

Chapter 21



The
Wicked
Tower

FICTION *Rawly Rawls*

The Wicked Tower 21

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Seats around the crammed table overflowed with the upper echelon of Ostia Novus society. Those that were loyal to the queens regent had been tasked with bringing the city to heel. Lord Lars and Lady Norbana Uticensis sat at the middle of the table. The new duke spoke to all. It seemed they would be required to pay an additional tax to properly outfit the Royal Guard outpost in the city.

“That’s fine,” Lars whispered to his wife. “We’ll be happy to pay so long as every vile Tullius is turned to ash.”

“They are not all bad, dear.” Norbana’s upper lip stiffened. Her husband knew she didn’t like his talk about their detainment by the duke.

“Good, gods. They ... are ... vile,” Lars said through clenched teeth. He felt his blood boil, but the man next to him was showing interest in his words, so he quieted himself. The man was some sort of newly-titled baron, and Lars didn’t know what to make of him.

The new duke went on about taxes at the head of the long table.

“I just wish ... that ...” Norbana whispered these words to her husband but did not finish. She pushed away from the table. Slowly she stood, her belly glowing a bright azure. Her eyes had gone quite blank.

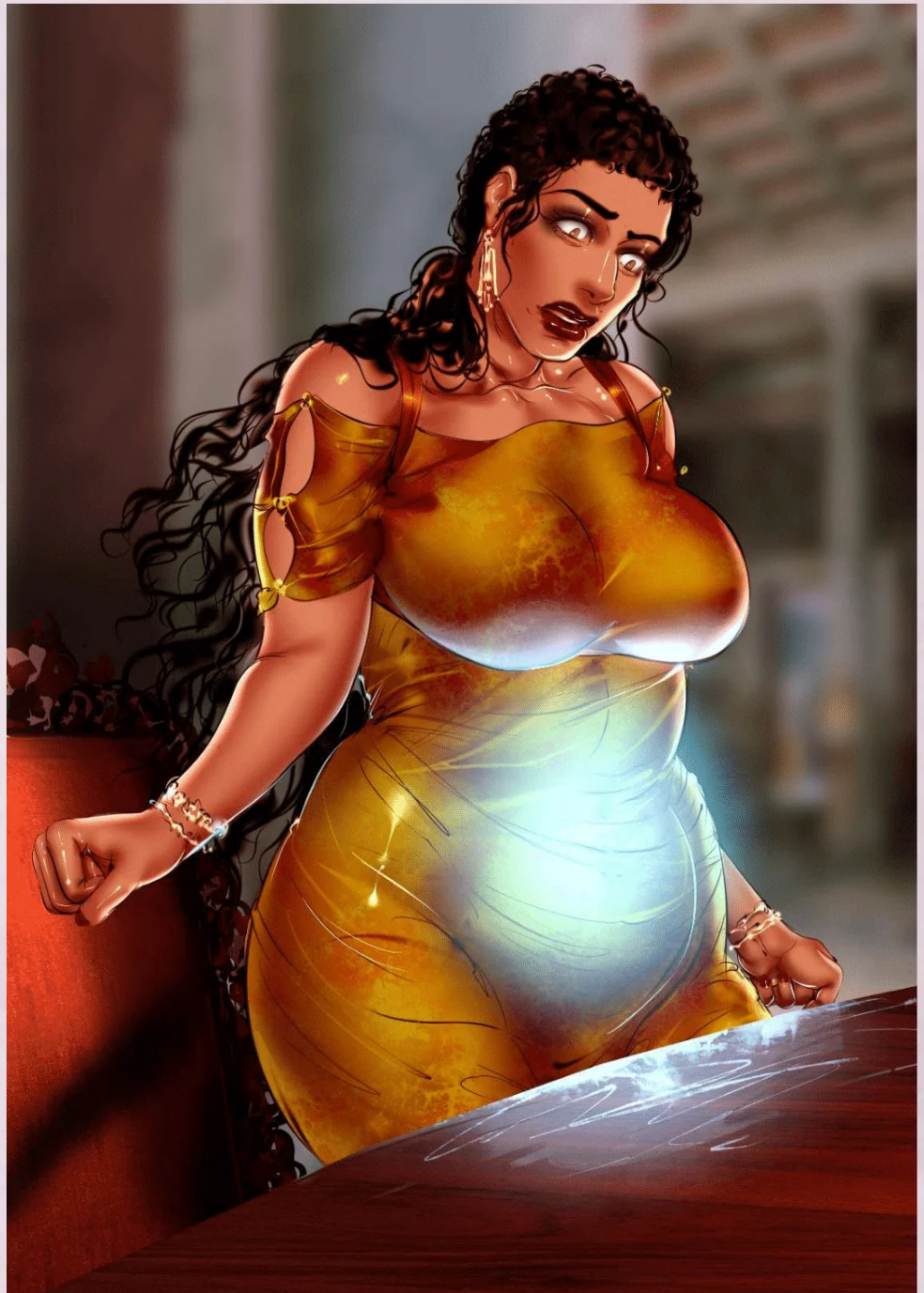
“Norbana, sit down,” Lars hissed. “Everyone is watching you.”

“Lady Norbana? Did you have something to add?” The new duke called down the table.

Norbana said nothing as she pushed her chair back. It fell over with a loud clatter that echoed around the otherwise silent hall. Gasps and shrieks went up among the dinner guests as her belly grew larger.

“Norbana!” Lars reached for her, but she somehow slipped his grasp. She turned and walked away in a trance.

“What is this? What’s happening, Lord Lars?” The new duke’s complexion turned pallid.



"I don't know, Your Grace." Lars stood and made to follow. He tripped on her overturned chair and fell to the ground. When he looked up from the floor, he could see her stola pulling and pulling as her breasts and stomach grew. "Stop, Norbana. I demand you stop this sorcery this instant!" But she ignored him. In disbelief, he watched an azure circle open in the air in front of her. Inside, there was nothing but black.

Screams filled the hall now. There were several calls for the guards.

Before anyone could stop her, Lady Norbana stepped into the glowing circle and disappeared. She had vanished into thin air.



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"What did you do?" Day Star stood when his champions walked out of their rest chamber. He didn't much like surprises, and here was a big one.

"You should know, *angel*. You did it to us." Cassia stopped with her hands on her hips and gave the room a steely gaze. Her stola draped over her stomach awkwardly. It was not made for maternity. "You tricked us into that place. And now you expect us to charge into the belly of the beast ... like this?" She waved her hand at her changed body.

"I'm as baffled as you." Day Star looked at Hekate.

Laughter erupted from near the hearth. Vel turned his gaze there. He had been so keen on their confrontation with the strange godling, he hadn't noticed the tall woman with shining platinum hair leaning against the mantle. Brynhild's laugh was not kind. The chiming sound carried on and on. After some time, the sorceress's chortle stopped abruptly at a wave of Hekate's hand.

"Enough." Hekate blurred into three women sitting in one chair, her voice a harmonic trio. "The new magic that this one brought into our world is powerful." She nodded at Day Star. "You did this to yourselves. And it is most unfortunate."

"What, how?" Naevia's skin crawled with the thought that they could so easily, and accidentally, alter themselves.

"I would guess that all three of you heard the story of Vel and me in the wood?" Hekate looked them over.

Cassia, Naevia, and Dellia nodded.

"Then I would also guess that each of you wished for such a thing yourself. You wanted motherhood. You wanted to feel what I felt."

Hekate shrugged. "But powerful as you may be, you are limited. Your wishes overlapped. The magic sought to fulfil your desires and brought you halfway. I wish we had time to educate you. Maybe afterward, should we prevail, I will find you a tutor for your magic."

"I volunteer." Brynhild lifted her hand, but the room ignored her.

"How do we reverse it?" Dellia stepped forward. "I would rather not fight like this." She pushed her swollen belly out for emphasis.

"You cannot turn back the clock on life. It flows in only one direction." Hekate frowned. "You will have to work with this." She turned toward Day Star. "The armory now, I think."



"Oh, yes." Day Star walked over to the corner where Discordia continued her mercurial, diminished existence. "Excuse me." Day Star pushed the goddess a little to the left, opened a door, and wheeled out a cart with weapons and armor. "I had to make some last-minute adjustments after seeing how you all carry yourselves now." He rolled the cart out before the fire. "Pick out what you need. I should have everyone's sizes."

"I am an unusual size." Brynhild stepped forward and surveyed the cart. She spoke the truth. She had a tall and curvaceous body.

"I am an unusual armorer." Day Star went back to his chair and sat. "There is nothing magic here, these are all things I've pilfered and altered myself."

Vel watched Brynhild pick up an oak staff and check its balance. "Can someone explain what she's doing here? She's not coming with us."

"She is." Hekate glanced at Vel with annoyance.

"She can't be trusted." Vel folded his arms over her chest.



"Of course, little one." Hekate rolled six eyes that converged into two. "That is plain."

"Listen, everything I did was to hinder the queens and restore magic to its rightful place." Brynhild ran her fingers over a light, chainmail tunic. She looked over at Cassia. "I was so committed to the cause, that I may have stuck my nose into a marriage or two. I am sorry, duchess."

"Gallio chose your bed." Cassia clenched her fists.

"That's what I'm telling you. He did not. I used what little magic I had left to cloud his vision. He had no choice." Brynhild did her best to fill her face with contrition. It was always good to admit to something already discovered or easily discoverable. It put others off the scent of other crimes.

"So, he ... was telling the truth. You bewitched him?" Cassia's face fell. It had been easier for her when she had thought he had cheated on her. Maybe she would get a chance to talk to Gallio after this was all over. Maybe she could set things right. She saw the sorceress nod. "And my son? What of Fortinbras?"

"He was a brash young man. I know not what became of him." Brynhild eyed the goddess. She wasn't sure how hidden this lie was, but no one contradicted her.

"We cannot have this duplicitous hag on our flank." Dellia stepped to the side of the cart opposite Brynhild and eyed the swords. "She will stab us in the back first chance she has."

"She will be a useful ally." Hekate's trio of voices had the tone of one long past the point of arguing. "You may watch your backs as you see fit."

"Now that that's settled, may I have some of the magic you have given to these other women?" Brynhild picked up a mail tunic and held it up to her chest.

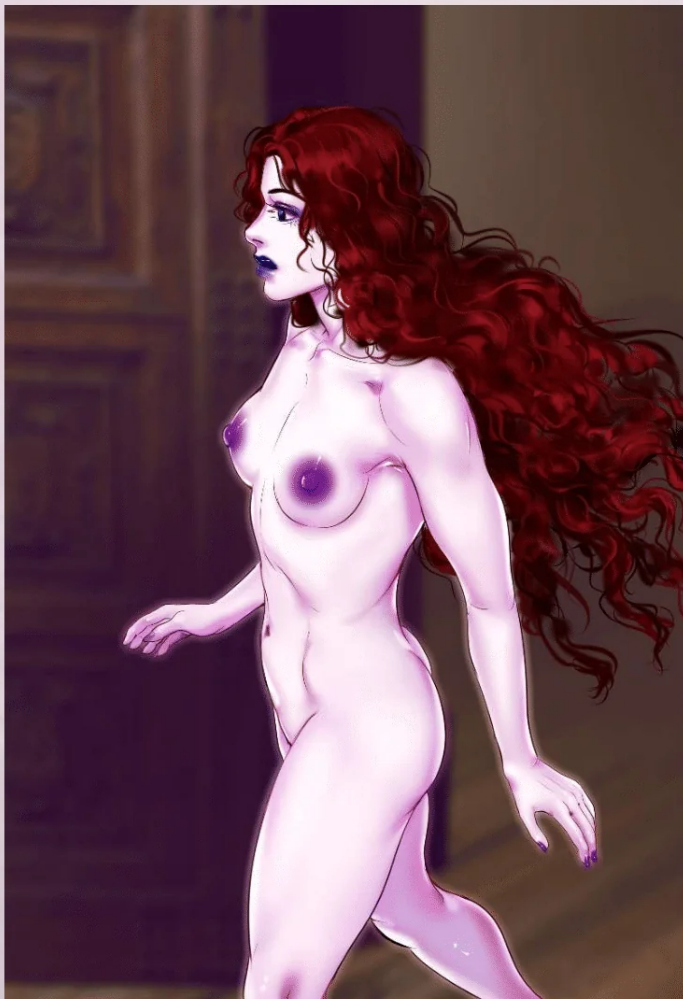
"No," was all Hekate said to that.

Brynhild didn't press her.

In silence, the group armored themselves. Naevia found a bow with just the right tension. Dellia found a sword weighted perfectly. Cassia chose a bow and a long dagger. The three of them slipped into lorica squamata that looked like dragon scale and glinted in the firelight. It all fit perfectly. Vel selected a shield, a mail tunic, and a short sword. Brynhild took the staff and some light armor.

"So, it looks like we're ready." Vel looked over his women and the sorceress. "How do we get there? I don't suppose they'll leave the front gate open for us?"

"There is one more." Hekate stood and held out her arms in invitation.



A door on the far end of the room opened. A woman strode in with purpose. She was tall, naked, and her pale skin had a bluish tint to it. She looked to be about thirty years old. Her breasts were modest and high, and her hips somewhat narrow. The woman's hair was the same copper color as her aunt's.

"Welcome, Daughter." Hekate smiled and moved swiftly across the floor, her arms still open. She pulled the woman into an embrace. "This is Circe, daughter of mortal and god." Hekate held Circe away from her with six firm hands and smiled. "My, you've grown. Come meet your daughter, Vel."

Vel's armor rang musically as he awkwardly walked over to Circe. He bowed in a formal greeting, but the naked woman pulled him into a tight hug. He was surprised by her height; she was just about even with him. But why should anything surprise him about her?

"I've so looked forward to meeting you, Father." Circe had a bright, dimpled smile that lit the room. "I am quite happy with my gift. Thank you."

"Your gift?" Vel tried not to look down at her tits. Her nipples were a captivating purplish color.

"Life. You and Mother gave me the gift of life." Circe kissed Vel on the cheek. She looked past him at the others. "It is lovely to meet all of you." She stepped away from Vel and curtsied. "My grandmother, the former Duchess of Ostia Novus. Well met." She curtsied again. "Aunt Naevia. You are as beautiful as I imagined." She rushed up to Naevia, towering over her. She lowered her head so their matching hair overlapped. "You can tell we're related."

"Indeed." Naevia stared, wide-eyed, at this miracle of a creature.

"Cousin Dellia." Circe pulled a sword from the cart and, like lightning, moved over to her cousin. She had the tip of the sword kissing Dellia's armor before Dellia could move. The room froze.

Dellia laughed. "You are a quick one. Next time I'll be ready." She drew her sword and pushed Circe's blade away from her breast. She glanced at Naevia with a meaning that clearly said, *What the fuck was that?*

"Shall I provision myself like the others, Mother?" Circe made no greeting to Brynhild. Indeed, she gave no indication she had even seen the sorceress.

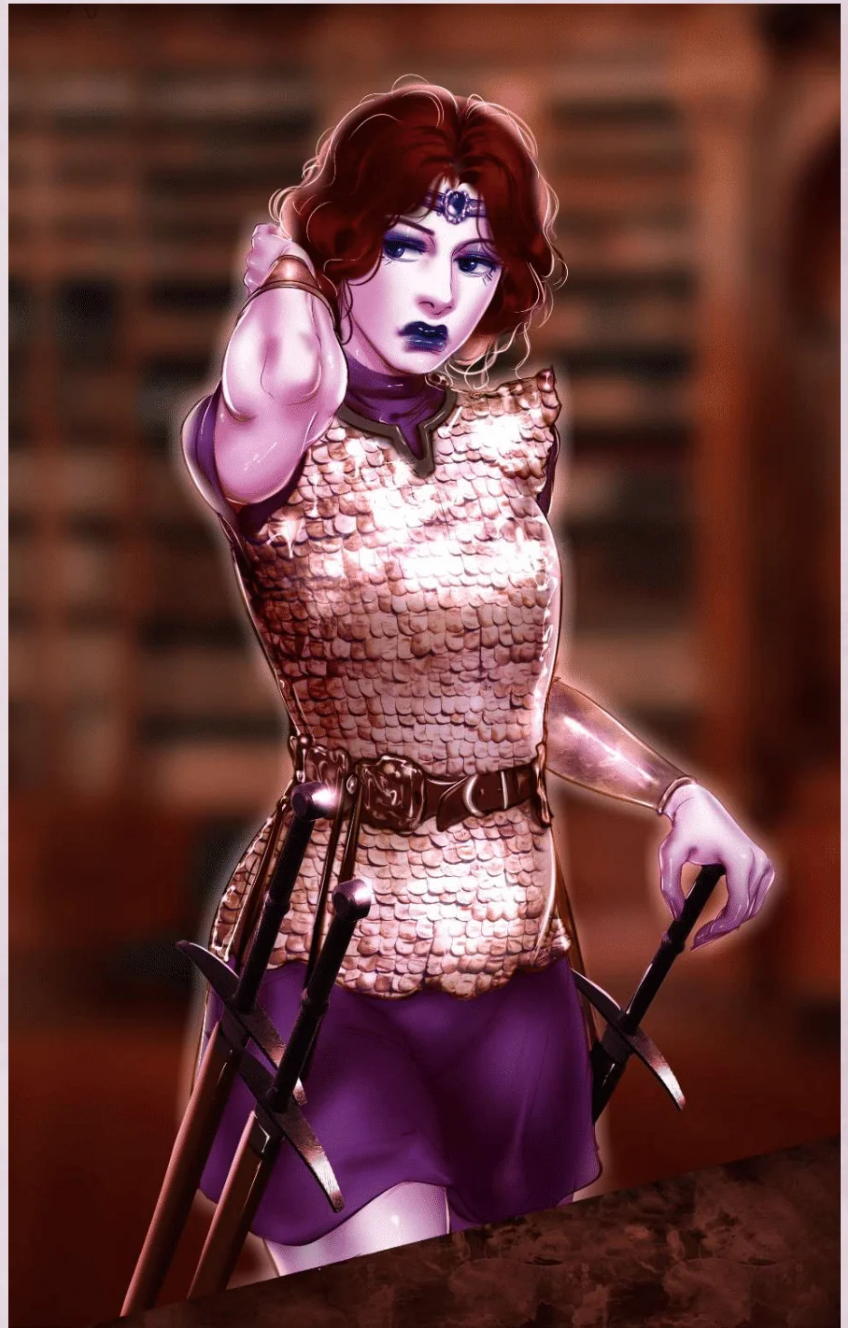
"Yes, you are to go with them." Hekate sat back down in her chair, her jaw set in pride and satisfaction.

"Very well." Circe set about dressing and arming herself. The crowd in the room watched her in silence. There was some measure of awe, like they had all been joined by a tiger.

As his daughter attached a third sword to her belt, Vel roused himself. "So, I ask again. How do we get there? And while you're at it, you might tell us what it is we're supposed to do. How does one destroy a wicked tower?"

Hekate smiled at her daughter with obvious delight and said nothing.

"I can answer this." Day Star crossed one leg over the other and pulled at his trousers so they wouldn't wrinkle. "You will use your magic. We have here a stone chipped from what is now the top of the tower. Cassia, Naevia, and Dellia will touch this and focus on moving to that spot. The other three will hold on and travel with them. No one should see you coming."



“And what are we to do there?” Naevia frowned. She felt a tingling in her fingers. The magic was itching to release.

“We’ve told you this before. You must find Princess Minicia and rescue her. Then you must find the heart of the tower.” Here Day Star frowned. “This was the piece of the puzzle that the queens regent unwound on their own. Their uncle tried all manner of objects, but nothing worked. They have hidden the heart from us, so we’re not sure what or where it is. But you will know it when you see it. And with luck, it will draw you to it. Destroy it, and then magic yourselves far away, for the tower will fall without its heart.”

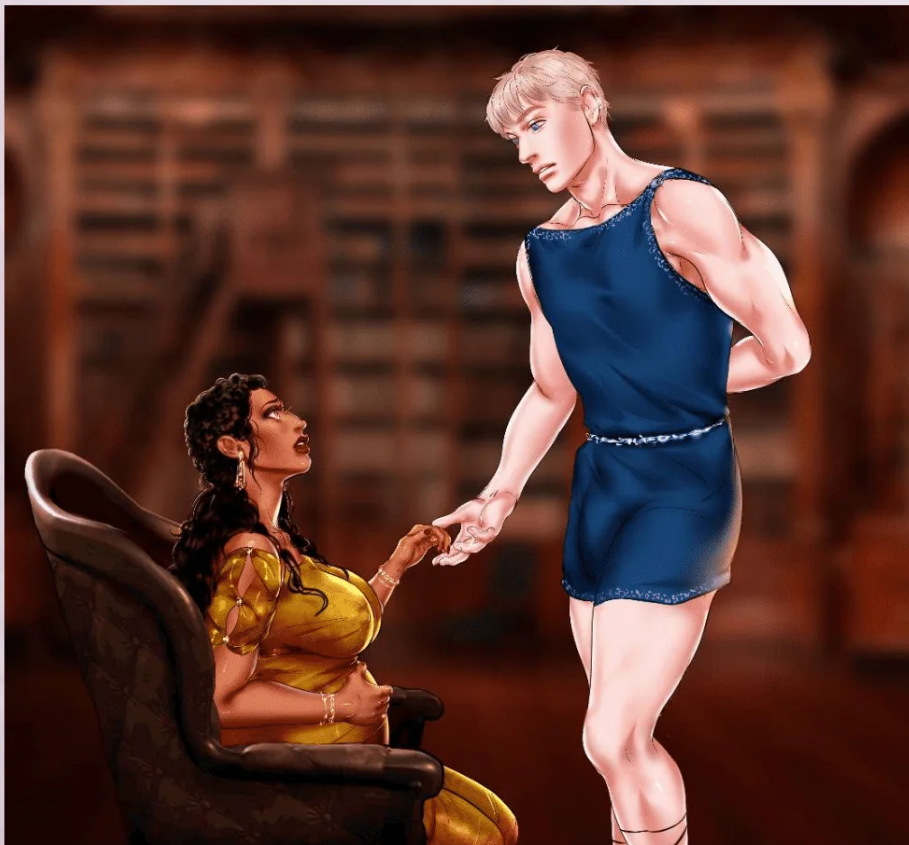
“This is insane.” Dellia looked down at her burgeoning belly, not all that well hidden by the metal dragon scales.

“Insane or not, it is time. Ready yourselves. We send you on your way with –” Hekate was cut off by a hiss, a flash of azure light, and the Lady Norbana falling from the ceiling and landing with a bounce in an unoccupied armchair. “Well, this is a surprise.”

Everyone in the room turned toward Norbana. They could all plainly see that she was also about halfway through a pregnancy.

“What have you done to me?” Norbana’s face was quite pale and her teeth chattered. She tried, unsuccessfully, to burrow her way into the armchair.

“It seems your desires came into alignment with the others.” Hekate cocked her head at the lady, surveying her. “You did this to yourself. There’s nothing to do now but ready yourself. Find some gear and prepare to fight.”



“Fight?” Norbana looked close to fainting. “I’m a lady. I can’t possibly.”

“This looks about the right size.” Brynhild tossed a dragon-scale tunic at the woman. “Put it on.”

“Oh, my.” Norbana looked around the room. She caught sight of Hekate’s imposing figure, and then the body of the hideous Discordia in the corner. “Oh, my ... my ... my ... my.”

“Easy, Brynhild.” Vel walked over and offered Norbana his hand. “Come with me. It’ll be alright.” As she took his hand, Vel thought he’d never told a more bald-faced lie. There was no way things were going to be all right.

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The workmen were quite surprised when Vel and his party dropped out of nothing onto the top of the tower. One man lost his balance on the scaffolding and pitched over the side. His scream faded for a long time until it became a high-pitched squeak and vanished.

“They’re fleeing down the stairs. Shall I stop them?” Circe drew her longest sword and held it angled over her copper hair.

Seeing this, Dellia drew her blade.

“Let them go. They are not soldiers.” Vel watched the flood of men scramble down the narrow opening to the stairs. When they were gone, he walked to the edge of the circle they stood on. The top of the tower had jagged stone walls that were partially finished, about three feet high. There was also timber framework for several internal walls. It was clear that the tower would go higher if construction carried on uninterrupted. He looked over the side and felt his equilibrium wobble. He couldn’t see the palace below. There was a long stretch of empty air, and then churning clouds, coiling around the lower stretch of the tower. “How high are we?”

“Best not to contemplate that, Father.” Circe took hold of Vel’s belt and lifted him away from the edge. “Sorry for moving you, but I didn’t want you to follow that lost man.”



“Thank you.” Vel shivered. It was cold up there, but sweat covered his brow. They were alone at the top. He could see Norbana shivering, her eyes wide. He wasn’t sure if she’d be a help or a hindrance. Although his

mother looked calm and cool, he wondered the same about her. His daughter, on the other hand, had just lifted him off his feet by his belt. A demigod would be quite helpful.

"It's best if we follow those men quickly." Dellia strode to the descending stairs and looked down. "We don't know how long the red capes will take to climb the tower, but it would be best if we were gone before they reached us. The stairway fits two abreast at best. We could get bottlenecked easily."

"Yes, weapons out everyone." Vel put his hand on Norbana's arm and gently kept her dagger in its sheath. "Except you. Best to stay in the back. We wouldn't want you accidentally poking anyone." Accidentally or otherwise, for that matter. He trusted her no more than he trusted Brynhild.

With her bow at the ready, Cassia moved over to her son and reached up onto her tiptoes. He lowered his head and she whispered in his ear, "Maybe it's best if I keep an eye on her."

"Yes." Vel smiled and nodded. They were on the same page.

"Shall I go first then?" Brynhild leaned on her staff casually. "I have protections about me that may surprise anyone we encounter."

"Yes," Dellia, Vel, and Naevia said at once. They all liked the idea of Brynhild with her back to them and not the other way around.

They descended. Brynhild led the way, followed by Dellia and Circe. Vel and Naevia walked side by side after them. Cassia and Norbana took up the rear. The windows were not yet installed at the uppermost levels, so the wind whistled through unfinished walls, open doorways, and half-finished floors. Everything was deserted for nine floors.



On the tenth, Brynhild paused and held up her hand. "Someone comes." She held up her left hand, and a shimmering green circle ignited before her.

Vel looked around them. They stood on the stairs. There were two walls on this floor framed out by heavy timbers. The large round area offered nowhere to hide. There was a patchwork hole in the wood floor some 15 yards to his left. "Are you sure?"

"I see her in the flesh." Brynhild stared through

her emerald shield, her right hand clutching her staff tight. "It is one of the queens. Cesphea, I think." An arrow whistled through the air and shattered against Brynhild's magic. And then another one struck, split, and fell to the stairs. "I can hold them."

“What good would that do?” Vel knew they needed to descend. A stalemate gave the other side victory. But he need not have worried. The next moment there was a pink spark and an explosion that sent Brynhild flying back into the party. They all tumbled off the stairs, recovered their feet, and formed a semi-circle on the open floor. The stiff breeze quickly dispersed the lingering smoke. Vel could hear bow strings bending in tension. He gripped his sword tightly. It seemed a long, sickening eternity passed as he waited, and then crimson-caped men burst from the stairwell.

Cassia and Naevia loosed their arrows. Two men fell, but more raced toward them.

“Shit,” Vel muttered. He raised his sword, deflecting a blow meant for his head. Chaos reigned. Discordia, had she not been a ruin of her former self, would have been proud. An azure flash nearly blinded Vel, and the man in front of him spun through the air and right out one of the unfinished windows. Vel stood slack-jawed. He watched Circe charge two men. With one stroke she decapitated the first, and sank her sword in the chest of the second. Had she learned that in the day she wandered the Earth?



“Mom, look out!” Naevia’s arrow found one of the royal guards as he charged Cassia and Norbana. He sprawled on his belly. She watched Norbana jump down through the hole in the floor and disappear. Probably for the best. Naevia nocked another arrow. Blue flame glowed around the head. She had no idea what her magic was up to, but she figured it wouldn’t be good for the royal guard. She loosed again.

“Fly, you fucking ugly bastard.” Dellia sliced a man on the thigh and defenestrated him with a solid kick. His scream faded quickly among the din in the tower. She wondered what they thought down on the ground with all the falling bodies. A grim smile spread across her face as she pivoted and clobbered a helm with the pommel of her sword.

Several more azure flashes hit Vel’s eyes with a sharp percussion. In front of Brynhild, a man struggled as a magical serpent constricted around him. Vel swung his sword at a charging man and deflected him toward Circe, who made short work of him. They were winning. With any luck this was the bulk of the resistance. Once broken, they could move through the tower freely.

Cesphea stood in the shadowed stairway. She had only a few men left. She took a deep breath, pink flame running the length of her gown and dancing on her copper crown. She readied the bolt in her crossbow and launched herself into the fray. She knew how to crush her adversary and so had already picked the target. Her finger stayed a moment when she saw the blue-tinged abomination cutting through her men. She had no idea who that woman was. It didn’t matter. She aimed at her original target. Cesphea squeezed the trigger and with a twang, her bolt shot across the room to where Cassia nocked an arrow. The bolt was true, aimed right for the heart, but something deflected it at the last second. It caught the duchess in her right shoulder and spun her around.



“Mother!” Vel lurched toward her, but there was still so much chaos between them. An evil red glow crept over the round room. Nothing burned, but he felt everything would turn to ash. He saw the surprised expression on his mother’s face as she tried to catch her balance at the window opening. Crimson bloomed from the wound across the silver of her armor. She reached down and protectively cradled her belly. Vel knew she would fall. She glanced quickly in his direction with a look of desperation, and then she pitched over the side. “Mother!” Vel was still ten feet away when she toppled into open air.

Hearing his call, Circe turned toward her father. She caught sight of her grandmother’s fall and raced across the room. She leapt out of the tower after Cassia and plummeted earthward.

“No!” Vel stumbled. Both his mother and daughter were gone. A great surge of power hit him, and he turned to see Brynhild shielding them from Cesphea’s pink fury. Their magic crackled and clashed in the center of the room.

“Down here.” Naevia grabbed Vel’s hand. She screamed at Dellia, who followed. While the sorceress fought the queen, Vel, Naevia, and Dellia dropped through the hole in the floor and landed hard on the wood decking below. Without thinking, they scrambled to their feet. The stairs were empty here, but they could see light flashing against the walls from above. Quickly, they descended, tears streaking the cheeks of brother and sister.

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It had not been Brynhild's intention to sacrifice herself for the others' escape. It would have been the other way around, but for her burning hatred of Cesphea. The despicable queen had robbed the northern sorceress of everything she held dear. Even now, strengthened as she was by the dust on her left hand, she was a pale shadow of what she would have been. The queens could have freed magic after what had happened with the original tower, but they chose avarice. And for that, Brynhild could not forgive them.

The fight took less time than it takes a pot of water to boil. At no point did Brynhild think she would win. She prayed, however, that her hatred would be enough. That was not to be. With a great push of fiery, pooling energy Cesphea extinguished the sorceress's defense and tossed her to the floor. There, the large woman panted on her hands and knees.

"It was my pride that led us here." Cesphea lifted her hands, pink light blazing from her fingers. "My sister said we should have removed you long ago. But I wanted you to know. I wanted your impotence and humiliation." She brought her hands down and lightning bolts shot from her, knocking Brynhild to her side with a howl and sweeping her across the floor. The sorceress came to rest near one of the window openings. "More the fool am I." She looked at her remaining men. "Go, follow those that escaped and kill or capture them. You are not needed here."



The ranking officer nodded, and the red capes stormed back down the stairs in hot pursuit.

“You are nothing. You are simply ... a shadow of the other half.” Brynhild’s lungs burned and her muscles cramped. She tried to stand but fell back to the floor. She sensed only a small reserve of energy inside her, but decided now was not the time to spend it.

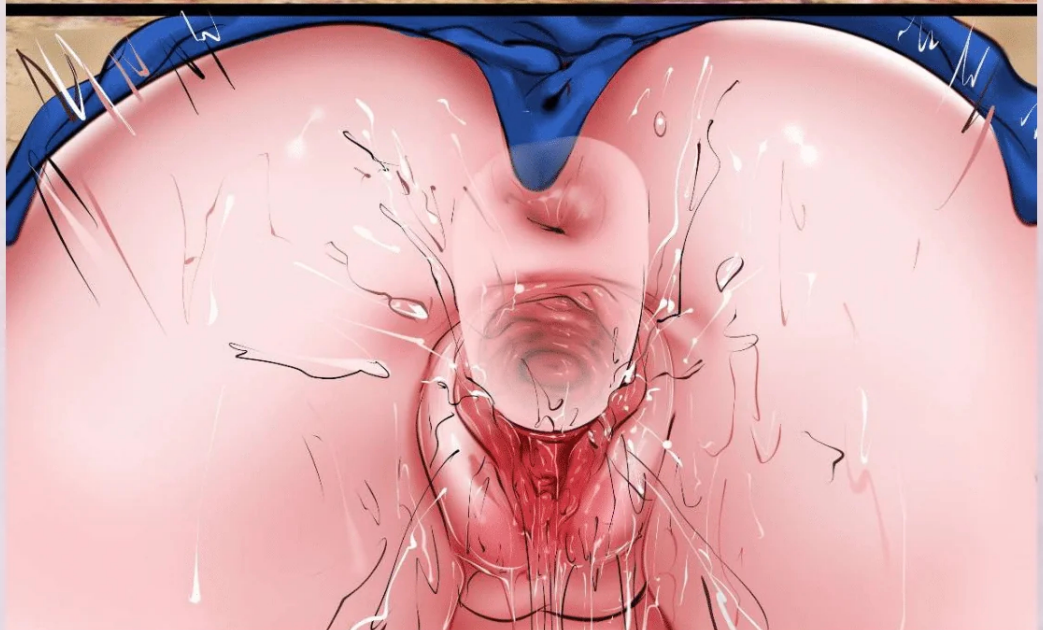
“I exist enough. I have eyes. I will see you and your kind fall into nothingness.” Cesphea tore her gown up the middle and released her cock from its confinement. It sprung out hard and eerily smooth. “Get back up on your hands and knees. Get back up like the bitch you are.” A line of pink fire traced down the back of the armor and clothes Brynhild wore, sundering them in half. Then Cesphea reached down and lifted the woman back onto her hands and knees.

“You are an abomination.” Brynhild’s attire fell to either side. She now had her naked ass in the air. The wind caressed her skin as it whistled through the room. “Your time will come. You are not meant for this ... aaaaahhhhhhhhh.”

Brynhild felt the long cock enter her, robbing her of her breath and salient thought. Her pussy opened itself to the intruder like a traitor.

“Not ... ugh ... a bitch but ... a sow.” Cesphea squatted behind the sorceress, holding tightly to her ass. She pumped without mercy. Usually, she would give a woman some time to adjust, but she cared not for Brynhild’s pleasure. She wanted only to dominate. To show this woman how futile her little insurrection was.

“You will ... uh ... uh ... uh ... not rule.” Brynhild wished very much that the well of pleasure inside her would seep away. Instead, it built. “I have seen ... ah ... ah ... the goddess Hekate. She will not ... ugh ...” The rest of her words traded themselves for whimpering grunts.



Cesphea laughed long and hard. "I have reduced you to a ... ugh ... breeding sow. Maybe I shouldn't dispose ... of you ... quite yet. Would you like to ... carry my child? They say all my ... children are ... cursed." Cesphea howled with laughter and pleasure. The sound of the sorceress's mewling submission was almost too much. The queen regent was going to cum in the northern woman. She would breed her. Who could stop her?

It was time. Brynhild harnessed her last reserves and locked them together with a coiling serpent. It seemed Cesphea hardly noticed, for she kept fucking Brynhild from behind, although her movements were somewhat hampered. The pleasure built for the sorceress, but she knew she would never cum on that monstrous cock. "You have ... uh ... robbed me of all. Let me ... uh ... uh ... return the favor." Brynhild pitched herself sideways out into the open air. The pair fell from the tower, quickly picking up speed.

Even in free fall, with the fading serpent around them, Cesphea's hips bucked into the sorceress. It wasn't until they pierced the clouds that the truth of the situation hit the queen. She tried desperately to port herself safely back into the tower, but Brynhild's serpent held her firm. It was then that the shadow screamed. An earthquake shook the palace when she and Brynhild met the ground.

