her own juices. Then she opened her mouth and lowered her face down onto his shaft. His head slipped easily into Norn's cozy throat, and she kept going until she had fully swallowed his cock and her lips rested on his pelvis. Mag's eyes went wide with surprise and pleasure.

"How?" he gasped. "How can you do that without gagging?"

Norn raised her head off of his cock and looked back at him with a wry smirk.

"I'm a witch," she said. "An awful consort of dark forces, filled with greed for fucking and swallowing cock. I've lain with men, women, beasts, and demons. Don't you think I deserve punishment for how wicked I've been?"

She climbed off the bed and stood on the purple rug at the foot, her pale skin caressed by the dancing light from the roaring fire behind her. With one hand she massaged her breast, and with the other she cupped her sex, shivering with pleasure. Mag sat up and scooted to the edge of the bed, transfixed by the seductress.

"It doesn't matter where you spill your seed," she said, fixing two hungry brown eyes glazed with lust on Mag's own yellow orbs. "As long as you release it in my body, it gets added to my well of power. My cunt, my mouth, my ass - all my holes ache for your cock. Don't you want to show me how much you loathe me? Don't you want to use my body until it breaks?"

Mag stood up, his vigor renewed, and grabbed Norn by the shoulders, pushing her down to her knees. She gasped at his forcefulness, looking up at him with mock apprehension and a hesitant, thrilled grin. Mag wasted no time pressing his cock to her lips and grabbing two handfuls of hair to hold her in place. Her wet, red lips parted for him, and she extended her pink tongue to caress his sensitive head. Mag shoved his cock forcefully down the witch's

throat, causing her to groan, but she didn't even gag as the warrior began fucking her face. He set an intense pace, slamming in and out of her mouth as he had her cunt not long before. If Mag's rough use hurt the witch, she didn't show it. Norn only looked up at him intently, her brown eyes melting with ecstasy.

The pressure in Mag's overtaxed cock built quickly, and his thrusts became erratic as his crisis neared. Norn grabbed each of his well-toned buttocks with her hands and helped him keep his rhythm, pulling him forward with each powerful thrust and humming so that her mouth and throat vibrated around his shaft. Finally he thrust one last time, pushing himself in as far as he could go. Norn held him in place with two hands on his ass and flexed her throat muscles as if swallowing him. Mag erupted inside her, his seed like magma as it sprayed forcefully from his head and down her throat to fill her belly. This was the most powerful climax yet for Mag, and he felt on the verge of blacking out as his synapses fired in unbelievable pleasure. Jet after jet of his seed rolled down the witch's esophagus. Norn continued to squeeze his cock with her throat muscles until the last dribble fell from his cock.

She pulled back, her face flushed a deep red and her pink nipples jutting out even further from her full, firm breasts, evidence of her extreme arousal. The witch's eyes flashed a radiant gold once, twice, three times, and stayed that color for a few seconds before fading back to their usual predatory brown.

"Almost there," she said. "Amazing for a human man. But I require more."

Mag managed a pathetic moan and crumpled to his knees, too drained to stand. He slumped forward, but Norn caught him and hugged him to herself. She kissed his neck gently, and he could hear her heavy, labored breathing in his ear.

"I don't think I can go on," said Mag. "I'm about to pass out."

Norn snaked a hand between their bodies and grabbed his cock, which was still hard. Mag cried out at the sensation, and found

the throbbing in his loins even more insistent than before. His cock felt like there was a dam inside it waiting to burst, and the pressure of holding it back threatened to overwhelm him. The lust-magic had made his cock visibly larger in size with every climax, each more powerful than the last. *But I think it's going to kill me if I keep going*, he thought.

"I just need one more drop," whispered Norn in his ear. "You can give me that, can't you? One more drop, and then you'll make me come like the monstrous, demon-fucking slut I am. One more drop, and your insatiable cock will finally subside."

She pushed him back and flashed him a crazed, ravenous grin, and he saw how flushed and sweaty she'd become in the course of their fucking. There was a fine sheen on her breasts and abdomen, and he had one to match on his toned chest and stomach. Norn leaned forward suddenly and planted a sloppy kiss on his mouth, running her tongue all over his lips. He could taste the salty tinge of cum on her lips, and the wanton nature of it thrilled rather than repulsed him.

"You nearly drowned me when you came with your cock lodged in my throat," she said, pulling back. "And you've already flooded my womb with your seed twice. Don't you want to make me truly yours and claim my ass as well?"

Norn turned away from him and got on all fours, wiggling her plump backside suggestively. Her sex was so wet that it was dripping down her legs, and her clit had swollen to twice its original size. The witch reached one hand back to grab hold of one cheek and spread her ass for him, revealing her tight pink rosebud.

Mag found himself overtaken by pure, animal lust. He could focus on nothing else besides fucking Norn immediately. He walked forward awkwardly on his knees, pushed her legs apart, and positioned himself behind her. With a roar he took hold of her hips and drove his cock into her dripping cunt. She felt even tighter than before, but even so his cock quickly bottomed out, stretching her even further with his increased size. She cried out, her breasts

swinging pendulously beneath her as he delivered a few quick, powerful thrusts, each one brushing the rough spot deep inside.

When his cock was well-lubricated by her cunt, he pulled out completely and positioned his swollen head at her anus. He pressed forward and Norn let out a low moan as her muscles slowly gave way before the immense invader. The witch cried out in pained pleasure as his head slipped past her outer ring of muscles. Her rear passage was painfully tight around Mag's cock, but he pushed forward relentlessly, desperate for release. She relaxed her muscles with a low, wanton moan, and the vice grip loosened, allowing him to slide his slick cock even deeper. When he had bottomed out completely he found all control slipping away.

"Yes," moaned Norn. "I'm so close. Flood my ass with your seed. Let me come."

The witch's ass quickly stretched to accommodate the invasion, and Mag started fucking her at a rough, relentless pace, causing her to cry out with each stab of his cock. Her breasts swung back and forth beneath them, flicking beads of sweat off her erect nipples onto the carpet below. Mag squeezed her firm ass with one hand and with the other took hold of a handful of hair, pulling her head up without regard for the pain it might cause. He increased his pace, slamming in and out of her savagely. She gasped with ecstasy and began to clench and unclench her anal muscles around him. That was all his overtaxed organ could take. Mag buried himself in her ass to the root, crying out as unimaginable pleasure washed over him. His cock exploded, and as soon as his seed splashed into Norn's body she screamed as well, clamping down on his cock painfully as she finally reached her own orgasm. Norn shuddered all over, her body thrashing and throbbing with renewed climax from each jet of seed Mag gave her.

Even as Mag's cock continued to fire off inside Norn, he felt an odd sensation, as if the warmth Norn has poured into his cock before was being shot back the other way. The spell was erupting

along with his seed, going back to its mistress in the throes of her own unending orgasm.

Norn's arms gave out and she collapsed to the ground, still coming weakly. Mag's cock sliding out of her with a pop. It had already shrunk back to its normal size, and began to rapidly soften as the last weak jets shot out onto the witch's backside. Mag collapsed beside her, a feeling of satiated relaxation settling over him. Norn rolled to her side to look at him, and he saw that her brown eyes had turned a steady, brilliant gold.

"I'm full," said Norn, her red lips twisting into a mischievous grin.

"I'm empty," said Mag.

The witch scooted closer, draped one leg and one arm over him, and kissed him on the forehead affectionately.

"I think I'd like to keep you around," said Norn, her red lips curling in a mocking smile. "You're at least as good as the creature you slew on your way in, though not as well endowed. Still, quite impressive for a human male."

Mag was still panting for breath as his heartbeat gradually slowed. The lust haze around his brain had begun to clear, like a fog pierced by the sun's rays, and it began to occur to him that he was in a witch's lair, naked and vulnerable. Strangely, however, he felt no hint of danger or malice coming from the pale, slight woman lying beside him. *What's wrong with me?* he thought. *Is this what it feels like to give up?*

"I don't want to be a thrall," he managed between deep, greedy breaths of the dank cavern air.

Norn raised an eyebrow and smirked condescendingly.

"How do you know you're not a thrall already?"

Mag narrowed his eyes in confusion. *Is she joking?*

"How can I be a thrall?" he asked. "Aren't witch's thralls just mindless servants?"

Norn shrugged.

“Mindless servants are a bit boring, don’t you think? Come now, Mag. What if another brave warrior showed up in my cave and tried to kill me? Or fuck me? Wouldn’t you rush to defend my honor, just like my last thrall?”

Mag thought long and hard about the question as his breathing and heartbeat returned to normal. He surprised himself with a sharp pang of jealousy and protectiveness at the idea of anyone else coming here after Norn. *She’s mine*, he thought. *I claimed her. All of her.* The realization settled over Mag like hot water poured over his shoulders as he sat in a tub, scalding but pleasant. He knew he was still the same Mag, but his fortunes and will had been tied inextricably to Norn through the ensorcelled coitus they had engaged in. The witch watched the emotions play over his bemused face and playfully stroked his muscular chest with one finger.

“See?” she said. “Admit it, Mag. You’re smitten with me.”

Mag gave a rueful chuckle. “Maybe so, you spawn of darkness. But I’m not going to live with you in this cave. Too creepy for my tastes.”

“You think I live here?” replied Norn. “Who would live in a cave? There’s not even a privy.”

Mag furrowed his brow in confusion.

“Then-” he made a wide gesture with one arm, encompassing the cave’s purple and red furnishings and arcane trappings, illuminated by the dancing fire in the center. “-what’s all this for?”

Norn rolled her eyes in exasperation, and launched into an explanation that she was clearly annoyed with having to recite to an ignorant swordsman.

“Leylines of power and renewal converge at this spot, making it ideal for the ritual you just partook in. I only spend a small

fraction of my valuable time here. In fact, you're extremely lucky I was here at all. Normally this place is warded with a hex that kills intruders instantly."

Mag whistled appreciatively.

"You hate company that much, huh?"

Norn shrugged again.

"You would too if you were me. No end to moronic interlopers sent by those idiot dukes in Seleca, ever since I cursed their murdering, raping ancestor."

She broke off talking as a sudden thought occurred to her. Norn's red lips stretched to the edges of her face as her mouth curled in another too-wide smile, and a wicked look flashed in her lustrous golden eyes.

"That's why you came, right?" she asked. "To bring back the head of the creature that dwells here and lift the curse?"

"Yeah," replied Mag. "The Duke was offering a big, fat sack of gold as a reward. I paid a lizardman to guide me here, but he was barely braver than the rest of his tribe."

Norn nodded.

"Lizardfolk are a superstitious bunch. They don't matter, though, I've no quarrel with reptiles as long as they leave my cave alone. The Duke and his progeny are the ones who've earned my enmity."

"But hasn't it been long enough?" asked Mag. "You cursed the Duke from six generations ago, and neither he nor any of his male heirs lived past 35. Even if the original Duke was the blackguard you say he was, does the family still deserve to be cursed?"

Norn sneered.

"A witch never forgets," she said curtly, as if that settled things. "But I think I know a way for us to collect the reward and

make the fool think the curse is lifted after all.”

““We?”” echoed Mag.

“Oh yes. You’re going to be a good boy and earn that fat sack of gold for me.” She patted him affectionately on the cheek. “But don’t worry. You’ll get a cut worthy of your place at my side. I just wish I could see the look on that idiotic Duke’s face when he lies dying in bed, heart refusing to beat, as he realizes the curse was never really lifted after all.”

Norn sighed and smiled with self-satisfaction. She began squirming next to Mag so that her thighs rubbed together, and a breathy moan escaped her lips.

“But there’s something else I want before you go,” she said in a plaintive, wanton tone.

“Oh no,” protested Mag. “I know what you’re thinking. I’m done. Totally spent. I couldn’t fuck you again if I wanted to, and believe me, I do.”

“It’s not your cock I require,” answered Norn.

She sat up and scooted backward so that her plump backside was even with Mag’s head. Then she braced herself on her soft hands and swung one long pale leg over his body so that she knelt just above his face. The angle gave Mag a perfect view of her sex beneath its thin patch of golden hair, flowered open and still dripping with arousal. Her musky scent filled his nostrils and blew all other thoughts from his mind like a spring gale. She lowered her quim to his mouth, and his hands reached up to cup her firm buttocks even as his tongue snaked out to taste her sex.

“You are my servant,” she said. “Now serve your mistress.”

* * * * *

When Mag emerged from the cavern's mouth with a bundle under one arm, he had to squint at the sudden brightness of the late afternoon sun. His eyes slowly adjusted to the blinding light, and he heard Varak's rasping laugh before he saw the lizardman clearly.

"Mag man returns!" announced the guide. "An hour late. Varak should have left human for dead."

Mag chuckled happily.

"You're a real prince for waiting, Varak. Tell you what: how about an extra ten gold for your trouble? I'm feeling generous."

Varak immediately extended a clawed hand, and Mag shook it firmly.

"What happen in cave? Mag man run away like coward?"

"Coward, eh? Take a look at this," said Mag.

He lifted up the large round bundle he'd carried out with him and loosened the knot at the top holding the cloth in place. It slipped down a bit to reveal a beastly face, skin pulled tight in the rictus of death. Varak sucked in his breath, half in shock and half in appreciation.

"Mag man slay Norn?" asked the lizard, incredulous.

"Oh yeah," replied Mag. "The curse is lifted."

"You hero!" cried Varak, gesticulating wildly. "Lizardfolk will honor your name!"

"Let's save the honor for later," said Mag. "I'm tired from all this slaying. How about we head back to town?"

Varak nodded emphatically and hurried to lead the way. They set off through the forest back to Varak's village. *Good old Varak*, thought Mag. *This lizardman is a better sort than most humans I've met. Shame about having to fool him.*

As the cavern faded in the verdure behind them, Mag's thoughts stretched back behind them to the witch - his mistress - that lay satisfied on the bed in the cavern. He was anxious to finish this

business with the Duke. Norn had talked of going north to the city of Angheg to visit an old friend in the mountains, or perhaps west to the coast where sailors knew her by a different name and offered her baubles in hopes of calmer seas. He didn't care. As a drifter Mag had never known where he was going next or even what he might have for dinner. Now he felt like his life had meaning - purpose. It was a nice feeling.

“Queen’s Gambit” by Belinda LaPage

One

“Highness, an envoy from Gennaíos approaches.”

“A what?” Prince Óscheo turned and glared at the messenger.

“An envoy, Highness,” he simpered. “Bearing a message, perhaps, from Gennaíos.”

“I know what an envoy is, you cretin,” Óscheo growled. “What does he want?”

“She, my liege,” the page pressed on, perhaps risking his life. “It is a girl, standing off beyond the archers’ range and holding the white flag of truce. I believe she wishes to convey a message.”

“An invaluable insight,” the prince sneered. “Send out a rider. Retrieve the message. Have someone else bring it to me.”

Little had gone well on this campaign; dozens of warriors were lost in heavy seas and the fortifications around their staging point had taken days longer to build than they should have. With the sickle moon now waxing in the night sky, Prince Óscheo knew he had missed the last good opportunity for a surprise attack on Gennaíos. He was looking for any good excuse to retreat, but he knew his brother – King Dokimés – would only shame him by sending another regiment, which would probably conquer the Warrior Queen in a single battle. In daylight, no less.

Óscheo’s military successes were largely against inferior forces with inferior weapons. His idea of a well-executed campaign was a moonless, midnight rampage through an un-walled city defended only by militia, murdering as many civilians as possible to create pandemonium. Prior to the unwelcome arrival of this envoy –

suggesting a surprise attack was now an impossibility – he had hoped to execute this inspired battle plan in Gennaíos.

Although an army of career warriors defended Gennaíos, it was only a woman – Anja the Warrior Queen – who led them. Óscheo could visualise his own success over Anja; he saw himself victorious and unharmed, throwing her to his men to beat and rape – though not before he himself had taken the opportunity to spread her royal thighs. Delivering the majority of his force to the edge of her lands was an excellent beginning to this dream, but now the remaining steps to victory seemed so very elusive.

At least he could assure his own personal safety by wearing the enchanted armour of Ûşarmy. Its origins known only to the wizard Mágos, the light and flexible armour was impervious to swords, arrows, and spears alike. Óscheo would be dead five times over were it not for the magic woven into its threads.

Curiosity got the better of the prince; he stalked out to the compound gates to observe this envoy. *A girl! How dare they send a girl!* Even *he* would think twice about murdering a defenceless girl beneath a white flag of truce.

He was in time to see his rider exit the gates and gallop towards the figure at the top of the rise. Clad in a tunic of Gennaíoan colours – white and blue – she sat astride a chestnut pony and held aloft a white flag on the end of a lance. The contrast to his own approaching warrior bordered on the comedic; the burly soldier's warhorse stood five hands taller than the pony, and it only served to accentuate the diminutive stature of the girl herself, who was slightly built and shorter still than her mount.

There was no scroll passed; the girl merely kicked her pony to a restless trot and circled the prince's rider as she delivered her message verbally. Holding her position as the rider returned, she seemed to be looking into the distance beyond the rise where Gennaíoan reinforcements presumably waited. Óscheo made a mental note to make camp on higher ground next time and congratulated himself on such a shrewd observation; doubtless less

capable leaders than himself would be overrun in their sheltered valley by an approaching enemy that they never saw coming.

“Your Highness,” the warrior called, having astutely spotted the prince on his return approach. “Queen Anja would meet you to propose a peace offering. She waits yonder, over the rise.”

“An offering?” Óscheo replied. “What kind of offering?”

“I asked the same, my Prince. But the girl herself does not know,” explained the rider, his horse snorting and wheeling impatiently, as if keen to return to the filly on the hill.

Óscheo felt a similar urge; the envoy was young, no doubt, but the modest swell beneath her tunic suggested she was of age – or if not then well upon her way. The prince felt he might enjoy a closer inspection.

“Will you hear from Anja, Highness?”

“I will,” Óscheo answered, at which the soldier turned and signalled the girl by waving both arms, and she in turn signalled the hidden party beyond the rise. “Get me a horse and four guards, armed with lances and swords,” he ordered a hovering lieutenant. He briefly considered returning to his tent for his armour, but on balance, it seemed unnecessary. The Gennaíóans came under the white flag and Óscheo knew them better for their honour in combat than for any predilection to murder foreign royalty.

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Óscheo’s party approached the top of the rise with a vanguard of two warriors and a second pair flanking his own horse. He stopped them a stone’s throw from the girl and watched Anja’s approach. She was either courageous or stupid, for her escort consisted of just two soldiers – one on each flank – and a pair of unarmed civilian women following a safe distance behind. Óscheo

congratulated himself again; bringing the superior force to this meet virtually assured him of the upper hand.

Anja stopped beside her envoy and handed over the reins before dismounting and striding confidently to the midpoint between the two groups. Understanding that she expected him to do the same, Óscho for a moment rued his decision not to wear the enchanted armour. *Just a woman*, he reminded himself. If she tried anything, he would slit her open – the Gods had already begun the job between her legs and he would be more than happy to finish it. He shook off his feelings of caution (*cowardice?*) and dismounted.

Walking slowly, he took the opportunity to study her more closely. In person, she was every bit as beautiful as the legends had hinted. Compact of stature, the Warrior Queen was clad in a Valkyrie's strap-skirt and leather battle corset that hugged her full breasts and smooth feminine curves. The lean muscles of her shoulders and arms suggested a close acquaintance with the shimmering sword at her hip. Gleaming brown skin, glossy, long black hair, and piercing, dark eyes completed the picture; this woman was the very essence of both beauty and nobility.

Óscho halted a body's length from Anja – just beyond range of her sword – and resisted the temptation to address her. Let her be the first to speak and perhaps reveal her strategy.

"Prince Óscho," she said flatly. It was neither a question nor a welcome. Perhaps she had early intelligence of his arrival. *Magic? Or a traitor in his midst?* The possibility that she had placed observers at her borders never occurred to him. "You are far from home," she finished, pausing perhaps to see how he might respond.

"Akrovystans are a travelling people, Anja," he replied deceptively, deliberately omitting her title. Why bother to acknowledge a position that would cease to exist before the moon turned its next quarter.

"I see that you travel with soldiers and warhorses," she continued, arching an eyebrow. "An unusual retinue for trade or

diplomacy. Or perhaps you have some other goal in mind.”

“These are dangerous times, I think you’ll agree,” he hedged. “I should not want my party waylaid by thieves in the night. These men afford me a measure of protection when I am far from home.”

“No doubt,” Anja sighed, signalling her disbelief in his lies. “It is in the spirit of diplomacy that I come to you, as well. I wish to make you an offer that I hope will strengthen the ties between our lands.”

She negotiates surrender before the battle has even begun! Such a cowardly people. The legends of their courage and resourcefulness are doubtless only fables; children’s bedtime stories with no base in fact. Still, Óscheo reminded himself of his own thwarted battle plan and was interested to see whether he might salvage some military pride with a diplomatic arrangement.

“State your offer, Anja,” he said. “For I have other important matters competing for my attention.”

“I can see the truth in that,” Anja responded cleverly, eyeing the heavily fortified camp in the valley. “I know that fate has dealt your people some cruel blows, with plague killing so many children and leaving your women barren.”

“You are well informed of our affairs,” Óscheo said stiffly, annoyed but surprised that she had such sources of information.

“We of Gennaíos have our own problems,” she went on. “Our fair women and fertile lands are the envy of the Great Sea kingdoms, making us targets of many warlords who would have our natural riches for themselves.”

“Really? I did not know,” Óscheo smirked.

“We are not a warlike people,” Anja went on, refusing to rise to his bait. “The only thing we gain from war is widows, and the staunch defence of our lands has produced too many of those. It seems that our troubles are complimentary: Gennaíos’s widows want the security of marriage and family, and Akrovysta needs women to bear their next generation.”

“You offer me women?” Óscheo’s attention shifted from Anja to the two women on horseback standing behind her soldiers. They were fair indeed; full of breast and broad of hip, they bore the luscious, womanly curves that promised many a happy evening of successful procreation. “And what would you take in return, Anja?”

“We want for nothing more than peace,” she replied. “The swift return of your army to Akrovysta is all we seek – that and your word that they will not return to the shores of Gennaíos. These two women behind me are perhaps the first of many diplomats who will forge new and peaceful ties between our lands. In time, we would welcome them back along with their families to settle here and farm our lands.”

Óscheo was intrigued. The offer of women had stirred some deep and animal instinct. He was not like his brother, the king. He had never learned the easy smile and genial manner that had won Dokimés his choice of countless suitable mates. The only women *he* bedded had to be bought, so he found the idea of those who offered themselves freely to be deeply arousing.

“Bring them forward, then,” he said. “Let me see these future brides of Akrovysta.”

“Selena!” she called to the envoy. The girl dismounted and as she helped the Gennaíoan women out of their own saddles, one of them carelessly snagged Selena’s wimple on a sandal and pulled it from her head, spilling free long, shining curls the colour of buttermilk.

The proximity of Anja’s leather corseted curves had commanded Óscheo’s attention so completely, he had not yet taken the opportunity to study the envoy, whose shape and movement had seemed so inviting from the distance of the camp. *That hair! By the Gods, it was impossible to ignore!* He had seen tresses of raven black and countless shades of brown, but Selena’s creamy white locks – lighter still than her golden skin – were the stuff of myth and legend.

Óscheo was spellbound. The broad, leather belt cinched around her waist clearly showed her slender curves and the shelf of her small breasts – so she was obviously of age – but she was truly tiny, a full head shorter than the petite Anja. The noble part of him wanted to fold her in his arms and cradle her delicate body, protecting her from the dangers of this violent world. The rest of him was far less noble; it wanted to strip her naked, hold her down, and watch the awe-struck look in those captivating blue eyes as his bulging cock stretched open the silken bud between her thighs.

“Thank you, Selena,” Anja said as the girl presented the two widows.

Óscheo shuddered to hear her name spoken again. It felt powerful to know such a thing without an introduction, like an unshared secret. He said it to himself – *Selena, beautiful Selena* – and imagined whispering it in her ear as he pushed his thick manhood into her.

“What say you, Prince?” Anja asked. “Both took husbands on the eve of battle and have lain with a man but once.”

One of the women coughed into her hand and looked shyly downwards. “Twice,” she whispered, her dark eyes flashing briefly upwards to Anja. “’Twas our wedding night, my queen,” she finished by way of explanation.

“Twice then,” Anja corrected herself unapologetically. She turned her attention to the other woman, who shrunk beneath her regal gaze, and after a moment of indecision, showed Anja a hand with four fingers extended. The queen’s eyebrows lifted in what might have been either surprise or envy. “In one night?” she gasped.

“Still, Prince Óscheo,” she recovered quickly. “I think I understand the hearts of men well enough to hazard that this foreknowledge would hardly dampen the ardour of a prospective husband.

Óscheo felt short of breath. This talk of fucking while four beautiful women stood before him – one of whom might well be a

goddess in human form – had made him lightheaded. He could think of nothing but the girl Selena; he longed to see beneath her tunic and touch her ripe, young body.

“The o-” his voice broke as he tried to speak and he had to cough and start again. “The other one,” he said, gesturing at Selena. “The girl. She is a widow as well?”

“A widow?” Anja responded with surprise. “She is just barely a woman, Prince. She only commenced her training last harvest, after her sixteenth summer.”

“Training?” Óscheo felt gutted. He could think of nothing but the girl, Selena; holding her, smelling her hair, feeling the beat of her heart behind those tiny breasts, and listening to the nervous flutter of her breath in his ear as she parted her legs beneath him. *Take me, my Prince*, she would whisper. *For I am yours*.

“Selena is highly prized for the colour of her hair,” Anja explained. “She is being schooled in the art of lovemaking, and then on her seventeenth birthday, she will be matched to a noble from a neighbouring kingdom with whom we already share the bond of peace.”

“Lovemaking?” Óscheo felt barely capable of a longer response; he simply could not look away from Selena’s blue eyes.

“You needn’t concern yourself with Selena’s virtue, Prince Óscheo,” Anja smiled. “I assure you that her maidenhead will remain intact until her wedding night. The techniques of marital congress are taught by one’s mistress in Gennaíos; it was a time upon which I myself look back fondly.”

“Would you promise her to a mere noble?” Óscheo asked, finally regathering the power of speech as a plan formed in his mind. “Surely such a jewel should fetch a higher price,” he suggested. “Perhaps ... royalty?”

“Royalty?” Anja mused. “That would be a pleasant dream indeed, but Selena’s blood is red, not blue. Perhaps if she bore a girl

child with the same colouring, but I fear aiming for a royal husband would be setting our sights too high.”

“I think otherwise, Queen Anja,” he began to use her proper title almost unconsciously, trying to ingratiate himself. “The girl could never take the throne, of course, but a union with a third or perhaps even a second prince ...” He trailed off, allowing the Warrior Queen to complete the thought on her own.

“Hmmm, yes, a prince with no claim to the throne,” Anja considered, sounding thoughtful. “Your brother’s queen has just borne an heir, has she not? So you yourself are such a second prince!” she continued happily. “I fear you have been impaled on your own lance, Óscheo! By your own admission, a Gennaíóan peasant girl might be the next princess of Akrovysta.”

“I stand by that assertion,” Óscheo said, his heart pounding in his ears. “A lack of nobility could be quickly forgotten in light of such a unique beauty.” Might he defeat this stupid, brutish queen in a battle of wits and win the exquisite Selena as his own fuck-toy? *Princess indeed!* Akrovysta would never accept a peasant princess, not even for a disliked, sulking, second prince such as himself.

“If you are proposing yourself as a match, Prince Óscheo ...” Anja began.

“I am,” he interrupted, allowing himself another lustful look at Selena’s young, virginal body.

“... then I must humbly demur,” she continued. “It is one thing to seek a mutually beneficial arrangement for these poor widows, but we have no treaty with Akrovysta. I should invite an uprising if I were to render you our most valued bride only to have your army invade beneath the darkness of the next moon.”

Óscheo despaired. He *must* have this girl.

“You would have King Dokimés’ name on a treaty long before this moon waned, Queen Anja,” he lied hopefully. “Until then you would have my word as his brother.”

“Hmmm,” Anja seemed to consider this proposal. “I would need more than your word.”

“Name your price,” Óscheo leaped at the chance. Her eyes downcast, Selena watched him closely through her blonde eyelashes and blushed to be sought so earnestly by a prince. He imagined that blush deepening with her virgin sheath stretched tightly over his bulging manhood. “I have both gold and silver in abundance.”

“I was thinking of something more compelling as a promissory offering,” Anja said carefully. “Like your sword.”

“My sword?” he reeled as if struck and looked down at the jewelled and gilded pommel. It was a royal treasure of Akrovysta and was rarely off his hip. Dokimés’ carried their late father’s weapon, of course, but this blade had belonged to their grandfather. It was his greatest pride.

“Only until such a time as a treaty is struck,” Anja offered. “When I returned it, you would possess the two finest things of beauty in your kingdom and be the envy of your brother.”

Óscheo’s head spun. Dokimés would never sign a treaty with Gennaíos, but that did not mean he could not retrieve his sword. Might he not accept her offer and then resume the invasion after feasting on the lovely, young Selena. How much sweeter the spoils of war when he thrust into Anja’s conquered body with the blonde girl’s scent still drying on his cock.

“I accept,” he answered rashly, drawing his sword slowly and presenting the hilt to the Warrior Queen. He had no idea how he would marshal his soldiers to defeat her without the element of surprise, but he felt certain that he would be able think more clearly once he had filled the blonde girl’s slit with his royal seed.

Two

“What would you have us do with these women?” asked a warrior as the prince’s now extended party approached the fortified camp.

Anja had kept her horses, so the widows rode double behind the two flanking soldiers, while the girl Selena sat on the front of his own saddle with the tight peach of her rear pressed breathtakingly against his cock, which was now painfully erect and lifting at his leather skirt.

“House them in the Adjutant’s tent for now,” Óscheo replied. “Afford them every dignity you would a woman of Akrovysta.” He briefly considered allowing the soldiers to share them, but he did not yet want to reveal his intent to renege on the deal with Anja. He wanted to spend the rest of the afternoon stretching Selena’s little rosebud over his cock, and unrest in the camp was the very last thing he needed.

“Yes, Prince Óscheo,” answered all four warriors in unison.

As they entered the gates, the warriors peeled off to the stabling area while Óscheo rode straight up to his own tent. *Let a servant deal with the horse*, he thought selfishly.

The girl twisted around and looked upwards into his eyes. “You have the stirrups, my Prince,” she said softly, her lips pursing provocatively so very close to his own. “Will you lift me down?” She raised her arms, inviting him to hold her there.

He closed both hands around her chest with his fingertips trailing over the edges of her breasts, and with one athletic movement, she kicked her right leg over the horse’s head and slid down its left shoulder. Óscheo took an extra moment to measure the swell of her left breast – small and so wonderfully firm beneath the tunic – before reluctantly releasing her and dismounting.

“Have my horse seen to,” he ordered the guard at his tent as he led Selena inside. “And ensure that I am not disturbed.”

“Yes, Highness,” the soldier responded dutifully, not missing the opportunity to gawk enviously at the small blonde beauty beside

him.

“Now, girl,” the prince said excitedly. “Let us see what you look like beneath that tunic.”

“I understand my duties as a wife,” Selena said, looking shyly down at his feet. “But should we not be married before we lay together?”

“Child, you have much to learn about Akrovysta,” he laughed. Then making up a harmless lie to ensure the girl’s compliance, “By our laws, we were married the moment your queen accepted my sword.”

“Oh!” Selena flashed her blue eyes upwards with surprise. “I did not expect, I mean, would you have me now, then? As on our wedding night?”

“Many times and in many different ways,” Óscheo growled lustily, rubbing the tented bulge in the breechcloth beneath his skirt.

Selena shuffled her feet nervously. “I have been taught how I should prepare to receive my husband,” she advised. “Mistress says that it eases the path of congress and that a good wife should always make herself ready, but ...” she looked away bashfully. “... I did not realise I was to be married today.”

“Does the earth need to be readied for the plough?” Óscheo asked. “Nay, you will find me ready enough for the both of us, my dear.”

Selena pressed on bravely. “Queen Anja says that many men enjoy the preparation, and ...”

“And?” She had piqued his interest with mention of the queen in connection with lovemaking, for notwithstanding the pending conquest of sweet Selena, splitting Anja’s seam had raced to the forefront of his life’s ambitions the moment her lithe, corseted body swung down from her horse that afternoon.

“I shouldn’t say, my Prince,” her voice dropped to a sibilant whisper. “But she said that some men - some *gentle* men - like to

join in.” She looked back up at him through her eyelashes. “Would you help me to ready the earth for my Prince’s plough?”

Óscheo’s cock ached to be inside her, but she had intrigued him with the invitation. He gestured his assent and idly wondered how Anja would prepare her own body for his taking.

Selena took a blanket from the bed and laid it on the earthen floor, and then she knelt with a washbowl of river water and a cloth beside her. She looked up again at the prince, and after a quivering breath and a moment of hesitation, she removed her belt and slowly pulled up her tunic – revealing her slender thighs, pointed hips, and her flat stomach – and then quickly lifted it over her head, exposing the most perfect, small, round breasts that Óscheo could have dared to imagine.

His heart raced. Now dressed only in a breechcloth, Selena’s beauty was stunning. Her golden skin seemed almost to sparkle and the shadows cast in the filtered light of the tent lent a voluptuous depth to her slender curves. He watched transfixed as her tiny, pink nipples hardened to ripe peaks with thoughts of lovemaking, causing her to look down at them blushing and massage the points back to softness with her fingertips.

“Won’t you come to me?” she asked softly, patting the blanket invitingly in front of her.

Óscheo felt an unfamiliar longing; he still wanted to lay with her – desperately so – but even more than that he wanted simply to watch (and maybe touch) the perfection of her petite, lean muscles working beneath that flawless skin. He knelt on the blanket in front of her and settled back on his heels, mirroring her pose. Then, unable to deny himself, he placed his open palms on her knees and stroked slowly up her thighs and beneath the breechcloth, stopping only when his fingertips touched the thin folds of linen covering her sex. Smoothing his fingers inwards along the line of that crease, he felt for a moment the soft pad of her vulva before slipping between her thighs, gently forcing them open them to form a wide vee before gliding his palms back down her inner thighs to her knees.

“Your touch is so gentle, Highness,” she whispered, taking one of his hands in hers and fingering the smooth, un-callused skin. “Soft,” she observed. “It makes me feel ticklish in here.” She pressed his hand to her breast, which fit perfectly into the hollow of his palm. “And in here,” she whispered huskily, guiding his hand down and touching the backs of his fingers to the soft parting between her thighs. She held him there for a few moments until he felt her moist heat through the linen, and he realised with a breathless thrill that her rosebud was opening beneath his touch.

Returning his hand, Selena wet the washcloth and wrung it out in the bowl, and then starting with her face, she began to wash herself. Óscheo simply watched, paying particular attention to the way her firm, young breasts reacted and moulded to her touch; nothing he could do or say would make her actions more poetically sublime. Selena was a living example of the perfection of the Gods.

When she had finished washing her upper body, she rinsed the washcloth, and then catching Óscheo’s eye, she smiled demurely and untied the cord that fastened her breechcloth, allowing it to fall between her parted thighs.

The prince gasped and his cock jerked with wanting beneath his already tented underwear. He had seen between the legs of whores before and had been disappointed to find the mysteries of female anatomy remain stubbornly cloaked beneath a thick bush of black pubic hair. He hadn’t guessed that Selena’s fair colouring extended beyond her head, and until he noticed the fine dusting of translucent blonde fuzz, he believed for a moment of breathless excitement that she was in fact much younger than promised.

Female anatomy was a mystery no longer though, for Selena was utterly exposed. With her knees shoulder-width apart, Óscheo drank in every detail. The mound of her pudenda where he expected to see her vagina was largely featureless, save for a few wisps of downy hair. Her slit sat lower between her thighs; not half the length of a finger, it was just a short gash in a puffy pillow of flesh that looked every bit as soft and inviting as her breasts. As he had

suspected (*fantasised?*), it lay open, pointed at the bottom and cowed at the top, the pink interior glistening with readiness.

Selena fan a finger between her open lips, collecting her juices and spreading them upwards, swirling around the pink fold that evoked distracting thoughts of the wizard Mágos's cowl. Her mouth opened in a silent cry as she touched herself, and Óscheo looked up for a moment to regard her angelic face framed in silky blonde curls. With her eyes softly closed, she was lost in the moment; her lips moving wordlessly over shining white teeth as her finger continued its seductive dance near the top of her slit.

Had she invited him to take part? How could he not? Óscheo reached a hand between her legs and touched the hot, wet centre of her sex, causing Selena to twitch and her eyes to fly open with surprise. Óscheo jerked his hand back, surprised himself by her reaction.

"Do it again," she whispered, smiling. "Please, Highness."

Selena sighed softly as he touched again in the middle of her slit. He pressed gently but firmly, however he could not enter her. Having never taken a girl's virginity, he had no idea how much effort was required, only that it was said to pain her, so it could not be as simple as entering a whore.

"Down here," Selena whispered, holding his hand in both of hers and sliding it downwards until he felt the soft pink flesh yield and part to his touch. Manipulating his hand, she bade him to enter and he slipped the tip of his middle finger inside the warm, tight barrel of her sex. Selena rose off her heels to meet him, moaning softly with her head thrown back as she moved him slowly in an out of her entrance.

"Inside is my soul," she breathed. "It will be yours, but the way is narrow and protected by my innocence. Can you feel it?"

Óscheo grunted wordlessly. It was not much of an answer, but he *could* feel it! Her opening was impossibly tight, squeezing his finger and making him force it through the tiny channel, but beyond

that point, he felt a gentle, pliant softness – the warm and moist paradise that awaited his cock.

“My heart and my soul,” she continued. “The heart is easier. You can touch it.” She withdrew his finger and glided it up her slit, circling it so he could feel the swollen bud beneath its hood. “O-h-h-h-h-h-h,” she groaned breathily. “Can you feel it beating?”

Óscheo could not, but he felt her hands clench when he touched her in that place and saw gooseflesh break out on her breasts, which lifted fetchingly with her shallow breaths. Taking control, he returned to her entrance and fucked more deeply with his middle finger – almost to the knuckle – while Selena rocked forward to meet him, her hips gently thrusting and working to impale herself more forcefully.

Introducing the tip of his thumb, he used it stroke the bud she had called her ‘heart’, causing her to cry out with her head thrown back, the tips of her long blond hair swaying and dancing around her slowly pumping hips.

Selena rose up on her knees and took Óscheo by the ears, guiding his lips first to one breast – where he kissed and sucked the tiny nipple to attention – and then to the other. They were wonderfully firm and the tips as hard as marble; so very unlike the soft, saggy breasts of Akrovystan whores. He licked them all over just to feel the springy texture beneath his tongue and was delighted to find that he could almost suck one entirely into his mouth.

The girl’s moans had turned more desperate, almost pleading, as she thrust her narrow hips onto his finger with more force and crushed his face to her breast.

“Kiss my heart,” she pleaded, her voice beginning to break. Óscheo kissed the bony cage of her sternum. “No, no!” she cried, pushing his head lower. “My *little* heart!”

He understood immediately what she wanted. He had heard tell of men using their mouths down there, but he had also smelled the slick slime left on his cock after mounting a prostitute and had

never felt the compulsion to try it himself – until now. He was in thrall to that small opening between her thighs and he longed to experience every pleasure it had to offer, so he allowed her to guide him down with her hands, kissing her flat stomach along the way and tracing a wet line with the point of his tongue.

Rising on her knees to meet him and bending backwards to offer her sex, Selena began to whimper with anticipation as the prince's lips and nose brushed through her short blonde curls.

Óscheo smelled her heady scent at the same time as his lips met its moist source. Without hesitation, he darted out his tongue to taste her, eliciting a delighted gasp from the girl as he touched her 'heart'. *Nectar of the Gods! This was nothing like what he expected.* Sweet and salty and pungent, all in perfect measure; it was like olive oil and brine, but with some other exotic spice underneath – something raw, something alive!

He kissed her, coating his lips with her musky scent as he sampled the different textures of her flesh – the soft folds of her lips, the hard nub beneath its wizard's cowl, and the moist, pliant lining around her opening. He dipped into that most intimate place with his tongue and found it to be the wellspring of her scent, replenishing her dripping juices faster than he could lap them up.

"Oh yes!" Selena rasped, her narrow hips pumping in time with his tongue. "Now my heart, my heart! Take it!"

He was not precisely sure what she wanted him to do, but he knew exactly where it was to happen, and he shifted his attention back to that hardened nub. Óscheo reflected for a moment that he had never taken an active interest in a woman's enjoyment of lovemaking. He now thought he understood the reason: no woman had ever seemed to enjoy it. Without exception, all of his whores had simply lain there and docilely received his fucking. He found Selena's tiny, writhing body to be exquisitely erotic, so much more exciting than merely a warm, wet hole for his cock.

Selena's reaction when he sucked her little bud between his lips was both instantaneous and prodigious. "Oh yes!" she squealed, twining her fingers in his hair and bucking her hips into his face. Óscheo closed his hands around the small globes of her rear and squeezed her tight, sucking her pleasure nub and flicking it with his tongue while she twisted and writhed like a fish on the hook. Her excitement peaked with a volley of wordless cries, and pulling violently on his hair as she arched upwards, she unleashed one more scream before thrusting him away and falling backwards. Hugging her knees to her narrow chest, she grunted and moaned as a series of shuddering spasms wracked her tiny body, clutching a hand over her sex and making the prince wonder briefly whether he had hurt her.

The spasms abated after a few moments, leaving her gasping entreaties that Óscheo soon realised were grateful words of thanks. Laying back on the blanket, she swept some long blonde locks from her face and smiled up at her lover.

"Now my soul," she whispered happily, opening her legs wide and wriggling towards him so that he knelt between them.

Óscheo tore at his clothing and hurled it into a pile – taking him from clothed to naked in the space of a few heartbeats – and with his straining cock in one hand, he contemplated the small target in front of him.

"Oh my," Selena breathed. She was propped on her elbows and nervously watching his tool bulge and throb. "Mistress never told me it would be so big. Will it fit?"

If anything, Óscheo knew he was a little smaller than the average soldier under his command, but it was pleasant to hear she thought otherwise – even if she was mistaken.

"I am certain of it," he assured her bringing the tip to her glistening, pink entrance.

"Let me hold it," she said, reaching a hand between her legs and taking him in an underhand grip that maximised contact along

the sensitive underside of his cock. He felt the muscles in his stomach contract with anticipation as she experimentally stroked him and touched the tip to her swollen clitoris, smearing it with a clear bead of his juices.

With his own hands now free, he used them to explore the contours of her small body. Starting with his thumbs together over her mound, he stroked with flat palms slowly upwards over her tummy, his fingertips curling around the sides and following her slim, hourglass curve. He stopped with her breasts cupped in the angles between each thumb and forefinger, lifting and pushing them together to lend her a more ample shape.

Looking back down to her sex, he could see the purple tip of his cock glistening with their combined juices, and Selena was using it to tease the wet, pink lips around her opening. Óscheo pushed slightly forward and the swollen bulk of his cockhead filled her entrance, bulging her engorged lips out to the sides. He could feel the narrow channel of her virgin sex squeezing and wetly shaping the soft flesh of his knob, straining in what would ultimately become a vain effort to deny him passage.

Selena gazed with wide-eyed delight at the sight of his bulging shaft lodged in her opening. “Is that it?” she breathed, glancing quickly up to his eyes. “Are we one? But Mistress warned it would not be without pain.”

Óscheo saw no point in an explanation, for it would not help matters. Instead, he took a firmer grip on her body – plumping her breasts together – and with a thin cry of pain from the girl, he pushed his cock into her straining sheath. That first stroke admitted less than half of his length before he could go no further, halted as much by her crushing pressure as by the lack of lubrication. He pulled out a small way, allowing her blood and their combined juices to spread around the point of their coupling, and then he pushed smoothly back in to the sound of a renewed cry of pain from Selena.

This was what he had wanted. *Oh, washing and stroking her young body had been exquisite, and the taste of her musky*

womanhood – taking her with his tongue instead of his cock – that too had been sublime. But this ... this! He looked down in glorious conquest at the young girl impaled beneath him, his thick cock buried halfway inside her bleeding and once virgin cunt, and her angelic face an agonised rictus of combined pleasure and pain. He probed deeper, making Selena cry out and grimace again as her convulsing sheath clamped down delectably onto his erection.

Straining under her crushing heat and pressure, Óscheo's cock bucked and throbbed inside her and his balls boiled, preparing to fill her with his hot seed. Selena strained beneath him, lifting and writhing and gasping for breath, those movements allowing him to slip deeper until he felt the exquisitely tight barrel of her opening gripping him firmly by the root.

Óscheo had experienced nothing the equal of Selena's sex; more than just warm and wet and tight, it felt as though it was alive, squeezing and slurping at his cock, tightening around the base and then rolling down his length in a sucking, wet embrace. He felt his manhood jerk and swell, preparing to ejaculate, but not wanting to finish yet, he pulled all the way out to regroup until his cockhead rested once again between her parted lips.

He strained for what felt like an age against the need for release, and when he was finally able to relax, a thick pearl of cum oozed from the tip and dribbled down into Selena's open cunt. It sat there at the threshold for a moment and then – stunningly – it streamed like quicksilver into her body.

The girl stiffened and arched her backside off the blanket, reacting somehow to that one bead of cum melting into her slit. (*Melting? It looked like some lurker beneath sucked it in!*) Her mouth opened as if in a terrible scream, but the only noise to emerge was the sound of a thousand pained souls sighing in anguish.

Óscheo's blood ran cold. *What sorcery was this?* Finally, that horrific sound abated but he was dumbstruck – torn between the urge to flee and the desperate need to stroke back inside and unload into her depths. As he steeled himself to take her again, Selena

opened her eyes – no longer ice blue, but a burning, hellacious red – and froze him, trapped him, with the unearthly force of her gaze.

Three

Selena felt the ancient magic within coming to life. It had been so very long since it was last unleashed – long enough for her body to regenerate the outward signs of virginity, at least. But that was the way of her kind, the way of the *siren*. Having taken the seed of a man, it was her power to wield control over his passions – not his body or his mind, but his lust, fear and anger. She had wielded that talent sparingly over her long, long life; it was a hungry thing that could leave a broad trail of destruction if she was not careful, but she planned to be so very careful indeed with her warlike prince.

Having waited so long though, she must first sate her own needs. Óscheo was not an unhandsome man and his cock was young and very hard; she had enjoyed worse, so why not use him a little before she put him to her real purpose? She locked her blood red eyes on his and commanded him.

Take me! She spoke with her mind rather than her voice, and connected by both his seed and her gaze, he could not deny her call. Selena showed him a picture in her mind of how she should be taken, and she sat up and laced her fingers behind his neck to help.

Positioning his pulsing cockhead between the soft, pink lips of her opening, Óscheo pushed effortlessly back inside, groaning with pleasure as her furnace heat enveloped his shaft. With their bodies now connected in this most intimate way, he hooked her trim legs over his elbows, and clasping his hands in the small of her back, he rocked back onto his knees and lifted Selena's lithe young body off the blanket.

Laying back in his arms with her legs high in the air, the angle was perfect not only for the deepest penetration, but it

exposed her swollen nub so she could stroke it with her fingers.

Now fuck me, she commanded from her throne, mounted atop his cock. *Oh, she had missed this*. It was such a shame that she would have him just this one time. The prince was no stallion, but his modest girth was the perfect size for Selena's forever young body, which felt pleasure and pain the same as any mortal woman. As he stood and began rocking her onto his thrusting cock, she felt utterly full, stretched in every direction, and she gasped with unaccustomed delight as the soft skin of his cockhead grazed deliciously over her cervical wall.

Selena hung her head back, and with her small, peaked breasts thrust upwards for the attention of Óscheo's lips, she allowed her long, blonde hair to fall and sway with the rhythm of the his driving cock. Her fingers spread like a spider's web over her pubic mound, the tip of the middle one centred on the sensitive bud that the prince had earlier teased to such an explosive climax. She could feel that warm sensation returning in gently building waves and she squeezed down on him with her secret muscles to feel its tingling path as it flooded her core.

"Gods! So tight!" Óscheo breathed. He leaned back, using the girl as a counterweight to balance as he strained to go deeper, mashing the soft pad of her sex against the bony floor of his pubis. He was so far inside her that Selena could feel his balls against her buttocks as they lifted and swelled in preparation for that ancient imperative to blast a hot gout of seed into her womb.

No! She reached inside with her mind and stayed him at the final moment. "Finish me!" she screamed aloud, her voice quavering with undisguised lust.

Óscheo's cock swelled angrily as the fingers of the siren's mind tightened like leather bands around his balls, squeezing them mercilessly in her magical grip. She thrilled at the feel of his throbbing, swollen glans, pressing and stretching, straining deep inside at the gateway to her womb. With urgent fingers fumbling erratically at her sex, she arched and bucked on his cock, staying his

release with her magical powers as she searched desperately for the path that would lead her once again into the ecstatic convulsions of orgasm.

“Arrrrggghhh!” Óscheo groaned wordlessly, his face flushed and eyes bulging with the pre-orgasmic agony of denied release. With every muscle aching in resonance to the building pain in his swollen balls, he lifted Selena’s taut, thrumming body and drove her back down onto his cock, pounding the glistening meat of his shaft into her silky depths, only to drag back through her clinging, battered sheath to do it again. Unable to stand any longer, he fell to his knees, driving a gasp from Selena as his cockhead again pounded her innermost depths. Her small breasts rippled erotically with the shockwave and he leaned in to take one in his mouth, using his teeth on the stony tip.

The red pain of her nipple struck lightning through Selena’s body, sparking off her swollen bud and filling her straining core with an explosive charge. Her eyes rolled back in anticipation of her climax and she finally released her mental hold on the prince. His pressure was so great that it didn’t wait for him to pump, steaming cum simply flooded in a dam burst, pounding her innermost depths and filling her core with molten heat and pressure.

With a feral cry, Selena came in a series of shuddering convulsions. She felt the heat of Óscheo’s seed coating the walls of her sex and filling her with a wet warmth that flooded back past his shaft, mixing with her own gushing ejaculation and plastering her blonde wisps in a sticky mess. This fresh supply of the prince’s seed kindled inside Selena and her siren’s powers flared red again in her unearthly eyes.

“Now, my Prince,” she whispered with a scheming smile. “I have another task for you.”

* * * * *

“Anything,” Óscheo breathed. The pain in his balls disappeared immediately with his release and he now felt only the deep calm of post-orgasmic bliss. Not even Selena’s fiery gaze could disturb him; his only purpose now – his only desire – was to serve her.

“Anja waits beyond the rise,” she told him, never releasing her gaze. “She lulled you with her gifts and now waits for nightfall when she would kill you in your sleep.”

“That lying hag,” Óscheo growled, forgetting his own plan to destroy the Warrior Queen under the cover of darkness. He knew he was right to take the girl for himself. *See? Already she had saved his life.*

“Bring me her head,” Selena smiled. “Secede from your brother’s kingdom and let us rule Gennaíos together as King and Queen.”

Óscheo’s eyes filled with a greedy lust for power. Could he really take Anja’s conquered realm as his own and use her army and riches to defend against the wrath of his own brother? *What could stop him?* The plan was a thing of pure beauty.

“Waiting for me, is she?” he hissed, his hands curling into fists as the heat of anger rose in his face.

“Go and see,” Selena goaded. “Go now! Don’t wait.”

Rising to her command, Óscheo stepped naked from the tent and almost bowled over his startled guard. He strode purposefully to the gate, seething with anger as he bellowed for the gatekeeper to open it for him.

“Anja!” he roared, stepping outside the safety of his compound. “Anja, you coward! Come from your den, vixen!”

A few moments later, a head appeared beyond the rise, and to the sound of galloping hooves Anja crested the hill and rode quickly down to the fortified Akrovystan camp, dismounting less than a spear-throw from Óscheo.

Leading her horse, she stepped forward fearlessly and surveyed the bloodied remains of Selena's virginity on the prince's cock with a grimace of disgust.

"Your promise of marriage to Selena seems broken, as does her innocence," she accused him in a steady voice. "And what of my virtuous widows? Am I to understand that you do not honour our truce, Prince Óscheo?"

"It is you who is without honour, bitch," he seethed, his bare hands flexing with barely suppressed rage. "You, who would kill me in my sleep. Lay down your sword now and I shall spare your kingdom. Otherwise your villages will burn and your women will become whores for my army."

"You think me defenceless, Prince?" Anja smiled. She looked over her shoulder and a moment later a dozen heads appeared over the horizon. A dozen more followed them, and a dozen more after that, all marching forward and fanning out until a thousand soldiers covered the hillside, standing off beyond reach of Óscheo's archers.

"Perhaps it is you who should lay down your sword," she warned. "Though I recall you cannot, as it already belongs to me." She drew his weapon from the scabbard on her horse's saddle and threw it at him like a spear, striking its point into the ground at his feet, where it swayed pendulously back and forth.

The prince pulled it free and held it menacingly in his fist. Anja still had not drawn her own blade.

"Does Akrovysta observe the law of champions?" she asked. "Two warriors battle alone for their respective kingdoms?"

"I need no champion," Óscheo growled. "Your white-haired slut has asked for your head, and it would give me great pleasure to present it before I take her body a second time.

"Do you challenge me then to a duel of champions?" Anja asked loudly, eyeing the growing crowd of Akrovystan witnesses gathering behind the compound's walls. "A duel for my own kingdom?"

“And when I kill you, your army will yield to me?” Óscheo asked. This was too good to be true. *Had he really worried about a battle plan against this feeble-minded, vain woman, when all he needed was to slay her and take everything for himself?*

Anja turned to face her warriors on the hillside. She drew her sword and held it aloft, where they could all see it, and then lowered it, pointing the tip towards the earth in front of her. As one, a thousand warriors bent and placed their weapons on the ground, and then stood at ease with their empty hands fisted in front of them.

Anja turned to face Óscheo again. “They will not retrieve those weapons until the victor orders them to do so,” she said confidently. “Will I have the same guarantee from your men?”

Still naked, Óscheo turned to the camp and addressed them.

“Warriors of Akrovysta,” he called loudly. “This scheming bitch has asked that I kill her, a request that I shall honour. I command you not to interfere!”

“That is not the assurance I asked for,” Anja said, raising her voice to be heard by the watching hordes. “What is your order to them in the event that you lose?”

Óscheo bellowed laughter. *How could such a wealthy kingdom find itself ruled by such a stupid, vain bitch as this?*

“My warriors!” he yelled with amusement. “Queen Anja questions your honour! She asks me to give you your last orders in the event that she slays the Prince of Akrovysta!” Óscheo performed a slow turn to look at Anja and then back at his warriors, enjoying the raw power and courage borne of his nakedness. He laughed loudly again. “In the event that I am slain by a woman, I ask that you all to lay down your weapons and mourn the death of Akrovystan dignity. I further ask that you burn my body and scatter the ashes so that my homeland need never suffer the shame of bearing my corpse in its soil!”

He turned back to Anja with a smile. “Enough talk, vixen! Draw your weapon and face me!”

“Would you not ... prepare yourself, Prince Óscheo?” Anja asked with a smile of her own, nodding at the thickening shaft of his cock.

The prince’s passion was high, fuelled by his coupling with Selena and the thought of conquest over the beautiful Warrior Queen. He planned to keep her alive long enough to rape her in front of her own men, first with his cock and then with his sword. He considered calling for his enchanted armour, but he didn’t want to lose the moment of triumphant expectation and power that he could still feel building in the watchful crowd.

“I need no further preparation for the likes of you, Anja,” he growled confidently. He stepped forward and stood in the ready position. “Prepare to die!”

“I don’t wish to defeat you with the advantage of armour,” Anja called. She reached behind and deftly unbuckled her leather corset, pulling it over her shoulders and dropping it to the ground. It left banded indentations tattooed across the flat, golden skin of her stomach and around the richly swelling bounty of her breasts. She discarded her leather Valkyrie’s skirt with a similar lack of fanfare, exposing a neat bush of black hair that Óscheo longed to part and explore. He tried to ignore her nakedness, but the stiffening of his cock gave proof of his failure.

Anja finally drew her sword and walked slowly towards him, her hips swaying and her heavy breasts bobbing gently with each step. As she drew closer, Óscheo saw her erect, pointed nipples and realised he was not alone in his elevated passion.

The Warrior Queen stepped to within a body’s length and took guard against him, wearing only her sandals. Óscheo raised the tip of his sword and touched it to hers, relishing the clang of finely crafted steel. He judged his reach to be at least a hand longer than Anja’s, and his weapon exceeded hers in length by a similar margin. *I might never need to step in harm’s way*, he laughed to himself.

Anja pushed the tip of his sword upwards and then stepped in, swishing quickly through a horizontal arc in front of his mid-section. She was fast – he would admit that – but she was nowhere near close enough to touch him. Óscheo parried towards her neck but by the time he got there, the fast-moving whore had stepped around him and struck out again, nicking him below the right pectoral with the point of her blade.

Bitch! He would cut off her tits for that! He stepped back to regroup and touched the short line of blood trickling down his chest. *A scratch! A lucky one, at that.*

Anja beckoned him forward and he came, deflecting her first strike with the flat of his blade and then lashing out in a powerful rain of slashes, each one bringing him closer until he was within striking distance, whereby he lunged forward with the killing blow that would take off her head. The Warrior Queen ducked beneath his blade and let the prince's follow-through take him off-balance. At the last moment before he regained his poise, she struck out at his head with a flick of her wrist and the razor sharp tip of her sword neatly severed his earlobe.

Óscheo staggered backwards, screaming in a rage of frustration. There was no pain, not yet – his passion was too high. As he stood back gathering his breath, Anja picked up his fallen earlobe and studied the flat, crimson edge that had once connected it to his body. She looked up at him with a vengeful smile and painted a red line from her neck down between her breasts.

"Now we are both bloodied, Prince Óscheo," she taunted, casting his earlobe into the dirt.

"You have marked the place where my sword will go when I cut out your heart, you slut!" he panted.

"Then show me," Anja husked angrily.

Óscheo advanced again, but this time he stayed out of her striking range and wore her down with powerful blows around her head that she had to defend with her heavy sword raised high.

Relentlessly he circled left and right, using his superior power and reach to wear her down without exposing himself to further danger. With the last of a dozen consecutive blows in as many seconds, he struck her so hard that the deflection from her weapon turned the Warrior Queen around, exposing the soft curve of her side.

Seeing his chance, he stepped forward to pierce through her ribs and into her lying, deceitful heart, but Anja continued her pirouette, dodging his blade, and then she swung back around to engage him. Stepping into danger, she touched the flat of her blade to his – right up near the hilt – and then with two lightning turns of her wrist, she circled his hand and twisted the hilt from his grasp, sending the sword flying.

Heedless of Anja's blade, Óscheo desperately tracked the flight of his own weapon and the Warrior Queen caught him off guard with a sandaled foot to his chest, kicking him sprawling to the dirt. Landing heavily on his back, his breath whooshed out in a startled gasp and his mind reeled. *How could this have happened?*

He felt cold steel under his chin and a small sandal on his chest, and he looked up at Anja, her body aglow with sweat from her exertions, her breasts heaving as she sucked in air. The look on her face was triumphant. Óscheo moved to grab her ankle and twist her to the ground, but she warned him with a touch of pressure on his neck, drawing a trickle of blood. Too late, he understood that it was wrong to engage her in swordplay; he should have grappled her from the first and used his superior weight and strength to overpower her.

Even close to death, still he could not ignore her allure. His eyes dropped to her parted thighs and saw that she was open and wet behind that thatch of black hair. He realised with dumb fascination that this was every bit as exciting for her as his tongue was for Selena.

"Your last chance, Prince Óscheo," Anja panted. "Take your army and lead them back to Akrovysta. Let them bear witness to your disgrace."

Óscheo stared at her in furious silence for a few moments, the beat of his heart loud in his ears. If he could not have her alive, he would take her in death while her body was still warm.

“Archers!” he cried.

* * * * *

It was his final word. Anja did not know whether his warriors had more honour than Óscheo, but prudence had always served her well as a battle companion. She leaned forward and pushed the point of her blade into his throat, cutting off his final duplicitous order. His eyes widened and his body jerked as blood bubbled out around her blade, but Anja pushed deeper and when her sword bit into the fragile bones of his neck, he fell back limply, dead before the last breath had seeped from his chest.

“Your prince is dead, Akrovysta,” she yelled triumphantly, pulling free her bloodied weapon and stepping away from Óscheo’s corpse. “Honour him by keeping to your bargain.”

Hundreds of awed eyes looked on in silence from behind the compound’s gates. No one stepped forward to take charge – Óscheo had never favoured the kind of leadership that might lead to a challenge of his authority.

Anja heard a rustle from the back of the crowd, and a moment later Selena stepped through, carrying a grey-green bundle and leading the two Gennaíóan widows by the hand.

“I came here in good faith,” Anja addressed the Akrovystan warriors again, confident now that there would be no repercussions from the prince’s defeat. “Gennaíóa has fought and triumphed in many battles, but my armies are depleted. The widowed women of this land will welcome brave men to join us, to strengthen our numbers. We would willingly share our riches, and in return, ask only

that you join us in defence from those who would take by force what we offer freely.”

Still there was no answer.

“You have the night to consider my offer, warriors,” she said as Selena joined her and stood beneath her protective arm. “Go to your boats if you will and return to Akrovysta, but any man holding a sword or a bow tomorrow morning will die.”

“Come on,” she said quietly to Selena as they turned and walked away. “Let them consider my offer.” She eyed the bundle under the girl’s arm. “What do you have there?”

“Enchanted armour, Mistress,” the girl replied. “I felt him wish for it in his final moments. I thought it might be valuable.”

“Enchanted, you say?” Anja asked curiously, fingering the rough weave of the impenetrable fabric. “Can you feel its magic?”

“Nay, mistress,” she said, considering the question carefully. “It’s not magic I feel. But it is not of this world, either.”

Anja studied the markings on the grey-green armour. “Ûşarmy? Perhaps it is the name of the kingdom from whence it came?”

“Perhaps, mistress,” Selena agreed. “Perhaps we will find out, one day.”

“Dark Wood” by DA King

Mother Luna slowed her resplendent fairy wings down as she took a gentle sip from the river, her face frowning from the taste. Something foul was afoot in Fair Wood and she would get to the bottom of it. A Fair Wood without fresh spring water, chattering birds and giggling fairies was no Fair Wood at all.

But the wood was no longer an oasis of joy and wholesome pleasures, a place where those with cares became carefree. The trees had become foul mouthed, their branches more lascivious as they smacked her pert, juicy ass, while red eyed squirrels tried to jump into her plentiful cleavage. The forest grew more rude and crude by the day, and as she sampled the foul water, she found out why. In the northern reaches of the realm spread an unspeakable evil, from a kingdom of ashes sprung a barbed, ebon tower, sinking its vile roots into the very spirit of the land.

Mother Luna gasped as she saw the dark queen, her eyes wreathed in violet fire, crowned by abyssal black hair, her face the very image of icy beauty and smoldering desire. A black crescent moon filled her vision and Mother Luna screamed at its perverse image, so similar to her own full moon which hung by her neck.

She stood up, knowing what she must do. The only way, as every fairy knew, to stop screaming hordes of demonic warlords, wielding blades forged from the very fires of hell, who raped and pillaged in the name of chaos and their dark mistress, was through the power of love, the power of heart. She would spread the word to all her fairy daughters and sisters to rally and defeat this evil.

Mother Luna braced herself, and then launched into the air, the creamy globes of her breasts jiggling within her fluttering, blue dress as she surveyed her domain from the air. She dallied with the wind, laughing as the sun kissed her skin. As she looked over her forest, her light heart grew heavy, for all the verdant lands below reminded her just how much was at stake.

Her first order of business was to ensure the future of her people, and so she headed for the Lords of the Wood. She landed in the sacred grove and straightened her dress, before floating over to them. The Lords were giant flowers, all male, the fairy people lacking any true male equivalent. She sighed in relief when they didn't display any obvious signs of corruption, their dark blue petals waving in greeting, always excited whenever a woman came to visit.

In truth, many of the flowers looked the same to her, but she knew which one she really wanted to see, the one who would get more than a friendly greeting. The father of her daughter, his larger than usual stamens making him distinct among his kin.

She looked down at Cava-til, smiling as she saw his stamens harden in her presence. She hugged the flower, wrapping her milky thighs around his hardening stamen as she squashed her breasts against its rippling surface. "Good morning Cava-til, Father of Fathers!"

"Good morrow to you, Mother of Mothers, well are you welcome to the open air." His voice was deep and sensuous, more so than Mother Luna remembered. Her eyes becoming heavy lidded for a moment before she shook away her fog.

Mother Luna beamed, relaxing into his velvety petals. She groaned as she felt one of his stamens move down to massage her heavy breasts, her nipples engorging as they pointed through her light blue dress. Luna breathed in his spores, growing more aroused the longer she wallowed in the center of the flower.

"We have matters to discuss, matters of the Wood," she breathed, her concentration waning as his more flexible stamens nudged away her panties. There was something new about him; his petals seemed softer, his voice smoother. She slowly impaled herself on his primary stamen, its phallic head easily piercing her wanting lips.

Cava-til chuckled, his laugh an earthy rumble. "I am well acquainted with matters of the Wood and would gladly discuss them

with you."

"No, not that. Well yes, that, but just this once. Today is a special occasion." Mother Luna gasped as he began slight thrusting motions inside her, his tremendous girth touching all her sensitive spots within her moistening sex.

"More than you know, Lady of the Wood." She smiled, always touched whenever someone called her by her official title, but preferring her more humble name. She mewled in pleasure as he dribbled sweet nectar along her skin, her toned thighs glistening under the aphrodisiac fluid. She felt as if she was floating outside herself, on a cloud, as gentle waves of pleasure began to throb up from her loins, all thoughts of why she visited in the first place seemingly falling away by the moment.

She let a long moan out in the air as his length fully sank inside her, her voice setting the nearby birds scattering into the sky. "Oh, mmmmh, Bella misses you...." She arched her back as his other stamens kneaded her soft flesh, the perfect moons of her ass making slow thrusts on his glistening rod.

"Who in the blazes is Bella?"

"Your, uhh, daughter!"

"Oh. Right."

She felt a fire beginning to burn in her loins, whimpering as she felt his stalks slowly pull down her dress, ocean blue silk giving way to luscious, gravity defying breasts, spilling into a soft teardrop shape.

Another of his stamens nudged into her deep cleavage, stroking itself back and forth as another deep groan emanated from the ground. Luna too, loved the sensation, the moist coating of the stamens providing a unique and sensual pleasure between her breasts. With each gentle thrust of the stamen, her moon pendant was nudged further into the soft valley of her tits, the cool steel creating tantalizing stimulation for her warm breastflesh.

She sighed in pleasure at the feeling of his stamens coating the hemispheres of her ass in nectar, creating mutual arousal as their hard lengths glided across her full and firm buttocks. Her apple-shaped bottom quivered to the tingling sensations while she gasped, her belly writhing to the drops of Cava-til's arousal that had dribbled onto her, the sweet fluid streaming around the sleek contours of her stomach before soaking into her flowing snatch.

"This won't be much of a discussion if we are too preoccupied with...extended welcomes," said the soothing voice of Cava-til, his main stamen still hardly moving within her sex, letting the sheer size and slight grinding motions inundate her with pleasure.

"Too true," said Mother Luna, her voice trembling and airy, while her delicate hands massaged Cava-til's sticky fluids into the soft, pale mounds of her breasts, her fingers squeezing around their hefty size and tracing around their perky slopes.

"So let us have our pleasure before we have our business!" A sudden surge of passion filled his voice as two of his stamens wrapped around her arms, pulling her down as his main stamen, as hard as steel, pulled out of her sex before slamming back in, sending the fairy queen's love juices sloshing over his petals.

"Yesss!" she cried, her huge breasts bouncing to his deep thrusts, instantly setting off a volcanic orgasm through her spasming body. She had forgotten what such pleasure had felt like. Indeed, everything in moderation was the fairy way, and Cava-til's intoxicating stimulation reminded her as to why she only had sex once a decade. This could be addictive.

She moaned with abandon as she felt two stamens, not completely hard, writhe and grope around her jiggling tits. The reddish yellow color of his organs was dazzling against her smooth, ivory white flesh, pressing and rubbing against her hardened pink nipples as they kneaded her swaying melons.

Cava-til's rumblings broke her out of her reverie for a moment, just as she felt more of his stamens wrap around her legs, leaving her locked in position for his thrusting manhood. "Although today... I must admit... business is a pleasure... "

His voice had become more than a little deranged, prompting her to open her eyes. She gasped when she saw his petals, customarily dark blue, were instead flushed deep, sanguine red. Too many questions raced through her mind. Since when could he turn red? And what did he mean that today's business was pleasure?

She wished she had a sharper mind for these sort of things, but could only sob in ecstasy as her tied down body was pummeled underneath his engorged organ, her heavy and ripe tits colliding against each other in a joyful rhythm as her legs were left splayed before his lusts.

And then, as she turned her face away from another stamen trying to force itself down her mouth, it hit her. The reddish black pedals, the thorns on the stem, the overwhelming, sensuous stimulation - Cava-til had been turned! Her heart fluttered as she realized she was in mortal danger, while spine tingling pleasure pushed such thoughts down, but her will was strong.

"Why!? My love of loves, why did you betray me?" she howled, his thrusting stamen driving her to climax once more, her love juices dribbling over his shaft and into the flower's center. Her eyes rolled back into her head as two of the stamens twisted around her nipples, groping her ripe flesh as another gave a playful slap on her bouncing ass cheeks.

"Because, you vapid little creature, my lusts cannot be slaked once a decade. All of the Lords grow weary of coupling with you half wits only to breed more of your insipid kind! We want more! We want pleasure, for all time!"

Luna leaned back on a petal, the betrayal and immense pleasure of it all having brought her low. She tried to pull herself off

the stamen but her pussy lips clung to it hungrily, unwilling to part with her lover. She screamed in bliss as another orgasm rocked her, her succulent body breaking out in a sweat, gleaming in the pure light of day. "But I loved you!"

Cava-til shook with fury, his petals trembling. He had the stamens groping her bouncing breasts instead pull away and wrap around her head, preventing her from turning away as another stamen aimed right for her lips. "Ohhh, love! Love, love, love! So tedious a notion, it must have come from a fairy! Was it not our love nourishing this forest and keeping your trifling little kingdom alive? We gave and gave, and how are we compensated? A kiss on the petal, a hop on the stalk?"

He kneaded her thick bottom, giving her a hard slap on the cheeks, which elicited a surprised cry of pleasure from the fairy queen. His voice darkened, his melodious tones barely holding back his poisonous rage. "We gave until we could give no more, and these...trinkets of affection, these nothings which you so generously gave us, pale before the treasures of the dark queen. Now I'm going to enjoy turning you into our mistress's slave!"

She sobbed in pleasure and terror, unable to block an incoming stamen from jutting down her throat, gagging her protests. She knew no pain, no misery, no guilt as the passion in her veins blanked out all thought in her mind. She felt the sun fall away, her body enclosed by petals, bottling her up in a chamber of lust.

The heat within the closed up flower was overbearing, the sauna like conditions making delicate beads of sweat stream down the pouting swells of her chest. She looked down, seeing the foul stamen pulsate and throb, a frothing cauldron of evil ready to inject itself into her pure, innocent body. Her heavy, pearly globes heaved with desire, her flared hips rolled with intensity as her midriff stretched and scrunched with her gyrations, and her swollen, grasping pussy squelched and sucked, desperate for his vile nectar.

Luna was so hot, and so ready for release, but she feared it as well. She heard wretched gurgling sounds booming from a lower

place in the flower, Cava-til's deep groans building up for his long awaited climax into her helpless body. She moaned uncontrollably, and made peace with the fact she had no choice in the matter, that her righteous, pure self would be gone by the time the petals lowered.

With a deep growl, Cava-til finally came, his spare, grasping stamens squeezing and grabbing around her pendulous, perfectly shaped breasts. She felt him spew his unholy load down her throat and jet into her womb, her body convulsing and thrashing in his grasp as she suffered the most violent orgasm in her life. Her eyes fluttered as her thighs jerked and spasmed, while drool and nectar bubbled out of her mouth and washed down her shaking tits, her soul blindsided and penetrated by the vile spear of evil that boiled in her veins.

With each beat of the heart, pounding in her ears, she felt another explosion of pleasure race through her body, her lustful moans muffled by the shaft in her mouth. She blacked out from overstimulation, finding herself subconsciously aware of the feeling that her heart was hardening, becoming stony and impenetrable as a new clarity was grafted onto her mind, ripping away loving sentiment and cherished emotions.

Her head lolled to the side as her body lost its rigidity and became slack, the plowing stamens of Cava-til still keeping up their lustful assault. Her eyes had rolled back into her head as incoherent, animal moans gurgled out of her throat, her brain rendered mush from overwhelming ecstasy. She realized how foolish she had been all along.

She had no chance against the dark queen in the north, she never did. How naïve she was to think that the power of love could resist such wanton treachery, such incredible sensual delight. As Cava-til's stamens loosened around her arms, her hands involuntarily went to straight to huge breasts, her body eager to quell her insatiable lusts. Her nails rubbed over her bright nipples,

pinching them, as her fingers sunk into the gorgeous swells of her tits, her hands nearly overcome by their abundant softness.

She sobbed and twitched to the impossible sensations coursing through her veins, loving the liquid heat that Cava-til pumped down her throat and deep into her womb. With each gout of wicked nectar spewed into her body, drowning her in bliss, she realized there was nothing to fear about turning to darkness. This was heaven.

Her pussy lips were like a butterfly to a blossom, milking his stamen, until it had sucked every last drop of corrupting nectar into her luscious center. She couldn't think for herself anymore. All thoughts centered around serving and enslaving other's to the dark queen's will, and the more she thought of it, the more aroused she became, an evil smile dawning on her face. She thought of sinking her infernal claws into her innocent daughter and came at the idea, her orgasm setting off a wave of changes across her body.

From within and out, her body burned, her skin erupting into flames, stoking pleasure and pain all the same. Her blonde hair whitened into a wintry hue while her clear, porcelain skin was consumed by magical fire, her complexion charring into obsidian black as her bright blue eyes quickly turned blood red, glowing with inner malevolence. All the while, her glorious fairy wings were remolded, splintering apart and re-stitching themselves into grotesque bat wings, the ends of her wingspan tipped with sharp claws.

She dropped to her knees, wallowing in her orgiastic downfall as the flames died down, a satisfied growl leaving her lips as she admired the afterglow of her damnation. Clear beads of sweat dribbled down her breasts, gigantic and beautiful, pliable mountains of trembling ebony that caught the glow from floating embers. She took in a deep breath as Cava-til lowered his petals, the fresh forest air blowing away the scent of ash.

To her, it smelled too fresh. She looked forward to the day when the air reeked of fornication, heathen magic and burning trees.

But first, she had a daughter to corrupt. Luna stood up, the soft peaks of her chest standing at attention while her sculpted ass bounced proudly from her movement, her lustful body gleaming in the afternoon sun. She grinned as she noticed the full moon pendant resting between her lush cleavage had almost melted away, with only a charred black crescent remaining.

"Thank you, Cava-til, for showing me the path. I am so sorry that I did not give you the attention you craved in days past. We will be together forever once I have tarred and ransacked this wretched forest in honor of my Queen."

"All is forgiven in the baptism of fire. I look forward to our days together, my Lady of the Wood. Please do re-educate our daughter as to what it means to be a servant and friend to all the woodland creatures."

Luna smiled evilly. "Oh, I will, don't you worry about that."

* * * * *

Bella floated to a tall, verdant tree, humming happily as she knocked on its trunk, rapping on the wood with a series of light and heavy knocks, as the bark parted and welcomed her into its enchanted abode. Elmsmile was a perpetually happy tree, and the more joy Bella felt as she took shelter in his center, the more delight was shown on his face.

Bella lived an unhurried, idle life. She often spent her days preening and primping her luxuriant, golden hair in front of the placid, gleaming lakes of her woodland home. She was entranced by her own beauty, washing herself in the sparkling waters as the cool tides licked and lapped at her full, round breasts, an inheritance from her beauteous mother, as were the lush moons of her ass, softer than silk but still as firm as could be.

And yet, for all her self-love, her personality was saccharine sweet, typical of most fairy temperaments, oblivious like most of her kind to the passions her form elicited in baser creatures. Hers was a velvet-lined existence, ignorant of the wars and hardships of the realm, her beauty excusing her indifference.

"Greetings... Bella.... a butterfly... landed.... on... me... " boomed the tree, its voice baritone and fatherly, sharing his trivial observation of the past day.

Bella clasped her hands together with a gasp of joy as if it were the greatest news she could possibly hear. "Oh! That is so wonderful, Elmsmile!" She hugged one of his roots, embracing it like a long lost family member, before looking at it with the kind of sincerity that only a fairy could muster. "You are the greatest tree a fairy could ask for. I can only hope to be as wise as you one day."

Her blissful naivete would be short lived, for the trees of Fair Wood, though noted for their ability to utter piercing eloquence, were absolutely dreadful in their ability to keep a conversation, needing at least a day to vocalize new thoughts and observations. And so Elmsmile could only creak and bend in terror as he heard and felt a fell wind blow his way.

He could sense an infernal tempest, uprooting pines and shattering oaks into screaming splinters of wood, as peaceful forest animals were left tainted and vicious in its wake. He cursed himself for not being able to warn his charge, and hardened his bark as much as he could but to no avail. Mother Luna had arrived.

The fallen Lady of the Wood stopped before Elmsmile, her tremendous bat wings stirring the air as she lowered herself onto the shattered remnants of the surrounding trees. Elmsmile shuddered at her sight. Being a tree, he knew very little of the outside world, but some things were so primal and instinctive to all that live; he had no doubt that pure evil stood before him.

Mother Luna stepped forward, her eyes glowing like red stars as her succulent breasts jostled to her dominant stride, pouting

obsidian globes outlined by her blindingly white tresses, relishing her nudity as she cackled into the air. She put her hand to Elmsmile's trunk, drinking in his fear as she watched his bark darken and fall away underneath her dark magic. She closed her eyes, seeing through the tree's consciousness, and moaned as she saw her daughter inside, completely unaware of the madness outside as she picked flowers in the tree's internal garden.

She salivated and her pussy moistened at the thought of bringing her daughter into the dark queen's embrace, battering her will and burning her innocence away with pleasure, until she too relished her enslavement. She brought herself back to reality, smiling as saw the tree's bark had been stripped to the core.

She loathed trees now, and dreamt of the day when they would be mutilated into nothing more than chopping wood or great, lifeless brambles of branches. She smiled when she saw the face of Elmsmile, his normally jovial expression frozen in an agonizing frown, the oval holes of his eyes closed with rotting wood. Like so many before him that fateful day, and so many to follow, Elmsmile was but another noble oak, with nothing to mourn his passing but the dead silence of the forest and Luna's cackles of delight.

With a dainty skip, the damned fairy queen sauntered into the tree's dark, gaping wound...

Bella picked up a lavender flower, smiling as she breathed deeply of its fragrance. It never ceased to amaze her how things always smelled as beautiful as they looked, but then again, such was the way of things in the lands of Fair Wood. During her frolic in the garden, she had been all too unaware of the darkening of her environment. The friendly wisps had disappeared, the atmosphere had become humid and dank while just below her feet, waves of grass were turned yellow while flowers slowly grew into grotesque size.

Mother Luna lurked in the darkness, snickering as she watched her daughter become mesmerized by a flower. Plain, dull little girl, it was no wonder that Fair Wood was rolling over to the

encroaching darkness when it was populated with such simpletons. She stifled a moan of pleasure as she crept closer to her daughter, as thoughts of betrayal against her own people drove her arousal ever higher.

Her eyes roved over her daughter's lovely form, her pride stoked knowing that she birthed such incredible beauty into the world. Her supple, hourglass physique was complemented with a figure clinging, bright yellow dress, one that Luna had made her as a gift, in happier times. She reached forward, hoping to yank her by her silky blonde locks while sinking her claws into the lavish swells of her chest until she stepped over a fallen branch, her claws snapping its length instantly.

Bella flinched, dropping her flower when she heard a sharp crack behind her, finally noticing the grass below was not as healthy and vibrant as it was before. She spun around, gasping upon seeing her grinning, naked mother. Red flushed her cheeks and stuttering utterances left her mouth as her mind struggled to make sense of her mother's inky complexion, taking in the drops of sweat and arousal that streamed off her body, her mammoth breasts shining like two teardrops of oil in the diffused light of the tree.

As Luna sauntered forward, her daughter stared on in horror, paralyzed as she watched her mother's body seemingly absorb all light and then reflect it around her curves, her glossy belly looking more toned than ever while her bobbing breasts shook with every step, the light they captured making them look softer and rounder than ever before.

Bella looked into her mother's smoldering, crimson eyes and knew there was nothing left of the sweet, nurturing woman that raised her, the lecherous look on her face moving her to action. Bella launched up into the air, blowing up a swirl of dust as she set for the entrance of the tree.

Mother Luna smiled, taking her time to launch into the air, knowing her new wings would outpace those of her daughter, but

she held back. She wanted to let hope of escape rise in her daughter's heart before crushing it completely.

The ruptured entrance to the tree was in sight, and Bella's spirit lightened as she beat her wings harder, straining herself as she thought of warning her fairy sisters. She gasped the moment a shadow fell over her, and screamed when the grasping talons of her mother sank into her shoulders, holding her tight as the two dove for the ground.

Mother Luna pulled Bella up from her feet and into her arms, holding her tightly as she wrapped herself around her daughter, pressing her overflowing chest into her daughter's equally enormous bosom. She sealed her lips around hers as she sucked her willpower away. She reveled in the taste of her daughter, sensing the untouched virgin soul that lay beneath her flesh, its innate goodness and purity calling to her like a delicacy to be savored and ravished.

Bella shuddered as little tingles rushed along her immaculate skin, the wind screaming in her ears as she plummeted down and down. Having her mother so close, she could feel the sheer wrongness and evil that filled every part of her being, and struggled to pull herself away from her kiss, away from her supernatural grip.

Her world was reduced to the barest of senses, the feeling of her glossy hair whipping across her face, the lashing winds blowing up her dress, and her mother's salacious tongue, plundering her mouth, making sounds of pleasure as her poisonous lips smothered her with sinful desire. Worst of all, was the feeling of being drawn to her evil, as if her good nature clamored for its opposite.

But Bella knew there would be no complement of opposite energies, no balance, only chaos. And virtuous though she was, she was no warrior, and feared that if her mother melded her with the darkness within her soul there would be only evil, pure evil.

Luna gripped her daughter closer as the hard ground sharpened into view, kissing her daughter more passionately than

ever, letting her paralyzing toxins work over her voluptuous body, compelling her passivity and arousal. She rejoiced to the little muffled whimpers that came out of her mouth, her twitching limbs weakening in their fight, until her thrashing finally slackened into calm resignation.

Bella knew this was improper but couldn't fight it, unable to resist the throbs of pleasure from her mother's lips that rendered her body limp, and soon felt dry, yellowed grass crunch underneath her as her mother piled her into the ground. Dust flew up at their impact while the wind was knocked out of her lungs. She gasped for air as her mother pulled away from her lips, regarding her with a hungry glint in her eyes.

Mother Luna breathed deeply before settling her hands on her daughter's breasts, her pitch black fingers sliding around her saffron yellow dress before cupping the large, creamy white mounds inside. Her eyes flashed into pure flame for a moment, as she willed her infectious essence to stream off her skin, oozing like oil onto her vulnerable daughter.

Bella's eyes regarded her mother with abject terror, her body beginning to involuntarily writhe and tingle with pleasure as rivers of black melted through her dress and seeped into her skin, the liquid having a mind of its own as the streams moved against gravity and headed for her openings. A feeling of calm washed over her, urging her mind to just let it happen, her body long having surrendered with docile acceptance.

Luna hissed in pleasure, grinding herself against Bella's flushed and gleaming pussy lips, moaning as more and more of her corrupting fluids started to penetrate her, the ecstasy of tainting the innocent rushing through her veins. She watched with rapt interest the struggling emotions that played over Bella's face, sometimes fearful, sometimes full of pleasure, all the while her dewy lips gasped in surprise, making an O shape as the seductive sensations snaked through her flesh.

"It will be over soon, my sweet child," said Luna, her voice a twisted mockery of typical sing-song fairy intonations. She moaned as Bella moaned, their pleasure intertwined as an orgasm blasted through the fairy's body, her toes curling as her ivory complexion flushed in bliss, only to be glossed over in the sticky black fluid as it spread over her skin, finally seeping down her mouth and flowing into her sex.

"Yes! Drink of me, become me! Let our new mistress's holy purpose flow through your soul!" She leaned over Bella, groping her firm breasts as she whispered into the young fairy's ear. "Give yourself to me, let evil take you..."

Bella could only whimper in response, her mind overwhelmed with unholy pleasure as her mother's darkness penetrated her, tainted her and remade her in its twisted image. She felt all her inhibitions melt away and lusts bloom where there had been none before, more than that, she felt the vile fluid twist and writhe within her flesh, stimulating and arousing her in ways she had never felt before.

She knew she should have been fighting and screaming, and that this was wrong, but there was another part of her that didn't want this to be wrong, that wanted to embrace this pleasure. Her animalistic yearning for debauchery, repressed by the veil of fairy civility, was the part that called to her - the part that won out. Her soul wept at its inevitable damnation. In the fairy's overheated, sexual fever, her mind focused on the only thing that mattered: pleasure.

Mother Luna mashed one of her black globes down Bella's mouth, relishing the feel of her weighty, soft breast resting on her face. She sighed in contentment as she felt her daughter gulp down her corrupting nectar, flowing like a black river from her swollen nipple. She moaned as she felt Bella thrust back at her, grinding against her pussy, happy that the newly awakened lusts in her daughter had overpowered her virtues.

The two looked like buxom maidens wrestling and writhing in oil, as Bella's purity was exorcised, her body convulsing, sending sloshes of the inky fluid flying as powerful orgasms ravaged her over and over. Each blast of pure, sexual bliss robbed her soul of its defenses, bringing her one step closer to ultimate damnation.

The fallen fairy queen moved her hands up from her daughter's round ass as she jerked and twitched to her corrupting touch, before settling on her head, letting her polished liquid fingers melt through her skin and seep into her mind, ripping out any final traces of good from her gentle spirit.

Bella moaned in elation while her eyes glassed over at the violent obliteration of her spiritual defenses. With nothing left to fight, the evil penetrated deeper into her being as her obscene ecstasy intensified, hearing its seductive whispers while it spread through her soul, her innocence and purity forged into unrepentant sadism and unholy lusts.

Luna cradled Bella, smiling with depravity as her evil infested her daughter's body, watching as her blonde hair darkened into a striking blood red, her green eyes clouding with darkness, like black opals, before following her mother's looks and igniting into fiery, crimson orbs. Little imperfections on the fairy were smoothed away, her waist becoming waspish thin, emphasizing the bouncing, soft peaks of her chest evermore.

Her breasts too, swelled to the dark magic, expanding into wobbling globes, their already hefty size steadied by their gorgeous round, upturned shape. Her porcelain mounds, topped with pink nipples, had become as black as the rest of her skin, her areolas glowing as gold piercings materialized through her nipples, a chain of infernal steel linking her tits together, from piercing to piercing. Most dramatic of all, her wings ripped apart, fracturing and remolding themselves as leathery skin and reptilian scales replaced the colorful layers of butterfly chitin, until she had the glorious wingspan of a black dragon.

Mother Luna's steely grip relaxed, pulling away from her turned daughter as she took in the full breadth of her changes. Bella had ceased her spasms. An unnerving calm filled the air as she lay in the grass with supernatural stillness. Only low whimpers and quiet moans seeped from her lips, her eyes glazed over as she stared up into the roof of the tree, her darkened soul choking off the last bits of good that remained in her being.

Luna smiled, looking on expectantly as her sounds of contentment came to an end. At last, all resistance had been eradicated; at last, she was complete. And she was responsible for it, for taking something rare, good and pure - her own daughter - and turning her into one of the most wicked creatures that ever lived. That she did all this, turned her on even more, making her tight, glistening pussy spasm to her traitorous thoughts.

She ran her fingers between the generous swells of her breasts, tracing back and forth between the soft valley that separated them, playing with her nipple chain, before trailing down her sculpted stomach and robust thighs. Her daughter was now more like her, like a statue of onyx flesh.

In the dead silence of the tree, Bella finally rose up, pushing off the ground as her plump breasts jutted into the air, her back arching while she took her first breath as a servant of darkness. An eerie giggle left her lips, a holdover from her unabashedly girl-like demeanor of before, as she stood up with a dancer's elegance, her voluptuous physique even more irresistible than before, her beauty now a trap for all who would desire her. A new, cunning intelligence surged through her mind, and she smiled as insidious thoughts were born anew in her black heart.

"Thank you, mother," she said, stretching her back before kissing Luna passionately. "You have shown me the truth, given me purpose. How lost I was before, but now I cannot wait to bring this gift to my fairy sisters!" She beamed with degenerate delight at her mother, their minds aligned in their sinful mission. "They lead such

empty, benign lives, but together, we can instill the sheer pleasure of obedience, bequeath the beautiful treasure of enslavement! Of evil!"

Bella's cackles echoed into the air, her unhinged nature striking even Luna as a bit much. Her eyes were wide and red while her mouth frothed in animalistic mania. With a lightning quick jab of her hand, she plucked from the air an innocent wisp, holding it within her fist. She moaned as she corrupted it within her palm, the glowing orb turning from a calming blue to an impassioned red, before letting the spirit go, off to possess a woodland creature or some hapless fairy.

Mother Luna hugged her in a motherly embrace, an evil smile of triumph on her face. "Of course, my dear. This was how it was meant to be, mother and daughter, queen and princess, uniting to remold Fair Wood into a paradise worthy of our new mistress." Bella licked her mother's neck, before willing herself to return to her normal, uncorrupted appearance, her dragon wings and inky complexion disguising themselves with a more noble countenance.

Both left the desiccated tree of Elmsmile in silence, eager to spread their darkness.

* * * * *

A year had passed since the ruling members of Fair Wood had pledged themselves to Queen Morgana's evil empire, and the woodland realm no longer living up to its name. Black smog belched into the clouds from the fires of industry, the crack of whips over slaves filled the air, and moans of carnal delight rang through the decrepit woods.

The last of the fairy resistance had been rounded up and imprisoned within the wicked grasp of the Lords of the Wood. Bella and Luna delighted in seeing the silhouettes of countless fairies being filled by their thrusting stamens, their cries of misery having

long been replaced with howls of pleasure. And when the petals finally bloomed, so too would the fairies, having accepted and rejoiced in the evil branded upon their souls.

Violet bolts of lightning stabbed across the deep red sky, lending the land an unholy aura. Mother Luna drank deeply of the combined lust and suffering that filled the air, pleased she had served her mistress so well. Today was the day the Queen sent her high command to ensure the lands were truly hers. Luna would make sure they were not disappointed.

She saw carriages and soldiers make their way through the sparse wood, nimbly evading the pits of fire and hanging corpses that dotted the land. At the head of the convoy rode a knight, tall and bedecked in ornate ceremonial armor, with imposing rows of spikes upon spikes crowning his shoulders and helmet. Clearly the leader, she thought.

Luna flew down from her perch, letting her daughter keep an eye on the ongoing orgy as she greeted the envoy. She bowed before the approaching knight, folding her wings in submission as the knight brought up his hand, motioning for his men to halt. There was complete silence as he dismounted and surveyed his surroundings, Luna not moving an inch lest she offend him.

"Where is the resistance?" he said, his voice deep and raspy.

She returned to a standing position, smiling as she turned to greet him. "This is it, my lord." She motioned to the flowers, their stems bending every now and then from the pleasurable ravishments happening across the field. "This is all that remains of my rebellious people, when they are done, they will know nothing but loyalty to the Queen."

The fairy in the flower just before the two screamed in ecstasy. Her curvaceous silhouette was pressed against a petal, her immense tits squeezing into distinct circles as she was pummeled against its soft surface. A deep groan emanated from the flower as it

pumped its corrupting load into her hot depths, the fairy scratching the petal interior in delirious joy as her body convulsed in agonizing pleasure, the evil infesting her soul and devouring her innocence in a chain of orgasms.

The knight's glowing eyes narrowed as he stroked the hilt of his sword thoughtfully, entranced with the perverse sight.

"Interesting." Luna's evil little heart skipped with joy, pleased her usefulness had been recognized as the knight turned to face her.

"The Queen values those who can resolve their own problems."

"Thank you, my lord."

The knight spun around, throwing back his cape theatrically as he mounted his horse once more. "My men will be pleased, not having to suffer the indignity of wetting their blades with fairy blood." Luna eyed the demonic creatures that had accompanied him, each one having a maniacal glint in their eye as they sharpened their swords. "You have done your Queen proud."

He looked to the fairy in the flower once more. Her impassioned whimpers and whines filled the air as she slowly slumped down from overwhelming stimulation, her giant breasts dragging down the side of the petal as she shuddered and twitched while the fires of sin consumed her body. "I'm sure she would be very interested in these flowers."

"I offer them freely my lord, but may I ask, what is your name?"

The knight looked down at her, his eyes flaring for a moment in some unknowable emotion. "The Black Knight. There is no other name but so." He turned his snorting horse around before looking over his shoulder. "In one month's time we make our assault on the barbarous tribes of the east. Be ready."

Mother Luna looked behind her, hearing the unfurling of petals and smiled as she looked upon the corrupted fairy, her skin rendered jet black and steaming from arcane fire, the valley of her massive breasts streaked with sweat as she let out an orgiastic sigh,

her lips curling into a treacherous smile. Luna looked back on the departing convoy, beaming with wickedness.

"As my Queen wills it."

"The Troop" by FV Meyer

The war of the chase, they call it.

Groups of mounted troops, bandits really, raiding and pillaging the countryside, sapping our country's strength and will to fight by demonstrating we cannot protect our people. There is no real rhyme or reason behind any specific outing; the marauders do whatever they believe they can get away with before a company of proper soldiery shows up. And when they do show up, the looters flee like cowards, back across the border with their ill-gotten gains.

My troop approached the nearby village cautiously, our mounts tucked neatly into a small draw, climbing up the hill that overlooked the village. It was necessarily slow going if we were to avoid being seen and remaining unseen was the biggest advantage we had. Picking slowly and deliberately through the stunted and prickly bushes, the twenty of us reached the military crest of the hill before dropping to our bellies and crawling until a few of us could peer down below, careful to keep brush behind us. To any set of watchful eyes in or around the settlement there wouldn't be the tell-tale heads outlined against the summer's sky to give the game away.

I was stopped an arm's length below the true crest, on my belly and mostly hidden by a particularly obnoxious dull-green scrub-bush. Below me was Seven-Toe, a rather rugged looking but kind-hearted fellow, who was silently chewing a piece of jerky, his face a mask of patience. Above me, our leader Ensign Woodriver, was slowly looking over the village for a few minutes before signaling me the all-clear, which I passed down to Seven-Toe, who nodded and passed it down in turn, communicating every necessary bit of information with nothing more than a wave of an outboard palm. It took less than a minute for the rest of the troop to rise up and begin descending down to the draw where we'd left our rein guards, mounting up and getting back onto the road.

Falling in beside Corporal Casper, I finally spoke, “So, daylight’s getting a bit thin,” doing my best to ask a question without asking a question.

Corporal Casper didn’t even look at me, giving a shrug while remaining ramrod straight in his saddle, “There’ll be enough moonlight tonight,” ever the hard-bitten chaser, intent on running down his prey and obviously figuring that a night march followed by pale blue raid would be the best way of achieving that goal.

“Still, Ensign Woodriver doesn’t seem to think we have a chance with this bunch. It was hours before we even read the message and –“

Corporal Casper still didn’t look at me, but cut my words short just the same, “We? Tell me Maven, have you learned to read since we last spoke?”

I flinched away, knowing exactly the direction this conversation would take from now, “N-no...”

“So who does know how to read in this troop?”

“Ensign Woodriver...”

“And...?”

“Ensign Woodriver is the only one...”

Corporal Casper finally turned towards me, staring into my eyes for an uncomfortably long time, “That’s right. Ensign Woodriver is a learned man of proper upbringing and *he* reads all the messages “*we*” get.”

It was the start of Corporal Casper’s favorite lecture: a good chaser means exactly what they say and says exactly what they mean. Exaggeration and ambiguity are not in the cavalry vocabulary. The cavalry’s reports and observations, “Can, on a single word, change the course of battles, be the difference between winning or losing war and lead to the wealth or ruin of nations.”

I was so damned sick of hearing the lecture, but I understood why he did it. Corporal Casper had never been taught to

read or count higher than one hundred, but he was mindful. He knew when I was trying to ask him a question obliquely and he went out of his way to break me of that habit and train me to be straightforward in my inquiries. But he wasn't a cruel sort and, after I'd endured yet another repetition of his lecture, he rewarded me, "You are right though. Ensign Woodriver isn't holding much hope for this one; two dozen of them, with most on swifts, and no captives or stolen livestock to slow them down? They know what they're doing, they know we have an outpost a few miles away, they'll ride all night, same as us, reach the border by breakfast. If they don't, it's probably a trap and they've got more fellows with 'em, trying to lure our troop into an equal fight in the darkness. Either way, no sense in passing a village full of stables and warm, dry beds for the night."

I gave him a nod of thanks and broke away, leaving him to ride in silence, as he generally preferred. I was grateful for Corporal Casper. Along with Seven-Toe, Martin Elder, Martin Younger, Cheeky, Gallows Tom, Little Thumper, Old Man Brown and all the others who I'd come to know in my short time with the troop.

They'd been hard on me at first, teaching me to ride on some of the wildest horses they could find, forcing me to get back in the saddle when I'd inevitably be thrown. Under their tutelage, I learned to care for my ride, watering, grooming, nurturing. They taught to fight, first by wrestling – teaching me to subdue and disarm opponents with a few canny tricks – then with my fists, knees and skull as weapons before introducing me to the lance, the saber, the pistol and the carbine, on foot and from horseback. They taught me how to find water, catch food (thankfully, I knew how to cook beforehand, because some of their recipes made my face turn green), how to spot a trap, how to scout an ambush, how to charge, how to retreat, how to lead, how to follow.

They'd also taught me some other things, things that would never make it onto the drill field or in the manuals the officers were always fretting about. Like how to find the girl (or girls) in the village who were willing fuck a troop of chasers. There was a certain art to

the thing, a practiced eye for the impressionable and the naïve, if you preferred them innocent, or the knowing appraisal of a woman who'd sell her cunt the same as her wares, if you preferred them otherwise.

The best procurer of our troop was definitely Ensign Woodriver – at least when he'd been drinking – on account of his looks and obvious upper-crust, moneyed bearing. There weren't many girls who didn't dream of a dashing cavalry officer atop a white horse and Ensign Woodriver was exactly that. But most nights he stayed sober, so we had to make do with Gallows Tom for the bedding down entertainment. Generally that meant outright whores; Gallows Tom had the tell-tale scars about his neck of a man who'd been half-executed and almost no self-respecting girl would trust him as far as they could throw them. I didn't blame them one bit. Even without the neck pieces Gallows Tom seemed an untrustworthy sort and the story of how he acquired them was ever changing, depending on the audience. But I didn't mind his selection of girls all that much. Even the whores were a good time.

This village was a little larger than usual, the buildings better kept and the people seeming well-fed and happy; a good harvest for the last few years, no doubt. According to law, we had the right to demand quarters, but as usual, the villagers claimed that they didn't have the beds for anyone but Ensign Woodriver and Little Thumper. It was funny – people obviously trusted the good Ensign on account of his status, but Little Thumper had only his youthful angelic face, which conspired to expel the common sense of most villagers. We called him Little Thumper not only because he was an energetic boy, but also because he fucked like a rabbit, fast and frequent. There was no surer guarantee of having your young daughter's virtue stolen in the night than to quarter him.

Meanwhile the rest of our troop had to make do with shelters otherwise not fit for human occupation; generally barns, a half-full granary on occasion, with stables as the last resort. Still, it was better than being exposed to the elements while trying to sleep and

good cavalymen always rode with extra bedding for comfort. The barn we found had plenty of room for the six of us, with the rest of the troop spread out across the village; some paying for an inn like Corporal Casper, Old Man Brown gruffly declining on account of all the noise we make at night and others finding different arrangements.

That left the Martin brothers, Cheeky, Seven-Toe and I to prepare the place for Gallows Tom's triumphant return. It wasn't difficult and before long we were spread out on comfortable straw arrangements, singing and laughing as the dark took over the sky. The only interruption was a sliding of the bar door, drawing every set of eyes. She was better looking than the typical whore: a few winters short of thirty, with a kind of straightforward comeliness to her face, a thick braid of golden hair that fell halfway down her back, shimmering blue-grey eyes, carried by a world-wise expression. I wondered why a woman like her would agree to this, at least until I saw the faded black widow's choker around her neck as she turned to Gallows Tom. "This is all of them? Three coppers, then," she said curtly.

"Three coppers! You're a comely girl, two coppers' worth certainly, but three? Bah!" Tom replied incredulously.

"Well then, keep your two coppers and let them all fuck your ass instead. My price is three coppers, take it or leave it."

Gallows Tom grumbled, but dug the three coins out and handed them over reluctantly, muttering under his breath about war-profiteering whores. The woman didn't pay him any mind, examining each coin carefully before putting them away and only then walking over to the makeshift bed we'd arranged on a large pile of hay, "Now then, who is going to be first."

Martin Elder already had the straws arranged evenly in his hand and we each pulled one. Mine was longest and Seven-Toe's was shortest. "Guess our very own maid-of-the-saddle goes first," Gallows Tom bellowed. I looked down, embarrassment rushing to turn my face crimson, "If it's all the same, I'll trade Seven-Toe."

Seven-Toe nodded in thanks and pulled off his shirt. The whore had already removed her simple attire and lay back naked on her bed of hay. The others went back to their card game, but I remained near enough to the corner to watch, loosening my belt and the ties of my shirt as Seven-Toe got atop her, putting her legs on his shoulders and rutting her like an animal. I liked the way Seven-Toe fucked. He was dominating without being cruel or calloused and plenty vocal, which I really enjoyed during the times when I couldn't get a good vantage point. The widowed whore was experienced and before long they were both gasping and crying out, the sounds of their sweaty bodies slapping together ringing throughout the barn.

The others didn't pay much mind, but I concentrated on the spectacle of Seven-Toe and the whore coupling, running a hand across my breasts while rubbing my womanhood through the riding pants, biting back my lip to stay silent. Seven-Toe laid his head next to hers, her legs falling off his broad shoulders and splaying out in a manner most unbecoming of a proper lady. I looked closer, taking in every detail: Seven-Toe's tight, full sack swaying back and forth, the way the whore dug her nails into his back, the wet gurgle of her pussy being filled, the way his breathing caught as she massaged his rod. I untied the last of the strings holding my pants around my waist and shoved my hand between my legs, sinking fingers between my gushy-wet folds with a barely stifled sigh.

Seven-Toe was close, launching into a series of repressed grunts as his pale ass bounced ever more comically between the whore's legs. I flicked my nipple faster, my juices flowing freely as I imagined what it must feel like to have Seven-Toe between her thighs, coupling with desperation borne of hard living and constant danger. I felt envy for the whore as Seven-Toe dug his maimed foot into the barn's dirt floor and thrust one final time with a wheezing hiss, his tight balls twitching as they seeded the whore's purse. He stayed deep inside her for a few seconds, then got to his knees, a trail of his essence connecting her sex to his before finally collapsing under its liquid weight.

Seven-Toe took a few deep breaths then got onto his feet, partially dressing before walking back to the other side of the barn, where the card game was still in full swing, except for one figure who rose from the rest and proclaimed with grandiose bravado, "Well boys, it's time to take a little night ride!"

Gallows Tom laughed at his own terribly unfunny banter, which was just as well because no one else ever did, and unhitched his garments. Unlike everyone else in the troop, who would generally carry only their saber (perhaps one pistol if the village was suspect) on their person about the common people, he insisted on carrying his weapons until disrobing for the night. Every single one; saber at his waist, his lance across one shoulder and carbine across the other, with a brace of six pistols affixed to his chest and – I was quite sure – a knife tucked somewhere concealed. The dull thud of his arsenal being shed marked his progress towards the sweating, panting whore until he stood before her supine form nude but for his weathered riding boots, stroking his cock as he got down on his knees. He cast a long shadow over the whore, roughly tonguing her breasts and nipping at her bosom with his teeth. She winced and sniveled, but Gallows Tom was deaf to her pleas; he wasn't the gentle lovemaking sort that every girl dreamed of, but the kind of ruffian that kept their fathers up at night.

I lifted my hips and slid my pants down to better please myself as I watched them fuck, the voyeuristic thrill racing through my entire body before collapsing back onto my clit like a lightning bolt. I reached deeper down into my shirt, digging my nails into my own breasts in a cruel fashion, consciously mimicking Gallows Tom. With my other hand I extended three fingers and gave my clit a nice, solid slap before sinking them between my folds once more, a quiet yelp escaping my lips before finding itself turned into a deep, contented moan.

Gallows Tom took his time, patiently working the whore with calloused hands and brash manners. The whore's diffident attitude only encouraged him, bringing forth further excess as he pushed

both her breasts together and took her nipples between his teeth, then pulled his head back. The whore gripped the impromptu bedding tightly, her nails threatening to pierce the material as her mouth wrenched itself open at the same time her eyes screwed themselves shut. The whore's face was the very portrait of a piercing scream, but for her complete silence as Gallows Tom put the reins to her. I felt my pussy clasp at the fingers pushing deep and I took it as a sign to withdraw them to give my clit another slap. My head rolled back and I closed my eyes briefly, enjoying the sting before going back to rubbing my clit. It was too much for me to stay quiet and I took my shirt between my teeth, biting down on the thick garment to keep myself under control.

When I gathered my senses and looked back, Gallows Tom had spit her nipples out of his mouth and was now hanging his face close to hers, speaking softly enough I couldn't make out the words. I could however, understand her response, "No! Not even for a tencop! If you want to bugger someone, you can start with yourself!"

Gallows Tom leaned back on his heels, scratching at the scars circling his neck, "Well then, turn over whore. I'm tired of looking at you," directing her with his gruff voice no longer held low.

The whore stared at him for a few seconds on account of the insult, but dutifully rolled over onto her hands and knees, turning her head back, "And if you get any funny ideas about pretending you don't know where to put that pig-sticker, I'll tear your fucking balls off," her own voice dripping with willful malice.

The scoundrel behind her didn't seem to pay any heed, but – judging from her intake of breath – he didn't put her threat to the test. Instead he drove himself deep inside her with only a moment's respite, stopping with a fleshly *thwack* to mark the sheathing of his cock. The whore didn't moan or cry out this time, taking his length with a stoicism probably borne of experience. Instead she pushed back against him, her milk-white thighs and ass jiggling as she moved back and forth. Gallows Tom purred like a satisfied cat and let her do the work, one hand rubbing the pert ass in front of him, the

other behind his head, looking for all the world like a highborn lothario being serviced by an ardent social climber. If of course, you could ignore the bed made out of hay, the wooden structure and the farm smell that hung in the air.

I preferred to imagine him just as he was: a swashbuckling chaser with a mysterious past, taking what he could get from a widow-turned-whore. My body agreed, goosebumps climbing my skin as a thin, white dribble of love juice ran down the back of the whore's thigh. I licked my lips as I imagined what was in that drop - a woman's natural desire, pre-seed to smooth the way, the last man's seed, being displaced. I wanted to taste it but instead settled for removing my hand from my shirt and sucking on two fingers, imagining the vaguely salty taste was the same.

"By the mountain river, you fuck like a dog... and about as long as one too."

The whore had stopped moving, the dribble down her leg now surpassed by a dripping trail straight from her rented cunt. Gallows Tom merely smiled at the insult, "Got what I paid for, hah!" he replied.

He was barely standing before Cheeky emerged from a nearby shadow, already naked, and sat down next to the whore. "Hello, Miss! Ready for another," he spoke quickly, with the honest exuberance of youth.

Cheeky's voice was certainly that of a man, deep and throaty, but his manner of speaking was that of a much younger boy. If you didn't see his face – the puppy-dog eyes, prominent red cheeks, and the hint of boyhood fattening – you'd think he was mocking you. The whore turned her head towards him and opened her mouth to say something nasty, but then shut it when she saw his face and realized he wasn't putting it on. Instead she rose to her knees, flicking a few stray blonde hairs behind her back and tucking them back into her braid, "Always ready for an eager chap. How will you have me?"

“Umm, can you get on top?”

The whore's face transformed when she smiled, lighting the room with the kind of refreshing happiness that spread like fever. It was the face of a young mother greeting her child or receiving a piece of lovely jewelry from her beloved husband. I stopped playing for a bit and watched her more closely. This one was good at her trade. Most whores only had two characters they played: the wanton harlot enflamed with lust and the hardened tramp who wanted men to hurry up and fill her purse, so she could get on with filling her purse.

Cheeky's ruddy face brightened as the whore straddled him, Gallows Tom's seed still leaking from her. If the boy noticed, he didn't care and they were joined with a wet squish and soft moans from both parties. She settled down on his lance, then wiggled a bit before working her hips, back and forth, undoubtedly kneading his cock with the muscles no one would ever see. He kept his hands on her tits, treating them with the sort of reverence you'd see displayed when a learned man encountered a long-lost ancient text; cautiously fingering its dimensions, silently giving thanks to grace and good fortune, only slowly opening it up and exploring its depths. In return, the whore venerated his cock, speeding up to bring him closer, slowing down to keep him from going over the edge, then shifting styles before it became too familiar. She went through a full range of pleasures, bouncing up and down as if riding at a gallop before laying herself flat on his chest while sliding against his manhood and then leaning back and holding his ankles to allow him to watch as her cunt slithered up and down his cock.

She was playing him like a harp and Cheeky didn't even know it. I had slowed down, holding myself back in anticipation, but I felt a deeper, more insistent crest of pleasure building within my stomach. I didn't want to go over just yet and so I withdrew my fingers, regretfully, and went after my bosom again, this time reaching under my shirt instead of into it. My nipples were puffy and

stiff, like little rocky peaks atop mounds of snow and I attacked both vigorously, sustaining the flames of desire as I looked on.

The whore wrapped a hand around the back of Cheeky's head, pulling him up to a sitting position, supporting her weight in his lap while she whispered something in his ear. I didn't hear what it was, but I could tell – despite his sun-kissed complexion – that whatever soft words she'd spoken were debauched enough to bring a blush to Cheeky's entire face. Oldest trick in a whore's book and Cheeky went from blushing to planting his seed deep within her. She rode out his spills, softly stroking his hair and singing a gentle voice as he finished, his cock falling from her like a loosened rope, followed by a steady run of excess seed onto the bedding.

Ever so carefully, he laid her on her side, his face with her face, and spoke for a few minutes as she continued to carry the melody. In the pale light of the diminished fire, the barn took on a ghostly essence, the flames causing the shadows to begin their dance across the crude beams and haystacks. I couldn't see them anywhere near as well, but I was still able to hear plenty, including the pause in her song and wet smacking noises that told me Cheeky was kissing the whore. Suddenly my breasts felt much more sensitive and my pussy begged for attention with tears made of my love juices. I gave my clit a three finger slap to calm her and kept listening, hearing the kissing become energetic and impatient, the wet tones of lovers sharing their hearts through their mouths sprinkling throughout the night.

Someone at the far end of the barn laid new fuel for the fire and it flared back up, revealing the spectacle before me. The whore was still in his lap but Cheeky had his arm around her waist and was pulling her onto him while his other hand held her mouth to his. They were both rolling their hips in unison, joining together and breaking apart with a desperate rhythm. Cheeky was lost in the moment, his eyes closed, his skin flushed with sweat and his body yearning for release.

Meanwhile, his cherished other had her eyes open and carried the expression of a washer woman after cleaning five stew pots.

Cheeky would never see that and the whore was quick to close her eyes and adopt a suitably overwhelmed manner as he finished a second time, putting on the affections of girl caught out of breath after they'd broken apart. Cheeky rolled over onto his stomach, reaching out to run his fingers over her lips, saying something that made her giggle. The whore shrugged and then dropped the mask along with a fourth copper into her piles of clothes, "Aren't there others?"

As if he remembered a solemn duty, Cheeky hopped up, scooping his clothes into his arms and rushing to the other side of the barn. The whore didn't bother dressing, even as moments turned to minutes. Instead she waited, sitting on the now scattered bedding that only partially shielded from the stunted haystack we'd used for a mattress, taking up a stray piece and using it to clean her finger nails.

The Martin brothers came upon her slowly, quietly enough she was slightly startled to see them, "Both of you?"

The younger Martin put his hands on his hips and gave her a once over before answering, "That's right. Is that a problem?"

Her eyes darted back and forth between the two brothers before she answered, "No, it's no problem," her voice having lost whatever residual softness remained after Cheeky. She rose to her feet and I finally got a good look at her body, her breasts marked and reddened by Gallows Tom, short strands of almost invisible spittle on her face after kissing Cheeky and the seed of three men dripping from her spread cunt, running down her thighs in rivulets. The whore turned around and adjusted the bedding we'd provided, turning it sideways before lying atop on her back, head hanging off one end and legs spread over the other. The brothers weren't particularly old, but they'd both been cavalry even before joining our troop of chasers. Tough, clever and experienced, neither of them needed a

manual when it came to whoring. The younger brother got between her legs, lifting them from the back of her knees as he thrust inside her. The older brother grabbed her braid and wrapped it around his hand before shoving his thick prick into her mouth.

My hands shot back to between my thighs as I watched them go in and out of her, sometimes losing their cadence and causing her to gurgle as both cocks slammed into her, other times acting like a like a pair of lumberjacks cutting down a tree, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. I crammed another finger in, leaving only my thumb outside, pumping it fast enough that my juices sprayed onto my palm. Never one to let an idle hand stay at peace, I clasped my clit between two fingers and motioned in circles, massaging the lips and hood as well. By now my shirt was wet with spit and I was sure I'd nearly chewed through it, but I was much too far along to care, so I bit down even harder as the brothers ravaged the whore in front of me.

The younger finished first, loudly barking as he buried himself as deep as she'd go, pulling back a few times to slam back into her depths and spill the last of his seed out inside of her. The elder Martin ignored his brother and instead held her head deep, his balls resting on her face before pulling out, followed by coughing and spitting from the whore. She didn't complain though, not even when he walked around the haystack, flipped her onto her stomach and took her from behind with savage thrusts numbering a baker's dozen before pulling out. The whore made the mistake of assuming he'd finished and turned over just in time for the elder Martin to wet her face with his seed, his free hand grabbing her braid again and holding her even as she shouted out.

His brother hadn't stuck around after finishing but the elder did, staring at the whore for a good minute, admiring his handiwork with a grim smirk. The whore glowered back at him with one eye open, neither wanting to give ground to the other. In the end, the elder Martin stepped away, still smirking but never turning his back on her. It was probably a wise move.

As for me, I continued my dalliances for longer than I'd intended, looking over at the painted whore across the barn. It was only with great discipline on my part that I first stopped, and then removed my hands. I'd been biting my shirt for so long it hurt to stop, my body shivering as the soaking wet material touched my breasts and spread a chill across my skin. However it was no chill that caused my legs and hands to shake as I stood, taking a tentative step forward and cast my shirt aside.

The whore was gathering her things quickly, satisfied her work was finished. She was facing the other direction, bending down to grab for her purse when I put my hand on her back, "Miss."

She turned slowly, looking me over, but speaking kindly, "Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you were another..." pausing to think of an appropriate term for "whore-monger."

My voice cracked as I spoke, "I am."

Her eyes grew big before she laughed, "You? But how? And why?"

I grabbed her arms and gently pushed her back to the haystack, "Please, just... lie back."

The whore stopped laughing and her blue-grey eyes regarded me warily, but she did as I asked.

"Spread your legs."

She again obeyed and the sight of her pounded, swollen, seeded and spread cunt made me feel faint. It wasn't strictly my decision to fall to my knees between her legs, but it did put my mouth right where it belonged and I closed my eyes before diving in to enjoy the meal. To me there was nothing more delicious than a used cunt at the end of the night, packed full and overflowing with the troop's seed. I started with her thighs, licking up the run-off streams of juices, enjoying the salty taste of her sweat mixed in with it. Once I'd managed a tongue-full, I took it between my lips, savoring but not swallowing until I had a good mouthful of lust in cream form. Once her thighs were clean, I attacked her cunt with my

mouth directly, sealing my lips around it and slurping the remnants of the men's desire directly down my throat. The tang was my nectar and I moaned my satisfaction into the whore's cunt.

She grabbed my hair in her hands and pulled my mouth harder against her cunt, bringing her thighs to my ears as well. I didn't mind in the slightest and continued to suck the troop's essence out of her. Being deprived of sight and sound merely enhanced my other senses and provided me the opportunity to withdraw further into my own mind, losing myself in my visions. I felt and smelled and tasted at the same time I fell into trance.

First it took me back to when I'd first left my father's home in the city, his youngest child, promising to return with the King's sign on a deed in ten years' time. Then I remembered the first few weeks as we drilled, being one of the very few girls amongst scores of men. I remembered crying, being told I'd never ride properly, never fight properly, and never shoot properly. I remembered they made me wear dresses and used their riding crops to lift my hem up, humiliating me in front of all the others. Then I remembered meeting the captain of the entire company, Prince-Captain Fitzjerome. I remembered the oaths, all the oaths, but especially the one the girls alone swore, promising we would never bed men, wed men or bear men's children. I remember Alyssa the Pretty and Rose being executed for violating that oath, their bodies stripped and swinging from the parade while the other chasers and chasers-in-training spat and called them whores.

I remembered crying even more and only stopping when my troop arrived to take me and Ensign Whiteriver told me he cared for my carbine and not my cunt, in front of all the others. I remembered Corporal Casper teaching me everything I didn't know and thought I already knew. I remembered how the other chasers accepted me. But most of all, I remembered falling in love with all of them, seeing them bathe naked in streams and pools and running off to frig myself until I passed out. I remembered drawing pictures of what our children would look like. I remembered an elaborate wedding

ceremony, bound to my entire troop and a wedding night spent with every man having his turn with me. I remembered realizing they were stupid, silly dreams that would never happen.

And as I finally sucked the last of the easy pickings from the whore's cunt, I remembered that whores and harlots all carried what I wanted – what I needed – to feel inside me. I remembered Gallows Tom telling me about cunt-lapping and the taste of another man. I remembered the first time I'd dug my lips to a whore's nethers and lost myself in the taste, with Ensign Whiteriver asking if I was drunk when he'd seen me on watch, on account of how blissful I appeared. I remembered it all.

Most of all, I remembered this whore had more seed on her face. I let my lips part with hers for a moment, pushing her thighs from around my head and getting up onto my hands, looking down on her. It was drying in the warm air of the barn, but there was still a certain thickness to the white lines dripping down her skin. She looked at me with a question, seeming to ask if I was finished. I tongued all over her face as my answer, deftly licking the elder Martin's gifts and swirling them about in my mouth before swallowing them. The whore tried to turn her head away and I grabbed her cheeks in both hands, desperately washing her face clean with my tongue, ignoring her annoyed protests until I was sure it was clean.

Her snowy complexion was tarred by the lines of irritation crossing her face, but I didn't care. Instead I leaned back and started fingering myself again, imagining being a whore in the troop's employ, putting my own nipples in my mouth and biting down to pretend it was Gallows Tom. I posted out a hand and leaned forward, still on my knees, but riding my other hand, pretending it was Cheeky. The whore stared at me like I was possessed, her eyes wide and a hand covering her mouth. I didn't care.

Instead I was lost in my fantasy, giving up supporting my weight and instead leaving my face against the barn's dirt floor while I pressed four fingers between my lips and slurped, pretending that it was elder Martin using my mouth while I slipped my thumb in with

the other four fingers filling my pussy, stretching it further than I'd ever imagined it would as younger Martin took me in mind's eye. I rolled and writhed across the floor, the only sounds escaping my crammed-full mouth being animalistic groans of carnality. I can't imagine what the whore was thinking as she watched me debase myself in such a fashion.

Instead I imagined long nights of pleasure, being used by the men I loved. My orgasm hit like it always did, as if I'd leapt off a cliff and instead of falling rose higher and higher, above the clouds and beyond, reaching up into the heavens that no mortal man had ever reached before. I knew I was shaking, on the ground, the fingers in my mouth choking me slightly as my whole fist went between my legs, but I didn't care. The whore's appeal to me had left along with the seed inside her. And with that final thought I felt my pussy clench around my hand one final time as I drifted into sleep.

The war of the chase would resume in the morning.

"Judgment's A Bitch" by Guinevere A Hart

Grand Judicar Galatea strode down the darkened corridor of the dungeon beneath the Arch-magus's Tower. She whistled a tune as she twirled her heavy iron key ring around her black-gloved finger. With her other hand, she set her wide-brimmed scarlet hat further back on her head, making sure the small horns on her forehead were evident. Before she entered the section of cells, she tossed long black waves of hair over her shoulder and turned to her adeptum. "Are we ready?"

Adepta Thorn and Adeptus Stone looked up and down long curves snugged into supple black leather. Galatea had her heavy red duster opened to show off her generous cleavage, a deep red rose tattooed on the pale flesh of her breast. She could only see their smiling eyes within their hooded masks, but the appreciation she found there made her feel good. Her adeptum were expected to remain intimidatingly silent when on the job, so they both only nodded to indicate that they were ready.

As she neared the cell she wanted, she took harder steps, making sure the steel tips on the ends of her high-heeled boots rang in the echoing dark. She called out in a sing-song, "Gaaaaron! Wake up, wake up! It's another beautiful day in the bowels of the hells!"

From a cage further down, Garon cried, "Oh gods, not her. Please, gods, kill me. Just please let me die."

She reached the cell and wrapped her long, four-knuckled fingers around the bars. With glowing red eyes, she peered in at her quarry. It had been some time since she had visited the creature. The rail thin human was clothed only in its own beard and hair. It was curled up in the corner, furthest from the door. Humans were interesting animals; they always wadded themselves up in the corner that way, as if they could somehow hide from her. There was nowhere for the creature to go, and its time was nearly up. She

stared at it for some time, as her visage seemed to frighten it. She could smell its fear, could almost taste it on her palate. Fear was a delicacy Galatea thoroughly enjoyed. As she stared, she let her mind wander over her first meeting with the creature before her.

* * * * *

Galatea had left Stone and Thorn in the antechamber while she went alone into Alathan's office. There, she found the Arch-magus pacing back and forth in front of his desk. The high-elf's handsome face was set hard. He gnawed at the end of his thumb, and with nearly every step, his tapered ears flicked in irritation. The blue tattoos that adorned his face, hands, and exposed chest glowed with barely contained wrath. A scruffy looking human stood off to the side of the room and nodded to Galatea, but said nothing. At that man's feet lay a bound and unconscious prisoner. The bound man had a moustache that lay like a dead rat on his upper lip. At that moment, the 'dead rat' had drying blood on it from the man's broken nose.

"Judicar Galatea, this is Ledo. He is a friend of Adri's." Alathan then pointed at the man on the floor and his face twisted in disgust. "And *that* is a spy he intercepted today; a spy among my own damn servants!" Alathan pressed close to Galatea. The heat from his rage boiled off of his skin, but she did not back down from him. She held her place and his gaze. He snarled at her, "This is *my* house! If my daughter is not safe in *my* damn house, *no one will be!*"

She kept her own voice cool and level. "I understand, Arch-magus."

He backed off, and nodded toward Ledo. "Explain, if you will."

Ledo bowed slightly and turned to Galatea. "When we arrived today, I noticed this man following Adrielen wherever she went. He was following, while trying to look like he wasn't."

Galatea nodded that she understood and signaled him to continue. "He was always watching her, listening to everything she said. When Adri went into the library to make plans for further travel, he seemed overly interested in the maps she studied. I was simply going to report his actions to Alathan, but then he took a lady's under garment from his pocket and sniffed it. He took the garment with him, to his own quarters and used it for his pleasure. Upon searching his room, I found a hidden collection of Adri's things. His 'trophies' were arranged in way that was... disturbing. I didn't like that. I didn't like it at all."

Ledo was not the only one who did not like it, for Alathan snarled a vicious growl, grabbed his staff, and sprang upon the man on the ground. Galatea laid a calming hand on his arm. "Arch-magus, I will have some difficulty questioning this man further, if his brain matter is caught on the end of your staff."

Alathan slowly lowered the staff. Through clenched teeth, he said, "Yes, I want him questioned further. I want you to handle this personally, Galatea, in the way that *you* do best. And Galatea... *make it last.*" He hissed the last part, his eyes burning rage and vengeance, and she understood him perfectly.

* * * * *

The creature whimpered and groaned at her from its corner, "Please. Oh please, Mistress, I've told you everything. Please just let me alone to die."

With false tenderness, she said, "I'm afraid I can't do that, Garon. We've been over this, but I'll tell you again. You see there's this elf-woman that I very dearly love. And you, well, you put her in danger, didn't you? Then, of course, there's the promise that I made to my sweet lady's father."

In her studies as a judicar, Galatea had traveled the Four Kingdoms and spent time learning in each of the temples throughout. She spent more time than was required at the Temple of Dawn, because of Adri. She had been quartered with the duchess, and the two of them had become close friends. Galatea had been sullen and withdrawn, for people treated her poorly due to her lineage. The word “monster” was both whispered and shouted at her on more occasions than she cared to recount. Adri stood up for her, then taught her to stand up for herself. She not only learned to take care of herself, but Adri showed Galatea how to love herself. She would not admit to being in love with the high-elf, but she would not deny it either.

Garon sobbed, “They said I could keep her if I helped them. But I swear, I wasn’t going to hurt her!”

“Yes, yes, the Agent of the Worm Lord, I know. Now, Thorn and Stone are going to prepare you for today’s little game. The question of the day is: What is going to happen to my beloved Adrielen when she boards the *Lady Fair* for Novusarcis?”

“Oh please, Judicar, I don’t know. I’ve told you a thousand times that I don’t know!”

Galatea opened the cell, allowing Thorn and Stone to gather the prisoner. Its fear was not the only thing her olfactory senses picked up. The creature was filthy, its stench overwhelming. To her Adeptum, she said, “It smells. Bathe it, shave it, feed it. Then hang it up in the Quiet Room.” The Quiet Room was a special chamber, reserved for those sentenced to execution. Thorn and Stone nodded their silent understanding and obeyed her instructions.

Even after long and painful hours at her skilled hands, the Garon creature still sang the same song: “I don’t know!” It could be that it actually did not know. The trouble was that Alathan had finally ordered Garon’s death. Galatea still wanted to know about the *Lady Fair*, but she would not defy the will of the Arch-magus. If the creature did not change its tune in the next few hours, she was going

to have to come up with something else. Perhaps she could find someone to put aboard that ship, but she would have to do it soon.

By the close of her day, Garon was dead, and Galatea still had not gotten the answers she wanted. Alathan was angry and impatient for justice against those who hunted his daughter. He had made it clear that it was Galatea's job to do it. She went home frustrated and irritable. Something was wrong with the ship Adrielen was supposed to sail on, for she had managed to get that much out of her prisoner. There had to be someone she could put on that vessel that could give her another lead.

In her room, about to rest her pounding head, she was just turning down the coverlet when a solid shadow materialized in the corner of her room. She gasped, then took off her slipper and threw it hard at the dark-skinned elf. He deftly caught the shoe and tossed it back to her. "Krellyn, you scared the shit out of me, you fucker! Don't you know how to knock?" she snarled at him.

She and the dark-elf had crossed paths a few months past, as they were both investigating the attacks against the duchess. Galatea found him cold and arrogant. However, he was also sharp, and she suspected that he was much more powerful than he let on. She did not particularly like him, but he was a potentially valuable contact, one she intended to hold on to.

He disappeared from before her, and a second later she heard a knock on her bedroom door. Galatea rolled her eyes and called, "No one's home. Go away."

Krellyn reappeared in her room. His voice was low and deep, as though gravel rolled in his throat. "See, whenever I knock, no one's home. It's a curse, so I try to avoid it."

She gave a good glare and said, "Kiss my ass."

He smirked. "No, I don't think so. But thank you for the offer." Then he asked, "Garon is dead? Did you get the information about the ship?"

“Yes. And no, but I’m working on it. I’m going to check with one of my contacts and see if we can get someone on the *Lady Fair*. It’ll have to be someone powerful, I think, just in case things are worse than we expect.”

“We’ve made arrangements for Adrielen to travel on a different boat. But I’m curious. When you find your dupe, try to send him to me. We might be able to track him.”

“Good, I’ll do that. Now tell me, is Adri well?”

She was only a little surprised to see his face twitch, something that almost resembled a smile. His answer was short, but Krellyn was not a talker. “She is.”

“That’s good. Krellyn, she is happy, right?” Adri wrote to her on a regular basis, and it seemed Krellyn made her very happy. There was a time when Galatea wanted to be the one to make her that happy, but Adri was not for her.

“Of course. She is always happy.” The dark-elf was cold, so very unlike the vibrant and lovely elfess she had known in the temple. Galatea had no idea what Adri saw in him.

“I swear to the gods Krellyn, if you break her beautiful heart, I will shove your alchemy lab so far up your ass, you’ll have to mix reagents with your tongue.”

He raised an eyebrow. “The whole lab, hmm? That does sound kinky. I will be sure to pass your suggestion along to Adrielen.” Galatea took off her other slipper to throw it at him, but found only an empty space where Krellyn had been.

The following night, Galatea went to a small brothel known as the Laughing Leopard to visit the owner, Lord Cesa. He was an incubus, but he kept his business well within Slavland’s laws. He could indulge his clients as he saw fit, so long as they left his establishment with their free will intact. The incubus knew everyone, and if he didn’t, he knew someone who did. She needed to put a person of strength and power on the ship, but it also had to be

someone who would not be missed should things get ugly. If anyone knew such a person, it would be Cesa.

She caught the incubus's eye as soon as she entered, and they met at the bar. The form he took for his usual clientele was quite tantalizing, though Galatea preferred his true form. At the bar, he appeared as a well-muscled human male. Long black curls cascaded down his back and over one shoulder. He was not wearing a shirt, and the dim light glistened off of his copper skin. His beautiful amber eyes regarded her through a veil of thick lashes. With his voice alone, he massaged her intimate parts. "Judicar Galatea. Business or pleasure, Dear One?"

As he leaned closer, she felt his heat, smelled the exotic spice that clung to his skin. Her eyes were drawn down to the fine tracery of a circular tattoo in the middle of his chest and the small gold rings that glinted from his nipples. She envisioned catching one of those rings on her tongue. It was a vision that made her squirm in her seat as moisture gathered between her legs. She had taken too long to answer, for he took her chin between his thumb and fingers and tilted her face up. He licked his lips, and she wanted his tongue in her mouth. He asked again, "Business or pleasure? Or both?"

She smiled. "Both."

He smiled back with straight white teeth, canines slightly elongated. Then he stepped around the bar and offered her his hand, which she took without hesitation. He purred at her, "Pleasure first, then. It makes the business so much nicer, I think."

He drew her behind the bar and into the store room. Though Galatea had been with him before, it always awed her when he dropped his human pretense for his true form. As she stripped off her clothes, she watched him. His copper skin took on a metallic like sheen, and leathery wings erupted from his back. The light hair on his lower legs became fur as bones shifted and his feet became cloven hooves. Great horns curled from his forehead like those of a ram. A small sound came from her throat as she beheld the thick cock in his hands.

All day long, Galatea intimidated and dominated others. Cesa knew exactly what she needed. He was on her in an instant. He wrapped her hair around his hand and painfully jerked her face toward his own. His wings folded around her, filling her senses with his intoxicating presence. His amber eyes became glittering yellow and they locked onto hers. "The usual, Judicar?"

"Yes," she squeaked, before an impossibly long tongue unfurled from his mouth and lapped over her face and neck. The properties in his saliva lit her nerves and made her body shake with desire. He pulled her hair harder, bringing tears to her eyes. His tongue trailed tingling wet over her shoulders while his other hand applied stinging slaps to her ample breasts. He pinched her nipples then worked the end of his busy tongue over the stiffening nubs. She gasped and moaned, her fingers clutching at his horns.

He drew back for a moment and growled at her. "Tell me, Dear One, have you been bad today?" As he spoke to her, his tail curled around her leg, and he let the tip of it flicker against her wanting clit. The end of his tail felt like a tongue swirling and flicking, and her pleasure climbed fast. He moved his hands down her body and over her hips. Then he grabbed her buttocks, squeezing hard.

When he let his fingers graze her tight pucker, she whined at him, "Ooh! Yes!"

He put his hands on her shoulders and roughly spun her around. He pressed her against the round surface of a large barrel. All the while he kept the end of his tail in place, fluttering and lightly slapping her clit. He kept a hand pressed to her back, and that marvelous tongue slithered down her spine. She moaned when he dipped his tongue between her cheeks. The wet member tickled up and down. When he inserted the tip, and that tingling spit was inside of her, she squealed and bucked against him.

He laughed at her, then slapped her ass hard. "You will be still for your spanking, Dear One." She tried to be still as he slipped his wriggling tongue back in her ass, and the end of his tail pushed up inside her needy pussy. While he fucked both of her holes, he

applied slap after stinging slap to her buttocks. As he spanked her ass raw, she gasped and moaned, the pressure building inside until she could no longer hold it in. While she came, he stopped and removed his tongue and tail, but still kept her pressed against the rough wood of the barrel.

She felt the huge head of his cock press hard against her opening, the tip stretching her in a way that wound up her pleasure center again. His cock was slick with the oils his body produced, and those oils made her quiver and whine with painful wanting. He rocked gently at first, letting her muscles stretch around his girth. As he did so, he brought his tail around to again rub her clit. When he had fully planted himself, he took her hips in his hands and slowly pulled back. She shut her eyes tight and whimpered in needful anticipation.

She cried out as he thrust hard. He pounded her fast, pulling her against him as he moved. Soon, she lost her hold on the barrel and was supported only by his strong hands as he pushed and pulled her hips with his rhythm. She was impaled upon him, and the hot friction drove her to a screaming climax that she felt in every part of her body. She weighed little more than a doll to him. He lifted her off, spun her around and pinned her back against the barrel. She was shocked when he jerked his cock and spurted hot cum on her face and breasts. His jism burned pleasantly, and when it hit her skin, another wave of ecstasy shook her body.

He let go of her and she leaned against the barrel, her legs shaking underneath her. She stayed there for moment to catch her breath, and put out her tongue to taste the thick fluid on her lips. There was an odd spicy sweetness to it that felt like hard liquor going down her throat. She instantly craved more, but she thought better of it. Cesa was like a drug to her, and too much of him was very unwise. She groaned and laughed, "Gods, I needed that."

Cesa laughed with her and threw a damp towel at her. "You were very tense, Judicar. It's not good for you to be so stressed. You should come to me more often." He was compacting his body

back into the human form he maintained in the front room, and she felt a small twinge of sadness at that. She found the demon to be achingly beautiful in any form, but she liked him best as himself. As she cleaned up, Cesa asked, "You want to do business in here? Or out there?"

She looked him in the eyes and said, "It's about Adrielen."

He nodded, and put his pants on. "Wait here."

He went out and came back with two chairs and a crystal bottle with a demon skull etched into it. She put her clothes back on while he spun his chair and sat with his arms on the back of it. He took a swig from the bottle and passed it to her. She tipped it back, letting delicious liquid fire sear her throat and stomach. As she got herself together, he asked, "What do you need, Galatea?"

He listened to her as they passed the bottle. He did not interrupt and only asked her a few questions. When her story was done, he tilted his head up and stroked his chin while he thought about it. At length, he said, "I think I know a guy you could use. My people have been watching him and maybe planted a little suggestion." At her raised brow and narrowing eye, he waved placating hands. "Don't worry, I know your damn laws, and he's still got his free will. He's probably here already." He got up and led her back to the bar. There, he pointed out the man in question.

Galatea watched the wizard carefully. He was dressed in a nobleman's finery, his dark hair kept to a fashionable length, his nails manicured. His strong jaw was clean shaven, and his brown eyes were clear and sharp. He had a serving girl on his knee, and he stroked her thigh as he shared his woes.

"I have dreamed of the great Tower of Slavland since I was a boy. You have no idea how I have studied and toiled. I am a man of truly extraordinary arcane talents, yet I am denied the recognition I deserve. If the Arch-magus would only see me, I am sure that he would immediately realize my strengths and understand what

valuable asset I could be to him. I only want an appointment. Is that truly so much to ask?"

"No, of course not. Oh, my poor, poor Eartho. Stay tonight, hmm? Let me take care of you." The girl cooed her sympathies and played her fingers in his fine hair.

Eartho gave a small, sad laugh. Though he was getting drunk, there was still some cautious suspicion in those brown eyes. He waved for another drink, then patted the girl's thigh. "Young lady, I am quite certain that you could 'take care' of me, in one way or another. Though I am not so certain of the wisdom in allowing you to do so. The power radiating from your delectably nubile flesh tells me you are not quite human." The girl on his lap only giggled and kissed him.

To Galatea, Eartho's frustration was clear as he whined at the girl and drank his liquor too fast. In spite of that, he still retained faculties enough to politely refuse the attentions of Cesa's employee. As she watched the wizard, Cesa told her everything he had learned of the man.

* * * * *

The Magnificent Eartho paced up and down the long carpet in the antechamber of Arch-magus Alathan's office. The morning was going exactly as the previous two had. With envy, he watched as acolytes came and went from the chamber. Men and women were admitted and dismissed, but clearly they had more clout than he. It was the third day he would spend in that antechamber. He did not relish the time wasted while pacing, studying books he already knew by rote, and generally fuming. He was certain he would return to his room at the inn no closer to his goal than the day before.

Eartho was a young wizard and scholar with great talents and greater ambition. It was his dream to work and study alongside

the Arch-magus of Slavland, and maybe one day become Arch-magus, himself. He only wanted a brief appointment with Alathan, but it seemed that was too much to hope for. He had petitioned the steward several times, and even asked a passing acolyte or two to mention how he had been waiting. He was tempted to stride right past the guards and enter unannounced, but it would not do for him to be so rude. Such an act might possibly get him arrested.

He was disappointed, for it was no good being a wizard with phenomenal arcane powers if no one of any note would recognize him for it. There had to be some way to catch the new Arch-magus's attention, but Eartho felt he had exhausted all appropriate channels. When a wizard resorted to something drastic in Slavland, it often led to torturous confinement at best, a grisly demise at worst. There was nothing he could do, except sit and wait, day after day.

As the wretched day crawled into evening, he caught the steward one last time. He got the same answer he received every time he asked: "I am dreadfully sorry, m'lord, the Arch-magus is very busy. Perhaps you might come back tomorrow."

Though Eartho's jaw clenched in frustration, he nodded and even tried to smile. "Thank you, I shall." With that, he stepped out into dusk. He decided that his next order of business for the day was to get ripped. Perhaps he could even find a warm, soft, and sympathetic place rest his burden. He had heard rumors that the Laughing Leopard was the place to be for any and all indulgences. Forgoing the carriage ride to let the evening air and a good stroll ease his temper, Eartho walked to the brothel.

He sat at the bar in the Laughing Leopard and worked on his third glass of liquor. The fair creature on his lap gave him some small comfort, but he suspected she was from another plane of existence, maybe even a succubus. Though the silky thigh beneath his palm was tempting, such a being was not something he wanted to tangle with while drunk. There was little harm in baring his woes, but that was all he intended to bare.

He was surprised when the bartender told him his drinks, and the girl if he wanted her, had been paid for. He looked to where the barman pointed though, and his guts tightened as he observed his benefactor. The first thing he noticed was the scarlet duster. The black keys emblazoned on the shoulder spoke of the wearer's devotion to the Keeper of Keys, the goddess of judgment. The badges on the lapel told him she was the Grand Judicar of Slavland. He could not read her face for the wide brimmed scarlet hat kept her in shadow, but the eyes beneath that brim glowed red like embers. Eartho told himself that he had broken no laws, and he swallowed his heart back down to where it was supposed to be.

The woman who paid for his drinks leaned back in her seat with her shiny black leather boots on the table. The long tapered heels as well as the toes of those boots were tipped in etched steel. They hugged her shapely legs until scarlet cuffs turned back just past her knees. Her shapely hips were swathed in tight black leather, on which hung a coiled heavy whip. He winced at the tiny blades that glinted in the flail of that weapon. Apparently, judicars were not required to relinquish their arms at the door. Her black bodice and red silk blouse barely contained her generous snow-white breasts. Oiled black curls spilled over one shoulder as she tilted her head to look at him. Against his better judgement, he got up and joined her. "I thank you for the drinks, Lady Judicar. Is there something I can do for you?"

The judicar took her boots off the table and leaned forward to rest her delicately pointed chin on her hands. She regarded him with a steady smile that did not touch her cold and calculating gaze. Her voice purred from her throat with a languid and sultry lilt. It was a sound that was felt as well as heard. As those eyes chilled the bones, that voice warmed the blood. "You are quite welcome, Eartho from the province of White Gate of Shonland. My, but you are far, far from home, aren't you? I am Grand Judicar Galatea." She did not offer her hand, nor did Eartho try to take it.

With her face more in the light, he caught the glint of fangs in her smile and the small pointed horns that sprouted from her forehead. She was a tiefling then, and Eartho had to question how one of such unpopular breeding could rise to such a position. Her gloved fingers were strange to him, then he realized that she had an extra joint on each digit. He very carefully kept himself from shuddering, and again, reminded himself that he should not be in trouble.

Her sexy laugh stirred his loins, but his sense of self-preservation was stronger. "I'm not here to arrest you, Eartho. I'm here to help you. Sit down, love. Let's talk."

Eartho was pleasantly surprised by how kind and helpful Judicar Galatea was. She suggested that she could arrange a meeting with Alathan, if he could prove his abilities for the Arch-magus. She told him of the peril that the man's daughter was in, and what a grand impression it would make if he could help her. By the end of the conversation, Eartho had a short list of information and a renewed sense of hope and purpose. He quickly memorized the data on his list, then cast a simple spell to set the paper alight. Once it was done, he blew the ash from his palm and dusted off his hands. Galatea had let him know that time was of the essence. He left the brothel to settle his affairs at the inn, then immediately teleported himself to his home in Shonland.

When he arrived, it was early morning. According to his information, the Lady Adrielen would be working in the hospital at the center of town. Remembering Galatea's insistence that he hurry, Eartho went there immediately. The place was teeming with commoners who were injured or sick. With a handkerchief on his face to avoid catching any of the various dirty peasant illnesses, Eartho searched the building and grounds. His efforts were in vain though, as the lady was not there.

He left the hospital and went to her home in a modest mid-class section of town. Why a noble woman of such fine breeding would choose to live in a place that Eartho considered little more

than a hovel, was not really his business. He had been asked to offer the lady whatever assistance he could, and was determined to do it. He nearly lost his nerve when a dark-skinned elf (the first he had ever seen) answered the lady's door.

At first he thought the being with the piercing red eyes was a butler, but his demeanor and manner of dress suggested otherwise. He was dressed in a heavy, charcoal colored cloak with a deep hood, his slender hands covered in fine dark leather. His every move was quick and liquid smooth. When Eartho asked for Adrielen, the doorman looked like he was reaching for weapons. He thought and spoke quickly, convincing his cautious host that he was not there to cause harm. The dark-elf seemed to consider Eartho's words for a moment, then stood aside and bid him entry.

The dark-elf, Krellyn, was polite if somewhat reserved, and offered tea. Upon entering the house, Eartho worried when he found the place practically emptied. Krellyn told him that the lady had left that very day on a ship to the colonies. When he heard this, he started to lose hope of using her as an avenue to her father. But he thought Krellyn might be able to help him, so he sat down to tea with him.

The dark-elf said very little to him, and his scrutinizing gaze made Eartho feel nervous. In spite of his manners, Krellyn seemed to think he was one of the common cutthroats who wanted to kill the duchess. Eartho tried to keep his emotions under control. Though he was offended by the line of questioning, he could understand why the man might be suspicious. As calmly as he could, Eartho explained that he wanted to work for Adrielen's father. After staring at him for another long and uncomfortable moment, Krellyn produced traveling papers from inside his voluminous cloak and gave them to Eartho.

"This will get you passage aboard the *Lady Fair*. She ships out first thing tomorrow. You get on that ship, you might be able to catch her."

Eartho was pleased as he left the dark-elf to his empty hovel. He spent the day gathering supplies, being sure to stock up on his spell components. Though he had traveled the Four Kingdoms extensively, he had never been to the colonies, and he was looking forward to a remarkable experience. Knowing he was not far behind the duchess, he was certain he would find Adrielen in the colony of Havenport. Then he would assist her in whatever little task she was about, returning the lady, safe and sound, to her father. He would surely stand a hero in the Arch-magus's eyes. It was a brilliant plan.

It remained a brilliant plan for almost the entire voyage across the sea. As the lookout released the blessed cry of "Land!", Eartho had considered what a fine trip it had been. They were only hours outside of Havenport and he was looking forward to getting his land legs under him. Then men started to scream as a massive tentacle reared up out of the water. It wrapped around the jib boom and snapped it like tinder. Another tentacle slapped against the deck, knocking several men in the sea. As more tentacles rose up to tangle in rigging and grasp at masts and men alike, Eartho broke from his shock and stumbled to his tiny cabin.

The ship groaned and rocked as the giant sea monster tried to tear it apart. Eartho grabbed his precious spell book and his bag of components. He turned to go back out when a tentacle slammed against the deck and blocked his exit. Momentarily stunned, he watched that muscle contract. There was a long and high pitched creak immediately followed by a thunderous crack. Eartho's part of the ship suddenly tilted sharply and he was thrown against the cold rubbery flesh. Just as he was contemplating the dangerous maneuver of teleporting to some other part of the ship that may or may not be intact, the tentacle moved and Eartho was tossed across the deck as the entire ship was pulled in two.

The creature's massive head broke the surface of the churning, foaming waves. Its large tentacles were feeding dead and dying men into an array of smaller tentacles that surrounded a sharp

beak. It used those smaller tentacles to hold its prey while it ate. It rolled back its alien black eyes, and a thick membrane slid over the orbs as arrows bounced ineffectively off of its hide. Men had secured themselves to their doomed ship to fight back with bows. Others threw harpoons that stuck, but the beast simply ignored the barbs. Still some of them, though it was suicidal, flung themselves at the thing with swords and daggers.

In the chaos, Eartho tied a rope around his middle and tied the other end to what was left of the mizzen. He shut his eyes tight and focused his mind on the arcane strengths that were his. His soul reached out into the dark depths of both ocean and Aether and he called forth a shiver of dire sharks. The feasting great kraken paid it no mind as a thick mist of Aether began to form all around it. When Eartho's conjured help began to tear at its lower body though, the creature shrieked. Its voice seemed to rip through Eartho's head, leaving him temporarily deafened. In its pain, the creature flailed all of its limbs, flinging men and smashing what remained of the ship to splinters.

The churning sea swallowed Eartho, mizzen and all. He cut the rope that bound him to the wood and tried to get a look at the thing that destroyed the ship. He could barely see in the dark water, but from what he could tell the kraken's body was far too large for even the dire sharks to destroy it. He realized that the only thing he could do for himself was try to escape the mythical beast. He could cast a spell that would allow him to breathe in the water for a time, but he could not cast anything while he was under water. He watched a moment longer as his sharks were torn apart by the kraken's lower limbs, then with a strong kick, Eartho swam for the surface.

Before he broke through, the kraken wrapped a limb around his neck and hauled him, choking and sputtering out of the water. It carelessly passed him from limb to writhing limb. Its suckers had hooks that latched and tore both clothes and skin as he was tossed about. Then it grabbed his leg and brought him close to its face, so

that it could stare at the wizard with one great black orb. Eartho was no mind reader, but he got the general impression that the beast knew he was responsible for the sharks, and that it was most certainly angry about it. It moved him to its mouth tentacles that surrounded and entangled him, and the great beak snapped menacingly. Thinking quickly, Eartho called upon his conjuring skills to pull a thick flock of seagulls in to blind the creature. Though it raged against the birds, it kept a firm hold on its meal.

Eartho had not gone all that way just to be eaten. He cast his water breathing spell, then he managed to get an arm free at the expense of some lost flesh. In his freed hand, he conjured an Aether blade that crackled with arcane energy. He brought the magical sword against the tentacles that bound him, and in seconds he splashed down into the water. With his breathing spell active, Eartho dove down and away from the creature.

He swam in the direction of land, hoping to get there before the sea killed him. In minutes, he came upon an ancient ruin that was some distance below him. The entire city was protected by a bubble-like dome of powerful magic. He paused, hovering over that strange sight, curious about who or what could be strong enough to maintain such a thing. Then a current began to tug at him, one that seemed to be pulling back in the direction of the monster, and Eartho fought to maintain his own course. He turned around again, just in time to see the ocean floor open up like a trap door near the domed city. The wounded kraken swam through that portal and the floor closed over it.

Though the monster was gone, Eartho had a very long swim ahead of him. He paced himself, conserving his energy for he had no idea how far away he was from safety. In time, he could think of nothing at all except to go through the motions of pulling himself through the water. His progress felt too sluggish, and as his spell was beginning to wear off, he seriously doubted his ability to survive. Then he saw a shadow above him and a faint circle of light

there. He had no idea if that circle meant safety or his death, but he no longer cared. Eartho just wanted to get out of the water.

With somewhat renewed hope, Eartho swam for that light. Finally, his hand burst up through the surface. He gripped the edge, and on shaking arms, he pulled himself out of the drink and onto a hard stone surface. As he pulled in a great gasping breath, he sensed there were people in the room. He hoped they were colonists. He needed to let them know about the tragedy of the *Lady Fair*. The only two words his exhausted mind and body could put together were, "Kraken boat!" Then Eartho's world went blessedly dark.

Eartho lay in that darkness, believing that he was dying. It only made logical sense. No one got nearly eaten by a kraken and lived, not even a magnificent arcanist like himself. He was trying to die quietly with what dignity he had left to him, but someone kept poking him. Whoever was nagging at him smelled very strange; a combination of black powder, gun oil, and... flowers? As politely as he could, he tried to explain to the freakish gun-toting flower that he was dying. "Please, not now. I have just come from the kraken boat. You have no idea how exhausting it is to die."

The flower said, "You're not dying."

What an absolutely ridiculous thing for a flower to say. Of course he was dying. He started to explain further, when he opened his eyes and saw the barrel of a pistol pointed at his head. In spite of everything he had just gone through, he was about to be shot in the face. Losing his typically amenable temper, he shouted, "Can you not leave a man to die in peace?!"

Then the 'flower', who was actually an angel come to lead him to his afterlife, pushed the gun away. The angel had a halo of snow white hair framing a very pretty, pale face. Her eyes were large, kind, and the most extraordinary blue. As he was just beginning to question why an elfin angel would lead a human man to the gods, the angel leaned over him and assured him he was not dying. Then his mind added a lot more length to the elf's hair and

little more softness in her cheeks, and he recognized her from paintings he had seen in Slavland. This woman was not an angel at all, but close enough, for she had healed all of his injuries and even suffused his body with a renewed energy. Much to his good fortune, she also happened to be Alathan's daughter. In spite of the kraken boat, or maybe because of it, Eartho had found what he was looking for.

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Galatea paced around her bed where the naked Adeptus Stone was bound and gagged. With padded cuffs, she had bound his thighs to his upper arms, fully exposing him to her and Adepta Thorn's pleasures. A profusion of sweat glistened on his skin, dew drops in the stubble of his shaved head. His solid muscles were taut, though his light gray eyes smiled at her. He was marked with love bites and welts from Galatea's lash (a toy that she used in her bedroom, not the vicious one she used in her profession). His breath came fast and he moaned around the gag in his mouth, for Thorn worked a dildo in and out of his rectum while her tongue and fingers played over his ringed cock.

Galatea admired Thorn's beauty. Tanned skin over athletic musculature, accented by glinting jewels at her pert breasts and tight navel. Her red-gold hair hung long and straight over one shoulder. Her green eyes held laughter and mischief as she looked up at Galatea. She stepped behind Thorn and ran her fingertips over the woman's toned buttocks, watching the candlelight play over the gemmed flange of the plug there. She dipped between Thorn's nether lips and was pleased to find her wet and engorged. She slid her fingers over the swollen clit, and Thorn gasped and further parted her legs. While she worked Thorn's clit, Galatea looked into Stone's pleading eyes. "Would like to cum, Adeptus?"

Stone moaned again and emphatically nodded his head. Galatea withdrew her fingers and licked them clean. “Adepta Thorn, if you would be so kind?”

Thorn gave her a little nod and a sweet giggle. She slowly slipped the ring from Stone’s cock. Then she returned her mouth, taking the entirety of his member, to suck him in earnest. She kept her hand busy at his ass, and he shut his eyes tight, grunting around the gag in his mouth.

Galatea lay down behind Thorn, positioning her head between the woman’s fine legs to give the young woman a proper tongue-lashing. She sucked the tender flesh between her lips and rapidly flicked her tongue. When she added her long fingers, pumping them in and out of Thorn’s tight pussy, it was not long before both Thorn’s and Stone’s bodies quaked. The three of them stayed where they were. Galatea enjoyed the warmth and the scent of spent sex as bodies began to relax in the aftermath.

Galatea usually slept alone, but she actually considered asking them to stay tonight. She was considering her words, wanting them to stay, but not wanting to sound needy, when something went wrong. Stone started to frantically yell around his gag and his hands flailed in the manacles.

Thorn immediately scrambled off the bed and was reaching to release Stone’s gag, when Galatea sat up and swore. “Keeper’s Twat, Krellyn! Learn to fuckin’ knock, you asshole! I was right in the middle of a team-building exercise here!”

The left corner of his dark mouth curled. “Is that what the mortals are calling it these days?”

Galatea ignored the question and turned back to her adeptum, pleased to see she did not have to instruct Thorn to release Stone from his bonds. With a fierce glare at Krellyn, she grabbed her robe off the hook on the wall and threw it on. “What do you want?” she snapped.

“Did you send a wizard called Eartho to Shonland? He was your plant for the ship, correct?”

“Yes. Did everything go according to plan?” She was glad to know the wizard had found Krellyn and hoped for a further lead.

“I thought you might like to know that your wizard is still alive, and the tracking mark I placed on him seems to be working well. He can be scried.”

She had not expected the dark-elf to be able to scry. It was more than she had hoped for, and she was glad to be able to give Alathan some answers. “And what happened on the *Lady Fair*?”

“A kraken; and only hours from the coast. Your Eartho was well chosen. He was the only one who lived through the attack.”

“A sea monster attacking a ship could be a coincidence.” Even as the words left her mouth, she knew it was not so.

He issued a derisive snort. “Adri says there are no coincidences.”

“I know, but who commands a kraken?” One answer leading to a dozen more questions was the way of Galatea’s life. If something powerful enough to give orders to a kraken wanted Adri dead, then the issue was worse than they had thought.

“I’ve got a few ideas, but I want to make sure. For now, I’ve got an appointment at the Empyreal Banker’s Guild in Avar. I’ll be in touch.” With that, Krellyn was gone.

Stone stepped up behind Galatea and stared at the place Krellyn had been. “He’s one slick fucker, isn’t he?” he muttered.

“Adeptus, you have no idea. You and Thorn get our bags ready. Tomorrow we’re going to Avar. If that dark-skinned ass has another lead, I want to know what it is.”

“Paying Off A Contract” by John Evans

"Mother pusbucket!" cursed Alana.

The halfling took her saddle bags off her shoulder and angrily flung them onto a chair. Alana blew a strand of her brown hair away from her face. She had just returned Cific on the late evening coach from Karina's farm, having arrived there a little over a week later than everyone else, being delayed by her guild master.

"Stupid, Gods-be-damned, shit-for-brains half-ogre!"

Halfling women don't get morning sickness; they seem to be actually suited for childbearing. So the first Alana knew that her body was changing was when she received the request to come to the farm. What she had not expected was a witch's prophecy. Alana thought back to the day when she arrived at Karina's farm.

Dorothea, Rolph, Dagmar, and Helga greeted her at the farm. Tomei and Cassandra were still there waiting for Alana as if they knew when she was going to arrive. The two women congratulated Alana on her pregnancy and went on to explain to how all the women who took part in the ritual were in the same boat.

Alana felt a little uneasy when Helga told her about the prophecies, and the feeling continued as she went to Cassandra's wagon. Her unease heightened and she felt her skin crawl when Tomei had her pull up her blouse to touch her stomach with her bony fingers. After a moment or two, Tomei cackled.

"You're correct," she said. "A burden the baby will be. Trouble the baby will cause, even before it is even born. If you follow your first impulse, danger untold will befall you."

"Tomei," cautioned Cassandra. "Just the child."

"Too confusing, milady," snapped Tomei. She then took in a deep breath. "I'm sorry. I can't get a reading when the halfling is unsure whether to kill the fetus or not."

"Thank you, Tomei," said Cassandra. "I know this is been trying. Go rest. I will walk back with Alana."

Cassandra escorted Alana out of the covered wagon. They started walking back to the farmhouse, Cassandra in unperturbed silence and Alana in quiet unease. Finally, Alana turned to face Cassandra.

"Yes, Tomei's prophecies are accurate," said Cassandra before Alana could say word. "You obviously have misgivings on whether to continue with this pregnancy."

"Untold dangers?" quipped Alana. "There are always untold dangers in our world."

Cassandra walked over to a fallen tree to take a seat. Alana sighed and followed after her.

"Tomei said 'dangers untold' if you stop your pregnancy," said Cassandra. "It's a subtle difference, but the meaning is profound. If you don't deliver the child, danger, calamity, and horror will follow you for the rest you're very short life. Maybe even beyond that."

"Great," snorted Alana. "So I really don't have a choice after all. Danger untold or fate worse than death."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said Cassandra.

"You know Per, right? Huge, tall, half-ogre." Cassandra nodded her head. "When I left him, I was going to go adventuring. The owner of the tavern in Cific where I was staying put me in touch with a nobleman who had a problem. A rival nobleman had taken a valuable piece of jewelry and my nobleman wanted it back. The fee was lucrative enough to entice me. He then told me not touch anything else in the house or the authorities would be informed. He said all he wanted back was his property. I agreed to do it."

"It was... an experience. There were guards, traps, and alarms. The poison needle in the lock of the treasure chest almost

stuck me. But I retrieved the jewelry and gave it back to the nobleman.

"Two days later, the other nobleman contacted me. It wasn't to accuse me or turn me in. He wanted to hire me to steal the jewelry again. He told me that the first nobleman had taken the piece and he needed to prove that it was his. Again, the pay was enough to pique my interest.

"The long and the short of it is I took the job and stole the piece of jewelry back. The first nobleman's house was just as deadly as the other one. I think they just weren't prepared for someone my size.

"The next morning a man came to see me. He told me he was Volsma, guildmaster for the thieves in Cific. He was urbane, well-dressed, and sounded educated; not your typical thief. He explained to me that the two noblemen started stealing from one another as a joke. It evolved into a test of their security and if a thief or two died, then it wasn't much of a loss as far as they were concerned. He went on to explain that the guild had forbidden thieves from taking any job from either nobleman."

Alana smiled ruefully at Cassandra. "I was starting to relax when Volsma told me that as a non-guild member I needed to pay fifty percent of the two fees I had received along with a forty percent fine for breaking the guild restriction."

"What?" exclaimed Cassandra in shock. "That's, that's..."

"Highway robbery?" suggested Alana with a smile. "Volsma is a thief, and he's good enough and ruthless enough to rise up to be the guildmaster. He is also very chauvinistic and believes females are only suited for two things, one of which is cooking. He did offer me a five percent discount on the forty-five percent rate he charges to his other prostitutes."

"Maybe I should pay a visit to this Volsma and show him that women are better than he thinks," said Cassandra in disgust.

"If you could find him," said Alana. "Anyway, I paid him, told him I was not going to be one of his prostitutes, and I thanked him for his time. That was when Volsma told me that I should go home and find a husband. That ticked me off. I asked him what the rates were for a thief in the guild and that I wanted to join. He laughed and said I had to prove myself first.

"Two days later, I hauled four bags of loot into the guild warehouse. I asked if that was good enough proof for him. He conceded, but stated since I was a female, he would have to charge me forty percent instead of the regular rate of thirty percent. I told he might as well tack on another forty percent for breaking guild restrictions since the loot came from the two noblemen's houses."

"How did he take that?" asked Cassandra.

"Better than I thought. He congratulated me and said he expected great things for me, adding that since I made the same mistake twice, he was tacking on another nineteen percent fine. He also told me that if I didn't perform or if I broke another guild restriction again, he would find something else for me to do, if you know what I mean.

"So that's my fate worse than death, and being pregnant means I can't be a thief for a while."

"You could go back to your village," suggested Cassandra.

"To be a farmer's wife?" asked Alana with a shudder. "I'm too adventurous, too restless for that life." She touched her stomach. "Besides, I really don't know what... this... will look like."

"Is that what you are afraid of?" asked Cassandra. "Is that why you don't want to keep the baby?"

"Part ogre, part human, part halfling," recited Alana, staring down at her furry feet. "It'll probably be a goblin."

"Shall we find out?" asked Cassandra, raising her hand which was now surrounded by a golden glow.

Alana gulped, but nervously nodded her head. Cassandra brought her hand down and placed it on Alana's stomach. Alana's eyes widened and she froze completely still as Cassandra's hand glided right into her.

"Hmm," mused Cassandra as Alana could only stare at the arm sticking into her. Cassandra's expression changed from bemusement to intense concentration. "That's very unusual. Oh, my! Hmm."

Cassandra pulled her hand out of Alana. Alana stared at it, sure she would find her blood all over, but there was none on the glowing hand. Cassandra flicked her wrist several times and the glow winked out.

"I really need to spend the next fifty years or so studying halflings," muttered Cassandra to herself, while shaking her head.

"I beg your pardon?" asked Alana, both hurt and confused.

"What?" Cassandra came out of her reverie. "No, no, I beg your pardon. I was surprised. While Tomei has an affinity for predictions, my magical strength deals with nature and its order. Don't be worried about your baby. She's a halfling from the top of her head down to her furry toes."

"She's a girl! No, wait, a halfling? But how?" stammered Alana in total confusion.

"Your halfling traits must be dominant," said Cassandra. "I'm not saying that your child won't exhibit human or ogre traits, but, physically, she is a halfling."

Alana slumped down. Her mind was whirling around and around. She could not get past the discovery that her baby was a girl and a halfling, despite her mixed heritage. Cassandra placed a hand reassuringly on Alana's shoulder.

"Nothing has to be decided right this minute," she said. "The people I've met here are good people. They'd be more than willing to help you."

"Yes, they are and they would," admitted Alana. "However, they won't be able to help me with Volsma. Trying to pay him off would only lead to extortion. Threats will not work and he sees no profit in fighting. He'd run and hide, and then attack when I'm least expecting it."

"Come," said Cassandra, standing up and heading towards the farmhouse. "You could move and leave Volsma and his ilk behind."

"I could, but it would probably be the same in any city I moved to," said Alana. "Except now, I have someone to provide for."

"It sounds like you have made a decision."

Alana grimaced and sighed.

"Yeah, I guess I have, but that doesn't solve my problem. I could go home, be bored within a day, and never really have the acceptance of the other halflings. Live off my friends? Only until Volsma found out where I was. I need to go back to Cific and get enough money to pay off my guild membership and have enough to live on once I'm too big to be able to, uh, work."

"Is it expensive buying your way out of the Thieves Guild?" asked Cassandra.

"What's the membership cost into the Witches Guild?" asked Alana.

Cassandra smiled and said, "We don't have a guild."

"Really?" scoffed Alana.

"Let's say we operate under a hierarchy and there's no cost to get in if you have the correct... requirements."

"And if someone one to leave the hierarchy?"

"It's a lifetime membership," stated Cassandra.

"Oh, you mean..." stammered Alana. She then waved her hand. "Never mind. The cost to buy off my guild membership is three times my best year's earnings. If you do manage to pay it off, then

you under suspicion of working freelance, which is frowned upon, or of starting your own guild, which is unacceptable with fatal consequences. I will move away from Cific, if I can pay off the guild."

They had reached the farmhouse and stopped outside the front door.

"I wish you well, Alana," said Cassandra. "Please tell Helga I will be back in a week for her."

"Are you leaving soon?"

"Very soon."

"I'll pass on the message," said Alana. "Thank you for the prophecy, I think, but, more importantly, for letting me know about my daughter."

"You're welcome," said Cassandra with a smile.

Alana turned and opened the front door. She stopped and turned back saying, "Oh, I wanted to ask you..."

Alana froze in astonishment. Not only was Cassandra nowhere to be seen, but her wagon had also disappeared without a sound. Alana stepped away from the house, looking around for Cassandra and her wagon.

"Very soon, indeed!" snorted Alana, pulling back her recollections of that day as she flopped on her bed in her room.

"You do realize that talking to yourself aloud is not a good indication of your mental state."

Alana barely moved as she flipped a dagger towards dark corner of the room from which the voice had emanated. A loud thunk told her that the weapon had embedded itself into the wall instead of whoever was there.

"You almost got me with that one," said a man coming out of the shadows.

He was thin and of average height with light brown hair pulled back into a ponytail. He had a goatee and his lips pulled up

into a smile, showing a great deal playfulness, but that was not matched by the shrewd and careful look in his eyes. A dark gray cloak covered his light gray tunic and brown pants. Low, soft leather boots completed his ensemble.

"I wasn't trying to hit you, Volsma," said Alana. "What do you want?"

"What do I want?" repeated Volsma. "How about an accounting? A member of my guild disappeared on me for awhile, reappeared, and then disappeared again until she just returned back here. I am dying to hear of your adventures."

"My trips for personal," said Alana, sitting up. "There was no profit in either of them."

"No profit?" snorted Volsma in amusement. "The Overlord and his wife, Baron Tenan and his wife, High Priestess Ivin, not to mention several others. It sounds like there was a lot of profit to be made, one way or another."

"Noose, poison, arrow, axe, or mace?" asked Alana.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I'm asking how you would like to die," she said. "The Overlord will hang you. Queen Shara will poison you. Baron Tenan is a ranger and deadly with a bow. Baroness Karina is proficient with an axe, as is High Priestess Ivin with a mace. It was just a personal request from the Baroness and all I got out of it was traveling expenses."

"So you failed to exploit the opportunity presented to you," said Volsma flatly.

"As I said, it was a personal matter and involve my friends!"

"Friends?" scoffed Volsma. "Leave it to a female to put her emotions first. Maybe it is time for you to consider a different vocation in the guild."

"Volsma, I am not becoming one of your whores!"

"Why not?" asked Volsma, genuinely perplexed. "You have all the right equipment. It's easy, steady work and you'll be able to keep more of the profit."

"I'd be able to keep more the profit if you didn't fine me all the time," argued Alana.

"Is it my fault that you keep breaking the rules?" asked Volsma. "I said before that females are too emotional and irrational for this type of work. It's better if they stick to something they are designed for."

"I can count the number of male members who score more than I do on one hand," replied Alana sarcastically.

"They don't donate half of their take to the poor," said Volsma with a sigh. "Especially before it's been accounted for by the guild. Your emotions get in your way."

"Look, I don't want to argue," said Alana. "I've had a long trip and want to get some rest."

"All right, Alana," said Volsma, heading towards the door. "I didn't come to argue, either. Just to remind you of our agreement and to warn you. There is a new band of thieves operating in Cific. They're not part of the guild and appear to have no intention of joining us. There've been a couple of scuffles between us and them, but no direct confrontation. Something's up and I don't like it. Keep your eyes and ears open. I may even suspend your next fine if you find out anything about them."

"Aren't you a person of virtue?" snorted Alana.

"Of course, I am," said Volsma, opening the door. "For those who follow the rules."

"Volsma?"

"Yes?" he asked, turning back around.

"How much would it take to buy my membership out of the Guild?" asked Alana.

Volsma's face lost its playful look and turned as hard as granite.

"Looking to go over to the other side?" he asked coldly.

"No, I wouldn't betray the guild," said Alana. "I was thinking that maybe it's time I got out of this type of life. Since I'm so emotional."

Volsma kept staring at her for several moments before saying, "One million, two hundred thousand sauers."

"What!?" gasped Alana in disbelief.

"You heard me," said Volsma, smiling. "You had a very profitable first year. It's a shame you kept getting fined all the time."

With that said, Volsma closed door behind him. There immediately followed the sound of another dagger hitting the door hard enough to pierce it. Volsma looked at the point of the dagger sticking out of the door and broke out laughing as he left.

* * * * *

Alana woke up late the next morning. Her sleep had been unrestful, full of images of babies, thieves, bottles, and knives. Yawning, she tried to groggily recall her dreams, but all she could remember was fleeting moments.

"Snap out of it!" she said out loud to herself. Alana rolled out of bed, stretched for a couple of minutes, and then proceeded to get dressed. "You've been in a funk for a week or more. It's not doing you any good and you have plans to make."

Her stomach growled loudly, and she reached down to gently rub her fingers over her abdomen.

"I believe you're right, little one," she said. "It is well past the time for breakfast. Perhaps breakfast and brunch. I have to admit for

all his faults, Per could cook. How about we head downstairs and see what we can find."

After a good breakfast consisting of eggs, bacon, hash browns, sausage, fruit, sautéed mushrooms, and milk, Alana felt satisfied enough to head out. She knew she needed to score several big takes without incurring any penalties from Volsma. She needed information. Gold and silver she could get, but she'd need it by the wagonload to pay off the guild. Gems and jewelry were good in the price to weight ratio, but took time to fence. Align grimaced when she thought about magical items. They always brought the best prices; not the common items like light orbs, transporting chamber pots, or animated feather dusters, but the more rare enchanted items.

Alana thought briefly of Per's sword, Dorgeth, and Karina's axe, Remarg. She quickly shook her head to drive away that thought. She was sure that either one would be enough to buy her way out of the guild, but stealing from her friends was an option she would consider.

"Besides, if what I heard is true, those weapons might take a dislike to me," chuckled Alana to herself. She then thought about Karina's companions. "Ivin! I wonder if the High Priestess may have an idea as to what I can do."

Alana grabbed her cloak and raced out of the inn onto the busy street. Her trip almost ended before it started. As she turned left out of the door, she had to put both hands out to stop herself from running face first into a huge, wooden barrel. What was worse, the barrel was moving straight towards her.

Alana tried to jump to one side, but her way was blocked by a wagon wheel. She took a step back and stopped suddenly when her back touched another barrel. The moving barrel was coming closer and seemed intent on crushing her. Alana was ready to yell and dive under the wagon when a hand came down, grasped her by the collar and hauled her upwards just as the two barrels collided heavily.

"Watch what you're doing!" yelled the black haired halfling who had hauled Alana up on top of the wagon.

"Get fucked," snorted the heavyset, unshaven man who had been moving the barrels. He then took a long look at Alana. "On second thought, let's fuck her. Although, she'll probably be screaming for mercy before my tip is even inside her."

The halfling bristled and was about to berate the man when Alana broke out laughing.

"Oh, please!" she scoffed. "Like you could find it under that huge tub of lard hanging over your belt!"

The man's face turned beet red and he snarled, "You know, little runts like you should show better manners to their betters."

"Well, it is certain that I have a better command of the language than you do," sneered Alana.

The man lunged towards them, and Alana and the other halfling danced backwards out of his reach. The man bumped into a couple of the barrels and cursed. Alana was starting to draw her short sword to defend herself when a stout cudgel thwapped into the man's chest, stopping him cold.

"I paid good money for this ale," said Marcus, the innkeeper, punching the man in the chest with his cudgel and forcing him back a couple of steps. "I'll be very upset if any of these kegs spring a leak." Marcus pushed the man back another couple of feet. "And my customers, who pay a premium fee for this ale, will also be upset. So..."

With that said, Marcus pushed the man with his cudgel one more time. The man, very red-faced, slapped the cudgel side, but took a step back. That was his undoing. The back of his calves banged into the water trough. With a cry of alarm, the man lost his balance and fell backwards. Water splashed everywhere, and Alana broke out laughing as the man sputtered and floundered.

"Are you two alright?" asked Marcus, coming over to the wagon.

"Yes, we're..." Alana stopped talking as she turned to finally look at the other halfling. Her mouth dropped open in amazement. "Fanko? Fanko Feerson? What are you doing here?"

"Well, I could ask you the same question, Alana Feckelstone," said Fanko with a smile. "I haven't seen you since... since..."

"...since the orcs attacked our village," finished Alana. She looked at his left arm and swallowed hard as she saw the leather and metal brace on his upper arm. "I'm sorry."

"For what?" asked Fanko. "It was that orc's mace that shattered my arm, nothing to do with you. It, uh, took a long time to heal though, and my shoulder hasn't moved properly since."

"What about your job at the mill?"

"I couldn't move the large sacks of grain without excruciating pain," said Fanko. "I had to quit."

"Oh, Fanko, I'm so sorry," stated Alana.

"Don't be," laughed Fanko. "It worked out for the best. Your father help me during my recovery. Well, he always said my ale was the best he ever tasted and he convinced me to start doing it as a business." Fanko gestured to the barrels. "This is the result."

"I hate to break up this reunion, but we need to get these barrels inside," said Marcus. He pointed to the man getting out of the trough and said, "What do you owe him?"

"Four sauers," said Fanko.

"Four!" Markers shook his head. "Highway robbery!"

"He's the only teamster I could get," said Fanko.

"Pay the man," said Marcus. "I'll get my people to move the barrels inside. I'll also hook you up with a reputable freighter."

"I know of one, too," said Alana, thinking of Nesbra.

The barrels were quickly and safely stored down in the inn's basement. All of them that is except for one small quarter-keg that Fanko left on the sidewalk. Fanko opened his purse and counted out a small handful of coins.

"Four sauers as agreed," said Fanko to the freighter before tossing the coins into the bed of the wagon.

The man rushed forward. Alana grabbed Fanko by the arm to pull him out of the way, but Fanko broke free to pick up the quarter-keg. The man, however, was not after Fanko, but scrambling to get into the wagon. Suddenly, as if by magic, whole crowd of people appeared, pushing and shoving to get the coins in the wagon. Alana snatched Fanko's arm again and pulled him into the inn.

"What the hells?" cursed Fanko in complete astonishment. "What just happened?"

"Welcome to the big city," said Alana with resignation in her voice. "Your teamster will be lucky to keep a half a sauer."

"I didn't mean for that to happen!" exclaimed Fanko.

"I know, but your earlier altercation with him made some people close by see the possibility for quick profit. It's not your best introduction to Cific."

"I don't know," said Fanko with a smile. "I ran into you, didn't I? Or would you rather I say I picked you up?"

Alana gave him a sour look before blowing a raspberry at him. She then asked, "How are things in Merryvale?"

"They're fine," answered Fanko as he placed the quarter-keg on a table. "You know how things are there. Nothing changes that much. Your father is still the mayor. Anson, Bertie, and Proda married Merida, Hallie, and Rosalie, respectively. My new brewery has been the talk of the town for the past six months with everyone coming over to get free samples."

"Pint-size samples, I wager," laughed Alana.

"Bucket size," responded Fanko with a chuckle, "and several buckets at a time. You would not believe how indignant a couple of them became when I told them they would have to pay for it."

"The Grisville clan, I suppose?" asked Alana.

Fanko snorted in disgust. "It's a shame that our nearest halfling neighbors had to be Grisville. Oh, there are good folk there, but there is that solid core of Grisville-Ravels that gives that town a bad name. I swear that if we look back far enough, the Ravels will have more than a little goblin blood in them, and,uh, what's wrong? You've turned white as a ghost!"

Alana took a steadying breath as her hand lightly touched her abdomen before saying, "It's nothing."

Fanko looked confused and bewildered for a couple of seconds before his face took on a look of comprehension. He blushed bright red all the way up to the roots of his hair and he ashamedly looked away from Alana.

"I am so sorry," he mumbled apologetically. "I forgot your mother was a Ravel."

Alana laid a hand on top of Fanko's and squeezed it reassuringly.

"It's all right," she said. "My mother was a Merryvale Ravel. I believe she once said that her Grisville cousins had questionable ethics and a very loose interpretation of ownership."

"That is a charitable way to put it," laughed Fanko, glad that he had not insulted her. "Your father bought two guard dogs for the brewery. I couldn't think why until they cornered Rafe and Colie Ravel trying to make off with a couple of barrels from the yard. The two of them spent the rest of the night and a day in the stocks until their father came for them. Old Man Ravel seemed more upset that they've been caught than by what they've been doing. Luckily, for them, they're only thirty and not adults. It had rained that night, so they were wet, cold, hungry, and miserable. The magistrate deemed it punishment enough and release them."

"You have a few more years to go yourself, don't you?" asked Alana.

"Five more years to my thirty third," replied Fanko proudly. "Your father's the owner of the brewery until then, at which time, we become partners. You know, it always struck me as being strange that the Big Folk see a human as a child one day and the next day they are an adult without any time for maturing in between."

"They are shorter lived than we are," said Alana. "To them, sixty is positively ancient." She then looked over at the small barrel on the table. "What is with this keg? You're as possessive of it as if you had all your gold hidden inside."

"Almost as good," answered Fanko with a smile. "Hopes and dreams, hopes and dreams. Marcus! Do you have a stand and a spigot for this barrel?"

"Let's put it over here by the bar," said Marcus, walking over with a wooden mallet. "The afternoon crowd will be coming in soon and will be out of the way. New ale?"

"Yes," replied Fanko as Marcus expertly tapped the keg. "It's an amber ale with the secret ingredient."

"Pint or a half?" asked Marcus.

"Just a small glass for me," said Fanko. "I only want a taste."

"Me, too," said Alana, thankful that Fanko had made that choice. She knew she would have to watch what she drank until her pregnancy was over.

Marcus poured out three small glasses of the amber liquid. They all sniffed and then tasted it.

"Oh, that is good!" exclaimed Alana.

"Very nice," agreed Marcus. "Nice body, good aroma, and some sort of a sweet acidity. Oranges! You blended oranges into the brew."

Fanko was crestfallen and his face showed it.

"How did you know?" he asked. "I never tasted one before. A peddler brought them to the village and I bought every one he had. He told me they were only grown to the south."

"They are, lad," said Marcus. "We're too far north for orange trees to grow and prosper, but there are some freighters who bring the fruit up here to the city." He tasted the ale again. "This is a very good ale, although probably not worth the price you paid to make it."

"It was expensive," admitted Fanko.

Marcus tasted it again and asked, "Hmm, what is your recipe?"

"Well, I take..."

"Marcus!" interrupted Alana sternly.

"Just asking...just asking," chuckled Marcus. "What do you want for the keg?"

Fanko thought about it and said, "A room for the night, dinner, breakfast, and an introduction to your teamster."

"One dinner and one breakfast with a half pint at each," countered Marcus. He pointed out Alana. "I've seen her eat."

"Well, she is a growing girl," said Fanko, looking appreciatively at Alana. "Done."

A group of people entered followed by another so Marcus left Alana and Fanko to check on his new customers and chivy along his serving girls. The pair headed outside, but not until Alana had checked to make sure that Fanko's angry freighter had left the area.

"Will I see you later on tonight, Alana?" asked Fanko as they walked down the street.

"Yes, but where are you headed off to?" asked Alana.

"Well, I didn't want to interfere with anything you have planned, so I was just going to look around," answered Fanko.

Alana pursed her lips in consternation. Cific was a little more cosmopolitan than other nearby towns and villages. It was a human city, but other races, such as dwarves and elves and halflings, traded here. Still, Alana knew the dark side of the city and worried that Fanko's natural curiosity might lead him into trouble.

"I'm going to the Temple of Adelpha," said Alana. "Why don't you come along with me?"

"That sounds great. She's the human goddess of love, right?"

"She's a goddess of love," corrected Alana. "Her worship is open to everyone."

"Yes, but it's the humans with all their hangups that go to her for help," snorted Fanko. "Why don't they go with the natural flow of things like we do?"

Alana dodged around a wagon as she led the way across the street. She skirted around a group of humans arguing over the price of a horse. The men did not even notice the two halflings.

"Their nature is not the same as our nature," said Alana. "It's best not to mess with it, especially where a goddess is involved. Don't make a mistake by thinking that their values are the same as ours. You may not understand everything of what they do, but, if they knew, they would understand even less about us."

"Probably not, given how straight-laced humans are," laughed Fanko. "Don't worry. I'll be good at the temple."

"You had better be because we are here," said Alana as she led them out into the city square.

Fanko gasped in wonder. Majestic stone buildings with impressive columns surrounded the cobblestone square. At one end, marble steps led up to the raised dais in front of the gleaming white Temple of Adelpha. Merchants in brightly colored stalls hawked their wares to customers making the square seem like a seething mass of people.

"Impressive, huh?" asked Alana.

"I'm overwhelmed," admitted Fanko, "but it's cold. There's a living bush or tree in sight."

"Too true. At times, I miss Merryvale and its farmlands."

"You could always return," suggested Fanko.

"I'm more Ravel than Feckelstone," said Alana as she started towards the Temple. "I don't think I'm suited to the orderly, complacent life of Merryvale."

"You're twenty, aren't you?" asked Fanko, following behind her. Not waiting for an answer, he continued, "You have plenty of time to explore and live before Harlo slaps the mantle of adulthood on you. That's one of the reasons I came out here with the deliveries."

"One of the reasons?" asked Alana.

She stopped suddenly, stood still for second, and then spun around. Fanko nearly bumped into her when she stopped. Now that Alana had turned around, she was pressing up against him. Fanko was only an inch taller than Alana's three foot height, so he could clearly see the growing suspicion in her eyes.

"You didn't end up at the Golden Dragon by coincidence, did you?" she asked quietly.

"Well," hedged Fanko nervously. "It was one of the five deliveries I had to make here." Alana's eyes narrowed. "And, uh, and your father did asked me to, uh, um, check up on, uh..."

"Aw, aren't you the cutest couple?"

Alana and Fanko both looked up at a very fat woman looming over them. She had an absolutely delighted look on her face as she stared down at the two halflings. Her fingers twitched as if she wanted to gather them up and squeeze them.

"You two are so cute!" gushed the woman. "I can see that you two are so much in love!"

"Oh, mother pusbucket!" cursed Alana, grabbing Fanko by the hand and leading them away from the thoroughly shocked and scandalized woman.

"Alana, I..."

Fanko stopped talking because Alana jerked him towards the temple. But then he tightened his grip and stopped walking. Alana jerked to a stop in turn, looking backwards at him.

"Look, Alana, we had deliveries coming here, and one of those was the Golden Dragon. Yes, Harlo did asked me to check up on you. It was the only way he would allow me to go with the ale. He is your father and he cares about you."

"He can... You can..." sputtered Alana. She threw her arms up in the air in resignation. "Well, shit!"

"Such language!" said Fanko in mock horror. "You're starting to sound like a human."

"You're probably right about that," admitted Alana. "I wonder if my father will stop seeing me as a child on my thirty third birthday."

"He won't," said Fanko. "Maybe on your hundred and eleventh?"

Alana snorted in amusement and said, "Probably not. C'mon."

She led Fanko at the temple stairs and into the huge stone building. Fanko stopped just inside the main entrance. Alana turned around and smiled when she saw him looking around entranced by the size and sheer magnificence of the temple.

A small, busty human woman wearing white robes walked out of the side door and over to where Fanko was standing. She touched him on the shoulder and asked, "Can I help you?"

Alana, who was further into the temple narthex, came back and said, "How are you, Dorna?"

"Alana!" cried out Dorna. "I didn't see you! How are you? Did you receive your reading yet? Did you go see Karina? It's great to see you!"

"Let's see: fine, sort of, yes, and it's good to see you, too," answered Alana.

"Oh, you," admonished Dorna for making fun of her. She knelt down and gave Alana a big hug. "It is really good to see you. What brings you here?" Dorna looked over her shoulder at Fanko. "A problem I can help with?"

"Not that kind of problem," said Alana. "Dorna, I'd like you to meet Fanko Feerson, halflings from my father's village. He is delivering his ale here."

"You're welcome here, Master Feerson," said Dorna, standing up and offering your hand the Fanko.

"Please, call me Fanko. This place is truly spectacular. Did dwarves build it?"

"Fanko!" yelled Alana in embarrassment.

"Oh, no offense! I mean, humans can build good, uh, great buildings, uh, structures. I didn't mean that..."

"Fanko!" yelled Alana again and he fell silent.

"It's fine, Fanko," chuckled Dorna. "This temple was built decades before I was born. I'm not sure, but I think it was built by dwarves and men working together. The High Priestess would know."

"Which is why I am here," said Alana, shooting an angry look at Fanko. "I need to see her. I'm sorry. I mean, would be possible to speak with High Priestess Ivin?"

"No need to be so formal, Alana," said Dorna with a smile. "Come with me. She should be in her office."

Dorna led them back through the side door., and Alana and Fanko followed her down a wide corridor. Tapestries lined the wall,

except for the three alcoves on either side of the hallway. Each contained a life-size marble statue of Adelpha in her different incarnations: a young girl, all innocent yet seductive; a mistress clad in leather with a whip; a warrior in form-fitting armor; a woman who was both bashful and pleased by her nudity; and, surprisingly, a mother surrounded by children. The last one was of a nude seductress with her back to the corridor looking over her shoulder.

Fanko stopped to admire the last statue. Its hands were on its hips and the sculptor had captured a coy come-hither look on its face. The entire statute seem to suggest undeniable pleasure if the viewer just followed her. Fanko felt a stirring his loins as he gazed upon the statue.

"Yow!" yelled Fanko in fright suddenly.

Alana and Dorna looked back to see him skitter backwards and crash into the opposite wall. Fanko sat down heavily, almost pulling the tapestry off the wall, before pointing at the statue. The doors at the end of the corridor banged open and Ivin came rushing out.

"What happened?" asked Ivin, her blue eyes scanning the hallway for a threat.

"The statue!" stammered Fanko. "It winked at me!"

Ivin took in a deep breath, swelling her large breasts tight against the cross straps of her robe. She closed her eyes and slowly blew out a breath to calm herself. She scowled at the statue, while pulling the long braid of her golden hair over her shoulder. She then knelt down beside Fanko and put a comforting hand on him.

"I am sorry for your fright, my friend," said Ivin. "My goddess is whimsical at times."

"I'm sorry I yelled," said Fanko ashamedly as he stood up. "It caught me by surprise."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Ivin. "Statutes are not supposed to move. Hello, Alana. I thought you went to Karina's farm. Are both of

you here to see me?"

"Just me, thank you very much," said Alana primly, trying to convey clearly to Ivin that she and Fanko were not there as a couple. "This is Fanko Feerson from the village where I grew up. He is operating a brewery with my father and came to Cific to make deliveries."

"Of course," said Ivin with a smile. "Dorna, would you please show Mister Feerson around the temple?"

After Dorna and Fanko left, Ivin led Alana into her office. Glass balls of magical light illuminated the room as did the sunlight coming in through an arched stained-glass window. The window depicted Adelpha with her arms outstretched as if to embrace the viewer.

Ivin led Alana away from the massive desk and chairs. There was a sofa on the opposite wall between two bookcases.

"How are you, Alana?" asked Ivin once they sat down on the sofa. "No morning sickness, I hope."

"No, and no prophecy, either," said Alana. "I was unsure about the baby when I went to the farm. Cassandra and Tomei could not read her future." Alana stopped and looked a little shocked. "My child. I think this is the first time I finally realized I'm going to have a baby."

"I had my realization about a week ago," said Ivin, with a smile. "We're here to help you if you need it."

"Funny you should say that," chuckled Alana. "I need to pay off my thieves guild membership and I was wondering..."

"Say no more," said Ivin, holding up a hand. "I'm more than willing to help you."

"Uh, Ivin, it's a little more complicated than that."

"Nonsense," said Ivin. "You can't stay in the guild while you're pregnant. I'm happy to do this for you."

"Ivin, I need one million, two hundred thousand sauers."

Dead silence followed. Ivin could only stare at her with unfocused eyes and an open mouth. Alana statement had stunned her speechless.

"Ivin, Ivin, Ivin," said Alana, snapping her fingers. Ivin jerked a little bit and came back to reality. "I thank you for your offer, but I can't accept it. First of all, the sum is too much and, second of all, there would be numerous complications if I did accept. I wanted to ask you if you knew of any relics or artifacts lying around."

"I beg your pardon?" asked Ivin incredulously.

"You know, any relics or artifacts that I could pick up," said Alana. "I was thinking that only an exceedingly rare magical object or two could fit the bill."

"Or two!?" exclaimed Ivin. "Alana, these items are powerful and dangerous, and closely guarded secrets. Why not just leave your Guild and move away? Karina would welcome you at Dosser. You could even go to the Capitol; the Overlord and Queen Shara would find a place for you."

"Until my Guildmaster found me," pointed out Alana. "He doesn't believe in female thieves. He allowed me in, but now its become a contest of wills to see if he can force me out of thievery and into prostitution."

"How very open-minded of him," snorted Ivin in disgust.

"He's a thief," said Alana as if that explained everything. "My daughter will become a bargaining chip, or leverage, as soon as the Guildmaster finds out about her. That's why I need to be free and clear by Guild rules."

"I wish I could help, but I can't think straight now," said Ivin. "I missed breakfast and I'm starving. Would you care to join me for something to eat?"

Alana's eyes lit up. "I'm always up for second breakfast!"

Ivin laughed and shook her head. "Ask a stupid question. I should've known better than to ask a halfling if she wants something to eat. Come with me."

The high priestess led the way back down the corridor. Alana made sure not to look at the statues as she passed by; the last thing she needed was to be startled by moving statue, not with all the pressure she was under.

"How's Callie and Andie?" asked Alana.

"They're doing fine," replied Ivin. "They're away visiting nearby towns and villages for the next three weeks. I hope you don't mind if we go to the kitchen to eat."

"Not at all," said Alana as they went to the doors at the end of the hallway and entered the large foyer of the temple. "It should be close to where the food is."

Ivin shot her a sour look and Alana broke out laughing, until the priestess snorted in amusement and shook her head again. The two of them then grew quiet and looked at each other. A low rhythmic sound sounding like clapping had captured their attention.

"I take it you hear it, too?" asked Alana.

"Yes, and..." Ivin stopped, cocked her head, and listened for second or two. She then sighed in understanding. "It's coming from the temple."

"Really?" exclaimed Alana in amusement. "Do you still have that big old bed as an altar?" She started towards the temple door. "I guess it does fit in with your religious teaching."

"Alana," said Ivin in warning. "It's, uh..."

"Different from the first time I was here?" quipped Alana. "I'm sure it's all right. You were set on the straight and narrow by your Goddess, more or less. Besides, it's a public place, right?"

Alana cracked open the door just wide enough for her and Ivin to slip in noiselessly. The temple itself had not changed since she had last been inside. A large mattress was still on the raised

platform, which was the main altar for the temple. Magic lighted globes, held up by golden chandeliers, lit the vast temple and gleamed off the marble walls. Alana chuckled to herself when she saw what was causing the clapping noise.

Dorna was half lying on the mattress with her legs dangling over the edge. She had taken off her robe and tossed it over the front pew. Fanko was also naked. His short height was perfect for aligning his crotch with hers. He had a hold of Dorna's hips and was fucking her lustfully with a slap-slap-slap sound.

Fanko and Dorna were sideways to Alana and Ivin, so the pair of them did not notice the two newcomers standing at the back of the temple. Alana was amused by the goofy smile on Fanko's face as he plowed his hard dick into Dorna. She did, however, grimace a little at the odd protrusion she saw at his shoulder.

Dorna was moaning and writhing on the bed in pleasure. Her hands twisted and pulled the sheets as the slapping together of their hips continued. Fanko pulled out of her and Dorna groaned in disappointment. Alana and Ivin could see Fanko's cock gleaming wetly in the light.

"Since her pregnancy, Dorna's been a little more frisky," whispered Ivin. She then chuckled softly. "Make that a whole lot friskier. Are you sure you're not upset by this?"

"Why should I be? Now, if we were married, I boxed both of his ears."

"I understand that."

"Maybe, maybe not," whispered Alana. "I boxed one ear for not telling me what he was up to and the other for not inviting me!"

"Wait a minute, what?" Ivin bent over and leaned in closer. "You'd be upset because you weren't invited?"

"Oh, fuck! Yeah!" yelled Fanko in pure ecstasy.

Alana and Ivin looked up to see Fanko ram his cock hard into Dorna. Dorna squealed in delight, and her legs banged up and

down on the floor as she orgasmed. Fanko's whole body shuddered again and again as he emptied his seed into Dorna's womb.

Alana look back at Ivin, who was still bent over with her head turned to the side. Her face was flushed and her full lips were parted as she watched the two upon the altar. Her large full breasts hung down in her robe and Alana could see her hard nubs poking out the fabric. Alana reached up and gently pinched both of Ivin's tits.

Ivin gasped sharply and shivered in pleasure as what seemed like jolts of the electricity shot through her. Her head swiveled to look at Alana.

"I thought you were hungry?" she asked softly.

Alana tilted her head towards the door. Ivin straightened up, breathing in to steady her nerves. She followed Alana out the door as Fanko and Dorna started in on round two.

"It looked like you were hungry for something else," said Alana.

Dorna moaned out loud and began to chant, "Fuck me. Fuck me. Fuck me," as Alana close the door.

"I'm still hungry," said Ivin, "but after watching those two..."

"Well, he is a young, virile halfling," chuckled Alana. "So, where to?"

"Follow me," cooed Ivin.

She let Alana into the residential section of the temple. They took a large oval staircase up two long flights of steps.

"Maybe we should've gone to the kitchen," said Alana. "It may have been closer. Where are we going?"

"Right here," said Ivin with a smile as she opened the door.

"Mother pussbucket!" exclaimed Alana.

"Being high priestess does have its perks," said Ivin smugly.

The room beyond the door was a palatial size. A huge canopy bed dominated the opposite side of the room, mauve colored curtains hung down from the canopy and plush pillows lay at the head of the bed. To the left of the door were two floor-to-ceiling windows and a set of double doors that led out to a good-sized balcony. Gold curtains hung from these openings. Paintings adorn the wall and the entire ceiling was a mural dedicated to the goddess Adelpa.

Expensive furniture - couches, dressers, bookcases and the like - lined the walls, except for one corner of the room. In that corner was a stand, which held Ivin's armor. The armor was burnished scalemail with a metal kilt. An open-faced, high-winged helmet rested on top of the stand and a round shield hung on the wall behind it. A small table next to the stand held a weapons rack upon which was a wicked looking horsemen's mace.

"Nice digs!" commented Alana, flicking a finger to ping against the breastplate of Ivin's armor. She took a glance out of the window. "I thought you'd have a view overlooking the city square."

"Too noisy," said Ivin as she pulled on a bell cord. "There's an audience chamber that has a balcony which opens out to the square."

"Calling for reinforcements?" joked Alana.

Ivin laughed. "Maybe I should, but, no, I'm just hungry."

"As you said before," smirked Alana with a little smile.

"Yes, I did," said Ivin, returning the smirk. Just then there was a quick knock at the door and he opened it to see what Ivin wanted. "Food for two. Don't have the cook go to any trouble. Just some fruit, bread, cheese, and wine."

"Don't forget the big cucumber," muttered Alana in jest as she started to unbutton her top.

"Alana," admonished Ivin as she walked over to a dresser and pulled open the top drawer. She then stepped back and

indicated for Alana the look in.

Inside the drawer were dildos, feather dusters, rope, whips, and several things Alana could not even identify. She had been aroused when she had seen Fanko and Dorna going at it, but now she felt her body heat up just by looking at these things.

"You have the coolest toys!" said Alana as she pulled off her trousers.

"I like what you've got to play with, too," said Ivin, reaching over to cup one of Alana's breasts. "Those two must've really gotten you going."

"Well, I am a young, virile halfling."

They didn't speak any more after that.

Contributors

Victoria Arius

Victoria's formative years were spent in the depths of the Southern English countryside. There her parents absorbed themselves in their Academic careers in the Cloisters of a well-respected university, abandoning Victoria to her ancient grandmother, who filled her head with religion and superstition. Following a childhood with an unhealthy respect for God, Victoria discovered the contents of her local library's large print section and developed a healthy respect for erotic writing and real fantasy. She now resides in Bath, a city of bright stony beauty, built on stinkingly sulfurous hot springs. When not observing the interesting results of these seeping vapours on its pseudo-respectable citizens, she writes fiction based on these characters but with better body parts and a more developed vocabulary.

John Evans

John grew up on Grimm's Fairy Tales, Jules Verne and Greek mythology which began a life-long fascination with fantasy and science fiction. As well as collecting fairy tales, folk tales and myths from around the world, he became an avid role-player. It was one night's play, after too many beers, that he had the initial idea for the character of Pervikar. The story took off from there and eventually became his classic erotic epic fantasy series *The Adventures Of Pervikar* (also available from Uruk Press). "Paying Of A Contract" is an exclusive extract from the forthcoming fifth book in the series.

AW Freyr

AW Freyr lives in somewhere in the United States and writes strange fiction. His darkly seductive debut novel, *Fencing Academy*, is

available now from Uruk Press. The start of a major new fantasy series, it begins the captivating Lyza Dunwall's remarkable journey of moral, political and sexual awakening against a backdrop of murder, necromancy and swordplay.

Guinevere A Hart

Guinevere is a wife, mom, writer and artist. She lives in the south central US with her awesome husband, great kids, a Yorkie with ADHD and a neurotic Chihuahua. With a love for words, and for all things fantasy and science fiction, she has been creating stories since childhood. "Judgement's A Bitch" takes place in the same world as her *Lady Of Light's Dawn* series. You can follow the further adventures of Adri, Krellyn and Eartho in *Hope's Awakening* and *Hope's Ascension*, both available from Uruk Press. You haven't seen the last of Grand Judicar Galatea either...

DA King

DA King is a writer and painter who favors pulp sci-fi and fantasy, a baroque aesthetic and erotic transformations akin to those seen in cheesy 1980s horror movies. "Dark Wood" is set in the same world as his debut novel, *Morgana*. A tongue-in-cheek tale of evil, good and very large breasts, it is available from Uruk Press now.

Belinda LaPage

Belinda LaPage is a student from Sydney, Australia who hopes one day to write popular, mainstream fiction. She likes stories more than words, journeys more than places and numbers more than mathematics. She's funny, witty, sexy, a terrific lover and takes puckish delight in writing her own bio. When she's not writing, Belinda enjoys reading, surfing, time with friends and buying the wrong shoes.

FV Meyer

FV Meyer was born in the USA and is an avid fan of mixed martial arts, military history and cooking. They find time for wordsmithing between work and college and this is their first published story.

EC Revelle

EC Revelle lives in the American midwest with two kitty cats, which everyone knows are better than human children. Revelle enjoys Nintendo games, anime, sci-fi and fantasy novels, comic books, movies, and generally anything nerdy.

Also from Uruk Press

Amulet – literary erotica. For those who are turned on by plot, prose and character.

Arrow – sugar and spice and all things nice. For those who want grand romance, steamy sex and happily ever afters.

Broadsword – strictly hardcore. For those who want larger than life heroes and heroines, epic escapism and lots and lots of sex.

Amulet

The Squab Fiends by Victoria Arius

Elizabeth Herbert is as free as any woman can be in Victorian England. A widow with fortune, connections and an appetite for new experience, her search for her old lover John Maginn will lead her into adventures which stretch her credulity and sexuality. When two scientists pull Maginn from the side of a Channel steamship in 1862, he bears little resemblance to the man who left England seven years before. Exiled by his Herbert's husband, left for dead on a battlefield in India and battling constant pain and an addiction to opium, it seems the fates have conspired to make his existence intolerable.

Damodar Rao has been raised to rule, every moment of his childhood and adolescence carefully controlled to prepare him for a great future. Arriving on English soil after his guardian disappears, a happy accident will open his eyes to becoming a prince among women, without violence or responsibility. Together the trio must keep transform themselves by rejecting their dark pasts and dependencies. Determined to take control of their destinies and using progress as their weapon against superstition, they discover

that to be truly free, they must fight an elite occultist movement, while warring against their own desires.

A devilish blend of history and fantasy, *The Squab Fiends* is the debut novel from Victoria Arius. The adventures of Elizabeth, Maginn, Rao and the Lunar Society will continue in book two of the *Bête Noire* trilogy, *The Demon Ape*. Highly recommended for fans of the supernatural secret histories of Tim Powers, the steampunk Victoriana of Alan Moore and the Gothic romance of Edgar Allan Poe.

***Fencing Academy* by AW Freyr**

Destitute and alone, Lyza Dunwall returns to the city of her birth with one thought on her mind: vengeance. But when her fortunes change and she is enrolled in the prestigious Sara Sunderland Academy of Fencing, she soon finds the world is more complicated when you're rubbing shoulders with the likes of the Duchess Adriana, the most powerful girl in the world. Seduced by the lifestyle of the Rotham elite, Lyza must reconcile her competing desires or die trying. Meanwhile, the Weeping Maiden stalks the streets, revolution is in the air and the malevolent River Blackwater flows slowly past the living and the dead.

Fencing Academy is the darkly seductive debut from fresh talent AW Freyr. The start of a major new fantasy series, it begins the captivating Lyza Dunwall's remarkable journey of moral, political and sexual awakening against a backdrop of murder, necromancy and swordplay. For fans of the erotic intrigue of Jacqueline Carey and the verbal cut and thrust of Scott Lynch. Lyza's struggle will continue in *Duel To The Death*.

Arrow

***With Good Intent* by Guinevere A. Hart**

As a young elf raised among humans, Céde just wanted to be normal. But when strange new powers emerge, marking her as a sorcerer, “normal” is forever beyond her reach. With her dark and sullen guardian Varrin and her stalwart half-orc companion Jorak, she journeys across forbidden lands to join others like her at the magical academy known as the Spire. There, they will learn to use their goddess-given power and prepare for war against an ancient and terrible enemy.

All the while, the demon god known as the Lord of Hordes bides his time. As celestial bodies align in convergence, a gate between worlds will open to allow his armies through to join him in plundering the world of Velith. Will Céde and her friends be strong enough to face the hordes and save their planet, or will the world of Velith be destroyed in the chaos as the Hells are unleashed? *With Good Intent* is the first book in the three-part *Hells Unleashed* series.

***The Lady Of Dawn's Light* by Guinevere A. Hart**

A powerful, erotic adventure series for fans of romance and epic fantasy alike, now available in a single omnibus edition.

Hope's Awakening

Adri, a light-hearted and affectionate elf, is loved by everyone she meets. Even the gods are moved by the expanding radiance of her spirit. So she has no idea why someone wants to kill her. On top of that, her mother and the emperor are missing and no one seems able to do a thing about it. While those around her are tempted to despair, Adri's faith is enough to propel her forward.

Through it all, she is challenged by her love for Krellyn, a brooding dark-elf with a past darker than his flesh. Is her hope enough to save her family, the empire, and maybe even Krellyn?

Hope's Ascension

Adri and Krellyn are now happily married and living a life of domestic bliss with their daughter Jubilee. But dark-elf Krellyn's past won't leave him alone. Two thousand years ago his cause was betrayed and Elelmin, the god of the high-elves, was killed by the locust-headed demon known as the Prince of Winds. The land was sundered, Elelmin's soul was shattered and Krellyn was caught in the cross-fire. Now the Prince of Winds wants to finish what he started. Krellyn will do whatever it takes to protect his family but for them to survive, Adri must ascend to her true calling.

Broadsword

The Adventures Of Pervikar by John Evans

The classic erotic epic fantasy series from John Evans is now available for the first time in a new and definitive four volume edition.

Pervikar

Pervikar Devon is just an average farm-boy. Oh, except for the fact he is a half-ogre who stands seven and a half feet tall and has green hair. One day Per accidentally incurs the wrath of the queen by protecting two young women from the advances of a corrupt baron, and is forced to flee her assassins.

So begin Per's adventures. Leaving his home far behind, he sets out to find fortune, fame and female companionship. As he journeys across the strange, magical world of Provost, he encounters orcs and goddesses, mages and ghosts, and even a dragon. Along the way, he learns to be a leader and a lover, and using all that nature has endowed him with, rights a lot of wrongs and beds a lot of women. Per gets his intelligence and compassion from his human mother, and his strength and... size from his ogre father.

The Rescue Of The Queen

Perikar Devon's adventures have taken him from one side of the world to the other. He's learned much but lost everything so, tired and weary, he returns to the Capitol in search of his friends. But before he can find them, he witnesses the kidnap of Queen Shara – the woman who tried to have him killed.

Knowing he will be unfairly blamed for her disappearance, Per resolves to rescue her. She almost murdered him, now he must save her life! Heading out of the city, he starts a long journey that

takes him from a magistrate's perverted dungeon to an orgy in a far off dwarven fortress. Will he be able to must fulfill a prophesy and overcome powerful sex magic to rescue the queen?

Karina's Quest

Karina Devon hasn't seen her son Pervikar for over a year, ever since Queen Shara tried to have him killed. Then, out of the blue, she receives a summons from Per's ogre father, Gar. He tells her that Per must take part in the ritual of neccar, where he must mate with every woman he has ever had sex with. If he fails to complete the ritual, the ogre god Ahhspah will take his soul. Unfortunately, Per has been a busy boy and has sown his seed across the world of Provost. So Karina must set off on a quest to reunited him with his past loves. All of them. Then there is the small matter of finding her son.

The Ritual Of Neccar

Pervikar's adventures are almost over. Once an innocent farm-boy, the half-ogre has grown into a noble warrior. He has faced gods and ghosts, dragons and dwarves, mages and monsters. He has even taken Queen Shara, the most powerful woman in the world and once his greatest enemy, to bed. Now he has assembled her and his other lovers to take place in the ritual of neccar – the sacred ritual that will see him take on the mantle of his ogre heritage and truly become a man.

But first his mother Karina must recount how she ventured into the underworld itself to bring back a demoness and a dead woman to play their part in Per's future. She must navigate pirates and foreign courts before entering the nine hells. Along the way, she slakes her thirst for battle with her axe and her lust for sex with her body. The end is in sight but she must confront her biggest challenge yet: being turned into a man!

Morgana by DA King

Morgana of the Black Moon. Harbinger of Hell, Ransacker of the Righteous, Violator of Virgins. Her titles number as many as her sins, her infamous cruelty only matched by her unsurpassed beauty, renowned and feared throughout the land for her mastery of sorcery and seduction.

But, dear reader, she was not always so. Before she enshrouded the kingdom in darkness, before she forged the Black Knight, before she was Morgana of the Black Moon, she was... Morgana. Simply Morgana. Born from a humble coven of simple means, named after one of the greatest witches in history, the young Morgana began her tutelage under the great Voroven, the oldest living disciple of Merlin himself! This is her story...

DA King is a writer and painter who favors pulp sci-fi and fantasy, a baroque aesthetic and erotic transformations akin to those seen in cheesy 1980s horror movies. *Morgana*, a tongue-in-cheek tale of evil, good and very large breasts, is his first novel.