

SHANA

Virtual Princess



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A "New Woman" Novel



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Shana, Virtual Princess

By Heather Berdrow

In this day and age, we all know how computers are used in every part of our daily lives. We also know just how addictive video games can be, especially for young people, who can sit for hours in front of a computer monitor, and get lost in one of many virtual worlds.

One such young man was named Steve. He was seventeen years old, and spent most of his life in just such a way. When Steve was five, he got very sick. The illness attacked his muscles and bones, leaving him in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. As the years passed, Steve began to accept his limitations, but he didn't like them, not one bit.

At school, he watched his friends do all the things he yearned to participate in. Sports, school dances, and, of

course, dating. He would see just how cute these girls that he had known for years were becoming. They developed curves, soft skin, and a sense of confidence. But they wanted someone with four working limbs, not just two. Steve wasn't ugly by any stretch of the imagination, but he couldn't compete with the football and basketball stars. Getting a letter in a sport was a guarantee of a date with a cheerleader, or a girl on the pep squad.

So Steve retreated into the gaming world, where a disability wasn't a problem. In each world, his character was strong, able-bodied, with muscles upon muscles. The girls in these worlds would hang around, taking full advantage of his protection. But this safety came with a high price tag. Gregor the Terrible had his harem, and controlled many worlds and their lands.

The worlds that Steve frequented were some of the most popular, with millions of players online and all were identified by their character names, as meetings in the real world were quite rare.

Steve had just logged on, loaded the latest edition of Space Alien Battle, a pop-up that dominated his screen. "Damn," Steve huffed. "I just installed the latest blocker. Why isn't it working?" He tried everything he knew to delete it, but it just wouldn't go away.

Suddenly, the screen changed to a message for all who were watching. "Greetings. The exploits of the mighty Gregor, and all of his might, have allowed you to receive this special invitation to join our new world in Super 3-D and High Def. The only drawback might be that all the characters of this world that you will be controlling will be assigned at random. If you think you are ready for the challenge of your life, please press Enter now. Soon, you will be in for the ride of your life."

Steve was intrigued by the graphics that now played across his monitor. In the back of his mind a little voice urged him to pass on this opportunity, but what did Steve really have to lose?

He hit the Enter key; the graphics seemed to freeze in place, but all of the characters were looking directly at him. He laughed, and thought how clever. The screen then went black for a second and a wheel appeared. It had many names and pictures of the main characters of this new world on it. The wheel started to spin faster and faster. He could no longer read the names, nor could he look away. Round and round it went, drawing Steve's eyes to the middle of the wheel. There was a bright flash of light. The wheel slowed to a stop, Steve blinked, then jumped at the suddenness that startled him back to consciousness.

He was then able to focus, read the name and see the picture of the character that he was now assigned. Her name was Shana, and she was a princess in her land. It seemed that the land was always under attack from some evil force or another. Her father, the king, didn't have any sons to carry on with him, only two daughters. Shana was the oldest. Peta was just a little younger. From a very early age, both sisters were trained by the best masters in this world to help defend their kingdom, their people, and their lands. Shana was tall, a full-figured woman, maybe in her early twenties. She had long, dark, swirling hair, and wore a combat uniform of breast plates, a short leather and metal skirt, and knee-high boots with towering heels. Peta was smaller, but not by much, and was dressed nearly the same. Both wore battle helmets with the family and kingdom crest emblazoned on the crown of each helmet.

Shana also carried a variety of weapons. She had two swords carried in holsters on each hip, and a variety of

knives from very small to very large, all sharp enough to slice the head off any creature. And from a wide belt, clubs also hung within quick reach. She was holding the reins to a bird-like creature with four legs and a saddle strapped to its back. Steve would later find out its name: Gor. She was not only a pet to Shana, but her steed in battle as well.

Steve was stunned. He had never seen such a beautiful and mighty woman before. She was wise, strong, and had confidence in herself in everything she had to do. Her skin looked soft and tanned to a dark, golden bronze. He could not tear his eyes away from this lovely creature. Then there was another flash, and a new message scrolled across the screen.

“Thank you for accepting our invitation. In less than twenty-four hours, several pairs of 3-D glasses will arrive. Please wear them the next time you are logged on, and every time after that. The kingdom thanks you as well. Shana is the realm’s mightiest of warriors. We know you will fall in love with her, just as we have.”

Then, just as quickly, the screen went black; several seconds later, the game he had originally tried to enter was now loading, filling his screen as usual.

Steve began to play his usual character. As the game progressed, he noticed that everyone on the screen was moving slower and the graphics were much paler than he remembered. He chalked it up to his being tired. After logging off, Steve readied himself for bed. After he lay down and closed his eyes, all he could picture was Shana. Her beauty and strength kept running through his mind, like a video that was constantly rewinding to the same place. The last time he looked at the clock, it was three in the morning. He had been in bed for several hours, still was not asleep. He was glad it wasn’t a school night, as that would have made the day just that much longer,

Shana, Peta, and Gor were the only thing he could think about now. He hoped the glasses would come soon, so he could see her again.

Later that morning, Steve sleepily opened his eyes. He had a pounding headache; he felt like he had too much beer the night before, and now had a nasty hangover. As he began to get up, he noticed that his bed was really torn up. Strange but he shrugged it off. After he was done in the bathroom, he changed into jeans and a T-shirt, his usual daily uniform.

Steve rolled to the kitchen and poured himself a bowl of cereal and a glass of juice. Everything he did was routine. One day was just like the next. Nothing much ever changed. He went through the motions of living.

As he took his first bite, he saw a box on the kitchen table; it was addressed to him. Steve looked at the shipping label. It was addressed to him but there was no return address. The box was small and light and it took him about three seconds to get it opened. Inside, he found three pairs of glasses and a card in an envelope.

“Thank you, Shana. Your kingdom awaits your arrival. Please hurry, as our scouts have reported seeing an army on the march towards us. They are wearing the crest of the kingdom of Beltan. Please, we need you.”

Steve sat back, and thought, “That is so strange. The box is addressed to me, but the card is for Shana.” He quickly finished breakfast, and rushed back to his room. He would be alone for the entire weekend, as his parents had gone away at the last second, which was very unusual. They were both sticklers for the details, and normally would take weeks to plan a vacation. When Steve had gotten home from school the day before, his parents had the car packed and were hurrying away.

“The last twenty four hours have been so weird,” he thought as he turned on his computer. HE took one pair of glasses out of the box and sat them next to the monitor.

The first thing he saw as the screen flickered to life was a message labeled ‘Urgent.’ He then scrolled down and saw the rest of the message.

“Before continuing into the game, please don the glasses provided.” Steve did as directed and suddenly felt like he was falling at a fast rate. Instinctively, he reached out to grab onto something, anything, but what he saw only confused him even more.

It was a long, golden brown arm, with a wide gold bracelet just above the hand. It had long, slender fingers, with the tips painted a bright blood red. He looked in the other direction and saw an identical arm. He then looked down and saw two large white globes, with large dark nipples. He reached up with the foreign arm and pinched one of the nipples. It was like an electric shock that was very pleasurable. Waves began to flow outward to every corner of this unknown body.

Steve then pulled back the unfamiliar blankets covering “him” to see a fine, narrow, sculptured stomach and waist that flared into wide, rounded hips. A small, delicate piece of white material was laced tightly to those hips. Past the material were long powerful legs. The tips of the toes were also painted a blood red. Steve reached down, touched the material where the thighs came together, and felt a tuft of hair, but nothing else. There was no penis, no testicles, nothing that he was used to seeing and feeling.

Before Steve could explore any further, there was a frantic knock on a door at the far side of the room. When Steve answered, he heard a light, but strong and confident, woman’s voice. “Yes?” the voice said clearly.

Another woman, young, opened the door, and stepped into Steve's view. He recognized her immediately. It was Peta and she was already dressed in her battle uniform.

"Why are you still in bed?" she asked with a smirk. "Don't you remember, we have a battle to plan for, and Father is waiting."

Steve, without thinking, swung those long legs off the bed and put his feet down on the cold, stone floor. Steve then realized that he was able to move his feet and legs, and had sensations he had never felt before. "I'll be right there," he said. Peta just shook her head in disgust before leaving the room, closing the old wooden door behind her.

Steve then sensed his full bladder; he would wet himself if he didn't find a bathroom soon. He looked around the room and saw a chair in a corner, with a wooden bucket underneath it. Unsure if he could even do it, he tried to stand. It was too easy, as those athletic legs did all of the work. Steve then took his first uncertain steps toward the chair. He found that it was a breeze and walked gingerly over to the chair, feeling the change in the stone pattern of the floor.

Before sitting, Steve untied the tiny white piece of cloth, then sat down. Instantly, he could feel the stream of warm fluid begin to flow into the bucket. It took but a few seconds to complete the chore. He looked for something to wipe with, then saw a cloth hanging on a makeshift hook, just above the chair. He grabbed it and blotted himself dry. There was something there that he touched, and it felt wonderful. But again, he was interrupted by another woman who walked into the room.

She was much smaller and more frail than Steve. Her hair was tied back, her skirts were long, and she wore an

apron, very similar to one his Mom always wore when she cooked. When she looked up, Steve saw that it was his mother standing before him. He started to say something but was cut off by the woman.

“Come now, Shana, we have to get you dressed,” she stated. When Steve rose, he felt the weight of those globes on his chest. They wiggled and wobbled as he walked towards the woman, who was now assembling her clothes. Except for the tiny cloth between his legs, Steve realized that he was naked, standing before his mother, looking like a woman, and he blushed fiercely.

The woman turned, untied the cloth, tossed it to the side, and helped Steve into a new pair of what he would label panties that were then tied in place on each side, hugging his hips and bottom. Next, a piece of heavy leather, in the shape of short shorts, was laced into their proper place. She then helped Steve to put on and lace up a leather bra, trying to contain her large breasts.

“I swear, you are getting more beautiful every day, ma’am,” the woman said as she placed a leather and metal skirt around his waist, tying it tightly in the back. The woman, Steve would learn, was named Helena, Shana’s personal maiden. Helena fastened a leather and metal vest on Shana, then a pair of knee high boots that laced up the front. Steve was now completely dressed, turned into a piece of highly polished metal. In a mirror on the far wall, he saw his reflection for the first time. Steve saw what Helena was talking about. Shana was gorgeous, sexy, and built for battle.

Steve then heard a loud knock on his door, and a guard, dressed very similarly, looked around the open door, only to see Shana staring at him.

“Beg your pardon, princess; your father and Peta are waiting for you in the great room. Should I tell them

you're on your way?" he mumbled, as he looked down to the floor, trying to avoid ogling the Amazon-like figure before him. He then looked up and said, "Helena, hurry up with the princess, she is needed elsewhere."

Helena dipped into a low curtsy. "Yes, I will get a move on," Helena replied. The door then closed quietly as Helena finished with the last details.

Steve's long, dark, and shiny hair was pulled back severely, a leather band was tied to the base, making a ponytail, high up on the back of his head. "Done, ma'am," Helena said. She then scurried to the door and opened it for Steve to leave.

"Thank you Helena. As always, you are a great help to me," Steve said, in a lovely feminine voice. Steve then nodded to Helena who was now bowing as he exited the room.

Helena ran ahead of Steve, and down a massive stone stairway. He could feel the leather bra trying to do its best to contain the twin globes as he descended the stairway. He also noticed how his hips and bottom swayed from side to side, and the hem of his short skirt would brush across his thighs. Steve remembered that other girls when they walked took shorter strides, and walked at a slower pace. But not Shana. She walked as if she always had a purpose, and no one was going to stand in her way.

Just as Steve's foot reached the final step, there was another flash of light, temporarily blinding him. Once his vision began to return to normal, Steve was back in his room, sitting in his wheelchair. He was looking at a blank screen. He glanced down and saw his lifeless legs. He looked over to his alarm clock on the night stand. It read ten PM. Steve had lost more than twelve hours since he put on the glasses. They were now sitting back on the desk, right where they were before.

Steve could feel a massive headache coming on and was completely exhausted. Even knowing that he had not eaten since early in the morning, Steve just rolled himself to his bed and lay down. His head no sooner hit the pillow than he was out like a switched-off bulb.

Just like the previous night, he had a very restless slumber. In the morning it took all of his strength to drag his body out of bed and into the bathroom. He did feel a little better after he splashed cold water on his face, so after he was done, he went to the kitchen, as he was starving. He made a pot of coffee even though his parents frowned on him drinking it because of his age, some eggs, and a couple slices of toast.

After eating, he almost felt human, so he went into the den to watch a little TV. He flipped through the channel guide several times, but didn't see anything interesting. Steve then went to his old standby, 'The Tech Channel.' He watched a debate over laptop vs. desktop when a commercial flipped on, interrupting the speakers. It was an advertisement for the newest game platforms, only available to a select number of players. Steve watched closely, and recognized it immediately. Then, like he was in a trance, Steve went to his room, powered up his computer, and put the glasses back on.

When Steve next opened his eyes, he was just descending off the last step on the stone stairway, walking across a wide space, and into a large room that was filled to near-capacity. Helena was just in front of him and was pulling back some very ornate curtains. Steve saw several familiar faces. First was Peta, then he spied Mr. Collins, his high school principal, wearing a bejeweled crown. Just behind Mr. Collins was a man in a jester's hat and costume. That would turn out to be his father.

A booming voice silenced the entire room. "Well Shana, glad you could join our little party. Come, give

your father a big, wet kiss," Mr. Collins said. Steve felt himself being drawn towards the giant of a man. Mr. Collins bent forward, Steve reached up and warmly kissed his cheek. Steve then felt a large hand sneak up the back of his skirt and roughly squeeze his bottom.

Steve was shocked, but Shana wasn't. "Thank you, Father," she said, as she smiled up to his face.

Peta watched the show and just giggled. But she was next in line for a little morning love. Instead of just kissing cheeks, Shana and Peta kissed each other fully on the lips, with Peta snaking her tongue into her sister's open mouth. They hugged and gave each other a similar bottom grab.

"Now that we are all here," Mr. Collins bellowed, "where are William and his scouting report?"

A very tall, handsome young man stepped forward. "Here, sire," he said. "I have the latest news from the border, east of the castle." William then looked over to Steve, smirked, and winked at him, as he removed some papers from the satchel at his waist. Steve could feel his heart skip a beat as he blushed.

Steve then felt Peta's elbow in his ribs, as she began to smile nervously. "Who is this William and why do I have this warmth down low in my belly?" Steve thought to himself.

Everyone's attention was then drawn to a number of maps that William had laid out on a massive table. "The scouts have reported an army here." William pointed to an area on one of the maps. "They look like troops from Beltan as they are wearing its crest on their blouses and shields."

Mr. Collins studied the map, then turned to Steve. "Shana, take your men to the northwest, here," he said, pointing to a spot on the map. "Peta, you and your men

will go to the southeast here." He placed a large finger on the coordinates. "I will take our main force to this point. As soon as they step into our kingdom, we will attack from three sides, cutting the head off of the snake," he said. Grunts of approval spread throughout the assembly. "But tonight, we feast. Tomorrow we may die, but our guts will be full," he laughed. Everyone in the Great Hall joined.

The crowd began to filter into another room with long rows of wide tables, filled with freshly cooked food. Steve followed Mr. Collins and Peta to a table at the far side of the room. It was on a platform slightly above the rest of the tables. The men began to take their places and waited for Mr. Collins to sit before they did. There were many young girls rushing between the tables, serving the men their food and drinks.

One girl caught Steve's eye. He knew her as Crystal. He had a huge crush on her ever since they met in elementary school. She was dressed in long skirts and a flowing blouse, with an apron and a scarf. Every so often, she would look up to Steve, blush, and turn away as soon as Steve would make eye contact. He heard cups clink, men laugh heartily, and the fire crackle and pop in a large open pit, just off to his left.

The next time that Crystal looked in Steve's direction, he pointed a finger at her and motioned for her to come to his table. Loud enough for everyone to hear, Steve said, "You, serving girl. My room, tonight." Crystal lowered her gaze, dipped into a simple curtsy, and went back to her serving duties. Mr. Collins smiled at Steve and nodded his head in approval. Steve looked over to another table and saw that William, too, was smiling. But there was a lot of hurt as well, written deeply on his face under that smile.

Then the room became brighter and brighter to Steve, so much so that he had to cover his eyes. When the light faded, he again was back in his room. This time, it had been more than fourteen hours since he had put the glasses on. Steve was getting very confused, but could do nothing more than lie down on his bed and slip into a fitful sleep. He tried to fight the darkness, as it overtook his consciousness, but it was just too strong. His eyelids fluttered and his room disappeared.

The next thing Steve was aware of was a faraway buzzing. Not only was it getting louder, but it was becoming more annoying as well. Steve was able to wake up enough to realize that it was his alarm clock, and that he was to be in school this morning. Begrudgingly, Steve pulled himself out of bed, hit the bathroom, and dressed for school. It was like everything he did was in slow motion. He had absolutely no energy at all. He put his backpack on his chair, then rolled to the kitchen. Once there, he saw his mother; she was wearing the same apron as Helena. She too was barely awake and moved slowly, just as he was. Her eyes were only part-way open, and her actions were very deliberate.

After his juice and cereal were done, Steve headed for the front door to wait for the school bus. Once he finally made it to school, it seemed like the entire campus was moving slowly as well. People walked and talked like they were just as tired as he was. Not ten feet in front of him he saw Crystal. She was dressed like a girl her age would these days. Short skirt, a shorter T-shirt, sneakers, and ankle socks. But Steve also noticed that she was wearing the same scarf as she had the last time he had seen her.

She turned, saw Steve, then blushed deeply before running into the girls' bathroom. If he had more time, he

would have waited for her to come out. As it was, he would just be on time if he left right away.

The rest of the week passed, just as non-descript as all the others that Steve had lived through. But come Friday, after he was home from school, everything changed. His parents had left a note saying they would be gone for the weekend, but would see him late Sunday night. Once he laid the note down, he was again drawn to his computer and the glasses. After the screen was alive, the seven-year-old Steve no longer existed, and Shana was reborn.

When Steve next opened his eyes, he was in Shana's bedroom, on her bed, watching Crystal taking her clothes off in front of him. It was all so real to Steve. Many a night, Steve would lie in his bed and dream of Crystal in just this position. He would wonder what she looked like without clothes. Now here she was, stripping down to her panties and bra. Steve patted the bed beside him and Crystal moved without words.

Steve was lying on his side and Crystal was snuggling up, with her back to him. She was so soft and warm. He could feel her body tremble as he began to stroke and explore her body. Steve began to kiss her passionately and she returned his kisses with just as much intensity. He moved from her lips to her small, pert breasts, down her flat stomach, and onto her love nest.

Meanwhile, Crystal was also exploring on her own. Like Steve's breasts, bottom, and a very large, rigid, pulsating, and excited member. Steve felt every stroke of her hand, making him that much more excited. He then rolled on top of Crystal, spread her legs wide, and pushed his way deep inside of her. He closed his eyes and threw his head back as he began to move in and out of her. He had never felt anything at all like this in his entire life.

Then somewhere deep in his loins, a feeling began to build, much faster than he had imagined. He tried to hold back but just couldn't for a second longer. The spasms began and flowed outward to every corner of his body. Crystal wrapped her legs around him, pulling him deeper and deeper. Then she, too, began to spasm. Having no control of her actions, or of her voice, she yelled loudly as she bucked wildly. Once the spasms began to subside, Steve felt himself come out of Crystal. She kissed him quickly before bolting from the bed, picking up her clothes as she did, and tried to dress hurriedly. In a small voice that Steve recognized, she said, "Thank you," as she closed the door behind her.

Steve lay back with a wide smile spread across his face. "Oh my," he thought. "What a glorious feeling." He reached up and began to touch his own nipples. They were so sensitive that he could only do it for a short time. His hand traveled from his breasts down to his wet, now deflated, member. But when his hand arrived, there was nothing there, nothing but a tuft of hair and a warm moistness where just moments ago a large member stood tall, at full attention. He was very confused. When he opened his eyes again, he was back in his room, and the computer screen was flickering off and on. His room was pitch black, but the first hints of light were not far away.

Steve removed the glasses, and tossed them into the trash. The roller coaster he had just been on was too much for him to process. He had had enough of the exhaustion, the confusion, and the massive headaches. He lay back, closed his eyes, and slept without dreams. Several hours later, Steve woke up from a falling dream. He had been walking on a narrow ledge when it gave way. He shook his head, trying to clear his mind. After a bathroom call, he was back in the kitchen for food and a much needed drink; his mouth was as dry as a desert well.

He took a deep breath and felt a little better with some food in his belly. He was then pulled by some invisible source back into his room, where he found that his computer was back on, and the glasses were back on the desk. He tried, but could not resist, no matter how hard he tried.

Steve saw himself washing Shana's body with warm water and a cloth. He was getting to know his new body very well and enjoyed the feelings he was experiencing. He laced on a clean pair of panties, then walked back over, and crawled into bed. Once he pulled the covers up, he was relaxed enough to begin to fall asleep. But before he was completely out, he heard the door to his room creak open and a tall, dark figure enter.

Steve reached into a hidden pocket on the bed, pulled a long knife out of its scabbard, and waited for the figure to get close enough to use it. He then heard a familiar voice whisper to him in the darkness. It was William; like Steve, he too was nearly naked. Steve returned the knife to its hiding place as William approached and slipped into the bed beside him. Only Steve wasn't a he now, he was Shana, and a princess. William leaned into Steve and kissed him hard. William then snickered, and asked, "Did you have fun with the little girl? Now are you ready for a real man?"

Steve's arms went around William's neck and pulled him closer. His body was warm and he could feel William's excitement, as it lay on his thigh. William then began to kiss Steve about the face and neck, before heading south, placing a warm, wet mouth on Steve's breast, sucking gently, sending shock waves through him. William's hand was busy exploring the center of Steve's sexuality, as more and more waves crashed through Steve.

Steve could feel the wet sticky fluid that William had deposited on his thigh, and began to pull at William's

more-than-adequate hardness. Steve rolled onto his back, pulling William on top of him. Steve was powerless as he tried to avoid the inevitable results. With his legs wide apart, Steve felt William plunge right into him, causing him to inhale quickly.

“Mmmmm,” was all Steve could mutter as William began to piston in and out. Steve wrapped his long legs around Williams’ waist, pulling him in just a little deeper, as he held on tight. With a loud grunt, William began to deposit his seed into Steve, which in turn triggered Steve’s own cascade of feelings. His love nest contracted around William, holding him in place, while Steve ripped William’s back with his sharpened talons.

As things began to return to normal, William leaned over and kissed Steve long and lovingly before jumping out of the bed. He made his way to the door through the darkness, leaving Steve more than just satisfied. He turned to his side, replaced the blankets, and began to doze off once more. He could feel William’s deposit starting to leak out onto the bed. Steve ignored it and fell into a deep, restful sleep, with a very happy grin on his face.

Before light began to break over the kingdom, Helena had gone to Steve’s room, woke him up, and helped him dress for the day’s ride into the trap planned by his father, the king. It was turning out to be a warm summer morning, when Steve realized he was outside, standing by the stables, looking over the men he commanded.

A stableboy came out, leading Gor out of its stall, and to Steve. The stableboy was the star quarterback for Steve’s high school but was now much younger. The boy bowed low and said, “Gor is ready for your day. He is fed and fit, milady, just as you commanded.”

After mounting Gor, Steve looked down upon the boy, smiled and dismissed him. Steve then looked back to see

his men mounting their rides before he grabbed the reins, urged Gor move, and guided her out the main gate, followed closely by more than fifty men. He had just gotten out on the road he was to take when he saw Peta doing the same. Peta looked over and blew her sister a kiss, before turning her force to the southeast fork in the road.

It was nearly half a day's ride to the area where Mr. Collins had told Steve to put his men. A small tent was quickly set up for Steve so he would be sheltered from nature. The rest of the men set up individual shelters to sleep in and to store their gear. There were not campfires lit, as they worried about alerting the oncoming army, and losing the element of surprise. Salted foods, water, wine, and rum were shared among the men. The conversations were kept down to whispers, as his men had been trained well and battle tested.

For Steve's part, as Shana, he never had anyone share her bed before a battle, as he wanted all of her focus on the job at hand. William was not a part of Steve's group. He was a commander, just under the king. He would be the one leading the forces, once the skirmish had begun.

Steve was in his tent where out of habit, he was sharpening his sword with a whetstone. But his mind was elsewhere. It seemed to Steve that the trips he made into the character of Shana lasted longer each time, and his time as Steve was shrinking. He could think of no good way to get off of this ride. The addiction to, and the attraction he had, for Shana were too great a temptation. He realized that Steve would soon no longer exist, and Shana in her virtual world would take his place. It wasn't an altogether bad experience, quite the opposite. He just didn't think he was cut out to be a full-time woman, let alone a warrior and a princess. He began to notice that the more he embraced and accepted his new life, the less the people he knew in his old life were in this world with him. They

slowly changed into their own characters, looking only a little like the people he knew.

Like Helena; the more time he spent around her, the less she looked like his mother. Same for his dad, Mr. Collins, Crystal, and the stable boy. They began to take on different looks, like no one he had met before. His thoughts were interrupted by a commotion just outside his tent. He dropped the stone, put the sword in his dominant hand, and braced for an altercation. One of her personal guards peeked in and told him that he was needed outside. Steve took a calming breath and stepped outside of the tent.

Steve immediately saw two things out of place. First was the messenger from his father's camp. There was a woman, beautiful, scared, and quite naked. Her hands had been tied together and she wore a rope collar around her neck. Steve looked at the woman who was shaking from fear and the cold. He ordered some of his men to find her something to wear, and to keep her close to his tent. Steve went back inside and the messenger followed.

The messenger handed Steve a hollow tube that bore his father's crest. After the messenger was dismissed, he removed one end of the tube and pulled out a piece of parchment. There was to be a change in plans as the Beltan troops had turned a little north and were heading in her direction. The army had but a few horses, so it would take some time to reach his position. Early the following morning, the kingdom's troops would attack before the rise of the sun and catch the army sleeping. Steve had his orders and would follow them to the letter. He scribbled a quick response to his father and sent the messenger back. He was sure that Peta had received the same message and that she would make the same reply.

Steve/Shana called a meeting with all of the commanders where they shared the contents of the message and the

plans that were now in place. They all had smiles on their faces as the battle was now just hours away. Now that everything was set, Steve/Shana had the time to look into this mysterious woman the men had found. They had the woman brought to the tent where they were dismissed. The woman could not look at Steve/Shana directly. Instead she looked down at the ground just in front of the princess' feet. She had a large, heavy blanket that had been thrown over her shoulders and her hands were still tied together.

The princess walked over to the woman, pulled out a dagger from her belt and in one swift motion sliced through the bindings. "Please, sit over there," Shana said as she pointed to a makeshift bed of straw and blankets. Without a word, the woman did as she was directed. Shana then pulled a cutoff stump over and sat down facing the woman.

"Do you understand my language?" Shana asked. The woman looked up, and nodded her head in the affirmative. "So why don't you speak, or is there some other problem?" Shana continued. The woman had been looking at the ground but when she raised her head, Shana saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"I can speak just fine. I am scared and confused is all," she finally opened up. Her voice was light and melodious, and Shana began to search her eyes and face for something, anything. She then softened her tone,

"What is your name?" Shana asked.

"In this land, I think my name is Camille. But back in the real world from where I come, it's Carl," she replied.

Shana understood right away. "So you are a victim of the game as well," Shana said. Camille's jaw dropped and she stared back at Shana. "So you're not from this virtual world either?" Camille asked.

“No, I am from the same world as you. There I was known as Steve. I think that we have been abducted by the makers of this game. Did you use the special glasses that were sent?” Shana inquired.



Camille knew she had found a sister that was in the same predicament. "Yes I did, not more than a week ago, I think. Time seems not to matter much in here. What feels like days in this land, is just a few hours in our world," Camille stated.

Shana knew exactly what Camille was saying, as Steve had felt the same way. Steve had been in this world for many days, but much less in real time. Shana stood, Camille rushed to her and threw her smallish arms around Shana, but the blanket that had been her only protection now lay on the ground. Shana could feel the softness and warmth of Camille's skin as she hugged Camille back. She was much smaller than Shana by at least ten inches, and weighed no more than a hundred pounds. Her skin was pink, but very pale as compared to the bronze of Shana's. Her breasts, hips, and bottom were also on the tiny side, but seemed to match her body perfectly.

Shana sat Camille back down on the bed and draped the blanket around her shoulders. She then sat back down on the stump, and asked, "Tell me about Carl?"

Camille took some time, searching her mind for the right words. "I am a teenager, very fat for my age. I weigh nearly three hundred pounds and stand but five feet and six inches. I have no brothers or sisters, as I am an only child of a single mother," Camille answered. "What about Steve?" she then asked.

"I too am a teenager, about seventeen. When I was little, I got sick and lost the use of my legs. So I have lived my life in a wheelchair," Shana replied.

Camille's face lit up, as an idea had just popped into her head. "Maybe this is someone that is greater than us attempting to make us feel better, like we belong. No one will pick on us here, just the opposite. So maybe this

whole thing will only be temporary," she said excitedly. Shana knew better, but wanted Camille to feel like there was hope, if only for a little while.

Camille looked into Shana's eyes, and asked, "What are you going to do with me?"

Shana paused, then said, "We need to get you some food, then we both need some sleep. I have an important appointment in the early morning. But once that is over, I'll take you back to my family's castle and we'll go from there."

Shana ordered up some fresh fruit and veggies and let Camille eat her fill. She ate almost nothing but said she was full. Shana told Camille to lie in the bed, she would join her shortly. Camille crawled under the blankets and watched Shana get undressed for sleep. In just minutes, Shana was down to her leather bra and shorts after she had hung up her skirt and breast plate. Camille was amazed as she looked at Shana's body as more and more became visible. Shana then went to bed herself, slipping in behind Camille. It hadn't taken long for Camille's skin to cool, so Shana pulled Camille back up against her. Both were out in minutes with smiles on their faces.

Shana heard the wake-up call. When she opened her eyes, she realized that one of her hands was holding onto Camille's breast. Camille, in turn, was holding on tightly to Shana's arm, as she felt safe and secure in Shana's presence. Shana leaned over and into Camille and whispered that it was time to get up. Camille stretched lazily and snuggled back up to Shana. Shana rolled out of the bed and made her morning's visit to the toilet chair. She then began to get dressed for the day ahead.

Camille had fallen back asleep and was breathing slowly and deeply. When Shana finished dressing, she popped out of the tent and told one of her guards to stay

at the camp and watch over Camille. The guard looked disappointed but followed orders. If he hadn't, he would have been put to death. No trial, no appeal.

Shana looked out over the camp; everyone was moving, dressing, and getting their horses ready to ride. The sky was still dark; torches placed around the camp were the only illumination. But a flash of light into Shana's eyes caused her to squint and turn her head away. Steve was back in his room once more. When he looked at the clock, he saw it was now late Sunday night. He heard some sort of commotion from somewhere outside his room. When he opened his door, he saw both of his parents floating just above the floor, surrounded by a twinkling light. There were also two figures that disappeared as soon as they saw Steve at his door.

The twinkling evaporated and his parents were set down gently on the floor. Steve was hypnotized by what he had just witnessed. Steve blinked a couple of times and suddenly, his parents were back to normal, as if nothing had happened. They had no memory of the events at all. When Steve tried to tell them what he had seen, they just laughed and told him he must have been dreaming. They took him into their room, to show him the mussed bed. Steve knew he had seen something but what, he didn't know.

For more than two weeks, nothing at all took place. No flashing lights, no invisible pull towards his computer, no disappearing parents. Even when Steve put the special glasses on, there was nothing. Steve began to believe that his parents were right, all of this was only a dream. Summer had finally arrived but it didn't mean anything more than no school and no getting up early. He could now take a deep breath, as the bullying was over for another semester.

The memories of Shana and the computer world were just starting to fade away. He had even begun to dream again, something he had not done since the glasses arrived. All was back to normal as far as Steve could tell. Gregor the terrible was again stomping elves, dwarves, and nasty fairies. His level of experience in this mythical land was continuing to grow to the point that he had now become a Master Gamer. Only a few people had ever been crowned, and now he was among the few who had.

Once he reached that level, Steve wanted to know who else lived at this lofty position. One name popped up as he scrolled down the short list. Carl Stuart. He was one of the first to be crowned Master. He lived on the east coast, way too far for Steve to visit, but there was always the internet.

Steve typed the name and hit the search button. He was in for a shock. He read that Carl Stuart, a Master Gamer, had gone missing during a camping trip with his family, and was now presumed dead, as he was never seen again. Steve sat back in his chair and thought 'Wow.' He began to search the names of all Game Masters in any game or category. There were quite a few names, but he found that with the exception of himself, none were alive to tell their tales.

Steve felt his pulse rate rise, and his breathing became fast and shallow. He didn't want to admit it, but he was fairly sure he knew all of their whereabouts. The game. He then felt something like a static charge in his room; things fell to the floor as his room began to shake. Steve locked his wheelchair in place, hoping to ride out what he thought was an earthquake. Then the two figures that he had seen weeks earlier in his parents' living room materialized right before him. They were all that was visible as the area around them was nothing more than darkness.

They looked human, which made Steve feel a little more relaxed. When the static finally cleared away, he saw a man and a woman, wearing strange uniforms that had unknown symbols running up and down their sleeves. They were holding hands as they began to walk, like normal people, towards him.

“Hello Steve,” the woman said, in a soothing voice. “We are dimension travelers. We have been watching you for some time and now that you have reached the Master level, you are a perfect candidate to leave this dimension and step into one where the sky is the only limit.” Steve had no words as he listened to the visitors.

“You becoming a Master in the game you’re playing means that you have the capability for abstract thinking, a skill that is rarely found these days,” the man said.

Steve was finally able to speak and said, “I know what you are saying, but I am scared. What about my parents, my family, my friends?” The woman smiled as she placed her hand on Steve’s. A feeling of well-being washed over Steve, and his fears seemed to evaporate.

“I met Carl in the world you have been taking me to and he was just as scared as I am. He was even more confused than I am with all of the sudden changes and upheavals in our lives, Steve pleaded.

“That was the old Carl, the one that no longer exists in this plane. That is all thanks to you and to Shana,” the man said. “Many of the people that populate other worlds and in other dimensions are not readily accepted in this world for many reasons. Mostly by people who perceive them as less than whole. Carl was an overweight teen and you have a damaged body. The woman you know as Peta was also a Master in the same world that you are. He had multiple birth defects which left him unable to take care

of himself. Do you remember what Peta is like now?" they asked.

"I do, she is nearly perfect in every way," Steve answered.

Look, Steve," the man said. "We are here to offer you a choice. You can stay here in this dimension, and live your life as you have been doing, nothing will change. Or, you can join us in the kingdom where one day, Shana will be a queen, and live a life of her choosing. We will give you a seventy-two hour window. If you want to accept our offer and live forever as Shana, all you have to do is put on the glasses. We will hear you, help you leave this world and experience things you can only dream of." They then both bowed towards Steve. He felt the same static charge as before. In an instant, they were gone, leaving Steve to make his decision.

Steve had a lot of thinking to do. There was so much to consider, but he was reminded of his life every time he looked at his useless legs and remembered what it was like to be Shana. He had never considered living his life as a woman. But this may be his only chance to ever walk again. He then remembered, in detail, every encounter that Shana had had with the server girl, Crystal, being taken by William, and his one night with Camille. They had done nothing but sleep in the same bed, but he realized just how hooked on her he was. He could only live that kind of life vicariously through his game characters.

Later that evening he rolled into the living room where his parents were watching television. He looked at them from the doorway; he knew they had given up much of life, just to have Steve around. Everything that they did revolved around him. His mother looked up and smiled. "Hi mom," he said. "I love you."

His mother's smile widened, "And we love you too, dear one." His father was too engrossed in his program to even realize that Steve had come into the room. It was as if he could hear his parents' thoughts as he rolled back to his bedroom. "I just hate seeing my son in that awful chair. I feel so sorry that he got so sick," his mother would think.

Steve had made up his mind. He took a long last look at his room, the posters on the wall, and the chair he now sat in. He then reached over, grabbed the glasses, and slipped them onto his face. Almost instantly, he was transported back into the game, into the body of Shana, at the very same point at which he had left. It was as if everything around him had been placed on pause.

Nothing moved but Shana with all of Steve's mind and his memories. Just off to his right, a twinkling began, and the woman traveler appeared.

"Welcome. We are very glad you are here. We know that you will enjoy your new life," she said.

Steve asked, "What happened to me in the other world, and are my parents okay?"

The woman smiled. "Everyone always asks the same question. Your parents found you unconscious in your room, called for an ambulance, and took you to the hospital. The medical staff was unable to revive you. After an examination, blood clots were found in your lungs and that was the cause of your death. Your parents were very sad but have moved on. Here, let me show you."

A panel appeared out of nowhere and flickered to life. Steve saw his parents and their new life. They had sold the house and moved into a gated condo project. They had setup a small sort-of shrine to Steve on the fireplace mantel and surrounded it with pictures of places they had visited. They were standing, holding hands, as they

placed another picture up. He heard his mother say, "Here is another place we went to. Just so you know, we take you everywhere we go, right here." She patted a place on her chest, right above her heart. The image dimmed, then went out.

"See Steve, you may be gone from their life, but you'll never be forgotten," the woman commented.

Steve was very touched by what he had just seen. He didn't think his parents liked him very much as he grew up. But it turns out they were living just as much of a nightmare as he was. "Will I get to see them again?" he asked.

"Sadly, no, not in this life," she replied. "Once you have moved into another dimension, we do not have technology that will allow for that. Besides, you're going to be very busy in your new life. You will always carry the memories of Steve, but now you are Shana, princess of this kingdom." Steve nodded his understanding.

"We travelers want to thank you for accepting our invitation. This world will need you and there is much to do," she stated as she began to twinkle. Before Steve was able to ask more questions, she was gone.

Steve had many questions that would never have answers. "So, Steve is no more. Like the woman said, I am Shana," he thought. She felt a breeze on her cheek, and saw that things were beginning to move around her. "I am a woman, a princess and a warrior," she thought. She was now standing next to Gor, holding onto her reins. She then stepped to a tree trunk and jumped into the saddle.

Shana heard a woman's voice call out to her. "Shana, please be careful. I'll be right here, waiting for you." It was Camille, the teen once known as Carl, a Game Master. Shana smiled down at Camille, blew her a kiss, and urged her ride to go.

Shana rode at the head of her men, towards the spot her father had laid out. As they neared the place for the ambush, Shana slowed her pace to a walk and listened carefully for any sound that would alert her of danger ahead. Through some trees she saw dust, then movement, as the opposing forces were marching towards her and her party. She silently ordered her men to draw weapons and prepare to attack. Shana heard a horn call. It was a familiar sound, followed by another, also very well known. It was her father and Peta riding to the attack. She then blew her horn and led the charge at the foot soldiers, just within sight.

Shana had her sword in her right hand and the reins in her left as she made the initial contact with the enemy. The foot soldiers didn't stand a chance. If they weren't trampled, they were cleanly sliced to death. Shana was deadly accurate with her strokes. Within the first thirty minutes, the opposition had been pared down nearly fifty percent. The rest were now retreating towards the border and hoped-for safety. Shana, her father, and Peta, had now merged, and were in hot pursuit. They had lost but a few men and several horses. The king was quite happy that his daughters had been trained so well and had done a wonderful job.

As Shana passed a grove of trees, she heard a shout from just to her left. She turned and began to bring her sword up for protection when a dark figure swinging on a rope that had been tied to a large branch collided with Shana, knocking her from her steed. Shana landed hard, then rolled to a stop. Gor continued, not knowing there was something amiss. Shana was out cold, lying in tufts of grass and weeds. Feeling the opponent's feet land a blow very near to her ribs and her shoulder was the last thing she would remember of that encounter.

Shana's mind was dark and dreamless before cold water was splashed in her face, returning her to the conscious world. She was very sore and found it hard to take a deep breath. Her hands were tied tightly behind her back, as well as her feet and knees.

It was difficult, but Shana was finally able to open her eyes. She was sitting in a small clearing. The area didn't look familiar, so she didn't know where she was. Sitting on a fallen tree, not ten feet away, was a man dressed in all black, staring at her.

"Good, you're finally waking up," he said. "Too bad. I would have liked to have you just once more." He patted the felled log. She felt the pain in her bottom and realized that he had had his way with her while she was out.

"Who are you and what did you do to me?" Shana demanded, knowing full well what was done.

"Nothing much happened. But you do have a most beautiful bum, the best I have ever seen. It would have been a shame not to enjoy it," he smirked as he rubbed his crotch.

Shana was livid, but only had her mouth for a weapon. "For this insult, you will surly die. Do you know who I am, pervert?" she spat.

"Of course I do. You're Shana, princess extraordinaire," he mocked. "And I'll get my bounty once I turn you over to the Beltans. And there is nothing you can do about that, my Little Princess.0"

Shana could feel the blood rush to her face. "So I am to be a prisoner of that evil man," she thought. "At least it won't be for very long."

The bounty hunter walked over and helped Shana to her feet. Of course, he did have a sharpened blade at her throat as insurance for her cooperation. He reached up,

squeezed her breast hard, and toyed with the nipple. Shana was not going to give him the pleasure of crying out. With his other hand slipped under her skirt, he began to probe her rear with a finger, very roughly.

Just when she was about to retaliate, she heard another voice, a much older one than the bounty hunters. "If I were you, I would leave the princess alone, before something really bad happens.

The bounty hunter lowered his knife and took both hands away from Shana. He swiftly cut the ropes from her feet and knees. Quickly, before he had time to react, Shana brought a knee up and slammed it into his groin area, knocking him off his feet. He began to writhe in pain. She turned to thank her rescuer and saw the older man sitting on top of a massive white horse, and men encircling the two in the clearing. They all had on battle dress with Beltan symbols emblazoned on the uniform.

"Did that man rob you of your virtue?" the king asked, smiling the whole time. Shana stayed quiet. King Yaro then told his men to help the pervert up and pay him double the bounty, as an insult to Shana. "Oh, and while you are over by her, please help the princess remove her warrior clothes as well. No woman has a right to wear a uniform, unless it is that of a maid or a serving wench," he cackled.

King Yaro was not a large man, not intimidating in the least. He got his way by being cruel and heartless. As an example, it was said that he had a stable boy of no more than six or seven put to death for giving his wife at the time a flower on her birthday. It was done right in front of her. He turned to her and plunged a knife into her heart. He then walked to the local village, saw a girl washing clothes, and ordered his men to take her, as she would be his next wife. She was only ten years old at the time. Something told Shana that she would not live very long as

he was ruthless in his dealings, especially with women, who he felt were nothing more than chattel to be bargained with.

His men followed his command to the letter. They picked up the abuser, gave him two bags of gold, and told him to leave. He turned and began to walk away. Shana heard the familiar swoosh of an arrow, turned, and saw the man fall, not twenty paces away, with the arrow in his back. One of the guards ran to the fallen man and took back the gold. Shana then saw that evil grin the king was famous for.

Ever since her capture, Shana had been making plans to escape. She knew now was not the time to try, as she would wind up as dead as the bounty hunter. Shana kept a small knife hidden in the rear of her skirt belt. Before his men came for her, she removed it and hid it between her hands. When the time was right, she would use it to free herself and get away. That is if she were to live that long.

Beltan soldiers began to paw at her clothes, ripping and tearing them from her body, into shreds. In minutes, Shana was wearing nothing but her lace-on panties and her boots. She was pushed from behind, towards the king, who was still atop his horse. "My dearest princess Shana, we are going home to Beltan to regroup. Your father and sister have not seen the last of me. But you are another story. When I am through with you, you will beg me to put you to death. But your release from this life will not be for some time," he said as he turned his horse, kicked him in the ribs and rode ahead, followed by his personal guard, Shana and her captors.

Shana walked for hours, having to endure the rude comments and taunts of her guards before they reached the king's encampment, which Shana figured was just beyond her kingdom's border. In amongst the tents, a stake had been driven into the ground. She was then tied

tightly to it, under constant guard. Not far away, Shana saw the king's tent; it too, was also under constant watch. King Yaro came out several times just to ogle his prisoner. Once, he even walked over to her and began to play with her chest, giggling and laughing like a child with a new toy. Luckily for Shana, the sun was getting very low in the sky and fires were being lit. It was getting close to the time when Shana would try and make her escape, under cover of darkness. But she decided that there was one thing left to do before she left.

Shana was very patient, as she watched fire by fire, the flames being reduced to simmering embers as men all around the camp began to sleep. Even her guard was dozing, propped up by his spear. The time was now, Shana thought.

Quietly, she worked the ropes with her knife, until one by one, they fell away. It was very late and no one was paying any attention to the prisoner. After all, she was tied very securely to the stake. She stepped into the shadows cast by the tents and the trees, and rubbed her hands and wrists, trying to get feeling back in them. Within minutes, Shana, not caring about her nudity, struck down the sleeping guard and took his weapons. She then slowly and deliberately moved towards the king's tent. After one of the guards passed within inches of her, she moved to the rear of the tent, sliced a hole, and quickly stepped inside.

A single oil lantern on the far side of the tent was flickering, giving off strange shadows. Shana used those to move closer to the king. Once, she had to duck down, as a guard peeked in on the sleeping king, making sure all was quiet. Shana found some clothes, put on a pair of short pants, and tied them tightly to her narrow waist. That was followed by a sleeveless vest that would cover her breasts, but that was all.

She began to move closer to the sleeping figure, where she could smell his terrible breath; his gut was making an awful growling sound. His face then scrunched up, and he let loose a foul-smelling gas. Shana had to reach deep inside for strength to not throw up. He opened one eye, smacked his lips, and went back to sleep, snoring loudly in just seconds.

Shana now crawled up to the sleeping monster. With a dagger she had taken from the guard, she pressed the sharp point of the blade to the king's neck as she whispered into his ear. "This is for all of those that you have killed and abused," she said.

He opened his eyes just as she pushed the blade into his throat, severing the arteries and his windpipe. Fear and pain filled his eyes as he could feel the the life drain from his body. Only a moment later, he was dead. Shana returned to the tent wall and slipped out without being noticed.

Nearby, Shana saw a rope that had been tied between two trees and several horses tied to the rope. She moved silently to the closest horse and began to rub it under its neck and chest, so it wouldn't get spooked and raise the alarm. He must have liked it as he began to sniff her hair and lick her bare skin.

Shana untied the rope, quickly jumped on, and urged the horse to move. He followed her commands and walked slowly into the tree line. Once she was clear, she urged the horse to run, and he did. He was a very fast horse and seemed to enjoy having Shana on him. He held his head high and his tail was at attention. It took a few hours for Shana to get to her border, then a couple more before she felt at ease enough to stop, knowing she was safe. Shana slipped off her newest friend; she found a stream nearby from which she took a long drink before

pouring water all over herself, washing away some of the blood, dust, dirt, and sweat from the last few hours.

She followed the stream for some time before coming upon an outpost of her father's guards. From behind some trees, Shana gave the friend call to alert those present not to attack. When the signal was returned, she stepped into the clear, where she was mobbed by everyone at the post. A messenger was dispatched to the king's camp, telling them the princess was safe and where she was at. Shana was given food and drink and a quiet place to rest. Her horse was feed, brushed, and praised for his help.

Shana slept fitfully for a couple of hours, only to be disturbed by a guard, telling her that her father and sister would be here within the hour. Just hearing that news made Shana cry tears of happiness. She had been holding everything inside, but now felt safe enough to let it all out.

When her father and sister arrived, than ran together and shared many a hug and kiss. Peta was the first to notice Shana's physical condition; she had bruises, scratches, and welts all over her body. There was no place that had been spared. They then noticed that her clothes were covered in dried blood and asked Shana to show them her wound. Shana blushed before telling her father that the blood was from King Yaro and that she had killed him.

Her father just shook his head. "He tried too many times to take over this kingdom. Many men, on both sides, have died because of his greed. I am so very proud of you. We will have a grand celebration after we get back home and you are feeling better," he declared.

Just then, another horse and rider appeared. It was Camille. She jumped from her horse and ran to Shana, throwing her arms around her. "When I heard you were

missing, I was never so scared in my life. But you're back now, and I am never leaving you again. Where you go, I go from now on," Camille said, tearfully. Shana blushed again, and everyone else began to snicker, even her father and sister. Shana could do nothing more than hug Camille back.

While they were making their way back to the castle, word was sent from a general in King Yaro's army, asking to meet with the king, to thank Shana for ending a terrible chapter in their kingdom's history. The following day after the group had gotten home and were rested, a General Winslow and his aides sat down with the king. Shana and Peta were also in attendance.

The first thing the general did was send for a wrapped package that he then presented to Shana. When she unwrapped the package, she found King Yaro's ceremonial sword and scabbard. Both were jewel laden, made from the finest steel that had been polished to a mirror-like finish. "This, milady, is for you. You have done our kingdom a great service and we all owe you our lives," the general said. He took Shana's hand and kissed it warmly. Shana thanked the general for his generosity. She tried to decline the gift, but he would not allow that.

The general then turned to the king, to whom he bowed low and long. "Your highness, our kingdoms have been warring with each other for much too long. Since his death anyone who was loyal to Yaro has either been put to death or expelled from the kingdom. All of Beltan's generals would like to submit an offer of a truce, with only one clause. We would like to have Shana as our queen. If she is anything like you, we will have a great kingdom once again," the general proposed.

Upon hearing this, Shana was speechless. She knew that someday she would be a queen, but thought it would

be of her own kingdom, not one that had been at war for many years.

“Thank you, General Winslow. I’ll take what you have said as a compliment. Shana is an intelligent and fair woman I have been grooming to take my place one day. But your offer is interesting and I would like to have some time to consider it,” the king replied.

The general bowed again. “As you wish, your highness. Take all of the time you need, as this a serious situation.”

The king then ordered that a place of honor be setup for the general and his party. A feast would be held to welcome new friends to the kingdom’s table. The general bowed once more, then left the castle, as did most of the attendees. Only the king, Shana, and Peta remained.

The king called for the healer to help Shana with her wounds. Then Helena was summoned, so Shana could get redressed in her own clothes.

“Oh my,” Helena said as she looked at all of the bumps and marks on Shana’s body, especially her breasts, which seemed to have taken the brunt of the abuse. Shana still had some difficulty sitting as her bottom was just as battered as the rest of her was.

Dressing in her own clothes made Shana feel so much better, more normal. A guard had come calling, inviting the princess to the feast, which was now just beginning. She turned to Helena and hugged, then thanked her for always being there.

“I do have a favor to ask of you,” Shana said. “I don’t think that you have heard that the people of Beltan want a truce between our kingdoms and be our friends now that King Yaro is dead. But the one condition is that I become their queen. Will you come with me?”

After Helena had picked up her jaw from the floor, she told Shana that wherever she went, Helena would always follow. That was one less stress for Shana. She knew that everything was about to change for her, radically.

Shana sat down at the long table with her father and Peta; Camille was sitting at another table, but wasn't very far away. The guests had yet to arrive so her father, Peta, and Shana began to discuss all of the issues raised by the general, and what they would mean to the kingdom.

"So tell me, Shana, what is it you want to do?" her father asked. Peta scooted up, and was sitting on the edge of her chair. Shana had been thinking about nothing else since the initial meeting.

"I love our people, our kingdom, but I love you and Peta even more. And because I have that love, I am leaning towards accepting their generous offer. We would never have to fight again, unless we were attacked by another force. In that case, we would now have two armies, not just one," Shana said, then looked at Peta. "My lovely and wonderful sister. I will miss you most of all. But I know that you'll be a great queen as well, and follow in father's footsteps, and I don't want you to wait until you are old to be queen, waiting on me to pass." Peta began to tear up.

"Thank you Shana, my dearest sister. We have had our differences in the past, but as you have often said, we are family. It feels great to know that you have confidence in me," Peta sobbed.

Just as they finished their talk, the guests had begun to arrive and were seated at the king's table, as a sign of respect and honor. The feast was loud and raucous, as people from both kingdoms began to mix, and were getting along quite well. The king then pounded the table with

his tankard, quieting the crowd, which by this time was massive. He then rose and gave a salute to his guests.

“This is a momentous occasion for both of our people. But as happy as it may seem, it is also a sad time for our kingdom as well, and a time of great pride,” he began. “My daughter, the princess Shana, has consented to the terms of the truce, and will become the new queen of Beltan.”

The general then rose, and returned the King’s salute. “Thank you, your highness. I know of the sadness you feel, as well as the pride. But we, the people of Beltan, welcome you, Queen Shana, to our land. May you lead us in honor and wealth. Your new home is being readied for you as we speak. By the time you arrive, all will be ready. As a sign of our bonding, I would like to share blood with you,” he said as he drew his dagger and drew it across his palm of his right hand. Shana stood, grabbed her own dagger, and followed the general in making a wound on her right hand as well. They then grasped hands.

The general bowed low, “We welcome you, your highness, as our new queen.” The room erupted with chants of praise and encouragement.

The feast lasted nearly all night. Most did not wake until early afternoon of the next day. There were many headaches as well as a few cuts and scrapes, and at least one broken arm. The general’s party stayed one more night, then left in the early morning of the following day. Their camp was broken down and they would soon complete the trip home.

Helena and several of the castle’s workers began the process of packing all of Shana’s things. She would not have to take anything but the clothes on her back but she did have many mementos and personal items that would be going along. This would only take a day or two to com-

plete. Meanwhile, Camille would stay with Shana each night so she could continue to nurse Shana back to health. Shana had spent many hours with her father and Peta, as they talked a lot about the future and their hopes and dreams. Finally, all was ready. Shana would be taking her personal guards with her, and they too, were ready.

There was many a cart and wagon, some overflowing, as whole families would be going to Beltan. The column was then escorted to the border, where many tears and hugs were exchanged. From the border, Shana and her group were escorted by the royal Beltan guard to their new lives.

It took less than a day to get to the center of Beltan. As the procession got closer, people of all walks of life began to line every street, trying to get a good look at the new queen they all had heard about. As they neared the castle, Shana decided that she was not going to arrive inside a wagon. She had full battle dress already on, so she called for Gor to be brought forward so that she could ride into her new home, at the head of the column.

Everywhere she looked; crowds of people cheered her arrival and clapped loudly as she passed by. They all had high hopes of a new and better life without the tyrant Yaro. The group then crossed a bridge and moat, and through twin doors made of the finest wood and metal in the land. It was lavishly decorated with images of Yaro, with his arms spread out as a welcome to any guest. Shana decided that the doors would be taken down and the wood and metal be given to farmers and carpenters. The images that were truly disgusting to Shana would be burned.

The many new residents of the castle proper stopped in front of a large and wide stairway that was surrounded by what used to be statues of Yaro. They now lay in ruins, strewn throughout the large courtyard. The general and

all his commanders were there to greet and welcome Shana to her new home. A stable boy ran out to catch the reins of Gor as she dismounted.

Shana turned to the general, who was now bowing low, and said, "You have a beautiful city that seems to be filled with wonderful citizens. I felt very welcomed as I rode through the streets. Thank you so much, General Winslow." Shana saw that the rest of his men were also bowing low.

"Anything for our new queen. Everyone from the very old to the very young has high expectations, given your reputation for fairness, your highness," the general replied. "If you're not too tired from your journey, we would like to get the ceremony completed as soon as possible. We have much work ahead of us to erase the memories and actions of our former ruler."

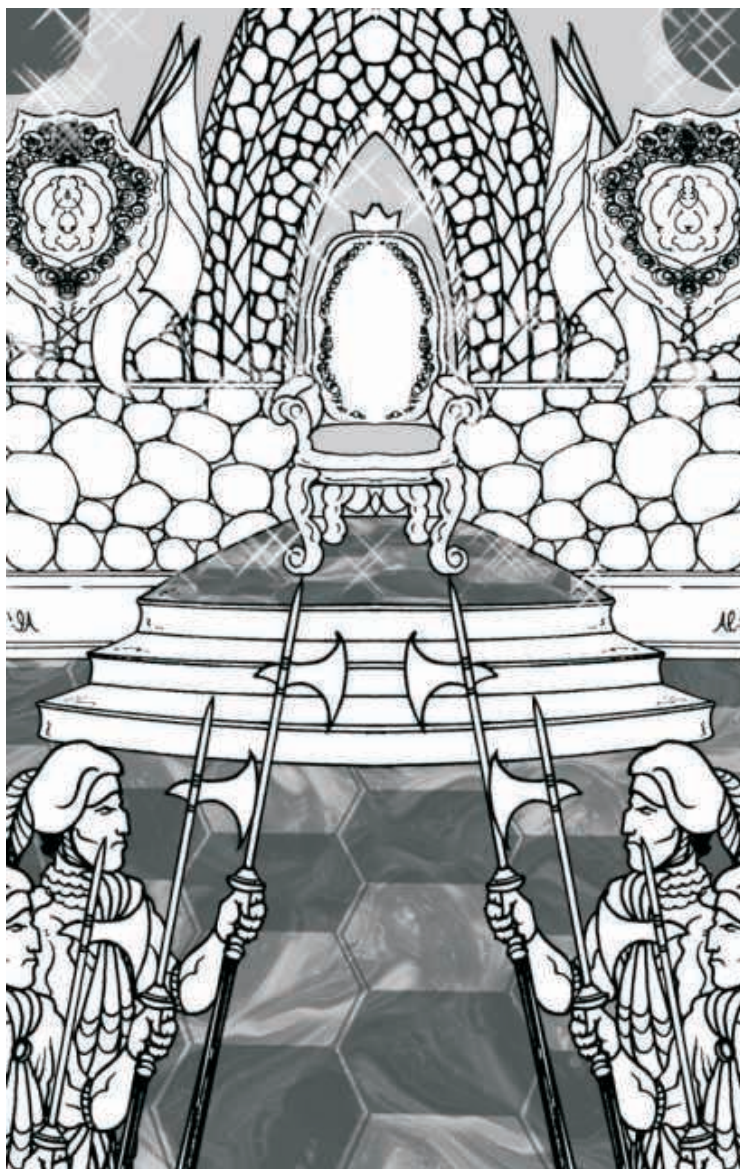
Shana felt wonderful and full of energy. "Maybe today is a little soon, would tomorrow be all right, if there aren't too many preparations to be made?" Shana replied.

The general smiled warmly. "They have been ready for days, your highness. Tomorrow will be perfect," he said.

"Tomorrow it is then. Anything I need to do, please have someone come to my chambers and share your customs with me," Shana replied.

The general nodded his head as he left the courtyard and went into the castle. Shana and her entourage were then led to the base of the castle courtyard, up the grand stairway, and into a great meeting room. After looking around, they all agreed it was exactly what they hoped it would be, and all that they could make it. Even with all of the advice and education she received before leaving for her new home, she still had the fears of not living up to all of the expectations.

Shana was then shown the throne room, followed by her expansive chambers. The room was breathtaking. She had never seen such opulence in her, or Steve's, life. He had explored many lands, real and virtual, in his gaming days.



“Yes,” she thought. “All of those memories are still intact.” She often thought of Steve, and had learned to be very grateful for all that she had now, even if it was in a girl’s body. Just as soon as Steve had agreed to become Shana, she noticed that there was no one who was familiar to her any longer, only new faces, many more than in her past.

Shana’s chambers had many smaller rooms attached to it. She guessed that they were for her personal staff. As she walked from one room to the next, she found all of the rooms to be deserted. She chose the largest room for Helena. It was also the closest to her room. Shana removed her heavy battle dress and put on a wrap that tied at the waist. The rest of her clothes would be brought up in a short while. There was a large wooden chair that was placed near the massive fireplace; it had several throws that were made from rare animal skins strewn about the room. Shana sat in the chair and took a deep breath. She thought, “This is just the first day of many to come. I need to do things smartly, but not too fast. Father said that some people don’t do well with change.” She smiled and nodded her head absent-mindedly in agreement.

She must have dozed off for just a moment because she jumped up and off the chair and was ready to protect herself when there was a loud knock on the door. After composing herself, she went to the door, and opened it, not knowing who was on the other side.

Shana saw a long line of men carrying bundles of things that Shana had brought along with her. Helena was at the front of the line when she saw her blush. She felt a draft and realized that the cover that she had on had had come wide open, showing the world all of her wares. She only had the lace-on panties to cover herself, and she, too, blushed. But she turned it to her advantage.

Shana directed the men on where to place their cargo in her room. She never covered herself, trying to show her confidence. She knew that, soon, the story of the naked queen would flow out to even the smallest of villages. Helena looked at each bundle tag before telling the men where it belonged. After the last man left and the door was shut, Shana and Helena fell onto the bed together, unable to contain their laughter. Helena knew where the proper cover was located and gave it to Shana without delay.

As things began to be put away and the clutter was lessened, Shana hadn't realized that she had so much stuff. Then things that she had never seen before started to show up. Just then, Camille was admitted to the chamber; she ran to Shana and threw her arms around the new queen.

"Oh, I missed you so. I was stuck at the rear of the column. I'm sure I must weigh a ton now with all of the dust and dirt that I had to endure," she whined with a wry smile.

"There there, my child," Shana kidded as she patted Camille's bottom and stroked her long, beautiful golden hair. "You smell as if you have bathed in a floral garden, so you are not so bad after all. Camille snuggled up under Shana's breasts and rested her chin just under Shana's chin.

"I heard that you gave half of the men in the castle a show that they'll never forget," Camille teased.

Shana's hand came down on Camille's rounded bottom with a thwack. Camille tried to escape but Shana would not release her. Instead she just hugged her tighter, then began to kiss her. When they finally came up for air, Camille said, "Well, I guess I am destined to be abused by you forever. Am I right?"

Shana just smiled. "You'll do whatever and be whatever I want you to be. You know why?" Shana asked. Camille shook her head side to side, and stuck her tiny nose in the air. "Not only am I the queen, but I love you to death," she declared.

Camille feigned fright, but couldn't contain her joy for more than a few seconds. "And I love you as well. Are we going to sleep together, or am I just one of your wenches?" Camille asked.

"I'll let you know when I decide. But for now, it will be in my bed," Shana concluded.

Many of the house staff were no longer around. If Yaro was displeased with anything, for any reason, they would never be seen again. The general had to do some real arm twisting, but he was finally able to muster up a complete staff. He then brought a woman who was arguably the best cook in the kingdom and installed her just days before Shana arrived.

The first night was the first meal in the new era. The cook worked long hours just to make sure everything was just right. There was nothing worse than an angry monarch. After Helena had helped her dress, Shana walked to the dining area and took her place at the head of the table. Just one taste was all Shana needed to know that the cook was a genius.

"General, I understand that you yourself recruited the cook. Is that true?" Shana asked.

"Yes, your highness. I have always considered her the best cook in the whole kingdom. But I may be a little partial, as the cook is my mother," he replied.

"Please bring her to me, as would like to meet her," Shana said.

The general excused himself and went into the kitchen area. A few minutes later, the general and a very old lady came back into the room and bowed low to Shana. "Your highness, this is my mother," he introduced.

Shana got up, took the woman by the arm and sat her in Shana's chair. The woman's eyes got bigger, as she had heard what happened to those who didn't make the grade.

"General, I would like you to establish a school for proper cooks. And I want your mother to teach young people how it's done right." Shana said, looked at the general's mother. "I have never had such delicious food, and I have known some of the finest cooks around. You are, by far, the best of the best. You are not to work in my kitchen any longer. Instead, I would like you to direct those that are willing to learn your secrets to fine food preparation."

Both the general and his mother smiled at each other. "It will be my pleasure to do as you ask, milady," the old woman croaked.

Shana then turned to everyone at her table. "Will one of you gentlemen please give this fine woman a chair? Make it a padded one so she may be comfortable," she asked. Many of the men fell over themselves, trying to carry out Shana's request. When Shana looked over to the general, she saw that he had a tear in one eye and a warm smile for his new queen.

When the meal ended, Shana headed back to her room, with Camille in tow. It had been a long, grueling day, and she was tired. But before she could get undressed, another older woman came in, bowed, and introduced herself as the 'Keeper of Traditions.' Shana invited her in to go over everything she would need to know for the next day's ceremony. The ceremony was planned for

mid-morning in the city's square where many onlookers could watch and share in. The woman left, so now Shana could get some rest. Tomorrow would be even busier than today was.

Helena had drawn a bath for Shana with lots of hot water, rose petals, and lavender. Shana soaked for more than an hour before Helena came in to help with the last little bit before bed. Helena had seen Shana naked before and hardly noticed as she laced on a pair of panties and a short nightgown. Helena said her goodnights before heading into her own room. Shana walked into her personal chamber and crawled into the warm down-covered bed. She fluffed her pillow, pulled up the covers, and took a deep breath. She was now ready for sleep.

But Camille had other ideas. Wearing only panties, Camille had slipped into the bed before Shana did. She hid deep under the covers and waited for Shana to relax before she made her move. Shana had just closed her eyes when she felt the bed begin to move and a warm hand traveled up her leg. She could tell by the aroma that it was Camille.

Camille stopped at the top of Shana's thigh, where she began to unlace her panties. As soon as they were off, Camille began to touch and taste Shana for the very first time. She didn't quite know what to expect but she was shocked by Shana's rising excitement. Camille had always pictured herself with another woman, but a woman with something extra? After spending a few minutes with Shana in her mouth, Camille continued her journey northward, moving over Shana's tight stomach, stopping at each of her breasts, before she was eye-to-eye with this lovely creature.

Shana was enjoying Camille's ministrations. Her excitement was nearing a breaking point. She wanted to be inside Camille when she reached her peak. Shana kissed

her lover warmly and passionately while she played with Camille's breasts and bottom. Quickly, she rolled Camille onto her stomach and began to kiss and bite Camille's soft, rounded bottom. Shana was now close to the point of no return.

She pulled Camille to her hands and knees, spread her legs, and probed for the first available orifice. Camille began to purr as Shana slowly entered her. The rhythm started slowly but as she neared her peak, the rhythm increased wildly. After a loud grunt, Shana released her passion into Camille, which brought Camille to the same point.

When the spasms of love subsided, Camille curled up into Shana's arms, facing away. With their breathing returning to normal, Shana kissed and caressed Camille. They were sound asleep in each other's arms within minutes. When Shana woke up, Camille was gone, as she had slipped out of the bed and gone into her own. Shana stretched and yawned, as Helena entered the room.

"Good morning, milady," she said. "It is a good morning, my faithful companion. Have you seen Camille yet this morning?" Shana asked.

"Yes. She is bathing right now so she can be ready for your ceremony. I would suggest you do the same, as we have but a few hours left," Helena replied.

Another young girl, one Shana had never seen before, entered, carrying a tray with some hot liquid and fresh fruit. She nearly dumped the whole tray as she watched a naked Shana get out of bed and head for the private area to do her morning ritual. "Oh, your highness, I am so sorry. I spilled some of your tea. I couldn't help it. You are so beautiful, I had to look."

Shana smiled, and said, "Don't worry, I am nothing like the last person to occupy this room. Just clean up any

mess you make before you leave." The girl blushed, curtsied, and left the chambers after she had wiped up the spill.

Helena had another bath ready, for which Shana was thankful. She loved to soak among all the aromas and the heat of the water relaxed her so. Helena was quite busy in another room, laying out her royal attire for the ceremony. Shana dried herself and walked into the changing room. "I was given some new articles by the house staff. They are made of a wonderful material that they call silk. It is made from a worm. It is so soft, you simply have to try it," Helena declared.

Shana first put on the panties which, like all others, laced up at each hip. The material was wonderful and felt good next to her skin. Next came the chest cover, made of the same cloth. It was just as comfortable next to her breasts as the panties were. Helena then helped Shana slip on the royal dress and petticoats that were then laced into place. Finally, a pair of closed toe sandals was sat down for Shana to slip her feet into.

Helena then had Shana sit so she could begin the arduous task of preparing her hair. It was long, shiny, and the color of a moonless night. After many strokes with a brush, small leather bands were tied to keep her hair in place. Several fresh-cut flowers were added to give it some color. Shana squeezed some pomegranate seeds into a bowl and crushed them before using the juice to paint her lips a moist red. Finally, her princess robes were placed on her shoulders and tied at the neck.

Shana looked at herself in a polished metal shield that had been hung on the wall. To her, everything looked as it should. Then came a knock at the door, which Helena answered. Royal guards had been dispatched to escort Shana to the coronation ceremony, where she would be crowned as Queen of Beltan.

Shana took a long slow breath in and exhaled before she took Helena's hand and started the trek to the central courtyard. She was flanked by four large, lavishly dressed guards, and had a couple of young girls who followed her to carry her long train. As she walked, she could feel the new material as it slid across her skin. She felt so sexy and feminine, but she was also getting physically excited as well. She would have to have more clothes made of these new threads. Not only for her, but for all of the women she knew, especially Peta and Camille.

The walk was longer than she remembered; everything had been happening at a breakneck pace since her arrival. She came to a large opening that looked out over the courtyard and saw many people, most of whom she had never met before. There were a few faces she recognized, like Camille, the general and his staff, but most surprising was William.

He was in his nicest commander's uniform, atop his ice white horse. When Shana entered the courtyard, he dismounted and followed the lead of the general, who now bowed low to Shana.

"Your majesty. We, the people of Beltan, welcome you to our fair city. We also must thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your actions that rid us of the evil tyrant, Yaro," he declared in a loud, strong voice for all to hear. He then extended an arm and escorted Shana to a raised and much decorated platform. Several religious and political leaders were already there, waiting for Shana to make her way up the stairs. Just off to her left, she saw a massive crown encrusted with many different colored stones. It was a heavy gold circle with several points and material in a rich red that lined the inside.

Shana stopped in front of the religious leader who bowed, but just barely. "As General Winslow announced, we too are grateful for your presence. I shall place this

crown upon your head. With the written agreement, you now shall be known as Shana, Queen of Beltan, and her people," he said in a rich, deep voice. Shana could tell that this man was used to speaking to large groups.

He turned and with both hands gently grabbed the crown, and spun around to face Shana once again. She produced the required document, gave it to an aide, and returned her attention to the holy man. He then placed the heavy item on her head, stepped back, and bowed again. She was now officially the leader of the kingdom.

The crowd erupted with cheers, clapping, and whistles. Minstrels began to play and the courtyard became a sea of moving bodies. Shana walked to the edge of the platform and waved at the people, as she walked around the perimeter of the platform. Shana was then led to the throne room where she saw a huge, ornate chair well up off the floor. There were seven steps to the platform, which was said to be a good luck omen for prosperity.

Shana thought that now, the real work would begin. It took nearly a whole day to meet and greet all that had come to see the queen and to wish her well. A grand feast had been prepared in her honor. Shana could only pick at it, as she was completely overwhelmed. She sat at her place, at the head of the long table where the feast was being served. Shana saw William sitting near the middle of the table. He winked in her direction, then smiled and blew her a kiss. Shana knew what William wanted, and she wanted it as well.

As the evening started to wind down, Shana went to her room and changed into something much more comfortable. Helena assisted Shana in removing the grand crown, and she set it in its proper place, just above the head of her bed. A smaller, more practical, crown was now within her reach.

Shana sent Helena to find William and invite him to join her in her sitting room. Helena must have run to find him as it was only a few minutes before William was standing in her chambers. William, following protocol, bowed low, and addressed Shana as your highness. "I am here at your request," he said, waiting for Shana to reply.

"Yes Commander, I did send for you, as I need some personal advice on what to do with this burning, here, low in my royal tummy," she said with a wide grin across her face.

William returned her smile with one of his own, as he undressed and joined the new queen in her bed. As he began to explore Shana's body, he came across her new undergarments. When he ran a hand over them, they both became much more excited. "What are these?" he asked. "New royal knickers for the queen?" William's hand had never felt so good, as he massaged her breasts and bottom through the thin material.

"Quiet, Commander. I need you to make love to me," Shana said, breathlessly.

William needed no more encouragement. Soon enough, Shana found herself in the same position as Camille was just the night before. Her new panties had been pulled down her thighs and William was kneeling behind her. His large tool was buried deep inside of Shana and she could feel every inch of it.

He started slowly but was soon moving in and out of Shana's love nest with reckless abandon. His excitement began to grow even larger and soon he began to spasm, filing her with his hot, sticky fluids. The couple then fell onto the bed, where William pulled Shana close and kissed her passionately.

There were a great many things that needed to be changed in the kingdom of Beltan. Yaro had robbed the

people of any wealth they had for himself and bought many worthless items to feed his own greed. One of the first things Shana did was to tour the castle and inventory its contents. . Anything that was not needed would be sold and the profits put back into the kingdom. Farmers would get much needed seed and tools which in turn allowed the bakers and grocers to make more of their products.

Next, Shana held a meeting with the general and his staff about all of the prisoners in the jails. Those that Yaro put there for opposing him would be released. Anyone who had been convicted of a crime would have their cases reassessed. If they were violent or had harmed anyone, they would remain in the jail. Shana also made sure that the older people in her kingdom were treated with more respect.

During one of the early meetings she had in the Great Hall, Shana saw a figure at the back of the room, standing in the shadows. He wore a cloak with a hood, which made him seem nearly invisible. He carried a large but narrow staff that he used to get from one place to the next, which he seemed to do without difficulty. But when Shana tried to see what his purpose was for being there, he just disappeared, not returning for several days. She asked the general to catch this shadowy figure, bring him before her, and find out just what he was up to.

Meanwhile, William only stayed for a couple of days before returning to her father's forces. The nights were spent with Shana. After he left, Camille returned to her place beside Shana. The changes that Shana was making started to pay off quickly. Most everyone was now happy, doing what they could to help others and the kingdom. About a week after William had gone, the general sent word to Shana that the mystery man had been captured and would be brought before the queen. Shana didn't

know why but the message gave her a feeling of doom, like a dark cloud had parked itself on her shoulder. She couldn't see it, but knew it was there.

Shana was sitting in the throne room when the general led the hooded figure in. They were flanked by heavily armed guards on each side. Shana's own personal guards were there as well; they were quite on edge as the group got closer.

"Your majesty, is this the man you saw last week?" the general asked. Shana nodded her head in the affirmative. "We found him in a village not far from the castle. He gave us no problem and went with us without question," the general reported.

"What is your name?" Shana asked. "And why were you here?"

The man pulled back his hood and looked directly into Shana's eyes. "My name is Gallon, I am a master of potions and spells. I am here to see if you are anything like your predecessor," the man answered.

"I quite understand that but since I saw you, I have had this feeling of darkness that is hanging over me. Are you the cause of this?" she questioned.

"No, your majesty. I came to this kingdom several years ago in an attempt to end a plague named Yaro. I could not muster the proper spell to cast him away as he was being protected by another entity, a dark and powerful one. But it seems as though you are immune to that shield and were able to end his rule. I have come to offer my services to you and your people. The darkness you feel is now quite close. It wants this land for himself and will stop at nothing. With my skills and your immunity, I can help defeat this monster that is getting closer by the hour. I do not act unless I am asked. So your answer, your highness?"

Shana was stunned by what the hooded man had to say. For some odd reason, she knew that he was telling the truth as she could feel the darkness creeping ever closer. "I will need some time to consult with my general and his staff. Will tomorrow at this same time be alright with you, if we decide to add you to our defenses?" Shana asked.

"Tomorrow will be fine. Just know that the darkness is very powerful, and we will need everyone's cooperation in order to eliminate his threat," Gallon declared. With that final statement Gallon bowed to Shana, then turned to leave. Two of the guards blocked his way but with a flick of his fingers, the guards were frozen in place, unable to move anything but their eyes. There was genuine fear behind those glances. Gallon continued to leave and was out of the throne room in mere seconds.

Shana then noticed she was sitting on the edge of her seat. She sat back and could breathe again. It was an awesome display of power from Gallon. The general turned to Shana, "Your highness, I too have felt the impending doom creep into my mind. Every member of my staff and our army is also quite aware. We need this hooded man's help, if the price is not too high."

"I quite agree, General. I am sure he hasn't gone too far. Please ask him to return, so we may barter with him for his advice and services," Shana said. The general bowed, turned, and exited the throne room, leaving Shana alone with her thoughts. She was in conflict about what to do with the hooded one, William, and of course, Camille. "Maybe a ride in the fresh air will give me some perspective," she thought.

She returned to her room, changed into some clothes more appropriate for riding, then headed for the stables. Gor was saddled, Shana hopped on and off she went, without her escort, with no particular destination in mind

. She rode at a moderate pace for more than an hour when she came upon a stream of fresh cool water, and a couple of small waterfalls. "This looks like a nice place to think," Shana said to herself. After dismounting, she sat next to the slow moving stream and put her feet, ankle deep, into the water.

Shana had been at the water's edge for only a few minutes, when she felt the presence of someone else. Slowly, she put her hand on the hilt of her dagger and began to look around for her unannounced company. Then she saw him clearly, directly across the stream for where she was sitting.

As she went to rise, the figure said calmly, "Please your highness, remain sitting. I am very sorry that I disturbed you." He then stepped out into a small clearing and bowed towards Shana. "My name is Twir, prince of Overland, and I am new to this land. But I have heard about the bronze and beautiful queen that resides somewhere in this area. I guessed it was you," he said.

"Yes, I am Queen Shana. What brings you to our land?" she asked.

"I have been following an evil lord who laid waste to my country, to face him in battle and remove him from this world," he replied. Shana had been sizing the prince up since he first made his presence known. He was just a bit taller than she was, well-muscled and defined. He had a face she had seen before.

"May I ask you a question, Prince Twir?" Shana asked.

"But of course. If I have the answer, I will certainly share it with you, your majesty."

Shana rose and walked towards this handsome prince. "I seem to know your face. Have we met before?" she asked.

"I am not sure, you seem to be familiar as well. As I said, I am new to this land. I have never been here before. The last place that I remember being in was a land that plagued by a warlord named Gregor the Terrible. After I slew him, I was visited by travelers who asked if I was up to exploring new lands. I hope that you don't think me insane but I remember that in another world I was known as Cathy. I was a girl who dreamed that someday, I could live as a man." Shana put her hand on her chest and stumbled back. "Are you alright, your highness?" the prince inquired.

"Yes, yes, I am fine. It's just that your travels seem to have mirrored my own. I was from the same world you came from. There, I was known as Steve, and I lived in a wheelchair. I, too, was visited by travelers. At that time, I was a Master Gamer, in the same game you speak about. I was the character Gregor." Now it was Twir's turn to be shocked.

The prince stumbled over several words before he could make any sense. "That is almost too much to believe. If I hadn't have lived it, I wouldn't believe it," he stuttered his response. "In that land I was known as Princess Catherine, your foe for many battles." It was then that Shana realized why his face was so familiar.

"Are you all male now?" Shana asked.

"Yes, 100%. Are you all female?" Twir asked.

"Not all of me, and not all of the time. I still have some parts from my former life. A lot depends on the situation. If I am with another woman, I have an appendage. If it's with a man, then I am a girl. Apparently the travelers can reach into your mind and snatch out certain thoughts and feelings. I guess because this really is a virtual world, we can be anything," Shana said.

The prince nodded his agreement. "It does sound crazy, but I think you're right. Have you met others like us?" Shana said, then described Camille to him, and explained that she used to be known as Carl, also a Grand Master of the game.

They both came to the conclusion that the game must be some kind of breeding ground. If one can function at a very high level in the gaming world, one would be eligible to receive the offer and be an easy choice for the travelers. All of the time the two had been talking, Shana was feeling more and more strange. She noticed that the longer she talked with Twir, the harder her nipples had become, and the wetter her panties had gotten. She then noticed that Twir was also in a state of high excitement; the front of his pants were very revealing and he kept touching himself.

"Prince Twir, I would like to invite you to my castle so we can talk so more about this situation. It seems to me that this meeting was not random. I came to this place to think about a dark entity threatening my kingdom, and a dark hooded man named Gallon who offered his services to help defeat this unseen foe," Shana confessed.

"It would be my pleasure, as I feel just as you do. I have found that in this land, there are no real coincidences, everything that happens does so for some reason," he replied. They mounted their rides and started off towards Shana's home.

As the two rode together, they spent the time comparing notes and experiences in the gaming world. Prince Twir, AKA Cathy, as a child, also had an illness which affected her heart. If she were to get up and go to the bathroom, she would turn blue and not be able to breath. As a result, she too, had lived most of her life in a wheelchair. But Twir was strong and quite handsome, which made Shana twitch down low in her belly. No one, even Wil-

liam and Camille, that had that effect on her. Could she be under a spell, or was this something of a different nature? Was Twir the one to bring her peace, or a long lasting relationship? Shana had many more questions than answers at this point.

When Shana and Twir arrived, they were told that the hooded man and the general were waiting for them. As the two walked together, Shana actually felt small for the first time since being in this world, not like a giant among ants. Shana told herself to control her impulses, as there were bigger, more dangerous, things ahead for her to consider.

Shana and Twir entered the great meeting room and saw Gallon and the general talking quietly. When they saw Shana, they stood up and bowed. "So Gallon, as I am sure you know, we have decided to enlist you and your services, as long as the cost to our kingdom is not excessive," Shana declared.

Gallon smiled widely, as he knew what the answer would be even before he asked for it. "Your majesty, the cost of my services is minimal, as I, more than anyone, want this monster and his army destroyed," he began. "It has done more harm to this world than any other creature. I am confident that with my help, your armies will be victorious," he gloated.

"You're beating around the bush, Gallon. Tell me what it is that you want," Shana demanded. "Of course, your highness. It is quite simple. I want your sister Peta to be my wife. I have known about both of you from the beginning. She is my price. If you can make this happen, then I will live in your service forever," Gallon replied.

It took several seconds to take in Gallon's request. "I am not my sister's keeper. She has her own mind and her own free will, just as I do. I cannot, and will not, make her

do anything. If she decides to agree to your terms, it will be her decision," Shana said, as she tried to hold back her anger.



“That is all I ask, your majesty. I only want the chance to meet her, then let her choose her own path,” Gallon sheepishly replied, as he tried to lower the growing tension.

“Very well, I will send for her. But I want no tricks, spells, or potions used on her. If you do, you will not see the sun set on that day. I love her with all of my heart. I would rather die in battle than to sell her to the highest bidder,” she said bitterly.

Gallon bowed lower than ever before. “As you wish. No potions or spells. I had no plans on needing or using them, as I think I am her destiny and she will know it when we meet.”

Shana tried to compose herself. “Very well, Gallon. Now if you will excuse me, I need a bath,” she said as she turned to leave. Everyone bowed as she left the room for her chambers.

When Shana arrived, Helena had a hot bath waiting. She then undressed and slipped into the relaxing water. Shana sent word that she wanted a scribe so she could send her sister a message. A teenaged boy walked slowly into Shana’s private quarters. He had his eyes glued to the floor as he tried not to embarrass the queen. “Have you not seen a woman without her clothes on?” Shana asked playfully.

“No, no, no, your highness. I am not sure I want to right now,” he stuttered.

“Well, raise your eyes then, as there is nothing to see,” she said.

The boy did as he was told and visibly relaxed as Shana’s nether parts were well under the surface of the water. After she composed the message, she asked that he read it back to her, which he did with accuracy. Before she dismissed the lad, she stood up and stepped from the tub

as she reached for a towel. He blushed nine different colors before sprinting out of her sight. Shana was laughing heartily as Helena entered the room.

“What in the world did you do to that poor boy?” Helena asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Nothing that he won’t see in just a few years, if he is lucky,” Shana giggled.

The next afternoon she received word that Peta was on her way and would be there by sunset. Shana sent word to her kitchen and house staff to prepare to have company and make rooms ready for Peta’s arrival. She also had Gallon brought to her for further conversation. Shana had many questions but most pressing was information on the dark entity. What was it? Where did it come from? And most important, what was it after.

Shana was to meet Gallon in her throne room where she could have some privacy. When he arrived, Shana dismissed her guards and sat across a wide table from the hooded man so she could look at him, face to face. Shana took a long look into his face, trying to see what was behind his eyes. He wasn’t a bad looking man, he was even on the good looking side. He had soft, caring eyes and a smile that was a little disarming. His body was covered from shoulders to his feet, by his cloak so she had no idea how he was built.

Shana ordered up some fresh fruit and drinks, as she expected to spend a fair amount of time talking to him. After they were delivered, she began to ask the questions she thought were significant.

“If I may interrupt you, your highness. All of these questions do have answers but you have to look inside of yourself for the answers. I know that you remember your old life, as is true for me and most of the people of power and influence in this world. Think back and try to remem-

ber who your worst enemy was. From there, the rest will fall into place," he pointed out.

Shana thought back to her days as Steve. A neighborhood bully named Danny picked on Steve from day one, and made his life miserable. Not only at school but at home as well. He wanted to be the center of attention and he wanted everyone to be afraid of him. He thought that if he was feared, no one would dare challenge him. Like most bullies, he had low self-esteem. So now, Shana knew who she was dealing with. "Does our enemy have a name?" she asked.

"He is known as Dante's disciple, your highness," Gallon replied.

Shana thought, "That figures. A name that might instill fear, without having to prove it."

Shana and Gallon finished their conversation just as word got to them that Peta had arrived, and was waiting in the great room. Gallon told Shana that he would wait for the evening meal to make his presence known. Shana felt she had to remind Gallon of the limits she had set.

Shana went directly to the Great Room to greet her sister. Even though it had only been a short time since they had seen each other, Shana thought that Peta looked older and wiser than before. Peta saw Shana enter the room where she first bowed, then rushed, to her sister and hugged her warmly. Because the Shana's personal guards had never seen or met Peta before, they tried to block her way until Shana released them.

"It is so nice to see you," Shana said.

"Same here, sister. After I received your letter, I hurried to see you. What is so important?" Peta asked.

As Shana began to explain, Gallon entered the Great Room and bowed to both women. When Peta laid eyes on

Gallon, a wide smile spread across her face. She ran to him and gave him a strong hug. Gallon had removed his cloak; Shana saw that he was very well built. The hunching over was just a ruse to deceive others.

Before Shana could say anything, Peta and Gallon were locked in a passionate kiss which left Shana only able to watch in complete disbelief. Peta then turned to Shana and blushed wildly.

"Can you dismiss your guard?" Peta asked of her sister.

Shana did as she was asked and once the room had been cleared, she turned her attention to the couple and asked for an explanation.

Gallon was first to speak. "As we talked about earlier, most of the people in this world are from other dimensions. Peta and I were together then but she was known by another name, Peter, and I was called Gail. We both wanted to live in different bodies. As we grew up, we learned how to master the same game as you. We were both approached by the travelers. Since we had promised to stay together. It was easy to accept their offer.

After we came to this world, we were separated. When I found out that Peta was my love from another world, I knew that as soon as we met again, we would be just like had hoped." Peta was shaking her head in agreement, as Gallon shared their story.

"So you see, my lovely sister, all is well," Peta finished her love's statement. Shana was still somewhat hesitant to believe them, but her story was just as strange as theirs was.

"So now that this has been settled, can I count on your help for the duration?" Shana asked Gallon.

"I gave you my word, your majesty, and I will live up to it as promised," Gallon replied. Peta looked mystified, so Shana and Gallon explained the situation with the dark entity.

"If there is to be a battle, I am sure Father will want to support you," Peta said. "And so will I. I'll have my forces ready and quite able, so now you have me here to help."

Hearing her sister pledge assistance made Shana feel like things may just work out and Dante might be defeated. Before the evening ended, Peta had sent her fastest rider to their father, with a message that explained the problem and asked for his help.

Before heading to bed, Shana arraigned rooms for both Peta and Gallon. It had been a full and emotional day for everyone, especially for Shana. Thankfully, Camille wasn't feeling well and had decided to stay in her own room for the night, which gave Shana time to figure out her next step without complication or interruption. Shana had just fallen asleep when she was visited by an unknown guest. Shana knew that she was still sleeping, but was now face to face with Dante in her dreamscape.

"So, you are my new opponent," Dante whispered. "This shouldn't be difficult as you are just a woman. My army will easily overrun yours, just as it has in every battle since day one. I have known about you from the first day you arrived in the land and have been looking forward to meeting you, then defeating you, just like I did before in the other world."

In her dream, Shana just smiled. "Seeing you like this just lets me know how afraid of me you are. We have a history, you and I, and I am not that other person anymore. I look forward to meeting you in real time as well so I can drive my dagger through your heart and disman-

tle your army before you take your last breath," Shana retorted.

Then he was gone as Shana woke up with a start. She was wet from head to toe and her bed sheets were soaked. She felt overly warm. The dream was vivid, not something that that could be easily forgotten. Light was now coming in the window so Shana got out of bed, hit the potty chair, and dressed lightly, before she headed for the kitchen for something warm to drink.

As she passed Peta's room, she heard the two in the throes of lovemaking. She still had a hard time with the relationship but she laughed to herself as Peta began to yell. As she began to drink her tea, Shana wondered if everyone that now lived in this world was also from her old world and had the same issues. Camille was a completely functional woman, and William a fully intact male, but she was somewhere in-between.

While she was lost in thought, Peta and Gallon had joined her for breakfast. As they ate, Shana shared the story of her dream visitor and his message. Gallon listened carefully as he tried to figure out just how much aid Dante was getting. Dante could not invade Shana's mind as he did without help from some source that had skills in spells and potions. Gallon then shared his own thoughts on the matter and explained his logic.

"The battle will take place soon," Gallon said. "And probably very near the castle. I can protect it and those inside of it from the dark arts but we still have the physical army to contend with." Shana and Peta nodded their agreement.

Shana sent for the general and Twir. Plans would have to be drawn up, and soon, if Gallon was right. Peta collected her forces and joined Shana's to prepare. A large area had been set aside for the new army to camp. Word

from their father was also received; he would be sending forces to bolster the existing men. He and the remainder of his forces would be located just inside his border and could be called upon in just a few hours.

Camille continued to be sick and stayed in her room with a nurse. The medical people had no idea what was wrong with her, causing the illness. Shana was getting lonely sleeping by herself. She had an ongoing debate with herself on whether or not to invite Twir to join her. Before she could come to a decision, a scout reported that a large army, dressed in black and blood red, was nearing the border of the kingdom. There had already been a few skirmishes along the frontier as Dante's troops tried to gauge the toughness and resolve of Shana's army. The losses on both sides were minimal but that would certainly change over the next few days or weeks.

Shana then received some unbelievable news. Camille's illness was not caused by a disease as was feared but from being pregnant. It was Shana that had planted the seed. She was floored when Camille's nurse broke the word to her. Shana rushed to Camille's side and held her warmly and gently. Camille was feeling better to the point of having that special glow that only expectant mothers can exhibit. Both Shana and Camille had difficulty in removing the smiles from their faces.

Never in Shana's, or Steve's, mind had he/she even thought of getting someone pregnant. And Camille, AKA Carl, never dreamed of becoming a mother. Word spread quickly through the castle and everyone was as joyous as Shana and Camille. Now knowing the new stakes, Shana had much more to fight for. And fight she would.

Within days, Dante's troops made several attempts to breach the lines setup by Shana's forces. In the early days of the battle, some of the most heavy fighting took place with both sides feeling the losses. But where Dante sat

back in a place of relative safety, Shana, Peta, and Twir were on the front lines with their men. Each night when the armies would retreat to their camps, most of the troops were too tired to even eat. As soon as they reached safety, they would collapse in exhaustion. Gallon had set several spells around the castle that kept Dante's dark helpers at bay.

Dante had sent assassins to the castle with orders to eliminate anyone of any stature, those that would mean much to the leadership. Camille was in their crosshairs as they crept silently into the castle. But Gallon was just as aware as anyone to what was being planned and he took extraordinary steps to protect those that had remained at home. He moved everyone into the Great Room and had makeshift beds made for those that would be staying there.

The enemy assassins were very good at what they did but Gallon and the guards were just a little better. When the killers realized that it would take a full frontal attack to get into the room, they prepared for just such an entry. The guards felt the darkness as soon as it entered the castle and were on high alert. If anyone tried anything, they would have to go through several layers of protection and there would be even more waiting for them inside.

All three entrances were attacked at the same time. Several of the guards were killed by the assassins but they would lose many more, making them too weak to be a real threat. One by one, the killers fled; they never reached the doorways. With but a few of the assassins left, they then concentrated on the main entrance, the furthest away from those being shielded. The leader of the killers knew that time was running out and made one last try. He sent several poisoned arrows in the direction of Camille, hoping he would hit something of value. One arrow was coming directly at Camille.

Before Gallon could do anything to deflect it, Helena placed herself between the assassin and Camille. She took the arrow in the middle of her chest and was dead before she landed on the floor. The nearest guard was already moving towards the lead assassin when the arrows were loosed. With one swift stroke the assassin lost his head, never seeing if he had completed his assignment.

After the threat had been neutralized and the castle was secure, Gallon sent a message to Shana, warning her of the possibility of assassins and news of the castle incursion. In the message was the sad news of Helena's bravery and of her passing. This enraged Shana.

"This has to end now," Shana declared. "And the only way to stop the killing is to cut off the head of the snake." Shana told Twir and the general to pick a few of their best men. Once that had been accomplished, Shana shared her plan to deal with Dante herself.

"But your majesty," Twir said, "he is protected by spells that no one has been able to penetrate."

Shana had little patience and replied. "That may be true, but King Yaro had some of the same spells that he thought would protect him as well. I was able to get to Yaro and end his reign. I'll do the same to Dante. I just need help getting to Dante from here. I'll take care of the rest," Shana spat.

Neither the general or Twir liked the idea. But the fact that she was the queen gave her all the power she would need to make things happen, her way. An hour later, the group led by Shana headed towards Dante's encampment. Shana could feel Dante's influence the closer they went. The group was able to get within several hundred feet of Dante's tent when everyone but Shana was halted by some invisible force.

Shana then drew her sword, the same one she had received from the people of her kingdom, and moved slowly and carefully to the rear of Dante's tent. The group could only watch as Shana disappeared behind the tent. There was only one guard at the entrance but Shana thought better of killing him. Instead, she moved to the side that was hidden by trees and shrubs. With her dagger, she sliced an opening and stepped through to the inside. In just seconds, she was standing over the body she knew was Dante.

He was busy with a local girl, when Shana put the dagger to his throat. "How did you get in here?" Dante asked.

"I have many spells that are protecting me in here." Shana smirked. "It seems that good will always have a way of looking evil in the eye," she said in a voice that only Dante and the girl could hear. Shana motioned for the girl to leave through the slit she had made. Shana never once took her eye off Dante, not even for a split second.

When Shana and Dante were finally alone, she told him to stand and face her. She was confident that she could out duel this pudgy little man. If not for her skills, that may have been a fatal mistake on her part. Dante, in a flash, armed himself, and pointed the tip of his sword at Shana's heart. "I am sure you thought that you could just waltz in here, and kill me without much effort," he said, with a wicked grin. "Like you, I have many skills that no one, even my closest advisors, knows about. I am going to enjoy carving you up and feeding you to the animals in this forest."

Quickly, Dante advanced, barely missing Shana by the smallest of margins. Shana defended herself from his sword and dagger, as they moved around the tent.

“Aren’t you going to call your guards, you coward?” Shana exclaimed with bitter vile in her voice.

“I don’t need them. You are only one woman, so this will be over in a hurry,” he replied. Dante made another thrust at Shana with his sword, then followed that with an assault with his dagger. He sliced through her leather skirt like it was made of paper. Her skirt fell to the floor, leaving her with just her panties as protection.

When Dante tried the same move a second time, Shana was ready for him. Shana turned to the side and as the blade passed, she used her own to cut deeply into Dante’s abdomen. Shana expected to see blood pouring from the wound but saw bats and spiders instead. The color left his face as he dropped his weapons and grabbed his stomach before falling towards Shana.

As he grasped her leather top, he said, “How?” Those were the last words that he uttered as the life evil had placed in him left from the tent entrance, into the night. With a loud thump, Dante hit the ground as the last creature exited his body.

“That is for all of the men and women you have killed, especially one that I loved dearly,” Shana said as she watched the last bit of life flicker and fade from his eyes.

In seconds, light began to filter in, engulfing Shana and the lifeless body of Dante. The body began to smoke, then catch fire. Soon it was nothing but a pile of ashes that began to blow out of the tent. Without any regard to her state of dress, Shana proudly stepped from Dante’s tent and declared to the world that he was dead and the battle was over.

Many of Dante’s men saw Shana standing there with her sword and dagger, then began to flee back to their own country. Soon, Shana was joined by the group of men she had brought with her. Twir began to undress and

offer her his pants to cover herself. Shana would have none of that. What she wore was adequate in her eyes.

The camp became deserted quickly and Shana's forces made sure they continued their retreat. Twir came out of Dante's tent with his sword and scabbard in hand and gave it to Shana, signifying her victory. Shana raised both blades and crossed them above her head, to cheers and whistles from her men.

Shana had other things to think about, namely Camille and Helena, and how it was time to head home. She wanted a state funeral honoring Helena as she was just as much a hero as Shana was, maybe more so. As they left, Shana looked back and saw that the encampment was now in flames. She hoped it would be a sign to others that this was her kingdom and that she was strong enough to defend it.

As Shana and her men were riding home, Shana heard a voice. "That is twice now that you have defeated one of my subordinates. I'll admit that they were weak, but be warned, Queen Shana, I'll be back. The next time, it won't be so easy to chase me away."

Shana replied to the voice with her thoughts. "The next time I hope it is you, not some weakling that I face. I'll be ready to send you to join those that you have sent ahead." Shana then smiled confidently.

When Shana and her party arrived, she found Camille in tears as she held Helena's hand in hers. Shana sat down next to Camille and placed her hand upon the other two. Camille looked up through red and swollen eyes.

"She protected me and it cost her her life," she sobbed.

"I know. I should have been here to protect both of you. For that I will feel guilt for the rest of my life," Shana whispered. "But Helena would have wanted us to celebrate her life, not her passing," Shana then declared.

Shana helped Camille back to her room before attending to matters of state. She declared a day of celebration for Helena and all of those brave citizens who had passed as a result of the war.

Just days later, the entire kingdom and more filled the streets to honor those who would not be coming back. Shana led the procession through the streets and onto the burial field. It was a somber event but everyone knew it was something that had to be done. Once the ceremony had been concluded, the attendees all headed for home. When Shana arrived, she saw that Twir was saddling his horse, preparing to leave. Shana looked at him quite bewildered. "Leaving so quickly?" she asked.

"Yes Shana. I still have some things to take care of before I settle down in one place," Twir responded. Shana had a look of disappointment on her face.

"I know, Shana. I am very attracted to you as well," Twir said. "But I think that it is more physical than anything else. I think it best if I leave before we have something to feel guilty about. Besides, Camille needs you right now." Shana didn't like what Twir was saying but deep down she knew he was right.

"Then go in peace, my friend. Always remember that you will be welcomed here, anytime," Shana said sadly.

Twir went to Shana, put his strong arms around her and gently kissed her on the lips. "Thank you, Shana, for everything," he said as he mounted his horse and rode away, towards an uncertain future.

Shana stood there for some time, even after Twir was well out of sight. She turned and headed for her room to change. She went to Camille's room to sit with her, as she was still very upset by the loss of Helena.

Shana, too, missed Helena, her help, and her advice. She began the search to find a replacement. After asking

several trusted aides, a middle-aged woman named Senta was interviewed and hired as Shana's personal assistant. It only took a few weeks for Shana to know that she had found the perfect person to replace Helena. Senta was just as opinionated and warm as Helena was which allowed Shana and Camille to move forward.

Not much later, Shana received the invitation to Peta's and Gallon's upcoming nuptials. Camille was in no shape to travel, so it was Shana and Senta who would attend. The journey was short and Shana was able to spend some time with her father. He expressed his pride in all of her exploits, as well as how she was ruling her kingdom. Shana didn't know why, but she still felt like a little girl when she was with her father, even though she had never actually been a girl.

The ceremony for Princess Peta and the Spellmaster Gallon was a grand affair. The party lasted well into the night. At the reception, Father gave Peta and Gallon lordship over a parcel of land, somewhere in-between her father's and Shana's. As her gift for the couple, Shana released Gallon from her service so that they could always be together. But now that Shana was family, Gallon promised to be available to her, just for the asking. Father was also getting in on the happiness. He, too, had found a new love.

At least in their part of the world, there was peace. Shana and her family could look forward and work on the prospects for prosperity and happiness. Camille was now quite close to delivering the baby and the royal watch was on. Every now and then, William would visit and would stay with Shana. But the visits got shorter and shorter and soon ended as William had found someone to spend his life with. Then one night, out of the blue, Shana was once again visited by the travelers. They wanted to know if Shana wanted to stay in this world permanently or was

she willing to be someone else in another dimension. Even though she would have been a complete male in that world, Shana declined the offer, as she couldn't possibly have been happier. They consented and told Shana they would never return. She would live here, as Shana, forever.

Even with things so peaceful. Shana would always remember the words the dark voice had spoken. She knew that someday she would have to face him. She hoped that she had the skills to defeat him. It certainly wouldn't be as easy as it was with Yaro or Dante, but she had all of the resolve and confidence she would need when that day arrived. But for now she had a kingdom to rule, a child on the way, and a family that she could love and that would always love her back. How long all of this would last, only time would be able to tell.

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