

Puppy Mill 2: From the Shadows

t'Sade

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Curious Cabbit Press

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Silence

1

Something disturbed Merrie's oblivion. One moment there was nothing and then in the next, she felt her thoughts began to coalesce into coherence. She couldn't tell when it happened, only that in one sudden, terrifying moment, her consciousness woke up and she was aware. The memories of the event up to her oblivion were hazy—flashes of sex and violence—but then welcoming stillness.

She tried to move her fingers but nothing responded. She concentrated on them, remembering how her digits felt as they wrapped around the handle of a door or caressed across the sheets as her lover knelt between her legs. She remembered having hands, a long time ago.

More memories rose through her thoughts, coming into focus more than anything else. They were of a massive wolf biting down on her wrist, shearing it off with a single exciting bite. A name came with the image, Tabitha. Tabitha had ripped off Merrie's hands and feet, that was why she couldn't move them.

A shudder of lust and fear ran through her body. It coursed along the limits of her limbs, mapping out where each one ended at her wrists and ankles. She was both elated and despaired when she thought about how the wolf had taken her limbs after a brutal chase through the woods. Then, as more memories poured in of the years after she was amputated, more shivers of desire rippled through her body. Flashes of violence, starvation, and tears flashed across her mind.

She focused on the sensations of her own body. She tried to move her shoulder, that part she still had left, but it responded sluggishly,

painfully. The movement brought her fresh smells, rotting plants and the earthy smell of moss.

Taking a deep breath, she was surprised how much it hurt to move. She had to concentrate on the muscles drawing cold air into her lungs and then even more to exhale. It tasted of alcohol in the back of her throat and she remembered how her magic tasted like that when she was using it. She smiled at the memory, she had magic. Powers beyond anything she had ever expected when she was growing up.

A smile took almost all of her energy. More of her body was coming back. It felt like she was still pulling herself together, drawing her essence together with nothing more than her will and desire.

She tried to open her eyes but couldn't. After a few more attempts, she gave up and focused on dragging her body through the leaves and along the ground. The cool earth felt good against her skin and she used the sensations to anchor herself away from oblivion and solidify her thoughts. The movements scraped against her skin, revealing sensitive breasts, hips, and nipples.

After an eternity of inching her limbs around, she focused on listening to her surroundings. A cool wind blew across her body, tickling her skin. It whistled through branches above her and rippled the leaves that surrounded her. The smell of moisture tickled her nose and she was thirsty.

She reached out for it, not knowing where it was, but all she felt was moist earth grinding against her breasts and branches scratching her outstretched limbs. She shivered at the sensations, enjoying the pain that mapped out the limits of her own physical form.

A heavy ring pressed against her throat. It took no effort to remember that: it was her collar. The adamantite ring was sealed to her very soul by terrible magics. She remembered someone telling her only a god could break it.

A god tried. A goddess actually, Merrie couldn't forget Lemetri's beautiful face as she shoved her hand into Merrie's chest and wrapped around her heart. The goddess stole her breath away when her delicate fingers tightened around the beating organ.

Merrie froze, the pain bringing her consciousness further away from the oblivion. She strained her ears, listening for her heart.

Silence.

No heart beat in her chest, no thump coursed through her veins. She remembered listening to it, her fear should have caused it to beat rapidly against her ribs, but there was nothing. No beat, no rhythm, nothing besides terrifying silence.

Fear rose, this time it was unwelcomed and terrifying. She brought one of her severed arms to her chest and pressed it against her large breast. Raw muscles protested against her movement, but she ground down until she could feel the hardness of her ribs.

Her heart refused to beat.

Whimpering, she focused on opening her eyes again. Despite the ease that the rest of her body returned to life, her vision took longer. She used the smooth end of her arm to force the eyelid opened and then cried out at the brilliance around her. Everything was hazy and shades of darkness, but the light streaming through the leaves above her were painful.

She cried and pulled her arm away. The darkness of her eye closing was a welcomed relief, but the seal had been broken. This time, when she steeled herself and opened her eye again. The brilliance blinded her, but she forced herself to keep it open until the glare faded.

Merrie was in a bowl of the earth, surrounded by rotted leaves and dead trees. A spring bubbled up from a pile of rocks about two or three meters away before bubbling away along a rocky stream. The water splashed off the rocks and splattered into the earth around her. She could feel splatters caressing her skin.

As she listened for her heart, she lifted one limb up to look at it. When she saw nothing more than coiled darkness and shifting shadows, she gasped. Her pale arm was no longer there, only the shape of it being held together by some force. It looked like her body or, more accurately, like the shadow of her body.

Merrie lifted and turned her arm slowly, staring at the dark, boiling form with wonder. The rest of her was the same, the shadow of her former self.

Seeing herself as nothing more than animated darkness made her uncomfortable. She let her arm drop out of sight and turned her

head to stare at the stream. It was better than looking at the light above her or her own disturbing shape. The stream appeared to be like every other stream she had seen before, though she couldn't remember much of her time before she was kidnapped, raped, and amputated by a massive thriban named Bass. He had done it at the Paladin Puppy Mill, where he and Tabitha and the others lived.

Then she noticed the plants on both sides of the water. They were wilted and sagging, as if the life had been leached out of them by the water that streamed past. Even the trees were beginning to droop around it. Whatever was killing them was recent, maybe a day or three she guessed.

Merrie never really grew plants but she had flower gardens by her own house. She remembered how they died during a drought, when she couldn't get enough water in their planters with her long days. The plants on both sides of the stream were doing the same thing, but there was water, they should have been thriving.

Blinking, she glanced up. The haze around the light was beginning to fade and she could make out burning points of light on a field of darkness. They were stars.

Merrie frowned in confusion. Stars were never that bright, they were never so painfully brilliant that it hurt her eyes. She blinked and focused on them, struggling as if she was staring into the sun itself. It took her a long time to focus on the field of sparkles above her, a familiar sight of stars on a moonless night.

She laughed to herself, though it hurt. She could see in the dark. She remembered how the shadow magic had seeped into her mind and body of over the years. She was able to see in the dark for a long time. Then, whenever that was, the stars were enough to see by but not to blind. She blinked past her tears and looked around.

Despite getting used to the starlight, it was getting brighter around her. She peeled her head from the moist ground and lifted it. Her aching muscles strained to keep it up as she inspected her surroundings. She found the new source of the brightness, light streaming through the trees and the underbrush. It was warm and brilliant, filled with colors besides shades of gray.

It also burned. Not only was it too bright for her eyes but she could feel the warmth against her skin like a brand. Heat beat against her and the light hadn't even touched her skin. She

whimpered and tried to move, but her body refused to slid fast enough as strands of morning light speared through the underbrush and began to paint the ground around her.

Merrie cried out as the light grew too much and it blinded her. There was no place she could look that didn't hurt. As more sunlight speared through her little shelter, the world became a haze of brilliance and heat. She sobbed and ducked her head, smashing it against the earth and digging into it. It was too bright to do anything.

The heat continued to rise until it felt like it had set her on fire. She cried out into the mud, screaming through her raw throat as she fought to move against the light.

A searing pain cut through her senses, someone was tearing her arm off. She flailed it around, thumping it against the ground painfully but the burning only increased.

Sobbing, she lifted her head and peered through the blinding haze at her limb.

It wasn't someone ripping her limb off again, it was sunlight. A beam of light had finally pierced through the canopy of the trees and came down across her shadowy limb. The black mist burned away in the light, boiling away into nothingness as the light easily pierced clear through her.

It only took a second, but the moment in time drew itself out until it was in slow motion, every searing iota of pain tearing through her senses as the sunlight burned away the end of her arm and continued up, igniting the black shadows of her form until it reached her shoulder.

Merrie screamed. She couldn't help it, it was the only thing she could do against the agony that tore her apart.

More sunlight speared through the canopy, catching her thigh, stomach, and chest. Each time it burned away her shadowy body. More flames ignited across her skin, peeling back the darkness like mist burning away with the sun. Heat and black flames consumed her as she was immolated in the brilliance of the morning light.

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Nesting

2

It happened again and again. Merrie would somehow wake up to silence and have to pull her body together again. By the time she started to regain her senses, the sunlight came and set her on fire.

It was torture, slow and inescapable. Every time she woke up to the silence in her chest, she knew she would be immolated before she could rescue herself. The silence became a terrible dread, a fear and loathing for whatever kept her coming back to life only to suffer again.

Time slowly intruded on her mind. When she first awoke, it was a moonless night. Later, she watched the moon rise as a brilliant shard of light that she couldn't suffer to look at. She knew that she would grow accustomed to the stars, but the moon refused to be anything other than painfully blinding. At least it didn't burn her skin away.

She also saw that she had limited time. The trees and plants were still rotting away, the leaves falling to the ground as they died. The poisoned stream continued to rot away at the forest. It also removed more of her protections from the sunlight; it speared her body faster every morning. Soon, she wouldn't have much time to do anything besides die if she didn't do something.

After a few cycles of pity and death, Merrie realized she couldn't give up. She learned how to coalesce her body faster. Her waking wasn't just regaining consciousness, it was also pulling her body together from the darkness around the trees to regain her shadowy form. The anchor was her collar, the shadows naturally gathered around it as soon as the evening light faded.

Punctuated by the rhythm of rebirth and immolation, Merrie began to change her environment. She spent an entire day pushing leaves into the pit. She took another day to drag a branch over to her waking spot before she burned away. Day after day, she created a nest to protect herself from the shadows.

Each time, she worked in silence. She wanted to hear her heart beat in her chest, to feel it straining as she shoved a pile of leaves with her face and breasts back into the pit. The stillness hung around her, a dread that did nothing to darken her life.

She remembered her master, Kine. He used to finger her when they had a quiet time together. It was the same rhythm: beat, beat, beat, silence. It was his favorite part of a song that she couldn't remember anymore. Just three notes and silence, but he used it when he fingered against her, when he drummed against the table in impatience, and that rhythm kept with her long after he was gone. She remembered how the collar had thumped against her chest with the same beat before the Lord of Shadows had consumed her.

Memories of Kine's death haunted her. It kept playing over and over in her head, the agonizing emotions and sensations of having her heart and spirit ripped out clawing through her consciousness. She cried out silently as she pushed herself to create a shelter. She felt the tears on her cheeks splashing down against her skin and along the ground. The trail behind her was always rotted away from her sorrow.

It was easier to face his death when it was sealed away in a pit of despair. But her fight with Lemetri had cracked open the mental barriers that prevented her from experiencing the full onslaught of the memories.

She couldn't stop. Tears continued to rot the ground as she forced herself to push more leaves and branches into her shelter.

Just when she had enough leaves and branches to shield herself from the day, she lost a day just thinking about her former master. She missed him. She craved the times when she teased him and when he caged her. The fighting, the fucking, the loving. It was supposed to be the end for her, a peaceful life where she finally had everything she wanted.

It was a new despair that held her down as she just watched the sun rise up. She didn't even cry out when the light burned away her body, sending her into a torment of light before the darkness took her.

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Heartbeat

3

Merrie woke up crying. Hot tears ran down her shadowy cheeks as she stared up at the light. She felt her body still gathering for the night, the darkness around her pulling together to give her shape and form. It would be an hour before her ears worked again or she could feel anything. Until then, she had nothing to do but wait.

She missed Kine so much. She relived his death, dredging it up from her memories and playing it in her mind with a sick fascination. He crawled toward her as the Lord of Shadow pulled him back. He died next to his other love, Rimmy. Both spirits had escaped, she knew that, but the Lord of Shadows had not returned either spirits to Merrie.

The rawness of the events gnawed at her senses. She couldn't do anything but listen to them as shadowed darkened and gathered into a solid shape. She listened to the silence and let the tears splash down.

Merrie thought about Kine's rhythm, the triple beat that echoed in her life. If she couldn't have the beat of her own heart, maybe she could replace it. If she couldn't have a heart in her chest, maybe she could feel that instead. Focusing her attention on her being, she thought about the burnt-out wound where Lemetri had ripped out her heart. It was empty and aching, it only needed something to replace it. Even if it was just something beating inside her body, a clock.

Focusing on it, Merrie tried to gather the darkness into the hole in her chest. However, the image faltered and she felt the gaping wound once again. The goddess' flames had burnt her heart. She had seared it from her mind and sense of being as much as her body.

Like her missing limbs, the ripped-out heart had been torn out from her very spirit. No magic, short of a god's, would ever restore it and even then, it might not be possible.

More tears splashed on her cheeks. She pressed both severed arms against her breast and held on to the silence. She wanted something there, something to beat three time and pause, just like Kine had done for her.

She took a deep breath and tried again, trying to form her thoughts into a spell to shape the shadows around her. But, as the calligraphy of a shadow spell began to swirl across her mind, she lost her concentration and it crumbled with a shiver of power.

After another hour of trying, she gave up. With a sob, she let her limbs grow slack and leaned against the pile of leaves. She knew she could burrow underneath them, that would shield her from the light, but the pointlessness of her torture stilled her body. Why was she trying to survive? Why was she trying to do anything? The sun would come and burn her away, there was nothing she could do about it.

Only a god could stop her agony.

She froze.

The Lord of Shadows was the Shadows Realm's equivalent of a god. Maybe the being of utter darkness would be able to give her a heart.

Inspired, she reached out for it. Her mental probing pressed against the veil between her world and the darkness. It resisted her, though the veil was thin around her. She pushed harder, driving her will and fear into it.

The barrier between the worlds strained as she shoved through. Memories of stepping across rose inside her and she used them to remember the twist of sensation whenever she crossed over. She could feel the icy coldness of the Shadows seeping around her along with the ether taste in the back of her mouth.

Merrie pushed harder, ripping the veil with the force of her desire.

Darkness poured around her, instantly corroding the branches and leaves around her. She could feel the pile shuddering as it crumbled over her body.

Desperate, she reached through the darkness and called to the Lord. (Help me, please!)

The powerful intelligence responded almost immediately. Alien thoughts poured into her head with the force of a hammer, the overwhelming calligraphy and disturbing images. Both were filled with too much details than any mortal could ever comprehend: dimensions beyond height, width, and depth; calligraphy that extended beyond a flat page in a blossom of energy; and emotions that were born of a creature that had never had a flesh and blood body. The images and thoughts were spells and native to the Lord of Shadows, every thought manipulated the darkness around it.

Now it was inside her head. The Lord's presence dragged her down and dredged up all the horrors of Kine's death. Despair flooded through her as she struggled against the overwhelming force inside her mind. It was difficult to keep her own sanity with the dark powers inside her head.

Desperate, she reached out for her collar. The black metal felt icy against the smooth end of her wrist. Touching it brought a sense of calm as she managed to focus on it, squeezing her consciousness into a small part protected by the terrible magic of the collar.

(Desire?) The Lord of Shadow's thoughts were powerful, a punch in her mind that threatened to rip her sanity apart. The blossom of complex calligraphy burned her thoughts, drawing her focus into it and threatened to consume her.

She mentally clutched to her collar. Her physical body responded by dragging through the branches, drawing the sharp twigs against her face and chest. She tried to image her heart again, the beating in her chest. She craved to feel a rhythm inside her.

The Lord of Darkness drew its attention on her mental picture. She felt it forcing her attention on it. Details that she had forgotten in the haze of the years that had passed and the oblivion of her resurrection. Each one was brought to her forethoughts, rolled around in the mental fingers of the Lord, and then shredded by the power of the Lord as it consumed them. As soon as it finished one, it pulled another related thought out and did the same.

When she realized how through and quickly the Lord was going through her memories, she panicked. She couldn't afford to lose her

life. She tried to pull her mind away, but the mental claws of the Lord has caught on her brain and held it in place.

She pawed at the ground, digging her limbs through the leaves and branches. A thin wail escaped her throat but she couldn't escape the darkness that burned away her memories.

Just as the Lord pulled for the raw memory of her master's death, it stopped. It pulled back for a moment, its aliens thoughts scraping across her consciousness.

Merrie whimpered, helpless to do anything.

The Lord's thoughts slammed into her, spreading across her mind in an explosion of black calligraphy and inhuman images. **(Shadow Bringer, light kills you.)**

She whimpered, crouched on the ground from the onslaught in her mind.

(The light burns, your body melts.)

(It hurts,) she managed to project, her thoughts only a ripple in the expanse of the alien creature. (I can't keep my body together.)

(You living. Flesh. Bones. Blood. All missing in shadows.) Images came flooding through her mind, of her own naked body before she had died. Details came as the Lord of Shadows visualized stripping away her skin and muscle. Her blood blossomed in a cloud of crimson before it became black and pitched and evaporated. Her arteries and veins remained in an empty shell, melting away along with her blood. Even her skeleton, the wrists and ankles polished smooth from Tabitha's cropping, remained for only a moment before they too evaporated into obsidian mist. Soon, the only thing left was a shifting cloud of darkness shaped like her body.

(You cannot remained together without.)

Tears ran down Merrie's cheeks. She had seen it already, when the sun melted away her thin skin and evaporated the dark mist within.

The Lord of Shadows reached out for her, not with its mind but with its physical claws. The sharp points pierced the veil between the worlds and directly into her heart. It clamped down to cup the empty cavern where her heart used to be. Ice poured in from another dimension, another plane. It gathered inside her, spreading sharp agonies through her body.

Merrie cried out but no sound escape her throat. Her body shook violently as she pawed at her own fragile self, plunging her limbs into the shifting shadows and melting together before reforming into the cropped bitch that she had become.

(Shadow Bringer needs heart.)

An explosion of black calligraphy raced across her mind, burning away apart of her very being as it poured energy into the space. She felt it weighing her down, pulling her shadowy form around it as the energies solidified into something more solid than any other part of her body.

When the Lord of Shadows pulled its claws back through the barrier between worlds, the weight of whatever it had created suddenly bore down on her.

She cried out as she was pinned to the ground by the first solid thing connected to her shadowy body. The crushing pressure was nothing compared to branches and leaves that she had moved but it was somehow connected to her. The connection made it heavier, a pressure that was unlike anything else she had experience.

Thump.

Merrie froze as her body shook. The vibrations coursed along her body and her shadowy form responded by solidifying. A paper-thin shell formed along her body, draping it in the first hints of something resembling flesh.

With a new skin came a burning as her nerves brought waves of burning agony. She pulled back her head and screamed as loudly as she could but no noise came out of her unformed vocal cords. She cried out, the black tears that ran down her face suddenly splashing on skin. She could feel each black droplet as a brand against her raw and reformed sense of touch.

Thump.

The fresh tears froze on her face as the world grew icy and dark. More trees withered and peeled away, crumbling in an instance as the Lord of Shadows loomed over her, blotting out the sky with its form. Massive wings that would never fly in the sun spread out and more of the forest died around it.

Inside her body, tendrils of darkness snaked their way through her form. The second beat surged them forward as they plunged

into all of her extremities. The rush of black blood sounded from deep inside as more veins and arteries were grown inside her.

Thump.

The suffocating ice of its presence bore down on her. It squeezed her chest as the calligraphy and alien thoughts scraped across her mind. Her body solidified with the raw presence of darkness, but it was misshapen and twisted, formed by her random thoughts instead of her identity.

Merrie forced her thoughts into place, imagining what her body looked like before she was killed. She didn't have hands and feet anymore, but she didn't remember a time when she did. Those memories were lost when she bonded the first time.

Her body shifted around her visualization. This time, the shadows were strong but sluggish, they felt like they were growing more solid than before. Her skin still felt paper-thin but it held the shape like drying clay.

Elated, Merrie shaped out her body just as she remembered: smooth limbs, long hair, and even her face that she saw countless times in a mirror. As she did, her body mimicked her imagination and solidified, maybe for the last time.

Inside her new shape, bones grew. The heavy weights felt like crystal as they stretched into each limb and between the network of veins and arteries. They sealed into place, dragging her down but also giving her rigidity that she didn't think was possible.

The Lord of Shadow's thoughts scraped across her mind one last time before it withdrew. It left behind darkness in her mind and a cobweb of intricate calligraphy that refused to fade. They were spells, she knew that, but they were far too powerful for her to understand while she struggled to keep her body safe.

(You are not done,) came the drifting thought as the Lord withdrew back to the Shadows.

Merrie sobbed as the veil between the worlds sealed up. There was fear and comfort with the Lord's presence, but with it gone, she felt empty.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Merrie jerked. She knew that rhythm but she had never felt it deep in her chest. She held her breath for it to continue. It did after a second.

Thump. Thump. Thump. Silence.

Fresh tears dripped down her face. Her heart, or whatever was in her chest, had given her shape. She felt more solid with it, anchored. It was also icy, colder than anything else she had experience before in her life.

Gulping, Merrie wondered if she would be able to survive the sun. She doubted it, but this time she was inspired to roll over on the pile of rotted leaves that somehow survived the Lord of Shadows. Above her, there was nothing left to protect her; the alien being had focused its withering aura around her and stripped away all of her shelter from the killing light.

She used her severed limbs to dig into the pile, burrowing deep and rolling over until the rotted leaves and branches covered her completely.

The air around her quickly grew cold but she didn't mind. The hoarfrost that formed on her body felt good against the heat from the rising sun. She could feel the sun rising. This time, the leaves and branches shielded her and she felt safe in the darkness.

The tears froze on her cheeks as she closed her eyes and let her world drift away until there was nothing but the triple best of her heart pulsing through her black veins and her blacker heart.

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Discovery

4

Merrie felt their presence before she heard them. It was a caress of magic against her senses, like feathers trailing along her skin. But she didn't have skin to caress, only a solid mass of shadows that could barely handle the heat of the day. She remembered the touch of different magic, from crystal-like arcane patterns to the flowing pulse of holy magic.

She shivered at the memories. The paladins and Bass both used holy magic. It was bright and clean, filled with life and hope. For a creature of shadows, it also meant death. Even the aura of power felt like the sun, she didn't think she could survive the onslaught of those energies any more than the morning sunrise.

Freezing, she listened for her pulse. When she heard the triple beat, she let out a sigh of relief. Her heart had not disappeared nor it was her imagination. The Lord of Shadows wouldn't have given it to her if it was a temporary measure, but she didn't know what the alien being wanted from her. Nor did she know if it would grant her enough strength to survive the sunlight or simply keep her body together long enough for rescue.

A crunch of dead leaves drew her attention back. The ground vibrated with their footsteps as they came closer.

"Are you sure this is the place, sire?" The first one spoke in a deadpanned voice, somehow giving the impression of being both attentive and bored at the same time.

"Yes, I saw the petition with my own eyes. Halfway between road markers 1903 and 1904. Two hundred meters from a rock cracked in half to where three trees were blazed and painted with a white 'L'. That seems pretty specific, don't you think." The second speaker

had a deeper, richer voice. Memories of it brought a ripple of pleasure coursing through Merrie's new body.

"Of course, sire, but what is here?"

"They didn't say."

"Then why are we here?"

"Because..." the second man's voice trailed off. "My spies say that there was a battle here and there is still a presence of dark magic here."

"Are you sure?"

There was a loud snap. "Large circle of dead trees not give it away? Take a deep breath. You can smell that? That's ether, Boz, shadow magic. You should be used to it. You've smelled her."

"In my defense, sire, most of the time when I was cleaning up after you, there was also the smell of sex also. It is hard to tell the two apart." Boz's voice never rose above a steady pace.

Merrie couldn't help but smile. She listened to the two men and tried to identify the third. She shifted slightly and rotted leaves cascaded around her. When she piled them up, they were full but either time or the shadows had rotted them into powder. The dust coursed along her skin and settled underneath her. She felt the heat of the day above them and winced in fear that sunlight would touch her and burn her away.

"It could be dangerous," said Boz.

"And that is why we have Loyal Alestri here. And if something defeats her, we also have Eolis and the duke. Don't worry, Boz, it won't take long."

"Yes, sire."

There was a pause. "Do you want to go back to the wagon?"

"Please, these leaves are doing nothing for my shoes."

The second man laughed. "Go on."

Boz turned and walked away.

"Oh, and Boz?"

"Yes, sire?"

"Thank you."

"For?"

"You came this far. I know you liked her too and I appreciate the gesture."

“I live to serve you, sire. And you’re welcome. Do you wish for me to summon the Loyal?”

“No,” said the second man, “her idea of looking around is blowing up everything and inspecting the debris for what survived.”

“I will not convey that message. Be safe.”

Boz walked away, the ground barely vibrating with his movements. Merrie wanted to follow him, but there were two others close to her. She tried to concentrate on them, focusing all of her attention. Her senses tugged at her mind as if they could pull away from her. She wondered if there was a spell to do so but didn’t think she had the energy to try.

“You really are hard on him, Claston,” said a third voice. Unlike Boz’s and Claston’s, the third one was a deep rumble that caressed against Merrie’s senses. It shook the ground and matched the heavy footsteps that took a step closer. “Even as a prince, you should treat your man better.”

Claston grunted, his lighter footsteps crunching on the leaves. They went a few steps and stopped.

“Claston?”

“Eolis...? Doesn’t this look strange to you? This dead section isn’t a circle, it’s heading that way.”

“Yes, it seems to be following the water from that stream.”

“Probably poisoned then, or touched by shadows. It sure smells like it. Come on.”

Claston’s footsteps headed closer to Merrie.

“And if there is a creature of shadows laying in wait?” asked Eolis, his voice a low rumble.

“Then I will scream really loudly and the Loyal will blow up everything.”

Eolis groaned. “You know I can’t tell when you are faking it, but when you say things like that, it makes me worry that I’m wrong about you.”

“Faking what?”

“Being an idiot.”

There was another pause.

“I know you aren’t,” said Eolis, “No one in charge of... what you control could ever be an idiot. Your mother trusted you because you proved yourself. Which makes you not a fool or a dandy. You put on

a good face, but there is something about your eyes that tells me you are a lot smarter than you pretend to be.”

Claston chuckled. “The duke said you were a hard person to deceive, Eolis. Have no fear, your boss is not a fool or a dandy. I have no interests on the throne until both of my sisters are done with it. And hopefully they will have kids of their own and I will just be the foolish uncle helping from the sidelines.”

“Thank you, sire.”

“Oh, don’t you start that on me. Bad enough I hear it from Boz. Come on, I want to figure out where this water is coming from.” Claston’s boots crunched on dry twigs and sticks. He came closer, the ground shaking more with his footsteps.

He stopped. “Well, here it is. Fuck, it’s just a little water coming out.”

“What were you expecting?”

“I don’t know. The Church of Lemetri has been really pushing to stake a claim on this place. Their requests are very specific including water, air, and stone rights. Not to mention a petition to create a holy spot. That seems wrong, being that all of them are only a glimmer of the power that they had before last year.”

Merrie tensed at the hated name. It was Lemetri who killed her. Merrie still remembered the brilliance of the beautiful woman before she was torn apart by the Lords of Shadows.

“I was hoping there was something more. Reports said that her dog died here. The big black one that she kept?”

“Tamin?”

Merrie smiled at the name. She remembered Tamin. They were talking about her, not Lemetri.

“Yeah!” Claston sighed. “That dog scared the fuck out of me. From what I heard, he killed thirty men around here, just so Merrie could escape.”

Swords pierced Tamin’s back as the other paladins joined the fight. Holy flames burned him from the inside and his guts ignited into flames. Gauntlets grabbed his body and threw him off Gillette. He got a single look of Gillette’s face and felt joy at the sight of the injury. There was nothing but a bloody hole where the enemy’s eye was. The edges of the shattered bone were black and corroded.

Gillette staggered to his feet, fueled by the holy magic that glowed from inside his body. The light came from his remaining bones, glowing from the inside. Injuries sealed over and healed in a flash. The tears in his armor sealed up and flowed over each other until they were once again solid metal. As the visor repaired, Tamin watched desperately to see if the eye would heal, but the magic couldn't touch the blackened bones. And, when the armor had completely repaired itself, Gillette's ruined face remained as bloody as when Tamin tore it off.

Tamin fought with all his might, his body burning away with every moment. He tried to bite, but there was nothing to sink his teeth into. He couldn't get off his back, not with the men holding him down and the swords punching into his body over and over again.

The last thing he saw with Gillette's scythe as it sliced him open from belly to the top of his skull, slicing through bone and skull in a flash of brilliance.

The painful memory ripped through Merrie. She fought back a sob. The leaves over her shifted with her movement and she froze.

"Did you hear that?" asked Claston. He jumped over something and came closer, his footsteps crunching through the leaves. The crumbled pile began to slide off her and she was blinded by the sunlight that came pouring it.

"Claston, don't—"

A beam of sunlight caught Merrie's chest. The brilliance burned into her fresh skin which crinkled and blackened. Agony burned along the wounds as the gaping hole in her chest ignited into black flames. She screamed, she couldn't help it and tried to burrow deeper into the leaves.

There was an explosion and a burst of energy. The concussion wave blasted the leaves away from her, stripping the ground completely bare of her shelter against the sunlight.

Brilliance burned her, searing through her shadowy flesh as the sunlight cut through her body.

Merrie screamed louder, thrashing violently as she tried to hold her body together. Her skin was on fire, peeling away in waves of piercing agony.

"Oh, fuck me! That's Merrie!" yelled Claston as he stood there, holding a branch.

A woman in green armor surged forward, her large spear coming in an overhead swing. Merrie remembered her from before, Loyal Alestri. They had fought once, destroying a large chunk of the city before the fight ended. The spear glowed brilliantly with killing spells as it left a streak with its movement.

And then there was a large man in front of her. No, a thriban, a gray-skinned humanoid with broad shoulders and wearing a white shirt with a tie.

The Loyal's blade stopped centimeters from his back. The only part Merrie could see was the glowing weapon poised above his shoulders. Beyond it was the sunlight that bore down on her.

She screamed and tried to burrow into the ground.

Cloth draped over her. It was Eolis' suit jacket. The heavy material smelled of sweat and musk, but it shielded her from the light. The only bits that leaked through were the tiny pinpricks through the gaps in the fabric. Even those burned but it was pricks of pain instead of waves of agony.

Eolis scooped her up. "It must be the light, it's burning her!" His voice was a roar as he turned to shield her from the light with his body.

"Fuck," snapped Claston. "The wagon! In with the taxes, there isn't any light there."

Lost in agony, Merrie could only clutch to Eolis' body as she tried to keep her body together. Every pulse of agony, from the simmering sunlight fire, threatened to pull her apart and it took all of her will to keep herself bound to the black veins inside her body, the triple-beating heart, and the collar that thumped against her chest.

Loving Pain

5

When Merrie woke again, she was on a bed of blankets. Her surroundings smelled faintly of sex underneath the cleaning solutions and Eolis' musk. There was another smell, another man. A name came up, Zeob. Merrie remembered Zeob as a slender, submissive male who traveled with Eolis and did all the cooking and cleaning.

She shivered and opened her eyes. It was blissfully dark around her. She was underneath a heavy comforter, the weight pinned her down against the mattress with a steady pressure that made her feel safe. She twisted around slightly before using the smooth end of her arm to lift it slightly.

Outside of the blankets, it was also dark. She blinked and stared at the room around her, inspecting it before she dared to peek out.

It was Eolis' room. She had seen it before but it had been years since she was inside it. She remembered the tapestry on the wall and how it smelled. There were new decorations, expected after so many years, but it gave her some comfort to be somewhere familiar. She took a deep breath and scooted out from underneath the blanket. Her ears caught on the way out and she felt delight growing at the pressure. She still had her dog-like ears. Curious, she reached down and stroked along her body toward her tail. When she felt solid skin, the delight grew despite the discomfort of raw nerves unused to being touched. The joy and discomfort peaked when she caressed her tail, stroking the silky strands with the edge of her arm.

She had a body, a solid one. She ran her wrist along it, exploring her skin as if it was her first. It felt smooth and solid, unlike the

shadowy form that she pulled together. It was just like she remembered, except for a pucker of a scar above her heart from where Lemetri had burned it out of her chest.

Merrie held one hand against her scar as she continued to explore her body. She had forgotten her sense of touch and it took a moment for the sensations to come back to her; it felt like she was touching and being touched by a stranger at the same time.

Underneath her skin, her shadowy form was still there. Part of her concentration remained on it, keeping it in place to prevent it from leaking away. She was keeping herself together in spite of her skin. Curiously, she wondered if her new flesh could contain her.

Taking a deep breath, she relaxed her concentration. It felt like letting her bladder go free. The darkness inside her swelled and boiled, pressing against the insides of her skin with only a whisper of pressure. She closed her eyes and concentrated on her flesh, stroking around for any sign that she was losing her form. Her arm caressed against hard nipples and soft breasts that still felt like a stranger's. She trailed her hand down to between her legs, along the smooth mound of her sex and against the raw opening of her sex.

At the flash of pleasure and pain, she let out her breath. It felt good to touch herself, to feel her body responding once again.

A snore startled her.

She jerked and lost control of her concentration. Her shadowy body blossomed inside her skin but it held her. She panted for a moment, afraid that she was about to dissolve, but when her new body held, she let out a long whimper of relief.

"M-Mer?" A man sat up in the chair next to the bed. His dark hair was plastered against the side of his face but Merrie recognized him immediately. It was Borias, the mage and healer at the Puppy Mill. He was also a lover and a friend, though she had only seen him briefly before her fight with the goddess.

Letting out a shuddering gasp, Merrie reached out for him. The ends of her wrists couldn't grab him but she had a sudden and desperate need to touch him. Then she remembered how much she hurt touching anything and dropped her hand, her ears flattening against her head. A whine rose in her throat and she pulled back.

Magic sparked against her senses as he cast a spell. His eyes began to glow.

She flinched but then realized it was just her seeing his magic, not producing a killing light.

He turned to look at her. His smile stretched across his face as he slipped off the bed and sank to his need. "It be you, right?"

Merrie nodded and whimpered softly.

"Be thanking everyone." Borias rose up and reached out for her.

Merrie flinched.

He pulled his hand back. "Sorry, I just be excited. They found you yesterday. I be healing part of you but your body is fragile. It be just a wrapper around your... darkness."

Merrie rested her severed arm against the pucker of her wound.

Borias' eyes followed it. "I cannot be healing that. Divine magic be burning you and no mortal magic could be healing that. Are you solid?"

It would have been a strange question for anyone else. Merrie prodded her body for a second and then nodded. The movement made her dizzy and she had to lean back against the headboard for support.

Borias gasped and held out his hand. "You be okay?"

Merrie let out a gasp and nodded. She didn't think she could speak. Compared to pulling herself together every night just to burn away in the light, she was in far better shape than she could imagine. She looked at his outstretched hand for a long moment and wondered if she could risk him touching her. She didn't know if her shell, her skin, could take the pressure.

After taking a deep breath, she pressed the side of her face against his palm. As soon as they touched, the contact burned. She jerked back with a whine. Her nerves were raw like an exposed wound. Even the briefest touch hurt as much as a flame.

Borias snatched his hand back. "Oh, please be forgiving me."

Merrie nodded, tears in her eyes. She tried to gather her thoughts to project but something kept her silent.

"Your body be new. You... you... everything be new to you. It may be hurting because you have never been using it before." Borias' broken speech was the results of a geas that forced him away from Franome City. It had been cast in a hurry and it took part of his ability to speak with it.

Merrie licked her lips for a moment. She knew how to talk to him, but not with her words. She frowned as she remembered how and then reached out with her mind. She encountered a shield around his thoughts. It protected him from intrusion and spells; most people had them but powerful mages had stronger ones than most.

She pulled back and whined again.

Borias shifted and sat down on the bed. "I know it be hurting right now. And I not be knowing if the light will be hurting you, so we be taking you back to the mill."

He tensed for a moment and she remembered how violently she responded when someone tried to take her back. Fear and concern rippled in his mind and she could feel it lapping against her senses.

Merrie reached out and pressed her arm against his thigh. It hurt, a burning pain, but the touch also relaxed much of his growing fear.

"Sorry, you be cropping Havi. I be liking me arms and legs," he said with a chuckle.

Merrie blushed and ducked her head. She didn't know what she was doing when she ripped Haviston, Borias' cousin's, arm off his body. She was vulnerable to compulsions and Haviston's effort to keep her away from the mill had grown until it consumed her thoughts and she tried to kill everyone who brought her back.

"Me room be dark. I can be caring you down there until you are strong enough for sunlight. That is..." he paused, "... if you are willing to be staying with me and the others."

She remembered his room. It was deep in the basement of the mill house. There were barrels of beer that he brewed along with an entire kitchen where he made magical food. It was also dark, shadowed and muted without a single window. It was also far more comfortable than cowering under a pile of leaves. She nodded and touched him again, wincing at the pain that rose up from their touch.

Borias sniffed. He wiped his face with the back of his hand. "I be missing you, girl. Five years you be gone and we be hearing horrible things that happened to you. If I not be having all me organs burst out me asshole, I would have been coming with Bass to save you. Instead, I be staying here to avoid seeing death and having all me

organs be spewing out of me nose. Though, one of them be gone now.”

Merrie cocked her head, smiling at the familiar movement. Her tail twisted underneath her, but it was trapped on the pillows and her ass.

“The prince, Claston, he be taking off the death geas. I can be using real magic now, not have to be using spells and weaker charms.” Borias sighed and gestured around the room. “But, I be kind be nervous since I think he be doing it right. I’m afraid to see if I can still be getting power from killing someone. Or I be dying painfully.”

Merrie pushed herself up on her severed wrists to free her tail. Then, she crawled on her knees and knelt down on the bed. Her tail wagged once before drooping to the side. The position felt better, though she could feel the wagon moving underneath her. The ragged thumps and jerks was comforting, in a way.

Borias chuckled and smiled at her. “You be beautiful.”

Merrie blushed and wagged her tail. She gave him a smile and arched her back slightly, lifting her heavy breasts to his view.

His desire washed against her senses and she twisted slightly knowing that it would turn him on the most. His lust brought the faintest of ripples of energy along her skin before it slid down to her pussy. Her vulva began to tingle with excitement.

“You be still an alpha? Do you still be getting power from sex?”

She thought about it for a moment. She hadn’t thought about sex since she regained consciousness.

He smiled. “You be putting them lovely titties up for me. You be doing to turn me on? Or you be doing that because it be feeling good for you?”

With a shy smile, she took a deep breath and arched her back more. She spread her legs along the cool sheets until she felt the faintest touch of the lower sheet tickling against her sex. Unconsciously, she tightened her inner muscles.

“I be thinking, if you can handle the touch, maybe me be bringing you orgasm might help your body.”

The thought of his mouth against her sex rose up followed by a wave of longing. At the same time, she cringed at the burning

sensation that would come from his touch. She wanted it, now that he reminded her, but she didn't know if she could handle the pain.

Borias held up his hand. "No, not be pressured. I only be wanting to—"

(Please,) she projected into his mind. This time, her thoughts pierced his shield easily. At the same time, she brought her wrists up to her collar in the begging position she was taught during the early days at the mill.

He stopped with his mouth open. He slowly closed it with a choked sobbed. "I be missing you, girl. That voice be haunting me and I thought I never be hearing it again."

Borias shifted closer. "You really want me to be trying? It be hurting, your body is still new."

Merrie nodded hesitantly but she felt the longing building inside her. She inched forward on her knees, keeping them spread obscenely apart. Her slow movements brought her to the edge of the mattress. (Just a touch?)

He moaned and rubbed his hard cock through his pants. "I can be doing that. Just tell me when you need be stopping."

Borias stood up enough to slide closer before sitting on the bed. His weight sank down on the mattress.

Merrie shifting her position to avoid touching him but to have her body close him him. The anticipation, half forgotten in her agonies, rose up and she felt her pussy tingle with excitement. Her smell rose up around her, it was a strange mixture of musk and alcohol blended together.

"Tell me," whispered Borias as he reached out for her, "if it be hurting."

He carefully maneuvered his finger between her legs. His body trembled and his breath was hot against her skin as he held still for a moment. Then he touched her lightly along her vulva.

The first touch was fire, burning from the caress. Her muscles clenched and she trembled as a whine escaped her throat.

Borias snatched back.

(No,) she projected, (please.)

He looked at her, worry naked on his face. But he obeyed and brought his finger back against her smooth, hairless vulva. He

hovered over her moist lips for a moment before giving a gentle stroke along one side of her pussy.

The touch was fire but so was the desire underneath it. He was right, the pleasure brought a ripple of power sparkling along her senses. She bit back her whine and focused her world on his finger as he slowly drew it up and down her slit, teasing it. The light touch was almost as much agony as being burned alive but the pleasure that blended with the pain made it bearable.

She let out a soft sigh and held herself still, enjoying every burning caress against the delicate folds of her sex.

It was dry at first, as if her body didn't know how to respond. She held her breath and sank into the pain, embracing it as she let her world focus on his digit.

Borias drew back and forth, teasing and hurting at the same time.

The tingling along her pussy grew stronger and the first smells of her sex wafted up to her. It smelled of pussy and ether, a strange mixture of scents that tickled the back of the throat. Her hips rocked against his finger but the pain caused her to cringe.

Seeing that he was looking at her with concern, she took a deep breath and leaned her damp sex against his palm.

Borias parted her lips and ran his finger along the inner opening of her sex. The burning increased as did the pleasure. He found her clitoris and circled around it. Tiny sparks of pleasure ran along her black veins, flooding through her.

With the pleasure came something else, a pulse of power. It flared inside her and then sank into her skin. She felt it shimmering around her, an invisible field of energy.

"There we be going," whispered Borias. "I can be feeling your cunt growing wet. Just a little more pain, k?"

Merrie fought against the discomfort and pressed her pussy tight against his fingers.

He stroked her gently, back and forth. After fucking so many women, he seemed to know exactly what she wanted. The pleasure grew, overwhelming the pain, and she began to pant.

She reached out for him but, at the first burning touch, she yanked her arm back. She used to brace against the headboard for balance and expose more of her body to his stroking fingers.

“This not be loving as much as I want,” he whispered, “but you be a good girl.”

Her inner muscles clenched at the remembered words.

“Oh, I be remembering what you like. You be liking being a good girl,” he said playfully.

Her pussy spasmed again and the pleasure rose.

“Good girl,” repeated Borias.

His burning fingers assaulted her clitoris and pussy, drawing through her ether-soaked lips. Inside her, the pleasure swelled inside her, rising to fill her body with the pleasure of something intense. The anticipation plucked at her senses. Between her legs, she began to drip with excitement and his fingering slurped quietly.

Merrie whimpered and clutched the headboard. Her naked body shook in the darkness, unseen by any light. She could feel the air against her aching nipples and the heavy weight of her breasts moving. Even the muscles, freshly formed from shadow and magic, strained to hold herself still as the pleasure continued to rise inside her.

His deep breathing punctuated the rapid triple-beat of her heart. Her collar thumped against her chest, matching the beat of her heart. The heavy ring that had been melted into it dug into her skin but it was nothing compared to the discomfort and pleasure of his finger teasing her.

Her whine filled the room as she held back her orgasm. It only took a few seconds longer.

Pleasure burst inside her. A black flame of intensity exploded from her clitoris and pussy and raced along her veins. Power and energy followed after it, blossoming inside her body as it sank into the shadowy mass underneath the skin and wrapped around it. She felt her form grow more solid as she cried out.

Borias yanked his hand back.

Merrie collapsed on the bed, panting heavily. Her orgasm hummed inside her, pulsating deep in her body. She felt cold and comfortable at the same time. With a happy sigh, she curled up on the pillow.

Borias pulled the blanket over her. “Good girl.”

Merrie looked up at him and smiled. (Thank you.)

“I be never stopping loving you, Merrie.”

She smiled again. Her eyes drooped.

“Go on, you be sleeping now. When you wake up, hopefully we be at the mill.”

t'Sade

The Mill House

6

Powerful arms scooped her off the bed, blankets and all. Merrie let out a gasp. She writhed and tried to escape before something attacked her.

“No, no, relax,” said Eolis in a deep rumble.

She didn’t stop. She pawed at the blankets, trying to find the opening to escape. She needed to breathe, she needed to move.

Eolis sighed. “For Rubin’s sake... freeze!” Eolis’ bellow shook her entire body and his command pummeled her mind.

Her pussy grew instantly wet as a flash of pleasure coursed along her body. She whimpered and clutched herself, obeying instantly as an orgasm rippled through her body. Captured in the confined of the blanket, she was inundated by the scent of her orgasm, alcoholic and sweet. Shuddering, she inhaled deeply and then relaxed.

Claston chuckled. “Fuck, that command was loud.”

“Alphas need to obey, even if it isn’t their master,” explained Eolis. “Give them a strong enough command and they will do it. Or, as I suspect from the moans in here,” he gave the blanket a gentle squeeze, “they will orgasm first and then obey.”

“I’ll have to remember that.”

“With your highness’ presence, I suspect you wouldn’t have to yell loud. But you have to believe the command, force it. Their telepathic abilities means they can pick up when orders are not genuine.”

“Like when Lady Anasome ordered Alestri to command Merrie and Merrie ignored it.”

Eolis’ arms stiffened. “I wasn’t aware the prince was there.”

“The prince,” Claston said with another chuckle, “has very good reports.”

The thriban grunted.

A door creaked open. “Be coming inside, please. The stairs are behind the stairs, either side.”

Eolis’ footsteps thumped on wooden steps. His arms were powerful as steel as they cradled Merrie. The heavy blankets prevented any light from coming inside and she wasn’t sure if it was day or night when they arrived.

As he carried her through the entrance, she smelled the mill house around her. It was an old scent, one that she hadn’t sniffed in over five years but the memories came rushing back. She remembered the night she was first kidnapped and raped out front. Bass had shoved his cock into her with brutal strength, showing the rest of the kidnapped bitches their fate. Later, when he took her up to the third floor, he had raped her face for using the bathroom and pretending to be human. Since then, the more she submitted, the more she acted like nothing more than a bitch, her power grew.

She craved the submission and the orders. She wanted to be told what to do, to be forced down and made helpless. Everything that ground her down make her more powerful. She squirmed in her confines and pressed one wrist against her wet and aching pussy..

Eolis carried her into the basement. She felt the cool air seeping in through the blankets and the scent of alcohol, urine, and shit tickling her senses. Borias taught the bitches how to swallow anything including noxious meals that looked far worse than they were. His room was musty but cold, something she craved.

“Little hard to see in the dark,” Eolis said.

Borias said, “Take three steps forward, one more. Half a step to the left. Okay, there is a bed in front of you.”

Eolis bent over and set Merrie on the bed. It was soft and comforting. She moaned and curled up under the blankets unwilling to peek out in case there was light. (Thank you,) she projected to both Eolis and Borias.

“Be safe,” Eolis said as he patted her through the blankets. “I can’t tell you how happy I am to see you have returned to the mill.”

“Without you be killing everyone.”

“Hush, Borias.”

Merrie sent a pulse of thanks and affection. She felt safe in the basement. It shielded her from the light but she also was filled with the memories that came from the scents that surrounded her. They were all familiar as the day Borias first took her down there. The remembered submission warmed her and she closed her eyes.

“Come on, Eolis. We be having dinner in the great hall.”

“Are you sure Bass won’t mind us sleeping here?”

“No, but we be putting Claston in Bass’ bed.” A smaller hand pressed against her. “You be okay down here?”

Merrie let out a small pulse of contentment.

“Food? Water?”

Neither appealed to her. She shook her head.

“Can you call us up from upstairs?”

She thought for a moment, then reached out with her mind. It grew easier the more she was awake. She felt Claston, Zeob, and another man in the great hall. The third was familiar only by sight, it was Duke Natis. Eolis and Claston had powerful shields, but it was nothing compared to the skill of Borias who paled compared to Natis. She didn’t even think she had a chance to project to the duke unless he wanted it. She tapped on Claston’s mind and then projected, (Yell “yes” please).

A second later. “Merrie says yes!”

Borias leaned over and kissed her through the blankets. “You be showing off. Good girl.”

The words brought a familiar pleasure. She smiled and closed her eyes, letting her mind drift back to sleep as the most powerful men in her life headed back upstairs to watch over her.

t'Sade

Sweet Homecoming

7

Borias' snore woke her up. Merrie opened her eyes and stared up at the ceiling. She was nestled in his bed with the blankets drawn up to her breasts. Her nipples were hard and aching in the moist coolness that surrounded her. She stretched her feet out, dragging her severed ankles underneath the comforter until she found a cool spot and relaxed again.

She knew if she looked to left, she would see the entire wall filled with casks of lager. She turned her head and looked past her knees. On the far wall was a beautiful kitchen set. It was out of place with the rest of the house, but it had hundreds of tiny drawers. This time, she could see the sheaves of spells on parchment sitting on shelves. There was magic around the cooling boxes and more glowing faintly on the stove. The different colors and flavors of magic washed over her, reminding her when she was watching him cook vegetables for her while using magic to make them look like shit.

It was the first time she had someone piss into her mouth also, though he chased it with a load of cum and a glass of lager. She moaned softly at the memory of him holding her in place and guiding the beer into her mouth and down her throat.

Another snore interrupted her thoughts. She followed it to the source. It was between the bed and a brick wall where Borias slept with a blanket wrapped around him. He looked uncomfortable, sleeping on the hard-packed ground. At the same time, a swelling of affection rose inside her. He almost died for her and there was no question that he loved her as much as anyone could.

She smiled to herself. He would have been a good master to her. His mother begged her not to consider him, and Merrie obeyed the

former wizard priest, but looking down at him and recalling all the sweet things he did for her, she couldn't help but wonder what life would be like if he was the one the collar bound her to instead of herself.

Merrie sent a pulse of love through her collar. It came back magnified, a wave of love that coursed through her body in a lazy wave of pleasure. She smiled and then rolled over on her stomach. Her short limbs made it hard to move but she inched over to the edge and then reached down with one hand to brush against his face.

The touch was fire against her raw nerves but she didn't care. She did it again, caressing his chin before sending out a soft pulse of warmth with her mind.

Borias snorted and froze, his eyes snapping open.

(Come to bed.)

Borias yawned. "No, the floor be comfortable."

Her tail wagged back and forth. (Now, I need you.)

He raised an eyebrow but then stood up. He wore only a pair of shorts and she took a moment to admire his slender body. He was beautiful, though scarred from all his years in Abbinkey Prison and solitary. She glanced down to his shorts. (You won't need those either.)

"You be sure?" Even as he spoke, he hooked his thumbs on the waistband. His cock grew instantly, swelling out the front. Moments later, she could smell his musky excitement in the air.

She stared at it and felt the familiar hunger coming back. It would hurt, but most of her life was about pain. What she needed down was to be fucked. She needed sweet and loving. Lifting her gaze, she projected her desires to him.

Borias answered by pulling down his shorts and kicking them off. He had a beautiful cock. It stood out straight from his body with only a little curve going up. His balls, two hair ones, hung underneath thought they were tight to his body because of the cold. He stroked it twice before crawling on the bed.

Merrie stared at his body and held out her arm. The smooth end hovered centimeters away from his body. Taking a deep breath, she touched him.

The caress was fire against her senses but she relented. She drew her body close to him as he settled into place. Every touch burned but she welcomed it as she snuggled against his body.

Borias reached down to kiss her forehead.

She tilted her head up to match his lips. When they touched, it was an electric fire that burned across her senses. She gasped and kissed him back, loving the contrast of his hot body against her cold lips.

It didn't matter if it hurt or not, she lost herself in the passion of the kiss. She caressed his arm, enjoying the muscle underneath, then used the tip to lever his arm away from his body and around her.

His palm against her shoulder brought fresh waves of agony but she felt better as he held her tight. She lost herself in the pulses of pain and pleasure that filled her, both seemed to pool in her pussy and she grew slick with need.

He broke the kiss and whispered to her, "Do you want me to fuck you as a bitch or a woman?"

Merrie answered by rolling on her back and spreading her legs. The cool air of the basement swirled around and she shivered at the touch. She felt exposed and vulnerable to him as she looked up at his body next to her. Her pussy tingled with desire and she felt the desire for his cock gathering deep inside her cunt.

Borias let out moan as he rolled over her, careful not to touch her. He looked down her body for a long moment before shifting away from her. His muscular ass rose up as he lowered himself to his elbows between her legs.

She held her breath as he brought his lips to her moist vulva.

The first touch of his tongue against her pussy was electric fire. It slammed into her, pleasure and pain. She let out a cry and slapped her arms against the mattress. She couldn't grab anything, but she could delve her limbs underneath the pillow as she focused on the wet tongue laving her from asshole to clitoris and back again.

Borias knew exactly how to lick her pussy. He dragged it back up and sucked on her clitoris. When she whimpered, he released it with a pop and lapped further down to tease her opening.

Merrie writhed on the bed, whimpering with need and the pleasure built up inside her. It was hard to resist, every touch was

like the first time a man had touched her. But this was a man who knew exactly what she needed instead of some teenager fumbling at her jeans.

The only part of his body touching her was his tongue. He swirled it around and sucked at the opening of her pussy.

She planted her legs on his shoulder. The pain flashed through her mind and she grew even hotter. Whimpering, she arched her back and sent a pulse of desire coursing through his mind.

Borias shuddered and finally grabbed her. His hand seared his skin as he spread her legs obscenely apart and lapping harder and faster. The slurps filled the room, echoing the pleasure that wracked her senses.

He lifted her ass from the mattress and delved further down, slobbering against her asshole before shoving his tongue into it.

The wet pressure inside her sphincter pushed her over the edge. She let out a cry and let the orgasm slam into her, burning its way through her black veins and throughout her body. The magic from her ecstasy gathered along her limbs, giving them more strength and solidity that she didn't have before.

Borias continued to lap at her ass, licking hard and fast.

Before she knew it, another orgasm slammed into her. She moaned and ground her ass against his face using his hands around her severed limbs for angle. The pleasure of having her sphincter opened up by a wet tongue was almost too much to bear. She moaned and felt her mind shaking in its foundation from her pleasure. She knew that her orgasms could be more powerful and give her more energy, only if she came harder.

(Fuck me,) she ordered.

Borias looked up. His face would have glistened in the light, but she could only see it was damp. He smelled of whiskey and her pussy. Without a word, he spread her legs enough to hook them on his hips and crawled up her body.

She reached out for him, caressing his chest with the smooth ends of her arms. The pain grew but she wallowed in it, enjoying it as a precursor to the pleasure she was about to enjoy. Her breath came out in soft gasps mixed with whimpers of need.

Borias panted as he positioned himself, his cock poised millimeters from her soaked pussy.

Every point their bodies touched, from her inner thighs to her arms on his chest, burned. She felt it rise and fall, almost overwhelming.

He hesitated but she sent a pulse of need through his mind. He shuddered and rocked his hips forward. His cock pressed against her pussy and easily slid into the slick folds. It bumped against her clitoris and slid down, dragging along sensitive skin as he sought out her opening. His head was swollen and shiny pulsing with his desire. She could feel it through the vibrations of his heart against her nerves and the way he held her tightly with his fingers.

Merrie gasped and arched her back, silently begging for him to hurt her by sucking on her nipples.

Borias braced himself on the bed and pushed harder, driving his cock into her pussy.

It was the first time her new body had taken a cock. Even her insides burned with the rawness but it also felt good. She needed it, she craved to feel hardness inside her. With a moan, she lifted her hips to meet him, using his hips to pull herself up. Her smooth body, freshly made by magic, slid along his rougher skin and she moaned at the touch.

He pushed deeper, a single slide that brought almost his entire length into her.

Merrie cried out. She felt the entire length burning inside her but wanted more. "P-Please," she whispered in her broken voice.

Borias jammed his cock deep into her body, splaying her legs out obscenely in the effort. She didn't resist and almost came from having his hot, throbbing cock buried so deep inside her.

He drew out and drove it back home, quickly establishing a fast and hard stroke that filled her completely. His muscles flexed with every stroke that ended with his hips slapping against her inner thighs; her entire body slid up from the impact. Bursts of pleasure and pain warred inside her body, stealing her breath away as he drove into her.

She stared up into his eyes, seeing love and compassion in them. He was a silent lover but one that had her every pleasure in mind as he drove into her without slowing down.

As the ecstasy built, Merrie squeezed down his length with her inner muscles. The friction added to her pleasure but didn't increase the pain. She clamped down even harder and whimpered for more.

Her needs leaked out from her own shield and she felt others beginning to pick up on her own lusts. The first was Zeob in the wagon who was being fucked by Eolis. Claston and Eolis both responded by it wasn't as intense as the orgasm that left Zeob splattering his cum all over the sheets.

Borias grunted as his thrusts grew faster. "You... be.... coming?"

Merrie moaned and nodded. (Harder.)

He rammed into her, thrusting hard. It hurt, every centimeter of his cock plunging into her soaked hole was agony but she craved it as much as the pleasure. She needed to be hurt, beaten, fucked roughly.

Another orgasm rose inside her, a cliff of ecstasy that threatened to explode inside her. She held it back until it was a knife edge against her senses.

Borias let out a grunt and then flooded her pussy with his seed. The hot jets became a wave of agony as it painted her insides. Every touch brought more pain but it also overwhelmed her battered senses lifted them to heights she wasn't expecting before she exploded with an orgasm of herself.

Her pleasure rippled away from her, slamming into the others in the mill. She felt Claston coming in his hand and Eolis spewing his load deep into Zeob's rectum. Borias also came again, adding the flood of juices that poured into her and set her insides afire. Even Boz responded, though she didn't know what he was doing.

The only two not affected were the duke and Alestri. Neither seemed to respond, though Merrie knew there was no submissiveness in the Loyal to ever let her power hold sway.

Borias shuddered as the last of his burning cum poured into her pussy. Then he pulled out with a grunt and drew away from her.

Merrie moaned at the burning inside her. The afterglow throbbed deep inside her body as she shifted to the side and gave Borias space to lie down without touching her.

"You be okay?"

She shivered from the discomfort flooding her pussy. (Yes,) she said and meant it.

He kissed her once, a brand against her shoulder, before wrapping her in a blanket. “Be safe tonight, k?”

Merrie smiled and projected love toward him.

Borias wrapped himself in a blanket and rested next to her. The fabric didn’t burn like his skin, only his naked touch. He chuckled and held her tight with the blankets between them. “Tomorrow, I be taking care of you.”

Merrie smiled and closed her eyes. Even with his cum burning her insides, it felt good to have the glow of pleasure pulsating inside her. It made her feel like she could change the world. Or least herself.

t'Sade

Wake-Up

8

Merrie woke up to a tingling in the back of her head, a sense that the man next to her was waking up. She opened her eyes and peered around the pitch black room, her eyes easily seeing through the dark. She breathed in the cool scenes of lagers, magic, and man before pushing herself up to her knees and wrists.

Her breath came quietly as she let her senses play over Borias' mind and body. He was still dreaming in the half-lucid state before he woke up fully. His body was stretched out on the bed with his blankets around his knees and his bare chest exposed to the cool air.

Life on the mill was hard. He didn't have heavy lifting but years of manhandling kidnapped girls and breaking them into a life of being a bitch had refined his muscles. Not to mention he cannibalized his own body for the small amount of magic that he was able to use.

She focused her senses on his talents. The last time they were close enough for her to inspect him, she was still learning magic. Now, after two masters and her improved skills, she could see the pulse of power beneath his skin. It was an alluring swirl of arcane powers, dancing among itself with such potential. It felt wild and structured at the same time, like waves on a beach that never stopped lapping up on the sand.

It was beautiful, more so with the contrast of his geas. The geas was a nasty knot that tied into every part of his body. It was attached to his very spirit and bound his body into place. Threads of the black spell were jammed into the swirls of his very being and she could see where it had torn through his powers. It also was anchored into his mind, cutting through his ability to speak. There

was no elegance to the geas, just a spell that was brutally bound into him with no care for the restrictions.

From what she heard, the geas was the price when Bass broke Borias out of Abbinkey. She couldn't imagine what happened that would force the geas on him, or why not returning to Franome City was important enough to kill him if he broke it, but it was there, threaded into his spirit, body, and magic to ensure he never returned home.

Merrie knew that he had a second geas on him, the prison one that all mages got. It was supposed to tie into their magic and prevent them from tapping into the one thing that gave them strength. She remembered how Rakin had it put on him during his sentencing; it ensured he would never get angry again or die horribly but both Merrie and Rakin knew that he would never be able to feel rage again, not after their brutal rape of each other.

Her pussy grew wet at the memories. As much as Rakin hated her and she feared him, he was one of the few people in the world who could truly be her master. He was a legend for his magic and tactics, a three hundred year old warrior who could have taken over the world. He was also brutal, intelligent, and powerful. He knew how to command her, how to degrade and humiliate her until her powers blossomed.

With the alpha's ability to enhance their masters, he would have ruled the world. She let her mind drift through the imagination of the brutal rape and destruction he would inflict on her, but also the raw power that he would use to conquer the known world. She would have been a bitch queen, the right hand of an immortal man who could destroy the entire Franome Army in hours.

Her pussy drooled with excitement, though the images was terrifying. She knew that he would have corrupt her, not only in the moment they bonded but as they both grew in power. He would torture her and push her to the very limits her mind and body could handle and she would reflect that brutality into turning him into a god. She would have become cruel herself, mimicking her master's powers until she would be feared as much as he was.

Merrie shook her head to stop her thoughts. She had a master, he was beautiful and kind. He wasn't, however, a good master for alpha. He didn't even know what one was, but she had his power

inside her. The triple beat of the shadows thumped in her chest and flowed through her veins. She knew that she would bleed black now, the energies of the other reality corrupting her as it leached the life out of her.

Both were powerful but neither were her life now. She would always be a creature of shadow, her gift from Kine, but she was her own mistress and alpha at the same time. Like the geas, her spirit was bound in on itself, endlessly ordering and obeying herself as the power surged inside through her collar.

Merrie looked back at Borias, curious to see what the prison geas looked like. She didn't find it though. She expected it to be another knot of power tied into his very being but she only found gaping wounds in his power that were beginning to heal. The energies were raw and unfocused, bleeding out into the air around him. His normally powerful shields were fractured from the leakage and errant energy washed over her body like a thousand fingers caressing her skin.

Her tail wagged back and forth as she watched and felt it dance along her senses. It was wilder than he had ever been. Over time, it would heal and he would once again be a powerful healer and blood mage. This time, though, he would be able to delve into the power that came from cannibalism and use that death to create far more powerful spells. She could feel it, the desire for women begging him to take their lives and the sweetness that came from the first knife wound and the last breath.

Her body grew hotter with her thoughts. Her pussy drooled down both sides of her legs and soaked into the mattress below her. He had shown her some of his memories before and she brought them up to remember the intensity of lust and hunger that echoed through them.

His cock twitched and grew to half mast. He was submissive enough that she could read the half-waking thoughts of his body. He had to pee, like most guys, but he dreamed of the bitches that he trained before. They had orders how to wake him up, it was part of their training that Merrie remembered herself, though she was given far more leeway than the rest of them. Her visit to Borias' room was to shield her, not to train her.

Licking her lips, she decided to finish her training from five years before. Settling on the mattress next to him, she brought her lips to his cock and kissed it lightly. Flares of heat caressed her lips, the agony burning her face.

His cock grew harder.

She pushed past the pain of touching him and levered her head so she could scoop up the tip of his cock and hold it between her lips. It felt like a hot pepper against her tongue but she ordered herself to ignore the pain and sucked lightly.

The command came through her collar, an order that she couldn't resist. She knew it was be agony to wrap her lips around his shaft but the anticipation brought a surge of lust coursing as she submitted to the command. She opened her mouth and sealed her lips around the ridge behind his glans. The agony increased and she fought the whimper rising in her throat.

The cock grew harder in her lips, lengthening and stiffening rapidly.

With a smile, she bobbed up and down. Saliva gathered in her mouth and she used it to lubricate his shaft before sliding it deeper into her mouth. The warmth and hardness in her lips threatened to bring up a moan, but she kept quite as she explored his beautiful cock. It was long and smooth, with a few ridges for his veins and a relatively narrow head at the top. It didn't take her long before she was sliding her lips up and down his entire length. She stopped with her nose buried in his pubic hair and took a deep breath of his musk.

A thrill coursed through her body. She turned slightly and pulled up, taking her time to draw her lips to the very top before pushing back down. The searing of their touch only added to the thrill coursing through her veins.

His cock thumped against the back of her throat and she reflexively gulped to swallow it so she could take his entire length once again. She pressed her lips tight against his base and felt the hairs on his balls tickling the side of her lips.

Borias was awake. She could feel his attention and lust burning in her mind but he was trying not to move.

She wagged her tail and let her entire ass move with it. Reaching out, she pressed the smooth ends of her wrists against his chest and thigh to brace herself. Taking a deep breath, she bobbed harder and

faster, smacking her face against his belly as she took his cock deep into her mouth.

He moaned and pre-cum flooded inside her mouth. “That be feeling good.”

She wagged her tail harder and shoved all the way down, grinding her face tight against his pubic and swallowing the pre-cum that dribbled down her throat.

He shuddered with pleasure.

She resumed pumping his cock, laving it with her tongue as she fucked it with her face. The willing submission sent ripples of pleasure through her as she continued to drool around his shaft. Her pussy was also dribbling down both sides of her thighs, soaking the sheets; she always got soaking wet when she submitted to anyone. The anticipation of the agony only added to her excitement and she could feel her entire sexy tingling with aching need.

He reached out for her and stroked his soft hands against her thigh as he reached for her pussy.

Merrie didn't stop pumping. An image flashed through her mind, either from him or her own imagination, but she liked it. Without taking her mouth off his cock, she lifted her body and turned around until she straddled his face. Her pussy continued to splatter down but she heard it splash against his face.

His breath was hot against her bare pussy. It contrasted with the icy touch of her skin and she moaned at the touch.

Her pussy dripping, she held herself centimeters over his face. She knew that she was dripping on him but she could feel his lust rippling from his mind as her juices coated his lips.

She settled down on him, grinding her large breasts against his belly. Her nipples caressed his stomach and it felt like claws digging into her sensitive tips. The touch of their bodies was painful but less. It seemed that it was only a discomfort, something easily pushed over in the growing intensity of the moment. She smiled to herself and spread her legs wider.

“Breakfast?” Borias said with a grin and reached up to cup her buttock with one hand and the base of her tail with the other. “I be liking to drink me meals.”

She shivered at the sensation, her tail was sensitive. Willingly, she lowered her pussy down his mouth.

His cock surged with hardness as his lips pressed against her cunt. He lapped deep into the soaked folds, smearing her moisture across his face and sending sharp agonies radiating from her pussy.

Merrie finally moaned and ground down, shoving her entire hairless cunt hard against his mouth and nose as she bobbed faster and harder. More pre-cum poured out of his cock and she gulped it down greedily as she deep-throated him repeatedly.

Borias joined in, alternating between licking every folds of her vulva and sucking on her clitoris. His fingers caressed her asshole, teasing it and circling it as he assaulted her sex with a well-practiced tongue.

Pleasure blossomed inside her, coursing through her veins as the orgasm rippled through her body. The pain only added to her pleasure, pushing the orgasm to higher limits. She kept her pleasure tight in her head so he wouldn't be forced into an orgasm. She wanted to feel him come from nothing more than their bodies pressed together and their lips on each other.

His cock grew harder and his hips thrust faster past her lips. He didn't bother telling her that he was about to come, she felt it boiling in his thoughts as he strained to hold it back.

Merrie ground her aching nipples against his stomach and came again, enjoying the struggles and submission. Her juices came out in a flood and his body shook from the effort to gulp them down.

The cock grew hotter, almost searing. Her lips slid up and down it as it swelled inside her mouth, straining the tight ring. With a single surge, it exploded inside her mouth. Hot cum painted the back of her throat and she greedily gulped it down as a third orgasm wracked her body. The salty taste was one that she never grew tired of and she suckled his cock as it continued to pump hot jets into her mouth.

Borias moaned and thrust hard with his hips. He planted his feet on the mattress and thrust hard a few times before holding it in place, emptying his balls deep into her mouth. His tongue never stopped sucking on her clitoris and she felt every gulp shake through their bodies.

Slowly, their thrusts and grinding slowed to a stop. She let his cock rest in her mouth but pulled her soaked pussy off his face. The slurp noise of her breaking the seal brought a smile to her lips and

she rested her head to the side to enjoy the afterglow of her orgasms.

“I be missing that.”

Merrie sucked one to answer.

He jumped. “Carefully, we not be having a bitch in here for a year since... you be going away. I’m not used to pretties waking me up like this anymore.”

(I’m sorry.)

“I be sorry and I not be sorry. Bass always be pretending to be evil, but now he’s a baron and in charge of an evil man’s farm. He doesn’t have to be pretending to be evil. Plus, you know, he be wanted in Franome City for kidnapping that perfume lady.”

(But he was protecting her against Gillette’s men.)

“Reality and the courts don’t always agree.” A wave of sadness throbbed inside him; he was convicted of snuffing a girl who wanted to be, all because her father refused to let it go. “Though, eventually that be changing.”

Merrie’s ears perked up. She knew why the second geas was missing. (You were pardoned.)

Borias stiffened. “How you be knowing?”

(The geas is missing, ripped out. I can feel where it is healing.)

It was as if something drained out of him and he slumped back. “Oh, thank you.”

At her quizzical pulse, he cleared his throat. “I know Claston be saying he be pardoning me, but I be living with this geas for so long, I not be thinking he could do it. I be still terrified of seeing a girl die, though now I really be wanting it. It be a long time since I be killing someone.”

Merrie smiled and released his cock to kiss the top. (I’m almost immortal now.)

His cock twitched.

(I can be killed but I always come back.)

The length grew against her cheek, a burning brand that she adored. She kissed the side of the shaft. It was still moist from his orgasm and she lapped up a bit of cum that cling to the ridges.

(I want you to be the first one.)

“Didn’t the goddess—”

(The first mortal to kill me. I want it sweet and beautiful, with lots of fucking, submission, and domination.)

His cock surged against her face, a splatter of cum smearing against it. "Oh, Merrie."

She kissed it again, lapping the cum that oozed out of the tip.

"But, we should be waiting until both of us recover."

Merrie sent a wave of agreement.

They both rested against each other. Merrie let her eyes drop against the throb of discomfort of their touching. The longer they embraced, the less it hurt.

Borias squirmed after a few moments. "I need to get up."

She could feel why, the prickle of his bladder was already rising in his senses. She smiled to herself and held herself still. (Why?) she projected as casually as she could. The only thing that betrayed her emotions was the growing wetness between her legs. The other bitches knew exactly what to do, he was the one who trained them to swallow anything presented to them.

"I gotta be going pee, k?"

Merrie opened her mouth and scooped up his cock again. It was still half-hard and she easily seated her lips against his base.

The shock and lust that exploded from Borias made her smile. She felt him concentrating on his bladder, preparing to relax to let the urine flow. "You be sure?"

She gave him a suck. (This is what your bitches do, right? Gulp it down?)

"You're an omega, the most powerful True Submissive anyone ever be knowing. You not always be following the rules."

(I'm a bitch serving her master. What does my master want to do?)

He moaned. "I be wanting..."

His cock throbbed and swelled between her lips. "I be wanting to fill your belly."

She moaned around his cock and made sure not a single drop would escape.

With another moan, he slumped back. The sensations and emotions rose inside him, he was well practiced from going between hardness and urinating at the same time. It was only seconds before

a hot jet of urine shot into her mouth. The acrid taste flooded around her tongue and ran down her throat in a thick river.

Knowing it was coming, Merrie was already sucking it when it flooded her mouth. The heat poured down her throat and into her stomach, filling her as another orgasm rippled through her body. She gulped loudly, knowing that it would turn him on more, and drank from his cock until the steady stream slowed. She opened her mouth enough to let some cool air in, and then sucked his piss hole to ensure every droplet was safely in her now gurgling belly. The taste of his pee coated her tongue and she inhaled to drink in the sharp tastes.

Borias chuckled. "I don't think you ever be waking me up like that."

Merrie moaned and fought the urge to plaster her cunt back on his face.

"Though..." His thoughts grew smoldering with lust. His shields grew together as he tried to obscure his thoughts.

Merrie's ears and tail perked up. Her tail wagged back and forth.

"... I be thinking that you need the same?"

Merrie froze. She could picture it in her head, her straddling his face as she peed into his mouth. A surge of heat filled her, no one had ever done it to her before though she had frequently been a toilet slut for Rimmy before.

Borias laughed and hooked his arms over her buttocks. "Come here, alpha. I want to be drinking my breakfast."

He pulled her down to his mouth. His tongue swirled around her opening and teased her clitoris before he lapped at the tiny hole of her urethra. The discomfort of his touch swirled with the growing pleasure. The sensations were intense and it added a flame of desire to the smoldering heat boiling inside her.

Merrie gasped and pushed herself up, angling until she had her entire weight grinding down on his face. She knew not to ask for confirmation, his thoughts already told her everything she wanted.

She watched as his cock grew hard and aching. It took her only a moment to concentrate on releasing her bladder. When it did, she felt the icy liquid pouring out of her into his mouth. Where he was hot and searing, she was cold as icy.

His grip tightened and he gulped loudly, drinking as she peed into his mouth. There was an intimacy in their position, his helplessness and her domination pushed her toward another orgasm. She let out a tiny cry and ground down, rocking back and forth as he kept his lips tightly sealed against her intimate of places. Her juices soaked his face. She felt every gulp as he drank down her piss, each swallow shaking her body and sending intense waves of pleasure coursing through her body.

It took her a long while to empty herself into his mouth. When she finished, she had come more than once. Panting, she lifted herself and he gave her one last lick to leave her glistening from asshole to urethra to clitoris in a single blow.

With a moan, Merrie slipped to the side and turned around. She nestled her body up against his, their lips nearly touching. The taste of her pee was on his breath, but it wasn't urine that she smelled but alcohol and ether.

"It be cold," he whispered.

(Everything inside me is cold now. I'm not human anymore.)

"No, but you be just as beautiful." He kissed her. "Though I be disagreeing, you not be tasting like smoke and whiskey to me."

(What do I taste like?)

"Beautiful," he said with a smile. "And also like Belkim wine be called sake. It be made from rice and has this tingle in the back of me throat. That be what you taste like."

(I've never had it before.)

"I should be getting you some. You bet you be liking it."

She smiled broadly and sent a pulse of love toward him.

"I be loving that smile. Even without magic, it be the only thing I can see."

Merrie hesitated, confusion in her thoughts.

"Your lips, they be glowing."

She stared at him in shock.

Borias pulled away long enough to pick up a mirror from the side table. Bringing it over, he held it in front of her.

Merrie stared at her image. It had been a while since she looked at herself. Her face was still beautiful but it was missing the signs of her age. There was no lines around her eyes or the sight of anything other than a young woman in her late teens or early twenties

staring back. The problem was that she was twenty-nine years old, not nineteen.

Her thoughts caused her ears to shake. They were sticking out of the side of her head but they weren't human anymore. Instead, they were narrow edges with tufts of white hair at the tips. She remembered when she earned her ears at the mill and how they have been a part of her ever since.

She drew her attention to her lips. They were just as she remembered but they sparkled with a pale white glow. As she watched, she could see energy rolling across them, causing a strange but hypnotic pattern to dance along every curve. In her mind, she could feel a different type of energy pulsing along them, divine power, the power of a goddess.

"I be thinking that when you be biting Lemetri, you got some of the goddess' blood on your lips."

Merrie pursed her lips and then parted them. She licked them and tasted brightness against her tongue. It was Lemetri's. She had tasted a goddess' blood and it had marked her. It didn't burn like the rest of light but was a balm against her fading discomfort.

"Now, I be sure the rest of you not be glowing."

She looked up and smiled.

"Though, I be willing to inspect you much more. Claston and the others be leaving yesterday, Bass and the others not be back for a week. I be thinking we could spend that time seeing if we can be getting you use to the light. And maybe be fucking a little."

Gathering up her pleasure, she let it wash over him. It sank into his skin and thoughts.

"Or, we be fucking a lot."

She grinned at him and wagged her tail.

"Yeah, we be doing that too. But occasionally I must be going out to dump it. We can't drink forever." Images from his head rose up, back when she was first learning how to be a bitch. They were out in the front yard as he guided her to raise her leg and pee on the ground.

She projected the memories from her point of view, the rush of submission as she spread her legs while he watched.

His cock surged to full hardness. A low moan shook the bed.

Merrie smirked. (Good boy.)

t'Sade

Senses

9

Merrie stretched out on Borias' bed and let out a content sigh. Her stomach gurgled with hot cum and hotter food. The rest of her body hummed with the afterglow from a quick series of orgasms before Borias had to return upstairs to finish his chores for the day.

She knew that it would take him a few hours. By then, the sun would have gone down and they could risk taking her out into the front yard to pee outside and get some fresh air. They tried bringing her upstairs the day before, but even with all the curtains drawn, it was still too bright. She shuddered at the blinding and burning light that leaked through the cracks of the windows.

Rolling over on her belly, she spread her legs as far wide as they would go and wagged her tail. She could wait. The darkness felt good against her skin. With a soft moan, she lifted her hips and let the cool air caress her damp pussy.

She considered masturbating again, but she didn't want to move. It felt good to have her breasts grinding against the mattress and her arms pressed against the pillows. It gave her a sense of presenting herself to unseen eyes which gave her a little thrill. She adjusted her body slightly, her knees sliding along the sheets, as she tried to present herself perfectly for a mistress who couldn't possibly see her from that angle.

With a grin, she tried to imagine what Borias saw when he came into the room. She knew she had a tight ass from so many years of crawling on her hands and knees. She used to pace back and forth in Kine's mansion for exercise. It wouldn't be long before she would have to do the same in the basement. She imagined the curve of her back and the rise of her shoulder blades. She swished her tail,

rocking her hips back and forth just to enjoy the friction of her swollen labia as it rubbed against each other. At the right moment, her opening split wide enough for the cool air to caress her clitoris and opening.

In her mind's eyes, the image came clearly. She was beautiful and helpless, a cropped bitch laying on the bed waiting for her master. She could even see how her pussy lips parted slightly with her position, giving just a hint of the delicate opening underneath. She imagined a droplet forming on her pussy before it slid down her folds.

To her surprise, she felt the droplet caressing her nerves at the same time that she saw it.

She moaned at the sensation.

Instead of hearing it from the vibrations through her body, she heard it from a distance.

Merrie moaned again, wagging her tail faster. She could imagine it directly, see it actually. She followed the movement of her white tail rocking back and forth, snapping in the air. The wind of her movement didn't caress her naked ass and back but buffeted against her body a meter away from her heart-shaped rear.

Elation poured through her.

Her concentration wavered and her senses pulled toward her body, sliding in the air before they began to sink back into her own body. She gasped and forced her concentration to hold it still. To her surprise, it stopped just as her sense of vision was only centimeters away from her glistening pussy.

With a grin, she admired her sex like no woman could. Then, with an effort, she imagined the focal point sliding through the air back to its original position a meter behind her ass and cunt.

She tried to use her eyes to look back but couldn't. The senses that were cast away from her no longer functioned from inside her body. She couldn't hear the triple beat of her heart or see anything besides her body.

With her mental might, she turned the focal point of her senses around. It was as if she was standing as she scanned the room, seeing it from a higher position than possible with her severed limbs. She smiled broadly to herself and concentrated on moving the focus of her senses again.

It was easier now that she understood how it worked but it took energy to move it. Her senses—the knot of hearing, sight, and touch—flowed through the air. She tried to pull them apart, to see if she could cast them in separate directions, but they remained locked together. She managed to guide her focus into the corner and then looked back at herself.

It was surreal watching herself from the gap between two beer barrels. At the same time, there was a thrill as she looked at herself as a stranger, seeing her body as someone else would see it. Her vision roamed over her skin, drinking in the sight of her severed legs, flowing hair, and large breasts. She wanted herself, desired it more than anything else.

She smiled and an idea came to her.

Merrie gathered her energy and shaped it into a spell that she knew by heart, an intuitive form that had helped her through many years as an extension of her body. From a distance, she could see the black energies gathering along her body, rippling from her skin and orifices. It coalesced above her, spreading out in ribbons of darkness that quickly blossomed into a rippling fabric of her unconsciousness, her cloak.

With effort, she managed to bring her senses to above her ass, imagining it was some snake-like beast that loomed over her and stared at her with lust. The cloak shaped itself to match her imagination, forming a long tendril with two points of utter darkness for eyes. The two spells merged together, her senses snapping into the body of the cloak and sealing into place. The effort to maintain both effects faded into a single one, one that required almost no effort to keep stable; she had used the cloak for many years without realizing it and it felt like a part of her very being.

She shook the cloak and her vision moved with it. She smiled as she imagined it above her and then guided it down to stroke along her thigh. The feather-light touch, the touch of Shadows, was alluring and seductive. Like seeing herself from a different point of view, the touch was a stranger's, different and unexpected.

She moaned and lifted her ass further from the mattress.

In her mind, her pussy lips spread open in quiet invitation. She reached out with her cloak and grabbed her buttocks, jumping when

she felt it through her own skin. The wonderful touch was hard and cruel as it pried her open, exposing her dusky anus and drooling cunt to her own hungry gaze.

More of the cloak rippled against her body, stroking her clitoris to asshole with unnatural waves of pressure. Her pleasure grew from the touch and she could smell her excitement in the air, she wondered if she really did taste like Borias' sake.

She thrust up, silently begging for the cloak. She tried to clench her cheeks together, but the sharp grip of the cloak kept her forced open. She was vulnerable and helpless, only half sure of what she would do.

With another part of her mind, she send the commands. The dual nature of being an alpha and a mistress at the same time made it easy to view the cloak as her mistress and her bitch form as the alpha. The commands raced through the collar and then came back as her mistress. It took no effort to imagine it was the cloak giving the orders, not herself.

Merrie cried out into the pillow as she waited for anticipation. She wasn't even sure who was giving the cloak orders anymore, but she didn't care.

It struck. Her vision blurred as it drove deep into her sphincter, piercing it with only the bluntest of tips. It drove deep, almost a quarter meter before yanking out.

Merrie's entire body shook with the intense pleasure that slammed into her. She clutched the pillow, using her arms to shove it into her face.

The cloak stuck again, impaling her ass. With every stroke, it grew thicker and harder. It twisted together as it punched into her sphincter, the ridges of each loop riding against her sphincter as it forced her open.

She shuddered and cried out again, losing herself in the growing pleasure that formed as the cloak impaled her again and again.

The cloak continued to thicken with each thrust, more of its body joining the coil that impaled her asshole. She could see the tiny opening beginning to gape open between the rapid fire strokes that filled her deeply before yanking out. Her vision bobbed with each stroke, bringing her closer and closer to the impaled asshole.

Merrie's stomach thumped against the mattress as the cloak reached deeper into her body. She could feel the girth, now two fingers wide, as it thrust deep into her rectum and to the curve of her insides. The welcoming thump at the gate was a blast of discomfort and pleasure. She moaned and pushed herself to her knees, holding herself up as she begged her own cloak to fuck her harder.

It swelled as it obeyed her command. Soon, she felt her nether ring beginning to strain underneath the girth of the intruding cock. It didn't need lubrication, it was smoother than any mortal fabric. It drove deep with little resistance but she felt every ripple of cloth and darkness as it raced past her straining asshole.

When it hit the curve of her rectum, it simply bent and followed it deeper. It burrowed far into her organs, swelling her belly and making it hard to breathe before yanking out. As it did, her tiny little hole gaped open. It began to close but then the cloak was already impaling her again. She felt it curve almost up to her lungs before yanking out. Every ridge of its twist rubbed against her sphincter, sending bolts of pleasure coursing through her system.

Her body protested the intrusion. The cloak was almost as thick as her forearm and it plunged deep into her body. Her insides strained around it, stretching like a glove as it took meter-long thrusts into her body. Each one filled her completely before sucking out.

She moaned as she remembered how the cloak would pour into her enemies' mouths and noses before ripping out of their chest. The intimacy wasn't lost on her; if she lost control, it would drive so far into her ass that it could come bursting past her lips.

Merrie came hard at the thought of the cloak fucking her from sphincter to lips. At the same time, she was terrified of it but the image of it filling her to the point of bursting as it pumped in and out was too much. She screamed loudly into the pillow as her body exploded into black flames of ecstasy.

Her shields crumbled under the onslaught of her own orgasm. It rippled out from her, an unconscious wave of pleasure that easily shattered the wards to Borias' room and spread through the rest of the mill. There was only one person nearby, but that only meant the full brunt of her orgasm focused on him.

She felt his orgasm like a flame in the darkness. It exploded and rippled back with pleasure of her own. She welcomed it and felt his orgasm slam into her own. It added to her own pleasure as she writhed on the bed with her own cloak impaling her ass.

Shuddering, Merrie held herself up off the bed until the last of the pleasure faded. Then, with a happy sigh, she let the cloak pull out of her tortured ass and thumped down. The pulse of her afterglow ran through her veins as she let her focus remained on the cloak, watching a sated bitch spread out on the bed.

Above her, the front door to the mill house thumped open. "You be a bitch!" bellowed Borias. It sounded like he was smiling.

She wanted to see him. Before she realized it, the cloak had taken her senses as it raced up along the ceiling, fluttering as it floated across the boards until it found a tiny crack between the floorboards above her. Her vision and hearing both blurred as it squeezed through but then sharpened as it blossomed back into shape underneath one of the couches in a sitting room.

Light streamed through the curtains. It blinded her but didn't burn. Instead, it cast most of the room into a hellish glare that hurt to focus on. Fortunately, the front door was shadowed by curtains.

Borias stood there, his hand down his jeans. He had a smile on his lips as he pulled out his hand. Cum dripped off his grip. He sniffed at it and then wiped it on his jeans. "She need to be learning how to shield again. I can't be coming when I'm working with tools like that. Might be cutting off my dick."

With a grin, he headed for the back stairs.

The cloak followed, dragging Merrie's senses along it as it found a shadowed spot underneath a cabinet and then around the stairs. When he opened the door, she saw the inky darkness of the basement as a welcoming comfort. There was no glare of light blinding her down there.

As soon as Borias headed down the stairs, she sent the cloak flowing after him. It accelerated in the darkness and she used it to slide under the door. When it wrapped around her, she found it easy to release the spell that let her cast her senses away and they settled back into her familiar icy body.

With a gasp, her vision cleared and she could see again.

A throbbing in her chest drove her to crawl to her knees and pull her arms up to her collar. The icy metal thumped against the ends of her severed limbs, reminding her that she was submissive to any master, even Borias.

The door slammed open. There was the dimmest of lights behind him, he had forgotten to close the basement door, and it haloed his body with brilliance.

Merrie winced at the light, tears streaming from her eyes.

“Bitch.”

Her pussy pulsed with the dominating tone.

“You be making me come.”

Shivering with hunger, she barked once and wagged her tail. She knew the exact things she needed to do to turn him on. Lifting her buttocks slightly, she threw her hips and breasts into the movement, shaking her entire body back and forth as she panted.

Borias let out a strangled moan. He stepped into the room and closed the door behind him. “Come here, I’m going to fuck that pretty face of yours. And then I be fucking that ass of yours until you scream out.”

She couldn’t wait.

t'Sade

Hidden

10

Merrie smiled to herself as she slept against Borias. Touching his body still hurt, but it was now only a mild itching. The frequent touching and orgasms had helped reduce the pain as pleasure overcame her pain. It felt good to have his warm body against her icy one. It was comfort in the darkness and gave her hope that she would recover enough to see the light again.

It had been a four days since Claston and the others left for the fair. Bass would be back the next evening, which both excited and terrified Merrie at the same time. She knew that her hatred for him was because of Haviston's compulsion but she still had a fear she would attack him. She knew that she could hold her own against Sable, simply because she had become more powerful than the one alpha. It was different with two of them, between Dixie and Sable, they would easily win.

The last time, she was able to fight with Bass, Tabitha, and the two alphas because she had Lady Anasome's perfume with her. The scene, *Complicated Bitch*, was her own private scent but it also pushed away compulsions and commands. Without it, she didn't know if the compulsion to avoid the mill would somehow come back.

She wasn't sure why she was worried. She was back at the mill. She was in the basement with her naked body pressed up against Borias. The one thing Haviston didn't want was for her to return, that has already been broken.

With a sigh, she pressed her cheek against Borias' chest and listened to his heart beat. She wasn't sure what happened to her anymore. Was her recovery because of the collar's powerful

regeneration or something else? Did the Lord of Shadows have some other plan for her? Someone once told her beings that powerful always had a cost when they helped her.

Not wanting to let her thoughts dwell on uncomfortable topics, Merrie cast her senses out to her cloak. It billowed out of the darkness and flowed over her, looming like a dragon over her head. When she gave her own vision to the cloak, it was much easier to sink inside it and use its body as her own.

A ripple of power ran down the length of the cloak before it flowed along the ceiling and found the crack to the next floor up. Underneath the couch, it stretched out along the darkness and peered into the room beyond. It was dark but long before the false dawn. There wasn't a single creature moving but she could hear the buzz of summer insects outside and the ripple of smaller life surrounding the house.

She smiled to herself. It was nice not to be trapped in the room, though she didn't dare find out if the cloak could handle sunlight. Even if she could figure out how to see in the intense glare, she didn't want to risk it being burned away or destroyed. It was part of her, but the effort to recover the cloak sapped her strength. She had created it only a few days ago but she still had not recovered the energy to create a new one.

Rippling along the ground, she slipped through the house and enjoyed the memories that came from each room. She recalled when she was fucked in the bathroom, raped against the stairs, and even when she was comforted by Borias on the stairs back when she was just accepting her new role as a bitch and an alpha.

Flowing up to the third floor, she slid underneath Bass' closed door and into his room. It was almost like she remembered it. Along one wall were piles of pillows scattered in a large pit. That was Sable's bed when she wasn't sleeping on the mattress with Bass. Merrie remembered her first night there and sent her body exploring through the gaps of the pillows before cascading up along the bed.

Moonlight speared through the window. It was bright and glaring, blinding her. She pulled away but not before lingering along the shadows of the mattress and the headboard. After a few seconds,

she lipped down and along the line of shackles where he had bolted her into place before gently fucking her ass with his massive cock.

After a few minutes of basking in the remembered pleasures, she slipped through the open door and back into the hallway. Her cloak flowed down the stairs in a sheet of black. It felt good to just spread her power out across the surfaces of the house while it was empty.

She reached the second floor and froze.

The door was closed when she entered Bass' room. Now it was open.

Fear prickled her thoughts. Down in the basement, her physical body squirmed slightly.

She sent her cloak back up the stairs, no longer enjoying herself but keeping it tight to the edges of the stairs and as hidden as possible. As she did, she reached out for Bass' room to double-check the door.

Merrie couldn't find it.

Frowning, she stopped at the top of the stairs, a puddle of darkness, and looked around. She saw Rendi's old room but her eyes slipped away when she looked to where Bass should have slept. Her mind was convinced there was only one room on the top stairs, but she knew it was otherwise. She spent days in it, days of being raped and pounded, trained and broken. She had every orifice of her body impaled on his thick, huge cock. There was no way she imagined any of that.

A pressure built in her head, forcing her attention away from his door.

The fear built up. She experienced the same thing many times in her life, it was a repulsion spell. It was a way of pushing attention away from a person or location by forcing their eyes to shift to the side and twisting the mind to stop thinking about it.

Merrie had spent years with Rimmy, a master of the repulsions. She also had exceeded the dark-skinned woman when Merrie took over shading their house over the years.

A pang of sorrow flashed over it. Someone had broken her shade—her repulsion spell—the night Kine was murdered. The gaping hole in her heart when her first master died tore at her and she felt despair coming in along the edges of her thought.

It took all her will to force her thoughts away from the dark night. When she did, she looked around and found that she could see Bass' room once again. She didn't remember when it became possible, only one moment it was there and the next she was dragging her thoughts back to it.

Warily, she focused her attention on Rendi's room and found that it was impossible to find.

The repulsion had moved but she sensed no magic.

Someone was in the house.

The hackles on the back of her neck rose up and a low growl shook her body.

She felt Borias waking up next to her. Frustrated, she yanked her cloak back and it raced into the basement, using the cracks in the house to hopefully avoid detection. As soon as she could, she released the spell and let her hearing and sight return.

"—wrong?" Borias whispered next to her.

Merrie let out a shuddering breath. She reached out and probed the shields around Borias' room. He was skilled at creating shields, but she didn't know if they had been pierced. She looked around, wondering what the stranger was doing in the various rooms.

"Merrie?" he asked again.

Merrie reached up and pressed her wrist to his lips. With a soft moan, she crawled up on his body and slid down until her damp pussy pressed against his limp cock.

He started to ask something but she silenced him with a thought. (Someone is in the house.)

The muscles in his body tensed.

(I don't know if they are watching or how long. They were in Bass' room and now your mother's.)

Borias tensed, the muscles of his body locking. He glanced around and she could feel him cataloging any spells he had nearby that could be used for defense.

Merrie sent a pulse of pure pleasure into it, forcing it along his veins.

His cock grew instantly and painfully hard.

Without letting him respond, she sank down on it and impaled her cunt on the hardness. With their bodies intimately together, she

opened up her connection with him and felt the intimacy that only an alpha could have with their lover. (Fuck me,) she ordered.

Borias did after only a heartbeat of hesitation. He gripped her waist, his palm burning along her skin, and began to thrust. The pleasure slid into her thoughts and she felt the swelling of energy.

(Harder, dominate me.)

Borias grabbed her hair and rolled over. As soon as he was on top, he began to pound into her pussy, slamming it home. "Be taking this," he snapped as he fought with fear, anger, and lust at the same time.

Merrie moaned and writhed underneath him, enjoying the hardness that impaled her. With each thrust, little burst of pleasure and energy coursed along her body. She let her mind drift as she inspected his shields for any sign of intrusion. They were solid as she remembered it, a shimmering wall that would keep out any magical intrusion.

Borias grabbed her throat, squeezing down as he accelerated his thrusts. Her entire body shook as he drove her into the mattress.

Not expecting his hand or being choked, she came as his cock pounding into her pussy. She sank into the helplessness and the difficulty breathing and thrust up against him, meeting each stroke with her own wet smack. Her body strained to keep up, she was still weak from recovering.

A heat rippled from the door. She looked at it but saw nothing but her eyes slid away. With a start, she realized that the intruder was about to enter Borias' room.

Frantic, she grabbed all the energy from her orgasm and wrapped her own mental shields around her. Darkness plunged into her thoughts as calligraphy swirled across her mind. The ink darkness flooded through her veins as she pulled a shade right around her body but left Borias exposed.

Borias faltered. (Where are you?)

(Keep fucking! Just pretend you are masturbating.) She knew her thoughts were tinged with her fear. She could feel the light coming under the door but couldn't see it. It burned at her skin as it peeked through the cracks. Whoever was coming had a lantern but was using their own repulsion to shield her attention away from it.

He struggled for a moment, his cock slipping out.

Merrie used the intimate connection between them to give an image of her body underneath him. She threw everything she could into giving it as much detail as possible. (Dominate me! Be a fucking master, now!)

He realigned his cock and drove it hard into her pussy, slamming it home. “Fucking cunt!” he snapped as he clamped down on his hand. He grip wrapped around her throat and choked off her breath.

Dark pleasures surged through her body and she fed it into the shadow, wrapping herself in a repulsion that she hoped was stronger than the intruder’s ability to break it. Her attention was forced away from the door and she knew they were inside. Her body burned with their light, black mist rising off her skin as it began to darken and peel.

Merrie almost screamed out. (Don’t scream!) she ordered herself. The command rippled away and came slamming back, a powerful command from her mistress. Her throat seized up as she continued to project her agony into Borias’ mind.

He continued to slam into her, driving hard and fast. “Fucking bitch! Fuck, fuck!”

Knowing that an active spell might break the shade around her, Merrie cast out her senses and let them wait. It was a passive sense, not as powerful but much harder to detect. She focused on the places her mind would go but mapped out the places she refused to look. The moving heat and the burning of her skin confirmed their position. More of her skin peeled away, revealing shifting blackness that made up her core. Veins, dark as pitch, pulsed with her orgasms and the rapid beat of her heart as agony tore through her. She could feel her glass-like bones coming dangerously close to the invisible light.

The repulsion field moved across the room at a steady pace. It didn’t rush, it didn’t stop.

She bit her lips against the agony. Blood dotted her lip and she could taste the ether on her lips. She could barely concentrate with the rapidly pounding cock that slammed into her, driving her hard into the mattress. Pleasure and agony warred with each other. Her vision blurred as she mapped the intruder’s circuit of Borias’ room.

When it stopped, it was right at the foot of the bed. Whoever it was, it was looking straight at Borias and maybe her. The light from its lantern or torch tore along her skin, peeling back more of her flesh. Black blood poured out across the sheets, staining it almost instantly. Wavers of energy rippled off it as the shadows seemed to gather around her own life's fluids.

The fear rose inside her, choking her as she prayed her shade would keep against who ever was less than a meter from their bodies. She didn't know if they would attack or try to kill them, she only tried to shield herself from their attention and be ready to strike if they did.

"Why be fucking leaving me!? Why you be sold!?" Borias' cock was larger than it had ever been before. It slammed into her hard and fast, splashing cum everywhere. He had already emptied his balls into her and the wetness splashed everywhere. Each thrust of his hips ground against her pelvis. His knuckles creaked as he strangled her, the pressure on her throat threatening to collapse it.

There was a flash of energy, a detection spell. It slammed into her shade and slid off. A second spell went off, this one was lost in her shade, sliding to the side without even a ripple of power.

She studied the magic floating around her. It felt and tasted differently than her shadow or psionics. She thought it was related to Borias' magic but it was more dynamic and threaded with energies that were otherworldly but not divine. Borias' energies was controlled and structured, this one wasn't. She knew it meant that the person watching her had learned it intuitively instead of being trained to use magic.

The energy waved over the bed as the intruder focused one spell after another against the bed.

(Don't stop!) she commanded, driving pure lust through his veins.

Borias groaned and came again, his cock swollen and hard as he drove into her. Each thrust slammed his head against her cervix, punching it with incredible force that added to her agony.

Merrie screwed her eyes tightly close, fighting against all the pains that sparked along her pussy and throat. Her legs were burning, the air burned in her lungs, she was bleeding, and her shadows were leaking out. She could feel the black veins of her

heart struggling to keep her inside her shell but it wasn't going to last much longer. She bit down harder on her lip, her teeth cutting into her divine lips.

The intruder pulled away.

At first she thought they were going to attack but it was a leisurely movement. The long agonizing moment for them to leave the room was torture. She could feel every beam of light as it burned away her skin, tearing away her only way of surviving.

Every slam of Borias' hips threatened to break her control. When the door closed, she tried to project to him but he was lost in his fantasy. She almost let her shade down to let him down he was killing her but then realized the intruder might have left something behind. She screwed up her courage and focused her attention on Borias.

His mind was a ragged mess. Her desperate projection and command had burned into his thoughts, driving him to masturbate with the image of her. It took her long moments to pry his mind away from her domination. With the telepathic intimacy, there was nothing to shield him from the full brunt of her command. (Stop!)

Borias slowed down and then stopped. Panting, he shuddered with one final orgasm and pulled out. The coppery scent of blood filled the air and she could tell that some of the stickiness that poured out of her wasn't cum but his own life.

"F-Fucking... bitch," he gasped and rolled over.

(Heal yourself,) she projected.

Borias shook violently as he reached down. Energy rose around his hands and they began to glow.

At the first touch of light, Merrie jumped and realized she was vulnerable. With a cry, she rolled off the bed and hit the ground hard. Heart pounding in her chest, she crawled underneath the bed and summoned her shadow to wrap around her.

Even with the darkness suffocating her, she could feel the light against her skin. It only lasted a few seconds but those moments were agony with her burned skin ground into the hard-packed earth underneath the bed.

(M-Merrie?)

Merrie wiped back the tears and peeked out of the room. It was dark again. She kept the shade tight around her as she crawled into

bed and nestled up against him. He didn't respond to her until she projected her position to him.

He wrapped his arm around her as if he was cradling a pillow. "G-Good... girl," he gasped. (Merrie?)

(I'm here.)

(Why can't I see you?) It was always strange how Borias could communicate clearly via telepathy but not while he spoke.

(I shaded myself. They were in the room with us.)

(Did they see you?)

(I don't think so.) She projected memories of what she saw through his mind.

He stiffened for a moment and then groaned. (I've never come so hard that I started to bleed.)

(I'm so sorry,) she sent only a fraction of her despair at him, (it was the only thing I could think to do.)

He leaned back on the pillow. The air wavered around him as he exhaled hard. (Good girl.)

The remembered phrase rippled through her body, giving her a bit of strength.

(Do you think they left something behind?)

(They didn't attack and they didn't take anything I saw. What else would they be doing?)

(Detection or remote sensing. Mages used to put them on bugs to spy on others. It could also be a trap.) He held her tight against his body.

The movement caused pressure on her wounds and she winched from the agony. (Wouldn't they just set them off.)

(It depends on what they want. Sometimes it's better to have them ready in case you need them at the right moment. At school, I heard how some mages would leave killing traps hidden in an embassy for years until they were needed. By then, everyone stopped looking and never realized their death was only inches from their head.)

Merrie shivered at the thought. (They were in the rest of the house. I felt them moving around but I don't know for how long.)

(There could be dozens of traps or bugs then. No chance we would catch them all.) Frustration and fear rose in his thoughts. (We

wouldn't even know if there were any in here. Is that why you are still hidden?)

She thought about it. She was just using remote sensing herself, it made sense that someone else would do it. She couldn't drop the shade without risking being caught. She nodded and projected her thoughts through the intimate connection.

To her surprise, sadness and helplessness came back through their connection.

(Borias? What's wrong?)

(I can't heal you.)

Surprise rippled through her. (What?)

(I felt what the light did to your body. I felt your pain. I can't heal that without revealing you. There is no way to heal those injuries without using magic.) The sorrow deepened and she felt it echoing in her own thoughts.

Taking a deep breath, Merrie looked down at her skin. It had peeled back to reveal the dark shadows again. Wisps of obsidian rose out of her body, blowing away with the faint breeze from both of their movements. It hurt but she knew she could take it.

Turning back, she looked up into his eyes and smiled. (Just tell me to survive.)

Tears ran in his eyes. (You be a good girl.)

She moaned and let the pleasure ripple through her body. It may take a while but she would recover. She had experience far worse already since she was reborn.

Bugged

11

Merrie didn't sleep well. Keeping the shade wrapped around her was exhausting. Back in the day, she had a house to anchor it to but in the basement room, she had to keep it flowing around her to avoid causing Borias to disappear suddenly. Neither were sure if the spells left being were watching them or traps, or if there were any, but it seemed better safe than sorry.

(Can't sleep?) asked Borias as he curled up on the blankets. His toe touched her as she slept on the foot of the bed to avoid any behavior.

She sighed and closed her eyes. (No, I can't tell if there is something here or not.)

(I know what that is like. In Abbinkey, I was sentence for life. I didn't even have a chance to escape but I also knew that it was only matter of time before someone came for me. Mages were always wanted in the prison, usually as something to toy with or torture.)

The remembered horror and fear resonated along their telepathic connection. Merrie shivered as years were compressed into seconds, a montage of him jumping at every shadow and every opening door. (Why?)

(Because we couldn't use our magic. Every mage in Abbinkey was geased to never use their source of power or have their insides liquefy and pour out of the nearest orifice. I saw it happen once, it was terrible since the spell also kept the poor bastard alive for hours while blood and gore spewed out.) The memories grew dark. (They laughed at him. All those fuckers just sat back and laughed. I heard the making bets on when he stopped screaming or if they could identify the organs that came out.)

Merrie closed her eyes tightly. The memories were raw inside Borias, a pointed remainder that he suffered a lot before Bass rescued him. (I'm sorry.)

(It is what it is.)

She projected nothing in return. Instead, she just basked in his affection and let his presence keep her company. Slowly, she started to drift to sleep again but her fear pricked her awake. She opened her eyes and stared out into the room. It looked just like it always did, but there was the threat. The darkness gave her no comfort because she couldn't discern if she was safe or not.

Slowly, she pushed out her senses, spreading them along the shadows. Her world grew thin as she caressed the wood and floor, tracing every centimeter with her mind. Billowing with her mental command, her shadow cloak spread out across the ground and her senses attached to it. This time, she sank deeper into her spell until she lost connection with her body and felt everything through the cloak.

She was gliding. She could feel every bump along the ground and every ridge in the bricks. To inspect each one would take forever but she didn't know how to find something that wasn't there. Frustration hummed inside her as she swept along the surface without a clue of how to find it.

Merrie didn't know what to do if she found it. If it was watching her, why? Why did someone need information about the mill? The only thing she could think of was to wait for some admission of guilt or a weakness and then use it against them.

She also didn't know if the intruder was aware of her presence. She hid the best she could, but there were far more powerful people than her when it came to creating and breaking repulsion spells. She worried her lip and switched her attention over to the kitchen area. Years ago, she had enjoyed the different spells that were embedded in the parchment. Borias used them since he couldn't tap into his own power. They were spells that altered the nature of things, usually to make healthy food look and taste like shit.

With a smile, Merrie remembered how Borias crafted each meal for maximum disgust. He was skilled in making something look like a bowl of diarrhea but be made only out of carrots and potatoes. He has other spells to prevent disease, sickness, and infestations. She

had one of his runes on her inner thigh, or did before her body was completely destroyed.

Curious, she looked inward to herself. The plague rune, as it was known, was gone as was the rule of cleanliness. She also had a rune of sterility added by Kine. Before the goddess, they were small marks on her inner thighs but when she looked at her own magical aura, she saw nothing of those spell. Instead, there was only a shadowy darkness that boiled inside her, an inhuman core to her very human shell.

Somehow, she doubted she was capable of having children anymore. And the Shadows would corrode anything living, she suspected the same was for any disease that entered her body.

“Uh,” Borias said as he crawled out of bed. “I gotta pee.”

He didn't look at her as he headed around the bed and then up the stairs. She listened to him, counting the steps as he headed out near the kitchen and then to the front door. Unlike Bass and the others, Borias preferred to pee outside and only use the bathroom on the floor above when he had to shit.

She closed her eyes again and tried not to think about being watched. It was hard enough keeping the shade on her, she didn't want to—

Her thoughts froze and she lifted her head again. Turning, she looked toward the wall with the stairs. Counting. If there was a bug, it was probably being hidden by a repulsion spell. She needed a pattern she could count and maybe she would be able to find it.

Turning back, she looked at the room. Seeing the casks, she counted each one but it looked right. She tried counting off the cabinets but the number looked right.

Then she focused on the bricks. There were too many to count without walking along them. She smiled, she could. With a surge of power, she gathered up her cloak and sent her senses along it. As the black shadows flowed over each one, she tallied up the count to run a circuit of the room.

(... 215, 216, 217.)

Frowning, she tried again but went a row lower.

(... 218.)

Borias came down the stairs, his bare feet scuffing on the wood.

Merrie finished another row. (... 217.)

When he crawled into bed, he brushed against her just as she finished another row.

(... 218.)

(What are you doing, Merrie?)

(I'm seeing if there a repulsion on of the bricks. Do you know how many there are?)

(Either 217 or 218 bricks in 12 rows. From the bed, there are 81 or 82 visible bricks on the far wall.) The memories that came up of long hours watching over bitches crying themselves to sleep. The number had been burned into his memory.

(Can you also count?)

He started at the bottom, counting the bricks that were visible from his bed. She did the same from the top as they focused on the same wall.

(81.)

(82.)

(81.)

(82. Are you sure this will find it?)

(81. Yes,) she projected with little confidence.

(80. Same as usual.)

(81.)

(82.)

(Wait!) Merrie's ears perked up. (Go back two.)

(80, so that's the right number.)

She smiled to herself. She held her breath as she counted the same row. (... 78, 79, 80. Just as I... no, there is 81. There has to be.)

Surprise and elation rose inside Borias. (Really, it was that easy.)

(I haven't found it yet.)

Merrie frowned and then began to inspect the wall. She started by counting the bricks, comparing multiple rows and stopping when the numbers were different. It took her minutes, maybe half an hour, before she isolated it down by a single brick. The only way she could look at it was to order herself to look at it at all costs; the power of her adamantite collar was far stronger than any domination from a repulsion.

Heart beating in her chest, a triple beat, she sent her cloak up along the wall and to the bricks. Concentrating, she focused all of her senses through it and kept her attention locked on the brick as

she worked her way through the barely visible repulsion spell that tried to push her eyes away.

t'Sade

More Bugs

12

Hours had passed while she focused on the spell. The focus was innocuous, a single shard of glass wrapped in spider silk. It was light enough that it clung to the crack of the wall with the sticky web. Like the design, the spell was small but complicated. There were at least five layers to it, the outer being the repulsion spell that made it difficult to concentrate on.

It wasn't shadow magic, she was sure of that, but it had a foul taste to the magic. It also matched the energies she picked up from the intruder; each of the layers had the same touch of magic. It meant that a single person created the spell and bound it to the glass.

The repulsion itself wasn't powerful but it was precise. The larger the area, the more energy it took. A single splinter was easy to protect, it only took about the same amount of energy as maintaining a light spell.

It was the spells underneath that worried her. Each layer was bound into the others, creating a tightly woven pattern of magic that depended on the others to remain stable.

The next one was sensory, it passed information along a delicate-looking strand of power that traveled only a millimeter before it disappeared between the gap between dimensions. That scared Merrie because she only knew how to step across to the Shadows and this spell was using a similar technique to continually provide information. The connection went both ways, she could almost feel a sense of telepathy coursing along the trans-dimensional strand.

One of the final layers she could identify also had to do with telepathy, but it was patterned to only pick up telepathy. Judging

from the energies, it was aimed for a very specific type of telepathy but she couldn't identify which one. Most of the spell was designed to pick it out from other forms of mental communication. She thought about Haviston and how he communicated almost exclusively with telepathy. From what she could tell, the spell would ignore his projections along with her communication.

She had to be careful to explore the weave of magic to get to the inner layers. As far as she could tell, the first ones were holding the inner one in place. It was a trap of some sort, one that could be triggered by any of the other ones failing. Remove the repulsion and it would fall apart. Sense something specific, it would open. Even an outside command could drive it to fall apart.

The inner most layer was too protected by the others. She only got a taste of the power. The foulness clung to the tip of her tongue, staining it with something poisonous. She tasted it with a frown, trying to remember where she had felt that same type of energy before.

(Merrie?)

Merrie let her concentration drift back to Borias. (I'm back.)

(Do you have anything?) He was worried and nervous. His mind kept going through scenarios of running to Bass to tell him or calling Tabitha to help. Mixed into those scenarios was Merrie destroying everyone as a cloud of darkness.

She sent a comforting wave back to him. (I'm not going to destroy everything again.)

(Again?)

Guiltily, she gave him a brief image of the Shadowed District when she brought the shadows into Franome City during a bout of depression and suicidal thoughts. Thousands had died before she managed to clear it again.

Fear and sadness rose up from his thoughts. (I'm sorry. I wish I was there.)

She thought for a moment. (I'm glad you weren't.)

Surprise. (Why?)

(When I was alone, I went to a dark place. I came back damaged and helpless. But I survived. I survived starvation, torture, and loss. The woman who joined the fight against Gillette and help defeat Lemetri—)

(You killed Lemetri.)

She remembered the boiling darkness as the Lords of Shadow burst out of the world and pulled her back. Careful not to let Borias see it, she shook her head. (I helped. But if I didn't go through what I did, if I didn't lose Kine, didn't have Rakin rape and torture me, if I didn't bind to myself, then I wouldn't have been there to help you.)

(But you lost so much.)

Merrie sniffed at the memories of Fang and Tamin. (Yes,) was the only response she could give.

He stroked his foot against her side, sadness and love resonating along the connection of their bodies.

She basked in it for a moment. (I'm scared. I don't know if I can win this.)

(What did you see?)

She gave him a compressed analysis of the spell, breaking down as much as she could. There were some things that couldn't translate from either of her innate magics, alpha and shadow, to his crystalline and patterned wizardry, but there was enough for them to work together.

There were too many questions. She knew enough to dispel it but that would trigger the innermost layers which she couldn't identify. She let part of her mind work on some way of detecting the spell without breaking the spell, that would at least let identify where the glass was.

(This telepathy sensor bothers me,) Borias said.

(Why?)

(Because there is only one person who uses telepathy here, Haviston. Everyone else speaks.)

Merrie frowned, pondering it. It came to her in a flash just as she felt the the same epiphany burst along her connection with Borias. (The alphas. It lets someone hear the alphas talking with their masters.)

(Fuck,) snapped Borias.

Dread filled her. The connection between alpha and master was intimate and powerful, more so than almost any other form of communication. She was told that it couldn't be broken into but she had done that in the fight with the paladins. She had briefly bonded with the other alphas and turned them into a single gestalt fighting

force, capable of coordinating instantly with the full experiences of all five members.

She brought her senses back to the cloak and stared at the pattern. Her heart pounded faster, the triple beat slamming against her chest. She already knew the answer but she had to see it for herself. After a few seconds, she confirmed her dread and pulled back.

Taking a shuddering breath, she closed her eyes. (Someone stole my spell.)

(What?)

(The gestalt. Part of my spell is in there, I can feel the pattern. It isn't the whole thing, not enough to create a full bond, but they stole enough to partially connect. Just enough to listen on the connection between the alphas.)

(How?)

She sniffed as a tear ran down her cheek. (Someone was watching our battle. It's been a year, I bet it took them that long to puzzle through it and to enchant that glass shard.)

(Does that mean it can hear us?)

Merrie pulled the spell apart in her head. (No, I have to touch you for this. This is an intimacy that would require one of those shards to be stuck between us. Between that and the shade, I can project to you but only if we are touching.)

Borias groaned and rested his arm over his face. (Someone has been planning on attacking this mill for over a year. They are prepared to take on two alphas, their masters, and no doubt me and Haviston. These are the plans of someone who understands strategy and no doubt has backup plans.)

(Like knowing there is a shadow being in the house?) Her mind rippled with fear and growing anger. It pulsed around her, swirling in a black cloud that teased her senses.

He projected darkly, his own emotions beginning to be colored by dread. (We have to assume that they are prepared to take you on. They may not know the limitations but even saying your weakness once, or letting the alphas know about it, could risk everything.)

Borias sighed. (Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. I'm in prison again. There are traps all around us and they are waiting until the right moment to set them off.)

(When?) but Merrie already knew the answer.

(At the worst possible moment. I have a feeling we are going to find it soon.)

(What do we do, master?)

Borias' attention drew into sharp focus. (First we find out how many there are and see if we can shield ourselves from them. Bass and the others are walking into a trap.)

t'Sade

Ambushed

13

Time was beating against them. Merrie frantically worked through the components of the spell, trying to get them to fit together that they wouldn't fall apart in a burst of energy that would trigger the trap. She used her own powers, the calligraphic swirling of shadows while Borias worked on his own version based on arcane patterns. They traded information in half-shaped words and concepts.

It was like working with a true master. They didn't need to finish sentences or even acknowledge each other. Their minds plucked knowledge from each other as they translated the foreign concepts into their own magical system and integrated the results into the spell.

Merrie alternated her senses from the cloak to her own body and back again. It quickly became second nature as they inspected the shard for details. They had to trust her shade from letting whoever was on the far side from detecting her attention. It was harder than she thought and the haze of exhaustion was fraying her concentration. More than once, she almost set off the bug and whatever spell was wrapped inside.

They had been at it all night and most of the day. They were expecting Bass and the others in early evening which meant they had only a few short hours before they walked into the traps.

(Do you have a plan?) asked Borias.

(Not really,) Merrie projected as she wove her spell together. It was almost coming into a stable pattern but she needed more time.

(I think these traps must mainly be in the house. It would be the best place to set them off. We need to get everyone as far away as possible.)

(Can't we just meet them out by the road? No, they would be waiting there for something unusual like that.)

(And I'm betting that if we act like we know, they'll set off just enough to take me out. That would give you a chance to leave and warn them but then—)

(No!) snapped Merrie.

Borias forced his thoughts from their suicidal spiral into something more cheerful. (And here I was hoping for a blow job for volunteering.)

Merrie grinned at him. (I'll blow you if we survive. In fact, I'll let you snuff me if we survive.)

A wave of desire slammed into her. He tore his thoughts away, a reflexive action after so many years of having a geas that would kill him. Slowly, he wrapped his hand around his cock. He pumped slowly with his mind distracted so Merrie sent a pulse of pleasure to get him dripping wet. That way, it looked like his thoughts were focused on some fantasy instead of trying to decipher a spell in his head.

(Thank you.)

Merrie sent a pulse of love back. (Why don't you and Tabitha go on a date? I remember when you sneaked out of the house to visit the pond.) She followed by her memories of watching them talking, it was five years ago and the memories were faded with disuse but they brought a wave of affection coursing along the connection back to Merrie.

(That was a long time ago.)

(She'll remember. It will get her away and then you can talk.)

(What about Bass?)

Merrie thought for a moment, pausing as the components of her spell refused to mesh together. She frowned and wiped it clear from her mind before rebuilding it. (Maybe I can dominate Ass Licker and Fir? They don't have telepathy and I should do it if I can touch them with my cloak. There is the other pond, Ass Licker tried to run away from it one day.)

(She's called Cinthia now unless she's being naughty. Cute girl, she's really grown since you left.)

She remembered picking up the memory of that from a few years ago. The last time she saw Licker was the day that Rakin had almost

bought her. Only a surprise purchase by Kine saved her from a lifetime of pleasure, submissions, and pain. She nodded to herself and let her tail wag. (I love you,) she said before the dread could fill her.

Borias sighed and stroked harder. (Be safe, Merrie. This is going to get nasty quickly. If we screw up, then whatever is in that trap is going to set off.)

(Let's hope there is only a few. Then we can stop them before whatever ambush is coming.)

(I think I have it. Hold on.) He gathered his power together, forming an invisible pattern between his fingers.

Merrie reached out and gave it a little power, enhancing his ability like all alphas could do.

The pattern snapped into place and then disappeared. His eyes began to glow with magic. Slowly, he looked around but then froze.

(Borias?) she asked.

(Fuck me piss hole with a broadsword.) Along with his swear, he sent an image through his own eyes.

His spell painted a rune over the glass shard. The faintly glowing image was hard to miss in the dark, though only he could see it. But there wasn't one of the, there were dozens. Dozens of glass shards scattered across the room, they were dropped between the parchments and on the ground. More had bounced under the casks while a few stuck to the door itself.

Merrie froze, her heart stopping for a long beat. Despair burned her thoughts, there were too many of them.

(Is there a chance that they only put that many down here?) Borias asked but he already knew the answer.

Merrie finished her own spell. It was a bit more complicated than Borias but it was designed to also disconnect from her and follow her cloak. The knot of magic rose up as the cloak swooped around and caught it along with her vision and hearing. Together, they flowed across the ground.

The spell showed the shards as red spiders, it seemed to fit with the energy inside it.

Able to see them, she easily maneuvered her cloak around the tiny immobile creatures still in their eggs. The cloak flowed up through the ceiling and underneath the couch. She paused only a

heartbeat and saw far more spiders markers laying in wait. There were hundreds of them poised to go off as soon as something triggered them.

Frantic, Merrie sent her cloak to the window and looked out.

There were far more surrounding the mill house. Thousands or even millions of glowing red spiders laying in wait. They had been spread out at least five hundred meters from the house. With her spell, wherever she could see past the moonlight, she saw nothing but spiders.

A wave of energy rose up, the first buffets of a storm about to strike.

Brilliance rose up along a hill and then ducked below it. In the afterimages of darkness, she spotted two wolves sprinting toward her at unnaturally speed. Their passing left a wake of leaves and dirt flying.

The light came back and she could see it was a wagon. The brilliance came from Bass and Sable who were crouched on top of it. Both had their tower shields up and they were armored.

A sick feeling slammed into Merrie. She yanked her cloak back and slammed her senses back into her body. As soon as she could, she projected as strongly as she could. (We have a problem.)

Borias jerked at the image she set. (This is too well planned. Time to change our own plans. New one, you get Tabitha and Dixie far away as possible.)

Merrie gathered energy for her shape-changing spell.

(No!) snapped Borias as he jerked.

Merrie held herself still.

(They can't know there is a shadow creature here. Everyone knows that the Omega came from here. We don't know if they are prepared for you or not. If you reveal yourself, then they will be prepared.)

Tears burned in her eyes. She pawed at the ground, anxious to lash out. Around her, the traps were quiet but that wouldn't last for long. (I can drag you out.)

(I would be looking for that. A creature bursting out of the basement that I already inspected? One that I couldn't see until it decided to be seen? What does that sound like to you?) His mind was already furiously working through other plans.

Merrie's ears flattened against her head. (What do I do?)

(This is too well planned. Even if we run out to stop them before the field, they are going to hit us with everything they have. I would have done that, contingency plans for contingencies. Anyone who spent this much energy to make that many shards must have planned for everything. We can only hope that you are an unknown and can disrupt that. But you need to get out of here.)

She shook her head. (No! I can't leave you.)

(Merrie, leave. Get Tabitha and Dixie away. Bass won't leave if they are running this way, don't even try. You and Dixie are both alphas, you can do a lot of damage but they can't know you are here. Please, it is the only thing that may ruin this ambush.)

Tears ran down her cheeks. (Are you really going to let them walk into a trap?)

Borias sniffed and buried his face into the pillow. He shook violently and she could feel the fear staining his thoughts. (Please, please do this. Get her to the place where you killed Lemetri.) An image came with it, of a dark plot on the land. They could see it from the porch but no one had been able to find it. It had a natural repulsion on it, like most things of the shadow. (There probably is no one there, even if there is, no one would enter a shadow land willingly.)

Above them, there was an explosion as the front door was knocked in. The impact shook everything, even the foundation. "Borias!" screamed Tabitha. "Get your fucking ass up! Fir is dying!"

Around them, the traps began to gather energy.

Borias sat up. He stretched out, his hand brushing against Merrie. (Be safe and I will give you as much time. Maybe whoever has set this trap will let me heal the girl before springing it.)

Desperately wishing there was another way, Merrie got to her knees and brought her cloak around her. It comforted her but also shielded her from observation. Drawing up another familiar spell, she let her body melt into the cloak and merged herself with the darkness. Her view shifted as she flowed off the bed and show along the ground. She reached the stairs and surged up it and out the back door as fast as she could. Less than a heartbeat, she was away from the house and slithering through the grass between the red spiders that were beginning to wake.

She could feel the energy inside the innermost shell now. It was the foul taste of otherworldly power. She had felt the same type before. It was in a little girl, Count Blood's daughter, Dith. The duke and other said she was an infernal, a devil.

Inside the house, there was another crash. "Damn the gods, Borias! Hurry the fuck up!"

Struggling with her fear, Merrie rushed around the house. She saw the wagon coming to halt.

Bass jumped out. He was holding a slender young woman in his armored hands. Her blood dripped off his white armor but left no stains. His massive body was barely contained in the plate armor. The only part visible was his gray skin and yellowed eyes. Even from a distance, she could see the pain his gaze as he rushed toward the house.

Behind him, Sable landed heavily on the ground. The armored dog was larger than a mastiff with the same armor covering every inch of her body. A massive tower shield hovered over her back as runes danced around it. The energy that coursed between her and Bass was brilliant, filled with holy energy as it ricocheted between the two as she enhanced the former paladin.

She thought about the beasts that she had read about but she couldn't easily picture any of them. But she had seen an alpha transform into something other than a dog. Lady Anasome's Alpha, Rose, could turn into a tiger and snake.

Merrie grinned and gathered her energy, combining her shadow and psionic powers together to shape her body. Fresh skin and flesh tore and reformed. She used her cloak to hold her insides together as she forced herself to take on a great cat's shape. Powerful claws and a barrel chest. She struggled to give it colors, the shadows leeching everything out of her, but she managed to force her fur to be white with black strips. A long, spiked tail came out from her rear. The end hovered above her head, ready to strike. She knew her large teeth were glowing with the faint divine power inside Lemetri.

In front of the house, she spotted Cinthia crawling out of the wagon. Years ago, she was a young teenager who fought against her collar. Someone prevented her from being sold at the auction and she remained at the mill with Fir as her mistress. Like Merrie, she was cropped but it was at her elbows and knees instead of ankles

and wrists like Merrie. She crawled on the ground after them, her naked body shimmering in the moonlight that threatened to blind Merrie.

She was also terrified. Fear radiated away from her in waves. It sickened Merrie, but Merrie didn't think she could rescue her and still draw away the alpha.

The last person coming out was Haviston. The balding man struggled with one arm missing. He had a neat robe, but it was stained with blood. He started toward the house but then stopped, a frown on his face. Psionic energy gathered around him, the sharp logic palatable to her senses.

Seeing Haviston gave her an idea. Praying he would forgive her, Merrie fixed her form in her memory with a spell. Then, she accelerated toward him as fast as she could. Her body thudded against the ground, the energy of her cloak pulling her as much as she sprinted toward him.

As she ran, she gathered up everything she knew about the traps and her recovery. Forming them into a parcel of information, she compressed it down as far as she could.

Merrie burst into the light of the front porch with a snarl that shook the windows. The light burned but she was moving too fast to stop and let it burn.

Haviston turned around and his eyes grew wide. Psionic spells slammed into place, defensive spells that would protect him from physical harm.

With a surge of power, Merrie raced past him and slashed out. She tried to graze him but she needed to touch his body. As soon as she did, she punched the mental message through his shields and directly into his mind. Her claws snapped through bone and there was a burst of blood that sprayed after her.

Merrie cringed but she had to keep running. She used her magic to accelerate her body, racing directly to the grove where she died the first time. She knew that no matter how fast she was, Tabitha would catch up. It was only a matter of time if they could get past the spiders before they woke up.

Seconds later, the dual howls of the magical wolves rose up behind her. Energy rolled across the ground as Tabitha and Dixie

charge after her. The power was palatable, a wave of terror before they struck.

Merrie had seen how both had removed heads with their sprints. She wasn't sure how she was going to defend herself. She kept racing as fast as she could. Thankful there were clouds in the air and she used the shadows along the ground to leap forward a hundred meters at a time.

There were still spiders along the ground. They were a lot fewer of them the further she went but she wasn't sure of their limits. She was surprised how far they were though; whoever had set them down had planned for someone moving quickly.

Even so, she could almost count the seconds before the druid and alpha struck.

Even though she was already hitting her limits, she drew calligraphic spells ran across her mind and cast spells to enhance her strength, speed, and defenses. The drain on her resources sapped her strength and she stumbled before regaining her pace.

Panting, she used her cloak to glance over her shoulder to see how close Tabitha and Dixie were.

Tabitha was the easiest to see. She grew with every few steps, her tawny fur rippling as she charged forward with bared teeth and a blast of energy. She accelerated constantly and Merrie knew that she could break the sound barrier with enough time.

Dixie was far faster and raced ahead of her. His tiny, wolf-like body cut an arrow through the grass and left a wake of flattened grass and kicked up dust behind him. His eyes glowed brightly as he aimed straight for her.

The spectral lead between the two wolves was thin and stretched out. Energy bounced back and forth, rippling slower than Sable's energy but still enough for Dixie to enhance Tabitha. It was only a matter of seconds before he struck first.

Merrie panted and glanced back at her destination. The withered black trees were too far away, she wouldn't make it in time. Cringing against the pain that was about to strike her, she prepared another shape-changing spell. Her cloak tightened around her form as she prepared for cast the spell while moving as full speed.

Just as he reached her, she released the transformation spell. Her body melted and reformed in the opposite direction. She was

already swinging her paw and her magically enhanced strength caught Dixie on the side of his head and threw him to the side. The impact knocked her back meters as he flew across the grass in the opposite direction.

Transforming again to turn around, Merrie burst forward. She caught a shadow and jerked to the side just as Tabitha blasted past.

The wind following the magical wolf almost picked up Merrie's large fake body and pulled it along. Merrie inwardly screamed at the agony that her speed was stressing her body. She was being ripped apart, her new skin unable to handle even the opening blows of the fight. She jumped through the shadows, careful not to cross over, and landed a hundred meters closer to her destination.

There were still spiders around her, only a few but it only took one to reveal information.

With a whimper, she dug her paws into the ground and sprinted for the glade. It was only a kilometer away but the thousand meters felt like a million with a hell-bent druid and her alpha after her.

The second attack came from all directions. Dixie had multiplied himself and the eight tiny wolves launched themselves at her. Teeth dug into her spine and tail, snapping the fragile illusions. Their teeth snapped on each other and they fell back, no longer biting down on solid flesh.

Merrie cried out as her body hemorrhaged obsidian mist. Agony spread out across her body and her limbs grew heavy with a wave of weakness. She stumbled and tried to regain her momentum. She knew that it was only seconds before Tabitha struck and the druid wouldn't hesitate to take off her head.

(Move!) she snapped at herself.

Tabitha slammed into Merrie's side, shattering her fragile ribs. The impact yanked Merrie off the ground and threw her over a hundred meters on the ground. She landed hard, smashing her body against the ground. Her fragile shell rolled into a beam of moonlight and one of the open rents in her skin began to smolder.

Screaming, Merrie flung herself into a dark patch.

She wasn't ready when Dixie slammed into her, sheering through her back leg. It cut against her real skin, opening up another grievous wound in her delicate form. Black mist burst out of her injury and black blood hit the ground with a sizzle.

Merrie wanted to call out to them but she spotted one of the spiders the ground a few meters away. Swearing at whatever bastard had set them out so far, she scrambled to her feet and surged forward.

Tabitha caught her again, flipping her over with a powerful smack of her paw.

Before Merrie could respond, Tabitha jumped on top of her and bit down.

Terrified, Merrie lost control of her bladder but lashed out with her one good back claw. Powerful points dug into Tabitha's stomach, tearing open her abdomen. At the same time, Merrie threw all of her magical strength into a blow with her fore claw that cut across Tabitha's throat. Blood exploded around them.

Dixie jumped over Tabitha and came down on Merrie's forearm. The pain exploded across her senses as she felt bones snapping and her skin tearing. Black mist exploded from her wound, darkening the world around her.

Praying that no one was watching, Merrie used the darkness to melt and reform less than a meter away. Flipping over, she scrambled to her feet and sprinted toward the grove.

It only took a few seconds for both wolves to recover. Tabitha gained her power through the chase and the worst thing Merrie could do was attack while fleeing. The energy rolling from her body was a storm that beat against Merrie's heart, a wall of power that threatened to consume her. Every time Merrie resisted, the druid and alpha would gain more power to kill her.

The grove was in front of her. She could feel the shadows staining the trees inside. They were all dead now, the life sucked out of them by whatever force was inside. It called to her and she raced forward it, stretching out her senses for the darkness.

The shadows from the dead trees stretched out and became hardened. They raced along the grass, a thousand sharp claws that traced every millimeter of the ground as they reached for her.

Merrie whimpered and fought through the pain. Every moonbeam she passed burned and she felt her limbs beginning to fall apart. She needed darkness, she needed the shadows.

Tabitha slammed into her from behind, launching her forward.

Merrie flipped over helplessly, windmilling in the air as clouds of darkness traced her descent. She saw the ground coming up but there was no way her fragile form could handle the impact. She tried to curl up but her body refused to respond, it was broken and bleeding too much.

Darkness swallowed her, a thousand claws of the shadow lands yanking on her body and pulling it deep into the darkness. They pierced her skin and tore open her cloak.

Merrie let out a cry of pain as the momentum slammed her into a tree. It snapped in half and she rolled over, scratching her face and chest along the ground before coming to a halt against a rotted stump.

Tabitha and Dixie came to a halt only meters away. The wolves were glowing with raw and wild power. It beat against the suffocating pressure of the shadows, pushing them back with the excitement of the hunt. Merrie could see a cropping spell dancing in Tabitha's teeth.

Merrie's pussy grew wet with her fear. She had lost her limbs in the same way, but it wasn't nearly as violent. Then, Tabitha had easily sheered through her limbs; the spell had ripped them from her spirit and she would never have them back.

Gaping for breath, Merrie backed away. Every part of her body screamed out in agony as her transformation melted away, leaving her a naked, injured woman backing away from the two approaching wolves.

Her collar thumped against her sweat-slicked chest. She could feel the slow regeneration taking place but there was no way it would heal her fast enough. She focused on it for a second, she had energy stored in it for a single spell but only a single one.

Both wolves growled even louder. Combat spells rippled along their fur as the rage took over. They were there to kill, not to talk. They stalked forward, Tabitha's huge paw crushing trees while Dixie slithered underneath branches.

Merrie gathered the darkness into her. It flowed into her injuries and filled her broken skin. The welcoming ice filled her body and stilled her rapid beat of her heart. She managed to gulp for air a few times. "T-Tabitha."

The large wolf shook her head. hj

Merrie reached out but there was nothing but killing fury in their thoughts. No longer did either have coherent thoughts, not after being attacked twice. They were already imagining how they would rip her apart. The lust of their violence beat against her and her body warmed with anticipation of being their victim.

Merrie gulped. The shadows were calming her down and she was still backing further into the darkness.

The wolves followed, unaware of the pressure that surrounded them.

She glanced around, there were no spiders among her.

(Dixie,) she projected.

Dixie snarled and snapped his teeth. He either didn't hear or wouldn't listen.

(Please, Dixie, it's me, Merrie.) She force the thought into his head.

(You look like her,) came the sharp response. Dixie was a Copir silfae, a tiny man barely a meter tall. His voice was high-pitched and lilting, except that it through as a sharp growl. His voice was also overlaid with Tabitha's, the dual tone was the alpha and master blending together in thought and power.

(I am her. Please, I had to do that.)

(She's dead and we will not let you take her form!) They both lunged as one.

Desperate, Merrie tapped the energy of her collar and shoved it through a domination spell. She boosted her own power as an alpha and let it flow through the collar. It rebounded back into her, gathering up power until the air grew black around her. She projected it with both her mind and voice at them, screaming at the top of her lungs, "Sit!"

The spell pierced both of their shields, shattering them instantly as the domination spell plunged into their consciousnesses.

Instantly, both wolves sat down hard, snapping broken branches with their rush to obey.

Dixie's cock spurted, splattering the ground with cum. His aura surged with power from his submission.

Tabitha lost control of her bladder, a single squirt of urine painting the leaves underneath her.

A quizzical look crossed both of their faces.

Merrie panted and held herself still. Her body hummed with power but also screamed out in agony. Her shell was ripped and torn, black shadows clung to her wounds as the darkness around her slowly seeped back into her form.

There was a rippling of power and then there were two silfae in front of her. Tabitha was a Silvr, a slender woman with small breasts and a thick thatch of hair over her naked mound and underneath her armpits. She stared at Merrie with a look of disgust and fury. “Did you just fucking dominate me!?”

Cringing, Merrie nodded. (S-Sorry.)

Dixie snarled, his tiny hands dug into the ground. (Why?)

Merrie gasped for breath and then sent what she knew over to them. She included everything from the infernal spells, their ability to listen to conversations between alpha and master, and also what Borias and Merrie puzzled out about the spells. It took longer, neither were as good at telepathy as Borias or Haviston. Painful seconds later, both of them settled back.

“Fuck,” they said as one.

Tabitha looked around with narrowed eyes. “Dixie, check the wards.”

Energy rippled between them, bounding back and forth as it grew in power. Then, it shot out in all directions as it traced the various spells that warned the mill of intruders. It didn’t take long for a response.

“Down,” Dixie said with a growl. “Every single one. I sense at least a thousand warriors gathered on this side.”

Tabitha sighed, “Same on this side. It’s a fucking ambush.”

“Fir was just to trap us inside.”

With a growl that Dixie mimicked, Tabitha stood up. “Bitch, come with us. I don’t want to get lost in here.”

She didn’t wait for an answer but strode sideways around the perimeter of the shadow land.

Merrie followed, her strength rapidly returning as the shadows continued to pour into her. She remained on her wrists and knees, crunching the dead leaves and grass.

Dixie crawled in step with her. (I’m glad to see you are still alive. We all thought you were gone but we couldn’t return here to look

for you. You left a fucking shadow lands and we couldn't figure out how to get inside. Wait, how did we?)

(You were chasing me.)

(Yeah,) amusement and lust flooded through the connection, (that was a good fucking hunt.)

He glanced at her again. (Why are you bleeding black clouds?)

Merrie winced. (I'm having trouble keep this form. Borias' spell wasn't designed for abuse.)

(You are leaking shadows.)

(I can't be in the light, it burns me. I think sunlight can still kill me.) She lowered her ears to her skull. (Any bright light.)

Dixie though for a moment. (That will make things far more difficult.)

(I'm sorry.)

He grunted and patted her on the shoulder. (That was a good chase. There was blood and violence. I'm hard. You gave both of us a lot of energy to fight tonight.)

Merrie could feel it. It bounced back and forth between a intangible line between the two of them. The energy continued to build until scraped against Merrie's senses.

Tabitha crawled up on a rock and crouched down, her eyes narrowing as she looked in the distance. A low growl shook her slender form.

Merrie followed her gaze. When she saw thousands of men gathered, she inhaled sharply.

(That's their main forces,) said Dixie. (I always told you I'd gather them here if I was going to attack the mill.)

"Yes, and that is why we put more of the wards there."

(Someone knew about them. I can't feel them,) came the low growl. As he did, images flashes through his telepathy as military plans laid themselves down and he started to break apart the various troops that were gathered. Merrie didn't even know there were uniforms but somehow Dixie could identify them even from a distance.

"Who's fucking us over, Dixie?"

(Lemetri, at least. I see a lot of their warriors ready to charge. There is also a couple clans of hunters from the Silver Lands. Druid-hunters. Shape-shifters. Heavy military, shield breakers. There are

at least three backup troops including artillery and a nasty-looking druid who has a walking tree for a chair.)

Tabitha sighed. “Fuck, that’s a lot of people to kill.”

Dixie smiled, a fierce joy rising up. (Yes, mistress.)

Merrie could barely see any of that, even with Dixie’s identifying them for her. Her attention drew to the side, to one of the few groups that didn’t look like they were preparing for war. Instead, they were chanting and preparing something that looked like a large white bell.

(What is that?) asked Dixie.

Merrie frowned for a moment. She had seen it before but it took her a moment to place it. (It’s to break shadows. They used it a few times to clear the shadow district I created.)

(Did it work?)

(Yes, but it is fragile. The entire thing is glass.) She frowned as she recalled the details. (It also took a lot of energy to prepare. They would charge it and then carry it into the shadows as far as they could before setting it off. They needed a lot of guards to protect it because the shadows attacked them. Gillette....) The image of the man who betrayed her choked off her thoughts.

Tabitha sighed. “At least the priests of light are distracted. None of them are armored or wielding weapons, probably think they are safe. That will make the fight easier.”

Merrie perked up. (They will?)

“Yes, if don’t think they are needed, they will trust the paladins to defend them. They also won’t have as many defensive spells since that energy could go into powering that artifact. Some of them will still have power despite Lemetri being gone. I suspect they are getting latent powers from their pantheon or there is some small connection to the goddess.” Tabitha gestured behind her. “This shadow land has been here for a year, something is keeping it around. I’m betting it’s fillet of goddess.”

Merrie thought about the sight of the shadow creatures feasting on the light. She shuddered at the memory. She wanted to reach through the shadows but didn’t dare so close to the edge. She could feel the power of the lands, it was being kept in place by the feasting.

Dixie looked at her and nodded. For a moment, he looked old.

Merrie sighed and bowed her head. (What about the devil? Borias said that someone was creating those traps and it felt infernal.)

“No,” Tabitha said with a shake of her head. “I keep looking but I can’t see it. I doubt I will but I’m hoping the bastard doesn’t have attack powers. Probably a sneak and most likely a mercenary.”

(He stole my spell.) It hurt Merrie that her own magic, corrupted as it may be, was being used against her friends.

“Then he’s patient and waited a year to do this. No, if this goes wrong, he’ll probably slip away and try again. We don’t have time or energy to deal with things we can’t fight. Same goes for those light fuckers. While they are polishing their bell, we can ignore them.”

Merrie glanced at them, a dread filling her. (They are going to remove the shadow land.)

“Yeah, probably. Which means you are going to stay here in case we lose.”

With a jerk, Merrie shook her head. (No, I can fight.)

Tabitha looked at her, her green eyes almost burning. “You are vulnerable to light and injured. There are at least three different troops out there who are capable of creating enough light. If you are that fragile then you can be killed just by being near their magic. Fuck, you’re another fucking Borias!”

Merrie shook her head. (I had to abandon Borias and Bass, I can’t leave you too.)

Tabitha turned away, her pointed ear quivering with her movement. “Either you die quickly out there or have a chance here. I’ll let you decide but if you get in our way, I will kill you myself.”

Sorrow clutching her throat, Merrie bowed her head.

“All right, old man, how much life do you have left before that cancer eats away at your body?”

Dixie shivered, a ripple of fear running through his body. He gulped and then steeled himself. (Fifty years at least.)

Merrie sobbed. The only thing keeping Dixie alive was his submission to Tabitha. If he walked as a human, his body would begin to eat itself at a rapid past. The last time he stopped acting like a bitch, he thought he lost years of his life.

Tabitha was struggling with her own emotions. The sorrow rippled away from her like wavers of heat on a black rock. Both of

them knew what was going to happen but they didn't have the words.

(Why are you doing this?) Merrie asked, barely able to control her own sorrow.

The elf woman opened her mouth to say something but then closed with snap.

Dixie answered for her. (We've been companions for many years, us two and Bass and Sable. We've fought battles and wars, adventured and grew old together. Just as he will do everything he can to save us, we will do the same. It is the only way companions can treat each other.)

His eyes were shimmering as he looked at Merrie. (When it comes down to it, save Fir and Cinthia first. Borias. Then Bass and Sable. In that order. Fuck Haviston, he's a dick. The girls aren't warriors, they can't handle this. Borias... may not survive with his geas, but I know you are sweet on him.)

(It's—) The words froze in her throat. Something stopped her from saying he was pardoned. It was a compulsion, but she didn't know the source. The pressure relented as soon as she stopped trying. She opened her mouth to say something else.

Brilliance exploded straight up, a beam of the brightest white speared up from near the mill house and pierced the clouds. The darkness around it peeled back, melting away the clouds as it shot further than Merrie could see. It lit up the ground around them and Merrie's skin began to bubble.

With a cry, Merrie dove further into the darkness as the ground began to buckle.

Tabitha stood up. "Well, that's someone pissing off Bass. I hope it wasn't one of the girls. Dixie, where's your artifact cache?"

"Under the blond asshole scratching his ass by the stump." Dixie's voice was scratched and strained. It came with a flash of pain. His body twisted and reformed into a wolf but there was a terrible intelligence in his eyes.

"Well, then he's about to have a new hole ripped through his chest. Dixie, kill."

Dixie burst forward, his body blurring and splitting apart into multiple wolves. The many streaks of darkness charged directly for the front ranks.

Tabitha looked back Merrie. "I'm glad to see you. You were always a good girl."

A rumble shook the ground. It began to buckle underneath Merrie's feet.

Before Merrie could regain her balance, Tabitha had transformed into a wolf and was charging. With every step, she grew larger and larger until she was taller than the house.

Wind howled around Merrie, expanding out from the mill house. She glanced over and then jerked back. The beam of light had gotten even brighter. It turned all the shadows into hard-edge points but the edges were beginning to fray underneath the onslaught of holy magic.

In the gathered troops, paladins and clerics began to glow as they prepared for battle.

Merrie sobbed. The light burned and blinded her. She couldn't survive against any of it but the knowledge didn't make the knife in her heart any duller. She turned and fled deeper into the darkness of the shadow land.

Shadow Lands

14

Merrie crawled through the darkness. Her supernatural vision made it easy to avoid the larger of the rotten trees and crumble rocks. Everything had corroded with the touch of the Shadows, even the ground itself. It crumbled underneath her touch, the sterile grains no longer clung to itself and it shifted with every movement.

With so much darkness around her, she easily restored the shadows of her body and patched up her wounds with bands of darkness. It wouldn't hold underneath the light, but it kept her from leaking more of her insides until her skin could heal.

Sorrow radiated from her and the shadows flocked to her misery. She could feel the beat of spirits on the other side the veil, there was little keeping the Shadows from invading the world. She could feel it stretching all around her, as if some creature's claws were pressing against fabric over a door. It was a terrible feeling but, at the same time, she wanted to slip over and embrace the death that was on the other side.

She didn't know what she was looking for, only that she could no longer see the brilliant column of light from Bass. She had seen it before, it was one of his more powerful attacks. She was thankful that he was still alive, but Tabitha's last words worried her. He would have only used it in times of crisis or maybe someone died. Images of Borias, Fir, Cinthia, and even Sable flashed through her mind, each one sending her darker and deeper into her despair.

Merrie already knew how low she could get. She almost killed an entire city with her sorrow over losing Kine. Thousands had died because of her and she would have easily killed ten times that if she didn't try to undo her mistake. It took her a long time to accept

Kine's death. It was Rakin, of all people, who gave her the ability to work out her emotions against him until they both came out of that cell, bloodied and broken.

Her thoughts brought more sorrow and shadows around her. She tried to cheer herself up, but it was difficult. She had finally brought herself back to life only to lose everyone before they could ever have a reunion. She spent years trying to return to the mill, if it wasn't for Haviston's compulsion, and now she couldn't even be with the family she loved.

She continued to crawl through the rotted world of the shadow lands, vainly looking for some forgotten artifact or spell that would let her change the battle. Instead she just saw death and destruction. It washed over her, the scent of rot flooding her nostrils along with the burn of ether in the back of her throat. It was her scent, her smell. It flowed through her veins as the shadows corrupted everything including herself.

Coming around a tree, she scraped her back against it before she managed to come free. She could have easily pushed it aside if she had hands but she didn't. She didn't even use her cloak.

She stumbled free.

Seeing an empty circle of nothing, she stopped. There was nothing in the center, No rotted leaves or branches, Not a single stump or rock. Just a flat, featureless circle of death. It hung in the air, a stillness that had suffocated even the wind around it.

She let out a soft cry. She knew what was in the center. It was where Lemetri had ripped out her heart before Merrie pulled both of them into the Shadows. The last and greatest of her spells, giving her soul to the Lord of Shadows.

Trembling, Merrie started toward the center. She had nowhere else to go. The silence pressed down on her and she felt the veil between two worlds grow paper thin. It would only take a single thought to cross over. She shook violently as she reached the center and looked down. There wasn't even a scorch mark from where the goddess died.

She could feel the pressure of the veil against her. The Shadows were close, almost ripping through on their own. It bore down on her heart and head. She felt it seeping through her magical energies and her heart quickened with it.

It was the darkness, the Shadows. It reached for her, strained to cross the thin barrier between worlds. She wondered if she stepped aside if it would rupture the opening. Would the Shadows burst forth, would they be able to take on the army poised to kill her family?

Merrie knelt in the center like a proper bitch. She spread her knees and let her tail rest on the ground. Lifting her head, she looked into the inky void above her. “Why? Why did you bring me back?”

Her voice didn’t echo, it was muted by the stillness in the air.

Any icy wind brushed against her bruised and battered body, teasing her nipples and sliding in the valley between her legs.

She brought her wrists up to her collar. “Please? I’m begging you.”

Unsure of what to do, she bowed her head until her hair touched the ground. She planted herself and lifted up her ass, presenting herself to what she hoped was the Lord of Shadows. Though having her pussy and ass lifted up seemed inappropriate for a being that could rend the World Tree in half.

A tingling tickled her rear.

She shook her ass, sweeping her tail aside.

The tingling grew stronger and quickly became an itch. She jerked and sat up, pulling herself away.

A flash of light caught her attention. She looked up and realized it was her hair. Light had caught on the ends and was slowly following the strands to her scalp. It was a shimmering silver, the faintest of lights. She had seen it before, when Borias showed her lips in the mirror.

Balancing on her knees, Merrie looked down. She scanned the earth but couldn’t see anything. But she knew what it was, Lemetri’s blood. It had soaked into the ground but was hidden in the darkness.

Her scalp began to tingle. She cringed and looked up as the shimmering spread out along the strands of her hair, giving her a shimmering silver appearance.

Her ass still tingled. Whimpering, she yanked her tail and pulled it forward. When she saw the shimmering strands coloring her ass, she let out a whine. She needed darkness, not to have her body glowing all the time.

The burning increased. The divine light was fighting with her shadowy nature. She squirmed and tried to pull at her hair, snapping strands. The shimmering glow continued to follow the strands until her ass and scalp were burning.

Merrie cried out and pawed at her hair, trying to escape the blood of the goddess. Her whine rose in volume until it filled the air around her.

And then it stopped.

One moment, she was crying out and then the next there was nothing but overwhelming pressure and ice against her body. Merrie shook as fear filled her. She slowly looked up to see the towering form of the Lord of Shadows looming over her. Terrible wings spread out across the sky, blotting out even the darkness. Claws larger than her body flexed and tightened. She had seen them tear through buildings and people, both had rotted away in an instant.

Fear gripped her heart. She felt the hot trickle of urine splatter down her thigh but there were no splatters as it rotted away before touching the ground.

(Lord of Shadows, help me.)

(Shadow Maker. Light Snuffer. You have fed.) The power of the Lord of Shadows' voice was overwhelming. It crushed Merrie's own thoughts as it projected directly into her brain. It felt like shadowy claws were scraping against her very mind, corroding everything it passed as the words echoed endless in her head. There were more, alien thoughts that she had no chance of understanding but they had a pattern similar to the calligraphic spells that danced across her thoughts.

Merrie whimpered and held herself still.

The Lord of Shadows flexed one claw and loomed closer. She could feel the ground dissolving around her, blowing way into dust as she sank down around him. The raw power of the creature was overwhelming, it both filled and drained her body at the same time. Her heart beat faster, the triple beat shaking her form.

(W-What do I do? How do I save them?)

(Save. Shadows. Give. Sanctuary.) Each word felt like a torture for a creature trying to communicate with a lesser being. The Lord's immense thoughts threatened to shatter her sanity.

Tears ran down her cheeks only to blow away into black mists. She inhaled the sharpness of Shadows into her lungs and trembled at the icy scrap against her lungs. When she exhaled her, her hair began to glow brighter. It flickered with every breath, snapping back and forth in the silent wind that rose up around her.

(Shadow Maker. Give sanctuary to your children.)

The veil between the worlds strained. She could feel a thousand claws pressing against it, trying to break through the barrier between the worlds. She pictured the other creatures that the Lord of Shadows had created. They were formed when her own energies had ripped through the roof of her mansion when she collared herself. The terrifying moment had repeated itself when the Lord of Shadows had pulled Lemetri with Merrie into the darkness. The last thing she saw was it splitting in half and two more beasts being created from the light as they feasted on the goddess' body.

The Lord reached down with one claw. It was larger than her. It touched her collar with surprising delicateness. Everything other than her and the collar rotted with its presence. **(Open the gate.)**

It projected with the force of a command. Her pussy grew slick and dripping in an instant. She shuddered with her orgasm and spread her legs further on the fine sand of dead ground.

Calligraphy raced through her mind, patterns she had already seen before far more complex and intricate than she had ever seen before. As she watched the Lord imprint the knowledge directly into her mind, she considered the spell. She didn't think it was beyond her limits for skill but she didn't have nearly enough power to cast it.

The Lord kept drawing the spell across her mind. The longer it took, the more she could feel her sanity being threatened by the alien thoughts that pummeled her thoughts. The Lord saw the world differently, both in a scale that treated her as barely significant but also from a view that had no basis in her reality. It was terrifying see the world different and she struggled to keep her own perceptions intake with the Lord invading her mind.

When it finally finished, it withdrew rapidly. It reminded her of an immense cock being yanked out of her cunt, with an empty ache left behind. As much as the Lord's presence threatened her sanity, it was also as if a god was inside her mind.

She lurched forward with a sob, her wrists catching her from falling to the ground. Tears splashed down as she drew her thoughts together and considered the spell. It would rip a permanent hole between the world, not unlike what she had done to the district in her sorrow. The only difference was the spell would be deliberate and focused, far harder to break than just an orgasm and blast of pleasure.

It would corrupt the world around the mill, probably destroy every living thing within the shadow land. Creatures of the night would roam free in the cover of darkness preying on not only the mill and the bitches there but also the surrounding villages.

She wanted to say no, but something stopped her. It was a longing. The creatures in the shadow district were friendly to her, loving even. Even the most fearsome beast would have obeyed her and it tore her heart when she destroyed them.

Fresh tears ran down her cheeks. She hated the feeling that gnawed at her when she killed the creatures of the shadow. They fought for her, defend her, and even sheltered her. They were her kin, but ones of the black blood that flowed through her veins.

Far away from Franome, there wouldn't be as much danger to others if a small part of the shadows remained in reality. Maybe the mill could move? She felt guilty for even considering asking.

Before her, the Lord of Shadows drew back. **(Open. Sanctuary.)**

Something twinged inside her, a promise to save Franome. It was her geas, the promise she made to the queen of the country to protect the land. She couldn't let the Shadows take over, even if she wanted. But, at the same time, she wanted to open the gate. It was more than a longing, it was a hunger to have the shadows swirling around her body, ice against her body.

The geas fought with her longing. It wasn't a boiling in her stomach like the last one but an overwhelming pressure to obey, to submit. Her body grew slicker with her excitement as she struggled against it, letting her ideas shift and slide in an attempt to find some way that would let her protect Franome from the darkness while still obeying the Lord of Shadows.

She knew that the shadows would spread out from the portal, they would continue to eat away at reality until there was nothing left but darkness.

Her gas responded powerfully, crushing the idea.

The only way was to limit the shadow lands from forming. If they couldn't invade, then there would be no threat to the rest of the country.

Suddenly, the gas relaxed.

Merrie let out a gasp and then smiled. She had an option, a way of obeying both the gas and the Lord of the shadows. Lifting her head, she addresses the most powerful being in her world. (I have a request.)

The Lord's attention was a lead weight against her mind.

(I-I will give you sanctuary but you can't claim all this land. You must have a limit, places you can't go.)

(There are shadows everywhere.) The alien thoughts pummeled her mind and she could tell it was not happy.

(Not everywhere,) she said as she almost lost control of her bladder again. She was about to bargain with a god. She didn't know if she should laugh or cry. Instead, she wiped the dried tears from her face. She tried to think about how to frame her response. (There are shadows and then there is... home.)

The attention intensified. She trembled under the Lord's will.

(What if... what if...) She struggled with the idea in her head. She felt ashamed for asking but it was the only metaphysical measurement she knew. (What if you limit yourself as far as my orgasm will travel?)

Silence.

(I radiate pleasure when I come. It affects people. That will be your limit.)

The Lord loomed over her again. **(You are strong enough to consume the world.)**

Her heart skipped a beat. (Y-You aren't good enough to make me come that hard.)

The Lord's silence was painful.

(Promise. By whatever you honor, by your own being. By the Shadows, by the darkness. You will go to my limits and no further. Not as long as Franome exists.)

The Lord pulled back. Its powerful wings spread out and she felt its alien emotions grinding down on her.

Merrie bit back a whimper. She had gone too far, she knew it.

(Agreed.)

She gulped. (How do you make a promise?)

The Lord only pulled back further. **(Cast the spell, use the light. A promise has been made.)**

(Use the....) Merrie looked around. As they had talked, the ground had rotted underneath her. It was nothing more than fine sand except for droplets of shimmering light that had gathered on the surface. It was Lemetri's blood. The same color flowed through her hair.

She could picture the gate spell in her mind but it was too complicated to keep in her head. She needed it to be drawn on the ground.

Panting, she bent to her side and brought her tail to her mouth. Taking a large hunk of the shimmering hairs in her mouth, she braced herself and yanked hard. They snapped out and she jerked at the pain that shot up her spine.

With a whimper, she worked the hairs with her lips and the ends of her arms to create a makeshift brush tied with a sliver of darkness from her cloak. Holding it firmly in her lips, she leaned over and tipped the end into the blood of the goddess. The shimmering light surged up the strands until it glowed brightly in her mouth.

Wincing at the brightness and the prickle of divine power, Merrie began to draw out the gate spell on the ground. She had to crouch, her ass in the air and her breasts scraping on the ground, but she could draw. Her brush held and a ragged line followed her tracing.

The spell in her head both incomplete and too complicated at the same time. It was created by a mind born of Shadows not her mortal frame. But she had cast similar ones enough to know where to fill in the gaps. She crouched as she drew, spreading it out in calligraphy on the rotted ground.

It felt like she was writing on the world itself. Power surged around her as she followed the lines precisely, using her intuition more than her memory to finish the swirls and whorls that made up the spell. The power pulsed along the color painted on the ground. A wind picked up but somehow didn't disturb the lines she had already drawn.

As she traced out the lines, she felt her life pouring into the spell. The very core of her being was being painted on the ground and she could see black streaks through the shimmering light of the goddess' blood.

When the blood ran out, she dipped it into the gathered pool until it was gone. When she still had more, she squeezed it out of her tail and hair to wring one last precious droplet out.

The world wavered around her, both from the veil between Shadow and reality straining but also from her vision blurring. It hurt to breathe. Her limbs felt heavy when she moved them for the next whorl of power.

By the time she was on the last swirl of the spell, her entire body shook with effort. Her energy had rapidly drained with the effort to keep the brush in place. She was also out of blood. She imagined the last loop and held her breath as she hoped the color would hold. It was only seconds of painting before either the spell or color would fade.

She gasped and forced the line steadily. Only two more curves, only one more curve.

One centimeter from the end, the color stopped.

“W-What? No!” Her throat ached from speaking.

Only a centimeter of color was needed to finish the spell. Merrie looked around for any more droplet but there was none. No more blood of a goddess left. No more energy for the spell.

She felt the energy beginning to dissipate. She didn't have enough. The spell was breaking apart.

Whimpering, she looked around again, pawing at the ground. She needed just a little bit more, a single droplet would be enough.

The wind picked up around her, howling as she felt the air being sucked out of her lungs. She didn't know if the Lord was happy or not, but she could imagine a thousand shadowy beings screaming to escape. They would tear her apart if she didn't finish.

Merrie whined as she looked for more shimmering. She just needed a tiny bit more. She scanned the ground for the same color as her lips and hair.

When she found none, she slumped back. “No, this isn't fair.”

No answer but the overwhelming pressure. It ground down on her, forcing her toward the rotting ground. She licked her lips to moisten them and then smiled. She had a bit of color left.

Reaching up, she grabbed her collar with her wrists. She brought her lower lip up against her teeth and then sent the command. (Bite. Bleed.)

Unable to resist her own commands, Merrie chomped down and sliced into her lip. At the same time, her pussy surged with lust and submission. As the ether-laced black blood and shimmering color gathered on her lip, she bent over and kissed the last part of the spell.

Energy exploded from her, throwing her back. She saw blackness rip open between the worlds and a thousand claws burst out of it. They spread out from the magic circle, a boiling mass of unnatural creatures and shadowy beings that she had seen many times in the last few years. Claws and teeth swarmed over her, a boiling sea of black on black.

She was ripped off the ground and tossed into the air. Screaming, she fell back down but they were already swarming over her. Teeth scraped against her nipples and tore at her sides. The pain sparked against her senses as claws were dragged across her buttocks and back, a lover's scratch instead of a killing blow.

Merrie gasped as she felt an icy mouth filled with teeth pressed against her sex. It was large and easily took her entire pelvis inside. A tongue slathered against her, leaving behind hoarfrost that tickled against her skin.

More claws were on her, scraping against her body, covering every inch with sharp pains.

Merrie tried to twist out of the grip but she was couldn't. There were too many creatures holding on her. The helpless ignited a flame inside her.

Teeth bit down on her breasts, piercing the flesh as she sucked on the aching mounds. The pleasure and pain blurred together, overwhelming in how fast they assaulted her body. There was no gentleness, no kindness, only brutal speed and strength.

Something thick and rough was shoved up against her asshole. It slammed forward, tearing open her ass as it drove deep into her

body. She felt every millimeter of the icy length as it plunged deep into her rectum and slammed against her organs.

She screamed out without wanting to, but the sound ended in a muffled gurgle when a tentacle jammed down her throat. She choked on it, but then a second and third forced their way past her cheeks and into her mouth. Her neck swelled by the brutal intrusion. She tried to breathe but couldn't as the tentacle thrust erratically into her, fucking her throat clear down to her stomach in a rapid fire series of thrusts.

The hardness in her ass was yanked out, tearing it open further before something larger pressed against it. There was no way so many creatures could reach her but the shadows were flexible and fluid. The massive intruder tore into her, ripping her rectum wide open as it began to pound a fist-sized hardness into her body.

Merrie cried out as the pleasure and pain grew. It was hard to tell the difference, it was impossible to wrap her mind around her brutal rape with the exhaustion of casting the spell. Her body was adrift in the sensations, unseeing as every centimeter of her body was assaulted.

Her pussy was invaded by a dozen claws. They scraped against her insides as they tried to reach her cervix. She felt it tearing into her insides and tried to force them out, but she was growing too wet with her helplessness and it only added to the friction. The thickness filled her up, stretching her insides as they pounded into her ass, her pussy, her mouth.

She was helpless to do anything and her lusts ignited for her inability to do anything. Crying out around the thrusting tentacles in her throat, she writhed and twisted, silently begging for more even as they bit and scratched.

Her collar glowed with its healing power but it wasn't enough.

More mouths clamped on her breasts, a hundred nibbling teeth. More caught on her sides, stomach, and buttocks. They gnawed on her body, adding to her pleasure.

Merrie choked on the cocks raping her throat. She couldn't help but feel pleasure from the intensity. They were brutal but also fucking her. They were dominating her like no mortal person could ever do. She couldn't identify the bodies only a swarm of cocks, tentacles, and teeth. The surrealism only added to her pleasure.

It didn't matter how she writhed and twisted, there was something thrusting into her. More tentacles shoved into her mouth, ripping her throat open as they forced their way in. As one drew out, two more were forcing their way inside. The constant thrusting and pulling of the black tentacles was too much to bear. She clamped down on them but they forced her mouth open.

They were using her, raping her. There was no part of her body that wasn't being impaled or bit.

Something gnawed on her clitoris, tiny teeth teasing the hard nub of pleasure until it ached. It wasn't drawing blood but it was close. She tried to rock away from the pain but the creatures had pilled her arms and legs away from her body. Teeth nibbled along every centimeter of her limbs, against delicate flesh and skin.

The pleasure continued to grow, it was an orgasm stronger than she had in a long time. The sudden helplessness and brutality pushed her to higher heights. She started to orgasm, but then every mouth bit down hard on her, interrupting her pleasure.

As soon as the wave past, they were once against nibbling and touching her.

She cried out, her ruined orgasm still growing in pleasure. It threatened to rip about her mind as she lost herself in the thrusting cocks and tentacles. The claws in her pussy reached her cervix and scraped against it. The entire effort for the fingers to get deeper strained her entrance with the endless back and forth of a hundred hands jamming and pulling back.

Merrie jerked violently and tried to escape. Her body shimmered as she tried to melt away but the shadows had her pinned. They would have just raped her in any form she took.

With a rush, the pain disappeared. It became nothing more than ecstasy that burned brightly in her black veins. She cried out as her orgasm rushed up and then was halted by a thousand teeth chomping down on her body. They brought her to the edge of pleasure again and again, each time it rose in power as the Lord of Shadows taught her how much her body could take.

They continued their assault on her, brutalizing her body as they raped her. She thrashed back and forth, trying to escape. Her helplessness only added to the fires, they were black inside her

body, burning her insides as her entire frame clenched and relaxed in rapid.

Sheets of her juices coated her thighs, stomach, and buttocks. Her body had been flipped and twisted around that she could taste her excitement on her lips. She sucked on them, tasting blood, cock, and her pussy. Her insides clamped down as an orgasm rushed up.

A thousand teeth bit down, stopped her orgasm.

Merrie whimpered and cried out. (Please!) she begged. (Let me come!)

Just as fast as they came, the shadows pulled away. Only the ones holding her limbs held her in place.

She shuddered and gasped for breath. The suddenness was overwhelming as was the desperate hunger for an orgasm. Every part of her skin was raw and bleeding darkness. The mist swirled around her, covering her body in darkness. The parts that weren't bleeding glistened with her juices and pleasure.

She tried to pull her arm free but tentacles wrapped around her shoulders and elbow only tightened to keep her in place.

Frowning, Merrie looked around for why they stopped. And then stopped when she realized the Lord of Shadows was looming over her. She shook as she looked up.

It was holding out its fist. The limb was larger than her body but there was no question it was pulling back to thrust inside.

Merrie whimpered in fear. Her body was already dripping with need but the terror rose into a knife-like edge. She clenched.

The Lord thrust forward. Its hand slammed against her cunt and asshole, exploding into streamers of black mist. They poured into her, filling her pussy and swelling it open as icy pressure forced its way up Merrie's rectum.

She screamed out as it continued to pour into her, filling her insides until she thought she would burst open. Seconds later, it streamed out of her mouth and nose. She felt every millimeter of it scraping her insides, dragging back and forth along raw nerves.

Her ruined orgasms ignited into the purest black flame. It seared along her veins, surging as the Lord shoved deep and yanked out. Every thrust of its unnatural fist pushed her higher and higher.

Fear sparkled in her mind. The Lord was going to make her come hard enough to touch the world. She cried out and tried to hold

back the pleasure, but the bites and thrusting made it impossible. She wanted to come, she craved it. When the Lord thrust into her, she lifted her pale hips up to its fist and accepted it. When it burst out of her mouth, she shuddered with ecstasy. She needed to come, it was her nature, it was her power.

The Lord of Shadows continued to assault her ass and cunt. The streamers of mist caressed every inch of her body inside and out. It danced along her veins and throbbed along her bones. It set off a thousand pleasurable sensations and she couldn't stop her orgasm even if she tried.

It exploded inside her body and mind, a pure wave of ecstasy that threatened to destroy the world. The black orgasm seared her veins but it wasn't enough. It exploded from her mind but a sudden twist of darkness and she felt it funnel through her collar, the collar the Lord of Shadows had help bind her.

Knowing that anything that went through the collar would be magnified a hundred-fold, Merrie came even hard as she dreaded the explosion. When it came, it pulverized the shadows around her before spreading out in a black wave of visible energy.

In the black field of her mind, her orgasm also rippled away from her. She could feel the hearts and bodies of everyone who ever submitted among a field of stars. All of them would be affected by the intensity of her orgasm.

The Lord slammed its fist home again, impaling her completely on obsidian mists. It burst out of her throat and set off another orgasm that rippled out for her.

Merrie screamed out and followed the energy as it burst out of the glade and slammed into the armies around them. Every man and woman who had ever obeyed a command exploded into orgasm. As one, they dropped to the ground as their bodies were wracked with the most powerful pleasure they had ever experienced. Commanders dropped as did the priests and other warriors. The smell of cum flooded the air as it soaked into robes and leaked out of armor.

The ripple of pleasure continued to expand.

The Lord of Shadows hammered its fist into Merrie, driving the obsidian mist through her entire being and setting off wave after wave of pleasure. Her entire body burned brightly as she thrashed

violently, snapping free of her bounds and thumping toe the ground.

Each burst of pleasure was forced into her collar by the Lord's alien mind. Each one that came back magnified and stronger was sent out to add to the Lord's growing domain.

Pressure ground her into the earth as the Lord thrust again and again, driving the pleasure higher and higher as she was rapped from ass to mouth in rapid fire blows.

Merrie felt her orgasm reaching further, spreading out until it approached Maddy's Dairy and even the villages in Blood County. It was only a matter of seconds, a few thrusts of the Lord's powerful fist, that they would be swallowed by the shadow lands that would follow. After that, more of the county would be swallowed by darkness.

She tried to pull it back.

The Lord's hammering made it impossible to stop it. The pleasure of having something so hard, so fast, and so flexible driving deep into her orgasms was too much. It touched every pleasurable nerve, set off every sensation of being filled that she had. She cried out, her eyes no longer seeing, as she came again and again.

Merrie whimpered as she imagined all the people who would die when the shadow land swallowed them up. She couldn't hold back, she could only force it somewhere else. In desperation, she threw it into the one thing she had left, her collar. It could store energy.

With all her mental might, she drew back the pleasure and forced it into the collar, commanding it to store. It poured into the artifact.

For a moment, she thought it would stop.

The collar reached the limits of its storage and the excess energy poured out magnified even more. It circled back into the collar again and again, gathering energy and strength with every loop before the Lord of Shadows finally let it explode out from Merrie's helpless body.

Merrie screamed and drew it back, forcing it into the collar again and again. Power surged through her as her entire body glowed from the inside. The black flames seared the Lord itself as she became a black inferno of lust and shadows.

Unable to take it, she directed it up. A black beam of pure darkness burst out of her body and speared up. It was grew around

her, spreading out rapidly as it pierced the cloud. Unlike Bass's column of light, darkness surrounding the beam as the sky blotted out the stars and moon with a supernatural storm that rapidly formed.

The Lord yanked out its fist and looked up. Without a thought, it launched itself into the air and into the beam of darkness. Its form swelled and then exploded into hundreds of other creatures like itself. They split themselves until the air was thick with the powerful beings that swarmed in the cloud of darkness.

Merrie hit the ground hard, the energy drained out of her. Black cum poured out of her mouth, pussy, and ass. Her body shuddered violently from her rape. But there was a smile on her lips. She managed to keep the shadows confined though she had accidentally summoned thousands of creatures to roam the shadow land she had permanently affixed to the world.

The Lord landed heavily, its body glowing with dark energies. **(The limits of your pleasure and no further. No being of darkness and shadows will leave through its own will from the boundaries you have established. Thank you, Shadow Maker. You have given us sanctuary. We will honor our promise.)**

Its alien thoughts were clearer now. Or, Merrie wondered, had she been changed to understand them more.

Merrie cried out at the empty feeling. It was the strongest orgasm of her life and she already felt like there was nothing but an empty void left in her body. She curled up in a fetal position and let the tears blow away into black mist.

To War

15

Merrie flowed along the ground, her body tracing every curve and bump of the rotted ground. Her shadow form didn't need light inside the shadow land, only the power that rippled along her. Fragments of calligraphy raced along her head, unformed spells and possibilities dancing among the afterglow of her dark orgasm.

It only took seconds for her to reach the original limits of the shadow land. One moment there was nothing but crumbling trees and rotted leaves, the next she was racing along wilting grass and between trees just beginning to lose their leaves.

She slowed and stopped, reforming her body. For a second, she saw her shadowy limb in front of her and worry sparked along her senses. What if the darkness had stripped away the shell that Borias had created for her? Then, as she watched, her pale skin formed over the shadows and sealed it back into place. Even the small measure of protection gave her a respite of peace and a sense of safety.

Shaking her head to clear the shimmering hair from her face, she peered around. She was near the bottom of a rolling hill. To her right, she could see flashes of light bursting along the edge. Small explosions shook the ground and the air stank of expended magic, flames, and lightening. To her left, there was nothing but a solid light. Neither felt right in a land of shadows and darkness.

Her land.

She needed to go to the mill and help join them. With the shadows surrounding her, she knew she could survive battle even against holy power. However, when she looked at the solid light, she

felt it pushing her away. Something was there, something powerful and terrifying for the darkness inside her.

Worrying her lip, she made a decision. She crawled up the hill toward the solid light, her naked body swaying with the movement as her tail remained pressed against her inner thigh. She kept her ears perked up as she listened for whatever was over the hill. When she heard loud chanting, a prickle ran along her skin.

She lowered her body to the ground as she reached the top of the hill. Grass scraped against her nipples and thighs, tickling her. If it wasn't for the danger, she would have stopped and just enjoyed the play against her body. Instead, she lowered herself further until her breasts ground into the earth and she inched over the top and peered over.

In the midst of the darkness, the bell stood in a pool of liquid light. Twenty priests surrounded it, holding their hands up in supplication and chanting loudly. Holy energy poured through them and into the white glass artifact.

Surrounding the priests were paladins. None of them were Lemetri's. They had the same symbol at the chanting priests. She thought for a moment, trying to remember through the thousand gods that every child was supposed to remember but came up blank. She gave up most of her memories when she bonded with Kine.

Around the circle of light were shadow creatures, the simple beings that were formed when a creature died among the darkness. Their shadows were imprinted on the realm of Shadows and sometimes their death would manifest as animated forces. Normally, the shadow creatures remained in the realm of Shadows, safe from mortal man, but with the portal and the newly expanded shadow land, the two realms had merged and now they surged forward against the light that burned the darkness.

The creatures were the first to respond. Thousands of animals who only thought of eating, fucking, and fighting. They threw themselves at the bell, a black wave of death. She saw squirrels and wolves, raccoons and moose. Each one charged against the circle of paladins and into the light.

Each one died. Either by glowing weapon or melting away in the light of the bell. She felt their spirits dissolving and the final screams of their second lives withering away in an instant.

Tears glittered on her cheeks as she watched them die. Individually, the shadow creatures weren't capable of attacking the bell. She remembered that from the shadowed district. They swarmed against it, but they weren't strong or organized enough to get through the ring of protectors much less the light. The danger came when too many came, when the swarm became a black river of death and it overwhelmed the forces protecting the artifact. Then the bell would crack.

Until then, more and more would come until the larger beasts came, like the reaper or the Lords of Shadows... no, they weren't the Lords of Shadows. She cocked her head as new understanding flooded through it. They looked like the Lord of Shadows but as she concentrated on them, she could see differences. Feeling the Lord in her mind so long gave her a different way of viewing them, not by physical appearance but by the complexity of the shadows that made up their being. The new beings were barely sentient, dull creatures with some of the powers of the singular Lord. They were closer to her hounds than the sentience of the Lord.

Merrie gulped, she was being changed again. The touch of the alien being had altered her, twisted her thoughts and perceptions to be part of the Shadows more than ever. She shivered at the cost and wondered if it was just a side effect of something more terrible.

Trembling, she brought her attention back to the battle. She didn't have a name for them, so she simply thought of them as her children, her shadow kin. It seemed to work when the Lord of Shadows called her "Shadow Maker."

Thinking of them as her children made her worry. They would die when they threw themselves against the bell. Even she could feel the desire to eradicate it from the world, it was a threat to her very being, a twisting of something that she could only call evil.

She sent her cloak and perceptions ahead. It flew across the air and then snapped to the ground, tracing along it as it danced between the stomping feet of the charging creatures. Up close, she could see the stylized bell on the paladins. They were lightly armored, chain shirts and steel boots. Their weapons were too bright for her, glowing with holy magic as they slashed through the swarming creatures.

A weapon slammed into the ground next to her cloak. She dodged out of the way and surge away, only to barely miss another sword. The blades were too bright. They created brilliant glares that erased everything around them in a halo of holy magic and power.

Merrie cringed and sent her cloak further along, moving with more agility than the other creatures were capable of doing. She knew where the bell was but all she could see was a wall of brilliance. It burned her, searing at her vision and smoldering her cloak's body.

She managed to slip past the feet of a paladin and got into the inner circle but it was too much. The cloak ignited into flames.

Screaming, she yanked it back. Her vision blurred from the brilliance and she flailed around until it managed to fall back into the swarming creatures, shielded by their bodies away from the light. The stench of magic and death filled the air.

The cloak shook its head to clear Merrie's vision. She looked back at the paladins, inspecting the nearest one as the creatures swarmed around her. They had gaps in their armor, she could send the cloak in through their orifices and tear them open from the inside. She had done it before many times, it was an effective attack.

Steeling herself, she surged forward. The cloak swirled around the swarming creatures and she caught on the nearest paladin's leg. It was a man, but that didn't matter for long as she flowed through the gaps of the chain armor and against his hot skin. Sweat soaked her as she crawled along his hairy leg.

His scream shook his body. He staggered back, beating his thighs. The impacts stung her body, almost dazing her, but she bore down and surged up into his crotch and into the tight sphincter of his ass. His scream grew shriller as she forced her way into the tight opening and then began to tear out his insides, ripping through intestines and stomach and lungs in a surge of death and brutality. Claws ripped out his lungs as she crawled up his throat. The heated pressure and darkness was a contrast against the brilliance outside but then she was out of his mouth and into the blinding light.

Merrie gasped, she had never imagined what it was like for her cloak to kill someone. It was brutal and terrifying. She felt sick using it and promised herself she wouldn't ever do it again. At least while she was watching.

As the man collapsed to the ground, the nearest paladins attacks attacked her. Their glowing weapons slashed out, she was too distracted from her own disgust to dodge them. Burning blades sliced through her cloak and igniting it into flames. Her vision blurred with the flashes of light and the agony of her body on fire.

Dazed, Merrie tried to escape them and accidentally got closer to the bell. Her cloak shredded and burned away along with her vision. Desperate, she yanked back and the cloak fluttered out of the light and into the darkness. Only a few long strands of darkness survived the attack.

As soon as it was protected from the light, she pulled it back. It didn't fly as fast as it used to. Instead, it limped and crawled to her before settling back on her skin.

Down in the battle, she heard one of the paladin's yell out. "We just lost Rog! Something just ripped him out from the inside."

"Personal wards, now!" came two other replies.

As one, the paladins suddenly slammed their fists together and exploded into light. Energy coursed along their bodies, bright and clean holy magic.

The shadow creatures pulled back, the light pushing at them.

The magic sank into the paladin's bodies and each one began to glow from the inside.

It only took a second but then the creatures were able to overcome their aversion and they surged against the paladins again. Nothing changed other than they were glowing.

The one of the second speakers yelled loudly. "Get ready, there is a shadow mage coming!"

More defensive spells rose up as the various paladins braced themselves. Their blades slashed through the darkness but it was almost rote actions now. There was no need for anything graceful, only sweep through the creature to kill them.

"How much time, Mar?" asked the paladin who was speaking. He had mousy brown hair peeking out of a dark green bandanna with his holy symbol on it. Underneath his chain armor, she could see that he was slender but muscular, the lines of his pectorals strained against his chain armor.

A female priest stopped chanting long enough to yell back. "Three minutes! Now shut up, Jace!"

The paladin shook his head and grinned. "Time to purge this evil! Galladin!"

The others took up the cry. "Galladin!"

Merrie snarled, her body wavering as she looked down at the paladins. They were going to destroy her shadow land, her children, her promise. Delving into her thoughts, she found a spell to control the shadow creatures and drew it across her mind, the calligraphy coming easily as she pulled in the shadows around her. Energy flowed through her black veins and beat against her insides. She channeled it through her collar and let it build up, gathering in energy until she was surrounded by a black cloud of utter darkness.

Jame, the paladin who spoke, suddenly looked up. "By the gods, incoming!"

Merrie snarled and released her spell. Bursts of shadowy tendrils shot out of her body and swarmed over the gathered forces. The light from the bell erased it, but for every tendril that was blasted by the light, twenty sank into the hearts of the creatures around her.

Their barely coherent thoughts flooded through her mind, but she shoved them aside and shielded herself from the din. Her spell caught more, twenty, fifty, a thousand. Thousands of tiny creatures, each one not capable of getting close enough to the bell to do any damage.

One of the tendrils caught a larger shadow creature, it was one of the shadow kin. Instantly, it became a thick tentacle as she felt a flood of power come through it. It was larger than a bear and she could picture its black wings spreading out as it came over the hill. Powerful claws dug into the ground as it approached.

She split the spell, pushing the horde into a corner of her mind and giving her attention to the kin with the bulk of her attention. She shifted her senses to the cloak and let it fly around her, taking in the battle. The kin was still over the hill but it was passing next to some large rocks.

An idea hit her. She commanded it to pick up the largest rock and get ready to throw. With the rest of the creatures, she pulled back with all her mind.

The mindless horde suddenly stopped attacking, they pulled back into a black carpet of evil.

The fear and nervousness instantly rose from the paladins. A few swung their glowing weapons aimlessly until they realized no one was attacking. Many of them stood ready, staring at the mass of darkness that was only meters away from them.

Jace yelled out. "Get ready! Defensive up front, the mage take charge!"

The paladins began to swap positions, moving with practiced grace as they shifted the brighter glowing paladins toward the swarm and the darker ones near the back. Merrie cast her senses across them and saw that they all had different level of wards surrounding their bodies. The ones in front were the strongest and the ones in the back were wanting.

Merrie sent her cloak to slithered through the ground near the back. She didn't send her senses along with it, but she could feel it in the back of her mind. As it flowed, she gathered the shadows around it to repair some of the damage don by the light.

And then she waited.

Seconds passed by as the priests continued to chant. Her skin crawled and her mind ached as she strained to keep the creatures at bay. She wanted to lash out, to kill, to swarm over them.

Energy continued to gather in the bell. The light burned at the creatures in the front, searing them away. She almost pulled them back but didn't. Instead, she let the first ranks melt away in silence.

The fear continued to rise. They were all trained to fight against it, none of them would break ranks, but the long seconds were torture for them as long as the others.

"When are—"

Jace, at the point of the formation, shifted his weapon. "Pray."

"How—"

"Pray if you have to say something. They will strike, be ready."

Merrie focused her attention on the back two paladins. Both of their wards were beginning to falter. She saw the glow inside their bodies flickering and dimming.

She sent the horde forward a meter and then pulled them back.

The paladins brought up their weapons and held them ready.

The chanting continued to fill the air, the energy growing into brilliance.

Merrie fainted again, wishing that the weaker paladins would lose their wards faster.

Finally, she couldn't risk it anymore. With a surge of power, she threw strength and protection spells down the thousand connections in her mind. They surged with the darkness as the cloud around her poured into their connections.

A thousand creatures grew darker as they surged forward. Each one only had a smallest measure of increased strength but against so many, the paladins would be struggling.

"Brace!" screamed Jace and then they were on him.

Holy energy burst out of the paladins and they attacked.

Merrie threw her cloak forward, bracing herself against the light. It burst out of the darkness and surged forward, slamming into the weakest paladin. The female paladin's wards burned her cloak, searing it but it wasn't enough to prevent her from forcing her way into the sweat-slicked sphincter into her organs.

The paladin dropped her weapon and screamed, clawing at her stomach as the cloak burrowed deeper into her body. Blood poured out of her mouth and nose.

Merrie concentrated on the cloak, driving its actions. She couldn't feel the wetness of her body, but she had enough control to force it down one arm of the paladin and then the other.

Her scream grew shriller as the cloak tore through muscles of her legs, forcing an opening before it could wrap around her bones

The horde continued to die, surging against the light.

Suddenly Jace was sprinting toward the paladin Merrie was attacking. His weapon rose up and there was no question he was going to kill her.

Merrie drove her puppet yank back. At the same time, she had it clamp down on her weapon.

Raggedly, the female paladin staggered back.

Jace's weapon barely missed her. He continued the swing but backhanded her toward the darkness.

Merrie's strength wavered from the impact. Jace had enough holy magic that it burst through the meat shield she was using. It burned her cloak and frayed her control. She forced the woman to charge forward, not toward Jace but to swing her weapon at the bell.

Jace interrupted her, plunging his weapon into the woman's chest.

Merrie switched her attention to the shadow kin. (Now.)

The boulder launched itself over the hill, directed by Merrie's command. It sailed through the air, unseen by the paladins or the priests.

Pain ignited from her cloak. She felt the holy energy rippling back toward her, using the tendril of control as a path to burn her out. She severed it and felt a part of her life burn away as the female paladin's body burst into brilliant, holy flames along with the cloak, an extension of Merrie's being.

The boulder smashed into the bell. Both exploded in an explosion of light and shards of glass. The gathered energy radiated out in a rapidly growing sphere of the brightest light Merrie had ever seen. It moved too fast for her and she couldn't dodge fast enough, though she scrambled back toward the top of the hill.

Her world grew white and blinding, the glare too much to see anything. All she could feel was the heat beating against her skin, burning away her flesh and searing at the obsidian underneath. She cried out, straining to keep her form together as she flailed helplessly toward the curve of the hill.

Darkness enveloped her, the icy pressure of inhuman wings wrapped around her as claws dug into her skin. She gasped and tried to open her eyes but she was blinded. She felt the energy of the shadow kin still in her thoughts as pain raged across its system. It had sacrificed itself to protect her and she felt its dying as the blast threw both of them away from the explosion.

They hit the ground with a crunch and the last thing Merrie remembered was her limbs cracking from their impact.

Then oblivion.

t'Sade

Jace

16

Merrie was alive but couldn't see. The world was too bright and it burned her eyes even though they were closed tightly. She whimpered and rolled over, plastering her face against the ground and breathed in the smells of rotting earth. The alcoholic scent teased the back of her throat from the rapidly dying plants. In a matter of days, it would be rotted and crumbling.

Her entire body burned. The concussion blast had scraped her thin skin raw, bringing her shadowy insides dangerously close to the burning light. Icy blood oozed out of deeper scratches, tickling her skin as it bubbled in the light. She had no doubt it would be pitch as night before the heat evaporated it from her body.

Cracking open one eye, she saw nothing but light. With a cry, she snapped it shut. She didn't see anywhere to escape. Panting slowly, she dragged her legs up to her chest and curled them underneath her. The movement exposed her naked sex and ass to the light; it burned her like a torch. Crying out, she clamped her tail over her exposed holes and yanked her arms tight against her breasts, crushing them.

Gulping, she tried to cast out her senses to find some shelter. The calligraphy in her head burned away from the discomfort. She tried again, but the agony of her body in light made it impossible to concentrate long enough to cast the spell.

Her skin began to peel under the light. She could feel it crinkling and rippling, the first sensation of her shadowy insides beginning to melt under the brilliance.

Crying out, she tried to open her eyes against the blindness again. There was nothing but glare, a white that was too bright to be

anything other than holy power raging around or above her. She couldn't even identify the direction to avoid it, there was nothing to position herself except for the space of rotted grass underneath her naked body.

Merrie knew she had to move. She forced her arms out against the burning light. When the searing heat raced up her limbs, she bit her lip and drove them into the ground. The smooth ends of her wrists sank into the moist ground. Trembling, she kept her tail firmly against her pussy as she pushed forward and dragged herself a few decimeters.

To her right, she felt the holy energy gathering. It felt like standing next to a bonfire, a heat rippling along her side and ripping at her skin. It was getting stronger.

She peeked at it, just a flash of movement. The light was too bright for her and she felt it searing her eyes but she spotted a human staggering toward, limping with heavy movements. Their entire body was only a brilliant halo, visible only by the relative darkness that surrounded it. It was one of the paladins, she guessed it was Jace from his previous actions.

Unable to look into the light further, she closed her eyes and blinked away the tears. Fear surged through her body as she frantically tried to clear her vision. She imagined Jace was almost on her. He may have been injured by the explosion, but she had no doubt that he was capable of killing a naked woman cowering in the middle of the light.

"I... I..." His voice was hoarse and grating. The former confidence that boomed in it was gone, but she could still hear him straining to approach and the determination that vibrated in his chest. "I know of you. You're the shadow woman, the so-called omega. The Shadow Hound."

Fear surged through her body. She had to protect herself. She turned her head away from him, cringing at the terror that spiked inside her. Cracking open one eye, she tried to spot some shelter that gave her shadows.

The world was cast in sharp-edged lines of light. Some radiated from Jace, she could tell by how they swayed back and forth, but there were other ones that rippled along the ground. The shadows

from the second light were shorter and she guessed it was a pillar of holy flames.

Sharp pain exploded from her right arm. She jerked away from it, terrified that Jace had caught her. Shielding her body from the light, she peeked at it and saw obsidian smoke rising from the burnt edges of her skin.

"I knew, I knew that I was right," growled Jace. "They were all so confident that you weren't there. That damn spy said... there were no... shadows in the house. She either lied..." Jace swallowed hard before he continued, "... or you were able to hide from her. Either way, they were all fools for trusting her."

Merrie inched away from him. Every tiny crawl lengthened the time she was in the light. It would only be moments before more of her skin ripped open from the light.

She tried to summon her cloak but it was destroyed. There was only a dull ache where she had been mentally connected to it.

There was a thud and Jace grunted. "Go for the goddess, they said. If we save her, then she will defeat the traitor, they said." He snorted between the heavy gasps.

A scraping noise filled the air. She cringed but no attack came. She started to peek but the light was too bright. She turned her head sharply away and looked around for shadow.

There was nothing in the valley that she had fallen. The only darkness was the boiling blood that came from either her or the shadow kin that had protected her. The black blood was painted thick against the grass, crumbling it clear down to the earth even as it boiling and misted away in the light. The choking smell of death burned in the back of her throat, tickling it with the fading taste of ether.

Jace grunted. "That was a pretty good trick, girl. You just about killed everyone with that sacrifice play. The problem is," he snarled, "that was my sister you killed."

Merrie tightened her grip. She looked up along the ridge of the valley she was in. If she could get on the other side, there would be darkness.

Gathering up her rapidly fading power, she drew her transformation spell across her mind. The familiar calligraphy

needed little concentration and easily swirled across her thoughts, fueled by her fear and the energy that rippled inside her.

Her body began to shift, the skin rippling and peeling.

Agony exploded in her body as the light poured into her body. The spell snapped and the energy raced along her body, peeling her open further before she could throw herself into a fetal position and roll away from it.

“Yeah, yeah. You can’t escape the light, blah, blah. I’m tired of explaining it. You just keep whimpering there, I just need a few more moments to get over there and kill you properly.” He made sounds of pain and the light grew brighter as he approached. “I told them they should have prepared for you. All because everyone is so anxious to save the goddess and have her owe favors for the ass kissers.”

Merrie sobbed into the ground. Her entire body was on fire from her attempted shape-changing. It burned inside her, her shadowy insides were twisting and boiling inside her skin. It took all of her concentration to concentrate on her black heart and let the triple beat solidify her insides.

“After this, I’m going to spend a week healing myself,” Jace grumbled. His voice was growing rougher and hoarser. He coughed wetly.

Fighting the agony, Merrie tried to come up with something to save herself. He was closer, she could feel the ground shaking with his staggered footsteps. He was also limping badly, a rapid pair of footsteps before he paused for a second. She guessed that both of his legs were injured but not broken.

As he approached, she smelled fresh blood drifting over the wind. It mixed in with the searing taste of holy magic. It felt like liquid glass against her tongue.

Merrie mentally gauged the distance to the hill. It was only a handful of meters but it was further than the ocean with her pinned in the light. She could do it with her human body but turning into a hound was too much.

An idea darkened her thoughts. She screwed up her face and forced a command through her collar. (Present!)

There was an infinity as the command shot through the connection in her head. It rippled through her collar and became

something more, an irresistible order from her mistress. The anticipation grew as her pussy heated up, a liquid gathering in her insides as the order came back changed.

What hit her was the thoughts of someone else, her own mind transformed by the collar into the orders of her mistress.

She obeyed, she couldn't do anything else. Agony tore at her flesh as it peeled away. The pain coursed through her as she forced herself to obey, to slam her ankles into the ground and spread her legs wide. Her tail snapped up, removing all the protection as her bare pussy and ass was exposed to the light.

Everything inside her screamed to curl back up but she held herself. The surge of pain blossomed into pleasure as she fought to obey her mistress. Waves of holy energy seared her skin but it only drove more pleasure to fill her, gathering into an orgasm that pushed back her suffering.

It exploded almost instantly with the taste of blood in the back of her mouth and her entire body burning. Black energy exploded from her sex and raced along her black veins. Her insides solidified around it and pulsed.

“What are you... damn!” Jace raced forward, his foot thudding loudly against the ground.

Surging energy through the aching connection with her cloak, she cast the spell to create a new one. It pulled from her very being, sucking part of her life away, as the darkness blossomed into rippling fabric. Before he could attack, she cast protective spells through the link. She had done the same for her master, her mistress, and her own pack. Now, she gathered up the power and brought it surging across the lit ground toward her.

The holy light peeled away the flesh of her pussy, exposing her sex to the searing light of the sun.

Merrie screamed out as she held herself still.

Jace reached her and she felt the energy rise above her with the whistle of a sword.

(Dodge!)

She was obeying before even the command slammed into her. Throwing herself blindly in the light, she managed to slip past the blade as it plunged into the ground. Liquid glass splattered against her as the magical blade sheared through rotted earth.

Jace's steel-tipped boot slammed into her sex. Her pelvis cracked from the impact as he drove almost half of his foot into her sex. The impact tore open her pussy, ripping skin and sending out a gouge of black blood to splatter against him.

Merrie's cloak snapped between his legs and enveloped her. The icy darkness was a balm against the light as the supernatural cloth wrapped tightly around her body, sealing over her misting wounds and over her face. A knot jammed into her mouth, gagging her but also sending little waves of helplessness to fuel her magic.

She frantically cast the transformation spell. Her body twisted and ripped, her delicate flesh peeling apart like parchment. She felt her insides beating against her cloak and was thankful it shielded her. Moments later, her body reformed into her other form, a Bel Dark hound with a massive chest and a huge head.

A rush of excitement poured through her. She turned toward Jace as her cloak plastered itself over her eyes. The darkness shielded her from most of the light but it was still powerful enough to seep through the darkness. She couldn't focus on him, but she could see his outline from the shadows around him.

Jace yanked his sword up. "Damn, damn, damn!" He swung.

Merrie almost missed the weapon coming at her, it was glowing too brightly. She dodged to the side. Her energy poured into the cloak, keeping it together with the force of her will. A painful throbbing in her head and the taste of her blood in her mouth told her that she only had a limited time to fight in the light.

Jace's weapon left a glowing slash in the air.

She ducked underneath it as she stepped away. Her powerful muscles easily pushed her back.

"I will hunt down if you run," said Jace.

Merrie thought about Bass and the others fighting near the mill house. (I have no fight with you.)

Jace had powerful mental shields. They weren't psionic but a cloud of prayers and guarded thoughts. She could feel him gathering energy for spells, flashes of symbols rising out of the boiling depths of his mind.

He grunted. "You have their goddess."

(Lemetri is dead.) She projected memories of her death into Jace's thoughts.

Moving with desperate strength that she didn't know she had, Merrie surged forward. She slammed into Lemetri's body, every shattered bone grinding into each other in a singularity of pain. She snarled and slammed her head down to bite down on Lemetri's neck with all her might.

Canine teeth shattered against the soft, delicate neck of the goddess, but the shards cut through the divine flesh. Blood, brilliant and shimmering, flooded into her mouth and she felt burning its way across her tongue.

Lemetri screamed out and lost her concentration. With a sucking noise, the Lords of Shadows dug their claws into her beautiful flesh and pulled her into the darkness.

The world grew black as Merrie fell into the shadows. Claws of a thousand Lords of Shadows tore at her and she fell into them, no strength left in her silent body to resist.

He pulled back with a hiss. His thoughts grew more guarded, the cloud tightening into a mass of storm clouds and lighting. "No, they said the traitor killed her."

Merrie sent images of the promise she made to the Lord of Shadows along with the images of the shadow kin feasting on the remains of the goddess. She let the details fill in as she pushed the thoughts to the side and wrapped them in a quick psionic spell to keep them flowing.

Jace let out a long breath, his thoughts growing angry. "Then you are the enemy, not that traitor. They were all fools, blinded by their own desires."

She said nothing. Slowly, she backed away from him and prepared herself to run.

"No one is above the gods!" Jace charged, his blade becoming a holy brilliance. It burned her cloak, melting it away into obsidian mists as he charged the few meters to her.

Merrie let out a gasp and threw herself to the side, her body transforming briefly into shadows.

His sword slammed into her right leg, pinning it into place.

She screamed and yanked at it as her body reformed. The noise of it echoed against the valley sides, bouncing back in a shrill sound.

Jace released the sword and punched her, throwing his entire weight into slamming his fist into her chest. The impact cracked bone and she was thrown against the ground.

“By the holy light!” He slammed into her again and again, a brutal pummeling that drove her into the ground.

“You will not survive!”

He had steel gloves on his knuckles. Each impact exploded with tiny flashes of holy light as the blessed knuckles crushed her furry chest and tore away at the cloak. Black blood poured out of the impact as he punched her again and again.

Merrie tried to defend herself, her hound form melting away from the impact.

The fists didn't slow as they crushed her naked breasts and slammed against her stomach, sides, and pubis. Each impact shook her body as he brutalized her without pausing or slowing.

She could see the insane fury in his eyes. It scared her to see the intensity burning in his gaze, the way he fought against the wound that left the bones of his arm exposed to the air and shredded his chain armor. One eye was swollen shut and his brown hair had plastered against it.

“Be vanquished, creature of darkness!” His fist caught her jaw, cracking it. The delicate shadow insides, desperately trying to reform into her bones, shattered and she felt it swelling from the impact.

Merrie fought to regain her senses. When she could, she managed to force a single command through her collar, a desperate need to get energy to escape her attacker. (Orgasm.)

It was weak but confident, she knew exactly what she needed. Her body grew liquid as she felt the order circling and coming back. It slammed into her.

Her entire body exploded into pleasure, turning Jace's attacks into pleasure as she accepted it. It surged through her body as she came, thrusting her naked hips into his fists as he pummeled her sex. The wetness gathered along her pussy as the energy flowed through her, filling her body and holding it together.

It did nothing to shield her from his attacks, that was what kept her coming, but she gathered her pleasure and scraped a spell across her mind.

Her body melted into darkness.

It exploded into flames.

Unable to scream, she flowed out from underneath Jace and up along the hill. The pain and agony followed her, ripping her shadow form in the brilliance as she reached for the crest.

“No!” screamed Jace. He snatched up his sword and jumped after her, bringing the weapon in a brilliant arc over his head and down at her body.

She reached the crest but wouldn't escape the attack.

On the far side, she spotted a shadow kin only meters away. The shadowy creature ducked under the light that streamed over the hill but it was waiting for her. Three others were arranged along the valley. Their claws and tentacles wavered just under the light, as if it was a glass ceiling above them.

Merrie silently sobbed with relief. She reached out for the nearest and sent an order through a hastily formed connection.

The nearest one attacked, lashing out with tentacles and claws.

An explosion of light burst underneath Jace and he slammed into it and then jumped back just as the claws slashed through the air right where he would have been. He landed heavily on the ground and sank to one knee.

Merrie sobbed as she finished flowing over the hill and into the blessed darkness. With a sob, her body reformed into her human shape and she curled up against the cool air.

“I will hunt down, girl. I will destroy you for daring to kill a god.” Jace snarled.

Merrie reached out and pressed her hand against the icy ankle of the shadow kin. Its energy flowed into her, filling her with sweet darkness and relief. With a sob, she let her senses drift and they sank into the creature, rolling for a moment before she was seeing out of its eyes.

Jace glared at her from the bright sight of the hill. His eyes were glowing points of white light. His sword burned at the ground at his feet.

Merrie projected the image of the shadow kin next to her.

“I'm aware of the dark creatures that protect you.”

She reached out for others. She felt them coming out of the copse of trees that formed the original shadow land. They were her children, her protectors, her guards. She sobbed and rolled to her body, her injuries throbbing.

Jace sighed and stood up. He brandished his sword as he took a limping step back. "This is a battle that neither of us will win."

She panted as she looked up at the four shadow kin looming over her. They were powerful but also untrained. Jace was a warrior, no doubt spent many years hunting the creatures of the night. She wasn't sure which one would win, not with her body screaming out in agony and her skin only seconds away from bursting open again.

Merrie transformed into hound and back again but it did little to heal her energies. She frowned and tried again, but her skin remained ragged and torn as before.

Through the shadow kin's eyes, she saw Jace back away.
(Are you retreating?)

Jace stopped and tightened the grip on his sword. "Do you wish to fight?"

(I want to protect my children and my family. I want to call this place home and not worry about attack or invasion.) Careful not to think of Borias, she projected an image of the shadow kin and Bass, who she hadn't seen since she recovered.

"No," Jace said in a hard voice, "I'm not retreating. Your family is being slaughtered right now. An army rises against them and you may be their own hope."

Unwillingly, fear and determination began to rise up inside her.

"Fighting me means that one of us will die. I don't know which one, but I do know that your loved ones will die without your help. Defending them will leave you weaker. Then I'll be back to kill you. What do you chose? To sacrifice yourself to save them or to defeat me and leave your loved ones to die?"

Merrie tightened her jaw. (And Lemetri?)

"The goddess is dead, as you said. There is no reason for you to lie, it fits with their desperation for a rescue, and also their weakened powers that have increased when they approach this place. They are all fools to attack like this and they blinded by their own desires. Let them die first, then you and I will finish what we started. And when I slaughter you, I will come back properly prepared for battle to destroy what you have let loose on this world." The last few words were spat out.

She struggled to consider his words. Her entire ached but it was unlike the injuries she had acquired in the past. The pain came

along her torn skin and the burn of light against her shadowy insides. Her bones ground together with each breath, she could feel the burning sparks along her ribs, pelvis, and thighs.

Merrie asked the shadow kin to look down at her. She saw herself, a naked woman with black-streaked body shaking violently. She looked like she was on the edge of collapse with her shimmering hair plastered against her shoulders and back. Long rents ran along her skin exposing the living shadow underneath and she could taste the black mist that seeped out of her wounds.

Turning, the shadow kin looked back to the lights flashing near the mill. The light was painful for even the spectral creature but she could sense that the battle steadily continued. Various energies rippled along the ground.

Merrie sighed and turned the kin's attention back to Jace. He was also injured, but she couldn't tell the extent with the pure energy rolling off him. It would be a hard battle, one that she would survive no matter what—her collar promised that—but death would take days if not months to recover. By then, she may find her loved ones dead.

Tears ran down her cheeks. Jace was the enemy but he was also offering to pull back. Or least appeared to be, she didn't know if he would try to betray her later.

Behind her, she heard an explosion rock the ground near the mill house and the smell of burning wood wafted past her.

Shaking her head, she swayed. Ribs ground against each other and she tasted blood in the back of her throat. She couldn't take on two battles. With a sigh and a sick feeling twisting her stomach, she projected a pulse of agreement.

Jace continued walking backward away from her and the kin. "We will fight again, girl. Galladin is patient and the light never fades."

He backed away for a hundred meters before he disappeared into the glare of the bonfire that centered where the bell used to be. Through the shadow kin's eyes, she saw hints of the bodies that were scattered from the center of the explosion. Their twisted bodies and gaping wounds would have scared her one day, now they were just victims of the senseless battle from the forced of Lemetri.

Once she was sure he wasn't going to return, Merrie lifted one bare wrist and started toward the other battle. Every movement burned at her senses.

She swayed, a wave of dizziness rushing through her mind.

Merrie shook her head. She couldn't stop, Borias and the others needed her. She reached out and planted one wrist against the ground.

Before she could crawl toward the fight, the dizziness swelled up and she crumpled to the ground. The last thing she felt before the darkness was her bones grinding together as her insides boiled from her injuries.

And then there was darkness.

Respite

17

Merrie woke up with a gasp. When her ribs scraped against her insides, she let out a cry and froze. Fresh tears glittered on her face as she blinked frantically, trying to clear the wavering world around her.

It took her a painful moment to realize she was staring up at the sky. Smoke and mist swirled above her, flashing with the light of combat spells in the distance. The stench of blood and ozone filled the air and she choked on it. Beneath her, among the rotted leaves that were already crumbling with her presence, she felt the vibrations of explosions, fighting, and war machines.

Terrified for the mill, she brought up her timekeeping spell. She had only blacked out for a minute but it was enough for her shaking body to slump on her back.

She tried to roll over but her injuries prevented her. Every movement caused her bones to grind and her skin to rip. A thousand agonies danced along her nerves. She could do nothing but let out a cry.

Ice pressed against her body. She flinched at it and looked up as one of the shadow kin settled down next to her, lining up its massive shifting body against her own. It was cold as death and just as silent, but the ice felt good against her senses. It matched the coldness that filled her, they were made of the same shadows.

The kin stopped moving for a heartbeat and then leaned into her, pressing its icy body against her own.

When her injuries scraped against its body, she winced. She started to project a command to it but then realized that the icy pressure felt good against her. It shielded her from the flashes of the

combat, the reflections of the flames that still burned over the hill, and gave her something solid to rest against.

Merrie's cry faded in her throat. Hesitating, she pressed her face against it. The cool touch felt good and she let out a soft moan. The cold seeped into her body and filled her with darkness. She could feel her shifting insides solidify around her black veins once again. The weakness from her fight slowly faded.

Another shadow kin knelt down on the ground on the other side. She watched it silently as it settled into place and rolled against her, pinning her naked body between their two forms.

The icy touch of death and shadows perked her nipples. The tiny aureole crinkled up until the points stuck out with aching hardness. The confinement and her own helplessness sent little waves of icy pleasure along her skin, it caressed her body before sinking between her lips and along her clitoris.

It wasn't the intense pleasure of fucking or submission, just a moment of being pinned to set off the curls of pleasure rising inside her cunt. She closed her eyes and enjoyed them.

An explosion shook the ground.

She jerked out of the moment and looked up at the sky. There was a gout of magenta flames rising up. She thought of Haviston, his psionic magic frequently burned the bright purple-like color. Taking a deep breath, she reached out for him.

Her thoughts struck a mental shield that was unlike she had ever encountered. Instead of protecting one person's thoughts, it covered the entire battlefield in a cloud of glittering diamonds. Her project crumbled against it. She tried again but couldn't penetrate it. If she knew how to zero on Haviston, she knew she would be able, but without having the psion's thoughts in her mind, her aimless probing was futile.

Desperation rose up, choking her. She reached out to pull herself out from between the two shadowy kins but couldn't find purchase on their shifting, icy bodies. She projected a command for them to move apart but both creatures only looked away and pinned her tighter.

(Move away, I need to rescue them.)

One of the kin let out a silent growl, she felt it in her mind more than from the vibrations. The thoughts that came through were

alien and twisted, they had no basis in her reality. It was like projecting into the mind of the Lord of Shadow but not as overwhelming.

(They need me.)

One of the tentacles sticking out of the shadow kin swirled down along her thigh. It was as thick as her wrist and the tip was cold enough to leave frost sparkling along her skin.

She batted it away but another took its place. She gathered up an order. When she looked down, the command faded from her thoughts.

Darkness was seeping out of the shadow kin and rolling across her skin in streamers of obsidian mist. It moved unnaturally, like wind blowing snow across a road, but instead of falling off her almost white skin, it seemed into her wounds.

She stared in shock, her body trembling as she watched the shadow kin giving part of itself for her. It wasn't just the cold of their bodies, it was of their shadowy selves, the common darkness that shaped body of their bodies.

Merrie looked up at the nearest shadow kin.

It looked black, its shifting body twisting and boiling. It didn't have any strict form or shape but it looked canine and feline at the same time. The angular head had two black shimmering eyes. Tentacles rippled along its body, tracing its spine down to a spiked tail that had curled protectively around Merrie.

Alien thoughts scraped against her senses. It beat against her with only the slightest of commonalities of emotions. She felt them wash over her as she let her mind drift in the kin's thoughts, trying to find some way of asking it to release her.

She only got a strange sense of affection. There was more to it but she couldn't identify the emotions. It felt like awe and protectiveness and... love. She looked into its place eyes and felt the same feelings radiating from the two kin surrounding her. It felt strange but comforting despite the pressure to join into the fray, a sense of respite and quiet before the blood.

Merrie blinked and tried to escape again but it was a weak attempt, partially because her body could barely hold her own weight but also because she knew she couldn't escape. They were holding her down because she couldn't fight.

She reached out toward the combat one with blood-streaked, shaking arm. Black blood, her blood, dribbled down the bottom edge as a few streamers of obsidian slowly slide into the rents in her thin skin.

Helpless, she stared at her arm. How could she help in the fight? Any light would kill her. She looked at the mist and darkness seeping out of the shadow kin. It was helping her. As much as she desperately wanted to race to Borias and save him, she needed to survive the fight. The only way was to recover some of her energy and strength.

With a sigh and tears in her eyes, she slumped against the icy, shifting skin of the shadow kin. Black mist and cold seeped out of its body and into her own. She breathed in the thick scent and tried not to think about her loved ones dying in combat while she was helpless to stop them.

Merrie let her mind drift back through the surrounding area. She found her cloak. It was a manifestation of her will, but it was also independent. She could feel the rents and burns from their fight; it was the same injuries her own paper-thin skin suffered. She summoned the cloak to her and felt it fluttering across the ground, slithering like a snake until it rested against her thigh.

One of the other shadow kin pushed its head closer. It looked like it was sniffing from its angular head and sharp, black teeth.

The cloak reached out for it.

Black mist puffed out of the kin's mouth and across the cloak.

It fluttered and drew it in, taking the obsidian mist to repair some of its own damages. With a shudder, it slithered forward and spread out across the shadow kin, disappearing into the black-on-black of the animated cloak and the inhuman beast. A ripple of power and energy swirled around it as it began to heal just as Merrie was.

The ground shook from an explosion.

Merrie closed her eyes tightly and thought to herself, (Please live, please?)

She ground against the shadow kin and prayed that the shadows would fill her faster.

Bloodbath

18

Twenty minutes later, Merrie felt like a new woman. Most of her injuries were bound with shadows and the rent in her flesh plastered over with spells. The shadow kin's energy hummed inside her, the darkness of the shadows filling her almost as much as the sexual excitement of obeying her mistress.

She bounded across the grass in her hound form, followed by the four shadow kin. The unnatural creatures' fluid bodies had changed when she did, taking on a hound-like appearance though there was no hiding the tentacles along their backs and tails or the long, jagged claws that dug into the earth. Each one was twice her size but moved with unnatural silence that didn't shake the ground or whistle the earth.

She moved like they did, using the darkness to flow as much as move along the ground. The triple beat of her heart was the only noise she could hear. Her bare paws whispered along the grasses. She could feel the plants dying underneath her, wilting away with her presence.

They slowed as they came up to the top of the final hill next to the mill. It was still a kilometer away but she knew it would give her a view of the house and the surrounding battle. Before she reached the crest, she could see the flashes of light and felt the shaking of spells as they struck each other.

When she reached the top and looked over, she froze in shock.

There were still hundreds of attackers alive but there were far more dead and dying on the ground. Bodies were scattered in all directions and rivers of blood soaked into the dying ground. Mist

clung to the curves of the earth and seeped through the splayed limbs and severed heads.

The mill house was standing but the entire great hall along the side had collapsed. Flames burned brightly in the debris of the hall and along the third floor. She could see sparks of energy rising from the flames where magical devices and burst of infernal energy faded away.

A flash exploded from the front of the house. Merrie winced at it and then forced herself to look, dreading seeing one of her loved ones dead on the ground.

When she saw the massive form of an armored white thriiban swinging a great sword, she let out a sob of relief. Bass was unmistakable even from a distance. His powerful blows hammered at the two men in front of them. All three wore the same holy symbols on their chest, all three glowed with holy energy, but Bass wielded it with a skill of a centuries of practice. His weapon sparked and flashed with every impact. He didn't miss, unlike his opponents who were obviously suffering from exhaustion.

Behind him, a large hound guarded his back, Sable. She wore a dog's version of Bass' armor including the same holy symbol on her chest, but it was shaped for a powerful beast instead of a two meter tall man. Four swords hovered over Sable. As Merrie watched, they launched in the gap between the shields of the three men trying to break past her. The weapons streaked across the front yard and punched into the chests of archers who were trying to get a clear shot. Scattered throughout the yard were more bodies with gaping chest wounds and severed limbs.

Tears of joys gathered in Merrie's eyes. (Sable.)

The armored hound's tail snapped up. (Merrie!) The voice filled with smoke and whiskey slammed into her with a wave of intense affection. Even as Sable was ripping the throat out of a man, her thoughts were as bouncy as her demeanor. (Dixie said you were alive! I missed you!)

Merrie basked in the affection. She sent a condensed version of her memories through the mental communication with the other alpha.

The other alpha didn't even pause as she yanked back her head to avoid sword blows from her opponents. Their glowing weapons

glinted off her blood-streaked armor. She lunged forward, her body a blur. She chomped down on the nearest paladin's wrist. The connection between her and Bass flared up and then she yanked back, throwing the man high into the air with his wrist flying in the opposite direction.

She glance around and then bore down to growl at the remaining opponent. (Dixie said you were vulnerable to light?)

Merrie's ears lowered. (Yes, it burns. I can't handle your magic's or any other bright light. It...) Unable to find the words, she sent an image of her skin burning in the light and the black obsidian mist evaporating.

To Sable's credit, there was only a flash of recoil before her thoughts bounce back with an intense wave of affection and love, the mental version of a tight hug. (Poor baby. After this, want me to lick it make it better. I'm good at feeling in the dark.) Following the playful response was a surge of lust.

Merrie shivered at the intensity of the projection, Sable was one of the strongest alphas she had ever experienced in her life. She was passionate and loving, but also a brutal killer when her master's life was threatened. Like Merrie, she was cropped but it was at the elbows and knees. Even so, she gave a sense of bouncing even when slaughtering her opponent.

(Stop fucking teasing her,) snapped Dixie as he came racing around the corner of the house as a pack of wolves. Only one of them was his real body but it was almost impossible to identify him in the racing duplicates without using magic. The black-furred creatures sprinted in a blur as they raced through the front yard, taking out the knees and limbs of the attackers. Explosions of blood and metal shot into the air as they disappeared along the far side.

(That isn't going to work again,) Sable projected. Her attention was on a pair of paladins hanging beyond the direct fighting. Both had their weapons ready to strike, but it was impossible to see where they were looking at.

Dixie snorted. (I bet I can get one more charge before they get ready.)

Sable grinned, sending an image of Dixie with his face slammed into the ground. He was a tiny humanoid, barely a meter in height

and slender like all silfae. Tabitha was in her wolf form, fucking his ass with powerful, brutal strokes.

Dixie's response with simple. (Fuck you.)

(Later, sweetie.) Sable seemed completely unfazed by his violent thoughts or the attackers she was fighting against. The connection between her and Bass glowed brightly. Sable's thoughts began to blur, a rumbling man's voice blending with her own.

Merrie felt her heart surge at Bass' voice. It was mixed with Sable's thoughts, a blending of master and alpha, but Merrie remembered the joy of the powerful thriban when they had a chance to be together. Tears burned in her eyes, this time joys of pleasure.

(Haviston's compulsion is gone?) Sable seemed even more excited, if that was possible.

Merrie nodded and then sent a wave of affection.

(Then after this, we want to fuck you so hard you won't be able to walk for a week.)

(She can't walk,) snapped Dixie, (she was cropped.) His thoughts faded. Merrie glanced to the side of the house where Dixie's duplicates were down to three. All of the wolves were attacking fighters on their side but there was a lot of blood.

Tabitha snarled as she fought off six men on top of her. She was in her larger wolf form, almost as large as the house. Her tawny fur was matted with blood and her back right leg looked like it was injured.

A few hundred meters away, a line of archers and mages were shooting at both Dixie, Tabitha, and a crystalline shield that was barely visible on the far side of the building. The streaks of power rippled through the air, leaving trails of sparkling energy behind as they slammed into all three.

Like the other alpha and master, there was a spectral lead that connected Dixie to Tabitha. It wasn't as powerful and didn't glow as brightly. But Merrie could sense energy bouncing back and forth, magnifying Tabitha's magic with every passing second. It enhanced both of their healing powers to keep up with the constant onslaught.

Merrie took a deep breath. (I'm on the ridge to the south of the house, what can I do?)

Sable's thoughts became more structured and ordered as she took on more of her master's thoughts. (Our magic is too flashy if you are vulnerable.) Her thoughts were equally male and female. (Going around the back side would shield you and Haviston could use some help. We've been fighting for a while and he's the least trained in combat.)

Strategies and layouts pushed up from Sable's thoughts as she imagined the lands around the house in terms of slopes, shelter, and protection. It was the thoughts of a great warrior who had fought on almost every terrain.

(Getting rid of those fucking archers would be great!) snapped Dixie. He limped back with four arrows sticking out of his chest. With a snarl, he transformed into a tiny naked silfae and then back again. His body blurred as he transformed repeatedly, each one sealing up the injuries. Seconds later, he was unharmed but his thoughts were exhausted from the effort.

Merrie glanced at her kin. The four hounds were already pawing at the ground, their silent growls shaking the air as they looked back at her. She reached out for them, not able to speak to them directly but she could feel their awe and desire for her. They wanted to please her and protect her. She caressed their thoughts and felt sadness. (Will you kill for me?)

All four of the kin snarled silently. A fierce wave of bloodlust filled her thoughts.

She stared at them, a strange sense of protectiveness coming over her. She never had nor would she ever have children. The shadows corrupted her and her body would not bear children. The creatures before her were the closest thing she had to offspring, they were formed by the dark powers of her collar and the Lord of Shadows. Their strange affection felt like love for a creature who never felt the touch of a mother.

One of them had already died for her, throwing itself in the light without a single word or thought. She felt the loss still in her heart, an empty hole. It wasn't nearly the gaping void that Kine had left with his death, but she still felt the one death like a knife wound. Would she mourn the others too?

They had emotions too, but they were alien and inhuman. They wanted to kill for her, to slaughter beings of light that invaded their new home. They were territorial and protective, like her old pack.

Turning her back on the battle, she padded over to them. Reaching out with one paw, she rested it on the nearest one. The cold from the shadowed body seeped into her skin, resonating with the darkness in her own veins.

Drawing calligraphy in her mind, she cast spells of protection, speed, and strength into each one. She channeled it through her collar, magnifying the power until their bodies swelled and grew pitch with her powers. She cast the same spells into herself, shivering with pleasure as the energies sank into her form.

Looking up into the black eyes of her kin, she smiled sadly. (Be safe.)

The nearest one pawed the ground.

(Kill with me) She projected the location of the archers and the other groups that fired at Tabitha, Dixie, and Haviston. Without waiting for a response, she spun on her heels and sprinted across the land. Footsteps later, she melted into the darkness and became a living shadow tracing along the ground, flowing along the grass and rocks without leaving even a whisper of movement.

The four shadow kin follows after her, melting like her until it was only five shadows racing across the ground without a shape to form them.

When they reached the archers, Merrie only needed a second to assess their position. The archers were focused on firing steadily at the defenders of the mill. Each one fired in perfect rhythm. Merrie's time keeping spelling identified that each archer fired only a tenth of a second after the one to their left. Their movements were precise as they plucked the next arrow out of their assistants hands, drew back their bow, fitted it, and fired. The entire action took only four seconds to complete but the large number of them ensured there wasn't even a hint of a pause from the rain of arrows that speared toward Tabitha and Dixie.

Without pausing, Merrie burst out of the shadows and took out the assistant. It was a young man, slender and delicate. He didn't even slow her down as she slammed into him. Before he hit the

ground, she tore out the soft skin of his throat and was already leaping over the next assistant for the one after that.

Her cloak burst out from the shadow kin's shadow and took out the one she jumped over. There was a wet gurgling sound as it forced itself into the young woman's asshole and burst out of her throat in a shower of blood. Fluttering, it sailed over the one Merrie slaughtered and plunged down into the eye socket of the fourth.

They tore their way through the assistants, scattering quivers and arrows in all directions.

In the corner of her eye, she saw the archers turning around. They still held out their bows, but as they pulled back, shimmering arrows formed. She felt the scrape of their energy, it was druidic like Tabitha's but far more structured.

The other three shadow kin struck the archer's back. There was a boiling mass of tentacles and claws. The powerful creatures ripped through flesh and bone as easily as paper. There were no screams that rose out of their dark bodies.

They made it almost two-thirds through the line before the archers managed to rouse a defense. Glowing arrows shot through the air toward the shadow kin. None of them were aimed toward her.

Merrie snarled silently and melted into darkness. Using the grass and bodies for protection, she and her cloak slid around to the far side of the line. Building up speed, they charged it from the far side. Just as she reached their feet, she burst out of the darkness again and began to slaughter assistants and supplies.

Less than two minutes later, there were only corpses of archers on the ground.

(Fuck,) Dixie projected with just a hint of awe. (How do you managed to do that after only being an alpha for a thief. Are you sure he wasn't an assassin?)

Merrie flipped her hair back and looked around. Blood steamed from her jaw, it was hot and coppery. She licked her lips and panted. (Kine only killed a few people and always with magic.)

(Kine...)

There was confusion from both Sable and Dixie.

(My master.) An intense wave of sadness filled Merrie. (My first master.)

They would have projected more but suddenly Sable's connection trembled. (They hurt my master!) Anger and raged poured out of her.

Merrie gasped and looked up but she couldn't see anything other than brilliant white light coming from the front of the house. It hurt her eyes and her vision blurred trying to focus on anything near the holy spell.

Fragmented images came through: Bass clutching his side with blood pouring through a tear in his plate armor, men charging into the the fight and interposing themselves between Sable and Bass, and the paladins who were holding back suddenly casting combat spells.

Sable's thoughts were incoherent but brimming with fury. Prayers echoed along the connection as she began to cast magic.

A cheer rose up. Merrie jerked and looked over thinking they were celebrating Bass. But then she saw Haviston's crystalline shield cracking. Hunks of sharp energy fell off the force field and exploded in a shower of sparks. She gasped. (Haviston!)

Her thoughts connected to the psion. The older man, Borias' cousin, didn't seem surprised when they caught each other. (Merrie... you do not have a last name anymore? How?)

Merrie sent a pulse of fear.

Haviston's thoughts stopped for a second and the shield brightened but it only slowed the falling of the chunks. (I cannot keep this up for long. My attention and focus is fading with them hammering me with both physical and magical attacks. The onslaught is giving me very little chance to catch my breath.)

Ears flat against her skull, Merrie whimpered. She glanced at the mages attacking the house. Their spells were slamming erratically into the shield as waves of fire and lightning. She could see what Haviston meant, they attacked so fast than he couldn't even catch a breath, much less regain his thoughts. The mages were also scattered among the hills, none of them were close enough to slaughter them in a line as she did with the first group.

(Master!) screamed Sable, her thoughts burning with fear and pain. Images of Bass falling to the ground filled her thoughts, the details terrifyingly accurate as Sable watched her master fall with a sword buried in his back just to the right of his spine.

Dixie snarled and his thoughts began to separate from Tabitha's, taking on the high-pitched voice of the small silfae. A different set of thoughts, alien but terrifying, rose up in his mind. Flashes of him wearing armor as he lead armies into battle swam across as he dredged them from a past life. (I have to do this.)

Images of him planning his attack drifted through his thoughts. He already know how he would kill the first nine men, the rest were gathering together as he began to think as a warlord and not as a bitch.

His submission was also the only thing holding back the disease that ravaged his body. Even his recollection of his past life as a silfae warrior woke the cancer. It burned along his body without waves or points, it was spread completely through his tiny body.

Dread darkened his thoughts. He knew he was going to die.

Merrie gasped. (No!)

(We don't have a choice, they are killing us out here. I'm—)

(I won't let you die, Dixie!)

(We have no—)

Merrie gathered up all her mental will and slammed it through her collar and through the connection between them. The absolute dominance of the collar was magnified by her powers(Sit!)

She was racing toward the house as both Tabitha and Dixie sat down heavily, a bewildered look on both of their faces. Her feet whispered across the ground as her massive Bel Dark hound form ate through the distance rapidly. She didn't know what she was going to do. All she knew was that she couldn't lose Dixie if she still had a breath in her chest.

(Did you just fucking—) snarled Dixie.

(Master! They are killing my—)

(—tell me to sit!? Again!?)

(—master! They are going to cut his—)

An idea blossomed in Merrie's thoughts among the panic and anger from the other alphas. She glanced at Haviston's shield. If he could keep it up, they could isolate Bass and his attackers. With only a few opponents in isolation, they would be easy prey for Tabitha and her alpha.

All Haviston needed was help. That was what alphas did for their masters.

Merrie smiled grimly. She dug her paws into the ground. Casting a rapid speed spell, she launched herself down the hill. She took on the aspect of her mistress and began to throw commands through the collar, magnifying them into powerful compulsions that would dominate an alpha completely. (Sable, kill the guys on your master! Dixie, clear the attackers away from near the house!)

Sable's agonized thoughts hit her, filling her mind with sorrow. (There are too many, I can't clear them fast enough.)

(Just the ones near your master, Haviston will get the rest.)

(I will?) asked the psion, his monotone voice steady in his mind.

Merrie ignored Haviston and sent out her most dominating thought. (Kill them!)

The other alphas's thoughts grew bright with lust as they were slammed by the irresistible command. Energy crackled between them and suddenly there was a visible line of power between Merrie's heart and them. It wasn't as thick or bright as the ones between the alphas and their masters but it was just like the connection she had forged during the battle before her breath.

Black energy crawled through the connection to the alphas and then rippled back. In her mind, she saw black mist rising out of Dixie as Sable's armor turned smoky. It only took a second for them to take on her aspects and their thoughts to grow closer to Merrie's.

Sable's power surged back toward her, liquid light streaked with darkness. It plunged into Merrie who accepted it as an alpha and reflected it back, magnifying it even more. It surged back rapidly, plunging along the leash that connected them.

The entire front of the house light up in painful brilliance.

"Bitch Cutter!" screamed Sable in a broken voice. It sounded of smoke and whiskey even from around the building. Merrie could also hear the terror for her real master and the lust of obeying the sudden mistress who was in her thoughts.

White swords shot out from the front, peppering the entire front yard with streaks of glowing blades. They slammed into the chests and bodies of the attackers, splattering more blood among the flashes of light. Everything in front of Sable, from the bodies to the wooden fence that framed in the yard, exploded in a shower of magic, gore, and splinters.

Dixie sprinted around the house, splitting in two and then four. His bodies continued to pull apart as he drew power from Merrie, the circuit of increasing energies growing brighter as he became a sea of snarling wolves that raced around the house. Black mist boiled off his bodies and left a trail that marked his passage.

Tabitha shook her body and snarled at Merrie as the Bel Dark hound raced past her. She then charged in the opposite direction, aiming for anyone near the house.

No thoughts were passed as Merrie came skidding to a halt next to Haviston. The older man was weak, leaning against a stump. Blood poured out of his nose, mouth, and ears. He tried to wave to Merrie but his body was shaking too violently. He finally shook his head and held out his hand toward the rapidly disintegrating crystalline shield. (I do not have sufficient resources to maintain the shield longer, Merrie.)

(Do you trust me?) Merrie asked.

(Yes, with reservation.)

Panting, Merrie thumped against him. She looked up at him and realized she knew what to do. With a grin, she pressed her icy body against his leg. (Here, then accept what I can give you.)

She turned her thoughts inwardly. With a deep breath, she sent out a command to herself through her collar. (Connect to him.)

It was a terrifying command, one that ordered her to open up herself completely to another person, to reduce the barriers to the core part of her that made her an alpha, a bitch who needed to be dominated and would give everything to her master.

The order punched into her with a finality that tore her apart. Her entire body grew liquid with desire, a heat exploding inside her pussy. Juices dribbled down her swollen lips and her clitoris ached with desire. Energy rose inside her, a new lust surging through her. She had felt it before, back when she almost bonded with a brutal man who killed her best friend at the mill and then later when she bonded with Kine.

Trembling, she looked up at Haviston. Then she opened her heart to him.

Alphas were powerful because they bonded with a single individual. That connection, more intimate than any telepathy and far more powerful any spell, forged a connection between the spirits

of two people. The alpha lost part of their self in the connection but, in exchange, they found the perfect master. Someone who would order and command them, someone they could take their power and magnify it, pushing their masters into unparalleled heights.

Merrie had two masters in her life but only one remained, herself. She simply let the natural between an alpha and a master to open up again, to reach out through Haviston's shields and sank into his thoughts. As she did, the connection with the two alphas faded away.

(Merrie, I cannot be your—)

Memories slammed into her.

Haviston struggled to keep his thoughts calm as he stared at the red door. He was bound with set of crystal cuffs, the psionic shackles were scraping against his senses as much as the geas the judges placed on him. He could taste the bindings in the back of his throat, a sharp taste refused to go away no matter much water he drank.

The red door was the curse of the Kivas family. Generations ago, his grandfather had built the prison to contain his own brother. From that point on, every Kivas, everyone who shared the same blood, had entered the prison through one of two doors.

His emotions threatened to crack his control. Years of mediation came up but they were just empty thoughts as a tear burned in his eyes. The gravity of the moment bore down on him, he was finally going to face the consequences of his action. He was going to enter the red door and be marked as a criminal for the rest of his life. For years, he would suffer. He deserved it, he took it on himself, but that didn't make walking up to the door any easier.

(What are you doing, Merrie?) Haviston's thoughts were disturbed.

Merrie felt his thoughts deep in her intimate mind. He was close, closer than anyone except for two other beings in her life. His

psychic energy was low, barely enough to keep the layers of defensive spells in place. She could feel every struggle that he took to maintain control over his emotions and his thoughts. Everything had to have a place, everything had to have an order otherwise he couldn't use his powers.

With a smile, she sent a calming wave and took the defenses spells from his mind. The power caressed her thoughts as she fed them energy, repairing them and strengthening them. Haviston was her first teacher of magic and the endless lessons came back as she brought structure. It was a way of giving something back to him even though he was responsible for her trying to kill Bass and Sable.

(Merrie, you cannot bond with me. You already have a master.)

(Haviston Kivas,) she hesitated, afraid that she wouldn't be able to refer to him by name. None of the alphas could ever refer to their masters by anything other than a title, it was almost impossible to separate their sense of self from their masters. The same blurring of two thoughts hadn't happened. She smiled and continued. (This isn't a true bond, just enough to let me help you.)

(Your thoughts are chaotic and dark. There is too much sex. It is disturbing.)

(Then cast a spell with me, master.)

The response was immediate, a quickening of his breath and a surge of excitement. His penis grew harder though he tried to keep that part of his body tamped down with his concentration.

Merrie sent a pulse of lust toward him and then reached out, gathering his power and taking it into her self to magnify it. It came pouring back, faster than Sable could ever reflect power.

Haviston channeled it into his spell, working with renewed strength and focus as he repaired the cracks in his shield. The glowing wall increased in intensity as it sealed into place. Then, with the urging of Merrie and her power, it spread out in both directions in a circle that would surround the entire mill.

Crystalline patterns rocked through her thoughts, solidifying the shadows of her mind into smoky crystals like the one around her collar. She fueled his power, magnifying and enhancing it. The act of submitting herself brought more heat to her pussy, a pulsing of desperate lust that spread out to every part of her body.

Haviston held up his one good hand and slid it to the side.

His shield shot out to the end of the house and curved around it, cutting off the entire west side before racing for the front.

“Bitch Cutter!” screamed Sable as she launched another attack of swords against her opponents.

Dixie came racing by himself, followed by Tabitha in her wolf form. (All the assholes are away from—by the fucking trees, did you just fucking bond again!?)

Merrie shuddered with her orgasms. Her pussy was soaked with Haviston’s thoughts wrapped among hers. His energies rippled along her body, changing it. She grew more solid but she felt the bones in her body turning to glass. Her thoughts grew more structures and analytic, seeing the world not as trees and grasses but exact names and locations, distances that were measured in thousands of a meter. The details were overwhelming but her rapidly adjusting thought took it in easily.

The shield swooped around the house and stretched up to form a massive dome that surrounded the entire building. The air grew suffocating from the fires.

Sable’s thoughts were incoherent as she rushed over to her master. Through the connection, it was obvious that she had dropped her armored spell to be closer to his body. The sobbing shook the connection as did flashes of her large breasts grinding against the blood-streaked metal of Bass’ chest plate.

The connection between Haviston and Merrie snapped.

Merrie jerked violently, her orgasm stopping in an instant. She let out a whine and stumbled back. There was an empty hole in her heart, a gaping wound where the intimate connection Haviston had just been. She pawed the ground and fought the despair that threatened to consume her.

(That was risky,) sent Haviston. (Tactically sound but it could have gone terribly wrong.)

With his thoughts, he pushed back the despair. Kneeling down, he patted her on the head. “I am so glad to see you safe, girl.”

Merrie whimpered and rubbed her face against his hand. (Sorry, I needed to save them. I can’t let Dixie die.)

(I’ll die when I’m fucking good and ready!) Dixie trotted up to Merrie. He looked at her for a moment, his eyes boring into her. Then, he lifted his leg and peed on her.

Merrie stared at the hot urine splashing on him. It was a wolf's dominance, not an elf warlord's. A shiver of lust and desire rolled through her. With a smile, she threw a wave of pure lust at him.

Dixie's tiny cock snapped to full length, cutting off the pee. He made a quiet whimper.

Merrie grinned and shook the pee off her severed leg. (You're welcome.)

Dixie gave her face a lick before heading back to Tabitha who snarled at Merrie. (My mistress is furious that you ordered her.)

She couldn't help but let her amusement leak through her thoughts. (And that she obeyed it?)

Anger and amusement blended together. There was a bit of lust, he was turned on by the unexpected submission. (More than furious. She is going to kill you when we get out of this. Or maybe crop you further.)

Merrie's cunt grew even wetter. She had lost her wrists and ankles to one of Tabitha's hunts, a brutal race that made it past the gates of the mill before Tabitha caught and cropped her.

Haviston shuddered. His mind was unreadable with his shields but Merrie could tell that he was struggling with emotions and the closeness they briefly shared.

(Come on,) Merrie said, (we need to get Bass into the house and figure out what to do next.)

(My mistress wants to know how long the shields will last.) Dixie's mind was still sharp from the adrenaline pumping through his veins.

Haviston slipped into the conversation. (Two hours and nine minutes. It is anchored properly even if I am unconscious.)

He headed toward the front of the house, projecting his thoughts into the house. (Borias Kivas, Bassimar Sarmo is gravely injured. We're bringing him in.)

"You be hurrying then!" yelled Borias from deep inside the house.

Joy and anticipation hummed through Dixie's connection. It was a counterpoint of Sable's sorrow. The tiny silfae didn't seem phased by Sable's misery. (Then let's heal up and get ready to kill every fucking one of them.)

Merrie shivered at the intensity of his thoughts. She turned and headed back around the house. She didn't need telepathy to know that Sable needed her.

(Oh, Merrie?) Dixie's thoughts sharpened as he reached out for her again.

(Yes?) The part of her that could anticipate the orders of her masters grew tight as a dread rose over her.

(Where are those infernal traps that you told us about?)

A red light speared out of the basement windows. It was too bright and sharp to be natural. A wave of heat and the stench of sulfur blasted after it, shattering the glass and scorching the wood. The grass against the house burned away almost immediately.

Merrie gasped sharply, spinning on her knees as she stared at the house with growing fear.

The skittering sounds of a thousand tiny legs filled the air, punctuated by the hissing of more eggs bursting open.

(Fuck,) projected Dixie with surprise and annoyance coloring his thoughts.

She glanced at the shimmering shield surrounding the house. In an instant, it had turned from protection against their opponents to a trap sealing them in with the meticulously planned spells designed to kill each one of them.

(Fuck,) she sent back.

Swarm

19

Merrie braced herself as she raced around the corner of the house. From Sable's thoughts, she knew that she would be see Bass collapsed on the ground and she dreaded the worst. That didn't stop her from charging toward the large body slumped across the front steps.

For a large thriban, there was a lot of blood pouring out from ragged rents in his armor. It sheeted along his white armor before splattering loudly to the wooden steps and pooling on the ground beneath him. Large rents had been torn out of the armor, revealing blood and pale gray flesh underneath. Bubbles formed along the cuts near his chest, matching the ones that dotted the side of his mouth.

If he was anyone else, Merrie would have been convinced that he was dead but Sable's wail rose and fell as the naked alpha pawed at her master. Blood streaked the naked woman's body, smearing along her breasts and stomach. The blood splattered on her face traced the faint wrinkles, giving her mask-like appearance.

Sable's sorrow slammed into Merrie, staggering her back.

Merrie had to shield herself to clear her thoughts. She mentally bound herself in leather, wrapping it around her body, throat, and face until Sable's cries faded. The sight of Bass' made her sick but she had to protected the others. (Borias! The trap was sprung!)

Borias was already moving. "I can't be getting to the kitchen! Havi!"

Haviston said nothing but he projected a wave of acknowledgement.

Merrie jumped over Sable and Bass, her paws smacked in a puddle of the thriban's blood. The door leading into the house was half-open, she slammed her way into it.

She wasn't surprised to see that the infernal traps were actually spiders once they were released. Each one was only four or five centimeters across with long, spindly legs. However, there were hundreds of them forcing their way through the cracks in the floor and pouring from the kitchen in a swarm of the unnatural red light and flashing legs.

Borias swore violently as he stomped on the floor, smashing one or two spiders with a strike. He had blood soaking his sleeves but she didn't think it was his. When she saw a bloody trail leading into the kitchen, she knew it came from carrying Fir's body back to the room to rest, that is where she would have put the young woman with the great hall still smoldering.

Merrie continued to follow the trail with a quick glance. When she saw the glow of a spider swarm already boiling inside the room, a fresh wave of fear raced through her veins.

Haviston stumbled after her, but he struggled to get around Bass' bulk.

"Merrie! Licker and Fir be in the kitchen! I cannot be getting to them!" Borias' voice cracked with fear and pain. He swore and slapped at the spiders crawling up his legs. His palms smoked when he drew them back and she could see that the blood from the infernal creatures had blackened his trousers. The smell of burnt hair and fabric filled the air.

She snarled and charged forward. As she raced through the dining room, she drew the darkness around her and summoned her cloak. Though she was tired and exhausted, the fear for the two helpless women gave her strength. She leaped on the dining room table and then over Borias' head into the kitchen.

Inside the room, the light from the infernal spiders was blinding. She winced at the brightness and summoned her cloak to wrap around her body. It gave her only a small measure of protection but she hoped it was enough.

She landed heavily in the middle of the swarm, crushing spiders in bursts of infernal energy and burning blood. She dug her paws in and spun around.

Cinthia and Fir were both on a plush chair set in the middle of the room.

Fir was slumped to the side, most of her chest and throat covered in bandages. There were bruises covering her body and bloody cuts. Borias' healing energies still pulsed inside her body, lighting up her skin from the inside as they repaired the damage to her insides.

Cinthia had crawled over Fir's body in an attempt to shield her. The naked bitch had the ends of her knees braced against the leg as she frantically beat at the spiders crawling up.

Merrie stepped forward, crushing more spiders. Tiny bursts of infernal energy exploded along her paws, searing the pads underneath her feet and burning away her black fur. The agony was brief and unexpected; she stopped in stunned agony.

Before she could move away, the spiders swarmed up her legs. The legs seemed to pierce her skin, punching through the thin shell of her form. Agony blossomed from a thousand claws and her vision blurred from the onslaught.

She tried again, but the swarm of spiders swelled up before her. Thousands of burning red eyes stared at her and she could almost sense the malevolent intelligence behind them.

As much as Merrie wanted to reach out for the infernal behind the spiders, there were two helpless women who needed her more. She lunged forward, but the spiders met her in a wall of biting agony. The pain increased long after she drew back. She could feel the agony spreading underneath her skin, soaking through the boiling darkness. It was poison of some sort.

Just as the dread started to hang over her, the burn of the poison faded. She guessed it was dissolved by her shadowy core. It only meant agony for her but neither Fir nor Cinthia wouldn't be as lucky if too many spiders bit them.

Unable to pass through them as a hound, Merrie drew on the darkness around her and let her body melt into darkness.

Renewed agony washed over her. Her body was two dimensional, flowing along the ground but the energy of the spiders baked her. She could easily pass through the legs of the spider with only burns along the edges of her incorporeal form. It felt like someone dragging burning brands along every centimeter of her skin.

She forced herself to move underneath the sea of spiders and toward the chair. It only took her a moment to reach one of the legs and then crawl up. She stopped long enough to send tiny pulses of icy and darkness into the spiders crawling up the side of the chair.

As they fell into the boiling swarm of creatures, Merrie gathered herself underneath Fir's body for a moment to calm herself in the heated darkness between her buttocks. Then she flowed up between Fir's thigh, along her naked vulva, and then up to her breasts. She spread herself across the shivering woman and then let her body swell out of the darkness, sliding into place along Cinthia's body before the bitch realized Merrie was there.

Cinthia gasped as she stared directly into Merrie's eyes. The alpha saw hope shimmering in the young woman's eyes.

Giving her an comforting smile, Merrie glanced around. She could step across into the Shadows but she knew that the other dimension would hasten both Fir's and Cinthia's death. Fir was already unconsciousness with her injuries, even seconds in the shadow realm could kill her.

"I'm scared," whispered Cinthia. There were tears in her eyes.

Merrie nodded and braced herself, her naked thigh sliding against Cinthia's. She looked around, trying to find some way of dragging the two girls to safety.

In the other room, Haviston and Borias held back the swarm of spiders with magic. Haviston's crystalline spells contrasted with the flowing discs of power that formed in front of Borias. The swirling arcane energies blinded Merrie and she had to look away.

As she thought furiously, she used the shadows around her to form tendrils that pierced and tore apart the spiders that continued to crawl up all sides of the chair in an endless march.

Cinthia cried out sharply.

Merrie looked at her in concern just as the younger woman shook one of the spiders from her arm. The short, stubby appendage ended smoothly at her elbow but the spider bite was already swelling into a knot of red.

(Borias,) Merrie said frantically, (these are poisonous. Cinthia just got bit!)

Fear rose inside him. He called out over the rustle of the spiders. "Be getting her outside any way!"

Turning his head slightly, he yelled louder. “Where be you, Tabby!?”

No answer came but there was fear and pain radiating from outside. It felt like Dixie but there was no coherency in his mind.

Fear growing, Merrie reached out for him and found his mind. Shoving past his shields, she let her senses with merge with his.

A massive spider had crawled out of the great hall. It’s body shimmered with tiny points of light and its edges flickered with the have of a thousand tiny legs. The spiders had bound themselves together into a giant form.

Dixie could barely focus on it as he cried out in agony. There were spiders still crawling on his muzzle from where he tore out the leg of the combined spider but a few of them had gone down his throat. He wasn’t expecting them to keep moving but now they were tearing and biting his throat and stomach.

Everything burned as the poison surged through his veins. He tried to transform to heal but the spiders were pinning his form, a sickening twist of magic that prevented his shape-shifting while they were attacking him from in the inside.

Despite the agony and fear, it was his mistress suffering that made it impossible to think. She was only a few meters away, on her back and screaming out in agony. She had been in her larger form when she bit down and there were dozens of the infernal creatures tearing her from the inside.

Merrie ripped out of his mind with a gasp. “Fuck,” she whispered hoarsely.

Cinthia slumped against her, her eyes glazed and her body cold but slick with sweat. The spots where their bodies touched were beginning to frost over, the hoarfrost sparkling along Cinthia’s naked skin.

(Sable!) Merrie reached out for the other alpha.

When she only got a wall of fear and terror, Merrie pulled back and slammed her way through Sable's mental shields and forced herself into the older bitch's mind. A storm of despair and agony crashed back, Sable's entire world had been focused on keeping Bass alive as he struggled with his mortal injuries.

(Sable, we need your help!)

No words came, only the storm of emotions.

(You must fight. Without you, we're all dead. Including your master!) Merrie's frantic thoughts pummeled Sable.

(If I leave him—)

A few spiders caught Merrie as she focused on her thought. The burning poison raced through her veins even as she crushed them out of existence.

Merrie withdrew long enough to let her mind assume the mantle of a mistress. She crafted a domination spell and then threw it through the mental connection she had with Sable. (Fight, you damn bitch!)

Sable's sorrow snapped in an instant, followed by intense wave of lust. The order had woken up the part of her that all alpha's craved, the command that could not be resisted. It gathered through the alpha and filled her completely.

Through the window, a pure white light rapidly grew brighter. It speared through the glass and lit up the room.

Merrie tried to duck away from it but it caught her body, burning away the thin veneer of her flesh. The black mist of her body evaporated in the light and Merrie almost lost consciousness in the blinding glare of Sable's power.

Sobbing against the pain, Merrie gathered every shred of darkness left in the room. The hard-edged lines of darkness poured together into a shield of utter darkness between her and the glowing alpha. The spiders near the base withered and crumbled away from the enervating power of Shadows.

At the same time, she could feel Sable's power eroding at her darkness. It was only a temporary measure.

Merrie focused on the spiders being killed by the darkness. An idea grew and she sent out a quick projects. (Borias, Haviston, the girls are coming, be ready to catch them.)

(I can only see a wall of darkness. I cannot see them coming, Merrie.) Haviston's monotone thoughts somehow gave the impression of his exhaustion and concern.

Controlling her tendrils, she stopped crushing the spiders and wrapped them around both Fir and Cinthia. (They are coming in three, two, one!)

With a surge of power, she threw both of them through the screen of darkness. Their bodies sailed over the spiders who tried to jump after her, but they passed through the darkness just as it was burned away by Sable's light.

The full brunt of Sable's holy energy caught Merrie in the chest. She screamed as every millimeter of her body ignited into flames. Blind and in agony, she fell to the ground. Black mist trailed behind her before being burned away.

Merrie wondered if the spiders or the light would kill her first.

t'Sade

Countless Bites

20

As soon as Merrie hit the ground, the impact and the light broke her concentration on her transformation spell. She let out a strangled gasp as the fur melted off her body and her canine form reformed back into a cropped, naked woman.

She didn't have time to scramble to her knees or regain her dazed senses when the spiders swarmed over her. Their weight pressed down on her as their tiny, needle-like legs scraped along her skin. Even though each one was no heavier than a handful of rice, more of them kept crawling on top of her until the pressure squeezed her ribs and ground her body into the ground.

Merrie tried to pull herself up to her wrists and knees but the carpet of spiders held her in place. She knew she could move them individually but somehow the creatures linked together and she couldn't find the leverage to get more than a few centimeters of leeway underneath the blanket of spiders pinning her to the ground.

They wasted no time attacking. Tiny pricks from their legs became sparks of pain as teeth dug into her skin. Those increased rapidly as more of them began to feast on her helpless body. It wasn't just one bite, though. They all attacked at once, turning her world into a sparkling cloud of agony as they bit at her nipples, breasts, and inner thighs. With every bite, their poison seeped into her body and set her nerves on fire.

Merrie cried out and tried to wipe them away. The smooth end of her wrist smashed against them but the spiders bowed underneath the weight and dug their feet deeper into her burning flesh. She needed fingers to pry the small bodies away but she hadn't had

them for years. Instead, she flailed uselessly against them as they crawled up her arm and began to feast on her wrist, elbow, and even shoulder.

It was too much for her. She screamed out in agony as she thrashed back and forth, trying to crush them with her body. The only thing she did was grind them into her breasts where they tore into her nipples, sides, and thighs.

Her helplessness set off a flame between her legs. Despite the agony and pain, being pinned to the ground caused her pussy to grow slicker and desire to the curl in the back of her thoughts. The urge to surrender to the attacking spiders fought with her senses. It would be a painful ending to her life but she would come harder than ever while it happened.

Merrie clamped her eyes shut and fought with her desires. She couldn't give up, no matter how much she desperately wanted to wallow in her helplessness. There were too many people who needed her, her friends were in danger.

Gathering up her willpower, she managed to force an order through her collar. (Don't give up!)

The command came back as a hammer, slamming into her mind and shoving her desires away.

She tried to send out another command but couldn't think of one. The countless pricks and agonies from the teeth and legs assaulting her senses made it impossible to find a command that would work. Desperate, she tried to cast a spell to melt into darkness but the poison pouring into her body made it impossible to concentrate on the calligraphy. She could only create a few swirls of shadow across her mind before a sharp wave of agony interrupted her.

Merrie tried again but couldn't form the spell.

Her attempt to command herself failed, even thought was nearly impossible with the teeth gnawing at her flesh.

She beat at the spiders, smacking them with her useless arms and rolling back and forth.

The spiders tightened their bodies across her, cutting off her movement until their heavy weight crushed her body. The weight of them ground her joints together and squished her breasts tight against her ribs.

The lust between her legs grew hotter. She could feel her juices soaking the spiders that were crawling between them. The squirming bodies that slickly moved against her pussy made it harder to concentrate between the pain and her helplessness.

A thud of a combat spell interrupted her struggles for only a bit. She cringed, waiting for the flash of light to strip away her flesh but only darkness surrounded her. The spiders, somehow, had saved her as they crawled over her body and crushed her.

To her horror, the spiders continued to force themselves against her. Among the countless bites and scratches, she felt them prying their way against her openings. Pin-like legs levered open her buttocks as they forced themselves in between her cheeks and up against her vulva.

Her slickness betrayed her as they slipped into the tight holes, sliding their bodies to jam into her openings.

She screamed out for only a second before they started to squirm their way past her lips and teeth, scraping her tongue and cheeks as they pried her jaw apart.

Merrie thrashed hard, pawing at her mouth and body. She tried to force them off, but the needle-like legs were pinched against her body. She couldn't get the smooth end of her wrist underneath the attacking creatures enough to force them off. She needed fingers to pull them off, fingers she hadn't had in years.

It was impossible to concentrate with so many creatures attacking her. She tried to focus on getting the spiders out of her mouth, but the infernal burning seared her tongue as they gnawed at her inner cheeks. More of them were driving themselves into her mouth as they reached for the back of her throat, scraping against the delicate flesh as they crawled toward the back of her throat.

At the same time, they were forcing their way into her pussy and asshole. Sharp pains of being pried open by needles followed by biting that traveled further. The thickness of the spiders was nothing compared to the burning agony of their bodies and the sharpness of the poison that surged through her body. She tried to squeeze her muscles down, but she couldn't maintain the pressure to keep them out when the rest of her body was being attacked.

The only relief she had, though small, was that the carpet of spiders attacking her blocked out the brilliance of Sable's holy

magic. Her skin no longer burned and crinkled from the light; it only suffered countless bites.

One of the spiders managed to slip into the tight channel of her pussy. The agonizing bites were somehow more intense as it tore into her insides. It didn't stop crawling further into her, clawing its way deeper into her body where its tiny claws ripped into her delicate inner walls and along her cervix.

Merrie's entire body locked from her suffering. Her back arched back when she wanted to curl in a fetal position. It exposed everything to the spiders who didn't hesitate to attack her. She felt the poison filling her body, staining her insides as they tore into her nipples, ribs, and every delicate part of her body.

More spiders were in her throat, ripping it open as they clawed own for her lungs and stomach. There was pressure at her asshole as spiders surged deep into her body; her attempts to keep them out were disrupted when one of the spiders clamped its mandibles down on her clitoris. The flash of agony was enough for the creatures to breach her opening. Now, there were at least three of them forcing their way as they chewed against her insides.

Merrie tried to concentrate to cast a spell, it was impossible. The spiders, the sheer number of them, made it impossible. She couldn't form a coherent thought with the panic surging through her mind.

With a flash of inside, she realized that the panic was part of the spell. They were forcing her to struggle against them. The fear of the swarm, the countless attacks that couldn't be steeled against, and even the sharpness of the poison. They were crafted to prevent casters from using magic.

The idea that Borias and Haviston would suffer the same way brought tears to her eyes. She already knew that the spiders were clawing their way into Dixie's and Tabitha's organs, no doubt to kill them from the inside.

That left only Sable as the lone defense against the spiders. There was no way the alpha could defend anyone but herself and her master. If the spiders attacked, they would die.

Despair filled her, filling the gaps of her thoughts between the flashes of agony and pain. She thrashed and sobbed, choking on the spiders tearing into her throat and shaking violently as she tried to squeeze out the creatures invading her pussy and ass. She was being

violated, violated in ways no mortal creature could even comprehend.

There was nothing she could do besides writhe in the last few seconds of her life as the moment stretched into an infinity of agony.

Black despair of her situation roared through her mind, muting the agony as she considered just stop moving and let the spiders feast on her corpse.

But she couldn't.

There were spells bound into her psyche to prevent her from killing herself.

It didn't stop the darkness and hopelessness.

Then there was the lust of being pinned and violated.

She was helpless, unable to do anything.

Unable to stop the agony.

Unable to free herself.

The pain began to increase as she twisted against it, embracing her helplessness as much as she suffered by it. She was an alpha, she gained power by being ground down and surviving. She only had to embrace it.

It took all of her willpower to force her body to stop moving. She concentrated on the sensation of being violated: the spiders choking her throat, the biting against her cervix and inner walls, and even the chewing of her intestines. The boiling swarm of creatures, both inside and out, were overwhelming but that only magnified the growing energy inside her.

For the briefest of moments, she found an equilibrium of pain and pleasure. It was only enough time for a single rapid spell.

A thousand spells from domination to defense raced across her mind but only one gave her what she needed. With all her might, she gripped against the thin barrier between the world and tore open reality.

As the realm of Shadows poured around her, the spiders screamed out as they crumbled away. The floor joined it, withering away into dust in a heartbeat.

Grateful and despite, Merrie fell sideways into the rip and let darkness comfort her agonized body.

t'Sade

Blessed Darkness

21

The spiders came with her in a choking, biting blanket of agony. They gnawed on her body while the ones crawling inside attacked her insides. Flashes of heat and pain exploded along her senses.

The sensation of a hundred spiders crawling and biting inside her cunt and bowels was maddening. She tried to force them out with her muscles, but the spiders only slid around the slickness of her pussy and bit down on new places.

Merrie wasn't sure if she successfully shifted into the Shadows but she thought she felt the comforting icy seeping through the carpet of agony that surrounded her.

The spiders in her mouth forced their way deeper, prying open the tight confines of her throat as they squirmed deeper. They reached the point where her breath and stomach split. Some of them started to crawl into her lungs while others forced their way deeper toward her stomach.

She jerked violently and pawed at her throat. She couldn't breathe. It was agony as black spots form across her vision. Despite being blind in the carpet, the darkness of her suffocation was surrounded by a haze that was invisible but somehow visible at the same time.

The weight and pressure of the spiders attacking her lessened slightly. A small bit of hope rose inside her but she continued to paw at her throat, trying to clear her throat.

The spiders in her pussy were maddening. The thousand legs pricking and poking her from the inside were almost as distracting as the slid of thick, heated bodies as they rolled and twisted inside

her. It was a hundred fingers stroking her inner walls that forced more juices to pour out of her cunt.

The spiders in her intestines were just as painful. They were forcing their way deeper into her body, swelling her stomach as the spiders pried their way into her sphincter and pulling themselves deep. Waves of pain rolled across her nerves. She tried to clamp down, to stop them for violating her further, but they continued their march through her lower organs.

A wave of icy wind slammed against her body. She shuddered at the pleasure of it, it sparkled along her pussy and along her agonized limbs. Not willing to give up, she pawed at her throat with one hand and at the spiders with her others.

To her surprise, the spiders were brushed away. She snapped open her eyes to see black claws flashing over her body. They were ripping the spiders from her body. As her vision cleared, she saw that it was a swarm of shadow creatures. They were smaller ones but their inky forms and small claws were large enough to pluck the spiders off one at a time.

Despite seeing an end to her agony, she couldn't stop the spiders inside her body. They continued to violate her, biting at her inner walls and intestines. They were forcing their way into her lungs and more had slipped into her stomach and were biting her innards.

Tears burned her eyes as she thrashed violently.

And then one of the shadow kin loomed over her. She froze in shock as it slammed its claws down on her shoulders and pinned her against the ground. An intense wave of lust burst across her senses as she stared into the black voids of its eyes.

She tried to reach out for it, to read its intentions but the squirming and biting infernals inside her body made it impossible to read thoughts. Instead, she looked up at it helplessly, unsure of why it pinned her to the ground.

The answer came soon enough as a massive black cock grew between their bodies. It was a meter long and shimmering black. The head was an arrowhead, a narrow point that looked like it was designed to impale a tight orifice.

Her body shuddered at the sight of it, the lust rising up. The familiar sensation of wanting to surrender to being pinned grew up. This time, when she looked into the eyes of a creature she had

created with her own energies, she knew that it was going to happen no matter what she did.

When the shadow kin drew his cock back, she fought against the agony of her insides and lifted her hips to meet it. The thick head, large no matter how sharp of an opening, slipped down along the valley of her slick vulva and then over the small bump to press against her sphincter.

Deep inside her body, the spider continued to gnaw.

She didn't know what it had in mind, but the unknown loomed over just as her child, her get, was prepared to impale her.

Black spots swimming her vision, she silently urged him to hurry up.

Powerful muscles gripped her tightly and his claws dug into her shoulders. Then her entire world exploded into pain and pleasure as the cock drove into her. It was thick, more than she thought it was. It tore open her sphincter and plunged deep into her body.

An explosion of pleasure coursing through her senses. It doubled when she felt the infernal spiders being crushed against the walls of her bowels, the girth impaling her grinding them violently as the shadow kin drew back and slammed its cock home again.

The crushed spiders twitched feebly against the icy hardness that impaled her. She could almost feel the energies crumbling under the pressure.

Merrie shuddered with her pleasure.

The shadow kin drew back and slammed it hard, ripping open her asshole even further and plunging deeper into her bowels. Its powerful claws dug into her shoulder as it put more of its weight on her, holding her tightly as it built up to powerful thrust. Every second, he rammed his cock deeper into her body.

She could feel her abdomen swelling from the spiders and cock impaling her. The sensation of being stuffed to her limits slammed into her, adding to the juices that poured out of her cunt and lubricated the pitch black shaft that impaled her.

A wave of giddiness rolled over her as the darkness encroached across her vision. She resumed her pawing at her throat. She tried to project to the shadow kin, to free her lungs before raping the spiders that had impaled her sphincter.

Something grabbed her head and tilted it back. She blinked past the black spots to see herself staring down the hard length of another cock. It was a second shadow kin, this one holding her skull firmly in place as it lined up its cock toward her mouth.

Her mind growing dull with suffocation and the storm of pleasure and pain from the first one, Merrie did the open thing she could think of: she opened her mouth wide.

The second shadow kin wasted no time in slamming its cock home. The thickness forced open her mouth as it drove into the back of her throat. Spiders were crushed against her inner walls as it pounded her face hard, tearing into her throat as it fucked her.

Merrie's world became nothing but the two cocks slamming into her and the growing desperation to breathe. She couldn't think, her mind was a dazed swirl of sensations as she bucked against the two members. She could feel the spiders being crushed as her organs were stretched around the thick cocks, but the one impaling her throat pounded too fast for her to draw in even a single breath.

The first kin's balls slapped against her lust-slicked thighs. The cock head rammed against her diaphragm, adding to the pressure of the cock that drove into her mouth, down her esophagus, and was forcing its way toward her stomach. Her entire body swelled with the girth of the two shafts, the pressure growing intense with the tiny pops and crushes of spiders being destroyed.

Claws dug into her head as the second shadow kid drove deep into her. She saw the long shaft disappearing into her, felt it as it stretched open her throat, and then the strain of her body to contain it. The balls, three of them, swung toward her fast; they came closer with every stroke. The base of the shaft was even thicker and her jaw threatened to dislocate from the pressure.

Her body grew tight with pleasure. She was helplessly, impaled from both ends by two cock that rammed deep. Knowing that they were her own children, her shadow kin, only made it more intense as she willingly accepted their lengths.

Both kin's balls slammed against her as they buried their entire length into her body. She could feel every thick ridge and pulse of icy pleasure as they drew out and then rammed home again.

The spiders were crushed by the battering lengths that rammed into her. Even the ones in her pussy were crushed as she began

nothing more than a cock sleeve for the two immense creatures fucking her.

It was almost impossible to concentrate. The spiders in her lungs were still there but it was the cock she was suffocating on, not their bodies. Violent tremors coursed through her body, reflexive actions as she tried to eject the cock that raped her throat with hard brutal strokes that threatened to tear open her insides.

The shadow kins pounded faster and hard, splatters of pre-cum pouring out of her ass and mouth. The icy liquid poured into her stomach and seeped into her lungs. She felt it corroding at the crafted bodies of the spider, dissolving them with energy-draining properties of th the Shadow.

Merrie twisted violently but the shadow kin pinned her tighter.

Tight claws dug into her throat, squeezing it around the cock that impaled her. The cock impaling her throat began to drive faster. His balls punched her face, the icy mounds of the three testicles beat against her face; each one was the size of Bass' fist. The impacts only punctuated with the tightness in her throat and the sensation of being impaled from lips to stomach by hard, unbendable cock.

The kin drove faster and faster, flooding her body with pre-cum as the cock swelled inside her. She felt it tear at her insides as it grew, stretching her throat further apart until the taste of blood flooded her mouth.

The shaft pounded her face.

The joints of her jaw threatened to dislocate. Her teeth scraped against the entire length of the shadow kin but it didn't seem to care or notice as it fucked her brutally.

The cock swelled to inhuman thickness and then exploded. A jet of icy cum blasted inside her stomach, swelling it instantly as her stomach grew. The pressure grew rapidly as she felt more jets of cum force its way down the shadow kin's cock.

It didn't stop thrusting and the cum poured out of her stomach and up into her esophagus. Icy liquid flooded across the plunging cock, lubricating it as it flooded up and into her lungs.

Almost instantly, the pitch-black cum of the shadow kin dissolved the spider bodies. The blessed coldness poured into every nook and cranny of her lungs. Her chest swelled with the pressure as she strained to keep her jaw from popping open.

The thick ridges of the cock scraped along her lips and throat, tracing their way down as the shadow kin continued to pump liters of cum deep into her body.

It took her a moment to realize that it was withdrawing with the very stroke. She couldn't see but she felt the hard jets of cum pulling back. It soaked her insides and then her lungs, and finally it was in her mouth, spraying out from her cheeks as the kin withdrew completely.

Confused, Merrie opened her mouth to beg for help but then the first shadow kin drove hard into her body. The cock head slammed against her diaphragm and a thick gout of cum was forced out of her lungs. It surged out of her mouth in a thick sheet of icy liquid.

When it withdrew, her lungs were pulled down and sweet air flooded into her lungs.

The brief moment of respite and fresh air was all it took to see off her orgasm. Pleasure exploded inside her as she inhaled sharply, then exhaled as the first cock worked her lungs. The cock drove deep, forcing her to exhale. When it pulled out from her ass, she inhaled.

The helplessness of controlling her own breath was intense. Pleasure coursed along her senses as she cried out, gurgling from the cum that still flooded her lungs.

Her pussy clenched with the hard thrusts of the cock that impaled her. With the spiders gone or crushed, she sank into the icy liquid of the shadow kin's cum and let the pleasure wash over her. Her entire world focused on the shaft that impaled her asshole. Every ridge and bump traced its way along her insides, scraping at her raw skin and igniting her orgasm into higher limits.

She let her mind spread out with her pleasure. A ripple of ecstasy spread out from her, catching the inky darkness of the shadows that surrounded her. They came themselves, creatures of shadows coming from pleasure.

A wave of icy liquid, cum from a thousand creatures surrounding her, poured down. It traced through every centimeter of her skin, soaking her completely.

It also pushed her into another orgasm. She cried out, choking on the cock that forced cum from her lungs, and then sank into the pleasure.

The shadow kin slowed down. Instead of pounding her brutally, it slowed down into a sensual thrust that took meter-long strokes inside her spasming depths.

Merrie sank into the pleasure, moaning and letting out soft whimpers as orgasms rippled through her body. She smiling and looked into the black eyes that stared down at her.

Reaching out, she caressed both of the shadow kin's minds with a wave of thanks and love. She looked around at the other surrounding creatures; the shadowy beasts of the woods that had rescued her before. They were all fro her. She sent out a wave of love toward the shadow creatures, her children.

The first shadow kin slowly pulled his shaft out of her asshole. An explosion of cum followed faster it, pouring out on the ground in a thick puddle of black liquid.

Merrie slumped back. (Thank you.)

The love that came back warmed her heart. She panted in the last of her afterglow and thought about how to rescue the others.

t'Sade

Second Wave

22

As much as she wanted to remain in the Shadow realm and enjoy her afterglow, Merrie couldn't. She crawled over on her knees and wrists and stretched out. Her abused skin, burnt and bitten, sparked with pain. She could see where Sable's holy magic had peeled back her thin flesh and revealed the smoking darkness inside.

She gathered the darkness around her, forming it into ribbons, and wrapped it around her injuries. If she had time, she would have poured it into her body to let it fill her but she didn't think she'd have the time to let it set and replace her insides. She only hoped that Sable's holy energy wouldn't strip away the darkness before she could recover.

With another surge of power, she reformed her cloak. The familiar construct rippled out of the darkness and fluttered to envelope her. It tickled her skin as it wrapped right around her body, sealing up against her leaking pussy, ass, and skin. The pressure felt good and a startling contrast between the blanket of spiders that had recently attacked her. It would also give her a second layer of protection against the light.

Glancing around, she saw the massed creatures and had an idea. The smaller shadow beasts were capable of pulling off the spiders. The corpses on the dark ground were proof of that.

Hope in her thoughts, she reached out with her mind and asked the creatures if they would help her.

They weren't intelligent like other bitches or humans, but they responded with a cloud of love and trust. They were hers, her children and her army. They would die for her.

Nodding, she took a deep breath and steeled herself for battle. Her spectral bandages tightened around her body as she summoned the energy to transform herself back into hound form. Surrounded by the darkness of the Shadow realm, it only took a flicker of movement before she was once again covered in fur with her massive paws grinding into the ground.

Bolstered, she casted her familiar combat spells: speed, strength, and protection. Using her connection with the shadow horde, she let the spells envelop the gathered creatures. The energies of the Shadows helped her and she layered them quickly on the beasts. Each would wouldn't be able to fight against a well-trained individual but she hoped it would be enough to allow them to eradicate the spiders that infested her home.

Merrie focused her attention on the last spell: the one to create a portal between the worlds. With the drain of the horde's protection spells dragging on her senses, she concentrated on the complex calligraphy that would create a bridge between the planes.

The world darkened around her, even more for Shadows, as she pierced the veil and pried it open. Planar energies rolled around her, defying colors or comprehension. Her spell grew stronger as she layered spells to keep the opening gaping wide.

She couldn't help but imagine it was her fingers sliding into a lover's pussy, spreading them open. The constant pressure to seal the opening brought a smile to her. She reinforced the spell until there was a glowing portal shimmering ahead of her.

Taking a deep breath, she anchored her spell and then charged forward.

Energy sparkled along her pitch-black fur as she crossed between the world and then landed heavily on shattered floorboards of the mill house. She snarled.

The spiders were still there, swarming over everything. As one, they focused their attention on her: countless glowing red eyes focusing on her with hatred and anger. Energy rolled over their bodies, a haze of too-bright red flames reflecting off the walls and windows.

Ignoring the threat, she quickly cast out with her senses to find the others.

Haviston and Borias were protecting Fir and Cinthia. Their minds flashed with their efforts to maintain their shields but both men were at the last of their energies. She could tell their spells were cracking from their effort and the injuries that burned along their thoughts.

Cinthia and Fir were safe between the two men, but their minds were glowing with terror and pain. There was also blood on their senses, both had been hurt in the moments it took for Merrie to recover.

Guilt slamming into her, Merrie cast out her senses for the others.

Both Dixie and Tabitha were almost dead. Both of them were clawing at their bodies as they fought against the spiders that swarmed over them. Dixie's lust of helplessness, the hallmark of all alphas, wasn't enough to overcome the agony of being torn apart from the outside and inside at the same time. Both were alive only because of crumbling druidic magic that kept them breathing.

Sable, on the other hand, was incoherent with fear. She stood on Bass' prone form, her entire body a pillar of light as she used the last of her energies to protect her master. There were spiders clawing at her body, not harming her armored form, but trying to reach for his body.

Tears burned in Merrie's eyes. She wasn't too late, but it was close.

Around her, a wave rippled through the spiders. They started forward, a cloud of burning darkness and too many eyes.

Merrie smiled and yanked open the portal behind her. A tsunami of darkness burst out of it as countless shadow creature poured out. They slammed into the spiders, shadow against infernals. The sake and sharp scents of the two dimensions quickly choked the room.

She jumped over the battle and toward the Dixie and Tabitha. They were in the back, away from Sable's brilliance. (Dixie, I'm coming!)

Only agony came back, sharp pain as the shape-shifting alpha struggled to transform to keep his body healed enough to avoid dying. Unlike Merrie, it was second nature for the silfae and he managed to keep his body shifting to avoid the spiders from tearing out critical organs or his body from being torn open.

Merrie also reached out for Sable but the elder alpha's mind was too inwardly focused. Immediately she shifted it to Haviston. (I need to help Dixie and Tabitha.)

(We can hold off,) came the remarkably strained voice of the psion, (but we are—)

Fear prickling her skin, Merrie summoned two of the shadow kin after her. They squeezed through the portal and came chasing after her, their bodies all tentacles, claws, and wings. Together they burst through the back door of the house and toward Dixie's thoughts.

When she saw a towering mass of spiders, four meters high in the vague shape of a giant wolf, her heart almost skipped a beat. The spiders were glowing violently, flickers of too-bright red and too many squirming legs as they pinned the two wolves to the ground.

Merrie grew hot with the memory of being pinned to the ground and violated. The same thing was happening to her two friends.

Spells of strength and armor danced across her mind and she let the darkness fill her body with ice. She threw more power into the spell, charging it beyond what she had ever done to protect her against the spider's bite. Beneath her feet, the grass withered and crumbled away.

She brought her cloak over her mouth and nose. She sealed up her pussy and asshole at the same time. The pressure reminded her of how she build up her mental shields. It would also give her time to rescue the others before she had to breathe.

She twisted her thoughts into a new spell, to give her the ability to holder her breath. It failed but she tried again and succeeded before she reached the mound. Just as her lungs filled with the searing cold ice of the Shadow realm, she plunged into the squirming mass of spiders.

Heat and pins scraped at her body, clawing at the black cloak that protected her body. Her heart beat faster, the triple beat drumming in her chest as she clawed her way toward the others. Her large paws crushed through spiders but they were on her, gnawing at her cloak and clawing their way through her defenses.

She brushed against a squirming body and a sharp wave of fear poured through her mind. It was Dixie.

Merrie reached out with her mind and caught one of the shadow kin's attention. Directing it to grab Dixie, she gave it the strength.

Black tentacles plunged into the boiling mass of spiders. They wrapped around Dixie's wolf body and then yanked it brutally out.

(What the—?) came the sharp fear.

Merrie sent a wave of apology to him even as she directed the shadow kin to get the spiders out of his body. There was only way they knew to create them.

She gave Dixie only a brief image of what was going to happen, the black tentacles plunging into his asshole and mouth.

(Merrie! No, don't you—) His world exploded into shameful pleasure as the shadow kin began to rape his tiny body. Pleasure and hatred radiated from his mind, focused on her. His thoughts were also projected the sensation of the spiders being crushed against his insides while the darkness withered away at their spells.

She only smiled grimly to herself and clawed her way deeper into the mound of spiders. She swatted spiders blindly until she smacked against Tabitha's weakly thrashing form.

(Save... her!) snapped Dixie as sensations of his body being violated filled his connection. The thick tendrils were plunging deep into his throat, choking him off as they sought out the spiders to crush them.

Merrie directed the remaining shadow kin toward Tabitha. At the same time, she summoned whatever swarm of creatures she had brought with her to come for the spiders that would no doubt chase them once Tabitha was rescued.

Black tentacles plunged past her vision, wrapping around Tabitha's body. With a surge of power, they yanked her free, ripping a gaping hole out of the spider mound that Merrie chased after.

Merrie hit the ground running toward the house.

Dixie was already being slammed against the wall, tentacles of the first kin plunging into his now humanoid form. His tiny body, barely a meter in height, shook violently as he was plunged in from both sides. His tiny cock was hard and splattering against the wall. Black cum from the shadow kin poured out of his ass and squirted from his mouth as the creature eradicated any of the spiders still inside.

(I will kill you,) he promised before another orgasm slammed into him. (I will fucking kill you!)

Merrie gave him a wave of apology and raced around the house. Her hound form easily covered the distance but she could see weak light pouring out from the beginning. With her mind, she could tell that her creatures had finished killing off the spiders inside. Thankful, she reached out for Sable. (Dim your magic, I'm coming around!)

Incoherent fear and terror blasted her. Light flared up from the front, painting brilliantly across the ground.

Even reflected of the blood and gore, Merrie could feel it burning her skin. She skidded to a halt and panted. (Haviston, I can't survive that.)

(I can't reach her either. She thinks Bass is dying.)

Merrie's blood ran colder. (Did they?)

(No, but he is dying. I don't know how but her thoughts have been crumbling rapidly.)

Another blast of holy light flared into existence. Inside the house, the shadow creatures too close to the window burned away from the intensity of it.

Merrie winced and tried to reach out for Sable. (Please, I can help. Just let me up there!)

Only terror and fear came out. There was nothing, no coherent thought, no negotiation. Only a primal need to survive and fear for the one person that mattered most.

Tears burned in Merrie's thoughts. She pulled back the swarm of creatures from the windows, protecting them with the house. As she did, she looked around desperately. (Haviston, can you knock her unconscious?)

(If you do, we will die.) A detailed image came over. Both Borias and Haviston were up against Bass. They were using Sable's holy blasts to handle the wall of spiders poised to swarm over them. Cinthia and Fir were between Bass' legs, clutching them tightly as if his large body could shield them from the attack. Numerous cuts and burns scored their body. Both shook from poison that ravaged their system. (She is unconsciously healing everything within a few meters of her, which is keeping us alive.)

(I can get in there.)

His mind flashed through scenarios, painting out options in rapid succession. As they did, Merrie's hopes dropped.

(You can't defeat them in time. I don't see a way.)

(Can she protect you enough to survive?)

(No,) came the definite reply.

(Then you die or we find a different way.)

(I cannot.)

Merrie thought furiously. She drew her attention back to the swarm of spiders. The two shadow kin were raping Tabitha now, much to the annoyance of Dixie who was slumped against the ground unable to move. The spiders were almost crushed but it took longer because Tabitha remained in her giant wolf form.

Another flash of holy light blasted the area, searing away the shadows.

Haviston showed how the light pushed back the spiders but it only gave him and Borias precious seconds to reinforce their shields before the spiders came back.

An idea came to Merrie but it sickened her. (What if... what if you make her think Bass died?)

Shock and horror radiated across the connection.

Merrie shivered at the memories that slammed into her. The devastation that tore into her soul with Kine died had scarred her for years. It still haunted her to that moment. Tears burned in her eyes as she recalled what happened.

(No alpha besides you has ever survived the death of their master.)

(He won't really be dead. The spiritual leash will still be there. But, she will either go catatonic and I can come. Or she will lash out at the creatures and kill them.)

(Or she could kill us all.) Even as he projected, Haviston was thinking about options. (No matter what, she will be damaged for the rest of her life.)

(You will die if we don't do anything.) Merrie hated the idea but she couldn't come up with anything.

Haviston's thoughts broke off for a moment as some of the spiders managed to charge forward and attack him.

Another blast of light burned Merrie. There were tiny screams of agony.

Inside the house, her creatures were ready to attack but they couldn't survive the light any easier than they could. She also didn't have enough to swarm over Sable to darken her.

Merrie flinched and looked away. Reaching out for Dixie, she started to give him her idea but remembered the spiders could read it. Instead, she focused on him. (Dixie? Can you fight?)

Dixie sobbed as he projected back. (I... I don't have anything right now. Those... things are done with my mistress. She's alive but we have nothing left. It was...) Memories of choking panic rose up.

She sent a comforting wave. (I might have to hurt Sable.)

He only sent a wave of agreement before withdrawing.

Haviston's thoughts brushed against her own. They came back pained and streaked with agony. (Spiders bit me again, this poison is hard to concentrate. I only have moments before I might collapse.)

(Borias?)

(His spells are keeping him up but if I fall, my cousin will fall too.)

The moment rested on Merrie, she had to make a choice. No matter what she chose, someone was going to hurt or die. She gulped and raced back toward the end of the house. At the same time, she guided her creatures into the most protected parts of the ruined mill house.

(Haviston,) she projected with sorrow and fear. (Make Sable think Bass is dead.)

Merrie raced around to the back.

Tabitha was finally in her silfae form, naked and shivering. She and Dixie clutched each other. Black cum poured out of their nether holes and coated their faces but they were alive. She looked up at Merrie as the alpha came around the corner.

Merrie skidded to a halt. Fear rose inside her as she thought about the damage she had done.

Tabitha gave her a hard smile. "When this is done, you fucking bitch, I'm going to rape you so hard you will wish you died."

She coughed and black cum bubbled out of her mouth.

"But thank... you." The last bit came out through gritted teeth.

Merrie gulped, her throat was dry. (Shield yourself.)

Tabitha frowned. "Why—?"

Any question was interrupted by a single scream that ripped out of the air. "No!" It was the tortured sound of whiskey and smoke, a

woman who just lost the most important person in her life. It came with a mental blast that slammed into Dixie and Merrie.

Merrie, prepared for the onslaught, had been shielded but she felt it crack under the intense wave of agony and sorrow that blasted her.

Dixie, on the other hand, wasn't prepared and he burst into tears before the eyes rolled into the back of his head and collapse.

Light exploded from the front in a pillar of holy flame. It splashed against the shield surrounding the house before punching through it, shattering the powerful spell as if it was tissue paper.

Waves of emotions slammed into Merrie, the force them pushing her physically back as she fought to retain her own sanity under Sable's sorrow.

The light continued to grow brighter, burning so intense that the reflections off the bodies and ground and crumbling shield were enough to direct it against Merrie's form.

Merrie's cloak ignited into flames. It seared away and soon the light was burning away her bandages. Agony coursed through Merrie's body as she struggled to retain her sanity under Sable's despair.

She tried to reach out for Sable but there was nothing to connect, no intelligent though, no consciousness, only despair and pain.

Guilt slammed into Merrie.

Powerful tentacles grabbed Merrie and yanked her off the ground. The two shadow kin slammed her through the back of the house and toward the stairs leading into the basement.

She only had a glimpse of the formerly dark kitchen lit up brilliantly. The creatures that were cowering in the further rooms were screaming as the light burned them away.

The shattered door of the basement scraped her back and then she was plunged into darkness. She didn't have time to even scream before she hit the hard-packed ground which drove the air from her lungs.

Mouth gaping but her air refusing to work, Merrie saw darkness pour into the basement. It was the shadows, creatures and the kin, as they rushed into the basement. They slammed into her and piled on top, shielding her body from the light even as Sable's holy flame began to spear through the cracks in the house.

Merrie sobbed. It was one thing to lead the shadow creatures into a fight, another to have them sacrifice themselves to save her. (No, no, not again!)

The shadow kin that loomed over her looked into her eyes. (You will live, Mother.)

(Why? Why are you doing this?)

Her world grew darker as more of the creatures piled on top of her. The weight bore her down, grinding her bones together and making it impossible to move her lungs. The spell she used to keep breathing remained, it was the only way she could get air in the suffocating pressure of the creatures, her creatures, as they protect her from Sable's sorrow.

The shadow kin groaned and planted his arms on both side of her, straining to keep the pressure from crushing Merrie to death. His thoughts burned in her mind and she could feel him dying even as he shield her. (You are the Light Snuffer. Our deaths is for what you have given the Shadows. You are not done. You must live because the Lord of Shadows—our father—told us.)

The kin's body crumbled but the thoughts remained. They were washed with agony and pain. (Even... without him, we love you. You are the mother, the lover, the darkness that surrounds us. You are the reason we exist and...)

The sound of cracking bones filled the air. The pressure on Merrie's ribs increased and she felt the muted sound of her own insides fracturing from the weight.

(... we love you more than life.)

Then the world became nothing but blessed darkness.

Purifying Flames

23

Heat beat against Merrie's body. The waves of burning ripped at her raw nerves, reminding her of the tiny cuts and scratches that peppered her body. She could feel the heat against the rents in her thin skin and the contrast of the icy darkness inside her with the smoldering air.

She whimpered and tried to roll away from the heat and back into the cold embrace of the shadow creatures that protected her. The movement caused agony to spark along her senses. She managed to roll up on her side and then down on her front, crushing her breasts against the hot ground.

Her rolling also brought her into contact with the sharp edge of something wood or metal. It cut into her skin, peeling it open and allowing more heat to pour into her fragile body.

Merrie gasped as she woke up fully. Inhaling, she choking on ashes and embers. With a cry, she doubled over and slammed her head into a heavy barrel before slumping to the ground. Still choking, she covered her mouth and winced as her raw skin scraped against the wood.

Blinking, she peered underneath the barrel. Light flickered across the room, yellows and oranges painted on the ground. Wood smoke and sharp smells swirled around her. It dragged streamers of embers and sparks around Borias' prized possessions.

Merrie pulled back and peeked up from her vantage point. The entire ceiling was on fire, the flames already blackening the timbers and ashes poured down. She pulled back from the flickering light and crawled further underneath the barrel.

Fear sparked in her mind. She reached out for the shadow creatures, to make sure they were okay. Instead of brushing against a cloud of thoughts, there was nothing.

Her heart beat faster in her chest. She tried again, extending her senses beyond the burning basement and up into the area above her. She felt where the portal to the Shadow realm had been, the fading magic felt like a healing scar along smooth flesh. But there were no shadow kin or even the smaller creatures around her. They had all disappeared, no doubt killed by Sable's holy magic.

Tears burned in her eyes and she let out a choking sob. They had sacrificed themselves for her again. It wasn't the first time but that didn't diminish the ache she felt in her heart. She could still feel the places where their minds connected with her own. The thin leads that lead to each one had been burned away and left gaping holes in her psyche.

She started to sink into despair but then heat flashed over her. She opened her eyes to see that a hunk of the ceiling had fallen less than a meter away from her. Sparks rose up from the wood as it blinded her with its brilliance.

Merrie looked away and blinked furiously to clear her vision. When it did, she caught sight of her own body. About half of her skin still clung to her body. The pale white was a painful contrast to the boiling black mist that made up her innards. She could see the black veins that connected her heart and felt the triple beat of it pulsing through her body. The taste of the collar's powerful regeneration magic tickled the back of her throat but it was quickly fading. She didn't want to think about what it meant, of the two healing spells in the collar, one was for bringing her back from the death and the other was the slow torture of recovery.

She shook her head and looked for shelter against the flame. She braved the firelight and crawled out from underneath the barrel. The heat bore down on her, prickling her skin and tugging on her hair. She tried to transform into a shadow but her injuries and lack of energy refused to let the spell take hold. Instead, she had to work her way across the room with her naked body. Her breasts teased the warm ground, nipples scraping against the rocks. Her limbs shook from exhaustion and injuries but she managed to make it to the bed and then to the shattered door.

As she moved, she could see how the shadow creatures had shoved her further away from the stairs and into the room. The books, furniture, and even bed were shoved aside. Black ash and the faint smell of sake painted the floor to mark where the creatures died in their attempts to save her.

Her cold tears splashed on the ground as she leaned against the door frame. The hallway outside of Borias' room was cooler but not by much. The flames hadn't reached it. Thankful to get away from the suffocating heat, she crawled around the wall before slumping against it.

Above her, the roar of fire filled the air and she heard glasses and pottery shattering from the heat. The mill house was destroyed.

Merrie took a deep breath and calmed herself. Closing her eyes, she carefully expanded her senses to identify the situation above her. She also hoped to find the rest of her friends were still alive, though a fire in the house didn't give her hope. She started by searching for the infernal traps but every sign of the spiders, large or small, appear to have disappeared. She didn't know if one was being shaded beyond her limits but otherwise she could safely use her psychic abilities.

Opening her mind, she listened for submissive thoughts surrounding her. As her senses rippled out, she felt the thoughts of warriors as dim lights in a field of black. They must have approached when the shield went down.

There were also priests. Their minds were brighter because they submitted themselves to a higher power. It gave Merrie some leeway into their minds and she could feel their triumph and joy bright against her skin. It sickened her knowing they were celebrating their victory.

She frowned and reached further, pushing as quickly as she could with the air growing hotter around her. She panted softly, sweat sliding down her breasts. Her thoughts traced along more individuals, at least a hundred celebrating.

And then she brushed up against a field of brilliance. It was a ward built from prayers and faith, a shimmering cloud of light. The creator, whoever it was, had given themselves completely to Lemetri and her name whispered endlessly in the cloud.

Merrie flinched at the light but then explored the ward. It took her precious seconds to find a weak spot and ease into it—Borias had called her a shield breaker for her talents. Inside, there were multiple minds speaking out in conversation.

When she felt Bass' consciousness, she almost sobbed with relief. With a hesitant tendril, she reached out for him and connected. (Hello, master.)

(Merrie.) Bass' thoughts were analytical but fractured. Most of his attention was directed somewhere else; she could feel a storm of despair raging against his other mind. It was Sable. The other alpha had cracked when she thought Bass had died and she could feel him frantically trying to piece together his alpha's thoughts with love and affection.

Guilt slammed into Merrie. (I'm sorry. I—)

(No,) came the command. The intensity of it, raw power against her mind, sent a flash of liquid heat coursing along her body. It came with a welcomed rush of power as her submissive side rose up to obey.

She gulped and wrapped her short arms around her chest.

(I can't help both of you. Sable needs me and I need you to be strong for yourself.) His thoughts were structured but she could feel his own emotions leaking out through the cage of his willpower.

Merrie nodded even though Bass couldn't see her. She took a deep breath and then did it again. Her breasts rose and fell with the effort as she struggled to calm herself. Her collar, heavy against her collar, thudded against her chest and she was reminded that she was her own mistress.

The despair faded. It may never go away but it could wait until they were no longer in danger.

(Good girl.)

She moaned at the compliment. (Thank you, master.)

He sent a wave of affection toward her, brief but intense. It felt like curling in a hot bathtub with strong arms around her. (Are you safe?)

(No, I'm trapped in the basement.)

(After Lemetri's army captured us, they set fire to the house. It has been burning for about a half hour so you don't have much time. Do you have an exit?)

She frowned and glanced up at the flames. They were getting brighter and the heat was making it hard to breath. She looked up at the stairs but the kitchen was burning brightly. She sighed and sent an image of what she saw to Bass.

(Damn,) he projected sadness. (That place has been my home for half a century.) His mind focused away from his emotions. A blanket of logic and strategy muffled his sorrow.

He opened his eyes and she saw the inside of a blanket tent. Only a few streaks of light came in through the stitches of the heavy canvas. He blinked and looked away from the light but his eyes couldn't focus on anything other than heavy barrels and supplies. (Not much to see here, they are keeping most of us helpless.)

Bass continued. (Both alphas are bound by spells to keep them unconsciousness. I can reach Sable but she is suffering from terrors in her sleep. I can't hear or feel Dixie.) There was a strange edge of discomfort in his thoughts; Sable had been his mental companion for decades. Her agony raged against his mind and he withdrew for a second to comfort her before going back. (She is very damaged, both mind and body by that attack.)

She stared to respond but he interrupted. (It was a battle. Haviston told me you gave the order. Thank you.)

Merrie's thoughts drew back in shock.

(If given a choice of losing my friends and compatriots for decades verses spending the rest of my life comforting a wounded lover, I would have done the same thing. Without hesitation.)

She sobbed with relief.

(This is a war,) his thoughts grew darker, (and the battle isn't over.)

Merrie let his thoughts sink into her own, trying to give comfort without leaking her own fear into his mind. Her eyes focused on the flames, watching as they grew closer.

(They are beating Tabitha every few minutes to keep her dazed until they can figure out a way of keeping her bound. She's escaped at least four times already.) Memories of the screams rose up and fell. (Haviston and Borias are both bound, blinded, and gagged.)

Embers cascading down and she backed way from them to avoid getting burned.

(What happened to Borias?) asked Bass.

Images of the mage rose up, sharp with fear and surprise. Borias had just come down the stairs in a moment of silence between the fighting.

“Get back inside, you idiot!” snapped Tabitha.

Bass growled and kept one eye focused on his own opponents. He reached out for Borias with his own hand, as if it could stop his friend from being too close to death and killing himself.

Borias winked at him.

Bass stopped, stunned with surprised. Something had changed, Borias had always run away from fights before. He had too, if he was in the presence of death, it would have killed him also. Now, there was something new to his demeanor, a fear that had been stripped away. He cocked his head slightly and then gasped, Borias had his geas removed.

Merrie flinched at the memory seeping into her mind. It only took a second for Bass to figure out the geas. She wished she could tell him the details but the bonds of her own geas prevented her.

Instantly, it felt like a weight had been ripped away from Bass. He had spent years worrying that the wrong turn would kill Borias and there would be nothing Bass would be able to do stop from every organ pouring out of his young body.

Borias raised his hand.

Two paladins in front of him hesitated. They kept their weapons away from him, no doubt because they were told of his limitations.

Red energy spread out from Borias' hand. It was a magical disk about a half meter across. It was also brighter and more intense than any spell Bass had seen Borias cast before. Energy curled around Borias' body, warping the world as he stared at the two paladins. Sweat beaded his brow the swirling energy sharpened into arcane runes floating in the air before him.

The spell ignited into twisted whips of power. They shot across the distance and wrapped around the necks of the paladins.

They let out strangled cries which ended abruptly as Borias yanked his hand back and blood exploded from their mouths, noses, and ears. It streamed out of their bodies and formed into long ribbons of crimson.

Borias ripped the gore out of the two warriors. The blood whip cracked against the house, exploding it violently. He snapped it forward and the blood lash whipped through the air, bisected the two paladins, and then burst the chest of a priest rushing up to heal the two victims.

Bass let out a gasp of surprise and relief.

Borias stared at a moment, the spell crackling along his air. Even from Bass' vantage point, he could see that Borias' cock was hard. "Be fucking me," said Borias, "I be living."

"Great!" snapped Tabitha. "I'll fuck you later for not telling me! Now go kill the fuckers!"

Bass withdrew his memories. (Borias had his geas removed recently. Did you know about it?)

She opened her mouth and then closed it. A pressure on her mind refused to let her project anything other than, (I can't tell you.)

Bass' mind worked for a moment. (It would take a Royal Family to pardon that geas. The queen would have never left Franome City and Borias couldn't go there with his other geas. One of the princesses is warring with Luxember and the other is at home. That means it had to be Prince Claston, who I heard may be friendly to you. It was him, wasn't it? Probably while we were at the Blood County Festival.)

She shivered, he was remarkably accurate.

(You don't have to tell me either way) His thoughts were wry. (I know how these spells work. If it was Claston, I bet he traded the prisoner's geas with the Royal Protectorate. You accepted the same geas, right?)

Merrie didn't think the spell binding her thoughts would allow her to acknowledge it, but she tried anyways. She managed to send a wave of acknowledgement before the geas drew her thoughts back.

(Good.) There was relief in his thoughts. (Protecting the country is a noble goal. Though,) he added with a wry thought, (I'm curious how you summoned a shadow land while keeping the country's best interest in mind.)

With a blush, Merrie ducked her head. (I don't know. I had to let the Lord of Shadows through but I limited how far they could go.)

Bass didn't answer for a moment, then responded curtly, (We will deal with that later. Iolis, the former high priests of Lemetri, is going to kill me.)

An image of the woman came with the name. It was a woman wearing a blood-soaked, long-sleeved shirt and black jeans. Her small breasts tented the fabric but the swelling only emphasized the symbol of Lemetri that was nestled in her cleavage. Her heavy boots contrasted her slender form, they looked like bricks. She had no obvious weapons but Bass could feel the intensity of Lemetri's power filling her.

(She is probably going to drag me into the original shadow land, to where the goddess died in hopes of rescuing her. I suspect she is going to sacrifice me.)

(Lemetri is dead.) Merrie sent an image of the goddess' corpse and the feeding shadow kin.

(I know. Iolis doesn't want to acknowledge it. She clings to the fading shreds of magic that we have as proof that Lemetri exists. I have never felt that she survived. That moment when you killed her....) Nightmares began to rise up in his thoughts but he forced them down. (She is going to hold Sable's life to ensure my cooperation. If any of us attacked, she promised to kill Sable, Dixie, and the others.)

Merrie shivered at the intense hatred that rose inside her. Bass had suffered enough for his faith, he had hid himself for decades to avoid the Church of Lemetri. Once again, they forced themselves into his world with violence.

Bass' mind grew dark with a howling rage. (I will destroy that woman for threatening my Sable.)

She blinked at her tears, Sable was her friend too. (What can I do?)

(Get out from the house by any means. It will take the priests another day or so to heal up everyone to prepare to invade Lemetri's Grave.) It was the name he had given the shadow land that had surrounded the former battle.

Merrie took a deep breath, wincing at the heated air that pricked her throat. She looked around again but there was no new way to escape.

(I will kill them but I must keep my Sable safe. You are still an unknown, I hope that she assumed you died during the attack. The infernal must have told her that you had returned because she has protection spells against darkness wrapped around her but I don't know how long she'll maintain them.)

Merrie looked around at the basement. There was no place to escape the heat.

(Be safe, be a good girl.)

A little surge of pleasure rippled through her body. She smiled and let her mental communication fade. Drawing her attention back to her body, she inspected the basement but couldn't find an escape. The only thing she found were barrels of Borias' lager stacked up near the foot of the stairs along with tools and supplies. He had rolled out one of the barrels in preparation of celebrating when the others approached.

She looked at one of the barrels and then smiled. If she had a day, she might be able to survive inside one of them. It would be risky but she had no other escape. Grabbed one of the chisels with her mouth, she crawled over to the nearest one.

The heat around her burned her skin as she jammed the chisel into place between the spout and the wood. She had to use her teeth to pull at it, it was loose but she was weak. The long minutes it took her to pry off were some of the longest in her life. Her shadowy body kept melting away, stripped away by the fire that roared above her.

When the spout finally fell off, lager poured out. It was icy cold and she gasped for relief. It bathed her parched skin. Even though it stung, it was nothing compared to the heat and light peeling away

her skin. She panted softly and sank down into the puddle, enjoying every second of the coolness.

Before long, the lager had poured out of the barrel and left it nearly empty. Inside, it was dark and cool. Merrie forced her body melt and poured herself into the barrel. A single tendril wrapped around the spigot and pulled it back into place, sealing her tightly inside.

Encased in darkness and surrounded by the powerful fumes, Merrie gathered the darkness around her until the inside of the barrel began to ice over. With a groan, she let her body relax and prayed that she would heal enough before the basement burned down around her.

Exhaustion

24

The world roared around her, muted only by aged wood. The barrel rocked back and forth from the winds that buffeted it, shaking it loose as the rest of the mill house burned down around her. The heat seeped in but she managed to hold it back with a shield of shadows that frosted the inside of the wood.

The cold from the shadows didn't last long against the heat. It only had time to ice the wood for a few minutes before the fire melted it. Waves of heat seeped through the barrel and swirled around her as she struggled to keep her attention moving from one warm patch to the other. She laid down a thin layer of ice and shadows against each one before moving to the next and then the next. By the the time she had painted the entire insides of the barrel with her spell, the first parts were hot again.

It was exhausting but mindless. Her mind drifted slightly as she swirled her attention around. There was nothing to focus on, she didn't have someone to dominate her or even time to masturbate. Instead, she ended up going over the battle over and over. Each time, she thought about the things she missed or mistakes she made: she could have used her collar more, she could have dodged in a different direction, what if she opened a portal first, could she have saved Sable without making her think Bass was dead? She doubted every choice and decision.

The heat continued to seep through the wood. As it melted the frost, the steam swirled around her and tickled her reforming lungs and skin.

She couldn't sleep or let her mind doze. Her need to sleep and heal throbbed in the back of her head, plucking at her attention. She

had to fight it, knowing that if she missed too many sections, it would be harder to recover. If she stopped, then she would be boiled alive.

Merrie groaned and twisted slightly. The beer at the bottom of the barrel sloshed around her. Some of it leaked into her wounds and she felt the sting of it burn across her skin before it faded in the boiling darkness of her core. More of it lapped at her ass and pussy, teasing the sensitive flesh. She wanted to finger herself, to build up pleasure to give herself more energy but couldn't afford the distraction.

Groaning, she twisted around again and redoubled her attempts to focus on the spell keeping her cold. Sooner or later, the fire would finally die down and then she could save her friends.

Recovery

25

Merrie woke with the realization that she was no longer casting the spells to keep her alive. She thrashed violently trying to regain her senses but the effort only slid along the curve of the barrel and into the puddle at the bottom. Slamming her wrists against the side of the barrel halted her slide just as her shoulder blades were soaked.

She panted as she blinked at the darkness. She could see everything clearly thanks to her shadowy nature but being aware of her tight quarters didn't help.

Her ass was up along the far edge with her weight resting on her shoulders that were firmly against the now-dry bottom of the barrel. She looked up to her pale skin that almost glowed in the darkness. Her trim abdomen crinkled with her position and her legs were splayed open, braced against the top of the curve and the side of the barrel. Between her legs was her sex, glistening with a few droplets of the remaining lager.

Merrie stared at her pussy. It was as pale as the rest of her body with her outer vulva pressed tightly together in a soft mound with a slit down the length. Her clitoris, the little fold of pleasure, peeked out of one end of the slit. She could also barely see her asshole along the ridge of her body with the end of her tail sticking up to trace along the curve of the barrel.

As she watched, her tail wagged back and forth. She felt the tiny muscles of her spine clenching and relaxing with the movement. Each way also pulled at her vulva, tugging them tightly open before the lips closed together. It was a tiny movement but one that felt like a delicate caress of a lover.

She worried her lip as she contemplated pleasuring herself. The others needed her to rescue them, or at least be ready to fight back. At the same time, she was an alpha and desperately needed pleasure to fuel her magic.

Her tail continued to wagged back and forth, peeling and squeezing her vulva open and close. She moaned and reached up. The smooth end of her wrist felt good against her sex, sliding it back and forth against the delicate fold. Shivers of pleasure raced along her skin and she let out a soft moan.

She reached up with her other wrist, putting more weight on her shoulders, and brought it up to her pussy. With both arms, she stroked back and forth as she concentrated on her sex. After a few minutes, she felt the first bit of pleasure tingling along her sex.

Merrie smiled and closed her eyes. She imagined it was someone else touching her with thick fingers. Her pussy tingled and she focused harder on the imagine, pretending it was Bass who towered over her and bent her almost in half as he fingered her.

Her pussy clenched with her thoughts. She stroked her lips harder, working the end of her arm into the furrow of her sex. Every bump against her clitoris felt good but she wasn't enough to set off an orgasm. Instead, it was just a slow build up of pleasure as she pictured Bass back when she was first learning about her powers. He was kind and gentle but still powerful as he drove into her.

She mimicked her fantasy, tilting her body closer to herself as she tried to guide her wrist into her sex. When she couldn't quite find the right angle, she slumped back with frustration. The little heat and pleasure faded quickly leaving only an uncomfortable itch and hungry desire resonating inside her.

Blindly, she reached out and stroked the spigot to the barrel. The metal was cool reminding her that she could escape at any moment.

She glanced back up at her pussy while stroking the spigot. She sighed and tried to figure out how she could masturbate quickly. She reached up again but it wasn't enough. She slumped back and tried again.

After a few triple heartbeats of thinking, she came up with a different way. Taking a deep breath, she spread her legs wide and planted her arms against the bottom of the barrel. She closed her eyes and let her mind drift.

It took a moment to let her mind recall the details of Bass: the way he smelled, the strength of his fingers as they trailed up and down her slit, even the rumble of his voice as he held her close. It had been years since he held her as a bitch but her mind and body remembered.

Her sex grew heated as she imagined it was his fingers pressing against her, grinding her down as he worked her pussy open. It was slowly, like a faded imagine coming into focus. Because it was her fantasies, the edge of excitement and unknown couldn't come to her.

She mentally reached out for her collar. The heavy metal rested against her breasts and clung to her nipple but it also connected to her thoughts with an intimacy that no living being could ever experience again. She found the connection and projected her imagination through it, hoping it would come back as if from a stranger. That was how her commands to herself worked, the collar transformed them into another being's orders.

The images came flooding back through the collar, transformed by the crystal and the metal that irrevocably bound Merrie to herself. They were no longer her fantasies but her mistresses, changed so she no longer could predict every caress and touch. The smells, the taste, and even the shape of Bass had altered into a shadowy-like beast with the taste of sake in the back of her throat and a roughness that scraped against her delicate skin.

As she kept her eyes close, she could imagine monstrous fingers stroking along her slit again. They dragged along the opening and pried open her sex. Fingernails, no claws, scraped along the inner folds and she grew wet as the tiny scratches reported themselves. She moaned as the thick fingers, shaped by her fantasies and altered by her collar, caressed her clitoris and circled around the opening of her cunt. The digits were thicker than she expected but they were also powerful as they dipped into her opening and then out. With every tiny plunge, they transferred more of her gathering juices along the rough skin and lubricating deeper plunges.

Her eyes fluttered open, revealing movement above her. She started to clamp down when an unexpected command came rushing out of her collar.

(Close your eyes.)

It was the command she was about to give herself but it came from the collar before she could build up the thoughts. The intensity and surprise slammed into her. Her pussy grew liquid almost instantly as pleasure fluttered throughout her entire body.

In response, the monstrous fingers drove into her, two digits forcing her opening widely apart as they plunged past the first and second knuckle. She felt the thick ridges of bones and the roughness of the skin against her inner walls as a blast of pleasure. A thump of the creature's knuckles crushed her labia and clitoris before the creature pulled up.

The creature, who longer felt imaginary, rammed his fingers back into her pussy. The digits filled her completely and stretched her outer lips before the knuckles smacked against her opening. It was a rough and powerful but also exactly what she needed to set off her pleasures.

Soon, the creature was pounding into her pussy. A rapid triple beat that smacked against her flesh with little bursts of discomfort blending with the pleasure of being filled by the driving digits.

Merrie moaned and cried out, spreading her legs as far as she could as she pushed her hips up into the hand, meeting each smack with her own thrusts. The ends of her ankles thumped against the barrel as the plunging was transmitted down her useless legs.

A powerful hand gripped one of her thighs right at her knee. It bore down, crushing her leg but also forcing her spine to bend further as it tried to fold her in half. With every degree of bending, the plunging fingers were able to drive deeper into her. Soon, she felt the claws at the end poking against her cervix.

The pain flashed through her body but it was hard to feel it more than pleasure with two thick digits ramming into her cunt. Her entire world became focused on the driving fingers, enjoying every ridge and bump as they dominated her pussy.

She tried to move her leg, hoping that it was just a fantasy, but the grip tightened and she felt the tips of the creature's claws pierce her skin. Blood, no doubt black as night, dribbled down her thigh as icy dribble but it reached the plunging fingers and she could no longer feel it.

The sense of losing control pushed her closer to the edge and she cried out again.

A third hand slapped against her mouth. Before she could wonder how there could be a third one, it had gripped her jaw tightly together and dug its claws into the side of her face. The grip tightened until she felt her jawbone begin to grind.

Before she could comprehend how a third hand got into her fantasy, the creature pulled the two digits from her cunt.

She clenched her muscles as the emptiness started to fill her.

They plunged back in but there were now three fingers jammed into her pussy. Her efforts to tighten her pussy were pointless as they three digits tore her open and plunged clear to the knuckles, driving the thick fingers stretched her out painfully.

A spark of pleasure raced along her veins, an orgasm about to explode.

(Do not come!) came an unexpected command exploding inside her mind. It has the irresistible power of her mistress, an order she was helplessly to obey.

The orgasm raced through her body but it refused to crest. Instead it filled her as she was assaulted by the three fingers. They pounded into her ceaselessly, driving deep and hard. Her entire body spasmed around it, orgasms trying to set off in a burst of pleasure, but the order kept her body from reaching the crest. Instead each one added to the building pleasure, an agony of ecstasy that swelled inside her.

The hands splattered her juices everywhere, filling the room with the soft patter of cool liquid and the alcoholic taste of her pleasure filling the tiny confines of the barrel.

She flailed her arms and her free leg, trying to do anything as she was pinned and fingered.

More hands, each one tipped with sharp claws and with a powerful grip, caught her limbs and pinned them down against the edge of the barrel. In a matter of seconds, she was helpless as the digits continued to assault her. One even caught her tail and crushed it between fingers while the rest of the palm cupped her buttocks.

Her entire body shook as the pounding grew stronger. Her labia was crushed and bruised by the knuckles that smacked against her soaked folds. Her cervix and inner walls were gouged and scratched but it was nothing compared to the endless sliding of thick bones

wrapped in rough skin that assaulted her insides. She could feel her inner lips clinging to the fingers as they drove into her, grasping them as a lover who didn't want to be abandoned.

Merrie cried out into the hand silencing her. She twisted and writhed but with all of her limbs pinned, it was a movement that only empathized her helplessness.

Another orgasm tried to burst inside her. She felt it rise between the waves of pleasure that assaulted her cunt and then reach a crest but her body refused to push over the edge. It added to the storm of pleasure that wracked her body. Her muscles jerked and tensed helplessly but she couldn't do anything.

Tears ran down her cheeks. She sobbed helplessly as she was assaulted by her own fantasies. It was more than she expected but now she only wanted to let the orgasm rush through her, but her own collar wouldn't let her.

Her breasts shook with the violent pounding. Her entire body had focused on her abused cunt as she was filled and emptied, pried open by the three digits that dominated her world.

And then she felt a pressure against her asshole. It was a claw. It took her a moment to realize it came from the hand pinning her tail between two digits. She could feel the creature's grip tightening on her buttocks as the pressure increased on the her tight sphincter.

The idea of having sharp claws in her bowels brought an intense fear that heightened the pleasure of the still plunging fingers. She tried to clamp down on her vulnerable opening but the anticipation of being ripped open set off an orgasm that refused to crest.

Crying out, she could do nothing as the creature slammed its thick thumb into her asshole, tearing it open and driving clear to the third joint in a single thrust.

With the pressure of the thumb now filling her ass, the three fingers were suddenly a lot tighter. That didn't stop them from driving harder and faster, forcing their way into her body as her insides strained to contain them inside her body. Sharp bursts of pain, her insides ripping, flooded through her. It swirled into the pleasure of having two holes filled completely.

She sobbed and cried out, another orgasm crushing into her. It was getting hard to breathe. Her entire body was pinned against the inside of the barrel as she was raped by her own fantasy.

(Please!) she begged her collar, sending the command. (Please let me come!)

It felt strange begging her own collar, herself as a mistress.

When the thought came back, it wasn't what she expected. (You cannot come. If you do, the others will know.)

She thought about the warriors and priests outside of the house. Her orgasms always rippled out to the submissive people around her, setting off their own pleasures as she lost herself in the ecstasy of her own orgasm. Her ice ran cold as she thought about her own need for power ruining any surprise.

Sobbing, she fought against the orgasms that were already raging inside her. They were right at the edge, an explosion that would reach as far as the shadow lands and beyond if she came. There was no way she could stop it, no way she could halt it anymore.

She cried into the hand silencing her. Her body shook with the threatening orgasm that wracked her.

Merrie waited for more commands or orders but none came. With every second passing, her world sank further into the three digits plunging into her abused cunt. Every thrust scraped against the insides of both of her holes as her body was crushed against the thumb that pinned her asshole against the side of the barrel.

It was too much. Tears ran down her cheeks. (Please! Please! Please!)

Her mental begging only emphasized her helplessness and set off the orgasms that refused to crest. Her body was drooling, splatters of her juices rained down on her face and traced along the curves of her body. Her nipples and clitoris ached, her muscles were tense as they fought against the countless hands that pinned her into place.

(Only for me,) came the answer in response to her begging, (come only for me.)

It was her voice but her mistress' thoughts. She realized it was the collar changing her begging into a command, but she didn't know how, only that it was still her thoughts and her mind that guided her.

But it also gave her a release. With a sob, she reached out for the collar in her mind. She clamped down on it and let her entire world focus on only it. The rest of the world faded away until there was nothing but the orgasms boiling inside her and the connection to

her mistress. She was going to channel everything into the connection, every iota of pleasure, every orgasm threatening to burst.

The command to let her come didn't come. She waited for it, sobbing as her body was wracked with pleasure that refused to crest.

Then she realized she had to ask. It had to be her begging that were transformed into the order. (Please, mistress! Let me come!)

Her body spasmed again as she waited the heartbeat for the response.

(No.)

The order redoubled the pleasure inside her. She bit down on her tongue as she was wracked with intense pleasure.

(Why—)

(Come for me!)

The sudden reversal of orders left her stunned.

The world exploded.

Pitch-black pleasure exploded through her veins, countless orgasms going off at the same time. It ripped through her body, flooding every centimeter and every cranny as her body tensed into rock-like hardness. Her pleasure shot through her mind and funneled into the collar.

The collar took it. Sucking it in as fast as it poured out of her body. She became a channel, a hose. The rush of ecstasy racing through her mind left her stunned and reeling.

It never came out the other end of the collar. Her, as her mistress, never gained the pleasure. Instead it stopped somewhere deep inside the collar, gathering or dissipating, she didn't know.

Orgasm after orgasm wracked her body, plunging her into a world of darkness. She strained against the claws pinning her as she jerked violently, a vessel for the pleasure that slowly drained out of her.

It felt like forever before the last spasm rushed out of her body. She slumped down against the barrel feeling limp and liquid. She couldn't open her eyes still but her body felt like it was melting with the afterglow of her orgasms.

Sometime during the pleasure, the claws had disappeared and no longer pinned her.

It didn't matter though as she splashed along the bottom of the barrel. It took only a moment of focus to open the spigot and pour out of the barrel, slashing on the ash-covered ground of the basement as a shadowy mist.

She swirled for a moment and then pulled herself together, forming her shape into the naked woman who had pulled herself from oblivion once before.

(Open your eyes,) she send the command through her collar. This time, the order came back unchanged and she opened to look around. Panting silently, she sat on her haunches and looked up at the night sky above her. It was a dark night with storm clouds boiling above her. No moonlight threatened her in the burnt-out pit of the mill house and her former home.

Merrie breathed in the scent of burnt wood and blood. There was so much death and destruction around her. A battle that had been lost. Her friends and lovers may have been fatally injured in the process but the war wasn't over yet.

Reaching out with her mind, she scanned her surroundings. There were four patrols of warriors and priests around the house but the bulk of the army had moved on, no doubt to Lemetri's Grave.

Movement in the corner of her vision drew her attention. She looked toward the pile of burnt timbers and broken barrels that covered her shelter. There was something inside it, something dark and powerful.

Claws reached out from the darkness. They were glistening with her juices and stained with her pleasure. She knew them, she knew the shape of the hands and the body that remained out of sight. It was one of the shadow kin, one of her children.

(Shadow Maker,) came the questing thought of her child.

(My child.) She smiled and wiped the tears from her eyes. (Thank you.)

(I serve you.)

She thought about all the sacrifices the shadows had made for her, the ones who had died.

(I will die for you.)

Merrie realized that there was nothing she could do about it. They were her children, they were the countless spawn of her

powers and the light of Lemetri impregnated by the darkness of the Lord of Shadows. They were her children. They were also her army.

She focused her attention inside her. Her injuries were still there but her skin was renewed and she felt the boil of darkness swirling inside her. Her orgasm and sleep had given her back some measure of her powers.

Merrie looked up at the clouds. (They are going for the corpse.)

(We are born from the light.) There was a prickle of concern from the inhuman thoughts.

(They are going for your father, the Lord of Darkness. They will kill the others in the process of trying to recover Lemetri's corpse. They only see us as darkness and evil.)

She turned back to the kin. He was looking at her with black, shimmering eyes the color of the abyss. There were thoughts, alien but close enough to her own that she could feel the protectiveness rising. They would die for the Lord of the Shadows as much as they would for her. They would also sacrifice themselves for Lemetri's corpse, the light that created the shadows they needed to be given life.

Merrie took a deep breath. (They won't listen, not yet. Bass said they were blinded in their quest, which means only one thing, we have to fight again.)

(I will kill for you, my mother.)

She smiled and transformed into her Bel Dark hound form. (Then let's go to war.)

Reaching out, she gathered the darkness to reform her cloak.

To her surprise, the kin stepped up and sank into her summoning. A different type of power rushed into her mind, writing out in calligraphy a complex spell of darkness across her mind. It was like the spell to create the cloak but it integrated the kin's life into it.

Merrie hesitated for only a second and then accepted the gift of her child. Her focus gathered on the kin and she pulled. The energies broke apart and then flowed toward her in a stream of darkness. It raced along her fur with a thousand claws. The memory of the spiders' legs rose up but it was different.

The kin's body plastered itself against her, forming into a thick shell of hardened darkness. It's countless claws plastered over her

ass, sex, and breasts. They gripped her through, shoulders, and sides before hardening into a stiff armor of darkness. Tentacles wrapped around her body, reinforcing joints and sealing up the gaps. As the last of the claws covered her face and formed a canine helm, the kin's wings wrapped around her chest and sealed into place.

The spell solidified into armor, but an utterly different one than the power that Sable had used. She flexed her paws and the armor moved. There were no openings in the juices. She could also feel one finger of the kin's claw impaling her pussy and her ass. The sharp points of more claws were peppering her skin, not enough for pain but to tease the masochistic side of her pleasure.

(T-Thank you.)

(You are my mother.)

She jerked at the response. (You're alive.)

(Yes.) With the response came an insight into the spell. It didn't kill the shadow kin like she thought but instead reshaped it with the fluid nature of shadows. It could separate from her much like her cloak could pull away in combat.

She smiled, tears in her eyes. (Thank you,) she project again.

(Kill?)

(Yes.)

She let her body and armor melt into darkness and flowed toward the edge of the ruined mill.

She had friends and lovers to save.

And a ground to paint with blood.

t'Sade

Years Lost

26

Merrie didn't bother with the patrols around the ruined house. She could easily slaughter them but she assumed that they were around the house for two reasons: a token watch to waste energy on or a way of detecting her presence when they ceased reporting. Either way, she wasn't sure if she could take on an army by herself but she had to find out who survived the battle.

It took little time to race along the ground. As a shadow, she easily swirled along the withering grasses and cooling corpses. It was night, probably from the next day, and there wasn't much light to dodge. Along the way, she didn't even get a hint of the infernal spiders; they must have been either destroyed in the fight or gathered up by the devil controlling them.

She made it up to the edge of the original shadow land in a matter of minutes. She spread out her senses looking for holy magic or submissive thoughts. When she spotted only a single patrol within a hundred meters, she relaxed. They were moving away from her so she had at least a few seconds of to look around.

Her body reformed back into the armored Bel Dark hound but she kept herself low against the rocks to hide herself. Her head against the rock, she peered around her.

The first thing she noticed was the camp set up where the army had originally been gathered for their attack. There were still signs of Tabitha's and Dixie's attack: tree trunks were shattered across the site, long gouges from their sprints that crossed through siege weapons and through ritual spaces. But, for all of the destruction, the survivors had repaired much of the camp and were going about their cleanup from the battle. She could see long tents with healers

going in and out. There were also many with walking injuries gathering food and bringing it to the infirm.

Guessing from the numbers she saw before, it looked like about two-thirds of the army had been killed in the attack. Half of the survivors were unable to move on their own.

A grim thought filled her. If she opened up a portal to the Shadows and directed her own creatures toward the wounded, she could ensure that almost no one would survive the attack. It would be a slaughter.

A silent growl shook her body.

A flash of guilt slammed into her. Merrie pulled back her train of thoughts. She had already been responsible for the deaths of thousands, both humans in the Shadowed District and the creatures of the Shadows. The other slaughters had left their mark on her, she didn't need to add others.

Turning away, she vowed she wouldn't attack unless they attack her.

Focusing her attention on the shadow land, she could see the light near the center of it: the paladins of Lemetri. They were the threat to her children, her friends, and the Lord of Shadows. She guessed they were almost to the center where she killed their goddess.

Merrie took a deep breath and felt anger filling her.

Despite the urge to charge after them in a rage, she stopped and spread out her senses first. It wouldn't be good to race into a trap.

She started with the paladins but quickly encountered the holy cloud obscuring her senses. The prayers and shine pushed her back but she twisted her way through the shifting mist of the protection spells and steadily scanned those inside.

Merrie found Bass but his mind was focused directly on Sable. The intensity of his emotions leaked images of him holding her tight to his body despite the manacles that bound his wrists behind his back. Holy spells crisscrossed both of their bodies and minds, an overkill of overlapping magic to ensure that he would die if he tried to break free and attack.

She withdrew from his mind without alerting him to her presence. Moving around, she quickly found Tabitha and Dixie. Both

were in agony but conscious. Their fury burned her mind despite being focused on someone else, she suspected the high priest Iolis.

Merrie brushed up against the shields of a dozen paladins and an equal number of priests. All of their shielding was well-developed which meant they had some experience fighting telepaths. It was also a sigh of highly skilled individuals. She also identified Iolis as the source of a cloud, a pillar of light that was too bright for her to even try to infiltrate.

After searching further, she realized she couldn't find Borias, Haviston, Fir, or Cinthia. She withdrew her senses and then cast them toward the camp. It was less protected than Iolis and she quickly caught Haviston's attention.

(Merrie, I had doubts you survived.) There was relief in his deadpanned thoughts. She could also tell he was in a lot of pain.

(I'm... alive. What can I do?)

(How combat ready are you?)

She projected the image of her in her armor.

To her surprise, he was shocked. His thoughts dissolved into static for only a second but it was one of the strongest emotions that he had ever presented. When he recovered, he projected, (Psionic symbiosis with an external extra-planar entity? I've heard of it being done but I never suspected you would be able to puzzle through the complexities.)

(I... didn't. He did, the shadow kin provided the spell.)

Silence for painful seconds. (I would like to know more, but this is not the time. Are you able to summon creatures from the Shadows again?)

Guilt rose inside her. She fought it back before taking another deep breath. Glancing around to make sure the patrols hadn't returned, she pulled her senses back and then pushed them across the barrier between the worlds and into the Shadows.

Darkness flooded her. She felt the swirl of power buffeting her, it was icy and calming. A craving to step across filled her, to just retreat into the darkness but she had to resist. After a few moments of basking in the comforting void, she spread out her senses to look for creatures and kin she could use as allies.

There were precious few. Only a few thousand woodland shadows remains in the area and a dozen shadow kin that were strong

enough to survive on the other side. There were hundreds more but they were immature and weak, something she never realized until she started to interact more with her children.

Before they could respond to her mental presence, she withdrew and communicated the details to Haviston.

He thought for a moment.

While he did, she searched and found Borias' and Cinthia's thoughts. Borias was sleeping and in the middle of a nightmare. Cinthia's mind was locked tight with terror. Both were in separate tents from the others and heavily guarded by the few uninjured warriors.

(Merrie?)

She returned her mind to Haviston.

(I don't have a strategy for this without you giving up either us or Bassimar Sarmo and the others. I can't see where there are enough forces. Iolis is very powerful and she is prepared to take on someone like you. Around her, you have numbers that will overwhelm you. Unless you commit to saving or the other, you'll fail.)

(No,) she said, (I can't accept that. Not after this much pain.) Tears burned in her eyes.

(I'm drain and warded. My cousin is also. The girl is somewhere else.)

Her thoughts twisted for a moment but she couldn't figure out why. She dismissed it. (Then I will save you.)

(And they will alert Iolis who will slaughter Bassimar Sarmo. You would have to attack both at the same time and win. By yourself, you can't do that.)

The tears leaked out of the eyes of her helm and splashed down. He was right, she couldn't save them all. It took her a few minutes to let her own strategies filter through her mind.

He was right.

She refused to accept it though. She was the Omega, if there was anyone who could do it, it would be here. But, she knew that if she let him know that she was going to try saving both, he would stop her. Pulling on a guise of a heart-broken woman, she connected back to him. (I'll save you. Help me come up with a strategy?)

There was only a hint of relief and then he agreed. Together they came up with a plan. She would summon whatever creature she

could. Sending the creatures through the medical tents in an attempt to distract everyone, she would send the kin to attack the three protected tents.

When they finished, she pulled back.

(Merrie.) Haviston projected. (I know you are going to try saving the others.)

She froze.

(It is folly but I understand the reasons. I have also taken that into account. We may suffer additional injuries but that is a choice you have to make.)

She closed her eyes tightly and melted into darkness. (I'm sorry. I have to try.)

(May you be successful and find surprising strength from unexpected places. Regardless of how this ends, you have been one of my greatest accomplishments and friends that a poor psion could ever have.) With it came a wave of love in an intense wave that washed over her.

Her spell faltered as she was bathed in it, she had never felt any emotion so strong from Haviston before. She crouched on the ground for a moment, panting for breath, before she could regain control of her emotions.

(Whenever you are ready.)

Merrie remained in her Bel Dark form as she began to cast the summoning spell. Part way through it, she realized she needed something more and began to weave the portal spell into the results. As the black calligraphy scrolled across her mind, she added spells of protection, strength, and speed into the summoning. It was a single spell, a fusion of many of her combat spells that was harder to cast but easier to keep in her mind without letting it slip.

When she started to feel her personal energies starting to leak into the spell, she twisted the source from herself and into the collar. She hoped it had stored the power of her orgasms, it was one of the functions of the collar.

Energy surged through the spells, an intense spark of power that burned across her mind. The spell ripped from her mind and her control as a black portal into the depths of Shadows burst into existence behind her. It grew into a flat circle of darkness that

instantly corroded the rock, earth, and plants in an thirty meter circle.

The first shadow kin stepped out, swelling in size as the spells sank into its body. It grew to twice the height of a house. A boiling mass of tentacles and claws burst out as it launched itself into the air.

As it became nothing but a black spot above her, the second kin burst out followed by a swarm of woodland shadows. Each one burned with the intensity of her spells as they charged forward.

Merrie took one look at them and then raced toward Iolis and the paladins. She didn't bother melting her form, she needed to conserve her energy for the attack.

Bursts of light seared across her mind as she raced past traps, the holy flames burned her skin but didn't permeated the armor that protected her body. Thankful for the chance, she raced to cover the distance as fast as possible.

She saw Iolis first. The tiny priestess stood in the center of the dead spot with her hands up in prayer. Her slender body was delicate and Merrie noticed she had slightly pointed ears, a Silvr silfae like Tabitha. Holy flames danced between her fingers as she summoned the power of the goddess only meters away from the physical location where Lemetri died.

Merrie snarled and bore down, trying to cover the distance.

The other paladins and priests were spaced around the priestess. The priests were chanting and adding their energy to Iolis while the paladins were guarding them. She could feel Tabitha and Dixie on opposite sides of the circle, both of them were bound tightly in place with silver spikes jammed into their joints. Bright blood poured down as both of them tried to shapeshift to heal their wounds but couldn't.

Bass and Sable were on the ground in front of Iolis. He had been stripped down to a simple shift and someone had put a shift over the normally naked bitch.

Sable cried out in the powerful arms of Bass who held her tight as he glared up at Iolis. Chains bound him tightly into place, he was helpless but furious.

One of the paladins cried out as she approached, "Shadows approach!"

Iolis lowered her hands and looked around. The energy still poured into her and the spell continued as she cried out her prayer, but she was casting a second spell at the same time.

Merrie felt a surge of frustration, she was hoping the priestess would be caught in her spell. The energy she was gathering would no doubt be a light spell.

(I will shield you, mother.)

Merrie sent a wave of thanks to her armor and child. Then she focused on the nearest paladin who stood between her and Iolis. With a silent growl, she jumped up and gathered up the darkness of her own being into her attack. Her teeth tore into his leg and she sent a surge of darkness into the wound, corroding it to ensure he would never walk again.

He screamed out shrilly as his body began to rot away.

Merrie landed in the circle and jumped for Iolis.

The priestess took one step and backhanded Merrie. The impact slammed into Merrie and cracked bones. The force threw her across the circle and into the chest of a paladin who fell back in a scream of his own.

Merrie took out his throat and surged forward. She had taken blows from a goddess, she could survive Iolis.

Iolis didn't seem bothered either. She lifted one foot and cried out. "Lemetri, give me strength!" She slammed it down into the ground.

The ground exploded out from underneath Merrie. She stumbled forward with her speed, only to catch Iolis' kick as the priestess slammed her immense book into her chest.

Merrie flew back in a splatter of black blood.

"Kill them!"

Rapidly losing her advantage, Merrie fought past the growing despair and surged forward again. She ripped the throat out of a paladin and two priests. She reached the paladin poised to kill Tabitha but before she could attack, Iolis was there with a roundhouse kick that knocked her out.

Merrie screamed out in agony as she landed on the ground. Her armor held and her bones were unbroken but she felt the impacts. She reached out for the armor and felt the shadow kin dying; Iolis

used holy magic in her kicks and the armor was protecting Merrie from the light.

Tears burning in her eyes, she shook her head and staggered back to her feet. Blood dripped from her maw as she regarded the fight. Tabitha was safe for a few seconds but Dixie was poised for death. There were also paladins stalking after Bass who strained at his chains.

Iolis strolled to the center and turned to face Merrie, a smirk on her perfect face. Energy continued to pour into her as she continued to chant the spell without breaking stride. Merrie could tell it was a portal spell, she was going to breach the gap between the worlds and pull Lemetri out herself.

Fear for her children and the Lord filled her. Merrie planted her feet and let her spells surge through her veins before she charge forward. She had too many targets but she knew if Iolis died, then the others would falter.

Iolis' silver eyes sparked as they approach. She skipped back and kicked out.

Merrie dodged underneath it and lashed out at the other foot.

The priestess jumped over her and then brought her foot down on Merrie's spine. There was a crack of her armor shattering and a burst of holy light that seared into Merrie's skin. She felt her insides dissolving under the intense energy.

Fighting blind from the pain, Merrie lashed out for Iolis' foot. She missed.

Iolis hopped off Merrie and then kicked hard. The impact crunched into Merrie's ribs, cracking them. A sharp pain of a shattered rib piercing her insides dangerous close to her crystal heart flashed through her as she hit the ground and scraped along the distance until she stopped a meter away from Dixie.

"Hold!" said Iolis as she strolled toward Merrie. "The submissive might be down. Be prepared to kill the others."

The paladins rushed to place blades at Tabitha's, Dixie's, and Bass's neck. Another aimed at Sable despite the growl from Bass.

Merrie gasped and looked around. The nearest ally was Dixie who looked at her in agony, his eyes blurred with pain and his tiny, frail body soaked in his blood. The silver spikes were embedded into his

wrists, ankles, and hips. She could see how they pinned him in place and prevented him from healing himself.

Their eyes met, a moment where two warriors knew the end was coming.

Merrie opened her mouth to say something.

Iolis stomped down on her snout, shattering bone with her massive boot.

The flash of holy light blinded Merrie and stripped away the helm. She screamed as her transformation spell faltered and she withered away into a naked woman wearing nothing but a black collar. She blinked and found herself staring at Dixie again. She tried to find some way.

He looked at her, defeat burning in his eyes.

Then, a thought leaked into her mind. With a broke jaw, she croaked through her bloody mouth. "How... many... years?"

Dixie's eyes came into sharp focus. They were an intense blue as he stared at her. She could see the thoughts burning in his mind as she asked him to sacrifice his own life to cancer to save them. It was a foolish thing but even if they both died, then Tabitha and Bass and Sable would survive.

Iolis stepped back but didn't attack again.

A hard smile crossed Dixie's lips. "Enough."

Iolis interrupted with a downward kick that shattered Merrie's leg.

Merrie sank into the pain. She felt it boiling inside her, an agony of failure but also a need to save others. She knew how to do it and began to reach out for him with her spirit, ready to connect as she did with Haviston. "Need... an alpha?"

"What are you talking about?" Iolis asked. "Submissives can't bond with—"

Red energy burst along Dixie's form. He yanked hard and snapped the chains around his wrist. Moving faster than Merrie had ever seen, he pulled the silver spike from his shoulder and twisted it free. Turning, he slammed it up into the groin of the paladin poised to kill him.

As he stood up, Merrie saw the mystical connection between him and Tabitha flare into view and then snap.

On the opposite side of the circle, Tabitha let out a scream of agony.

Dixie's thoughts darkened into a black hatred and despair.

Merrie's world slowed down, her triple heart beating faster as she reached out. She saw the spiritual leash burst out of her chest and race for him. It was black and crystal, her nature.

Dixie yanked the other spikes out of his body and slammed them into the other priests and paladins surrounding him. He snapped the wrist of one of them and pulled the sword free. Standing up, the naked silfae stood slightly over a meter. He looked directly at Merrie and she felt an intense wave of submissive race over her. "Get over here, bitch!"

It was a command and one that triggered her innate submission. The leash snapped forward and plunged into his heart into the shattered and gaping hole where he had just torn out his own bond with Tabitha. She sank into a world of despair and agony.

He was crouched on a tree branch as he looked at the village ahead of them. They were all filthy humans invading his land and cutting down his trees. He focused on the children and mothers first, they would die the first and that destroy the morale of the others.

Merrie inhaled as power surged through her. It was hard and cruel and powerful. Screams in some language, the forest tongue, flowed into her mind and spread out, reshaping her as she sank into the bond with him.

Years later, he was the Warlord of Blood River, The Slaughterer of Innocence, The Death of Humans. He was a hero standing on a pile of corpse as he cheered his men. They had taken on an army of ten thousand and survived. He lifted his bottle of wine to the others. "To the heart of this kingdom, we will kill every single human that invaded our ancestral lands!"

Hundreds of years slammed into Merrie, burning themselves into her memories as she relived all of her master's life in intricate

details. She lived through thousands of days worth of sparring, fighting, learning how to cast magic while fighting, and spells designed to not only kill but terrorize his opponents. They were all woken in the druidic language, spells of plant and animals and nature.

Pain bent him in half. He knelt down and coughed, hiding his mouth from the others as he felt hot blood soak his palm. He was sick but it wasn't anything thing he had experienced before. It was gnawing at his body, tearing at his insides. It had be a curse, a spell from his enemies.

Agony flashed through her, years of cancer eating away at her body. She experienced every struggle as he tried to find a cure, a way of surviving. Every burning pain of his body being eaten away imprinted itself on her mind.

The wolf was too big but he knew he had to submit. The problem was that he could never surrender. He had to fight. Gripping the rock tight in his palm, he ignored the cuts that bled between his fingers and lashed out. It caught the side of Tabitha's head and cracked the bone.

She snarled and slammed her head back, growing larger with the blow. The impact threw him across the rocks and dangerously close to edge of the cliff. Tabitha jumped after him and bit down on his chest, piercing the skin as the teeth slipped between his ribs and nearly impaled his heart.

In that moment, it wasn't a matter of surrender. He had lost. He had lost for the first time in his life and it was to the woman who could save him. He gave into the surrender and let it consume his thoughts.

Merrie's body shivered as she transformed into a wolf and back again. Her body shimmered as she shifted again and again, healing her body as she alternated between the silver wolf of Dixie's bone

and the black hound of her former master. Her body grew stronger with each transformation.

Every time she shapeshifted, the healing also rippled down the tri-colored leash between her and her new master. Dixie hadn't stopped moving through. He used his sword to cut through the paladins as he bounced around the circling, using speed magic to cover the distance in a flash.

As he did, strategies sank into Merrie's mind. She accepted them and obeyed, gathering power as she submitted to his will. She attacked and launched herself, transforming constantly to keep him alive.

Iolis attacked her, light blinding as she kicked with rapid speed.

To Merrie's surprise, the silfae's bond protected her from the light. His shapeshifting also allowed her to move her body in ways that she never imagined even as a shadow. Most of Iolis' attacks missed and Merrie got in repeated blows that soon left the priestess bleeding.

Even in the few seconds of their attack, Merrie could still feel the cancer eating away at her master. It was faster than anything she had seen, she could literally feel the seconds of his life racing away as he strained to slaughter every person before he died.

She fought back, hammering blows against Iolis and keeping her away from Dixie. Her mind flashed with the detailed strategies of the former warlord as she jostled and shoved anyone else around her in a way that left them exposed to her master's sword or knife.

In eight seconds, only Iolis remained standing.

Dixie only had three left.

Iolis jumped up. The power she had gathered for her ritual gathered into her feet and Merrie could see that it was directed to explode. The power would kill everyone around her, including herself.

"No," warlord and omega said at once. They both rushed forward. Merrie gathered up her powers, druidic and shadow and psionic. She let her body swell and grow as she chomped down, catching Iolis' hips sideways and crushing them.

Dixie's sword flashed between her lips, barely missing her skin as he pulled it up Iolis' spine, cutting her from tail bone to skull in a single slash.

The feet hit the ground with a loud thud and then fell apart. The severed ends of Iolis' legs were black and withered, cropped even in spirit. No magic sputtered in them, no killing spell exploded.

Dixie panted once, staring at Merrie.

Then he collapsed to the ground.

The connection between them flared brilliantly as she felt every part of his body burn away from the cancer. She felt it in her own soul, searing her insides. She screamed out in agony as she felt it corroding her own insides.

She fell back, pawing at her throat with her useless arms. She couldn't stop it. It felt like every organ inside her body was on fire, burning away as it withered.

Her bond with Dixie ripped from her soul. She froze as an intense blackness filled her being and the gaping wounds of losing her master were torn open once again. Despair and darkness poured into her as she felt her life force being sucked out through the spiritual wound.

She had lost another master. It was only for eleven seconds but the damage felt like a life time.

Sobbing and crying, she could feel the despair beginning to corrupt the world around her. Earth and dust dissolved into nothingness as she sank into a pit. It was swallowing her up, consuming her where she would go.

Her collar thumped against her chest.

Tears ran down her cheeks as she screamed out, crying out with all the agony of losing her master. She had nothing left, no reason for living, no reason for anything.

Merrie couldn't take it again. She tried to summon anything to end her life.

The collar thumped against her chest again.

Her wail rose up, ripping open her throat. Her body continued to burn away.

Darkness flooded through her and she clutched to it. It was her collar. The icy metal burned through her agony, an immutable token that she had survived once again.

Still screaming out in agony, Merrie clutched to the collar as an anchor. She sank her mind into it, trying to find some way to shield herself from the agony of losing a second master.

She just had to hold on.
She could make it.
She couldn't.
She had to.
She—

Despair

27

Merrie was in agony but she could not scream. She tried to do anything but no matter what she did no noise came out of a throat that no longer burn. She couldn't take or touch herself or even flail around. Instead, it was just a terrible silence. She wanted to flail around, to find some way of escaping the pain, but her limbs refused to move. She couldn't even feel anything against her skin. It was as if she no longer had a form, not even a shell to contain her darkness.

The helplessness surged through her but no pleasure rippled along her senses. Instead, it plunged her deeper into the pit of torment. Unable to do anything, she continued her attempts to scream while forcing her way through the cloud of agony.

Desperate for something—anything actually—that would relieve some of her torment, she reached out for the one thing that she knew would be there, her collar. Her body didn't caress against the cold metal but she felt it in the back of her mind. It was a solid anchor for her thoughts, a place to shield against the pain for a moment to gather her senses.

At the touch of the mental connection, she felt a surge of relief. Some of the pain faded from her mind as she focused all of her willpower on the collar, exploring the familiar connection to herself. It was an unbreakable leash, a lead that was inexorably bound to her mind and soul. If she had a soul left.

Still in agony, she sent out a pleading pulse through it. She didn't know how it would respond, but the collar had changed her thoughts before. What came back wasn't her own thoughts, it was her mistress.

A part of her wanted to explore the strange behavior that she felt only a short while ago. The response she got wasn't an alteration of her own thoughts, a change that made it feel like her mistress, but something more. It felt like a distinct consciousness echoing in her mind.

The time it took for the thoughts to transverse the artifact felt like forever. She lost her mental grip on the collar and fell back into the agony. Her mind wanted to scream but she couldn't hear her voice.

Merrie tried to reach for her collar again but she couldn't focus. Her mind felt like it was fracturing under the darkness that threatened to tear her apart. It reminded her of the pit of despair that had formed in her mind when she lost Kine. The emptiness and fear all boiling deep inside her, ripping her apart when her life had no more meaning or purpose.

A new thought blossomed through her mind, wordless and powerful, a sense of ownership and command. It pushed away some of the agony with a singular reminder that she was already owned. She had bonded her soul already, joined forever with the one mistress who would never leave her.

Merrie's agony diminished slightly. The despair felt a little more shallow. She had bonded with herself, given her very being to the collar and became her own woman.

Reaching out, she found she could find the collar's connection in her mind again. She sent out a strangled pulse of hope and joy, her love for being dominated.

It came rippling back as an intense wave of power, all the force of a command without actual words or desire, the idea of submission.

Pleasure blossomed inside her.

(Accept it.) The feeling of submission became something more intense when the actual command filled her thoughts. It was her voice but different, the unfamiliarity was there again, different thoughts than her own. It only took her a moment to realize what she meant, accept the pain.

The idea of sinking into the agony terrified her. It hurt beyond anything she had seen. She remembered how the despair had torn her apart. She created the Shadowed District and hurt so many people.

(Accept it!) came the overwhelming command.

The pleasure snaked through her agony. She managed to steel herself and than opened herself up, taking in the pain and letting it shatter her mind. Her thoughts, her sanity, fractured and blew apart, sinking into oblivion as she obeyed her collar because it was the only thing she could do.

t'Sade

Choked Out

28

Merrie woke up choking. Dazed from her fall into oblivion and the torments of her own mind, she assumed her inability to breathe came from having her face against a pillow or stuck in a pile of bodies.

She reached out to clear her face but her arm thudded against a muscular arm. The response from her impact was an immediate pain as powerful fingers dug deeper into the side of her neck and the pressure across her throat increased. She could feel more than hear the crunch of cartilage, the fracturing sound resonated across her body and sharp agonies burned in her throat.

Still blind and dazed from waking up, she flailed. Her bare arms and legs smacked against someone kneeling on her chest, crushing the edge of her ribs with their thighs as they bore down on her. Her shortened legs weren't enough to reach them but she couldn't stop the helpless flailing against a mattress and blankets.

She could beat her attacker with her arms, but her impacts weren't enough to dislodge the hands crushing her throat.

"You fucking bitch," growled Tabitha with a blast of alcoholic breath. Her hands tightened and the cartilage cracked further. A sharp agony filled Merrie's throat as the drunk silfae continued to choke her.

Merrie's vision and senses came back into focus, the details filling in despite the burning agony in her lungs. She briefly saw that she was in a small, stone room but her attention was to the figure on top of her.

Tabitha was straddling her chest, tears running down her cheeks and a mask of rage on her face. Her hair was matted and still

covered in blood. Fresh wounds still oozed, adding the stench of copper to the air along with the alcohol.

“... fucking killed him!” Tabitha’s voice rose into a screaming slur. She shoved down with her body, crushing Merrie into the pillow underneath her head.

The sound of cracking cartilage turned into a pop as the delicate structure of Merrie’s throat collapsed. The tightness in her throat became a wave of agony.

The pain pushed past the suffocation and her dazed thoughts enough for Merrie to come to her senses. Pushing herself past the pain, she drew on the darkness surrounding her and let it pour into her body. The icy comfort surged through her veins and filled up the aching depths of her soul.

She didn’t need a spell to melt her body into darkness, it was almost innate after so many years. As soon as she could escape the hands around her throat, she poured off the bed and raced for the door.

As she did, Tabitha thumped loudly on the bed. Her hands clutched Merrie’s pillow. Lifting up, she tore it in half. “I’ll kill you, fucking bitch!” Her voice echoed loudly off the walls.

Tabitha rolled off the bed and transformed into a wolf. It was a large one and it dwarfed the tiny room Merrie was in.

Merrie could feel the stone underneath her as she started to flow out of the room but the hallway outside of the door was bright and painful. The streaks of magical light burned her shadows and she flinched away from it.

Tabitha landed on top of her, the magic wrapped around her body somehow pinning Merrie into place. She bit down, teeth scraping against stone but the energy in the bite ravaged Merrie’s form; it was a killing spell that would have ended Merrie instantly if Tabitha had managed to bite into living flesh.

Merrie tried to flow away but the paws kept her pinned in place. The magic burned at her skin, not like light outside, but more of a chewing into her blackened body as it prevented her from escaping.

The sensation of being helpless while a shadow creature was unusual, but the rush of pleasure that came wasn’t. It filled her with the pulsating ecstasy and a sense of longing. It poured into her being and spread out across her mystical nerves. She felt it sparkle

along the ragged rents of her form and filled the gaping pit of despair in the back of her mind. It was a liquid orgasm that gave her hope and, more importantly, power.

With a fresh infusion of energy, she forced her body to take on a three-dimensional shape while transforming into a Bel Dark hound once again.

Tabitha snapped her head forward to bite down, the raw magic glowing in her teeth. She was aiming for Merrie's shoulder.

Merrie forced her body to keep her shoulder dissolved to avoid the blow while solidifying the rest of her form. She used the momentum of her growth to throw her weight into Tabitha's throat and chest. The impact shook both of them but it was enough to toss Tabitha across the room.

Before the snarling wolf could get back to her feet, Merrie regained hers. She considered shoving herself through the door and racing through the light to the nearest dark room but she didn't know where she was.

Tabitha leaped on the bed and growled. The sound shook the air and Merrie could feel Tabitha rapidly casting spells on herself. The taste of druidic magic filled the air, it was a suffocating pressure that scraped against Merrie's senses.

Merrie prepared her own spells, letting the darkness of the room seep into her body and mix with the pleasure that filled her. She drew the calligraphy across her mind and triggered the energies that would give her strength and speed.

She tried to summon her cloak to protect her but Tabitha attacked before the thoughts solidified. The wolf's jaws glowed with her cropping spell as she lunged for Merrie.

Merrie melted away.

Tabitha slammed into the wall. She hit it with a sickening crunch. With a snarl, she spun around. She charged forward with her mouth gaping open to bite down again.

Waiting for the last moment, Merrie jerked to the side and Tabitha crunched into the wall again. The smell of fresh blood filled the air.

Realizing the Tabitha wasn't fighting clearly, Merrie raced for the opposite side of the room and waited for the attack.

It came, a wild and drunken charge.

She dodged again, spinning around the kick at Tabitha as she raced by.

The wet thud and muted crack shot through the air. Tabitha slumped forward and left a dark smear on the wall before she hit the ground.

Merrie jumped on Tabitha and landed heavily on the silfae's back.

Tabitha groaned and tried to get up, her body shuddering from her injuries and a growl shaking her body.

Taking a short jump, Merrie landed on Tabitha and slammed Tabitha back to the ground. She jumped again, driving the weight of her Bel Dark form into the wolf underneath her. She wanted to lash out, to attack in kind, but held back. No matter what Tabitha did, she was still a friend.

Instead, she staggered off Tabitha and headed for the door. She couldn't face the light with her shadow form but she hoped her hound form would give her some protection. At the door, she took a deep breath and pawed it open.

The light was blinding and it burned her skin. She flinched back into the blessed darkness.

Tabitha groaned and tried to push herself up.

Merrie looked at her friend with a sense of sorrow. Tabitha was hurting, no doubt because of Dixie's death. Merrie couldn't help the druid, no with her own weak form. She also couldn't fight with Tabitha, one of them would die if they kept attacking.

Steeling herself against the pain, she rushed out of the room and down the hall. There were two doors on both sides but she saw a door straight ahead that looked like it was ajar. Her paws made no sound as she covered the distance in a few seconds. Her shoulder smacked hard on the wooden door and she burst inside. Her paws skittered against the floor and she thumped against the far wall before she could stop.

"Merrie!" said Bass as he stood up. It had been a long time she had seen the thriban and even longer since she saw him completely naked. The powerfully built man was like a human male but he was much broader and taller. His skin was a pale gray and covered with thousands of scars from a century of battles. Gray hairs covered his chest, highlighting the firm lines of well-defined pectorals and abdominal ridges.

Reflexively her eyes dropped to his crotch. His cock was half-hard, a swollen rod of manhood that stood away from his body. It was a gnarled length with a half-formed knot in the middle of his length. Her pussy clenched at the sight of it, she still remembered the first time she had seen it and the first time it was slammed into her pussy the night he kidnapped her. It was thick than her wrist and the large head at the tip would have dwarfed her own fist. Now, it was just a thick, swollen member that she forgot she had craved.

Underneath his massive cock, his two balls were huge. Covered in white hair over nearly black skin. Each one was the size of a melon and she knew that he could come liters while fucking for hours.

A snarl behind her tore Merrie away from her growing lust. Merrie spun around and backed away, preparing herself to use the wall behind her.

Bass jerked and looked at the door. "Is that Tabby?"

A snarl and the sound of a charging wolf echoed through the open door.

Merrie nodded and braced herself.

Bass kicked the door shut. The wooden door slammed into its frame less than a second before Tabitha hit it head first. The wet impact sent a sick surge through Merrie's stomach.

"Damn it, she's drunk." Bass stepped forward. To Merrie's surprise, he came for her instead of heading for the door. His large hands easily scooped her up from the ground before he turned and lifted her over the bed.

Merrie let out a moan from the casual way he just took over her body. Her moan became a whimper when she saw that he had been buried under a lot of thick blankets. It formed a protective nest in the middle. Nestled against the edge was Sable, naked and helpless. Tears glittered on the older alpha's face.

Bass slid Merrie's massive form into the nest of blankets. "Keep her company," he ordered.

Merrie shivered with pleasure as the transformation spell melted away. His rough fingers trailed along the smooth lines of her thighs and back before he released her. The very last touch was one finger tracing the line of her tail.

She looked up to see him push the blankets closer to both of them before striding for the door. He didn't bother getting dressed. The

door creaked open. “Okay, you bitch, we have to talk,” he said in a low rumble of a voice. The door slammed shut behind him.

Merrie settled into place, spreading her knees for balance. Her tail rested against the ridge of blankets. She took a deep breath and took in the musky scents of Bass’ manhood and Sable’s pussy. She glanced at Sable but when the older woman turned her head so she was face down on the blankets, Merrie looked away.

Emotions radiated around Sable in a cloud of sorrow, fear, and desperation.

Tears burned in Merrie’s eyes. It was her fault that Sable was afraid. It was her choice to make the alpha think she lost her master.

Unable to look at Sable, Merrie reached out for her with her mind.

Sable blocked the connection with a wall of sorrow and her natural shields. Her mind was wrapped too tightly around her cloud of despair. Merrie knew the despair too well, it had haunted her for years after losing Kine. Even though Sable didn’t lost her master, the pain was just as real. Merrie could too easily remember the ragged emotional wounds that the lie had left behind.

Merrie had a similar injury in her own spirit, the rawness of losing a master even a temporary one like Dixie. The intimate connection she had to the Copir silfae was still deep when it snapped. She recalled the last moment with Dixie, that moment when the cancer finally ate through his heart and brain. The shock of his death, even in memory, threatened to encompass her thoughts and she struggled not to break down in a sob of her own.

The walls of the room shook when something powerful hit it. Both woman jumped at the sounds, the mattress shifting with their movements.

Merrie leaned forward until she pressed her face against the warm sheet and balanced on her knees. The pain she woke up to, the fall into oblivion, they were all a well-tread path in her life. She had lost another master, been closer than any lover at the point they died. Dixie’s and Kine’s memories and experiences were both inside her, raging along the rawness of the core of her being.

Her very nature—the ability to give everything to herself to grant her master power—had been torn out. It had almost destroyed her

the first time but she managed to survive because of Haviston's geas. Now she was faced with it a second time and there was no magic protecting her from the despair.

To her surprise, though, the pit of darkness wasn't gaping inside her. It hurt, hurt more than anything she could comprehend, but the suicidal thoughts and sorrow wasn't. She knew she could survive because she had done it once before.

She peeked at Sable. The curvy woman was still face-down in the blankets. Sweat prickled her body as she curled her short arms and legs up against her body. The ends of her elbows barely reached her wide hips but the smooth end dug into the skin.

Merrie knew that Sable was hurting. Even though Merrie also suffered, she had already gone through it and survived. The years of agony still marked her but Sable, for her older age and skill, had never even had a hint of losing her master before that point.

Taking a deep breath, Merrie pushed down her pain and inched toward Sable.

Sable tensed, her legs shifting slightly to press her thighs together.

Merrie tried to reach out with her mind but Sable continued to block her. After a third attempt, Merrie inched closer until their bodies were only centimeters apart. "I-I'm..." Her voice ached to speech, telepathy was so much easier, "I'm sorry."

Sable sniffed, her shoulders shaking.

"I didn't want to hurt you but I couldn't... I couldn't...." She thought about the endless things she could have done to save the others. She wondered if she could have braved the holy light to save them or managed to push back the pain long enough to stop the spiders. Maybe if she triggered the spiders sooner or didn't tell Dixie then they would all be alive.

Her throat swelled up with her sorrow. She inched until she could press her cheek against Sable's shoulder.

Sable tried to pull back again but she was pinned against the wall of blankets. She squirmed slightly, pressing out with her stubby arm but there was no strength behind it. The touch slid against Merrie's side before stopping against her ribs. The emotions leaking through Sable's shields assaulted Merrie, threatening to break her down into cries.

Merrie stroked her cheek, not looking at Sable but whispering through her hoarse throat. "I had to make a choice. I couldn't help you, not with your magic and mind. You were panicked, h-holding them off but not winning. It hurt me to ask Haviston to do it... to ask him to make—"

Sable tensed, every muscle in her body growing rock hard.

Merrie swallowed before saying something else. "It hurts. It hurts more than I can ever describe. W-When it happened to me, I was in a cage. Unable to escape, unable to get to Kine."

The older alpha's movements stopped instantly.

The memories came back. Merrie started to explain them, not knowing why or what it would do to help. "It was our thing, he would cage me to make me wet. It was the day he proposed to Rimmy. They were so," the tears were coming faster now as they splashed on Sable's shoulder, "happy. Years of struggle and they were finally going to be together. I was going to have two masters, two people to tell me what to do, to command me, to... to..."

"Dominate," Sable whispered, her raspy voice choking on the word.

Merrie nodded and then let out a tear-filled snort. "Together, they almost made a good master. Neither really pushed me, neither could. They were lost in their own lives and I was a toy to play with, not one to dominate. And then the paladins came. A night of horror."

Sable shifted slightly.

"I did everything I could but I couldn't reach them. I saw both of my masters die that night, right in front of me. When Kine died, he summoned the Lord of Shadows right into the room with us all. Everyone died except me: my master, my mistress, my pack, the paladins. I... I... when he died, he ripped my heart out. I wanted to go with him," sobbed Merrie. "I wouldn't have begged but that damn geas almost killed me when I called out to him. I was bleeding and dying but I couldn't go with him."

She curled up, leaning against Sable. Tears burned in her eyes. "And then, there was nothing. I tried to kill myself but the geas wouldn't let me. I tried to go to him but there was nothing. It was days, months, I don't remember, with me caught in a cage and

slowly wasting away as I... I... kept remembering his death. I couldn't stop, it just kept going across my head in endless, painful details."

Sable's arm hooked Merrie's neck. She rolled back away from Merrie, pulling her along.

Merrie obeyed the silent command, rolling with Sable until her back was pressed against Sable's large breasts and her buttocks were nestled into the nook of the older woman's hips.

"We missed you," Sable said in her smoke and whiskey voice. It was a low rasp of a woman who rarely spoke with her throat. "When we heard, we tried everything to find you. We couldn't, not with the law saying we were bound not to enter the city."

Merrie nodded and leaned back, still crying.

"One of us was always at the villages or at the keep, trying to find any shred of information. You were never at fault, love. We should have never let you go but we thought it was the best thing, you were going to be a beautiful alpha."

Merrie sniffed and smiled. "We are beautiful alphas."

Sable kissed her neck. Her cheeks were also wet with tears. "We are."

"I'm sorry, Sable, I didn't want to lose you. I'm not good at fighting like you are. My powers, I-I don't always remember what I can use and how to use them. Most of it is instinct, it just works but then after I realize I could have done it—"

"It's okay. It's okay." Sable punctuated the sentences with tiny kisses. "Your master wasn't a warrior. He was a thief, right? He worked in Shadows, flowing around instead of charging forward. He didn't need strategy, did he?"

Merrie couldn't help but giggle. Kine was a very talented thief but he was a terrible planner. That was Rimmy's job. "No... he wasn't good at plans. They usually drank and fucked away everything they got. Not like Rakin."

Sable stopped kissing her and her body stiffened. "At least he was never your master."

Merrie's thoughts drifted to when Rakin had captured her. "He almost was."

The wind sucked past Merrie's ear as Sable inhaled. "We know that he kidnapped you. That ended with his arrest and sentencing to Abbinkey Prison, right? When did he... could he bond with you?"

Merrie lifted one arm to her black collar. "This. He bribed a god to turn it into an alpha's bond, my bond. An artifact that would take a god to remove. It duplicates the bond almost perfectly, except there would be no escape. He kidnapped me because he was going to collar me."

A heat fluttered to life deep inside her body. She fought against it, she was in agony and pain and trying to help Sable, not tease herself into an orgasm.

"Oh, poor baby." Sable kissed her on the shoulder again.

The words started to flow. Merrie could easily recall Rakin's attempt to break her down, to fuck her into submission and beat her senseless. He had everything planned masterfully, prepared for every magical and psionic power she had. Once he broke her down, he was going to use the collar on her and she would be his until the end of time.

The heat inside her fluttered faster and she felt her nether lips growing slick. For all the brutality and beating, her helplessness was just as intense as the moments when she bonded with every master she had. Rakin was a master, a true master for a true submissive. He was also a power-mad warlord capable of destroying the known world.

The magic of the collar was beyond most mortal limits. People were slaughtered to have access to her, not only for her natural ability to magnify her master's powers but also the high-level spells inside it. Her near immortality and regeneration was one thing, but the absolute control her master had over her would make her the envy of any.

It would have been the ultimate bondage, an inescapable tie that she could never escape. It would be a rape that never ended, a surrender that would set her on a constant edge of excitement and lust knowing that she was a slave to the owner.

Realizing that she was getting slicker and her breath was coming faster, Merrie tried to stir her thoughts away.

Sable moaned softly as her kissing became a nip. "You are getting turned on. Tell me? Tell me how he did it? What did he do?" There was a longing in her voice.

Merrie clenched her thighs together, enjoying the tingle of excitement that danced along her senses. She gulped and then

started as close as she could from the beginning. “His men ambushed us at night. It was a brief fight but it ended when he tried to grab Nir and me. He was going to use her to force me into obeying. If I didn’t, he would torture her.”

“Bastard,” whispered Sable. Her nipples were hard against Merrie’s back. As much as Rakin was a threat to everyone, she was also the only one to experience his dominating force besides Merrie. She was reliving her own torture at his hand from so many years ago.

Panting softly, Merrie forced herself to tell the story. “I managed to use my clock to pull her free when he teleported, but that meant it was only me when we appeared in this brick room...”

It felt like hours as she told the story of how Rakin raped her in the cell while preventing her from using her powers. He fucked her repeatedly, pushing her to an orgasm before going again. It was a brutal rape when she realized that if he left her prison cell, he was going to use the collar to bind her. She managed to keep him there, pushing the limits of his rage and anger until they were hate fucking to the very limits of their minds and bodies.

When it was over, they were both bloodied and broken. Both of their sources of power, Merrie’s despair and Rakin’s rage, and been burnt out. Rakin’s cock had been twisted and ruined beyond all use, endless orgasms driven first by his rage, then his pride, and then her desperate mind control had pushed him beyond even his considerable limits.

By the time she was finished telling her story, her tears were dried but she was wet with excitement. She went into too much detail of their fucking and she felt the familiar cravings plucking at her senses.

Sable moaned and nipped her shoulder. She slid her short arm down over Merrie’s breasts to tease the aching nipples. The touch sent electric sparks along Merrie’s skin.

The older woman breathed heavily, the heat washing over Merrie’s sensitive ears. “I could never be with anyone but my master, but if I could... if things were different, he would have been a glorious master.”

In the warmth of the blankets, Merrie could smell both of their pussies in the air. They were both excited from the story as they both recalled their submissions to Rakin before they escaped.

Merrie turned her head to look at Sable. "Do you miss him?"

Sable worried her lip. (Yes,) came the telepathic reply. It was raw and powerful, a lust-tinged thought. To her surprise, it also had no echoes of Bass' voice in it.

Merrie's eyes widened with surprise.

Sable blushed and ducked her head. (Sometimes, when we aren't thinking, I remember him. He used to hold my head down when he fucked me. I... I couldn't move away, my legs were unable to prevent him as he raped me.)

Images came flooding through the connection, hazy and almost forgotten but polished as an ancient fantasy.

Sable tried to pry herself off the cold ground but she couldn't escape the rocks or even the hands that held her down. Her short limbs, still uncomfortable from being cropped, flailed against the ground. She couldn't get them underneath her and her efforts only bucked her naked body up against the hard cock that speared her asshole with brutal efficiency.

Rakin grunted as he leaned into her, almost crushing his head. His cock was a burning pole as he violated her ass. His hips crushed her tail with each short, powerful stroke that slammed her body into the ground and drove his length deep into her body.

He had been fucking her for almost an hour without stop. The source of his anger was in front of Sable, choking out the last of his life's blood as he watched with wide-eyed horror. His cut throat no longer sprayed Sable with every spurt but she could see that Rakin was somehow keeping him alive until he came deep inside her.

Sable sobbed as she watched him, lost in agony of her violation but also choking under the intensity as she tried to escape. He was controlling her, he was dominating her. No matter how much she wished she

was back in her master's arms, there was nothing to compare to how easily he used her for his own angry lusts.

Merrie broke the connection with a gasp for breath. Her own body was humming with excitement as the images continued to roll through her head. She felt the same hunger as before, to have a master drive her into the ground, pin her like his own personal fuck hole, and pound her body until she cried out in pleasure.

Sable panted herself, her cheeks flushed with excitement.

Merrie rolled over, her thigh squelching with her lust. She settled back into place and reached up with her arm and brushed the smooth end of her wrist against Sable's dry cheek. (I'm sorry.)

There was an intimacy with the telepathic communication that no words could ever breach. She knew that was why Sable didn't want to let her in at first, it was hard to lie with emotions. She sniffed. (I would never hurt you if I thought there was a choice.)

Sable reached up with her own but her arm wouldn't reach Merrie's face. She rested it on the swell of Merrie's breast. Her upper leg tilted into her, resting in the soaked gap between Merrie's thighs. The impact sent tiny currents of pleasure coursing along Merrie's skin. (I know. It hurts so much. Every time I touch him, I think about how I thought I lost him. I almost died at just... just the thought of losing him.)

The raw emotions came through the connection, pummeling Merrie's thoughts. It was agonizing and painful but without images. It was the same sensation of having the link snap when Kine died. Haviston must have used her memories to simulate the broken connection. But experiencing it through another's memories made it almost impossible to pull away.

Tears sparkled in Merrie's eyes. (I'm sorry.)

Sable smiled sadly back at her and then reached up to kiss her. Both of their breasts, slick with their sweat, slid against each other. Merrie could feel her aching nipples caressing Sable's skin while the hard points of the other alpha traced along hers.

Their kiss was delicate and touching, a caress of softness that quickly became something more passionate. Sable's tongue flashed first, teasing Merrie's mouth open. Merrie answered with her own,

losing herself in the caress of their bodies and the kiss. Their mental connection grew deeper, not to the point of bonding, but almost as close.

Merrie didn't have a conscious thought when she lifted her knee to slid against Sable's soft pussy but that wouldn't surprise her. She was an alpha, she knew what her lover wanted before her lover did. Sable's pussy was bare, that was the way her master loved it. Merrie's knee easily slid into the wet folds and she stroked against the heated liquid that coated her skin.

Only a heartbeat later, Sable broke the kiss. Her lips peppered along Merrie's chin as she worked down to the sensitive point where the shoulders and neck met. The tiny kisses and nip invoked moans from Merrie's lips as she shuddered with pleasure.

Sable's leg continued to stroke against Merrie's pussy. It was shorter and thicker, but Sable had been cropped for many years and she expertly stroked it directly against Merrie's clitoris while teasing her opening. The thickness brought surges of pleasure to dance along Merrie's nerves as she moaned louder.

No words were needed as they shifted their bodies against each other. Merrie broke the embrace to lift herself to her knees and then down opposite of Sable. The sweet smell of pussy surrounded her as she delved her head in between Sable's thighs and lapped at the soaked folds.

Sable wasted no time of her own as she did the same. Her mouth was sure as it caught Merrie's clitoris and sucked on it.

Moaning, Merrie lapped at Sable's cunt, swirling her entire face in the soaked folds as she lapped at the hard clitoris and the opening below it. She even teased along the wrinkled opening of Sable's asshole. Her mouth only stopped at the soaked fur of Sable's tail as it curled over her with Sable's pleasure.

Sable lapped harder as she ground her breasts into Merrie's belly. The hard nipples traced little circles with every movement as she bucked her hips into Merrie's face and plastered her lips over Merrie's pussy. Her tongue was sure and strong as she lapped hard and fast, drinking from Merrie's cunt as much as she was licking.

Merrie grinned at the idea of Sable drinking from a water bowl. (Like a dog?)

Sable chuckled and lapped harder. (Like a proper bitch, now get going yourself.)

The little command, though in jest, brought a surge of heat. Merrie delved her face and gulped down the juices flooding out of Sable's cunt. She slurped and ground her face in, not caring that it was soaking her hair, ears, and throat. It tasted like it should, the slightly tangy sweetness of a beautiful pussy.

The pain of Merrie's thoughts faded as she sank into Sable's mind, sharing the pleasure as much as the alpha gave back the same. It was a circuit of them, a wave of pleasure that swelled from Sable's thoughts, washed through Merrie's, and then flooded back to Sable. With every repetition, it grew stronger as they began to share the same growing orgasm.

The pussy under her mouth grew wetter and liquid. Juices flowed down Merrie's face as she tried to keep up, driving more of her face and tongue into the soaked hole.

Their orgasm continued to build, gathering in pleasure as they shared it between the two of them. Soon it was stealing her breath away and Merrie had to strain to keep lapping at the pussy that threatened to drown her. She gripped Sable's strong buttocks with both hands as she drove her face down, lapping and slurping with all her might.

Pleasure grew rapidly, magnified with every passing second. Soon Merrie was rocking her hips into Sable's face with hard strokes while Sable did the same for her. They were both lapping and sucking.

The orgasm ignited in both of their minds at the same time. For Sable, it came as a burning explosion of pleasure that locked her entire body. An explosion of juices poured into her mouth and squirted out of her lips. It surged hotly against her face and shoulders before pouring out onto the mattress.

Merrie's orgasm did the same to her, freezing her body and sending every nerve into overload. The orgasm rippled along her nerves, setting each one on fire, as her muscles strained to keep her in place. It assaulted her mind and body with the intensity.

But when Sable's pleasure seeped into her own, Merrie redoubled it and sent it back, setting off an explosion of ecstasy in the other

alpha. It came back magnified even more, bouncing back and forth between the two women until it started to hurt.

Sable whimpered, the noise muffled by Merrie's clamped thighs and soaked pussy.

Merrie couldn't take it much longer herself. She let out a cry and it exploded from her mind, spreading out in a wave of orgasm that would affect every submissive around her.

As the surrounding building lit up with cries of pleasure, she felt a thousand orgasms exploding along the hallways of the keep and then in the city beyond it. There were so many people in close quarters, all of them vulnerable to the overwhelming pleasure of her orgasm.

Each one of the other orgasms rippled back to her, a mystical connection to the one who invoked it. It slammed into Merrie as an intense wave that pummeled her mind and ignited more pleasure. She took it and cried out, choking on the fluids that poured down her throat. She shuddered as she came again and again.

Each orgasm blasted out of her and into her surroundings. She cried out as she lost control of her body. She was choking and spasming and shaking but it was a glorious wave of pleasure that continued to fill her with ecstasy.

(Merrie! You need to stop.) It was Haviston's thoughts in her mind.

Lost in the daze of pleasure, Merrie could only do one thing. She reached out for the collar and poured her orgasm into the connection. The collar could store power in it, but Merrie never knew how much.

As powerful as the orgasm was, building up from the pleasure around her and the alpha in her embrace, it was instantly snuffed as the collar sucked it up and drained her completely.

Merrie peeled her face from the soaked cunt and let out a gasp of breath.

(Fuck,) moaned Sable. (I forgot how powerful your orgasms were.)

Merrie panted and rolled on her back. She shivered with the intense afterglow that shook her body.

Sable, trembling, lifted herself up and turned around. She plopped next to Merrie and kissed her. Her face and body were

soaked with Merrie's juices. (Thank you. Thank you for saving my master, thank you for being so sweet and sexy. Thank you for everything, my sweet little bitch.)

There was still a haunted tone in her voice, the agony of losing her master, but it was briefly sated by their pleasure.

Merrie kissed her back. (I'm sorry—)

(No, don't ever say that.)

Merrie nodded. (Then, you're welcome.)

Sable's eyes glittered. (You did get my master pretty horny though.)

She nodded above Merrie.

Merrie lifted her head to see Bass standing at the foot of the bed, his cock hard and throbbing. The glorious length was easily thirty centimeters long and thicker than Merrie's thigh. Thick veins pulsed along its length, spreading out from the thick knot that lodged itself in the middle of his length.

Sable kissed Merrie's throat. (He wants both of us right now, but I don't think I can. Do you think you'd like to feel him inside you?) There was a playfulness in her thoughts, she already knew the answer.

Merrie moaned. It had been years since he fucked her. She remembered the sweetness but also hardness inside her. She nodded.

Bass' yellowed eyes were wide as he crawled on the bed. His weight sank the mattress and tilted Merrie toward him. She slipped through the wet spot created by Sable's and her orgasms. He held out his hand as he planted both knees on the edge.

Merrie reached out for him but she stopped a meter shy.

He didn't seem to care as he reached out with one large hand. He stroked along her throat, breasts, and stomach. The thick, rough fingers were delicate and teasing as he curled two fingers into the aching opening of her pussy and then pulled her closer.

Being moved like a common object sent an intense wave of lust coursing through her body. Merrie opened her mouth as she was drawn between his legs. She kissed his cock as it passed and then clamped her mouth on the side, tasting the musky hardness that had teased her memories for years. He was thick and hot, a swollen length that jumped against her lips.

“Fuck,” he said in a low rumble that shook her body. He pumped his fingers into her pussy, stretching it open. Each one of his digits was easily as thick as a normal human’s cock. The two together strained her limits but it wasn’t enough to take his length.

She kissed and caressed his cock, exploring it with her lips and nose. She loved the smell of it, hardness and musk. Even the thick patch of black hair at his base had the scent clinging to it. She buried her face between his two thick balls and drank in the scents.

Bass pumped harder, driving his digits into her slick channel. Her legs quivered when his knuckles smacked against her perineum and his thumb crushed her clitoris. He drove it in deep, twisting slightly as he eased her open.

He was going to fuck her. Merrie moaned louder and sucked on one ball. She was unable to get the large nut into her mouth but he seemed content to have her suckling on it. His testicle jumped at the touch and ground against her face, suffocating her with their swollen; they were full and ready to pour into her as soon as she could take his length.

Bass chuckled. A third finger curled into the space between her legs.

Merrie spread her thighs as wide as they would go. Her excitement grew higher as she anticipated the discomfort of having three fingers plunged into her pussy. She mouthed his ball.

He drove his finger in with his considerable strength. Her opening and inner walls protested the intrusion but there was no stopping him as he forced his digits to the first knuckles into her spasming tunnel.

Bass planted his other hand against her breasts, pinning her to the mattress as he forced his fingers to the second joint into her. The thickness was overwhelming but he pulled out and jammed it back into her liquid depths.

Merrie cried out into his testicle as she came. The pain of intrusion was nothing compared to rush of the submission and the anticipation of his cock buried deep into her cunt. She broke her embrace and lifted her head to suck on the side of his cock. Reaching up, she added her hands to slid his entire, ridged length between the skin of her wrists.

Bass' moan shook her world. He yanked his fingers out and then jammed them deep into her.

She shuddered with the pleasure, her hips rising up to meet each thrust of his fingers as he pounded his digits into her. The tightness of her cunt quickly loosened up as he drove deeper with every stroke. Soon his knuckles were punching against her skin, a splash noise filling the air as he drove them deep.

Merrie came again on his fingers, crying out into his glorious cock as she lost herself into his pleasure.

Bass continued to drive his fingers into her until she experienced another orgasm before pulling his dripping digits out. Merrie looked up past his throbbing length, almost black with his excitement, to where he fed his fingers to Sable who moaned as she lapped them up.

Sable was in a begging position, on her knees spread far apart and the severed ends of her arm up as close to her throat as possible. Her tail, the same color as her namesake, wagged back and forth as she gulped and cleaned each finger in turn.

Bass chuckled and looked down. "You are beautiful, Bitch."

Merrie smiled.

The smile faded when Bass reached down and yanked her free. He spun her around and slammed her back against the mattress.

A surge of lust raced through Merrie. She cried out and pressed her thighs together, not sure why she did it until he jammed his hands between them and pried them apart. The submission, the act of resisting, was what he wanted as she fought back helplessly as he dug his thumbs into her thighs and lifted her ass from the mattress.

Her pussy lifted until it was positioned right at the tip of his thick cock. The head was swollen and dripping, a river of pre-cum that had coated Merrie's chest and the blanket below. It splashed hotly against her thighs as he took a deep breath.

Merrie didn't have to wait long. Bass slammed it hard with no pretense of being kind and gentle. His cock punched her pussy with the force of a hammer blow, ripping it open and driving deep into her pussy.

The shock of being penetrated so hard sent an explosion of lust burning through her body. She cried out into another orgasm as he buried half of his length into her with a single thrust. The knot in

the middle punched her pussy, crushing her vulva with the hard thrust.

Sable moaned with her own pleasure. (You like it hard.)

Merrie moaned and came on the cock. It was so thick and hot and hard. IT filled her up completely, stretching her inner walls with waves of pleasure as her insides molded around his length.

Bass grunted and pulled back until only the head was lodged inside her. The movement caused her inner lips to cling to each vein as it pulled out of her, a ripple of pleasure that would never stop.

He punched inside her again, driving deep into her liquid depths until his cock slammed against her vulva. She felt the impact through her bones and a flash of agony. It quickly dissipated under the intense pleasure that came from being filled once again. His cock was so hard and hot. Every stroke filled her insides with his hot pre-cum until it poured out from her tightly stretched opening.

Bass began to hammer into her, slamming into her with hard, powerful strokes. His cock drove deep into her pussy, setting off countless orgasms, as his cock punched against her opening. The slickness of his pre-cum and her own excitement caused it to force itself into her opening, stretching her painfully opening as it began to impale herself with every stroke.

She cried out, begging for more but unable to use words. She knew that Sable would communicate her lusts, so she only pawed at his muscular chest and begged for him to keep going, to use her until he was sated.

Bass never stopped. His body grew slick with sweat as he drove into her repeatedly, slamming hard and fast until the entire bed rattled against the wall. His knot hammered into her opening until it was stretched around it. It felt like a fist that drove into her opening and pulled out.

Finally, the knot slipped inside with a brief respite of pleasure.

Then Bass ripped it out of her cunt and drove it back inside. He punched it harder and faster, driving more and more of his cock into her pussy until she felt it driving against her cervix. The pain and pleasure blended together into an ecstasy that ravaged her insides. She couldn't count the orgasms that tore through her, it didn't matter. All she wanted was to feel his entire length inside her,

his balls pressed against her ass and the patch of hair at his base scratching her swollen and abused pussy.

The thick ridges of his cock slid up and down her length, ripping along her sensitive insides in endless ripples of pleasure. She could barely concentrate as she felt her mind fracturing under the onslaught of pleasure and ecstasy. She jerked but her body was impaled by his cock, she couldn't move until he wanted to.

Bass growled as he pounded into her, forcing more and more of his cock into her tight pussy. She felt her insides stretching and straining, she couldn't take much more as she was pulled taunt along his entire massive cock. Her stomach swelled with every thrust and she felt it ramming against her insides, shifting them aside as he dominated her cunt like a true master.

“Don't. You. Fucking. Make. Others. Come!” snarled Bass. He punched his cock into her willing body with every word, driving it home until his balls smacked against her thighs. She could feel every centimeter of thick ridges and knot sliding against her insides in delicious pleasure before he pulled out.

His pre-cum continued to pour out of him before spewing out of her gaping hole. It flooded the mattress, soaking blankets and sheet in a wide puddle.

“If Sable comes, I. Will. Punish. You!” he said with a powerful thrust that drove Merrie up the length of the bed and smacked her head against the headboard.

She braced herself on the wall but it was hard to do anything with the cock jackhammering into her pussy, swelling her entire body up as she became nothing more than a hole to fuck and a sleeve for his length. She lost herself in orgasms, basking in the liquid pleasure that flowed through her veins. It was too much for her, she cried out again and again, her voice raising into a howl that she knew everyone could hear.

Another orgasm began to rise up, punctuated by smaller ones. It rose like a wave and threatened to consume her thoughts. She concentrated on it, enjoying the intensity as it rose up. It would spread out across the countryside if she let it go, but she knew that she could easily channel it into the collar and use the energy later.

But that wasn't what he wanted. She smiled and reached out for Sable.

Sable tensed briefly and then moaned as the pleasure rose between them.

The cock inside her swelled immensely, stretching her painfully apart as the knot almost doubled in girth. Even Bass had trouble yanking it out of her cunt as he gave a few last strokes.

Merrie brought the connection from Sable into her collar. Only one other person would experience her pleasure.

Bass let out a roar and exploded with his own orgasm. Cum exploded from his cock with the force of a fireball, painting her insides before filling her completely. The searing hot liquid flooded her pussy until it reached her knot which kept it inside her. There was only one place for it to go and she felt every surge of cum shot deep into her womb, flooding her completely as her belly swelled up.

The orgasm exploded inside her. She channeled it into Sable and the other alpha fell to the pillows as the orgasm ravaged her body. It reflected back redoubled but Merrie just accepted it and then channeled it into the collar, letting the circuit of pleasure caress against her nerves and senses before being sucked away.

Bass tried to fuck her still but his cock was pinned in place. His movements only dragged Merrie back and forth on the bed for a few more times before he finished pumping his cock deep into her depths. Her uterus and womb were completely filled and her belly looked like she was months pregnant. It felt good, an intense pleasure that radiated along her senses as she looked down at her rounded belly.

"F-Fuck..." gasped Bass. He shook with his afterglow, his yellowed eyes glazed over from his pleasure. She could sense his thoughts, he was going to hold it there until he softened.

Merrie didn't want that. She moaned and spread her legs as wide as they would go. (Rip it out.)

For a moment, the roughness of Bass melted away to the kind-hearted thriban underneath. He didn't want to hurt her, he loved her.

Merrie shuddered with anticipation. She reached out with her mind and repeated her order, her request.

Sable came again, thrashing on the bed from his thoughts and the last of her pleasure.

Bass reached down to her thighs. He wrapped his powerful digits around Merrie's waist and along her swollen belly.

Merrie moaned, her hips rocking around his steel-hard cock that impaled her completely. She panted as she steeled herself for the pain.

With a roar, Bass crushed her stomach and then yanked his cock out of her with a single powerful blow. The swollen knot punched against her insides before cracking bone. It burst out of her pussy in an explosion of cum that painted Bass' thighs with his own seed.

Merrie screamed in pleasure, losing herself in ecstasy as the pleasure and pain blurred into each other, sending her into the heights of intensity that she craved so much. She let it rip through her veins, as a white-hot explosion of fire. It burned her, suffocated her, and centered her entire world on her ruined cunt but she didn't care. It filled her completely and she blossomed under the assault of her senses.

Cum continued to pour of her pussy as her belly sank down. It was a thick river that poured out onto the mattress, soaking it instantly, before splashing down on the floor. The sound of dripping cum filled the air as the scent of it tickled her senses.

She shuddered and came again, enjoying how her pussy gaped open after being assaulted so powerfully. She gasped and slumped back, her body slick with sweat and the afterglow humming through her body. With an effort, she tried to close her legs but nothing works.

Instead, she let her body sink into the soaked mattress. A smile crossed her lips. (Thank you,) she sent to both of them.

"You were a bad girl," said Bass with a low growl.

Merrie moaned and nodded. (Yes.)

Sable slithered against Merrie and sank down. Her body was covered in sweat. (You were beautiful.)

Merrie stared into her eyes. (I'm sorry I stole him.)

Sable kissed her back. She wrapped one arm around Merrie's sweat-soaked breast. (You didn't steal him, we shared you. I haven't had such pleasure since the last time you were here.)

Bass groaned as he crawled off the bed. The mattress jumped when his weight no longer pinned it. "Better find drier quarters."

Sable perked up. (She was a bad girl—)

Merrie shivered at the pleasure of being called a bad girl.
(—make her sleep in the wet spot.)

Bass looked down and chuckled. “The entire thing is a wet spot. Come on, we’ll go back to her room.”

Before Merrie could move, Bass reached over and scooped her cum-soaked body and Sable’s slick one and picked them up. When Merrie was crushed against his muscular check, she let out a sigh of pleasure and sank into his grip. It felt good to be held by someone willing to do anything for her.

Her pussy continued to drip cum. It splattered against the ground, leaving a trail of white globs, as he carried both of them out of the room and down the hall.

Merrie saw blood on the walls but said nothing. Tabitha was obviously not going to attack again but she felt in the back of her head that Bass was making sure by keeping her close. For a moment, she wondered if she should have held her own against the druid but then realized that she liked being taken care of for once. It had been a long time since she had enjoyed the pleasure and company of a master, a true master, that wasn’t her own fantasies.

Pinned

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Merrie let out a happy moan as she woke. She didn't have to open her eyes to feel Sable's naked body against her left side and Bass on her right. The warmth from both of their bodies washed over her with every breath.

The other alpha had one short leg and her breast hooked up on Merrie's body, pinning her effectively against the solid ridge of Bass' chest and thighs. Sable's hard nipple poked at the side of Merrie's breast, the heat seeming to gather on it. Slowly, Sable ran her leg along Merrie's. The short length didn't give her much angle or the ability to hook, but Merrie loved the touch of bare pussy that tickled against her thigh as Sable ran her leg up and down.

Merrie cracked open one eye and looked at Sable.

Sable's dark hair was plastered to her face, probably from the dried cum from the night before. Her eyes were closed but she had a smile on her lips. The smile grew wider as she lifted her body and freed her tail from the blankets. The movement was sensual, seductive; it was exactly what brought a flutter to Merrie's heart. The movement also dragged her moist pussy along Merrie's skin until it settled into place right above Merrie's knee. She rocked back and forth, spreading her vulva open with slow movements.

Merrie closed her eyes to concentrate on the sensations. She flexed the muscles of her leg and ground her thigh into Sable's pussy.

The flood of moisture that smeared against her skin encouraged Merrie to put more pressure against the grinding alpha on her leg. Her effort pushed her back against Bass, her shoulder resting against his rock-hard muscle. She considered pressing her back firm

against the ridges of his body but didn't, she wanted to give Sable as much room as she wanted to hump her leg. Merrie compromised by angling her body against Bass' sleeping form and keeping one leg.

Sable moved with Merrie, she kept perfectly in balance and her rocking never paused. By the time Merrie settled into place, Sable was once again humping her leg as she smeared pussy juices along Merrie's leg. Every stroke ended in a moan.

Merrie reached up with her one arm, pressing the smooth end of her wrist against Sable's breast and nipple. She smiled as she stroked Sable, enjoying the pleasure as the older alpha worked her pussy higher.

Soon, Sable's pubic mound was grinding against Merrie's. Their slick, hairless folds caressed each other and the steady movement and wetness brought a surge of pleasure coursing through Merrie's body.

Sable leaned against Merrie, her short arms on each side of Merrie's neck for balance. Even with her eyes closed, Merrie could feel Sable's attention on her as the woman humped her leg and ground her cunt against Merrie's. The slick pleasure rose and fell with every movement and the only sound that punctuated the slurping was their panting.

Merrie reached up with her other arm to hold Sable. She arched her pussy to press her soaked folds against Sable's wet ones. The pressure and pleasure of their sexes driving together sent bolts of pleasure crawling through her body. It was hard work, grinding and thrusting, but the way their bodies seemed to move perfectly together, driving by the alpha's telepathy, brought more pleasure with every passing second.

Neither the alpha nor omega were in a hurry for an orgasm. It was a slow but pleasurable progress as their hips rocked back and forth. They ground faster and harder, straining as the pleasure built up into a lazy orgasm that swelled instead of sparked. It wasn't until it was about to crest that both began to frantically grind their cunts together.

Merrie gasped as she came, the flood of juices soaking their thighs and the sheet below them as they jammed into each other, scissoring their legs around each other as they jerked and shuddered with their own orgasms.

Despite her orgasm, Merrie managed to keep her pleasure inside herself. She felt a little proud of that, obeying Bass' words from the night before. Her tail thumped against the mattress as she reached up for Sable to pull her down.

Instead of sinking into Merrie's arms, Sable lifted her body slightly.

Merrie looked down curiously. Strands of juices clung to their bodies, connecting the splayed folds of their pussies together. The sight and heat of their swollen lips brought a soft moan to Merrie's lips. She looked up, unsure of why Sable lifted instead of settled down.

The answer came almost instantly as Bass eased his cock between their bodies. The gray shaft was almost black with his excitement. The gnarled length traced the line of Merrie's sensitive slit and pushed along it, teasing her with the thick ridges and bumps.

He stopped when his knot settled against her pussy. It seemed to slid into the opening, splaying open her labia and nestling into the wet hole. The pressure and heat radiated across her senses, a thousand little sparks of pleasure coursing along her nerves.

Sable panted softly as she lowered her body, trapping his cock between both Merrie's and her pussies. The pressure of her body ground the knot against Merrie's clitoris before it slid back into the opening of her being. She rocked forward, rolling the thick member against Merrie who could only moan in pleasure.

Still sensitive from her first orgasm, Merrie rotated her hips.

His knot slipped around her wet fuck hole like a joint.

She pulled off it enough to slid her sex up and down his length, painting his black shaft with her juices.

Sable did the same from the other side, adding his musky scent to the sweetness of both of their pussies.

Bass reached underneath Merrie, lifting her up easily as he burrowed his hand underneath her armpit. The thick muscles ran along the bottom edge of her breast as he curled his hand over and cupped her opposite tit. The thick, scarred fingers could easily hold both of her tits, but he grabbed a single one and rolled it between his fingertips.

Pleasure rippled along Merrie's senses. She felt caught and helpless, sensations that added to the growing lust that burned

between her legs. She clung to Sable's hips and pulled her tight against her body.

Bass tightened his arm underneath her body, pinning her in place as his hips drove his cock between their bodies. She could feel the matted hair at the base thump against her buttocks as he crushed her tail between their bodies. He was already slick from their juices.

She loved his strength. It was irresistible and powerful. He could snap her spine with only a surge of strength but he would be using that power to only drive his cock deep into her body. His hot breath burned the back of her neck and she moaned at the sparkles of pleasure that radiated along her skin.

Sable leaned over Bass's arm and kissed Merrie. Her thoughts were pulsating with lust but she made no effort to project her thoughts. The wave of love and affection sank into Merrie's mind, spreading like wet fingers across her consciousness.

Bass crushed Merrie's breast, grinding it between his powerful fingers.

She moaned, her body jerking with a tiny orgasm that rippled through her senses. She clamped her legs tightly around his cock, wishing it was buried inside her.

He chuckled and pressed his thick lips to her ear. "You want me inside you?"

Merrie moaned, shivering with anticipation.

"Say it, Bitch."

She gulped. "Yes," she gasped. "Inside me."

"Then get me to come first. I want to mark you." He thrust his cock between Merrie's and Sable's body with a short thrust. The heat radiated from his length and seeped into her skin.

She nodded and thrust her hips along his cock. She soaked his length with her pussy, moving her cool body up against his length.

On the other side, Sable did the same but her skin was searing hot compared to Merrie's icy darkness. Her short legs easily kept the pressure on his cock as they both slid from his base, over his knot, and then to the tip.

Bass moaned and gripped Merrie's hip tightly, pinning her in place as he thrust in time with their movements. His cock pulsed with heat and pressure as he drove it between their pussies as much as they rode him.

Merrie lost herself on knot that rolled against her pussy and crushed her clitoris. The wet pressure and hardness pushed against all of her buttons, wonderfully smashing her body tightly. The little sparks of discomfort adding to her pleasure.

Sweat prickled her skin as she rocked her body with hits, crushing herself against his powerful arms before shoving back against the hard-muscled chest. With every stroke, Sable's soft body ground against her own, adding an overwhelming heat to envelop Merrie's icy body.

"You were a bad little bitch," Bass whispered as he drove faster into her body. His hips smacked loudly against Merrie's buttocks. The sweat between their bodies caused their skin to cling together for only a moment but that didn't stop him from driving his cock hard against her body.

Merrie gasped at his words. She was a bad girl and he was going to punish her.

His cock grew thicker and harder. The heat rolled off it as the knot swelled.

Merrie and Sable both increased their pressure around it, forcing Bass to strain more as he shoved his cock between the tight, soaked lips of their bodies. The knot thump against Merrie's asshole, pussy, and clitoris with intense pressure.

Bass groaned and gripped her tighter, crushing her body.

Merrie cried out as she came on his cock, flooding the junction of their three bodies with her juices.

Sable came again only a heartbeat later.

"Fuck," growled Bass in a tone that shook through Merrie's body. His cock swelled for a moment and then shot out a huge stream of cum across Merrie's body and the blankets. It splattered the blankets in a jet, liters of it pouring out. When he pulled back, it sluiced down Merrie's thighs and stomach before jetting directly against her cunt and clitoris before he forced it out from their bodies.

When he was fully seated against her, his cock stuck out from Merrie's body like a black cock of her own. She could feel every pulse, every tremble, every shake of his body.

Merrie cried out as he hammered her buttocks.

His knot forced her thighs apart as he blasted the last of his cum against her body and out across the blankets. He shuddered one time before slumping forward, crushing Merrie as he panted loudly into her ear.

Merrie looked across the blankets and grinned. The entire bed was soaked with his cum. It sheeted off the ridges of the blankets and formed pools. When thribans came, they came more than humans. It was part of their nature, the way they fucked. Most of the time, they bred through violence and rape. She panted with anticipation, she was about to enjoy him again.

Sable slipped off of Merrie and Bass. She crawled over the cum-soaked blankets and then rolled to her side, facing her. The puddles squelched around her body as she settled into place, heedless of the slime that covered her gloriously naked body.

Merrie watched her, her eyes locked on Sable's. Behind her, she felt Bass draw back his cock, squeezing the knot out from between her thighs before lining up the thick, swollen head up against her sphincter. She thought about the first time he buried his length into her rectum; she had forced him to rip into her by using her shock collar.

The memories slammed into her and she came at the thoughts. It was intense and hot, searing through her body.

Bass chuckled and increased the pressure against her sphincter. His cock head was larger than a man's fist but it was swollen and slick with his recent orgasm. Cum still poured out of it and she could feel it splattering against her tight ring.

Her body hummed with pleasure. She pushed back on him, increasing the pressure herself as she relaxed her lower ring.

The thick head forced itself into her sphincter, spreading the opening into a burning ring. None of them slowed down though as he continued to push against her, forcing it deeper with every pulse of his body and twitch of his muscles.

Merrie gasped. (Don't stop.)

"I'm not going to, Bitch," Bass growled. He tensed his muscles up and clamped his arm across her body. His cock pulsed hotly and the head swelled with his thoughts.

She knew, in the back of her mind, that he was was going to tear into her. He was going to make her hurt and she wanted it. She

wanted, needed, to be dominated and taken. Now they knew she could take it. No matter how hard he thrust, no matter how much damage he did to her, she could take it.

Sable crawled forward and wrapped her cum-soaked body over Merrie. Her thoughts were a wave of pleasure and anticipation as she kissed Merrie passionately, smearing both of their faces with Bass' cum.

Merrie tried to relax her sphincter. Her heart fluttered quickly.

Bass slammed himself into her. His huge cock tore through her sphincter, ripping through flesh and and skin. The swollen head punched deep into her body.

Merrie only had a second to gasp for breath before the knot slammed into her sphincter, ripping it even further open in a burst of blood and agony. The thick, swollen cock drove deep into her, stretching and tearing her insides as he buried his entire cum-slicked length into her with a single stroke.

Bass held himself still, every muscle in his body frozen in rock hardness. His cock pulsed hotly, the entire length feeling like molten steel inside her shredded rectum.

Merrie's mouth opened his cock but she couldn't form even a thought. Everything had focused on the burning pole that dominated every sense of her body. She shuddered and tried to clamp down on her inner muscles but they refused to move.

The smell of sake flooded the air around him. It mixed with the sweetness of her orgasm that also assaulted her senses. She was coming, hard and fast. She didn't even know it, only that she was lost in the perfect mixture of agony and pleasure, a point where every sense of her body could no longer distinguish between agony and ecstasy.

The pleasure threatened to explode from her mind.

Bass yanked back his cock and slammed it home again, crushing her buttocks with the force of his blow. Icy liquid and hot cum splattered against her cheeks. "Don't you fucking dare make everyone come!"

Merrie let out a strangled gasp. She clamped down on her pleasure, forcing it to remain inside her head. The pleasure grew faster despite it blossoming across her thoughts and body.

He pumped into her again, driving his thick cock deep into her body. The sake scent grew hotter and she felt her icy blood pouring out of her ruined sphincter. It didn't matter, the heavy collar around her neck would ensure she would survive. The danger and pain was only only foreplay to her limits.

Bass pounded into her ass. The force of his blows tilted her forward. He followed the movement until he was looming above her, slamming her brutally into the mattress as he tore her ass further open. His knot, already larger than any human male could achieve, ripped through her sphincter and filled her completely. The end of his cock punched against her diaphragm, forcing out more strangled cries from her lips.

He planted his hand on the back of her head, crushing her face against cum- and sweat-soaked pillows as he raped her ass.

Merrie thrashed and flailed around, losing herself in the agony and pleasure as she felt her body opening up around his girth. His hardness traced a burning line from her sphincter along the length of her rectum and into her intestines.

She came hard and fast, her body exploding into pleasure as she fought to keep it inside her head. Her mental shields strained against the intensity of it.

Tears ran down her cheeks. The force of Merrie's thrusts caused them to splatter against the pillows, splashing everywhere as liquid heat and ice poured out from her gaping ass and pussy.

Sable moaned and tilted Merrie's head toward her.

Merrie sobbed with pleasure.

"Fuck you, Complicated Bitch," she whispered in her hoarse voice. She clamped the smooth ends of her arm against Merrie's head and leaned forward to kiss. The alpha easily moved in time with the powerful thrusts that shook Merrie's body. She rocked as if she was an extension to Bass' body.

Merrie gasped between the kisses. She felt empty and filled at the same time. Her entire body had become a vessel for Bass' and Sable's lusts and she loved every moment. She shuddered as the orgasm assaulted her senses, slamming against her internal shields repeatedly.

She wallowed in the ecstasy as long as she could and then redirected the pleasure into her collar. It sank into the metal, seeping out of her mind and into the void around her neck.

Bass groaned and drove deep one last time. His cock swelled painfully thick before he exploded inside her again. Liquid hot cum poured into Merrie's ruined opening, flooding her insides until her belly swelled and she felt it gurgling up the curves of her organs.

Merrie shuddered and moaned with pleasure. She curled her feet against Bass' thick thighs and let her body slump forward. She kissed Sable as more orgasms coursed repeatedly through her body, ricocheting repeatably before she funneled it into her collar.

He held himself still, his cock pulsating deep inside her body. With every beat of his heart, more cum poured into her body until she strained to keep it.

The agonies of her penetration intruded on her pleasure. She pushed it aside already knowing that the regeneration in the collar would keep her alive. She became aware of his sweat-slicked body crushing her painfully as much as his cock continued to beat inside her.

She panted with her afterglow, straining to move with the weight pinning her down. Her insides twisted around his hardness as the sweat-, cum-, and blood-soaked fabric clung to her body. Thick liquid poured out from her ass, tickling her bare pussy as it puddled underneath her pubic mound.

"S-Sorry," gasped Bass. He started to lift himself.

Merrie shook her head. (No.)

He froze.

Despite the pain of having her body impaled and the liquid still pouring out from her ass, she reached out with her mind. (No, please. Just here. Keep me down, just for a little. Hold me down.)

Sable kissed her again. (You sure?)

Merrie nodded. (Just hold me down, hold me down like a bad girl.)

Bass chuckled and settled his weight back down. His cock barreled deeper into her body, pinning her painfully in place as a fresh orgasm ravaged her mind.

t'Sade

Dire Awakening

30

A tickle woke Merrie up. It was just a finger against the back of her thoughts, a gentle prodding. She reached out and tested her shields to make sure they were still wrapped tightly around her thoughts before focusing her attention on her physical senses.

It took longer for her body to respond. After so many years of waking up in strange places, she kept her body still and her thoughts contained as she grew aware of the pressure around her. The easiest to identify was the broad, muscular chest that held her up. Her legs were spread on either side of his hips and his heavy cock rested against her still aching pussy. It had slipped out of her while they slept but the heaviness and the girth felt good against her nether lips.

The corner of her lips curled up as she cracked open one eye to look at the gray chest of her lover. It was Bass. After years of agony and pain, she finally came back to him.

Sable was on her back, sprawled out with her breasts grinding against her shoulder-blades. Her nipples were hard as two tiny points against Merrie's skin.

Merrie's tail stuck up between Sable's thighs. It was caught by the older woman's body. She could feel the soaked hairs of Sable's pussy along the length. It would only take a little effort to thump it against the alpha's cunt and wake her up.

(I don't recommend it,) came Haviston's thoughts.

Merrie's smile grew wider. (Haviston. I'm glad you are safe.)

There was a cloud of emotions in the psion's thoughts. They were wrapped tightly in his shields but she could feel muted waves of fear, concern, and relief boiling inside. (Safe is relative. I have come

to the conclusion that every time you and I encounter each other, I will soon experience a grievous injury.)

A shock rippled through her. (Oh no, did you lose a leg?)

There was a brief moment and then a burst of joy. (No, I still have the limbs I had previously.) His thoughts turned sour as an image waved across her mind. It was Haviston staring into a mirror. His right eye was nothing but scar tissue and his vision were strangely flat. (I was severely injured. It was a paladin and holy magic. It burned clear to the bone and the count's healers say they don't have the ability to restore that.)

A tear burned in her eye. (I'm sorry.)

(You made a choice, Merrie. An emotional choice and one that I strongly recommended against, but you were the only one capable of making that decision.)

She wanted to respond but he continued.

(Once made, you did everything you could to ensure that you succeeded and your friends survived. In that regard, you have demonstrated legendary prowess and talents beyond my expectations. You are far beyond anything I'm capable of.) There was the briefest twinge of jealousy in his thoughts.

There was something else strange about his thoughts. It felt final, a closure of a conversation. She tried to reach out for him but he deftly shifted her thoughts away.

Her ears flattened against her skull and her tail curled away from Sable's pussy. (You were injured. You lost your—)

(I lived,) came the deadpanned response. (Only one of us died when we were outnumbered by a superior opponent. We survived an army that spent at least a year planning our slaughter. There is no way it could have been done without loss.) An image of Sable crying wavered across her thoughts, it was right after Bass woke up. It was followed up by images of Dixie's body in clinical details.

The tears rolled down Merrie's cheek. (I—)

(Don't apologize.)

It was a command but without the full force of one of Bass' orders or Haviston's own magical compulsion. It was enough to trigger her nature and a flicker of pleasure raced along her nerves. She inhaled slowly and let the tease fill her.

Sable's tail flickered. The psychic nature of alphas meant she would pick up on Merrie's pleasure if she wasn't careful. It didn't matter how powerful Merrie's shields were, an alpha could always pick up desire.

Haviston's thoughts grew guarded and tense. (You are required for a far more serious discussion.)

(About what?) A prickle of fear raced along her skin and the hints of pleasure evaporated.

(I cannot tell you. I recommend you come to the count's hall properly dressed and not smelling of Bassimar Sarmo's cum and Sable's pussy. There is a bathing facility on the each floor—) He finished with a detailed map of the mansion.

Merrie shivered at the intensity of his thoughts. Fear tickled her thoughts.

Before she could respond, he broke the connection.

Merrie looked at Sable. The alpha was beginning to wake up, the natural ability of the alpha to sense when they were wanted. Reaching out, Merrie caressed her thoughts with a gentle wave of love and affection before casting a sleeping spell directly into Sable's mind. It sank deep into the alpha's thoughts, her submissive nature magnifying the spell into something more powerful.

The alpha closed her eyes and settled back to sleep.

With the fear growing inside her, Merrie let her body melt into shadows.

The alpha sank into her master's arms, settling into place as if they belonged. They did and Merrie felt a brief pang of jealousy. The collar was her mistress but it wasn't capable of holding her tight, or fucking her violently. It was in her mind but capable of commanding her body.

Slipping away, she let her pitch-black body slip across the room and toward the darkness to summon her cloak and find a bath. There was one in the basement, she bet it would be dark enough to shield her from the sunlight.

t'Sade

Properly Cleaned

31

A dip into the icy waters of the basement tub felt good. The water was almost freezing but compared to the frigid darkness that pumped through her veins, it relatively hot. Tiny shards of ice gathered around her as she dipped her head underneath the surface and then crawled up to the edge.

The bathing area had a short wall around it and it took her a moment to lever her body out. The effort crushed her bare breasts against the sharp rock and tiny scratches peppered her stomach and thighs before she could perch on the edge.

She knew she could have just transformed and crawled out, but she was nervous about Haviston's enigmatic thoughts. Being reminded of her helplessness tempered her fear slightly; it also gave her a little rush of power that danced along her veins.

Merrie took a deep breath and exhaled. Black mist and the taste of sake tickled her throat. She focused on the water dripping off her pale body, the way it caressed her curves before boiling away from the cold. The mist seeped away from her, rippling across the sharp stone ground of the bathing area.

She thought back to the battle. Years ago, Count Blood had once reprimanded Bass for starting fights. Given the destruction and the number of warriors dead, it had to be the reason Haviston wanted her presence.

Her ears flattened against her skull. It wasn't her fault that the paladins attacked. All signs were that Bass was doing whatever he could to avoid conflict. Her thoughts turned sour, he was doing the same thing the first time Lemetri attacked back when she was first cropped.

With a sigh, she looked around the small chamber and before reaching out for the dark shadows. There was power for her. With a smile, she reached out and pulled it toward her, solidifying the shifting darkness into the rippling folds of her cloak.

The cloak caressed her body, cupping her breasts and tightening around her ribs. Layers of darkness pressed against her pussy, crushing her labia as it molded against every fold and bump. As it wrapped around her throat and seeped underneath the collar, she let out a unwitting moan.

The cloak squeezed down on her in a ripple, a firm touch from throat to cunt to the ends of her legs. A few droplets of water were squeezed out and splattered to the ground as ice.

It didn't matter that the cloak was almost completely underneath her control, she still remembered when its behavior was unexpected. Like when the collar changed her thoughts, she got a rush of pleasure from the unexpected.

With a grim smile, Merrie got ready to face the count and the reason he summoned her. She crawled out of the bathing area and used the cloak to snap the door shut behind her. With Haviston's map still in her head, she headed toward the stairs leading to the main floor and Count Blood's great hall.

The lower floors were obviously for the servants. She passed across narrow doors leading into cell-like chambers. A dizzying array of smells overwhelmed her: the musk of men, the perfume of women, the rot of mold and water damage, and even the faint sweetness of drugs.

The triple beat of her heart began to accelerate as she considered what waited her. She crawled down the empty hallway and breathed in the scents of different servants as she tried to push her thoughts away from the growing dread.

She was about to set the severed end of her wrist on the first step leading up the stairs when a twinge scraped against her senses. The rest of her body tensed with a sudden surge of danger. Taking a deep breath, she inched her outstretched arm closer. The prickle intensified and she froze.

Merrie pushed out with her senses. With her supernatural vision, the stairs began to glow. A ripple of reddish energies coalescing into unfamiliar infernal runes inscribed on each step. The glyphs hurt to

look at but she scanned them quickly in fear that it was another attack by the spiders. To her relief, the spell didn't have the same signature but it was definitely infernal.

The fear turned into something else as she pulled back from the steps. She could feel infernal energies manifesting around her. It beat from inside the walls of the hall, the runes inscribed underneath the wire and plaster that lined the hallway.

Her lips tightened as her tail lowered against her cloak-covered pussy. The runes were hidden underneath old and moldy plaster but the energy was fresh. It took her a moment to realize it was flowing from behind her.

A cold ripple ran down her spine.

Even before she turned around, she began to draw her combat spells across her mind. Black calligraphy scrolled in her thoughts, the familiar words and dark magics pulsing through her pitch-black veins. Her heart beat faster, a triple beat that sent waves of icy through her body. Magic for strength, speed, and defense flowed into her body.

A little girl giggled. "Someone's been a naughty puppy."

Merrie knew the voice, though she hadn't heard it in years. It was sweet and innocent, just like every little girl Merrie had heard on the streets.

She also knew it was a lie. There only innocent-sounding girl in the fortress was an infernal pretending to be the count's daughter. Merrie first saw Diffy after she had finished butchering a monster at the annual county fair. She didn't have a scratch on her but she was covered in blood from head to toe.

Tensing, Merrie turned and focused on the young girl standing at the end of the hallway.

Diffy looked only eight years old. She had the same face and appearance as she did so many years ago, it didn't look like she had aged even a second. The only thing different was her dress. It was black with a flared bottom that was short enough to reveal the little girl's sex if it wasn't for the crimson lace underneath it. She had both black socks and gloves that went to her mid thighs and almost to her shoulders respectively. Red flowers clung to her black hair that cascaded down her back.

Her appearance would have been benign except for the large meat cleaver in her hand. The blade shimmered in the glare of the infernal runes glowing from underneath the plaster.

Merrie's body grew tighter with anticipation. She finished her spells. Her cloak rippled with her thoughts, caressing her body as it loosened slightly.

"A very naughty little puppy. You ruined my playground and now I can't play on it."

Merrie cocked her head in confusion. (What?)

She froze. Her mental thoughts didn't reach Diffy. The infernal mind was well-shielded. The minuscule personality that did leak through was alien and inhuman, a devil.

Diffy's eyes narrowed as she tightened the grip on her cleaver. "I don't like it when puppies ruin my toys. I don't like it when anyone ruins my fun."

Merrie kept her eyes on the infernal girl as she crawled to the nearest door. Reaching out with her cloak, she tried to push it open but a field of infernal magic burned the tip of her cloak. It came back smoking.

A faint breeze washed over her.

She looked up.

Diffy was only centimeters away. She smiled at Merrie but there was nothing but cruelty in the blue eyes.

Merrie gasped and jerked back. She tried to melt her body into shadows but infernal energies surrounding her interrupted the magic. It felt like an electric surge racing through her body and preventing her form from dissolving. Bouncing off the wall, she regained her feet but was hit by a wave of nausea from the wave of magic that halted her transformation.

Diffy's cleaver flashed for Merrie's head.

Merrie ducked underneath it. Her tail ground against her pussy. She crushed her breasts against the ground to avoid the attack.

The cleaver slammed into the plaster next to her, slicing easily into the soft material until it struck solid stone with an impact that shook the ground. A cloud of dust exploded from the impact, followed by a flash of reddish light.

Merrie snapped her cloak forward, the edge forming a sharp point.

Diffy smacked it aside with her blade and then launched into a rapid fire series of slashes. The heavy cleaver punched into the air, chipping the stone ground and carving off large hunks of plaster. Bursts of infernal energy, red and violent, flashed with every impact.

With a burst of concern, Merrie sent out a pulse of alarm. It echoed back, bouncing off the magic surrounding her. Cringing, she jerked back to avoid one of Diffy's attacks but she misjudged and slammed against the wall. The hunks of plaster ground into her back and she rolled to the side to avoid another attack.

Diffy was fast. Despite having a frail-looking body of a preteen girl, her blows were powerfully as they broke off large chunks of the wall. Merrie noticed that even though her attacks looked wild, she was careful to avoid harming the wards that kept Merrie sealed in the hallway.

Focusing her attention on the attacks, Merrie tried to transform but Diffy's attack prevented her from concentrating. They came too fast and powerful for her to divert even a small amount of her attention. She swore and focused on easier attacks, using her cloak and mental blasts to lash out.

The little girl's dress fluttered as she spun around, easily avoiding the cloak. Her eyes were pitch black as she swung her cleaver around, slashing through the cloak and cutting off the tip.

A bolt of agony slammed into Merrie. The cloak was part of her but separate. She normally couldn't feel it, but the backlash from the infernal magic in the cleaver branded the agony across her mind.

Diffy smiled and her eyes widened with an insane lust. "No, puppy. I'm going to punish you."

Merrie tried to send out another pulse of alarm. She reached out for Haviston, but the wards kept her contained. She whimpered and looked back at Diffy, backing up dangerously close to the stairs as she did.

The little girl smiled broadly and stalked after her, plaster dust dripping from her black. "Oh, you really won't like what I do with thieves."

Diffy's leather shoes tapped on the hard ground.

Merrie glanced at the stairs. The infernal wards were glowing brighter now, beating against her back in waves of heat. She was less than a meter away.

“Time to die,” giggled Diffy.

Merrie gathered up her power and lashed out with her mind, punching hard with her thoughts. The impact slammed into Diffy and the little girl stepped back. A trickle of blood, black as night, oozed from her right nostril.

Diffy’s eyes widened and then her face twisted into a nightmarish glare. Her pitch black eyes seemed to glow as she clutched her weapon. “Bad puppy!”

Surging forward, Diffy covered the distance between them in a blink. Her cleaver slammed into Merrie’s side, slicing through the cloak and scraping against her ribs. The heavy blade jerked her off the ground for a millisecond.

Agony exploded along her senses as Merrie cried out. She reflexively tried to dissolve into shadows.

The infernal runes flashed brilliantly and the light tore at her form. A high-pitched whine filled her ears right before a pop snapped inside her mind, the backlash bolting throughout her entire body.

Merrie sobbed at the agony and slipped back, inching closer to the stairs as black blood splashed down from her side.

Diffy appeared in front of her again. Her blade shone in the light of the infernal runes as she brought it down toward Merrie’s skull.

(Defend yourself!) came the commanding voice from her collar.

Something snapped inside her as a surge of power and lust flooded inside her. She sank into the submission and lashed out with her cloak, forcing the magic into the cloak.

The black fabric surged forward, forming into a black tentacle that looked disturbingly like one of the Lord of Shadow’s tentacles. It punched into Diffy’s abdomen near her hip.

Merrie formed other tendrils out of her cloak and thrust them forward. Her ordered echoed inside her head, endlessly commanding and she was helpless to do anything other than obey her mistress.

Diffy brought her cleaver up to deflect Merrie’s attack.

With a growl that shook her head, Merrie used her magic to strength the tendrils. They punched into the broad side of the cleaver, drilling holes through the metal before piercing Diffy's shoulder and ribs with her attacked.

The anger in the infernal girl's face cracked. Her eyes lifted for a moment above Merrie.

Merrie's cloak had blossomed into a fan of tentacles and tendrils. Around her, the shadows darkened and deepened, blurring the infernal runes as Merrie pulled on the very darkness around her to add to her attack.

With a surge, Merrie ripped her cloak out of Diffy's body. Gouts of black blood splattered against her face as she saw the gaping wounds in the waif-like girl. It was already soaking through the red lace of her dresses and dripped for the ground.

The end of the heavy cleaver snapped off. It landed in a pool of Diffy's black blood.

The little girl's expression twisted into an inhuman growl, her corners of her mouth stretching out further than possible and her teeth growing sharper. Her pitch eyes grew larger, morphing her face into something utterly terrifying.

Light seeped through her black dress. It caused the short skirt and blood-soaked lace to flutter with the energy rolling off her. Seconds later, Merrie could see seven infernal runes glowing on the little girl's body. They were on her throat, sternum, belly. The other four were on her shoulders and hips.

Energy beat against Merrie, pushing back the darkness in waves that left a burning, sulfuric taste in the back of Merrie's throat. It scraped against her senses and she cringed at the brightness.

"Bad doggy," said Diffy in a low voice. The end of her cleaver twisted and melted, stretching out into a wide-bladed sword. Infernal flames raced along the edge of the blade.

Merrie set her jaw and pulled her cloak close, ready to strike back.

Diffy appeared in front of her, teleporting to skip the intervening space.

Ready for it, Merrie slashed out with her tentacles. The pitch darkness wavered under the light but she kept it together.

The infernal twisted her blade to present the wide side.

Merrie thrust her tentacles forward. The blade broke once before.

Her cloak slammed into the blade but it didn't shatter. Instead the force of the impact threw both of them back.

Merrie's tail brushed against the stairs.

Heat exploded behind her.

Merrie screamed out, this time from the light and heat. She spun around to see a wall of too-bright flames engulfing the stairs. Magenta waves raced along the flames and the heat pushed her back. The brightness slammed into her, hitting her with a force far more than mere flames. Her cloak began to boil off and she could feel it searing her skin.

With a scream, she threw herself back.

Diffy's sword pierced Merrie's back just right of her spine. The heavy blade punched deep into her body and out her belly. Black blood poured out of her torn-open stomach and evaporated immediately in the infernal light.

The strength in her arms faded. She slid down the blade to smack loudly against the bloody ground. The fall drove her chin hard against the rock and she almost blacked out from the agony.

"Bad doggy!" Diffy twisted the blade, ripping open the wound. It scraped against her spine and white-hot agony shot through Merrie's body.

Merrie tried to move but her arms and legs didn't seem to work. Instead everything focused on the searing agony of having a cleaver buried deep inside her.

Diffy pressed one tiny, patent leather shoe against Merrie's tail and yanked the blade out. "Down puppy."

Tears rolled down Merrie's cheeks. She couldn't get purchased with the severed ends of her wrists. They kept slipping on the dust and blood along the ground. Her vision blurred.

Merrie turn her head to look at her opponent.

Diffy slammed her other foot against her skin, grinding it against the ground and preventing her from looking. "Goodbye."

Tears burned in Merrie's eyes. She couldn't see enough to stroke out.

The heat grew around her.

Desperate, Merrie released the control of her cloak and it slumped against her. It felt she had just yanked a blade out of her gut. She immediately threw everything she could into the collar, channeling the magic she used to drive the cloak through her collar. She didn't know what would happen but she hoped it would give her a chance to survive.

The cloak snapped forward, tightening around her neck as it launched away from her.

Diffy's foot slipped off Merrie's tail. It briefly slammed against her pussy, crushing it underneath her toe before she stepped back.

"W-What?" The young girl sounded surprise.

The cloak ripped from Merrie's body, spinning her around like a helpless top. The world flashed around her, giving her only a glimpse of the cloak becoming a ball of shadowy tentacles before she flipped over again.

There was a wet smack of something hitting Diffy and then Merrie crashed to the ground and against the wall. The infernal runes tore at her back, growing hotter with every passing moment as black blood poured out of her wound. She couldn't escape the agony but that didn't stop her from trying. She planted her wrists against the wall and pushed with all her might.

The cloak, moving on its own, snapped forward again. The needle-like tip punched into Diffy's chest and legs. Instead of pulling out, they ripped to the side, tearing large chunks of the little girl's body out in showers of black blood. The torn fabric revealed her pale white skin and the glowing runes that swam in Merrie's vision.

Shaking, Diffy stepped back and grabbed her stomach with her free hand. Blood oozed out from between her fingers. She gasped and looked at Merrie with a hurt look on her face.

The cloak boiled, its shape changed from something that looked like the shadow kin to the giant snake and back again. Finally, it solidified in something that looked like a snake except that it had hundreds of tentacles coming out of one end.

Sobbing through the pain, Merrie channeled more energy through her collar. (Stop her.)

The cloak shot forward.

Diffy dropped her blade and screamed, "Daddy!" It was the sound of a terrified little girl.

One of the runes flared brighter than the other.

Merrie's thoughts blurred for a moment as a sudden and startling concern to save a little girl rose up. She fought against it but the power of the mental compulsion was too powerful and fast for her to prevent it from seeping into her thoughts.

Her cloak crumbled to the ground.

The runes faded instantly as did the wall of fire.

Diffy's face twisted back into shape as she cried out, sobbing. "Daddy!" her scream echoed unnaturally loud in the hallway.

The pressure around Merrie faded and she could feel outside thoughts intruding on the hallway again. There were people approach, angry and concerned guards being the closest.

She tried to gather up the power to launch another attack but the compulsion stopped her. She couldn't hurt an innocent little girl. Not someone innocent like Diffy.

The little girl's scream echoed shrilly. She clutched her side where bright red blood now flowed from her grievous injuries. Her dress was completely torn to reveal her immature body.

Racing boots slammed down on the stairs.

Merrie managed to push herself off the ground. Swaying from the agony and nausea, she tried to pull herself up.

The cloak fluttered toward her, sailing across the ground.

Suddenly the cleaver slammed into the middle of it, shattering the rock underneath.

The cloak halted. It jerked toward Merrie but it couldn't move. It's material stretched from where the blade appeared to have pinned it to the ground.

"Daddy!" screamed Diffy but there was no fear in her bright blue eyes.

Guards landed on the ground and immediately surrounded Diffy. One of the knelt down next to her but the rest of them interposed themselves between Diffy and Merrie.

Seconds later, the count came racing down the stairs. "Baby!"

He flung himself to his knees in front of her, sweeping her up in a hug. "Oh, Baby!"

Unlike his so-called daughter, Count Blood had aged. He was always older but now he had completely white hair. He wore a black

suit. It was impressive-looking but there was a fragility to his body, time had not treated him well.

“What happened?” asked the count.

“T-That puppy attacked me!” Diffy’s eyes were dripping tears. “I-I wanted to give it a pet and it bit me!”

A prickle of fear race along Merrie’s nerves. She managed to push herself up to her knees but the injury in her back made it almost impossible to move any further. Black blood poured out of her, splashing down her back and along her inner buttocks before splashing on the ground.

The count looked at Merrie, a glare painted on his face. “Guards!”

Four guards next to Merrie stood up straighter. They drew their short shorts out and pointed them at the injured omega.

“I want that bitch in irons, now!”

t'Sade

Justification

32

Merrie whimpered as she curled into a ball and clutched her arm tight against the wound in her stomach. Her cloak was wrapped around her injuries to keep the black mist from being exposed to any flash of light. The pressure of her arm helped alleviate a small measure of the sharp agonies of having her body torn open. With her shortened arms, she couldn't do the same for the hole in her back and she had to suffer from the discomfort that wracked her senses.

The control of the cloak still remained under the collar's power. She fed it energy through the connection and could give it orders, but it didn't respond like before. There was an unexpectedness to it, a sentience that made every movement like a lover.

A twinge scraped against her senses and she whimpered again. Twisting slightly, she tugged at the heavy blanket draped over her. She would know if it came up, the count had ordered a magical light to be shone over the blanket to ensure she wouldn't escape. Even lifting one edge brought a dangerous brightness underneath her shelter.

It was humiliating that she could be imprisoned by nothing more than bright light. For everything she had done in the years, light was the worst thing to be vulnerable to. It was everywhere and even the reflections off the floor were enough to burn.

Despair darkened her thoughts. The count refused to listen to her with Diffy sobbing and claiming that Merrie attacked her. There was no chance for rebuttal, no chance to defend herself. The little girl had the count completely wrapped under her spell, though Merrie didn't sense any compulsion magic around either of them.

(There isn't a compulsion,) projected Haviston. He was a few meters away and unable to approach. His thoughts were deadpanned but she could tell that he was frustrated.

(Then why wouldn't he let me speak?)

(You saw seven runes on her, right? No doubt one of them is related to manipulating others. That is how she would gain her power, by capturing his affection that he is incapable of seeing anything other than her.)

She let out a long breath.

(Borias Kivas will be approaching soon, he will be able to provide some healing.)

Merrie nodded and clutched her wound tighter.

(This fight will make your case more difficult.)

(Case? What case?)

There was a moment of reluctance. Then, Haviston's mind grew closer to hers as he created a more private and intimate connection.

A prickle of fear fluttered down Merrie's spine.

(The duke and prince are here but under disguise. The shadow land you created has created a great deal of concern and you are to answer for it.)

Merrie's heart beat faster, a triple beat thumping in her chest. (The shadow land? Not the attack?)

He projected a sour amusement. (No, the attack is also a problem. Waver Blood is still stinging from his private meeting with the duke. It wasn't much different than the one years ago.)

The count stood up. He clasped his wrists behind his back and stood up straight. "Yes, my lord duke. What should I have done?"

The duke leaned to the side, his tiny hand clutching his staff. He looked around the campfire for a moment, his eyes briefly stopping on Merrie before focusing his attention back on the count. "The problem is you're too nice. You have never been in a war or a battle, but you are one of the eastern counties between Dorza and the rest of Franome. You are the first line of defense against invasion and you can't even handle a hundred guys trashing your fair."

He continued. "I don't care that you get your rocks off snuffing people. I don't care that your fair has people lining up to get killed. What I do care is that you," he pointed a shaking finger at the count as he spoke in a hard, cracked voice, "are losing control of your lands and your people. Your guards are poorly trained, you allowed those damned paladins to wander on in to wage war with your pet fallen paladin—"

Bass tensed but said nothing.

"—and I don't like your daughter."

There was a ripple of power and Diffy was suddenly standing in front of the duke, her long knife aimed at his throat. She shoved forward, her face a mask of rage, but her blade rang out when it struck a brilliantly white great sword that interposed itself between the girl and the duke.

Merrie sighed. (Another lecture?)

(Yes. Allister Natis had a private conversation with Waver Blood. The small amounts I heard through the door echoed similar sentiment. The duke blames the count for allowing Lemetri's paladins attacking and, by conclusion, putting you into a situation where you were forced to create the shadow land.)

A strange longing rose up. (I wasn't forced. It was a deal.)

(Be careful how you word this deal then. I... Borias is here.)

"Be fucking me? You be shining a light on her?" asked Borias as he walked up. He sounded furious and she was warmed by his emotions as they approached her.

"My Lord Count's orders," responded a strange voice which Merrie assumed was a guard. "There is no other way to prevent her from escaping."

"Merrie not be going anywhere. Havi, why didn't you say something?"

"I did," said Haviston in his emotionless voice. "The count was unwilling to listen to logical reasoning."

"Well, Blood be being an idiot. Dispel that light," Borias' presence grew closer. He was less than a meter away and Merrie sank into his rage and let it wrap around her thoughts as a protective blanket.

"I cannot allow that, sir," said the guard.

"Havi, kill the light."

"Sir, don't—"

"You be shutting up. There be Natis, Loyal Alestri, me, and Havi. Even if she wanted to be running away, she not be escaping. Now, be dispelling that light and be letting me attend to her injuries!"

There was a shuffling and then the blanket draped over Merrie was pulled back.

Merrie cringed in expectations, but no killing light spread over her. Even the curtains were drawn and the room was cast into a shadowy darkness. She let out a gasp of relief. With a tired smile, she looked into his eyes. (Thank you.)

Borias knelt down next to her. "Hey there, pretty bitch."

He looked rested despite the bandages on him. There was a sparkle in his eye as he reached out and deftly slipped one hand between her legs and the other for her wound.

The cloak peeled away from her body underneath both of his touches.

At the caress along her pussy, she let out a soft gasp of pleasure and relaxed her legs.

"Yeah, that be making you relax," he said. His fingers trailed up and down her pussy, teasing the opening of her ass before circling her pussy and then flicking her clitoris.

With his other hand, he spread out his fingers and began to whisper. A circle of yellow-green energy blossomed from his palm. The light hurt, like scratches against her skin, but the flood of healing magic pushed it aside. Her insides twisted and boiled as she leaned into his questing fingers and let him heal her.

"That collar be nasty. It be healing you but it would take forever. Maybe days with your injury." He shoved two fingers into her pussy and pumped back and forth.

Pleasure racing along her veins, she moaned louder.

Haviston pushed into her thoughts. (I find it fascinating that his manipulations are capable of producing so much energy for you. You are getting far more out of being sexually stimulated than anything I've seen before.)

Merrie panted and glanced up at the psionic.

He sat on a bench a few meters away. He had found a white robe and pinned the sleeve for his missing arm against the side. His right eye was heavily scarred and bandaged, she already knew he lost his vision from the fight.

She would have said something but Borias added a third finger into her cunt and pumped harder and faster.

“There you be, be enjoying the energy. I’ve almost got this healed.” The spell continued to seep into her body, filling her with shimmering energy that was nothing compared to the pleasure flooding in from the thrusting fingers.

The door to the room opened up. Merrie glanced over to see Duke Natis, Prince Claston, and Loyal Alestri walk in.

The duke walked toward them with a scowl. He shook his head. “Borias, please stop that.”

Borias didn’t look back. “She be seriously injured. I not be stopping.”

The Loyal stepped forward. Her green armored boots thudded against the ground as she walked. There was a flash of magic as a spell was activated, it came from the spear in her hand which meant it was an attack spell.

Claston stopped her with his hand. “Let him heal her, Natis.”

The prince was dressed in a neat black suit. There was no disguise magic around him. Merrie wondered if they had sealed off the audience chamber to let the prince and duke speak freely.

A wave of agreement washed over her from Haviston.

The duke nodded and turned his back on Merrie. He wore a simple outfit, a farmer’s, but there was no question he was still one of the more powerful men in the country. Merrie remembered that he was a summoner. The duke said, “As you wish, my lord. She isn’t going anywhere.”

Merrie was warmed by Claston’s compassion. She started to project but then stopped at the flash of magic from the Loyal. Alestri was capable of detecting telepathy and frequently misinterpreted Merrie’s actions as attacks.

Instead, she groaned and rolled over, spreading her thighs to give Borias more access to her cunt. She loved how his fingers were wet and slick as they pumped inside her, the way his knuckles brushed against her aching labia with every smack against her body.

On the far side of the room, a door slammed open. Count Blood took a few steps in and then stopped. In his arms, he cradled Diffy who was wrapped in a black nightgown and a thin blanket. She looked broken and fragile as if the fight had almost killed her. The count's eyes widened. "What are you doing!?"

Borias looked at him. "I be healing her."

"I ordered her to be left alone! She'll escape as soon as she can. Guards, I'll—"

"No!" snapped Borias as he stood up. "I be not stopping!"

Merrie felt an empty loss with his fingers no longer plunging into her, but the tension in the room was already diminishing her pleasure. She took a quick breath and was happy when the wounds only ached, not burned. He had healed her enough to give her respite to crawl up on her knees and wrist.

Her cloak fluttered and wrapped around her body, pressing back against her wounds and grinding up against her slick and aching pussy. A tendril slipped inside her, squirming deep inside her.

She fought a faint moan rising in her throat as the pleasure brought a surge of energy.

Count Blood hugged Diffy tighter, his hands white as he held her. "I will not be questioned! Guards, secure that bitch now! If she tries to run, burn her body away with all the light you can."

"She not be going anywhere," said Borias.

"Silence!"

Borias clamped his mouth shut but he didn't move away from Merrie.

The count strode over to a recliner, glaring at Borias the entire time. He turned away only long enough to gently set Diffy in the chair and tuck the blanket underneath her. It was almost sweet how he leaned over and kissed her forehead.

Diffy looked up. "I love you, daddy," she whispered in her innocent, girl-like voice. She shuddered as she curled into her blanket. There were bandages visible through her thin, silk gown. Some of them were soaked with crimson.

The tenderness disappeared when he turned back. The glare painted across his face brought a shiver of fear. "That bitch attacked my little girl. She almost killed my innocent baby!"

"Your daughter not being innocent, count," Borias said.

The count stepped closer, raising his fist in front of him. "I will have you executed if you say another word. Just one more word and you'll be dead by morning."

"Um," Claston spoke up as he entered the fray, "I believe that is illegal."

The count turned on the prince. "And what do you...." The words faded in his throat as he visibly paled and then cleared his throat. "My apologies, my prince. That monster attacked my daughter."

Claston cocked his head. "Have you asked the bitch her side of the story?"

"Why would I need to? I saw what happened."

"Really? You were there during the fight?"

The count twitched. "I saw enough. It is my right."

The prince held up both hands. "Except for that whole legal thing? We have laws, you know. She has been tried and convicted."

"Fine, she's guilty. I'm the count, I can—"

"Count Blood," Claston said in a low voice. "I'm the Prince of Franome and if you finish that sentence, I'm going to strip your title away from you before you sit down."

"You can't do that, I have—"

"Rights?" Claston said with a smile. "Process? Laws?"

In the corner of Merrie's vision, she saw Diffy lift her head. The little girl was paying attention to the conversation as much as the others, though she was obviously pretending to be an innocent girl for the count's sake.

The count's face grew mottled with anger. "You are fucking her! Of course you are going to side on that bitch's side. You, that fallen knight, the healer, and even that psion!"

The Loyal stepped forward but stopped when Claston held up his hand.

"Maybe, but that isn't the point. We have laws in this country and I want to make sure you obey them. Your position, your oath to Franome and the Royal Family demands it."

From the bench, Haviston spoke up. "For the record, I have no interest in sex with anyone."

Everyone looked at him.

"It's true," he said. "I have never had sex with Merrie."

The count trembled with his emotions. He glanced at Diddy who had rested her head again while pretending not to listen, and then back again. "She attacked my little girl. The bitch almost killed her!"

"Your little girl is a murderer herself."

"She is—"

"I just saw her in the blood games a week ago. Wields a nasty cleaver. She's your champion, for what... the last fifteen years?"

"Eighteen, your highness," said the count but it didn't seem to register.

"Right, your eight year old girl has been a champion for eighteen years. She gutted that last guy right before she cut off his legs and dick. I remember because she threw the dick and it landed on my feet."

There was a brief moment where the count said nothing. Then he took a deep breath and pointed accusingly at Merrie. "She attacked her!"

"Why don't you ask Merrie what happened?"

"She's a fucking bitch, she'll lie."

"You have a psion in the room." Claston gestured to Haviston. "You could prove that."

The count pointed accusingly at Haviston. "He's a friend of hers and Bass. He won't speak against her. Besides, truth spells are illegal and you know it. They can easily be faked."

"So you can't prove she did it—"

"My daughter—"

Claston held up his hand. A wave of determination rose from him and Merrie felt worry start to radiate from her thoughts.

Merrie's skin prickled. She took a deep breath and gathered her energies, if the prince was nervous then she wanted to be ready to defend him.

On the far side, Loyal Alestri's armor began to glow with spells activating. Unlike Merrie who could only activate a few spells, there were at least a dozen that exploded across her senses in less than a heartbeat.

Claston cleared his throat. "Your daughter is a devil."

Diddy lifted her head slightly as her eyes narrowed.

"She is not!"

“Yes, she is. She obviously manipulating you into doing whatever she wants. The fact that she remains eight years old after almost two decades is a good indication that she has wrapped you in at least some form of compulsion.”

Claston’s thoughts grew more guarded. He was scared but determined. He rushed forward to say. “In fact, I’m going to recommend that she—”

Diffy appeared next to Claston, her broken cleaver in her hand.

An explosion of air blasted the entire room as the Loyal teleported between Diffy and Claston. Her massive spear glowed brilliantly with a thousand killing spells activated at once. The raw power of the armor and spear blinded Merrie.

Diffy smiled broadly, her eyes darkening into pitch. She tightened her grip on the cleaver. A glow began to form underneath her gown, the runes quickly becoming visible through the thin fabric.

Haviston’s thoughts pushed into Merrie’s (I see infernal runes for fatherhood, innocence, long-term planning, and blood. I don’t know the other three.)

Merrie tensed. She sent a pulse of thanks to Haviston. She could feel the Loyal’s killing spells continuing to gather. They were embedded in the spear and her armor, making her nearly impossible to kill. The spells also made her sick to her stomach, which only was worse with the infernal magic gathering.

The silence stretched between them.

Brimming with relief, Claston leaned to the side and looked past both Loyal Alestri and Diffy to speak to the count. “So, your daughter is grievously injured? She no longer appears to be at death’s door.”

Diffy’s eyes narrowed. One of her runes flickered as it gathered energy. It was one of the runes that Haviston couldn’t identify.

The Loyal slammed the butt of her spear on the ground. “Loyal Alestri says step away.”

“Try it, old lady.” Diffy’s voice was sweet and innocent. The black eyes and shimmering cleaver were not.

Claston sighed. “Loyal, back. Count, have your daughter return to her chair.”

Alestri obeyed first, stepping back but not releasing the spells on her spear. Dust curled up around her feet, wafted by the power rolling off the waiting magic.

Diffy didn't move.

Claston glanced at Diffy. "You're sweet, aren't you?"

Diffy smiled sweetly back. The rune for innocence and one of the other runes flickered briefly.

Alestri tapped her spear on the ground.

The prince returned his attention to the count. "Your daughter?"

Waver sighed. "Diffy? Please."

The light underneath Diffy's gown faded. She turned as the monstrous appearance faded instantly. "Yes, daddy."

She skipped over to her seat and sat down.

Claston gestured to Merrie. "We have a bitch who is being healed and has a collar that regenerates her. Your daughter who appeared to be dying is now in full health. At this point, I think we can say both of them are going to survive with nothing more than minor inconveniences and we should table your accusations without blaming either."

The prince's emotions calmed down and Merrie felt a thrill of success radiating from him. She squirmed slightly and let her energy bleed back into her body. "That is, unless you want me to follow through with my threat?"

The count let out a long, shuddering breath. "Yes, my prince. I have no complaint with the omega."

Diffy folded her arms over her chest and pouted, but otherwise made no effort to leave the chair.

Claston looked at Merrie and cocked his head. "I'm sorry," he mouthed.

Merrie smiled weakly. (Thank you.)

The Loyal twitched and Merrie pulled back her thoughts.

No one said anything for a long moment.

Borias coughed and relaxed, sinking down until he was sitting next to Merrie. Reaching out, he stroked her ear.

A shiver of pleasure raced through her. She sat down properly, her ass against the ground, and leaned into his fingers.

Finally, the duke interrupted the silence. "May we speak of the reason she is here?"

The old man stepped forward, his body shaking as he leaned against a walking stick. He stopped between Claston and Waver before turning to Merrie.

A prickle of fear raced through Merrie's senses. She took a deep breath and looked at everyone else who was staring at her.

The duke seemed to hesitate and then glanced at the prince.

"Go on, Natis. We all have questions."

Borias stroked harder against her ear.

Merrie worried her lip. (You want to know what happened?)

The prince and duke both nodded.

(How much? How the attack started or just the shadow land?)

Claston smirked and his eyes flickered over in Haviston's direction.

Duke Natis cleared his throat. "Yes, start with the attack. What happened after you made it to the mill house?"

Merrie opened her mouth to start at the beginning when Eolis brought her into the house but the geas surged up, silencing her. She choked for a second. Her ears flattened against her head, trapping Borias' fingers. She tried to move forward but as soon as she even thought of Claston, Natis, or Eolis, the geas silenced her.

With a whine, she ducked her head.

"Well?" snapped the count from next to Diffy.

Merrie sent out a private thought to Haviston.

"Um, my lord?" said the psion as he stood up.

"Yes?" asked both the duke and prince.

"Alphas are known to be susceptible to compulsions and mind-control. We would not be able to detect if she was unable to speak due to certain influences. These spells are commonly known as geases and—"

"Oh!" gasped Claston. He spun on his heels. "Count? She may be revealing sensitive information. Could you please dismiss your guards?" He took a deep breath. "And your daughter?"

The count's face twisted in a scowl. "I don't keep secrets from her."

Claston sighed. He thought for a moment. "She'll find out anyways. Your guards though."

The count waved the guards out of the room. As soon as they left, Claston ordered Haviston and Borias to ward the room against

listeners and spies. Everyone watched the two mages work in silence. When Borias finished, he started to return to Merrie but was stopped by Claston. Instead, he positioned himself next to Haviston on the bench.

“What is this about, my lord?” asked Waver.

“Borias and Merrie both have sworn fealty to the Royal Family.”

Diffy looked surprised.

The count gasped. “Your geas? Then how did she summon a shadow land? That can’t possibly be in Franome’s best interest.” The count’s face darkened. “She got past it, she—”

“She is an alpha, my lord,” Haviston spoke up. “I am intimately aware that her very nature magnifies compulsions to a dangerous level. Not even a god could break the control it has over her thoughts.”

Merrie ducked her head and shivered. It was terrifying to know that there were two unbreakable forces on her thought, the collar and her oath. She hoped they would never be put into conflict, she didn’t know what would happen.

Waver waved his hand, his face still mottled. “Maybe the lord prince doesn’t know how to cast the geas—”

“My mother cast that spell, Waver. If you want to question her abilities in magic, I recommend you come with us back to Franome City.”

The count slowly closed his mouth. “I spoke out turn, my lord.”

Merrie could feel energy flickering around Diffy. The infernal was picking up on the conflict and drinking it in not unlike how Merrie gained her power from submission and pleasure. The energies were focused on the runes, both the planning and the one that appeared to be responding to impulsive statements.

Claston chuckled. “We are all on edge and outbursts are understandable. Merrie? Please tell what happened.”

Merrie started the story. This time the geas allowed her to speak. She projected as much as she could, condensing information when she felt the listeners were getting overwhelmed. Even though she could, she didn’t exclude Diffy who listened with rapt attention. It took almost an hour before she got up to the deal with the Lord of the Shadows.

The room grew uncomfortable as she recalled the deal. The moments where the geas guided her thoughts left holes in her memories. She could remember the final decision but not how she agreed to open the gate.

Natis interrupted her before the sex that consummated the deal. “You agreed to create the shadow land in exchange for the assistance in the fight?”

(Yes. My friends were dying and I had to save them.)

“Then you can close it. You are the focus of the gate between the Shadows and this realm. We can easily create a ritual to dispel the gate through you.”

The aching longing came back. If she closed the gate, then the shadows would no longer have their sanctuary, their home. Her children would be helpless against the forces that saw shadows as evil and destructive. A tear burned in her eyes, she didn’t want to lose the shadow kin. They were her children.

Natis chuckled. “This is good news. I can find the spells to break the—”

(No.)

The entire room jerked at her response. The only one who didn’t respond was Diffy who was glaring at Merrie with shielded thoughts.

Natis tightened his grip on his staff. “What? Why?” His voice was low, angry.

Merrie’s stomach twisted in fear and terror. She was in the room with some of the most powerful beings in her life. Natis, the Loyal, and Diffy would be almost impossible to defeat.

(These are my children.)

“They are monsters. They are no better than devils or demons.”

Diffy switched her glare to Natis for only a heartbeat. She clutched her father’s hand as the infernal rune for planning flickered. The other rune, the one for rash actions, was glowing brightly even through her shields.

Merrie felt a prickle of concern. It seemed that even her own decision to refuse Natis was feeding Diffy.

(They are contained.)

“You don’t know what. They could just claim that they won’t... what, go beyond the limits of the shadow lands. Do you know how large of a land you claimed with that stunt of yours?”

Merrie shook her head. She cringed with anticipation.

“Almost four thousand square kilometers. Your shadow land has swallowed all of Blood County and then some.”

Emotions rose up from everyone in the room except for Haviston, anger and shock were the strongest. They glared at her.

Natis took a deep breath. “You have to understand. Everyone in this county is going to die because of you. Not just one, not just a hundred, thousands. This is going to far worse than what you did to Franome City and the Shadowed District! A hundred thousand people are now at risk because of what you did!”

Merrie cringed and bowed her head. Tears burned in her eyes. She was familiar with the guilt that she inflicted on the city. Innocent people died because of her despair. She thought a shadow land far away from the city would be safer, a place of sanctuary.”

She considered sealing the gate. Even with her promise to the Lord of the Shadows. She could almost imagine what it would like to have her children dying. They wouldn’t go easily which meant it would require months if not years of cleaning out using magic and light. Her stomach soured at the thought.

Diffy’s runes for impulsive actions and the long-term planning both glowed with energy. There was a flicker of a smile on her lips that Merrie wasn’t sure she saw it before it disappeared.

Claston sighed. He looked away as frustration radiated from his thoughts.

Waver spoke up in a far calmer voice. “You need to close the gate.”

“We understand saving your friends,” said Natis. “It was a horrible way of doing it and I would have rather you let them die, but that is in the past. You can’t leave this shadow land in place. I’m sure... I’m sure Claston will pardon you for summoning it if you assist in clear it out.” He looked at the prince.

Claston looked back. “Of course.”

Tears rolled down Merrie’s cheeks. The longing was back, choking her. She fought against it even as the world seemed to spin around her. She was sick to her stomach and torn with guilt, but it

wasn't an easy choice. There were thousands of shadows that were safe in the shadow lands. It was part of her, part of her begin. It was her children, her babies. She knew what should have been the right answer, to help the others and close the gate. (I... I...)

She looked at Diffy but the infernal's face was a mask. She was hiding her emotions and her runes. Only the shimmer of her bright blue eyes gave any hint that she was waiting for Merrie's answer as much as the others.

Trembling, Merrie turned to Borias and Haviston. Borias' eyes shimmered with tears. Haviston's thoughts were guarded.

(Haviston, what do I do?)

(I cannot help you, Merrie. This is a choice you must make, even though the consequences of either appears to be dire. Just know that whatever you do choose, I have no doubt that your friends and I will support you to the limits of our abilities.)

The tears were still rolling down her face.

"Why are you hesitating?" snapped Waver. "You know the right answer."

Merrie sniffed. (No.)

"No?" asked the count. "No, you won't do it, or you don't know what is right?"

She struggled with her thoughts. Her heart and mind warred inside her, tearing her apart. She wanted to throw up. Looking up at Claston, she knew that she was about to betray him.

Claston's look softened and then he looked in agony. "Merrie—" he started.

(I will not close the portal.)

Natis drew back. "What?"

The Loyal's spells slammed back into place.

"You stupid bitch!" yelled Waver as he stepped forward. "I will have—"

"Silence!" snapped Natis. He slammed his walking stick down.

Merrie's attention was drawn to Diffy, where a look of rage was disappearing. Whatever Merrie had just said had pissed off the infernal though both of her runes were flickering even through her illusion of innocence.

"Like hell I will shut up," yelled the count. "You will close the damn portal, you stupid fucking bitch! I will not let you ruin my—"

"I said quiet!" bellowed Natis.

Waver opened his mouth to rebuke the duke.

Loyal Alestri slammed her spear down on the ground. "Loyal Alestri says quiet!"

The compulsion spell slammed into Merrie with the force of a tornado. It wrapped her thoughts tightly in it and sent her into an intense cycle of pleasure that threatened to explode. The orgasm tore through her veins, flooding her with power. She whimpered and shuddered, her juices dribbling out of her pussy and splashing to the floor.

(I recommend you don't let the orgasm escape,) projected Haviston.

Merrie whimpered, her vision blurring as it rose inside her. She reached out for her collar and channeled the pleasure into it, screaming in her mind as the pleasure crested inside her and then exploded directly into her collar.

Darkness gathered around, the shadows growing hard-edged. They stretched out from their places underneath the tables and chairs into tendrils that reached out for her.

"Loyal Alestri says—"

"Quiet!" bellowed Claston. "No more compulsions! Merrie!"

Merrie sobbed as she sank her thoughts into her collar, forcing more of her pleasure until it finally seeped away from her body. When she could see again, she was in a puddle of her own juices with the smell of her sex wafting up around her.

Haviston spoke up from his bench. "I recommend not using compulsions like that around an alpha."

Borias smacked his cousin.

Merrie shuddered. Her entire body felt frozen, a searing pleasure of cold beating through her veins. She panted for a minute before looking up. (I... will not.)

Natis approached her, his body glowing with defensive spells. "If you don't, you are committing treason on this country."

Brimming with the energy from her orgasm, Merrie found it easier to speak up. (I swore a oath. My geas prevents me from doing anything to harm this country or the royal family. I can make this choice freely so I will. I swear, my actions have not harmed this country or the the royal family.)

“The royal oath won’t save you from justice,” said the duke.

She was still sick to her stomach but she nodded. (I must accept that then because this is now my children’s home. I made a promise, a deal, and I will not go against my Lord of Shadows or our children. The Shadow Lands are contained by my deal, they cannot go beyond those limits.)

Claston groaned. “Oh, Merrie.”

She looked at him. (I’m sorry. This is important to me, more than anything else. I cannot break this promise. I made it in good faith and I feel that it fulfills my oath to country and family in spirit. I stand by it. I must honor it.)

Even though she felt the conviction of her words, she almost threw up.

Natis sighed. “You leave me no choice then.”

She looked at him. (I know.)

“Merrie Golddotter, as a duke of Franome...” Natis looked at Claston.

When Claston looked away, Merrie’s heart sank.

“... I hereby charge you with treason against Franome, the Royal Family, and the people therein.”

The tears didn’t stop rolling down her cheeks. She kept looking at Claston. (I’m sorry.)

Claston sighed and walked out of the room.

“Count, could you please have her escorted to one of your cells. I will ward it personally to prevent her from leaving until we can arrange for her arrival in Franome City.”

The uncomfortable pause that followed was interrupted by a little girl saying “fuck” before she disappeared from her chair.

t'Sade

Inner Thoughts

33

Merrie sat in the corner of the prison cell. It was situated in the basement of the count's keep, well protected against stray sunlight as long as she avoided the single narrow window ten meters above her.

Around her, the hum of wards scraped against her senses: Natis' newer ones felt like brands when she accidentally projected her thoughts, older protections to prevent anyone from digging into the stone, even wards using magic against the locks or the heavy steel door that led out. The runes on the door glowed faintly when she approached, a warning for the flame spells inscribed into the metal. The auras of the different spells were a cacophony against her senses, like a thousand rats squealing for attention.

Natis was a powerful summoner, but she found traces of divine magic in his wards. It surprised her but also made sense as she thought about it, the forces from other dimensions were almost gods, not unlike the Lord of Shadows.

She had spent an hour inspecting the wards, learning from them even as she realized there was no escape. She couldn't leave even if she wanted to. Her thoughts kept her pinned in place. It had been hours since Natis had commanded her to stay in the cell after enchanting it. The agony of being cut off from the others meant she only had her own thoughts for company.

Doubt plagued her as she kept going over the conversation in the great hall. It was obvious that everyone felt that she made the wrong choice but she couldn't identify it. She made a promise, a deal, with the Lord of Shadows to give them shelter in this world. Intellectually, she knew that a four thousand square kilometer of

land turned into a shadow land would be devastating for those already living there. It was worse than the Shadowed District and just as many people will die as they were hunted and slaughtered by the creatures of the shadows.

Her creatures. Her children. It had to be the shadow kin. She had a strange attachment to them that no other creature had ever touched. No, there were others. She had her pack in Franome City, her wonderful dogs who killed and died to protect her.

The memories brought tears but the gaping, howling darkness of their loss had finally faded. She could still longed for Tamin's comfort. The powerful Bel Dark hound had been her companion twice, one as a gift from the Lord of Shadows. He died saving her, twice.

She sniffed. The shadow kin also sacrificed themselves to save her. Was that what made her want to save them? She didn't want to know there were others who would kill and die for her, yet there were. The creatures of the shadows, from the smallest shadow of a squirrel that died in the light to the powerful tentacle beasts that radiated protective love for her. They were hers. No one else could talk to them, feel them, or cherish them. They were hers. Born from both her power and the Lord of Shadows, they were a part of her heart as much as Tamin and her pack, Kine and Rimmy, and everyone else she lost over the years.

Emotionally, the answer was also clear but opposite of her thoughts. She had a family and friends. She could save them and she did. If she had to choose, she would have done the same.

Tears burned in her eyes. She buried her face into her knees and let out a cry. Why couldn't there be easy answers? Why couldn't the geas wrapped around her soul prevent her from making the wrong choice? Why didn't it?

She couldn't see any other way. She had risked all of Franome for her family twice, once when she made the deal to save her friends and then again when she refused to close the portal. The geas should have torn her apart long before the creatures fucked her, before she asked the Lord of Shadows to give her an orgasm to limits its boundaries.

Her cloak wrapped around her, the cool fabric settling into place along her icy skin. The caress brought little shivers of pleasure

along her skin. Flips of fabric rustled along her nipples while the fluttering corner draped along her pubic mound. The cloak was cold, even for her body, and the icy touch felt good.

She sighed and let her senses drink in the sensation. Her triple heartbeat grew more rapid as the pleasures radiated through the rest of her body.

The cloak tightened, grinding her knees against her head and pinning her arms to her side. It continued to stroke along her nipples and pussy, drawing up and down with slow, torturous strokes.

Merrie moaned and tested her bounds but couldn't escape.

The cloak continued to move without her direction, pressing hard against her pussy as it opened up her lips and wormed up against her clitoris and along the sensitive spot between her pussy and her ass. The delicate, fluttering fabric teased and tickled her.

She arched her back and panted. Soft whimpers rose up from her throat, the needy sounds of a bitch who hungered for an orgasm.

The cloak ran a ridge against her entire sex, from clitoris to asshole and back again.

"More, please," she whispered.

Responding to her plea, the cloak continued to caress her. Ribbons of darkness wrapped around her body, tightening along her skin as it cupped her breasts and thighs. Pressure rippled along its length, teasing her even further as it sealed her arms tight to her body.

Merrie tested the pressure but the cloak easily held her in place. She moaned and twisted in her constraints, enjoying how the pleasure bubbling inside her. It felt like icy claws reaching from her insides, stretching along her nerves in delicious agony.

Before she could beg for more, the cloak withdrew from her sex. It kept her bound tightly but ceased to teach her sensitive parts.

Merrie moaned and twisted, the pleasure rising inside her but nowhere close enough to an orgasm she craved. She wanted to reach out with her mind and regain control over the cloak but didn't. She liked it when it responded without her direction; it was her ally but she couldn't predict every action which made every touch a pleasure.

The collar was the catalyst for the cloak's independence. She didn't dare break its control over the animated material formed by her own powers.

She wondered if the collar was the reason why the geas didn't stop her. Was the artifact more powerful than the royal geas? Would it protect her from the damage promised if she ever did anything against the royal family or the country?

Merrie tensed. She wondered if the geas had actually taken root inside her. The idea of having anything absolutely controlling her was both exciting and terrifying. She loved when she could resist, the playful way she got in trouble with Kine or even using the collar to divorce herself. The geas didn't allow for that. It was absolute.

She realized her pussy was growing wetter. The part of her who craved submission also loved the absolution. There was no escape from the collar around her neck. It had bound into her soul and kept her leashed as tightly as any master.

Merrie rubbed her thighs together to enjoy the pleasure of her slick lips stroking each other. The cloak had started a fire inside her and she wanted to nurture it into something more than just a little pleasure.

A new doubt slithered through her thoughts: what if the geas wasn't an absolute? What if the power she gained from submission was a lie?

Her attempts to masturbate faltered. Not even the cloak's bondage was enough to push her over the edge.

After another attempt, it was obvious. The doubt was too much. She had to know if the geas was there. If it wasn't, then she had made the wrong choice. The others would forgive her if she promised to close the portal.

If the geas remained, however, then she still didn't how the shadow land furthered Franome and the family.

Merrie had to find out.

She tensed at the thought, the geas was very powerful and it could kill her if she tried something as foolish as attacking Claston.

There was a brief tingle that scraped against her spine.

Merrie frowned, unsure if it was the geas or anticipation that stopped her. She shivered and bore down. Her breath came faster as

she thought about the geas. She must push harder, to know if it was really there.

Her pussy tingled with her thoughts. She remembered another time when she built up the courage to hurt herself, when Bass was being too gentle with her and she needed it harder and faster. She whimpered as she twisted and and forth, the tingling between her legs becoming a liquid heat as she remembered how much the last geas hurt when she cried out from her cage. She could still taste it in the back of her throat.

Merrie panted as she tightened her body. She knew how to trigger it. It just needed to be a thought with convention, willpower to go forward with some action that would violate the compulsion. She only had to push a little.

Just a little thought.

She moaned and squeezed her legs together. Her stomach tightened as she took a deep breath and then another. “Come on,” she whispered, “just one thought. Just trigger it a little and then you’ll know.” Her voice was hoarse from talking but she was tired of echoing inside her own thoughts.

Her body tingled with anticipation. Her pussy drooled with the realization she was about to inflict agony on herself.

She tried to let her thoughts go toward treasonous activity. Her first attempts was to imagine attacking Claston but her fantasies took hold of the thoughts and draw them into sex, fueling the ache between her legs. With a hiss, she screwed up her thoughts and imagined someone else. She couldn’t think of anyone else that would trigger the geas besides maybe killing the queen—

t'Sade

Circumstances

34

She woke up with a bloody nose and her body shaking violently. Her joints ached as she tried to push herself up but the smooth end of her wrist slipped in a puddle of something liquid. She groaned as she slumped forward, smacking into the slick liquid. When the smell of sake flooded her lungs, she realized it was her own black blood pooled underneath her.

Gasping, she managed to jam her wrists on the rough rocks underneath her and pushed herself up. The smooth ends of her wrists squelched in her blood. She could feel it dripping off her face. It also burned in the back of her nostrils and her throat.

She felt drained and exhausted. Every joint in her body ached with her effort to get into a sitting position. She shuddered and let out a deep breath. Her throat and lungs were rough; she could taste the sharpness in the back of her throat.

Merrie levered herself up; the cloak had pulled away but she didn't know when. She could feel a burning along her asshole and pussy. Even her piss hole ached. She didn't need to look down to see that black blood coated the inside of her thighs and oozed out from her nether cheeks.

With a groan, Merrie sat up. She peeled her tail out from underneath her leg with a wince and then found a comfortable position with spread thighs for balance. Every movement sent a pang of discomfort.

“That,” she gasped with her rough voice, “was a mistake.”

At least she knew that the geas was still wrapped around her soul. No action she could do was against Franome or the royal family. Even the thought—

Merrie forced her mind away from reliving the experience. She didn't think she could take another blast from an errant thought. Panting, she tried to find a comfortable position but kneeling in a puddle of her own blood seemed to be the only one.

As she tried to push away the discomfort, she brought her hands up to her throat. The sides of her slick arms pressed against her breasts. At the same time, her tail curled up and she found herself arching her back. Her nipples were standing up, as if begging to be sucked.

It only took a moment to realize someone was approaching. Her innate abilities, the powers of the alpha, allowed her to anticipate their desires. It didn't surprise her that she could sense someone even through Natis' wards, Bass had called her a "shield breaker" because she was able to pick up the thoughts of dominants even through their natural defenses.

Breathing a sigh of relief, she sank into the desires of the person approaching. They had very specific desires: an exact position of her wrists against her collar, the arch of her back, and even the distance between her knees. She smiled as she identified one of the Puppy Mill trainers, no one else had a reflexive desire to see a bitch submitting when they opened the door.

She wagged her tail, careful to hold it above the blood.

The door creaked.

Merrie held her breath and added a wiggle to her hips, rocking back and forth with her entire body.

The heavy lock scraped and groaned, then the door pushed open.

Merrie looked up, her eyes bright with hope.

There was a low, rumbling sigh. "Oh Goddess," said Bass, "there is no greater pleasure than seeing a bitch present herself."

"I be agreeing," said Borias. "There is... be fucking me, you be bleeding?"

The mage rushed forward, dropping into the blood. Magical light burst from his hand, searing into her skin and blackening it. Healing energies flooded into her, repairing the damage as fast as the light burned her away.

Merrie felt dizzy for a moment. She started to fall but Bass' large hands caught her and pulled her tight to his powerful chest. Whimpering, she sank into him.

“What happened?” Bass’ voice vibrated through her body. “Did they beat you?”

Merrie tried to speak but her voice froze for a moment. (No,) she finally projected. (I was... I made a mistake.)

A broad hand stroked her hair. “Wanted to make sure the geas was still affecting you?”

She coughed and clutched his chest with her arms.

When he wrapped his arms around her, she sank into the heat of his body. She felt safe in his grip, protected and comforted. She let out a little whine.

“There, there, little bitch. We have you now.”

Merrie sniffed and rubbed her tear-streaked eyes against his muscular pectoral. (Thank you.)

“If there was one thing I learned as a paladin, there are a lot of situations where you can be right and wrong at the same time.”

(Why didn’t the geas stop me?)

The light from Borias’ spell faded. “There be many geases in the world. Some be stupid, others be intelligent. The royal geas be one of the most powerful that a mortal human be casting without a god.”

Merrie sniffed and looked at him.

There was a sadness in Borias’ eyes as he looked back at her. He rubbed his eyes and sat back into her drying blood. “The geas still there, I can be seeing it in your energies. Very powerful but also be absolute. Whatever your thoughts, whatever your choice, it be honoring the geas.”

(But how?)

Borias struggled for a moment. “Complex geases be knowing intent and the depths of your spirit. The promise you be making, the one you be making to the Lord, it be helping Franome even if no one can be knowing how. Count Blood may not be seeing it, but I trust the geas more than I trust him.”

Bass chuckled. “I agree. You are just at a point where your choices will put you on a different path.”

(Should I close the portal?) She hated even asking.

Bass sighed and stroked her hair. His large hand easily slid down her back to her tail before he brought it back up. It was a slow, soothing touch.

Merrie blinked at the tears in her eyes and pressed her cheek against his chest. (They are my family.)

Borias opened his mouth but said nothing. He nodded and leaned back.

(I made them, not from my womb but from my energies. I can feel them in my heart when they are close. They... treat me like their mother. They love me.)

The large hand never stopped stroking her.

Borias reached out and joined with Bass, stroking Merrie's thigh and arm with slow strokes.

(The Lord asked for me to save them, my babies. My kin. It was the deal, to save you, I had to give them a home. The shadow land. I had to take it, I had to save everyone.)

"They be bound to the limits of your orgasm, right? All that space and no further?"

A memory came up, of the Lord of Shadows saying she was strong enough to consume the world. She shuddered and tried to force it out of her head. "Y-Yes," she said, not trusting her thoughts.

Bass said, "Do you think the Lord would break his side of the agreement?"

She thought for a moment and then shook her head. (No. The Lord promised.)

"Why? It's a little hard to believe a creature of darkness."

Merrie thought of the reasons she believed it, but she knew in her heart it was as important as not closing the portal. Their agreement was bound in darkness, a connection. She looked up at Bass. For all of his experience, he wouldn't understand a gut feeling. (Lemetri.)

Bass stiffened.

(Promises made, never broken, right?)

He nodded.

(I open the portal with her blood. I had it in my hair and I painted the lines on the ground.) She smiled. (I even ended the spell with a kiss.)

Borias inhaled sharply. "You be using divine magic in the promise?"

Bass groaned. "Be fucking me."

"That be my line!"

(You have to believe me.)

“I do,” Bass said as he stroked her. “I always believed you. I never doubted you made that pact, any more than I doubted that you would back out of it. Promises are a powerful thing. You can fight it, break it, or embrace it.” He chuckled. “You know what happens if you commit to too many promises though.”

He sighed and ran his thick fingers along the bottom of her jaw. “Using the blood of a goddess in a pact will carry a lot of weight. You might find it nearly impossible to break; it isn’t a compulsion but the weight of divinity holds the chains that you have to shatter.”

Borias ran his hand along her thigh but said nothing.

She sniffed. (Thank you.) She looked over to Borias. (Both of you, thank you.)

Bass leaned down to kiss her. “You are a good girl.”

Shivering with pleasure, Merrie kissed him back. (Good boy,) she projected playfully.

The thriban glared at her but the corner of his mouth was turned in a smile. He wrapped his thick arms around her and squeezed her with a tight hug.

The pressure of his powerful grip sent a thrill across her body. Merrie let out a soft moan as she sank into the embrace. Her tail thumped against Borias’ side. She smiled and rested the side of her head against the bare chest, a few of the thriban’s gray hairs tickled her nose. She drank in the musky smell of his body, a hint of sweat and a lot of sex.

Borias snorted with amusement.

“What, Borias?” asked Bass.

“Oh, nothing, good boy.”

“Don’t push it, boy.” Thriban’s body tense as he growled.

Borias ran his hand along Merrie’s buttocks. His finger trailed up underneath her tail. “Or be doing what?”

“I’ll make you regret it.”

When Borias slipped his fingers into Merrie’s pussy, she inhaled sharply before letting out moan. It felt good and she couldn’t help but rock her fingers up against his digits. He easily delved deep into her opening, caressing and wiggling against her sensitive inner walls.

The mage leaned closer to her to look directly into Bass' face. "Like this?"

For a moment, nothing happened. Then suddenly an intense warmth exploded along his fingers. It was a healing spell, the greenish energies flowing along her insides as they seeped into her skin. She wasn't injured but that meant the energy rushed through her body like a thousand lapping bitches as they sought out her injuries.

Merrie's eyes widened as the heat beat against her insides. A shudder of pleasure arced along her nerves and she tightened her body against the broad chest. She tried to clamp down on her inner muscles, not to push him out but to hold him in, but her body seemed to roll over his glowing fingers. It hurt but also felt good. The swirl of agony and ecstasy blurred her vision almost instantly.

"Like what?" asked Bass, the rumble of his voice resonating through her body and melding with the waves of pleasure that assaulted her insides.

Merrie's eyes unfocused as she pawed at Bass' chest, arching her back as she squirmed on the pulsating fingers deep inside her core.

Borias twisted his fingers back and forth, plunging them deep into her pussy until his knuckles smacked against her vulva. He drew out and slammed them back home. With every movement, pulses of energy raced along her body, heating her up and igniting an infernal deep inside her cunt. Flashes of green lit up the cell, she could feel the light as much as the pleasure.

Bass frowned, his yellowed eyes darkening. "What are you doing?"

Merrie whined. She looked up at the thriban, pleading with her eyes. Her body was on fire. She ground her hard nipples against his chest and spread her legs further to crush her clitoris against the hard ridge of his cock that had grown with her movements.

Borias leaned over her, pressing his chest against her shoulder blades. His lips caressed her ear. "When I tell you, my good little girl —"

Merrie whimpered as the pleasure redoubled. Borias' thoughts were close to hers, the playfulness and planning building up an anticipation that was hard to resist.

“—I want you to be giving Bass all your pleasure. No other be coming, just him. Can you be doing that?”

With a soft cry, Merrie levered herself off Bass’ cock and ground her buttocks up against his hand. She met his smacking knuckles with little grunts of pleasure of her own.

He drew his dripping fingers out, then jammed them deep into her pussy. Three fingers wiggled and squirmed inside her, stretching her insides as he painted the glowing magic against the most sensitive of places.

Merrie gasped, shuddering with pleasure, as she writhed on his fingers.

“Bor, what are you... doing?” Bass groaned. He unwrapped his arms around Merrie but she nestled closer, panting loudly as she thrust back into Borias’ digits. Each movement smacked her loudly first on Borias’ hands and then with her cheeks against Bass’ chest; she was fucking herself on the torturous fingers that assaulted her cunt.

“I thought you be making me regret it,” Borias said with a smile. He thrust hard while causing the magic to pulsate deep inside Merrie’s cunt.

The burst of energy shot her forward. She fell off his fingers with a wet slurping noise. With a whine, she pushed back until his fingers once again plunged deep into her cunt. Her inner walls rippled along his digits as she grew closer to an orgasm.

Bass spread his fingers along Merrie’s back. He pushed his grip down to explore what Borias was doing. His fingertips, each one thick than a human cock, caressed along the curves of her ass and then down her crack. One finger teased her sphincter before he slipped further along to spread around Borias’ thrusting fingers.

The sensation of three human digits plunging deep into her body coupled with the thick digits sliding along her slick folds was too much for Merrie. She let out a soft cry of pleasure and shuddered closer to an orgasm, her entire world centered on the five digits stroking her opening.

Bass wormed one finger into her pussy and another tickled against her anal ring. It would only take a single thrust to impale both of her openings on his thick fingers.

Her orgasm cracked open stripping away all the stress and fear away in one black moment that rushed through her body. She cried out, a half-whining cry that beat against the walls of the call. Every muscle in her body tensed around the probing fingers, grinding down as she thrust back with all her might.

Before the orgasm could explode from her thoughts, she obeyed Borias' last command and drove it directly into his his thoughts. The submission of obeyed redoubled her pleasure and she drove it deep into the former paladin's own lust.

"Oh, fuck!" gasped Bass. He clutched Merrie's buttocks hard as he came himself, one finger slipping into her asshole as he lifted both her and Borias off the ground. His cock surged to full length underneath her, popping seams of his jeans as he drove his hips up against Merrie.

The rasp of denim against her clitoris and soaked labia set off another wave of pleasure. She sobbed with ecstasy and pumped it back into Bass' thoughts.

He responded almost immediately by tightening his grip. His thick finger shoved deep into her ass, pulling it open as his other caught the slick opening of her cunt. As his thick finger forced itself into the tight opening with Borias' digits, her labia was stretched into a tight ring as it tried to accommodate the combined girths.

Bass' thick knot drove against Merrie's clitoris. It was hot and large, easily the size of her fist. The fabric and the heaviness felt like she was jerking into a solid rock. It crushed her but also set off another series of orgasms as she was pinned helplessly on powerful fingers and ground hard into the knot of a creature who would be fucking her soon.

"Bitch!" he grunted. His grip tightened and his thick finger wormed deeper into her ass. His grip was powerful, he managed to pin even Borias' fingers deep in her cunt. Only the healing magic kept her from ripping open.

Merrie cried out, both her ass and pussy stuffed. She ground her hard nipples against his chest and shared each orgasm that rippled through her with the thriban.

"Damn it, Bitch," groaned Bass, his cock thrusting hard up against her body and lifting her completely off the ground. Cum flooded through the popped seams, squirting out in all directions as

he came again. “If you are going... to do... that, then share it with that... fucking bastard!”

Merrie, panting heavily leaned forward to kiss Bass. She was tiny and vulnerable, a slip of a woman compared to his massive girth. She enjoyed the looming of the mage above her, his weight would crush her easily into another orgasm.

Behind her, she felt Borias intensifying his mental shields. He knew what was going to happen.

Bass winked over her shoulder. “Take this, asshole.”

She let out a soft cry and then slammed her orgasm against Borias’ mental defenses. It held but not for long. She ground her hips and clitoris against Bass’ hard knot and used the growing pleasure to drive her passions even higher and slammed hard against his shields.

“Be... fucking me!” moaned Borias as the orgasm pierced his defenses. He came hard in his own trousers. He let out a long gasp and slammed his hips against her buttocks. His fingers bent at a strange angle, but he didn’t seem to notice as he slammed into her again and again.

The beat of the three lovers faded slowly. Soon they were panting and looking at each other.

Bass moaned and flexed his hands, swirling his fingers in her ass and pussy for a moment before stretching her open to let Borias escape. “Okay, Bitch, let us get our clothes off and we’ll fuck you properly.”

Borias pulled away from her, his fingers making a squelch as they slipped from her slick pussy. He glowed with healing magic for a moment which grew brighter as he quickly stripped off his clothes.

Merrie started to crawl off Bass but he didn’t pull his finger from her ass. Instead he hooked it into her clenching orifice and pulled her up. She squirmed as he held her up, only the pressure in her ass keeping her from falling off.

With his other hand, Bass peeled off his jeans. A loud splash filled the cell when his cum poured out over the now ruined fabric.

Every movement he made was transmitted through the finger hooked into her. She bobbed on it, her body straining to keep her up. She felt like a puppet, completely controlled, and it reignited the pleasures for another orgasm.

Bass fished his massive cock from his jeans and wrapped his fingers around it. She couldn't see it, but she quickly felt it as he swirled the swollen again against her dripping slit. His cock head was easily the size of his fist, a powerful member that had only one purpose: to fuck hard and powerfully.

Merrie leaned into it, her eyes locking on Bass because she knew he loved her look.

He responded by pushing her down on his cock. A thick river of cum lubricated her but it was still tight. Her body strained to take all of his head, stretching further and further until her labia was once again stretched into a painful ring around the swollen curve. It was thicker than the four fingers and she gasped with pleasure as she felt every millimeter sliding into her with inescapable force.

She loved the discomfort of taking him into her. He was so thick, it felt like it would tear her in half. However, she had taken his length more than once and knew that with the pain came an intense pleasure once he shoved into her to his knot. If she could, she would take even more, forcing her body to stretch around the thickness in the middle.

Another orgasm almost set off as she thought about his entire length pinned inside her, the knot keeping her firmly in place as he kept coming. She shuddered and looked into his eyes. (Fuck me.)

Bass' cock head continued to impale her until she reached the thickest part. It was just on the edge of her pleasure and pain. He continued to push into her, curling his hips up even as he drove her down. The pressure increased until it was a sharp pain.

Then she was beyond it. Her pussy clamped down behind the head and the thick hardness sank deep into her pussy.

Bass ground down with his hand, shoving his finger deeper into her ass as he shoved her down hard on his cock. The hardness drove deeper into her, stretching her insides with its girth. It didn't take long before his knot slammed against her entrance.

It was larger than his head, harder too. The rock-like ball was slick with cum and pulsated with his head. It was also perfectly positioned to force the upper end of his cock to painfully stuff her pussy from opening to cervix with no escape for his cum; thriban were powerful breeders by nature.

She shuddered with an orgasm. It built inside her as she clamped her pussy around his cock, squeezing down with all her might as she fed the orgasm into both of her lovers.

Bass made a strangled growl and grabbed her throat with his free hand. The powerful grip pushed down on her shoulders as he guided her with his finger in her ass. His cock surged inside her and the knot lodged itself into her tortured opening.

“Fucking.” He drove down hard on her, forcing her opening to tear around his cock. The healing energies of her collar and Borias’ magic swarmed around her but the brief sharpness of pain came over only as pleasure as he forced it further into her channel.

“Bitch!” With a growl, Bass shoved her down with all his might. The knot tore through her opening, creaking her joints as it slipped past her pubic bone.

The sensation of it sinking deep into her cunt was too much. Merrie tried out as his cock stretched her insides out in all directions. She could feel her cervix straining against his head and enjoyed the hot liquid that was forced into it as he continued to cum deep inside her pussy.

Bass wasn’t done. He continued to push her down, forcing her to take more of his cock as he pulsated hotly.

Merrie was delirious with pleasure. She shuddered and squirmed, enjoying how the rock-hard length prevented her from writhing more than anything else. She cried out with another orgasm; she was utterly trapped on his cock. The pleasure burst out of her and she drove it deep into her two lover.s

Borias wasn’t idle. She felt his presence as he straddled Bass’ legs and pressed his own hot cock against her sphincter. There was no room in her pussy, not with the girth. The mage didn’t seem to care that there was a thriiban finger stretching her opening, he shoved his length into her sphincter with one powerful stroke.

The pressure increased, tearing into her insides but also setting off her orgasms.

Borias grabbed her ears, crushing them in his grip as he buried his balls into her ass.

“My finger is there,” Bass said with a smile.

Borias shrugged and pulled out. He drove back in with a fast thrust, balls deep. With every thrust, he pulled Merrie’s head back.

She was caught between Bass' hand around her throat and Borias' grabbing her ears. She couldn't move, couldn't escape. She was a submissive bitch getting fucked hard and faster.

Merrie came again.

Borias slammed into her ass, driving hard and fast. He wasn't gentle as he thrust deep into the tight opening, slipping past Bass' fingers to burst himself.

In her cunt, Bass was thrusting lower but more powerfully. Every time he drove his hips up, her entire body jerked forward.

They both rode her hard and fast, driving her into one orgasm after another. Just as they began to slow, her shared orgasms inspired them to keep fucking.

Merrie loved it, even as the world grew black around her. She flailed her hands helplessly, beating against Bass' chest as she came again and again. The energies of ecstasy and submission burned deep inside her, flooding her body with an indescribable force that threatened to burst out of her chest no matter what she did.

Just as she felt her thoughts beginning to crumble, she directed the pleasure into her collar.

The ecstasy exploded and shot into it, disappearing from her senses. She felt it being sucked out of her as she came hard and long, wailing with pleasure as every muscle in her body locked into hardness.

They held there for a moment, two men coming deep into her body. They filled her completely, stretching her insides and forcing her belly to swell with the volume of cum.

Merrie slumped forward, smiling. She panted as she remained pinned on two cocks. (T-Thank you.)

Bass, his skin slick with sweat, reached up and stroked her cheek. "Good, fucking girl."

She shuddered with a faint orgasm.

"Being good," gasped Borias as he settled inside her. His cock surged a few more times, pumping the last of his orgasm into her abused asshole.

One Last Chance

35

Merrie woke up sandwiched between Bass' powerful chest and Borias' thighs. It was a warm, comforting pressure with her naked breasts up against Borias' chest and her legs spread around his hips. Bass had his thick arms around both of them, pinning them all together. His hips were up against Merrie's buttocks, almost crushing them but also keeping his long cock nestled between her legs. The small bump that would become his knot had lodged itself between her cheeks, a reminder of how hard and long he could get.

It didn't matter that Borias was half the size of Bass, they were both talented masters and skilled lovers. In another life, she could easily see herself becoming one of their alphas. Unlike her first true master, both men were more than capable of giving her the degradation, abuse, and love she craved.

Sadly, it was Kine who had saved her from Rakin's wrath. She was thankful for that but he was never able to fully satisfying her submissive nature.

With a smile, she reached out for their thoughts. Flashes of dreams burst from the thriban's mind, he was still sleeping and nowhere close to waking up. She got images of battles and orgy, it blurred together. The images were detailed and she found herself growing wetter as they projected against her lust.

Borias also slept. His shields were far more powerful than Bass', but Merrie easily slipped pass them to scan through his dreams. The human mage dreamed of Franome City, the one place he could no longer visit.

Merrie sighed and projected a wave of affection for both, careful not to wake them up. She nestled back against Borias' neck and closed her eyes.

Sleep didn't come.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and looked around the cell. She could feel thoughts focused on her, a desire that prevented her from sleeping. After double-checking that both men were still firmly asleep, she gathered the darkness around her and used it to transform her body into shadows.

The two men slumped together. Borias made a muttering noise and then rested his head against Bass' check.

Merrie smiled to herself. She reformed her body a few meters away from the sleeping men, her pale skin no doubt hidden by the lack of light in the cell. Musty smells swirled around her, coupled with a cool breeze that danced along her ears and tail. She turned into it, following the air currents until she reached the door.

It was cracked open.

A flicker of concern flashed through her thoughts. The door shouldn't have been open, she was a prisoner. Worried that it was a trap, she considered closing the door and going back to sleep but she couldn't. She was being drawn. Trembling, she reached up with her severed wrist and pulled it open.

The hallway was dark, with a single candle burning at one end. She sniffed, catching the scent of smoke of recently extinguished torches filling the air. Looking up, she could see where the blackened ends still smoldered. Someone had put them out, someone aware of her vulnerability to light.

Worrying her lip, Merrie peered further out of the cell. Her attention was drawn to one end of the hall where a single man stood at the T-intersection. It was Claston.

Merrie's tail began to wag, her entire body rocking. It only lasted a few seconds before she took in the serious look on his face and the way he held himself stiffly. With a frown, she crawled out of the cell.

Claston beckoned for her and then pointed down the hallway to his right.

She glanced back at the cell with Bass and Borias.

He shook his head and pointed against down the hallway. The command was silent but clear, she needed to follow Claston.

A little thrill fought with the growing concern inside Merrie. She turned to close the door but her cloak fluttered out of the darkness with a rush. It closed it behind her before wrapping around her body firmly. Merrie sent a pulse of affection toward it, (Good boy.)

The cloak rippled for a moment, squeezing her body in a wave before settling down.

Steeling herself, Merrie crawled down the hallway. She sent a pulse of greeting and affection.

Claston put a finger on his lip to silence her. His movements were curt, sharp. His emotions were shrouded though, a dark mixture of frustration and sadness and a bit of anger swarming through his thoughts.

The prickle of fear rose inside Merrie.

They headed down a hallway and then a second one. The rough stone scraped at her wrists and knees, reminding her she was a cropped bitch following the prince of the country. As they approached the end of the second hallway, she started to feel Loyal Alestri's magical spells; the combat magic was active and ready, the cacophony of the overlapping spells scraped at Merrie's senses.

It also told her where they were going, to a large door at the end of the third hallway. She could feel warding magic inscribed on the door and leaking through the stones, the room on the other side was well protected against intrusion. There were also magic to prevent eavesdropping or letting sounds escape.

The urge to activate her own combat spells rose up. It felt like she was being brought into a secretive execution. Despite her fear, she didn't, she had to trust Claston with her life. Even without the geas, she would have trusted him.

Past the door, he held it open for her to crawl into the dimly lit room.

She was immediately aware of the Loyal's presence, it was hard to miss the series of combat spells humming in the corner. At the table, there was three chairs. Duke Natis sat in one of them, his face twisted into a scowl. The older man's staff rested against the edge of the table, flickering with a strange mixture of divine and arcane energies.

Merrie glanced around. There was no one else. She spotted more spells on the inner walls, they were designed to prevent shadow

creatures from escaping. It was a trap. With a whine, she looked up at Claston.

The prince sighed and closed the door, sealing up the wards. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry," Natis said. "Treason is a serious charge."

Any hope of leniency faded. Merrie ducked her head. (I'm—)

The Loyal twitched.

(—sorry.)

Claston sank into a chair. "Why won't you close the portal?"

Merrie looked at the third chair. She wasn't sure if she should sit in it; she knew the Loyal wouldn't but she wasn't sure if the count would arrive. After a few moments, she decided she could vacate if the count showed up. With a soft grunt, she crawled up on the seat of the chair and sat down with her nipples just on the ridge of the table and her tail threaded through the back.

Her effort gave her a moment to gather her thoughts. (I cannot break this promise to the Lord of Shadows.)

"You've created the largest shadow land known to history. Thousands, hundreds of thousands will die when those creatures hunt. You've killed all of them."

She ducked her head. (I cannot.)

Natis rolled his eyes and let out an exasperated sigh. "Are you sure you didn't bound with Bass? Promises are his thing."

Merrie shook her head. (I don't get power from this promise, but I did promise them a home in exchange to save—)

"You should have let them die!"

(They are my friends!) The shadows in the room began to waver.

The Loyal tapped her spear against the ground as the buzz of her spell filled the air.

A bolt of fear coursed along Merrie, but she didn't back off. (You know know what it is like trying to pull your body together. I spent a year being burned away and reassembling. A year of agony trying to gather myself long enough to find safety and I couldn't even do it without your help!)

She planted one of her wrists against the table. (Bass, Borias, Tabitha...,) she hesitated when a strange sense of forgetfulness slammed into her. With a cough, she continued, (... and Cinthia are my friends! They would have protected me.)

“You have Claston.”

(The prince is a prince.) She looked at Claston sadly. (He couldn't have chosen me, even if he wanted to and everyone knows that. He can't have a bitch, not when he has a chance at the crown or if he needs to marry for alliances. He has to be proper and noble and accessible. He couldn't ever be my master.)

Claston ducked his head.

(Any relationship I have with him will, by necessity, be hidden in the shadows. Out here, at the Puppy Mill, I could have been safe. I... I need Borias, I need all of them. So, no, I couldn't let them just die.)

Natis sighed. He fingered his staff before saying, “Everyone dies, girl. Even your family.”

The image of the shadow kin sacrificing themselves rose up. A tear burned in her eye. “No,” she said with a rasp, “I can't lose any more of them. They shouldn't have to kill themselves to save me. I... I... I can't lose them again.”

The duke did a double take and then looked at her. “Lose them? Bass never killed himself... who are you talking about?”

Tears ran down her cheeks. She tried to stop them but the emotions were rising in a rush. “The kin. The shadows. They all keep sacrificing themselves to save me. They kill for me, they die for me. Every time, it tears me open. I don't want to fight. I didn't want Lemetri to come after Bass, I just wanted him to be safe. I wanted him to have a home, a place he... I... we all can be away from the dying.”

She sobbed. “Dixie died for us. Tamin died. The kin died. Thousands and thousands of creatures swarmed out and died. I don't want that! I don't want to have my pack die again!”

Natis stared at her for a moment. Then he set his jaw. “Hundreds of thousands of beings—intelligent beings—of this world will die because you won't close that portal. You will murder all of them just to save a bunch of adventures and creatures from another world.”

Merrie wiped the tears. Even then, the idea of closing the portal sickened her. (I can't.)

“You mean you won't.”

She took a deep breath. (It may be treason, but in my heart, I'm doing the right thing. I have honored the geas that has bound my soul.) Her heart beat faster. (I will not close the portal.)

Claston sighed. "How do we know the geas is still on?"
(It is.) "It's there."

Merrie glanced at Natis, uncomfortable that they spoke at the same time, and then back to Claston.

The prince shook his head. "Please, Merrie? For me? Close it. That's an..."

The air grew electric, a tension rising up.

She sniffed and shook her head. (Please don't.)

Claston's eyes shimmered with his own tears. "I'm sorry."

He took a deep breath before he said, "As crown prince of Franome and by the power of your geas, I order—"

Merrie closed her eyes, cringing at the agony that would come.

"—to close the portal immediately."

Nothing happened.

Merrie opened one eye and then another. No acid burned the back of her throat, no twisting of her insides slammed into her.

Claston looked confused. "What? What is going on?"

She thought about saying no, but the geas didn't respond. Curious, she thought about obeying his order and felt a tingle coursing along her spine. It was a moment of discomfort, it could have been imagined or not.

The prince looked at Natis. "Natis?"

Natis frowned. "I don't understand, the geas won't let her disobey a direct order."

With a whimper, Merrie looked around. Something was building inside her, a pressure against her thoughts. It rapidly filled her and her whine increased.

"Merrie?"

She started to take a deep breath but then spoke before she realized she was saying anything. "No."

Claston jerked. "What?"

"No." She felt sick to her stomach. (No, I will not close the portal.)

The prince stood up. "I order you—"

(Do not obey the prince,) came an powerful command from the collar. It spoke in her thoughts, resonated with her own words, but the overwhelming pressure was not her own. It was a command from her mistress, to be absolutely obeyed. The power of it surged

through Merrie's veins, flooding her with energy as an orgasm ripped across her body.

"—to destroy that portal!" The prince leaned over the table toward her.

Shuddering with the intensity of pleasure that wracked her body, she could only stare mutely. Her insides were twisting, her pussy on fire and her cunt drooling with excitement. The smell drifted up from beneath her body, scenting the air with her lust. She opened her mouth to speak.

Claston's face purpled. "I am the prince! Obey me!"

Merrie gulped and shook her head. Even if she wanted to obeyed him, her mistress to commanded her. (No.)

"You must."

(I serve Franome but I will not close that portal!)

The table between the prince and Merrie exploded. There was a flash of green as the Loyal appeared in the wreckage. Shards of wood flew in all directions, scraping Merrie's face and body.

The explosion knocked her back off the chair. She started to flail, but then used the power humming inside her to dissolve into darkness and reform a few meters away. With a snarl, she wrapped the darkness around her and activated her combat spells.

Claston regained his feet. "Loyal!"

"Yes, my prince."

"Command her."

"Loyal Alestri says—"

Merrie lunged for the Loyal.

"—sit!"

The order crashed into Merrie, driving her into the ground with the force of a maul. Before she could regain her wits, she was sitting on her naked buttocks on the ground. Icy tears ran down her cheeks, splashing on her bare breasts.

Claston stormed around the Loyal. His face was a mask of rage and sorrow. "Last chance, destroy that portal."

Merrie trembled as she fought against the command echoing inside her head. "N-No. I will not."

"Damn it, Merrie. Thousands will die! You have to obey!" Tears ran down his face as he shook his head. "You have to!"

She sniffed and shook her head. (I—)

The Loyal surged forward, the tip of her spear appearing underneath Merrie's throat. It sliced into the skin, cutting a shallow line from collar to her chin. Instantly, icy blood welled up along the cut.

Merrie jerked from the pain but felt a surge of pleasure racing through her. She was helpless and her body responded with energy. “—will not destroy that portal. I made a pact—” That felt like the right word. “—with the Lord of Shadows that does not violate my other oath. The shadow land will remain as long as I can give my kin the home they asked for.”

“Damn it!” Claston stormed away. “Natis, do it.”

Natis stood up from his chair, untouched by the explosion that had destroyed the table. He picked up his staff and walked over. As he did, energy swirled around him. It was a compulsion spell but one that burned with brilliance from the energy pouring into it from the staff.

Merrie whimpered, fear rising up against her frustration, rage, and sorrow.

“Merrie, you remain charged with treason against Franome, the Royal Family, and the people therein. By the power granted to me by Her Royal Highness, Queen Vikia Pador, I command you to present yourself at the front door of Royal Courts in Franome City in three days at fo... first bell.”

The spell slammed into her. It was a powerful suggestion but she could feel her submissive nature mutating. It twisted and empowered, growing to consume her thoughts with an overwhelming desire to present herself. There was nothing, no force short of her death, that would stop her from being exactly where Natis commanded her.

Reflexively, her timekeeping spell activated and gave her the exact number of seconds before she had to submit herself for treason.

The urge to race to Franome City rose up, powerful and choking. Her body blurred with the desire to lash out at the words and head directly there. She fought it. “I-I have to say goodbye.”

Natis shook his head.

“At least tell Bass... Borias... Tabitha...” Every name was an agony to pull out. She felt herself dissolving into darkness as the compulsion fueled her magic. “Cinthia...”

There was one more. She knew there was another name but she had forgotten it. She strained against the spell, tasting her black blood on her tongue as she fought with tears and magic. She didn’t know why, but the last name was important.

Her thoughts slid away and she almost dissolved instantly.

With a start, Merrie realized they had forgotten someone. “Fir! What happened to Fir!?”

She only had a chance to see a surprised look on both Claston and Natis’ face before her willpower crumbled and the compulsion forced her to dissolve into darkness. The overwhelming urge to rush to Franome City slammed into her and she flowed for the door.

The wards resisted her but she couldn’t stop.

When she couldn’t get through the wards, she gathered up her orgasmic power and ripped into the Shadows. The thin barrier of the shadow land made it easy to create a small portal. She surged into it, drinking into the darkness and boiling creatures before racing toward Franome City.

t'Sade

Home Repairs

36

Merrie slipped out of the Shadows in the one place she knew the barrier between the worlds would be the weakest, her former home. Her naked knees thumped against the rotted wood of the stairs. One wrist caught on the side of the stairs but her other flailed into empty air.

Her cloak poured out from the rip in the Shadows, wrapping around her breasts, hips, and pussy with a tight, comforting pressure. Black tendrils snapped out to catch other parts of the railing. She was instantly pinned in place.

The wood underneath her knee snapped and fell down. It plummeted a few feet into a pile of rotted woods, clattering loudly among the rusted remains of a cage Kine had put underneath the former stairs.

Flush with power from her orgasm and her journey through the Shadows, Merrie easily shifted into shadows and flowed down the side of the stairs back to the solid ground. When she reformed back into a naked bitch, even the floorboards creaked and a puff of dust rose up around her.

She fought back a cough and looked around her. It had been over a year since she left her home and it looked like a rotted building was on the verge of falling down. Deep beneath the crumbling wood, hunks of plaster, and leaking roof, she could feel the source of the rot: the black magic that permeated every part of the manor. It had been sunk into the foundation itself, layers after layers of protective spells that prevented most people from even seeing the house. It was a shade spell, a shadow version of a repulsion. There were also warnings and protection along with the spells. The individual

magics were knotted together into a complex weave that weakened the barrier between reality and the Shadow while protecting her home.

The wards were tripped, but no one had repaired the fraying spells. Even the shade had started to fade, no doubt letting someone to enter the property and set off the alarms.

Even though she was only going to be there for a few days—the clock in her head told her exactly how much time—Merrie closed her eyes and cast her senses into the spells to repair the wards of her home. It took her a moment to remember how everything worked together before she could start repairing the weave. As she did, she added her new experiences with magic to enforce it and make it last longer.

A sad part of her realized that she might not be returning to the place after her court visit. It might be the last time she would be there. If that was the case, repairing the spells would be an exercise in foolishness.

She tore her thoughts away and focused on repairing the spells. After an hour of concentrating, she had enough repaired that she could use only a portion of her attention to maintain the words. She took a deep breath and opened her eyes again.

The inside of the manor hadn't changed with the repaired spells but the atmosphere had changed. There was a presence of darkness in the air, a rippling of another realm in every pitch black shadow cast by the faint light leaking in through the broken ceiling and through the rotted holes along the walls.

It felt more like home.

She smiled to herself, a bit sadly, and began to inspect her surroundings. It didn't matter how repaired or fixed the building was before she had died, the shadows had corroded everything: hinges were rusted completely through, pots had collapsed underneath their weight, and even the massive cages in the kitchen were nothing more than rusted fangs sticking out of the floor.

Merrie paused at the cages, remembering her pack. The central cage, hers, was ruined just like the others. She had almost died in it and the memories of watching Kine die in front of her echoed across her mind. The pain still gnawed at her heart, but she forced herself to walk past it and peer out into the yard.

The present of the other realm had twisted the plants. They were still thick and weedy, but everything looked wilted. Pale mushrooms stuck out along the cobblestone trail that lead to the back where she had once had a gang-bang with her hound back for her master's pleasure. She smiled, a memory of pleasure flickering along her senses.

Turning back, she headed through the house as she relived memories, both good and bad.

As she headed back through the entry hall, she noticed it was almost sunrise. Pale light streamed through the cracks in the ceiling, walls, and shattered windows. The beams were easy to avoid despite the brilliance hurting her eyes. She considered her options and came up with two choices, the basement and her master's bedroom. She chose the latter, it was where she felt safest.

The master bedroom was large. The far wall had been destroyed in an attack against the manor but she had them repaired knowing about the corruption from the manor's magic. It was solid and thick, crafted from dense rock and magically enhanced mortar. In the year, it only had a few cracks along the wall but no light leaked through the solid walls.

She smiled to herself and crawled inside.

The cloak closed the door behind her, plunging the room into pitch darkness.

The icy pressure of the room was a comfort, tickling her skin as she looked around. While the wall had survived a year with little damage, the massive bed had not. The fabric of the mattress had ripped apart, spilling straw and cotton across the floor. Much of it had already crumbled into dust that blew up in little clouds every time she exhaled.

She headed to the one thing that survived inside the room, a large iron cage. With her magical senses, it glowed faintly with the spells to ensure she couldn't escape even with magic. Kine had used it to "punish" her and she loved every minute of it. She sighed and rubbed her cheek against the cold metal before crawling inside.

The memories flooded through her, bringing a flicker of excitement cascading along her senses. She circled a few times and then curled up on the hard metal. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes.

t'Sade

Just two days and then she'll turn herself in.

Home Invasion

37

The creak of a rusted gate opening ripped Merrie from her shadowed dreams. The memories of having hundreds of bodies pressed up against her, clawing and kissing, faded away with a shudder as her attention was brought firmly into reality.

She had two days and four hours left before she had to be in front of the court. The need to present herself hovered in the back of her mind but it wasn't overly powerful; that would change as she grew closer to the time.

Merrie didn't move at first, forcing her body to remain still as she imagined some fell creature looming over her ready to strike. Reaching out with her physical senses, she ignored the distant sounds of multiple people walking through the overgrown plants on the front walk to focus on the room around her.

The triple beat inside her gave her comfort as she listened for another heart, another breath, even another scuff of fabric. She inhaled slowly, tasting the air but finding nothing more than sake and dust.

When she caught no hint of anything near her, she focused next on gathering energy to cast her combat spells. Black calligraphy swam across her mind, forming into the spells that had been long practiced into second nature: armor, speed, and strength. Energies swirled around her insides with an icy flare as her heart beat faster.

Perking her ear up to listen better, she focused both her physical and magical senses toward the intruders. Her ears twitched, tilting to catch every hint of sound.

There was three of them, walking up the walk steadily, chatting as they did. All three were shielded but the defenses were the

natural ones that occurred with any skilled individual. None of them appeared to be ready for a fight, nor did they have the continually maintained defenses of a psychic who always assumed an intrusion.

Confusion rippled across her thoughts. They were intruding in her home but they weren't prepared for a battle nor did they move as if they were not in danger. It seemed like a casual visit despite them penetrating the shade that she had just enforced.

Merrie slowly pushed herself up on her knees and wrists as she focused on the intruders. Fear raced along her mind as she scanned for how they entered her home.

She found it after only a few seconds, they were following a beacon that had been placed under the stairs. The energies were arcane in nature but very focused, it drew a second lodestone that the lead intruder had toward it despite the shade's pressure to look and walk away.

With a silent snarl, she melted into shadows and raced along the floorboards as she headed for the beacon. More spells raced along her mind, gathering the darkness around her until she was nothing more than shadows.

Underneath the stairs, she reformed with her defense spells bristling. Anger burned in her mine, causing the spells to ripple and distort. Her cloak peeled out of the wall of darkness behind her and wrapped around her, the semi-sentient fabric wrapped around her limbs as she looked down at the item that broke her defenses.

It was a Whore's Guild seal. A black ribbon folded over itself with an white pin with a silhouette of a woman dancing on it. It looked a lot like hers, before she was destroyed by a goddess.

The energies in the seal were set down with precision, a very simple spell with a lot of power to get through the shade. She could easily destroy it, but seeing her guild's symbol in her house made her hesitate. Why would they be coming back?

Curious, she cast her senses back to the three intruders chatting as they approached. This time, she sank into the lead one's shields to identify who was coming into her house.

His mind was burning and he danced among the flames. The heat around him, though there was little, showed as ghostly flames where it rose up from a cat corpse and an old vent across the street. But the mansion, it was black as it was cold, a forbidding place. He could feel the spell driving

him to look away, the only way he could keep going was to follow the tugging and have faith that it would lead him past the gates.

It was Scorch, one of the guardians of the guild. The fear faded away into a blossoming joy. Her tail wagged, thumping lightly on the rotted staircase.

“Stop!” snapped Scorch.

“What is it, Scorchy?” Merrie recognized Elf’s voice. Another of the guild guardians, he was a submission who used butterflies and rainbows to devastating effect.

“Quiet! I hear something.” There was a flare of energy as fire spells began to gather around him. She felt his mental shields hardened in anticipation of an attack.

Moments later, the other two warriors also prepared for combat with flashes of magic.

Elf’s energies were brilliant, almost too bright to sense even over her magical senses. His defenses were butterflies flying in a cloud around him. She knew from experience that he used clouds of butterflies for everything, from cleaning a room to stripping the flesh off an opponent’s bones.

Unlike the first two, the third person with Scorch and Elf was a stranger to Merrie. She could feel feminine energies leaking through the shields along with a watery taste with a hint of necromancy and death. The water mage’s power was reacting to Scorch’s power and Merrie expected to see steam gathering between them.

Scorch started up the stairs, his heavy boots causing the rotted boards to creak. “Elf, out front and guard. Wight, with me.”

“Be safe, Scorchy-poo!”

“As you command,” said Wight with a raspy voice.

“Be careful, anything that can break into Bitch’s house can probably eat us.” He chuckled. “It’s probably hungry too.”

Wight came up behind him. She was a slender woman with very small breasts and boyish hips. Her short white hair was limp against her face as if she had just come out of the shower. In her left hand, she had a large hunting knife with a translucent blade that steamed with the heat radiating from Scorch.

She peered around. "That isn't helping me. This place is creepy enough as it is. It always feel like there is something about to jump out at me."

"Scared of shadows?"

"Didn't you say the previous owner had shadow powers or something?"

Scorch smirked. He held up his hand and a ball of flame appeared in it. It started as a golden flame but quickly grew brighter, turning blue and then a brilliant white. Spears of light cut into the darkness, forming beams that blurred her vision.

Before she could duck down, the light splashed over her skin. Immediately, a searing pain raced up her arm. It set her nerves in agony. With a whimper, she threw herself behind the rotting stairs.

Wight let out a scream of her own. "I just saw something move!"

Flashes of magic exploded toward her. It was a spear of black-streaked water.

Merrie's cloak billowed out between her and light. The rippling darkness shielded her from Scorch's light and Wight's attack spell. The spear splashed against the cloak, ripping a hole through the animated darkness.

She flung herself further into the darkness, letting her body dissolve into shadows. She streaked back to her room, projecting as she went. (Kill your spell, please!)

"B-Bitch!?! Why?"

(The light burns!)

"Oh, oh!" The spears of light faded as she reached the hallway.

Without looking back, she dove down the hall while radiating fear and pain.

"Bitch, what is going on? Why does light hurt you? It never did before."

Whimpering, she reformed into her human form and crawled into the bedroom. Her body still burned from the light but it was slowly subsiding. She managed to project back to him, coloring her thoughts with fear and urgency. (I merged with the shadows when I came back. Ever since, sunlight kills me and bright light causes my skin to melt.)

"Oh, fuck me. Seriously? Wight, stand down. Elf!"

Merrie ducked her head. (Sorry.)

“Scorchy-poo?”

“Bitch is here.”

“Bitchy!?” Elf’s voice rose an octave. The brimming hope brought a smile to Merrie’s lips. “Where is she?”

There was a flash of rainbow. It reflected off the walls, sending little shooting pain across her skin.

Merrie whimpered and tucked her body tight against the cage, shielding herself as best she could as the cloak tightened.

“No, no light!”

“What? Why?”

“Something’s wrong.”

Elf gasped.

“Take Wight and fly home. Bitch is hurt and she needs us.”

As brilliant as Elf’s emotions were, feeling them suddenly clamp down surprised Merrie. “Wight,” Elf said in a flat, serious tone.

Merrie felt Elf and Wight leave and Scorch approach. The fire mage’s boots thumped loudly against the creaking wooden boards. He walked slowly down but there was no light following after him; his fingertips scraped against the wall.

“Bitch, are you down this way?”

Merrie sent an image of room and hall to Scorch. It was a detailed map but she could easily see through the darkness to give him a clear image of where to stand and where to turn.

He shivered, fear and surprise and joy bubbling in his thoughts, and then came in. Walking blind but surely, he came around to Merrie’s cage and crouched down.

Merrie let out a soft whine and reached out for him with her severed wrist.

He took it. Bringing it up to his cheek, he rested it against the roughness of his beard. “They said you were dead. It tore Nir’s heart out, she cried for days. All of us were broken when we heard.” There were tears in his eyes.

(I did die.) Painful memories flashed through her mind, of the goddess Lemetri shattering her bones. (A goddess destroyed me.)

“Don’t tell Wight that. Her ex-husband was a necromancer.” Scorch chuckled. “Well, until he ended up dead and she fled her in-laws who wanted her body to bring her back. She joined the guild a few months ago. Sweet girl, bony ass though.” He shifted around to

sit down on the ground. "Took a shine to Nir though, so we've been spending a lot of time together."

(Fucking?)

"Of course."

Merrie grinned. It wasn't long ago that Scorch was rude to everyone, an angry whore that was protective and private. By the time he married Nir, a girl that Merrie brought to the guild, he had softened up.

(How is Nir?)

Scorch sighed and the smell of ash grew stronger. "She grows more beautiful every day."

Merrie picked up different thoughts, unsaid but fore in his thoughts. (She's pregnant?)

He grinned and reached out. He scratched Merrie along her head, finding a sensitive spot behind her ear. "It must be hard to keep secrets from you."

(Sorry. Congratulations.)

"Thank you. I'm pretty sure I'm the father too."

She send out a questioning pulse.

"It's kind of hard between the gang-bangs, bukkaka scenes, and everything else she does for the guild. We had her off the sterility rune but she didn't want to stop working." He chuckled. "I don't mind though, I'm going to be the child's father no matter who's cock it came from."

Merrie grinned and leaned into his scratching fingers. Her tail thumped against the bars.

"How... how did you die?"

She started to gather her thoughts to send her memories.

He held up his other hand. "No, wait. Kirin will want to know. Might as well wait for the boss, otherwise I'll have my ass handed me be again. I really don't like it when she spansks me."

"Aw," said the guild mistress as she stepped into the room. "That was sweet of you. You are also correct."

Both of them jumped. She didn't hear Kirin appear.

Kirin was a large-breasted woman wearing nothing more than a single yellow corset. Her breasts stood out, nipples sticking out. Between her legs, an inhumanly large horse cock swayed between her legs. Seeing it, Merrie felt a surge of desire rising up. She

wanted to feel it inside her, to have the massive shaft tearing into her body.

Her pussy grew slick with the memory of feeling Kirin's acidic cum burning her insides.

A light flickered underneath the corset, responding to Merrie's desire. Years ago, Merrie had seen the Infernal Marks that burned on Kirin's chest and marked her as having traded her soul to devils for power.

Setting down three large bottles of wine, Kirin sat down lightly on the ground with one knee pressed up against Scorch's and the other against the cage. Casually, she reached down to grab her horse cock, pulled it out from underneath her thigh, and dropped it heavily on her leg. It made a loud thump, one that cause Merrie's pussy to clamp down with desire. The tip of Kirin's cock almost reached her ankle.

"I'm so glad to see that your death was temporary," she said with a grin to Merrie. "I'll admit, I was worried that I would never see my good girl again."

Merrie shivered at hearing the phrase "good girl." Years ago, Bass had imprinted it into her, causing a flush of pleasure every time someone said the words. Her tail thumped faster.

Kirin grabbed one of the bottles. Using her thumb, she snapped off the head off and took a long swig of it. The broken glass from the bottle cascaded off her knuckles and to the ground.

Up close, Merrie could feel energy gathering inside Kirin, it came as she chugged the bottle with casual grace but surprising speed. She gulped loudly as the sounds grew more hallow. Kirin let out a gasp when she finished. She set down the empty bottle with a clink. "Want to tell me what happened?"

(How far back?)

"Start with the day you left the Guild with that paladin, Gillette."

Merrie shuddered with the memory of the paladin who almost killed her. She thought back for a moment, working through the hazy memories that had faded with the long periods of agony. (Gillette was a trap.)

She closed her eyes as sorrow rose up. (He killed Thorn and Tamin.)

Both Scorch and Kirin shuddered at the pain that Merrie accidentally projected.

Kirin rested her hand on Merrie's shoulder. "Can you show me?"

With a deep breath, she cast a spell to dredge her memories and began to project the detailed images and emotions into both Kirin and Scorch.

Bad News

38

(And then, they told me to show up at the court in three days. That's —) The time came rising up in Merrie's thoughts. (—one day and nineteen hours left).

The realization that she would be tried for treason in less than two days brought a sick feeling to her stomach. She twisted and rubbed up against Kirin's thigh, dangerously close to the horse cock that she had been smelling for hours. The thick member was always half-hard and thicker than anything else. Her pussy grew wetter at the thought of it impaling her.

Kirin stroked Merrie's cheek slowly. "I can't imagine how you survived so much pain."

Her finger traced down to the heavy collar around Merrie's neck. "I know this doesn't protect you from the agony, only prevents you from truly dying."

Merrie nodded. The collar was always there, both on her body and in her mind. She could feel it, though she didn't understand it anymore. It was her but it wasn't, it gave commands that she didn't send through the link. It reminded her when she thought the cloak was a different creature, and not her subconscious.

Kirin groaned and rubbed her head with her other hand. "Psionic communication is brutal, isn't it?"

Merrie rubbed her cheek against Kirin's thigh, inching closer to the thick shaft she craved. It had been almost a day since her last orgasm and she could feel the hunger gnawing on the edge of her thoughts.

A light flickered underneath Kirin's corset. She shook her head and reached out for a bottle of wine, but all three were empty from the hours of retelling her tale.

Merrie watched, she knew that Kirin needed alcohol as much as Merrie needed sex. It was source of their powers and colored how they saw everything. (You aren't psychic and you have strong mental defenses so I couldn't easily send a single condensed thought to you.) She looked up at Kirin, easily seeing in the dark. (I would have stopped.)

Kirin shook her head and brought her hand back to her head. "No, no. I needed to know that to figure out how to help you."

(You can fight a treason charge?)

The guild mistress chuckled. "Not easily. You already have a lot of evidence against you, namely the shadow land. Being responsible for Lem—"

Merrie stiffened.

"—that bitch's death isn't going to help your case. Death of a goddess isn't illegal, per se, but she had some influence on Franome politics and her death left a power vacuum. The paladins are still there and they are getting desperate."

(If they didn't attack, I would have never done that.)

"No matter why it happened, any court case is going to focus on that shadow land. Thousands may die because of it, ten of thousands maybe. Blood County is far away, but we all still remember the Shadowed District."

Merrie's ears flattened.

Kirin let out a soft cooing noise and stroked Merrie's cheek again before sliding her fingers up to scratch behind the ears.

Merrie moaned softly and leaned into the fingers. (I was in a dark place. Kine....)

"Sadly, no one knows how to handle the mental health of the truly powerful. Not to mention, you were one of those things that should have never been forgotten." She chuckled and tugged lightly on Merrie's ear, sending little flashes of pleasure to race down Merrie's spine and gather between her legs. "Specially sexy little dog girls who could destroy the city in a fit."

(Kirin?)

"Yes?"

(Why did the geas let me summon the shadow realm?)

The guild mistress' hand stopped for a moment. She held herself still for a moment and then sighed. "I don't know. I think no one would. I've been thinking about that ever since you got to that part. I can't imagine any way that ever summoning another realm into Franome wouldn't be violating the Royal Geas."

Merrie thought back to her attempts to test the geas. Her body tensed as her thoughts got dangerously close to forbidden thoughts. Tensing, she tore her thoughts away and shoved them into the back of her thoughts where they would never rise up. (Is the geas still affecting me?)

Kirin chuckled. "Yes. For anyone else, I would ask the same question but you're an Alpha. We have many years of proving that you take even the slightest mental control and magnify it. Your very nature of submission, your desire to be dominated, is what does it. You get power from it and a geas is one of the ultimate forms of submission, one that you cannot resist."

A heat flashed across Merrie. She pressed her thighs together as liquid heat gathered along her pussy. Knowing that she couldn't do something did bring a surge of excitement to her.

"There is no chance, short of a god and probably not even then, that you have gotten rid of the geas. I don't even think your prince could do it. It would need the queen."

Squirming, Merrie crawled up Kirin's leg. She kissed along the softness, tracing her way up to Kirin's hip. (Wouldn't that mean I didn't commit treason? Can't we tell—)

Her body tensed, muscles turning rock hard as the sick feeling resumed.

"You can't." There was tears in her voice.

(Why not?)

"Because letting the world know that the Royal Family used one of their powerful spells on a common whore would threaten the family." She winked. "A very uncommon and unique whore, but you are still a bed-warmer despite your many lovers."

Merrie sniffed. (I can't even show them proof?)

"No, you can't." Kirin wiped the tears from her eyes. "The one thing we could use to prove beyond a doubt that you didn't threaten

the lives of thousands is the one thing we can't show. And... I suspect that your prince could speak on your behalf either."

A small part of Merrie's hope crumbled. Claston had spoken at Rakin's trial. He had the ability to change the verdict, to give her freedom. Tears burned in her own eyes as she froze, losing herself in a growing despair.

"The Royal Family can't benefit their friends. If he speaks for you, if he even acknowledges that you exist, it threatens the family and your geas. That is why I cannot talk about my own geas. I can't let anyone know who isn't also bound by the same magic."

(I'm screwed, aren't I?)

Kirin reached down. Sliding her arms underneath Merrie's armpits, she pulled the dog girl further up on her body.

Reflexively, Merrie straddled Kirin's lap, her pussy resting on the ridge of the half-hard horse cock and the severed ends of her legs brushing against her guild mistress' shin. Sinking forward, she crushed her breasts against Kirin's before she rested her cheek on Kirin's shoulder.

Kirin smelled of perfume, a delicate scent called Blue-Gold Glory by the Stars made by Lady Anasome. Merrie had her own scent by the same perfumer, but hers was called Complicated Bitch. She sniffed and closed her eyes as the tears ran down her cheeks and splashed on Kirin's shoulder; her perfume was the only reason she was sane but she had lost it during the battle with Gillette and Lemetri.

"It's going to work out," whispered Kirin in a broken voice.

Merrie didn't need to read her mind to know she was lying. The one thing she could use to prove her innocence was forbidden to reveal. The only thing she could do it present herself as the bitch who created the Shadowed District which killed thousands, someone who summoned a swarm of Lord of Shadows that nearly killed the World Tree in the city, and then summoned a massive shadow land. She let out a long, shuddering breath. (You are lying.)

"It doesn't mean I'm going to give up. You are still my Bitch."

The thrill of pleasure felt muted and cold. Merrie kept her eyes closed and ground her body against Kirin's. (I'm scared. I didn't mean to hurt anyone.)

"You were saving your babies."

Merrie stiffened.

“I saw your memories. Those feelings you have, that the shadow kin are your children? Those are true.”

The world started to spin. Merrie didn't think anyone else would understand. (H-How?)

“While I'm no expert in shadow magic,” Kirin started with a dry chuckle, “I do know that shadows are formed by the intersection of light and dark. Their shape is created out of fear, out of terror, out of the dark imaginations in people's heads. You, on the other hand, shape it out of need and love and power. The shape, that's you. Powerful beast, animal-like nature like your old pack, capable of brutalizing your opponents but more important, capable of abusing you.”

A flash of heat exploded inside Merrie and she felt the power rippling up her spine. Underneath her, light seeped out of Kirin's corset. It was the guild mistress' Infernal Marks, the six symbols that identified the devils she had traded her soul for power.

Kirin's moaned. “Yes, as soon as I saw those huge cock, powerful muscles, and long tentacles, I knew they were your babies. They were made for killing and fucking, maybe at the same time.”

Through the tears and despair, a slight smile cross Merrie's lips.

Stroking Merrie, Kirin chuckled again. “You have a type, Bitch: large, powerful, and brutal.”

Merrie squirmed. (I like being dominated.)

“No, you need to be dominated. You need to be smacked around, your face shoved into the ground as someone rapes that ass of yours.” Underneath Merrie, she could feel Kirin's cock twitch and start to well. It was hot, searing actually, against her icy skin. It also felt good as the erotic thoughts began to encroach on her thoughts.

Kirin stroked along Merrie's back, silent but her desires were burning through her shields. Both of them were driven by sex, it was the source of their power and their obsessions.

After hours of tales, both were also drained. They both needed pleasure then and Merrie's nature could feel Kirin's desire brimming in her head. They needed to fuck, they both craved a brutal orgasm to recover from their ordeal.

Merrie moaned softly, lifting her head to kiss Kirin on the lips. (Hurt me.)

Unlike most lovers, Kirin didn't need a confirmation. With a grin, she reached up and grabbed Merrie's collar from behind. Yanking it down, it forced it to dig into Merrie's throat and almost cut off her breath.

Merrie's pussy spasmed with desire. She let out a gasping whine as her body grew holder.

"You've been a bad girl," whispered Kirin.

Merrie almost had another orgasm. She clutched at Kirin's shoulder as the guild mistress tightened her grip, crushing Merrie's throat against the collar that only a god could destroy. She pulled up until the collar slipped underneath Merrie's jaw, forcing it up and back.

Kirin bit at Merrie's exposed throat. Her teeth were sharp and cutting. "A bad fucking girl who is going to have her ass raped."

Merrie could only respond with need. She bucked her hips against Kirin, sliding her soaked pussy up and down the thick ridge of the horse cock growing against her.

Kirin surged to her feet, her hand still on the collar.

Merrie was flipped over and then she was dangling by her collar. The metal dug into her skin, cutting off her artery for a moment and leaving her dizzy.

The rush of being dominated sent a powerful surge coursing through her body.

"Fucking slut," Kirin said with a grin. "Keep your fucking orgasm in your head this time."

Merrie whimpered.

"We got in enough trouble when you set off the entire city. You do it again and I'll make sure you won't make it to that court visit alive. If I have to break every bone in your body, I will."

Seconds later, she straightened while still holding the collar. Her knuckles were against Merrie's throat, crushing them and cutting off her breath as she held the cropped woman off the ground. "Now, I'm going to fuck you until I come and I'm going to pump so much fucking acid into you that you'll be screaming out in agony as it eats away your inside."

Merrie's orgasm rippled through her body. Kirin wasn't threatening, she was promising.

Kirin's body flashed with magic and then she was lifting Merrie to slam her down on the top of the cage. The solid metal slammed into Merrie's back with a force that would have cracked bone. Instead it caused her triple heart to beat faster as the pain seared her senses and lust boiled inside her.

Leaning down, Kirin grabbed one of the empty wine bottles.

Merrie could see the broken glass along the neck and her pussy clenched with desire. In the back of her head, she knew that she would be bleeding soon for Kirin but that didn't matter. It was just the intense pleasure of anticipation and the submission that was promised in her future.

Kirin didn't shove it into her pussy like she expected. Instead, she jammed Merrie's collar down against her throat. Her weight increased and the adamantite collar dug deeper into Merrie's neck, cutting off her breath. Leaning over to increase the pressure, Kirin wedged the wine bottle into the collar that stuck below the metal.

Merrie's eyes widened with surprise as she felt the bottle forcing the collar into her fragile throat. The smooth glass jammed against the bars and the collar was forced tighter until it cut off Merrie's breathing completely.

With a grunt, Kirin jammed the bottle into the collar.

A sickening crunch filled Merrie's body and then her throat collapsed around the collar. An explosion of agony and pleasure burst inside her as she found herself pinned helplessly to the top of the cage, unable to breath.

Reflexively, she tried to grab the collar but the smooth ends of her wrists couldn't get purchase.

Even through the pain, she was having an orgasm. Her juices dripped to the ground, loudly compared to the utter silence from cries that had no air.

Kirin's cock smacked against her thigh. It was huge, sized for a stallion on a relatively slender human. But it wasn't a cock that was pressed against her sex, it was the sharp edges of a bottle.

Twisting the head into place, Kirin cut into Merrie's pussy as she forced the neck into her pussy. Every millimeter of the broken glass tore into her insides. The agony was intense and brutal.

"Fucking bitch can't stop, can she?"

Merrie flailed her legs around as she kept going for her collar. She was trapped and the helplessness only fueled her desire. She struggled as much as she could, her breasts rising and fall with her desperate attempts to get air into her lungs. She could feel her tongue sticking out of her mouth, her lips parted as she tried any way to stop from suffocating.

Kirin punched the second bottle deep into Merrie's cunt. The sharp edges sliced into her insides until they pierced the furthest point; she felt her cervix being torn into. Black blood and her juices poured out to the ground as she tensed her muscles against the pain.

As soon as the bottle was lodged inside her, Kirin released and grabbed her horse cock with both hands. Merrie couldn't see, but she felt the massive, flattened head press against her asshole. There was only the smallest bit of lubrication, mostly blood and her juices, but not enough to ease the passage of anything so large inside her.

Merrie came again and again, rolling in agony and pleasure as she anticipated being raped.

Kirin's pre-cum sizzled against her flesh.

Stepping back for only a second, Kirin slammed the cock home. It ripped through the tight, resisting sphincter with brutal force. Strength magic flashed across Merrie's darkening senses as the cock head punched into the tight ring and tore it completely apart.

Thickness filled Merrie, a ripping intensity that filled her as the cock surged almost a quarter meter into her body. It tore her insides but also scraped against every nerve, setting them on fire with lust and pain.

Kirin pulled back and slammed it home, forcing her cock into the already tight passage filled by a large wine body and Merrie's tiny form. The pressure built, squeezing both holes as the infernal-touched woman began to punch her cock into Merrie's ass with brutal efficiency.

Merrie tried to scream out. Her ruined throat refused to allow even a single bit of air escape. Her helplessness and pain only sent off another wave of orgasms as she shook on her cage.

Kirin grunted as she punched the cock repeated into Merrie's ass, ripping it apart and tearing into the soft organs. Every centimeter brought thick ridges against the raw nerves. Every thrust filled

Merrie completely as she felt the wine bottle beginning to crack under the pressure.

Kirin's body was glowing, three runes searing through the corset. The largest was sex but the other two, horses and wine, were almost as bright as Merrie suffered with the three things that brought Kirin power and pleasure.

As Kirin opened up Merrie's asshole, the strokes grew deeper and more brutal. The immense hardness punched into Merrie's lungs from the bottom, nothing that she could do about it with her collapsed throat. She felt it crushing her organs and the wine bottle with each powerful thrust.

The bottle in her cunt shattered, imploding into a thousand glass shards that shredded her insides.

Merrie opened her mouth to scream out with her orgasm, the world growing black from her asphyxiation.

Something powerful punched against her face. She only had a second to see Kirin's hand holding the third bottle of wine before it was forced between her teeth and shoved into her mouth.

Merrie's jaw resisted but Kirin was in charge. With an orgasm-delivering but sickening crack, Merrie felt her jaw crack open and the base of the bottle slammed into the back of her throat. The smooth girth was agonizing and Merrie couldn't even start to close her mouth around it.

Kirin's balls smacked against Merrie's bleeding asshole. The entire length of the infernal horse cock had been impaled into Merrie. It pulsed hotly, spewing acidic cum deep inside Merrie's chest.

Her world becoming nothing more than a storm of agony, Merrie couldn't do anything but sink into the pleasure. She shuddered as she writhed on the cage and then came again and again. Her agony became ecstasy as her world continued to darken. She was dying, she was suffocating, she was coming.

With her pleasure threatening to spill out, there was only one place to put it. She channeled the intense orgasm into her collar and let her world become nothing more than agony and ecstasy.

t'Sade

Old Friends

39

Merrie had six hours left.

She woke up with the state of blood, glass, and healing magic in the back of her throat. Her body still burned on the inside, the acid slowly working through her organs as the healing magic of her collar healed her with minute amounts that did nothing to relieve the pain. Even her throat still ached, though she could draw in a raspy breath of air.

She smiled and her tail wagged slowly as she let herself focus on her surroundings. While she was back inside her age, not pinned to the outside, there were fresh blankets underneath her. None of them had the scent of the Shadows but they did have ash and smoke clinging to the fibers. There was also perfume, the multiple layers of different types. Merrie guessed that she was nestled into Scorch's and Nir's bedclothes.

With a happy moan, she stretched and pressed the ends of her legs against the bars to push out over the blankets. When broken glass cut at her insides, she froze for a moment. She looked around at the blanket, then forced herself to crawl out with the glass cutting her insides until she was free of the blanket.

Pulling on her power, she let her body melt into shadows and extricated herself from the bottle. The shards of bloody glass rained down on the ground. She reformed near the door of the room, free of her loving domination.

The air was only slightly warmer outside than the blankets against her icy skin, but sent a thrill of pleasure as she cast her senses out.

There were people in her house, one of them was Kirin brimming with infernal power. She could also identify Monk, the second in command of the guild, with his divine magic wrapped around him and blurring his senses. It was his spell on the ribbon that let the others into her house.

Smiling, Merrie peered through the door. There was only a dim light in the great hall. It flickered back and forth with a yellow cast, a candle. Relieved, she sent out a pulse of greetings as she approached.

“Let me get the light,” said Kirin.

(No, the candle is okay.) Merrie came in and looked around.

There were four of them sitting on folding chairs or in blankets. A single candle flickered between them, it was bright but not painful. Kirin was on one of the chairs, her body crackling with power. She had a different corset on, a wine-colored one, and a dozen bottles of unopened wines surrounding her. She had another bottle in her hand.

Monk sat opposite to her. A gaunt man wearing red robes and a matching cloth over his eyes, he was blind but capable of seeing far more than anyone else. She could feel the sensory spells dance along her senses as he inspected her.

Nestled against him was his daughter, Dith. The young girl had black hair and brilliant eyes that bore directly into Merrie. Where her father’s magic was a caress, Dith’s attention stripped away the shadows away from Merrie’s body and left her feeling exposed and vulnerable.

As a little girl, Dith was the only one Merrie had encountered that could pierce her shade no matter how much she tried. She walked in her father’s footsteps but would exceed his abilities to see through illusions if she hadn’t already.

The fourth was also a familiar face, Pristine. She was a slender woman with her dirty brown hair pulled up into a pony tale. She was beautiful though she had defensive spells humming around her. She was also a former Resolute—a royal guard.

Pristine jumped to her feet and rushed over to drop her knees and hug Merrie tightly. “I thought we lost you.”

Merrie radiated a pulse of affection and leaned into Pristine, enjoying the warmth and softness of the embrace.

“Listen, Bitch, no more dying on us, okay?” Pristine wiped tears from her eyes and kissed Merrie. “No more goddesses.”

As much as Merrie wanted to promise that, she was done fighting gods, she couldn’t find the thoughts. With an artifact collar that made her nearly immortal and her upcoming treason trial, she couldn’t promise anything.

Pristine smiled and got up. “Come here, Bitch.”

Shivering with pleasure from being commands, Merrie followed Pristine and sat next to the candle. The dim light burned her skin, but it was an easy discomfort to ignore.

Kirin shivered and pulled a blanket over her shoulder. “The problem with shadows is that they are always cold.”

(Sorry.)

“It is who you are. If you could handle the light, I’d bring you back to the guild house.”

Monk made a grunt.

“However Monk feels that it would put much of the guild at risk. In this case, I didn’t want to argue.”

He sighed.

(I’m sorry. Violence follows me, doesn’t it?)

Kirin shrugged. “There are only eight known Alphas in the world. Eight people in the world who have the power to magnify their master’s lusts into nearly unlimited power. If it wasn’t for your mistress, you’d still be the target for the millions of others who want to use you.”

Merrie ducked her head.

Dith said, “Which mistress, Kir?”

“Merrie became her own mistress, that is why she’s the Omega.”

The little girl frowned but said nothing. It felt as if she wanted to argue or to ask questions. Merrie watched her for a moment, confused.

Monk cleared his throat. “I’ve started looking for this Fir but I haven’t been able to find her.”

Merrie’s confusion grew. “Who…” and then whatever the infernal did to make her forget Fir slipped away for a moment. “Fir!”

Even as she focused on the image of the young girl, she could feel the spell erasing her memories. She clenched and shook her head. Her mind was pulling away and the images crumbling. She had

experienced it before, when Haviston made her forget. Now, she was losing someone who desperately needed her. (No, no, I can't forget!)

Kirin looked devastated. "I'm sorry."

Merrie sniffed. (For what?)

"That you keep forgetting her."

She frowned. (Forget who?)

Merrie didn't get an answer.

Kirin sighed and looked at Monk pointedly.

Monk held up his hand. "I have a request for Lady Anasome, but it might not happen in time. She and Rose are visiting delegates from Belkim."

Kirin shook her head and reached out for Merrie.

Merrie crawled over and leaned against the woman's leg to enjoy being scratched. It felt good and peaceful, though the energies from brutal fucking still hummed deep inside both of them.

Monk gestured to a box of papers. "About your trial..."

Merrie tensed.

"You're fucked."

"Monk," snapped Pristine.

(No, there isn't, is there?) Despair burned inside her, she wouldn't be able to escape with the duke's suggestion still driving her to show up in less than six hours.

"I've pulled some strings and got a copy of the initial case. The evidence is pretty solid and overwhelming. The easiest to refute would be the paladins of... that bitch and , both in things and the others of this Puppy Mill have said. Paladins of... that bitch and also some damming words from the priests of Galladin. There are probably, I don't know, twelve other groups that were involved with the attack on the Mill and they all claim you were the one who summoned the shadow lands."

Kirin frowned.

"Whatever you did, you pissed off the duke. He got some mages to teleport up there and link your magic of the shadow lands with the Shadowed District." Monk sighed. "Some land at the edge of the country is one thing, but reminding people you were the one who brought the District into the city will turn them against you."

He flipped through some papers. "I have admissions of guilt from you, confirmations from Bass and Borias." The pages rustled

together. “Artifacts destroyed, your powers described in detail. They even brought your former master’s powers into it.”

Merrie ducked her head at the mention of Kine. She still missed her master and the aching hole would never be filled up, though it wasn’t a raw wound anymore.

Setting them down, he gave her an apologetic look. “In the right circles, your reputation is going to doom you. Everyone knows the Lost Alpha has shadow and psionic powers. Without you having a master to blame, it will become your word against an ocean of evidence.”

Merrie’s ears pressed against her head.

“I know that you have some loyalty to the prince, but the queen and duke have shut off our connection to it.” Monk glanced at Kirin and then back to Merrie. “It is obvious that you won’t find a pardon from the royals in this.”

Kirin’s hand tightened against Merrie. “What about the Guild’s Final Plea?”

Pristine and Monk inhaled sharply.

Merrie frowned.

“I can speak for her, they have to listen.”

Monk shook his head. “No, don’t do that. You’d have to step down as guild mistress for that.”

“You’re ready to take over, Monk.”

“No, but it won’t matter. There are already four other guilds that are tied to the paladins working to be present. You’d have to counter all four before your sacrifice would mean anything.”

Kirin’s eyes sparkled in the light. “Can’t we find four others?”

“No, guild mistress,” Monk said.

“Well, fuck this.” Kirin stood up. “I won’t give up. I can convince others.”

Dith suddenly spoke up. “No.”

Everyone jumped and stared at her in shock.

The little girl looked back. “You won’t convince enough. Not this time.”

“Dith, love,” Monk said softly, “you can’t just say these things.”

The little girl looked at her father. “I’m right.”

He seemed to fight himself for a moment, and then sighed.

Kirin sat down heavily. "Fuck, so I'm giving up because some girl says I won't make it."

"Yes," said Dith.

"Dith, please—" Kirin started.

"Mistress," interrupted Pristine. "When has Dith ever been wrong?"

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Only thrice," whispered the little girl.

No one asked her.

After another uncomfortable moment, Monk turned to Merrie. "Is there anything, anything at all that could help you?"

She wanted to mention the Royal Geas but her insides clenched in warning. She shook her head, tears in her eyes.

Pristine came around to sit on the ground and hug Merrie tightly. "I'm sorry, Bitch," she whispered.

"You're screwed," said Monk.

No one said anything.

Pristine finally broken the silence. "Should I get some food at least? Something hot?"

Dith stood up. "I'll go with you. Monk has to ask Kirin an uncomfortable question."

Monk looked away sharply. "Dith."

Pristine looked worried but then got up. "Come on, girl, let's go creep someone else."

With a brilliant smile, Dith grinned and the two left.

As soon as the door shut, Kirin said, "No. I will not."

"Kirin, we have to consider it."

"No," came the snapped reply.

"Having a guild member convicted of treason will hurt this guild far beyond Merrie and us. It's been sixty years since Edmun was convicted and the Stone Layers still haven't recovered. The man has been dead for twenty-two years and there are only five members of the guild left. No one under the age of fifty. Do you know what Bitch would do to us? Do you know what treason will do to us? It could take us a century to recover the stain on our reputation."

Kirin's grip on Merrie tightened. "I may not be able to save her from this, but I won't abandon her. That isn't what we do! She's friend, she's family, she's our Bitch!"

“This is our guild. Three hundred twenty-five people people are counting on us to keep them warm and safe.” Monk held out his hand. “We have to think of them too.”

Merrie ducked her head. The idea of being convicted terrified her, but she also knew Monk was right. The guild would suffer when she was convicted. It would be a stain that would haunt them long after she was gone. Tears burned in her eyes. (He’s right.)

“No!” yelled Kirin, surging to her feet. “Bitch is part of this guild. End of discussion.”

Monk stood up slower. “Kirin.”

Kirin stepped at him, tears in her eyes. “Bitch is ours, we can’t abandon her.”

“We have to. Only a few know that she’s here. She’s already on the death register, if we never take her off, then some of this will blow past us. The guild must survive.”

“There is always a need for fucking.”

Monk held out both hands. “Please, Kirin, you have to consider it.”

(Kick me out.)

Kirin spun on Merrie. “What? No!”

(He’s right. There is no way I can avoid this, no way I can escape.)

Tears rolled down the mistress’ cheeks. “I can’t abandon you. I can’t.”

Merrie sent a wave of affection. (You won’t. But, he’s right. You must do this.)

She looked at Monk who was surprised. She gave him a sad smile. (Protect the guild, both of you. I don’t know if I’ll ever be back.)

Kirin swept her in a tight hug, sobbing.

t'Sade

The Voice of Justice

40

Six hours later, precisely three days after ordered by Duke Natis, Merrie reformed in the shadows just outside of the court house. It had been years since she had come through the door for Rakin's trial, but the massive stone building had not changed since. Marble columns rose up to form narrow passages to the glass-fronted buildings that hummed with dispelling and disrupting magic. There were thousands upon thousands of spells layered on from centuries of wards. They prevented telepathy, truth-detection, and eavesdropping. She could sense the cold press of divination magic, the court was one of the few places where the truth had to be told, not forced. Illusions and shape-changing would also be stripped away by passing the columns.

She knew she could use her shadow powers to enter the court but the overwhelming urge to present herself wouldn't allow anything other than her crawling up to the front door. She had to present herself, to turn herself in.

It was late evening. Normally, the court was quiet with only a few dozen judges, advocates, and defendants going in and out the doors. There was always a court open to handle emergencies, bail that couldn't wait until morning or marriages that had to be done before the stroke of midnight.

However, seeing a thick press of people stopped her. There were far more than she expected, hundreds of people were milling outside of the building. She spotted high and low society, journalists and judges. They were waiting for something.

She suspect she knew exactly who they were waiting for: her. She wrapped her black cloak around her body and then brought a shade

spell to direct eyes away from her. Slowly, she crawled out into the press of the crowd and let surface thoughts seep into her own mind.

Treason.

The bastard who killed my brother is finally coming to justice.

Death to the shadows!

Fear and hatred of the Shadowed District and wild fantasies ranging from a noble's son to a poor man's daughter. Not everyone knew who was showing up, only that a traitor to the country would be forced to walk through the doors.

As she got into a better position, she looked at her destination. For all the crowds, there was a large empty space in front of the door. Everyone wanted to see her come in. It would be hard to miss, there were dozens of lampposts shining brilliantly with magical light. The bright, white light was painful to her eyes and her skin crawled with the fear it was too brilliant for her shadowy form.

Standing between each gap was a guard in left-green uniform. She could tell the center two were Loyals, powerful warrior mages that had sworn lifelong fealty to crown and country. They wore armor permanently bonded to their bodies and a brutal array of combat spells. The other four were Resolutes wearing more cumbersome armor with less magic, but they were still powerful.

Merrie shivered. Claston's personal guard, Loyal Alestri, was Merrie's equal in combat. Two of them would easily best her, not that she was planning on attacking.

One of the center doors opened and the crowd grew hushed. Merrie could barely see past the brilliant light but it looked like a dour old woman wearing a heavy black robe. She had a matching staff except for a large emerald leaf on the top. She strode past one of the Loyals and a few steps into the cleared out courtyard.

"I am the Voice of Justice." Her voice easily carried across the silent crowd. "I am invoking the summons for Merrie Golddoth for the crimes of treason against Franome and the Royal Family. Present yourself within fifteen minutes or the Loyals of Justice shall hunt you down."

Merrie's blood ran cold with ice.

Around her, a ripple of surprise ran through the crowd but it died and the courtyard was plunged into complete silence. Not even

insects made a noise as everyone looked around, waiting for Merrie to present herself.

Duke Natis' suggestion spell rose up to choke her thoughts, driving her to step out into the empty space that formed in front of the courthouse. It was overpowering and dominating.

She lifted one wrist up and started forward. She couldn't stop herself as she crawled into the brightly light courtyard. The magical light instantly blackened her skin, peeling back the thin layer and revealing the boiling shadows inside.

Agony broke the suggestion's spell grip on her mind. It was only a brief respite, but she yanked back from the light with a yelp and dove back into the shadows of the legs in the crowd.

The suggestion spell grabbed her thoughts, driving her to present herself despite the brilliant light.

She fought it, struggling with the spell. She projected to the woman in black, (Please help, I can't survive bright light.)

It was like projecting into rock. Merrie had never experienced such a perfect mental shield. There was no shifting of subconscious thoughts, no weakness created by errant desires, and not even a crack that every living creature possessed. She spent a few seconds exploring the woman's defenses but even she couldn't penetrate it.

The spell gripped her tightly and she was forced to take another step into the light. Her skin blackened and agony raced up her leg. She let out a whimper and tried to pull back but the spell had gripped her movements and forced her further out into the light.

The searing agony caught her scalp and back. The flesh blackened and tore, revealing more of the shadows inside her. Her heart beat rapidly, slamming through her body with a drum of agony. She cried out, tears splashing down.

She felt people looking at her, drawn by her cries and the burning flesh. Their surprise and hatred focused on her, driving into her shields and battering her emotions as she struggled to keep from crawling out into the killing field of light.

"Look, the Voice had to force her to appear."

"What happened to her feet?"

"Why is she smoking?"

"What is wrong with her?"

"Fucking bitch!"

The Voice scanned back and forth before she focused on Merrie. Her eyes turned an intense black as her look sharpened. The look was not unlike Dith's, one that seemed to strip away everything including her mental shields. She felt naked underneath the black-eyed look, stripped bare of everything but a vulnerable bitch.

A surge of lust rose up inside her.

The suggestion spell drove her closer to the courtyard. She stepped completely into the light despite the agony. Her entire body smoked violently as she felt the light digging into the boiling darkness. The brightness blinded her vision, she couldn't see anything but white-hot agony. Only the spell drove her forward, forcing her closer to the main entrance with irresistible force.

Curious and angry voices rose up around her.

She whimpered, staggering forward.

The light continued to peeled back her skin before burning away the black cloud of her being. She could feel the light against her raw, crystalline nerves. New agonies ripped through her body as she slumped forward. Her body slammed against the cobblestones as the smell of burning flesh and sake filled the air.

There was an uncomfortable silence as Merrie crawled across the ground, whining and crying as she had to force herself across the cobblestones. Her helplessness ignited her power, it rose up in a wave of black orgasm but the power wasn't enough to keep her body from dissolving under the light.

She dug into herself, trying to find some way of breaking the suggestion's hold on her. Sobbing from the agony, she took a deep breath and tried to gather the darkness into her. The light burned it away as fast as she could create it.

Merrie's right arm collapsed in a burst of darkness. She fell forward, smashing her face into the cobblestones. Light burst across her vision as she screamed out in agony.

She couldn't stop moving. The spell forced her.

Dragging her face and chest against the ground, she dug the ends of her ankles into the stones and shoved forward. She managed to move another few centimeters before the rest of her body collapsed. Tears melted off her face, swirling away in clouds of black mist.

"Loyal Alestri says stop!" An overwhelming blast of Presence slammed into her, blowing away the duke's suggestion spell. She let

out a cry as she was forced to freeze, a surge of incredible lust ripped through her body. Alestri's Presence was a compulsion that she had experienced before, one that flooded her body and mind with raw, overwhelming pleasure.

There was a gasp from the crowd. Merrie saw movement but her blurred vision couldn't focus on where the Loyal stood.

"Loyal Alestri says freeze!" Another compulsion battered Merrie.

Merrie's eyes snapped open as her entire world exploded into a raging orgasm. Pleasure seared along her senses, ripping out of her mind. The wave of pleasure exploded from her mind and radiated out from her mind.

Around her, the people watching suddenly dropped to their knees as they experienced one of the strongest orgasms of their lives. Their pleasures exploded from their own minds, radiating back to slam into Merrie and setting off another set of orgasms.

"What is going on, Loyal?" asked the Voice in an annoyed voice. She was clearly affected by the rippling pleasures that radiated from Merrie.

"Bright light is fatal to the defendant. You have seconds before she is killed by the light. Loyal Alestri must service justice immediately."

"Do it," ordered the Voice.

There was a crack of air and then suddenly something heavy was draped over Merrie. The explosion from Alestri's teleportation slammed Merrie into the side, rolling her over and wrapping whatever was draped over her around her body.

The searing agony faded into a painful relief. Whatever Alestri had dropped on her blocked the light almost completely.

Merrie panted with relief, her body shuddering with the afterglow of her orgasm and the waves of agony slowly subsiding. She curled up and let the tears flow.

Footsteps stopped next to her. "Alestri, explain yourself," said the Voice in a low voice.

Alestri grunted. "Loyal Alestri is unable to explain."

"Why?" The Voice sounded unhappy.

"Loyal Alestri is unable to explain."

"I am the Voice. You must obey."

Merrie cringed. Her body was still on fire and she couldn't do anything to respond, both Alestri and the Voice wouldn't respond to her mental projection.

"Loyal Alestri is unable to explain." The Loyal seemed unperturbed by the command by one of the highest ranking members in the entire country.

"We shall discuss this further," said the Voice. Her voice rose, taking on the clear quality that easily cut across "By law, we must protect all defendants from injury or death. How we ensure her safety for the trial?"

"Keep all light away from her. A locked room with no windows or light sources."

There was a ripple of surprise through the crowds.

"Does she have powers that would allow her to escape?"

The Loyal didn't immediately respond and Merrie could almost imagine her tensing. "Multiple. She is capable of dimensional travel, shape-shifting, transformation into shadows. She is difficult to capture for extended period of items."

"How are you aware of this?"

"Loyal Alestri is unable to explain."

The Voice grunted. "We must also ensure she will not escape. That is also required by law."

"She is a True Submissive. Any form of strongly phrase order, suggestion, or compulsion will keep her save."

"Suggestions and compulsions are illegal in all matters of justice."

"Loyal Alestri suggests you give her a strongly-worded order."

"Are you serious, Loyal? Just telling her to stay would be sufficient?" The Voice's demeanor cracked with her surprise.

"Loyal Alestri swears on her oath."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"Very well." The Voice spoke up. "Loyals, take the defendant into custody. Follow Loyal Alestri's suggestions for care. And... give her an order to remain every...."

"Loyal Alestri recommends every thirty minutes. Spoke with great force of will."

"Post a guard in her room to give her an order to stay."

Pinned underneath her cover, Merrie's lust rose up with anticipation. It burned with the fear of her trial and the lust of being commanded repeatedly.

t'Sade

Just Chatting

41

Merrie whimpered inside the pitch-black cell. The severed end of her arm pressed against her pussy, rubbing against the cool slickness as she struggled to contain the pleasures that wracked her senses. Her tail was also curled up against her crotch, rubbing the soaked hairs against her fingers and labia.

The guard—a victim as much as herself—groaned as he slumped against the door. “S-Stay!”

The order punched her but it had lost much of the force of will. She could feel the pleasure and ache rolling off the young man. He probably wasn’t expecting to feel the full brunt of her orgasms until his cock ached and his pants were soaked.

He had lasted longer than the previous guard, a cocky older man who strolled in, gave one order, and then had to leave as he soaked the insides of his pants.

Merrie panted and then drove the power of her orgasm into her collar. It resisted, to her surprise, and the pleasure was sluggish as it flooded into the adamantite metal. That worried her more than anything else, she had never reached the collars limit before, not from channeling pleasure into it or using it to heal her body. It was an artifact, empowered by the magic of a god.

She took a deep breath and projected a sheepish thought, (Sorry.)

The young man chuckled. He wiped his hand on the side of his shirt and stood straighter. “I never thought I’d meet the creature... person who was making everyone come in the city.” His voice was strained and exhausted.

(I’m trying to keep it in.)

“This... isn’t all of it?”

She shook her head, her ears down. (No, it's a lot stronger if I don't pull back or...)

"Or someone could give orders better?"

Merrie nodded again.

The guard leaned back. His leather armor creaked as he rested against the door to the cell. He wasn't armed, but he was in no danger. His order, though weaker than when he first came in, was still enough to stay her.

Not that she wanted to attack. She had presented herself but it wasn't done. The duke's command still held her thoughts, she had to present herself for her crimes.

"What makes a good order?"

Her ears perked up.

"I mean, that's what is keeping you here? Right? Being told what to do?"

She sighed and nodded her head, but then realized he couldn't see in the pitch darkness. (That is part of it. I like being dominated. No... I have to be dominated. The more I am, the more powerful I can become and the more I enhance my master's power.)

"I've heard of that, a pure submissive?"

(True Submissive.)

There was a prickle of interest, a joy blossoming in his thoughts. "I know of those. There was a special one out there about two years ago. My sister called her the... um... The Lost One."

(The Lost Alpha.)

"Yeah!" He snapped his finger. "She was interested because she kept coming and our pa was calling her out as a slut. She said it was you that was causing it but he didn't believe it."

Her ears drooped. (Sorry, back then, I wasn't able to control it very well and I had a good set of masters.)

He shrugged before slipping down to sit on the ground. He wiped his hand off again. "... gonna get a bath after this. So, what's your name? The Voice said Merrie."

(That was one of my names.)

"Really? What others?"

She resisted. She didn't want to expose all of her identities. Kine, her first master, had always thought knowing a name made them vulnerable to attack.

“Don’t worry, The Namer is going to tell everyone anyways.”

(What?)

“The Namer of Justice. He announces all people coming up to the podium. One time, it took him almost five minutes to list all of the aliases of this thief. It was impressive because he does it in a single breath. Nice guy, but when he off duty, he speaks only in single word sentences except for using your full name. I can’t tell you how many times ‘Autiur Degassin Malfay the Third’ can be said in a single conversation.”

Merrie sent a pulse of amusement. She liked how Autiur was just talking with her casually, not treating her as a murderer of tens of thousands and guilty of treason.

“We’ve never had someone like you before. What happened to your legs?”

(They were bitten off.)

That shocked him. “B-Bitten off? As in someone gnawed your legs off? How awful.”

(No, it wasn’t awful. It was and it hurt, but it was also one of the most intense moments of my life.)

“Well,” Autiur said as he tucked his hands under his head and leaned against the wall. “I have twenty-five minutes before I have to give you another order. Want to tell me about it?”

Merrie resisted for only a moment as a wariness rose up. With her mind, she reached out to scan his thoughts. He had almost no shields, the sign of a young child more than an experienced and hardened warrior. She only picked up curiosity in his thoughts, a desire to pass the time while standing blindly in the dark.

A niggling feel tickled the back of her head, but she couldn’t place it. There was nothing about the young man that should have worried her, but it was Kine’s voice that warned her to hesitate.

She thought about it for a moment. There was no reason to hide her motivations, she tried to tell them to Natis and the count before. She had to open up the shadow land, she had to save her friends and it was the only thing she could offer. Even now, days after she made the decision, it still felt “right” to her.

With a deep breath, she made her decision. Dreading up the faded memories, she began to project.

t'Sade

Lessons Taught

42

“So, how about this?”

Autiur took a deep breath. She could feel his will rising up as he concentrated. It bubbled through his thoughts, this time far more forcefully than his previous attempts.

Her pussy grew wetter with anticipation. Tension rippled through her legs as she could feel his command before it came from his lips. She smiled, enjoying the play of his voice against her submission.

“Sit!”

His command, backed by the desire to make her submit, punched into her again. It left a flare of white-hot pleasure coursing through her nerves as her buttocks smacked against the stone ground.

The impact, plus the pleasures of submitting, ignited another orgasm. Waiting for it, she channeled it directly into her collar. Most of it sank into the enigmatic depths before the rest of it exploded out in a burst of pleasure.

“Oh, fuck!” Autiur sank to his knees again. He clutched his crotch with both hands. “D-Damn that feels good.”

A few reflected orgasms came rippling back. She took them and let the pleasure dance over her skin. She was thankful he wasn’t capable of belting out commands like *Loyal Alestri* or *Bass*; the last ten minutes would have set off orgasms across the entire city if one of them had been ordering her repeatedly for the last ten minutes.

Merrie grinned and panted. (Much better.)

“Yeah... yep... yeah,” he said with gasp. “I could feel that one.”

(Are you okay?)

“My balls are probably going to fall off, I better stop.”

She wagged her tail. The movement caused her entire hips to rock back and forth. She loved how her slick labia felt as it bumped against itself or on the rough rasp of bare stone underneath her.

“Well,” he said with another gasp. “I think I’m finally getting better at that ordering thing. My instructors always said I was weak at yelling at others.”

Merrie sent out a pulse of encouragement.

When he chuckled, she took a deep breath and drank in the scents of fresh cum—both his and hers—and the musky scent of papers that permeated the room. She suspected the room used to have records before they turned it into a cell. She was tempted to test the limits of the cell but the command still rippled in her thoughts.

Instead, she leaned against the wall. (Thank you.)

“For what?”

(My future doesn’t seem so bleak while talking to you.)

“I just like to talk, Merrie. Nothing more.” He groaned and cupped his crotch. “Though, most of the time, when I come this hard, we’re both naked.” Amusement rippled through his thoughts.

(It still helped,) she projected with a pulse of affection.

There was a moment of silence. “If it is so bleak, why did you do it?”

The quiet question threw her for a moment. She wasn’t expecting a guard to ask but it seemed like the same practice. (It was the right thing to do.)

“Being accused of treason is a pretty serious problem. You sure it was the right thing?”

In her heart, it was. She sent out a pulse of agreement with just a hints of her growing conviction. (I am doing the right thing, there are... reasons I know this but I don’t know how to tell the judges.)

“I’ve only been here a few years, but I suggest you are honest. It might hurt, you might get convicted even—”

A sick feel twisted in her stomach.

“—but honesty wins out in the end. If you truly did the right thing, if your treason is for the greater good, then they will see that.”

(You think I’ll be free?)

Autiur’s uncomfortable silence told her enough.

Ears drooping, she settled against the ground. Her naked breasts ground against the icy stone and the rasp scraped against her nipples. She splayed her legs until her entire body was measured against the ground and her pussy was exposed to the cooler air.

“Do you regret it?”

She sighed. (Every moment.)

“Would you do it again?”

(Yes.)

“Good.”

Her ears perked up.

“Only fools don’t regret their decisions, even when they think they are right.

Autiur groaned as he stood up. “I hope you are right, Merrie. I’d love to be able to chat with you again, after all of this. Right now, I think I need to see a healer and I’m sure there is another guard coming on deck.”

Merrie took a deep breath and spoke out-loud instead of using telepathy, “T-Thank you.”

Autiur smiled before pounding on the door.

Three guards came in with weapons drawn to protect Autiur from being attacked as he limped out and a burly made came in. It was the same maneuver from the previous guards; Merrie didn’t have the heart to tell them that there was no order to prevent her from killing them if she wanted.

Seconds later, she was once again in a pitch-black room with the new guard.

“There is no way you’ll make me come, slut.”

She smiled to herself, her tail beginning to wag.

t'Sade

Named

43

They came for her at midnight of the next day. Over a day of being commanded, alternately ignored or probed, and had every detail question. None of the other guards were like Autiur, they didn't try to make her feel comfortable nor were they happy with giving orders that would make them orgasm when the commands exploded in her brain.

Merrie, on the hand, was buzzing with lust when the guards opened the door. It was only an hour into the shift and the poor woman guarding her had both hands stuffed down her pants as she tried to work off the lust of the last echoed command.

As the door creaked open, the female guard scrambled to her feet with a hot blush on her cheeks. She gripped her sword tightly, no doubt wondering if everyone could smell the scent of her orgasm that filled the air. Glancing at Merrie, she swung around before she turned toward the light coming streaming through the crack.

A dozen armed warriors stood outside of her cell. Before the door opened, she could feel the raw killing force of two Loyals with their combat spells bristling for a fight. There was no grace or subtlety in the Loyals' spells, only a terrifying threat of nearly instantaneous death.

Beyond the glare of the Loyals, there was the weaker energies of four Resolutes. They didn't have the aura of threat that the Loyals had, but they would give her trouble if she tried to resist.

Merrie tensed as one of the Resolutes marched into the room. It was a man in his early forties with a short-cropped beard with streaks of gray. He had a large mace in his left hand, the head of it glowing a pale green. The energies on the weapon were enhancing

his strength and mass, a killing device that would slaughter a mortal person with a single blow.

With the weak command of the previous guard still echoing in her thoughts, she pushed herself into a sitting position. She could feel the curiosity and desire rising up. Reflexively, she leaned back on her heels to give her tail room to wag and for her to bring up her severed wrists up to the edge of her collar.

Her adamantite collar buzzed with power. Hours of repeated orgasms filled it, she didn't think it could hold much more of her pleasure, but she had nowhere else to channel her pleasure instead radiating it.

The Resolute stepped forward, his mace pointed directly at her throat. "The accused shall stand and present... herself..."

Merrie raised an eyebrow and lifted her wrist into the air. There was nothing beyond them, just a smooth end.

The Resolute swallowed and looked around.

(I cannot—)

Bursts of air slammed into her as the two Loyals appeared. Their weapons, both swords, pressed against her throat. The sharp edges easily cut into the flesh, not enough to slice deep but enough to bring smoking black blood welling from the cut.

Merrie almost screamed out. She clamped her mouth shut and tightly wrapped her shields around herself. She had forgotten how sensitive the Loyals were to mental communication. Trembling, she perked up her ears in hopes they would relax and cleared her throat. "S-Sorry."

She winced at the sound of her voice. It was rough and raspy, an anathema to how she lived her life. She didn't think she would get the same freedom that Loyal Alestri granted her to use magic.

"I-I don't usually talk."

Merrie had to cough. She struggled in fear that the two weapons would rip out her throat.

The Loyals inched their weapons away.

"Can you stand?" asked the Resolute.

"I cannot," she rasped. To demonstrate, she unfolded her feet from underneath her and showed the smoothed ends.

There was gasps of disgust followed by a wave of pity. She ignored it as she brought her other leg out, sitting fully on the

ground with both feet in the air. Her movements caught sly glances at her legs and she couldn't help but slyly part her thighs to expose her bare pussy to hungry, shamed looks.

"How did you get in here?" asked the Resolute, his commanding voice faltering.

"Crawled. On my wrists and knees, like I always do." Speaking longer wasn't helping her throat. "I can also transform into shadows and step across dimensions."

"Using magic to transform or teleport will result in immediate repercussions and response from the Loyals. They are authorized to kill you before you finish the spell."

Merrie nodded, her ears flattening against her head and her tail curling down. The Loyal Alestri was her equal in combat, two would slaughter her.

"The laws allows for crawling or kneeling." He turned to the others. "Clear a way, switch to short spears."

"Yes, Resolute Udin," came a chorus of replies. There was a flare of magic as the weapons in their hands melted and reformed into short, meter-long spears. They spread out in the hallway, clearing a spot obviously intended for Merrie.

"The accused shall move into position," declared Udin.

Fear trickled through Merrie's veins as she crawled next to the Resolute. The other guards kept their weapons trained on her as they slowly moved down the hallways with a practiced grace that made her wonder.

Well below the others, Merrie's thoughts turned inward. How many other prisoners needed half a dozen guards, Resolutes, and Loyals to prevent from escaping? How many people were accused of treason?

Doubt plagued her as they brought her up from the basement to the courthouse. The stairs were steep but she managed to easily keep up with the guards surrounding her. Even on the steps, she could feel the Loyals focusing on her; their spells only milliseconds from slaughtering her.

The dread and doubt rose as they headed down a narrow hallway. On both walls, someone had plastered the laws of the country. The dense script slid across Merrie's vision, the words welling up as she picked out fragments of laws about treason, lying, and the courts.

Her attention was guided by a subtle psionic effect; it was impressive but also left her feeling even worse.

Just as the dread brought her to her lowest point, they came up to a metal gate glowing with defensive spells. A giant leaf was mounted on the center of the gate.

Beyond the opening was the court. It had been over a year since she last saw it, but from her vantage point near the ground, she could only see a short wall that divided the front of the hall from the audience behind it. She remembered how crowded the benches and seats were during Rakin's trial. Crime and judgment was one of the many entertainments of the rich and powerful, not to mention the lure of gossips that will spread word of her own trial across the city in a matter of minutes.

She felt the pulse and beat of a thousand thoughts beating against her mental shields. They were errant thoughts of everything ranging from curiosity to anger. It was almost overwhelming.

Merrie was afraid to shield herself. With a nervous glance at the Loyals, she gathered her thoughts and formed her shield. The familiar leather pressure wrapped around her, squeezing down along her mental body.

The Loyals didn't twitch.

Relieved, she continued to wrap her mental thoughts in a tight shield.

The cacophony of thoughts faded.

(A telepath, huh?) The thoughts of a young man clearly echoed in her head. (I am the Namer of Justice, the one who lays bare your names and identity to the recorder and for the judges.)

Merrie tensed, she didn't even feel him penetrating her shields. Her eyes looked through the gate and she noticed him standing next to the gate. Somehow, she had missed him completely. (A repulsion —?)

The Loyals snapped their weapons down.

The man held up his hand.

As one, the Loyals relaxed. "Yes, Namer."

He smiled and looked at her. His eyes were red and they felt like they were stripping away Merrie's shield like a heated brand through butter.

She shivered and felt the curls of energy rising around her from the intense sense of helplessness.

He nodded and turned away, only to make a double take at her. His eyes widened. (What are your names?)

(My—) She tensed as she look at the Loyals.

The Namer held up his hand and waved it. The gate opened silently. “Don’t worry, you are not capable of harming me. I find telepathic communication more efficient.”

Curious, Merrie matched eyes with the Namer. (My name is Merrie Golddother. I am also known as Bitch.)

Projecting to the Namer was strange. Like the Voice, he had powerful shields that she couldn’t even feel rough edges. However, there was a single receptive point, a hole that she could project into it. It was something she had never seen before, a perfect shield designed for safe communication.

(There is more, isn’t there? I can feel them in in your mind.)

She smiled and her tail wagged. (There are a few, Ears, Tails, various names my lovers have called me during sex and role playing, the name Bass gave me when he trained me.)

(Yes. All of them. Every name, every term of affection, every swear directed at you. Remember all you can.) His eyes probed even deeper, stripping away her shields in a steady pressure, like a knife slicing into her flesh.

His thoughts were powerful and commanding, a flash of lust burst across her mind. It slammed against his shields.

The Namer’s eye grew wider. He discretely adjusted his growing hardness.

Unwilling to disobey the command, Merrie started projecting every name she thought someone had called her. It didn’t matter if it was a mistaken cry during orgasm or when she pretended to be the fantasy lover for another, she gave it. Along with each name was a brief image, she couldn’t help but flash a memory of the moment it happened.

As she projected, the Namer’s eyes grew wider and he let out a shuddering gasp. The faint smile on his lips faltered and then faded. Divination magic flared around him, sending out a thousand tendrils of power in all directions. They didn’t seem to be attack spells but something else.

Merrie continued to project the countless labels given by the shadows, those who feared her, and the names she heard in the thoughts of the people she had scanned.

It only took her minutes with the fluid communication between the two telepaths.

Finally, she was done. She sat back on her buttocks and heels and watched him curiously.

The Namer took a deep breath and then a second. He held up a finger to the two Loyals who tensed next to her. "This is going to take a bit. I think I can do this in one breath."

Her eyes drifted to Claston's and she felt a bit of joy seeing his profile. She remembered how he had spoken during Rakin's trial. He could free her with his authority, after all, he was one of the Royal Family. It would just take only a second.

Her stomach twisted painfully. A moment later, she realized it was the royal geas responding to her thoughts. Her hope was extinguished, he couldn't pardon her without putting the royal family at risk. Someone would question why the prince knew a common whore.

With a saddened heart, she glanced at Claston again hoping that he would at least look back.

However, Claston wasn't watching her. Instead his attention was directed at the ornate balcony next to his. With growing dread, she followed his gaze to where the queen sat with a straight back and a neutral expression. Even from Merrie's vantage point, she could see the determination in the way she held herself. She wasn't there for mercy.

A sick feeling twisted her stomach. Even if she didn't bring it up, Merrie wouldn't be getting a pardon from Claston. She suspected the queen was attending to ensure Claston wouldn't speak up in a fit of passion.

She wanted to reach for him, to give him comfort and talk. However, the Loyals next to her would silence her before she got a single thought. The cloak of loneliness hung over her, dragging her down as she realized it would just be her word against the full brunt of the law.

A tear burned in her eye.

The Namer held up his arm. "Attention!"

The court grew silent.

Taking one last deep breath, he spoke in the same sonorous tone that mimicked his thoughts. “Introducing the next accused, Merrie Golddother.”

There was the briefest ripple of noises but the Namer continued.

“Also known as Bitch, Ears, Tails, the Human Dog, the Shadowed Bitch, the Summoner of Darkness, the Light Snuffer, Shadow Bringer, the Shadow Mother, The Haunt of Shadows, the Killer of Darkness, the Bondages, the Lost Alpha, the Omega, Happy Cunt...”

She flinched at the names the Namer was exposing. So much of her life had been split apart by her various aliases, different part of her life shielded from each other. Only a few people ever knew that Ears, Tails, and Bitch were the same person, even less knew Merrie’s real name.

There was a couple chuckles of amusement as the names continued.

“... Menis Ochavis, Katrin Pasidal, Gilia Pasidal, ...”

Her mouth opened in surprised, she wasn’t expecting the Namer to list every name she had given, but he was doing it. His voice strong and powerful as he listed each and every single name she had taken for her lovers.

In the audience, she heard gasps as a few names matched those attending. No doubt, there would be uncomfortable questions from loved ones later in the night. She could remember some of them, the people who lovers asked Merrie to pretend to be sisters, daughters, and friends all for an illicit affair. Others asked Merrie to take on the likeness of lost ones to say goodbye or vent their passions.

The Namer continued, his face growing red with the effort to name everything in a single breath.

The litany grew uncomfortable as name after name filled the courtyard.

“... The Taker of Souls, the Shadow Mistress, the Mistress of Tears, the Bitch of Our Lives, the Meat-Cutters’ Savior...”

Merrie frowned. She didn’t remember any of the ones the Namer was listing.

“.. The Mother of Darkness, the Prin...” he choked and gasped, a tremor shaking through his body.

Taking a deep breath, he continued, "... the Pawn of Shadows, the Blessed Bitch of the Gods, Light Snuffer, Demon Bane, and Complicated Bitch."

There was an uncomfortable silence as the Namer lowered his hands. He panted as he looked at her with a strange mixture of surprise and relief.

Merrie shrugged and perked up her ears. She didn't know if she could respond or even how to respond to the litany of names. She was stunned herself that she had so many of them, including ones she never remembered anyone ever calling her.

Someone coughed.

Udin kicked her with one boot, the toe catching her inner thigh. "The accused shall approach the stand."

His voice was a low growl. When she didn't respond immediately, he kicked her again, this time catching against her naked pussy. The impact sent a flash of agony coursing through her followed by a brief burst of pleasure.

Head bowed but breath coming faster, she crawled past the Namer and down a narrow aisle between the short wall and the empty tables. The smell of old wood, polish, and dust teased her senses as she moved. When heads popped up over the wall to look down at her, She felt exposed which set off another wave of pleasure to wrack her body.

She remembered the platform from Rakin's trial. It was about a meter tall and three meters across. The old stone was chipped and scratched. There were stains of blood and other fluids that had seeped into the plain-looking rock. Up close, however, there was a different story. The stone glowed with powerful wards and magic. The strongest was an interlocking set of wards to detect mis-truths; the powerful divination magic was one of the most complicated and redundant spell she had ever seen. The energies would respond to different types of lies: half-truths, evasions, and even bald-faced deceptions. It also had redundancies to detect when it was being manipulated. The entire spell shifted chaotically, constantly twisting and reworking itself, no doubt to prevent any spells from protecting the accused. There were other magics glowing brilliantly in the stone, spells to detect mental control, psionic effects, and prevent anyone on the platform from escaping by any method

baring coming back down the stairs. A cold shiver of fear raced along her senses as she approached the stair. With a shaking limb, she set her wrist on it and pulled herself up.

A searing energy tore into her, gathering around her collar and prickling the skin.

Udin growled. “The accused shall not have any magical items on their person.” His booming voice echoed over the Royal Court, easily carrying back over the wall and through the gathered audience.

Merrie looked back. She was naked except her collar. Her eyes flickered to the Loyals who were still prepared to slaughter her for reaching out with her mind. Clearing her throat, she said, “It cannot be removed.”

“By the laws of the land, you must.”

“I cannot. It won’t come off.”

With a snarl, Udin hooked his mace on his belt and stormed forward. “If you go for my weapon, prisoner, you will be killed.”

Merrie flinched but held up the smooth end of her wrist as to explain herself.

He batted her hand away and grabbed the collar. The sharp edges of his gauntlet pressed against her throat as he worked the collar around in an effort to find the clasp.

Merrie had to lift her head. She felt humiliated and abused as he jerked her head back and forth. The submission sent pulses of heat coursing through her body, tickling her nerves and hardening her nipples. Energy gathered around her and she saw the field around the pedestal flashing.

Udin suddenly gripped her collar tighter, twisting until his gauntlet ground into her throat and made it difficult to breath. The pressure and pain increased dramatically as he pulled her half off the ground to bellow in her face. “The prisoner shall not use magic!”

If it was anyone else, it may have worked. For Merrie, all she could think about was how he had her life in his hand. He could crush her throat against the immutable metal that sealed her. He could kill her.

Energy poured into her, redoubling with the fear of death and the intense pleasure of submission. He wanted her to lash out, he wanted to hurt her, beat her. He wanted to cut her down. And every

aching desire that radiated from his thoughts punched into her intense need for submission. Trembling for only a second, she felt the power rising up into an intense orgasm.

“Stop immediately or I shall stop you!” His breath blasted against Merrie’s face.

She gasped and pawed at the air, her severed wrist flailing helplessly as she avoided touching him.

“I will cut you—” he bellowed, setting off another orgasm.

“Stop!”

The Namer’s voice cut’ through the pounding pulse in her thoughts. “Now speaking, Kirin, Guild Mistress of the Whore’s Guild!”

Udin twisted his grip more, cutting off more of his breath. “By the law of Franome, cease using—”

“Bailiff!” snapped Kirin. “You are causing this!”

A frown furrowed his brow. Without relaxing his grip, he straightened. His arm pulled Merrie up, forcing her to balance on her back legs. “Explain yourself, whore.”

“I would if you would stop making her come.”

“So she’s getting off on this. That is no reason to flaunt—”

“Court!” interrupted Kirin, her voice growing louder. “The accused is a True Submissive!”

A ripple of whispers and gasp ran through the audience. Merrie peeked over and saw that Udin was holding her high enough to see the five banks of chairs and benches that filled the end of the Royal Court. Each one had at least a hundred seats and every single one of them was filled. There were people standing in the aisles, arranged against the back walls. Even the balconies and upper deck was filled with people wanting to see a treason trial.

Udin shook Merrie. “What does that mean?”

Merrie’s cunt pulsed with desire as her body was wracked by his easy strength. She flailed helplessly, lost in fear and desire.

Kirin started to answer.

“I will not trust a whore,” he announced. Then he turned and yelled toward the far end of the court, near the large stone table where the judges would sit. “Historians!”

A trio of priests came out. They were of three different gods, all ones of knowledge.

“What is a True Submissive?” asked Udin.

The lead one, an older man with white hair and watery eyes, answered. “A True Submissive is an individual who gains power from submission and abuse. Anything that causes them to experience feelings of submission, helplessness, or domination will cause them to gather energy. Unlike most submissive magic, a True Submissive is unable to use their magic without a catalyst in the form of a ‘master’. Of the known True Submissives, the only limitation on magical use is the master, not the True Submissive. The master in this relationship guides and directs the magic.”

“So her master is the one using magic?”

“No,” said one of the other priests. “The gathering of power is induced by physical and mental domination.”

Kirin spoke up, “You rattling her by her collar is causing her to orgasm. That’s where the power is coming from.”

Udin froze and then peered down at Merrie. She could feel the anger burning inside him, he was used to being in charge and didn’t like her.

Her pussy grew wetter and she clamped her thighs together.

He tightened his grip, cutting off her breathing as he tried to twist off her collar.

A pulse of desire leaked from her shields, rippling energy across the pedestal. It lit up a column around the platform before rolling across the room to strike against an invisible shield formed by the short wall to the audience. It also broke against an intense wall of protection that interposed itself between Merrie and the judges’ stone table.

He did it again, setting off a stronger orgasm.

Merrie tried to keep her pleasure in her mental shields but couldn’t. Wisps of pleasure radiating out, striking the surrounding walls with enough force that a few ripples of energy broke through and into the audience. She could hear the soft gasps of pleasure from the first few ranks of seats.

Disgusted, he dropped her. “So, how do you drain her? An anti-magic shell?”

Kirin cleared her throat.

“Speak, whore.”

“Please reference the Whores’ Guild submitted report called ‘Bitch’s Collar.’”

Merrie shivered at hearing her name.

Udin looked at the priests of knowledge.

The first one spoke up. “Those records are sealed.”

“By who’s authority?”

No answer.

The answer must have meant something. Udin sighed and stepped back. “Is she a danger to the court?”

The three priests glanced at each other and then, as one, nodded. The first spoke again. “We recommend care be exercised with the accused.”

A ripple of surprise raced along the audience.

“Fine,” growled Udin. “But the collar comes off.”

“We do not recommend this course of action,” said the third priest in a surprisingly girlish voice for an older man.

“I will be the authority on that! Remove that collar or I will have it destroyed.”

Kirin cleared her throat.

“What, whore!?”

“Bitch’s Collar.”

Udin growled. He slowly swiveled his head to the historians.

The first one spoke again. “The collar is a registered artifact, destruction of it will threaten the court.”

“... and the city of Franome,” added the second.

“... and the World Tree,” finished the third.

This time, the whispers and cry grew even louder. They bounced across the room as people half stood up.

“There will be silence in the court!” bellowed Udin, turning on the audiences.

As he struggled to regain control over the court, Merrie glanced at the platform. He wanted her there, she could feel it. Wordless, she stepped back on the stairs.

Energy flashed over her.

With a rush of submission, she forced herself up on the stairs and crawled to the center of the platform. She felt a thousand of eyes staring at her naked body as she knelt in the middle. Reflexively, she brought her wrists up to her collar and thrust her breasts out

for the empty chairs in front of her. There were five of them set out; Rakin's trial only needed three. She didn't know why, but somehow she felt there were eyes boring into her from the empty seats. She took a deep breath and spread her thighs, exposing her pussy and ass to the audience and the judges in front of her.

Seconds after she settled into position, the court grew silent.

"What, where... damn it," growled Udin.

Merrie couldn't help but wag her tail back and forth.

"Disgusting," Udin muttered but he made no effort to do anything else. Instead, his boots scuffed on the ground as he stood behind her. She heard him inhale and then bellow out. "Silence and attention! The Royal Court of Franome is now in order."

What followed was almost twenty minutes of prayers to the gods of justice, a declaration of loyalty to Franome, and even a vow to honor the decisions made by the presiding judges.

Merrie performed everything with tears in her eyes. She felt terrible alone and abandoned. There was no one to help her, no one to stand by her side. She was helpless to do anything.

When they got to the point where they bowed to the presiding queen, Merrie looked up in hopes. However, she only saw the queen staring pointedly back at her, jaw tight. Memories rose up of the queen and how she left with Kirin. It was a secret that the queen enjoyed the company of the Whores' Guild Mistress and Merrie had no doubt that the fact would not come up in her trial either.

The Royal Geas flickered inside her, twisting her guts violently to warn her against anything that would threaten the royal family.

The list of Merrie's accusations took almost twenty minutes. Charge after charge was laid in front of her: destruction of property, loss of life, destruction of farming lands, threatening the border of Franome, and attacking a count's daughter. Each one brought fresh tears of Merrie's eyes. She knew they were true but she couldn't speak. Instead, she flinched with each charge, each accusation. The dread filled her. She couldn't disagree with any of them, she had been responsible for everything.

And then it came.

"... and finally, Merrie Golddother has been accused of treason against the land and people of Franome, the Royal Family, and justice itself."

She almost broke down. Trembling, she bowed her head and let the tears roll down her face.

The Namer called out. “Announcing Judge Kagli, Judge Rammis, Judge Ertyo, Judge Cannerston, and Judge Marshdother.”

As each name was called out, the judge appeared in a chair. At first, Merrie thought it was teleportation but she caught the flash of illusion magic disappearing; they had been there for some time and were only now revealing themselves. She lifted her head to watch as the older men and women finished appearing. All of them were in the later parts of their lives, appearing to be in their sixties but no doubt in their second centuries. None of them were smiling as they looked directly at her.

One of the female judges, Marshdother, leaned forward. “What do you do prefer to be called?”

She almost projected but didn't. Clearing her throat, she said, “Merrie, please.” It was as good of a name as any.

“Well, Merrie, there are some serious charges laid before you.”

“Yes...” she struggled with the right phrase.

“Your honor.”

“Yes, your honor.”

“Did you do it?” The line of questioning surprised her. It was conversational but at the same time, Merrie knew that every word and phrase would be dissected and analyzed. The tone would make it harder to stay on guard, to make sure she didn't say the wrong thing.

Merrie cleared her throat. “I did not commit treason.”

“And the others?”

The trapped feeling rose. “From a certain point of view... yes.”

Judge Kagli leaned forward and Marshdother leaned back.

Kagli steepled his fingers. “Start at the beginning, show us how you got here.”

She blanched. “I don't know if I can.”

“Feel free to name people, those details will not go beyond the inner court into the audience. There are spells to ensure specific details like that won't be shared outside the judges, the royal family, and the officers of the court.”

Sweat prickling her brow, Merrie struggled with her next words.

“Please, Merrie. Realize that your life is on the line and you must tell the truth.”

“Yes... your honor.” Her tail pressed against her thigh as she struggled for a moment. Then, she found a place to start her story. She opened her mouth to start.

When she saw a little girl sitting on the table of the judge’s table, she froze. The girl couldn’t have been more than eight years old, with a soft gray and blue dress on. Her black hair was pulled up in a bow.

Merrie stared in shock. As her attention drew on the little girl, she disappeared. When Merrie drew her attention back to the judges, she spotted the little girl in the corner of her vision.

“Merrie? You must answer.”

Disturbed, Merrie calmed herself. “I guess the best time to start is when I died. It was after we were fleeing Lemetri’s paladin, Gillette...”

t'Sade

Hope

44

Ten hours later and Merrie was exhausted and aching. Her throat felt like broken rocks and the taste of blood coated her tongue. Every word forced out felt like a sharp knife on the inside. But she kept answering the question as best as she could..

The judges had provided her with water but allowed no other help. Originally the water came in a glass but the entire silence as the judges watched awkwardly as she tried to hold the smooth glass between the ends of her wrists. She broke two glasses until someone gave her a bowl to drink out of it, that helped but she spent years not talking and now she said more words in a single day than she had the day she was kidnapped and raped.

“Why did Bass pick you on the street?” asked Judge Rammis.

“He said that he saw it in my eyes,” she rasped. “He said there was a hunger for submission in Alpha’s eyes, the hidden part of our lives that was waiting to break free.”

“Has he been around a lot of True Submissives?”

“At least five.”

“There are less than a dozen living in the known world. How can one man have encountered so many?”

She thought for a moment, ducking her head to lap at the icy water. When she gathered her thoughts, she sat back up and licked her lips. “He trained two of them, one bonded with him.”

“Sable.”

Merrie nodded before she said, “Dixie—”

A sob rose up as she remembered Dixie’s death. “—he was a warrior about to die. He spent his entire life fighting his nature, but

when cancer was killing him, only submission stopped him from dying.”

“He was the Warlord of Blood River. A Copir silfae who successfully invaded Franome. He killed thousands before he disappeared.”

Her ears dropped down. She was hoping to show Dixie’s character and she was, once again, twisted into pointing out how destructive or terrible her friends were. “He was a friend, one who died saving all of us,” she said in one last hope.

Judge Kagli started up again. Merrie tensed. The judge’s questions were some of the hardest because he managed to bring up some obscure point and make her defend it.

Struggling to keep her hopes up, Merrie waited for the inevitable question.

“You said you weren’t aware of the size of the shadow land you summoned.”

Merrie nodded, her muscles tensing and sweat prickling her brow.

“You have the ability to dispel it, don’t you? You did that with the Shadowed District, which killed many people before you came to your senses.”

Merrie wasn’t sure if she could dispel it, but she knew it had to be possible. “Y-Yes.”

“Why didn’t you stay behind and dispel it? By your own words, you wouldn’t be here if you agreed to the duke’s request.”

The court grew hushed. She felt everyone staring at her, their gaze pummeling her mental shields with the silent projected hatred.

Merrie struggled with her answer. She wanted to explain her feelings and desires, but couldn’t. In front of the judges, it felt like she was being selfish for wanting a family and to give the shadows a home.

“Merrie? This is important.”

She hated that the judge had such a personable style of questioning, it made it harder to avoid the hard answers. Taking a deep breath, she tried to explain it. “The Lord of Shadows made a deal with me to save Bass and the others. They would have a sanctuary but couldn’t leave the limits of the shadow lands. They would have a home, to be safe.”

“Like the Shadowed District?”

“Y-Yes, but not near Franome City.” She coughed and had to drink to ease her throat. “Blood County was far from cities. I thought it was far enough to prevent so many from dying like what happened in the district.”

That wasn’t entirely true. She just wanted to save her friends.

“You turned four thousand,” he spat out the word, “square kilometers of fertile land into a dying world that no living creature could remain. How is that better than the Shadowed District? How is a significant portion of a dukedom and an entire county better than a few hundred blocks?”

Tears burned in her eyes. “I thought it was safer.”

Judge Ertyo held up two thick fingers to take his turn. Merrie didn’t know what to expect from his questions, he spoke very little. “Why didn’t you renege on the deal after you saved your friends. These are evil creatures of darkness, they will not honor your deal, why should you?”

“They will abide by it.”

“How do you know that? You don’t have control over these beasts. They could be swarming across the country side even as we speak.”

Merrie knew it wasn’t true. The Lord of Shadows would keep its end of the bargain, she knew it deep in her core, an unspeakable feeling written into the very darkness of her soul. “They are not. They will not.”

“How can you be sure?”

“They promised.”

“You said yourself, even Bass broke his promises! Even Gillette and Lem... the goddess did. Why would your so-called Lord not break his promise?”

The tears were rolling down her cheeks now. “I know it won’t. It is bound to me as much as I’m bound to it. Neither of us can break our promise. The shadow land is the limit of their lands! They cannot go beyond the boundaries we agreed on! I promise, I swear that this is true!”

The judge seems unimpressed with her outcry. “What proof can you give us? Not a feeling or hope, but proof. We need hard, solid proof. What can you tell us that will give us confidence that they

will not escape or use that land as a staging ground for some invasion?"

Merrie started to glance toward Claston but the geas twisted her insides. A sharp taste rose in the back of her throat as she found she couldn't even move her eyes in that direction. Even a sideways glance would reveal the connection between her and the royal family.

Kagli leaned forward. "If you have proof that this is for the greater good, you must tell us. If you cannot, we can't take your feelings into account. Realize, this is the one case where your silence will doom you."

The tone of the judge's voice caught her. She inhaled sharply as she stared at him, sinking into his brown eyes. He knew about the geas. The knowledge was there but he, like she, could not reveal the presence any more. There was a sadness in his gaze, a pity and compassion. A single tear hovered in one eye.

Her lips parted in shock.

Kagli was aware that she couldn't say anything. It tore at him just like it was tearing at her.

All she had to do was belt it out.

And then die as her organs burst out of her orifices.

The little gray girl was suddenly back on the corner of the desk. She was petting an equally colored cat.

Merrie frowned and looked away from the table.

There was a suited man standing on the other side of the table. He also wore gray with pale blue. His eyes were black and sad as he stood there, not moving or touching.

She didn't know why the Loyals didn't strike at him. Looking to the side, they didn't seem to notice the intruders. Nor was anyone responding to the other figures in gray, from children to older folks, that stood among the audiences.

Like the little girl, if she focused on one, they disappeared.

"Merrie," said Judge Kagli. "You need to speak up."

Closing her eyes tightly, she squeezed the tears out. "Judges. I will swear on every god that will listen to me, on the crystal of my heart, on the darkness in my blood, that I have only the best of Franome's wishes in my thoughts. My actions, no matter how

devastating or terrible they seem, are for my country and my queen.”

The judges said nothing.

“I-I know that I can’t prove it. I have destroyed Blood County by summoning the shadow lands there, but I can tell you with all the truth I can muster, it must remain. My actions have, and will always be, with Franome’s best interest in my heart.”

There was a painful silence.

“I’m sorry,” said Kagli in a quiet voice.

She sniffed and nodded. Just as the geas allowed her to summon the darkness, it also ensured that she couldn’t defend herself. A bitter taste flooded her mouth but she swallowed it down.

Kagli turned to the other judges. “I have completed my questions.”

The other judges quickly agreed.

Resolute Udin stirred from his position and stood up. “The questioning phase has now completed. Does the Royal Family wish to make any statements?”

The entire court looked up at the queen.

Merrie’s heart skipped a beat in hope.

Queen Vikia stood. “May justice serve,” she said in a clear voice.

Merrie sobbed.

The queen turned and left the balcony, followed by her personal Loyals.

Claston was already gone but Boz stood stiffly on the balcony. Even from a distance, she could see tears in his eyes. Somehow, it helped to know that he, and probably Claston, both mourned what was about to befall her.

Udin waited until the queen was gone before announcing to the court. “The judges will now deliberate. The doors will be sealed by the law of the land until a decision is made.”

Kagli cleared his throat.

Udin turned toward the judge, obviously surprised.

“We’ve already decided.”

The rise of murmuring in the audience silence immediately. It was an oppressive silence, a poignant blade that hung over her.

Merrie closed her eyes tightly and tensed.

“Merrie Golddother,” started the elder judge. “The five justices of Franome have decided your fate.”

She nodded, the tears tearing and her throat aching.

“We find you blameless—”

A gasp relief slipped from her lips.

“—in all crimes except for the charge of treason.”

He paused to take another breath. “We find you guilty of treason against the country of Franome, the Royal Family, and the people who swear fealty to the Tree of Wisdom.”

Murmurs rose from the audience but it quickly died when the Loyals and Resolutes hefted their weapons.

“All magical devices in your possession shall be destroyed and you will be sealed from your magic for the rest of your life. You shall be imprisoned in Abbinkey until the end of days with no chance of a retrial baring a pardon from the Royal Family.”

There would be no pardon, she knew that. The tears poured down her face as she forced herself to listen as the judge continued.

“Your guild shall be fined one million crowns—”

“Fuck,” said Monk. He was smacked before he said anything else.

“—for harboring you from justice. It is in the court’s judgment that they be investigated for the decisions they made according to the sealed records. We further declare that Count Bassimar Sarmo shall be stripped of his titles—past, present, and future—baring further considerations. He and the rest of the so-called ‘Puppy Mill’ shall be forbidden from owning lands or businesses until said considerations have completed.”

There was a brief cheer from the back.

“This court has further judged that the Church of Lemetri shall be disbanded, all assets shall be sold and the proceeds donated for the public good. The court suggests to the law to establish laws to prevent the former goddess’ symbol to be forbidden. Furthermore —”

“What, you can’t—!” said a strange voice.

One of the Loyals teleported away in a cloud of smoke.

The outraged voice didn’t continue.

Kagli shook his head. “Furthermore, Diffy Blood—the daughter of Count Waver Blood—is to present herself to the Royal Courts in one month time or a bounty of one hundred thousand marks will be

established to bring her alive. We must determine if she is truly an Infernal with dire plans to this country.”

When the cloud blew away, Merrie saw Autiur standing in the Loyal’s place. He wore gray and pale blue. He had a sad look on his face as he looked around at everyone but Merrie. Then, to her surprise, the blue faded away into grayness.

“There shall be no appeal on these pronouncements baring a decree by the Royal Family or the combined decision of the Parliament. So has decided the Royal Court.”

Merrie finally broke down, sobbing as she curled up on the stone platform.

t'Sade

Sentencing

45

Merrie curled up on the cold stone pedestal, listening to the cacophony of noises that assaulted her. Even pressing her ears against her head couldn't stop the din from hammering at her senses. She felt tiny and broken, not to mention hatred at herself for being unable to defend herself because of the geas.

She knew she was a sacrifice. With her sentencing, they also had an excuse to bring in Diffy and separate her from her father. The Church of Lemetri would also be dissolved, no doubt making it harder for them to keep attacking Bass.

Having her trainer stripped of all titles, though, hurt even more. Bass and Sable had enough trials in their life. She had destroyed the Puppy Mill with the Shadow Land. There was no way they could return to their old lives. Even more so, now that he had lost the barony that he had just acquired from Kessler in Blood County.

Tears ran down her cheeks, black and icy. They splashed on the stone pedestal and sizzled. The smell of sake rose around her, tickling her nostrils.

"Merrie." It was Autiur. He stood next to her, his gray eyes looking at her.

She shuddered as she lifted her head from the stone. The audience was screaming and there the smell of fear and blood filled the air. She could feel the hatred, fear, and anger beating against her mental shields, slamming her with waves of thoughts.

Autiur leaned forward. "I want you to know, I know why you couldn't speak."

Despite his quiet voice, she heard it in her head and past her clamped ears. The words were startling clear as she stared into his

gray eyes. It felt like he was projecting to her, but in a subtle manner that deftly slid past her mental shields as if they weren't even there.

She frowned as she pushed herself up more. Something felt wrong with the man in front of her. He felt different, more controlled, more... aware than before.

Autiur reached out and stroked his hand along the side her head. His hands were cold, icy actually. With her nature, she should never feel cold again but he had a caress of something colder than the Shadows and darkness.

(W-What?) The ward around her rippled with her accidental projection. The energy glowed and she saw where the glowing energies gathered around his arm from where he reached out to her.

He shook his head. He ran one thumb along the sensitive ridge of her ear. "I just wanted to say, I know you have a geas on you."

(H-) "How?"

"I also want you to know, what is going to happen is not your fault."

"I... I—" The urge to project rose but she forced the words out of her raw throat. "I couldn't tell them about it."

"No, no, sweet little puppy girl. I'm not talking about your trial. I'm talking about what is going to happen soon. It's going to be terrible—"

Merrie's blood ran icy cold.

"—but there is nothing you can do about it. I promise you, what will happen is not your fault."

From the side, Udin stormed up. "Come on, whore. You may have some powerful friends and so-called artifacts, but the law is the law. Time to get that damned collar off and send you on your way."

Autiur looked up at him and shook his head. "I will not regret gathering you."

Merrie thought Autiur's words were strange but she didn't have any chance to ponder the phrasing.

Udin didn't respond as he came around. His gauntlets sparkled with energy as he reached past the ward and wrapped his thick fingers around her collar. The hard metal crushed her throat, squeezing her until it was hard to breath.

A surge of pleasure rose up, filling her with sweet power and lust. It sparkled along her senses, tickling her pussy and igniting the heat deep inside her body. She moaned as he hauled her off the platform and out of the wards.

The magical protections peeled back. Immediately, she was assaulted by spells and emotions. They both hammered against her mental defenses. There were many of them, tasting of different energies from divination to infernal.

She closed her eyes as she was dragged down the aisle back toward her prison cell. Using the energy of Udin's abuse to fuel her, she wrapped herself in stronger energies.

He responded by gripping her collar tighter. The metal dug into her neck, breaking skin. Blood trailed down. He dragged her toward the door.

"Merrie!" cried Kirin. She was forcing her way toward the shallow wall that divided the audience from the aisle toward the prison cells. "Let me talk to her, damn it!"

"Back off, whore!" bellowed Udin. He threw his other hand up. A translucent shield burst into existence, the seal of the royal court glowing brilliantly.

As the light touched Merrie, her skin blackened immediately. She screamed out in pain.

"Damn!" Udin's energy surged with a triggered spell. It was similar to the one Merrie used to enhance her strength. Spinning around, he picked her up and threw her toward the open door.

She flipped over in the air. Reflexively, she activated her own spells to increase her agility. Even that wasn't enough to lessen the impact as she slammed into the far wall of the hallway. She managed to get her feet underneath her and caught the brunt of the blow. Then, as if she had done it every day, she stepped down before the kinetic force released her from the wall.

She sat down, her knees on the ground and her ass on her heels.

It took her a moment to realize that Udin's desire was to see her that way. The surge of submission rippled through her body, filling her with power once again.

Udin backed away from Kirin, bellowing incomprehensibly. He passed through the gate and slammed it shut. Then he kicked the

heavy wooden door behind it close, plunging the hallway into silence and darkness.

Merrie watched him.

“Fucking whore. She and the whole damn lot should be kicked out of town. Life would be better,” muttered the bailiff. He grunted and looked around. “Where’s the fucking lights!?”

“S-Sorry, sir,” said a young page. She was at the far end of the hallway, working at a flint as she tried to start a lamp.

Merrie felt sick as she waited the painful seconds for the light to come back. She had been convicted of treason.

As soon as the flame was caught, Udin wasted no time. He reached down and grabbed Merrie by her collar. At the surge of pleasure and her moan, he made a disgusted noise and dragged her down the hall. “Clear the path back to the cells,” he ordered.

The humiliation only fueled her power, filling her with energy as he squeezed tighter.

Merrie shuddered with growing pleasure. It left her thighs and pussy slick with her juices. She could smell the sake scent of her excitement wafting around her as he continued to drag her down the well-worn path that a thousand criminals had walked.

By the time he threw her back into her cell, she was on the edge of an orgasm. It rippled along her thoughts and dribbled down her thighs. She rolled on the ground and came to a start, twisted with her tail bent underneath her and one arm holding herself up. It was what he wanted, his desires that boiled deep underneath the hard, bitter man that stared her down with all the hatred in the world.

“Page!” he snapped.

A different page, another teenage girl, ran up. “Yes, sir?”

“Get the disenchanter.”

“Don’t they usually do that in the court?”

“Now, bitch!”

The girl winced and then stumbled back.

Udin turned back to Merrie. “I don’t care what that whore’s guild bitch says. The court has ruled and I’m going to get rid of that fucking collar of yours. I won’t let anything like that break out of the wards.”

He tromped into the room and knelt down. “And then, I’m going to have your bones inscribed with the most terrible geases. I know

you have seen Borias, hell the entire fucking Kivas family. You know what is going to happen, don't you?"

She nodded as the tears threatened her. She didn't know if she could live without magic. She would be nothing again, not just a weak girl, but before the Puppy Mill ever came back. She would be... just a person. A broken, cropped human."

"Yeah," he said with a chuckle. "I like when you criminals realize what is going to happen. The mages are the worst. They scream when it happens, when they feel that connection to their very soul laid to the blade. Don't worry, you can," he grinned, "use your magic. It will be the worst pain you have ever experienced, your insides will twist and rip out, liquefying before they pour out of your diseased holes."

She couldn't tell him that she had many geas in her life. She didn't want to either, she could feel that his hungry desire was to dominate her, to force her to cry. He wanted to break her and she craved it.

Merrie let out a long shuddering breath, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh, fucking bitch. You are getting off on this, aren't you?"

She couldn't answer.

"Aren't you?" He backhanded her.

Stars exploded across her vision. The flash of pain turned to pleasure and a tiny orgasm rippled across her senses.

"You disgusting beast," he snarled. He smacked her again and again, throwing her head back and forth.

The pain only increased her pleasure. Her cheeks burned with the agony of his gauntlet smacking against her flesh.

Udin growled before switching to punching. His knuckles slammed into her jaw, slamming her down. Her head slammed against the hard stone floor. A flash of blood coated her tongue.

He punched her again and again, pounding her head into the ground. The blows came faster, raining down against her.

She felt her skull cracking from his fists, her entire body exploding into agony as she flailed helplessly against him, unable to lash back herself physically. In desperation, she gathered up magic to cast a spell.

“No!” he bellowed, short-circuiting her spell. His blows came faster as he knelt down over her body, pinning her naked form against the ground as he hammered into her head with powerful, brutal strikes. Her nose cracked as did other bones. More blows caught against her throat and chest, knocking the wind out of her.

She twisted helplessly, the pleasure increasing with every blow. She couldn't divert the energies into a spell or even concentrate enough for her collar. Instead, it built up into a powerful crest of pleasure.

His armored knuckles slammed against her jaw, cracking bone. She felt the joint scraping free.

It was too much. The pain ignited into white-hot ecstasy. It exploded from inside her, radiating out in a wave of purest pleasure. In her mind, she could feel it slamming into other submissive people around her, the pages and other guards.

They dropped as they lost themselves in their own orgasms. Their cries echoed down the halls even as their pleasure came ripping back.

Merrie screamed out, her voice hoarse. Her throes of pleasure shoved Udin off her body as she came again and again, taking the reflected orgasms and magnifying them. They burst out of her again, radiating back into the city in a terrible loop of pleasure.

She felt the pleasures of the people in the city light up. There were the submissives and those who desires. Then the more powerful energies as the wave of pleasure struck the Whore's Guild and then further. Then, a brilliant light as it struck another True Submissive, Rose. The pleasure rushed back, slamming into Merrie with the force of a tsunami.

“Fucking—!” Udin staggered to his feet.

Merrie cried out, her back arching as her broken bones and muscles protested. A puddle of her cum grew underneath her as she was assaulted by more pleasure, radiating out endlessly until she felt her pleasures reach beyond the limits of the city.

Every submissive, every person who had ever gotten pleasure from obeying a command or order, exploded into an orgasm. It filled the city with brilliant motes of pleasure.

She sobbed as she tried to force the energies into the collar, to guide them safely.

“—Whore—!” Udin

The collar absorbed some of it but then stopped. It was full, the depths of the artifact had been reached and it could no longer store power. The rest of it radiated away from her, buffeting every other orgasming being in the city with fresh waves of pleasure.

“—Stop—!” Udin’s kick caught her in the ribs, picking her off the ground and throwing her across the room.

She slammed into the wall. The force cracked her her head. White sparks exploded across her vision. The pain followed after, turning into the hottest of pleasures that burst out of her senses.

He stormed toward her. “Stop, or by the gods I will end you now!”

“Excuse me?” came a surprisingly calm voice.

Merrie slumped to the ground, her body shaking as black blood poured out of her mouth and nose. It also came leaking out form her pussy, the thin obsidian fluids smelled of sex and excitement. She hummed with power and felt the shadows around her beginning to respond.

The darkness near the edges of the bricks sharpened. Her energies reached out for it, pulling it closer as the room grew pitch with power.

Udin growled and unsheathed his weapon. “Stop or I will—”

“You will what, Bailiff? Command a True Submissive to do anything? Beat a woman who gains power from abuse?”

Udin jerked and looked around.

Merrie tried to look at the man standing in the door but couldn’t see past the sparks and tears. She shuddered as the darkness continued to grow around her, wrapping around her body in utter darkness as her cloak snapped back into place.

Icy comfort wrapped around her body, cradling her limbs and breasts, and pussy with pressure. She pumped energy into the cloak, trying to bleed it away from her own body to avoid setting off the entire city again.

“My lord mage!” gasped Udin.

“That artifact brought her back from the dead after a goddess killed her. You stabbing her is just going to give her more energy. If you don’t kill her, that pleasure will probably kill half of the city in pleasure.”

“She is a criminal and refuses... what?” Udin staggered back. “What do you mean kill half the city?”

Merrie gasped as she managed to drain herself into the cloak. She used more of her power to transform into a Bel Dark hound and back again, then did it in rapid succession as the transformation slowly and painfully healed her bones.

“Don’t you—”

“Bailiff, don’t stop her. She’s using the energy for something good.”

Merrie sobbed as her body twisted and shifted, pulling itself back together until she was once again only human. Panting, she peeled her sweat-soaked body from the ground and pushed herself up to her knees.

The other man, the mage, stepped inside. He wore a flowing robe and had a staff in his hand. An amulet around his neck shone with protection energies, a powerful shield that no doubt protected him from the brunt of her orgasm.

Panting, Udin, stepped back. Her black blood dripped from his fists. He looked around with a brief look of fear, but there was only the mage, himself, and Merrie in the room.

Out in the hall, Merrie could hear the shuddering cry of the female page as she recovered from her orgasm.

“You called for me, Bailiff?”

“Yes,” Udin said. He started to say something but then shifted himself. He was hard, she could feel it in the back of her mind, but hated himself for experiencing it. He adjusted his armor and then then took a deep breath. “This beast has been convicted of treason and will have the Justice Geas put on her. You need to remove her magical artifacts.”

The mage looked at her. His intense gaze, red, peered through her.

She shivered as she felt his energies dance along her skin.

The mage shrugged. “The cloak is a spell and the collar is an artifact, there are no items to disenchant.”

“Her collar, Lord Mage. Remove the collar.” Udin gestured at her angrily.

The mage shook his head. “No.”

“She’s a traitor. Remove her magic.”

“I will not.”

“Why won’t—”

“Because no mortal can remove that collar. No spell by human or silfae can affected that.”

“Bullshit.”

Merrie cringed and lowered herself against the ground. Udin’s anger was beating against her and he was getting more furious with every passing moment.

He glared at the mage. “It is a conviction. You must.”

“My oath is to protect this country. Attempting to remove that collar will probably destroy most of the city.”

“I stopped beating her.”

The mage shook his head. “No, I said she would probably kill half the city with orgasms. Destroying that collar would destroy almost all of the city in fiery, burning death.”

Udin stared at the mage. “I don’t believe you.”

“My oath will not let me remove that collar.” The mage turned and headed out.

“You must! It is the law!”

“My oath is to the country, I do not have to obey this one.” He turned and looked pointedly at Udin. “Want to come with me and we’ll talk with the Chief Judges?”

“I’ll find someone else.”

The mage shook his head and just walked away.

Udin turned and glared at her. “Fucking bitch. I’ll get that collar one way or another.”

t'Sade

Denial

46

Hours later, Udin brought in three wizard-priests into her cell. “Here is the criminal. I only need the collar removed.”

Merrie looked up from the ground. She felt energetic from her orgasm but couldn’t do anything about it. The wards on the room were still powerful; she could have broken through but Udin had enough sense to command her to stay every time he left. The order seeped into her thoughts, bringing waves of pleasure every time she considered leaving.

The priests came in, fanning out by the door. She spotted the symbol of Misyr dangling from their amulets and along the bottom of their robes.

The lead one, an older woman, walked forward and knelt down. “Hello, Merrie.”

Merrie didn’t know her but she still sent out a welcoming wave of emotions. It brought a growl from Udin but the priests just smiled.

“May I see it?”

Merrie lifted her neck, exposing her throat and collar.

The head priest took it and then gasped. “Cold.”

(Sorry.)

“No magic!” snapped Udin.

“Please, sir, we are capable of defending against her.” She was lying, Merrie could tell that, but there was little fear. The head priestess turned back and rolled the heavy adamantite collar around her neck. She stopped at the wedding ring fused into the side, the dark crystal almost pitch black.

Udin paced back and forth.

"You know, Sister Rendi regretted making this collar with her dying breath."

At the memory of Borias' mother, Merrie sobbed. The old woman had been at the mill when she arrived. She left because of Merrie and she was killed because of the collar. It was the last magical item that she had made, but Merrie had been told that it had the energies of a god inside it.

"She was a sister to me," said the older woman. "Her death still haunts me."

She ran her finger along the collar again. "This cursed artifact was her destruction. I only wished I could remove this stain from the world."

Udin stopped. "Wished?"

The priestess stood up. "We cannot destroy it."

"What? Why not? I said I'd pay you a hundred thousand marks!"

"The Church of Misyr will return the money, of course. Even the nonnegotiable fee we charged you. This is a matter of honor."

"I don't want the money," he snapped. "I want that collar gone! She is a traitor, she must be geased."

"It cannot be removed."

"Everyone keeps telling me that! How is that a stupid fucking whore has something even you can't remove!"

The priestess gasped. She stepped forward and slapped him. "Don't you dare!" Her voice cracked.

Udin froze. His cheek was red but he made no effort to touch it.

"That collar is a stain on my god's honor. It is a device that binds forbidden spells into it. It was crafted by a terrible man who should have never been able to do it. I am ashamed that Great Lord Misyr had any involvement with the collar but he did in his great knowledge."

"It's just a collar."

"No, it isn't just a collar. It is the soul and life of a great sister, it has the blood of two different gods flowing through it, and it was forged in darkness. Any one of those could be removed by us, but not all five."

"F-Five?" His face twisted into a scowl. "Explain."

"Her own soul is wrapped around that collar. Her nature, the True Submissive, takes any mind control and twists it, binding it

tighter than any magic could do alone. She is that collar as much as it is part of her. Her soul, her spirit, her nature are tied into it as much as the gods and shadows.”

Udin’s jaw tightened. “Are you saying no one can destroy it?”

“It would take a god, maybe many of them.” Her face still twisted in rage, she leaned forward. “Do you have any gods owing you favors?”

A low growl rumbled in his chest.

“That collar cannot be destroyed. Even if you happened to find some way of cracking it, the sheer power that is stored inside it would destroy the city.”

“You mages keep—”

“And you are obviously too stupid to listen.”

Udin bristled. “I will have you—”

“Shut up.”

“I will not—”

The priestess slapped him again. “Quiet!”

Udin stepped back in surprise. His hand dropped to his sword.

The priestess backed away her self. “My apologies. I feel strongly about this. If you insist on going forward, I will petition the High Court and the Royal Family to stop you. You must not mess with powers beyond your ken, not this time, Lord Bailiff.”

“I will not stop, justice must be served.”

“As you wish.”

The three turned and left, leaving a seething Udin and cowering Merrie behind.

He took a deep breath. “Every fucking one.” He glared at Merrie. “How did a common whore get an artifact like that? Why didn’t they kill you sooner?”

Merrie wanted to respond but she tasted the acrid energies of the geas preventing her. She couldn’t tell him she was already bound with something far more powerful. Instead, she shrugged and pressed her body.

Udin paced back and forth, his fury beating against her shields. Then, he stopped. “Fine, if I can’t remove the collar, I will move forward on the geas. Page!”

It was a young man who arrived this time. He glanced at Merrie's naked body and shivered; she could feel that he had orgasmed with her and no doubt had her image burned into his head.

Behind the page, in the door, was Autiur. The gray guard shook his head before walking past.

"Yes, sir?" asked the page.

"Summon the binders. We have a geas to put on this criminal."

"Yes, sir."

Udin waited until the page was gone and then sighed. "You will be on that wagon to Abbinkey by morning. I promise you that."

Second Thoughts

47

Udin dragged Merrie down the hall with a makeshift leash made from his belt wrapped around her collar. The metal buckle dug into her throat, scratching her as he yanked impatiently. With every pull, his heavy boots scraped against the ground and his grunts echoed against the walls.

Merrie dragged herself behind, digging her wrists and knees into the smooth stones. It took her a moment to realize that it wasn't only her growing dread of being sealed by the geas but also her need to obey his unspoken desire; he wanted her to resist, he wanted to pull and tug her until she cried out in pain.

Her pussy fluttered with heat. She was on the brink of an orgasm for the last two hallways. Her naked body flashed as she tugged further on her leash and sunk into the forced submission. The power that came flooded through her veins with the sweetest of pleasures.

The only thing that tamped down her pleasure was the realization that he was using the very thing the geas would prevent. The magic would bind to her and cut her off from her magic, preventing her from doing anything that would give her power. In her case, that meant obeying command and submitting. She didn't know if she could turn that off, it wasn't possible not to obey the ordered commands that he was muttering under his breath as he hauled her down the halls.

Udin stopped sharply in front of a wide wooden door. It had a room number and two more lines on a brass plaque on the door: Mage Riff Glassnier, Master of Geasa. He yanked on the leash, pulling it up so Merrie had to sit.

She obeyed, her pussy squelched from her excitement. Unwittingly, her tail wagged back and forth as she stared in confusion. She felt dazed, her body responding as it always did as she tried to keep herself from plummeting into a despair; she had already learned that her depression could kill.

He hesitated for a moment as a brief surge of lust rose up. Then he turned and pounded on the door, his metal gauntlet booming in the narrow confines of the hallway.

Startled, she slumped against the wall. Her thighs were soaked from her excitement, it warred against her growing dread. Panting, she took a deep breath.

Merrie rubbed the sore ends of her wrists against the ground.

Udin looked down and scoffed. "You are so disgusting. Not even the worst of our criminals gave us so much trouble. Why don't—" He held up his hand. "No, don't use your magic to answer. If you can't say it with your mouth... actually, I don't care what you say at all. Just be quiet."

The echo rippled along her senses and she let out a soft moan.

"You really get off on even—?"

The door opened and an old man wearing a tunic with the court symbol on it peered out. "May I... Oh, Bailiff, how may I help you?" asked Riff. He had a strained voice as if he had been working out for hours.

"I need a Justice Geas put on a criminal as soon as possible."

Riff shook his head. "Paladay and her crew are on duty right now. I'm off for another twelve hours. You should ask—"

"I need someone competent."

The old man glared at being interrupted. "Pala..." The old man glanced down at Merrie. His eyes widened. He dropped his gaze to her wrists and then slowly drew his eyes up with the intense look that felt like he was looking at her insides or at her energies. "Is that... the Alpha?"

She nodded, her ears bobbing with her movement.

"Yes, the traitor."

It took a long moment for Riff to stop scanning her from wrist to ears and back again. "I would have thought you'd would have had the geas placed on her already."

"There was... complications."

The mage didn't look away from her. "That collar is very powerful. We don't normally geas anyone still using magic, it can trigger an immediate negative feedback."

Merrie's ears went down, she didn't like the sound of that.

Udin growled. "I know but apparently no one is willing to remove it. Can you geas her with it?"

"Yes."

The bailiff let out a sigh of relief. "Oh, thank the Seven—"

The mage looked surprised before a flash of fear. He stared at Merrie as if seeing her for the first time.

"I won't though," came a distracted reply. Then he pulled back. "No, I can't."

Merrie stared up at him in confusion.

Udin's jaw opened. "What? Why the fuck not!?"

The old man shook his head. "I... I..." He jerked and pressed his hand against his nose. Coughing, he shook his head. "No, no one can... should." He looked up at Riff and there was fear in his eyes. "I can't explain it though."

"Well, why not?"

"I cannot," Riff said firmly. "Please, do not press."

Udin's face purpled. "I'm fucking tired of you damn mages telling me you can't do anything with her." He yanked up on her leash. "She's nothing more than treasonous whore. It's like all of you are fucking her with the pussy footing and avoiding it."

"That is not it, Sir Bailiff."

"Bullshit! All of you have the hots for this cunt! That's the only reason. I'm going to find Paladay! At least she is willing to do her duty."

The mage pulled back and then yelled, "Sir! Do not do that!"

He reached out for Udin but the bailiff smacked his hands away.

With a growl, Udin leaned toward him. "I will see justice done today, and it doesn't matter what corruption she's has on you. It will, I swear to the Seven Gods of Evermeet."

"You cannot!" The mage shoved forward. "I must call on the judges then. Wait here or bring her to the courtroom."

"Why?"

"I cannot explain." Merrie had heard that tone before. He had a geas controlling him also, maybe even the same one as her.

"You will fucking explain this, by the order of the Royal Courts. I'm really fucking tired of everyone telling me to treat her like royalty. She's a fucking criminal, not the queen!"

"I cannot." The mage looked frustrated, his eyes sliding toward Merrie and back. "I swear, Bailiff Udin. I swear on my gods and the court, I have nothing but the safety of this country, the land, and the Royal Family on my thoughts. I must speak to others about this."

The mage stepped around Udin. "Please, promise me. Just wait."

Udin grunted.

"No, Bailiff, I'm deathly serious. Lives will be lost if you charge forward with placing a geas on that creature... woman without being careful. I don't know how many lives, but it will be many deaths if you rush. Promise me. Promise me you'll wait until I can figure this out. Please?"

Udin's teeth ground for a moment. "I will wait."

Abandoning his room, the mage hurried down the hallway. His door creaked open, he hadn't bothered closing it.

Merrie felt a quaver of fear. Every mage she's encountered since she was convicted was terrified of her and her collar.

Udin sighed and watched him turn a corner. "What the fuck have you done? Everyone is so scared of a naked woman with no hands and feet. You're nothing more than a whore, you should be on your way to Abbinkey by now, not having me running around trying to find someone who has the balls to do their job."

Merrie cringed. She whispered, "Maybe we should—"

He silenced her with a yank that dug the collar into her throat. "Let's find Paladay. She lost family when you cursed the city, she won't hesitate."

Merrie resisted by digging her wrists into the ground. There was too many things going wrong, too much and she was worried that Udin was going to kill people like the mage insisted.

He yanked hard. "Come on, bitch! I said I'd wait and I waited long enough. I want this fucking geas on you before I grow old. Now, heel!"

The bellowed command slammed into her, a sweet pleasure filling her as it set off a rippling orgasm. She let out a moan as her focus grew inward to her rippling cunt and the icy juices oozing out

from her bare pussy. She shuddered as it filled her with intense pleasures.

When she regained her senses, Udin was dragging her down the hall. She tried to say something but he yanked her her, cutting off her breath with the collar. Another ripple of pleasure. When she recovered, her limbs skittered on the ground as she struggled to keep up, she remained silent as his mental desire demanded.

Unable to fight him, her thoughts wandered as she rushed to keep up. She didn't think the collar could be removed from her. It was her bond, tied into her soul with spells and oath magic. Her True Submissive nature had wrapped around it, digging deep into her mind. Without it, she would have no mistress anymore, an alpha without a master. She had done it once, it was a terrible time in her life and thousands died in her despair.

She wondered if death would be a good alternative but doubted the collar would allow her to remain truly dead. She could be destroyed, but that only meant that she would have months of torture as she regained her body.

Merrie concentrated on her collar, sending a thought along the place that she identified as her mistress. (What do I do? Please? Do I fight? Do I run away? Do I submit?)

She hoped she would get a response. She didn't understand how the collar could give orders that she did not initiate herself. This time, she hoped it would command her to do something.

The agony of waiting for an answer was painfully.

Udin continued to yank and pull her down the halls. He muttered under his breath as he navigated the narrow hallways of the courthouse. She could feel the age around her, along with countless protection spells that had been layered over the years.

She stumbled along as she thought about the Justice Geas. It operated by cutting a mage off from their source of magic. For Borias, who gained power from death, it prevented him from even being near someone who died. She remembered how haunted he was when he talked about having an integral part of his life ripped away for years, not to mention the constant fear of stumbling on a death and having his insides rip apart.

It would be the same for her. Whatever gave her power would kill her after the geas. That meant pleasure and pain. She couldn't be

ordered or reach out with her mind, she wasn't sure she could even survive because every time she crawled on her amputated wrists and legs, she was reminded of her helplessness. She could never fuck again. Never be raped or enjoy consensual sex. She could never be told what to do. No one around her could even desire her to do something, not if her abilities picked it up.

Tears ran down her cheeks. She didn't know if she could survive without magic anymore. Could she become just "another girl" like she was before Bass kidnapped her?

"Bailiff!" A woman's voice rose up behind them.

Udin turned and then let out a gasp of relief. "Paladay, I've been looking for you."

"I have been running around for you." Paladay was a red-haired woman with large breasts and narrow waist. She looked beautiful with bright yellow eyes. She was also half the age of Riff but with the same crackling energy of a mage.

Udin yanked Merrie around. "I need a geas put on this traitor as fast as possible."

"With pleasure, sir. Please, we can do it in the ritual room."

Merrie whimpered and shook her head. She dug her wrists into the ground as the gravity of her situation continued to grind down on her. She was about to lose everything.

He grunted and pulled harder.

She shook her head, her ears flat against her head. She couldn't take it, not with the fear.

"Do you need help, Udin?"

"No," Udin said with a growl. He yanked the makeshift leash and dragged Merrie along. "But, I want this damn thing on as soon as possible. Riff is insisting on waking up the judges or something to prevent me from doing my job. I have priests threatening the same. I just want her done."

There was an intense surge of anger and hatred from the female mage. "I can do it. Right here and now, actually."

"Really?"

"We just need a private room. Something we can lock. If you don't trust them, then let's do it now before they can send an order and I'll be forced to obey."

"I should have gone to you first."

“Yes. Um,” Paladay looked around. “Come, there is an empty dining hall in the next hall over. It will do well enough.”

Udin dragged Merrie. “Don’t you need two other mages?”

The anger rose from her. “Normally, yes, but if you are worried about being interrupted, I’m sure that asking for forgiveness is more important. We can dot the ‘i’ later.”

“Oh, thank the Seven, I really should have come here first.”

“Only serving my country,” the mage lied. Merrie could feel the deception but couldn’t push her thoughts into Paladay’s shields without alerting Udin of her curiosity.

The panic growing, Merrie continued to fight but Udin was more powerful and she was coming too hard from being forced. It only took a few minutes before he dragged her into an empty dining room.

Paladay locked the door behind her. Turning around, she started to pull chairs away from the two tables near the center of the room. “It’s been hours, I would have expected to see you far sooner.”

“There was complications.” Udin looked down at Merrie and then up at the woman moving tables. “Sit. Sit!”

Merrie planted her ass down. She sobbed and tried to get up.

He looked uncomfortable as he took a deep breath. “Stay!”

Merrie jerked at the command, then lost herself as pleasure flooded through her. Even on the brink of losing everything, she couldn’t help but respond to the order.

With a disgusted noise, Udin backed away and let the leash slip from his hand. He watched her warily but Merrie couldn’t move no matter what she wanted.

She looked at him and whined as more tears ran down her cheeks.

He shook his head. “Stay!” he bellowed and then hurried to the center of the room to help clear it out.

As they worked quickly, he said, “I tried to find someone to remove the collar from her. It is an artifact of some sort but everyone refused.”

“Refused? How could they refuse?”

“Said it was too dangerous. That gods were needed.”

The mage scoffed. “It wasn’t a god that killed my brother. It was her and that Shadowed District.”

Udin straightened to pick up a chair. "You lost family?" He was lying himself, but Paladay didn't seem to notice.

"My brother and his family. They never made it out. We never know who did it, but when I heard that it was her, I knew I had to be the one to put the geas on her."

Merrie's ears drooped. She still regretted that her suicidal depression had killed thousands.

Autiur sat down next to her. "Everyone dies though. I would have thought you could have accepted that after Rakin. From the rumors, you've paid penance five times over."

Merrie jumped at the sudden appearance of the guard. Her tail slapped against her pussy as she leaned away from him.

(What—?)

"Quiet," he said. It was a whispered command but something was behind it, an intense presence that slammed into her, crushing her will and setting her lust on flames. She shook from the sudden orgasm that wracked her.

Autiur looked at her sadly and then shook his head. "Udin can feel you projecting and using magic. The orgasms are one thing but conscious control will change your future for a few more seconds."

She frowned.

"Your path is almost set, Merrie Golddotter. A few more minutes and everyone will have made the decisions that bring us to the point of no return. Then, I can finally do my job." There were tears in his eyes.

Merrie looked back. The door was closed and presumably still locked. Turning back, she looked at him, trying to figure out how the gray man managed to slip inside. Unable to resist, she leaned forward. "H-How?" she whispered.

"Your future," he said in a bright voice. "Those two are rushing to the event, the cliff of decision. You could try stopping them but far more will die."

She looked at them. Neither Udin or Paladay responded to Autiur's clear voice.

"They can't hear me yet."

She looked at the two. She could feel the hatred rolling off Paladay, images of her brother in her thoughts as she finished clearing out the center of the room. She pulled a satchel from her

side and started to draw lines on the floor. “Normally we use the platinum ritual ring or the pedestal, but it’s just a framework.”

“She still has the collar on,” Udin said warily.

“The artifact?”

“Yes, will that be a problem?”

Paladay looked at Merrie, her eyes didn’t seem to even register Autiur sitting next to her. For a brief moment, there was doubt and fear. Then the anger returned. “No, it just means she may be setting off the geas in a few minutes and dying painfully.”

Udin chuckled. “I can live with that.”

Autiur leaned over to Merrie. “No, he won’t. Neither of them will.”

Merrie started to whisper. Then she had the overpowering urge to sit back. She gulped and obeyed, her nature driving her back as pleasure coursed along her. She tried to channel it into her collar but the adamantite collar could no longer take anything else.

“Sit!” snapped Autiur.

Merrie gasped, her pussy clamping with the order.

“Fucking whore,” growled Udin. “I can’t wait until she can’t get off like that.”

“Her power really comes from submission?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’m required by law to remind you not to order her once the geas is put on her. It would force a negative response would probably kill her. You would technically,” she drew out the word, “be considered murder.”

He smiled cruelly. “I’ll keep that in mind. What if she tries to run?”

She smiled back. “You are a bailiff of the law. That is a reasonable thing to order a criminal to stop misbehaving.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Autiur sighed. “I remember that. I used to be a cocky little asshole who ‘followed orders’ no matter who got hurt. I would accidentally leave the cell door open just so I could beat those damn slaves.” Shaking his head, he continued, “I wasn’t really a good person then, I guess. However, it got me this job... for the rest of existence.”

Merrie watched him. Autiur seemed sad as he watched, as if he was reliving something. Glancing over to the other two, she saw that Udin and Paladay were working on the far side. Risking a chance, she leaned over and whispered, "What are you?"

Autiur smiled sadly. "Not quite yet. Let's say, I was a man who followed orders enthusiastically. Now, my job are gathering people like those two."

"Ones who just follow orders?" Her sore voice scraped against her senses.

Udin responded before Autiur. "Get over here, whore."

Looking at Autiur, she got to her knees.

He said, "Just a few more seconds."

Rakin tensed as runes crawled up his legs, burning their way into his skin and leaving charred trails. They continued to burn their way until they covered every centimeter of his flesh.

Somewhere, the judges were declaring the conditions of the geas, but it didn't matter. Rakin would never survive to receive a pardon. He would spend the last of his days in Abbinkey, locked away to never see freedom again.

The magic exploded into light and Rakin finally screamed as the runes were burned into his flesh, sinking down through aching muscles to etch themselves against his bones. His voice cracked as the shrill sound echoed against the walls.

And then the light faded and Rakin collapsed to the ground, a husk of a man who would never haunt Merrie's dreams again.

Tears rolled down her cheeks. She crawled into the drawn circle and sat down. She was about to lose everything. She wanted to run away, to step into the shadows, but couldn't. It was her conviction, it was an order. She had to obey, even though it meant losing the very nature of her being.

“Let’s get rid of this whore,” Paladay said with a smile. She reached out and took a deep breath. Her voice rose up in the beginnings of a spell.

She faltered, then stopped.

“What’s wrong?” asked Udin.

“She already has a geas on her.”

“How? She’s a whore.”

“No, it’s a—” She stopped and coughed. With a gasp, she pressed her hand to her mouth. Turning her back to Udin, she held out her hand. There was blood on her fingers. The world grew silent as she stared down at it, then she leaned over to whisper at Merrie. “How did you get that? You shouldn’t have that!”

Merrie wanted to say but couldn’t. The Royal Geas stopped her words. Even as the acid burning rose up, she desperately wanted to break it to tell her that she wasn’t a traitor, she wasn’t a threat.

“Paladay?” Udin sounded concerned.

The female mage stared at Merrie. Her thoughts were spinning, furiously working. It took a moment for the rage and anger to twist around before Merrie caught a gist of what was going on behind it, Paladay was steeling herself for something terrible.

Merrie’s mouth opened. Paladay’s geas, probably the same one as her own, was threatening to kill her. Putting the geas on Merrie would threaten the country and the mage knew it.

Her own geas gripped her thoughts, driving her to save the country. She had to obey, she had to serve as she always did. Energy crackled around her as she drew on her pleasure, pulling power from the collar as the darkness around her solidified into sharp edges.

“Fuck!” roared Udin. He drew back and punched at her, his gauntlet crackling with energy. It was a disruption energies, he was a spell breaker.

Merrie’s cloak, fully formed in an instant, snapped between them.

The gauntlet punched through it, slamming into the side of Merrie’s head and driving her into the ground.

She tried to melt into darkness but another punch slammed her back into her physical form. Strange colored energies wrapped around her body, disrupting the flow of energy. Udin straddled her

and drove down, driving his knee into her chest as he punched her in the face with brutal speed. "Bind her, now!"

Merrie screamed out. She lashed out, pulling on more power. The world wavered around her as she tried to save her country. The geas made her, that single thought was enough to set it off.

Paladay started to scream out the spell. It was rapid and fast but the energies coalesced quickly; she had obviously done it day in and day out for years. It was innate as Merrie's own magic.

Merrie's cloak snapped out, the tip forming a needle-like tip. It stretched thin as it shot toward Paladay's heart.

Udin slashed through it, cutting through the supernatural fabric and disrupting it. The edges burned away before it faded into shreds of darkness.

He responded with another brutal punch, cracking the bones in Merrie's face as he hammered into her. The sharp edges of his gauntlet caught her face, slicing into skin and scraping against her skull.

Stars exploded across her vision.

Foul energies wrapped around her body. The Justice Geas started to drape over her. It felt like a choking, burning blanket that seemed to seep past her mental shields and wrap around her spirit. She could feel the runes burning on her skin as they burrowed deeper, ripping into delicate flesh.

Udin continued to hammer into her, one fist after the other as he pounded her into the ground. Black blood splattered everywhere as he refused to give her even a second to breath. Her blood was pouring into her throat as he pulverized her nose, jaw, and skull.

"... by the power of the royal family..." Paladay screamed out in agony. She was bleeding out of her nose, ears, and mouth. It coated her face as she fought against her own geas. More blood sheeting out between her legs, soaking her robe and puddling on the ground in a sizzle.

Merrie tried to tell her to stop, beg her.

Udin interrupted her with a powerful cross. His neck blow slammed into Merrie's left tit, crushing it before snapping her ribs. "Continue! For the greater good, continue!"

Paladay dropped to her knees, vomiting blood and gore. She screamed out more words to the spell, binding the geas tighter

around Merrie until she felt it digging deep inside her shields and burning into her blackened bones.

The connection to her collar darkened. It felt like heavy fabric draping over it. The pressure wrapped around her other thoughts, blotting out the joy and pleasure from her life. Even the fading pleasures were snuffed out, leaving nothing but dread and the overwhelming drive to obey the Royal Geas behind.

She felt the geas grow stronger, melding with the Royal Geas and expanding. It was growing beyond the limits of the spell as she was forced to submit to it. Pleasure exploded inside her and was snuffed out, only to be ignited again as she was forced to submit to the all-consuming power of the Justice Geas.

Straining with all her might, she forced herself into her agony. She could barely see straight. She focused on Kirin's runes, using them as an anchor as she delved inside her. The agony was coming from herself, the power of an Alpha and her own psionics working through the collar. She remembered how it was suppose to enhance her master, but she was now the master of herself. The power was ricocheting back and forth, building up until it tore at the world around her.

She tried to stop the circuit but it was too tight, too intimate. It continued to build up. She concentrated on the power, trying to find some way of interrupting the power. She accidentally called up some Shadow magic and felt it pour through the collar and back into herself. It built up until the world around them grew black.

She didn't even have time to scream as pleasure rising up inside her at the simple, casual command. She tried to pull back, to stop it. It was impossible.

"... and I seal your magic until... the... end of... time!" Paladay screamed out one last time before collapsing in a puddle of her own blood. "Die... murderer," she said in a broken whisper before the light in her eyes faded.

Udin punched Merrie one last time. Panting, he loomed over her. "I got you. I fucking got you."

Merrie sobbed, her entire body was boiling inside her skin. She could feel the pleasure flaring out and being snuffed. Then it would flare again, more powerful than ever as the Justice Geas tried to use her own body to quiet the energy. Her organs shredded instantly but they were made of shadow already and they just reformed only to be torn apart again as she was caught in agonized loop of pleasure and darkness.

She looked up through her tear-blurred eyes. Autiur was standing next to Udin, watching down with tears in his eyes. She tried to reach for him, begging with all her might to stop the agony as the submission rose up again and again, only to be torn apart. She was leaking. She could feel it corroding the rocks around her. The shadows were flickering, rapidly switching between dancing to her will and growing quiet.

But she couldn't regain control as her mind was torn apart but the energies were still there, the darkness was getting blacker and deeper.

"S-Silent now, aren't you?" He panted in triumph. His shoulders heaved.

The barrier between the worlds was being ripped using her as a gate. There was a storm on the other side, a black and violent horror as the Lord of Shadows gathered around her. She screamed out as the Royal Geas kicked in, she couldn't let them through. She couldn't.

Autiur shook his head. He was dreadfully calm despite the horror of her writhing body. "This isn't your fault. Remember, no matter what—"

She could feel an order coming. Her insides shook as it imprinted on her mind, a command from Udin that would destroy her. Her eyes widened and she shook her head, trying to open her mouth to beg him not to do it.

"Go on," Udin croaked, "try to speak."

Autiur sighed. "There it is."

She let out a bitter cry, fighting against her desperate need to submit.

"Speak," he said with a self-important grin.

Shadows burst out of Merrie's open mouth, the force of the expulsion driving her jaw painfully open. It smacked against his

face, but no sound came other than a hissing horror as his flesh began to wrinkle and rot. The scent of sake burned her nose as more shadows shot out of it. She could feel more jets ripping out of her ears, ass, and pussy. Every part of her body screamed out in agony as the living shadows inside her seemed to be ripping out of every hole in her body.

Udin jerked back as he tried to cast a spell, but the magic fizzled out as the side of his face crumbled away, aged and withered in a heartbeat. The darkness stretched down his chest, consuming the rest of his skull and neck with terrifying speed.

The darkness pouring out of her combined with the shadows bursting out from every crack. The barrier between reality and the Shadows ripped open. Stone and wood rotted instantly, corroding from the oppressive darkness in less than a second. Waves of darkness ate away as the walls, ceilings, and floor exposing startled faces in the rooms on the other side. The looks only lasted a second before they were also consumed by the withering darkness.

Her mind flashed out, the agony and pain and horror radiating out from her. The Justice Geas tried to rein it back but it was too much. The ripples of mental noise spread out rapidly, slamming into the minds of everyone around her. She saw the thoughts of everyone who had ever enjoyed a command, enjoyed the pleasure of submitting, and even had the smallest shred of submission was laid bare to her horrors. Their minds cracked into explosions of insanity which rippled back at her.

Merrie tried to pull herself back but using even her mental senses caused the geas to tear into her. She was helpless as the destroyed minds and cries of anguish slammed into her. Like pleasure, it set off another wave of blistering sensations to radiating away from her, each one more powerful than the other.

Desperate to stop others from suffering, she tried to direct all of her horrors and agonies back into herself. It almost worked but then the Justice Geas rose up and she lost control. With a sob, she prayed that death would come and end her before too many others died.

“I’m sorry,” said Autiur with a profound silence. His voice was calm despite the horror.

Then the world stopped.

t'Sade

Death

48

Silence.

The raging horrors and screamed in her heads had stopped and there was nothing but a moment of stillness. she let out one shuddering breath and then another. She had to work her lips for a moment before the words would come out. “A-Am I dead?”

“Yes and no,” said Autiur.

She looked. He was sitting next to her, one leg to the side as he reached out for her. She felt no order or command from him, only dullness. The presence he had possessed earlier was gone. Reflexively, she pressed her cheek against his cool palm.

The world around her was a raging hell of darkness but it was frozen in place. She saw half withered bodies clawing for the doors, sparks of energy hanging in mid-air as mages tried to shield themselves. The darkness had reached the outer walls of the courthouse and a few beams of painfully bright light speared into the black mists.

She focused on Udin who was still straddling her. Well, part of his body was still there. The rest of it was half destroyed by the blackness swirling around him. There was nothing left of his face and upper body, just the blackened stump where his waist was.

Fear rose inside her. She looked at Paladay who was half-destroyed herself along the ground underneath her. As the fear stained her thoughts, she shifted and pulled herself free of Udin’s body. It remained in place, hanging in the air.

“What...” she coughed. “What happened?”

“You can project now. Udin can no longer hurt you. He can’t hurt anyone ever again.”

Relieved, she switched to the more comfortable mental communication. It was the only comfort and her skin crawled. Even the darkness that had been jetting out of her remained in place; there was an empty place where she was only moments before. (What happened? Why is everything still?)

“You happened. You are a True Submissive, probably one of the few beings that the Justice Geas should never be applied against. Then again, you are the first True Submissive in history to have the geas, so I’m not surprised they wouldn’t know that.” He gave a bitter laugh. “Hindsight is always crystal clear, they say.”

She whimpered and ducked her head. Udin’s body didn’t move with her, he seemed frozen in place. As she pried herself free, (Every time I tried to stop the energies, it got worse.)

“You were forced to submit to the pain, which gave you power. The geas tried to stop it, forcing you to stop which only gave you more pain. That is one of the dangers of Alphas, their limits come from their masters, not themselves. Bound to themselves, like you, I can’t imagine how this would happen any other way.”

A tear burned on her face. (What is going to happen?)

“A lot of people are going to die. That is why we’re here.” He sounded sad as he stroked her face with his thumb. “I like my job, there is a satisfaction in getting smug bastards like Udin. But not this many, not like this.”

(What are you?)

Autiur smiled at her. “You asked that earlier, didn’t you?”

At her tentative nod and mental pulse of encouragement, he continued. “I’m one of the gods of death.”

Ice ran through her veins. The gray-looking man was a god? She guessed he was something more than just a guard when he showed up. A god? He wasn’t anything she expected when she thought about the divine forces that guided everyone’s life.

“Well,” Autiur shrugged, “there is a lot of death in this world. More than any one being could every handle. Even a god. Because of that we have specialties. In my case,” he gestured to Udin’s darkened corpse, “I’m Death by Blindly Following Orders.”

He shook his head. “It’s a very specialized field, but sadly I’m called too frequently. There are a lot of men and women who die while obeying.”

(Am I dead? Are you here for me?)

He nodded. "I think so, but not by me. Actually, none of us know who is going to collect you. That collar... makes things difficult. I'll admit, it makes me curious. I can feel the resurrection magic in there, it has the touch of divinity in it but a god of life didn't contribute to it. I'm not sure if you can survive this or not."

There was movement on the corner of her vision. She turned and looked at where the world itself was twisted, like a tear between the worlds. It was growing bigger. Slowly, but she could see black claws through the torn opening. She reached out tentatively and felt the alien thoughts of the darkness pushing through the stillness. Her ears flattening, she peered around and noticed that the edges of darkness were still growing, albeit with painful slowness.

(The darkness is still coming?)

Autiur glanced over and shrugged. "Yes, time slows down when we reap."

(Udin?)

"Paladay too. They are in their own fragmented reality, talking to me at the same time. Udin is begging while Paladay is crying. I've heard both so many times. Neither have reached their acceptance, which is the point I take their souls." His voice grew tense. "I've seen what these two had done, I want them to see the full impact of their decisions even if it takes years for them to see the full extent."

Merrie sobbed. (I tried to stop it.)

A little girl walked through the darkness. She was gray as Autiur. There were tears in her eyes as she looked directly at Merrie and then at Autiur.

Autiur bowed his head. "I wondered if it would be you, Sacrificed by the Innocent."

The girl shook her head. She frowned at Merrie and then sat down next to her. She had soft, gray hair that caught on Merrie's ear.

The world seemed to ripple and Merrie thought the darkness slowed down even more.

"I'm not for her, Death by Blindly Following Orders. I was summoned to attend but not to reap." The girl had a beautiful voice, filled with despair and strength. Merrie wondered if she had been human once.

“Summoned by who?”

“Why are you here?” asked the little girl in response, a wry smile on her lips.

Autiur looked uncomfortable for a moment but then gestured to Udin and Paladay.

The girl shook her head. “You wouldn’t be in her fragment if that was true. You were summoned also.”

Autiur looked at Merrie. “I cannot say.”

“Neither will I.” The little girl reached up and scratched gently behind Merrie’s ears.

An older man’s voice rose up. “I suspect there are many who were summoned by us. I’ve already reaped mine but I must attend to this one.” Merrie looked up as he sat down next to Udin. He was naked, his wrinkled body sparkling with hundreds of crystals embedded in his body. His eyes were too large to look at and it took a moment to realize they were rose quartz. (Hello, Merrie Golddotter. I am the Death by Insanity of the Crystalline Mind, the god who guides the souls of psions to beyond.) His mental thoughts were comforting but also firm.

She let out a soft cry.

(I am not here for you but I am required to attend with the pretense of reaping your soul.)

It scared Merrie that that forces were gathering around her. She was still recovering from the idea of being a traitor to the country. The idea that she was important enough that someone was using death to manipulate her terrified her beyond anything she could imagine. (By who?)

(Remain quiet and you’ll see. The gods are using your death as an opportunity for a conference.) He seemed confident. (Death slow down time around the soul they reap. The more of us gather, the slower your world goes and the longer they can speak. Most lives only take seconds, but I sense that there will be enough deaths gathering that time will practically stop despite the duties we have ahead of us.)

Dread prickled along her skin. (How many are going to die?)

(Millions. Almost every reaper who could apply or has dominion is here. We have been gathered to take the souls that this gathering darkness will kill.)

Despair clutched her heart. She trembled and closed her eyes tightly. (Millions?)

(Almost fifteen million humans, every living being within the limits of Franome City and beyond. Only a handful will survive.)

(The Royal Family?)

(Death of the Assassinated Royalty is here, so I suspect at least one of the royal family will be killed.)

(No,) she cried, (not them. I cannot, please, what can I do?)

(Death cannot be denied.) There was more to his thoughts.

(It can be changed?) Then she remembered what Autiur said. (You can change it. Autiur said there was a point of no return, that hasn't been reached for everyone, right?)

He smiled. (Negotiation, that is one of the stages everyone goes through.)

(I don't care about me!) She sent a pulse of frustrated anger. (How do I stop others from dying? There are friends out there, lovers, companions. There are children!)

(Everyone dies.)

(Not from me!) The tears burned on her face and she felt black ice crack as it froze.

(You are already dying, Merrie Golddotter. There is nothing you can do anymore.)

She whimpered and pulled away from the little girl. Her bare thigh brushed against a cat who meowed. Merrie gasped and spun around. The gray cat purred softly before carefully jumping on Udin's hovering corpse. With a proper flick of its tail, it curled up and went to sleep.

More gods were approach: a pair of twins, more children, more old. Each one sat quietly around her, watching her with bright eyes. They were as uncomfortable as she was.

Around her, the destruction continued to slow. She could see individual shards of wood no longer being corroding into black mists. The dust hovering in the sunlight stopped and became diamonds. Near her thigh, the rips in reality had frozen in place, the pitch black eye of the Lord of Shadows peering out at her as it was caught ripping open the barrier.

Merrie reached out for him with her thoughts, a tendril of mental awareness connected the two. There was resistance but she could

feel the alien thoughts still spinning in the darkness, the unfathomable mind of a terrible creature only meters away from her and yet a world away. (Are you there?)

(Light Snuffer. Hurt?)

She let out a quiet sob of relief. The alien thoughts were overpowering and thundering, beating against her consciousness. More importantly, they weren't affected by the time being slowed down on the cusp of her demise.

(I'm dying.)

(You must not.) The command crashed into her, driving into the very core of her being. A surge of pleasure came following, but there was no agony from the geas fighting her. Instead, it just hummed inside her, an orgasm right on the edge of cresting.

Another god of death approached. It was a middle-aged woman with flowing gray hair but a young face. "So many of us in one fragment but none of us taking the soul? That is worrisome." Her voice brought a strange comfort and kinship for Merrie, she wondered if she had brushed against this one before.

Autiur bowed his head. "Greetings, Death of Submissive's Lost Master. We have gathered as we were summoned but none of us feel the urge but to attend. You must be the one, you are the death of most alphas who survive their master."

Merrie gasped and her body grew still. She had meet with this goddess of death before. The memories of Kine's death rose up, choking her as she remembered the precise moment her bond had snapped and her heart had been ripped out.

The newest death didn't answer Autiur. She came over and knelt down in front of Merrie, catching her head with two soft hands and pulling her gaze up until Merrie was staring into the bright gray eyes of the death Merrie feared most.

Merrie whimpered.

"Don't worry, my little bitch, I'm here for you but I will not take your soul today."

Tears ran down both of their cheeks. Merrie whimpered again, her body trembling.

The death kissed her forehead. "Soon. I promise you, it won't hurt anymore."

“You can’t say that,” muttered the Death by Torture. “None of us can promise that.”

“Just because you refuse doesn’t mean others won’t bring sweetness,” whispered the Death by Surrender of Spirit. “Not all of us enjoy the pain.”

The world shimmered around her, it had come almost to a complete halt. The deaths were all focused on each other, debating and talking with each other.

A thrill of pleasure tickled Merrie. They were ignoring her, treating her as nothing more than a thing. The feeling of uselessness and being unimportant reminded her of her place, nothing more than a pet at their feet. She sank into the pleasure even as her mind spun furiously. She needed to save others, to stop the city from being destroyed by her power. The Royal Geas may not have its hold on her in the moment of her death, but that didn’t stop her from needing to save others.

She gathered the pleasure and sent it through the tenuous connection to the Lord of Shadows. (I need help.)

(Light Suffer. Your promise binds us. You are the Shadow Maker. We shall protect.)

(What can I do?)

(You are Shadow Maker. You be you.)

She could do that. Concentrating, she focused on the connection between the world. The raw, gaping wound in reality scraped against her senses. It was icy and comforting, a terrifying grip of her salvation.

Around her, the shadows grew sharp-edge and deeper.

Carefully, she let her power funnel through the dark energies that made up her soul. The triple beat of her heart calmed her as she worked through the complexities of an improvised spell to convert pleasure into the rawest form of darkness she could create. Gingerly, she channeled her pleasure through it and into the icy depths of the Lord of Shadow.

(Yes,) came the rippling pleasure of the alien creature. The Lord of Shadows clawed at the opening, moving infinitesimally slow as it widened it.

“If none of us are here to take her soul, then I have work to do. Millions are going to die today and I’m anxious to get started,”

muttered Death By Screaming Agony, a bitter old man with wrinkled fingers tipped with sharp claws. His frizzy hair moved as he looked around, his eyebrows rising as he tried to get others to respond.

“Many of us are anxious to move on,” said Autiur, “but you know the forces at play. Her death must be accepted before we can dispersed.”

“Then why aren’t we taking her soul? It’s just a mortal. A powerful woman but we’ve taken worse.”

Merrie cringed at his harsh words. She tried to pull away but Death of Submissive’s Lost Master kept a grip on her face. The effort to even try to pull away sent ripples of pleasure coursing through her body. She was terrified but couldn’t escape.

“No, no,” whispered Death of Submissive’s Lost Master. “You can’t escape us. No one escapes death for long. Not even the beautiful and rarest of submissives, the Omega. Oh, I had my fingers right on you before but you just slip away. That Rakin has made you the ultimate challenge for me.”

Trembling, Merrie couldn’t look away. They would stop her if they knew what she was doing. They wanted to reap the souls of the city, the millions who would die because of her. But she couldn’t allow that.

Diverting a portion of her power, she wrapped the entire area around the rip in a shade. She didn’t know if the diversion spell would keep death away so she wrapped the calligraphic energies with the crystalline, blending shadow and psychic energies together. She tried to add power from the collar but it was empty, drained into the explosion that would tear apart the world around her.

The Death of Submissive’s Lost Master’s grip loosened. Her eyes shifted away to another conversation between the gathered reapers. Her lips moved.

“We are waiting for the acceptance,” said one reaper. “Until then, we have things to discuss. We are rarely given a moment to interact, let’s take advantage until the death that must come presents itself.”

Looking around, she saw that other deaths were doing the same. Their attention slid away from the Lord of Shadows as they casually discussed how they would gather the souls of the millions that were

about to die. They were planning it, which gods would take which parts of the cities. A million fragments of lives ending where every single person got their last words in before their souls were gathered for some purpose. It would be the largest mass death in modern history and the gods were almost celebrating it.

Trying not to think about her own contribution to the reapers, Merrie breathed a sigh of relief. They appear to have forgotten her completely and avoiding the rip in reality. The ripple of pleasure flooded through her, giving her a sweet balm of power to keep feeding to the Lord of Shadows.

Her eyes caught with Death by Insanity of the Crystalline Mind's gaze. The old man was staring directly at her, his fractured eyes seeing through the magic she used to hide the shadows. Fear prickled along her skin and she tensed waiting for him to draw their attention back.

He looked at her and then pointedly looked away.

Merrie froze, unsure of his response. Then she ducked her head and settled to the ground. She was content to be nothing more than a mortal at their feet as she tried to figure out how to save the rest of the city from the darkness. She knew it was possible, she only had to figure out how to cheat death a million times over.

She needed time, the one thing she had plenty to work with.

Ears flat against her head, she closed her eyes and let her tail thump as she began to work.

t'Sade

Dealings

49

Merrie's back and stomach ached as she watched the reapers talking among themselves. It had been an hour since she started feeding power to the Lord of Shadows and not a single one, not even Autiur, had spoken to her. She thought there was something between them but as time stretched, she was both thankful and saddened that he ignored her to speak with his peers.

Her tail snapped back and forth, the movements transmitting to her buttocks as she flexed one leg and then the other. She felt like she was on the edge of a knife as she watched silently, her mind straining to keep energy flowing steadily into the Lord of Shadows and a shade to obscure her efforts.

Merrie was surprised that the spell actually worked. She would have thought it would be nearly impossible to cheat a god or death but it appeared to be working. She gulped and ducked her head.

Her thoughts drifted to the possible punishments if they did catch her. As the gods of death spoke about suicide, torture, and agony, she couldn't help but imagine herself in situations. The horrifically detailed descriptions flashed through her mind, each one more alluring than the other.

She wanted to accept them, to feel a knife against her throat or to have her limbs torn apart. As much as the reapers spoke with casual brutality, more than a few of them found pleasure in the countless deaths they witnessed. She panted softly as the desire grew inside her, fueled by images of how the very gods would torture her for their own fantasies.

Pressing her thighs together, she ground her soaked clitoris between her legs and rocked back and forth. Her movements were

quick and subtle as she tried not to draw attention to herself. She wanted to stroke herself, to get fucked by the clear images welling up in her head. Death of Internal Bleeding was talking about a man being impaled on a spit; Merrie could almost feel the hard metal pressing against her ass.

A soft whine escaped her lips.

Sweating, she twisted and struggled to concentrate on her spells. The energy flowed steadily to the Lord of Shadows. Its shadows boiled underneath the shade spell. The alien creature gnawed at the edges of reality, crumbling the stone and corroding everything around it, but the spread of darkness and the Lord's motions were both arrested by the reapers' presence; moving even a millimeter took an agonizing long time.

Merrie still wasn't sure what she was going to do. There was no enemy, no threat. She needed a target to fight if she was going to use the Lord of Shadows. She only had fear to guide her as she strained to grant the Lord as much power as possible in the possibility that she would need to summon it into her fragment.

She didn't know if the Lord could kill death, one or many of them. She suspected it could, which is why she continued to feed it power despite the alien thoughts that were creeping through the connection between them. The longer she remained connected to the Lord of Shadows, the more the alien thoughts intruded her own consciousness. She could feel the edges of her thoughts fraying at the edges, the world shifting constantly around her. Every object and wall around her felt fragile, rippling with the delicate barrier of Shadows.

The insanity of darkness was also infuriating. She could almost feel how the Lord would be able to help her, but the thoughts would slip away. Her thoughts would fragment and it took her a moment to solidify them back into her own identity before she could try again. She wondered if the otherworldly creature was trying to help her, in its overwhelming way, or if she was just fooling herself by thinking she had a chance.

Doubt darkened her thoughts. Her ears and tail drooped as she considered accepting one of the many endings that deaths fantasized about. There was one talking about ripping out her organs. She moaned as she imagined herself on a table as someone

rammed his fist into her guts and yanked out long strands of her intestines. She shuddered with desire and bit her lip to avoid crying out.

A sudden surge of energy crawled along her skin. She jerked at the sensation of it scratching against her body, like a bare flame pressed against her back. It was too chaotic to be psychic and too bright to be shadows. Instead, it felt like fire and light and raw emotions at the same time.

It was divine power.

A god was coming.

The power burned both her skin and her thoughts. The world grew more hazy and delicate. The barrier between worlds grew thinner until it felt like only a soap bubble remained between reality and Shadows.

Around her, reapers stopped talking and made dismissing sound.

“Our glorious ‘betters’ have decided to grace us with their presence,” muttered Death of Abandoned Dreams.

“Damn the gods,” muttered another one.

Merrie whimpered quietly. Her body and spirit remembered the casual brutality that Lemetri had inflicted on her. Even a simple strike, a slap actually, had shattered bone without messing a single strand of the goddess’ hair. The idea that she would be before a god scared her, more than she could imagine.

“The light is going to kill Merrie,” said Autiur.

“Is Death of Burning Light here?”

There was an uncomfortable pause.

Merrie whimpered and curled up on her self, shoving her body tight against the legs of the nearest reaper.

“I’m here,” came a hoarse whisper. “Who’s dying?”

“Are you collecting her?”

“**No, you are not to collect her soul,**” came a booming, powerful voice. It beat against the walls and crushed Merrie against the ground. The overwhelming Presence brought an intense surge of pleasure as it forced her head down and her eyes averted. It was a command and she couldn’t help but orgasm with the intensity of the unspoken power.

Ectasy burned along her senses. She tried to channel it into the collar but the artifact had been unresponsive ever since the reapers

had approached. She couldn't channel it into the Lord, now in the raw pleasurable form. Panting, she concentrated on holding it inside her shaking body as she transformed it into darkness to feed it to the Lord of Darkness. Her hips rose and fell, smacking her body against the puddle of juices that had gathered under her cunt.

"Tone it down!" snapped a couple of the reapers. Two of them stood in front of Merrie, not that it did anything to the intense light that burned her skin.

There was a thud that shook the ground. A burst of energy followed, rattling Merrie's shade and almost disrupting the connection between her and the Lord of Shadows. The brilliance faded quickly. "You forget your place, reapers," said the much quieter voice. It was masculine, smooth, and rumbling.

It reminded Merrie of Bass but it was like comparing a rock to the majesty of a mountain. She wanted to hear it again, to feel it rumble against her body. Her pussy grew wet at the sound of the god's voice. She pressed her thighs together and her pussy squelched with her unexpected excitement.

"No, we didn't forget, Supreme God of Magic," said Autiur with just a hint of sarcasm. "There is just a mortal present and none of us are here to collect her soul."

"You don't need to tell me. I can smell the stench of mortal foolishness hanging around her. I weep for the meager shred of my power that has been disgustingly bound into the artifact around her neck and more so for the sheer gall she demonstrated by corrupting that magic with darkness and submission." The god's voice dripped with hatred. There was no question that he would have no hesitation to destroy her.

Despite the fear that clutched her heart, the God's voice drew her desire. The deep rumbling had a Presence more intense than anything she had felt before. It made her want to snap the collar from her neck and pray for the ability to bond once again. She knew there would be no limit to his power and she would be practically a goddess magnifying his power.

She squirmed, the juices dribbling from her pussy and soaking the ground. Hunger for raw power called to her, a desperate longing calling to her heart. She ground her thighs together, her excitement coating her thighs with her desire.

“I’d rather you didn’t, Misyrr,” said a cheerful-sounding man. He stepped into Merrie’s vision, a middle-aged man with a full head of hair and brilliant smile. His eyes were gold—no white, no pupils, just the purest yellow gold.

“Madock the Gold,” Misyrr said with a voice reserved for shit on the bottom of a shoe. “What do you think you’re doing here?”

“Isn’t it obvious? It was my favors that summoned the reapers here.”

A ripple of whispers among the gathered gods of death. They looked at each other with guilty looks for a moment. A few coughs filled the room.

“To slow down time? That seems rather excessive for you trying to pull a fast one on me. Why do you demand my presence?”

“Oh, many reasons.” Madock waved his hand and smiled. He sat down in a golden chair that wasn’t there a moment earlier. Crossing one leg over the other, his black suit sparkled with delicate golden pinstripes.

“I will destroy you, merchant. My attention is precious and you can’t afford even five seconds.”

Madock looked up at the god of magic, the most powerful being that Merrie had ever heard about, and smiled broadly. He was a minor merchant god. His name sounded familiar though, something that plucked on her memories but it was before her binding with her first master, Kine. The binding process had erased many of her memories.

Misyrr sighed. “Make your offer so I can reject it. Then I will destroy that woman and her collar.”

Merrie let out a soft cry and flinched.

One of the reapers stepped closer to her. Their foot was dangerously close to the corroded stone from the Lord of Shadow’s portal.

“Patience, oh mighty and powerful god of magic. There are a few other negotiators that must to the table for this deal.”

Misyrr’s eyes narrowed. He glanced at Merrie who struggled with wanting to pull back in terror and crawl forward in desire. The disgust was palatable in the room. Slowly, his gaze returned to Madock.

Madock seemed unperturbed by the threat by the divine being. "Patience, Misyr."

"You have no right to talk me like that. I will destroy—"

Madock held up his hand. "Hold on, Galladin is here."

Any desire wracking Merrie crumbled instantly. She knew Galladin's name, just as she remembered Jace, his champion.

Shaking her head, she swayed. Ribs ground against each other and she tasted blood in the back of her throat. She couldn't take on two battles. With a sigh and a sick feeling twisting her stomach, she projected a pulse of agreement.

Jace continued walking backward away from her and the kin. "We will fight again, girl. Galladin is patient and the light never fades."

He backed away for a hundred meters before he disappeared into the glare of the bonfire that centered where the bell used to be. Through the shadow kin's eyes, she saw hints of the bodies that were scattered from the center of the explosion. Their twisted bodies and gaping wounds would have scared her one day, now they were just victims of the senseless battle from the forces of Lemetri.

Galladin was a huge man almost three meters tall with square shoulders almost equally across. He wore heavy armor emblazoned with his symbol, a glorious white fist. Brilliant light speared out in all directions, piercing the darkness and splashing against her skin. The pale flesh blackened instantly, peeling away like burning paper.

Then stopped.

A wave of energy ran over her, stopping the pain with the sharp taste of arcane magic.

Misyr lowered his staff. "Not now, Galladin."

Galladin looked across the two gods and directly at Merrie. "What is the foul beast doing here?"

"Slowing down time," Madock said and gestured to the twenty or so reapers in the room. "I needed a moment of stillness as we discuss her fate and the fate of the city around her."

Misyr said, “You could pick any mortal for that.”

“Why would I care what is happening?” Galladin said, he had his arms tucked behind his tunic.

“Millions are about to die,” Madock said.

Misyr shrugged.

“Serves them right for allowing her putrescence within city limits,” boomed Galladin. He tucked his hands inside his tunic and squared his shoulders. Energy rolled along his skin, flashing along the links of his chain armor and sinking into the stone beneath his feet.

Frustration and the smallest measure of anger rose up inside Merrie. Did the gods not care that the city was about to be destroyed?

A slender, naked woman stepped out from behind Galladin. She smiled and leaned into him, her blonde hair turning red. “I don’t know about that, honey, there are many things in this city I’m quite fond of.”

Galladin snarled and stepped away as if she was made of fire. “Talus, what is the goddess of whores doing here?”

Talus shrugged, her breasts and hips swelling until she was a curvy woman. It was slow yet sudden, one moment she was a thin woman, the next she was curvy with a hanging belly and large breasts. “It sounded like a party happening in this mortal’s mind. You know I can’t resist a party.” She giggled and looked at Merrie. After a moment, she blew a kiss.

It caressed Merrie’s cheek, sending an intense bolt of pleasure ripping through her senses. Merrie gasped and leaned forward, her body shaking as the pleasure grew into an intense wave of ecstasy and then crested into an orgasm.

Both Misyr and Galladin shook their head.

“I don’t have time for whores, give me the beast so I can destroy it.”

“Not after I destroy that collar, paladin.”

Madock held up his hand. “One more negotiator and then we’ll be ready.”

“I will make no deals with you, merchant,” warned Misyr.

“You know what I want, let me destroy the foulness that stains this world. I’ll owe you a favor for that boon. It would be worth it.”

Madock looked at Talus, as if waiting. She stretched, her body growing thicker and harder. Her breasts flattened into muscular pectorals along with the hips. A bulge swelled out and then unfurled into a long, half-hard cock.

Merrie's pussy clenched with desire.

Talus groaned and shrugged. "I'll wait."

Seconds passed uncomfortably. The reapers were no longer talking but watching with various expressions of fear, distrust, and anger on their faces. They seemed upset at the presence of the gods despite being ones themselves

The three gods, on the other hand, seemed to ignore them as easily as the reapers ignored Merrie. There was a sense of parallel between them.

A gentle hand pressed against Merrie's back. It was soft and cool.

She jumped and looked up to see an older woman kneeling next to her. The newcomer looked to be in her sixties, with long white hair tied into three braids. Her eyes were cloudy, not white but the shifting movements of a summer storm. Sparks of lightening raced along the edges of her supernatural eyes. Her white dress shifted constantly, wavering without a wind or movement.

There was a quiet presence around the new goddess. No words were said but a single look from her shifting eyes demanded that Merrie remained silent. There was no question she would obey, she couldn't imagine anything other than remaining lying on the ground as the three other gods talked.

Madock looked around, his eyes sliding over Merrie and the goddess, and then shook his head. "Looks like someone is going to be late. Why don't we start without her?"

"Yes, get this farce over with so I can start slaughtering your worshipers," grumbled Misyr. "Do you really want to find out how many you'll have left when I'm done?"

With an easy smile, Madock shrugged. "That wouldn't be profitable for either of us, would it?"

"You are a small god, Madock. Nothing more than a dim light in the sky. Why do you think you have any say in this conversation?"

The reapers rustled at the phrase. None of them were smiling.

Madock chuckled. "Do you really believe that?"

Misyr narrowed his eyes.

“You know my portfolio, god of magic. I gain power when you benefit from my deals. Now, do you really think I would be here if I didn’t have something that you want?”

There was a brief, tense silence.

“What do you think I want, god of deals?”

Madock cocked his head before he turned to Galladin. “What do you desire the most?”

Galladin gestured at Merrie, his face twisted in a scowl. “I want that foul creature destroyed.”

Merrie cringed. She started to pull back but the overwhelming desire radiating from the goddess holding her down stopped her. Galladin didn’t seem to notice the goddess with his attention focused directly on Merrie.

“I don’t think so.”

Galladin started and then glared at Madock. “What do you know!?”

“Why do you want her destroyed? It’s more than she’s a beacon of submission and sexuality, isn’t it? It’s more than her sizable measure of power.” Madock sounded confident.

Galladin glared at him. He tugged on his tunic, bunching up the metal links in his broad hands. A few of the metal rings snapped under the pressure. A flickering light rose up behind the chain, spearing out and highlighting the symbol on his chest.

Madock held up his hand. “It isn’t about Merrie, is it? It was Lemetri—”

“Don’t you dare say her name.”

“Why not, the goddess is dead.”

More metal bent under Galladin’s grip. He took a deep breath and let it out.

“Merrie summoned the Lord of Shadows, didn’t she? The creatures feeding on Lemetri’s corpse in the Shadows? Her bright body being ripped to shreds by those mindless—”

Galladin’s face twisted in a scowl. “I will rip out your throat if you keep talking about her.”

“No, you won’t. You know that I’m leading to something, a deal. You get what you truly want, I get something in return. I am a lawful creature, a simple one, you could say. You also know what I’m offering.”

“You can bring Lemetri back?” The god of light stepped forward. “She isn’t dead?”

“No, she’s dead.”

“Then there is nothing—”

“I can get her body back.”

Galladin froze in mid-word.

Madock smiled and said, “More importantly, I think we are on track for negotiating for her divine spark.”

Both Misyr and Galladin tensed as did the rest of the room. Merrie could feel a pressure grinding down on her, crushing her against the floor as the two gods stared down a third. Even the reapers were still.

“It would be a fitting consolation prize, the core of her energy and command of her portfolio. Along with it comes her dedicated paladins, priests of light, and a healthy church that has survived a year without guidance.”

“How?” asked Misyr, appearing interested for the first time. “Are you planning in invading the Shadows? There’s a nest of creatures that have been feeding on Lemetri’s divine light for over a year. None of our followers have powers in that realm, how do you propose to get her corpse?”

Madock held up a finger and turned toward Merrie. “I was thinking about asking the Lord of Shadows directly.”

Merrie inhaled sharply. Her ears flattened against her head and her tail shivered. It took her only a moment to realize that the goddess had released her to move again, but then she was at the center of attention as gods—reaper and greater alike—stared at her.

“Merrie?” asked Madock. “Pull.”

The goddess resting her hand on Merrie’s back leaned forward. Her lips brushed against Merrie’s triangular ear, the touch was electric and burning. “Bring the Lord of Shadows here,” she whispered.

The goddess’ breath was hot and sparkling against her senses. The quiet, unassuming words echoed powerfully inside Merrie’s head, pounding against her consciousness as they commanded her to obey.

Merrie’s heart quickened rapidly as pleasure beat against her senses. She squirmed for a moment, pressing her slick thighs

together as she felt her pussy drool with the lust for obeying a command.

She reached out for the Lord of Shadows, dissolving the shade around the rip in reality.

The nearest reapers gasped and stepped back as the ripe in reality widened rapidly. Black claws, too many to count, clamped on the edges of the rip as the boiling, sentient darkness poured out into the room. Tentacles burst out, grabbing onto the crumbling remains of walls. They bulged as they pulled, drawing the mass of the Lord of Shadows directly into the room.

As the Lord stepped on the ground, claws that stretched and shifted as Merrie watched, the stone beneath began to crumble and corrode. It would age a thousand years in a second, but the stone was still in the thrall of the reaper's moment of time even though the Lord of Shadows was free.

(Shadow Maker harm.)

Madock, Galladin, and the reapers all flinched at the powerful mental blast that came from the shadow power. Merrie shivered under the alien thoughts, drawn into the insanity as much as she felt comfort that the Lord was next to her.

(Light Snuffer.)

Galladin stepped forward, pulling his hand away from his tunic to hold it in front of him. Light speared out from the gaps between his fingers as he balled it into a fist. "I'll see you destroy—"

The goddess next to Merrie whispered, "You will stop."

The light disappeared immediately.

Misyr looked confused for a moment and then did a double take. "Parn?"

The older woman stood up and nodded her head.

"What is the Goddess of Oaths doing here?" He glanced at Madock. "Just tell him to let me destroy that collar. Better yet, speak it out of existence. Speak the truth and let it be done."

Merrie looked up at the goddess in confusion. She had never heard of Parn before.

"Parn is here at my request," said Madock.

Misyr's grip on his staff tightened. He scraped it along the ground and sparks of arcane energy rose up from the contact. "You play

with forces beyond your skill, foolish god. The Goddess of Oaths is not one to be toyed with easily.”

Madock shrugged and winked at Merrie.

Merrie pulled back, her ears perking up.

“I think Parn can speak for herself, don’t you think?”

Misyr shook his head. “Every word she says is truth. You don’t want her to speak without consideration.”

“I’d rather treat her as a living being and a goddess in her own right instead of speaking for her as if she was a child.”

Misyr grew a meter in height as his face turned red. “You will not—”

Parn interrupted with her quiet, commanding whisper, “Calm down, Misyr, and listen more.”

Instantly, the greater god of magic shrank to normal size and closed his mouth. He stared at Parn with a mixture of surprise and anger in his face.

Madock smirked.

Galladin cleared his throat. “I’m uncomfortable with this creature here.”

“Merrie or the Lord of Shadows?” asked Madock.

Galladin tightened his jaw. “Both.”

“Well, if you want Lemetri’s spark without losing most of your men, you’ll need to negotiate.”

The Lord of Shadows grew in size, its shifting form twisting endless between claws and tentacles as it spread to fill almost a quarter of the room. **(Cannot lose the light. Will not!)**

The lesser gods all flinched at the mental thoughts that boomed across the room.

Galladin’s teeth ground together as he glared at the creature of darkness. He shook his head. “I will not have that foul thing in my mind.”

Talus’ voice rose up from where she sat on Autiur’s lap. “Use the submissive.”

Galladin jumped and looked at her, as if he had forgotten she was there.

Madock grinned. “Good idea. Merrie, would you translate for the Lord?”

It was Merrie's turn to be surprised. She was one of the few beings unaffected by the Lord's alien thoughts but she couldn't speak for it. It was too powerful, too much. She reached through the connection she had, sinking into the alien mind and let it wash over her. She understood its needs more than others.

The Lord focused a dozen shifting eyes on her. **(I speak, you speak. You change words.)**

(I don't know if I can, I don't always understand you.)

(Shadow Maker. Deal.)

To her surprise, the Lord of Shadows sent a pulse of strange emotions toward her. They were foreign and shifting but they also felt like trust.

Merrie bowed her head. (I will deal for you.)

(Us. Mother. Father. Softness. Darkness. Children.)

Parn patted Merrie's head, her soft hands caressing at the sensitive ear. When Merrie looked up, the old woman smiled. "You can do it."

Merrie's mind twisted, cracking and reforming in a single moment. The alien thoughts humming through her head suddenly became clearer. It wasn't words but memories and gut feelings. She gasped as she sank deeper into the mind of the Lord of Shadows, feeling the gnawing hunger and constant desire to survive raging inside its head. Half-formed emotions and fragments of coherent thoughts grew inside her.

Her body vibrated as she felt the connection tightening, pulling them closer than almost anything else before. In the corner of her eye, she saw a black strand rising out of her chest and reach out for the Lord. She could feel the connection to her very soul being laid bare as she opened herself up.

Merrie looked down at it, tears in her eyes. She was binding again. She didn't think it was possible, but she could feel her very being reaching out for the Lord, swirling down the mental connection before it plunged into the shifting darkness.

She shuddered as the Lord's life slammed into her, shaping her mind and body as his thoughts began to overwhelm her own. She experienced centuries of having her body pulled apart and shoved together again, gathered fragments of light around torches and

candles. Her world became nothing more than agony and ceaseless rage.

And then, she met herself. Solidified darkness, a rock in an ocean in shifting worlds. Even as her most fragile, she was more solid than anything else the Lord of Shadows had experienced. The powers she gained from Kine had given her Presence in the Shadows, a gravity that pulled the Lord of Shadows in like a moth to the flame.

With a soft sigh, she understood.

Crying, she looked up at Parn. She was bonding again, the third time in her life. Alphas were only supposed to bind once, not thrice. It was glorious and terrifying and beautiful all at the same time.

"This is why I touched you so many years ago," whispered the goddess.

Merrie felt gutted. Parn had made her? She was a True Submissive because of the Goddess of Oaths? All the horror and despair was to bind to the Lord of Shadows?

Parn shook her head. "You are here because the world needs you. In this case, you are right where you need to be to end the violence between light and shadows. Embrace it."

(Y-Yes,) Merrie was surprised she could keep her own thoughts sane while projecting, (Mother.)

Parn smiled and patted her head. "You are a good girl."

The trigger phrase slammed into Merrie with the force of ten thousand fireballs. Orgasms exploded along her senses as reality was enforced by the goddess' words. She was a good girl, she was exactly what she needed to be. Her eyes rolled back into her head as the pleasure grew hotter and brighter, white motes of searing ecstasy rippling along her senses.

Her pleasure exploded from her mind, rippling away. Around her, the gods and goddesses began to moan. Some dropped to their knees, pawing at their crotches. Galladin was among them, his guttural grunts filling the air as he clutched his groin with both hands.

Misyr remained standing but she could see his knuckles turn white from the effort to maintain some decorum. His face was tense but there was no question that Merrie had just caused a greater god to orgasm.

The god of deals only sat back in his chair and closed his eyes. “Oh, that feels good,” he said into the moan-filled room.

Only Parn seemed unaffected. She smirked and pulled her hand away.

It took a minute for the gods and Merrie to recover from her orgasm.

“What was that?” grumbled Misyr.

“That, my dear god of magic,” Talus said with flushed cheeks, “was one of the most beautiful orgasms I had ever felt in my life. After this, I might need to steal her for myself.”

Merrie blushed hotly.

Talus smiled at her and then pulled her dripping fingers from her pussy. She looked at Autiur, who she was still sitting on, but then gestured to Merrie. “Come here, bitch.”

Whimpering with need, Merrie crawled over. She felt the heat and desire rolling off the goddess of whores. Reflexively, she pulled herself into a sitting position and brought the severed ends of her wrists up to her neck. The heavy collar clinked against them.

Talus’ eyes were pools of the deepest crimson as she pressed her wet fingers to Merrie’s mouth. The smell was indescribable, ambrosia from the goddess’ own pussy.

Hungrily, Merrie opened her mouth and sucked on the offered digits. She could taste brightness in her mouth as she swirled her tongue around.

“Are we going to watch some mortal get off or negotiate?” snapped Galladin as he staggered to his feet.

Madock chuckled. “I suspect she can do both.”

Merrie could feel the Lord of Shadows’ desire in the back of her head. As she stared into the liquid depths of Talus’ eyes, she projected, (We will not give up the light.) She could feel her thoughts blending with the Lord of Shadows, a mixture of shifting darkness and her own sweetness entering the minds of the surrounding gods. It was like when Dixie or Sable melded with their masters, their mental voices sounds like two voices overlaid on each other.

She moaned and lapped harder, sucking the sweet divinity off Talus’ fingers. Her body felt hot and excited, her nipples hard to aching desire.

Galladin turned around, his back to Merrie and Talus. "Then we cannot deal."

"Oh, Galladin, that is just an opening position," said Madock. He turned to the Lord, ignoring Merrie which brought a thrill to her senses. "Lord of Shadows, do you need Lemetri or would any light do?"

Merrie's connection softened and smoothed over the Lord's overwhelming thoughts. (We crave the divine light. It is pure, clean, and bright.)

"See, we just have to offer a replacement for Lemetri's spark."

Misyr tensed and stepped back.

Galladin snorted. "I'm sure we happen to have a goddess of light just hanging around who wants a bunch of shadows gnawing on her body until the end of time. I say we send an army and destroy—"

"Don't we?" interpreted Madock.

Merrie didn't look away from Talus. The goddess of whores was a young child now, right on the cusp of the age of Consent. Her slender body was beautiful but her eyes were as ancient as the goddess herself. Merrie moaned and shifted closer, moving her knees until they were brushed up against the slender toes of the goddess and her breasts were lifted up in supplication.

"No, we don't!"

There was a brief silence. "Misyr?" asked Madock with a grin.

Galladin spun around, a look of confusion on his face. It took Merrie a moment to realize that she was seeing the world through the Lord of Shadows eyes, her own consciousness labeling what it saw. Her presence was giving the dark beast concepts it could never figure out on its own.

Misyr took a deep breath. "What do you get out of this?"

"Supreme God of Magic," Galladin said in a deferential tone, "do we have something to trade?" He looked at Madock. "Anything? Explain."

Madock gestured to Misyr.

The god of magic turned to look at the Lord of Shadows. "There is a divine spark of light, a traitor to the gods of this world. I will consider a trade but I must exact have something in return."

The Lord of Shadows hungered for the light. (What is needed?)

“Even though Olume is nothing but a spark now, the guards of Dolagan have fought for centuries to prevent him from recovering. The light is too bright and can never be allowed to gather. To have him, you must promise to never let him manifest again.”

The intense desire rose inside the Lord. (A light that will never go out?)

“Never. Olume is the first of the gods of light. A small fragment of his power was granted to Lemetri when she took on the portfolio of grace and beauty.”

“I have never heard of Olume,” Galladin said.

Parn whispered, “You will not talk of him after this meeting.”

Reality shifted with the goddess’ words.

Galladin nodded. Not that he had a choice.

“Neither will Talus or Madock or the gods of death,” said the goddess of oaths.

The others cringed but made agreeing noises or gestures.

Merrie wondered why she wasn’t included.

Misyr tightened his grip on the staff. “Then I will hand over Olume in exchange from an oath witnessed by Parn that the Shadows will prevent him from rising again.”

For any other being, it would have been a moment to consider. Bound forever was the promise of an Alpha, not a powerful creature. Immediately, the Lord of Shadows reached out with one shifting claw and scraped the ground. (We will trade and we will promise,) she translated. (Until the end of time, my children shall feast on the spark.)

The world around Madock grew hazy as energy poured into him. He let out a long sigh, not unlike the one he made with Merrie’s orgasm. With a smile, he leaned into his golden chair for a long moment. Slowly, he sat back up. “Sorry, that was intense.”

“Be happy you made a deal between three gods, Madock. Now leave.”

Madock’s eyes sparkled and he grinned. “You owe me a boon, Misyr.”

“Use it for something important, you will not get another.”

Madock slowly turned to the Lord. “Lord of Shadows, what happens if Merrie dies?”

Merrie froze, her lips sucking on the base of Talus' thumb like it was a cock. The goddess of whores was a heavysset man with a thick hair covering his body. His cock, short and fat, dripped with his excitement.

The thoughts were overwhelming but Merrie understood them. (The promise made to... Shadow Maker would be broken. The barriers of my lands will no longer be honored and the shadows will be free to spread out.)

One of Misyr's knuckles cracked. Merrie glanced up to see him glaring at Madock.

"So, Merrie's life is the only thing holding back the shadows from invading?"

(Yes.)

Madock's smile grew wider and the energy rolled around him. "How long will this promise last?"

(Until she truly dies.) Merrie's thoughts darkened at the thought. She was surrounded by reapers waiting to take her soul.

"Well, good thing she has a collar that grants her immortality as long as her mistress lives, isn't it?" Madock's head swung over to look at the seething god of magic. "Misyr? That means we should look into her mistress, right?"

Merrie wondered if the collar was still her mistress or if her binding with the Lord of Shadows had taken over.

"She bonded with the Lord though," Madock said as if reading her thoughts. "Parn, who is Merrie's master?"

Misyr started forward. "Don't let—!"

"Zillia." There was nothing else from the old goddess.

Silence.

"Who?" asked Galladin and Madock. Madock looked shocked and startled; Merrie realized it was the first thing that he hadn't planned for.

Merrie couldn't understand the answer. Who was Zillia?

One of the reapers coughed.

Madock recovered first. "Well, until we figure out who this Zillia is, we probably should keep the artifact wrapped around Merrie's neck. It would be a shame to have all of your pet country destroyed in shadows if she died prematurely." His swagger came back. "Your

choice, Misyr. You are the only being in this room capable of destroying it.”

Misyr grunted and wrapped his staff on the ground. “You have a deal.”

Madock moaned as energy rippled around him. The power of the divine deal caused his bones to glow for a moment.

“I am done being turned into the fool,” Misyr announced. He disappeared.

Grinning broadly, Madock sat up. “Oh, this has been a glorious day.”

“I shall take my leave,” Galladin said.

Madock held up his hand. “Stay.

“I will not,” proclaimed the god but he remained.

“Thank you, I request one more deal.”

“Haven’t you had enough?”

“I want peace.”

“There will be peace,” Galladin said as he stood up straighter, “I will bring it to the world if it wants it or not.”

“You are about to take on the portfolio of Lemetri. I have one condition for that exchange, the favor you owe me for a deal that benefited you.”

Galladin’s eyes narrowed. “What is it?”

Talus pulled her hand from Merrie’s mouth. “Bassimar is mine.”

“What!?! Never! He is—!”

Madock held up his hand.

Galladin batted it away. “He is the stain on Lemetri’s name. I will destroy him the second I gain control. He will—”

Madock’s body grew more solid as he stood up. The force of his Presence beat down on Merrie, pushing her to the ground again. “You will give Bassimar to Talus.”

“He attacked her!”

“No, she attacked him. We all know that he was willing to keep his head down and keep praying but she, at your insistence, decided to destroy him.”

“He was a stain—”

“She abandoned him when she gave up that part of her power. He is the last of her old portfolio, one that Talus and others have

absorbed. You only want him to erase the memory of a different time. Talus will treasure him. She deserves him as a champion.”

Galladin’s jaw clamped shut.

“Galladin,” Madock said as the air crackled around him, “I invoke the favors you owe me for favorable deals. You have gained benefit and now you shall pay. I demand three things: Bassimar shall be granted to Talus; you will cease all present and future attempts to attack, kill, or otherwise harm Bassimar and his associates; you will cease all hostilities toward Merrie, the Lord of Shadows, and the shadow lands controlled by their union.”

The paladin god, soon to be a god of light, glared at Madock. He balled his hands into fists, squeezing down until his knuckles cracked.

“Do you agree before Parn?”

Galladin’s glare shifted from Talus and then to Merrie. Then he looked pointedly away. “To get Lemetri’s spark back, I agree.”

Before anyone could say anything, he disappeared.

Merrie looked at the three remaining gods.

Talus, now a fat blonde with small breasts and wide hips, stood up. She knelt down and caught Merrie’s head.

Merrie’s tail snapped back and forth as she stared into the shifting eyes.

“I know True Submissives are incapable of dedicating themselves to a god, but you are always welcomed into my house, Bitch of the Whores. No matter what reason, no matter how long it takes, you will always have shelter, protection, and love within my walls.” The goddess pulled Merrie into a deep kiss, her lips bright against Merrie’s spirit. It filled Merrie with joy and love.

Then the goddess of whores was gone.

“Thank you, Merrie.”

Merrie turned to Madock. She felt no desire to please him, he was already brimming with energy from his own deals. (Why did you do this?)

He walked over to her. He started to speak but then lowered himself, crouching down with one knee on each side of her head. “A long time ago, you helped someone dear to me. I will never forget.”

Madock touched his finger to Merrie’s forehead.

(It hurts! Please, Merrie, can she hear me? Please, don't let me... I can't breathe!)

At the first memory of Sama, Merrie burst into tears. It was her friend and lover back when she first came to the Puppy Mill. Many years later, her death still haunted Merrie.

Concern pushed Merrie and she lashed out, catching Sama's mind. As she connected, the bitch's mental voice came with a rush of sensations.

Grange had Sama bent backwards over the stool, her arms tied between the legs. Sparks of pain radiating along Sama's shoulder blades and her buttocks from the painful position. There was fear that she couldn't move, but her terror came from the cock buried deep in her throat. He was fucking her with short strokes, pounding her face but never letting the cock escape from the pressure of the rope around her neck.

Merrie let out a shuddering breath as she remembered herself in the same position.

(This was the same, right? Merrie, can you hear me?)
(Sama?)

(Oh, thank Madock,) it was the name of a merchant god, (Please be here. I can't breathe! It hurts. Please?)

Terror resonated along their mental connection. Merrie felt her breath catching in her throat. She reached out and projected comfort, trying to ease the growing agony and fear. (He will stop soon. Just hold on. Please?)

(I-I can't,) the choking sensation blasted through her telepathy and Merrie felt it around her own throat. Merrie shuddered at the sensation, forcing her mind to send back love and compassion.

t'Sade

Choose One

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The memories triggered by Madock wracked Merrie. She whimpered and twisted tighter into a ball, clutching her tail tight to her body as she sobbed into her arm.

The recollection was more detailed than anything she had experienced before, details that a mortal would have missed, a sense of being everywhere at the same time. It would have been overwhelming if it wasn't for the emotions of watching her best friend and lover die in her mind once again.

She sobbed and let out a ragged breath. She couldn't blame Madock for reminding her, he had honored her death in a way she couldn't have imagined. Madock had twisted gods' will and made deals just so he could give Merrie and himself closure. It was a small touch, more so from a god who heard millions praying to him, but one that eased some of her suffering.

After an eternity, she peeled her face from her shoulder and looked up through blurred vision. The reapers were still gathered but they said nothing. The shadows were still and she felt the barrier between the two realms had been sealed over; the Lord of Shadows must have returned back to the darkness while she was lost in her sorrow.

Parn knelt down next to her, one hand against Merrie's shoulder. She looked sad and concerned and peaceful at the same time. It would have been an impossible to describe, more so with the shifting clouds in her eyes.

(I'm sorry.)

Parn shook her head and patted her.

(Did Madock and the Lord leave?)

A nod.

She looked out at the slow-motion damage happening around her. The explosion had ripped out huge hunks of the courthouse. There was light coming from all directions, spearing through the clouds of shifting darkness. Turning around, she could see people dying as their bodies withered away into dust in less than a second. For her, the relative time would stretch it out for hours if not days with so many reapers present.

(What is going to happen to them?)

Autiur sat down next to her. "They're going to die. That's what happens now."

(Isn't there anything I can do? Please? Bring Madock back? Make a deal?)

The monochromatic man shook his head. "You are just a mortal." (I'm immortal. The collar keeps me alive?)

He sighed and nodded. "With that collar, you can't die. But the collar can always be removed and you still have the mortal coil within you."

There was a rustle of noise among the other reapers. They looked unhappy and disappointed.

(Then, why can't I made a deal?)

Parn tapped her. "Why?"

(Why? Because millions are going to die. They don't deserve it. They shouldn't suffer because of me. I'm going to survive, why can't they?) Merrie felt the frustration and anger rising. She knew she was talking to a goddess but the helplessness was overwhelming.

"But why? Do you want to save them because of the Royal Geas?"

The question halted Merrie for a second. She hadn't felt either of the geasa since the explosion. She frowned as she let the forbidden thought of attacking the royal family. Nothing. She tore her thoughts away, she wouldn't hurt Claston or the queen even if she was forced to do so. She would disobey that command, even if it meant her life.

Slowly, she shook her head. (No, I wouldn't. There are friends out there: companions, lovers, and strangers. There are children who need to grow up, a city that needs to live.)

Merrie sniffed and looked at Parn. (Can't I make a deal with you?)

Parn shook her head.

Autiur rested a hand on her shoulder. “You are past those now, Merrie.”

Tears burned in her eyes. (No! I can't. I just saw Sama die again. She died pointlessly, choked to death on some asshole's cock because he was upset at me. Now, I'm watching the city be killed because some asshole—) She gestured where Udin would have been if his body hadn't been destroyed. (—was upset at me again. I can't. I can't let people suffer!)

She pushed herself up to her knees. She looked at the gathered reapers. (Please, I'm begging. You'll do anything but don't let these people die.) Her thoughts were filled with sorrow and despair, she couldn't help but project it at the same time.

The reapers rustled uncomfortably, shifting from one side to the other.

Merrie sniffed and looked at the carnage beyond the gathered gods. The destroyed building continued to dissolve, revealing the courtyards surrounding the building.

When she saw Kirin in the front, hands drawing wine out of a dozen upturned bottles at her feet, Merrie's heart stopped beating for a second. The guild mistress had all six of her infernal runes glowing, burning away her corset as she formed a defensive shield to protect against the explosion.

Monk, Scorch, and other of the Whore's Guild protectors were there, spread out in a line as they were casting their own defense spells. None of them were trying to save themselves, they were trying to stop the explosion.

Tears ran down Merrie's cheeks as she looked away. Her eyes caught more light from the other side of the building. It was the priests of Misyr doing the same thing, the crackling energies of their arcane shields building up to stop the explosion.

Another direction, another group: Loyal Alestri was leading a group of other guards, more priests that Udin berated for refusing to remove the collar were in a different direction, even the guardian guilds were there.

She sobbed and shook her head. (Why are they there?)

“They knew what was going to happen. You can't see Udin's hatred and not guess the outcome.” Autiur said sadly. “They talked

and agreed to remain standing. They are going to try stopping the explosion even though all of them have accepted death to do so.”

(W-Will they succeed?)

“There is a reaper for each one.”

Merrie shook her head. (Why me? Why do I have to be this powerful? Why did I have to have the collar?)

Parn leaned forward. “You are needed,” she whispered. “Your power, your abilities, your submission. You are exactly where you need to be.”

(For what? To kill everyone? Is that what you wanted?) She shook her head. (No, I refuse. Can't I? What can I do to stop it!?)

Autiur sighed. “Nothing—”

“Pick one who dies,” interrupted Parn.

Autiur jumped and looked at her, his jaw dropping.

Merrie stared at the goddess. It took her a moment to register the words but she was still stunned. (What?)

“Pick one. A stranger, an enemy, a lover. Pick one that you would be willing to lose to save everyone else.”

Autiur paled, if that was possible.

Merrie looked across the gathered crowds. There were people screaming, caught in mid-motion as they started to panic. She considered the priests who she had only met for seconds but those weren't right. She knew the answer before her eyes slid over.

It tore her heart as she focused on Kirin. (Kirin.)

“Why?” asked Parn.

Merrie felt like her heart would break but she thought Kirin would forgive her. (Because she took the oath. She swore loyalty to Franome and the crown. Of all the people there, she is one of the few I know who accepted the geas without question.)

As she finished, she choked on her sobs. Bowing her head, she coughed and let the droplets fall to the ground. (I also love her. She gave me a home when I needed it most, she was there to save the family when I bonded. There are only a few people I would trust to do that: Kirin, Bass, and Borias.)

“Not the Loyal Alestri?” asked the goddess.

(I don't know her as well. She would do it, but I honestly can't say if she accepted it or not. Kirin, I know.)

“She accepted her oath without question.”

(Kirin,) Merrie projected.

Parn said, “The reapers then brought her here.”

“What—”

There was a soft presence.

“What is going... Bitch?” It was Kirin. Her voice cracked.

Merrie sobbed and shook her head. (Why?)

“Get out of the way,” grunted Kirin as she shoved a reaper to the side. She stepped forward and dropped to her knees to pull Merrie into a tight hug. “Oh, Bitch, what happened?”

Merrie looked up at the beautiful woman holding her. (I-I’m sorry.)

Kirin smelled beautiful, she was wearing her custom perfume, Blue-Gold Glory by the Stars. The guild mistress leaned down and kissed Kirin. “It doesn’t matter what you did, you know I would do anything for you.”

She held Merrie tighter. “Though, who are these people?”

Merrie sent an image of Parn. (The Goddess of Oaths.)

Kirin tensed.

(The others are reapers, the gods of death.) Merrie’s thoughts were dark and shadowed, lost on the edge of despair.

Large breasts ground against Merrie as the infernal runes flickered along Kirin’s stomach. “Are you dying?”

(No. I can’t. If I do, then far more people will die.)

Kirin tensed for the briefest of moments. Then she sighed. “Will me dying save this city?”

Merrie peeked up over Kirin’s arm at Parn.

The goddess nodded.

(Yes.)

Kirin relaxed and looked up. “Which one of you is taking me?”

Autiur raised an eyebrow. “Just like that?”

“I don’t care whoever you are—”

“I am. I’m truly—”

“Blow me,” snapped Kirin. “I’ve been in this job far too long to waste time listening to someone lie. I made a promise and I will honor it. I will save this city with my final breath.”

Parn held up her hand. “Your geas has no affect in here. You can choose—”

“You blow me twice,” snapped Kirin.

Merrie gasped. (That's a goddess!)

The goddess only looked amused.

"I don't need a geas to be a good person. I made my amends and set down the plans for succession. There is no debate." She turned back to Merrie. "Thank you."

(K-Kirin?)

Kirin answered with a kiss. Her lips were commanding as she pushed Merrie back. Her hands cupped Merrie from behind as she opened the kiss into a passionate embrace.

Merrie whimpered but embraced it.

The guild mistress broke it. "You are a very good girl, don't you ever forget it."

Merrie shivered with pleasure, it warred with the despair.

Kirin turned back. "Is there a reason to draw this out?"

Autiur shrugged and shook his head. He looked at the other reapers who shook their heads. "No, you have accepted with startling speed."

"I've accepted my death ever since I fled the infernals who marked me. So, who is taking me?"

Autiur started to say something but Parn interrupted.

"The reapers took Kirin in exchange for the rest of the city. Those who died in the explosion will remain dead but there would be no more deaths in the city until the sun set on the World Tree."

With a snap, all of the reapers and Kirin disappeared.

Reality snapped back to full speed. The explosion of darkness screamed in the air, ripping everything apart. It shuddered and jerked to the side, funneling the shifting darkness directly toward a single person in the crowd.

Kirin's scream of agony rose up as the full force of Merrie's gathered power poured into her body.

She resisted for only a heartbeat before her body began to wither away. Her hair dissolved first as did her magic shields. Wine splashed to the ground as the scream grew higher in pitch. Her infernal runes flared up, a brilliant and sickening red that shone through everyone. The light seared the ground and the bodies but Merrie knew no one would die from their wounds.

The black cloud continued to pour into her. The force of the howling winds pushed everyone back from Kirin.

Monk tried to reach her, fighting against the winds. Elf was pushing him, his butterfly wings beating as he strained against the force.

The last of the blackness poured into Kirin, her body darkening into the deepest black Merrie had ever seen. Only the flickering infernal runes glowed from the darkness.

Then everything stopped.

Kirin's body blew away into black mists, disappearing in a second.

Everyone collapsed to the ground.

Merrie sobbed.

Then she was falling. The explosion had destroyed the floors behind her. Before she knew it, she slammed against the crater that was left of the Royal Courthouse.

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Goddess of Oaths 51

“The universe stops for Merrie’s next decision,” announced Parn.

The world shuddered around Merrie. She looked up from the crater. The impact had broken bones and she could taste the healing magic of her collar in the back of her throat. It would take hours to handle the ten meter fall, but she would survive.

“Merrie survived her fall without injuries.”

In the next, Merrie was fine. Untouched and unharmed. She ached from her hours of waiting but otherwise she felt fine. She looked at the curved walls around her.

Seeing the universe completely stopped made her realize how little the reapers slowed down the explosion. Everything was frozen in place, caught in mid-air.

She looked at Parn who was kneeling next to her. (You could have saved everyone.) It wasn’t a question.

The goddess nodded.

(Why didn’t you?)

“Gods should not directly affect the world. It would escalate the battle until humanity is nothing more than pawns in their battles. That is why we are... encouraged not to have a direct hand.”

(You did.)

“I’m allow to affect lives of those who are directly touched by me. You are one of mine. I created the True Submissives as my champions and to answer my questions.”

Merrie squirmed for a minute. “Champion, like a paladin?”

Parn looked around. “Everything I say for the next minute will not automatically come true.”

The universe rippled around both of them, the ground shimmering with something more powerful than any spell Merrie had dreamed about.

Parn smiled and rubbed her thigh. "It feels good not to watch my words. To answer your question, yes and no. Paladins are the lone warriors against their god's enemies. You, on the other hand, must have someone. You must work with others to gain power. You tie people together by your nature, not use them to advance yourself."

(Is... everything that happened to me because of you?)

Parn shrugged. "There is no destiny. Just... suggestions. I wasn't expecting you to become the Omega. The rules in the universe were there, I just didn't know it could happen. That's part of the beauty of reality, I don't know what is going to happen. That is why I don't speak up much, I want to see what will happen naturally."

A ghost of a smile crossed her lips. "To be honest, I like to see struggle. There is no greater beauty than watching someone struggle with a life or death choice against some surmountable barrier."

(A geas?)

"Oh, yes, love." Parn sighed and smiled broadly. "When you risked your entire life to warn Bass and the others about the paladins, it was one of the most glorious moments of your life."

And then she realized, Gillette was silencing her with his gauntlet. She tried to bark, but no noise came out, but she could scream. Exploring gingerly, she dug into her mind and sought out Catais' spell that silenced her. She found it after a moment and quickly scanned over it. It was preventing her from making noises as a dog. A subtle and precise spell, like most psychics, and one that took advantage of her geas.

Merrie could make other noises, but the geas would never let her. She shuddered at the remembered pain when she screamed as a human, the feeling of her insides tearing themselves open and the blood that ran down out of every orifice. She couldn't do that again. Even if she could, a scream would bring Bass running. As

would calling his name. There wasn't any way she could warn of the attack.

And then she found something to say.

She gathered up the command. (Call for help,) and sent it. She winced with anticipation as the order came rippling through the collar. It was going to kill her, but she would die for her mistress. Gathering up her energy, she took a deep breath and then another one. The spell was a simple one, taught by her grandfather and Haviston, but useless with her geas. It was to increase the sound of her voice and she never needed it before now. Her panting whistled between Gillette's fingers, adding to the anticipation that she was about to die.

Steeling herself, she melted away. The light dispelled the magic, but she only needed to escape his grip. As she came back, only centimeters away but outside of his fingers, she inhaled and screamed the only thing she knew would warn the Puppy Mill.

“LEMETRI!”

The spell to enhance her voice tore her vocal cords, ripping them apart as she said the first words she had said in five years. They echoed painfully across the trees, reflecting and echoing in a rumble of noise.

She tensed as she waited for her body to tear itself apart, nothing happened. She only had a moment to wonder why she wasn't dead when Gillette jerked forward.

Merrie shuddered at the memory, she had just lost Fang and paladins were poisoned to destroy Bass and the others. The geas didn't kill her though, she remembered earlier that it would last until she touched the marker where she had lost her arms and legs; she had splinters of it in her leg but she didn't know that at the time.

Parn's eyes sparkled with lightning. “Yes, that moment. That was the most wonderfully glorious moment of your life. I didn't know it was coming, it was a surprise. You surprised me, Merrie.” She stroked her thumb along Merrie's jaw. “In that moment, as in many

other times, you exceeded everything I hoped of the True Submissives.”

(What now?)

Parn’s thumb circled to press lightly against Merrie’s throat. The old woman smiled sweetly for a moment. “I will take away all of your geasa. Every limitation, every limit. The Royal Geas and every other promise you have made. I will strip you bare of all obligations.”

Merrie stared at the goddess with shock.

“If you decide now, you can freely walk out of the crater and tell the world about the Royal Geas, sleeping with the prince, and even the queen’s secrets. Nothing will stop you.”

(I can’t do that.)

“No, my sweet thing,” Parn said with a smile. “You can do it, you choose not to.”

(I won’t do it!)

The Goddess of Oaths stroked Merrie’s throat. “I know, that’s why I’m going to ask you to take on the limitations of both the Royal and Justice geasa willingly.”

(Willingly? You mean put the geas on myself?)

“No, just chose to act as if they are there.”

(Wouldn’t it be easier to leave them on me? Or to put the Justice Geas on me? You can do it, right?)

“I can, I don’t want to.”

Merrie frowned. There was something growing around her, a feeling of importance, but she couldn’t wrap her mind what the goddess was asking her.

“Merrie, I want you to choose the geas. Not just to take it on, but every decision. I want to see you struggle with every word and every choice: you will struggle to keep the royal family’s secrets with your own lips, you will have to decide not to take power from submission, you will have to choose not to use your magic to save you. That is what I want. Not one choice, all choices. All struggles.”

Merrie stared at her as it finally struck her. She wasn’t going to have the warning the geasa gave her, the taste in the back of her mouth or the erased memories. All the limitations but without the safeguards.

“No quite. You will also be able to break them without harm. You can have the full measure of your power by choosing to do so.”

Merrie got confused again. No warnings that she was going to break it but also no consequences. No, there would be consequences but she wouldn't have to worry about her organs liquefying out of her openings or her brain being melted. It sounded almost impossible and at the same time, pointless. Her tail dropped. (T-Then... why?)

Parn looked up at the crater. “Magical oaths are too powerful. They don't allow disobedience. So this world uses them because they want absolute control over everything. There are nine thousand people with the Royal Geas on them right now. Nine thousand people who cannot say that the Queen is fulfilling the prophecy that heralds the destruction of the World Tree. Even if it becomes critical to save the rest of the royal family, they will not be able to disobey and sacrifice one for the greater good.”

(P-Prophecy?)

Parn waved her hand. “You've gone through those same absolute limits with your other geasa. You couldn't speak when you needed to, even though so many people wouldn't have suffered if you did.”

(But it is needed.)

She shook her head. “Not as much as it is used. Oath magic is very powerful but you are about to go to a prison where every single person, guard and prisoner, has at least one geas on them. Fifty thousand people who cannot make a choice because someone else took that away from them.”

Parn pulled her hand away and sat down on the ground. “Being the Goddess of Oaths is hard. You'd think having someone restricted by a geas give me power and its true, but most of my power comes from those who push the limits, explore them. My greater energies come from those who barely succeed and those who barely failed.”

(Break promises?)

Parn took a deep breath. “Bass also brought me so much joy when he forced Lemetri to break her promise. That was... glorious because he demonstrated the one thing I value above all things: free will.”

Merrie lowered herself to the ground as she concentrated. Her tail rested against her bare thigh as she tried to wrap her thoughts

around Parn's words. (So... you want me to promise to obey the spirit of the geas... just so I fail?)

"Or succeed while doing so. But that choice. That crux in time, that point of decision, is what I want you to take on. I want you to decide, with every blow if you are going to gain power from it or accept the agony. Every time you have an orgasm, every time you need to speak, I want you to have that moment of doubt. Every time you do, I get a little measure of energy. Like when Madock gained power from his deals, I gain power from your decisions."

(But... what if I can't do it?)

"You can. You already do it, but you had help. I want you to do it without help, to take on the rest of your life with nothing more than your will and desires to guide you."

Merrie whimpered and ducked her head. She didn't know if she could make a life-changing decision like that. Parn was asking for more than a favor, she was asking for a promise as binding as any one that Bass made, but instead of gaining power from the promise, she would be losing it.

Parn smiled but said nothing.

Merrie twisted and looked down at her pale body. She could feel the shadows twisting inside her and the triple-beat of her heart in her chest. She was delicate and fragile, a pale veneer of skin over darkness. "What about my body?"

"You will still be made of shadows. The light will hurt and could kill you. I'm not going to take your collar away either. It will bring you back... if you decide to come back. You will have the choice now, to end your life forever or the agony of coming back."

The memory of her body being repeatedly burned away but the sun slammed into her. She whimpered and closed her eyes tightly.

"You will also be blamed for all this destruction and death. You will be beaten, tortured, and hated. You can stop it with only a few words or a flash of magic, but I'm giving you that choice how to handle it. Will you accept the humiliation or take it for power? Will you whisper words that will harm someone else or remain silent and suffer?"

(I've had a hard life.)

"You will also fail to keep this promise. There will be times when you will need to speak as a woman or lash out with darkness. It will

be there, waiting, but as long as you keep choosing, then you are worshipping me. It's the point where you give up and fully embrace being mortal or the Omega that you will cease to be my champion."

(Then what?)

"Nothing."

Silence.

(You have the ability to rewrite reality. You can just say I accepted.)

Parn smiled.

Merrie finally understood. Her ears perked up. (You have that choice. You can control reality itself but decide to remain silent. Misyr treats you like a child even though you could destroy him with a word.)

"Three words, but yes."

There were tears burning in Merrie's eyes. She felt closer to the goddess for a brief moment, as if she finally understood some part of the entire universe. "Do alphas make choices?" Her throat hurt but she felt the need to talk; she was going to accept Parn's request but needed to ask more.

"They also make their master's decisions have more impact. More critical decisions, more choices that affect the world."

"You give others immense power to see how they use it."

"Good girl."

Merrie shivered with pleasure. Then she realized she didn't have to. With a frown, she forced herself not to gain powerful from one of the most powerful beings in the world and just let the pleasure wash over her without the tingle of gathering power.

Parn's smile grew wider. "Very good girl."

It was easier the second time.

Merrie took a deep breath and wiped the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. "I'll do it."

"Thank you, Merrie."

"I'm scared."

"Yes."

"I'm worried about failing you."

"You will."

"I... I'll keep doing it though."

Parn smile. She stood up and patted Merrie on the head.

Merrie watched as she started to walk away.

Then Parn stopped. "You know what I like? You didn't ask what you get out of this. Just like Kirin, you just said yes."

Merrie almost used telepathy. She cleared her throat and said, "Isn't the point of your request? Everything you asked was to willingly accept not having or using my gifts."

The Goddess of Oaths was smiling as she disappeared.

A wave of power rolled over Merrie as the universe restarted.

The full weight of her choice slammed into her. She had just willingly accepted the Justice Geas, or at least the limitations. That meant no more telepathy, no more shadows, no more magic.

Suddenly, she felt very alone and scared.

Ducking her head, she let out a soft cry. She didn't know if she made the right choice.

It didn't really matter, she would be making it for the rest of her life.

First Choices

52

The kick caught right underneath Merrie's ribs, the steel-tip digging into the soft space unprotected by bone or muscle. If she had organs, they would have been crushed and maybe even ruptured. The force of the blow picked up her entire body and tossed her across the dirty room.

The rough stone wall caught her. The impact dazed her and she couldn't even get her arms and knees underneath her before she scraped down the rough edges to land on the moist, hard-packed earth.

Gulping, she took a deep breath against the pain. When she inhaled the sour stench of old blood and urine, she almost threw up. Tears in her eyes, she managed to get her arm underneath her and pried her aching body from the ground.

She felt the guard coming up to her but she didn't have time to tense before a second kick caught her in the breast. Pain exploded from her chest as she felt the soft mound crush against what passed as her ribs.

Reflexively, she started to gather energy to transform herself into darkness.

She stopped, remembering what Parn asked her. It was still overwhelming to comprehend what the goddess said. It didn't matter if she failed or not, only that she thought about it. There was more to it, but she didn't understand gods beyond what she had seen with the paladins and her own experiences with the Lord of Shadows.

"Dornen, don't do that," said the other guard. It was a younger man, maybe in his mid-twenties with blond hair and dark eyes. He

had a short spear with a wide, wedge-shaped blade. It didn't look impressive but they had just finished dragging her down a narrow, underground hallway where it would have been ideal. She suspected there were more of them, though she didn't know where she was.

"Why not, Hore? The bitch probably has been killing people for years. She's got the mark on her now. This is probably the first time someone been able to hit her." Dornen was an older man, probably in his mid-thirties with balding hair and a slight gut. His kicks were strong though and she felt his strength while they were dragging her out of the wagon.

Dornen chuckled and kicked her again, this time in the hip. "Just reminding the bitch her place." He looked at Hore. "Why do you have a problem with it now?"

Hore frowned and scratched his nose. "I don't know. She's naked and missing bits."

"Yeah, but check these out." Dornen shoved his foot underneath Merrie's stomach and flipped her over. She thumped against the sharp wall and then slid down until she was on her back, her bare body exposed to both men's gazes.

Both men stared at her, their lips parted with their thoughts. She could tell both of them were also getting excited as lustful thoughts washed over her.

A little thrill raced along her veins as her knee spread further apart, exposing her bare sex even more. Her pussy was bruised from one of Dornen's earlier kicks but she knew that her folds were slick with excitement as were her hard nipples.

"Fuck," Dornen said, "this is the sexiest person we've had here in... ever."

He grabbed his cock through his trousers and hefted it. "Going to be late to the wife tonight, that's for sure."

Merrie's heart beat faster. She felt torn. Was she supposed to fight this? Would the Justice Geas have destroyed her by now, she gained power from being the attention of lust as much as being ignored. The tickle of energy danced along her skin, she could absorb it to use magic.

She whimpered and pushed back, both away from the two men staring at her and the energy that filled her. The sweetness of power faded, leaving her a feeling of longing.

“I like it when they cry also,” Dornen said, digging his fingers underneath his balls.

“I don’t feel right.”

“About what, you pussy?”

“She destroyed the courthouse. A lot of people died.”

“She has the geas, just watch the door.”

Hore frowned. “Are you sure?”

Dornen rolled his eyes. “If she didn’t, you really think she’d let me do this?”

She saw the kick coming but didn’t stop it. It slammed into her ribs, nearly breaking them. The blow slammed her up against the wall and she curled up to protect her face and breasts from being cut.

With a moan, Dornen licked his lips. “I’m going to fucking rape this cunt all night.”

Hore sighed. “Just let me check first, please?”

Dornen rolled his eyes again. Drawing back, he kicked Merrie hard into the stomach twice. “Fine, get the fucking globe.””

“Thank you.” Hore left the room, hefting his spear as he did.

Dornen turned back on Merrie. He smiled and knelt down next to her. “Bet you are feeling pretty scared now, aren’t you? No more powers?”

She was scared, but not for missing her powers. She could feel them, the seductive promise of shadows and psychic energies. It would take only the slightly flex of power to feel his desire for her to cry, to resist him so he had an excuse to beat her while raping her.

Merrie blanched. She was using her powers again. With a whimper, she closed the connection that had formed between the two of them.

Dornen’s smile turned into a wide grin. He pulled back and slapped her face. “Can’t strike back? I bet you had all those powers because of those freaky hands of yours.”

He hit her again. The crack of his open palm burned across her face.

Dornen shoved his other hand down, slapping against her pubic mound before jamming two fingers roughly into her slit. It was slick as usual. His fingertips easily plunged into her tight hole.

Merrie bit back a moan, his desires still swirling around in her head. Instead, she flailed one hand against him, beating the smooth end of her wrist against his chest. Inside, she felt despaired that she had broken her promise to Parn already.

He shoved the rough fingers in and out a few times. His fingernails scraped against her insides, adding flickers of pain to the growing pleasure. It felt good but also hurt at the same time. "Fuck, you are soaking wet."

Pulling out his digits, he looked at them. "Cold too. This is going to be like fucking a snowman, huh?" He shrugged and grinned. "Just means I'll last longer, bitch."

With his other hand, he smacked her again before grabbing her collar and pulling her head off the ground. "What do you think about that? Ready to feel a real man inside that frigid cunt of yours?"

She shook her head.

Dornen grabbed her knee and shoved it up against the rough stone.

Hore returned, his boots thumping against the ground. "Got it!"

In his hand, he had a white globe that was slightly larger than his hand. "Let me test her."

"Then we fuck her?"

For a moment, Hore looked like he would resist. Then his eyes focused on the two fingers pumping in and out of Merrie's pussy. "Yeah, then we have fun."

Stepping forward, he clenched his fingers with one hand and then pressed his other palm against Dornen's shoulder. The globe flickered to life as white energies swirled around the inside.

"Remember, the Justice Geas is about three times as bright." Dornen shoved deeper and pulled up, rubbing his fingers against the sensitive parts of her pussy and forcing her hips away from the ground.

A flicker of an orgasm rushed through her. His roughness was turning her own. She wondered if she could stop it but she didn't want to. She needed the pleasure, not for energy but just to give her something to soothe her own fears and helplessness.

Hore squatted next to her and reached out with his hand. "Three times?"

As soon as he planted his hand right on her breast, the globe burst to life. It was far more than three times brighter, it was a shining light that was so bright that she could see the veins and bones in his hands from the intensity of the light.

“Fuck!” yelled Dornen. He yanked his fingers out and stumbled back. “Turn that damn thing off!”

The globe bounced on the ground.

“Careful, asshole. That thing is expensive.”

“What the hell was that, Dornen!?”

Dornen frowned before crawling over to the globe. He grabbed it and then reached out with his other hand. “Let me test it.”

When Dornen put his hand on Hore, the light returned to the lower level. He pushed himself to his feet. Turning to her, he towered over her. “What the hell was that?”

Merrie shook her head. She didn’t know.

“I said,” he pulled back his his foot, “what the fuck was that!?”

He kicked her and then again and again. Each blow slammed against her ribs, face, shoulder, and hips.

Merrie cried out as she curled up to protect herself but there was little she could do as he hammered her body with a rain of brutal, full-strength kicks. When she curled up in a fetal position, he focused his kicks against her pussy, slamming the steel toe up against her labia and clitoris with powerful strokes that jammed her up against the wall.

She sobbed louder, trying to reach down to protect herself but her short arms wouldn’t reach. Blood ran down her thigh as he cut into her.

At the same time, desire burned inside her. She grew slick with every blow, every flash of agony that slammed against her senses. She wanted it as much as she prayed it would stop. It was agony and pleasure at the same time.

He suddenly stopped. Dropping to his knees, he grabbed her hair and slammed her head against the wall. With his other hand, he slapped her. “I said, what is going on!?”

She tried to block him but he easily smacked her arms aside and slapped her hard across the face. “Speak, you fucking monster!”

“I-I can’t!” she wailed between his smacks.

That stopped him. “What?”

"I-I'm an alpha." It hurt to talk with her jaw being slapped so many times. Her voice was also harsh as before. "W-We mag... magnify geas and they affect us more than others."

Dornen slapped her again.

"I promise!" she screamed.

It took everything she had to not to turn into a Bel Dark hound or into shadows. The room was dark enough. She wanted to escape, to run away. Even the promise of being raped wasn't enough to stop her, she had to suffer if she would keep her promise to Parn.

Dornen slapped her again, harder this time. "Fucking cunt."

Then he looked down. With her legs curled up to protect herself, that left her bruised and bloody pussy only centimeters away from the bulge in his jeans. He grinned and tightened his grip on her hair, shoving her harder against the wall as he used his other to fumble with the buttons of his jeans.

It only took seconds before he freed his cock. She couldn't look down and the anticipation grew inside her.

Dornen shoved his cock deep into her body, burying his entire length into her with a single thrust.

A ripple of pleasure filled her. She let it wash over her, filling her with pleasure as he jammed her head hard against the wall and started to pound into her.

She flexed to meet his body, enjoying how the thickness filled her with pleasure. Her pussy burned though, the blood and cuts scraping against his slickness only added to pleasure that swirled around her.

He slammed into her hard, stopping on every few thrusts as his cock pulsed. He was trying to torture her on his shaft but struggling with his desire to cum. It would have been brutal, but Merrie had fucked far more terrible things. It was only pleasure to her as he filled her pussy.

Hore grabbed her hair and Dornen released it.

The younger man pulled his belt over her head and brought the buckle to her mouth.

Dornen rammed hard into her pussy causing her to gasp.

Hore shoved the buckle past her teeth and then yanked on the belt, tightening it around her head. The metal forced her mouth apart.

Then, without wearing pants, he stepped over Merrie's chest. His cock was also thick and dripping.

"Pussy, get your ass out of my face," snarled Dornen.

"Pick a better position next time, ass." Hore's voice was distracted as he shoved his cock into Merrie's mouth and the buckle. It was strong tasting, salty and sour. He shoved it hard into her, slamming her head against the rough stone as he buried his length into her mouth and against her throat.

The pressure against her gag reflex caused her to jerk, but she was pinned in place by both men. She tried to push his legs away from her.

Hore pulled his cock almost completely out before slamming it home. The thrust slammed her head against the stone wall, dazing her again.

She almost transformed as an orgasm tore through her body. She moaned and tensed, pushing harder on his thighs and trying to lever Dornen away with her legs, but she was impaled on each end by thrusting cocks and helpless to stop them.

Hore's thrusts were far more violent than Dornen's. He slammed her head against the wall with hard, fast strokes as he pumped into her face. His cock punched along the back of her throat, causing her to gag. Wet noises filled the room as her pussy clenched around Dornen's thrusts.

"Fuck, yes!" cried the older man.

Stars swam around Merrie's vision as she choked on the cock. The ceaseless pounding against her face also drove her into the wall, the pain blossoming as she struggled to breath. She was helpless, utterly helpless as the two men continued to rape her. Her pussy clenched and tightened with the orgasms that burst inside her but the only thing that came out where puppy-like whimpers and wet gagging noise.

Hore moaned and whispered wordlessly at her as he fucked her face. His cock was dripping now, the hot liquid dribbling down her throat and causing her to gag even more.

Dornen's thrusts grew faster and harder. His cock swelled.

At the same time, so did Hore's. The thick shaft grew thicker with every thrust until it was completely blocking off her throat, lodging into the tight orifice as he ground against her face. The little friction

caused her head to pull further away from the wall. When he thrust again, her head smacked against the stone.

White light tore at her vision, orgasms ripped at her very being.

Hore slammed home, driving his entire length into her until his stomach crushed her nose. "Fuck!" he cried as his cock began to spew cum against the back of her throat, painting it before it began to slid down her throat.

Dornen groaned himself, lasting only a few more strokes before he began to cum inside her. The heat of his seed was overwhelming, a wash of heat inside her frigid body.

She came two more times and then sat there, choking on cock as her body clenched and unclenched around Dornen's shaft.

"F-Fuck," gasped the older man before he pulled out. "No, nothing as pretty ever come down this way."

Hore grunted and gave a few more thrusts, squeezing the last of his cum. Slowly, he stepped back. A few droplets splashed against her chin and chest before he stepped back. He looked at Dornen and grinned.

"We should get more whores convicted, this could make our day."

Merrie gasped, her body trembling from her orgasm. She ached but it was a good pain.

Dornen stepped forward and kicked her again right between the legs. The explosion of pain ripped across her senses as the toe tore into her labia. "Get that fuck in there, maybe you'll get preggy from it?"

She was sterile, the Shadows ensured that, but it still hurt as he kicked her crotch for good measure.

"Get your belt and throw her into the cell. She isn't going anywhere."

They dressed enough to drag her down the hall to a bunch of steel doors. Opening the third one, she only saw a brief flash of a single mound of straw in a corner and a pot before they threw her into it.

In a matter of seconds, she was locked inside.

"Come on, let's sign in," said Dornen.

"Damn shame she's going to Abbinkey tomorrow. I could use a couple more rounds."

“I might file for a reassignment. The week journey to Abbinkey is pretty fun, I heard.”

“Just don’t choke her to death.”

“I won’t.”

“Because I got docked a week’s pay because you did that asshole thief.”

“Relax, Dornen, this bitch can take it.”

Their voices faded as they headed down the hall.

Merrie waited until she couldn’t hear the voices before the first tear dripped down her face. The promise to Parn was going to be much harder than she imagined.

t'Sade

Doubts

53

Merrie shivered in the corner of her cell. She couldn't see anything except for a narrow silver of light underneath the door. There was a magical lantern outside and the light was steady but it did nothing to push back to the overwhelming darkness that surrounded her.

It had been years since she couldn't see in the dark. When her shadow powers came into maturity, it had been one of the things she did without thinking about it. Now, even the simple comfort of seeing her surroundings was marred by the simple choice; it wasn't that she couldn't use her powers, she had to think about each one. To be consciously aware that she was activating each one.

She worried her lip and rested her head on her arm. Her breasts were pressed against the ground. The cold of the stone beneath seeped into her body, easing her body like a balm. The straw did nothing to shield her from the comfort.

Merrie tried to change her comfort with the cold like she did with her ability to see in the dark. There wasn't a switch for that, she guess it was because her body was shadows. It called to the darkness but it was also her source of icy nature; no longer being able to adapt to the cold would mean she was either human again or dead.

That wasn't something she would choose.

She sighed and took a deep breath. It had been hours since the guards fucked her. She could still smell their cum in the air. It brought a smile as she focused on the experience, enjoying her submission without gaining power from it.

Her tail wagged back and forth.

Curiosity intruded in her thoughts. She wondered if she could see in the dark again. Just because she decided didn't mean that it was actually her choice. She frowned as she stared at the pitch darkness, slowly reaching out for the comfort that the shadows gave.

Slowly, the darkness peeled away and the details of her room grew sharper and in focus. In seconds, she could pick out the individual stones that made up the walls and ceiling. They were rough, just like everything but the floor.

There was writing on the far wall, ragged and difficult to read. Someone had written it in the dark but it was clear that they tried to write "I'm innocent" though the last letters trailed off.

Parn was right. Merrie still had the ability and powers, they just weren't automatic. She smiled to herself and felt the burn of tears in her eyes. She wasn't going to be completely helpless.

Reaching out, she found the connection between her and the shadows. It took a little more to figure out how to build a connection between the two. Slowly, the room darkened around her.

A fluttering movement by the door caught her attention. She froze and looked at it, her ears perking up as she did.

It was a butterfly. A black butterfly. There was only one person who used butterflies with their magic, Elf.

She watched it fluttering around with Parn's promise still in her head. If the guild was trying to connect to her, a magical butterfly would make sense. However, without magic, she wouldn't have been able to see it enter the room.

Her heart beat faster. She could imagine what the guild would do if they knew she had magic. They had already risked their lives to save her more than once. Twice now, one of the guild masters had died in the effort, first the ghostly former master and then Kirin.

Kirin's death brought a surprise swelling of sorrow. Merrie's ears dropped as she remembered how brave Kirin was to sacrifice herself. There was no doubt, no question about her conviction. She just stated it with a fact, as if she knew it was going to happen.

A tear ran down Merrie's cheek.

The guild would try to save her, there was no doubt about it. They were capable of breaking into the prison. Yes, it might kill more than one of them, but the bond she had with the guild was

stronger than she expected. As Kirin always said, Merrie was part of the greater family.

Too easily, she could see what her life would be outside of prison. She would be forced to live on the outreaches of society, hiding in some place like Borias did at the Puppy Mill. With the geas, she would be forced to spend her life alone; there were far too many triggers that gave her magic.

True, she didn't need to worry about them, but she also couldn't let them know that the geas didn't work. There were known absolutes in the life, the Royal and Justice geasa were two of them. They were unbreakable and unstoppable. No one would believe that a treasonous whore would have broken free. The result would put that entire part of society in question. Merrie knew that many people had geasa on them. Maybe they were allowed to live normal lives instead of being thrown in prison. If those geasa were unreliable, would there be more prisons, more deaths? Abbinkey was only one of three prisons in the entire country, where the worst of the worst went.

She didn't want to think about it. She had to keep pretending the geas had destroyed her.

More tears came as she watched the butterfly dance across the room. She didn't move as she did, instead perked her ears and listened the flutter of wind and soft rustles of it landing on the ground.

She had to choose between the guild who loved her and the goddess who created her. It was the worst of her decisions because the idea of spending the rest of her life in Abbinkey was terrifying.

It was also where she needed to be.

Closing her eyes, she finished creating the barrier between the shadows and herself. When she opened them again, she couldn't see anything but the sliver of light underneath the door.

She was blind.

Blind to the loved ones trying to rescue her.

Blind to anything but her own future.

t'Sade

Packing Light

54

Merrie didn't know what time it was when they came for her. She woke up when the door scraped open. It was Dornen and Hore again.

"Come on, cunt, time to go," snapped the older guard.

Hore brandished his spear, ready to strike out at her.

Merrie, her thoughts dark with despair, pushed herself up to her knees. Her body felt dirty and disgusting. The black blood had dried and it flaked with her movement as she stepped forward. Taking another step, she swayed for a moment and then crawled forward.

Hore made a little grunting noise. It sounded uncomfortable.

Dornen frowned as she crawled past him, walking on her smoothed wrists and her knees. The ends of her legs scraped against the ground occasionally as she stepped forward.

Somehow, she made it through the night. She didn't use her magic to look for wards, didn't shape-change to escape, and didn't turn on her ability to see in the dark again. She was blind and helpless.

That brought a joy to her as she crawled down the hall. Despite being on her knees and crippled, she moved faster than both guards who rushed to keep up with her.

"Where the fuck do you think you're going?"

Merrie looked up. She had so many ways of answering, but only one for her position. She sat back on her haunches, brought her wrists to her throat, and then gestured down the hall with a single bark.

Both men flinched.

Hore grunted louder and he adjusted his cock.

She smiled because she didn't feel the lust coming off his body. She didn't know that she was turning him on until she moved. It was freeing not to be sure anymore.

Dornen sighed. He switched his spear to his other hand.

She tensed, knowing the slap was coming.

It cracked across her face, an explosion of pain that blinded her with stars.

Merrie turned back and barked again.

"Fucking bitch!" He slapped her again and again. The next blow caught her shoulder but he slapped her again a few more times.

By the time he stopped, she was dizzy but elated. The pain and submission resonated inside her, made her depths slick with desire and her body anxious for his cock. She parted her lips and let her tongue slid out slightly. It had been a long time since she acted like a dog, it reminded her of the happier days at the Mill.

Dornen cleared his throat. "Just..."

Hore unbuckled his belt and pulled it close.

"We don't have time for you to rape her, ass."

"Use it as a leash, dick cheese," snapped Hore. "She's got a fucking collar. Use it like one."

Dornen glared but took the belt. He shoved his hands into the collar and pulled it tight as he felt the leather through. His eyes caught sight of the gem on the ring and he stopped, peering down. "What the... what is this?" he asked Hore.

Hore frowned and peered at it. "I don't remember. That looks expensive."

"It's black. Glass?"

"Not with that metal. It doesn't look cheap. My brother had some glass jewelry—"

"The fag or the slut?"

"Jare with the theater."

"The fag, okay." Dornen started to turn the collar around her neck. "Well, it's mine now."

After a few seconds, he brought the collar all the way around. "What the hell? This thing doesn't have a clasp."

"What? It has too."

"I know that, asshole. I'm looking but I can't find one."

“Try a small hole. I heard they have some that have hidden clasps. You need a key or some metal to pop it open.”

“How the hell would you know that?” asked Dornen as he twisted the collar around again, searching for an opening with his thumb.

Hore cleared his throat but said nothing.

After a little while, Dornen hissed. “Nothing. Let’s see if I can get this gem at least.”

Merrie tensed when the guard pulled out a knife. He was using it dangerously close to her neck. It wouldn’t kill her for long, but she didn’t know what it would be like coming to life in the cells.

Footsteps interrupted him. “What the hell,” snapped a woman.

Both guards stood up and Dornen dropped his knife.

The newcomer was an older woman in uniform. “What in the Seven Hells are you doing?”

“N-Nothing, madam!” said Hore.

Dornen cleared his throat and slid his foot out to step on the knife, pinning it underneath his boot.

“Dornen?”

“Nothing, madam!”

She strode forward, her brown and gray hair coming loose from her ponytail. “Nothing looked a lot like a knife. You weren’t thinking about killing this girl, were you?”

Merrie watched with curiosity, her ears down. She was still in a begging position. She didn’t know what to do, not without reaching out for the woman. Instead, she arched her back slightly like Bass and Borias taught her and kept herself still.

The woman glanced down and then did a double take.

Merrie inhaled and the makeshift leash slid down to the valley of her breasts.

The female guard looked suddenly uncomfortable. The faint whiff of her excited sex rose in the air as she turned around. Her first step was a stumble but then she was striding strongly back the way she came.

Merrie sniffed the air and smiled. Her tail wagged faster.

The woman walked faster. “Just get her out of here. Both of you pack up, you are coming on the road with me. Just keep it in your pants.”

“Yes, madam!”

Hore grabbed Merrie's leash and followed after her.

Merrie followed, her pussy growing slick as she was lead dog-like down the hallway with Dornen behind her, no doubt watching her ass as she crawled.

The layout of the prison cells were a simple square. It didn't take long until she was brought into a cobblestone area outside. It was raining and the wet droplets splashed against her naked skin. It felt good along her scratches and bruises.

The courtyard gave the sense of being impenetrable. A pair of iron gates protected one end with at least a dozen guards standing with rain cloaks on both sides of the door. More guards were on the platforms above the gate. She spotted ones wielding crossbows or with staves on top with sword and ax fighters on the bottom. Despite some of them having obviously custom weapons, most of them looked like the weapons she had seen with the many lovers she had over the years.

She was tempted to reach out with her magical senses, just to see the wards. However, it wouldn't affect her so she remained in her head, shivering with the joy and fear of having to make a choice every time.

There were two heavy wagons in the courtyard. Each one had six double wheels. The wood edges looked thick and there were no windows or openings except for a narrow slit along the top and bottom.

Another guard came up. "Ready for prisoner transfer. Where is...?" His voice trailed off as he looked down.

"We got this one," Dornen said.

Hore tugged on the leash. "Lead or back wagon?"

"B-Back, sir, the rest of the prisoners are already loaded. Um, sir?"

Dornen and Hore looked back.

"The cobblestones are really hard and she's... naked. Do we have to carry her?"

"No, she's a traitor," Hore said before yanking on Merrie's leash.

With a flash of lust, Merrie followed. She had crawled over far worse grounds but it was strange with so many guards watching her with an array of emotions. She didn't use her senses and she

wondered how many pitied, were disgusted, or aroused by the sight of a naked woman crawling into the back of the wagon.

It took some effort to crawl up. The wagon was suited for someone far taller.

Hore yanked on the leash and Dornen shoved her from behind. His thick fingers jammed into her asshole and pussy as he did. She could feel him chuckle as he shoved her forward.

Merrie whimpered and peered into her new home for the next week. The wagon was wide, enough for two benches on each side. There were five men in there already, each one shackled to a bracket between their legs with another one on the floor between their feet. There was a space on the bench for a sixth, maybe her. She didn't know how they would shackle her without wrists or feet.

As one, all five men looked at her, their eyes growing wide as they stared at her.

One of them, a dark-haired mountain of a man spoke first. "What the fuck—?"

"Silence!" snapped Hore. He yanked hard on Merrie's collar and dragged her the length the wagon.

The prisoners stared at her, their eyes almost boring into her skin.

"That girl is naked," whispered one.

"I know, genius, why is she in here?"

"Come on, traitor," snapped Hore as he stopped in front of a cage that had been shoved into the far end. It was made of thick bars with a hard wooden floor.

Seeing it, Merrie sensed. The last time she was put in a cage was the night Kine had died. A whine rose in her throat as she shook her head, tugging on the leash.

"What the...?" Hore looked surprised by her sudden fear.

"Just shove the cunt in!"

"I'm trying, she's pulling hard!"

Dornen's boot caught Merrie between the legs, the steel tip slamming into her sex with brutal fury. The agony exploded along her senses and she let out a cry as she lurched forward.

The older guard kicked again, hammering her hard and fast as he pounded her toward the cage.

"Hey, stop that!" snapped one called a 'genius'.

Dornen stopped only enough to point his short spear at the man's face. "Quiet!"

The prisoner sat back. "Just be nice."

"Fuck off, asshole." Dornen kicked Merrie again, slamming her face into the cage.

The impact stung and she twisted to relieve the pressure. There wasn't any way she could twist her hindquarters from his kicks though, her naked body was too vulnerable.

"Come on, Hore, get her in the cage."

Crying out, Merrie managed to orient herself into the cage when Dornen's next kick came, she was propelled into the back of it. Her face smacked against the bars on the far side as the nerves of her bruised and blood pussy screamed out in agony.

"Door!"

Hore slammed the door shut while Dornen gave the bars one last kick.

"Stay in there, you fucking slut!"

Dornen turned to the rest of them. "Not a single fucking word from any of you, do you got it?"

"Yes, sir," came the sullen but clear response.

One of the men, a very tall and slender one, answered a heartbeat later. "Yes, sir."

Dornen waved. "Good. Don't give me crap and you'll get to Abbinkey safe and uninjured."

Another prisoner snorted. "Thanks."

Dornen gestured with the spear at him. "Shut it."

He backed out of the wagon and hopped out. The door slammed shut, locking Merrie in with five men and a week-long journey to the rest of her life.

Introductions

55

“You, um, the chick?”

Merrie looked up. Her body was in agony, Dornen’s abuse had painted her with bruises and cuts. Her pussy was the worse, it was on fire every time she twitched. She decided to remain curled up in the corner, her tail wrapped protectively against the agonized opening. Even then, the shift of the traveling wagon caused the hairs to scarp and tickle her.

It was dark but not pitch. She could see the five men staring at her with various emotions. She thought it was curiosity but it was harder without using her emphatic powers. Once again, she was tempted to reach out and read them but didn’t. She could wait.

The man speaking was the mountain of the man. “Hey, there. You okay?”

Merrie nodded slowly, unsure if she should talk.

“What’s your name?”

She wanted to reach out with her mind, to talk telepathically, but didn’t. Acting like a dog didn’t seem right either, not with a week. She settled on talking, though her throat still hurt from her trial. “Mer... Bitch.”

“Merry Bitch?” The man chuckled. “You don’t seem very merry.”

Her ears flattened for a moment.

The slender man leaned forward, his face only centimeters from the cage.

Merrie looked at him nervously. “B-Bitch is okay. They call me that a lot.”

“I’m Monte. Don’t need a last name here, I guess. We’re all fucked.”

The slender man cocked his head.

Merrie watched him curiously but spoke to Monte. "I don't have a last name anymore. Not for many years."

"Boyfriend?"

"Master. A long time ago. He... died." There was only a moment hesitation when she remembered Kine's death.

"Is that why you are here? Kill the bastard?"

The sudden question struck her. She sniffed and shook her head. "No, paladins did."

One of the other prisoners whistled. "You fucked around with paladins?"

She chuckled. "Only a few. And a fallen one. He was the sweetest."

Another whistle. "Damn, paladins suck. There was one when I got caught. Bastard beat the living crap out of me."

"Yeah, right."

"No, they did. It was a shit demon or something. But that didn't matter to the courts, I still got life at the Key."

Another prisoner groaned. "Horrible story, Shit."

"No! Do not call me Shit. I will cut—"

Monte interrupted. "What is your name?"

"Razor. I was a knife man for Caldora."

"You worked for the family?" asked the other prisoner. He was a slightly portly man with only a fringe of hair and bright eyes.

"Until the assholes threw a bone to the guards. They set me up."

"Should have ratted on them."

"Yeah, I probably should have something to rat on. I was just a grunt, didn't know anything. As soon as they could, I got life and a quick trip to the staging cells. What about you? What's your name since we're being chatty."

"Ston Grainer."

"What you do?"

"Accountant, mostly."

"An accountant got life? What did you do, kill someone for numbers?"

"Cut the throats of the employees who didn't pull their weight. Those assholes were just working for me to get insurance and pay."

Wasting my time and ruining the bottom line.” Ston’s voice grew tense and low as he spoke.

There was an uncomfortable silence.

Suddenly, the slender man spoke. “You’re an alpha.”

Merrie jumped and looked at him. He had large, shimmering eyes.

“What?” asked Monte.

“The woman. She’s an alpha from Blood County. They have the puppy farms there, that’s why she doesn’t have hands or feet. She’s a... a... twenty-two, right?”

It had been a long time since she heard the numbers. They identified the puppies at the auction by the number of limbs they had. In her case, she had two joints so she was a 2-2. Sable, was an 1-1 because one segment before her limbs were cropped.

She gulped. “Y-Yes,” she said with a whisper.

Monte gasped. “They cut off her hands?”

“And feet,” said the slender man. Usually they do more, like a 1-2 or a 1-1. It’s part of the selling point, some buyers want just a little bit of limbs to make them helpless while others like a bit more mobility.”

“That’s horrific,” said one of the other prisoners.

Merrie looked closely at the slender man. He was the only one who seemed to see her as a cropped puppy girl. “How did you know?”

“I grew up in Blood County. One of my sisters was a 0-0, a pillow girl, and the other ended up going to Maddy’s.”

Maddy’s Dairy Farm. When Merrie was kidnapped off the streets, the victims were handed over to either the Puppy Mill or Maddy’s. The large breasted women were ideal for producing milk. “She’s a cowgirl?”

The slender man smiled. “Yeah, really happy for a long time.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Slaughtered?”

The slender man nodded and leaned back. “Yeah, it was a good meal. It was the way she wanted to go, spitted and roasted.”

Ston made a sick noise. “You... you’re talking about eating your sister?”

The slender man said, “Yes.” His voice was soft and gentle, not humiliated or scared. He seemed at ease being shackled in a wagon.

“Oh, Madock. That’s disgusting.”

Merrie tensed at the god’s name. She suspected that the god’s presence or attention would be drawn on her. She wasn’t sure if she wanted the God of Deals to know where she was.

“Only the butchering,” said the slender man. “You get used to the scent after a while. Plus there are nice benefits,” he looked at Merrie, “right?”

She thought about the massive bull men who fucked the cowgirls endlessly. Her pussy grew wetter and pulsed with agony and pleasure. “Yes,” she whispered.

Monte cleared his throat. “Since we’re going to be here a while, what’s your name?”

“Slender. I’m a butcher.”

Ston almost threw up. “Of women?”

“Yes,” came the amused reply. “Franome City has more than its share of spit muffins.”

Merrie’s ears perked up. “Borias said that.”

Slender focused on her again. “I like him, he was fun to talk to. He’s the one who set me up with the groups here. Couldn’t come himself but he gave me enough contacts to get my way into the societies.”

“How long were you butchering?” asked Razor.

“Seven years, give or take.”

“You’ve been killing women for seven years?”

“Consensual, of course. It is what they wanted. They came to me, asking for it.”

Merrie remembered Borias talking about that. She guessed that Slender was caught like Borias when he killed the wrong rich woman who had parents with a vendetta about losing their girl.

“Oh, Madock,” Ston said as he turned to the side. “Please, stop talking about this. I’m going to throw up.”

“Yes, please,” Monte said.

“You think so,” snapped Razor, “I’m across from him. He’s going to throw up on me.”

“As you wish,” said Slender. He crossed his long arms and appeared to close his eyes.

Monte turned to the last prisoner. “What about you?”

The man grunted.

“Please, it’s going to be a long trip. What I heard about Key is that we can all use friends to watch our back. It’s brutal there.”

“They don’t stick us in cells?” asked Ston.

“Not what I heard. It’s a free-ranged prison. They keep prisoners from escaping and send in guards when they have to, but otherwise you are free to move around. The big boys piss on the little ones, that sort of thing.”

“Oh, Madock. I’m going to die.”

The fifth prisoner grinned and sat up. He reached over and patted Ston on the shoulder. “Don’t worry, you can be my bitch, I’ll protect you.”

Ston looked like he would faint.

Monte sighed. “Why did you do that?”

“Why not?” said the prisoner with a shrug. “I had a family once, they screwed me over. I killed them.”

Razor said, “Family? What type of family?”

“Chitori.”

“Chitori? They were all killed a few months ago. Life has been better since those elves weren’t running the numbers, but still, it was brutal.”

“Yeah, good for them. Bunch of tree-fucking assholes who won’t even take care of their kin.” The man leaned back with a snarl.

“What’s your name?”

“Why does it matter? I know how they treat murderers here. I’m better off on my own.”

“Don’t you want to talk?”

“About what, Monte? My feelings? I hate those fucking elves and I’m glad I maced every single one of them into a bloody smear. So, if you want to make me human, then fuck off. If you want to shut up and leave me alone, then fuck off anyways.”

Razor grinned. “Let’s call him Shit.”

The unnamed prisoner jerked forward. “Try it, asshole.”

“How about we call you Mace?” asked Monte.

“Yeah, sure, whatever. I’m Mace. I kill people. I got life for it. Big deal. Except for pretty boy and the naked bitch here, I’m sure we’re all bad asses but I’m the worst of all of you. So stay out of my way and I won’t kill any of you.”

There was an uncomfortable silence in the wagon. It continued to sway back and forth as it continued to bring them closer to Abbinkey.

“Um, Bitch? What did you do?” It was Monte, he was curious.

She wasn't sure how to answer. Then she glanced at Mace and saw smugness on his face. She wanted to wipe it off. Sitting up, she sat back. “Do you remember when that entire district turned into a shadow land and killed all those people?”

“Yeah, the Shadowed District.”

“That was me. I did it again a week ago but this time I opened up a portal to the darkness in Blood County.” Tears burned in her eyes. “I doomed a hundred thousand people to a slow, withering death because I wanted to save a handful of friends from an army of paladins.”

It sounded far worse when she said it that way.

The room grew tense.

“Then, when I was convicted of treason yesterday, I accidentally blew up the court building and killed almost everyone inside. Oh, and I killed my guild master and one of my best friends because I couldn't stop it from killing every single living person in this city.”

Tears ran down her cheeks. It didn't feel better proving she was worse. She slumped down and let out a soft sob.

“Yeah, Mace,” said Razor, “I'm going with Bitch being the scariest person in this wagon.”

The First Night

56

It was well after dark when the prison wagon stopped.

Razor groaned. “Do you think they are going to leave us in here? I have to pee really badly.”

“Hold it,” snapped Mace. “I don’t want to smell it for the next week.”

“I am, Ace.”

“Mace.”

“I’m holding it, I just really need to pee.”

The conversation drifted off as they turned to listen to the openings in the wagon. It sounded like half a dozen guards were outside. Merrie heard Dornen, Hore, and the female guard from before. There was only one woman’s name called out, Ginny. The other guards were Vace, Porlis, and Lain. There was also two wagoners but she couldn’t catch their names.

“Ginny has been doing this run for twelve years,” said Monte.

“How do you know that?” asked Razor.

Monte snapped his mouth shut.

“Well, Monte?” This time it was Mace.

“Reasons,” Monte finally said.

“Like you were a guard in a previous life?”

“No!”

“Then what?”

“Drop it, Mace.”

“Why—?”

“Drop it!” Monte said sharply.

“Fine,” Mace snarled and crossed his arms. A frown crossed his face as they sat there in uncomfortable silence.

Around them, she could hear the noises of the horses being lead away and chains being undone. It didn't sound like they were setting up tents or anything. There might have been some sort of permanent structure.

The chain on the door rattled.

Monte spoke up suddenly. "Just answer 'yes, sir' and 'no, sir.' Don't give them a chance to screw with you."

"Whatever, guard," muttered Mace.

The door opened. It was Dornen and another guard. "All right, bitches. Who has to pee the worst?"

Razor looked around and then said, "Me, sir."

"Well, then you're last." Dornen grinned. Then he looked at Bitch. "Second-last. She's last."

Razor groaned.

Dornen got into the wagon and removed the locks for Mace and Ston. "You two, pout boy and pudgy. Down and follow Vace. You step outside the white line, you'll be shot. Talk back, you'll be shot. Raise your hands, shot again. Don't give us an excuse, we get a bonus for every guy who makes it and I don't want my first run to have less than perfect. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

Razor glared at Monte who shrugged back. Neither said anything with Dornen remaining in the wagon.

The guard came over to Merrie's cage and kicked it. "Don't worry, princess. You're going to have special accommodations tonight. A nice comfy bed and everything you want to drink."

The tone of his voice told Merrie far more. It wasn't going to end well for her.

About twenty minutes later, Vace came for the next two, and then finally Slender twenty minutes after that.

Dornen left with Slender, promising to come back.

Time passed. More than twenty minutes went by and no one had come for her.

The noises quieted down but there was still guards walking around. She started to get anxious, her tail snapping back and forth. She had to pee just as badly but she held it, knowing that they wouldn't hesitate to make her sit in her own urine for the next day and maybe the week.

No one came for her.

She tried counting the seconds but lost track. There were too many. Finally, after a few minutes of debating with herself, she activated her timing spell. It was a simple one but it had kept her sanity when she was left alone for hours.

Feeling the time somehow helped. She let the tick of the spell wash over her, marking out the minutes.

Almost an hour later, they finally came for her, four guards. They had cruel looks on their faces as Dornen crawled into the wagon and unlocked her cage.

“Okay, bitch. You know the rules. Stay on the white line and follow directions. You disobey, I’m kicking you in the cunt again.”

Her muscles clenched at the memory of the pain.

Her joints were sore as she crawled out of the wagon. None of the guards helped her off, she had to jump the final meter, landing heavily on the ground.

The two wagons were in a walled courtyard emblazoned with the Franome symbol. Warnings were painted on almost every surface, warning that prisoners would be killed for escaping. The gate was guarded by two guards with brandished swords. There was also a pair on top with crossbows.

Everything was lit by magical globes paced every few meters. There was almost no shadows anywhere, no protection against the light. She looked at it worriedly but it didn’t burn like sunlight did.

A thick white line was painted on the ground ahead of her. It led around the backside of a large stone building and came out the far side to come up the porch and enter the main doors. She could see barred windows on the bottom floor, enough for ten cells on a side.

“Come on, around back.”

She crawled along the painted path. There was a narrow gap between the building and the wall, only about two meters. Right around the corner was a latrine. It smelled overwhelming of shit and urine. She cringed but knew what she had to do. When she was ordered to, she stick her ass over the latrine and went to the bathroom.

Four guards watched her as she did.

It was humiliating.

It brought a faster triple beat in her chest. They had plans for her, brutal plans that probably involved her getting raped. She wasn't sure where, but she could feel it in the air.

When she finished, she took a step forward.

"Aren't you going to wipe?" asked Vace.

Flattening her tears, she held up her hand. "I-I can't," she whispered.

All four men stepped back. Then a baby-faced man stepped forward with a sigh. "I get the first shot, okay?"

"Yeah, whatever, Porlis, just wipe her ass," said Dornen.

Porlis grabbed a rag and shoved it into a bucket. He swirled it around before slapping it against Merrie's backside. It was icy cold and felt good on her skin and battered pussy. The guard swirled it around, gentle at first but then rubbing hard to scrub her asshole and pussy clean.

Merrie whimpered from the pain.

"Bastard really kicked you in the cunt, didn't he?"

She nodded.

"Well, it's not your cunt I want." He stopped at her ass and shoved a cloth-covered finger into the tight sphincter and twisted it. "You better be done properly, you'll be cleaning my stick once I'm done."

Merrie looked at him and nodded. She had sucked far worse in her training and over the years.

He hesitated for a moment. Then he stood up and dropped the cloth into the bucket. "She's good." Then to her. "Come on, follow me."

She did, with the other three guards trailing behind her. The path was rough on her knees and wrists. There was spot further down with piles of dirty clothes.

They didn't stop there.

They stopped at the next one, with buckets of sudsy water and rags.

"Clean off."

Merrie did her best but it took a while to try getting it across her. Porlis finally sighed and took over, dumping the icy water over her head and scrubbing the rest of her body clean. His hands were large as he lingered over her breasts, buttocks, and even pussy.

It took less than five minutes.

The last station behind the building was fresh clothes. Porlis hesitated for a moment and then shook his head. He guided Merrie down the path and toward the porch.

When he stepped off, she wasn't surprised.

She stopped at the edge and looked around. The crossbowmen were aimed at her.

"Off the path," came the order.

She ducked her head but obeyed.

The four guards lead her back around the wagons and to the front gate. It was open. She shivered in fear as they brought her outside of the prison fortress.

They were surrounded by a forest. A twenty meter section had been cleared out around the fortress. The space was littered with old, rotted stumps and felled rocks.

Dornen looked around and then pointed to a thick one with a relative flat top. There were already a pair of rings mounted at the base and she could smell old blood and sex on it.

She was going to be raped.

Her pussy throbbed with desire as they brought her over to the stump. Shattered wood stuck out of the top but years of weather had smoothed it over that it only looked uncomfortable, not deadly.

She thought about fighting but didn't. It was inevitable.

Instead, she crawled up on the stump. When none of the guards said anything, she lowered herself and pressed her belly.

"Wow, she just got right up there." It was one of the guards.

"Fucking cunt," muttered Dornen. "Probably spritzing her cunt the entire way here, thinking about all the cock she's going to get."

Porlis reminded them he was first.

Dornen sighed. "Yeah, yeah, just get her tied down. I get second."

Rough hands strapped her down, tying her in place and tightening the ropes until they dug into her shoulder blades and the small of her back. She whimpered but that only caused them to pull tighter. More ropes were run between her legs and over her shoulders, pinning her tightly in place.

Dornen grinned. "One more thing."

He grabbed her hair and pulled back, forcing her head up. Her mouth opened up just at crotch level of the guards. With his other hand, he grabbed her tail.

She whimpered and squirmed. The tail was connected to her body and screamed out in agony as he pulled it back. Her ass followed, twisting forward and exposing her pussy and asshole as she tried to relieve the pressure.

“Tie these together. Make it good, she’ll be here the night.”

A low whine slipped from her open mouth.

Hands worked the knots around her hair and tail. When they finally released her, she remained in a position of discomfort, three holes opened to the lustful guards and she was helpless to do anything.

Dornen leaned down. “You bite or scrape and I leave you out here until the sun comes up. I know that will hurt.”

She gasped, her body tensing as she tried to lessen the pressure of her position.

Dornen fumbled with his belt.

“Hey, I’m first.”

“You get that end.”

“I want to hear her scream.”

“Fine?” Dornen rolled his eyes.

Porlis’ clothes rustled for a moment and then she felt him step up to her back end. He stroked his hands along her pulled apart buttocks, teasing the aching flesh and dipping down enough to trail his fingers along her soaked and brutalized pussy. “Fuck, she’s wet.”

“She’s always ready for a good fuck.”

“They are going to love her at Abbinkey.”

“Yeah, wish I could stay just to listen to the screams.”

Porlis didn’t say anything. Instead, he stepped forward and pressed a thick cock up against the seam of her buttocks. He fisted the shaft and brought it down, pressing the rounded head against her tight but dry asshole.

Merrie gasped as she prepared to be raped. Her pussy kept clenching and she could smell her sake-infused pussy juices wafting in the air. She wanted it, craved it. She tried to lift her ass higher for a better angle, but she was pinned completely in place.

The pressure built at her opening, the spongy head working into the tight ring.

She panted, a whine vibrating in her throat.

“Fuck , that’s hot,” whispered one of the guards.

Porlis continued to shove his cock in, lodging the head into the opening. He felt huge without her being able to look at it, huge and ready to plunge inside.

She whimpered, her body shaking with a growing orgasm.

He leaned into her putting his weight on his cock as it began to spear into her.

Knowing that he wanted her to cry, she did. It only added to the speed of the thick shaft as it shoved into the burning ring, forcing deeper into the tight sphincter. She could feel the ridges of his shaft and the pulse of his heart.

Porlis grunted as he drove deeper. He stopped only for a second to grab her shoulders and then leaned further into his cock. His weight bent her tail even further forward, giving her relief on her neck but adding a new pain as the joint screamed out in agony.

She sank into the pain, letting it wash over her as she cried out. She was being filled. It was hot and agony, pleasure and pain at the same time.

He got at least ten centimeters into her before he stopped. He pulled back. Getting a tight grip on her shoulders, Porlis thrust hard into her ass.

She screamed as she was ripped open, filled completely as his cock buried into her backside. She could feel his balls grind against her slick opening and the entire length of his shaft pulsating inside her.

With a grunt, he yanked out and rammed it home again. With every thrust, he dug his fingernails into her shoulder. The pain only added to the pleasure as he pounded her sphincter with deep, brutal stroke.

The rope dug into her body as she was jerked back and forth, yanked along the rough edges of the stump as he raped her ass. She let out little cries as she did, partially because she knew all four of them wanted to hear her suffer but also because it was the only thing she could do.

Porlis accelerated, his thick shaft pounding her abused rectum with hard strokes. She could feel him swelling inside her, stretching her out, and then he exploded inside her. Wet jets of cum painted her insides for several seconds before he pulled out with a shuddering sigh. "Fuck, that's good."

"My turn?" Dornen said impatiently.

"Almost." Porlis came around and presented his cock to her mouth. She couldn't move away so he shoved it deep into her mouth. She tasted cum, her juices and the overwhelming sake flavor on it. There was also a hint of feces but she had put far worse in her mouth.

She wrapped her lips around it and laved her tongue, cleaning it off.

Porlis shuddered and moaned. "Oh, fuck, this is the best mouth I've had in years."

There was a cock at her pussy. It was Dornen. He shoved deep into her, bottoming out in her slick opening with little effort.

Grunting, Dornen grabbed her waist and dug his fingernails into her skin. Using her for balance, he pounded into her pussy. Every ridge of his cock scraped against her raw nerves but the sensation of being completely filled with hot cock was enough to push her toward an orgasm.

She moaned around Porlis' cock and finished cleaning it off. When she was done, she sucked on its length, drawing the last few droplets of cum from the opening.

Porlis moaned as he staggered back.

It was only moments before another guard presented his dripping cock to her mouth.

She kept her mouth open as he rammed it home, slamming it against the back of her throat before hammering her face with his entire length.

Merrie sucked on the cock, her body jerking in the ropes as Dornen continued to rape her pussy with hard strokes. He was lasting longer this time.

She cried out around the cock that battered her throat. Her body felt like fire as she came again and again, her helplessness setting her off but the power just shed off her. She knew it would be lost but she didn't care.

Dornen finished by yanking his cock out and slamming it hard into her asshole. The sudden pain flared a wave of agony and then he was pumping cum directly into her slick opening.

She shuddered and gulped loudly, the wet noises setting off her other rapist. He came in her mouth, splattering against the back of her throat until she gagged on it as it dripped down her throat.

Both men pulled out to be replaced by more. These two were much larger than the others. She moaned around the thick shaft as the guard slid it into place, pushing further until it reached the back of her throat. There were still a few centimeters left out, so she swallowed until it bent down and he could drive all the way forward.

She choked on his shaft, enjoying how her entire body seemed to focus on the thickness that invaded her mouth and crushed her tongue against the bottom. His belly smelled of sweat and cologne. It was musky and hot.

The guard in front wasn't moving, he was just holding it there. She felt her lungs beginning to ache but she held as long as she could. To distract herself from suffocation, she focused on the thick member that was slicing in and out of her. It was just as large as the one in her throat. With every thrust, it rammed against her cervix with a powerful beat and drew out. Her inner walls clung to the thick ridges and her labia stung with the friction, but it didn't matter.

The guard fucking her pussy drove into her. His wide hands held her down, grinding her into the stump as he pounded her pussy with hard, powerful strokes.

She came on his cock, adding to the slickness and heat but that didn't stop as he drove her into a second and a third orgasm. She cried out but only a muffled noise came around the cock that was choking her.

Merrie looked up to see the smile on the man's face. He was enjoying it. She couldn't help but feel more fear rising as her lungs screamed for air. She needed to breathe soon, or to use magic to escape.

He grabbed the back of her head and shove her face harder on his cock. It slid down a few more millimeters and the base stretched her lips further apart. She choked on it, trying to get more air but

couldn't. The only movement she could do was rock back and forth from the shaft that was pounding her pussy relentlessly.

She squirmed as much as she could.

"Don't choke her, Lain."

"She's fine. Just a little more. Come on, take a bit more." He ground Merrie's face harder into his belly, driving more of it until his balls were forced between her lips. It felt too large for her to take but he kept twisting and grinding her face until one large nut was forced into her mouth, stretching her cheeks and jaw achingly apart.

She didn't dare bite down, that would get her killed. She could do nothing but wait as the pounding in her ears increased and stars floated across her vision.

Then, just as darkness threatened to take her, he came. A single blast of cum, hot and slick, splashed down her throat. Without even a single moan, he yanked his cock and ball from her mouth and stepped back.

"Just move... oh, thanks." Vace chuckled as he presented his dripping cock to her mouth. "I won't choke fuck you but still."

It was the large shaft that had plunged into her pussy. She didn't remember when he pulled it out, only that there was another cock pounding her pussy. She opened her aching mouth and Vace shoved it deep into her mount and down her gullet.

She choked loudly, which only brought a smile.

He fucked her face, spreading the taste of pussy and cum all over her mouth as he brought himself to another orgasm. He pulled out enough to paint her face with hot jets of cum.

"I'm heading back," announced Vace.

"I'll come with you," said Lain. "We'll send down more guys."

"Yeah, yeah," muttered Dornen as he continued to fuck Merrie's upturned pussy. He was moving hard and fast, but as he came already, she knew he was in for a long fuck.

When he finally came, they were both panting from the effort. Merrie couldn't keep track of her orgasms, the mixing of pleasure and pain was a powerful aphrodisiac for her. She gasped as he withdrew, leaving his cum to ooze out of her well-fucked pussy.

Dornen smacked her ass. "There will be others soon enough."

Then he walked back with a whistle.

She was alone. The time keeping spell was still up and she felt the passing seconds as the breeze washed over her. Her breathing calmed down but she couldn't relax. her tied hair and tail prevented her from doing anything.

Then the insects came. They buzzed around her, landing on her body. It was only moments before they started to sting her. Pricks caught her nipples, ass, and back. She whimpered as the high-pitched whine caught her ear and then more wound land on her.

The only relief came almost an hour later when footsteps approached. Whoever it was didn't say anything, they just dropped their pants and shoved their cock into her pussy with one hard, uncaring stroke. It was slick with juices and she took the entire length with a moan of pleasure.

A few minutes later, the guard finished and headed back.

It would be twenty-five more minutes before two came to fuck her ass and mouth.

The rest of the night continued with occasional interruptions of cock and cum. Beyond that, only insects and the breeze kept her tortured body company as the seconds swam by.

t'Sade

First Sun

57

It was coming up on morning and Merrie could feel it along her skin. The sun hadn't risen over the trees yet but the horizon had been steadily brightening for the last hour. Even the reflected light caused her skin to tingle, like it was being held too close to a flame.

She squirmed as much as she could. Her shoulders, back, and tail were screaming in agony after spending the night tied to the stump. Layers of cum stuck to her skin, not quite drying in the moist morning air. Instead, it was sticky and slimy. The smell of it fought with the crisp scents of a morning waking up.

Her eyes scanned the horizon as she whimpered. The sun was getting brighter. It reminded her of waking up from her death, the constant crawl for darkness before bursting into flame. Every time a flicker of brighter light washed over her, the memories came following and her cries grew louder.

She squirmed and twisted, tugging on the ropes. She couldn't get free, not without dissolving into shadows or transforming into a hound. She looked up at the treeline and considered it for the countless time since she first felt the caress of ambient sunlight.

With tears in her eyes, she tried again. Why didn't she want to transform? Parn said she would fail. She knew the spell, it hovered in the back of her mind. She kept starting it and then stopping it, pulling back as Parn's words echoed in her head.

Merrie hated herself for not saving herself. She could have done it easily at night. She could have escaped the cage, the wagon, and even being raped. Well, she would have done it after being raped since the orgasms would have given her more than enough energy to break free and kill every guard if she wanted to.

She slumped, the despair rising. No, she was going to try.

Lifting her gaze, the memory of burning away in the sunlight grew stronger. The hope of following Parn was faced with the countless agonies of rebuilding her body. It took a year last time, could she really do it again.

She twisted and cried out louder, her voice naturally sounding more like a dog than a human. Another restriction.

A beam of sunlight speared through the trees, cutting through the rising mist.

Merrie shuddered as she had to turn away. It was too bright and looked like a flaming spear. It wasn't even close to her but that was only a matter of seconds.

Another beam of light speared out through the trees.

She screamed and twisted harder.

In her mind, she started the transformation spell again but stopped only a few swirls into it. She hated herself for stopping; in a few minutes, there would be far too much light for her magic to work.

Instead, she screamed out again, a high-pitched yet hoarse sound that beat against the trees.

Her limbs ached as she twisted in her ropes. She tried to jerk her head forward to break the tie with her hair and tail but only managed to cause her tail to protest in agony.

Seeing more sunlight spearing through the trees, she pulled harder. Her sounds rose up above the trees.

More beams of light pierced the sun. It was getting brighter all around her and the tingling along her skin quickly turned into a dull burning sensation. She couldn't stop moving, her cries rising up as she tried to steel herself from burning to death on the stump.

Black smoke swirled around her. It was faint at first but getting thicker with every second. She couldn't twist enough to see her skin burning but she felt the agonies rippling along her sides and buttocks. She could smell the sake in the air as she took a deep breath to scream louder.

The gate creaked open and then banged on something.

She screamed louder as sun pierced the air only centimeters from her skin. It burned a black line along her shoulder and throat.

Her scream rose to a high-pitched agony as she tried to twist away from it.

“Fuck!” yelled Dornen. He came running up. “Fuck, fuck, fuck!”

“Take off your clock, asshole!” bellowed Ginny. “All of your cloaks, now!”

“Mad—”

“Take off your fucking cloak and cover her or you are fired!”

Merrie tried to stop screaming but couldn't. Her body was burning away, the sunlight spearing against her breasts and throat. She felt it peeling away in the sunlight, the black smoke rising in a cloud round her.

A cloak was throw over her buttocks.

A beam of sunlight pierced her breast. It punched through her chest and out the other side. It wasn't where her heart was but the triple beat increased in terror until it was a constant drum that matched the agony of her insides burning away.

“Fuck!”

Another cloak was whipped across her face. It blocked the sun but the light still got through the fabric.

“More!” screamed Ginny. “We have to get her out of the light!”

Another cloak was thrown on top of her. Someone ran away. Then a shirt and some other clothes.

The tension of her hair and tail suddenly snapped. Unprepared, she lurched forward. Her face smacked against the front of the stump. The impact knocked off the clothes and she felt fresh agonies burn along her back.

Among the swearing, the guards frantically covered her. Each one reduced the light but there was too much of it.

The sun had rising and she was burning.

“Here,” said Vace.

“Seriously? You are going—” asked Dornen.

“Now, guard!” interrupted Ginny.

Hands grabbed Merrie and hauled her off the stump. Someone had removed the ropes but she hadn't noticed in her panic. There was a flash of sunlight across her entire body and then darkness as she was shoved into a large barrel.

Her body crumpled at the bottom as the black smoke gathered around her. Still crying, she curled her burning limbs together and prayed that the agony would end.

The smell of rainwater felt good as did the clothes that were jammed to the top to block all light from coming in.

"I don't care if you assholes ride her fucking cunt every night, but if you let her die, I'm going to kill every single one of you!" Ginny sounded furious.

"We didn't—"

"Don't you dare lie to me. I said she had to stay out of sunlight."

"I thought because she was pale, she'd burn," said Hore.

"Yes! Burn away. There is a reason she created a fucking shadow land! She is part shadow creature! I said no sunlight! I said no fucking light! We changed the damn lights on the fortress just for her!"

There was an uncomfortable silence.

"All of you are docked a day's pay."

"Ah, damn—"

A smack. "More backtalk and you are fired, Dornen. One more word that isn't 'yes,' 'no,' and 'madam.'"

A brief silence.

"Dornen?"

"Yes, madam."

Ginny took a long, deep breath. "Take the barrel and throw it in the wagon. We are late because of you assholes. We are leaving in five."

"What—" Dornen started and then stopped. "Yes, madam."

The barrel was lifted off the ground and carried. Merrie closed her eyes and swayed with it, it gave her something to think about besides her burning skin and the agony of sunlight. By the time they shoved the barrel into the back of the wagon, the pain had subsided into a dull ache. Only one part still burned in pain, from where the sun had pierced through her chest.

The wagon shifted as someone crawled in after her. Then the barrel was tilted to one side and then the other before someone shoved it over.

She whimpered from the jostling. Then she could see through the opening as the clothes tumbled out.

“Get in your cage,” snapped Hore.

Trembling, Merrie crawled out of the barrel. Every step was agony but the wagon was blissfully dark. Shuddering, she crawled into the cage.

“Think we screwed up?” asked Dornen as he crawled in. His voice was a whisper, like a beaten child.

“Yeah, big time. Can’t believe we risked everything for that cunt.”

Dornen took a deep breath and looked around. “We’ll just bring her in next time. Or do her in back. Don’t worry, I’m not done with that cunt.”

“I don’t know, I like my job.”

“I like seeing Ginny’s tits. Can you believe she just whipped off her shirt like that?”

Hore stood up and shook his head. “Not now, please? Maybe later, but... not now. I have someone at home. I can’t afford to lose this job.”

Dornen sighed. “Lock the fucking cage, pussy.”

Hore did and they both got out of the wagon. Locking the door behind them, they went to their duties of getting the prison wagon ready to leave.

A few minutes later, the prisoners were brought in and shackled to their seats. When they left, no one said anything for several minutes.

Finally, Monte cleared his throat. “I take it you didn’t have a good night.”

Merrie shivered and tried to find another comfortable spot on the hard floor of the cage. The blackened wounds were slowly healing but it would take hours before she would be fully healed. It would only take a second if she transformed but she didn’t. Instead, she reached out with her limb and tugged at the clothes still spilled on the floor.

Monte pushed some closer.

“T-Thank you,” she whispered after a moment considering if she could bark instead.

“What happened?” his voice was softer.

“They tied me to a stump and fucked me all night.”

Ston made a pained noise. “Oh, Madock.”

“No,” Merrie said with a grim smile. “That part was fun. Being left out wasn’t, they kept me there all morning and then the sun came.”

“Sun?” asked Razor and Ston at the same time.

“It burns me.”

Razor continued, “You’re pale. A sunburn—”

“Sunlight kills me. Burns away my skin and dissolves my insides.”

No one responded.

Merrie’s ears flattened against her head. She winced at the pain and pulled more clothes underneath her to give her comfort. “Sorry, I’m a creature of shadows. I don’t handle light well.”

“I thought you’d have the Justice Geas on you,” Madock said.

“It can’t change who I am.”

“All the vulnerabilities but none of the life-stealing powers?”

Merrie thought about how she still had magic. She could easily break out of the cage and wagon if she wanted to. However, she needed to remain, it was her promise. The other didn’t need to know it either. There needed to be some lies, even among murderers. “Yes,” she said.

Lunch

58

It was another long day and it was only the second of their ten day trip to Abbinkey. The rest of the prisoners were thankful for the two breaks to stretch their legs, get something to eat, and relieve themselves.

Merrie, on the other hand, couldn't dare handle the sun so she couldn't leave the wagon. Her handler, Dornen and Hore, were both abrupt with her and didn't give her a second thought.

She didn't eat though. She frowned as she stared at it wondering why she wasn't hungry. Ever since she recovered from her death, she didn't have the overwhelming urge to eat. She could do it, but it almost seemed like she was doing it out of habit instead of need. The same with relieving herself, she couldn't imagine she would have to pee or shit if she didn't eat.

With the shadows stuffing her body, she wondered if that was just another habit also. She didn't have organs. There was no stomach to digest food, no intestines to... do whatever they do. It was as if she just assumed she needed it.

Choice. Did she have a choice to eat and act like a human?

However, the lies needed to be maintained and she didn't relish the idea of holding her pee in for hours like the other prisoners. She reached out and gathered shadows in front of her. The boiling darkness answered her easily. She brought it down to the plate and caused the food to wither away and dissolve into darkness.

As soon as she finished, she released the power.

Rolling over in her nest of blankets and cloaks, she considered the ceiling. What about having her throat fucked? Was breathing also a choice? She remembered how Vace's cock felt in her mouth,

driven deep and held it inside her. She loved choking on it, to make the gagging noises, but if she was truly shadows then it was all a ruse.

The memory of the cock brought a flickering slickness between her legs. She moaned and lifted her amputated ankles up to the bars of the cage. The feel of cold metal felt good against her skin. She worked her thighs apart, hooking her legs on further bars until she was spread wide open.

Moaning, she brought both arms between her legs. Her arms pressed against her breasts, pushing them up as she rested the smooth limbs in the furrow of her sex. Pleasure teased her as she rocked them back and forth, dragging her arms over her clitoris as she brought up the memory of the guard's fucking in her head.

This time, she imagined it on a soft bed and without ropes. That didn't excite her for long, so she imagined the ropes back on and her tied down, helpless to stop them.

Still on a bed.

That brought a surge of excitement. She moaned and rubbed herself faster, lifting and dropping her chest to move her shorted limbs against her clitoris. The pleasure felt good, a slow build up as she drew on her memories to recall the thick cocks that plunged into her pussy and ass.

She opened her mouth and tilted back, trying to bring back the sensation of Vace's shaft plunging into her throat. He could stop her breathing, she would let him, just to suffocate on his cock while another guard pounded her pussy with fierce strokes.

She needed more. Much more. Soft whimpered slipped from her lips as she imagined them clawing at her breasts, grabbing the mounds and squeezing them painfully.

When she imagined Hore biting her nipples, the first surge of an orgasm came. She shuddered and let out a muffled whimper.

She kept stroking, working through the guards as she brought up each of their shafts and let them abused her imaginary body. She needed it, she craved to feel them pounding into her, treating her as nothing more than a fuck toy. The helplessness coupled with the roughness.

The first orgasm left her hungry for more.

She kept masturbating, stroking herself faster and harder. The smell of her pussy, alcoholic and sweet, filled the wagon. She shuddered as her juices splashed down her thighs and pooled underneath her buttocks. The guard's cloak would smell like her excitement for days.

Merrie grinned and kept pumping. Her memories worked toward her fellow prisoners. What would Monte look like naked? Would he have a massive shaft as he tenderly slammed it into her? Slender? Razor? She knew both Mace and Razor would be rough, almost frantic.

She gasped as another orgasm crashed into her. It was an surge of ice and pleasure. With a soft whimper, she kept going, dragging her arms along her pussy until she found another orgasm.

The door of the wagon opened.

Merrie froze and looked up.

It was Monte. He stopped mid-way crawling in, his eyes growing wide as he stared at her. He had a short beard, black as his hair.

She could feel his eyes against her skin. It felt good. Arching her back, she squeezed her breasts together and presented them for his hungry gaze.

Almost immediately, he groaned.

"Get in the wagon, asshole!" yelled Dornen from behind.

"Well..." Monte started, "that wasn't what I expected." He finished crawling into the wagon, a large bulge obvious in his pants. He sat down next to Merrie's cage, his eyes locked on her exposed body.

Razor crawled in next. He stared at her and licked his lips. "Fuck," he muttered before sliding down the bench to take Slender's spot.

Mace followed with a snort, sitting in his usual place.

Each look brought new pleasures. Merrie moaned as she stroked herself harder, splattering her juices against her bare sex and thighs. The smell of her excitement rose even higher, flooding the room as she came just by the men watching her.

Ston froze in the door, his jaw hanging slack.

"Get in!" snapped Dornen.

Ston didn't move, his eyes following every shake of her body.

She grinned at him, lifting her hips even more to give him a clear view of her arms between her pussy lips. She knew they were glistening in the light, she could feel the discomfort of the reflected sunlight but it was worth it to see the lust in his eyes.

“Get in!”

Ston lurched forward as Dornen kicked him.

“Get in before I stab you!”

Ston finally obeyed but his eyes never left Merrie’s body. He tried to sit down on top of Mace until the rough man shoved him aside.

“Get your ass off me!”

Sitting down, Ston continued to stare.

Slender was the last. The tall man crawled into the wagon, took one look at Merrie and Razor in his spot and sat down in an empty. He didn’t seem perturbed by Merrie masturbating but she could tell he was paying attention.

Five men staring at her.

She moaned and stroked herself harder, pumping her arms back and forth until another orgasm role up inside her, flooding her with sweet pleasure.

“What the fuck?” swore Dornen.

Merrie opened her eyes and smiled at him. He was angry and aroused at the same time, she could see it on his face and between his legs. His cock, the same one that had fucked her repeatedly, as straining against his buttons.

He froze, like the others.

Merrie felt the surge of pleasure rising. Six men were watching her masturbate. Even if she was not gaining power from it, the rush of being on display was enough to push her to another orgasm. Soft whimpers rose from her throat as she stared at all of them, matching their eyes as they watched with lust.

Her pussy was slick, the sounds of it echoing against the walls of the wagon. She shuddered as another one rushed up. She didn’t need to imagine their cocks, she could see them straining as they watched.

“Dornen! Get your ass moving!” yelled Ginny.

“I... I’m... she’s....”

“Is she still caged?”

Dornen tore his eyes away from Merrie. “Yes, madam.”

“Then get out of the damn wagon and let’s get going.”

He worked his way down the seats, chaining everyone into place but his eyes kept drifting toward her. He shot Merrie a final glance before crawling out. His eyes lingered on her, wide with excitement.

When the door slammed shut, she let out a cry and came a final time. Shuddering, she slumped to the bottom of the cage and smiled.

“Trying to make our lives miserable?” grumbled Mace. “Now I have a hard-on which is just going to make the next part horrible.” Even as he said it, he was watching her through the dim light as if hoping for more.

“Sorry,” she said, not being sorry. “I like to come.”

“She’s an alpha,” Slender added. “They get off on submission and sex.”

Mace perked up. “You mean she can use magic after that?”

“No,” Slender shook his head. “She’s a traitor, she’s has the Justice Geas on her. If she tries to use magic in any way, it would cause her insides to turn to mush. She would die screaming in an instant.”

“Then why is she showing off like that?”

“I,” Merrie said with her whisper, “like to come. I’m not getting magic from it, it just... helps.”

“Well, it isn’t helping me,” grumbled Mace. He turned his back on her.

She gave a hesitant smile. “Do they put us in individual cells at the fortress?”

He turned back. “Of course they don’t, you’d know....”

“If I wasn’t tied to a stump and fucked all night?” she asked with a smile.

Monte finally leaned in. “They didn’t really rape you?”

Merrie shrugged and perked her ears. “I like sex. It doesn’t matter how rough it is, I like it rough. It was just... they didn’t ask me. I would have said yes, even with tying me down and fucking my ass.”

Ston gasped. “You do anal?”

Merrie giggled. “I’ll do anything. Any hole, any way.”

Mace had turned back toward her but his arms were crossed over his chest and he was frowning. “You couldn’t handle me.”

She was tempted to speak up but didn't. Instead, she shrugged. "I hope to find out."

Silence filled the wagon.

"What?" Mace finally said as his arms grew slack. "Seriously?"

Merrie grinned and ducked her head. Her tail wagged, thumping against the edges of the cage. "I really like it. I don't get magic from it anymore, but the hard cocks, tongues, being choke fucked, or having my ass impaled. That is what brings me joy. I like it. I don't mind sharing it."

Her tail wagged faster as she thought about the men surrounding her.

"But you'd fuck us? All of us."

She nodded, then barked.

That seemed to break the ice slightly. Mace shrugged and then took a deep breath. "Well, if that is the case, go ahead and give us a show."

Merrie looked at the others who nodded or were obviously turned on. With a grin, she rolled on her back and spread her legs to give the rest of the wagon a view. Then she brought her arms to her pussy and began to stroke herself.

The Captain

59

By the time they stopped for the second night, Merrie was almost humming with excitement. She had come repeatedly over the trip, both as a distraction for everyone in the wagon and because it made her feel good. She didn't have to worry about using magic or making choices, she just had fun.

It almost made up for being convicted of treason, but not quite.

When the wagon stopped, they knew it would be some time before the guards came for her. The wait seemed to stretch out longer with every person walking past the back of the wagon, the guards seemed to take joy in rattling the lock before moving on.

Ston stirred from the uncomfortable silence. "Bitch? Why didn't you do it? Why didn't you close the gate?"

Merrie looked up at him. She was splaying on the cloaks and clothes, her legs spread apart and one smooth ankle resting against the bars. It almost felt good to enjoy the dim light and the coming night.

"I mean, any of us would give our nuts to avoid The Key. You had a chance, close the gate and walk away."

It was an old question that she still didn't have the answer. She also couldn't explain why the Royal Geas was accepting of it, since it obviously threatened so many people. She sighed and let her ears droop. "I felt right to keep it there."

"To save this paladin? He raped you. Really raped you."

"But I'm who I am because of Bass. He showed me what I was."

"It sounds more like he convinced a pretty face that what he did was the greater good. Told you that you were special to justify shoving his dick into you."

“No, it was more than that. It was—”

“It had to be more than that. Even if it was the right thing, you should have destroyed that gate... thing once he was saved.”

“Ston,” Monte said. “Don’t pick a fight.”

“Why not? She could have gotten free.” Ston pointed at here. “She didn’t have to be here. Why did she choose to go to Abbinkey when the rest of us didn’t.”

“We all did terrible things, Ston.”

“Fuck off, Monte.”

Monte sighed.

No one in the wagon said anything. Merrie whimpered softly and listened to the guards working outside. It was another permanent prison fortress, she recognized the sound of them replacing the lights with something else that let her crawl without harm. It seemed like a lot of work when it was obvious that Dornen and Hore had no interest in her comfort.

At the same time, she traveled down the same question as before. Why didn’t she? Why didn’t the Royal Geas prevent her? Or demand that she close it.

“I guess....” She sighed. “It felt right to keep it open.”

“And doom thousands? What does Slender think about that?”

“I’m fine.”

That caused everyone to stare at him.

Slender shrugged. “I grew up Blood County. All of us knew we would die sooner or later. Not everyone gets the choice, but at least in Blood County, they let you go out with a bang.”

“That’s...” Ston pulled a face. “Disgusting.”

“We are the only march that doesn’t have mandatory military service. The quality of life is the fourth highest of any county in the country, including Franome City. I’m not sure why that’s bad. Yeah, you might end up gang-banged and spitted every holiday, but I grew up with good education, a comfortable house, and low taxes.”

Ston paled. “E-Even the guys?”

Slender chuckled. “Yeah, there is a lot of cock and cunts in Blood County. Just because you have balls doesn’t mean someone wants to cut them off.”

Ston, Razor, and Mace all crossed their legs.

“Why did you leave?”

Slender shrugged. “Always need fresh blood. I mean cowgirls are —”

“Like your sister?”

“Yeah, she was beautiful. But not too bright. She had accepted it a long time ago. Sometimes, you need a bit of fresh meat. It has... flavor when you get to know them? It’s more personal, you know what I mean?”

“No... and thankfully, I never will.”

Slender shrugged. “It was a good life. I miss it but this is where I am. The Key will be just as interesting as Blood County. I even heard they have cannibals there. No doubt some good blood sausage too.”

“Oh,” Ston made a noise, “I think I’m going to be sick.”

“Slender, please. I don’t want to think about that,” said Monte.

Slender shrugged and said nothing.

After a few minutes of silence, Razor groaned. “I have to pee again.”

“Just don’t say anything.”

“Yeah, dad, I remember. Just hurry the fuck up.”

Finally, the door was unlocked. Dornen stuck his head in. “Okay, who has to go the worst?”

Slender raised his hand. “Me, sir.”

“Then you can go second last,” he said with a grin. He crawled into the wagon and walked past Slender who rolled his eyes. Thankfully for Razor, he and Mace were the first two selected to come out first.

Razor mouthed “thank you” to Slender who ducked his head.

As Dornen lead the two out, Hore remained by the door. Like before, it took about twenty minutes to get two men out at a time. It wasn’t long before Merrie was alone in her cage with the rest of the wagon empty.

She prepared herself for a long wait, closing her eyes and slowly stroking her pussy to pass the time. She didn’t want to use her timekeeping spell, it wouldn’t help and only make the passage of time more painful.

Instead, she masturbated. Her mind didn’t focus on one image or another, she just focused on stroking herself slowly and enjoying the little waves of pleasure that echoed inside her body. The orgasm

that came was slow and steady, a ripple of pleasure that just danced along her nerves.

“All right, Bitch, your turn.” Dornen seemed more sullen than usual.

She obeyed, waiting for her cage to open, and then crawling out obediently. She had to hop down to land on the white painted path and followed it, letting the guards lead her, though it was obvious how to reach her destination.

As with the night before, there were four stations. She didn't need to use the first but the four guards following her were insistent. She managed to pee slightly and Vace cleaned her with a cold rag. He also cleaned her off, his hands hefting and lingering on her soapy breasts and between her legs before he pulled away.

Merrie wagged her tail as she crawled back around the building. At the point she was pulled off the night before, she hesitated.

“No,” came the stern voice of the captain. Ginny gestured to Merrie. “You are inside tonight.”

Sighs of disappointment echoed around her. Dornen nudged her with his foot and she resumed down the white path. At the stairs, she had to balance herself before climbing up and following the line into the stone building.

Inside, there were cells on both sides of the first floor. They were already filled, six prisoners from the first wagon and five from the other. Mace and Ston shared a cell as well as two other cells doubled up with prisoners she didn't know.

“Food's at the end.”

Merrie crawled over and looked over a table. They were being served nothing more than gruel and what looked like watered-down beer. None of it looked appetizing. She thought about her stomach and her thoughts from earlier. Then, she lowered herself to the ground and looked up at Dornen.

“You need food?”

She shrugged and shook her head.

“If you get hungry in a few hours, no one is feeding you.”

She nodded, her tail wagging. There was a few droplets of water that splashed around her as she did.

“Then in your cell. Let's see, we have to double you up so... let's put you in—”

The captain stepped up and held out her hand. “She’s mine tonight.”

Dornen sighed. “Yes, madam.”

“Make sure everyone is set up for the night. I’m retiring.”

The guard gave Ginny and then Merrie a sour look before bowing. Then he walked away from Merrie and stormed out of the front door.

Merrie watched him and then lifted her gaze up to Ginny. The female guard looked tired but flushed at the same time. She had large breasts that were bound down with strips of cloth, Merrie could see the ripple of fabric underneath the guard uniform. Ginny’s hair was once again in a ponytail, this time the gray and brown strands were kept carefully bound by a strip of black leather.

The captain looked down. “Like what you see?”

There was something in Ginny’s voice, a promise of a far more pleasant night than before. Merrie sat up, on her haunches and brought her wrists to her collar.

“Don’t do that.”

She froze. After a moment, she lowered her limbs.

“Up the stairs, Bitch. I don’t want to see you groveling.”

Merrie ducked her head and obeyed, crawling off the white line with only a moment of hesitation and then up the stairs. It was a steep staircase and she had been in a cage all day, but it didn’t take too long before she was up on the second floor.

Like the first, it had a hallway with doors on both sides. Each door was twice as big as the cell below with what appeared to be an open area to one side on the far end. Talking and jostling rose up from the open area, that was where most of the wagon guards were eating.

Ginny didn’t spare them a second glance. She stopped by the first door on the right and unlocked it. Opening it, she gestured for Merrie to enter.

The room had little personality, a plain room with white walls and the seal of Franome hanging off one of them. A double-sized bed had been shoved into the corner with a pile of blankets at the foot. Next to it was four wardrobes that lined the wall and around the corner. Each one had a name on a plaque in front of it. Next to the wardrobes was a small table with two padded chairs.

Merrie lifted herself to keep looking around, curious at what the captain slept in. The opposite side from the bed had a narrow table with a small ice box, a sink, and a few glowing runes that would produce water and heat on demand.

In the final corner was a deep soaking tub. Merrie did a double take, she wasn't expecting to see a luxury like that in the room, much less the steam that rose from the top of the surface out of sight. She took a hesitate smell and was delighted to taste lavender and wildflowers in the air.

"Four of us share the room. In all the way."

Merrie realized her ass was sticking in the door frame. She crawled inside and sat down to one side. Her tail wagged slowly back and forth. The room was far more comfortable than spending the night on the stump. However that didn't mean she would enjoy it.

Ginny closed the door. "You know why you're in here, right?"

Merrie considered answering in barks but the captain obviously wanted more. "You want to fuck me."

Her tail wagged faster.

Ginny frowned and then stared at her. "You don't mind?"

Merrie smiled at her, her back arching slightly. "I like to fuck."

"Even with girls?"

Merrie's smile turned into a grin. "I like everything."

Ginny's cheeks were flushed. "I don't like pussies."

"I do."

A soft inhalation and a barely perceptible moan; Merrie's ears twitched as she looked at Ginny. She was a hard woman, obviously spending much of her time on the road between Franome City and Abbinkey. She also looked worn, if the scars and the sun-burned leathery wrinkles of her skin were any indication.

She was also beautiful in her own way.

"We don't have a lot of woman prisoners on this route." Ginny glanced at her. "Never any that look like... you."

Ginny circled around Merrie and walked over to the bed. There was nervousness in her movement but when she looked back, there was also lust.

Merrie crawled forward.

The captain dropped her hand to her sword.

Merrie stopped. "I don't have magic, remember?"

“Yes, but....”

“I’m also a naked woman with no hands or feet. The only weapon I have is my teeth which I intended to use in a few minutes.” As she spoke, she crawler closer.

Ginny backed up until her knees brushed against the bed. Then she stopped. “What are you going to do?”

Merrie answered by hooking one arm on the edge of the bed and pressing her face into Ginny’s crotch. The buttons of the captain’s trousers scraped against her face but Merrie only cared about the sweet smell of excitement underneath. It was mixed with sweat, smoke, and grime from a day of traveling.

“I found something I want to eat,” Merrie whispered.

Ginny panted.

“You might want to put the sword down, though. I promise I won’t use it.” As to make her point, Merrie opened her mouth and pressed against the curve of Ginny’s pubic bone. Even through the layers of material, she could feel the heat pulsating underneath. She sucked on the fabric, extracting the first musky taste of a woman who had been thinking about sex of hours.

With a moan, Merrie smiled and lapped at the rough, well-worn fabric. “Tasty,” she whispered.

Ginny moaned herself. With a shaking hand, she unbuckled her sword and placed it on top of a high shelf, well away from Merrie.

Merrie knew that she didn’t need it. She didn’t care at the moment. As Ginny fumbled with her weapon, Merrie worked the button open on the captain’s trousers. Underneath, the fabric of Ginny’s underwear was soaked. It was a strong smell of sweat and sex.

Shoving her face against the opening, she took a deep noticeable breath.

Ginny shivered with a moan. The sword slipped from her hand and clattered to the ground.

Instantly, she tensed.

Merrie returned to working the buttons open with her lips and teeth, sliding the metal tabs out of the way so she could part the fabric and gain access to the hairy mound inside.

Ginny’s hands reached out and she gingerly stroked Merrie’s ears.

To encourage her, Merrie moaned and wiggled her hips. Her tail waved back and forth as she worked the pants down off of Ginny's wide hips and then down to her thighs. She almost continued pushing them down, but the sight of the soaked panties was too much.

With a coo, she planted her mouth on the fabric and sucked on it. Her tongue ran along the cloth-covered furrow, working the thick lips apart as Ginny's stroking of her ears turned into a tight grip.

"Oh, fuck," gasped the woman.

Merrie smiled and sucked harder, dragging her tongue up and down along the soaked folds. She wasn't in a hurry, not unless her lover insisted on it. Wanting a better angle, she lifted her other arm to hug Ginny's thighs and lapped harder and faster, swirling her tongue along the edge of the fabric as she soaked Ginny's pubic hair with her spit.

"Oh, oh... no, let me get my pants off."

Merrie pulled back and released the captain.

Ginny was frantic to pull off her pants and underwear off. She fumbled more than once.

Merrie moaned and waited. She pulled back on her haunches and brought her wrists up.

Ginny glanced up, her eyes a little wild and her hair pulling free of the ponytail. "By the Gods, I shouldn't find that sexy."

"Please?" whispered Merrie. "I need to taste you again."

She let her tongue slip out.

Ginny frantically shed her bottom clothes and then sat back on the bed.

Merrie followed, her eyes locked on Ginny as she nestled her breasts between Ginny's scarred thighs and lowered her mouth to the swollen lips. When Ginny moaned in desire, Merrie began to lap harder, swirling her tongue along the hairy lips and deeper into the stronger-tasting core of the guard captain.

Ginny gasped and grabbed Merrie's sensitive ears. She shoved Merrie down hard.

Merrie opened her mouth obediently, jamming her entire mouth against the woman's slit. Her tongue swirled and lapped, finding Ginny's clitoris and began to tease it. She knew that lapping wasn't

enough, she swirled her tongue in random patterns, with frequent forays to drag the tip through the soaked opening and then back up.

“I’m... I’m going... too fast!”

Merrie didn’t stop. She smiled and lapped harder, closing her mouth to clamp her lips on Ginny’s clitoris and sucked hard.

“Fuck!” screamed the older woman. Then she came, spraying cum against Merrie’s throat and breasts, soaking her almost instantly as she jerked.

Merrie rode her clitoris, sucking and lapping as the hips jerked in all directions. It grew soaked around her but that only added to her pleasure as she chased Ginny through one orgasm and then another.

Too soon, Ginny slumped down. “That... was the best cum I’ve ever had.” She panted. “What do I do now?”

Merrie smiled, she wasn’t done. She leaned forward and nuzzled her nose along the soaked furrow.

Ginny clamped her legs. “Stop, it’s too sensitive.”

Merrie lowered her head.

The captain shook her head. “I’m only good for one.”

Merrie grinned even wider, she knew one place that wasn’t too sensitive. She burrowed her head down, forcing Ginny’s thighs apart with her head.

“What are you?”

Merrie peeked up. “Lift your legs.”

Ginny frowned but obeyed, lifting her legs and bending herself more. Her pussy rose up, swollen and slick. “It is too sensitive to touch, I know... what are you doing?”

Merrie delved her head further down, encouraging Ginny to lift her legs even further until Merrie found what she wanted, the tiny brown sphincter. It smelled of sweat and sex and ass, but that didn’t matter. Merrie opened her mouth and clamped her mouth over it.

“I don’t think—”

Merrie lapped against the tight opening, swirling her tongue along the crinkles.

The words froze in Ginny’s throat.

Encouraged, Merrie lapped again. She had licked far worse over the years and she liked the look of blossoming pleasure on the captain’s face as she continued to lap.

“Oh.... oh the gods... oh the gods!”

Ginny lifted her legs higher up, exposing the rosebud to Merrie's tongue. Her pussy began to drool with even more excitement.

With the ease of access, Merrie shifted closer to lap hard and wetly and explore the opening with the tip of her tongue. Her tail wagged violently as she lapped and sucked and delved.

Ginny whimpered, her wail of pleasure rising up in a gasp. "Oh the gods! Oh the gods!"

Merrie bore down as she ate the captain's ass, lapping at it until the other woman sprayed her with another orgasm, coating Merrie's head and ears with her juice. After sucking on her lips a few more times, Merrie pulled back. Her hair was matted and the air smelled of pussy, but she didn't care. It was sated pleasure that she saw in her lover's eyes.

"Oh, fuck, that was.... oh the gods, I never... never did that."

Merrie smiled and licked her lips.

Ginny sat up. She started to pull Merrie into a kiss but then stopped. Her face wrinkled. "You stink."

Merrie glanced at the tub with a question. "May I?"

"What? Oh yeah, get cleaned."

"Yes, madam."

Ginny shuddered and smiled.

Merrie crawled over to the tub. It took her a moment to hook her arms on the edge and pull herself up. The water was deep but the tub was short.

"Do you need—"

Merrie dove in, sinking well below the water before coming up. Her severed limbs pawed at the sides until she found the sitting bench and pulled herself on it. Dripping wet, she smiled at the captain and then ducked her head underneath.

It took a few more dips below the surface to finally feel clean. She smiled and leaned back. The water was searingly hot, more so with her icy core. It felt good and her smells were heavenly.

She missed her own perfume, *Complicated Bitch*, but she didn't think she would ever enjoy the scent again. She was doomed to spend her life at Abbinkey. A flicker of sadness washed over her. She almost let it dwell in her thoughts but didn't, it would hurt too many people if she let herself get plunged into the gasping despair that was too easy to fall into.

Merrie soaked in the tub for almost a half hour before Ginny joined her. The captain sat down in the water before stroking her hands along Merrie's body.

"You are so soft."

"I don't spend time outside."

"The sun?"

"Everything."

"You were a whore, right?"

Merrie nodded. "And a slave. And a master."

"Did you fight?" Ginny flicked Merrie's nipple before catching it again and rolling it between her fingertips.

Saddened, Merrie nodded. "I lost a lot of friends and lovers too."

"Is that why you did it?"

"No, I did..." She realized there was nothing that she could say. She could feel Ginny tensing up. She wouldn't understand why the shadow land was created, not any more of why the other prisoners couldn't understand why she choose treason over freedom.

Merrie sighed and came up with a lie instead. "I couldn't stop it once I got started. It was a horrible mistake, one that I will live with for the rest of my life."

Ginny relaxed slightly. She glanced at the sword still on the floor then back to Merrie.

Merrie knew that the night was going to be a one-time thing. She could see in Ginny's eyes that she was sleeping with a murderer, no matter how pretty Merrie looked or how pleasant she was.

Slowly, she bobbed her head and looked up at her. "May I please you one more time before I go?"

"I can't."

"I would love if you pinned me down and fucked my face with your pretty ass. I promise I'll lick you to another orgasm."

If it was going to be her last time, she was going to leave with a smile on Ginny's lips.

t'Sade

Suggestion

60

Despite thinking it was over for the night, it was late in the morning that Ginny finally delivered Merrie to the wagon.

“Get up there, Bitch.”

Merrie smiled to herself as she crawled up. Her naked pussy was bare to everyone looking as she wagged back and forth and crawled into the darkness. Automatically, she worked her way past the legs of her fellow prisoners and crawled into the cage.

To her surprise, the cloaks and clothes had been replaced with a stained but serviceable blanket. She smiled and curled up in a ball. She rested her chin on her forearm and looked at the door as Ginny stood staring at her.

“Be good, all of you,” said the captain in her rough voice. She slapped the door shut and locked it from the outside.

Merrie glanced at the still open cage door. They hadn’t locked her in place. Looking around, the other prisoners were staring at the door with amused looks on their face. She reached out and caught the door, swinging it shut until it clicked into place.

She felt someone staring at her. She looked up to see both Ston and Monte were watching her instead of the door. She didn’t know what either were thinking or when they started watching her. Did either see her closing her cage door?

Worried, Merrie closed her eyes.

“You never answered my question, Bitch.” It was Ston, he was asking about the shadow land again.

“Ston, don’t do this,” said Monte.

“We have a day, I’m curious. Why didn’t you close it. You had the ability, right?”

Unlike with Ginny, Merrie could feel that none of them would change their opinion about her. She shook her head and sighed. "It felt right to leave it up."

"Felt right? A hundred thousand people dying."

"They hadn't died yet. Everyone talks about dying in the shadow lands."

"Yeah, but the Shadowed District killed thousands!"

"Ston...."

"Fuck off, Monte. I'm asking questions."

In the silence, Mace cleared his throat but said nothing.

"So, why right? You must have had something? A spell that told you that you weren't violating the lives of everyone in the country? Some magical sense? A way of knowing that your decision wouldn't put everything at risk?"

Merrie's skin ran colder than normal. Ston's question felt precise, chosen. It sounded like he was trying to see if she had the Royal Geas. She didn't need the geas to know she wouldn't reveal it, but there was an off feeling from the current line of questioning.

"Come on, tell us."

"I don't really need to know," Monte said holding his shackled hands up.

"Of course not, guard."

"I'm not a guard."

"Why not? You seem to know things are going on. Didn't you tell us how to behave so Weak Bladder over here got a chance to pee."

"Hey! I can't help it if they don't give me enough time to go!" Razor rattled his shackles.

Monte held up his hands. "Come on, let's not fight. That will make the rest of this trip misery."

Ston slumped back. "I just want to know."

"Not now, Ston."

"Fine, forget I asked."

There was a ripple of light that blossomed in the room like a thousand spiderwebs suddenly appearing. Merrie froze as she saw the swirls of energy rising over everyone's head, including Ston's and her own. It had a taste of holy to it, a divine spell.

None of the men responded to the energies in the room. The light was visible yet had no reflection against the dark walls.

It only took her a moment to realize it was a compulsion spell. As it sank into her mind, she could feel it seeping through her thoughts. With a dread, she was helplessly to stop it knowing that her alpha nature would magnify it beyond its limits. If it was designed to make her forget the last conversation, it could remove her memories for days or even years.

A whine rose from her throat as the spell coated her thoughts in webs.

Then a ripple of subtle energies ran across her mind. The compulsion spell flared and then dissolved, leaving little bits of structure behind it. Without thinking, she worked her mind around the fragments, pulling them apart to analyze how the spell work. She didn't know why it was broken, but it was important to her that she knew what it was intended to do.

The spell was a short-lived one, only about five minutes of conversation at most. It was divine, like she thought, but it wasn't clear who cast it. It didn't appear to need anything other than a powerful will and a single word to cast; she had never heard of a suggestion that powerful.

She glanced at Ston.

The accountant was sullenly sitting there, muttering to himself as he ignored everyone else in the room. He had to be the source of the spell, but why was he capable of using magic? If he was a mage, they would have sealed his powers. If he wasn't, then the courts should have detected that.

Merrie could tell if she used her magical powers. She had hours to analyze and look for magic, but that would require her to tap into her energies. She could do the same by scanning for emotions, but again, her promise to Parn stopped her.

What if the person casting spell was waiting to see if she had magic? Just like it sounded like Ston was asking about the Royal Geas. Using her powers would betray her lie and put everyone at risk.

She sighed and closed her eyes. No, she had to wait. If Ston was to betray her, it was best to just pretend she didn't remember the conversation and watch. There would be time for detecting magic, but this wasn't it.

t'Sade

A Helping Mouth

61

“Fuck, I have to go again.” Razor squirmed on his chair.

“Really? What the hell is wrong with you?” Mace growled. “Have you tried not drinking?”

“Yeah, I do. I wasn’t expecting to spend two bells every day sitting on a wagon jostling my nethers. If I did, I would have never committed those crimes.”

“It would have better if you did.”

“Fuck you, Chitori.”

“Blow me, Caldora.”

Mace lunged toward Razor but stopped as his chains drew taut. “Just wait until you and I are put in the same cell again. I’ll smash your balls to fast you won’t have to worry about peeing ever again.”

“That’s... that’s not how it works!”

“Please, men,” Monte held up his hand. “Let’s just—”

“Fuck off!” yelled both men.

Razor glared at Mace who glared back. Then, as by an unspoken decision, they turned their backs on each other.

Merrie watched them, the sudden spell still on her thoughts.

Razor squirmed. He was struggling. She could see it in his body language. He had trouble but the guards weren’t giving him any quarter.

Her ears perked up again. If there was one thing she could do, it was to help. Though it would reveal that her cage was never locked when Ginny put her inside. But maybe that would also show she was serious about her conviction and her lifelong trip to Abbinkey.

With a smile, she pushed herself up to her hands and knees. Licking her lips, she used her face to push open the cage.

Mace looked at her. "What the—?" he whispered.

Merrie smile at him and then crawled over to Razor. She rested a hand on his leg.

He jumped. "Gods!"

"Let me help," she whispered.

The rest of the wagon grew silent with only the creaks and bumps of their travel filling the dim light.

"Help, how? You don't have a bucket for me to use."

She smiled and slid her hand up to his crotch. He was getting hard but that didn't matter for long. The smooth end of her wrist caressed his length and she explored it; he was good-sized for a human with a narrow shaft and large head.

Razor moaned. "W-What are you doing?"

"Helping. Can you open this?" She rattled his shackles, it would be impossible to get her head easily into it to open it herself.

"I don't—"

Slender spoke up, "Just let her, she knows what she's doing."

"What is she doing?"

"You got to do something?"

"Yeah, I have to pee, not get a blow job."

Slender grinned and leaned back. "A mouth is a mouth. She's an alpha."

"What does... that..." He looked down. "Seriously?"

She beamed at him. "I don't mind."

"I mean.." He was getting even harder. She could smell his musk through his pants. "I mean, I never."

Merrie answered by stroking his cock. "I can get it out with these."

Gulping, Razor looked up at the others. Merrie peeked over her shoulder to see what he saw.

Ston was looking sick, he was already turning away. Mace also looked away. On the other hand, Slender was watching with a grin on his lips and a hardness in his crotch. Monte was pretending not to look but he was peeking.

She smiled and lowered her head, kissing his thigh and rattling his chain. "Please?"

"I... I..." Then Razor moaned and twisted. He fumbled with his pants. The trousers that the prison had given him didn't have a

button. It took a moment for him to get the rope drawstring loose and lift himself off the seat enough to push it down to his knees.

Merrie looked at his cock, dark and swollen, and let out a soft, playful whimper. “Yummy.”

She pressed her face into the tight space between his arms, the chains, and his body. Taking a deep breath, she enjoyed the musty acrid scent that flooded over her. With her tongue, she drew it up his entirely length.

“O-O-Oh....” Razor froze.

Encouraged, Merrie licked again and then brought the tip to her mouth. It was hot and growing slick. It was also too hard to let him get relief, so she needed to soften it first. Giggling to herself, she bobbed down and took his hardness into her mouth.

Slowly, she drew her lips down. The little ridges and veins slid along her lips as she took it deeper. The head slid along the roof of her mouth and she rubbed the head against her soft pallet.

“Oh, oh fuck, I haven’t... had this in a long time.”

She shoved her face down, trying to take all of it into her mouth. It was a tight fit. The chains scraped her ear as she worked her lips down to his hairy base. Slowly, she drew up to his tip and released her lips with a pop. “Give me a moment, I’ll get it soft enough for you to use me like a toilet.”

His cock surged in her mouth.

With a grin, she held it gently in her lips. They had a while before the wagons stopped for the second break but she could tell he was uncomfortable. There was a hardness that wasn’t entirely driven by the lust of having a naked woman blowing him.

She gulped and bobbed her head. He wasn’t long enough to hit the back of her throat but it was still a nice, firm girth for her mouth. She moaned as she bobbed up and down, grinding her face as hard as she could at his base before bringing up to the top.

His pre-cum tasted watery. It was almost sweet and she loved it. With a moan, she lapped it up from his shaft and then bobbed back down.

Time seemed to swirl around her as she pleased him. She loved how he grabbed his leg with one hand and the chain with the other. His hips rose to meet her lips, thrusting as much as he could with his body shackled to the chair.

The rattle of the chains and the scrape of the brackets filled the room along with her wet slurping.

She moaned and swayed her ass knowing that others were watching it and imagining themselves underneath her mouth. She curled her tail up to expose her sex. With every shift of her hips, she could feel her labia peeling apart and closing. Of course, Ston would be staring at her ass, it was obvious that he was thinking about fucking her ass for days now.

Merrie added a twist to her bobbing. At the same time, she stroked her smooth wrist against his balls, teasing them as she brought his entire length into her mouth.

Razor grunted and his cock swelled.

She clamped down and sucked harder, pulling his shaft into her mouth with suction more than bobbing.

With a groan, he came. Ropes of cum splattered against her throat, filling her mouth with his cream. She moaned loudly and lapped it up, sucking directly on the end of his cock to get every iota of salty seed from his balls.

Razor slumped with a gasp. "Fuck."

Merrie kept her mouth on his cock. She relaxed her pressure and bobbed down to hold her mouth at his base.

"What... you meant it?" Razor's body grew tight.

"She means it?" he asked the room.

Slender grunted. "She's from the Puppy Mill. This is what she's trained to do."

Merrie smiled and kept her mouth in place. She had many memories of swallowing urine, though she had her favorite moments.

"I..."

"Just relax," said Slender. "Let it go, I don't care."

"It's disgusting," muttered Ston.

"Yet you want to fuck that ass of hers."

"I do not!"

"Yeah right. You getting a chubby right now staring at that star."

"F-Fuck off!"

Razor's tension relaxed slightly. "I can... right?"

She opened her mouth and got a better grip, increasing the pressure on the half-hard cock. Then she added a slight suction to it, pulsating his cock in her mouth.

The first squirt was hot in her mouth. It wasn't strong tasting at all, but it was also a curious and frightful attempt. He was scared.

"I-Is that okay?"

She nodded, not taking her mouth off. Her pussy felt hot and she curled her tail against it to rub it.

He relaxed even further, the searing liquid pouring into her mouth with a hard jet.

Merrie moaned and swallowed at it, taking the acidic fluid down her throat as Borias trained her to. It brought back memories of her training, of the vegetarian concoctions he created to give her the taste but not the contents. Now it didn't matter, she was content to let it pool in her belly as a hot puddle.

Razor let out a sobbing gasp of relief. The jet of pee came out faster and harder.

She had to gulp to keep up with it. It was flooding her mouth but she didn't dare let a single drop out of her lips. The sound of her gulping filled the room and she could imagine more than one of the men was getting harder hearing it.

Then, the jet slowed and ended.

She moaned and sucked on it until she got all of it. Her stomach gurgled around the hot urine, a comforting sensation as it quickly cooled inside her system.

Careful not to let any droplet out, she lapped his cock cleaned and gave it a suck to clean out the pipe. When she pulled off of his tip, she was smiling.

"Yummy," she whispered.

Razor stared at her, his chest heaving with his breath. "You... why?"

"Feel better?"

"Yeah, I mean, thank you."

She smiled and wiped her lip. She sat down in front of him and let out a soft breath. It came out as sake, the shadowy nature of her system already dissolving it into darkness.

Razor fumbled with his pants, pulling them up. When he sat back down, it was obvious that he felt better.

Merrie turned and crawled back to the cage.

"Wait, how did you get out?" It was Ston.

"They forgot to lock it."

"So you could escape at any time?"

She looked at the locked door. "Through that?"

"Don't you turn into shadows or something."

"What?" asked Monte.

"I-I heard something about that." Ston cleared his throat.

Merrie sighed and shook her head. "I can't anymore, remember. I'm a traitor, they sealed away my powers. I don't have magic."

"But you could."

"Yes, but not anymore."

"Why are going to Abbinkey?" Ston asked.

Merrie turned to him and sat down. "Why are you?"

"I killed people."

"I killed people. I ripped their throats out with my teeth, I withered their bodies with magic. I summoned an army of shadow creatures to tear an entire camp of paladins apart because they threatened my friend."

The room grew tense.

"I summoned the shadow realm, as you said, which threatened a hundred thousand people. I summoned the Lord of Shadows many times, both in Franome City and elsewhere. Those rotted branches in the World Tree, the Withered Limbs?" She referenced when she first bonded with her collar and a column of darkness rose up to kill some of the lower branches. "That was me. A guild master died that night. A few days, I was responsible for another..."

Tears burned in her eyes as she thought of Kirin. "She was a good friend, but she sacrificed herself because I couldn't stop it. So, yes, you killed someone. Cut a few throats. I killed thousands. Thousands upon thousands in so many different places. I refused an order from the high courts to remove the shadow land because I thought it needed to be there. I was declared a traitor and in the process, I managed to kill thousands more as their bodies withered away and dissolved."

She had crawled up to Ston as she spoke. "So, when I say I belong in Abbinkey, I think I belong in Abbinkey. Even if I had my powers, I

promise you, I would be on this wagon, getting raped at night and fearing the light because this is where I should be.”

Ston gulped. “I-I was just asking.”

“No, you were pushing. You were hoping I had some magical card in my sleeve that would let me escape. Guess what? I’m naked. I had a wolf rip my hands and feet off. I have no pocket to pull out magic. I’m here because I belong here.”

Ston gulped. “Sorry.”

Merrie pulled back. It took her a moment to clear her thoughts, she wasn’t expecting to talk so much. Then, she perked her ears. “Anyone else want a blowjob before I go to my cage?”

Slender rattled his cage. “Yeah, bring that mouth over here.”

She wasn’t sure she should have been on the wagon to Abbinkey, but her words felt right. It was where she was supposed to be. Just as she was supposed to have her mouth wrapped around some cock. With a wag in her tail, she crawled over to service the second of the prisoners.

t'Sade

Confession

62

Merrie hummed to herself as she crawled along the white trail. She could feel the hot cum oozing out of her slit and from the corner of her mouth. There was also the taste of urine from when they decided to “debase” her by peeing over her body.

She didn’t have the heart to tell them that she loved it all. Instead she wagged her tail and tried not to splatter too much cum or pee along the trail behind her.

“God, she stinks,” muttered one of the guards.

“Yeah, send her out back to get cleaned up.”

Both guards were stationed at the fortress. They would see her for less than a night and then she would be out of their lives forever. That didn’t stop them, or the others, from gang-banging her out in the woods. This time they even put a blanket down on the stump before fucking her for hours.

“Someone has to help her, you know that. Those freaky arms of hers can’t pick up anything.”

“Get one of the wagon guards—”

“To what? Clean up our spunk? Yeah, they are going to just shove their hands right in that sloppy cunt of hers. You know this crap, the wagon guards get to sleep in like princesses while we deal with this shit.”

Merrie wagged her tail as she led the way around the back. Like every other stop, there was four stations. She had been through them already but she only cared about the third one to clean up. Someone had dragged a horse trough back there. It was narrow but the soap scummy water was better than asking one of the guards to clean her off.

Without being told, she crawled into it and ducked her head. With her ass and pussy high in the air, she held her breath and shook back and forth. Water sloshed all around her, splashing out of the trough.

“Damn the gods!” snapped one of the guards.

Merrie look at him and then sank into the water until only the curve of her ass and her pussy were above the water. With a moan, she swirled around even more to get the rest of the cum and urine off her body.

The other guard watched, his eyes glittering with growing lust. He stroked his shaft which was surprisingly hard since he came at least four times in the last hour.

She moaned and flipped over to clean her tail. She braced her legs on each side of the trough and used them to lift her bare pussy to the air and enjoy the icy water as it dribbled down her sensitive slit.

“Fucking slut,” muttered the first guard. He patted the second on the shoulder and then headed down the path. “Don’t let her run away.”

“What? Hey! Don’t leave me alone! You know the rules!” The second guard took a step away from her and then hesitated. He looked back at Merrie and then to the leaving guard.

Merrie flipped back over and dived back into the water. It felt good to get clean for the first time since she started the trip. There was only so much a cloth and a bucket of water could do.

As she had her face in the water, she thought about her curiosity about not needing to breathe. Was she enough of a shadow that it wasn’t important? She wanted to test it but couldn’t get the courage to open her mouth and inhale. Would she drown? Would she just not be bothered.

Lifting her head, she panted for a moment and then squirmed up against the sides of the trough to scrub her buttocks and thighs. It would be harder to clean her pussy but at least most of her would be clean.

She dove back in the water, swirling around to rub her face against the bottom. The question rose up again and she opened her mouth slightly. The icy water flooded in and she froze.

Choice.

Parn gave her choice. More than she ever had before.

Merrie chose to open her mouth even further, to draw the water into her lungs. The scummy water flooded inside her and down her throat. She felt it pool inside her, icy and cold.

Panic rose inside her, a desperate need to breath.

She bore down. No, she didn't need to breath.

Her lungs burned with the need.

She didn't need to breath.

She didn't.

The darkness never came. It hurt and she thought she was suffocating but her mouth opened easily and there were no black spots swimming across her vision; she had been choke-fucked enough times to know what suffocation felt like. She smiled.

A hand grabbed her hair and yanked her back. "Don't kill yourself!" snapped the guard.

Merrie looked at him and opened her mouth to let the icy water pour out of her lips. She smiled and wiggled her ass around for a moment.

"Fucking bitch."

He threw her face back into the water.

She sank to the bottom and pushed up. It felt good. Everything felt good. She had been brutally fucked, debased, and abused. She had sucked off almost all of the men in the wagon, only Monte and Ston hadn't felt her mouth. The orgasms from it all still hummed inside her body. She was content as she could at the moment.

The guard groaned. "All right, get your cunt out of the water."

Merrie crawled out. There was a towel but it was behind the guard. Feeling remarkably playful, she shook her head.

"God damn it, stop acting like a fucking bitch."

Merrie perked up. She pouted and then sat back on her haunches.

"W-What are you doing?"

Slowly, she drew her arms up to her collar and spread her thighs. Her tail wagged back and forth as she thrust her breasts up and held herself still. It was her present position, it was also something she guessed he would find more than desirable. Her pussy clenched as he rubbed his crotch; it had to be sore but she was sure he had one more orgasm left inside him.

The guard looked around again, worrying his lips. Then he stepped forward as he unbuttoned his trousers. "A quick one, you fucking slut."

Merrie moaned and took it into her mouth. It was hot and swollen, perfect for her lips. She bobbed and lapped at it, bring him to a quick orgasm.

The jets of cum that dribbled down her throat tasted delicious.

She wagged her tail even harder as she cleaned him off. Finally, she released him with a pop.

He winced and shoved it back into his pants. "I think I'm completely drained now."

She barked.

He looked at her. "Yeah, they are going to love you at Abbinkey. Come on, fuck slut, time to get to bed. The captain said we're fired if you are left out in the light. Whatever that means."

Together, they headed into the fortress. The layout was the same. She noticed that two of the other prisoners were missing from their cells. The moans from upstairs told her that they were being used for the guard's other desires, one of them was probably with Ginny as she rode their faces and probably demanded that they lick her asshole.

Merrie grinned. The others may hate it, but the guard captain had found something she liked as much as dominating prisoners.

The fortress guard stopped her at one of the cells. There was already an occupant, Ston, who was sitting on his bed with his knees up to his chest and rocking back and forth. He didn't look up when the cell door was opened and Merrie was herded inside.

"Keep it down, slut."

Merrie barked softly.

The guard glared at her and then headed toward the back. He would pace for a while before another of the guards took over. There would never be more than ten minutes without someone checking on them.

Merrie crawled over and looked at Ston. She didn't need empathy to see he was hurting. She rested an arm on his thigh.

"I don't need you, Bitch."

"I'm someone to talk to," she whispered. None of the guards knew that she spoke.

“About what? Being a mass murderer?”

“You’re hurting, Ston.”

He sniffed and wiped his eyes. “I don’t want to be here.”

She sighed and rested her head against his thigh. “I know.”

“Why do you?”

“I don’t.”

“But you can escape at any time.”

“No, no I can’t. I have this... promise that won’t me. Geas burned into my bones, no magic, no hope. If I went to the Whore’s Guild, they would be abetting a criminal.”

She thought about Talus’ words, that she would always be welcomed. She wondered if the goddess knew that she was convicted. Or cared.

“I can’t go back to Blood County, I can’t go to Franome City.”

He sniffed again, a sob catching in his throat.

“You are from the City?”

“Yeah, all my life.”

She favored him with a soft smile. “I grew up there.”

“Where?”

“Suncaster District.”

Ston looked up. “Suncaster? That’s where I’m from. How come I never saw you?”

She gestured to the bed. When he shifted over, she crawled up on it and rested her head on his shoulder. “Do you remember when an entire street disappeared? And they found the bodies in a warehouse?”

“Oh god, you did that too?”

Merrie shook her head. “No, that’s when Bass kidnapped me. They were hired mercenaries. They plucked out the women and men who would make good slaves or cows and threw us on a wagon. Killed and robbed everyone else.”

“Why?”

“Puppy slaves can auction off for a couple thousand easily. A dairy cowgirl almost as much, if she gave enough milk.”

“You were sold? A slave?”

“I was...” The memories swirled around her head. “I was special. Some very powerful people wanted to buy me and it turned ugly. There were deaths and robberies.”

“How much?”

“Millions.”

“Millions?”

She smiled sadly. “Yeah, my master was a thief. He stole all the money from this warlord named Rakin. Rakin wanted to buy me because of what alphas do, my master just wanted to piss him off.”

Ston relaxed. One hand dropped to his side. “Slender keeps saying you are an alpha, what does that mean?”

Merrie nuzzled closer, her bare breast pressing against his side. She could feel his heart through their contact, it was steady but beating faster. The faint hint of his hardness was drifting up, he was getting excited. “Do you have magic?”

“Not really? Just the ability to do books quickly.”

“Alphas magnify what’s already there. So, if you... bonded with me, then you could probably do the books by looking at them. Or be able to see the entire accounting of a business just by walking into the front door.”

He tensed. “Really?”

“That’s what we do. True Submissives make people... more than what they are. If you had a killer, we would make them even more powerful. If you were a healer, you could heal the world with us. Every part of you just becomes... more when we are close.”

“By yourself?”

“Nothing. We live empty lives being late for work and never knowing. I was a secretary before I was kidnapped. Now, I have no hands and have seen terrible things.”

“That’s terrible. So if you submit to someone, you make them more powerful?”

“By a thousand times.”

“Then why do you say you killed all those people? Why wasn’t it your owner?”

Merrie tensed. The questions were striking sensitive parts. She closed her eyes as she recalled Kine’s death again. It was muted over the years but no less raw. “He died.”

“Did you get a new master?”

“I was supposed to die when that happens. I wasn’t. I... broke and that’s how the Shadowed District came into being.”

“My business partner lost his entire family when that happened. He died trying to back in for them. He was with a group of paladins and clerics, none of them made it.”

“I’m sorry.”

He wrapped his arm around her. “I believe you. I don’t know why, but I honestly believe you.”

She leaned against his shoulder. He felt warm and comforting, not only because he was baring himself. “I guess I’m going to Abbinkey for penance.”

“I wish I could accept it. Sometimes I think it would be easier if I just died.”

“I’ve done that too. Twice, in many ways.”

“You are a remarkable creature, Bitch. I wish I had your strength.”

She sighed. “I just had to accept what I did. I’m no saint or paladin, that’s for sure. I made mistakes, I hurt people, but I honestly try to do what I think is right.”

His hand dropped from her shoulder. He sniffed once and then his whole body shook. She looked up to see him crying, tears running down his cheeks. Saddened, she reached up and pressed her arm against his cheek.

“It... it wasn’t supposed to be this way. I just couldn’t help myself. I just... she was... and the next thing I knew, I had her blood on my hands. I couldn’t live with that but I couldn’t stop. I just... I just kept going on, her mother a few hours later. And then I... I went to work and I just kept killing them. I didn’t mean to, I was just... I just wasn’t supposed to do that.”

He sobbed loudly, turning toward her.

She pulled him into an embrace, holding him tight as he sobbed into her shoulder.

His arms wrapped around her and he clung to her. “I’m so sorry. I was a terrible father, I’m so sorry.”

Merrie closed her eyes and held him tight. The revelation struck her but he had already been convicted of it. There was nothing else she could do, nothing she would be willing to do with Abbinkey looming in their future.

She didn’t know what to say. There was guilt but she wasn’t sure if acceptance would help. She considered projecting her emotions,

to give him a comfort that no embrace could match. But, if he was the one who cast the spell, she would be revealing that she still had her powers.

For a long time, she felt his trembling body clutching to hers.

She wracked her thoughts trying to make a choice.

Finally, she knew the right thing. Gathering her power, she reached out with her mind, sinking into the chaotic stream of memories that flashed across his mind. He was tortured, had been for a long time.

There was no hint of magic inside him. That didn't mean anything. Gillette had hidden his true nature also, wrapped it around in a shell that she couldn't pierce.

Merrie sighed and projected. It may be a mistake but she had to help. She let a wave of comfort wash over Ston, filling him with neither forgiveness or blame, only gave him comfort that he was loved by someone.

He stiffened for a moment and then almost melted. The sobs came louder now, filling the cell as he sank into her.

She leaned back with him, pulling him to his bed. Together, they laid down.

The guard passed the cell entrance and looked at them curiously.

Merrie glanced up at him and then back down to Ston. With a soft whimper, she held him tight and let him cry.

Bared Throat

63

A hand stroked along her flank. She felt the questing fingers exploring up along her ribs to cup her breasts. Her nipple, hard as usual, ached for the touch even as she was waking up. The hand caught it between two fingers, gingerly exploring the crinkled tip before spreading out to hold the entire breast between their fingers.

Merrie could smell Ston behind her. His cock was pressing against her thigh, the thin fabric of his underwear soaked with his thoughts. His other hand was underneath the thin, barely serviceable pillow they both shared.

His breath was hot against her neck as he shifted slightly and brought his hand back to her breast. He trailed over one nipple before caressing the other.

As he did, his hips shifted forward and he lodged his shaft between the curves of her buttocks. The slick tip rasped along her recovering pussy lips. It would take only a slight angle change to take him inside her body.

He let out a soft breath. "I'm sorry."

She didn't know if he was talking about his daughter or his wife. It didn't really matter anymore. More than once, she had been a proxy for lovers and fantasies. It was one of her favorite parts of being a whore on the street, there were always people who needed her to act as forbidden lovers.

However, she usually used her empathy and telepathy to figure out what they needed. It would be harder without that information, without being able to connect the mannerisms that made it "real" for her lover.

She worried her lip as she enjoyed Ston's questing hand on her breast. It dipped lower to caress her stomach, as he started to search down between her legs.

Merrie decided not to use magic for Ston. The projecting of comfort was one thing, he needed that. To have an intimate connection was another, not to mention she didn't have high hopes of lasting long in Abbinkey and she didn't want his life on her hands.

With a soft moan, she lifted her leg as his hand sought her pussy. He inhaled sharply as he froze.

"It's okay, I like this," she whispered quietly.

"I'm sorry."

"No, please." She pushed his hand down until he cupped her pussy. She wasn't soaked but the pressure against her slit felt good. She moaned softly and pushed back, working his cock into the tight confines of her buttocks.

Ston moaned as he stroked two fingers up and down her furrow, working his way past her lips even as she grew slicker by the second. "So smooth. She was never this smooth."

Merrie rocked her hips against his cock.

He moaned again.

She turned to look over her shoulder at him. "You can have my ass, if you want."

He inhaled. "R-Really?"

She nodded. "Please? I need to feel you in my ass... Daddy." It was a guess but it was the right one.

He groaned and she felt his cock surged to become even hotter. He thrust it against her buttocks as he pulled his hand away from her pussy to fumble with his own clothes.

Merrie smiled to herself. When he grabbed her hips, she leaned into it, guiding the slick cock up between her buttocks. It rocked back and forth along her sphincter, teasing her as much as him.

Ston was soaked and dripping. He reached for her hip again and slid his hand down between her legs.

She opened herself up, lifting one short thigh into the air to give him better access to both of her holes.

He fumbled with his cock for a moment, working his hips back and forth along the slick seam of her buttocks before he managed to lodge the head against the tight ring.

“Oh, right there,” gasped Merrie in the quietest voice she could muster.

He moaned. “Oh, baby.” He pushed forward, increasing the pressure of the slick hardness against her opening.

It opened minutely, the pressure sending waves of pleasure across her senses. She shivered with pleasure and arched her back to increase the pressure.

“Oh, Daddy,” she whispered back.

He thrust forward with excitement. A flash of pain left her whimpering but he didn't stop as he drew back and thrusted in again, spearing into her asshole with short, insistent strokes.

Her rear entrance relaxed after a few thrusts but there was still tight pressure as he worked his cock deeper into her ass. Every thrust was frantic, right on the edge of control. She could feel him trembling to control himself as he plunged into her.

His other hand came up underneath the pillow. She expected him to grab her breast but then his fingers wrapped around her throat.

“OH, Daddy!” she gasped a little louder.

The grip on her throat tightened as he thrust harder. He moaned as he pushed her forward, rolling her onto her stomach and yanking his hand free as he did. His weight increased the depth of his thrusts, soon he was driving deep into her back entrance with slick strokes that left her feeling slick and filled.

He gripped her shoulder with his other hand, digging his nails into her until they broke the skin.

She moaned from the pain and pushed up, impaling herself as much as he thrust into her. The pressure of her insides being stretched out felt good. It was only intensified by the hand over her throat that was digging into the side. She could feel him trying to crush her throat, squeezing down. If she could breathe, he would be starting to suffocate her.

That only spurred her to further moans. She pushed back, gasping “Daddy” as if she was choking on his hand.

He groaned and thrust harder, moving from deeper strokes to slamming into her buttocks. Her entire body was driven into the mattress as the slap of their bodies filled the cell.

She clamped down on his cock, adding to the pressure. Whimpers, desperate and gasping, escaped her lips which only fueled his thrusts.

Ston panted as he drove into her, his fingers tightening on her shoulder and neck until she could almost feel her throat collapsing. He had lost himself in the pressure as he hammered her ass.

"H-Harder, Dad... Daddy!" Merrie whispered as quietly as she could but it was hard. Her body was already in the throes of an orgasm as she felt the pain and pleasure collide with each other. She shoved up with every thrust, desperate to feel more of his cock as it stretched her inner walls and filled her with the incredible sensation of liquid hardness.

She felt him come inside her, flooding her insides with hot liquid but he didn't stop. Instead he only increase the strength of his thrusting, slamming harder until her body was crushed against the mattress.

He released her shoulder, giving her only a moment's notice before wrapping his other hand around her throat. With two hands, he squeezed down as he fucked her, driving into her with brutal strokes as his fingers creaked with the effort to crush her throat.

She tried to whimper but no noise came out. There was no way she could get air into her lungs. It took a few thrusts and a blast of yet another orgasm before she remembered that breathing was a choice for her.

But, he needed her to struggle. She could feel it. She let the black stars slid across her vision as she took his cock. Her ass a was burning from his thrusts, he was getting rougher than any guard had ever been before. It was intense, slamming into her as he came again inside her.

The wetness of his cum coated her buttocks and dribbled down her bare pussy lips. She could feel it tickling along the sensitive nerves as she was repeatedly impaled on his cock.

Then, with a loud groan, he slammed hard as his fingers crushed through cartilage. Her throat collapsed as he came a final time in her ass, flooding it with more cum than ever before.

She tasted the regeneration spell starting up. It would be painful but a crushed throat was easily healed.

Shuddering, he held his position, his fingers seemed to shake. Sweat dripped across her body. He groaned as he peeled one finger after the other from her throat.

“Oh, Madock... not again,” he said in a broken gasp.

Merrie could hear the horror in his voice. She squeezed her muscles around his cock.

He slumped off her. “Oh, gods, not again, not again.”

She turned and looked at him. She managed to smile even though her throat was in agony.

“Bitch?” Ston peered at her. “Bitch?”

“I’m o... okay.” Her voice was broken and ragged. She could feel the cartilage shifting with the effort to speak through the agony.

“No, I can’t.” He inhaled to call out to the guards.

She shoved her arm into his mouth. “O... okay,” she rasped.

Tears glittered in his eyes. He reached out for her.

Merrie kept a smile on her lips despite the pain. She let him stroke her cheek before she motioned for him to put his head down.

Reluctantly, Ston did.

She turned away so he wouldn’t see the damage to her throat. The healing magic was already working at knitting the damage but she felt every agony as if it was healing ten times the rate. With tears in her eyes, she backed up against his naked hips and then closed her eyes.

He hovered his hand over her for a moment, as if unsure what to do.

Merrie answered by guiding his hand to her breast. When his fingers cupped her mound and his finger rested against her hard nipple, she smiled and let herself relax.

t'Sade

Promises

64

Merrie felt good. The last few days of the trip to Abbinkey had finally found their stride. She spent the days pleasuring almost all of the prisoners in the wagon and her nights being gang-fucked by the prison guards with occasionally spending the night fucking one of her fellow prisoners.

The constant orgasms relaxed her. She wasn't gaining power, nor trying to use magic, but just the constant submission and abuse was exactly what her psyche needed.

There was only one prisoner who she hadn't enjoyed: Monte. She looked at him through the cage bars. He was sitting quietly as Mace and Razor talked about working together to defend the rest of the wagon at Abbinkey. It was a way of passing the time since none of them really knew what to expect.

No, that wasn't true. Monte occasionally spoke up with a tidbit of information, usually about the guard. It was infrequent enough that the others seemed to miss it, even Mace stopped calling him a guard.

Merrie wondered why Monte never asked for her to join him. The other prisoners had, if it was drinking from Razor to relieve the pressure or letting Mace vent his passions into her face or pussy. Even Ston had opened up after their night together; the relief on his face when she was fine in the morning was enough to break much of the ice with him.

Merrie stretched. They still had one more night before they would reach Abbinkey. She let her tail wave back and forth for a moment, her entire body twisting in place to fuel the movement. It felt good to stretch, more so that the cage wasn't locked anymore.

She grinned. Something happened with her night with Ginny also. Merrie's abuse hadn't lessened, they still fucked her rough and hard, but they didn't work very hard to keep her on the white trail or make sure they locked the door. At the same time, they frequently forgot to feed her which didn't bother her at all.

Pushing herself up, she swayed with the movement of the wagon for a moment before crawling out. Turning around, she crawled up on the bench between Monte and Razor.

Razor automatically rested his hand on her thigh.

Merrie smiled at him but then turned her attention to Monte.

Monte glanced at her. "Bitch."

"Anything I can do for you?" she whispered.

"No, I'm good."

Slender perked up. "You gay, Monte?"

Monte shook his head. His hand reached up for his chest before spreading across his sternum. Merrie watched it as a prickle of danger rose up inside her. She had seen that movement before, many times when priests and paladins went for their holy symbols.

She dismissed her fear and leaned against Monte.

"No," Monte said, "I'm just not... really into sex."

"Is it a girl?"

"N-No, not really. Just not my thing."

"You an ace?"

"Ace?" Monte frowned.

"Asexual. Someone who doesn't like fucking."

Monte's face brightened. "Yeah, that's it."

The mountain of a man glanced at her and then lowered his hand.

The sense of wrongness rose. It was too wrong, too many coincidences, too many questions. She still remembered the compulsion spell. It was divine and she had only seen clerical magic users reaching for their holy symbols.

Wary, Merrie leaned against Monte. It was a friendly gesture, one that she had done more than once with everyone in the wagon.

"No," she said in a whisper, "I bet he made a promise."

She wasn't sure, but she felt a bit of tension.

"A promise?" Slender asked.

“Yeah, maybe a promise of chastity or celibacy. You know, those promises to keep one pure for their god? Those are easy ones, keep your dick out of some pussy or ass.”

This time, she felt the muscles in his leg tightened and then relax.

“Why would someone do that?” asked Mace, turning his attention to their conversation.

Merrie shrugged. “They gain power by it. The fallen paladin I told you about, Bass? All of his magic was based on promises. Promises to his goddess—”

The faintest of twitches.

“—and also promises to the girls he kidnapped. It was part of a goddess’ way of power. Almost all of her paladins were like that, because each promise gave them more power.”

She glanced at Monte. It was too dark to see anything but she thought she spotted something glistening on his brow. It took her a moment to consider using magic, from empathy to darkness. She wasn’t sure but the feeling that something was off was getting too much.

She let the connection to the shadows brush against her, pulling back the darkness so she could see clearly even in the dim light.

Monte was sweating. His eyes stared at her, shifting slightly as he bore into her.

Merrie sighed as a sick feeling filled her. He might be like Gillette, a paladin of Lemetri who pretended to be something else to worm their way into someone’s trust. That let them spy and attack when most unexpected.

If Monte was a spy, he wasn’t as good as Gillette. Of course, Gillette had no peer for his skill including wrapping his thoughts around a different personality.

However, he was reluctant to have sex also. Chastity was one of the first promises a paladin made to Lemetri. It was hard to break any promise; she though she had continually broke her promise to Parn throughout the trip.

Merrie let out a soft, fake moan and leaned against him. “There were other paladins too. I don’t know why, but Lemetri—”

Monte twitched and then groaned.

“—always hated Bass. He was part of the old guard, back when she had a different set of powers. That changed though.”

“What? Why?” asked Mace.

“Lemetri is dead.”

“Yeah, everyone knows that. They got in trouble building up an army and something killed... oh, that was you.”

“Three alphas serving their masters. But no, after that. A god took over Lemetri’s powers, the paladins have a new church.”

“What!?” asked Monte sharply.

Everyone else stared at him.

Monte blushed and ducked his head. He shifted away from Merrie. “S-Sorry, I didn’t know about that.”

“No one knows about that, she has be lying,” Mace grumbled. “That would be news that all of us would have heard in the cells. Everyone would be talking about that. You keep telling these stories, they can’t possibly be true.”

Merrie made a show of sighing. “If you say so, but I could prove it.”

“Then prove it.”

Merrie smiled at Mace. “Are you a paladin of Lemetri?”

“No, no fucking paladin would be sent to Abbinkey.”

“Are you sure?” She glanced at Monte who was pale. She crawled off the bench and back into her cage. “But, you must be right, Mace. No way I could know about that.”

As she closed her eyes, she hoped she was right.

The Paladin

65

Merrie yawned as she crawled into the final fortress before they reached Abbinkey. Her pussy and ass were comfortably sore and she had a stomach full of cum. She smiled and swayed her hips as the guard took her down the hall toward one of the cells.

As they passed one of the middle one, Monte called out. “Hey, could I have her tonight?”

Vace, who had just choke-fucked Merrie into multiple orgasms, looked at him. “I thought you didn’t want... yeah, whatever. Get your rocks off. I hope you like sloppy seconds. I fucked that ass of hers until she’ll be shitting logs for a week.”

Monte frowned as he stepped back. He looked sick but then nodded.

A quiver of fear and concern rolled over Merrie, but she kept quiet.

Vace shoved Merrie into the cell and slammed the door shut. “Enjoy the cunt,” he said with a laughter before heading toward the front to go upstairs.

Merrie looked around. She had never been paired with Monte, but it was obvious that he wasn’t interested in sex with her. She crawled into the center of the room and sat back on her haunches. Bringing her wrists up and spreading her thighs, she look at him.

“Don’t do that!” he whispered.

“Do what?”

“Stop being a slut!”

Merrie cocked her head and shook her head. “I can’t change, you know that.”

"I..." Monte looked around and then leaned forward. "I know, but it is making me uncomfortable."

"Worried?"

He gulped and shook his head. "No, not about that."

She smiled. "You mean I'm an unclean creature of darkness that has stained—" She remembered the words various paladins have described her over the years.

Monte slapped his hand over her mouth.

Merrie moaned but stopped talking.

He squatted in front of her, bringing his lips close to where her ear would be if she was human. Then he glanced and lifted himself to speak into where her ear actually was. "What do you think you know?"

"That you are a paladin," she said quietly. "Or a priest, I'm not sure."

"How?"

"You reached for your chest, I guess. And you turned me down."

"I'm sure plenty of people don't want to fuck you."

"Yes, but it was how you did it. You were too eager to turn me down."

Monte worried his lip. "I'll remember that for next time."

He took a deep breath. She felt the air grow tense around them. "You will forget you ever thought of that."

The spiderweb spell draped over her. She felt it dancing along her thoughts. Like before, it shattered into pieces instead of forcing her to forget everything. She didn't know why it wouldn't work but she felt an intense rush that she appeared to be resistant to the one thing that had destroyed her life before.

Still buzzed with her orgasms and the energy dancing around her, she felt suddenly playful. She let her face go slack and her mouth open slightly.

Monte stared at her for a moment. He let out a sigh. "Oh, that's a relief."

"Why?" Merrie smiled. "You are still a paladin, nothing changed."

He jerked. "H-How? You are an alpha, those spells are more powerful on you."

She grinned and leaned into him. “Who told you that? Were you briefed for this mission earlier? Before you were arrested?”

He groaned and sat back. “Damn the devils.”

Merrie lowered herself and crawled over to him. “Can we talk then? Or do I have to guess more details?”

He looked at her, a worried look on his face.

“Lemetri’s?”

His jaw tightened and then he nodded.

“You’re new, right? First mission?”

“Second. How did you guess?”

“Gillette.”

“He told you?”

“No, he betrayed me. Earned my trust and broke it. I survived but a heart remembers that pain. Something was off in the wagon, you just reminded me of a few things he also did.”

“The chastity promise? It was my first.”

She gave him an easy smile. “Really isn’t a good idea to send someone who made a vow of chastity and celibacy with an alpha trained to submit sexually to everyone.”

He gestured to her. “But you don’t have your powers anymore, it should have been easy.”

With a soft smile, she gestured back, “I’ve been fucking people for many years. I know body language, actions, the smells of it. Do you know cocks smell differently when you get excited?”

“Yeah, but I never thought about.” He frowned. “I’ll remember for next time. Say, why aren’t you trying to kill me now?”

“I never had a problem with Lemetri.”

“But—”

“Neither did Bass. All he wanted to be was left alone with Sable at the Puppy Mill. He wanted to be alone and die of old age, not be constantly attacked and betrayed.”

“That’s not what the church said.”

“Of course not. Lemetri used to be a goddess of joy and parties. Things changed when she became the goddess of light. She had... to put on a better face and that meant getting rid of her embarrassing past.”

“No, that can’t be right. She’s always been the goddess of light since the beginning of time.”

“Have I tried to kill you?”

“No,” he said sullenly.

“Have I revealed your secret?”

He shook his head.

“Have I raped you?”

Monte gasped. “No!”

Merrie grinned. “I swear, I don’t want to be betrayed myself. I have to go to Abbinkey. Knowing there is a paladin waiting to stab me—”

He blanched.

“—would make it harder to survive. I assume you were told to get rid of me if the chance came up, right?”

Monte’s uncomfortable look answered her.

She sighed. “Monte, I just want penance. I did terrible things, let me suffer in peace.”

“I have orders.”

“You have a new god.”

Monte looked around and leaned forward. “What do you mean? Are you the reason I’m having these dreams?”

Merrie realized that he was really a young paladin, one with relatively little training. He was thrown into a dangerous situation, a death sentence if anyone in Abbinkey found out. She almost felt sorry for him but she did feel anger at the church willing to sacrifice their men for one last chance at revenge.

She tried to think of Galladin and his portfolio. “Are they of a large man with chain armor? Maybe a glowing symbol?”

Monte nodded.

“Do you know of Galladin?”

He frowned. “A god of light and destruction. He is one of the companions and mentors of Lemetri. His symbols are a fist of.. light.”

There were sudden tears in his eyes. “Galladin? Galladin took Lemetri’s powers? I’ve been seeing the fist, I didn’t realize.”

He suddenly stumbled back. “No, no, that can’t be it. You are deceiving me. They said the shadows would do that.”

Merrie felt sadness. There was no way she could speak to him and let him understand. She also wondered if Galladin knew that Monte

was still following Lemetri's orders, maybe in hopes of an "accidental" miscommunication and assassination.

"Go away!" Monte said loudly. "Out of my cell."

"Man, quiet down," snapped Mace from the opposite side.

Circling around Merrie, the paladin pounded on the gates. "Guards!"

After a few moments, Vace came stumbling down. "What the hell? Did you blow your load already?"

"Please, I don't want her in here."

"Damn, what happened, she laugh at your pee-pee?"

Monte frowned for a moment. Suddenly he was surrounded by an overwhelming sense of Presence, an intense desire to listen and obey everything he said. "Put her somewhere else," he said firmly.

Merrie was stunned that the Presence wasn't affecting her.

Vace blinked. "Yeah, sure."

Merrie looked worriedly at Monte and then let herself be led out of the cell.

With a yawn, Vace pointed to Slender's cell. "Come on, maybe you can scare creepy instead."

As they walked down, Merrie looked into the cells. When she saw Ston, she gasped and sat down.

"What now?"

She nodded to Ston's cell.

"Really? The accountant? He's short, he can't have that big of dick."

Merrie smiled and wiggled her ass.

He shook his head but he opened the cell and let her go inside. Merrie watched as Vace staggered up, flicking off Monte before heading up the stairs.

Turning around, she had an idea. Panting softly, she crawled into Ston's bed and snuggled against his back.

"Bitch, not tonight."

She leaned over him. "Ston, you worship Madock, right?"

He blinked and then looked up. There was confusion on his face. "Y-Yeah, why?"

"Could you pray to him?"

"Why? What for?" He turned around so he was facing Merrie. "Why would you want a favor from Madock? He's a god of deals.

When I had my business, I would sacrifice five percent of my earning to him to retain his favor but I'm broke at the moment."

"What if someone was breaking a deal?"

"He might listen. Gods just don't answer because you ask. They never answer when you ask." He sniffed as his voice cracked a little.

"I know, but... could you try? Please? Just trust me?"

Yawning, he sat up. "Yeah, I can try. What deal is broken?"

Merrie ducked her head. "I can't say. I'm sorry, I just thought it might help."

"That makes it a little harder. I can't promise anything."

"I know. Thank you."

Ston nodded. He stretched for a moment and began to chant softly under his breath.

Merrie didn't know what to expect, all she knew is that she witnessed a deal and she thought something was going on. If Madock could do something, maybe he would. Otherwise, she would have to deal with Monte on her own.

Presence

66

Merrie berated herself as she splashed around the icy water of the trough. It felt good to clean up before the final trip to Abbinkey, but at the same time, she and the rest of the prisoners were feeling the dread of the prison looming before them. She didn't know what to expect, only that it would be hell for her.

Further down was Monte. He dressed quietly. Since he woke up, he had not said a single word to anyone. Just worked with mechanical steps.

Their eyes met for a moment before he looked away.

Merrie's ears and tail drooped. It was going to be a painful last trip. There was no way that anyone could miss the tension between them.

She slipped out of the water and shook herself. Ston and Slender both reached out with towels and she let herself forget Monte for a moment while they buffed and dried her. By the time she was done, and a couple slipped fingers along her breasts and pussy, she was smiling again.

"Okay, bitches, time to get mounted up. Tonight, you'll be in your new home!" Dornen was in high spirits, no doubt enjoying the dread that all the prisoners were showing.

"Come on, bitch," he kicked Merrie in the ribs. "Move your cunt."

Merrie winced but obeyed. She crawled along the white path around the building and toward the wagons.

"Stranger approaching!" yelled one of the crossbow men from on top of the gate.

Vace and Dornen stopped, looking around with confusion.

The fortress guards sprung into action. "Prisoners in the cells! Now!"

Vace spun and pointed back to the doors. "Now, move, move! Move your damn asses!"

Merrie crawled forward, hopping up the stairs and into the first cell. There was one of the fortress guards waiting to guide each one.

Monte was close behind her but when he was directed to enter the same cell as her, he balked.

"Get your fucking ass in the cell, prisoner!"

"I can't, not—"

The word ended with the guard slamming the butt of his spear into Monte's gut. As the paladin bent in half, the guard grabbed him by the scruff and threw him powerfully into the cell.

Monte slammed into the far wall, crumpling to the ground with a groan.

The cell door closed behind them.

Frowning, Merrie rushed over to Monte and cradled his head. "Are you okay?"

Monte looked up in confusion. His eyes took a second to focus and he waved at Merrie. "Monster."

"Yes, yes, but right now, you need to stay still."

He slumped forward into her lap. His head was hot and sticky. She frowned and stroked his head, only to bring it back bloody. Worried, she lifted his head to see there was a gash on his head. With his dazed expression, that meant he hit the wall harder than he expected.

She whimpered and looked around. She didn't have anything to help. After a second, she rested his head back on her lap to comfort him.

It only took a minute for the cells to be loaded and the doors closed shut. Six of the guards, a mixture of wagon and fortress, remained in front of the cells while the others filed out.

In the distance, she heard a muted "Halt!"

"What do you think—?" started Razor.

"Silent!" snapped one of the guards.

Everyone quieted.

"Identify yourself! Identify or be shot!"

Silence.

It stretched uncomfortable as the guards shifted on their feet, their swords brandished in front of them. Most of the prisoners stood at the doors to their cells, watching the front door as curiously as the guards.

Merrie felt the intruder long before they approached. It started as a quickening of her heart, a triple-beat that slammed into her ribs. With every moment, it felt like the pressure in the room increased, beating against her skin and ears.

She looked up. No one else seemed to notice but there was a little less tension in how tightly the guards held their weapons and the prisoners peered out.

The pressure build up. It was overwhelming. She could feel a silent command echoing inside it, the words beating against her ears. "Remain calm. Remain calm. Don't pay attention."

To her surprise, she felt no need to relax. No overwhelming orgasm coming from submission but also no slack jaw obedience. She had the choice to obey.

She did not.

The door darkened and then a young woman entered the room. She was in her early twenties with a brilliant smile and blonde hair. She wore chain armor that highlighted her perky breasts and narrow hips but left her midriff and thighs bare. Despite being almost useless as armor, Merrie found her eyes focusing on the large symbol between her breasts: Galladin's Fist. The symbol looked fresh and she could spot a few burnish stains from where the woman had removed the previous symbol.

She stepped inside and the guards stepped back. She had a two-handed sword on her back but despite the size of the weapon, she moved easily as she peered into one cell and then the other.

Spotting Monte, she smiled. Turning to the nearest guard, she said in the sweetest of voices, "Open this, please."

The guard stumbled forward. He fumbled with the cell door for a moment before opening it. Gulping, he stood there as she entered the cell like a queen.

Then stopped as her perfect blue eyes locked with Merrie. The smile froze, still brilliant but held in place. "Shadow Spawn."

Merrie smiled, confident that the deal that the gods had made was in place. "Lady Paladin, good to meet you."

The paladin frowned and then gestured to the moaning Monte. "That one is ours."

"I know." Merrie gently lifted Monte's head from her lap and showed the new paladin her bloody arm. "He hit his head, he needs help."

A look of concern flashed across the paladin's face. Then she strode forward with amazing grace and knelt down, smoothly sliding Monte's head from Merrie's lap into her own. The blood didn't touch her, it just dripped off the white gloves she wore onto the ground.

Merrie crawled back, fighting against the overwhelming Presence of the paladin that demanded that she remain calm. She didn't want to lose to it, it was important that she saw that Monte was cared for as much as knowing her fate.

A yellow-green glow surrounded Monte's head. Merrie had been healed enough times to know exactly what it mean. She watched curiously as Monte's dazed moaning stopped.

Seconds later, he sat up. "W-What happened?"

"You hit your head," said the paladin. "You needed healing."

"Oh, thank you..." He looked at her and then gasped. "Sir Lilin? What are you doing here?"

"Welcome back, Sir Fainmar. I apologize, we did not know where you are."

Merrie suspect that it was a lie.

"Y-You are wearing the symbol of Galladin."

"We have much to talk about. Lemetri is no more."

Monte looked at Merrie, frowning. "What trick is this? How did you convince her?"

The Presence grew stronger it focused on Monte. "Sir Fainmar, I swear to you on Lemetri's and Galladin's light, there is no trick."

The guards and prisoners began to stir but then the Presence washed over them and they grew still. Merrie felt it echoing in her head, trying to convince her to remain calm and not pay attention.

Monte looked at Merrie again. "My mission?"

Lilin glared at Merrie. "Over. Forever. Orders came from high, the fight with Fallen Paladin is over."

"Did we win?"

“No, Sir Fainmar, we did not win. We will never win.” There was bitterness in the paladin’s voice.

“Then why—?”

“Because it is over. We have much to talk about. Come.” She stood up and helped Monte to his feet.

Lilin looked at Merrie. “I hope, to all the powers in the universe, that you make some mistake, some horrible decision that once again lets us hunt you. The fight with The Fallen One may be over but we will watch you until the end of days.”

Monte groaned.

“The only solace I have is that you will never remember this threat, Omega. I know your weakness.”

A divine spell was gathering around her. Merrie could tell it was another compulsion, a spell for forgetfulness. She tensed, hoping and praying to whatever god was listening that she would be able to resist it.

“None of you will remember this event, ever.”

The spell snapped across the entire fortress. As one, every guard and prisoner went slack. Standing there with limp arms as they stared forward.

Merrie felt the spell crash into her mind. It crumbled almost immediately, breaking apart into fragments that she could see how they were constructed.

She had a choice to forget.

She did not. Instead, she knew exactly what she had to do to make it appear to work. She let her jaw go slack as she pretended to have the spell take over.

The paladin nodded. “Horrid creature, may you die painfully.”

Together, the two paladins left the cell. They headed out.

As soon as the Presence faded, so did the spell. Everyone else began to stir awake, regaining their senses. For a minute, they just stood there in dazed confusion.

Then the captain came in. “Why aren’t the prisoners in their wagons! We have a deadline. Move folks, move!” She clapped her hand to emphasize the point.

By the time they loaded the wagon, Merrie noticed that no one questioned why there was only five prisoners in the wagon including herself. Monte no longer existed to any of them.

She sighed and slumped down. They would be back, that she was sure about. She only hoped she wouldn't be constantly attacked like Bass was.

Prayer

67

They were almost to Abbinkey. The wagon was silent. No one wanted blowjobs or even to talk. The calming and soothing presence of Monte was obviously missing to Merrie, but to the others, it seemed like they were lost in thought as they headed to the dreaded prison.

Merrie remained on her makeshift bed, lost in thought. Did asking Ston to pray to Madock make the difference? Did he enforce the bargain? Or were the paladins already coming to retrieve Monte? No matter, she was glad that he was gone, both because he would be risking everything in the prison but also because his cover had been blown. She couldn't imagine she was the only one who would notice his mistakes.

Should she have prayed to Madock herself? She didn't know how. All she remembered was Talus saying that no alpha could follow a god.

But she did have a god, Parn. The Goddess of Oaths created her, shaped her into take other powers and magnify them. She was the goddess that Merrie should follow, but she never thought about how to thank the goddess. Were there prayers? Did she make promises?

The doubt hung over her. She thought she should thank someone for the help but she didn't know how.

Frustrated, she closed her eyes and whispered under her breath. "Parn? Am I doing the right thing? Did I break too many promises? I don't know... I don't know what I'm doing."

No, that didn't feel right.

Parn didn't give her directions. Only asked her to think about her choices.

She sighed and opened her eyes again, looking into the dim light. She didn't need magic to see in the room. She could, but didn't want to. It was as if she could choose how difficult life was, which opportunities would be missed like the black butterfly and which ones she would break the rules to have like comforting Ston.

There were other things going on. The breaking compulsions were the one that worried her the most. She could feel them in her head, little pieces of divine power floating around. It was like when she learned psionic magic. She had to break it apart and use the pieces to rebuild them into spells. These were divine powers, why were they echoing in her head. More importantly, how did she understand them?

There were so many questions, so many doubts.

She didn't think they would be answered in one day or even on year.

The Warehouse

68

The wagon came to a halt and Merrie's stomach rolled with fear. She wasn't sure what she would experience, but the dread of finally getting to Abbinkey Prison was too much. She groaned and curled up.

The door rattled and she perked up. They had always made the prisoners wait almost an hour before getting to them. Now, they were opening the door within a minute of arrival.

The door opened and sunlight streamed in. She felt the agony against her skin, searing against the pale flesh. With a scream, she threw herself into the back and burrowed into her blankets. Around her, the smell of sake and smoke flooded her senses.

Ginny flashed past the door and slammed it shut. "Sunlight is fatal to one of the prisoners!" she snapped.

There was a muttered voice.

Then the wagon was moving again. It only went a short distance before stopping again. The door opened, they were inside a dark warehouse of some sort.

A new guard stuck his head in and looked around. "Get them unlocked and out," he ordered.

Hore crawled in with a glare. He unlocked each of the four prisoners and pushed them toward the door. Then he reached Merrie's cage. He sniffed and pulled a face. He started to unlock it and realized it was open. With a sigh, he yanked it open. "Get your cunt out there."

Merrie, stomach twisted in knots, crawled out of her cage and out of the wagon. The warehouse was blissfully dim but there was enough light to see ten white squares next to the wagon. The other

four were already standing in each one so she crawled over and sat down.

A burly man came around the wagon. "Prisoners, stand at ready!"

He started to walk past Merrie and then jerked. He stepped back and looked down in surprise. "What the hell?"

Hore held out a bundle of papers. "Traitor to the crown. The, um, the naked girl."

"Where are her clothes?" He turned on Hore. "What the hell did you do to your charge!?"

Hore flinched and stepped back. "N-Nothing, sir! She doesn't wear clothes!"

The burly man looked down. "Stand up."

Merrie held up her wrists.

"You don't need your hands to stand up. Now stand up!" He reached down and grabbed Merrie by the shoulder. He wore a metal gauntlet and electricity surged through her body, setting her nerves on fire.

She screamed out as she was yanked to her ankles. Then he slammed her down.

Her legs collapsed underneath her.

Reaching down, he grabbed her again. More electricity slammed into her, setting her body on fire.

She cried out as he lifted her off the ground.

Just as he started to set her down, he look at her legs. His eyes widened. Merrie jerked violently in his grip as the man turned slowly to Hore who cringed.

"She doesn't... have feet either... sir."

The man made a disgusted sigh and released Merrie.

She crumpled to the ground as the lightning continued to surge through her body. Her arms and legs jerked for a moment before she could get her limbs under control.

"What's your name, girl?"

Merrie looked up to see the man leaning over her, his face centimeters from her own. His breath smelled surprisingly fresh. He had a neat beard but a number of scars along his chin and throat.

She squeaked.

"She, um, can't talk. She barks."

The man slowly looked at Hore. “No hands, no feet, no voice? Get your captain here. Now.”

Hore gasped. “Yes, sir!” He turned and ran.

The guard straightened. “Are the rest of you deaf also?”

“No, sir!” came the chorus of replies.

“Have all your feet and hands?”

Another round of agreement. They were frightened and answered quickly.

“Which one of you has a problem with sun?”

All four of them looked at Merrie.

A groan. “Of course she would be the one. Snare, Docent!”

Two guards came up. They wore tight uniforms with a large “A” with a keyhole in the center, the symbol of Abbinkey. “Sir!”

“Take the normals and get them processed. I’ll deal with Princess Puppy myself.”

“Yes, sir.”

Merrie watched as her four companions were taken away. Soon she was left alone with a glowering guard.

The guard scratched his beard. “Are you a joke?”

Her ears flattened against her skull as she shook her head.

“Ears too? What are you? Let me guess, a tail?”

Merrie twisted to show her tail which was pressed against her thigh. “A naked puppy girl in the nastiest prison known in this country. You are going to get raped and murdered in seconds.”

Her pussy clenched at the thought. The flutter of excitement and anticipation rose and she squirmed for a moment.

Ginny came running up. She was out of breath as she came to a stop. “Sir, you summoned me. Sorry, I didn’t know my way around this place.”

“You the captain?”

“Captain Ginny Racir, at your presence, sir.”

“Racir? Gorn’s girl?”

“Yes, sir. I started this run a few years ago.”

“I really need to get out here more often.” He pinched the brow of his nose. “Maybe you can explain the princess here?”

Ginny looked at Merrie. “That is Merrie Golddotter, a traitor to the crown.”

“This princess is a traitor?”

“Yes, sir. Convicted of at least twenty crimes including killing tens of thousands when she summoned two shadow lands, one in the middle of Franome City and the other in Blood County. She also... um, here is her report.” Ginny handed a thick envelop to the guard. “It’s rather detailed. She also destroyed the Royal Court. Almost everyone inside died.”

The guard’s grip on the envelop tightened, folding it in half. “She has the Justice Mark?”

“Of course, sir.”

“Sunlight?”

“Fatal and torture. The courts demand that she remain in darkness when in our control.”

“We can’t control her once she’s in the prison.”

“We know. As long as she is in custody, we are charged to keep direct and indirect sunlight and other bright lights away from her body.”

“She better stay in the tunnels then. Why is sunlight a problem?”

“Something about her made of shadows. She starts to... melt in bright light.”

The guard glared at Merrie who cringed. “You are a damn princess, aren’t you? Anything else you require? Glass slippers? A handmaiden?”

Merrie whimpered and shook her head.

“Someone to wipe your ass?”

She cringed as a flutter of memories came back.

“No matter,” he said. “It will be dark in a few hours, we’ll do processing then. Loyal to me!”

Merrie winced as the air exploded around her. An armored knight in green landed next to her. She didn’t need her magic to know there were thousands of attack and defensive spells in the heavily powered armor.

“Loyal Zurl, this is a threat to Franome. She is not to move from that spot on pain of death until I personally come to process her tonight.”

“Loyal Zurl obeys!” The loyal had a powerful mechanical voice, distorted through the heavy helmet he wore. He snapped his hand down and a large blade slid out from his gauntlet. It hummed with killing power, the air distorting from the sheer energy inside it.

Spinning around, Zurl stood in front of Merrie. There was a heavy weight as Zurl stamped his feet, the ground shaking from the impact.

“While you’re at it, scan her. I want to know if the princess has any other surprises.”

Merrie blanched. A loyal was going to analyze her abilities? He would know that she could still use magic. She whined and tensed, waiting for the immediate killing blow.

The guard grunted and pointed to the door. “Come, let’s get the rest of the prisoners into processing.”

Ginny gave Merrie one last look before she joined the captain.

As they walked, he started to ask questions. “How is your father doing? Retired? When did that happen? I really need to get out more.”

t'Sade

Processing

69

Though she hadn't moved from the white square, Merrie was exhausted. Every time she twitched, Zurl responded with a creak of his gauntlets, a scrape of metal against stone, or the air would grow tense with magic. Even without using her magical senses, she could feel the bone-deep scan scraping along her senses and pulsating in her bones. It only faded when the Loyal looked away.

She whimpered and ducked her head. Her arm shook for a moment before she started to lie down.

"Remain standing... sitting," ordered the mechanical voice.

She still wondered why the Loyal couldn't detect her magic. She knew she had it, she could feel it right on the edge of her senses. It was there, pulsating and ready to come to use. Only the oath to Parn stopped her from using it.

Sitting alone made it harder. When she was first bonded, she passed the time by using a timekeeper spell and pacing around Kine's house. She wouldn't now, if anything for her agreement with Parn. She glanced at Zurl and sighed. The Loyal would sense if she used magic also, that would make her more of a threat than a naked puppy girl sitting on the ground.

Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath and opened them again. It wouldn't be much longer, night had already fallen and the warehouse was almost pitch black. She stared into it, unable to pierce the shadows without her magic. Somehow, it filled her with dread and despair not being able to see clearly after years of using shadow magic.

Footsteps interrupted her thoughts. It was the guard from earlier, the one who appeared to be in charge. He wore the same

uniform but he seemed more content as he strolled up with hands in his pockets. She noticed he didn't have a weapon and he wasn't wearing his gauntlets either. "Good evening, Loyal."

"Welcome, Commander Fomasal."

Merrie started. Commander? This man was in charge of the prison?

"Did you scan her?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anything?"

"I detected no unexpected magic on her body or spirit. The only enchantments found were consistent with—"

There was a brief pause that Merrie almost missed.

"—oath magic."

"The Justice Geas?"

"The signature matches but there are aberrations with the pattern."

Merrie's skin crawled. She still had the geas on her? How? Parn said she had removed it. Merrie had used magic since then, more than once. It had to be gone, but why did the Loyal, one of the most powerful knights in the kingdom miss it.

Her stomach clenched. Did everyone think she had the geas but it no longer affected her? Why? What was Parn doing? Was it intended?

"What's wrong then?" asked Fomasal.

Merrie tensed, her eyes scanning the loyal as she dreaded the answer.

To her surprise, the loyal didn't answer right away. Instead, he looked up in a wide circle.

Fomasal frowned. "Zurl?"

"Scanning for other observers within the immediate area. Give me a moment, please."

No one said anything. Merrie remained still, her skin still crawling with growing dread.

Zurl's voice suddenly grew less mechanical. "Sir? The prisoner has a Royal Geas."

Fomasal's jaw grew slack as he stared at the green armored man. "Pardon? She's got what?"

Merrie was also surprised but it started to make sense. While Parn had removed the geasa from her spirit, the goddess must have had left enough of the spell to register to mortals. From their point of view, Merrie was bound by unbreakable oaths though she was aware that they were firm promises but not absolute. She sighed in relief. She could use magic, she just didn't want to yet.

"The pattern matches yours, but does not correspond to mine which was placed by the Queen. Judging from the signature, it was put on her somewhere between one and five years ago by Prince Claston. I only have a few samples to work from but the energy patterns fit."

Fomasal snapped his mouth shut for a moment. "How can she be a traitor then? Did she commit these crimes before? No, the Royal Geas is also a pardon. She can't be a traitor."

"Sir, may I express an opinion?"

Fomasal gestured to Zurl and nodded curtly. "Yes. Please do."

"The scan and research into her file also indicates that she has an increased vulnerability to oath magic. This means that the effects of both the Justice and Royal geasa have been increased. I tested some of the known limitations of both geasa and they are ineffective."

"H-How?"

"She is a True Submissive."

"I don't know what that is. A priesthood?"

"No, it is a rare individual who gains power from submission. The more you order or command them, the more power they gain. Apparently that has a very wide range that will trigger that power, even an order to sit would be enough. However True Submissives are incapable of wielding their own power and must be bonded to another individual. When that happens, they enhanced their bonded master's abilities with their own."

"So, she's dangerous with a... master? But useless without one?"

"I believe so. True Submissives are only capable of meta-magic."

Merrie knew that wasn't true. An alpha took on the qualities of their master, like her shadow powers or Sable's holy powers. However she wasn't going to correct the Loyal or the guard; they still thought she couldn't speak.

“Where is her master? Wait, wasn’t there something about... a...” Fomasal snapped his fingers for a moment. “No, I can’t remember. I thought I had it.”

He sighed for a moment, looking over Merrie.

She looked back. Slowly, she drew her knees underneath her and brought her wrists up to her throat. The smooth ends of her arms bumped against the heavy metal collar. Even without magic, she could see a brief flash of lust cross his eyes and she couldn’t help but get a little thrill when his pants grew tighter.

Fomasal blushed but didn’t turn away. Instead his hand tightened into a fist for a second before he relaxed it. “Stop that.”

She lowered her arms, but kept her breasts thrust forward.

He frowned and then looked at Zurl. “Can she choose not to use her powers?”

“I don’t think so.”

He turned back to her. “Then is the Justice Geas working? I just gave an order.”

“It has not triggered and I detected no gathering of power. The geas must be more powerful than her powers.”

Amused by their ignorance, Merrie found the sudden urge to reach out. There was something going on and she didn’t want to ruin it. She kept her tail still, though she could feel the muscles bunching with the effort.

Shaking his head, he groaned and pinched the bridge of his nose. “So, she’s safe even if someone tells her something. She is also utterly incapable of betraying the country and is yet a traitor?”

“Yes, that is my opinion.”

When he knelt down in front of her, Merrie held her breath. Her body trembled as she glanced at his bare hand and then back to his face.

Fomasal reached over and caught her chin. He guided her to look one way and then the other.

Merrie’s pussy grew slicker from his casual dominance.

“One other thing, Commander. That collar is an artifact.”

Fomasal tensed. He lifted Merrie’s chin and inspected the black collar. He said nothing but she could feel fear and worry in his actions. “An... artifact? In my prison?”

Zurl buzzed for a moment. “I suspect. While the collar has no distinct energy signature, it resisted my scan in ways that I have only encountered from other divine artifacts. I got only a small glimpse of its purpose; it appears to magnify the magic of the prisoner. There is oath magic used to bind her to the collar, her True Submissive nature has magnified this to the same degree that the Justice and Royal geasa have bound her. I suspect that the collar’s bond may be more restrictive than the geasa.”

“She has a collar that enhances her ability to enhance others?” Fomasal sounded worried. “But she can’t use magic, right?”

“Correct, the Justice Geas prevents that. Hence it not activating with your actions which I interpret as dominating.”

“What? Why?”

“She is getting turned on,” came the distasteful mechanical voice.

Fomasal looked into her eyes. The grip on her chin increased and he lifted her up. “Does this turn you on?”

She nodded, her pulse quickening.

Fomasal bared her throat as he peered at the collar. “No hands, no feet, no voice, no light, and an artifact to boot. I thought you didn’t have anything other surprises, Princes Puppy.”

She gave a soft bark.

He frowned, then shook his head. He lowered her chin until he was staring into her eyes. “Are you a traitor, girl? Did you betray Franome, it’s people, or the Royal Family?”

Merrie wasn’t sure how to answer. Was this a situation where telling the truth would violate the geas, if it was still on her? After a heartbeat she decided it didn’t and shook her head violently. She worried her lip for a moment but then remained silent.

Fomasal sighed. “What is going down at the capital? This is most irregular. More importantly, who’s screwing with politics down there? Damn, I hate people.”

“Her paperwork?” ask Zurl. “Maybe there was a mistake? We have never had a True Submissive here nor... a naked woman like this.”

“No, I double-checked. It’s valid and sealed. She’s a traitor to the crown, even though there is no possible way she could be. They dotted every ‘i’ and crossed the right letters.”

Merrie whimpered. She wanted to explain it but didn't, that felt it was going too far beyond the limits Parn wanted her to have.

"What do we do, commander? This woman has both the potential of being a great danger, both to herself and to those in the prison."

He sighed and shook his head. "Get her some clothes and process her. Parading her around nude is just asking for trouble. I'll start asking questions but it may take years to figure out the answer. Someone obviously made her take a fall and trusted that her geas would prevent her from telling anyone."

"It wouldn't be the first."

"Yes, but usually the guys sent for the fall don't have artifacts around their neck while they crawl around naked with their cunts hanging out. No, I can't keep her out here, she has to go in."

"She'll be dead before you get answers." Zurl sounded surprisingly human in that moment.

"I know." He looked at Merrie with sad eyes. "I'm sorry. There is nothing I can do, you will enter the prison. Maybe if you are lucky, you can sleep your way into a comfortable position until we figure out what is going on. You have the most... softest body of anyone in recent memory."

He shook his head. "However, you'll probably end up raped by morning and have your throat cut by tomorrow night."

Merrie sighed and nodded. Her ears were flat against her head.

Fomasal stood up. "Let's get this over with. Zurl, pop out and grab something for her to wear. Prisoner, walk next to me." His voice took on a commanding tone and her pussy clenched with the sound of someone capable of dominating her. "Any attempt to escape will result in your execution. Do you understand?"

She barked.

He shook his head. "Is that a yes?"

She barked and nodded at the same time.

"What is no?"

Merrie whined and shook her head.

"Okay. You're like a dog? Well, then... Princess, heel!"

She obeyed, crawling next to the guard without touching him. Her pussy was already dripping with excitement. Even the thrill of being ordered, though to crawl to her doom, was enough to bright a

welcoming joy. She had to fight sinking into the pleasure and letting the energy of submission fill her.

He had to adjust his crotch before he stepped forward.

She matched his movement.

Fomasal started slow but when she easily kept up, he accelerated into what appeared to be his normal pace.

She kept up fairly easily, crawling out of the warehouse.

They passed a number of guards who stared in surprise and shock.

The outside was not what she expected. It was at the bottom of a deep valley. Both sides had been carved back into towering cliffs that would be nearly impossible to scale. Behind her, there were at least three sets of heavily armed gates. Ahead of her, another set of gates leading into what appeared to be two doors, one red and the other white. The white door was far smaller than the red. The red was easily twenty meters high and forty across.

She stumbled, she wasn't expecting the door to be so large.

With a gasp, she regained her balance and hurried to remain centimeters away from Fomasal's hip. As she calmed down, she looked up to the top of the cliffs where a thick forest spilled out over the edge.

"There is a somewhat insane silfae and his killer plants on top. No one has survived escaping through them, so don't even try. Likewise, there are demons in the lower tunnels so digging your way out would be just as fatal. There is magic in the rock surrounding the prison, mostly wards and glyphs, but enough nasty surprises to not only kill you but everyone around you if exposed to air. The only way in and out is the Red Door."

Merrie shivered as she focused on keeping up.

He stopped in front of the red door. Gesturing to it, Fomasal said, "You will go through that. All prisoners do. I will not join you, the white door is for me."

She nodded.

The red door was old stone but not painted. Instead it looked like it was stained endlessly. There were words carved into it, but the many layers of dust and dirt, coupled with the erosion of age, had obscured all the letters until only a few remained clear. She only caught the large words on top: Kivas. It was Borias' family name.

Fomasal stopped and gestured to the door. "Now you enter Abbinkey Prison, also known as the Curse of the Kivas. The prison created by one brother to imprison the other. I'd give the history but it won't matter, you probably will never leave again."

She didn't see an entrance through the door.

"Just walk through it, the door will accept and mark you. I will be on the other side." He gestured again and waited.

Whimpering, Merrie stepped forward. The red door flickered in front of her. She took a deep breath and stepped into it.

The world around her disappeared and she was walking in darkness. It wasn't much different than entering the shadows. However she could feel the weight of the door on her, vague but threatening. It was heavier than anything she had experienced, a weight that would crush her if she tried to force herself through the red door.

Magic rippled over her body. It felt like oath magic but not quite. It sank into her skin, burrowing into flesh as it sought out her heart. The triple beat grew faster as the energy gathered around it. It reached down but then... it felt like the magic shattered against her heart.

Confused, Merrie continued to crawl forward until she came out the other side. Despite being a dim tunnel, the light was bright compared to the darkness of the door and she cringed from it.

Fomasal snapped out an order to cover the lights. As a dozen guards rushed to obey, he scanned the door behind her. As he did, he began to frown.

She turned to see glyphs and symbols surrounding the silhouette of where she passed through the surface. Many of them were subdued but others were bright and pulsating. She couldn't read most of them but she saw "Kivas" floating above her head.

"You know a member of the Kivas family?"

Merrie nodded.

"Which one?"

Merrie whimpered. She started to speak but then he interrupted.

"You can't talk. Fine, I'll find another way. Come on."

He turned and headed down a remarkably narrow corridor on the side of the larger tunnel. On one side, dozens of steel doors remained shut. The doors had no markings other than a number

over each one. He gestured at them. “Oath Masters. Every single one of them. Pick one door, it doesn’t matter which.”

Merrie looked at them and then selected a random one. She approached it and the door opened. Inside was a small office trimmed in white wood. There was a masked figure wearing a heavy cloak standing on the far side.

Fomasal joined her and closed the door behind her.

“Commander? Your presence is unexpected,” came a distorted voice. It hid all hint of gender and speech.

“The door detected emotional ties with the Kivas but she can’t speak. I need to know.”

“Very well, Commander. I’ll see what I can do.” The voice scraped on Merrie’s senses.

The figured focused on Merrie but she couldn’t see eyes or even expressions in the pale white mask. “I am an Oath Master. One of forty-nine. You will not know who I am. You will not ever know which one of us have placed the Abbinkey Compulsion on you. This geas will prevent you from ever leaving the prison until you have been pardoned or work out the remainder of your duty to society. Do you understand?”

Merrie whimpered and looked around. There was no exit, she couldn’t even see the door.

“Do you understand?” came the distorted voice.

Merrie barked once with tears in her eyes.

The masked figured looked up. “What was that? Is that... yes?” The voice was surprised despite the masked tone.

Fomasal sighed. “She cannot speak, only bark. One whine for no, a bark for yes. I don’t understand it either but seems to be the Princess’ way.”

“That will be... more difficult to get your answers. Do you understand what this spell does?”

Merrie nodded and barked. She wanted to cry and run away but there was no escape. Trembling, she fought the urge to curl up and tried to remain strong. She struggled with her tears until she finally decided to switch to a present position.

The Oath Master stepped back.

Merrie held herself still, wrists at her collar and her back arched. Her breasts rose and fell with her deep breath as her knees slid apart. Some of the tension left as she settled into place.

The Oath Master glanced up. "Commander?"

Fomasal shrugged. "Just continue. Princess Puppy has... issues."

"Very well." The Oath Master held out their hand. It was heavily gloved in white leather. It gave no additional hint to the person inside.

Energy gathered around her, chains of translucent power forming across her skin. Patterns rose up against her will. Merrie whimpered, she was trying to obey the oath she made to the goddess not to use her magic but this time her senses had activated without her choice.

The chains were a spell, cast on the fly judging from the way it was being woven together. She saw a complicated set of patterns in it, each one tied tightly together with some new magic being woven into the pattern.

It was a geas, of course. She could see how it was created to cause her pain if she tried to leave or even think about leaving. There were components to prevent her from getting outside of a certain range. She even spotted more details, subtle loopholes and aspects of the spell that were tied into the greater magic.

Whimpering, she looked away and started at the Oath Master instead. She saw the physical person in front of her but then saw more. There was magic wrapped around the mage's spirit. She gasped as she realized she was seeing the many compulsions and geasa that were wrapped around the Oath Master. Some were complicated, the brightest was the Royal Geas which Merrie could easily identify. There were others, wrapped so tightly so there would never be an escape from the unbreakable promises.

She glanced at the commander. She saw the same, the Royal Geas and more. They were just underneath the skin and along the bones, swirling around as they wrapped around his thoughts and actions.

She was seeing oaths. A thousand promises made to gods and divine powers. Ones with terrible consequences, ones that would tear apart the body and mind within seconds.

Scared, she returned to looking at the spell being cast on her. It was a terrible spell, the damage and violence inside of it capable of ripping her to shreds if she violated even a single clause.

It draped over her, wrapping around her body and sinking into her bones.

Then it shattered just like the magic in the door.

Her eyes snapped open as she felt the spell crumbling deep inside her. Pieces broke apart, revealing how they were combined together into action. Some of the hidden aspects rose up, certain words that would cause her to say things even if she didn't know them. A number rose up, 713284, and then faded. She didn't know why, but the number seemed important.

The Oath Master continued to spin the geas apparently unaware that it was crumbling almost as fast as they cast the spell.

Merrie's triple beat pounded in her chest as she felt the energy wash over her but do nothing. It danced along her skin, almost like a lover, but it had no more effect than caressing her.

Then it was done. The Oath Master pulled back their hands. "Prisoner, what is your number?"

Merrie frowned, she didn't have a number. No, she did. The numerals rose up in her head. She whimpered and looked around. The urge to speak was growing inside her, she had to. No, she didn't have to. She choose to. Clearing her throat, she whispered hoarsely, "713284".

Fomasal cleared his throat. "You can talk?" His voice was tense.

She ducked her head. "Yes, sir, but... I'm not supposed to."

He looked up at the Oath Master. "Is that the number?"

"Yes, Commander. The compulsion has been placed. She is now a prisoner until she is pardoned."

"Good. Now, since you can use words," there was a harshness in his voice, "which Kivas do you know?"

Merrie said, "I know three. Rendi, Haviston, and Borias."

"Borias!? You know where my cousin is!?" The commander grabbed Merrie's shoulder and pulled her close. His fingers dug into her body, his nails breaking into her skin.

She cried out.

"Where is he!?" He shook her violently, electricity ripping through her body as sparks shot out of his gloves and her body.

Merrie knew she couldn't tell. "I cannot!" she screamed through the lightning.

Fomasal released her and growled. "Tell me where the escaped cousin is!"

"I cannot."

"No, you must! He has escaped, I cannot let him remain—!"

"Sir!" interrupted the Oath Master.

"What!?"

"The Royal Geas is activating."

Fomasal stared at the Oath Master. He shook his head. "No. That's not possible."

"Yes, sir. She cannot tell you because the knowledge of his location would harm Franome."

"Why would my cousin's presence threaten this country?" He growled and looked at her. "What are you? Everything about you is wrong! You have a Royal Geas but you are a traitor? You have an artifact to boost magic but no powers left. The one Kivas to ever escape is somehow precious to the country? How can you be part of this!?"

Then he noticed something to her side of her head.

She looked to see black blood dripping down where he cut her.

He frowned as he peered down at his own hands where a few droplet of her black blood cling to his fingers. "What are you?"

She whimpered and cringed. "I'm sorry. I don't have blood... I gave myself to the Shadows before... everything else."

"Why did you lie to me about speaking?" His voice was calmer but there was a threat of retribution.

"I was scared. I... I spent most of my life acting like a puppy girl. That's how I gained power. It's part of my nature... and my training. I'm a pet. And pet don't speak."

"Are you one of those True Submissives?" he snapped.

"Yes, I'm an alpha. Well, the Omega."

Fomasal stared at her for a moment, his eyes snaking back and forth as if he was thinking. And then he sank down, to land heavily on the ground. "This is too much. What is the Omega?"

Merrie whimpered and her ears flatted against her head. "I lost my master." It wasn't entirely true but nothing forced her to explain she was her own mistress.

He looked at the Oath Master. “Is she telling the truth?”

“The compulsion prevents lies to the guards. She is telling the whole truth. Before you ask, I can also see the oath magic activating.”

“So that collar really is an artifact?” he asked Merrie.

The dog girl nodded. “It can’t be removed. Not without a lot of people dying. They tried in the court... it exploded.” Another whimper. “Too many people died. I tried to stop them but—”

“Of course. It’s a powerful artifact in my prison. Worn by a powerful being... incapable of defending herself... who is also not a traitor to the country.”

Merrie ducked her head. “No one else can use it though. It’s bound to me and only me.”

He groaned. “That doesn’t help. Something is terribly wrong. After this, I’m heading down to Franome City and cracking open some heads.”

Getting back to his feet, he said, “I hope you can survive... what’s your name?”

“Merrie or Bitch.”

“I’ll stick with Princess. I hope you have survival skills far and beyond what you look like. You are about to experience hell and I’m afraid of what will happen. I just don’t know who is going to be hurt more by this: you, the other prisoners, or Abbinkey itself.”

t'Sade

Three Lives

70

Fifteen minutes later, Fomasal and Merrie were walking back into the wide tunnel away from the Red Door. She kept close to his hip, her body moving in time with his rapid footsteps. Around them, the wide tunnel was dimly lit due to heavy cloaks being thrown over the magical lanterns that lined both sides of the tunnel.

The guards were still there, milling around both sides of the tunnel. They turned to stare at both of them but Merrie knew their attention was focused on her. She was an amputee crawling on the ground, naked and helpless.

She couldn't help but sway her hips and wag her tail. The thrill of presenting herself brought a rush though she was careful not to let the energy gather inside her. It still turned her on and she enjoyed the little tingle of excitement.

It didn't last long before they approached their next destination, the end of the tunnel. The entire opening was guarded by heavy steel bars except for a narrow opening in the middle. Beyond the entrance was open air and the darkness of night.

Almost thirty guards stood in front of the opening. Most of them were staring out into the night but that changed as they approached. One by one, the guards turned to stare at her. There were looks of naked lust and suspicion on their faces.

Merrie let out a soft moan at the attention.

"Do you cause trouble everywhere you go?"

Merrie looked up at him. Then she gave a single pointed bark.

"Yes, of course. It doesn't help that you are parading around naked. Where is Zurl—"

An explosion interrupted him, the air blasting against Merrie's face. The force of it forced her back a step.

Even Fomasal staggered for a moment.

"My apologize, Commander."

Fomasal glared at the warrior. "Were you waiting for me to ask for you?"

"I found a long shift, it should work to cover her," said the Loyal. He held up a bundle of worn fabric along with with a rope.

"Thank you." Fomasal said as he took the bundle. As the Loyal disappeared, he crouched down in front of Merrie. "Come on, the guards should have dressed you before you ever got on the wagon. Didn't you ask?"

Merrie whined and shook her head. She got on her knees and held out her wrists.

"I can help. Come on," he was almost tender as he worked the fabric down over her arms, shoulders, and breasts. His knuckles brushed against the sensitive nipples for a moment before dragging the fabric further down around her waist. "Do you like being naked?"

She barked.

"Back to being a dog?"

She rolled her eyes, grinned, and barked again.

"Well, Princess, I'm required to do everything in my power to make sure you don't die as soon as you arrive." He spoke a bit louder than normal, probably for the benefits of the listening guards. When he continued, his voice was quieter. "You probably want to head for the tunnels as fast as you can. Over the centuries, the prisoners have carved homes into the sides of the cliff and into the ground underneath. When they get too far, they set off the wards or set off a wave of demons, but there is enough places away from the sunlight that you won't die."

She lifted her body as he tugged the shift down. It fluttered to her hips before it was taut across her body. The thin fabric was almost transparent and it did little to hide her large breasts sticking out. It was also short enough that her tail was free and her pussy peeked out from the bottom.

He didn't seem to notice as he wrapped the rope around her waist and cinched it tight. His fingers were sure but there was an unexpected tenderness.

When he finished, he leaned back. "I'm going to find out what happened. But right now, you are ordered to enter the prison proper."

Fomasal stood up and pointed into the darkness. "We will not provide food, shelter, or clothing beyond what is legally required for you to survive beyond this gate. If you approach this gate without a pardon or being summoned, you will be killed. There is amnesty here, there is no freedom here, and there is no hope. You are now a prisoner of Abbinkey."

He stepped back as did the rest of the guards, clearing the path between her and the darkness. "You have sixty seconds to leave."

Merrie stared at him for a moment.

"Fifty seconds."

She turned and crawled out of the opening and into the night air. The fabric rasped against her skin, clinging to her body and tugging unexpectedly when she moved. It had been years since she had worn clothes that weren't her animated cloak, it only added to her discomfort and the feeling that she was in a strange land.

Outside of the tunnel, the path was pulverized rock. The sharp edges dug into her knees and wrists but it was a familiar pain. Her stomach twisted and she felt like she was going to throw up. It reminded her of being on the auction block when she was sold. Somewhere, back in her memories, she remembered standing in a warehouse as men worked their way through frightened people kidnapped off the street.

She paused in mid-step. She was standing? She didn't have any memories of having feet anymore, they were all lost when she bonded with Kine. She frowned and tried to focus on the memory but it slipped away.

Frustrated, she concentrated. Crystalline letters flickered across her mind and she felt an indescribable joy as pure magic rushed through her veins. She moaned at the sensation, losing herself as she clutched on her lost past.

Just as the spell was about to complete, she remembered Parn's request. She needed to live her life without magic. To live as if the

geasa were still binding her, to limit her magic whenever possible. Parn didn't ask for a proper oath, she asked for a choice. What would be one memory? It was only one second. One heartbeat.

But it was also trivial. Her bonding was a long time ago, many different lives in her past.

She held herself still as her struggle waged inside her. She could feel the memory slipping away, though she knew that her psionic powers would drag it back if she wanted. All she had to do was finish the spell.

Just a pulse of power.

Just one more crystalline letter.

She couldn't do it. Closing her eyes, she erased the psychic spell and felt the gathered energy bleed away. A sob rose in her throat as she slumped down.

Then her past was gone once again.

She took a deep breath. It was just a trivial memory. She could live without it. Pushing herself up, she got on her knees and looked ahead of her. a tear burned in her eye but she used her wrist to wipe it clear.

In the distance, she could see a bright light. She didn't know what was waiting for her and that frightened her. She knew there would be shadows to hide in and tunnels that she could pass her days. With her powers, that would be easy. Without them? She wasn't so confident.

She turned back to look at the tunnel entrance. She was far enough she couldn't see the guards but she knew they were there. The command and the Loyal would also be waiting; even at her best, Merrie was only an equal to the Loyal's combat abilities. But that would also require her to use magic.

Merrie already knew the answer. It was the same when she let her memories slip away. She stretched for a moment. Her tail and ears perked up as she started forward again. There was only one choice she could make of her three lives: crawl forward.

Rat's Bar and Whores

As Merrie got closer, she was relieved to find out that the glow didn't come from one brilliant source but instead was a collection of smaller lights hanging from the front of makeshift sheds and tents that formed some sort of village. The lanterns and glow stones dotted the floor of the valley ahead of her. In a short distance, less than a few hundred meters, they took a sharp turn and lit up along the cliff wall to reveal roughly carved paths and cave openings.

Her ears and tail were lowered as she continued along the path. The outer edges of the village were quiet but none of the buildings she saw looks secure or well-built enough to protect her against the light. If she picked one and was wrong, the rising sun would strip the flesh from her darkness and kill her.

The further into the village, the lights got brighter and she could see more signs of occupation: laundry hanging out on lines, garbage along the side of the path, and the sound of snoring. However the shanties didn't look any more secure, only jammed with more fabric and garbage to fill in the cracks against the weather. They also had windows carved or shaped into the sites, a normal convenience for most beings but fatal to her.

As much as she was looking forward to having some prisoner dominating her, the need to keep alive was warring with her lusts. It wouldn't matter if she was forced to choke on a cock if it took her months to rebuild her body. She suspected she only recovered from her fight with Lemetri because there was nothing to disturb her as she reformed her body; in the prison, she couldn't expect the same results.

On the other hand, it had been hours since she had been fucked and Fomasal's casual domination had awakened desires inside her. He was commanding when he dressed her and her thoughts kept going back to when he forced her chin up to inspect her collar. Her memories brought a heat along her pussy, a sparkling need to feel something inside her.

She stumbled through a light that was unexpectedly bright. It tingled along her skin and drew her immediately from her fantasies and into reality: she needed darkness before sunlight. Everything else would have to wait.

Whimpering softly, she crept further into the more crowded areas. She heard talking ahead. The voices were booming and slurred. She had heard enough humans and thriban to pick up the low growls of large men and warriors but little sounds of women speaking.

Her pussy grew slicker. It had been days since she had a cock inside her. Fomasal said she would be raped, but he didn't realized she craved the submission more than anything else. It wouldn't be rape even if she cried out to drive them to abuse her more.

She slowed down and pressed her body against a shanty made of sun-bleached wood. Creeping forward, she followed the line of the houses. Her knees dug into the ground, softer off the trail, as she pushed her way past garbage, flowers, and even through a small garden of fragrant herbs.

Merrie got lost more than once working with the darkness but she kept heading toward the sounds of the revelry. Finally, she came up around a surprisingly neat house and found herself at the edge of a village square.

The center had a well with sturdy but a makeshift cage around it. There was a small wooden table next to the opening. It almost looked like a vendor's table. A ruby light shone down from the top of the cage from a box with a keyhole-shaped opening carved into each side.

On the opposite side of the square was the source of the noises. At first she could only see men milling around, chatting and wrestling and joking around. The bulk of them were burly and muscular, covered in hair and scars. They were mostly human but

she spotted more than a few thriban, mostly grays but there was two black-skinned ones that towered a meter above the rest.

Merrie whimpered and pressed herself against the wall, making herself smaller in the darkness as she watched with warring dread, trepidation, and lust.

Her initial impressions of the jostling crowd was quickly proved wrong. There were others. Skimpily dressed women and more than a few feminine men were among the crowd. They were working as they carried platters and threaded their way around the jostling men. They took orders along with empty flagons and wooden chits of some sort. When they returned, they had platters of steaming food and refilled containers. Even from across the square, Merrie could tell that whatever they were drinking was strong. It reminded her of the sake she tasted in the back of her throat when she used magic.

Merrie's attention focused on the servers. They weren't as beautiful as the folks at the Whore's Guild but compared to the rough men, they were stunning. Their bare skin glistened with sweat as they were mauled and groped. The men seemed to casually thrust fingers between the serving wenches' legs or into their cleavage. Only one of the women looked like she was enjoying the mauling, the rest of them appeared to be tolerating it.

"Stop that!" cried a young man.

Her head snapped as she scanned the crowd. She saw a struggle to one side. One of the larger humans had pinned one of the servers, a slender man, against the wall.

The attacker was bare to the waist. His skin was covered in black tattoos and deep scars. He had one hand pinning the server's wrist above their heads. His thigh—thick and corded with muscles—was jammed up between the server's legs, spreading them obscenely wide and causing the smaller man's small cock and balls to slip out from underneath the loincloth he wore.

The din quieted.

"S-Stop, Trien. Please?" came the plaintive voice. "I have to work."

"I'm horny, I'm taking you home tonight." Trien had a low, rumbling voice. He leaned forward, drawing his own crotch up until

he pressed his obviously large bulge against the server's belly. "I'm going to fuck you."

"No... please, you hurt me last time. Y-You're too big."

Trien moaned and nuzzled up against the server. "It doesn't matter, Puss. Your ass feels so good around my cock."

Merrie tensed as she watched as the man named Puss struggled against his much larger attacker. In a good bar, there would be a bouncer coming. At the Whore's Guild, Elf or Pristine would be attacking Trien already. But here, no one seemed to care as Puss whimpered and cried out.

It went on for a few uncomfortable moments. Then Trien pulled back. He kept his grip on Puss, pulling the younger man away from the wall.

Puss tried to pull his hand free. "No, not tonight."

Trien yanked harder causing Puss to drop the flagon he was carrying in his other hand.

"Hey!" bellowed a gray thriban standing a few meters away. "That was my drink!"

"Fuck off, Horge!" snapped Trien.

The thriban stepped closer, his massive frame towering over the others. He had dark gray skin and bright yellow eyes. "You want to die?"

Trien shoved back with his other. "Not tonight. I want something small on my cock, not your hairy asshole! But if you don't back off, I'll do you before I nut inside Puss' ass."

Horge growled, his lips pulling back to exposed sharp fangs. He clenched his hand into a massive fist. "Try me and I'll choke—"

"Yo, assholes!" came a sharp voice.

The crowds melted away to reveal a woman with large breasts and wide hips. She had bright eyes, almost burning. Standing up on top of the bar, she was the same height as the surrounding men. The woman waggled her finger at the two quarreling men. "Don't fucking ruin my bar! You break something, good luck getting any clean water for a week!"

Both men cringed as did much of the rest of the bar.

Horge bowed his head and said, "Sorry, Rat. I forgot."

The woman smiled. It didn't reach her eyes. "Forgot what? Who's bar is this? Well? Who's bar?"

“Rat’s Bar and Whores,” came a chorus from everyone.

“And who’s in charge?” she demanded.

“Rat!”

“That’s right.” She patted her substantial right breast. The smile almost made her eyes. She pushed back her curly black hair over her ear. “Don’t none of you forget that.”

She pointed to Trien and Horge, the painted nail wagging. “Now you two, kiss and make up. Thriban, your next drink is on the human. Asshole, keep your fucking mouth shut!”

Horge grinned broadly. “Well, then give me a double. Top shelf sounds good.”

There was a roar of laughter.

Trien glared at him and then at Rat. “Come on. That’s all my chits. I spent a month earning them.”

The short-stacked woman crossed her arms underneath her sizable breasts. “Then don’t spill my fucking drinks, Trien. It’s a lot of work to make this crap you all drink.”

“Fine.” Trien grabbed a bag and threw it at Horge’s chest. It landed heavily on the ground. Before anyone could respond, he grabbed Puss’ wrist and yanked the slender man away from the wall. “Come on, bitch.”

Puss cried out, looking pleadingly back. “Please, Rat. Not this. Please? I beg you!”

There was a chuckle of laughter among the crowds but there was no compassion in the sound. Merrie felt a shiver of fear and sadness as she saw the tears glistening on Puss’ cheeks.

The woman gave Puss a hard look. “Keep your screams down, cunt boy. I have a business to run. Horge, I get two chits from that bag for Trien’s dick sleeve.”

Waving the bag, “No problem, Rat. I can give up a few.”

Merrie watched as Trien dragged a sobbing Puss away and toward the cliff. She shifted her body slightly and realized she was soaked. It didn’t take much to realize she was longing to be brutalized herself. If it wasn’t Trien, it was Horge, or it was someone else. None of men she saw looked polite and gentle; it was almost a promise of rough sex. Just like she loved to be fucked.

The serving girls and boys were nothing more than sex slaves, to be fucked as nothing more than holes.

It was exactly what she wanted. It didn't matter if she wasn't letting herself gain any power from it, the submission itself was her pleasure.

She leaned against the wall and let her tail wagged. She may have just found a place for herself at the prison. All she had to do was figure out how to introduce herself.

Rejection

72

Despite making a choice, Merrie didn't just charge out. Instead, she settled down and watched the bar and its occupants, in specific Rat.

The short woman was bossy and demanding, she also offered no slack when she gave an order. When she rested, which was rare, there was a scowl etched on her face. Rat was definitely a dominating personality. She demanded obedience in all forms and everyone jumped to obey her. She would have made a good mistress, at least from Merrie's initial impressions. She wanted to delve deeper into Rat's thoughts, to use her magic to slither past the shields but didn't.

Merrie's pussy grew wetter watching the woman break up a fight with nothing more than a curt word and a threat. When Rat stormed back to the bar, Merrie let her gaze linger on the shorter woman's ass. It flexed underneath her dark trousers as she crawled onto a bar stool and then to the bar where she could stand in the center of the wooden platform and glare at everyone.

As much as she wanted to, Merrie didn't much time to tarry. If she didn't get in Rat's graces, she would be desperately fleeing the sun in an unknown village.

The crowds had thinned over the last hour. There was only a quarter of the patrons left and two serving girls. All the slender boys had been dragged off to be abused by some of the patrons, though Rat didn't always allow them to be taken. It was less a matter of the tears that stopped Rat from accepting though; the woman seemed more concerned there was a certain number of servers for the patrons remaining. As they drifted off, one of them was allowed to take a girl or boy that was no longer needed.

The casual cruelty of it was startling. Rat had no compassion for the servers. It caused Merrie hesitation, it felt more like Rakin's strategy than Kine's laziness. No... Kine wasn't that much better of a master, not at first.

Merrie was stalling.

She took a deep breath and crawled out of the darkness and across the square. Part of her wished she had her cloak or magic to shield her but she knew it was better if she came in as she was, a half-naked girl on her knees.

The smell of men washed over her, musk and sweat. Her pussy clenched with anticipation. Up close, she felt very tiny as she came up to the first of the patrons.

"What the fuck is that!?" snapped Rat.

A sudden silence.

One by one, the remaining people turned and stared at her.

Merrie's heart beat faster, the triple thudding in her chest. A soft whimper escaped her throat as she came to a stop. Her thin shift clung to her body as she knelt in place, reflexively pulling her wrists up in a begging position.

Rat stood on the bar, hands on her hips, as she stared down.

One of the patrons, the thriban named Horge, coughed. "I think it's a human."

Other's spoke up around her.

"She's got big tits."

"She's soft looking," came a low growl of lust from the other side.

"What in the darkest hell, she's missing her hands."

"She's got dog ears!"

With each revelation, Merrie felt the hope rising up. There was lust in the air, a hunger that was unmistakable. The men wanted to fuck her with only a second glance. Slowly, she raised her eyes up to Rat.

The short woman glared at her. She had green eyes that flashed in the magical globes that hung from the ceiling.

There was a moment, Merrie arched her back slightly.

Rat waved her hand and snarled, "Get that fucking bitch out of here!"

Merrie froze in surprise.

“W-What?” asked one of the patrons, a large man who’s shirt strained over his chest. “Why not? She’s prettier than anything you got.”

Rat turned on him. “Then you get out of my fucking bar too, Agis! One week, no service.”

“What the fuck, Rat? I just said—”

“I don’t want some soft little cunt slave in my place. You assholes are rough on the bitches and she’s going to break the first time one of you get your hands on her throat.”

Merrie whimpered, her pussy growing slick even as her ears folded against her face.

“I know the type! That’s one of those fucking puppy slaves. You can get a dozen of them in Blood County. They’re sweet, soft, and so fucking delicate. She probably sleeps on silk and wants a pedicure —”

“She ain’t got feet.”

Rat snapped her head to glare at the speaker. “— fuck off, Erwin, or you’ll be joining him!” Turning back, she continued yelling at the man named Agis. “Even feeding her for a night is going to cost me more than I’ll ever get for her cunt with you assholes here!”

Rat jumped off the bar and stormed over to Agis. The top of her black-haired head was only a few centimeters over his waist. Her fist came up and she grabbed him by the crotch, her fingernails digging into his trousers.

Agis let out a choked cry and sank to his knees. He had a bushy beard which she grabbed with her other hand.

Rat screamed at him, “And I said get that fucking cunt out of my bar! So take that sweet little pussy that you want so much and don’t come back for a week! And when you do come back with that soft bitch’s blood on your hands, you will pay double for every cunt and drop of alcohol until I say so!”

Stunned, Merrie didn’t know what to do. She worried that Rat wouldn’t like her at first, but it never occurred to her that she would be rejected right off the bat. She stepped back, her knees scraping on the rough ground.

Men were still looking at her but the lust took on a different tone, a quality of danger and anger. She wasn’t a whore to them anymore, not even a potential one, but something else.

She whimpered and backed away. As she worked her way out of the brighter light of the bar, she reached for the darkness before stopping.

A few of the closer ones stepped after her. One of them rubbed his crotch as he smiled at her. "She's a free cunt for the night?"

"Yeah, rape the hell out of that fuck toy. I don't want her and she's only going to last the night anyways. Just don't leave her corpse in front of my bar or no one drinks tomorrow."

Rat started back, but then stopped. She looked over Merrie.

There was a moment of hope.

"First person who brings me that collar around her neck gets a free night on the house. Anything you want on the menu, except for me."

Merrie blanched.

The men stepped forward, the lust rising into an almost palatable aura of danger. One of them chuckled and wiped the drool from his fanged teeth. Another clenched his hand. In the front, Agis stared at her with a mixture of anger and need in his eyes.

Merrie had made a mistake.

The need to flee rose up, choking and powerful. It didn't matter that they couldn't remove the collar or truly kill her, it was the thought of her raped body being left out in the sun to burn away. She had to escape, the only way was magic.

Calligraphy burned across her mind as she pulled on the darkness. She felt it responding, pushing past the barriers of light as the edges of the shadows around her grew sharp-edged and solid.

No, she couldn't. She had to survive without magic. Parn would want that.

The spell fizzled. She turned to crawl away.

The first hand caught her tail, the powerful grip clamping down and grinding bones against each other.

She let out a cry but then there were more hands on her, pawing and ripping at her clothes. The thin fabric, almost lovingly placed on her by Fomasal, shredded in a second as too many hands mauled at her breasts and jammed up between her legs.

Merrie had no control as they shoved into her wet pussy and into the tight ring of her sphincter. There was only a little moisture from

her cunt but it was enough to take a thick finger to the second digit. She moaned against her will.

“So fucking soft,” growled one man as he squeezed her breasts. “None of Rat’s cunts are this pretty.”

“You keep groping, I want to spit this bitch.” It was a man trying to shove himself between her legs. His ridge thumped against her pussy and it sent a bolt of lust coursing through her veins.

Merrie squirmed, both trying to get away and to line up her pussy to the cock about to rape her. She knew it was only turning them on since there was no chance she would escape. There was easily ten guys mauling her then. It was getting her wetter as her helplessness flooded across her thoughts.

“Like hell I’m going to wait—” There was a sound of a fist colliding with a face.

A hand ripped out of her pussy, rough fingernails scraping against her delicate walls. There was an inarticulate roar of rage and then more hitting.

The hands mauling her broke apart, scratching and scraping her as a melee broke out over her. She saw a flash of limbs as powerful men slammed into each other, each one giving no quarter as they pounded fists and feet into their opponent’s body.

More than few caught her. She took one kick to the ribs. It was with an armored boot and she felt a rib cracking from the impact. A second later, someone slammed their foot on her pelvis as they punched their opponent.

Merrie let out a cry. She tried to crawl away but with her body so close to the ground, she couldn’t see the edge of the fight between the moving feet and splattering blood. She tried to dig her wrists into the ground but it was already slick.

A body fell down in front of her. The man was clawing at his throat as blood sprayed everywhere from his throat. It splashed against her face and bared breasts, the coppery taste coated the back of her throat.

She cringed and rolled away from it.

Someone’s boot stomped down, crushing her breast into the ground. The rough edge of the boot caught her nipple and she let out a yelp of pain before it was gone.

Merrie managed to get on her knees. Through the moving feet, she spotted Rat. The woman was sitting on the edge of a chair, watching the fight with a wide grin on her face. She looked... smug as her eyes took in the sight of men brutalizing each other for a chance at raping her.

Before Merrie could do anything, someone grabbed her tail and yanked. Pain ripped up her spine as she was dragged through the ground. She tried to stop it, to dig the smooth ends of her wrists into the sticky ground but it wasn't enough.

Her pussy clenched with need as she was pulled out of the fight. A hand fumbled through her sweat- and blood-soaked hair before fingers caught her collar.

Merrie's pussy exploded with an orgasm even as fear surged through her veins. She tried to get her wrist underneath it but the metal was drawn tight against her throat. As her weight bore into it, the icy metal dug into her skin and cut off her breathe.

"I want this fucking collar, bitch!" It was Agis. He twisted one way and then the other in a brute-force attempt to snap it from her neck. He jerked it back, digging it further into Merrie's throat.

Merrie's eyes bulged out as she pawed helplessly at her throat. She was completely off the ground, her entire weight supported by the unbreakable metal around her neck.

The taste of sake rose in her throat. There were a hundred different ways she could free herself. The easiest would be just to melt into shadows.

A shadowed silhouette rose in front of her, standing between the melee and Agis. It was Horge. The thriban snarled as he came lower. His hands were dripping blood as he spread them out almost into claws. "Let him go," he said in a low rumble.

"Back off, I got this bitch! Her collar is mine!"

"I don't want the collar, Agis. I just want her."

Agis continued to yank on the collar. "Yeah, right. You'd rip her in half. Fucking thriban!"

Merrie felt her skin ripping as he twisted it one way and the other. Her need to breathe was getting more desperate, the burn in her lungs making it difficult to concentrate.

"Give me the cunt, boy."

“You can have it after I pop her head off.” Agis jerked again, twisting hard until the metal ground against the side of her head.

“I don’t want to fuck a corpse.”

“She’ll still be twitching and hot, good enough for you fucking grays—”

There was a blur of movement. Horge’s fist slammed into Agis’ face. There was a muted crunch of bone.

Agis was thrown back, his grip on Merrie’s collar yanking her back by her throat. Her limbs flailed behind her as she was torn from the ground and helpless to do anything as they flew a short distance back.

The flight ended with a muted crunch of shattering bone as both of them slammed into a handmade brick wall. The entire structure groaned as the bricks scraped against each other, shifting off their base.

Merrie’s naked form slammed against Agis’ chest. She bounced off and slammed into the ground. The impact crushed her breasts against the ground and her leg twisted with a flash of pain.

Behind her, both Agis and part of the wall collapsed. Bricks landed on the warrior’s body with muted thuds, punctuated by groans of pain and the shudder of a man who had bones broken in his spine.

Merrie tried to push herself up. The smooth end of her wrist dug into the ground as she tried to find purchase. It took her a moment before she could lever herself off and relieve the pressure on her abused breasts.

One of the bricks slammed into her shoulder, the sharp edge cutting into her skin before rolling off. Her arm slipped and she smacked the ground again. She moaned and tried to regain her wrists and knees.

The ground shook underneath her, a steady thudding of someone heavy approaching. She looked up to see Horge storm up. He was silhouetted by the light from the well, his massive thriban shape looming as some beast coming out from the Shadows.

Merrie froze as she stared at him, an intense longing slamming into her as she remembered the embrace of darkness and the feel of sliding into the Shadows. The longing turned into desire as she remembered the shadow children surrounding her, the icy caress of

the Lord of Darkness, and even the feel of the darkness against her bare skin.

Then his hand stretched out and blotted out her vision.

She almost pushed herself into his grip.

Powerful fingers wrapped around her face. He was large, the equal to Bass at least. There was strength in each digit as he clamped down on her head and pulled her up.

“Come here, you little cunt.”

Merrie froze, lost in a flash of lust. She moaned and twisted back and forth as she was completely lifted from the ground and her entire weight focused on her neck.

He shook her twice, each time her body snapped around as if he was trying to break her neck. “Now, be quite, Bitch. I have no intent on sharing you.”

Horge gave her another shake, not bone-rattling but still proving his claim on her. Then he released her face.

She slumped down, slamming the side of her body against his muscular thigh. It felt like hitting the wall before she sank down into the dusty ground.

He reached down and grabbed her from behind. His fingers didn't fit inside her collar but he managed to wrap his hand entirely around her throat. Rough fingertips scraped against her skin as he picked her up again.

The pressure crushed her throat, cutting off her breath almost instantly. It wasn't the sharp pain of the collar digging in, just the thick suffocating presence that prevented even a whimper from escaping her throat.

Eyes bulging and the need to breathe rising, Merrie reached down with her footless limbs. Dribbles of her excitement coated her thighs as she felt asphyxiation darkening her vision. A tiny orgasm shuddered through her as she dangled back and forth.

When the smooth end of her ankle brushed ground, she felt a small flash of hope. Stretching, she managed to get the limb underneath her and lifted to relieve the pressure.

Horge relaxed just slightly, letting a few sips of air into her abused throat.

The relief was almost orgasmic.

“Stay down and quiet,” Horge said in a low tone and a warning squeeze. He was looking at the melee in front of them. There were knives flashing in the light above the well and more than a few sprays of blood. Through the stars crossing her vision, she saw at least five men were on the ground clutching their organs or bleeding out.

Merrie managed to hold herself still. She was on the edge of choking but managed to get air into her lungs. Her entire body shook with adrenaline and more than a little lust.

Horge muttered to himself and then took a step back. He moved smoothly from in front of the ruined building into the lane next to it. Backing up, he continued until he was enveloped in shadows.

Merrie felt the darkness on her skin. He was a thief or an assassin of some sort. She remembered from Kine’s memories how to move without drawing attention, the smoothness of his actions and the way he clung to the side of the wall until the brawl was out of sight confirmed it.

t'Sade

A Good Pain

73

As the thriban hauled Merrie away from the brawl, the sounds of fighting quickly died down. Soon there was only the echoing thuds of his heavy footsteps beating against the sides of the narrow lanes between the makeshift homes. He grunted as he came around a corner, slamming Merrie's head hard against the corner as he turned to follow a path parallel to the cliff.

Stars exploded across her vision. She twisted in his grip but when he tightened his grip, she was turned back until her side smacked against his powerful thigh. The smell of his body, a powerful musky that many of the powerful humanoids shared, swirled around her. It reminded her of her many thriban lovers, from her first with Bass and throughout the many years as lovers, customers, and patrons.

Though none of her lovers have ever treated her with a Horge's casual cruelty. It brought a flutter to her pussy and just a bit of worry to her thoughts. There was something in his actions that tempered the edge of submission. He was given life imprisonment for a reason.

"This time, I'm going to take my time. No guards coming, no one to interrupt me." He muttered but it wasn't really directed toward her. He was also talking to himself.

He slowed as he came up to a brick house. Like many of the homes near the cliff, it was built out of hand-made bricks and shared walls with its neighbors. The opening was a black maw, massive to fit his broad shoulders and height. Reaching out, he shoved his hand into the darkness and she heard the scrape of a poorly formed wooden door scrape against the ground.

He thumped her against the side of the door. Only his tight grip on her neck prevented her from twisting away. Instead her breasts scraped along the sharp edges of the brick frame before she was inside.

Inside was a simple cell, about three meters wide and two meters deep. The ceiling was also two meters and only a few centimeters taller than the thriban as he stood up. To her relief, there appeared to be no other windows and the lighting in the home was just a single glowing lamp hanging from the ceiling; the lamp was covered in dust and grime, dimming it to only an uncomfortable level for Merrie.

Horge turned and shoved the door shut, the wood scraping along both the stone ground and the roof before it thudded into place. Turning around, he whipped her on a pile of moldy bedding on the ground.

Merrie hit the bed hard. She couldn't get her limbs to brace herself before she rolled over and slammed into the brick wall. The sharp edges slashed at her face and side before she slumped back with stars in her vision. The pain brought a bubbling heat as she struggled to clear her senses.

Horge knelt heavily on the bed. "Don't just shove it in," he muttered as he grabbed her legs and pulled her away from the wall. His large hands caught her knees, forcing them straight as he pried her legs apart.

Merrie gasped as she twisted into a more comfortable place. Her tail caught underneath her and she whimpered as it was crushed between her body and the thick pad of clothes and furs below her. She drew in the scents of a man from the blankets, the musky scent of flesh that all bedrooms acquired.

The thriban released her leg. His eyes almost glowed yellow as he stared at her for a moment. Then he brought his hand up and slapped her face hard. "Be quiet."

Her face burning, Merrie stared in shock. She hadn't said anything.

His backhand caught the other side of her face. The rough knuckles caught her jaw, nearly dislocating it. The blow had his strength behind it and the entire side of her face burned with agony.

She let out a gasp that ended with a sob as he slapped her again, once with his palm and then with his backhand. Stars exploded across her vision as she gasped at the sudden pain that flooded through her.

Horge clamped his massive paw over her face, shoving her head down into his mattress. His other hand released her leg.

She started to close her legs but her ankles were stopped by his broad waist. He was between her legs and she could feel the distinct motions of him freeing his cock from his trousers.

Lust surged through her. She knew the right things to do, at least in this situation. With a cry, she arched her back and pawed at the hand.

The suffocating grip tightened, grinding his palm against her face and nearly crushing her nose. His fingers reached almost completely around her head as he pinned both of her ears to her skull.

Merrie lifted her hips. She was soaking wet as she imagined the other thriban cock's she had enjoyed. It would be thick and long with a knot near the middle of it. As thriban grew excited, the knot would form in the center; when it swelled inside her pussy, it was locked in place with plenty of shaft to still drive repeatedly into her body as the knotted cock stretched out her insides.

She moaned and writhed her hips.

He released her enough to slap her again, a series of quick blows that left her dazed. "Quiet!"

She tasted black blood on her lips when he clamped his hand back on her face. Her body protested as his weight bore down on her, pinning her skull roughly to the bed. She was helpless, unable to shift or even pull herself up. Instead, she was unable to do anything but wait for the inevitable.

Her pussy throbbed and she could feel her juices dripping from her folds and soaking her thighs. She brought her thighs back to rest against his hips, her ankles pressing against the muscular man's buttocks.

Then a heated rod thudded against her belly. The heavy weight crushed her clitoris and her labia. Something wet splattered against her sternum, it was hot and slick.

Merrie froze in surprise. She raised her hips, sliding the massive cock along the furrow of her sex as she measured it blindly. Horge's

cock was far thicker than she had ever felt on a thriban. It was easily twenty centimeters in girth and was as heavy as a brick.

His concern for killing a woman made more sense. No human woman could take such a thick and long cock.

However, as much as she felt the surprise, there was no fear. She wanted to feel it tear into her, fill her completely. It didn't matter if it hurt her or not, she needed it. She moaned into his palm. Her hips rose and fell as she stroked his shaft with her labia.

"Don't shove it in," he muttered as he drew back his shaft. The thick ridges ran along her pussy, dragging each bump and vein along her pussy. The tip of his cock continued to drip along her belly, tracing a heated line of pre-cum down her belly. Like most thribans, there was a lot of it and it dribbled down both sides of her belly to soak into the sleeping mat.

He gripped tighter on her face, holding her as he bore down on her. His other hand grabbed her thighs, digging his massive thumb into the sensitive joint between her pussy and limb. He pried her open as his cock slid closer to being lined up for one brutal thrust.

Merrie moaned as lust boiled inside her. She tried to encourage him to draw back.

"Just... just a little in. Don't make her bleed. Don't kill her, not yet." He was trembling as he drew back. She could feel the little hesitations in his movements, the fear and desire warring inside him as he brought the rounded wedge of his cock down into the seam of her sex.

His shaft felt even heavier with just the head against her clitoris. The rounded head slipped along her excited sex, sliding until it rested against the opening of her cunt. The heat seeped into her body felt like a flame.

He leaned into her, grinding the swollen head into her sex. The head was swollen and slick. It easily lodged itself into her opening but quickly stopped as reached the comfortable limits of her inner walls.

"Oh, fuck, that's good," he moaned. He shoved forward, the tip of his shaft forcing its way deeper into her body.

Her body resisted reflexively, but his weight and strength easily overpowered her. The massive head shoved into her, stretching her

painfully open. It felt like a metal sphere inside her but she knew that she hadn't reached even the widest part of his massive cock.

She let out a muted cry of pleasure as she struggled to handle his girth. Her hips twisted around it, soaking the head with her juices and the copious pre-cum pouring out of the tip.

Horge growled. He pulled back but his cock head was lodged inside her.

Merrie whimpered and clamped down, catching his head and clinging to it.

"No, don't thrust, don't kill her. Make it last. Open her up first." His hand relaxed slightly but then tightened powerfully. He groaned as shuddered, his cock thrust and pulled with the powerful beat of his heart. Shuddering, he ground down on her hip as he held his cock still.

Merrie moaned and writhed, rocking her hips around as she felt the pleasurable discomfort of being pried open. The ache in her entrance was exquisite, the stretching sent ripples of pleasure coursing through her veins.

She needed him to thrust, to rip into her. She strained to pull him deeper, to encourage him to do the one thing he obvious didn't want to do.

Merrie wanted to tell Horge it was okay. She desperately wanted to reach out with her mind, to send a single overwhelming pulse of lust and desire. He was at the cusp of doing so, she only had to encourage him.

She needed it, more than she could imagine. Mouthing his palm, she humped against the head, enjoying how it tugged and pulled at her insides. Tears burned in her eyes as she begged without using words, using her sweat-slicked body to encourage him.

He thrust deeper. "No, I can't!"

He tugged weakly, the thick head pulling on her insides. He wanted her, as much as she wanted him. He thrust, shoving it a few centimeters into her strained pussy. His rocking turned into thrusting, only a short distance with the tight walls of her pussy locking his cock in place. It only swirled her insides around but the feeling of something so hard and thick inside her brought waves of pleasure.

Horge moved faster, a low grunt rising. The combined juices of their excitement managed to soak the lodged head and it began to slip along tortured walls. She felt it rolling over her nerve, setting each one on fire as he rocked the head only a few centimeters at a time.

Merrie moaned into his palm, her body shuddering. She couldn't see the massive pole impaling her cunt but she could feel every ridge as it worked its way deeper into her pussy. It stretched her completely out.

Horge spend up, thrusting harder into her soaked insides. His cock continued to swell at her entrance, the girth stretching her further and further apart until she thought her pelvis would break. He was massive, a thick member almost as wide as her thigh.

Her tightly-stretched labia protested as it was strummed like a violin string. Every time he pulled back, she could feel her insides clinging to his massive cock. When he thrust back in, it pulled inside her and she felt her folds stretch taut.

The thriban grunted as he thrust, his hand tightening on her face and skull until his knuckles cracked. He was holding his weight between her outstretched thigh and her face, but he continued to move with the same, torturous thrusts as he continued to feed his cock into her pussy.

Finally she felt the thickest part of his cock head. It slid along her sex-slicked skin before burrowing into her pussy. It ached and burned as it thrust inside but that discomfort was nothing compared to the intense pleasure of being completely and utterly stretched out around the powerful shaft impaling her.

Merrie couldn't do anything. Her back could arch and she could twist her hips, but nothing would ever stop the cock from impaling her. She clamped her wrists over his palm and sank into the thrusting shaft, meeting each one with tiny strokes of her own body.

Horge suddenly stopped, his shaft buried deep inside her body. "No! Don't thrust, don't kill her."

He tightened his grip on her body as he began to pull out. His cock pulsed with his own needs as he drew out.

Her pussy clung to every bump and ripple. She wanted it, to feel it hurt her. But he was pulling out. She could almost feel that he was

going to leave her with only a hint of the agonized pleasure he could offer. She whimpered and twisted.

“I’ll stop, I promise. No blood.”

She murmured into his palm but he was still clamped down on her face. Merrie had to do something, not if she wanted to feel him rip into her. It was too much. With a quiet sob, she dug into her being and drew out power from the depths of shadows. Energy and magic flowed through her, singing in her veins. Moving with practiced skill, she formed a protection spell crafted of shadows and crystal. It was for her insides, to keep her body together. As soon as it settled into place, she focused on the man towering over her. Her thoughts slipped into his.

Guilt washed over her. He wanted her but was afraid to hurt her. The memories were raw inside his head.

When she saw it the first time, the merchant’s daughter begged for his cock. It was just what she wanted, to be filled completely.

He was young and foolish and a virgin. He knew that he was large but to hear her begging and to feel her tongue sliding up and down his massive length only pushed him to kneel between her legs and thrust deep.

It was heavy, a silken sheath for his cock. It was the first time he felt the liquid heat of a body wrapped around him. He thrust faster and harder, enjoying the pleasure.

Her moans turned into screams.

Something snapped inside him and he began to thrust harder and faster. He felt searing liquid bathe his cock as his shaft drove deeper into her chest, ripping through organs. His steel hardness cracked her bones, forcing her pelvis apart until it gave out underneath the ceaseless pounding of his hips driving into her body.

When he came, flooding her ruined sex with a liter of cum, she was no longer moving. Sightless eyes stared out into the sky as her body twitched and shuddered.

“Alisa?” he growled. “Alisa?”

The horror of what he had done slammed into him. He let out a choked growl as he pulled out, or at least tried to. His cock was so big that it was locked in her body. He tugged and yanked until her organs came out like a sock clinging to his shaft.

They found him that way, trying to pull out of the girl he had murdered.

Experiencing his memories, Merrie craved to be the merchant's daughter. The brutality that he killed her, the hard thrusting cock shoving deep, was everything she needed. She gathered up her desire and lust until it burned brightly in her mind. Then, with a single desperate thrust, she threw it at him.

Horge slammed forward, driving his massive cock into her magically protected cunt. It drove deep, punching the immense thickness deep into her depths until it slammed against her cervix. He howled as he rammed it harder, pounding against the limits of her pussy with powerful strokes.

Merrie came on the cock, her world lost in the pleasures of being torn open and the feeling of the shaft slamming against her diaphragm. It was crushing her, shoving organs out of the way as her stretched tight around his length. She bit down on his palm as she kept protecting the desire.

Her entire body shook violently, pinned by the tight grip on her leg and the hand suffocating her. She couldn't move which only caused the cock to impale her deeper. Soon it was inside her ribs; it would have torn through organs if she wasn't made of shadows. Instead, it was just blissfully uncomfortable pleasure as he took almost meter-long strokes into her willing body.

Wetness soaked her thighs and the furs underneath her. They were both pouring juices and it coated everything. She lifted her hips to encourage him.

He hammered into her, driving her into the bed as he worked more and more of his cock into her cunt. It took a while until the head felt like it was in her throat before she felt his large, hairy balls smacking against her ass.

She was stretched taut around his cock. Every pulse, every thrust was an orgasm that wracked her thoughts. She moaned as he used her as nothing more than a cock slave, a hot hole to fuck.

When he reached for his orgasm, she felt his shaft swell inside her. Her inner walls strained to keep together, the magic holding her apart when his cock would have torn her open from the inside. She tried to tighten her muscles but it was pointless, he was too strong to even slow down.

Horge howled as he slammed hard, paused, and then slammed into her again. Powerful strokes that impaled her from cunt to throat. His cock swelled and grew hotter, searing inside her cool body.

Then his shaft exploded. A flood of searing liquid poured into her body. It couldn't escape the length of his cock stretching out her insides. Instead it gathered in her chest, swelling and crushing her insides as he pumped liter after liter of hot cum into her body.

As the adrenaline faded, it was painful with him not moving but Merrie didn't care. She was almost humming with the energy from her countless orgasms. She moaned and enjoyed being pinned and impaled; she could only move her arms and legs with Horge dominating her helpless body. She jerked as the hot liquid pooled inside her.

"Fuck," growled Horge. "Fuck, fuck!"

He bore down and started to pull out his cock. It was tight, her body was clamped along his entire length. His massive head slowly worked down, he had to thrust in and out to move it out from her pussy.

She came again, moaning as the cum filled the void that his immense shaft left behind and relieving the pressure. She smiled to herself and let the pleasure ebb inside her.

Horge panted as he continued to draw out. The thick veins and bulges of his cock scrape along her now-sensitive opening. Each felt the taut skin snapping around the slick shaft. Every pulse of his rapid heartbeat throbbed inside her.

Then his cock head reached her pelvis. He had to pull on it to start working it out of her opening, it was too large to easily slip out. His grip on her face and leg tightened as he drew it out, slow at first but then yanking it out of her body.

Just as his massive orgasm exploded out of her as a shower of cum, she was slammed with a final orgasm. Her mouth clamped down on his palm as she writhed in helpless pleasure as jets poured out of her pussy. It tingled along her suddenly relieved opening, soaked her thighs, and poured down in a massive puddle that the furs couldn't absorb.

Horge finally released his grip on her face, pulling his massive paw back.

Merrie slumped back as she enjoyed the pleasure pouring out of her.

Then she saw the look of horror on his face. He was staring at her gaping pussy, his cock jumping with his pulse. To her surprise, he didn't have a knot like the other thriban she had bedded. There was a hint of a knot but it was a smooth widening of his shaft to an obscene girth. No bump, no ridge, just a forty centimeter shaft with the widest part halfway down the length. She smiled and looked up.

"I-I'm sorry, I didn't mean—"

"Thank you," she said in a hoarse voice.

He froze. "No, no, I killed you. I didn't mean...." He let out a low growl and crawled off the blankets. His knees were soaked with his cum as he backed away until he hit the door. "I'm sorry, I didn't... I didn't."

Slowly, Horge sank down to the ground. He brought his knees up as his thick cock slumped down on the ground.

Merrie shuddered as the last surge of cum sprayed out of her. She crawled up on her knees, her body humming with her pleasure. As she got on her knees, more cum dribbled down her thighs. She smiled and her tail wagged. Moving carefully, she crawled through the puddle of cum and onto the floor. She left little wet prints behind her as she came up to Horge and then slid against his body.

Horge flinched from her and then frowned. "A-Are you okay?"

Merrie nodded and barked quietly, her mind going back to the limitations she accepted. She rubbed the side of her face against his chin before nestling closer between his legs. With one hand on his softening shaft, she moved her head to his hairy chest. It was broad and muscular.

For a moment, she felt comfortable. Sore but happy.

But Horge wasn't. She reached up with her arm and caught his wrist. Pulling it toward her, she got him to hold her. Then she barked and smiled to him before settling down again.

It was a long day and she was exhausted after her orgasms. She didn't know what horrors the morning would give her but for the time being, she was content to enjoy the afterglow.

Horge's hand relaxed slightly. Then he held her tight to his chest. Before she knew it, Merrie fell asleep.

t'Sade

Blinded

74

Merrie woke up burning. Black smoke wafted around her face but it did nothing to stop the beams of brilliant light that seared her face and cut at her bare breasts. She only had a second to look up into the burning light before agony slammed into her. She felt her skin blacken and crinkle, the sun eating away at her delicate skin. The black smoke was her own being being evaporated in the heat and brilliance.

With a scream, she flung herself away try to find some place to dodge.

Something grabbed her collar and she lost her balance. Still screaming through the agony, she tried again. Her collar dug into the side of her neck as she pulled away from it.

The light was too bright, she couldn't see anything. Blinded, she could only flailed as she tried to pull away. Everywhere she touched was lit by the sun and she couldn't find any respite from the agonizing pain of being burned alive.

Her high-pitched scream of agony beat against the narrow walls of Horge's home. There were other sounds but she couldn't focus on them in her desperate need to escape the burning light.

She dug into the ground trying to find some freedom. The smooth ends of her wrists did nothing to the hard-packed ground. Desperate, she tried to summon magic for a spell but between the agony and the light, she couldn't calm her thoughts for even the most basic of spells.

Her left leg collapsed in a flash of agony. Reflexively she looked back at it but couldn't see anything in the glare of light. However

she could smell her flesh burning away and the agony of having sunlight dissolving her.

“Out of my home!” bellowed Horge, his voice loud enough to overcome her cries.

“Move!” It was a familiar voice but she didn’t have the attention to focus on it.

Merrie flailed to the other side, pulling on the collar until it dug into her throat. She reached for any darkness but couldn’t find any. The unbreakable collar continued to dig into her skin as she yanked on it, pulling repeatedly until she felt the skin beginning to break.

She hit someone’s legs and bounced off. Rolling on her back, she came up on the other side and tried to crawl away. Her one good leg caught on a rope of some sort and she felt flat onto the sun-warmed ground.

With a scream, she flailed.

“Pay attention to me,” growled Razor, one of the prisoners from the wagon.

“Keep away from my bitch!” roared Horge.

“Yeah, yeah, let us stop the screaming first otherwise you’ll just have smoke to fuck.”

Something heavy draped over her. It smelled of thriban and dried cum. More importantly it was thick enough to blot out the sun. Merrie collapsed with it, hitting the ground hard as the scream died out of her throat.

“Out!”

“Hold on,” yelled the other voice, Razor.

There was the sound of a fist hitting. Then the thump of a body hitting the wall.

Razor groaned. “F-Fuck....”

“That’s my bitch. Mine! Keep away!” Horge raged as he stomped closer. The fur was ripped off Merrie and she was once again exposed to the sun.

Her scream beat against the walls.

Mace swore. He grabbed something and yanked hard. She only heard the creak of something and then a shelf fell on her. Wood slammed into her back and side, crushing her. The agony of the light faded as she found a shadow to cringe in.

“I’ll kill—”

“Do you like that fucking cunt!” bellowed Mace.

Horge roared back. “She’s—”

“—going to die if you don’t get her out of the fucking sun—!”

A fist ended Mace’s words. He crashed into the wall and slumped. Silence.

Merrie sobbed as she tried to crawl into the darkness. Her burned leg wasn’t working anymore. Every time she moved, it felt like it was only holding onto her body by a thread. No bone was exposed, only the darkness smoking out of her.

Horge suddenly inhaled.

“That’s right,” said Slender in a quiet voice. “Take a deep breath, idiot.”

Horge growled.

“Nope, if you don’t want me to cut your throat, take a deep breath.” Slender seemed remarkably calm.

A long, shuddering breath filled the room.

“Razor?” asked Slender.

“Y-Yeah?”

“Close the door and check Mace. I got him.”

The door creaked but the light didn’t go out. Razor grunted. “Fuck, how do you close this.”

The door slammed shut and the room was plunged into blissful darkness.

“Asshole!” snapped Razor. “You almost took my fingers off!”

“Fuck you,” growled Horge. “Get out and leave my bitch!”

With a whimper, Merrie curled up tighter as she clutched her burned leg. The skin had peeled back completely to expose the shifting darkness inside. She could feel the icy vapors slip past her fingers. Unsure of what to do, she curled herself around it and prayed her body would heal.

Slender chuckled. “You ever had a puppy, thriban?”

“W-What?” asked Horge.

“A puppy, a bitch. You know, dogs that pee on the carpets and need to be taken on walks?”

“No, why would—”

“Well, then listen. You currently have a bitch which means you have to take care of her. This bitch doesn’t like sunlight. It kills her. I don’t know why, it’s scary as fuck to see happen. Me and the others

kind of have a little loyalty toward her, so I'd like not to hear her screaming from clear across the village."

"Keep—"

"Keep away from her. Yeah, none of us are.... Look, are you going to attack or can I take the knife away?"

Horge growled and panted for a moment. "I won't hit you again... for now."

Mace groaned. "What bull hit me?"

"Horge," growled the thriban.

With another groan, Mace staggered over and then knelt down next to Merrie. "Well met, Horge. I'm Mace. The man with the knife is Slender and Razor is behind me. We came in on the wagon that brought your bitch."

Mace pulled Merrie's hair from her face. "Are you going to be okay?"

She whimpered. There was a brief sensation of her body recovering but it would take hours if not days. She could heal herself faster by transforming, but she couldn't do that in front of the other prisoners. Slowly, she shook her head.

"Yeah, that's how I've been feeling for weeks. Will you survive?"

She considered speaking but then nodded. "If I can avoid light," she whispered.

Mace smiled and he stroked her cheek. His fingers traced down to her throat before he pulled up a rope that had been tied around her collar. She followed it with her eyes to where Horge had knotted it to a bar near the ceiling. With a sigh, he released it and caught the hair on the other side of her face. "Good girl."

A little shiver of pleasure flooded through her.

He looked up. "Horge?"

"Yeah."

"Bitch needs darkness to heal. We don't have to be here but—"

"Then get out."

"—you need to listen. Do you like fucking her?"

"... yeah."

"Do you want to keep doing it?"

Horge grunted.

"Then keep her in the fucking dark."

A loud bell rang out.

Mace sighed and he pulled his hand away from Merrie. "That was the work bell, wasn't it? We're late?"

Horge grunted. "Yes. No more surface jobs today."

"Well, time to learn about those tunnels," Razor said with a dejected tone. "I was hoping to go a few weeks before being sent down there. Fucking thriban doesn't know how to take care of the naked puppy girl."

Slender snorted.

Merrie peeked up. All four men were looking at her. The other wagon prisoners looked haggard, even after only two days apart. Slender winked at her while Razor turned to the door. Her tail thumped slightly.

Mace ran his hand on her arm. "Do you want to stay here?"

Razor froze and looked back.

Horge growled, his body towering over the others. "I'll kill you if you try."

Slender toyed with his knife. "Depends on what the bitch says. If she wants to leave, you can't take us all on."

The room grew tense.

Merrie nodded. "I'm okay," she whispered. "I just need it to be dark... and maybe food and water."

Mace turned to Horge. "Got that?"

Horge looked at him with a scowl and then back to Merrie. Slowly he nodded.

"Good. Now let's... grab that blanket. We'll put it over the shelf and make a tent for her. It will be hot but at least it won't be bright.

It took only a few minutes for all four to set up a small, pitch-dark tent for Merrie. It grew quickly cool from her body temperature and she slumped down on one of the furs underneath her. It was crusty with cum but she didn't care.

"Don't you take her," growled Horge.

"Wouldn't think of it but I wouldn't mind checking on her after the tunnels? No taking... just checking."

Merrie closed her eyes. Her leg was throbbing in agony and she found it hard to concentrate.

"Fine. You can visit Horge's bitch, but only if I'm here."

t'Sade

Gifted

75

The ground shook underneath Merrie's body. Her ears perked up and her tail began to wag slowly. Horge had a distinctive sound when he walked, a lumbering sound that vibrated the ground in slow, purposeful steps.

When something heavy hit the side of the house, a streamer of dust fell and tickled her nose; it wasn't just her head that he hit on the sides of buildings. He frequently banged his shoulder or hands against everything. It was as if he wasn't comfortable with his own body.

She pulled her limbs from underneath herself and pushed her body up into a sitting position. Her bare breasts wiggled as she settled into place, her buttocks resting on her shin and her tail free to drag along the dusty ground. She arched her back and brought her wrists to her collar.

It would be another few seconds before he arrived. He always took the same route, always walked at the same pace. He didn't like to vary his routine and followed it obsessively. It was everything she learned not to do with her bonding with Kine but then again Horge was a thug, not a master thief.

Her pussy grew wetter. One of the reliable aspect of her life was his desires: within minutes of him getting home, her face would be shoved into his balls and her lips caressing his shaft. He fucked her ever night, treating her with the same roughness as he did from the first night.

She loved the fucking. It was exactly what she hoped for when she entered the prison. Of all the possibilities, being repeatedly roughly used and treated as nothing more than a fuck hole. She

leaned to the side to tug on the rope attached to her collar. The hard metal dug into her neck, sending a little flares of pleasure through her system.

Slowly, she followed the rope with her eyes up to where it was tied to the three-meter-high ceiling. Even without her hands, there was no way she could reach it to remove it. Seeing the rough knot tied to a metal bar brought a little surge of lust and her tail wagged faster. Her spread-open pussy tingled with desire.

The door shuddered.

She barked and shook her entire body back and forth. At the same time, she steeled herself against the coming pain.

Scraping against the ground and ceiling, the door dragged open. The smell of burnt hair and wood smoke flooded in the chamber. The fading sunlight leaked around him but he effectively blocked the door as he levered himself inside and shoved it.

She only felt the briefest of burns from the light before the door groaned into place. Panting, she slumped but kept her body moving back and forth.

Smoke swirled around her current owner. It was choking and acidic. He shoved his shoulder his against the door to make sure it was tightly sealed. "Trap in the tunnels."

Merrie could only imagine the horrors of the tunnels. Horge worked the tunnels every day. Every few days, Horge would come back with deep cuts, acid burns, or smoking from the spells. She didn't understand how or why they worked, but she suspect it was something to pass the time and to earn chits for clothes, food, and more importantly alcohol. He had said that he wasn't allowed to have one of Rat's whores, his cock was too big and would kill any of them.

She could take it. She grinned and crawled over to him, her tail wagging.

His cock was already straining at his trousers. She brought her face up to it and pressed her cheek against the rough fabric. The smell of smoke choked her but it also brought the musky smell of a hard shaft. She moaned and mouthed against his buttons, sticking her tongue into the opening to caress the damp hardness underneath.

Horge moaned, a deep throaty growl. He reached down and grabbed the back of her head to grind her into his crotch. With his other hand, he worked at the buttons to open it up.

As soon as he did, the thick girth of his shaft burst out of his trouser and smacked the top of her head. His other hand ground her face into the under edge of his shaft, dragging his hairy balls across her face.

Trembling with desire, she opened her mouth and worked the large sack into her mouth. He smelled of sweat and man, a musky smell that brought a quivering desire from between her legs. Reaching up, she used the smooth ends of her wrists to heft his balls and bring them to her mouth.

“Your mouth is always so cold,” he said in a low voice. He tightened his head on her head, forcing her to one ball and then the other. “It feels good today.”

Pre-cum splashed down on her back and shoulders. It was a steady stream, dripping in splatters that traced the lines of her body as it made its way down her spine. It split into many rivulets, coating her flanks and hips before it finally formed a river that coated her entire backside. Much of it coursed into the valley of her buttocks. The tickle of the hot liquid against her labia was maddening, not enough to bring her to an orgasm but enough to get her squirming. She moaned and sucked harder, working her mouth widely open to try bringing as much as his sack into her mouth.

“Yeah... good bitch. Suck those balls.”

Merrie buried her face and smeared the saliva covering his sack against his face. Slowly, she brought her mouth up to his pre-cum soaked shaft. It was hard and throbbing, the massive girth almost as wide as her own head. She kicked and sucked her way up the bottom edge, tracing the ridges with her lips and painting her cool breath against his length.

She loved the thickness near the center. The hardened width was thicker than her thigh and she couldn't wait to feel it rammed into her pussy. After weeks of fucking, she could take him easily but it was still a strain as he shoved deep.

Her lips traced along the widest point before sucking on the thick river of pre-cum that poured down his length. It tasted warm and sticky, exactly her favorite flavor. With a moan, she reached the top

of his cock and suckled on the tip where the copious flow of pre-cum quickly filled her mouth.

Knowing that it would turn Horge on, she gulped loudly. The mouthfuls of pre-cum poured down her throat, filling her empty stomach. The heat seeped through her body, flooding her with a sense of joy and pleasure.

Opening her mouth as wide as she could, she drew in the tip of his cock. Her lips couldn't take all of it much less the gap of her jaw. She still tried, forcing it into her mouth until her jaw ached and a soft gurgling whimper escaped the liquid heat pouring down her throat.

After only a short time of sucking on his knob, he had enough. Horge pulled back.

She tensed, knowing what would come back.

His slap caught her cheek, the passive paw snapping her head to the side. A heartbeat later, his backhand hit her other cheek, slamming her head to the side. "Be quiet."

It didn't matter if she made a noise or not. It was part of his foreplay, the final bit he needed to get his cock throbbing and ready to plunge into her.

Her pussy began to drool with anticipation. She lifted her face, knowing that he was going to do it again.

He slapped her a few more times. His massive hand threw her face back and forth. One of his blows caught her breasts, sending a sharp flare of pain followed by an afterglow of the smallest of orgasms.

As she panted for breath, he grabbed her face and crushed her ears against her skull. With a roar of lust, he yanked her from the ground and threw her across the room.

She let out a yelp before she landed on his bed. Rolling forward, she stopped on her belly, her breasts crushed against the furs. Her tail snapped up as she spread her legs, bracing herself to turn around.

To her surprise, he landed heavily on the back of her thighs. One hand smacked the back of her head, crushing her face into the furs. His heavy shaft smacked against her shoulders, the balls along her buttocks.

Merrie froze with the unexpected behavior: Horge didn't like the idea of anal sex. He avoided even her offers to tease his sphincter. Instead he only had a single position, with her on her back and his cock driving up between her legs.

The unexpected behavior brought a smile to her lips. She moaned and lifted her hips, cradling his cock between the globes of her ass cheeks. Her tail thumped against the side of the shaft, sending vibrations down the entire length.

His cock continued to pour pre-cum across her back. It caressing her skin as it pooled in the small of her back before splitting apart to slide down both sides of her flanks.

Horge's grip tightened on her head as he pulled his hips back. His massive shaft slid down her butt, the center girth widening her cheeks, before it narrowed again. The rounded head of his cock slid down past her tail bone.

When it rested against her sphincter, she let out a little moan of desire. It had been weeks since she had something impaling her rectum and she missed the intense pleasure.

He continued to work down, shoving his dripping head directly against her labia. Pushing forward, the lubricated tip easily parted her nether lips apart and lodged itself into her pussy.

Despite being disappointed, Merrie let out a low moan of need. Fucking in one hole was better than being torn apart. She loved how the wide head stretched her open until her inner walls strained. She lifted her hips more, welcoming him to drive into her more than willing body.

Horge grabbed the back of her head with both hands. Thick fingers crushing, he drove his hips down and shoved his massive cock into her pussy with one hard stroke.

Already excited with anticipation, he buried half of his length into her body. Her inner walls strained to hold his girth, she couldn't quite get used to it, but the discomfit set off an intense orgasm as he began to hammer into her.

Pinned against the furs and unable to life her head, she bit down on the bedding as he fucked her. It was brutal and uncaring, he was only looking to flood her insides with his cum. She writhed underneath him, enjoying the helplessness and degradation as he used her. She was his fuck toy, a hole to vent into it.

Horge grunted as he finished stuffing his entire cock into her pussy. He strained to pull out, dragging her labia along, before he thrust his ridged shaft deeper.

Merrie gasped as the cock pistoned inside her. The pleasure of having the thick rod drive deep into her body, pushing aside organs, and plumbing the depths of her cunt, were incredible. She bit harder on the furs as she pushed back into each stroke.

His balls crushed against her buttocks with each thrust. When he pulled back, she could feel their combined juices dripping off them and splattering against the curve of her buttocks.

As he hammered into her, one after another orgasm burst inside her. She clamped down on his shaft, her pussy clinging to the ridged member as he easily powered her inner walls to bury deep into her body.

The tip of his cock hammered against her diaphragm and thrust into her chest. Her entire body had been stretched out around the pole but she didn't care. She moaned and gasped, little cries being forced out with every powerful thrust.

Then his shaft swelled inside her and his thrusts grew more powerful, the pounding almost breaking bones as he drove her hard into the furs.

As his cum burst inside her, she let out a muffled cry as stars exploded across her vision. Every jet of cum seared against her insides, painting her womb and pussy with liquid heat.

He shuddered as he emptied his balls into her body, the pressure building up as his thick cock sealed the only way it could escape.

Merrie moaned at the pressure, enjoying the discomfort blending in with the flares of ecstasy. Her wrists dragged against the furs as she closed her eyes and lost herself.

Then he stopped.

Merrie felt a prickle of difference. Horge had never just stopped with his cock inside her. He always pulled out and staggered back as cum poured out of her gaping slit.

This time, he pulled her head back from the pillows. Leaning over, he worked his cock deeper into her cunt as the last few spurts flooded inside her. Panting, he pulled her head back until her spine protested and they were looking into each other's eyes.

“You are mine,” he growled. His hips thrust again, plunging into the flooded depths of her body.

Gasping, she tried to nod but he was holding her too tight. She let out a soft whimper and then a bark.

He wrapped one hand around her throat, squeezing as he angled her back even more. Her arms were picked off the fur and she flailed helplessly. “No, use words! You are my bitch!”

“Y-Yes,” she gasped, tears in her eyes. Her pussy was still clenching his hard cock that was still stuffed into her pussy.

“You don’t fuck anyone else. Ever!”

Her cum-soaked breasts quivered with his violent jerk. The muscles in her neck protested as she was forced to stare at him. His powerful hand held her neck painfully in place as his cock pulsed inside him, throbbing deep inside her stuffed cunt.

“You won’t let him fuck you, do you hear.”

Him? Confused, Merrie just nodded.

He pulled back and rammed his cock deep into her pussy, stretching her painfully as he filled her. “Words, quiet words! Promise. Your cunt is mine.”

“Y-Yes, my cunt is yours.” Her pussy spasmed with the thrill of being dominated.

“Yes, don’t you forget that.” He continued to thrust inside her, moving faster and faster. The cum was already straining her insides and with him plunging deep, she could only feel it growing more tight. It hurt but it was a good pain as she was driven into another orgasm and then another.

Horge panted as he moved back into fucking her, but it was a slow deep thrust. His immense girth slid in and out of her cunt, caressing and stroking along sensitive nerves. He seemed to be enjoying himself instead of just rutting, bringing her from one orgasm to another until she was whimpering with need.

He gripped her tight, one hand crushing her breast and the other on her neck as he pulled her to his chest. His cock throbbed and swelled, spewing hot cum deep into her pressurized depths.

His breath was hot on her body. “Mine,” he said before pulling his cock out.

When the cum spewed out of her stretched pussy, she moaned and spread her legs. Thick jets of it splattered along her thighs and

spray along the bedding. She moaned and squirmed as the pressure subsided.

Horge rolled over on his back, his cock half-hard standing up from his hairy base.

Merrie lifted herself up. She was humming from the orgasm but seeing his dripping cock, she couldn't help but crawl over and suck on the creamy tip. The strong flavors their pleasures mixed together on her tongue and she herself to cleaning every centimeter of his shaft with her lips.

Horge moaned. "Mine."

She looked up and smiled. "Yours."

He said nothing for a while but she could feel he was struggling with words. She busied herself finishing cleaning up his cock, gulping the thick torrent of cum until it gurgled in her stomach. She ignored the puddle on the ground though it quickly coated most of her body from her efforts to clean.

"Your fat friend got hurt today."

Merrie froze. "Ston?"

"Yeah, the account... money guy. He was on my team and took the flames."

A tear burned in her eye. She pressed her cheek to Horge's glistening shaft. "Is he going to be okay?"

"Rat says he can't go in the tunnels for a month at least. He can't work in the stores either. Your other friends are helping with chits but... I... I..." He squirmed for a moment. His shaft pulled away from Merrie.

She waited, knowing she couldn't push him.

"He could use the company during the day."

"M-Me?" she whispered in surprise.

Horge grumbled and nodded. "He's having trouble. His kind always do and they never last. But he's... important to you. So, keep him company."

She smiled broadly and kissed his cock. "Thank you."

"Don't fuck him or I'll kill you both. He gets his dick in your cunt and I'll rip his balls off."

"I promise. He won't."

Merrie's tail wagged faster. It wasn't that he obviously didn't consider anal sex to be fucking but she was just happy that she

would have someone else in her life. being a slave was one thing, but she liked interaction also.

t'Sade

Card Game

76

Ston set down a roughly drawn card on the ground between him and Merrie. “Seven of Wands.”

Merrie peered at it. She had to lift her body to see it clearly in the dim light. The lettering was faded from many hands the deck had passed over in the years. It was also expensive, judging from Ston’s complaints. It took him almost two weeks of saving to get it and there was blood on the edges of half the cards.

Her tail wagged slowly before she looked up at him. Her breasts tickled against the ground, the nipples dragging as she had to arch her back. She smiled broadly and then nosed one of the cards face down on the ground in front of her.

He chuckled. “This is weird playing your cards too.”

“Not much easier for me. It’s hard to memorize the cards without being able to look at them,” she whispered. Even though she had gotten more comfortable speaking, both feeling guilty for doing so and her throat growing more accustomed to the effort. “I don’t think I never really played cards when I was younger. I’m... not sure though, I forgot a lot about being a child. Well, and a teenager, and most of my early twenties.”

“You’re doing pretty well, you’ve won the last few hands.”

“I’m sure you’re going to win this one.” She wasn’t telling the truth though, he had already lost the game.

“I doubt it.” He groaned and stretched out his leg. He braced himself on the ground and picked up her card.

As he did, she looked at his leg. The village’s makeshift healer—a disgraced cleric—had removed the bandages around his entire leg. The burn had mostly healed however there was a strip of dead skin

that had to be removed with a knife. The much smaller bandages were dotted with blood. The rest of it was visible, deeply scarred and wasted away almost to the bone.

“Still hurts,” Ston said with a sigh. He put her card down on top of his. It was the eight of wands. He groaned. “Damn, you won the hand.”

She smiled and wagged her tail. “Sorry.”

“No, I like losing to you. It gives me a feeling of penance for what’s going on here. I feel useless right now.”

Merrie nuzzled against his leg. “I’m sorry about your injury.”

“Not for long. I can walk again which means I’m back in the tunnels. That Rat can be a bitch about those damn chits and I’m tired of Mace, Slender, and Razor paying my way.”

“Thought about starting your own business? You’re a merchant.”

“Rumor has it that Rat cuts the throat of anyone who tries to compete with her. That’s a bit riskier than I’m willing to give at this point.” He stretched his toe. “No, the leg is good enough I can dig again so tomorrow I’ll be in the dark.”

He stroked her ear, right along the sensitive ridge. “I kind of wish we were back at the wagon though. At least then I had a chance to....” His voice trailed off.

She knew what he wanted. “To fuck me?”

His fingers froze for a moment. “Yeah. There aren’t a lot of women in the prison. The ones who are willing get snatched up by Rat and doled out for chits.”

“Except me?”

He chuckled. “Yes. I don’t know why she hates you though. She’s tripled the price on that collar of yours, three days of unlimited services.”

“That’s a lot.”

Ston patted her. “Don’t worry, I’d rather have your company than your collar.”

She crawled over and pressed her head against his side.

He slid an arm around her waist and cupped her breast. His breath was warm against her body as he rolled her nipple in his fingertips. “No, we both know a good thing when we see it. Horge has been keeping the thieves away from your collar. Despite having

the manners of a goat, he's a good person for us to hang around until we got our bearings."

"He's a bit rough."

"That's how you like it, isn't it?" He squeezed her nipple.

Merrie moaned, a ripple of pleasure fluttering along her senses. "Y... yes. I like it rough and hard. But he's just one man, as much as he goes, he really isn't... a challenge?" She sighed. "He makes me cum and gets me soaked, but there isn't much change. Blowjob, slapping me around—"

Ston tensed.

"—and then a fuck. Same thing, every night."

"He shouldn't slap you."

She lifted her head to nuzzle at his chin. "I like it though. It makes me feel good."

"At least he should feed you during the day. Or let you...." He closed his mouth.

Merrie grinned and kissed him. "Out into the sunlight? I'll pass, if you don't mind. Besides, I don't really need food or drink."

"You had your magic sealed away, how can that happen?"

Merrie didn't have an answer for that. She had thought about it herself, but she couldn't tell if it was Parn protecting her or the geas somehow pretending to work. "I don't know... maybe it doesn't change inherent aspects? For me, ripping out my darkness would be the same as tearing out your heart and bones."

He shuddered.

"I'm not going to argue, it saves me jumping up and down having to pee when Horge gets home. Or leaving little puddles on the ground." She grinned and kissed him again.

He squeezed her nipple and rolled it around.

With a moan, she leaned against him. She was getting turned on, which made it difficult since both of them were honoring Horge's demand they didn't fuck. It was hard, she wanted to feel Ston's tongue against her ass as much as he wanted to drive his cock into her tight hole.

"I-I better go."

She pulled back as he stood up. "Take care of yourself, I like having you around."

Ston rubbed his head. He looked down at his bandaged leg and sighed. "I'm hoping Horge lets me visit even after tomorrow. I don't think I can do long hours down there for a while."

Merrie nodded. She had no influence over Horge. He thought of her as less than a human, a hole to fuck and nothing more. The realization brought a longing for his massive cock that flooded her thoughts, tickling her pussy with desire.

Ston groaned. "Come on, help me up."

Enjoying the thrill of being ordered, Merrie helped Ston get to his feet. He gathered up the cards and shoved them into a small bag he had tied to his waist. His belly was smaller than on the wagon, poor eating and not a lot of money had not done well for him, however she saw muscles beginning to form.

"Thank you," she whispered.

They shared a kiss before she crawled to the bedding, crawling underneath the thick furs and blankets before he opened the door to let the sunlight flood in. She settled in, working her way into the opaque depths that protected her.

When she heard the scrape of the door, she felt a pang of loneliness and another of desire.

The door closed shut, not quite with the finality that Horge slammed the door.

She held her breath, listening. When he didn't return, she decided to remain under the blankets and deal with the maddening itch between her legs. With her cool temperature, the cramped blanket wouldn't overheat and the pressure felt good as she flattened herself against the firm ground. It almost felt like someone holding her down.

With a moan, she reached down to rub the side of her wrist against her seam. The folds parted easily, exposing the slick depths and her aching clitoris. The sake-scented smells of her pussy flooded the cramped space as she propped up the furs and rubbed herself faster. In her mind, she drew a detailed fantasy of him working his way up her body, his lips caressing her buttocks, then back, before moving up until his head was against hers. As the imagined cock pressed against the tight opening of her sphincter, she let out a louder moan and used both hands to rub her slick clitoris and slit.

Ston's visit always got her excited. Horge demanded that they didn't fuck and the thriban was known for brutal attacks against his perceived property, he had sent more than one person to the healer since they had arrived. His actions ended up with him getting banned from Rat's for a few day which meant even more brutal sex for Merrie. However she didn't want Ston to get hurt so she masturbated when he left instead of encouraging him to sliding his hard cock between her buttocks and drive into her neglected asshole.

The door creaked.

She froze.

No one should be entering Horge's home.

A sense of danger rose inside her and her building orgasm sputtered away.

The door opened further, scraping along the ground in slow, unsteady movements.

Ston never came back so late after he left.

She inched her way to the edge of the blanket but stopped when she felt the burn of light flooding inside the room. The door was still open and sunlight filled the space with a promise of agony if she crawled out. She froze, holding her breath until the door closed again.

"I know you're in here," said a vaguely familiar sounding voice. It was a man, not unexpected since most of the prisoners were male. It was low but not the deep base tones of a thriban nor the higher pitch of a silfae; the speaker was probably human in his thirties.

A prickle of surprise and sudden fear raced along her skin. She slowly drew her outstretched limb away from the light. Tense, she cocked her head as she tried to identify the intruder.

He stepped further into the room. "Everyone heard you screaming when that thriban opened the door. Since then, you never go out. I'm betting you have trouble with sunlight and light so if I keep this door open, you won't do anything stupid."

Her tail curled up between her legs to rest against her pussy. She wasn't sure, but it sounded like the intruder wanted something more than to rape her on Horge's bed and run away before the thriban returned. There was a calculating tone in his voice.

If was just sex, she would have played the willing victim. However, kidnapping posed a problem: Horge. The thriban was jealous and possessive and prone to lashing out. That meant that everyone would be in danger if she wasn't there when he returned home. The image of Ston rose up and she cringed, he would be Horge's first victim and the least skilled to defend himself.

Merrie couldn't let that happen. She had to fight back.

However the sun spearing into the room prevented her from just lashing out with power. If it wasn't for the brightness, he would be dead before he took another step.

Immediately, she felt a surge of humiliation. Parn wanted her to think about using magic, not reflexively use it. Her ears flattened against her head as she tried to come up with any other way of defending herself.

It only took a second to realized she was helpless. She couldn't handle the light and the intruder knew it. He had obviously planned this out which meant he may have the next steps already prepared to keep her unable to defend herself; it didn't matter if he was unaware of her magic, she couldn't use it.

A deep, pulsating heat flooded through her. It prickled along her skin as her pussy grew even wetter with anticipation. Somehow, her initial thoughts out of his intelligence and skill set off an overwhelming wave of lust, even if it was just a fantasy.

Cheeks and pussy burning, she knew she had to wait. He was probably going to fuck her. It was just what would follow after that left her concerned. However not everyone can plan for everything and he may not know the full extent of her powers. She could only hope that he would slip out and she would be ready to stop him.

He kicked the blankets. His boots drove into her hip, pushing her aside and flipping furs up briefly to let a spear of light sear a line across her pale skin. "I said answer me!"

The man wanted her to be afraid. She could do that. Inwardly preparing, she let the measure of fear already seeping through her thoughts surge forward. It quickened her breath and brought a whimper vibrating in her throat. She crawled deeper underneath the blankets.

"Yeah, try to run, you little cunt."

Her pussy grew hot as she played the role he wanted. She squirmed for a moment and then curled up until her tail dragged across her face.

“You better answer when I ask or I’m going to start flipping up every blanket in that pile. I bet you can’t run fast enough, it’s really bright in here.” As if to prove his point, he kicked the furs and a small sliver of burning sunlight pierced Merrie’s darkness to sear a black line across her wrist.

She bit down on her tongue and yanked back. A wisp of black smoke marked the air as she yanked her wrist back.

“Say, ‘yes, sir!’”

“Y-Yes, sir!” she whispered.

He kicked her again, the toe of his boot digging into her belly. “The Gods Below, I’m going to enjoy this. You are such a soft, fucking cunt, wasted on that stupid gray. I’m going to break you properly, stuff every hole of your body.”

She moaned unwillingly as the promised dominance fluttered through her. He wanted to fuck, that meant more opportunities to save herself. Her pussy grew slick with anticipation of being raped.

“Now, you are going to do everything I say otherwise I’m going to roast your ass right here and now.” He flipped the edge of the bedding, it was away from her but the threat was clear. “Do you understand?”

“Y-Yes, sir,” she whimpered.

There was a flutter of heavy fabric and a whiff of rotted vegetables. “Now, I have this heavy bag. I’m putting it near the edge. I want you to crawl into it. You take longer than five seconds and I’m roasting your cunt.”

That is how he was going to make sure she didn’t stall until Horge returned. She felt a thrill of a growing fear, he knew what he was doing.

With her pussy dripping, she obeyed and crawled into the sack. The smell of rotted food was choking but the fabric was thick. She couldn’t see even a hint of light through the material as he shoved her deeper into it and tied off the opening.

Trembling with lust and need, she closed her eyes and concentrated on his actions as he worked the opening further, it felt like he was wrapping rope to ensure it wouldn’t open.

As he picked her up and slung her sack over his shoulder, he grunted. Her body thumped against a hard back, the flex of muscles told her that he was strong. Not as strong as Horge but strong enough that she would have been terrified if she wasn't willingly going with him.

"Yeah, you like fatty, don't you? Don't want anything to happen to that fat fuck? Well, if you don't do exactly what I tell you to, I'm going to cut your head off and make sure your gray thinks fatty did it." The voice grew louder. "Can you imagine what Horge is going when he finds out?"

Anger tempered her lust. Even though he phrased it as a question, she suspected that he was revealing his plans. Rat did make an offer for her collar which would mean that he would have to cut off her head. She didn't know if it was possible, but it would hurt to find out. He also threatened Ston's life. He was a friend and she couldn't take it.

She still couldn't do anything with the light. With tears of frustration fighting with the burning need between her legs, she knew she had to wait. It just meant that she would kill her kidnapper at the first opportunity instead of letting him rape her to grant her power.

He chuckled. "Yeah... that's what I thought. Just be quiet and still and the fat man lives. You scream once, you cry out, and I dump that bag right out in the sun and jerk off over your smoking corpse."

Parn would understand if Merrie used her magic. Just this one time.

"You understand, cunt?" He shook the bag.

"Y-Yes," she whispered.

"One peep and then roasted tit." He started out of the house, slamming her body against the side of the door as he stepped out into the bright light. A few tiny specks of light got through the canvas to sting her but otherwise the bag held. She could feel the sunlight on the other side, a burning brilliant that would destroy her in seconds if he dumped her out.

She would behave until he made the mistake of leaving her in the darkness. Closing her eyes, she waited.

A Little Exchange



Inside the bag, Merrie was unable to see where the kidnapper was taking her. All she knew was that it was hot and cramped. Her shortened limbs helped a little as did her icy blood but the temperature continued to rise steadily as he continued to carry her. Without being able to look around, she couldn't tell if it was meters or even kilometers.

Just as sweat began to form on her brow, a new voice called out. "Trien! Wait up!"

Trien, she remembered the name from her first night. He had taken one of the whores, Puss, back to his home despite the young man's pleading. Merrie's stomach clenched, his planning worried her as much as his obvious cruelty. For the countless time, she wished the sun would fade away so she could lash out and end him.

Her kidnapper sighed and turned. "What do you want, Gon?"

"Where you heading?"

"To the dump, I have a full load."

Gon sniffed and then made a gagging noise. "By the Shadows Who Kill, what is in there?"

"Rotten food from Rat's, vomit I had to scrape off the tables, and something dead I found." He hefted the bag. "Well, if it isn't dead, it will be."

Merrie's eyes narrowed. She wasn't surprised Trien planned on killing her, it made it easier for her to plan on attacking him as soon as she had a chance.

"I'm surprise Rat has anything to do with you after what you did to Puss."

“Yeah, well the bitch deserved it. All that crying and whining. I was getting pissed off. Asshole wouldn’t even suck me off.”

“You sent him to the healer. Even broke an arm. I heard Rat cut you off for a month. She’s really pissed.”

Merrie gasped softly with surprise.

Trien grunted but said nothing.

“Well...” Gon said slowly, “I probably could get you a bottle for your troubles.”

Trien hefted his bag, smacking Merrie in the side with his elbow. He did it again, slamming the bone hard into her flanks. “For what?”

“Thirty chits for some Ring of Fire?”

“Really? Thirty? That’s three times the cost.”

“Well,” chuckled Gon, “seeing that Rat is pissed at you and I don’t think hauling garbage is going to get you very far. I think it’s a pretty good offer.”

Trien grunted.

“Take it or leave it. I’m taking these tools over to Rat’s before heading back home over there. If I have a little extra money, I wouldn’t mind grabbing a bottle for a little scratch.”

“I’m thinking.”

“Well, hurry up. I’m not going to spend all night walking to the dump and back just to give it. Well, if you make it sixty chits maybe I’ll go the distance.”

Merrie tensed, the place where Trien was planning on fucking her was that far away? How would she get back in time before Horge found out? How would she know where the dump was?

She knew the answers, she had more than enough magic and the ability to step into the Shadows. She just had to wait.

With a scoff, Trien said, “No fucking way I’m giving you sixty for a ten chit bottle.”

“Thirty?”

“Twenty.”

“Let’s compromise and call it thirty. Since you’re such a good friend.”

“Twenty-eight and I’d rather cut your throat than call you a friend,” snarled Trien.

“Eh, I’ll take it. Deal.”

“Head over there to my place. I’ll be back within an hour. Don’t go inside, I trapped the door. Fire glyph, it will melt your face off.”

“Yeah, yeah, I’ll wait.”

Gon walked away, his shoes crunching on a gravel path. Trien waited until it faded before he turned fast enough that Merrie flew up and then smacked against his back.

“I told you to be quiet, bitch.” He grunted and walked off the path and onto softer ground. “I’m going to fucking kill that bastard one of these days, but he’s right. Rat banned me because I fucked up that pussy too many times. Fragile little bitch. That’s why I got you as a backup.”

He chuckled cruelly. “At least until you break too. Don’t worry, I need to keep you around for a few weeks at least. By then, Puss should be out of the healer and I’ll be bored with you. One thing about Rat, she always forgives with enough chits.”

Trien stopped and dropped the bag. Then he kicked her hard and the bag rolled to the side.

Merrie grunted as she slammed into the ground. Sharp rocks dug into her side and tore the canvas. Sunlight shone through the tear, blinding her.

With a whimper, she shied away from it.

Trien kicked her. “Damn it, bitch, don’t move.”

“L-Light!”

“Oh, fuck me. It’s just a fucking tear.”

“It burns,” she whimpered.

“You know, this plan of mine might not be worth it. Maybe I should just kill you now?” He kicked her again for good measure. “No, not going to waste your cunt. Let me see if Gon has something. Stay here. If you run, I’m going to toast your fucking cunt and eat it.”

Merrie shivered and shook her head. “I won’t.”

“And be fucking quite,” he gave her one last kick before walking away. She listened to him circle around a building. Then the sound of cracking wood as he kicked open the door.

“Fucking hells, this guy is a gods damned slob. No wonder he got life for crimes against the altars.” He snorted. “I should just burn this place down to the ground. I’m... going to need to hold my breath.”

It took almost twenty minutes for him to return. "All right, let's see that bag."

He kicked her again, the toe of his boot catching her right underneath the chin.

Her head snapped back at the unexpected blow. With a soft cry, she curled up to protect herself from the blows she couldn't see coming.

Trien grunted as he sat down heavily. Something draped over the bag and the world grew darker. "I'm going to fix this rip but if you try anything, a bite or a sound, I'm going to rip it open and throw your smoking corpse into his house. You got it?"

She nodded sharply, her ears dragging on the side of the canvas bag.

"Now shut up." He grunted. "I hate sewing."

Merrie kept still as he worked.

"All this fucking work just to fuck a fucking cunt," he muttered. He jammed the needle into the canvas with sharp strokes. The tip scraped against her skin, leaving little black marks against her pale flesh.

Flashes of sunlight sparked the bag as he worked. She cringed every time one burned her skin or he caught her with another needle. It was an agonizing torture, one that seemed to go on forever.

Footsteps crunched on the ground. "Damn the gods! You broke in?"

"My fucking bag spilled. You want a dead corpse and shit on your door?"

"No, but... you broke it!"

"I'll give you thirty chits, fuck off!" Trien said as he frantically finished the tear. Leaning forward, he whispered into the bag. "You make a single noise and I'll kill you right here and now." His voice was a growl.

She remained still, not willing to make a noise or even twitch with the sun still bright.

"Got my bottle?"

"Yeah, got my thirty?"

"Give me a second." Trien grunted as he got to his feet. There was a scuff of fabric and leather as they exchanged their goods.

“Pleasure doing business. Want to stay and enjoy it together?”

“Fuck off.”

“Yeah, yeah, but at least now I can afford to fuck at Rat’s.”

Trien made a growl as Gon chuckled. Then the kidnapper grabbed the bag and swung it around. Merrie’s body was pressed tightly to the bottom as she smacked into a body and then up against Trien’s back.

“Yeah, fuck you too!”

Trien stormed away, his footsteps loud as he jerked the bag back and forth. “I’m going get home and fuck the living shit out of you, you gods damned whore.”

t'Sade

Kneel

78

A half hour after leaving Gon, Trien was still carrying Merrie on his way to the dump and her fate. She could tell the distance had taken its toll on him; he stumbled frequently and gasped for breath after stopping. Occasionally he had to sway to the side or groan with the effort to haul her up over a hill.

The trip wasn't enjoyable for her either. The sack was suffocating and hot. Her body rolled around in it but she couldn't even brace herself on the side to avoid smashing her face or breasts into the side. Whenever she did, he elbowed her or shook the bag violently until she relented. When she was forced into an uncomfortable position for too long, the pinpricks of light would sting her skin.

Despite her discomfort, it was Ston that she was worried about. Every passing second brought her further away. She was already sure she couldn't make it back without using magic. There was no way she could travel that much distance even assuming she broke free with first dark.

That was assuming she could escape when it turned dark. There was always a chance Trien had anticipated her abilities or dumb luck would prevent her from using them. The thousand what-ifs that haunted her made her question her choice to wait for an opportunity to strike back.

Just as she was berating herself for not fighting in the sunlight, she noticed that he was walking faster. Her body was bounced in the bag, rolling from one side to the other. She managed to brace her sweat-slicked limbs slightly as she tried to steady herself.

Trien elbowed her painfully. "Settle down, cunt. We're almost there."

She didn't know what to do. Panting, she fought the swell of lust from her helplessness and the sick from worrying about Ston. As she did, she started to pick up new smells from their destination: the stench of rotting food exposed to the air, sharp scents of burning wood, and the gathered garbage of an entire prison. Underneath was a different smell, she couldn't quite place it but it was sharp and cloying, like long dead corpses.

Ten minutes later, he was walking on a hardened surface. It sounded like cracked tiles that scraped against each other. He muttered as he jerked to one side and then the other. Finally, he came to a halt.

When she heard metal chains being rattled, her ears perked up. She could almost picture him pulling out a thick chain through a series of rings. She glanced up to see that there was still light seeping through the tiny little holes in the canvas. Her skin still crawled from the contact but she noticed it wasn't as hot as before.

Frowning, she peered at the fabric. The light seemed more blue than yellow but it wasn't any less bright. It was hard to tell through the shifting fabric but she also didn't think it was flickering. That meant it was probably a magical light.

Some of her hopes faded. He suspected she had to keep into the light. Her fears were confirmed when he entered inside a door and the light didn't diminish.

Trien slammed the door shut and then drew more chains through eye-bolts. She could feel the scrape of the heavy metal shaking through his entire body.

"Don't worry about escaping, I'm keeping this place nice and bright for you." He chuckled and continued down a narrow-sounded hall. "This used to be the old processing prison center. Lots of cells for prisoners but I found a perfect one for you in the isolation wing."

Her stomach rolled in discomfort as he carried her further into the building.

"Your light problem reminded me of some of my old bounties."

Merrie's ears perked up again but her tail slumped.

"There was a cabal of shadow dancers, assassins who could dive into darkness to teleport short distances. Nasty little bitches too, even the guys."

That sounded like the shadow abilities that both Kine and herself possessed. They weren't called "dancers" though, but Kine was more interested in stealing and having a fun time than killing. Merrie had the same interests, though she had not used her powers for steal anything. Her own thoughts brought a smile, even though she took on many traits of her master, that was not one of them.

Trien continued speaking, "Now, when we traded them for script, I noticed that the guards had an interesting setup for keeping them pinned because they were famous for escaping. They had this dark cell but all the hallways around them were really bright. Apparently they weren't capable of 'dancing' through wide enough spaces with light. Something about the Shadows, you could almost hear them pronounce the capitalized 'S.'"

He snorted with amusement and jerked the bag. "Guess what I duplicated here? I don't know if you are a shadow dancer, you shouldn't have magic, but you scream like one so good enough, right? Better be right, it took me a long time to steal this many lights."

Merrie froze, a prickle of fear and frustration rising inside her. She gulped and looked out at the bright light that still beat down on her suffocating bag. She couldn't escape without having her skin burned away, she couldn't focus through the light to see where to run, and she didn't know where to run to minimize her pain.

She was screwed.

When he entered the dark chamber, she knew instantly from the relief. Even though the heavy canvas protected her from the brunt of the light, she didn't realize how much she felt it against her skin. The darkness was a balm, icy and soothing. It spread instantly across her body and she let out a little moan of pleasure.

Before the sound escaped her throat, she was already casting the first of many spells. The calligraphy raced across her mind as she coalesced the darkness around her. She felt it flutter and solidify into a second being: her cloak.

It curled around her body, slithering like a snake. The flutters caressed her breasts, thighs, and then up along her spine. She could feel it reaching into her mind, a questing desire that felt strangely foreign inside her mind. There were hints of calligraphy and crystal in its mind, a construct of shadows and psychic powers.

Feeling the cloak as a separate entity startled her. At first, it was only a reflection of her own thoughts and desires. But feeling it in her mind as something separate made it feel like it had broken free to become its own being. Or it was like the collar, still her own mind but with something that turned her own thoughts into another being's, "her mistress."

Curiosity raged inside her, but then she remembered her plans. The cloak's senses merged with her own. She felt its entire body along her own as her world blurred. Immediately, it flattened and slithered through the knot at the top of the bag.

Seeing the world without darkness brought a pang of longing. She missed having the powers woven into every waking moment of her life. She pushed back the growing sadness and focused on her goal to escape.

Her prison cell was three meters by three meters. Crumbling rock walls surrounded all sides except for a metal door mounted firmly into the rock. A grill for the door had been boarded over but she could see just a hint of light peeking through it. It cast the entire room in a dim, blue glow. It was enough to see but not much more.

She started to explore the edges of the grill but a bright light pushed her back. Even the cloak began to smolder in the brilliance outside of the cell. Cringing, she worked her way around the rest of the cell, looking for chinks and cracks in the crumbling stone.

Unaware of her actions, Trien set the bag down.

Merrie almost lost focus on her cloak but she managed to cling to both as she felt the rank canvas being pulled off her head and his hands shoved into the bag to grab her breast and shoulder.

His grip was tight and painful as he lifted her off the ground and shook the fabric free. He seemed to be adept at moving despite going from a bright light to darkness only moments before; she wondered if he wasn't affected by his eyes adjusting.

Looking up, she saw the answer: he had a pair of goggles on top of his head. With his dark tattoos, it made him look more like one of the creatures of darkness with shimmering eyes than a human. A shiver of fear raced through her, Trien was turning to be a lot more devious than she planned.

"So, let's see what I got here." He threw her into the corner of the cell.

Her body slammed against the crumbling rock before sinking into a dust-covered pile of canvas. Thankfully, the fabric didn't stink nearly as much as the bag he used to kidnap her.

Merrie whimpered as she looked at him. In the back of her mind, she was bringing the cloak around the room to look for options.

Trien stepped back and leaned on the wall only centimeters from where the cloak was flowing.

The animated darkness slipped around him without even a whisper of noise.

He chuckled. "Well, you are prettier than I remember."

She glanced at him. Near his head, the cloak formed into a snake-like ribbon. A long point formed at the tip as it prepared to strike.

"I don't know what is going on in that empty head of yours but let me tell you about your new place. Surrounded by endless bright light. I stole as many of the globes from the village and around here. Some of them are still bright after a thousand years so I'm pretty sure they will stay lit until you are nothing but a corpse."

Merrie and the cloak froze.

"So if you are thinking about suffocating me with your tits or thighs, just realize you will be starving to death since you can't unlock the door without hands and you can't handle the light." He folded his arms over his muscular chest. Each arm was equally massive, he looked like he could snap someone in half if he wanted to. "If you want to get out, you better do exactly what I say."

The cloak relaxed with her fear.

She twisted before getting into a kneeling position. The cool air felt good around her. It contrasted with the despair in her chest, there was no way she was going to get to Ston before Horge.

The cloak finished exploring the cell, its senses overlying across Merrie's as she regarded her kidnapper. There was no other opening, no vent or even a narrow gap. The only escape she could find was through the boarded up grill and she couldn't survive the light that burned outside.

Her pussy tingled as she realized how screwed she was.

Trien dropped his hand to his crotch. "Now, I think it's time to talk about your future."

Merrie's eyes flickered down to the bulge. He was large even underneath his pants. His fingers easily cupped his large balls,

pulling them up to strain at the fabric. His cock was visible through the fabric, looked easily twenty-five centimeters long; almost the side of a thriban but without the knot.

There was a command coming, she knew it. It flooded through her veins like a drug. Slowly, her knees spread apart along the dirty canvas as she stared at her own chance at freedom.

“Get over here, bitch. On your knees.” To one side, his hand balled into fist with his own thoughts.

His command was low and throaty. She could hear his need and it strummed along her senses with a thrill. He had spent weeks planning this, making the prison for a shadow, stealing lights, and waiting for the right time. He was also planning for her to lash out, to disobey and require him to force her.

Her pussy grew slicker with desire.

He wanted her to disobey. He wanted to hurt her.

She wanted it herself.

Slowly, she let her magical spells dissipate. There was no need to use magic just to get beaten and raped. The connection with her cloak dissolve and her magical senses darkened until his body was only lit by the dim light coming through the grill. The weight of the world once again pressed down on her, pushing her into a fragile place where her comfort was solely contingent on her obeying her kidnapper.

Merrie shook her head.

He froze.

“N-No,” she whispered. Her voice was still hoarse but it sounded booming in the confines of the cell.

“What did you say?” he growled.

Her pussy pulsed with need. She almost came just at the sight of his face twisting into a scowl and his other hand balling into a fist. He was going to beat her in a moment.

“I’m not going to be your fucking slave,” she said even as the orgasm started to rise up inside her.

He was on her in a flash, his fist coming up and slamming against her jaw. The impact drove her into the wall, crushing her face up against the rough stone as she lost her balance.

Stars exploded across her vision as she let out a strangled cry. Her orgasm snapped, flooding her body with the purest pleasure as

she whipped her head back in time for his slap to catch her across her cheeks.

Trien growled as he fumbled with her hair. His other hand caught her ear and he crushed it against her skull as he dug his fingertips into the side of her head and along her brow. One thick finger slipped along her nose to smash up against her eye.

She let out a gasp.

He slapped her with his right hand. The powerful blow blinded her with the impact. The pain was intense, it only doubled by the finger that was now crushing her eye in its socket.

She flailed, trying to get her balance. Her thighs were slick with her orgasms, the hum of being dominated overwhelming everything and making it almost impossible to concentrate. Harsh cries ripped out of her throat.

Trien slapped her again and again, pummeling her face as he bellowed out with each blow, “You. Will. Fucking. Obey! Me!”

He threw her down, panting. “Now, try again. Get on your damned knees, cunt!”

She tasted blood in her mouth, the sake taste of her darkness teasing her. Inwardly, she smiled with desire. Her collar would prevent her from being too hurt and she found herself craving the conflict of pain and pleasure. Shaking from the effort and unable to see out of one eye, she let her whimpers of fear rise up as she crawled away.

“Oh, you—” Trien caught her. His knuckles caught the back of her cheek as he slapped her again. Before she could pull her head back, he jammed three fingers up underneath her collar and lifted her body.

At the feeling of being helplessly manhandled, she came again with a shuddering gasp.

He slammed her against the wall. Then he punched her in the stomach hard.

Lost in pleasure, Merrie almost didn't register the agony but Trien made sure she felt it by punching her again and again, slamming his massive paw into her guts until she thought she felt organs rupture.

She felt him lowering and her body tensed.

His fourth strike caught her in the cunt, crushing lips and clitoris in a blast of white-hot agony. The impact was wet, smacking against the walls as he drew back his hand. "What then—?" He started but then he punched her again, slamming his knuckles hard against her pussy with brutal force that shoved her hard against the wall.

"You better not pee on me!"

Merrie let out a sob as one leg went limp. It didn't matter.

He dropped her to the ground.

She slumped forward, her face smacking into his palm as he grabbed her face. He dug his fingers into her air and ground her face into his crotch. The sharp edges of the buttons dug into her face.

He fumbled with his buttons, ripping his pants open and yanking his cock out. The thick member, smelling of man and excitement, snapped out to smack into her face; it felt like being beaten with a stick.

"When I say get on your knees, I mean it!" He grabbed her head with both hands. Digging his thumbs into the sensitive spots below her ears, he jammed her face up against his naked cock. "Suck it, cunt!"

She gasped as she was ground against the hard, soaked shaft. His hairy balls rolled on her chin before she was pulled back and thrust into it again. The tip of his cock smacked against her cheek.

Trien crouched and tightened his grip. "Suck it!"

He slammed his hips forward and pulled her toward it at the same time.

Reflexively, Merrie opened her mouth to catch his cock head but it slipped. The slick head smeared across her cheek before jamming into her injured eye.

He pulled back and tried again, thrusting his entire body into her face as his cock battered her face cruelly. It only took a couple of thrusts before pre-cum started to drip off her cheeks and forehead.

Then he managed to strike. The thick cock head drove into her mouth, scraping along her teeth before shoving to the back of her throat.

She gagged at the suddenness but then moaned.

Trien tightened his grip and began to hammer his cock into her mouth. The tip punched at the back of her throat, battering at her

resistance as he took short strokes that shoved her head back into his hands. He yanked her forward as much as he thrust.

There was a taste of blood and then his head managed to slip into her throat. She felt the pressure against her collar as he buried twenty centimeters into her mouth. He was incredible thick, a glorious girth that stretched her lips and strained her throat.

Trien's strokes never gave her a moment of pause. His hips moved with hammer-like speed as he kept his cock impaling the tightness of her throat. He only pulled out enough to reach the back of her throat before slamming it forward again. Each thrust drove his cock deep into her body until his balls smacked against her chin and her face was buried in the short, curly hairs at his base.

Merrie's stomach heaved with her gagging. She strained her wrists against his thighs but she knew she couldn't or wouldn't stop him. The pleasure of being brutally face-fucked sent her from one orgasm to the other. Her juices were dripping down her thighs and soaking into the canvas. She gulped and gurgled around the cock which only seemed to inspire Trien to pound her faster.

A powerful thrust of his cock smashed her head against the rock wall. She was pinned between his hands and the hard spot, her throat struggling to keep the cock was was only taking deep strokes that left her struggling to breathe.

Her legs slipped out from underneath her as she gagged even louder on his cock.

"Fuck!" he screamed. With a single blow, he rammed all of his cock into her lips and smashed her nose against his pubis. The thick swell of his balls strained her lips as he buried every centimeter into her hot, willing mouth.

He came. His cock swelled and spewed cum directly into her belly. The heat of his orgasm flooded across her senses.

Merrie weakly struggled against it. She couldn't breathe, she couldn't do anything but flail her legs as her orgasm ravaged her body. Thick torrents of her own cum soaked the ground underneath her as black stars swam across her vision.

Trien didn't pull out. He kept his hips jammed against her face as he continued to empty his balls into her body.

The second ticked by.

Merrie's lungs ached for breath.

He shoved forward, grinding her back and forth against the now-bloody wall. His muscles easily pinned her as his cock continued to jerk. It didn't soften nor did it give her a chance to draw in even a single iota of air.

Her vision darkened. The lack of air made her orgasms more intense until it felt like a thousand knives were ripping across her body as she thrashed helplessly.

"Fucking cunt!" he roared and slammed his cock, and her head, against the wall. A fresh surge of cum spurted out of his shaft and flooded into her stomach. His stomach ground into her face, crushing her nose and lips with his weight.

Merrie's body shuddered. She was suffocating. She knew it was turning him on and that her collar would ensure she could survive it, but there was a brief moment when she wondered if the collar still worked.

Lessons Taught

79

Merrie woke up to Trien slapping her. His palm smacked against her hip and thighs in rapid succession. He attacked from one side or the other, battering her with ceaseless brutality as he alternated between his wide-open palm or the knuckles of his backhand.

She let out a strangled scream. Reflexively, she reached up to try pushing him away but her arms bounced against his muscular arm.

He batted her limbs aside and continued to batter her.

It took her a few gasping moments to realize that his other hand was wrapped around her throat. The thick fingers dug into each side and crushed the collar across the front. She could barely breathe; she woke up suffocating just as she passed out.

Unable to stop his ceaseless blows with her arms, she tried to shove back with her feet. The smooth ends of her ankles were useless, slipping off his sweat-slicked naked body and falling to the side.

Using his knee, he twisted her body to the side and began to focus his blows between her legs. His bare hands punched directly against her pubis, the thick fingers crushing her clitoris with every strike.

Her entire body shook violently from the force of his beating, if it wasn't for his hand clamped down on her throat, she would have slipped away. Instead, she tried to twist away but he pinned her knee with his and beat her harder.

“Fucking cunt!”

He twisted his arm and punched her pussy.

Unable to do anything else, Merrie let out a scream of agony as the white-hot flames of agony tore through her. She was soaked, but

she couldn't tell if it was blood or excitement that splattered against her thighs.

"I didn't say you could pass out!" He continued to hammer her pussy, punching harder and faster until her bones almost broke.

Sobbing, she writhed helplessly in his grip as he assaulted her cunt, tearing into it until the entire area felt like tenderized meat. When she tried to inhale, her breath only came in a gasping wheeze that barely got past the pressure around her neck.

"You!" He punched her again, the force almost tear open her cunt. Thick knuckles drove into her wet opening, ripping it further apart.

"Are!" Hammering down, he hammered into her. The sick sound of her body being abused was nothing compared to the pain that threatened to overwhelm even her own lust of submission.

"Mine!" One last punch caught the ridge of her hip before his fingers were fumbling for her collar. Growling, he knelt over her as he grabbed the collar with both hands and peeled her off the ground.

The adamantite metal dug into the back of her neck.

Pulling her close, he spoke in an infuriated and angry voice. "I don't care how pathetic you are, you will never tell me no!"

To make his point, he twisted his knuckles underneath her collar, crushing her throat as he squeezed painfully. The smell of her blood, the sake taste, flooded across her. She blinked past the stars that sailed across her vision. Every part of her was in agony from his blows but she was sure he had torn her completely open with his final strikes.

Trien snarled as he lifted her off the ground. His knees jammed between her legs before he shoved them apart. Panting, he brought his now naked cock up to her tortured opening.

Lost in a world of pain, the anticipation of sex seared across her mind. She wanted to grasp it, to gather the power and let it flow through her. Instead, she shook and tried to avoid it.

He yanked down at the same time he thrust his hips. His thick cock speared into her bloody cunt. The friction of her blood wasn't enough to avoid layers of skin being ripped off as he impaled half of his length into her.

Merrie's entire world focused on his cock as she felt the thick intruder stretching her out from the insides. The friction was intense but she knew it would grow slick soon enough. It was the pressure that tortured her, his wiry hairs scraped against her battered pussy.

Trien thrust hard into her, slamming her against the wall as he buried himself entirely into her body.

The pain blossomed into an orgasm that tore through her body. It was agony and pleasure at the same time. She sobbed.

Trien growled. "Time to learn your lesson, cunt."

He began to rape her harder, thrusting with powerful strokes before using the grip on her collar to pull her off. Unlike before, he wasn't using short strokes to keep her gagging, he was pulling entirely out and then slamming the blood-soaked cock head into her opening to tear it open again.

With tears running down her cheeks, Merrie writhed in the throes of her orgasm. The two sensations were blurring together, a heady mixture when it became nothing more than an intense sensation that set her off. If she still used her powers, she was only seconds away from broadcasting waves of pleasure into every submissive.

Unwilling to tap into her energies was almost freeing. The only thing she could do was lose herself in the moment, to be tortured and pleased at the same time. With a surge of masochistic hunger, she thrust down into his strokes and accepted the agony as his hips ground into her ruined pussy. His cock filled her completely, stretching her inner walls until it crashed against her cervix. The burst set off another

Trien grunted as he fucked her faster and harder. The steady smack of his hips against her bleeding pussy and the thumps of her head hitting the wall became a steady staccato that matched the flashes of pleasure that tore through her.

It didn't even matter that she was struggling to breathe.

Too soon, he came inside her.

She focused on the hot jets of cum that painted her insides, flooding her tortured cunt and sending her into another wave of orgasms. Soon, the hot liquid poured out of her and stung along her tortured flesh before dripping to the ground. Despite the burning,

she tightened her muscles around his shaft and let a soft cry escape her lips.

Trien gasped as he pulled out. A spurt of cum splattered on the ground. Panting, he looked up at her and grinned. "I might keep you longer than planned. You are a good fuck."

Merrie whimpered softly, her body trembling from the afterglow of her own pleasure. She knew he wasn't done, it was just a matter of time before he gave her the next command. Until then, she could only writhe in the discomfort of her beating.

He stood up and shoved her to the ground. "Kneel."

This time, she obeyed.

He grabbed the back of her head and yanked it toward his dripping cock.

She could smell her blood and juices along with the taste of his cum. She opened her mouth as he impaled it, smearing fluids all over her face as he buried his entire length into her.

"Clean it, cunt."

She pressed her wrists against his thighs.

He yanked his cock out and slapped her twice. "Clean it!" His bellow echoed against the walls.

When he shoved it back into her mouth, she opened her jaw and let the thickness invade her. It slammed against the back of her throat and slid down, filling her with a heated warmth as he fucked her face more than she cleaned it. With each thrust, he crushed her nose and beaten face.

Her whimpers were punctuated by the thick member pressing against her vocal cords.

That only excited him more and soon he was coming into her throat, pouring his seed directly into her stomach. When he pulled out, he was shuddering with pleasure. "I guess you can learn quickly."

Merrie looked up at him, her body swaying slightly from dizziness.

"You are my fucking bitch, do you hear?"

She opened her mouth to respond.

He slapped her. "Answer me!"

"Y-Yes."

“Good, you fucking cunt. If you want to eat again, you will do what I saw. If you want to drink, you obey. If you want a chance to ever escape, you will do every fucking thing I say.”

She knew the last part was a lie but she nodded anyways. She just needed the opportunity. Until then, her submissiveness would keep her going.

He chuckled and straightened. “Speaking of which....”

Her eyes flickered down to his half-hard cock. Her stomach grumbled. She knew what was coming next and she was thankful Borias had trained her.

Trien grinned and grabbed his cock. Smearing the wet head across her lips, he ordered her to open her mouth. His cock was already hard again, dripping with his thoughts.

With a surge of lust, she obeyed and pulled it into her mouth.

“Damn, your mouth is cool. It feels good.”

Trien clamped his hands on her head, holding her in place as he pushed his cock head deep into her mouth and rested it on her tongue. “You spit this up and I will beat you unconscious.”

She moaned as she stared up at him. He was going to use her like a toilet and it brought flutters of pleasure coursing through her tortured body.

It only took a moment before the first jet of urine splattered against the back of her throat. It was hot and searing. The fluid flooded along her tongue, bringing the rank taste to her nostrils, before it dribbled down her through. His grip on her skull tightened as he held himself still, groaning as he emptied his bladder.

Merrie gulped loudly, sucking on his cock as the heated liquid poured down her throat. She gagged on it but that only caused him to squeeze her head tightly in place.

“Don’t you fucking dare,” he muttered.

Her stomach gurgled as it was filled.

He finished with a gasp. Releasing her skull, he pulled his cock out of her mouth. Slowly, he dragged the wet head across her face, smearing urine and juices across her nose and lips. “Not bad for your first time. If you’re good, I’ll bring you something to eat.”

Merrie coughed. She felt warm and flushed.

Trien turned to the door and then back to her. Pointing to the blankets, he said, "You have ten seconds before I open the door. If you don't want to get burned, get under those blankets."

She scrambled over, burrowing into the musty canvas. The rough fabric scraped along her skin, abrading along the bruises and cuts. She winced as she found the bottom and heaped the blankets on top of her.

Curious to her imprisonment, she then stretched one arm out to hold up the bottom edge of the blankets. She didn't know how bright it would be but maybe she could get some clue on how to escape if she could see outside the door.

He fumbled with the handle for a moment. He hadn't bothered locking it. After wrapping both hands on the door, he yanked it open.

Light poured into the cell. Brilliant, burning light that blackened her skin almost instantly. With a yelp of pain, she yanked her arm back and burrowed deep into the canvas as he chuckled.

She couldn't see anything. The light was too bright that the glare blinded her completely. The only thing she was sure was that it was a magical light and one that wouldn't be fading any time soon. It was like the glowing globes they used almost everywhere but he had removed the glass coverings that filtered and colored it. Now, it was just a killing brilliance.

The door shut and her cell was once again plunged into darkness.

Despair flooded through her. The only way she was going to escape was if he made a mistake. He seemed to be prepared to handle her, which meant that she wouldn't have any hint of an opportunity until it happened. Despair lapped at her thoughts and she closed her eyes with a sob of sadness.

She wouldn't be able to save Ston.

Longings

80

Merrie whimpered as she rolled back on her back. Her inner thighs and pussy were still burning from Trien's latest rape. Every time he came in, he slapped and punched her. Beating her seemed to be one of his ways of getting excited; his cock was never harder when it was being rammed into her bruised throat or her battered cunt.

She spread her thighs and rested one knee against the stone wall. Reaching down with one arm, she pressed her wrist against the slick mound of her pussy. The touch was electric, a mixture of pain and pleasure. She could feel the bruises and lacerations stinging as she smeared her juices across her sex. Moaning, she rubbed her clitoris and lost herself in a slow, growing pleasure.

It had been days since he kidnapped her. Days of worrying about Ston and unable to do anything about it. She could only hope that Horge had seen reason not to blame him or Ston found a hiding spot.

Closing her eyes tightly, she shook her head. There was nothing she could do but letting her thoughts dwell only threatened to drag her into the pits of despair. She couldn't let herself get too depressed, though she didn't know if Trien could handle a shadow land opening up in the middle of his cell.

She grinned at herself and let fantasies of her children, her creatures of shadow, flood through her mind. They were big but tender. With her connection, they knew exactly how to please her. She had no doubt they would be gentle as they thrust their thick fingers into her pussy, sliding in and out.

Merrie moved in time with her fantasies. It had been a long time since she had enjoyed tender, romantic pleasure. Even with a hint of

being overwhelmed, it was better than the ceaseless cycle of brutality and fucking that Trien demanded.

She closed her eyes tightly and curled up, tilting her pussy so she could rub harder along the tortured flesh. Soft whimpers echoed against the walls as she rolled her wrist back and forth along her clitoris. She needed the pain as much as the pleasure as she imagined it was the shadow kin that was preparing to fuck her.

More than ever, she wished she could have a cock at the moment. At least something willing to fuck her.

She moaned and continued to stroke herself. She shoved her knee against the wall harder, bending herself up as she tried to find some angle to shove her amputated wrist into her cunt. She couldn't, but she managed to roll the hard end of her limb at the opening of her sex.

It was enough. With a cry, she let her fantasies of the shadow kin flood her thoughts. She could just pretend it was a massive black creature looming over her, working his cock into her cunt in preparation to impale her.

Her orgasm bubbled up, a rush of pleasure and longing. It ended with a sob as she curled up with her wrist still against her pussy. Tears ran down her cheeks as she remembered the heady rush of feeling the shadow kin fighting with her at the mill.

She missed them. She missed everyone: the shadows, Bass, Sable, and Borias more than the others. Life was easier when she was just a bitch, even as an alpha. Would she ever return or were those days now behind her?

Breathing heavily, she rubbed her pussy slowly as she let the idle fantasies lure her to an uneasy sleep. Trien would be back soon to beat and rape her. Until then, she could present there was still happiness in her world.

Assholes

81

The back of Merrie's head rolled back and forth against the stone wall. Her face was buried between Trien's muscular cheeks, her mouth planted firmly against the tight ring of his asshole.

"Lick it, cunt!"

She gasped, drawing in a little air through his crack, before she focused on the task he demanded. Using the tip of her tongue, she ran a circle around his opening to get it slick. The ridges of his asshole were already familiar to her mouth; this wasn't the first nor the latest time he was going to force her to rim him.

Trien responded by bending over and shoving back harder. Her head was pinned against his asshole as he rocked back and forth. Low moans shook through his body, vibrating the muscular thighs that pinned her.

She reached up to his balls. The hairy nuts were heavy against her wrists. When he groaned with pleasure, she cupped his testicle and rolling them back and forth between her limbs.

"Yeah, that's the right."

She speared his asshole with her tongue. The taste was strong but not overwhelming anymore. It reminded her of Borias when he turned vegetables into shit-flavored stew to teach her how to lick and suck without gagging. She closed her eyes and lapped harder, fucking his asshole with her tongue. She took her time, exploring the ridges of the clenching hole until they were dripping with saliva.

Trien moaned with pleasure, his thighs trembling as his cock swung down to strike her hand. It rose again, his knuckles brushing against her arms. He was pleasuring himself, pumping slowly. The

slick sounds of his pre-cum were audible even with her cheeks pressed between his.

She knew he wouldn't come for being rimmed, this was just foreplay before he started to beat her again. It was violence that turned him on, not submission.

Merrie focused on pleasing his ass. There was always a chance that he would reach an orgasm if she licked him deep and hard enough. A minor hope that he wouldn't beat her like he did every day. She speared the tight ring of his sphincter deeper, lapping and slurping loudly. She twisted in the confines.

"Fuck," came the gasp as he pumped harder. "That feels so good." He shoved back. "Deeper, cunt!"

She obeyed, worming her slick face between his buttocks and thrusting her tongue deep into the hot depths of her ass. She moaned as she did, her hips rocking back and forth as her pussy tingled with humiliating excitement. The feeling of her tail dragging against the stone wall was surreal, it only added to the feeling of being pinned helplessly.

Pre-cum dripped down onto her arms as he pumped faster, jamming back with his hips to crush her. Every stroke forced her mouth harder against his sphincter. She gulped and lapped, fucking him as much as he was fucking her.

Without warning, Trien pulled away and turned around. His dripping cock swung and smacked her in the face.

She turned away from the blow as the hot smear of lubrication streaked her face.

He grabbed her hair. With his palm crushing her ear, he pulled her away from the wall.

Merrie tensed knowing what would happen next.

Trien slapped her hard, a powerful blow that tore hair from his grip.

With a sob, she almost lost her balance as she swung to one side.

He brought her back with a backhand that blinded her with pain. His grip on her hair tightened as he smacked her again and again. Each time, his palm caught her cheek and face.

Then he moved down. His hand smacked against her shoulder once before he focused his attention on her breasts. With agonizing brutality, he smacked one and then the other. There was no

gentleness, no pulling back. He used his full strength to smash her breasts into her chest before back-handing the other.

She cried out in pain, partially because of the agony was intense against already brutalize flesh but also because she knew it would only excite him more. She couldn't escape him as pull her into the blows.

The taste of blood flooded her mouth. It was something she had gotten familiar with but it was never easy. Her jaw ached, her nipples were in agony. Every part of her body stung constantly from bruises and split skin.

He switched from smacking to punching. His knuckles slammed into her ribs as he rained down blows that caught her throat, chest, and stomach with hard strokes.

Unable to defend herself, she writhed to escape the blows but that only forced him to push her head to the ground so she couldn't escape. Soon he was punching straight down, crushing her organs with every powerful blow.

Her pussy was soaked. No matter how much pain she was in, she could feel the urge to sink into it. She wanted to embrace it, to let it flood through her veins and surge into indescribable power. It took all of her effort not to tape into her own submission.

An orgasm borne of pain flashed across her body.

She screamed.

He snarled and flipped her over. Before she could get her arms underneath her, he was between his legs. His hard cock, dripping and incredibly hard, slid down along her blood-slicked buttocks. The tip rested against her asshole before he brought his hips up to line it up to impale her.

Merrie tightened and pushed back.

He thrust. Already slick with his pre-cum and her pussy juices, the shaft easily impaled the tight ring and plunged deep into her body. There was a burning sensation as her sphincter resisted but there was no time to get accustomed to it before he began to thrust into her body.

"Fucking whore," he growled as he grabbed her hair with one hand. Planing his elbow on her back, he pounded into her body. Just as his cock was embedded completely in into her tortured orifice, he fumbled for her collar.

Merrie whimpered as the orgasm tore through her. She was nothing but a hole for him to fuck, a wet opening to rape and abuse. Even with her entire body aching from his beating, the feeling of having his thick cock deep inside her rectum set off waves of pleasure coursing through her system. Shuddering, she pushed back against his cock as it buried balls-deep into her body.

“Cunt! Bitch!” He continued to mutter profanities as he hammered into her ass. His thick cock plunged deep into her body, shaking her violently.

Then his fingers finally caught on her collar. With a groan, he grabbed it with both hands and yanked her back.

Merrie’s back protested as she was angled off the ground, her battered breasts hanging in front of her as the unbreakable metal dug into the soft flesh of her throat. Unable to breathe, she was forced harder onto his thrusting cock as he accelerated into brutal, short strokes.

His shaft pulsed.

She couldn’t breathe. Her eyes bugged out as she fumbled for the collar. It was too tight across her neck. The metal dug in, splitting skin until her blood dribbled out from the mark the ring left in her skin.

He smashed her face against the wall as he braced to fuck her harder and faster. His cock thrust powerfully, each stroke pulling out of her stretched opening before plunging back in.

Each time he rammed inside her, she came. The combination of her suffocation, the beating, and the fucking was enough to keep her on an edge of pleasure that threatened to drown out everything but her pleasure and pain.

He tightened his grip as he loomed over her. His hips smacked against her buttocks, the force almost snapping her tail.

With a powerful groan, he came inside her. Hot jets of searing cum splattered against her insides. It flooded deeper into her body as the hot shaft pulsed deeply.

Trien didn’t relent his grip on her collar.

Merrie choked, her body shuddering as her lungs screamed out for air. She pawed helplessly.

Trien slumped over her. His hand relaxed on her collar as his weight bore down on her. His shaft, still hard, pulsed as he emptied his balls into her rectum.

“F-Fucking whore,” he said.

Merrie gasped for air. Tears burned in her eyes as she drew in one breath after the other. She felt small underneath his muscular body, weak and helpless.

Trien strained as he pulled his cock out. A surge of cum followed, splashing across her buttocks and then down into the valley between her legs.

“Get up. Kneel.”

She obeyed, struggling through her discomfort but growing slicker with anticipation. As soon as she got on her knees, she opened her mouth and held her breasts out.

He thrust his slick, dripping cock into her mouth. “Clean it, cunt.”

After days of drinking nothing but cum and urine, there was not even a hint of feces on his shaft. She buried her face clear at the back, smearing her face against the cum that clung to his skin. The hard shaft slid easily into her throat, stretching it as she cut off her own breath.

The little desire to throw up rose and faded. She moaned and bobbed her head, sucking and lapping at the thick cock that had raped her only moments before. It didn’t take long before it was glistening with her spit.

As soon as the veined shaft popped out of her mouth, he shoved her back. “Ten seconds,” he announced before heading to the door.

Merrie crawled underneath the blankets. She had used a small shred of magic to test the door when he first arrived but the killing light still kept her pinned in place. She found a safe spot and closed her eyes; she just had to suffer until he made one mistake. That’s all it will take, one.

t'Sade

Abandoned

82

Merrie curled up in the corner of her cell with her head propped between her arm against the stone wall and her thigh on the ground. It was a profoundly uncomfortable position but better than trying to sleep on the rotting and stained canvas.

She tried not to think about how long she had been in the cell. Without a spell to measure the time, she could only use the coming and going of her rapist as a clock. From his words and actions, she guessed he usually came twice a day. One before breakfast and one before he headed for a bath and bed. With rare occasions would bring him a third time, mostly on days when he was horny or violent.

Then there were the other times when the expected morning rape never came. She didn't know if he would come for the evening rape or if the abandonment would continue into the next day. In one case, it was three days before he returned reeking of stale beer and spirits from Rat's.

Being abandoned was the worst for Merrie. Trien didn't tell her when he was heading in the village, he simply didn't show up as normal.

She hated when he didn't show up. The anticipation of being brutalized and raped rose every morning. When he didn't show up, it felt like being tortured with having her pleasure denied hour after hour. She didn't realize how much she craved her her customary relief of orgasms and pain.

The silence was worse when she knew she was alone. Terrible thoughts rose up, wondering if Horge managed to catch him or he died for another reason. Would anyone show up? Investigate? The

lights outside her cell would last centuries; she didn't think she could survive that long. Even if she did, would her sanity?

She sighed and closed her eyes. She didn't have the energy to masturbate, the doubt and despair made it impossible to find excitement. She wanted to, it was the one thing that made her feel better. When she pressed a her wrist to her pussy, it was cool and damp; no fire burned inside her.

Merrie tried to go back to sleep to pass the time.

Her eyes snapped open after only minutes. She couldn't sleep, she wasn't tired enough. The longing to get fucked refused to let her sleep.

With a sigh, she uncurled herself from the corner and crawled into the middle of the room. As she did, she let the energies of the darkness around her flood into her system. The dark syrup sensation of power coursed along her veins, an orgasm that wouldn't quite crest.

She already knew she couldn't step into the Shadows but she tried anyways. The light pushed her back; even though she couldn't see it, the surrounding brightness prevented the barrier between the worlds to thin enough for her to move over.

Instead she formed the calligraphy to her transformation spell. The energies wrapped along her limbs, twisting and lengthening them as she took on the form of a Bel Dark hound. The massive creature felt slightly uncomfortable for a moment before her body grew accustomed to the feeling of energy rippling along her senses.

Padding over the corner she defecated in, she projected a prayer to Parn. She had decided to use the hound's form a few weeks ago but only when she was absolutely sure that Trien wouldn't return. The smell was sharp but she ignored it. Reaching out, she scraped her claws against one of the rocks. The rough edges caught on her paw but she just did it again and again.

If Trien never returned, if he died or found some way to escape, she would be stuck for centuries in the cell. The magical lights wouldn't fade or diminish without something else happening. She couldn't count on an earthquake or even someone breaking into the cell without flooding it with killing light.

Her only hope was that he didn't protect the ground underneath her cell. She continued to paw, scraping her claws repeatedly over

the same line until she felt the faint indentations of her previous attempts. Shifting slightly, she followed the same strokes as before, gradually digging through the ancient stone.

It would take months, maybe years, but she had to do something.

t'Sade

Throat Fuck

83

The rattle of the lock was her only warning. With a gasp, Merrie looked up sharply at the door as a cold shiver ran down her spine. Her paw stopped in the middle of scraping, the pads of her feet dripping blood from hours of digging.

She had managed to dig a few millimeters into the ground in the long, agonizing hours since he last headed into the village. The smell of her blood was strong in the air, the stench of sake almost dripping off the walls.

The lock continued to scrape as Trien worked the door. He was moving quickly but she could hear his fingers slipping on the chains.

She let the magic slip away, twisting her body back into her human shape as she rushed over to the pile of canvas. Her body finished transforming as she burrowed deep into the rank-smelling fabric.

The door slammed open, flooding the cell with light.

Her tail ignited into flames and agony. Black smoke burst out as she cried out. Sobbing, she dug deeper into the blankets. As soon as she could, she pulled her tail tight against her pussy to protect it.

Trien slammed the door shut behind him. He strode forward as he fumbled with his belt. “God I’ve been thinking about this for weeks,” he said.

Merrie whimpered as she sat up. The canvas still draped over her head and it slowly slid off her bare shoulder to slump to the ground. She opened her eyes and saw only brightness.

The door was still open, painting a painfully wedge across the far wall. Her skin crawled at the sight of it and her vision blurred.

Thankfully, it wasn't directly on her and she wasn't burning but she could feel the discomfort scraping along her exposed nerves. She whimpered and pulled away.

He grabbed her head and yanked her toward his crotch. "Get over here, you fucking cunt."

She opened her mouth to take him in.

The thick head smacked against her lips, bruising them with the force of his blow. His head was dripping wet and smeared pre-cum across her face. Judging from the copious amounts of fluid deposited, she guessed from hours of walking back while thinking of sex. Reflexively, she opened her jaw wider as the spongy head thrust into her mouth.

At the taste of hot pre-cum across her tongue, she let out a low moan of pleasure. Her pussy pulsed happily as his head smacked against the back of her throat. It ground against her limits, forcing itself down into her throat.

She gagged loudly. Her pussy grew slick with anticipation. First he was going to fuck her face, then beat her, and then no doubt rape her. She couldn't wait. She started to look at him but the light from the door was too bright. Closing her eyes tightly, she let her senses focus on the cock raping her mouth.

Trien tightened his grip on her head, clamping it between his two massive hands. He thrust into her face, shoving hard and deep until his hips crushed her face.

The smell of ass teased her nostrils, not of his but someone else; he had fucked someone at the village. Merrie gulped loudly at the taste, it was foul but almost welcomed as a new flavor in her current hell.

Her strained lips touched the hairs of his crotch as they stuck out from his trousers. She was surprised that he was still dressed, usually he stripped before entering the cell. She moaned and took him deeper into her throat, working her lips against the rough fabric and sharp buttons.

"There you go, choke on it." He groaned as he jammed his shaft into her throat. Pulling back, he slammed into her again. With each stroke, he thrust her harder into his grip. To avoid her slipping away, he dug his fingers into her skull to hold it in place as he pounded her face with hard, brutal movements.

Merrie moaned and gasped. Her tail wagged with her pleasures as she reached up to grip his thighs.

“Take it. Take it all. Take it!”

He drove hard into her, his cock swelling with his pleasure. With a roar, he stepped forward and slammed the back of her head against the wall.

Stars exploded across her vision. Her mouth jaw strained to breath around the thick cock and balls that ground against her lips.

He thrust deep and switched to short strokes that never left her windpipe clear to bring in air. The steady pounding against her gag reflex and the constant swelling in her throat was exhilarating. Her helplessness set off orgasm after orgasm as she gulped loudly in anticipation of his cum.

The strokes grew faster and harder, ramming her head into the wall with every powerful thrust. She felt his pre-cum dribbling down her throat.

Finally, Trien rammed his cock hard into her throat and held it there. His balls stretched her lips and pried her jaw apart.

Inside her, his cock swelled and then poured hot cum into her belly. It flooded her stomach with searing heat, setting off a flutter of another orgasm between her legs and an wave of pleasure across her senses as she was forced to drink deeply.

He thrust twice before pulling out. One last jet splattered across her face. It was a hot whip of fluid before it dripped down her face. “Damn, you are such a fucking good cocksucker.”

Merrie gulped and titled her head up. The bright light beat against her face, burning but not peeling back the skin. Her pussy grew hotter with anticipation even as her stomach gurgled with the first liquid she drank in days.

His slap caught her on the cheek.

Her head snapped the side.

He backhanded her again, throwing her head back the other way. His knuckles caught the bone above her eye. Before she could bring her head back, he slapped her again. It didn't take long before he was smacking her back and forth, beating her with a fury that kept his cock hard. His smacks caught her face, collar, and breasts.

When she tried to pull away or at least relieve the pain, he tightened his grip on her hair and pulled her against the wall.

“Fucking cunt!” he bellowed as he continued to beat her. His open-hand slaps began fists. Soon he was punching her with all his might, cracking one side of her jaw and then the other as he rained down blows.

Merrie writhed in agony, her face in agony but her pussy spasming. Wet dribbles of her cunt splattered against the ground as she twisted and strained against her kidnapper.

Trien released her hair. Before she could slump forward, his punch caught the side of her jaw.

Merrie’s face smacked against the stone wall. Stars ripped across her vision, blinding her as effectively as the light.

He grabbed her shoulder and dug his fingers into the joint. With a surge, he flipped her toward the wall. Her nose cracked from the impact. With a snarl, he grabbed her skull with both hands and ground her face into sharp rocks.

Merrie sobbed as cuts and scratches abraded their way across his face. To relieve the agony of her spine, she twisted until her breasts were pressed against the same all and her legs spread out to balance herself.

Trien dropped to his knees behind her, his dripping cock painting a line down her pine. The thick girth bounced off her tail.

With a snarl, he shoved his cock around the base of her tail and lodged it up against her ass.

Merrie tilted her head up, gasping in anticipation and pain. Blood dribbled down her face from her bleeding nose. The taste coated her lips, flooding her senses.

He rammed hard, impaling her dry asshole brutally. The tiny opening screamed out in agony. With a grunt, he smashed her body against the wall as he thrust again and again, spearing her with all his might.

She screamed out but there was nothing she could do. Her body was crushed against the rocks as she felt the heated pole tearing deep into her rectum, ripping at the insides of her body.

“Fucking take it!” he grunted as he rammed into her ass, thrusting hard and fast with brutal strokes.

Merrie did, her world exploding into orgasms and pain.

Despite the brutality, despite the pain, she felt happy. Her submission was a drug that no agony could take away. It hummed in

her senses as she felt the stones scratching at her breasts and her ass bleeding from his rape.

The pleasure and pain merged together into the heady mixture of simply feeling everything as one.

Then he pressed the knife to her throat. The tip was right above her collar.

Merrie froze, her entire world becoming focused on the sharp metal digging into the delicate skin. A new orgasm exploded inside her, white-hot agony and the darkest pleasure. It surged through her veins.

He drew the knife across her throat, cutting deep past the jugular and opening up her trachea. The blade clinked against her collar but he drew it along the unbreakable metal with a deeper cut.

Her blood sprayed across the wall in front of her, bubbling up against her throat and pouring down her chest. It was icy cold, colder than anything she had experienced outside of the Shadows. Her body shook as the jets of arterial spray took on the triple beat of her heart.

Trien grunted as he ripped his cock out of her asshole. The pain was intense but nothing compared to the sharp agony of her destroyed throat. He grabbed her hair and yanked her away from the wall, throwing her down on her back. A heartbeat later, he was straddling her head.

Merrie's throat continued to spray jets of pitch black blood high into the air. Her lungs screamed out in agony as she tried to draw air into her lungs but the wet, gurgling whistle came from her throat, not her nose.

Then he was grinding his balls against her mouth. His ass was only centimeters from her mouth. "I've been thinking about this since the first day I got you," he growled.

Merrie couldn't do anything. She sobbed but only wet gasps came out. Her lips opened up from her reflexive training, she knew he wanted her to suck on his balls or the asshole above her.

However, Trien didn't seem to force it into her mouth. Instead, he planted his crotch and used his weight to tilt her head back.

The gaping wound in her throat opened up, spraying more blood around the cock head that was shoved into it.

With sickening sensation, she felt his shaft plunge directly into her esophagus. The cut opening tore even further apart as the spray coated his balls. It dripped down on her mouth and nose. She tried to open her mouth to breathe but it was useless.

Trien grunted as he slammed into her throat, fucking it brutally with hard strokes that tore her open with every surge of his cock. His balls caught on her collar, flipping it back and forth with every stroke.

“Fuck!” He said as he grabbed her breasts. His fingers dug into the skin, his fingernails breaking skin as he fucked her hard and fast.

Merrie’s head was shoved forward and back as he raped her throat.

It was surreal feeling his cock sliding into her throat, easily thrusting into her ribs. His cock was huge as he pounded against her throat and chin, ripping her open from the inside as it felt like it was reaching clear down into her lungs or stomach.

Dimly, she was aware that the spray from her throat had died down. She was dying. Her heart strained to pump more of it out of her body but the triple beat was hollow, empty.

Her entire hurt in a way she couldn’t describe. It felt bone deep. Shuddering, she fought the urge to close her eyes.

Trien was still raping her throat. His cock swelled as he pumped his cum deep inside her. She could feel it painting directly into her lungs, giving her the sensation of drowning even she was losing consciousness.

He shuddered violently as he ground his ass against her chin and ground his cock deep. “I miss this so much,” he moaned. “Fucking throat? Heaven. Rat won’t let me do this to those worthless cunts.”

Trien rammed hard, tearing into her throat as he tried to bury his balls into the opening.

Merrie could only weakly struggle. Everything was painful to move. She tried to lift her arm but there was no tension left in it. She struggled for air but her lungs were filled with cum and his cock still blocking her throat.

He moaned and started pumping again. “Next time, Rat won’t kick me out.”

His cock thrust deep into her chest.

The world was almost black. Even the light from the door had faded and she realized she couldn't see anything.

“Your collar is going to give me another cunt. I'm going to buy Puss and put him right here. Fuck his ass until I'm done and then rape his neck. One. Last. Time!” He slammed into her before coming hard.

Merrie's body twitched as the world faded away into darkness.

t'Sade

Left for Dead

84

Merrie woke from her nightmares in blissful darkness. There wasn't even a hint of light against her skin, just the icy balm of shadows covering every centimeter of her skin. It bore down on her with steady weight, as if the world had been buried on top of her.

She moaned and worked her lips. The taste of the regeneration magic was in the back of her throat, one of the more powerful spells that Rakin had embedded into it to bring her back to life if she was ever killed.

Trembling reached up for her throat. The smooth end of wrist stopped along a deep scar on her neck. The wound was deep, she could feel scar tissue and dried blood. When she pressed, there was a deep agony that transmitted clear to the inside of her throat.

With a soft whimper that came out as a wheeze, she brought her other wrist up to explore the cut from one side of her neck to the other. To her surprise, it continued on both sides of her neck and clear to the back. A prickle of pain along her spine told her everything she needed to know: Trien had cut off her head.

She gasped, she remembered why he had cut her throat. She yanked her wrist lower, patting her collar bone and shoulders. When she didn't feel the ever-present metal ring, her whimper grew into a high-pitched whine.

Frantic, she felt around the deep gash around her neck and up to her chin and down to her shoulders trying to find it. Part of her mind spun furiously, there was no way he could have taken her collar. More than one person said that even gods couldn't take it away from her.

Her body shook and she realized she was sobbing. Her body shook as she tried to pull herself to her wrists and knees. Something heavy rolled off her body and a fresh scent of garbage flooded across her nostrils.

She frowned as she realized she had been buried in the garage. It was already piled over her body, the weight was heavy against her form but not crushing. The layers of filth also protected her from the light as the regeneration magic brought her back to life.

It was sheer luck that Trien had dumped her corpse. It could have also been Parn but Merrie doubted the goddess was able to affect the world in that manner.

That didn't stop her from sending a quick prayer to her goddess.

Unsure if she would suffocate, Merrie set about crawling up through the muck. The garbage thumped against her body. Rotted food scraped across the deep wounds in her throat. The burning pushed her to keep crawling, digging her way up past rotted vegetables, rat corpses, and charred hunks of spoiled meat.

She was afraid of breaching the surface of garbage and coming out into the sun but she had to escape. There would be warning before she burst into flames. That didn't help the tension in the back of her neck, right where his blade had sliced off her head and, no doubt, fucked the resulting hole.

Fear pushed her forward as she dug for freedom. Her short limbs were almost useless and she could feel every scrape along her body. She kept going, crawling and passing as the tears ran down her cheeks and her body was smeared with filth.

Finally, fresh air and more darkness. Not even the moon lit up the sky. The only indication that she wasn't buried was the lack of weight along her naked body. Something rotten and wet dripped down her shoulder.

She crawled up on top of the garbage and took a deep breath of the relatively fresh air. Freedom felt good along her skin as did the ability to move her limbs freely.

Blinking, she peered around. Without a moon, she couldn't see anything but the village lights in the distance. Underneath her, she could already feel the garbage shifting with her movements. She could be on top of a pile or in a valley, either would be fatal if she crawled in the wrong direction.

Shaking her head, she toyed with the idea of just crawling without magic. Images of knife blades and exposed metal rose up with the fear of impaling her eye or tearing off her breast. After a moment, she knew she had to find shelter before sunrise and the only way was to use magic.

After a moment of guilt, she let the darkness flood through her and let her vision sharp.

The night peeled back to reveal she was in a ruined building of some sort. The walls was destroyed and crumbling. Rusted bars rose up from inside the bricks. Around her, she could see the outlines of cells marked out by quills of rusted metal.

She was in a former prison cell.

Breathing deeply, she crawled around the sharp metal that could have easily torn into her side or even pierced her body. She was thankful she used her magic. It took her a few minutes of unsteadily crawling until she reached the edge and looked out.

It was the prison, or what used to be one. Now there were only gutted corpses of buildings with metal sticking out in all directions. A stone gallows had been set up in the middle of a quad. Next to it was a pile of skeletons and bodies. Even from a distance, she could see the glint of metal among the bones; she had a sinking feeling it was prison guards that had been executed.

There were ghostly lights moving between the buildings. They slid out of the corner of her eye before appearing meters away. She saw the image of rotted bodies and torn-open throats before she looked away: ghosts. Horrible things had happened at the prison, things that keep the dead restless and the air fouled with despair.

On the far side of the gallows, one of the buildings shone with light. Even from a distance, she could see spears of the magical brilliance spearing out in all directions. None of the spectral bodies went near it but neither could she.

The light burned. Turning away from it, she focused on the haze in the distance. She had to get back before sunrise. There, she could hide in Horge's place or find some place from the light. However, even with the ability to see in magic, whatever creatures prowled the former prison could attack. She wasn't sure if they could affect her but she didn't want to find out.

She summoned the powers and let her body melt into shadows. She couldn't step forward but she could travel far faster as nothing more than a whisper on the ground. With the icy comfort of magic flowing through her veins, she flowed down the wall and toward civilization.

Zillia

85

It took a quarter hour to race along the valley floor toward the village. Her body molded along the rocks and ridges. She could feel the various paths but the fastest route was moving toward the now blinding light of the village. In her shadow form, the brilliance hurt from even a kilometer away but she could easily use it as a compass toward her destination.

By the time she was only a couple hundred meters away, she realized that she felt... off. It was a thin feeling, like she had a string trailing behind her and someone had pulled it between her fingers. She tried to pull it free, but the sensation grew stronger with every passing second.

Concerned but unable to do anything about it, she continued toward the village. As she did, she reached out for the Shadows; if she had already decided to use her powers, one more step would make it easier. However, there was no veil to reach across. It was just an abyss, a separation of the two worlds too large for even her powers to breach.

There was no escape for her using nothing but magic. She suspected, but she had to try again.

Her experiments ended when she came up along the back side of the village. Like before, she reached the empty and abandoned buildings first. The smell of rotted food, shit, and old urine flooded over her as she slithered through the decrepit buildings toward the bright center.

The outer edges of the village also gave her up. The sun would be coming up soon and she knew more about the layout to know where to hide from the morning light.

Unsure where to start looking, she headed for Horge's home first. She avoided the center of town and the light. Her body slowed through the narrow streets between the brick and stone buildings. Even in shadow form, she could sense familiar streets as she came around the same path Horge took every day.

However the building was empty. She reformed into her Bel Dark hound form, her massive body bristling with wariness. She padded inside, past the door hanging on one hinge. Her eyes pierced the darkness, scanning the edges.

Memories flooded through her: of Horge fucking her, her submission, and even the way he treated her as property more than a woman. Each of them brought a flush of heat and a tingling along her cunt. But then the memories of Trien interrupted her joy and the feelings vanished. He was hurt her friends just so he could whittle away the days until he could return to Cat's place.

She sighed and focused on her surroundings. She closed her eyes and slowly took a deep breath, drawing in the air as she used her heightened senses to pick out the scents.

The first was Horge. His musky scent was prevalent everywhere. It had been painted on every surface with his presence. She could even smell his manhood, the combination of sweat and semen that excited her so many times. But his smells were old. At least a few weeks, maybe a month since he was last in the house.

She took another deep breath, picking up the faded scent of her own body, the distinct sake taste in the back of her throat was hard to miss. There was also cum, food, and drink that tickled the edges of her senses but nothing for weeks.

Merrie frowned and looked around. What happened to Horge? If he was gone, was Ston okay?

She padded out of the house and looked down the empty street. It was about the second or third bell, in about an hour or so the village would be waking up with the morning light. Now only a few painful lanterns marked the corners and gave some illumination to the paths between buildings.

Stepped into the open, she sniffed the air for any others that came to the prison on the wagon. However, she couldn't pick up any of the scents; it simply had been too long and there were too many other smells.

The world wavered around her and the sick feeling in her body grew. Pressure tugged on her body and part of her hound form began to crumble away to bare pale human skin underneath. She stared at it in surprise, seeing her massive body dissolving as if she was standing in sunlight.

She shook her paw and more of her outer body blew away to leave the smooth end of her wrist behind. Her white skin almost glowed in the dark. Gingerly, she set the smooth end of her wrist down on the ground as the last of the hound form disappeared from her arm and shoulder.

Merrie glanced to her other limbs and saw her spell burning away. However all the wisps of shadows were all being pulled away in the same direction. She lifted her head to follow it, tracing the direction as the curls of darkness snaked their way toward the center of the village.

She groaned. If there was one place she wasn't safe, it would be the center. Rat's Bar was surrounded by burning light. She dreaded visiting it but it was also probably the best place to find out where her friends were.

With a soft whine, she crawled toward the center without the speed of her shadow magic or the power of her Bel Dark. She was nothing but a naked woman on her knees and wrists working her way through the dust, dirt, and garbage of her new home.

It took almost as much time to reach the center as it did to travel from the dump. Her human form was slow and painful. The light also seared her skin as she found herself crawling around magical lanterns and lights.

Rat's Bar and Whores was empty. The lights flooded the bare seats and benches. No whores served customers and no one was drinking. Even the mugs appeared to have been neatly cleaned and stacked up along the back of the bar. Heavy bars had been pulled down between the open air and the bottles of spirits Rat served.

The tugging sensation grew stronger. Merrie looked around, trying to find the source.

Movement caught her attention. She had thought the bar was empty but a single person sat on the top of the bar: Rat. The short, curvy woman dangled her feet over the edge of the wooden surface as she peered down into her lap.

Merrie took a step from the surrounding buildings. Her action reminded her of the first time she approached the bar. This time there wasn't anyone else watching. She inched forward, using whatever shadows she could to protect herself.

Rat gasped.

Merrie froze.

The other woman lifted her hand as she lurched off the counter. Her boots thudded against the ground. When she straightened, she reached blindly back to grab the bar with one hand as her other hand lifted.

It felt like someone was pulling Merrie's tail. She clenched her body tightly as she looked up.

When she saw her collar in Rat's outstretched hand, she froze. There was no mistaking the black gem along the ridge. It called to her, tugging on her very soul with a sense of longing and desire.

As soon as she saw it, the tugging sensation turned into a painful pull. There was a connection between her and the collar, one that grew taut with her presence and pulled at her neck. She tried to not think about it but then she realized she was being physically dragged along the ground toward it.

Rat shook her head and dug her heels into the ground. Her grip on the bar tightened, the knuckles white.

As much as Merrie wanted her collar back, the fact she was being dragged toward it worried her. She dug her own knees and ankle into the ground until she could figure out what forces were controlling her.

Rat grunted and released the bar to grab the collar with both hands. She leaned back as the adamantite metal appeared to shake in her hand. "What is...?"

Her eyes lifted and caught Merrie's gaze. She narrowed her eyes. "You are supposed to be dead."

Merrie whined. She struggled to keep her body still.

Rat shook her head and tightened her fingers around the collar. She dug her boots into the ground. "You can't have it back. I need it more."

The pressure grew stronger. It felt like someone was reaching into her chest and grabbing her heart. Powerful forces yanked at her being, tugging at her magic and spirit.

Dark, shadowy energy burst out of Merrie's chest. She let out a cry as it wavered for a moment and then grew taut in a straight line between her and the collar. She could feel her soul reaching out for it, questing to pull the two together.

Merrie gasped, she had seen a mystical lead from her chest before but not in many years. It was a bond, the mystical connection between a master and an alpha. It was usually only visible during powerful exchanges of magic or when the alpha was bonding. Reaching out for it, she could feel that she was still bound to her collar; it was visible as the two tried to pull together.

Rat shook her head and ground her teeth together. The air around her wavered, twisting and warping with energy. Streaks of rainbow lights flashed and faded, distorting the air.

The strange effect quickly grew more pronounced. Underneath Rat's feet, the wood twisted and liquefied. The bar melted, both metal and wood running free.

Only the collar was untouched.

The roof evaporated above Rat. Her body continued to twist, various images of other people superimposed over her small, statuesque form. Merrie saw men and women, tall and short, all layered on top of each other. The only thing that remained constant were Rat's flashing eyes.

"I need this collar! I can *tap it, I can use it.*" snarled Rat, her voice mixing with other voices in perfect harmony, like a massive choir speaking at the same time. "I need to get out of this *damn prison!*"

A multicolored glow formed along the dark line between Merrie and the collar. It flared like a flame along a rope dipped in oil as it raced down to envelop almost the entire length of the spectral leash.

Inside her mind, she felt the strange flames burning her connection. The flow of energy and her ability to project into the collar was being affected, as if the flames were destroying her bond to her collar. She tried to reach out through the lead but it felt like it was being gnawed upon by a thousand rats made of rainbows and horror.

Stunned, she pulled harder but she couldn't escape. The spectral lead pulled on her neck, the pressure of physical and spiritual

almost in perfect harmony. She was stuck, unable to do anything besides strain to avoid being drawn closer.

“No! I’ve been in this place too many centuries! No more!” Her voice grew deeper, echoing in Merrie’s head and also against the surrounding buildings. “No more!”

The layered voice cracked and Merrie caught a flash of something old and chaotic in Rat’s mind. She wasn’t a simple human, she was something else. A force that not only felt barely in control but one that dwarfed even the powers of the gods. Like Merrie, there was no hint of a geas on Rat’s mind; even without being able to see those powers, there was no way Rat could use magic if she had one.

Knowing that Rat was on part with Merrie terrified the alpha.

“I’ll be damned if I let a submissive cunt take this from me! I must destroy my brother’s prison and I need this power to do that! It has energy, it has strength!”

Blood dripped from Rat’s fingers. She yanked harder, the ground twisting and shifting as she stepped away. The raw strength drew Merrie along the ground.

The pressure also tugged at the connection, drawing it out and increasing the flames that seared the bond she had with her collar. The multicolored burning brightened to almost blinding brilliance.

The possibility that she would be forcibly ripped away from her collar became a distinct possibility. Fear surged through her black veins as she tugged harder, trying to break free but she couldn’t.

Her helplessness set off a flash of pleasure. She resisted it at first but then realized she needed it to save herself. She needed power and energy, there was no way around it. Turning it around, she let the pleasure flood through her veins.

It felt like a drug rushing through her body, a longing of desire and a hunger for power that came back faster and harder than she had ever felt before. It surged through her and up along the connection, swelling it and solidifying it.

The rainbow flames darkened, the colors interspersed with the shadowy wisps of her own power.

Merrie focused the power into spells. Black calligraphy seared through her mind, flowing faster than ever before as she drew out her common spells for strength and speed. The old combat spells sank into her bones and the world darkened around her.

Merrie's screams faded into growls as her body twisted and reformed into her Bel Dark shape. Her claws dug into the ground, tearing into the stone as she braced herself. (This collar is part of me, you cannot have it.)

"Then I will break your bond to get this power!"

(The gods couldn't destroy it, neither can you.) Merrie wasn't sure of herself. She was getting nervous that she was about to lose her collar.

Rat laughed and the world wavered at the sound. *"Gods? You think I care about gods?"*

The chaos magic that stormed around Rat grew. In seconds, the bar was gone, the bottles of spirits sparking as they were destroyed. It began to melt into the surrounding buildings, tearing apart liquid streams of multicolored fluids.

"The gods sealed me here because they could not kill me. A thousand tried and failed. I killed assassins and the gods of assassins. I even killed my own death to ensure no one would ever stop the Kivas." Rat yanked harder, pulling the collar away from Merrie with incredible force. The stretched connection burned brightly as the multi-color flames snuffed out her shadowy wisps. Even strengthened by her magic, it didn't feel like it would last long.

Desperate, Merrie tried to channel energy into it. Black flames jetted out around the multi-colored magic, fighting it for a few precious seconds before being extinguished again.

Rat tugged harder, her face twisting into a cruel scowl. *"Your so-called special connection is nothing. A trick, a power, nothing more than a paladin's touch or a ranger's gift. Even with a master, you wouldn't be able to stop me. No one can. No one is as powerful as me, no one!"*

Blood dripped from Rat's fingers. The crimson droplets splashed on the ground but seemed to be unaffected by the chaos howling around them.

Fear surged through Merrie. She was danger of losing everything. She thrashed back and forth, howling in rage and desperation. Her attempts to send energy to the collar only diminished the multicolored flames briefly.

Rat grinned and yanked hard. *"Say goodbye to your powers, cunt. If you live, you'll see what a true weaver of magic could do."*

Merrie whined. She had to do something. Her collar and her connection to it were the most precious things she had, her reason for living and her ability to survive her trials. Without them, she would quickly die and then thousands more would die when the Shadows invade from their lands in Blood County to darken the world.

But how could she save it? Or herself. What could she protect something even gods weren't suppose to be able to protect?

She tried pulling energy from the collar but there was nothing in the artifact's store. Her promise to Parn had kept it empty since it had exploded in the courthouse. Tears burned in her eyes as she tried to find some way of saving herself.

Chaos continued to burn at her connection, eroding it until there was only a failing thread that remained between her and the collar.

Desperate, she sent an order through the collar. (Don't let her take the collar!)

Even diminished by the failing thread, the echoing command slammed into her and gave her strength. Submission-fueled energy bolstered her internal stores but she needed to funnel it through the leash to save it. She fed it into her collar, strengthening the bond but it wasn't enough to stop the flames.

Like the other alpha and master, there was a spectral lead that connected Dixie to Tabitha. It wasn't as powerful and didn't glow as brightly. But Merrie could sense energy bouncing back and forth, magnifying Tabitha's magic with every passing second. It enhanced both of their healing powers to keep up with the constant onslaught.

Merrie needed a master, one capable of using magic that she could magnify. That would keep the energy building inside the bond to prevent the rainbow flames from destroying it.

She whimpered. She tried to cast another spell but the energy came from herself. As she strained her body to keep herself from being dragged into the collar, she tried to order herself to magnify her powers but the order didn't come. It wasn't possible, when she

played her mistress, it was like speaking through a voice box; the voice changed but it was always herself.

Not, not always. There were times when the orders came from somewhere else. But she didn't know to do that on her own. What spell? What mental control could she use to create the illusion that she had a mistress when she had bonded to herself?

Rat suddenly grinned but the smile didn't reach her eyes. Her arms trembled with the effort to hold the collar still. *"You've survived longer than I thought you would. I can feel you creating energy inside yourself, sick and twisted magic but it still rare to encounter anyone capable of sustaining themselves like you."*

She hauled back, dragging the collar away from Merrie. *"If you survive this, I might force you to bond to me. Even without the collar, your boost would easily let me continue my goals."*

Fear surged through Merrie. She couldn't imagine losing another master, the pain would kill her. There was no one closer than herself.

Merrie growled, a deep rumbling sound in her chest. (I will not lose my mistress to you!)

Rat snorted. *"You lie. I can feel it. You are using this collar as a buffer to create an loop. You don't have a mistress, you have an artifact that lets you fake it due to impurities."* She moved her hand to cover the shadow gem. *"Without this and the remnants of your old masters, you would have nothing."*

(I have a mistress.)

"No, you don't, you stupid girl."

Then Merrie remembered something Parn said. The goddess of oaths had said Merrie had bonded with someone: Zillia. She didn't understand what it meant—even the gods didn't know the name—but it was something she could use.

Desperate, she decided to create Zillia right then and there. It was a risky chance, but if she could activate both ends of her collar at the same time, it might be enough to create the feedback loops that an alpha enjoyed with their masters.

She wracked her mind. She didn't know how to invoke it on demand but she could use the feeling of the unexpected commands, the thoughts outside of her head.

Merrie also needed a manifestation, something to give her faked master a physical form. When she realized she already had it, she smiled. There was her cloak. When she had first become an alpha, it had manifested as a black, snake-like demon that fought as part of her. Later, she would find that it was nothing more than a fragment of her personality in her time of need.

There was no greater need then now.

As she strained to funnel energy through the connection to keep it from burning away and to keep her physical form in place, she began to craft spells. She started with the unexpected voice and her cloak. The abstract and physical. Binding them together was one of Haviston's geas, the one that took on her grandfather's shape to teach her things. It was a fragment of his personality but it had evolved differently than him. She needed that now.

More spells were thrown into the mix, some psionic and others shadowy. She bound and wove the spells together into a convoluted mess that would barely cast. She didn't have time to create an elegant spell that she may only be able to cast once in her life.

At the last minute, inspiration struck her. She prayed to Parn. She wasn't a priest or a paladin, but there was something between her and her creator. She hoped it was enough. Unsure of how to work prayer into her spells, she brought up the fragments of geasa from her life. The pieces weren't capable of binding her actions anymore but they were still parts of the ultimate promise.

The spell started to fit together, faster than she had ever felt before. The oath magic somehow arranged itself, connecting different geasa together into something new. As it did, it pulled in the threads of psionic and shadow magic into something incomprehensibly beautiful.

Merrie began to cry as a joy filled her. She didn't understand it but it didn't matter. She just sank into the spell as energy flowed through her.

(Cast the spell,) she ordered herself to give power.

The order came along with the surge of power of submission. She moaned as it flooded through her veins, filling her with dark powers that she funneled into her spell.

"A last minute attempt to save yourself? That never works."

Merrie didn't respond to Rat. She screwed up her face in concentration. Her bond was getting thinner, she didn't have much time.

Then the moment came. Everything seemed to stop for a moment as she projected the spell. It burst out of her, a complicated spell that she could never duplicate again. (Zillia!)

Black flames tore up through the bond and into the collar. The rainbow flames along the connection sputtered but managed to remain burning.

Merrie's spell poured into the collar.

Then it burst into black flames.

Rat almost dropped it. "*Shit!*" swore the harmonized voice.

Merrie's black cloak burst out of the collar, spreading out in a smear of darkness that stretched out into two bat-like wings. The folds of black briefly appeared to be tentacles like the shadow kin before it coalesced into its snake-like appearance. The needle-sharp tip reared back to reveal two black-on-black eyes.

In her head, Merrie felt her mistress reaching out for her. It was the same energies and feel as when she used the collar to fake her mistress but it felt somehow more alive. There was anticipation building but she didn't know what the order would be; she had disconnected herself from her mistress.

Then the rush, the hungry desire to respond to energy before the order came. It danced along her insides, flooding her pussy with an icy pleasure. She gathered herself and let it flow through the connection.

Energy rippled through the bond, sputtering the flames. It sank into the collar and then surged through the cloak. Black calligraphy painted across the animated cloak. It was her combat spells: strength, speed, and armor.

Merrie sobbed with relief.

The cloak snapped forward, punching into Rat's chest. Rainbow blood burst out across the ground as it came out from her back. The cloak shaped into claws as it tore through the chest, ripping its entire body through the widening hole.

Rat screamed out in agony.

(Transform!) commanded Zillia, her mistress, her cloak.

Merrie's body was already turning into a Bel Dark hound. She felt the fur and claws spreading out from her body as she was twisted and shaped by desire and darkness. The pleasure that boiled inside her pussy was nothing compare to the rush of obeying.

She charged forward, mouth open. As Zillia ripped completely out the other side of Rat's chest, Merrie's teeth clamped down on the woman's leg. Powerful muscles forced the teeth into flesh. With a surge of strength, Merrie ripped a hunk of muscle and tendon away from the bone.

A strange taste flooded her mouth. It was sparking, hot, and cold at the same time. It changed even as she concentrated on it. Concerned, she spit out the hunk of Rat's leg to see it was covered in rainbow blood.

Rat howled in pain. As the rainbow blood poured out of her leg, she released the collar and snapped her hand down. The howling multicolored lights and rainbow blood coalesced into a brilliant sword in her hand. It was blinding and dark at the same time, shifting in appearance almost constantly but it was always a weapon.

Staggering back, Rat slashed at Zillia. The blade cut into the billowing darkness.

Pain blossomed through the connection and Merrie groaned in agony. It felt like Rat had cut both of them at the same time.

Merrie started to transform but then realized her mistress wanted something else. It was a wordless order to attack the hand still holding the collar. Unwilling to disobey, Merrie growled and spun around. She gathered the darkness inside her and then lunged for Rat's arm.

When her teeth bit down, she released the withering effect of the shadow direction into the woman's arm.

Flesh darkened and peeled away to reveal rainbow blood flowing through veins. Muscles, tendons, and bones corroded into nothing, blowing away.

"No!" bellowed Rat. She yanked herself around, picking up Merrie completely off the ground with surprising strength. Then she threw the collar away from her. *"You cannot have it!"*

Merrie released the arm and landed on the ground.

Rat continued her spin. Her one good leg shifted and swelled. It went through dozens of versions of human legs before it stopped on the powerful leg of some warrior.

The kick caught Merrie in the ribs.

The force of a thousand horses slammed into her, shattering bone and picking her completely off the ground and throwing her in the opposite direction to her collar.

Merrie howled as she flew across the clearing. She hit the stone wall with a sickening crunch and cracking bones. With a groan, she slumped to the ground after leaving a smear of black blood on the wall. Shaking, she lifted her arm to see that her Bel Dark hound form was crumbling again, this time disrupted by the rainbow blood that covered her entire body.

The sensation of pulling rose up. She looked around.

The collar was sailing in the air toward her.

She lifted up one hand, her disappearing claws poised to catch the adamantite ring before it struck her.

Merrie missed by millimeters.

The collar slammed into her neck, crushing her throat in an instant. The force of the blow slammed her head against the wall.

Stars exploded across her vision.

The collar continued to drive into her, forcing the blunt edge through her flesh. She felt bones crunching and skin parting around the bloody collar that had slammed into her. It drove into her with irresistible force as it tore through the scar that she had before.

Merrie tried to scream.

When her spine snapped, the sound died in her throat.

She tried to reach up but her arms were no longer working. There was nothing left, not even the sensation of pain. She was floating, sailing, and falling at the same time.

With a crunch of stone, the collar settled into place around her neck.

Merrie couldn't move.

She could cry.

The world tilted, she was falling. She tried to catch herself but nothing worked. No response, no sensation.

She kept falling, bouncing off her shoulder and then slamming into the ground. She had a brief image of her own body—a naked

woman with a geyser of black blood where her head used to be—
before her vision rolled away and into the darkness.

Switch

86

Merrie slowly came into consciousness between the waves of agony. Despite her best efforts, she couldn't pry her eyes open. She wondered if they were sealed shut, or at least held down. As the wave of pain faded, she bore down and tried to force herself to see.

The pain came back, a brief flash before it faded. It felt like sunlight being branded across her skin but it faded quickly. The smell of sake flooded the air around her, the scent of her skin being seared by brilliance was distinct.

She tried to project her senses but the pain made it too difficult to concentrate. She frowned, or at least tried to, as she switched her attention to her limbs. The memory of being decapitated still burned inside her head and she was terrified that she would recover as nothing but a skull.

(Mistress?) It was Zillia. The comforting thoughts still had the timbre of being altered by the collar but the thoughts didn't come as a mistress but as an alpha, a submissive. The cloak had her voice but it was altered, a timbre that didn't quite match. The sound of the voice and the thoughts were the same as the voice that came through her collar, similar and yet distinct.

Merrie sent out a pulse of confusion.

The presence of the cloak drew closer, caressing against her skin. When she felt it wrapping around her breasts and along the plane of her stomach to cup her pussy, she almost let out a cry. Her head was back on her neck otherwise she would have never been able to feel it.

(Yes, I've set your head back and the resurrection magic in the collar has sealed it back on.)

Merrie could taste the healing energy in the back of her throat. She worked her cracked lips for a moment. (Where are we?)

Zillia shifted slightly, sliding along her bare pussy to cup her buttocks and then up to wrap around her flanks, back, and up to her shoulders. (In a wagon heading up toward the top of the cliffs. There are four other bodies in the wagon and two men pulling.)

(Top of the...? Can you show me?)

(I'm sorry, Mistress, I cannot. It is too bright for me.) Sadness rippled along the connection.

Merrie frowned at the phrase. Zillia felt like a submissive, the faint hint of another alpha reaching out to her mind. The urge to send a command rose up, somehow she knew that Zillia would respond before she finished forming the thoughts. But that didn't make sense. She created a mistress, someone to order her. (Mistress? I thought you were my mistress.)

It was Zillia's turn to send a wave of confusion. (I am. I can be, but only when you need it.)

(Can be? You mean you aren't always a master?)

(No, I am...) The cloak seemed to gather words. (... I am a fragment of you, a manifestation of your subconsciousness that has been granted independence. I'm everything you are, just separate.)

Realization blossomed across Merrie's thoughts. She had succeeded, but not in the way she expected. She knew that the cloak was a fragment of her personality, but it was fragile and easily destroyed. Her last-minute spell made it more persistent and gave it a personality.

In the fight, the reason she didn't have to project a command was because Zillia had done it for her. It was still her mind, but now there was a distinct force on the other end of the collar.

Curious, Merrie reached out for the bond around her neck. She knew there were two places inside it, two connections, one that she used to funnel commands to act as her mistress and another. They were gone, merge together into a single connection through the collar to Zillia.

Merrie froze in shock. She vaguely remembered how she created the mental construct to switch between being a master or a slave. It was the connection that went through the shadow gem that altered the voice and thoughts. Somehow, the creation of Zillia made it

obsolete and left her with a single, solid connection to her cloak. It felt wider, capable of handling far more energy than before. It also had a hint of being fluid, changing. It wasn't as stable as before but she discounted it as adjusting to the new mental patterns.

Reaching through it, she could feel the fluttering length of her cloak. It rippled against her skin and she smiled at the sensation of her own naked body being enveloped by the cloak's pitch material.

The wagon hit a rock and her senses jumped back into her mind with the distraction. Her limb caught on the corpse of another body and she rolled to the side. Her eyes finally opened and she found herself staring into the glare of bright light; fortunately it wasn't sunlight but a magical lantern hanging above her.

(Zillia, can you handle that light?)

(I have your weaknesses, magical light burns away my form as easily as yours.)

It was a cruel irony. Merrie sighed. (It figures that my mistress would be just like me.) She turned her focus back on Zillia. (How were you my mistress during the fight?)

Zillia's thoughts grew amused. (I am you. You are capable of being both a master and an alpha, therefore I am also. I'm just your mirror, your switch. When you are a slave, I must therefore be your mistress. When you are in dominance, I will become your submissive.)

A word caught her. (A switch? I like that.)

They shared a comforting connection, a closeness that didn't need words, physical or mental.

(Zillia? What are we going to do about the wagon?)

Merrie tilted her head to shield it from the light and opened her eyes. One of the other bodies in the wagon was facing her. It was Rat except there were two bloody holes where the eyes used to be. The half-naked bartender had the signs of the battle, but they were all injuries Merrie remembered inflicted.

(I do not know, Mistress.)

(They must think we're dead.) Merrie considered her options. (Do we let them throw my body into a pile? If it is getting light, I can burrow underneath the pile or crawl into darkness? If it is night, then I can get away to either escape or regroup. Regardless, it would be better not to use magic if we can, right?)

Zillia sent the mental version of agreement. It sounded like a good plan.

It also meant that it was doomed to failure.

Merrie didn't have any other choice.

Hauling Duty

87

The wagon continued to bounce and jostle Merrie along a long, rough trail. She could tell they were moving up from the tilt that pressed her toward the pile of bodies at the back off the wagon and the way the two men grunted with the effort.

The anticipation was worse. She wanted to do something, not wait. It didn't matter if it was running away or killing the two men. However, she made her promise to Parn and there was a way of surviving this without using magic. She just had to wait.

"I can't... imagine that Rat would die," said one of the men. He was slightly out of breath.

"Everyone dies, Jale. Even the mighty Rat. More so in this damn prison."

"What's going to happen to the bar?"

"You mean the smoking hole where the bar used to be?"

"Yeah, that," Jale grunted. The wagon jerked to the side. "Come on, Pirlin, keep going."

Pirlin grunted, "Yeah, yeah. We're almost there. Just a hundred more meters and we can dump these corpses and get the hell out of here. These damn plants give me the creeps."

The wagon continued slowly, both men straining to pull it.

Then Jale broke the silence. "I want to fuck her face."

"With a corpse? That's disgusting."

"No, her eyes. I want to fuck that eye socket of hers."

Pirlin must have thrown down the end of the wagon because Merrie was tossed toward the front. The naked body of Rat slumped against her, the strange smell of chaos magic surrounding both of them. It was almost like a fruit drink but where the different flavors

refused to mix together. The scent of death permeated everything, a cloying scent that tickled Merrie's nostrils.

"You want to fuck Rat's eye? What is wrong with you?"

"She's dead and I bet it's still soft." Jale seemed excited. Merrie fought to keep her own expressions from her face, she wasn't entirely bothered by sex with the dead though she preferred when she just played dead for her customers back when she whored.

"You don't fuck with the dead. Not here, not in Abbinkey."

"Why the hell not?"

"Bad things happen with dead people here. That's what happened earlier, when all the prisoners died. The dead, they started to rise up and ate everyone."

"Bullshit. That is just stories they tell the fresh meat to avoid pissing off the guards, the demons, or the psycho plant guy. Besides, you've seen Rat. She's got a fucking sexy body. Short, tits, and by the gods above, I've wanted to pound that ass since I got here."

"You... I...." Pirlin sputtered. "Don't do it. It's gross."

Jale groaned. "Get off your high horse, I saw you feeling up that naked dog chick when you threw her on the wagon."

Merrie's skin crawled for a moment but it wasn't from disgust but more of a wish that she could have been aware to enjoy it. The idea of being a helpless body with a man shoving his fingers into her holes brought a little rush of fantasy coursing through her veins. She started to smile.

(Play dead,) came the echoing command from Zillia.

Merrie's face went blank but the heat inside her redoubled. The unexpected command turned her insides liquid and her pussy tingled with anticipation. A ripple of pleasure raced along her senses and her breath quickened until she managed to clamp down on herself.

Zillia fluttered across her skin before tightening around her pussy and breasts. The pressure against her lower lips banked the flames but didn't extinguish them.

"Yes, felt up. Palmed a tit. Not shoved my dick into her neck hole. I beat you were thinking about that, weren't you?"

Jale chuckled. "I had forgotten about that. That would be—"

“No, no, no,” Pirlin said. “You do that but I’m heading down right now. I might be a murderer and a rapist but... no. There are some lines.”

“Don’t be a pussy. Let me get her up there and you can head on down while I have some fun. Don’t worry, I won’t be long. I’ve been thinking about skull-fucking Rat for a hour—”

Pirlin made a disgusted noise. “We’re close enough, you finish hauling the bodies. I’m going home now.” His boots crunched on the road before Merrie heard him hurrying back down the path.

“Well... what a fucking pussy,” grumbled Pirlin.

There was silence for a moment. Then Pirlin came around. “Well, time for a little loving I think.”

Rough hands dug into the wagon, patting around Merrie’s body. Zillia had her wrapped tightly but she could still feel the probing fingers before Pirlin moved over to grab Rat’s corpse. “There’s my pretty cunt,” he said before yanking on the body.

The nearly naked corpse slid along Merrie, dragging her closer to the side of the wagon as Rat was pulled free. Behind it was the burn of the magical light hanging above the corpses. The pain was gracefully short as more bodies slid against her and blotted out the light. Their heavy weight thudded against Merrie and drove her hard against the side of the wagon.

Even pinned against the side, she could look through the gaps in the side of the wagon as Pirlin positioned Rat’s body on the ground. The magical lantern still lit up everyone painfully bright but she could see through the tears in her eyes. There wasn’t anything else she could do but look with Zillia’s command echoing in her head.

He was a heavyset man with a large gut and powerful muscles along his arms and legs. His long beard waved back and forth as he grabbed Rat’s hair—the luxurious black strands wrapped around his fingers—and he pulled her to the wagon wheel to prop her up against it.

“Yeah, that’s a pretty bitch,” he muttered to himself as he fumbled with the buttons of his jeans. One by one, they popped open before he fished his cock out. It was long and somewhat slender. The tip had an arrow-like head and it was dripping with his excitement.

Grabbing Rat's head with one hand, he lined up his shaft with the bloody hole where her left eye used to go. He let out a groan of lust as he slowly sank it into the opening. "Oh, fuck."

Merrie imagined herself in the same position, her body slack and unable to respond but to still be able to feel as the cock slid into her skull. A flash of heat ignited inside her, flooding her body with pleasure as she focused on the man raping Rat's skull.

"Fuck," he gasped as he reached halfway before hitting resistance. No doubt the bone in the back of the eye socket.

"Always wanted to pop an eye cherry." He stroked her head. "Don't worry, daddy is going to bust you open."

Pulling back, he drove into her again and again, his balls smacking against her cheek and nose as his pubis hair tickled her forehead. He groaned and gripped the side of the wagon tightly. When his hips thrust forward, he crushed the body against the wheel.

Merrie fought back the moans as the entire wagon shook with his thrusts. His cock slammed into her eye socket and she wanted to feel it in her own, to have that thick shaft sliding deep into the wrong hole. It was wrong, it was disgusting, but it was also turning her own.

Zillia, reading her thoughts, began to stroke her pussy. (Don't let him know you are alive,) commanded the cloak even as the tendrils of darkness penetrated Merrie.

Merrie's insides clamped around the wiggling tendril as she lost herself in the fantasy. Every thrust shook the wagon and her world. Every thrust of the glistening cock into the gaping eye socket brought a flutter of pleasure.

Zillia flowed deeper into her body, stretching and expanding its darkness inside her until it felt like a cock pounding into her pussy in time with the powerful strokes of the skull-raping next to her.

Between one stroke and the other, Pirlin's cock suddenly surged deep into Rat's skull. The base of his cock slammed against her face.

He let out a cry of pleasure and pain. His hands released the wagon to grab the corpse's head, almost crushing it as he shuddered violently. "F-Fuck, fuck!" he gasped.

Even from a distance, Merrie could see his balls twitching as he pumped cum directly into Rat's brain. His cock plugged the opening

of her skull and Merrie could almost imagine it flooding through the forbidden opening.

It was raw and exhilarating, a forbidden action played out in front of her.

She almost let out a whimper before an orgasm through through her. She desperately wanted to stroke her pussy, to enjoy the pleasure Pirlin was getting out of Rat's corpse. Zillia's order kept her silent but the helplessness only magnified her orgasm that raged through her body.

With a groan, Pirlin relaxed his grip. Rat's hair clung to his fingers as he spread his fingers wide. Sweat glistened on his brow.

Merrie focused on his thick cock as it slipped out of her skull. His shaft glistened with a rainbow sheen. He slowly stepped back. The thick veins resisted before sliding out.

Then his cock head rested into the opening of her skull. Around it, a flood of cum and rainbow blood sprayed out across his legs and abdomen. It dribbled down her face and dripped off her lips before splashing to her breasts.

Panting, he staggered back. "You were a fucking bitch, but a great lay."

Reaching down, he grabbed his shaft and pumped it a few times. When he pulled his hand up, he looked at the oily sheen that covered his grip. "What the hell?"

After a moment of staring, he shrugged. He grinned and his cock twitched before growing thicker with his thoughts.

Merrie felt a quiver of anticipation. He was thinking about her.

Slowly, Pirlin lifted his gaze to the wagon. "Now, where is that other pretty cunt? I've never fucked a neck before."

His shaft jumped and fresh pre-cum dripped from the tip. With a grin, he reached into the wagon. "Where you, little dog girl?"

His thick fingers dug around the corpses as if they were no more than garbage bags. He grabbed Merrie's shoulder tightly. "Oh, come here, Beautiful."

(Play dead,) came the order rippling through her connection.

With an orgasm simmering inside her body, Merrie let her muscles grew slack and her breathing stop. Little prickles of excitement ran through her veins; given that she was made of shadows and probably didn't need it, but her body still had the habit

of breathing. However, the order took precedence and her lungs grew still.

He shook her a few times and then pried her body out. A corpse caught her head, bending it back until her throat was exposed. Slowly, it slid up to her chin.

“Oh, I’m going to fuck both ends....”

He stopped pulling her.

“Weren’t you decapitated when I started?” His voice brimmed with a sudden worry. He pulled her body, treating her as nothing more than a hunk of meat.

A orgasm rippled through Merrie. She struggled to keep her body from responding.

The last corpse slid off her head, the slack parts tugging on her ear painfully. Her body half-slid out of his hand.

“What the hell?” he whispered to himself.

Merrie considered frightening him. Jale had said the dead rise up. A smaller part of her wondered if he was going to cut off her head and fuck her neck, or skull fuck her like Rat.

(Scare him.)

With a grin, Merrie pulled her head up. Her strained neck protested but she knew it would look like a zombie coming to life. Slowly, she opened her eyes to stare direction at home.

Pirlin’s eyes widened.

“Boo,” she whispered in a hoarse voice.

“Fuck!” he screamed as he stumbled back. His boot caught on the arm of a half-melted corpse. His arms flailed as he fell back with his cock trailing an arc of pre-cum and his leg caught in the bodies.

With a sickening crunch, his leg snapped right before his head slammed against the side of the wagon. His body twitched for a moment and then every muscle slumped.

For a long time, Merrie remained still. She half expected Rat to stand up as some sort of undead—that would be ironic given how she just surprised him—but the body remained slumped over. Neither did Pirlin get up.

Gingerly, she tapped his leg.

He didn’t move. The bone had broken through the skin and blood flowed around the wound.

She glanced up at the bright light and winced. It would not be easy to escape the wagon, not without getting burned. Slowly, she lifted her eyes to see where they were.

It was a wall of plants. Not just tress pressed together, but thick trees that were almost perfectly lined up along the edges of the valley. Between each one, a webbing of vines and bushes created what appeared to be a solid surface of green life. She couldn't even get a hint of a light or movement beyond the surface leaves.

As she stared, she kept seeing movement in the corner of version. When she tried to focus on it, however, there was nothing.

(The plants are moving.) Zillia was projecting as Merrie's submissive again. An image came along, distorted by the shadow construct's senses. The details of the wall grew sharp and she saw vines reaching up or around, leaves wrapping to fill in gaps even as the wind gently blew past them.

(What is this?)

Neither knew because Merrie didn't know. She wanted to reach out with her senses, to see if it was magical, but she wasn't in direct danger. She had to honor her request to Parn, though it was getting harder to remember if she promised not to use her magic or to only think about it. She was sure it was to ponder the uses, which was fortunate since she thought creating Zillia was probably a direct violation of both the spirit and letter of Parn's request.

Guilt flooded through her.

(Mistress, look.) Zillia drew Merrie's attention the wall.

Vines and branches were reaching out from the wall. The tips of the green plants looked like tentacles as they slithered across the ground. They were heading directly toward Pirlin's and Rat's corpse. Roses, violets, and thorns coiled around the thick tendrils and roots. They all reached out like questing tentacles to wrap around the two bodies. Then, with the same slow movements, they began to pull the corpses into the wall.

Merrie tensed as the sense of danger grew stronger. She glanced up at the light, measuring how much pain it would produce if she rushed out of the wagon. (This isn't good.)

Zillia responded with a wave of concern.

A sound like wind rushing through the trees raced along the surface. She looked up to see the trees leaning toward the valley, as if reaching out for something. Something far away.

The sense of wrongness grew.

(What time is it?)

(Almost morning.) Then fear rippled through the connection, an intimate concern that they both shared. (Sunlight.)

The wagon underneath them shuddered.

Merrie gasped and peered down through the cracks. Vines and roots had wrapped around the wheels of the wagon. They were pulling it toward the wall as more vines crawled up the side, blossoming leaves as they did.

(We have to run,) she projected to Zillia.

(Magic?)

Merrie considered it for only a heartbeat. (Our only chance.)

She tried to crawl out. Her limbs didn't quite work the way they were supposed to, everything felt sluggish and painful with the effort. A whine rose in her throat as she tried to lever off the bodies but couldn't.

Zillia peeled away from her body, the snake-like darkness pushing the bodies aside as they crawled out from the bottom. Near her ankles, she could feel the vines slipping along her skin, trying to wrap around. Thankfully, she had no feet and could pull it close.

The triple beat of her heart slammed against her chest as she writhed up to the top of the wagon. The magical light over the wagon burned her skin and she started to smoke, but she had to look around.

They were on the top of a sheer cliff that surrounded Abbinkey Prison. Only a short distance away, but nearly a quarter mile down, was the guard entrance. Armed guards patrolled underneath her, no doubt armed to kill any prisoner that showed up. She remembered Fomasal's edict, approach the entrance and die.

The path that Pirlin and Jale had followed went almost three kilometers along the cliff, a bare path that was barely wider than the wagon. She spotted no shade or shelter along the east-facing wall. She could too easily imagine being caught in the sunlight halfway down the trail with no chance of escape.

Whining, she looked up. The entire other edge of the prison valley was bright with the approaching sun. Even from a distance, she could see the wall of trees and plant life surrounding everything. Fomasal had said something about the top, but she couldn't imagine it was lush, primal, or animated unless she saw it with her own eyes.

Her whine grew louder as she peered down the cliff. She could plummet a quarter mile and hope it didn't kill her. If it did, then she would be throwing herself into the cycle of recovering in the sunlight and having her body burn away before she could recover. There was no pile of leaves or dead trees to protect her.

She knew her only option, it just scared her.

(You need to get into the trees.)

Merrie's ears flattened against her head as she looked along the wall of life. Something told her that it was just as bad as an option, though not one that involved burning alive.

She considered her options. She had magic, her touch would corrode anything. If she could summon shadows inside the trees, there was a chance she could burn her way across the top of the plateau and out the other side. Or remained just inside the edge until night and to return to the prison.

Merrie took a deep breath. The wall of plants looked like her best option. She drew energy into her body with a prayer to Parn for forgiveness but the spell crumbled from the magical lantern above her. She whimpered and tried again but couldn't shape her body with the light pinning her in place.

The wagon continued to slide toward the wall of plants. More vines and roots reached out to grab it.

(We have to crawl for it.)

Zillia slithered back around Merrie's body, wrapping around her in a cloak of darkness that shielded her somewhat from the magical light. It hurt Zillia and the pain echoed along the connection.

Unsure that she could transform herself, Merrie half-crawled and half-fell off the wagon. Hitting the ground, she rushed away from the wagon's bright light and the questing tentacles. Sharp rocks dug into her body, tearing at her knees and wrists as she rushed forward the writhing wall of plants.

At the last moment, she summoned an aura of shadows. The darkness pounded in her veins. Black flames surrounded her body and the vines beneath her body began to rot and wither away.

Until she breached the wall of plants.

Between one step and the next, the shadows snuffed out. Even her connection dimmed but didn't break. She stumbled forward, planting her face into a large flower. The perfumed pollen surrounded her head as she accidentally breathed in a lungful.

Heat fluttered through her body. She pulled back and shook her head. (Zillia?)

She could feel her cloak's presence but it had dissolved from her body. She frowned and reached out for her cloak.

Zillia sent out a wave of weak emotions: fear and surprise.

Merrie tried to turn back, to escape the pressing confines of the plants but the wall had sealed itself up around her. There was only a few faint marks of rotted plant that disappeared in front of her eyes.

Fear prickled her spine as she tried to summon up a wave of shadow to rot it away the plants to escape.

Nothing.

Surprised and whimpering, she concentrated on her senses. Looking out, she saw there was no magic surrounding her. No, there was magic but it was being absorbed by the plants before she could tap it.

A wave of dizziness washed over her.

She lifted her arm but it refused to move.

There were more tendrils of smaller plants wrapping around her limbs, binding her down. She could feel the pressure as they caught her thighs, legs, and even woven into her hair.

She tried to pull free. Some of the roots snapped but there were hundreds that replaced them. Soon, she would bound tighter than any metal or leather restraint could hope to match.

Helplessness and energy surged into it, fueled by her own desires. She felt her body grow slick even as she felt dizzier. Motes of pollen danced around her as she tried to concentrate. A spell started across her mind but then faded.

She was being pulled toward something.

Merrie struggled to concentrate on her spell, to find some way of breaking herself free. She was in darkness now, she could

transform. Only if she could get the calligraphy to race across her mind.

(Zillia, help me!)

Energy rippled back, pushing away the fog of lust.

Then a vine shove into her pussy.

Any hint of concentration crumbled as she was instantly filled with twisting roots and tendrils. They burrowed deep into her core, a coil of twisting tips stroking along her inner walls. The entire mass rotated back and forth as the tendrils sought the fluids inside her and a place to root.

With a low moan, Merrie slumped forward and panted. She was so close. Her hips rose as more of the vines impaled her pussy, weaving themselves around each other to thicken and strengthen the squirming length that invaded her.

More tendrils pressed against her anus, mouth, and nostrils. Even her ears were assaulted by the questing plants. They started to rotate as they shoved into her moist holes. The discomfort rose quickly but then she felt smoother tendrils working their way in and prying her open.

With a surge of pleasure, the thick, ridged and knotted tentacles plunged into her body. It felt like her insides were about to rupture before they stopped and withdrew, dragging out countless bumps and crevices against her sensitive openings.

Merrie threw back her head and moaned. She was so close.

Pleasure swamped her senses. She gathered it up, clutching to the energy in hopes of casting a spell.

The ground slid underneath her, the roots were dragging her along the ground.

Peering through the mass of roots that were violating her throat with deep, twisting strokes, she spotted a large pitcher. No, it wasn't a pitcher, it was a plant shaped like one. It was massive, about four meters tall with a lid that slowly lifted to bring a thick, moist heat to wash over her.

The plants lifted her body, picking her easily off the ground as they continued to pump into her orifices. It was almost impossible to think with the wiggling, splitting, and rotating that was going on in her pussy; she almost felt like the plants were trying to take root in her body.

Her spell crumbled.

Her orgasm of helplessness tore through her, ripping through her senses as it plunged deep. Instantly other vines joined it to weave their way into a twisting mass like the ones that were straining her pussy and ass.

She shuddered helplessly as her body was positioned over the open pitcher plant. The bottom had some thick-looking liquid swirling around. The smell of sweet syrup flooded over her.

An orgasm tore through her body.

She had the energy for magic but it was impossible to concentrate. It felt like she had been drugged, but what would drug a creature of the shadow? What could stop her?

More pollen danced in the air, clinging to her skin. She could almost feel it burning along her skin and into her veins. It flooded her was a dazed sense of pleasure and lust.

Her pussy was soaked with need.

The plant raping her cunt continued to grow. It formed a ball of roots into the soaked depths of her pussy until it was knotted inside her. The pressure of her insides being stretched out by the writhing mass of roots and tendrils shoved her into another orgasm.

Then she was at the edge of the pitcher plant. Looking down, she breathed in the heady scent of syrup and sap. It was like the pollen, fogging her mind and making it hard to concentrate on anything but the waves of pleasure wracking her body.

The vines holding her above the plant lost their tension. She plummeted down. Any sound she would have made were muted by the roots that twisted and plunged into her her throat, cutting off her breath and driving almost to her stomach.

Merrie gagged on them as she landed in the bottom with a splash. She expected the liquid to be cold, but it was searing hot against her skin. The heat quickly cooled but it left a feeling of being covered in thick oil behind.

She tried to roll over but her naked body only slipped helplessly on the smooth sides of the pitcher plant. There was nothing for purchase, nothing to grab to pull her up.

The three thick masses of vines continued to plunge into her openings, raping mouth, ass, and pussy as knots drank up the juices that poured out of her. Around the twisting masses, the fluids that

surrounded her seeped into the spaces left by the twisting and plunging vines. Soaked from the inside, the vines were able to thrust faster and harder.

An orgasm tore through her, a spark of purest black swarming across her vision.

She tried to channel it into a spell but couldn't. The pollen or drugs made it impossible. When she concentrated on her collar, the energy flowed sluggishly; it felt as if the plants were draining it away from her as fast as she could orgasm. (Zillia?)

Only a faint, unfocused thoughts washed over her from her cloak. She could feel the energies being drained from it, leaving only the shell. She was sure that Zillia wouldn't be destroyed, the collar anchored her, but at the moment, Zillia was nothing more than a shadow.

She had to serve herself.

Merrie whimpered as she tried to pull herself up. The smooth ends of her wrists couldn't catch anything and she fell face-first into the deep pool forming around her.

The vines raping her throat never stopped. They plunged past her lips and gagged her. The sickly sweet syrup that she was coated in flooded her mouth, coating her insides with the oily substance that made it even harder to concentrate. All that was left was a plunge of being violated and the tingle of her body under the liquid.

More orgasms tore through her. She moaned as she writhed to escape but her body was failing. It was too hard to use her energy, too hard to concentrate.

Everything told her to sink into the orgasm and the sap, to let both fill her body. She wanted to give up, to let herself go.

It was the drugs talking.

Sobbing, she kept fighting but she was losing. It was just too hard to concentrate.

Her senses focused on her ass and pussy. The woven rope of vines and roots brought intense waves of pleasure as they continued to pry and plunge into her openings. She felt every thick ridge and bump. The leaves caressed along her sex as they plunged in and out. The smell of her sex, sake and alcohol, mixed in with the heady sweetness of the sap that now covered her body.

Merrie's head plunged underneath the surface of the sap. She frowned, it wasn't that deep when she first looked but now it was completely covering her body. She could feel it tingle along every centimeter of her skin.

Above her, the leaves of the pitcher plant began to close.

It was dark, blissful orgasmic darkness, but Merrie couldn't use it. There was no power around her, no energy that the plants didn't absorb.

She flailed helplessly as the liquid rose above her head. She felt it seeping into every hole, every orifice. It flooded her insides and set off a wave of orgasms that never seemed to stop.

Thorn

88

Merrie woke up to a familiar agony, the one where every part of her body burned from the inside as light seeped in to burn away the shadows that made up her core. She tried to her body away, twisting and writhing, but her form refused to respond to her silent commands or the screaming that couldn't escape her throat.

Underneath her writhing form, she felt the ground shift and slither. She was on something as it shoved her from one side to another. She silently hoped it would bring her into darkness where she could somehow muster the energy to flee but the light seemed to focus on her as she was dragged away.

Suddenly, the slithering stopped.

"Why do I bother?" said someone, their unknown voice was rough as sandpaper and almost bored. "You are just going to reform in a week."

She whimpered, the first sound escaping her throat. It was hazy and wispy, the only sound that could be made from her half-formed vocal cords. She could feel them tearing from the effort even as her body struggled to rebuild itself.

The brilliance diminished, turning from a white flame that blinded her completely to green-tinted colors that only burned on her skin.

She gasped, her eyes still not seeing as she enjoyed the brief respite. Even the screened light hurt, but it was nothing compared to having her shadows boiling away into wisps. Trembling, she concentrated on her surroundings to identify the speaker. If it was Rat, then she was in far more danger than she could imagine. If it

was someone else... well, she could escape as soon as she found darkness.

When she heard nothing, she frowned. The only sounds were the rustle of leaves and the creak of branches. The ground still shifted underneath her body but there was no tentacles or hands grabbing her, no blades pressed against her skin, only the burn of light and nothing else.

Unsure of what to do, she focused on moving herself. Trembling, she focused on her right arm. It took effort to move it, to drag the smooth end of her wrist along the shifting ground underneath her. She felt leaves and twigs scrape her skin but nothing lashed out.

Thankful that she still had a body, Merrie focused on her legs. It was harder, her body still felt disconnected from the rest of her, but she remembered how her skin felt when she crossed her legs. Bearing down, she focused on moving one leg and then the other, scissoring them together until she could feel her skin rubbing against each other and the pressure that teased her hairless pussy. It wouldn't be too much to masturbate, but it didn't seem like the right thing while still blinded in an unknown place.

Merrie blinked away the tears from her eyes and peered around. Everything was fuzzy and shifting and green. It took her a moment for her vision to focus that it was the forest that was still moving: coils of vines twisted and pulled through complicated knots, the trees swayed but also groped for each other, even the grass waved opposite to the wind as if it was following a breeze that didn't exist.

Confused, she looked around for the speaker. She didn't see anyone.

Glancing down, she looked at her body. The pale skin, a faint white, had blackened rents from where the sun pierced her shell. The boiling shadows seeped out but the wisps were fading as her form healed and sealed over itself. She gulped and looked around again as she considered using magic to try escaping or healing faster.

Merrie let her senses cast out but the shadows around her were dead. No, not dead, but there was no energy in them. Nothing to pull on, nothing to tap. Just dark pools that gave no comfort as something else drew all the magic out of the air.

She sighed and glanced down. Her breasts were rising and falling before she realized she was breathing again. The realization brought a rush of hope and she smiled.

Then she felt a presence wash over her. Jerking, she peered around but there was no one in the shifting trees.

No, she stopped and turned to the side. There was something wrong, a detail she had missed.

Her eyes had passed over it thrice before she spotted a face almost hidden among the coiling vines and weeds. It was impassive and small, more like a happenstance shape of wood than a face.

Then it blinked.

She inhaled sharply.

A silfae stepped out, a tiny humanoid barely two feet tall. His body was the same color of the vines around him but the movement made it easier to see him clearly as he peered at her. He appeared to be a Copir silfae, just like Dixie, but there was something unnatural about the way he stared back at her.

“You make poor fertilizer,” came the surprisingly rough voice.

“W-What?” she whispered.

“Your body, it gnaws at my plants and withers my leaves. Not just that shell of yours is destructive alive.” He pointed at her with three fingers. “But even the presence of your corpse is enough to wither life. You sap the life out of my plants and leave them to die. The ground that soaks your blood can no longer sustain life.”

He stepped closer. She noticed he had plants growing in his hair. Tendrils of roots clung to his pointed ears while more of it added to the matted life that made up some sort of robe or vest. He glared at her, his green eyes glowing faintly.

“I... I’m sorry.”

“I don’t care about you. You’re...” He gestured at her with one hand and pulled a face. “You are not one of my children. Normally I’d just mash your corpse into feed. I tried already but you still kill my children. Your blood, your skin, everything about you is more than I can handle.”

Merrie cringed away from him.

The silfae stopped in front of her. He crossed his tiny arms over his chest and glared down at her face. “What are you?”

“I’m... the Omega.”

He shrugged and shook his head.

“An alpha?”

Another shake of his head.

“I’m a creature of shadows?”

“I figured that but most shadow creatures are black and have shifting bodies. You are a naked... human? I don’t remember, humans have those fat bags on your chest, right? Or is that only the females?”

She frowned in confusion.

He gestured to her limbs. “But you don’t have hands or feet. How can you be... anything at this prison? Did someone bring you in as luggage or just some toy to play with?”

The idea of being shoved into a bag brought a surge of desire and fear. She had only been jammed into a bag a few times, all of them at the prison. She squirmed for a moment and then shook his head. “Only at the prison.”

The silfae scowled and pointed to toward her crotch. “Could you stop watering my children? That kills them.”

She glanced down at her bare pussy. It was already starting to glisten with her growing excitement. Looking up, she scanned his face. There was no attraction, no desire, just disgust. Confused and a bit wary, she clamped her legs together.

He shook his head slowly before looking her over. “Why is a naked human killing my children?”

She hesitated.

“Come on, human, speak.” He rotated his fingers as if to encourage her to go.

“I... they thought I was dead.”

“Obviously, you were on the fertilizer wagon. Why? You stink of this Kivas’ magic, though it doesn’t seem to have corrupted you. I’m surprised at that, not curious, just surprised.”

“Kivas? Rat?”

The silfae shrugged. “Don’t know, don’t really care what he calls himself now. You have the chaotic energies around you but that isn’t what is warping my children. Your shadow-stuff is killing them and I’m tired of creating dead patches in my forest with your corpse.” He stepped back just as a tree branch swung down to cradle him. “What do I have to do to get you out of my woods?”

Merrie thought about Abbinkey. The prison was hell, but it wasn't going to get better even with Rat gone. She didn't have many options if she wanted to restrict herself using magic. The only future was being used as some prisoner's sex toy, fucked and abused and beaten in a constant cycle of pain, death, and recovery.

Her pussy grew slicker with her thoughts. She squirmed and fought back a moan. The desire to return to the prison rose up, a hunger that felt stronger than ever before. It felt more than just lust, there was something else. An overwhelming need to return for... something. She couldn't tell the reason, or the purpose, only that she had to return.

Merrie sank into the feeling to return. It felt like a master commanding, or about to command her. The anticipation burned in her bones and deep inside her soul, a hungry desire to obey even as the words came out.

She wasn't sure where it came from. The closest she had to a master was herself, through her collar, and Zillia. Reaching out, she tried to connect to her cloak but the shadows were still snuffed out by the power around her.

Merrie couldn't be sure but maybe the command came from Parn? Would the goddess send her back to the prison for some purpose?

She considered escaping, fleeing through the woods. She knew she could do it, at least if she could find some way to tap into the shadows.

The Royal Geas didn't have a hold on her but she instantly knew that she would be violating it. It was a powerful sensation, as if someone was clawing into her skull.

To her surprise, she found that she could keep considering her options, to decide to violate the geas, but the answer was clear.

There was no doubt what would happen if she returned. She was helpless if she honored her geas and it wouldn't take long before some prisoner claimed her for their own. Before she knew it, she would be used as nothing more than a fuck hole and slave. She twisted for a moment as she imagined her future.

"You're leaking again," the silfae said with an expression of disgust.

Blushing, Merrie pulled herself up. After a moment, she slipped until she was on her knees with her legs spread, her pussy hovering inches over the ground. It felt more comfortable to be on her limbs but the sensation of having her tail wag free somehow distracted her from the thoughts.

The silfae snorted and shook his head. "You are broken for a human. More than usual."

"I'm exactly who I am," Merrie responded.

"And I want you out of my forest. How can I get rid of you?"

Merrie thought about the prison. She had to go back. "I—"

"I won't let you escape the prison, if that is what you want to ask."

Startled, Merrie closed her mouth with a snap. Then she spoke. "Why?"

The silfae shrugged. "I have a good thing here. This place is close to the Green and my babies thrive on the constant flow of fertilizer and corpses. Except for yours of course, but you shouldn't have been thrown into that prison without being... still comfortable in your own magic. Not with the Kivas around, he'll use you to try to escape. They are getting sloppy."

"No one else in the prison can use magic. They are all geased—"

The silfae snorted. "Not the children of Kivas, The Kivas. The brother. The one that they created the prison around. He's still there, I can feel the chaotic energies dripping off what you call a soul and the stench of it clings around like flies around the bloated corpse of some idiot."

She closed her mouth with a snap.

The silfae leaned forward. "And if no one in the prison can use magic, why can you?"

She blushed.

"No, there are a lot of people using magic. That geas that is put on you makes you unable to use your natural talents, but... whatever you humans do to keep living, that's still there. You can learn a new magic that way."

Merrie thought about how Borias had switched magic from killing women to using spells and runes. The memories came back of her kneeling on the floor of the basement, begging as he fed her

foul-tasting food created from magic. Her tail wagged slowly with her memories.

“Kivas has that will, that stuff that keeps humans moving forward. He shifts and twists too much. No geas sticks long enough to stop him. When it blocks his blood magic, he shifts to use stone-shaping. As the oath magic changes to prevent that, it’s mind control. Then whatever is needed.”

The silfae shrugged and tugged on a root that curled around his finger. “I’ve been watching over this prison for seventy years now. At least five iterations of magic rose up from that prison, each one tainted by Kivas chaos.”

He released the root which blossomed into a flower. “So, you aren’t escaping through the woods. I have no interest in ruining my situation for your attempt at freedom. I don’t need oath magic for that, I simply won’t give you passage through my woods.”

“N-No, I want to go back inside.” It felt good to say that.

He cocked his head. “Really?”

“I need to. I... I was convicted and sentenced here.”

“Wrongly?” snorted the silfae.

“I...” She felt about a moment before she caught the hint of pressure, the silfae wasn’t to know about the Royal Geas. “No, they were right. I killed all those people. It wasn’t intentional but I think I did the right—”

“Yeah... I’m going to stop you there. I don’t care.”

She glared at him.

He shrugged. “I don’t. What I want is to get you out of my woods. What do you need to repair your body? That’s what you need to leave, right?”

She bent away from the light. “Darkness would help. And maybe whatever is preventing me from pulling on the shadows.”

“Will you grow your hands and feet back?”

She shook her head.

He lifted one hand. As he did, the world grew darker.

She looked up to see the trees growing rapidly, stretching out to create a thick foliage that blocked the light and plunged her surroundings into almost total darkness. Only the faint light of moss and some plants gave her light.

"I won't let you access the shadows though. That would let you escape and I have no intent in letting that happen."

"I won't."

"I can't trust you. I will give you shade though."

She breathed a sigh of relief, letting the scent of fresh flowers flood over her. The darkness felt good, a balm against the agony of burning. Her body would heal, but slowly. She smiled to herself as the tingle of her collar's regeneration magic took over and started to repair the damage.

"I noticed sunlight kills you." It was a statement, a cruel one. Above her, the canopy fluttered and little spears of light shot down before disappearing instantly.

"Yes," she whispered.

"I can't do much about that. I can keep you shaded until the sun sets though."

"That would work. I can sneak back into the village."

The silfae stood up and then walked toward the edge of the clearing formed by the plants. "You do that. Try not to get killed or whatever happened to you."

She thought about the fight. "I hope not."

"Avoid Kivas though. If he finds out you survived, you are going to be more of a prize than ever before."

"Rat is dead."

"Kivas is never dead. He just reinvents himself every time someone thinks he dies. If you don't believe me, head to the well in the center of town. If there is a new store there, a promising new leader, or someone who seems to naturally take charge, I promise you that is Kivas. He's a weed that you can't kill, with roots down into the rocks themselves. Blood binds him to this prison, it keeps him alive as much as it pins him in place."

"I'll be—"

"I don't care," the silfae said as he stepped out of sight. "You have an hour before the sun sets. Follow the path and I'll throw you back into the pit, human."

She closed her mouth and stared in the direction of the silfae as her mind spun furiously. Rat was Kivas, the first one? How could that be? She saw Rat's body, even Jale fucking the eye hole. How could anyone survive that.

But she had and from far more damage.

Merrie groaned and stretched. She looked at the shadows around her and considered using her magic. She didn't have much energy in the woods, despite the darkness. There was something, the Green that the silfae talked about, that made it impossible to use shadow magic. She sighed and bowed her head, she could use Zillia's company right then.

With a groan, she sat on her heels and leaned back to let the darkness heal her damaged body.

t'Sade

Variants

89

Except for the rustle of vines shifting and the leaves blowing, Merrie was left alone in the darkness. She decided not to use her magic to see in the dark, instead just enjoy being blinded as the aches of her burned body slowly faded away into a quiet peace.

Soon, it was just the rustle of the animated plant life and the steady, triple beat of her heart.

She wagged her tail in happiness, moving as she waited for night to come. Despite not being able to see the sky or feel the sun, she knew that the strange silfae would make sure she would know when it was safe.

After an indeterminate wait, the rustling grew louder. She lifted her head to see a trail of green moss starting to stretch out into the darkness. There were other colors hanging from the trees and vines, creating a multi-colored tunnel toward her destination.

She wasn't surprised that the silfae didn't join her. It was obvious that he didn't like her, or probably any other human for that matter.

Crawling on her wrists and knees, she started down the trail with her ears perked up and her tail wagging.

The trail opened up sharply right at the edge of the cliff. One moment she was surrounded by trees and shifting vines, the next she was on the edge peering down at a sheer fall to the bottom. Only a thin scree of gravel marked the barrier between plant and open air.

It was just night, only a faint light clung to the horizon as the clouds in the sky were dark purples and blues. To the side, she could

see the dotted lights of the village. Even from her distance, the well at the center with the strange light above it was clearly visible.

The idea of returning to the prison was terrifying but it was also what she needed to do. Her body grew warm as vague fantasies of being abused and used hovered in the back of her mind. There will always be someone like Horge who will keep her.

She peered down the cliff to find some way down.

There was none.

Glancing, she look to see if the silfae was going to give her something. When nothing was obvious, she knew it was her responsibility to get down and there was only one way to do it.

She took a deep breath and reached out for the shadows.

In the small lip of the cliff, there was a hint of power that wasn't being absorbed by the plants. Grasping on it, she fed power into her collar until Zillia blossomed ahead of her.

The black cloak looked like an ink blot hovering in the air ahead of her. The edges rippled silently, moving in a wind that didn't exist.

(Mistress!) came the wave of icy happiness. Then the cloak draped over her, wrapping around her body and binding tight. The pressure caressed against her pussy and tail. It cradled her breasts and squeezed tight until right at the edge of comfort and discomfort.

Merrie moaned and felt a flicker of energy rippling through her body. She took a moment to enjoy the sensations before letting Zillia and her body to melt into darkness before streaming down the side of the cliff.

Once on the ground, she raced to the village. It only took fifteen minutes but her mind spun furiously on the silfae's words. She wanted to see the destruction from her fight with Rat.

Minutes later, she was padding down the narrow lane of the village in Bel Dark hound form. It was slower than her shadows but more resilient to the dim lanterns that hung in front of doors. The light still burned her skin but she felt a growing sense of dread and fear as she worked her way to the center of the village and Rat's old place.

Despite it feeling like it was only days since she left, there were changes to the village that gave her a sense of waking up after years. It wasn't just the new decorations or lights that hung in the front.

There was also a crispness in the air that hinted at a rapidly approaching fall. There was also the faint scent of burning leaves, but she didn't remember seeing any trees in the prison valley.

As she approached the center of the village, she slowed down and moved silently. The familiar sounds of the village center were missing, there was no one talking nor did she hear the clink of glasses and mugs from drinking.

Merrie still dreaded when she peered around the final corner.

It was completely different. The buildings that had dissolved and melted with her fight had been completely replaced. They looked new, but not recently built. Dust and mud covered them as if they had been there for months.

Her eyes scanned to the far side where Rat's place was. It was now just a general store of some sort. The lights were off but the ruby light from the well lit up the various items on display behind iron bars.

A sense of discomfort rolled over her. She turned and looked at all the new buildings. Nothing looked the same, except for the well in the center.

The makeshift cage appeared to be identical from before. Somehow it managed to survive the fight without being even scraped by flying buildings or the tornado. The ruby light continued to shine, highlighting the keyhole openings on each side.

She frowned as she stared at it. Why was the well untouched? The buildings on all sides had been obviously destroyed and rebuilt but not the center?

Other than the well, nothing looked sinister or out of place. She sighed and shook her head. The silfae didn't know what he was talking about.

(Maybe Kivas is one of these people?) projected Zillia. (Hiding out in the open like Rat did?)

(But how can we figure out? Or am I just jumping at shadows?)

A door creaked open.

She jumped at the sudden sound. Ears perking up, she looked around until she spotted a younger man coming out from one of the buildings across from the store.

He had short, sandy hair and a slender form. His attention was focused on a book that he carried with one hand while he absently

carried a bag of what appeared to be garbage in the other. Without looking away from his book, he headed straight for the well.

A loud click noise echoed across the center of town and the door opened before he reached it. The metal creaked loudly.

Without looking up, the stranger chucked the bag into the well and turned around.

The gate closed behind him, clicking loudly. Above, the ruby light grew brighter minutely. If she was looking at it, she wouldn't have noticed it but with her sensitivity to the light, it felt like someone digging their nails deeper into her skin.

(Kivas,) projected Zillia.

(Yes,) Merrie answered as she felt a shiver of fear coursing through her veins. She thought about the violent fight they had before she was decapitated. It was clear that Kivas had taken advantage of the violent to remake his image into something else.

(Zillia, this may turn violent at any second. Can you cast spells?)

(Yes, but only with energies in the collar.)

(Prepare to cast but don't pull energy yet. Kivas may be able to sense magic being used.) Merrie lifted her foot in preparation to back away. She didn't move though, in fear of knocking something over and alerting Kivas to her presence.

(What are we going to do, Mistress?) The cloak fluttered lightly against her throat.

(Run. Find a place to hide. There are tunnels where everyone works, we'll head there as soon as Kivas goes back into their house.) Being outside seemed a lot more dangerous than it had only minutes ago. She had never been to the tunnels but she had an idea where to find the entrance.

The man reached the door to his house.

It swung open without being touched.

Merrie frowned. Obviously Kivas was using telekinetic abilities with this version of himself. Assuming the silfae was telling the truth.

Kivas stopped in mid-step. He slowly lowered his book and turned to look directly toward Merrie. His eyes sparkled for a moment and then ignited into a pair of swirling, multi-colored orbs of light. "You survived." It wasn't a question.

At the sound of the layered voice, a surge fear of coursed through Merrie. She stepped back with a growl and started to cast spells. Black calligraphy raced across her mind, followed by a second line of complementary spells. Her body blurred as her combat spells snapped into place with startling rapidity.

“I had guessed the second regeneration spell was that powerful, but I’m impressed at its effectiveness. Rakin was a talented mage, a pity that geas made him into someone less than useless for my needs.”

Merrie froze. The memories of the man who sought to bind her with the collar rose up. She had forgotten he was also at the prison, though she had not even seen a hint of his presence. Maybe he had already ran afoul of Kivas. To her surprise, she was almost sad to think he had already died.

Kivas’ eyes narrowed. *“But you and your collar? You still have your powers, your natural talents. You are useful to me. That power can be used.”*

A terrible feeling rose up in her mind. She could almost anticipation what he was thinking and it cause her stomach to roll. (You can’t have me.)

“Why not? You are a submissive. You get off on being dominated. I can do that.” He hesitated. *“I can do that for a few centuries at least. What do you think? Become my bitch for a century until I can pry that collar off your throat?”*

An intense image slammed into her. It was chaotic and powerful, shifting from scene of torture to another. One moment she was having needles shoved into her breasts, the other she was being used as a fuck toy for every prisoner in the valley. A flash later and he was ripping her arm off.

A sense of helplessness exploded inside her, quickening her pulse and sending hungry desire raging through her mind. He would use her, abuse her, make her beg.

“For a century, I’ll make you my undying slave.”

Merrie hesitated. Underneath the intense images that were causing her pussy to grew slick with desire, she felt something missing. Kivas was powerful but he was too chaotic, too shifting. Even as he projected scenes of submission, she could feel his attention drifting. He was putting a show on for her, a role.

He wasn't a master, not the type that she needed. He would be worse than Kine, a master who would never use her to her fullest potential.

Despite her juices dribbling down her thigh, Merrie found the courage to bring up her metal defenses and quiet the overwhelming images of lust and submission.

"You don't have a choice." The images grew more intense.

Merrie focused on the collar. (I need you, Mistress.)

Zillia's presence shifted like a card flipping over. One moment she was obeying Merrie and then the next was the strong presence of her mistress, the force that knew how to command her. (I'm your mistress, not him.)

Bolstered by the stable presence, Merrie shook her head and stepped back. (I have a mistress,) she projected toward Kivas. (I cannot be your slave.)

He grinned, his eyes brightening until they began to melt the eye sockets around them. The air grew thick with the scent of scorched skin. *"What makes you think you can stop me? I am Kivas, the man who killed his own reaper and bound a promise of all the gods of death to never take his soul."* He smiled a little too widely to be natural. *"I can break a slave like you because I will never give up."*

He took a step toward her, the ground melting underneath his feet. *"You will come back, time and time again. Every time you draw a breath, I will crush it out of your throat. I will destroy you until time becomes nothing more than a memory!"*

Kivas swung his hand back. It would have smacked into the side of the building but instead it dissolved into rainbow energies. He snapped his hand forward and a streamer of killing force speared toward her.

Her magically enhanced speed kicked in and she dove to the side. The entire building behind her dissolved into energies, splashing out into a cloud of mist. The edge caught Merrie's flanks, the energy burned through Zillia and seared her skin.

She gathered the shadows around her, forming them into pitch black tendrils. Five of them shot forward.

Kivas knocked them aside with brilliant, multi-color energies. With his other hand, he pointed at her and darts of light shot toward her with supernatural force.

The light almost blinded her as she dove to the side.

(Keep dodging!) snapped Zillia.

With a surge of lust fueling her, Merrie continued to sprint to the side as she felt more buildings exploding into energies around her. Among the noises, she heard screams cut off and the sound of people dying left and right. (He's kill people.)

"I must get out of this damn prison!" screamed Kivas. *"I will have that collar! I will have you!"*

He flung out his hands and a wave of energy crashed into the buildings surrounding him. In a matter of seconds, stone and wood dissolved into a rainbow of colors. She saw bodies briefly suspended in air before they were consumed by the man's powerful magic.

Kivas inhaled loudly. The boiling, multi-colored mist streamed toward him as he sucked it in. From the inside, his body began to glow as she saw the remains of his surroundings begin to glow from inside his bones. His body twisted and grew larger, arms stretching out into hands the size of boulders. Moments later, the rest of his body followed suit until he towered easily five meters.

She didn't think she could fight such a creature on her own. She couldn't stop either. With a flick of her ears and tails, she launched more black tentacles at the glowing giant.

Kivas knocked them away. He flung his hand forward and a streamer of energy exploded from his palm straight for her.

Zillia's surge of energy and unspoken command had her moving. She dove into an alley and out the other side as the entire street ignited into rainbow flames. More buildings disappeared in a cloud of energy before he inhaled them again.

(Mistress?) Merrie asked, her mind trying to find some way of defeating the powerful being.

(We need get away from the others. He's killing everyone.)

(The tunnels or the entrance?) Merrie dodged another blast that tore a line clear through the village and well beyond it. She heard the screams of surprise and agony stop in an instant as Kivas slaughtered the other prisoners without hesitation and then inhaled their energies.

(The garbage pile. No one is there.)

A wave of agreement rushed through her. (Run, Bitch,) came the order.

Burning with the brilliance of submission, Merrie turned on her heels and raced away.

Behind her, Kivas howled in rage and threw bolt after bolt of rainbow energies at her.

Garbage Pile

90

Merrie's paws smacked against the ground as she ran. It was a frantic beat that shook her entire form as she raced as fast as she could. In her chest, the triple beat of her heart was a steady rumble that caused her chest to ache and her vision to blur. The darkness had been pushed back by her shadow senses; there was no way she could fight Kivas blinded.

Behind her, there was a loud bellow and then she felt the air pressure suddenly press down on her.

Spotting a boulder, she dove behind it just as a wave of rainbow energies came up behind her. Stone melted underneath her feet and the air grew acrid with power. It felt like heat and ice bit at her bare skin and her fur curled.

Holding her breath, she waited for the wave to pass and then let out the air in a rush. (That felt far away.)

Zillia unwrapped from around her body and sent a delicate tendril to peek around the boulder.

Merrie's vision blurred as she found her senses drawn into her cloak.

The brilliant rainbow giant was storming toward her, the steady pace of its feet were sending waves of multi-colored energies in all direction. Behind him, the entire village burned with a multitude of colors.

She gasped in shock and horror. (He is killing everyone?)

One of the taller buildings, only a few stories high, crumbled in an explosion of yellow, orange, and green. There were no screams.

Tears ran down her cheeks. (Why is he doing this?)

Zillia fluttered as the cloak retracted. (He's a creature of chaos, maybe you just broke whatever self-control he had?)

(But killing everyone?)

An uncomfortable wave of worry washed over her.

Merrie shook her head and slumped against the rock. (He's too big, Zillia. How can I fight that? I would need the Shadows but the barrier is too strong.)

She thought for a moment. (If I can get into his head, maybe I can do something?)

One of the tip of the cloak formed into a snake like head. It nodded as it sent a wave of approval.

"I'm sorry, Parn," she whispered before she closed her eyes to concentrate on reaching out to Kivas.

Rage and hatred, a brilliant wall of multi-colored energies that formed a vortex of hate. She shuddered as she found herself before an insane power. It plucked at her own senses, not with control but simply beating against it as he mentally clawed for her.

More tears ran down her cheeks as she froze under the onslaught of Kivas' mind.

Zillia wrapped around her thoughts, darkening them as the sense of her mistress became a shield. The pressure wrapped around her mental form to hold it together and to give her strength. (Break his shield,) ordered the cloak.

Merrie screwed her attention and thrust forward, projecting her presence into the maelstrom of emotions.

Kivas' insanity tore at her, cutting her open in an instant. She dug past the pain and burrowed deeper, using her talent to work her way deeper.

Then she encountered Mace. Her companion from the wagon to the prison's was in Kivas' mind, but not his physical body. His screams echoed shrilly as she felt his thoughts and memories being ripped apart by Kivas and the resulting explosion of chaotic energies being sucked toward the center of the creature's beings.

The last coherent thought the convict gave was a pleading “help me!” before he was gone forever.

Merrie slumped back in her body. She sobbed as tears ran down her cheeks. The storm wasn’t just chaotic energy, it was the people in the prison. It was lives and souls and spirits being used to fuel rage.

(He’s approaching. Maybe ten minutes?)

Still sobbing, Merrie shook her head. (How can I fight that?)

Zillia didn’t have an answer.

Merrie looked around. The garbage pile wasn’t going to help anyone and this was a battle of more than just magic. In the distance, she spotted the lit-up entrance to the prison. (How far is Kivas from the entrance?)

(The entrance?)

(Fomasal and the Loyals may be able to fight Kivas.) She had taken on a Loyal before, they were powerful beings that could turn the battle.

A wave of agreement enveloped her.

Merrie shook her head and gave a quick prayer to Mace and the others who had died because of her.

Then she looked back. Kivas was walking toward her but he had moved to the side of the cliff. He was massive now, easily thirty meters tall and glowing painfully bright in a maelstrom of energies.

However the top of the cliff moved violently near him. As she watched, she saw trees reaching out into the void above the rocks to create a canopy.

When Kivas reached up to slash at them, the rainbow energies faded even as the trees ignited into flames. He tried again but was rebuked by the silfae and his magic. Kivas shook his head and turned around.

Even though there was easily a kilometer between them, somehow Kivas’ eyes caught hers.

“You!” came the booming howl. Then the rainbow giant began to stomp toward her.

Merrie turned on her heels and sprinted for the prison entrance. She only hoped it was enough.

t'Sade

Help Needed

91

The prison entrance was brightly lit and painful to her eyes. It also had dozens of guards standing in front of it, armed with crossbows, pikes, and swords. Their silhouette bodies were a painting of barely contained fear and nervousness.

Behind her, Kivas still pounded after her. Despite his height, his movements took longer to make. She guessed she had less ten minutes before he was at the entrance.

She stopped right at the edge of darkness. Her Bel Dark hound form easily blended with the shadows as she pondered what to do next. Her eyes watered with the effort to look at the wide, low entrance. The magical lanterns were all brilliant and she could smell the alcoholic scent of her body already beginning to darken from their presence. She whimpered and stepped back further.

The ground shook and the acidic smell of chaos magic wafted over her.

Whimpering, she looked back for any familiar face.

It came when Fomasal, the guard commander, stepped forward. He was wearing heavy armor and had a glowing sword. "Stand strong! We can't let him hit the door in a charge!"

Merrie whimpered again and look at Kivas. He was approaching but Fomasal was in the center of attention and in a bright pool of light. She couldn't approach without being attacked or having her body burned. Her eyes scanned along the entrance and then past it to the wide hallways beyond. There were lanterns, she remembered those. Fomasal had darkened them.

(Zillia, do you remember where those lights are?)

(Yes, Mistress.) The cloak had switched back to being a submissive.

(We can't darken the entrance, but maybe one of the hallways? If we can get Fomasal in there, maybe we can talk?)

(Why not project?)

Merrie tensed as she considered it. If the Loyals were alert, they would detect it. She remembered that from before. However, if they were as violent as she recalled, then maybe she could use them attacking her to create the darkness she needed to talk.

(That's very risky.)

The ground shook again, it was getting louder.

Her tail ducked low. (I know. Better options? We need to tell him what is happening.)

(I have none,) projected the cloak.

Two Loyals stepped out of the front ranks. They had all of their combat spells activating, the sheer power of the spells warped the air around them as they stood at attention. One of them was Zurl, the loyal who knew that she had a Royal Geas on her. The Loyal would ensure that she couldn't approach Fomasal without attacking, not with them seeing a rainbow giant storming toward them.

Her heart beat faster as she screwed up her courage. She had fought a Loyal before. It was a brutal fight against someone, and that was when she was at full strength.

Energy flowed into her, Zillia was boosting her combat spells. She could feel armor and speed flowing into her black veins. It might give her the edge, then again, it might now.

With a faint shred of hope, Merrie reached for the Shadows but the barrier between the worlds was still too strong. She let out a whine and then shook her head.

"Okay," she whispered to herself. "Please, Parn, let this be the right thing."

With growing dread, she let the Bel Dark form peel away until she was nothing more than a naked woman on her knees.

Zillia flowed away into the darkness.

Trembling with fear and anticipation, Merrie crawled toward the light.

She only made it a few steps before both Loyals suddenly jerked.

“Prisoner!” bellowed Zurl. His green armor shone and then he disappeared in an explosion of dust and energy.

Merrie snapped to the side, her body melting into darkness as Zurl’s blade punched the ground that she was just there. It was only a microsecond of movement and then the earth exploded from the impact. Harsh energies tore at her side.

She landed and then dodged again as the second Loyal attacked. The hammer slammed into the ground and kicked up a wave of dirt and stone that threw her violently toward the light.

Merrie bore down against the pain and focused on dodging, moving one step faster than the other. She whimpered as she had to twist from one side and then other. Her body blurred as she shifted rapidly from Bel Dark, to shadow, to human, using the transformation process to heal the energies the Loyals did to her but also to move faster than one body could only do.

A third Loyal exploded into view. The spear caught the side of her shoulder. Arcane energies ripped at her flesh, tearing it open in a gout of her shadows. Agony burned as she stumbled and then threw herself as violently as she could as two attacks hit the ground.

In the corner of her vision, she saw Fomasal brandish his weapon. The long sword glowed a brilliant blue as holy energy surrounded him. He set himself for an attack, as if the three Loyals weren’t enough.

The hammer caught her side and she was flipped to the side.

She twisted and slammed into the ground, the smooth ends of her ankles digging into the dirt. She was only a few meters away from Fomasal. Without looking at him, she screamed out, “I swear—!”

Zurl’s blade came down, cutting the air.

She transformed to shadows to avoid it.

The spear caught her darkened form, pinning it to the ground.

She shifted back to tear it out her wrist. “—loyalty to Franome—!”

Tears burned as she struggled to belt out the words to the Royal Geas. She only hoped one of the Loyals or Fomasal would recognize it. A blade came after her and she shifted into Bel Dark to kicked off and roll to the other side, coming back as human. “—the crown, and—!”

The hammer caught her chest, snapping bone as it picked her up off the ground and threw her deeper into the entrance of the prison. Her body smacked against guards who didn't move fast enough.

Merrie screamed as the air ripped out of her lungs, “—family!”

Sharp agony tore through her chest and she saw blackened bone sticking out of her pale flesh. She rolled to her side and then forced herself to jump as one of the Loyals teleported next to her and crushed the pillar and one of the magical lights.

Zurl's attack caught the side of her face, sliding a burning wound that scraped her cheek bones before the arcane flames began to burn away her face.

Blinded in agony, she threw herself back away from the others. Black blood burned her lips as she continued to scream out. “I will protected it—!”

Two more blasts nearly caught her.

She shifted into shadows and back to human. “—my will—!”

In the corner of her eyes, she saw one of the magical lanterns darken and crack. Zillia shot across the space, the edges of the cloak smoking from the light damage.

Merrie sobbed as she stumbled and then had to dodge a rapid fire attacks. Each one got closer as the three Loyals hammered at her, destroying the ground and walls almost as much as hurting her. With each shattered light, the blinding agony faded slightly.

“—my pride, my power,—”

All three Loyals teleported around her, their weapons already swinging. The energies of their killing attacks tore at her skin, peeling it back to reveal the shifting darkness.

She had failed. With a cry, she belted out the next phrase of the Royal Geas. “—and my life!”

Oath magic burst from inside her, driving by her final words. She felt it shine brilliantly, as if she was fulfilling in an inescapable geas.

Nothing happened.

Trembling, she looked up to see three Loyals frozen in place, their armor glowing brightly but their weapons no longer buzzing with killing magic. The massive hammer head was the closest, only millimeters away from crushing her skull. It was larger than her head and completely terrifying in how close she got to being killed again.

Zurl responded first, pulling back his weapon. “Loyal Zurl demands the prisoner be taken to one of the oath rooms for interrogation.”

“An oath room?” asked the Loyal with the hammer. It was a woman’s voice, barely. “Why there?”

Zurl’s head inclined slightly.

Merrie felt the Royal Geas inside all three of them. It was part of their very being. With a flash of insight, she reached out with her own power and touched each of the geasa.

The response was immediate. The oath magic grew brighter as it intruded into their thoughts, demanding their obedience.

As one, the three Loyals straightened and stepped back. “The commander must interrogate the prisoner,” said the one with the spear. His voice was youngish, almost a boy.

Merrie felt an indescribable joy rush through her. She felt like she was a mistress in that moment, giving an absolute command. Her pussy grew slick with desire.

“Commander Fomasal,” said Zurl as he turned to face the approaching commander.

Fomasal still had his glowing blade out. He looked tired and exhaustion, as if life had drained out of him. He opened his mouth to respond to Zurl, but then glanced at Merrie.

She pushed herself up to her knees and wagged her tail.

He did a second look. “Princess?”

She barked.

Stunned, he looked at Zurl and then back at her.

“The prisoner must be interrogated. She had information about the disturbance in the prisoner’s village.”

There was no way Zurl would have known about it, but it was a plausible lie for the other guards who were gathering around.

Fomasal started to say something and then he closed his mouth with a snap. Snapping around, he looked over the curious guards watching. “To your posts!”

As they started to head back, he turned around. “Let’s get you somewhere dark where we—”

The ground shook violently and a wave of chaos magic slammed against the entrance.

Some of the guards cried out. “Attacker!”

Merrie whined for a moment and then up at the lights. She needed to talk to Fomasal but they weren't time to explain it. After a heartbeat of decision, she reached out to boost the Royal Geas even as she projected with her mind. (It is Kivas and he's coming for me. He will kill anyone who comes close to him.)

Before anyone could respond, she gathered up all the memories of Kivas and projected into the minds of the surrounding four warriors. It was a dense packet of information and probably more detailed than anything they had experienced in their lives, including the sex, bondage, and her various deaths. There was no way to explain it without sending anything.

All three Loyals gripped their weapons tightly, energies rolling over the killing blades and hammer even as their Royal Geas prevented them from attacking.

When she finished, Fomasal let out a moan of discomfort and staggered back. "Loyals, make it dark."

A rapid series of explosions burst down the hall as hammer, sword, and spear destroyed every source of light in a matter of seconds. The air beat against her ears, the pressure causing little pops from the rapid fire teleportation.

As the darkness plunge around her, she let out a soft sob of relief.

Zillia zoomed over to her and wrapped around her body, covering her pussy and ass and squeezing down tightly to remind her that she wasn't alone. A wave of relief flooded over her.

"You," Fomasal started. (You still have your telepathy? Shadow powers? Psionics?)

There was no way anyone could overheard the conversation in their heads. Merrie flattened her ears against her head and nodded. (Yes.)

(The geas? Justice or Royal? Does any of that have an effect on you?)

It took her only a moment to know she had to tell the truth. (They are there. I can feel them when they tell me what to do. I obey because it is the right thing to do.)

(But,) "you don't have to obey" (do you?) He looked bothered but also confused.

Merrie sheepishly nodded. (I do as long as it doesn't violate my oaths. The Royal Geas is part of that, I will not harm Franome, the

crown, or the royal family. I meant that, though there is no magic that forces me anymore.)

Fomasal's gaze hardened. (Does that mean you willingly came here because you were convicted? You went into that prison knowing that if you choose to not use your magic, you could die?)

(Yes.) It was the truth, though she didn't want to mention her promise to Parn. (And no. I can't really die as long as I have my collar. Well,) her tail wagged slowly, (I don't stay dead and it hurts a lot. It's happened a couple of times since I got here.)

She projected a brief wave of memories, of being raped, decapitated, and killed.

Fomasal looked sick for a moment and then shook his head. (That's what my investigation found too, Merrie Golddotter. Despite what is happening, my gut and the geas says you have Franome's best interest in hand. I suspect the judges at your conviction were aware of the geas but none of them survived the explosion.)

He looked back toward the opening where the rainbow colored light was beginning to flicker along the ground. (And Borias? My cousin?)

(He was pardoned by the prince and has taken the oath also.)

Surprise filled Fomasal. (My cousin now comes through the white door? How... no, I need to know later. Kivas must be stopped first.) Duty rose up, driving his thoughts. (Bring the Loyals into this conversation.)

(I'm already here and have witnessed the prisoner's discussion,) came Zurl's voice across the connection. Even in the connection, his voice was mechanical. The other two Loyals, Jasil and Sprin, responded with varying degrees of discomfort. Jasil wielded the hammer and Sprin's weapon was his spear. It was obvious they didn't like her telepathy or the fact that their Royal Geas was commanding them to allow it.

Merrie's tail wagged faster.

A dread filled Fomasal as he regarded the approaching glow. (The last time Kivas did this, almost everyone on this side of the door died trying to keep him contained. It can stop almost anyone from escaping it, but he has gotten so powerful the last time he almost broke free. It only happens every few centuries, so it became a problem to "solve later" but it looks like we are too late.)

There was no question what Kivas would do if he escaped. All three of the Loyals and Fomasal already knew that they were going to die in the coming fight.

Merrie's tail dropped. It didn't look good for any of them. (How do we stop him?)

Fomasal frowned as he thought for a moment. (The door will respond to his presence and start to absorb his powers, but it needs time. We have to let him get into the tunnels and hold him here until it can activate. Once there—and we're all dead—he will beat against it until his energies are drained by the door and he'll retreat back to the prison for another century or so.)

(And the other soldiers?) asked one of the Loyals.

(I'm sorry, they can't know this is our deaths. They made the oath, they were aware of the risks but even letting one of them through could risk the door not responding in time. The red door must remain shut to Kivas.)

The Loyals stamped their feet.

Merrie whined soft but she understood. She had seen the destruction Kivas had done. She couldn't let him escape, even if it was her collar that had started the attack.

Fomasal surprised her by pressing his armored hand against her cheek. (It isn't your fault. I should have questioned your conviction faster. I knew you had an artifact when you went in. I knew the risks but I thought it was safe.) There was a haunted look. (If... for some reason we survive, there is something that has to be done. I believe something terrible has happened and your conviction was intentional. You were meant to break Kivas free, I can't see it as anything besides that know what I know now.)

Stunned, Merrie stared at him. (What?)

(I... my... my geas does not help me with this. I think one of the Royal Family has been compromised, somehow. I don't know how, I don't know for what reason. I can't do anything besides my oaths, so I think it is pure luck that I happen to encounter someone who is willing to protect the country at the risk of their own lives but doesn't have to follow the unflinching rules of the geas itself.)

Fomasal knelt in front of her. "Merrie Golddotter, I need you to make a promise," he whispered. "If you survive, you must honor this promise. Even if it is the prince, you must save this country."

With a rush, her heart suddenly blossomed with an intense clarity. She had finally seen the reason for Parn's hidden moves. She had to make a promise no other being could make. "I promise," she said resting the stub of her arm on his.

Fomasal's eyes glittered with his tears. (Can you read my mind?) She nodded.

(Take this, just in case.) And then a rush of memories. It was rough and haphazard, a man who wasn't used to telepathy trying to explain a conspiracy in a rush.

Merrie reached in and pulled it out, copying his memories and thoughts, tracing through the observations and gut feelings. There were countless ones, but she shoved them into a packet as she traced through the flashing images and thoughts.

Fomasal stiffened.

As soon as it felt like she had everything, she shoved it into a knot of a package and then buried it deep inside her mind. She had to survive, there was no question about it now.

Fomasal staggered to his feet. He wiped the tears from his eyes and then strode toward the entrance of the prison. "Prepare men, for the fight of our lives!"

The three Loyals marched after him. They had heard everything but none of them said a word.

Merrie watched them with a new conviction. Then, she summoned the energies around her transform into the Bel Dark hound. Mind working furiously, she and Zillia padded after the warriors into a battle that she had to survive.

t'Sade

The Attack

92

Kivas came as a wave of energy. The thirty meter tall giant of chaotic energies barely looked human as it covered the last distance to the prison entries. The ground behind it melted and burst into flames, the energies of the dissolving material streaming up into the body. He was already bloated with the souls and lives that he had killed that the first three guards he killed made no obvious difference.

His backhand swept through the ranks until it slammed against Sprin's spear. The impact drove the butt of the weapon into the hard-packed ground.

Jasil and Zurl teleported next to the glowing hand and attacked it. The weapons shone brilliantly as they cut into the chaos but appeared to do no damage.

When Kivas swung his other hand, all three teleported away. Merrie whimpered. (Where is he vulnerable?)

(I don't) "know." There was no fear in Fomasal's thoughts but he was struggling with telepathy. She glanced over to see that the soldiers standing next to him also were standing firm but the further away from the commander, the more frightened the warriors looked.

At a quick question, he projected. (I'm immune to fear, it's a paladin power. Those around me share that invulnerability.)

She wondered if Bass had that same ability but she remembered everyone being frightened when he had first kidnapped her.

(Fallen paladins lose their powers.) There was distaste in Fomasal's thoughts. Then they faded as he charged forward to slash at Kivas' foot. His glowing sword thudded as it hit the rainbow

energies that made up the creature's body but it sank in and the commander had to yank it free. "Loyals, find the weak spots!"

Zurl landed back and started to concentrate.

Kivas seemed to notice and swung toward him.

With a gasp, Merrie projected a command through the connection. (Guard Zurl!)

The power rippled along the mental connection, driving by the force of her order. Their bodies lit up with power, the hum and crackle searing the ground before they both disappeared in a crack of air.

Both Loyals appeared with a second crack in front of Zurl, just as Kivas' hand came down. Hammer and spear caught the glowing force.

They held the attack for a moment, the air crackling with power and the ground trembling. The smell of chaos magic was strong in the air, burning the back of her tongue.

Then the two Loyals shoved back and Kivas was staggered back a step.

The inhuman creature howled and brought his fist down on the roof of the prison entrance, cracking stone and sending a shower of rocks and dust cascading down.

"What was that?" asked Fomasal as he headed to guard Zurl from further attacks.

She sent a wave of apology. (I had to respond.)

"No, go ahead." He waved his hand. "Drop the telepathy, it's distracting me. I need my attention on this fight."

There was a quiet assessment from the other Loyals and she released the spell. They didn't have to be secret anymore.

"Zurl?"

"The energy is too fluid and there appears to be no spells being used. It is just chaos driven by emotion."

Merrie shivered at the memory of seeing the same thing when she projected into Kivas' mind. There was nothing there. It frightened her that any hint of a personality had disappeared after the attack, as if everything, even Rat's mind was nothing more than a mask around something inhumanly terrifying.

Fomasal hefted his sword, the blade glowing brighter. Holy energy radiated from the length and Merrie had to step back from

it. He growled and looked over the giant. “I need to get into the fight. Zurl, any physical weakness?”

The ceiling shuddered violently and large rocks came plummeting down to smash into the oath rooms and along one wall. The impact kicked up dust and dirt in a wall that charged toward them.

Zillia spread out to block both Merrie and Fomasal from the blast. The cloak snapped before coming back.

Fomasal looked at Merrie. “What was that?”

“Zillia.”

He started to ask a question and then shook his head. “Why is he hitting the roof?”

“I believe he is trying to collapse it.”

“Collapse it?” Fomasal frowned. “If that happened, then digging it out would activate the door and seal it shut.” Dread rose up in the paladin’s thoughts. “He must have figured something out.”

“Or he knows we are trying to get him close enough to give the door time to activate. If he collapses the roof, we are either smashed if we stay behind or out in the open where he can pick us off.”

Another blow to the ceiling caused the rest of the small oath chambers to be crushed.

Zillia drew Merrie’s attention up to where a large boulder the size of a wagon was plummeting toward them.

(Zurl, teleport!)

The cloak snapped out to grab Fomasal tightly as Merrie transformed into her hound form. With magically-enhanced speed, she launched herself out of the tunnel and into the open.

Kivas smashed down with two glowing fists.

She dodged violently, Fomasal’s body skipping on the ground and then barreled away from the brilliant giant’s body until the light dimmed.

With a growl, she stopped and spun around as Zillia set down the paladin.

“You can shape-shift?”

(Yes.) Merrie watched as Kivas turned around and started to head toward them. She gathered what darkness she could around her, forming tentacles to attack.

Fomasal inhaled sharply. His sword flared as he held it up.

Merrie winced as the shadows became to break apart. She stepped away. (I need darkness to use my magic.)

“What are you?”

(I’m an alpha.)

“I never really understood. You killed... they said you turned Blood County into a shadow land. I also heard you summoned an army.”

Guilt slashed into her. (Yes.)

Then a different emotion started to rise up, a thrill of anticipation. She frowned, her brow furrowing, it felt like a master was about to give her an order. Curious, she glanced at Fomasal but he was struggling with thoughts and couldn’t have the sheer will to command her.

The ground shook and Kivas howled as he approached.

Fomasal lifted his head to look at the fight. “Loyals, block Kivas!”

There was a rapid series of bangs as the Loyals teleported into battle. They slashed and disappeared and reappeared to attack again.

Kivas’ voice became a deep, rumble as he stopped approaching Merrie and swung at the attacking Loyals.

Fomasal turned his attention back to Merrie. “Can you do that here? Summon a shadow army?”

Her tail dipped. (The barrier between her and the Shadows is too thick, I can’t step sideways.)

Merrie’s pussy grew wetter and she felt a tingle. She couldn’t tell where it was coming but she could feel the surges of power beginning to rise inside her. (Zillia?) she asked her cloak privately. (What is happening? Are you giving orders?)

“That makes sense, this prison was warded to prevent escape.” Fomasal spoke unaware of the second conversation. “Besides shape-shifting, dimensional magic, and apparently black tentacles the size of horses, what else can you do?”

(Mistress, there is someone coming. I feels like a master.)

(A master?) Merrie squirmed as she grew more excited. (Someone with an alpha?)

She reached out with her mind as she looked around her. Her magic pushed away the gloom until she could see as clear as day.

There was a man approach. He was thin, almost skeletal, and walked with a limp. Despite that, she could feel the determination already radiating from him, a force of will that felt like a rock compared to the raging anger of of the chaos monster behind her.

Her pussy grew even wetter as she reached out, striking against a powerful shield that set off a flood of memories.

He looked down and swallowed hard. “She defeated me. You see, your highness, there is nothing you can do to me that she hasn’t done already. Kill me? I’m already dead inside. Torture? For three days she raped me as I raped her. The healers couldn’t save my manhood and I will never fuck again. Even if I could get it hard, it would be agony. I have no anger left, I have no hatred. There is nothing inside left to keep living, but I can’t even kill myself because I know she won’t let me. In the end, I have nothing to fear because she has done what I have done to a thousand others.”

Merrie’s heart pounded in her chest as Rakin’s memories washed over her.

(Hello, Merrie,) he said a firm, determined thought. (I knew you would scan me.)

She whimpered, stepped away from the dark and backing toward Kivas.

Fomasal frowned and then spun around. “Who is there?”

Like at the sentencing, there was no anger in Rakin’s thoughts. He was still broken and dull, but she could feel energy rolling through his body. She had never felt it before, at least not for him, but it was arcane magic; strict, measured, and logic.

(The Justice Geas means I can never get angry again but that doesn’t mean I can’t learn a new trick. After three hundred years I know how to adapt.)

(What are you doing here?) Spells raced across her mind.

(Asking you to let me die.)

Merrie froze, even her tail stopping moving.

The command came and her buttocks were already pressing against the stone. “Now, sit down and listen.” Rakin’s voice was

rasping but the memories brought his force of will to crush against her desires.

She moaned as the pleasure ripped through her body, the unwilling submission driving an orgasm to flood her veins and ripple away from her a surge of lust and power.

Fomasal staggered back. "What... was that?" Clutching his crotch with one hand and brandishing his sword with the other, he faced Rakin. "Who are you?"

Rakin came into the light where Fomasal could see. "A prisoner, Commander, but one that happens to be an expert on what that bitch can do."

The former warlord held up his hands to reveal they were blank. His left eye was white, with three deep scars crossing fro his brow, through the eye, and into his cheek. More claw marks were painted across his skin, most of them old but a few were fresh injuries still glistening with drying blood. At the same time, his thoughts were speaking to Merrie. (You have the ability to stop Kivas this time but you need direction.)

"I don't know how you survived Kivas so far, but you are risking your life by coming her. Princess doesn't have anything that can help."

Merrie ignored Fomasal's words. (Why?)

(Because there is no way I'm leaving this prison alive. Either I can cower in the tunnels fighting off Kivas and the demons from both sides or I can fight and maybe regain a shred of my honor before I go.) There was determining in his thoughts.

He opened up his shields to her, letting her closer to his intimate thoughts. Surprised, she sank into him and found herself into making his choice: he was offering to use his full measure of power knowing that the Justice Geas would liquefy his organs in the process.

Then, a thought leaked into her mind. With a broke jaw, she croaked through her bloody mouth. "How... many... years?"

Dixie's eyes came into sharp focus. They were an intense blue as he stared at her. She could see the thoughts burning in his mind as she asked him to

sacrifice his own life to cancer to save them. It was a foolish thing but even if they both died, then Tabitha and Bass and Sable would survive.

Tears ran down her cheeks as she remembered what had happened to Dixie.

(The silfae was one of my greatest opponents. The battle of Blood River was the peak of my power, when I still had a heart to give and the magic to use it.) Rakin glanced at Fomasal. A wave of sadness rose up but it was quickly crushed as he pulled away from his own emotions. (That was the last time I was truly a hero of this country.)

He stared back at her. (Use me like I wanted to use you. Burn my life away to defeat this creature, let me be your master in the short measure of time my body has left.)

She cringed. (How can I trust you?)

(You shouldn't but I know what Kivas will do if he escapes. I know what he will do if he doesn't. There is no way this ends well for anyone.)

Her tail shook between her legs.

(Read my thoughts, my memories, delve into them and look. You have already won, Merrie. I am your prisoner and I swear, by any oath you want, that I only want the chance to die.)

Despite it feeling like a trap, Merrie reached into his mind and started to explore. Memories of his time at the prison washed by: the constant beating from other prisoners, the abuse from the guards, the attacks by the demons as they swarmed up from the dark, and even the pain of learning a new magic when every time any emotion caused him to weep blood. There was years of agony compressed into a single instant.

To her surprise, she was crying again.

Merrie looked for some deception: a lie, a shield that was protecting his true thoughts, even signs of tricking himself but she found nothing. His entire life had been laid out before her and it was the hell he deserved. She lived through his choice to come up from the depths of the tunnel twice, feeling each one as he finally got the courage to brave the outdoor after spending over a year in the dark.

“What is going on?” asked Fomasal, breaking her thoughts.

Merrie looked up as she struggled with her choice. Then, she sighed. (He's going to help me.)

"He's a wizard without powers."

Rakin stepped up. "No, I have powers and you have the ability to let me use them long enough to make a difference."

"I can't remove a geas."

"No, but you're a paladin and you can heal."

"Of course."

"Then drop your sword and keep me alive for long as you can."

Rakin reached down and grabbed Merrie's collar. With a yank, he pulled it tight to her furry throat.

Instantly, Merrie's body grew slick as she felt power surging through her. The hunger and desire rose up, begging to be used.

"I will..." the Commander's voice trailed off. "Okay."

"Did you ever bond?"

(With myself.)

The grip tightened. "A pity but I'm glad you didn't lose another master. This would have been easier if I could have made you mine."

Spells burst across her mind, written in calligraphy and crystal. It swirled as she brought patterns of domination, telepathy, and parts of the connection that bound her to the collar. She was going to create a bond, though temporary, between five the most powerful beings she knew. Blood dripped from her nose as her body grew darker from the power gathering inside her. Around her, the plants wilted and crumbled to dust.

Her heart beat faster. (Zillia?)

(Do it, Mistress.)

(This will hurt when he dies.)

(I will save you but this must be done.)

Darkness pouring into her, fueled by the unbreakable collar almost choking her and the need to save the country. She had a promise to keep, an oath. The power surged powerfully inside her, gathering faster than she expected despite the lack of connection to the shadows.

Calligraphy and crystalline logic flowed across her mind as she forged a new bond. The spectral lead burst from her heart and covered the short distance, umping from her body to collar to Rakin.

His grip stiffened as she pierced his shields and plunged into his very soul.

There was a brief moment of terrified vulnerability and then Rakin's life exploded across her mind. Centuries of war, battle, and magic hammered against her thoughts. His personality, even broke by his prison, was nothing compared to anything else she had happened. He was a master, he was in charge, he would dominate everything he saw in his life.

Then anger burst inside her. Her lip peeled back as she felt it grip her heart as she stared directly at the chaos creature wrecking havoc to the last standing Loyal. There were two smoking craters where Sprin and Zurl had fought, now only crackling energy marked their deaths.

A low growl shook the air as the shadows poured into her, filing her body with power. It mixed with the anger and rage, twisting violently as she felt her skin hardening. Her black paws turned into red claws that dug into the air. She felt muscles tearing and reforming as Rakin's anger warped her body.

Blood poured down Rakin's leg. More of it was pouring out of his ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. It frothed as he shook violently. It stack of withered organs and foul blood.

Fomasal gasped and dropped his sword to rush over. His hands burst into golden-green glow as he planted them on Rakin's chest.

More memories blasted through her mind, ripping apart her consciousness and shredding her thoughts. Her sense of identify crumbled under the onslaught, cracking under the force of a man who would have been the perfect master.

Then Zillia came to life, the cloak's personality shifting into her mistress. The black mental shields wrapped around Merrie's core, shielding it against the howling anger that represented Rakin's true power.

The force of wills tore through Merrie's mind. Her despair and loss from Kine rose up but it was nothing compared to what was going on.

Tear ran down her cheeks as the ground underneath her withered and crumbled, the power of her dark energies withering everything around her except for her... and now her master.

Rakin let out his breath in a gurgling sigh. (I would have been a god.)

There was no way to keep his mind out of hers, they were bonded.

He looked up through his bloody vision. (I would have become him. I cannot allow that.)

Merrie's pussy was slick and dripping. (We—) She found that she couldn't even think of "I" with his memories intertwined with hers. (—must stop him.)

Rakin groaned and more blood poured out of his mouth. He coughed. (Bring me darkness, Bitch.)

She reached out for the darkness but the barrier between worlds was too strong.

He wouldn't accept that. Tightening his grip, he twisted her collar hard until she couldn't breathe. "Bring the darkness!" he snapped. "Bring me shadows!"

Her body ignited into desire and flames, the heat coursing along her skin as shadow and fire twisted together. With a howl, she snapped out her tail and spread her wings as she dug into the barrier, reaching out for the darkness she laid behind.

Wings? Tail? She glanced down to see that her paws had turned into blackened claws and her fur was now scales.

Then the order was too much to bear. She mentally clawed at the banner, her actions fueled by an endless rage that radiating from her master. She snarled loudly as she reared up with both claws and brought them down.

Reality itself tore up to reveal the inky blackness of the Shadows. icy cold power surged over her, flooding her senses and blending with the heated rage that boiled inside her. Each of the two powers magnified each other, turning her core into a maelstrom of hatred and will.

She reached in and summoned the creatures of the dark. They responded, sluggishly at first but then faster as the promise of light and chaos drew them. A swarm of creatures, small and large, burst out of the opening.

An explosion shook the ground. Merrie looked up to see a cloud of arcane energies bursting out from underneath Kivas' fist. The snapped-off head of the hammer flew into the air before it exploded into the giant's face.

The resulting explosion blew off his head.

With a howl coming from everywhere and nowhere, Kivas' body twisted and melted, shifting until it was nothing more than countless rainbow tentacles flailing out in all directions. He began to thrash the ground, beating it with no sense of rhythm as he smashed everything.

Pain burst across her senses as she felt her organs twisting in agony.

"Keep healing, paladin!" gurgled Rakin.

Fomasal scrambled back to his feet and slapped his hands on Rakin. Healing energy poured into him and forestalled the horrible damage the geas was doing.

With a flash, Merrie realized she could dissolve the geas.

(Don't,) came his order.

Surprised, Merrie froze.

(I don't deserve it. Now, boost!) The order came with arcane energies flooding into her.

She gasped with pleasure as she took it and magnified it, pushing it back. To her surprise, he reflected it back to her and she boosted it again and again, increasing the power until the air around them wavered from the force.

He finally cast the spell. It wasn't as much as drawing a pattern but forcing it out through the sheer force of his will. It slammed into her body, a suite of combat spells that made her own seem weak. She felt herself growing stronger and faster. Her claws and teeth glowed with dark embers as she felt arcane energies gather; she could almost bite through the worlds.

More enhancement magic gathered on her wings. She looked up to see that Zillia had melted into her new form, forming dragon-like wings that spread out in both directions. The energy of the spells glittered on the knife-edges that lead each bone.

"Attack!"

She was already launching herself into the air. There was no sense of acceleration. One moment she was on the ground, the next

she was charging toward the center mass of the thrashing tentacle monster.

(Cut him open and use the shadows to pack the wounds.) Rakin's order came with one of her own memories:

Spying an opportunity, Merrie shot forward, not for the arm, but the cut Bass opened into Gillette's thigh. Her body flowed into the gap and she set off her own spell. Veins and bones corroded into darkness, peeling back as the Shadows tore into his body.

She understood instantly and rocketed forward. Behind her, the wake of her passing turned into a black mass of boiling darkness.

Merrie hit Kivas' tentacle and sliced through it. His energy tore at her body, digging long gouges into her flesh, but she had her master's order to push her through.

Darkness flooded into the gap of her passing. The rainbow light diminished as the shadows withered it, the two chaotic forces warring.

Merrie's momentum brought her high into the air. She spotted a mass above her and snapped out her wing to bring her in a wide loop only meters away from the canopy of energy-sucking trees that had formed over the entire valley.

Her wings cut through the vines that reached out for her before she rocketed back down, beating her wings as she lanced Kivas again.

Below, energies were gathering. She felt them rolling through the connection. With anticipation growing, she boosted it and sent it back.

(Use all the energy in your collar to maintain those shadows in his wounds. You need to drain the collar completely and also break apart his form.) Rakin's thoughts were precise and ordered, a stark difference to his emotions.

Casting a quick spell, she flew past the rent between worlds. Zillia tore from her body and fluttered down, a pair of dragon wings that landed against the opening.

Merrie hit the ground hard, her claws digging in and she spun around and charged again. She moved even faster along the ground

as she blew past Rakin and Fomasal with a snap. Her teeth opened up as she tore out a hunk of the creature's tentacle.

More shadows poured into the wounds, sucking away the brilliant energy before the chaos tore it apart. Kivas was stronger but the darkness did far more damage than the Loyals could ever have inflicted.

She came around and attacked again and again. Each time, she felt the shadows fading faster along with the energy of the collar. The spells and wards that kept the barrier were too strong, it would seal the opening.

For a moment, she considered fleeing into the darkness but Rakin stopped her. (I need you here.)

(Mistress, I'm almost out of power.)

(Zillia,) Rakin's thoughts interrupted her. (Drain yourself completely, I have another task for you.)

Merrie stumbled but the rage pushed her. She had an opponent still and he was still attacking.

Kivas' body swirled and lashed out but most of the tentacles had been torn apart. Only stubs of energy remained where the shadows had prevented him from recovering. He was still a deadly force.

Zillia let out a weak wave.

(Merrie, give me a private connection to your cloak.)

She didn't want to obey but couldn't help it as she split herself away, creating a conduit that she couldn't hear.

Rakin dropped to his knees.

She turned and raced toward him with anticipation of the command.

(Come.)

Rakin coughed and something wet landed on his chest. It looked like his stomach, but it was melting from the inside. His eyes were completely red with blood pouring down from every orifice. (Good girl,) he sent.

There was a sick thrill at the words she longed to hear.

Fomasal groaned and staggered back. His hands were shaking. "I-I have no more healing left."

Rakin tried to say something but only bubbles came out. (Merrie, rip out his throat.)

(What!?! No.)

He snarled at her and the anger surged through the connection.
(Rip out his throat, Bitch!)

Sobbing, she felt the force of his blow slam into her. Her body was already moving even as tears ran down her cheeks. With a single step, she vaulted over Rakin.

Fomasal's eyes widened in a look of betrayal and sadness.

Her magically enhanced teeth crunched through the bones of his spine as she swallowed tore his head off. Hot blood sprayed against her throat as she cracked the skull and then crushed it in her teeth.

Tears poured down her cheeks as she staggered back. Her scales were burned and singled, every part of her body smoked from the chaos magic. (Why? Why did you murder him? We were going to win! Why?)

(I had to.) Rakin looked at her. One of his eyes collapsed in on itself and slid out of the socket. (I looked through his memories at your promise. He is right, but it goes beyond the Royal Family. There are gods involved, gods who work through paladins like him. They can't know what you are about to do any more than they can know you survived this.)

She froze, her body shaking as she fought the urge to attack him.

(Use your collar and absorb Kivas.)

She stared at the thrashing creature.

(You need his energy to activate the door's wards. The more you channel Kivas' power into the door, the longer it will remain shut. If you use the full abilities of the collar, you can lock that door for a thousand years.) Pain lanced through their connection. Her own organs began to twist as she felt the geas reaching through to attack her. With a surge of divine power, the Justice Geas unraveled and ripped apart, leaving both of them free of its touch.

It was too late for Rakin though, his body was already beyond repair.

He smiled before his teeth fell out. (Good. They say the removal of the Justice Geas is the sign of being pardoned. If the Goddess of Oaths removed it, then I'll say that counts as the ultimate pardon.)

Parn whispered, "You will not talk of him after this meeting."

Reality shifted with the goddess' words.

Galladin nodded. Not that he had a choice.

“Neither will Talus or Madock or the gods of death,”
said the goddess of oaths.

The others cringed but made agreeing noises or
gestures.

Merrie wondered why she wasn't included.

Rakin groaned and clutched his stomach. Pain radiated through his thoughts, but he used his anger to push past it, driving forward even as his death approached. (After the door is sealed, take whatever is left of Kivas and bring it down into the tunnels. He is what the demons want, they are creatures of chaos and can feed on him like the shadows feed on divine light. Make the same deal and turn them into the prison guards of Abbinkey.)

He landed face-first in a pile of his own blood and spewed out organs. (That will save your country, Merrie, and fulfill your promise.)

His approaching death sapped at her strength. She sobbed as she felt herself being tugged along with it. Tears ran down her cheeks as she transformed back into a human form. She reached over to stroke his bloody shoulder. “Rakin...”

His thoughts were weak. (One last thing, I taught your mistress some new tricks too. You never learned how to be a real master when you created Zillia. I just taught her how to properly use you, as a proper alpha should be used.)

His body collapsed in on itself.

(Be the hero I used to be...)

(Merrie...)

(... my bitch.)

t'Sade

The Red Door

93

Chaotic energies tore at her throat. Zillia fluttered violently as her back, the sharp edges of Rakin's transformation still giving the cloak a dragon-like appearance. Merrie groaned as she staggered up to the red door.

Attacking the weakened Kivas without Rakin's power was painful. The creature had thrashed violently but the blows only burned her skin and peeled past the layers of her flesh. She survived but her injuries would throb until the healing energies of the collar sealed up the rents in her pale flesh.

It took all of her mental effort to keep the energy in the collar. It wanted to escape, to slither out and plunge into her mind. She already had too much there, Rakin's anger echoed through her thoughts but it was already blurring the lines of shadow and psionic magic. Coupled with the powers of Parn, she felt like she was becoming some sort of gestalt power, a combination that frightened even her.

(It is scary, Mistress.) Zillia sent out a wave of comfort.

Merrie smiled and rubbed her cheek against her cloak's scaly appearance. It had remained in that form after Rakin's death and Merrie didn't have the heart to transform Zillia back into shadows.

She stopped in front of the great red door. Her naked, human body shivered from the cold air around her. She had to crawl through the rubble to get there, but no one stopped her. She was sure she was the only living being on this side of the door.

Trembling, she reached up and pressed the smooth end of her wrist against the surface. It was warmer than she expected.

Runes blossomed around the touch, forming into nodes with names on them: Borias, Haviston, and Rendi. There was a thick line between Rendi and her son with a faint line reaching up and then down to connect Rendi to her nephew, Haviston. Both Borias' and Haviston's circles were red, Rendi's was white. Two criminals and one guard.

"A family tree," she whispered.

She sniffed at the memories. Rendi was assassinated because of what she had done. She was one of the people who had created her collar, despite it being the one thing that she hated most. Her god still hated Merrie for that.

After a few moments, she tore her thoughts away. She had to seal the door. Unsure, she let a trickle of Kivas' power seep out of the collar and up through her arm.

The door grew more solid.

A node appeared, a large red one labeled simply "Kivas."

As she poured more energy into the door and it grew more solid, more shapes appeared, names and connections. She saw Kivas blossom into dozens of children who turned into dozens more. Soon there were thousands of names in a tapestry of red and white. She saw family connections and marriages, children and cousins.

(Zillia, memorize this.)

(Yes, Mistress.)

More chaotic power poured into the door and it absorbed it. There was no sense that the artifact had any limit, only that it grew more and more solid somehow with every iota of power that poured out of her.

More of the family showed up, generation after generation. Soon there were hundreds of thousand of names covering the surface as she saw everywhere the Kivas blood had flown. All the family and lives that were tied into the prison, who had chaotic magic in their blood.

She almost lifted her hand but couldn't. She had to drain her collar. The artifact had nearly endless store of power but it was still weaker than Kivas. It took an hour to feed the power into the door as it became of an impenetrable wall designed to keep some horrible creature inside, a monster so insane that not even the gods could kill it.

When the door could take no more energy, Merrie slowly lifted her wrist. The world was silent around her, a cool breeze of winter tickling the back of her tail.

The door wouldn't open for at least a thousand years, powered by the energy inside it. By then, maybe they would find a way of stopping Kivas forever.

She doubted it. There was still so much energy inside her collar, boiling and shifting.

Turning around, she crawled out of the ruins of the prison.

The only physical remains of Kivas with a glowing heart on the ground. The small, insignificant organ still beat as tendrils of rainbow energies flailed out in all directions.

It looked so weak. She could just crush it and destroy it.

No, that was the problem. Kivas couldn't be killed. Smearing his heart across the ground would just let the fragments recover later, when they were long forgotten. As long as the world existed, there would also be something the creature could use to pull himself together.

(Zillia?)

The scaled cloak slipped off Merrie's back and wrapped around the heart. The energy crawled along the surface and Merrie shuddered at the sensations. It felt like a thousand worms crawling across Zillia's surface and Merrie felt the quivering energy as if it was on her own skin.

Zillia curled over to form a bag around the heart but the edges of the black cloth refused to fold over. The twisting energies that rose from the heart prevented the cloak from wrapping around it.

Annoyance bubbled in Merrie's thousands. She snarled and commanded Zillia to try again.

The cloak obeyed. The fabric rippled with the effort but it was as if there was a twisting, boiling field that surrounded the heart.

Motes of rainbow energies rose from the surface of the bloody heart. They lifted like embers off a fire. As she watched, more motes of energy coalesced along the surface. They gathered brightly before jumping off and into the air.

Merrie gasped. (Catch it!)

The black cloak billowed over the ember but the bright lights seeped through the material. There was a flash of pain through the connection. (I think this is pure chaos, mistress. I can't contain it.)

Surprised, Merrie had to try herself. She reached out with her power and her arm. The smooth end of her wrist waved through the motes. Unlike Zillia, the multicolored energies chased after her arm. She could feel each one against her skin, a tingling energy that seemed to dance along the hairs of her arm and cause her bones to vibrate.

Frustration, anger, and amusement bubbled through her thoughts as she drew her arm from one side and the other. The energy followed after it, leaving trails of sparkling light behind.

(What is this?)

Zillia fluttered. (Chaos. Whatever was inside Kivas, whatever fueled his rage, anger, and shifting nature.)

The motes started to drift away from her body. She waved her hand and they drew toward her for only a few seconds before sailing away. She noticed all of the motes were heading in the same direction, toward town.

(If that is Kivas, or parts of Kivas, there is nothing nothing that is going to happen. Where do you think they are heading?)

Merrie shook her head. She brought up the memories of the prison valley. (Somewhere in the village. But nowhere good.)

She tried to use her arm to pull the motes back. She glanced down to see that the heart appeared to be dissolving into flickering energies. Concern flooded her thoughts. The energy was getting more insistent on returning to the village and it looked like they were floating faster.

Merrie shook her head. She had to stop it. Reaching up, she reached out for the energy and tried to absorb it.

The motes froze and then began to crawl toward her.

She tensed. Was she about to do something stupid?

(Probably.)

(Better in my collar than returning home.) She pulled on the power and channeled it into her collar. (I could hold Kivas.)

(Enough to get him to the door. The Red Door can't take any more of his energies.)

The energies began to stream into her body, tickling along her nerves and skin before sucking into the collar. She already knew the answer. (Rakin knew this was going to happen. He told us to take Kivas to the demons. There is only way to do that.)

Zillia's concerned match her own as they both watched the heart dissolved into light and pour into her collar.

When the last of the heart had seemed into her collar, she could still feel it dancing along her senses. Her throat tingled and quivered for a moment before the energy quieted. The energy flared up for a moment and then quieted into the faintest of touches.

Merrie took a deep breath and held herself still.

When nothing flared up or tickled her, she sat down on her rear. Her tail shifted to one side.

Still nothing happened.

Zillia quivered and then rippled closer, inching toward Merrie.

Merrie shifted her tail over.

When the chaotic energies seemed to subside into her collar, she let out another long breath. (Seems to be holding.)

(Were you worried?)

(Kivas just destroyed the entire valley, took on paladins, and killed almost everyone we've encountered. Give how chaotic he is, I half expected his magic to burn out or—)

She remembered when she had bonded herself to her collar. The column of pitch energies that almost destroyed the World Tree over Franome City. Her ears perked up.

(Where should we go, mistress?)

(To the village.)

She transformed into her hound form, her body hesitating as she had to choose between Bel Dark and the dragon shape. After a heartbeat, she choose the Bel Dark. As soon as her black paws touched the ground, she summoned Zillia to wrap around her body.

The cloak cradled her body, holding tight along her body from pussy to throat.

Merrie let out a growl and then trotted toward the village.

She had demons to find.

t'Sade

Lay of the Land

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Merrie's paws thudded lightly on the ground. Her footsteps kicked up little puffs of multi-colored dust that tickled her snout. Fortunately, her need to breath was more of a habit than anything else. She held her breath to avoid drawing more of the chaotic dust in her mouth or sneezing.

That didn't stop the dust from streaming toward her. It clung on her paws and the short black hairs of her Bel Dark form. Hissing, it tickled her ears and danced along her chest as it worked its way to the collar.

She looked at the damage to the prison and couldn't help but feel sadness for the countless prisoners who had been sentenced there. None of them had a chance when Kivas lost his temper and killed everyone. With geasa holding back their magic, it had to be a slaughter if they were even aware of the death that consumed them.

Shaking her head, she padded forward.

Then she realized she didn't know if anyone survived. Her paw stopped above the ground as a sick feeling flooded through her thoughts. What if she had just locked prisoners into the prison with her, sealing them away for a thousand years?

"Oh, no," she whispered in a hoarse whisper.

Rakin had to come from somewhere. Without his magic, she couldn't imagine how he survived a direct attack which means he had protection. He couldn't be the only one.

Merrie hesitated. If there was even a chance someone was caught in the prison, she had to find them. However, it was dark at night and she couldn't do it by padding around, the valley was too big to search even if she could see in the night.

She knew the answer, but magic needed to be her second choice. It already felt like she had been using it a lot with the attack, was she following the spirit of Parn's request by using it again so frequently.

Need drove her to decide to use her magic. It was better to know if she had inadvertently sentenced someone to death than to be ignorant of someone left behind.

As soon as she made the decision, energy poured into her. It didn't come from the collar or the ground. No orgasm ripped through her body despite the pleasure that rapidly grew. It seemed to come from her core and the world around her, seeping in from everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

The flow that surged through her body no longer tasted of sake or had the sting of ice. It was hot and cold at the same time with a rich flavor that danced on the tip of her tongue and hummed through what she called a heart. She could catch the crystalline tones of her psionics and the shifting darkness of shadow, but Rakin's rage and Kivas' chaos flashed through the power and radiated deep inside. All but psionics were powers of chaos and they swirled and mixed together into a heady rush of fire and frost.

She closed her eyes and let it wash over her. The psionic and shadow magic were integrated into a single sensation but the anger and insanity were distinct powers. Bearing down, she cast a spell to find thinking minds. It was a psionic spell but all four types of energies fueled into a sparkling spell that shifted in her mind.

With a frown, Merrie concentrated with the unexpected difficulty to cast a spell. Energy leaked in sparks of rainbow motes of energy and crackles of power. The dust around her kicked up in clouds as she concentrated on the spell.

It crumbled, spinning off in her mind in threads of useless magic.

With a snarl, she bore down and tried to cast the spell again. She concentrated on keeping the power structured for the energies to work.

It fell apart.

Merrie shook her head and let her Bel Dark form dissolve away. Her naked knees settled into the ground. The familiar touch of cool air against her bare tits and pussy comforted her.

She tried again but couldn't keep the magic together.

Zillia fluttered down against her back, wrapping lightly around her body to cup her. The cloak sent a wave of comfort with the cool touch. An edge caressed against the side of her pussy, the pleasure rippling from the touch. (Would pleasure help?)

She didn't have an answer.

The cloak stroked along her pussy. The delicate touch felt good as the animated tip wormed its way along her outer folds and then up against the delicate opening.

Merrie moaned and leaned into it. (That feels good.)

Zillia's cloak fluttered along her inner thighs, teasing against the skin. A hem caressed along one side of her pussy and then the other.

Merrie leaned forward, closing her eyes. Her tail wagged back and forth.

With a flutter, Zillia worked a ridge past her lips along the moist entrance of Merrie's sex. The wiggling tendril worming its way inside her brought little ripples of pleasure.

But that was it.

Merrie wanted to enjoy it, but as she tried to sink into the pleasure, other emotions rose up. They were intense, the guilt and despair eroding at the pleasure.

With a whimper, she pushed back on the cloak. (More please.)

Zillia responded by forming into a thick, tentacle like shape and driving into her. The edges of the cloak caught her hips and tail, pinning them roughly against the rippling length as the thrusting grew deeper.

Merrie let a ghost of a smile cross her lips. She shoved back against the tentacle, enjoying how it thrust deep until it smacked against her innermost gate before drawling out. Every ripple teased along her senses, exactly like she enjoyed.

But it wasn't enough. As much as she tried to let herself go to orgasm, the warring magic inside her made it impossible. Strange emotions rose up and drowned out her pleasure. Chaotic powers disrupted the glow of power.

Desperate, she tried the spell again using what little pleasure was seeping into her thoughts. She tried to pull her two familiar powers away from the new ones. The chaotic powers were just beginning to integrate with each other and it felt like pulling taffy apart. They

were too close to each other, part of her alpha nature accepting and bringing them into a disharmonious whole.

With a growl, she shook her head. (I can't.)

Merrie needed help. Reflexively, she reached out for her collar to send a command through it so she could obey. Before she could form a thought, intense pleasure surged through her body. Almost instantly, her pussy grew slick and heated. She moaned at the rush of power, wondering what was happening even as she lifted her hips off the ground to grind her face and breasts against the hard ground.

(Face down!) came the powerful order, flooding her mind with a force of will and command. It was her mistress, her Zillia.

Merrie let out a moan as every part of her body ignited with ecstasy. She crushed her face hard into the dusty ground as she ground her achingly hard nipples into the glassy ground underneath. Her pussy grew soaked with an orgasm that exploded inside her. Her arms stretched out across the ground as she exhaled with a long, shuddering breath. (What—?)

(Silence!) snapped Zillia. The cloak shifted for only a moment and she felt it thrust a knotted length back into her sex. The rippling length ran along the insides of her pussy, folding and plucking at her inner walls. It plunged deep, each bump from the bulges stretching her out before sucking into her aching sex.

Merrie gasped, her thoughts growing hazy as the power rose inside her. While they were warring inside her, they were also starting to align to each other at the same time. It felt like a host of raw power that she barely had under control.

A sharp cut along her clitoris broke her thoughts as she pawed at the ground at the orgasm that rippled across her sex.

Zillia thrust harder, the length inside Merrie's pussy thickening and stretching her insides. (Don't cum until I let you!)

Her thoughts lost in pleasure, she could barely hear the hint of Rakin's command and dominance inside Zillia's thoughts. His private conversation had transferred something to the cloak and she couldn't help but smile at the thought of his mastery over her body being duplicated by her cloak.

The cloak rammed hard into her cunt, blossoming inside her pussy until her inner walls protested the thickness. Every thrust was

different; it was less of a hard shaft and more something that couldn't be defined. It was chaotic and unexpected, pushing and straining her in ways she couldn't protect.

She squirmed and rocked but the cloak had ground into her hips, forcing them to remain still. Sharp claws dug into her hips, piercing skin with a strength that made it feel like she was being pinned by rocks.

Merrie shuddered as she felt another orgasm rushing up. She fought it, but the more she did, the more everything inside her was bursting to be let go. Thick dribbles of juices ran from her sex, splashing down to the dusty ground with a hiss.

She shoved back against the thrusting knots, silently begging for more even as she bit down on her lips to avoid the approaching crest of pleasure.

(Come. Now!)

An orgasm ripped through her senses. She let out a long wail of pleasure as it flooded her senses. Her knees lost their tension and she slumped down, spreading her thighs until her muscles protested.

(Gather energy,) came the command. It was brimming with a stark edge of annoyance and anger. They were emotions that Merrie hadn't felt before and they were scary and exciting at the same time.

Merrie's eyes snapped open but she didn't see anything. Her magical senses wrapped around her body as the power surged inside her, magnified by her orgasm. More powerful, it was harder to distinguish between the four powers but at the same time, there was more to grip with her mind. She reached out mentally and grabbed all four. Chaos fought with shadows fought with anger. Psychic crystal crumbled under the onslaught.

(Gather!)

Unable to disobey, Merrie plunged her mind into herself and wrapped herself in power. It burned at her thoughts and brought up flashes of anger, despair, and rage. She managed to bring up her shields, but the powers were too intimate and close. The shields did nothing. Whimpering, she tried to pull back.

Zillia's command refused to let her relent.

As Merrie struggled to contain herself, the ground around her shimmered and shook. Rainbow dust formed a choking cloud of dust as it caught on her skin and burned along her flesh. Sparks danced across her vision. Inside, a heady storm of emotions rose up to color the power: frustration, rage, and the ache of submission.

The force of will radiated from Zillia, commanding and ordering. It was impossible to resist nor did she want to.

Then Merrie's energy latched onto it. Power surged through her, flooding her veins with everything and nothing at the same time. The power of the cloak flowed into her. It was the same powers as her own but they felt different and familiar at the same time.

With a cry of pleasure, she took it into herself and then pushed it back out twice as strong. The cloak reflected the energy back, gathering and twisting it together. It felt like a thousand threads of different powers tying together and being forced to coexist together. Any moment, it was going to explode inside her but, until then, she had a wild storm of power to command.

An order was coming. Her mind already started to form the spell. It was like her crystalline shadows but something else. A sparkling power, a scratch of lights. It was difficult to see how her mind tried to coordinate the others but she felt a spell blossom across her mind.

It was filled with potential.

She shaped it to find any survivors in the valley. The spell was more than psychic, more than shadows, it touched minds and hearts, darkness and light.

Merrie didn't cast it as much as she let it escape her thoughts. The power blossomed across her, rippling out like the waves in the field of thoughts. As energies radiated from her in a wave, reflections and answers came back in an overwhelming wall of information.

She knew how to handle that. With a surge of crystalline power, she managed to craft a psionic structure for the new information, a prism that collated, summarized, and refined. She saw more than felt an image of the land as the spell mapped out the destruction across the valley. As the edge of the spell rushed across the valley with startling speed, she saw every centimeter of ground along with the amount of damage it had taken.

Kivas' path was clear, a trail of destruction almost as wide as the valley itself where every iota of living creatures had been stripped away. Even the soil had been dissolved into nothing more than dust on top of bedrock. The few edges of the valley that he had not destroyed were barely capable of maintaining life.

To her relief, there was nothing left living, not even a flea. She smiled to herself and felt guilty at the same time. At least no one would suffer from her closing the entrance.

The scanning spell rushed up the walls of the valley and delved into the wall of plants. Almost instantly, she could feel the spell being sapped of its strength; whatever that silfae had done to absorb magic also prevented her from getting too much information. She managed to bask in the brilliant life of the plants for at least a hundred meters past the edge before she lost the images.

She looked up to see that the canopy that the forest had formed to contain Kivas remained above. There was some empty sky but the vegetation continued to cap the valley and plunge it into a twilight state that made it safe for her to be out in the open.

Her spell continued into the valley toward the village. She picked up nothing besides rock and dust.

And the well.

Startled, she almost lost control of the spell. The strange well with the lights and makeshift bars remained untouched where the village used to be. She couldn't see it through her spells, but she felt how it seemed more "real" than anything she had seen before. It also drew the chaotic part of her attention toward it, pulling her attention toward it even as her spell mapped out the furthest edges of the valley. There was something in the depths that called to the Kivas energy inside her.

(Move on,) commanded her cloak and the ripple of pleasure allowed Merrie to focus on the rest of the valley.

She found five entrances into the cliff, tiny openings carved from makeshift pickaxes and widened from years of chipping. The winding tunnels were blasted clean but she still mapped each one in the back of her mind with startling clarity.

Then she found a living being. It was human with a name and personality she filed away. She felt the emotions bright in her mind, fear and nervousness. Both her psychic powers and Rakin's

emotions clung to them, highlighting details that she had never felt before. The person was hundreds of meters from the entrance but the terror of seeing the destruction remained bright in their mind.

The spell kept pushing into the tunnels, mapping out each one in a wave.

More survivors showed up, emotions and thoughts bright in the darkness. With each one, her heart broke a little more knowing she had sentenced them to death. More sorrow faded the power of her orgasms, tamping them down with unfamiliar emotions.

By the time, the spell began to fade, she had picked up almost fifty living beings in the tunnels. She released the spell and opened her eyes.

Merrie was crying from the guilt.

The last one was brought the most joy and despair, the emotions were a delicate flower that she had felt before. It was Ston. Somehow, he survived both Kivas' destruction and even Horge's rage. She didn't think it was possible.

Her tail began to wag with the first shred of hope.

The guilt rose and the tail stopped.

She had sentenced him to die, forever locked behind the Red Door.

(That's enough,) Zillia commanded.

She released the spell. It lit up the edges of the valley in a sparkle of energy as the information settled into her mind. She pushed it aside for later, every detail memorized in case she needed it. (Zillia, there are survivors. What do we do? They can't stay here.)

A tear ran down her cheek as sorrow ebbed inside her. It wasn't the consuming depression of before but it felt more intense, no doubt from Rakin's bonding.

Zillia's thoughts shifted, losing the master quality but gaining a sympathetic touch. The cloak slipped out of her dripping pussy and then spread across her body. (We'll figure it out, Mistress. We can't do everything at once, we have to start somewhere.)

With a head hanging low, Merrie crawled toward the nearest underground entrance to Ston. There were going to be a lot of scared people and she had to be there. Their fear was still bright in their mind.

She had only made a few steps before she realized another option. Looking up, she stared at the edge of the forest. The silfae could help, either to let them escape or to shelter them. There was living plants up there. If the silfae could control his forests, he would be able to give passage. Maybe Kivas' death, though temporary, was enough to let him relent.

Merrie had a choice but it was clear. She needed to ask the silfae for help first. She gathered the darkness around her and let it melt her body against the ground. As soon as she could, she raced toward the valley cliffs to find the silfae. She didn't have luck with him before, but then she wasn't trying to save Ston and the others.

t'Sade

Aggressive Negotiations

It was claustrophobic at the top of the cliffs. The canopy that had formed during the fight with Kivas was only a few meters over the edge. Thick roots dug into the sides of the cliff for balance and the ledge was almost buried by the overwhelming growth of plants that stretched across the entire valley.

The smell of flowers and earth was strong around her. It was also very quiet, as if the twisted branches and leaves somehow muted every sound.

As Merrie reformed her body on the ledge, her ears were already down. She could feel the living magic around her. It was chaotic and shifting but nothing like the warring powers inside her. She was becoming shadows and chaos, held together by unchecked emotions and crystalline thoughts. Around her was thriving life that fed on ambient energies, draining the world around her until she felt like she was struggling to breathe. There was power for her, but it was a tiny shred of energy.

For a moment, she marveled at the power of the silfae. She knew that she had been gathering power and skills rapidly, but his skill seemed to be on par or even greater than her own, despite the difference in their magic. Merrie wondered what his limits were.

The roots nearest to her began to shift. Thick coils of ridged plants dug deeper into the ground. The stone beneath her knees cracked and quivered as they burrowed deeper into the cliff. Leaves unfurled and grew over her, darkening the world even more.

Despite the shadows, there was no comforting touch of the other realm against her senses. She couldn't taste sake in the air or enjoy

the caress of energy. The trees surrounding her were absorbing it faster than she could gather it.

It felt unnatural not to even get a hint of power from the darkness. Her tail dropped down as she around at the moving wall of plants and vines. The upper areas of the valley were scary when she wasn't sure if she had the power to defend herself.

Movement caught her attention. She glanced down to see tendrils of roots reaching out for her. The pale strands stretched out for her, the green tips shifting to the side.

She shifted away but there were more coming from the other side. The entire wall of trees was moving and she realized it was trying to grab her. For a moment, she couldn't figure out why but then she remembered the corpse from before. They wanted to feed.

Merrie started to gather her energies to push them back, or wither them with what little shade she could use, but then stopped. Parn wanted her to think about her powers, to consider their use. She sighed and realized that using her energies to push back some plants was a trivial use that the goddess seemed to be asking her to stop. She sighed and concentrated on the bigger need: getting the silfae's attention.

The tendrils reached her knees and arms. They tickled her skin as they began to wrap around her.

Zillia fluttered against her back. (Mistress?)

Merrie noticed there was a distinct feeling to Zillia when the cloak was dominating or being an assistant. It was almost stark, as if they were both growing into their shifting roles. She smiled as she realized Rakin's presence was gone in the more submissive modes. In a way, the brutal warlord had bonded with something, just not her. (Keep them from hurting me.)

A wave of acknowledgment but no words.

Merrie focused her attention on the trees. The easiest way to get his attention would be to rot the woods, but then he wouldn't likely be willing to help her or the humans in the caves. She needed something safer. Then she remembered the spell she used to find the disguised duke at the Blood County Fair.

The image of the duke's staff welled up. She knew how to find him. Curling up, she sank to the ground and

brought up the spell. It didn't come as easily before, but she could remember the individual runes that made it up. Flipping them in her mind, she twisted and rotated them until they sank into place. She adjusted it just like Haviston and then set the image of the duke inside.

She paused for a moment, then gathered up her power. Carefully feeding it into the spell, she watched it brighten until brilliance, then ignite with a rush. She forced it into a wedge and felt it spreading out. As soon as she didn't get a response, she sent out another wave.

Merrie was just powering up for a third spell when a ripple came back. It was the duke. He was on the far end of the camps, watching as two men in Rakin's uniform tore apart his neighbor's campsite. On the other side of him, Blood's men were trying to help a family put theirs back up.

(Do you need help with the spell?) asked Zillia. The cloaks thoughts tickled her mind, promising to dominate her if she couldn't handle the spell on her own.

Merrie frowned as she felt the anticipation of the spell awaking the energies inside her. It already felt like a storm brewing inside her. She twisted in discomfort, pulling and snapping tendrils that were binding around her limbs.

Her pussy grew wet with the idea of being dominated. The feel of Zillia wrapped around her throat and thrusting hard into her pussy while whispering orders into her mind. She squirmed, this time in pleasure.

Energy prickled along her senses. In it, she found that the fighting powers resisted her less. She concentrated on the surprise domination, the way the cloak clawed at her hips while fucking her cunt. As more power came, it flooded through her body and bound the powers closer together.

It was still difficult but she managed to wrangle the storm inside her into a chaotic spell. Haviston would have insulted her for the crude construction, but it was enough. With a thrust of all her might, she cast the spell.

The summoning pulse thrust into the wall with a flash of darkness. A few leaves crumbled away but the thriving left quickly grew over them.

In her mind's eyes, there wasn't a field of darkness like she saw with pleasure. It was filled with shifting lights and fog. The plants made it almost impossible to get clear images of anything.

She suspected it was also because there was only one living creature among the plants.

Nothing responded after an hour. Only the tendrils teasing her body and wrapping around her limbs but not pulling her closer to the wall.

Merrie gathered up her energy—it was easier this time—and cast the spell again. The spell crumbled but a second attempt managed to fire another pulse into the trees.

Suddenly, the tendrils yanked away from her.

Merrie looked up as she felt the silfae's presence. It was diffused but there was no masking the annoyance that approached her. She sat back, her tail wagging slowly as she waited.

The trees peeled apart as the Copir silfae stepped out. His tiny form, barely a meter tall, looked like a child but the scowl on his face revealed his age as older than her. "You aren't suppose to be here. We had an understanding."

(I need help.)

His eyes narrowed. A flower blossomed in his hair. "You have the stench of Kivas around you."

Merrie wondered how to respond. After a second, she decided to go with the truth. (I absorbed as much of his power into my collar to defeat him. It's... very powerful and I can feel it corrupting my energies.)

Sharp spears began to form in the trees. They dripped with clear fluids, poison no doubt. With loud creaks, they bent down until they were pointed at her.

She glanced at them and then dug into her own energies, pulling on the only defenses she had against the plants. Leaves and vines began to rot underneath her, a circle of withering that slowly grew wider. She looked up at him pointedly.

The silfae held up his hand.

Merrie stopped pushing her power. (Will you listen? Or is this going to end in a fight? You can't kill me, you've said it yourself.)

"There are solutions I'm willing to accept. Baking your corpse in the sun every day for the next hundred years is an option." His smile was grim.

Merrie glanced at the spears and noticed there were more tendrils and roots creeping on the ground beneath them. They were all dripping with different color fluids. With her shadowy form, she suspected they couldn't do much but she had been surprised before.

She turned her attention back to him. (I'm not asking for passage.)

"I'm not offering."

(There are others below who are trapped here.)

"This is a prison, that is typical. They'll be released when they serve their time. Or die, I don't care."

She sent an image of the Red Door. (I sealed the door. It won't open for centuries.)

The silfae shrugged. "I guess they die then. Good, I could use their corpses for fertilizer for my world. The best flowers grow in blood."

Merrie tensed for a moment. She sighed and shook her head. (Could you help them?)

The silfae leaned back against the tree. "Why?"

(Because it's the right thing to do.)

He snorted. The plants shivered around him. "Try again."

Merrie sighed and thought for a moment. She couldn't give up, not with the others surviving. A part of her wondered if she should have gone into the tunnels first, at least to check on them, but she was in front of the silfae.

Her tail thumped back and forth. She felt uncomfortable rising up inside her, a growing rage at her frustration.

She shook her head. (I want to do the right thing.)

The silfae shrugged again. "Even if I gave them passage, the wards won't let them. That was one reason I moved here, I'm inside the protections of the valley and anyone with that geas can't leave. This is dead man's land, a place for idiots who think they have a chance to fall and feed my greens."

Merrie's ear perked up. "What if they didn't have a geas?"

As soon as she said it, she felt foolish. It was obvious that she was immune to the geasa and Rakin's had shattered when she bonded with him. There was no way she could break the Justice Geas on fifty prisoners.

... but she wanted to try.

"I seriously doubt you have that ability."

She cringed. (I can try.)

"There is still no reason for me to let them through. They are going to die, might as well end their misery and let their bodies feed my plants."

Her lip peeled back for a moment. Energy sparkled through her veins, hot and searing. She froze and it faded; she had felt Rakin's rage before but it was not as intimate as the power that surged through her.

The plants shifted around again. The silfae stood up and crossed his arms. "You won't win that fight."

Merrie's lip curled back again. It didn't matter if it was an honest threat, she wanted to lash out. The logical part of her mind knew it was illogical, but the storm of emotions was pushing it back with an intense rush of power. She felt it curling through her veins and her joints. The hint of magic hovered on the edges of her senses.

(Mistress?)

The silfae was also gathering his magic. She could see it dancing on the edges of her vision. Focusing, she could see him focusing on defensive spells. The plants would be his offense.

(It's going to be a fight. Combat spells.)

Zillia's thoughts hardened. Then energy sucked out of her as the cloak began to activate magic. It was her normal suite of spells but with some of the improvements she had learned from Rakin. Strength, speed, and defenses. Each one layered into her darkened form.

Merrie bore down and let her body twist with magic. She reached for the anger boiling inside her; shadows weren't as powerful against the plants but the dragon form might be. Claws dug out of her paws and dug into the ground. Her skin rippled and shivered before scales formed across her flesh. Two wings snapped out, slicing through the tendrils around her.

The silfae's eyes widened.

Merrie inhaled and then let out a roar. Energy burst inside her chest, filling her with an inferno of raw power.

Spears shot forward.

Merrie leaned to the side and they snapped against her hardened shells. Snapping her head back, she exhaled with all her might.

The air ignited into white-hot flames. It shot forward in a stream.

The silfae jumped to the side.

Merrie followed with her head, channeling the power into her fire breath as she used the speed magic to lead her attack. The line of fire tore through the plants, slicing through the thick trunks and scorching them instantly.

“Stop it!” he yelled as he dove into the woods.

She snarled and followed after him, launching in the air as she continued to chase after him with the line of fire.

As the rage continued to rise inside her, she felt the other powers start to merge with Rakin’s. The white-hot flames darkened as streaks of black shot through the line of fire.

To her surprise, the trees began to burn and rot at the same time. They blew away almost instantly, the fires destroying woods with startling speed.

Poisoned tendrils shot at her.

Her wings snapped forward to shield her; Zillia’s form had merged with them guide them.

The tendrils and the wooden spears shattered against the rock-hard wings. Then a pulse of corrupted heat burst out from the surface of the wing, rotting them away.

The silfae abandoned his attack as he fled.

Merrie didn’t care. She inhaled deeply and fired another blast. As she did, she let the power explode from her wings in a massive wave of corrupted flames.

Trees, grasses, and flowers burst and withered away. Blackened dust blew away from her in a wide circle, stripping the ground bare.

(No reason!?) she projected with anger. (If you won’t help, I’ll make a path myself!)

Barely thinking, she funneled more power into the flames that radiated from her body. Her attempts caught on her collar, where the raw power of Kivas was just waiting to be channeled.

(Mistress?)

Merrie snarled and sent a wave of flame racing in a wave away from her.

(Mistress, do not use Kivas!) There was a desperate tone in the cloak's thoughts.

All Merrie cared about was burning the woods. She reached.

Zillia's personality changed almost instantly. Gone was the submissive personality and replaced with something far harder. (Down!)

The terrible force of the command crashed into her. It drove her into the ground, smashing her face into it as if she was being punished. The cloak's form grabbed her head and twisted it back and forth.

Being forced to submit was too much. Searing pleasure exploded inside her, hot and ice at the same time. It flooded through her body and redoubled as the power grew inside her. It mixed with the four warring forces and merged into a single incoherent force.

The corrupted flames exploded from her in all directions. A sphere of destruction radiated from her body, rotting and searing the surrounding plants in an instant. Fueled by her orgasm, it continued to grow and expand with startling speed.

There was a scream of fear and anger. It was the silfae.

It didn't matter anymore.

(Bad girl!) The disapproval rocked her, disrupting her anger and the magic.

She let out a howl as her transform crumbled away, leaving her naked and writhing on the ground. Her body shuddered with orgasms, rippling as she shoved her hands between her thighs as she gasped.

With a sob, she curled up.

Around her, the forest burned as light poured in from the rotting canopy above her.

Zillia fluttered above her, shielding her from the light. (To the side, crawl. Now!)

Merrie couldn't help but obey. Her eyes streaming with tears and her vision blinded from the light, she couldn't do but obey as she crawled over the smoking ground.

When shade draped over her body, Zillia ordered her to stop. (Sit.)

She sat on her ankles, bending back. Reflexively, she arched her back slightly and pushed her breasts up. Her wrists slipped up to her throat until the tips touched the tingling surface of her collar.

Her vision came back slowly. When she could focus again, she realized she was staring at an incensed silfae. The tiny man glared at her from the other side of a clearing.

“You ruined the earth!”

There was a flicker of anger inside her. Her lip snarled for a moment.

(Down girl.)

Merrie flinched.

(Now, talk.)

She took a deep breath. (I need help. Please?)

He glared for a moment before he sighed himself. “Fine. What do you want?”

(If I can break the geas, I want safe passage for the prisoners out of the valley and the prison.)

“When you can’t?”

(You provide food, shelter, and supplies for the rest of their lives.)

He cocked his head. “Are you serious?”

(There is an entire valley and there is only fifty of them. You know as well as I, you can easily provide that for them without threatening your woods. You could take over the rest of the valley for I care.)

There was a twitch and she felt a surge of interest.

Her tail began to wag. (So I do have something you want?)

“What gives you the authority?”

(I survive.)

The silfae thought for a moment, then he nodded. “Fine. Give me the valley and you have a deal.”

(Deal.)

Now, she just had to rescue the others and somehow break their geasa.

She was doomed to fail but it didn’t matter.

Zillia’s thoughts slipped into her mind. (Good girl.)

t'Sade

Flawed Thinking

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Merrie landed on the ground without even a whisper of sound. Her blackened wings folded across her back as her form melted from the dog-like dragon and into the more familiar Bel Dark hound. Still feeling the ache of her injuries, she flickered between human and Bel Dark hound for a few seconds until the tingle of healing pulsed along her skin.

Dust swirled around her. She closed her eyes and held her breath to let it settle.

After a few seconds, she opened her eyes to see that the multicolored glitter had gotten more agitated. It swirled ahead of her vision in coils as if a wind had picked it up. She could feel it caressing her body, dancing along her naked, human form with the lightest of touches.

Annoyed, Merrie reached up and slashed at a nearby streamer. It broke apart but then the individual whorls of dust eddied around her. With a growl deep in her chest, she lashed out violently at the dust that surrounded her.

A few seconds of uselessly attacking the wind, she stopped with the growl still vibrating in her chest. The dust responded to the collar again, dancing and hissing as they clung to the black metal.

She shook her head, reflexively transforming back into her Bel Dark hound shape as she did. She tried to step to the side but the clouds followed after her.

She froze as the world around her grew multicolored and unstable. Her eyes tried to follow the movements but they were too chaotic. With a snarl, she swiped at them.

Her wrist slipped through the whorls of dust and energy. Only a tingle marked their passing along her pale skin.

Dark energies rose up and her body shifted back into the Bel Dark hound. She slashed at the dust, getting angrier every time she couldn't do anything other than send eddies of multicolored dust cascading through the air.

(Bitch!) Zillia's thoughts snapped through with the force of a mistress.

With a surge of heat and lust, Merrie sat down hard on the ground. Her bare buttocks shifted into human form as she held herself still with a blush forming on her cheeks.

(Rakin's anger is still burning inside you. Talking to the silfae would not upset you this much.)

She tightened her lips into a thin line. A trail of dust painted on her face. A flicker of annoyance brought a rush of power and she fought the urge to wipe it off her face.

(You just lost your temper.) Zillia's thoughts were disapproving.

Merrie looked away, the corner of her lip peeled back.

(Bitch!) snapped the thoughts, crushing her annoyance. The black cloak spread out in front of her, looming over her in a field of darkness. Two red eyes burned brightly as they stared into her soul.

Her ears flattened against her head as looked up. A whimper.

The tension in Zillia's body faded and the cloak fell into black puddle in front of her girl. (Your emotions are far more aggressive than before.)

(I know.) She felt guilty but it was hard to see past the anger and frustration that still boiled inside her. (It feels strange. I haven't really been angry in a long time, not like this.)

(Not until you bonded with Rakin?)

The memories of the recent bonding rose up. They were brutal and and faded; she had only been connected to Rakin for a short period of time but she could still feel his memories bubbling in the morass of her thoughts.

Zillia fluttered. (He was a master of emotions. He channeled them into his power. After you bonded, he ignited those feelings inside you but also gave you the ability to tap into them. It's the same with Kine and shadows. Before then, your early influence with psionics.

Each bonding adds to your power but also increases the complexity of your reactions.)

(What about Kivas? I never bonded with him.) Merrie already knew the answer. If the dust was responding to the immortal creature's power, it was only a matter of time before it began to corrupt her. From what she had seen of Kivas, it would make it impossible to find a stable balance of powers like she had before the prison.

Her ears flattened against her skull and her tail lowered. (This is going to be difficult.)

(You are the Omega, chosen of Parn and someone as distinct as the gods themselves. You have bonded and lost more masters than any other alpha in existence.)

Merrie chuckled dryly. (You are saying we'll survive.)

(You have the energies of an unkillable creature that defied the gods. You fucked Rakin into submission, killed a goddess of light, and spoke for the Lords of Shadows.) Zillia's thoughts were playful but also serious. (You are already on the order of Kivas. You just aren't an agent of chaos.)

Merrie grinned and her tail wagged. (Fair enough.)

(Now, enough of a pep talking. Go save some prisoners.) There was just a flicker of the dominating personality but it was enough to sent off a thrill of needing to obey her mistress.

Encouraged by the slick sensation that dampened her thighs, she crawled toward the nearest cave entrance. It took her a few minutes as she worked her way through the ruins of the village around Rat's.

Then she spotted the well.

Unlike the destruction around it, the brick well looked as if it hadn't been touched since the first night she had seen it. Stone around the base, rusted bars over the top sealing it over, and the red light still pouring out from the top. It sat in the middle of destruction without even a scratch.

Merrie stopped, looking at it warily. She didn't need to use her magical senses to tell her that the well was something remarkable, possibly even an artifact. She couldn't imagine anything else surviving the maelstrom without a scratch.

(Maybe it was immune to Kivas?) asked Zillia.

Merrie crawled forward, lowering herself closer to the ground as she stared at the well.

However, as she approach, the energies in her collar began to respond. But, instead of dust rising up to cling to her collar, it was her being tugged toward the well. It fell less like she was moving toward it but falling. A strange desire, a hunger, rose up inside her.

She stopped moving but the tugging sensation didn't abate. With a soft whine, she tried to step back but her limbs didn't seem to work. She shook her head. (Zillia? Something's wrong.)

Zillia's personality shifted in an instant, the helpfulness peeling away into dominance.

The anticipation of the command crashed into her. She tried to back away but her limbs still refused to move.

(Back away, Bitch!)

She whimpered and forced herself back. Every step caused her body to shake and her chest to hurt. Her heart slammed into her chest, the triple beat crashing in her ears.

With every step, the pressure to plunge into the well diminished. It felt like a blade slowly being pulled out of her gut; it wasn't fast enough nor painless, it was agony.

(Keep moving, push, push you, stupid cunt.)

Tears ran down her cheeks. Pleasure flooded her senses, filling her with the sweet sensation of submission. She smiled grimly and let it flow through her.

She cast a haphazard spell of strength on herself. It was one of her most common spells and she managed to force the energy into place without the corrupting influence of Rakin and Kivas. The extra boost gave her the drive to crawl away.

When she finally broke free of the well's influence, she looked around. She was easily twice the distance when she first felt the influence of the strange object. She frowned and looked back. In the back of her head, the longing was still there.

Merrie shook her head. (I need to avoid that.)

(Yes,) came the simple reply as Zillia shifted back into its helpful nature.

Merrie frowned for a moment, wondering what was in the well. Was it something that kept Kivas pinned? It was right next to where Rat's was built. She wondered if that is where the motes of energy

were traveling toward. If that is the case, there may be more of Kivas' power inside the well.

The idea of exploring it gave her dread. She also knew that she may have to do it if she wanted to gather more power for the demons that Rakin said were hungering for Kivas' power.

Merrie wasn't ready to deal with that yet.

Turning around, she gave the well a wide berth and headed to one of the side entrances into the cliff. It was just a narrow passage in the rock with a stack of bricks to mark it. The stone was cracked and corroded, gouges ripped out from Kivas' range.

It didn't look safe but her mapping spell told her there was a large chamber right inside. She didn't know if anyone was waiting though nor if there was any light inside.

(Get inside,) Zillia playfully suggested. (It's dark.)

Merrie's tail wagged as she squeezed herself into the opening. It smelled of sweat and dust inside. She thought she heard someone crying. Frowning, she considered letting herself see into the darkness. If there was someone inside, she would be risking herself.

(Forgive me, Parn?) she projected before letting her suite of spells drape over her body. Her speed crumbled with the erratic energy corrupting her from her collar but she managed to harden her body against attacks. The darkness also peeled back as she let herself peer through it.

There was a man sitting on the floor against the wall. He had his hands in his face as he sobbed.

Reaching out, she touched his mind. (Hello?)

He gasped and looked up, his eyes bright with tears.

Merrie remembered his thoughts from the scanning spell, a man name Sterli. She sent a pulse of comfort. (I'm not a threat.)

Sterli scrambled to his feet, pushing himself up the wall as he stared at her. His thoughts were filled with terror, images of multi-colored energies tearing apart men right before his eyes.

(No, not me.) She projected as much innocence as she could as she crawled further into the room.

His eyes suddenly narrowed as he looked at her. "Y-You're naked! I mean..." He said other things but it was his thoughts that drew Merrie's attention.

Sterli crawled into his daughter's bed, his hands still bloody from killing her mother. He used his knees to pin her blanket over her.

She looked up. "Daddy? What is going on?"

He smiled, a thrill filling him. "Time to go to sleep, Darling."

She started to open her mouth but he silenced her by slapping his palm across her mouth. His other wrapped around her throat, digging his throat into her trachea.

He lost himself in the power he had over her as he dug both thumbs into her throat, straining to crush her. When her muffled screams rose up, he had to bear down harder; she still had a sister he needed to take care.

Merrie's thoughts burned with rage as she withdrew from his thoughts. Anger and rage rose up, a desire to lash out and kill the man in front of her. Her lips peeled back as she fought the intense hatred that tore through her, she could feel it just below the surface, a promise of power and destruction.

The emotions were raw and sudden. Rakin's bonding had brought them to the fore and she found herself suddenly struggling to not rip his intestines out of his body and use them to choke him.

Sterli shrugged, smiled, and then held out his hand. "I'm Sterli."

Merrie stared at his hand as she warred with her anger. All she wanted to do was slaughter the man. How could he just smile at her as he was thinking about his daughters?

Just as she started to transform, she found that she couldn't do it. As much as the anger and chaos warred inside her, it was the geas she saw behind his eyes. His thoughts were violent but he was bound by promises and magic. Justice had been served, even if it could have been wrong. In this case, it wasn't.

In the prison and with the geas, Sterli was helpless. She had previously considered breaking the geas to let everyone escape, but seeing the disgusting thoughts in Sterli's head, she realized she couldn't blindly strip away the magic binding him. Men like Sterli had to serve their time.

Merrie looked up at him. She ignored his outstretched hand and crawled around him. She couldn't stand the idea of talking to him but needed to for her plans. (I need to talk to the prisoners.)

His thoughts followed her, his eyes locked on her bare pussy and tail. He was thinking about grabbing her from behind, pinning her to the ground and squeezing her throat.

She stopped and looked at him. When she projected, she let some of the hatred and disgust she felt for him leak into her thoughts. (I know what you did to your wife and daughters.)

Sterli froze, his thoughts blurring for a moment.

Merrie brought up memories of her fighting, when she used Zillia to tear through an attacker's organs, ripping them out from his asshole before bursting out of his mouth.

Zillia fluttered and reared back into a snake-like form.

Sterli gulped, his mind cracking under the sudden terror.

(You don't ever have to speak to me. Just obey like a bitch. Now, go to the other entrances and gather everyone in the great hall. I need to explain what is going on.)

He couldn't run fast enough.

Merrie felt no joy in seeing him miserable. He was a disgusting human being. However, she delved into his thoughts as he was leaving. He only have sixteen years left on his prison sentence. Sixteen years and he was going to be a free man no matter what she did.

A disgusting man, but legally free.

Merrie shook her head with frustration. How was she suppose to handle this? It seemed like a simple idea at first, to make up for the mistake of sealing them in the prison forever. They couldn't leave without her breaking the geas—she only had a gut feeling she was capable of doing that—but she couldn't let men like Sterli free. But even if she didn't, would she come back in sixteen years to free him then? The geas wouldn't dissolve just because his sentence was served, someone had to remove it before he could escape.

The rage inside her was willing to let him rot. He was a terrible person and they both knew it.

But what about justice? The courts?

With a whine of frustration, she headed deeper into the tunnels.

t'Sade

Reunion

97

She got almost up to the meeting hall before she felt another person approaching. It was a prisoner, one lost in thought as he cooked meals for the other prisoners. It was a submissive, one that had bent over more than once for more aggressive prisoners and his thoughts were filled with the fantasies of having it done again.

Merrie smiled to herself and sent a pulse of pleasure. It lit up his thoughts and she enjoyed the tiny orgasm that rippled back toward her.

Focusing on her thoughts, she started to cast a spell to attract everyone's attention but then stopped. She could do that without magic. She headed straight for the crowds, listening to the slowly rising sounds of conversations, shouting, and laughter.

The hall was carved out with rough instruments. Lights glowed from a dozen tables arranged in the middle. On the far side was the kitchen, more of a makeshift set of tables with some sort of heating runes on it. On the other, hallways that would lead to sleeping dens which were nothing more than a slot in a wall with a blanket.

She entered the room and felt the wash of emotions. There was fear, nervousness, and terror. More than a few had seen the destruction and the horror still echoed in the back of her head; her collar felt warmer at the memories of rainbow energies and dissolving shapes.

Taking a deep breath, she headed for the nearest table and crawled up on it.

No one noticed her.

Getting on her heels, she sat back and brought her wrists up to her collar. Her large breasts thrust forward as she arched her back.

Her lower half jiggled as she wagged her tail. Then, she let out a single bark.

Almost no one noticed except for one head popped up. “By Madock’s grace, Bitch!”

It was Ston. He looked haggard and broken, but the joy that burst from his thoughts made everything just fade away.

Merrie’s tail wagged faster and her ears perked up. She smiled and wiggled her ass.

Scrambling over the table and shoving people aside, the slightly overweight man rushed over as the conversations died off. With a grunt, he reached over the table and hugged her tightly. “Oh, Bitch! Bitch! I thought... I thought I’d never see you!”

It wasn’t a sexual desire that drove him, it was the desperation of something familiar. She was a relatively happier time in his life.

A foreign memory rose up into her consciousness.

The fat man gasped for breath as he sank down on Rakin’s makeshift bed. Blood ran down the side of his face, but it was a shallow cut. It just looked scarier than his panic suggested.

“Thank you. You saved me. I thought I was going to die.”

Rakin shrugged and rubbed his hands together to get the mud and blood off them. “It was just a thriban. A big one, but still a man. If you know where to kick it, anything will go down.”

“No, that was amazing. The way you kicked him only once and he dropped. I didn’t think anyone was capable of doing that.”

A flicker of pride rose up, followed by the sharp taste of the geas magic in the back of his throat. His intestines twisted and he cringed in discomforting.

Taking a deep breath, Rakin forced himself to calm his thoughts. He couldn’t respond emotionally. He had to think of everything in terms of logic and patterns. Only see the world as a soulless consistency of logic and moral systems.

Morals meant he needed to take care of this man. He shrugged and then let a smile cross his face. Don't get emotional, he told himself, before he held out his hand. It was the right thing to do.

"I'm glad I could help," he said with honesty. "Now, let's get that wound handled."

Merrie's tail stopped wagging as the memory painted across her thoughts. The recollection was sterile and devoid of emotions, shielded from Rakin's own source of power. There was something sad about how he fought against his own desires. Merrie remembered how Borias had struggled with the same thing at the Puppy Mill.

Despite the very short period of time they were bonded, Merrie couldn't help but wonder how much of Rakin was now part of her psyche. She could already tell that his emotions were coloring her own, the anger at the dust that clung to her and the hatred toward Sterli were still there. Not to mention her dragon form.

But, for all those connections, Rakin's memories were still distinct from her own. With Kine, Sable, and everyone else she had established a link, their memories had instantly integrated with her own and the distinction between her new master and herself had blurred. Kine's were even more destructive; her bonding with him had destroyed all of her memories of her previous life before the Puppy Mill. But, when she reached into her own thoughts for more of Rakin's memories, she found none.

Concern and curious, she delved further into her thoughts but then realized that Ston was still wrapped around her neck. His thoughts were hot against her senses, the desperate need for comfort drew her back into the present.

She let out a soft whine and rested her head on his shoulder. Not wanting to send words, she let a feeling of joy and comfort radiating from her body. It flooded the room with a sense of peace, silencing even the last of the conversations.

Soon, every gaze was focused on her. She could feel the mixture of emotions, almost none of them hostile. The air tasted of surprise and not a small amount of lust. She arched her back slightly, lifting her breasts into the air and her tailed wagged faster.

Lust colored her thoughts and she sent out a wave of her desire just to feel the room respond. More than twenty men shifted back and forth as they inched closer.

Merrie smiled to herself and then projected to Ston. (I'm sorry. I didn't think you survived after I was abducted. Then I couldn't find you when I returned.) Well, she didn't have much time to look after she got into her fight with Rat.

Ston chuckled and sat back. One hand slid down her shoulder, brushing the side of her breast, before he rested it light on her thigh. A bitterness rose up in his mind, radiating like scraping fingers against her senses. "You know, before I was convicted, I thought I was a killer when it came to making deals. I had a successful business because I paid attention to my competitors and suppliers and knew just when they were at their weakest. Then, coming here, I realized I was in a lot more trouble because I couldn't defend myself against these brutes, but I still did my best to listen."

He snorted and then nodded to himself. "Well, in this case, I was paying just enough to hear Horge when he was bellowing. It didn't take much to realize that he was coming for me."

A guy from the side laughed. "You vaulted over that table, you mean."

Ston shot him a glare. "I rushed it out of there. Wouldn't you?"

His bitterness turned to anger. "Ran to Rat and made a deal. Had to give up all the money I earned since I got her, plus a promise to hand her a percentage of companies when I served my fifteen. She took it and more before giving me pass to the tunnels down here." His face twisted in a glare. "I heard she didn't even hesitate to tell Horge where I was."

There was a ripple of discomfort in the room.

Merrie caught catches of memories and thoughts around her. Rat was laughing when she handed Horge the key to the tunnels.

Ston shuddered. "What they don't tell you up there is that no one helps you down here in the tunnels. No one to tell you where to go, where to sleep, or even how to get food."

The room grew silent as guilt flooded across the gathered thoughts.

“No one was going to help me. They just turned their backs and told me to figure it out.” His thoughts were dark and bitter, but there was hope.

“Horge caught me in the laundry. I was trying to find a place to hide.” His voice grew soft as flashes of memories rose up.

Ston glanced over his shoulder at the door leading into the laundry area. It was difficult to see over the large copper pots filled with boiling water. The sharp smell of soap filled the room. There were two men stirring the pots, their wrinkled faces glaring at him through the fog as they worked.

From what Ston figured, they worked in the laundry in exchange for trading chits. It wasn't the same currency as the prison above but it was something that resembled a job. Maybe he could do that.

Heavy footsteps shook the ground.

Sphincter tightening, Ston looked up to see Horge's massive bulk coming out of the storm. “Where is the bastard?”

Both of the laundry men pointed directly at Ston.

“Oh, please help me, Lord of Monies,” he whispered as he backed away.

The projected thoughts took on a strange quality as Rakin's own memories overlaid them over Ston's projected ones.

Rakin followed the sounds of screaming. It would have been easy just to ignore them, but it wasn't the typical sounds of torture or rape. This was someone new, probably a virgin to the tunnels.

He didn't know why he investigated. Years ago, he would have just ignored the cries for help but something had changed. He had one hand in his pocket as he strolled into the laundry area. The two brothers, Aba and Toral, looked at him and then looked away. They were fond of ambushing newbies and torturing

him, but they learned quickly that while Rakin didn't have any magic, he still had centuries of fighting skills.

Ever since both of them could pee without bleeding, they avoided him.

Rakin smiled and then winced at the sour taste in the back of his throat. The warning from the geas was foul and he hated how much he struggled not to experience emotions. Taking a deep breath, he calmed himself and then walked toward the thriban who was beating a fat man to death. "What are you doing?"

The thriban looked up. There was blood sprayed across his face.

Rakin's gaze looked at him as the emotions slipped away to leave the cold logic of sizing up an enemy. The gray-skinned humanoid was strong, but he favored his left arm and had no signs of military training. He was a brute, ungraceful and used to using his superior bulk and size to win fight.

He stopped at the precise place just outside of the thriban's reach.

"Go away, old man, or I'll break you in half."

Rakin smiled but no joy rose up. He did it to give a false sense of geniality. "I doubt that, but I'm not interested in getting blood in the laundry. It makes people up—"

The thriban lashed at him.

Rakin didn't even blink as the bloody knuckles came millimeters away from striking his nose. "That wasn't very nice."

Behind the thriban, the fat man was sobbing and crying. Pathetic, really. Probably had no useful skills anywhere in battle. Or any skills that were of use in the prison at all.

For a moment, Rakin considered turning around.

He didn't.

He wasn't sure why. Maybe he should try being something more than a killer. The pathetic, crying man

would be a good project. Maybe it was time for an old warrior to learn something new.

Rakin shook his head. “No, not this time.”

Behind him, the laundry brothers decided to disappear in the steam.

The thriban straightened. “How about I show you your guts?”

Rakin’s gaze took in the way the thriban braced his foot. His fist was weak, probably a worn spot along the tendon and a bit of damage. That was the place to stroke. There was a similar place in the shins. He had his actions already planned out, it would only take two strikes.

The thriban charged with a roar.

Rakin had to lean a centimeter to the side to above the blow. He casually reached up and grabbed the thriban’s wrist, twisting enough that the creature’s momentum caused the joint to pop loose. He gave it more violent twist to tear the tendon.

As the thriban stumbled past in a roar that became a scream of pain, Rakin grabbed his belt and kicked at the back of his opponent’s knee.

There was a wet popping noise as the kneecap separated and the thriban collapsed. With Rakin pulling on his belt, the creature’s weight caught the joint at a bad angle and it snapped free. Blood sprayed across the ground as the end of his knee tore through skin.

Ston sighed as he finished his own story. Between his stumbled words, the two sets of memories that flooded Merrie’s mind, it had left a surprising story of a no-longer violent Rakin mentoring Ston into the cutthroat world of the tunnels.

The room was completely silent. The rest of the surviving prisoners had arrived during Ston’s tale. They were quickly taken in by the guilt of their own inaction, either for Ston or someone else who needed help.

Rakin held out his hand for Ston. "Come on, I won't hurt you."

Ston, shaking and terrified, looked at it. There was a puddle of urine underneath him from where he pissed his pants. Blood ran down his face from a cut brow and broken nose.

"Come on. I do the laundry down here. I have some clean clothes that will fit you."

Ston whimpered, a submissive little sound that reminded him of that bitch... no... no anger. It was the sound of an alpha, a little girl who needed to be commanded what to do.

With a fake smile, Rakin leaned forward and whispered in a strong voice. "Get up."

With a tear in her eye, Merrie smiled. (I remember.)

Ston frowned in confusion.

To her surprise, she was glad to see a different side of Rakin. There was good in his heart, she just didn't get to experience it herself except through memories. It was like finding out someone had a completely different life from what she had seen.

Ston hugged her. Then he looked at the surrounding prisoners. "Um..."

There were only a few not looking away, but they were all thinking about her. Despite their guilt and discomfort, she was still a naked woman kneeling on a table. The waves of shamed lust and memories of sex beat against her mind and she couldn't help but feel warmed by the promises.

"Um, everyone. This is... Bitch. She's really sweet and beautiful and... and..." Ston started to struggle when he thought about her lips wrapped around his cock in the prison wagon. Panic flooded his mind as he wondered if she wanted others to know what she loved.

(I also like to fuck,) she projected with a wave of her own desires and amusement.

Ston blushed and the others shifted nervously. Their thoughts were drawn toward sex. It felt good to beat against her senses.

Then the man who teased Ston spoke up. "Where have you been keeping her, Ston? With a fine-looking beauty like that, you could be

running this place like Rat. Dole her out for a chit a blow jobs or five for that ass of hers....”

Ston hesitated.

While Merrie wanted to talk about sex, she knew that she needed to bring up something else. She dreaded the next conversation, but it had to be told. (Rat is dead.)

Shock and fear filled the room.

“Is that what happened? We all heard explosions and there was a storm of some sort. Was that all Rat? I didn’t think she had magic.”

Merrie shook her head. She filtered much of the thoughts and then projected her memories to everyone in the room. It included the the revelation that Rat was actually Kivas, the fight between Kivas and herself, both in the village and at the gate. Then she ended with the remains of the valley. She kept out the memories of her closing the door and gave everyone the impression the Red Door sealed to keep Kivas in.

When she was done, there was a different type of silence.

“N-Nothing? There is nothing out there?” asked an ax murderer.

Merrie shook her head. (Kivas absorbed or destroyed everything. No gardens, no food, no shelter. There is nothing left.) Except for the well.

Another man raised his hand. Someone started to tease him but Merrie sent a sharp reprimand. “Um, I only have a year left on my sentence. How... I can go home then, right?” There were tears in his eyes. From her scan, she knew that he had been there twenty-nine years.

Merrie looked at Sterli who was already thinking about killing someone. Anger rose up, but she tamped it down. (I have an idea of how to get you safe, I just need some time to figure it out. Maybe a few days?) It was somewhat of a lie but she couldn’t accept Sterli being let free without consequences.

“What do we do now?” asked a younger man. He had been convicted by a crime of passion after he strangled his girlfriend and his brother for sleeping with each other. He had decades left on his sentence but she knew that he tortured himself for his crimes.

The air in the room grew tense as they looked at her.

Ston cleared his throat and everyone turned toward him. He raised his voice as he spoke. “Listen, it isn’t like we’re going to run

out of food or water. Rat's been locking us down here for weeks at a time when she's got something up her ass."

A number of people laughed uncomfortably.

Merrie was happy to see that Ston was acting as a leader but she didn't know what had changed. She suspected Rakin had helped but the memories were still hidden from her.

He gestured to the side. "We have plenty in the fungus gardens, vegetables, and even meat in storage. It won't be as tasty as when we get supplies from the top, but let's be honest. The prison wasn't known for its four star fare either. We have fresh water that doesn't come from up above. We've done this before, we can survive until Bitch can figure out something."

Someone in the back, an embezzler who also blackmailed the wrong person, snorted. "I say bullshit. She's a naked woman with no hands or feet. Even if those images she sent are real, that doesn't mean she can get us out a door that was designed to keep the entire prison shut."

Merrie could see others nodded with agreement.

Ston cleared his throat. "I trust Bitch with my life. You don't have to. I won't make you. She won't make you. But if you trust me, after all this time, maybe give her a chance. What else can you do?"

The embezzler snorted and waved his hand. "This is all bullshit. I'm out of here." He storm off.

Merrie could feel others agreeing. Others looked at each other guidance while most appeared to be looking at Ston.

Ston shook his head but said nothing as a third of the room walked out. Then, he muttered under his breath, "shit."

(Trust me, I'll figure it out.)

He reached out and stroked her shoulder. "I know, Bitch. It's hard to keep most of these guys not killing each other."

(You seem to be doing a good job. I would have never expected you to be acting like a mayor.)

He chuckled. "Someone has to do it and no one liked dealing with Rat when she was around. Damn, Rat was Kivas? You probably got half the room ashamed since she was one of the few women in the prison; they wanted to fuck her."

His eyes focused on her. "They are going to want to fuck you too."

Unsaid was that he was one of them. She could feel the hesitation and desire fighting. He was trying to hide it but he desperately wanted to enjoy her. She basked in the warmth of his lust. (I can handle myself.) She focused on the others, letting her mind drift through their thoughts. One hope was to find someone capable of dominating her, but none of them had the sheer force of will of a true master like Bass or Rakin.

The conversations in the room drifted apart, quieter under the shadow of destruction above.

One of the murderers, a grunt convicted of hundreds of rapes, came strolling up with violent sex in his thoughts. She could picture his large hands wrapped around her neck as he rammed his cock into her and her body grew slick with desire. “How about I take that pretty cunt off your hands?”

Ston shook his head. “Did you not learn anything from those images, Garalis? Bitch isn’t a whore to fuck.”

Garalis shrugged. He didn’t care about the images or anything else, he was horny and only his dick was thinking for him.

Merrie smiled and wagged her tail. (Well, as much as I’m looking forward to you fucking the hell out of me while making me your bitch—)

The murderer’s thoughts grew excited.

(The mayor gets his chance before anyone else.)

The smile froze on Garalis’ face. “What? What mayor?”

She leaned against Ston. (Ston’s earned me first.)

Garalis shook his head in denial. He balled up his hands. “I can change your mind about that—”

Merrie projected an intense flurry of scenes directly into his thoughts, of her being abused, beaten, and raped. Violence sex flooded every thought of his. His cock surged against his trousers, soaking them almost instantly. He swayed as he clutched his balls.

(I am more than willing to let you fuck me, but Ston is first,) she projected empathically.

“Y-Yeah.”

Garalis tried to recovery his dignity and strolled away while shielding his ruined trousers.

Merrie wagged her tail with amusement.

“You mean it?” whispered Ston. Fantasies were bubbling in his thoughts, desires that had been repressed.

She leaned over and kiss him. (I think I’ve said what I needed to. Want to take me away now? I have been stabbed, decapitated, burned, and been through multiple fights. I desperately need of orgasms, a long sleep, and a chance to recover.)

“I can do that. Wait...decapitated?”

Intimacy

98

Merrie's tail wagged happily as she crawled along the stone corridor next to Ston. Her naked body felt good in the cold air as did having a thousand tons of rock between her and whatever sunlight shone across the prison. She glanced up at Ston who was guiding her nervously with one hand resting on the back of her head and the other wiping the sweat from his brow.

She sent a comforting wave of affection.

Ston stiffened for a moment and then sighed. "You always make me feel better."

She let out a little bark and whimper of happiness.

"I'm not a mayor, you know."

(You seem to be in charge to me.)

"I'm not."

(Then why was everyone listening to you.)

He stopped and shook his head. "You know why? It was this old man named Rakin."

Merrie tensed for a moment. (I know him.)

Ston stared in shock. "You knew him? Do you know who a Merrie... Golddother is?"

Rakin stood at the entrance to the mines and looked at the multi-colored winds that rose up in a storm. It was Kivas, he knew the chaotic energies anywhere. His eyes scanned the battle looking for the opponent he knew was there.

Behind him, Ston managed to catch up to him. He was gasping and struggling. While the fat man managed to

master leading the mob of murderers underground, any attempts to get him to exercise failed miserably. Ston would never be warrior.

Rakin tasted a hint of sourness in the back of his throat. He was getting emotional again. He always wondered if hope was emotion.

“Oh, by the Golden God,” gasped Ston. “What is happening?”

“Kivas.”

“Kivas? I thought he was just a legend.” He sighed. “I’m surprised that Rat hasn’t sent anyone down here.”

Rakin’s lips tightened. He never understood how any couldn’t figure out that Rat was Kivas. The raw chaos was mistakable, not to mention the subtle signs. There was always a rope fraying, dishes being dropped but then appear back on the table, and Rat’s clothes would change every time he looked at her.

Something had broke Kivas’ delicate control over his form. Something disruptive to even a being of raw chaos. While there were probably dozens of individuals capable of doing that, he knew there was only one person in the prison now capable of doing something: Merrie.

Ever since Ston mentioned there was a beautiful blonde woman with no hands or feet, he knew exactly who it was. Not one seemed to know why she was in the prison. Like everything else she touched, she was breaking the natural order. The whole reason Ston was in the basement was because he wanted her as much as that thriban did.

Rakin knew exactly what Merrie was capable of. With his powers, he would have seriously considered going after her himself. With her, he could have taken over the prisoner and then used it as a base to dominate the world. With Merrie, he could have defeated Kivas. With

—

His throat burned. Realizing that his emotions were rising, Rakin forced himself to calm down and blank his emotions. He took a long breath.

“Rak?”

“Sorry, thinking about someone.”

“Who?”

“Merrie Golddother,” he said knowing that Ston wouldn’t know the same. However, Merrie would. She is probably recalling these memories even now. He smiled grimly to himself. Would she see that he changed? Or would she just see the monster that he had become when she defeated him. “I miss her.”

“Who is that?”

“Someone important to me.”

Ston’s eyes widened and there was a bit of tension in his neck. Rakin could tell that he was going to start pressing for questions. For a fat man, he was very good at remembering people’s weaknesses. “Where is she from? I’ve heard of the Golddother family.”

Rakin shook his head. “Not this time, Ston.”

“What are you going to do? Just walk out into that?” Ston gestured to the howling storm outside the opening.

Rakin stopped and stared at the battle. As he did, a gout of black energies ripped out of the multi-colored clouds. Even from a distance, he could feel the corrupting energies of the Shadows. Unlike the rest of the weak magic that people were capable of using, the Shadows and chaos magic were powerful and overwhelming.

His heart longed to feel power again.

His eyes watched the Shadows dissipate. Another burst of energy rolled out and he saw a flash of a dark hound briefly silhouetted against the brilliant energies.

The longing rose up and his emotions threatened to liquefy his organs. He forced it down as he watched the fight going on in the distance. There were paladins and holy magic. He was also sure there was at least two Loyals teleporting around judging from the flashes.

They weren't going to win.

For all of their powers, none of the warriors at the prison had the strength to take on Kivas. Merrie did, but Ston said she was alone. She couldn't have a master that knew how to properly dominate her.

He smiled to himself. I bet you're listening now, aren't you? Was I good master, Merrie? Did you get slick when I told you to obey?

Merrie's heart felt a familiar longing of her own. There were very few people who understood how to truly command her, how to draw out the full strength of her powers and use them. Rakin was one of them and they both knew it.

Ston grabbed Rakin's hand. "What are you doing?"

Rakin turned. "I'm going out there."

"Why? It looks like a battle going on!" Rakin could tell that Ston was also worried that his enforcer was going to die on him. He didn't realize that he didn't need Rakin anymore, his charisma had won over the bulk of the underground.

"Yes."

"Damn it, Rak! You're going to die out there!"

Rakin look at the battle and then back at Ston. "If I don't go, then Merrie is going to die. I can't have that. Not after everything we've done."

"W-Who's Merrie?"

"Merrie Golddotter. Just an old... let's call her... a friend."

She looked at Ston as she struggled with her own emotions. (No, I have never heard of that name,) she lied.

"Just curious." From Rakin's memories, Merrie noticed the same way his muscles were tensing. He was probing for information, reflexively trying to gather details that could be used later. Then he made a show of shaking his head.

She could see how he did well in the prison, once Rakin shielded him from physical attack.

A moment later, his thoughts turned back to his desires. “Come on, my place is just the corner. I bet you’re tired.”

She was, but she was also horny. Her body craved sex, a desperate need that was already gnawing at the back of her mind. She wagged her tail and followed after him, her knees rasping along the harsh stone and her hips rocking. A little fun was exactly what she needed right now.

They came into the same room that Merrie had seen in Rakin’s emotions. It was good-sized, maybe five meters by six, with exposed brick. Large shelves that used to hold laundry supplies lined two walls. There were two beds, one made and the other unmade. There was also a chest for clothes and other supplies.

About half of the walls had diagrams on them. From Rakin’s memories that welled up, she knew they were old battle plans that he had reconstructed from memory and then tried to analyze to pass the hours. It was an endeavor that only lasted a few months but then he couldn’t take them down because of the emotions that would rise up.

“T-This is my place. I used to share it with... Rakin but he hasn’t been back since he left. I guess he died in that fight. I don’t know if I’ll ever get used to the idea of him not being around. He seemed so... immortal, you know?”

Merrie glanced at him and decided to remain silent. She crawled to Ston’s bed, the one that was neatly made. It smelled of him and she leaned down to press her face against it and take a deep breath.

Behind her, there was a flash of lust.

With a grin, she let her thighs spread apart on the blankets, rippling each one as her tail rose up to reveal her hairless sex and ass to his view. Leaning forward, she ground her breasts against the soft blankets and wiggled her ass.

“Oh, Madock....” he whispered.

She found it amusing that he would call upon a god at the sight of her. It brought a smile to her face and she wagged her tail faster.

He fumbled with his trousers but it only took seconds for him to strip off. She knew he wouldn’t just mount her, so she remained in place, rocking side to side as he stripped down.

Ston’s thoughts were filled with excitement and dread. Would he be too fat for her? He couldn’t go more than one round. Was his

cock big enough? The insecurities reminded her of the days when she was a whore. She had felt them so many times but it never mattered to her. She craved the touch as much as the pleasure.

When he knelt down, she let out a soft whimper of need. Her body tingled with the heat from him. She could almost picture him hesitating, fingers just centimeters away from her flesh.

With a subtle wave of encouragement, Merrie pushed her hips back. His fingers caught her buttocks, right along the edge of her sex and her thigh. The touch was electric, something she had craved for too long.

Together they moaned.

“I’m not like Horge,” he whispered. His fingers trembled as he caressed against her labia. His fingertips caught on the delicate folds and sent little shivers of pleasure.

“I’m not huge or thick or—”

(That doesn’t matter.)

“Are you sure?”

Merrie pushed herself up on her wrists so she could look over her shoulders at him. Staring into his eyes, she let a ripple of affection and lust seep out of her and into him. (It is the person I’m with that is important. You are beautiful to me.)

He smiled. “Are you sure?”

Merrie pulled away and turned around. With shallow breaths, she pressed her naked breasts against his chest and kissed up to his mouth. Their lips touched and then she lost herself kissing him, enjoying the taste of his lips against her tongue.

Below, she could feel his cock surging hot. He was still worried about not lasting, but she knew how to handle that.

Inching forward, she pressed her belly against his own. The smooth ends of her wrists caressed his sides before delving between them. She caught his hairballs with the side and rolled them gently.

The smell of his musk filled the air and she drank it in. (I love to taste you.)

“I-I-” He quick got embarrassed.

“I know,” she whispered hoarsely. It felt strange to talk with her mouth but the intimacy made her point clear.

Ston stared at her with shock. “You have a beautiful voice.”

Merrie grinned and then began to kiss her way down his chest. (Trust me. I've been wanting to do this for a long time.)

He leaned back as she came over his belly. He thought she was going to hesitate, but she continued to kiss along his curves and then down below. His breath came in soft moans as flashes of desire burned along his mind.

(Lay back,) she commanded. A small part of her wished Ston was capable of ordering her, but she didn't think anyone in the prison could do that.

Ston grunted as he obeyed.

As soon as he was on his back, she was back to kissing his belly and working her way down to his sex. The short hairs caressed her face as she looked at his thick cock as it stood up. It didn't matter that it was a third of the size of Horge's or Bass' or a hundred other men, it was still what she craved. With a moan, she brought her lips to the head and kissed it.

"Oh, Madock," he groaned.

She worked her tongue along his glans and tasted sweat and precum along her lips. Moaning and wiggling into place, she moved her mouth down one side of his shaft to his balls and took each one in turn into her mouth to lave them with her tongue. Then she tilted her head the other way and mouthed his shaft.

"Careful of the—"

Merrie silenced him with a pulse of affection and lust.

His cock surged in her mouth but didn't quite explode. With a grin, she laved along the ridge and then down the front again. Her own pussy grew wet with the intimacy as she worked her mouth up and down his shaft. She loved how it grew hotter and harder with every caress.

Ston groaned even louder. His hands reached up for her ears but then he clamped them down on his blankets as he thrust his hips toward her face.

She buried her mouth against the base, enjoying the softness that surrounded her. Her mouth tilted down to her perineum; it was a far down as he would find enjoyable. Then she brought it up to the tip to breath cool air against it.

His thrust brought it to her mouth.

She let the crown part and slip into her mouth.

As Ston gasped with desperate need, his mind flooded with the fear of coming too fast and losing his only chance at her.

A quick spell slid across her mind, the emotions eroding at the crystalline perfection. She managed to forced it together into a subtle suggestion to prevent his orgasm until they were both ready. The spell shone bright in the back of her mind and then sank into his thoughts.

The jerks of his cock never stopped. He gripped the blankets tighter, fighting himself.

Merrie took his entire length into her mouth. The length and girth felt good against her lips. She tasted him and then slow drew out to kiss the crown.

Surprise radiated from Ston's mind. He thought he was going to cum.

She didn't explain it, just took him deep into her mouth again and again, stabbing his cock into her lips. With every thrust, she felt the desire building inside him. It would have to release sooner or later, but until then, he was going to enjoy the best, sloppy blowjob of his life.

The wet sounds of his pre-cum and her saliva filled his prison cell as she bobbed up and down. His balls were soaked. His belly was soaked. So was her throat. She moaned around it and ground her face deep against the padded base. She loved the touch of his body against her own and the little bursts of pleasure that radiated throughout her body.

"I-I don't want to come until you do."

Merrie smashed her face into his belly, gulping at his cock. (I've already came a few times.)

"Oh."

An idea blossomed in the back of her head. (Do you want to know when it happens again?)

"Please?" His cock surged in her mouth.

Merrie thought of a small, grabbing pieces of other ones to craft something. The corrupting influence of Rakin's emotions resisted for a moment but then as she got deeper into the smell, something changed. She wanted Ston to feel her pleasure, craved it. The emotions rose up to fuel the spell. They shone through the physic power she crafted and gave it fuel.

When the spell ignited, connecting their two bodies together for one person, she came at the pleasure that radiated from the release of emotions.

Ston stiffened, his cock surged with the need to orgasm but his mind refused to let him reach the crest of pleasure. "Oh! I felt that!"

Merrie grinned and resumed her sloppy blowjob. Her The touch of his cock, the feel of his balls, each one pushed her closer to her own, smaller, orgasm.

Ston moaned as it rose, their bodies sharing the same crest of pleasure. In her mouth, his cock was helplessly jerking with every pulse. Only the magic prevented him from ending his pleasure with an orgasm of his own.

She sucked as long as he wanted.

"M-My turn," Ston gasped.

Merrie pulled off. Thick strands of saliva and pre-cum connected their bodies. She smiled and knew he was looking down at her glistening face. (How do you want me?)

The answer came before her words. She was already rolling back when he spoke.

"On your back. I want to look into your eyes."

She splayed herself out on his blankets, her damp thighs parted and her sex swollen from the orgasms that had already teased her senses. Her tail wagged along the blankets, dragging along the bottom as she lifted her hips to his view.

"Oh, Madock," he whispered as he knelt between her legs. He licked his lips twice before he pressed his mouth against her sex.

The heated touch of his skin against her cool pussy felt good. She moaned at the shiver of pleasure that coursed through her body.

"You come a lot."

He gave her a long lick, trailing his tongue along the entire length of her slit. Then he lifted his head with shock. "You taste like rice alcohol. Sake."

Merrie panted, her breasts rising and falling her her panting. (Part of who I am.)

He grinned. "I never realized it was my favorite until now."

Then he shoved his face into her sex and began to give her a wet blowjob of her own. His mouth worked his way deep as he sucked on

her clitoris and then slurped his way down to the opening of her pussy.

Merrie let out a whimper as a more powerful orgasm tore through her. She giggled and thrust into his mouth.

He groaned as he ran his tongue along her labia, pulling them into his mouth to suck on them. One side and then the other. Then to trail his tongue and slather along her clitoris.

Fingers plunged into her pussy as he caught her clit and sucked hard.

(Oh!) she gasped as another orgasm tore through her. She felt it resonating through him, adding to his pleasure until his cock jerked with the need to come.

“I love it when you come,” he whispered and resumed lapping at her. In a matter of minutes, he drove her to multiple orgasms until he was dripping with her juices and her body shook with the glow of orgasms that rocketed through her.

Ston was an excellent cunt licker but even he felt his own needs rise up. “I want to fuck you.”

Merrie whined happily and sent a wave of desire herself.

“I’m probably going to cum inside you.”

(I can’t have puppies.)

He started to say something, then chuckled. “Puppies?”

She grinned back. (I’m a Bitch, right? Well, you can fill me with seed but nothing is going to take root.)

“A pity.”

She beckoned for him. (No.)

He crawled up between her legs. His cock bumped against her sex.

She arched her hips forward, lining it up even as she hook her knees against his back. Her tail smacked against his knee. (Please? I need you.)

Ston didn’t need a second encouragement. He thrust deep into her pussy. The ridges of his shaft sent off explosions of pleasure as he buried his length into her until his balls were ground against her skin. His cock twitched with orgasms that would never come, not until they were both ready.

“I-I’ve never lasted this long.”

She smiled. (Then fuck me. I need it.)

He obeyed, thrusting deep as he could into her pussy. Every slurp of his cock against her aching insides felt good. His cock was slick and hard and needy as he pounded into her body. He threw everything into his thrusts, pushing himself to his limits as he strained to set off more orgasms to ravage her senses.

Merrie moaned and kissed him, enjoying the intimacy as much as the pleasure. Energy rippled along her body and danced across her senses. She let it fill her but didn't hold onto it. Merrie had no need to gather it in her collar, just let it fill her reserves and then buffet her soul as he drew out more orgasms.

They fucked until his body began to give out. Panting, his thrusts turned from gentle loving into the desperate need to finally orgasm. Soft grunts filled the air, setting off more pleasure.

Merrie held him tight and met his thrusts. (Come inside me.)

She released the spell holding back his orgasm.

Ston let out a strangled groan and then thrust deep into her pussy. He pulled out and did it again. A third thrust was all it took before his cum sprayed against her insides, flooding her body with the searing hot touch of cum and an orgasm that blasted through her mind and body.

"Fuck!" he groaned as he smashed his belly hard against her. His cock, finally free to come, filled her with cum until it poured out across the blankets. Slumping forward, his weight crushed her as he tried to regain his senses.

She moaned and kissed him; he couldn't crush her or even hurt her. He was sweet pleasure and nothing more.

Then, as the afterglow faded, he rolled over. She could tell he didn't want her to clean off his cock with his mouth; it was too sensitive. Instead, he wrapped a corner of the blanket around her before propping himself up on his elbow.

Merrie smiled at him. She reached up with her wrist and caressed his face. (Was it worth the wait?)

"Yes."

His thoughts started to darken.

She stopped it with a thrust of pleasure and a kiss. (Relax. Worry tomorrow.)

Ston yawned. "Will you be here when I wake up?"

She shook her head. (No.)

He started to lean on the pillow but she drew him over so his head rested on her arm and his body pressed against hers. "I wish I was good enough to keep you."

Merrie hesitated and looked up at the war plans. None of them could even begin to be a good enough master for me. She needed abuse, loving, and commanding. She needed to be pushed and punished. But Ston's emotions were too fragile for that. She leaned her head against him. (My body is made of shadows. My soul is filled with chaos and darkness and crystals. I don't know anyone who could last long with me, I'll corrupt them over the weeks and months that would follow.)

She realized she was telling the truth. So much had happened to her, the raw power of her body and her skills was yet another reason why she couldn't remain in the prison.

(I love you which is why I have to leave. When I get you out of prison, I have to go a different path.)

Into the darkness of the tunnels, to find the demons that preyed on the prisoners.

His eyes focused on her. She could feel his mind spin furiously for a moment. "You already know how to get us out."

It wasn't a question.

She smiled and kissed him. (Rakin was right. You are very good at what you do. When you get out of here, you just need to find a good person to defend you and you'll be amazing.)

The muscles in his neck flexed for a moment then he sighed. "Why didn't you tell us earlier."

(Sterli.)

Ston groaned and rolled onto his back. "Him. He isn't repentant, is he?"

(No, not in the slightest. There are other prisoners like that. To let you escape the prison, I have to...) She hesitated, unsure of what to say. There was no guidance from the faux geases inside her, not even the Royal Geas responded. (... negate the geasa in some manner. That would leave him free to kill again.)

"Can you put another geas on him?"

She shook her head. (No, I won't force obedience. I just need to find some way to get consent for this, in a manner he will accept. It has to be his choice.)

Ston rolled back and smiled. He stroked her cheek. “I meant it what I said in the central hall. I trust you. I know that you and I aren’t going to be forever, but I’m going to enjoy every moment I have with you until you have to do what you have to do.” He took a deep breath. “If that means leaving us all here in person for the rest of our days or not, I trust you.”

She smiled and kissed him. (Thank you, Ston.)

Another yawn took him. “Will I get another chance to do this?”

(Of course. This is the best time I’ve had in weeks.)

t'Sade

A Distraction



Merrie crawled alone down the underground corridor while she enjoyed the afterglow that still hummed along her senses. She had left Ston sleeping in his room but she needed time alone. To make sure he was safe, she left a ward that would dissuade anyone from approaching until he woke up.

Her lovemaking with Ston did wonders for clearing her thoughts and recovering her energies. It was better than sleeping. For once, she didn't feel like she rushing toward a fight or desperately gathering energies to save someone. It was nice to relax.

She also knew it wouldn't last. It never did. Sooner or later, she would have to deal with Rakin's order to bring the remains of Kivas' energy to the demons below.

Merrie used the silence to ponder her current problem. She was confident that the deal with Thorn would work, but could she really accept killers like Sterli going free? She didn't want to, but she also felt guilty for lying to everyone. Within hours, she could have everyone walking toward freedom if it wasn't for the moral quandary she had stumbled on.

As she struggled with her problem, she became aware of someone following her. Her ears perked. Whoever was walking toward her was making great pains to remained as quiet as possible. However, the stone corridors magnified the scuff of boots and the heavy breathing; she didn't even need magic to sense them.

It had to be one of the prisoners. Probably someone like Sterli or Garalis. When she remembered the violent sex that Garalis wanted and her smile grew wider. Her tail snapped back and forth as she slowed down.

She remembered that demons also came up from the depths. While Ston insisted they never came close to the main areas, she didn't want to make an assumption and accidentally try to seduce a demon. Letting her senses reached out, she sought out the lust-filled thoughts of the man following her.

Garalis thought he was being sneaky. He had one hand resting against the cold stone wall as he leaned against it. His gaze was locked on her from behind, his eyes tracing the swollen slit of her sex. He was thinking about her screaming as he held her tight, his hands clamped around her hips as he rammed his hard cock into her cunt.

Merrie liked what she saw in his head. She stopped and spread her legs, dragging her knees apart until she felt her nether lips peeling apart. The slickness of her excitement felt good as did the droplets of her juices that tickled her inner thighs. Slowly, she looked back over her shoulder and perked her ears.

After a moment hesitation, Garalis stepped forward with a chuckle. "Heard me coming, Cunt? Just spread your legs for any man walking by."

His thoughts were getting more obscene.

She smiled and beckoned with her tail. Then she continued along her way, crawling with a sway of her hips and the slow scrape of her knees against the cold stone. She projected a sense of innocent lust into his mind as she rocked her naked ass and then turned toward an unoccupied tunnel.

Garalis rushed forward. His boots thudded against the ground as he covered the distance between them.

She tensed briefly as he grabbed her tail and yanked hard.

Pain exploded along her spine. She squirmed in discomfort as he twisted the base and yanked her back toward him. Her wrists and knees scraped against the ground.

He smacked the back of her head before he grabbed her blonde hair. His thick fingers dug into her skull as he forced her head back while shoving down on her hips. His fingers stretched out to grab her ears and crushed them against his palm.

Merrie's thighs parted as she was driven to the ground. Her nipples scraped against the ground as her chin was forced up.

Having her throat exposed sent a little thrill of fear coursing through her veins.

“Could he even get it up?” hissed Garalis.

He pulled harder, straining her spine as he drove her hips hard against the earth. “That little dick of his? You gave him his pity fuck, time to know what a real man feels like.”

The heat bubbled inside her as she was pinned to the ground. Little sparks of pleasure through her as she looked up into his crazed eyes. She strained against his hands, enjoying the sense of helplessness. She didn’t want to think how easily it would be to escape, she wanted to just enjoy the moment.

He stretched his back hand down around her tail. His thick, rough fingers pressed against her asshole. Then he scratched his head down to her dripping sex. “This making you wet, Cunt?”

Before she could answer, he shoved two fingers into her pussy. His fingernails were rough and uncut. They scraped against her insides as he jammed to his second knuckle. Pumping in and out, he grinned. “Yeah, already getting juiced up for me.”

Merrie looked into his eyes. Seeing the promise for rough sex, she let out a long, choked whimper to encourage him.

He thrust harder into her, his fingers cruelly shoving deeper into her cunt. His other hand pulled hard on her ears, twisting and yanking until she felt the pain blossoming across her scalp and skull.

Garalis looked up and then around. He let out a low growl of frustration. “I’m going to fuck you so hard... but not here. I’m not in the mood for having anyone interrupt us, especially that fat pig you called a mayor.”

Merrie felt a prickle of annoyance rise up and start to break through the pleasure she had at submitting. She struggled to tamp it down to prevent herself from lashing out and disemboweling the bastard.

He yanked his fingers from her pussy. The sharp edge of his nails caught on her lips and pulled the fold tight painfully before it slipped free with a faint burn. He wiped her juices on her ass, using her as nothing more than a convenient item. The casual indifference brought another flush of excitement.

Garalis stood up with his other hand wrapped around her ears. She was pulled off the ground by the pain as he jammed her face up against his crotch. Even through the threadbare trousers, his hardness was hot and gloriously hard.

She leaned into it, pressing her mouth even as she let the whine rise up louder in her throat. Inwardly, she was almost on the edge of an orgasm. Squirming, she mouthed the heavy balls she found through the material.

He grunted as he dragged her down the hall. "Fucking cunt. There is a room. With all these rocks, no one is going to hear you scream."

Garalis reached a heavy wooden door and shoved it open. Inside was a storage room. The smell of dust and old mold poured out from the opening. He threw her inside with a grunt and then slammed the door behind him.

Her shoulder smacked against a dusty crate. She rolled to the side and then onto her back. Her tail snapped back and forth with her emotions as she watched him untie the rope around his trousers and shove his pants down.

His cock was lovely, a wide sausage with a squat head and a thick patch of dark hair. His testicles swung low even as the flesh wrinkled with anticipation. It curved slightly to the side and bobbed with the beat of his heart.

Garalis chuckled and kicked the door to make sure it was sealed shut behind him. "Now, I'm going to fuck you so hard."

To encourage him, Merrie whimpered and made a show of trying to crawl back. Her bare legs flashed against the ground. The smooth ends of her ankles dug against the stone bricks, scraping into her skin.

He strode across the room, his cock waving with every step. With a grunt, he reached down and grabbed the top of her head. His fingers dug into her skull and crushed her ears. "Suck it!" he commanded as he yanked her face toward his erection.

She tilted her head so her mouth smashed against the side of his cock. With a moan, she mouthed it and sucked along the ridge.

His grip tightened on her ears, crushing the cartilage and sending sharp pains ripping through her senses.

It only made her moan even louder as she sucked on the thick rod. Moving down, she buried her nose into his hairy sack and breathed in the smell of sweat and musk. The smell brought a throb of desire as he smeared her mouth up and down his cock.

“Fuck, it’s been a long time.”

Almost nine years from Merrie’s scan. She knew exactly what he wanted, to force her to choke on his shaft. Lowering her body, she worked on sucking on his balls.

“Higher.”

She disobeyed with a rush of pleasure.

“Higher, damn it!”

Straining against his grip, she put a show of fighting him.

Garalis grabbed her head with both hands. “Open your fucking mouth!” he bellowed, his voice filled with lust and desire.

With his strength, he jammed her mouth against the head of his cock. After a few seconds, he twisted it back and forth until she finally opened her mouth.

The heavy crown felt good against her mouth. He forced her head down while thrusting forward with his cock. It slid easily in, rubbing along the top of her mouth before it slammed against the back of her throat.

She pawed at his thighs as he jammed her harder against her mouth. With a gurgling moan, she tugged to pull away from him.

Garalis rammed his cock harder into her mouth, stretching her lips as his cock forced itself into her throat. It was starting drip and the heady taste of pre-cum painted her mouth before he shoved it deeper.

The rush of having her breath cut off set off an orgasm. She let out a choked sound but it didn’t escape her plugged throat. Her pussy grew hotter and dripped with her excitement as she squirmed and worked her mouth further down the rigid length.

Garalis rammed her down on his cock repeatedly, forcing it deeper into her throat until she could feel her neck straining around it. The heated length brought waves of pleasure as she squirmed and helplessly beat her wrists against his thighs.

“So fucking good. I’m going to enjoy raping your throat for months.”

A surge of emotion rose up. Merrie felt her body shuddering as a transformation started to rise up. She forced one arm down as she felt it tingle. With all her willpower, she relented fighting him and concentrated on preventing the emotions from triggering a change into something brutal.

He finally stuffed all of his shaft into her mouth. The hard length felt like it reached her collar as she squirmed around it. Her nose was crushed against his belly and the coarse hairs ground against her lips.

Garalis let out a low growl as he crushed her head hard to his base. "Damn, you are a natural cunt, aren't you?"

He jammed his thumb against her forehead and pushed her back. The thick intruder slowly slid out of her throat and she let out a gasp of air as she stared up at him.

When his cock only pressed against her tongue, he pulled her back.

She obeyed his silent command and slid down his length. Her tongue traced the ridges as they slid into her throat until she could suck around the thick base that stretched her lips.

He jammed her back on, holding her tight as he pounded her face hard as much as he thrust into her mouth. Every thrust bruised her lips and throat, but the anger fueled his strength as he raped her face.

Merrie came again and again, swimming in the pleasures as she was used as nothing more than a hole to fuck.

Then, Garalis suddenly stopped as his cock swelled inside her mouth. With a gasp, he ripped it out as it pulsed powerfully. Wet droplets of pre-cum splattered against her bare chest as he squeezed her skull.

He was on the edge of losing control. She could have set him off and drowned in his cum but she wanted the same thing he wanted.

Merrie panted as she looked at him; it didn't matter if she didn't need to breathe, it was what he wanted to see.

"I'll drown you in cum later. I want that sweet cunt of yours."

He reached down and grabbed her throat with one hand and her ears with another. With a surge of strength, he yanked her off the ground and held her high into the air.

Merrie trashed as she dangled from his grip. Wet droplets of her excitement splattered against the ground. Her hip thumped against one of the dusty boxes, the bruise sending an aching pain to mix with the thrill of abuse and suffocation.

Garalis threw her down on the box with all his might. The wood cracked from the impact but held her weight. He released her ears to paw at her thighs, forcing them apart.

She willingly parted her legs in hungry need. Her pussy was slick with desire and she needed his cock buried deep inside her.

“I never fucked a cunt without feet before.” He chuckled as he jammed himself between her legs. His heavy cock thudded against her belly. “Hard to resist, huh?” he said with a grunt.

She moaned and arched her back, straining against the hand wrapped around her throat and arching her back to bring her breasts up to his view.

Garalis let out an inarticulate groan of need as he fisted his cock and jammed it in against her slit. It was slick and there was little resistance as he forced it down into her tunnel and then rammed it home.

Merrie moaned loudly as the thick cock plunged into her pussy. The thick ridges were the sweetest pleasure as it stretched her insides around his length. The hard shaft brought only a whimpering lust as he sank it clear to the balls in a single stroke.

“Fuck!”

Garalis wasted no time to start pounding her pussy. His hips slapped against her inner thighs as he shoved his cock deep. Each thrust drove into her powerfully, rattling the crate underneath her as the head smashed into her depths.

Every muscle in his arm tightened, bulging out as he bore down on her throat. The grip tightened and her throat almost collapsed from the force. He rammed his cock harder into her, pounding with wet, slick strokes that filled the air with the smell of sex, sake, and ash.

His grunts beat against the wall as his cock grew thicker. Every thrust drove into her, stretching her obscenely open as he crushed her against the crate. The hard muscles of his belly slammed into hers, beating her with every stroke.

Merrie's body twisted with the storm of emotions that ravaged her senses. Flashes of light and dark danced across her vision as her inner muscles tightened along his cock.

Garalis strained to thrust into her. His shaft was on the verge of exploding, wet juices flooding her insides and more of it splashing onto the crate. "Fucking. Cunt!"

Gasping, she reached out with her mind and sank into his emotions. The storm of emotions, hate and lust, fought inside him. He was on the verge of losing control, only a few more strokes and he would be flooding her cunt with seed.

She smiled and tightened her body around his cock.

His cock finally exploded between one stroke and another. Hot jets painted her insides as he set off an intense orgasm through both of them.

Merrie cried out, a wordless sound of pleasure and lust. Her entire body tightened as the energy boiled around her. It danced along her skin before sinking into the inky depths of her shell. Emotions flooded through her, but it was lust that took over instead of the anger from before.

Garalis grunted with his last few strokes. He emptied his balls deep inside her pussy and then staggered back. His fingers left marks around her throat when he finally released it. "Fuck," he gasped with a smile.

Merrie moaned and lifted her head. Her entire body hummed with the afterglow and she just wanted to enjoy it.

"I'm going to enjoy breaking you."

The smile froze on her lips.

"No more pity fucks, no more bullshit about saving us. You are a fucking cunt and I'm going to use you—"

The anger rose up. Merrie shook her head. (No.)

He jerked and then scowled at her. "Like hell, you fucking cunt. I own your fucking ass now."

Years ago, that would be enough to set off an orgasm. But the sheer strength of her emotions only gave her a ripple of power. She pushed herself into a sitting position and then slipped own to the ground so she was kneeling. (No. This was fun, but you don't own me.)

“You’re an arm-less cunt but a fantastic fuck. Let anyone try to take your ass from me.” He chuckled as he began to daydream of fucking her again.

Merrie’s anger rose up. It seared through her veins as her body shifted. Black claws spread out from the ends of her wrists as pitch black wings spread out in the tight confines of the supply room. The wooden crates crumbled as the Shadows gathered around her, ripped from across the barrier of worlds by the power of her anger.

Garalis stepped back, his confidence crumbling.

(This was my choice. It will always be my choice. And if the others knew what was happening, they would have—)

She froze as an idea suddenly coalesced. She figured out a way of letting everyone escape the prison. If all the prisoners were accountable to each other, there would be something that would stop men like Sterli. Evil survived in privacy, she could make sure it was always in the light. She smiled and then stepped forward again.

The stone blackened underneath her foot.

(Now run,) she ordered. (Or I’m going to make you my bitch.)

There was a different type of pleasure as he tore out of the room, stumbling with his pants around his ankles and fear burning brightly in his mind.

If Merrie wasn’t careful, she could get addicted to it.

t'Sade

A Choice is Given

100

Merrie woke up before Ston did with his desires humming in the back of her head, the idea of an idea of what would pleasure him. She could feel it as growing desire to suck on his cock, to bury it in her mouth until her lips were pressed against her base.

Her tail wagged as she stretched her naked body over his, enjoying the feel of her breasts against his thighs and his half-hard cock sliding along her shoulder. She let out a soft moan before she turned her head to admire him.

Part of her knew that he wasn't a classical sense of handsome. He wasn't the most desirable man, or least wasn't to her until her life as a puppy girl had started. She tried to remember a time when she wouldn't desire him, just as she desired almost every other living being, but failed. It was lost in the memories that were destroyed by one of her bindings.

She smiled to herself and reached out. She'd rather want everyone. The smooth end of her wrist felt good against his wrinkled balls. She rolled them over her wrist and then moved her hand up to caress his shaft until it began to harden.

Ston moaned. He spread one thigh as his hands clutched his blankets. His dreams turned more toward lust and fantasy.

Merrie's tail wagged lazily as she lifted her body and pressed herself against her thighs. She pressed her face against the warmth of his cock and breathed in the musky scent.

The old Merrie didn't understand beauty. Ston was exactly what she wanted in that moment.

She opened her mouth and kissed the small head. Then swirled the tip of her tongue around until it began to swell.

“Oh, Tara,” whispered Ston.

Images of Tara rose in her mind, a young woman that Ston had fancied as a teenager. Merrie enjoyed the intensity of his emotions as she joined into his fantasy. When she opened her mouth to suckle on the end of his cock, so did Tara in his dreams.

She cupped his balls between her wrists. With a throaty moan, she slurped and sucked on his cock. He wanted it sloppy and messy and that was exactly what she would give him. She grinned and enjoyed coating everything with her saliva as the wet sounds of sucking filled his cramped quarters. Soon, his cock was hard and throbbing underneath her tongue.

“Oh, fuck,” he moaned. His hand unclenched around his blanket.

Merrie could feel that he wanted to grab her head. She moaned with anticipation, her pussy grew slick with desire. She spread her thighs for balance and desperately wished she could finger herself as he came into full wakefulness.

Then she became aware of the fear that was growing around her.

Merrie's ears perked up. She withdrew from Ston's fantasy and started to reflexively reach out to the others. Then she stopped. Parn's request hovered in her mind. Her magic hovered in the back of her mind for a moment.

With a cringe, she let the magic subside.

It would be coming soon enough. She could feel the fear rising on the edges of her senses, no matter how much she shielded against it.

Knowing that she was against a clock, she focused on her attention. Her ass wiggled back and forth as she brought her mouth back to his shaft. She mouthed along the bumps and ridges, exploring and teasing him until it stood out from the softness of his belly. As soon as she could, she arched her back and then took him directly into her mouth.

The warmth felt good against her lips as she bobbed up and down. She reached out for him, not to force him to orgasm with magic or even telepathy, but to enjoy the pleasures of fantasy as she mimicked the dream Tear with each thrust of her mouth or lap of her tongue.

Merrie squirmed with her own growing pleasure. She wanted to reach down to press her wrist against her own sex but didn't have

time. Someone was was coming down to the hallway with the intent to find Ston.

Ston shuddered. He gripped her hair, not forcing her down but guiding her as he lost himself in his teenage fantasies.

The heat of his dreams beat against her mind. She basked in them, enjoying the pleasure that flooded her mouth. With every stroke, he grew rapidly closer to an orgasm.

Rapid footsteps came down the hallway. A heartbeat later, a second-story thief and rapist who called himself King because he didn't think his given name of Perry was scary enough, pounded on the side of his door. "Ston! We need you! Now!" There was panic in his voice.

Merrie didn't make it on time. She pulled her mouth off his dripping cock with a sigh of frustration. With magic, she could have easily pushed Ston toward an orgasm he would have remembered for months or pushed back the man pounding on the door to give her enough time for a loving finish. But, she made a choice and using magic for just an orgasm seemed trivial.

Ston yawned and pushed himself up. He started by saying "Hold..." but then his voice trailed off as he looked down at Merrie sprawled on his lap with her lips inches away from his dripping cock. A genuine smile crossed his face. "I was dreaming of someone."

(Tara?)

His smile grew wider. "Yeah, but I'm pretty sure I'd rather have the dream about you."

Merrie beamed at him and she sent a pulse of affection in a response. It wasn't enough to set off his orgasm.

"Damn all the gods, Ston! A fucking flower just ate Maider!"

Ston jerked and he stared at his door. "What in the Golden God's name?"

"I swear, Ston! A fucking flower!"

Merrie pulled back before Ston scrambled to his feet. She didn't have clothes to wear but she made sure Zillia was present; she could feel the cloak hovering close to her. It was wrapped around collar where the shadowy shape was hidden by the adamantite collar. (It may not be the safest place with Kivas in there.)

(We are both getting corrupted by his power, Mistress. Neither of us can escape it and it is a good place as any to make sure I'm nearby when you need me.)

Merrie shared a different form of affection as she watched Ston finish getting dressed.

Sweat prickled his brow as he finished shoving his dripping cock into his trousers and tied off the rope that made up his belt. "Come on," he said with just the first promise of taking charge.

Enjoying the rush of desire, she followed after him.

Perry glared at Merrie. "Leave the fucking naked chick! This is serious!"

He turned and rushed down the hallway.

Ston glanced at her.

(Go on,) Merrie said with a desire to be playful. It would be a trivial use of magic, but she had a sudden desire to beat both of them to the surface, the probable location of the flower.

"S-Sorry." Ston ran ahead, his bare feet slapping against the stone floor.

Merrie watched them turn a corner. Then she melted into shadows and snapped forward. She raced along the hallways, easily passing the two running men. Further along, she could feel that most of the prisoners were gathering at the main entrance of the underground. Fear and terror burned in most of their thoughts but there were three of them fighting for their lives.

Her playfulness disappeared as she rushed forward. It had to be Thorn, he was the only one who used plants. However, he was not supposed to attack the prisoners. (Combat spells, Zillia,) Merrie ordered as she transformed into a Bel Dark hound and raced the last few hundred meters toward the entrance.

Beyond the prisoners, the outside was shaded by the supernatural canopy that covered the valley. She growled and sent a pulse of repulsion that forced the men and women apart to give her a clear exit from the prison.

Even with the canopy, there was enough light to burn her skin. She pushed past the growing agony to race across a thick field of grass and plants that had formed around the entrance. Sharp thorns and vines tore at her skin with her speed.

Her attention focused on the the two men who were fighting for their lives against animated thorn-covered vines. Their bodies were bloody as they flailed and lashed out. The vines struck back, tearing into flesh and spraying the ground with blood. Despite fighting off the plants, the two humans made attempts to grab the pair of legs sticking out of a bulbous body of a large pitcher-like plant.

Merrie could feel the man inside screaming. He was in agony from the acid that burned his face, lungs, and chest.

(Pull them back, Thorn!) she projected with her might as she tore into the side of the pitcher plant. Her teeth ripped through the thick shell and a flood of sickly sweet acid poured against her face. It was hot and tingled as it began to bubble along her fur.

Maiders' gurgles were interrupted with his thrashing. He dug at the insides of the plant that had eaten him but his fingers couldn't get through the toughened shell.

She bit down on his leg and threw him back as Zillia's strength spell flooded through her veins. His body flew twenty meters before landing on a bed of flowers.

The plants shuddered. The bloody thorns reared back from the two prisoners.

Merrie turned toward them and snarled. Anger radiated from her thoughts as she projected into a wide wave of fury. (Thorn, we had a deal!)

The vines twisted back, wrapping around each other and forming a large mass. Blood oozed out from the knot of flowers as more plants grew up around it.

Maiders groaned as he tried to push himself up. His skin was peeled back to reveal smoldering muscle and bones.

(Saber, Garalis,) ordered Merrie to the two men, (see to Maiders. I will deal with this.)

Their immediate obedience sent a wave of pleasure coursing along her veins.

The mass of coiling roots and vines spread open as the Copir silfae stepped out. "We had a deal, Shadow," he said in a sharp, angry voice. "Your humans leave my plants alone. That one attacked first."

Merrie glanced back. (Maiders?)

Maidir inched out of the opening. He stared at the thick jungle of life that had grown overnight outside of the opening. "What in the Nine Fucking Hells is all this crap?"

Saber leaned against the door. "I don't know, but there is no way this is good news. What do you think, Garalis?"

Garalis, a large burly man, cracked his knuckles. "Probably the naked chicks fault."

Maidir snorted. "You always think women are at fault."

"Have you seen how scared Garalis was? He was all about raping that girl but when he came back, he was sobbing like a little bitch. He isn't going to be hunting women after all this." Garalis shrugged and gestured to the jungle. "Whatever Ston's Bitch is, she's more of a threat than all this stuff."

Saber stepped out. "Bet you a thousand you don't have the balls to pick one of those fruit."

Maidir pointed to a large melon. "Two thousand to eat that."

Saber gestured to a large, pitcher-like pack. "Five thousand if you do that one."

Maidir considered for a moment. "Promise?"

"On my mother's grave."

"Your mother runs a drug cartel, she's fine."

Saber rolled his eyes. "Fine, you can fuck my sister."

Maidir chuckled. "Deal. Get me a stick."

Merrie's ears drooped. Thorn wasn't at fault. Frustration and annoyance rushed up in her thoughts, followed by an intense anger. It filled her thoughts as she considered lashing out at Thorn and his plants.

(Mistress, your emotions.)

Merrie shook her head. Zillia's thoughts were enough to interrupt her. She stared for a moment at the plants and then sighed. She let her Bel Dark hound form fade and return her to being a naked human. (I have made a mistake, Thorn.)

His eyes narrowed.

(I didn't tell them what was happening. There were complications.)

"I don't care, creature of darkness. We have an agreement."

(Can we still honor it?)

He cocked his head for a moment. His pointed ears twitched. "We failed to specify certain details of our agreement. I am willing to ignore this discretion but I am impatient to have what is mine."

Ston cleared his throat. "What is he talking about?"

Merrie didn't have to look back to know he was standing in the entrance of the tunnels and looking around in shock. She closed her eyes and gave a quick prayer to Parn—more of thanks and a request for help—and then cast out her mind to summon the survivors of Abbinkey. It was a combination of a compulsion and a suggestion. Then she focused on the ones around her. (Let the others arrive, I need to start this spell.)

As she felt the prisoners coming to her summons, she began to cast the spell. The idea she had after her sex with Garalis had been bubbling in her subconsciousness and idle thoughts. She focused on crafting it and the various pieces began to sink together.

Merrie was going to create a spell that bound all the prisoners who left together. She would never bind them with an oath, not with her intent to strip away all existing oaths to let them outside of the prison. However, there was one aspect of a geas that she thought would help everyone: the warning that a crime was about to be violated with only an idle threat or intent. Garalis gave her that idea, he wanted to rape her in private; so what if everyone automatically knew his intent, but only if it was for a crime?

With her psionics, she figured she could create something close to having the same warning as the geas but without the obligation. Instead of the unyielding rules of the spell, she would use the combined thoughts and morals of the prisoners to act as a warning. As much as many of them were murderers, rapists, and thieves, most of them knew they were committing a crime. Most of them wouldn't commit a crime if they knew someone was watching.

She was going to use that realization to give them a pause. The spell would trigger when any prisoner considered breaking the law, when they thought about doing something they knew would be

wrong. But it wouldn't be just a spell saying wrong, it would be every other prisoner speaking.

As much as there would be men like Garalis and Sterli in the mix, there would also be better men like Ston. Not to mention, there was little chance all of them would be considering a crime at the same time. All she would have to do is connect them together no matter what the distance.

Her psionics and shadows would give her the ability to connect their minds together. It would provide the consciousness that she needed as they went their separate ways.

The spell began to weave together. Zillia merged with her, holding the spell together as they worked together to create something. She tied her various aspects of her being together: the crystalline powers of psionics and the all-penetrating shadows to bind them together, emotions for the trigger, and Parn's oath magic to strip away the existing geasa. The only thing she was worried about was her other influence.

(There will be chaos in this spell, you cannot avoid Kivas with his energies so close to your body.)

She knew it was true. Kivas corrupted everything, but there was a chance it would also make the spell more resilient. Kivas survived by adapting, she suspected the spell would do the same.

(That's a risk. A big one since you are not adept with chaos magic.)

Merrie agreed. (Yes, but I can't cast the spell without having his influence. I only hope that this will work.)

(It will, Mistress.)

(You mean, Bitch?)

Zillia's thoughts rippled and she felt the hint of hard amusement, like Rakin's thoughts caressing her own. It sent a thrill of pleasure as she sank into the brief hint.

(You are my Mistress, at the moment.)

Merrie smirked and then focused on her spell.

Together, they built up the spell together. It was massive and extensive, probably one of the biggest spells she had ever cast. It scared her not only on how extensive the spell was, but also that her skill had improved over the years to the point she could create

something that was capable of breaking free everyone from Abbinkey.

(We're ready,) projected Merrie with Zillia and other voices overlapping. She heard Rakin's and Kine's. Both of their influences had risen to the top as she concentrated.

She opened her eyes to see all of the prisoners milling around her. They were standing in the entrance and looking uncomfortable at the plants that were surrounding them.

On the other side, Thorn sat with annoyance. "Those are foul energies, creature. A sloppy spell that will function more like a weed than anything else."

Then he smiled broadly. "I like it."

The smile dropped.

Merrie watched him warily for a heartbeat. (I'll be out of your way soon enough.)

Thorn tensed. "Maybe. But get rid of the mortals first." His eyes slid to the entrance. "The ones that aren't stupid enough to stay."

"Um," Ston raised his voice. "What do you mean 'the mortals' and stay?"

Merrie turned and regarded the prisoners. (You have a chance to leave Abbinkey. I can and will strip away the Justice Geas, the Prison Geas, and any other compulsion from each of you. Will be able to walk away.)

She didn't need to hear the scoffs to know they didn't believe her. There was too much evil, guilt, and anger inside the prison. All of them could feel the taste of the geas when they even thought of hurting someone. There was also hope and dream bubbling up through the morass of thoughts. They wanted to believe her as much as they didn't.

Sterli stepped forward, his mind filled with the dreams of strangling some young woman. "If it gets me out of here, sign me up."

She fixed a glare at him, her mind boiling with seething rage.

Suddenly pale, he stepped back.

(There are rules. Anyone who doesn't take this offer will have to stay, but in the tunnels with only a short distance out here into the valley.)

There was a ripple of shock.

(Thorn has laid claim to the entire valley. He will provide for those who remain: food, water, and shelter, but there won't be much freedom out here. If you've been up along the upper ridges of the prison, it will probably be the same down along the ground.)

"Not probably, it will. The true owners of the world shall claim what is there to own." Thorn had a sudden excitement in his voice. "This garden will finally fall and it will be free."

She looked at Saber and Garalis. (That means not attacking the plants or harvesting them without permission. Thorn will provide for the rest of your lives, but he will be under no obligation to give safe passage. Even if you did, the Abbinkey Geas will stop you. Basically, if you stay, you will have an easy but simple life.)

An older man held up his hand.

"This isn't school," sneered Sterli.

Merrie sent a pulse to silence Sterli. (Yes, Yual?)

"What about the demons? If everyone leaves, we'll be only a snack. Is that guy going to save us?" His fear rippled under his thoughts.

Merrie nodded. (After this, I'm going into the tunnels to handle them. I have... obligations and it isn't safe for me to leave the prison the same way you did. But, I...) She hesitated. (I promise that they will not come up once I'm done.)

Sterli glared at Yual and then raised in his hand slowly.

She turned to him.

"So you kick us out of the valley and then leave us alone?"

"You'll have your magic, powers, and abilities back. I suspect together, you are more than capable of getting into the next village and beyond."

A few grunts and whispered discussions and then noises of approval.

Ston cleared his throat. "What's the catch?"

She could tell he was probing again. His eyes had a certain hardness. She tensed. (The catch is... accountability. You will not have a geas but some of you should remain in prison, just not for the rest of your lives. By accepting the spell, you must also accept that every time you consider a crime, the others will know.)

Silence.

(You think about stealing a book, you're going to have the rest of the prisoners here in your head. Rape someone and they will all know. They will know where you are, what you are doing. They will be able to call out to you and it will be in your head. When you break the law, they will be there.) Her thoughts grew harder. (You are free to keep doing, but you will feel everyone's attention on you as you do it.)

A discomfort rose up, sharper among men like Sterli and Garalis but less with Ston.

(You will find this spell hard to escape. Mental blocks, bright light, even magical items are going to eventually fail and they will know what you are doing. Deliberately try to hide from others, and they will know.)

Sterli snorted. "A bunch of prisoners are going to tell me what is right or wrong? I'd give a thousand marks that all of them would join in."

Merrie started but she sensed Ston was about to speak.

"Would you really, Sterli? Do you think I'd be fine knowing you were about to strangle someone's daughter?"

"W-What? How did you know that?"

"Or Garalis? He likes to rape women. Do you think every single man and woman in this prison is going to join in? To approve?" He stepped forward, confidence rising. "I'm here for stealing money and making some terrible choices but I'm not into abuse or murder or rape."

"I could end you, fat man."

Ston looked at Merrie. "Is informing authorities about their plan considered a crime? Will others know if someone does it?"

(No.)

Ston turned back. "So, if you think about killing someone and there are a hundred, you won't know which of the hundred reported you, right?"

Sterli's jaw clenched. He started to think about stabbing Ston.

Merrie tensed for a moment. (This is what it will feel like.)

She crafted a quick spell and let everyone experience Sterli's thoughts.

Almost everyone stiffened. Then everyone looked at Sterli.

Flushed, he stepped back. "That isn't fair!"

Ston's face hardened. "Seemed pretty graphic to me."

There were a few agreements in the crowd.

"This is bullshit. No one can live their life without thinking about crimes."

Ston gestured back to the tunnel. "Then stay behind, spend your life in the prison. I don't know about you but this is a second chance in life. I might not be able to go home, but without those geasa, I can at least live somewhere nice. Some place where I don't have to worry about getting my ass raped, demons hunting me, or working every day in a mine for an insane bitch who betrays you." Ston's words grew sharper. "I will take this choice willingly. I don't want to be here."

He stepped up. "How do you cast it?"

Merrie looked around and then to Thorn. (Can you bring me a large rock? Something with crystal?)

"Do I look like a druid to you?" Thorn let out an exasperated growl then waved his hand. The plants on the ground began to writhe and twist violently.

Ston jumped back.

A large root burst out of the ground and coiled up. It had a bulbous growth on it. Energy rolled along the dirty surface as the boil grew until it was twice the size of Merrie. Then it burst open to drop a large hunk of amber.

The ground shook from the impact.

"Close as you'll get from me."

(Can you give them time to decide?)

Thorn rolled his eyes and sighed. "I despise humans, you know that."

She waited.

"Tomorrow afternoon, when the sun is the tastiest, I will open up a passage to the edge of the warded area. Everyone who goes will be safe, I promise."

(Thank you.)

"Just go away, creature of darkness. The sooner you are gone, the better my life will be." Thorn turned and sank into the plants and out of sight.

Merrie reached over to the amber. It was warm to the touch but solid. Closing her eyes, she gathered the energy for the spell. The air

crackled around her as the world warped around her. She tasted shadows and the burnt taste of chaos. Energy poured out of her collar and her soul, sinking into the amber until it glowed with a heat-less fire of blue and black.

The spell itself was anti-climatic. The air cracked and then the stone ignited into flame. A wave of weariness slammed into her. Swaying, she sat back on her bare thighs. (This won't burn any of you.)

"Let me guess," Ston said with a smile. "Touch it and say 'I swear.'"

She smiled back. ("I accept." This must be consensual and it must be a choice you make. No one will force you.)

"It's a crappy deal," snapped Sterli.

Annoyance rose up, choking her. (It's the best I can do.)

"Bullshit. You can fight that plant guy, kill him, and then just walk us all out of here."

She snarled. (What I can do—)

Her body shimmered as the anger blossomed inside her. Her body shifted and twisted, wings bursting out of her back as her thoughts grew into a deep growl. (—is rip your throat out and spread your guts all over the ground for being a horrid monster who deserves to die! For your own daughter, I should snap every bone in your body while you are still living and let—)

(Down!) came the echoing command in her head. Zillia's thoughts were commanding and powerful, the sound of Rakin's voice underneath the cloak's thoughts.

Sterli scrambled back and dove into the tunnel.

Merrie sat down, transforming instantly. Her ears and tail drooped.

(Bad girl,) chided Zillia.

A whine rose in her throat.

Merrie looked at the prisoners still in front of her. They were all terrified and shocked, but still standing. (Everyone has this choice. Even bastards who should be killed.) She glared at some of the other prisoners. (I will not make exceptions, I will not judge. You can all choose if you accept my terms. If you don't, this will be your home for the rest of your life.)

She sat up. (You have until noon to touch the rock and accept. Thorn will lead you out. If you don't, he will provide you food and water for as long as you live. Accept or don't, these are your choices.)

On her knees, she crawled toward the entrance of the tunnel.

Silent prisoners parted, looking at her with fear, terror, and curiosity as she passed and left them behind.

Doubt and Darkness

101

Merrie's outburst in the garden haunted her as she walked alone deep in the tunnels of the prison. Despite the comforting darkness that surrounded her and the countless kilos of stone above her, her mind was still dwelled on her anger toward Sterli.

From their first interaction, she despised the man intensely. She couldn't help but think about the daughter he had killed or the rest of his family who died by his hand. He had no shame or regret for his actions, no redeeming values that she could detect.

She wanted to refuse him entirely, but a niggling voice in the back of her head said that she couldn't. She wasn't the judge for anyone. If she made the offer, she felt she had to allow everyone the chance to freedom.

(Parn?) asked Zillia.

It seemed reasonable. Her promise to Parn had come with other powers, including the strange boost to her powers when she refused to use them in trivial circumstances.

However, she still didn't want to give Sterli a chance. All she wanted was to rip his throat out, to transform into the dragon hound form and sink her teeth into his throat. The thought of his hot blood splashing against her throat left an intense wave of pleasure.

A low growl filled the tunnel around her.

(Mistress, you are falling under Rakin's emotions. His anger is dominating your thoughts.)

She snarled again. The sound beat against the tunnel walls, bouncing down until it slowly faded.

Zillia tightened around her, the black rippling fabric along her throat and chest. It crushed her breasts against her ribs and then dug up between her legs. The pressure was intense. (You. Are. Falling,) came the thundering thoughts as Zillia switched from submissive to dominating in an instant.

Merrie gasped as a rush of pleasure rolled through her body. A low whimper escaped her throat. She leaned against the wall as she panted for breath. The anger raged inside her, but the rising pleasure beat against it. Everything felt hot and cold as the anger and lust tore at her.

(Sit, Bitch!)

She close her eyes tightly as she sat down heavily on the cold stone. Her body grew tight as she felt her energies rising up in response, the hunger of an Alpha needing to obey their master. She felt the urge to sit up and didn't resist. Leaning back, she brought her wrists up to the heavy metal collar.

When the adamantite touched her wrist, she felt a rippling energy sparkling along her skin. The chaotic energies surged through her body. It gnawed at her pleasure, mixing the two distinct emotions into an even more confusing mess.

Zillia pulled back, the firm grip relaxing. There was the briefest flashes of surprise before the cloak's thoughts were wrapped again and it tightened around her again.

The overwhelming desire to obey crumbled. She leaned against the icy side of the tunnel and let out a long, gasping breath. (What was that? Why did that happen?)

(Kivas' energies,) Zillia said as the thoughts grew less dominating. There was annoyance in the cloak's thoughts. (Chaos changes everything. It breaks down patterns. I can feel it seeping out of the collar.)

Merrie's ears flattened. (Is it changing you?)

Zillia sent out the mental version of a shrug. (Yes, but every change, every spell will also change me. The more it affects you, the more it will alter me also. We are bound together, the three of us: you, me, and the collar.)

She knew it was true. As she bonded over the years, each connection brought different powers and abilities. When she used to be able to only share powers, now she could transform into

darkness, turn into a dragon hound, and has physic powers. Even if she managed to get dump Kivas from her collar with the demons, the chaos would touch her forever.

She shivered in fear.

(The chaos is already becoming part of your magic. The spell you just crated had it woven into its very core.)

(I didn't want to use it.)

(You don't have a choice, not with his influence.)

Merrie thought about the spell. It was one of the most complicated ones she had ever cast before, but at the same time, she was afraid of it. With the distance from the garden, she could see tiny flaws in how it was constructed. There were loopholes, or potential ones. There was always a chance that someone with a strong personality would be able to take over, to turn the accountability to an army of criminals.

Doubt flickered in the edges of her mind. Her ears and tail lowered as she thought about the possibilities. Too easily, her mind started to go down paths that spiraled toward her darkness, the aching despair that remained deep inside her psyche.

(Mistress,) warned her cloak.

Merrie took a long, shuddering breath. She wiped a sudden tear from her eyes. (It's been hours, Zillia. Why haven't anyone accepted the spell? Did I do the wrong thing?)

It felt like everything was a struggle recently. She had surges of emotions that magnified everything and just when she thought she had a handle on them, something would slip away. Abstractly, she knew it was the influence of two very distinct sets of powers merging with her own but she had never had to deal with two at once.

Then she thought about how Thorn called the spell terrible but then approved of it. The doubt began to well up again as she started to delve into the spell. If the psychopathic silfae like the spell, did that mean it was actually going to make everything worse? Should she destroy it before anyone accepts the magic?

She sat in the cold dark and tried to find the flaw that made Thorn happy. Even from so far away, the spell was still close enough for her to reach out and inspect it. She did, tugging through the weaves of shadows, psionics, and oath magic. However, the entire

spell didn't have the usual grace and weave of powers that her magic portrayed. It was messy and shifting. Even with her perceptions as the one who cast it, it kept changing under her attention. Just when she puzzled out one section, the magic would change and the functions she was investigating would move. It was frustrating trying to keep the entire thing in her head.

(Mistress, you've been focusing for an hour.)

Merrie blinked and looked up. She was slumped against the side of the tunnel but her body ached from being in position too long. She shook her head, clinking the collar against the stone, before she sat up.

Despite her effort, it wasn't obvious if she had made a mistake or not. The spell seemed to be exactly what she had in mind but the doubt remained a festering wound.

(You need to stop.)

Merrie shook her head. She started to reach out again for the spell. (I just need more time—)

(Bitch!)

Jumping, she brought her attention back. Zillia had uncoiled from her body and was twisted into its snake-like form. Two burning motes of rainbow eyes stared down at her. The black tail snapped back and forth, the tip sharpened to a point.

Fear rushed through Merrie's veins. It had been a while since she had seen her cloak in its other form, but it never had shimmering eyes of every color before. It was an obvious sign of Kivas' influence on her, one that scared her more than Rakin's emotions.

She need to get rid of Kivas, Merrie decided.

Zillia shook its head and unwound into a flutter of darkness. Moments later, its cool shape draped over Merrie's body and wrapped up against her breasts and sex. (There is still power in the chaos. Far more than anything you've dealt with before. If you had to choose, you could try to evict Rakin's energies instead.)

Merrie shook her head. As much as she hated Rakin for what he had done, the surge of emotions she struggled with were far deeper and bound into her soul. She had bonded to him, at least temporarily, but Kivas was corrupting her through the artifact she couldn't remove. If she could free of one, it would be Kivas but she didn't have much time before they were both lost.

As she pondered her choices, a sudden sparkling of energy danced across her skin. It was the spell on the amber, someone had finally accepted it. The tingling mixture of magic rolled across her senses, sparking little motes of pleasure, fear, and excitement into a heady rush.

Even Zillia responded with a flutter.

Even as the doubt rose up, Merrie couldn't help but feel relief. Someone had thought it was a good choice. Reaching out, she was curious to see if it was Ston who had taken the first step.

It was Yual, the old man who had spoken earlier. There was hope in his heart and a desire to see his grandchildren before he died.

She wanted to delve deeper, but held herself. The entire point of the spell was to let everyone live their lives in privacy until they thought about crime.

The energies faded but she still felt it in the back of her mind. A single, delicate connection to what she hoped would be a wider web of connections.

Somehow, having Yual accept the spell let some of the tension escape. The spell might corrupt or change beyond what she expected, but there were going at least good people involved.

Merrie was curious why Ston wasn't the first.

She forced herself to start walking again. There would be more, she knew it.

t'Sade

Cricket

102

Merrie woke up with the sense of anticipation. It tickled the back of her thoughts. Carefully, she opened her eyes and looked across the sprawl of limbs, sated cocks, and still damp flesh. She had found three lovers soon after Yual accepted the spell: two murders and a pyromaniac.

All three had spent the night spit-roasting her, fucking her from both ends until they passed out with exhaustion. Now, they were snoring around her but she couldn't detect the growing desire from any of them; their minds were lost in dreams of freedom and possibilities.

Despite their fantasies, none of them had accepted her spell either. Except for Yual, no one else had dared to come up to the stone to say the words.

It was fear. Fear that the spell wasn't going to work, fear that it would and they would lose themselves. The errant thoughts she picked up told her that some couldn't believe that the Justice Geas would be removed and she was plotting just to kill them by forcing them to walk out of the prison until their organs liquefied.

She sighed and wondered where the order was coming from. She could feel it, a desire rising up, but there was something different in its feeling. It was coming from further away, a thought beyond the limits of the room.

Carefully, she pulled her cheek away from one of her lover's cock and kissed it twice before backing out from the tangle of limbs. Her naked body still glistened with their cum and sweat and the sensation of it cooling in the air felt good against her skin.

Then, she felt the ripples of her network spell coming to life as the second person accepted the deal. The delicate threads of thought reached out for both her and Yual, like a spider jumping for a perching point. The connection was a ripple of sensation along her skin, tingling along her senses before prickling along her throat. It felt good, clean, and a promise.

Then she realized who it was.

Sterli's dark thoughts flashed across her mind as he stared at the rock with disgust. Then, like Yual, it faded away into privacy.

Merrie froze with a shudder of revulsion and growing anger. He wasn't supposed to be the second person. She didn't want him to accept the spell; a small part of her wished, of all the people she had met, that he would be one of the ones who refused.

(You made the offer to everyone, Mistress.)

Leaning against the wall, Merrie sighed. (It doesn't mean I have to like it.)

Zillia squeezed her.

... his hand wrapped around the pale skin of her knee. The whimpering bitch wouldn't know what to do if he squeezed down. Her missing hands would just beat against his chest as he threw her down on her back and pinned her.

Merrie froze as new thoughts seeped into her own.

She had to be hot, a slick little cunt. He saw her flashing it everyone but she was going to know what it feels like to get fucked by a real man when he kicked her knees apart and shoved his cock deep inside her.

He couldn't wait to hear her cries. Would she whimper like a bitch or scream like a girl? It didn't matter. For all her so-called magic, she would break like every other cunt.

Sterli's fantasies of raping Merrie flooded through her mind. Despite the anger and hatred, her pussy grew hotter with anticipation. He didn't know that she could take it, wanted it, or

even craved it. She let out a soft moan as he detailed every sensation of his cock tearing into her pussy.

Yual's thoughts interrupted both Sterli's fantasies and her own desires. (That is disgusting!)

Merrie froze, a fierce joy rising up as Yual's disgust and annoyance flooded through the thoughts.

Sterli's imagination faltered. Merrie expected some retort, the spell connected them telepathically, but none came. Instead, there was a flash of anger and shame mixed together.

(You should be ashamed of yourself, Sterli!) Yual's thoughts were sharp and disapproving, a grandfather who saw his own daughter in the position of Merrie. It didn't matter if it wasn't directed, the repulsion resonated along the connection clearly. (That girl... woman, is giving us a chance! A chance to escape and the first thing you think is hurting her?)

Merrie's tail thumped against the wall. (Zillia, why isn't Sterli responding?)

The cloak didn't know.

Closing her eyes, she listened to Yual's berating of Sterli as she followed the connection. The chaos-infused spell had changed on her again and it was like exploring an entirely new spell. It took her a few minutes of following it to realize it had morphed and corrupted, but it was beneficial: the one who was considering a crime was unable to defend themselves.

Merrie was stunned, that wasn't part of her spell. She never even considered that as a possibility but it had happened. She could feel Sterli's anger rising but it was from her own senses and not through the connection.

With the images of his rape still burning in her head, she hurried down the tunnel toward the garden. She was slick with desire but she also wanted to see his response.

They met in the crowded dining room.

Sterli stormed in with a scowl etched on his face. He lashed out at someone who didn't get out of his way fast enough. "Fuck off!"

Yual was in the room also. The older man looked up and glared at Sterli.

Sterli turned around. "Where the fuck is Yual?"

Merrie entered through the opposite door.

Instantly, Sterli turned on her. "You! What the fuck did you do!?" Merrie couldn't help but secretly feel joy. It blended with the hatred she felt rolling off him. He was thinking about cutting her throat. Each detail flooded her mind in rage-filled details.

His fingers wrapped around her throat, thumb against the delicate part in front. He couldn't wait to feel the cartilage crack as he shoved down, collapsing the delicate pipe just to watch her suffocate to death in his arms.

Sterli stormed toward her.

Yual tapped the broad-shouldered man and said something short. The other man stood up and lunged forward, grabbing Sterli's arm and twisting it behind him.

"Get off me, Grange!" Sterli said. "I'm going to fucking kill her."

"Can't do that, man." Grange had a low, rumbling voice. He was darker skin, a man from Melkuth, but his crime was being a petty smuggler who got life so a rich person would walk away free.

"This is between me and the bitch."

"Yual says you are going to kill her."

"Of course I am. Yual's fucking thoughts are in my head."

Yual stood up. "You were thinking about raping her."

The room grew sharply silent.

He cleared his throat. "I could see it. I mean, I could really see it in my head. Everything you planned on doing. I don't know where you were, but those... I knew exactly where you were and what you were doing."

"Yeah right."

"You were outside, by the rock."

Sterli tensed for a moment. Then he struggled to get out of Grange's grip. After a few seconds, he slumped. "It was just a fantasy."

"It was disgusting. You don't deserve to leave this prison, Sterli. Everyone knows it."

"Well, now I can. I felt the Justice Geas go away." Both he and Yual shuddered as the memory of the runes melting off their bones. "I can use magic again."

Then, his eyes widened and he smiled. Reaching out, he stretched out his fingers.

The shadows around the room began to quiver as Shadow Magic filled the air. The darkness began to stretch out for him as it formed dark claws.

Merrie's pussy clenched with pleasure as she felt the raw magic against her skin. It sang to her, the sweet taste of raw power.

For a moment, the claws hesitated.

Sterli frowned. Then, his eyes focused on Merrie.

She looked back as she basked in the power.

Minutely, the animated darkness began to reach for her.

"Stop that right now," Yual said.

As if all the magic fled the room, Sterli's summon ended and the magic dissipated.

Sterli gasped. "What did you do?" he yelled at Merrie. "What are you?"

Yual staggered forward. "That wasn't here, Sterli. I-I don't know how, but I could stop your magic."

Inwardly, Merrie gasped with surprise. She focused on Zillia. (Did Yual really stop Sterli?)

(Yes, Mistress. The spell interrupted the flow.)

(That wasn't part of the spell either.)

For a moment, she wondered if she should just keep Kivas' power inside her. There appeared to be more than a few benefits to having spells that adapted themselves.

Sterli screamed and thrashed until Grange jerked him off the ground. Then, he slowly stopped until he was standing with his hands clenched and body shaking with fury. His eyes had shifted over to Yual's as fantasies of killing the old man stared to rise up.

"You are thinking about hurting me," Yual said as he flinched.

Grange bore down, crushing Sterli tightly in his grip. "Stop it," he grunted before picking him up off the ground and slamming him down.

Sterli let out a cry as his legs took the impact. His thoughts faded instantly in a flash of pain. He shook his head. "F-Fine."

Yual sighed and let out a sigh of relief. "He's stopped. Let him go, please."

When Grange released him, Sterli snarled at everyone before turning around and storming out.

Ston came up and rested a hand on Yual's shoulder. "Are you okay?"

Yual hesitated and then nodded. His eyes were shimmering. "I... I am. That spell is exactly what she said it would be. I couldn't feel him at all until he started to think about hurting that girl. Then, I knew exactly where he was and what he was doing."

"And the geas?"

The tension in the room grew even tighter.

Yual opened his mouth for a moment and then smiled. "I've been here almost fifty years but I still remember the days they put that geas on me. Today, I felt it coming off. The ache in my joints, that burning sensation but then it was gone. Faded."

Everyone in the room shuddered. They were all tortured by the pain of the Justice Geas. She could feel hope rising in the room, as if the promise of her spell had suddenly become real.

Ston patted Yual. "Thank you."

Then he started for the door.

Yual cleared his throat. "Where are you going?"

Merrie's ears twitched. The words felt a little stilted, practiced.

Ston grinned and gestured upstairs. "I need to accept a spell. I want to get out of here and there is only a few hours left to say the words."

He turned and headed into the darkness.

Almost instantly, most of the room got up and followed him silently.

Merrie watched them in surprise. All the reluctance seemed to have faded in an instant. She glanced at Yual, who sat back down and let out a long, raspy sigh.

Something was different.

Reaching out, she connected her thoughts to Ston. (What are you doing?)

Amusement flooded the connection. (Everyone knows you're my friend. If I jumped up and took the oath first, the others would distrust it even more. It would smack of a con. I know their types and how they work. They needed an old-timer to be the first one

and I've made a point of not being close to Yual for that reason. He's a good man.)

His thoughts were filled with his memories about his family and his own experiences with contracts, working numbers, and the thousands of deals that were constantly made among merchant families. (I asked Yual to take the first leap. But I had nothing to do with Sterli. Did you?)

(No, he was the last one I wanted to accept the spell.)

A wave of regret. (Me either, no one likes the bastard. But he ended up being the perfect drama queen, right? That little fight of his was exactly what we needed to get others to accept it.)

Surprised, Merrie could only agree.

(Thank you for not forcing him.)

(I would never do that.)

(Then I made the right choice. I trust you, Bitch, more than anyone else in my life. If you make a promise, I will believe it until the end of the world.)

She smiled and blinked at a sudden tears in her eyes.

He continued, (I know we are going our separate ways, but I'm going to miss you so much. Without you, I would have never survived this hell. I know I can't ever go home, but you have give me and the rest of us our freedom.)

Merrie didn't have the words or even thoughts to response. Instead, she just sent a wave of affection and love in response.

(If yo are willing to listen, give these folks a little time before you head up. They need some privacy to get over the last few minutes. There are a few hours before noon and that... utterly terrifying plant creature.)

Thorn was terrifying. She grinned and her tail wagged with her amusement. (Want me to wait here?)

(Please?) It was a request and yet it wasn't. Ston was speaking from experience and she could tell he was becoming a leader the prisoners needed.

With a smile, she settled down. (I'll wait.)

t'Sade

Freedom

103

By the time noon came around, almost everyone in the prison had found their way into the gardens. Most of them sneaked out of the tunnels like rats to rush up to the rock. But as soon as they touched the rock and said the words, the spell took hold and they relaxed.

More than a few of them tested the bounds of the spell almost immediately. Curious and hesitant thoughts of robbing banks, killing people, or even thinking about drowning Sterli. Actually, more than a few used Sterli to test the connection, a fact that only made Sterli more and more furious since he was privy to each one as they were broadcast across the network.

At first, it was Ston and Yual that responded with patience and chiding but soon others that brought corrections in their own distinct styles. More than once, Merrie felt Grange or another warrior threatening someone for their more serious errant thoughts. Though Grange was willing to hunt down people to make his point instead of responding telepathically.

For all appearances, the spell seemed to have worked. Everywhere she looked, there was no sign of the Justice Geas or any other geas remained on anyone who had accepted the new network. Even with her powers with oath magic, they were truly and completely free of the relentless limitations.

She wasn't the only one who noticed the geasa were gone. It was only hours before the ripples of spells began to beat against the walls of the tunnels. No one was killing anyone, but there were candles floating in the air and stone flowing along the edges.

And with the return of magic came an intense joy. In some cases, it was a happiness that had been missing for decades. The first touch

of being able to use powers that had been sealed away left a pleasure that was as intense as an orgasm.

For once, Merrie and pleasure wasn't needed. She was content to remain curled up in the garden and let the emotions wash over her.

Ston sat down next to her. "It's like the Long Winter Night."

Her ears perked up.

"I remember when we would wait until midnight and then rip open all the presents." He chuckled. "I never thought I would be here when I was just a little kid. I had dreams of being one of the Loyals or fighting for Franome."

He chuckled and shook his head. Then he patted his soft belly. "I was never going to be a guard."

(From what I've seen, becoming a Loyal is probably not for you. You are bonded into your armor for the rest of your life.) She thought about Loyal Alestri. (And you kind of lose a hunk of your humanity.)

"Yeah," he said with a chuckle. "I wasn't ever going to be a Loyal. Hell, I couldn't even run around the courtyard if you were biting my heels."

Her tail snapped against the ground. (Oh, I'm sure you'd run if I was biting your balls.)

He grinned. Then he leaned against her. "I want you to survive. I want to play card games with you."

(Strip cards?)

A few fantasies flashed through his mind. The strongest was her kneeling in front of him, her mouth on his cock and her ears tickling his thighs.

She grinned and wagged faster. (It's a deal.)

Ston grunted as he leaned over to her. "That means, you have to survive your trip to the demons or whatever you're doing. I need you to survive. Please? Promise me?"

He wanted a promise, but she knew he was thinking about empty words not the full force of an oath. However, she felt something else hovering over her, an aching need that what she had to give him was something more than promises.

Merrie didn't think she could make an empty promise ever again.

However, oaths had power and she was about to go into somewhere that she may need it. Demons were creatures of

destruction and chaos. She doubted they were going to gently thank her for Kivas' energy and then send her on her way.

Bass had wrapped his life in promises. They were used against him but they also gave him strength when nothing else was left.

She reached up and rested her wrist on Ston's shoulder. "I promise," she said in her hoarse voice. "I'm going to play those cards with you when this is all over."

Ston smiled and stroked her head. "Thank you."

Merrie leaned against his thigh. She could feel the oath take place in a hidden place, digging deep to where she hoped she would need it.

In the distance, she could feel the building of power. Around everyone, the plants began to shift delicately as petals unfurled and leaves stretched out.

Thorn was coming.

She leaned over and kissed Ston before getting up.

He looked around. "What's happening.?"

(Time to go.)

He scrambled to his feet, his face pale. He looked around for some sign that he had missed.

Merrie sent images of the plants around her. Then she pointed out the swell of power as the trees began to dig deeper into the formerly bare ground, burrowing deeper as they stretched up to form a path of branches and wood in a crude staircase leading up to the rim of the valley.

Ston cleared his throat. "It's time to get ready. Anyone staying, say your goodbyes or accept the stone. As Bitch said, this is the last chance for you to leave."

He looked at an older couple who had been together for years, including when they went on a four county murder spree. "Are you sure?"

The wife shook her head. "No, we're staying."

He went over to talk to them quietly.

Feeling like an outsider, Merrie remained on the edge and watched as the others picked up their meager belongings. Being in a prison for years didn't allow for many knickknacks or boxes. Doubt filled the air as they regarded the path.

Thorn stepped down. "Humans smart enough to leave, get going. Your way is clear. Don't touch anything, don't get off the path, and keep walking until the flowers stop." His voice was bitter and angry, but it was the tone reserved to someone talking to cockroaches in the kitchen more than anything else.

He looked around. "Any idiots staying?"

Ston stood up. "Yes, and be nice to them. This wasn't an easy choice and they deserve to be respected for their decision."

Thorn glared at Ston for a moment. The garden grew tense for a moment then Thorn smacked his lips. "Fine. For those remaining, this area is the limit of your freedom above ground."

The ground twisted and then trees started to sprout. Within seconds, heavy apples, peaches, and other fruits grew on the branches of the same tree. It was a surreal combination that had no respect for natural plants. Around the trees, bushes and other plants rapidly grew into place. They also had a mixture of different fruits and vegetables, sometimes on the same plant.

"There will always be enough food. You are allowed to dig everything up to use for rope, fabric or whatever you filthy creatures need. If you need something to drink, make juice. The only rules are: don't use fire and don't go beyond the ring of plants that try to eat you."

The older couple and a few others remaining looked nervous but then nodded slowly.

"Everyone else, get out," snapped Thorn. "The path disappears in an hour. Anyone still wandering in the wild is going to be eaten."

After he stepped off the path, there an uncomfortable silence draped over the area.

Ston cleared his throat. He looked around until his eyes caught up with Merrie's.

She nodded for him to go on.

He raised his hand. "Come on. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to some freedom. I promise, I'll be the first to go over the line."

Then, in a shuffle of discomfort and fear and hope, the former prisoners of Abbinkey Prison started their trek to freedom.

Merrie's ears drooped. She had saved them, at least the ones who wanted to, but she felt like it was just one more complication.

Emotions bubbled inside her but she let the rage, frustration, and fear beat against her without interrupting her.

(Good girl,) Zillia said with a wave of affection.

“They will be safe, at least to the edge of my domain. Beyond that, they will have their own skills to keep them safe.” Thorn spoke quietly and without anger from next to her. She didn’t need to look to see the Copir silfae as he stepped out from a wall of vines and sat down next to her.

She regarded him, first seeing the delicate creature sitting on the ground next to her and then as a mage capable of doing incredible things. If he had bonded with her, there was no question that most of the world would be covered in flowers, trees, and vines. But, for all of his dislike of humans, he was in a rare mood of being utterly relieved that they were leaving his domain and she was going to follow soon after.

It took her a moment to form the thoughts that wouldn’t cause him to grow defensive. (I’m not worried about your end of the bargain.)

“Why do you bother? They are meat. No matter what spell you cast to bind them together, they eventually become fertilizer.”

(They are friends and don’t deserve what I’ve done. Kivas killed so many because of me.)

“Kivas has done worse. He’s slaughtered almost every prisoner at least twice since I showed up sixty years ago. The people who run this prison, the guards that were killed, most of them knew that. There are ghosts and the restless dead in the valley, my plants are fighting them. It may take centuries but weed and leaf always triumphs.”

She wasn’t surprised at the revelation.

Thorn reached down. A strand of grass stretched up to curl around his finger. “The energies of his are leaking out of your collar. I can see that they are beginning to corrupt your power.”

(I used most of Kivas to seal the Red Door shut. This is what is left.)

“No, there is more. Much more.”

Merrie’s ears perked up even as she felt a wave of frustration rising up like a sharp edge.

“That’s part of his secret. The corpse you were dealt with, the meat puppet that he used as a body, was just a shell. You have a large portion, more than probably any mortal could survive, but it isn’t all of it. If you miss any of it, he eventually recovers.”

She thought for a moment. (The well?)

“Yes.”

A shiver of dread ran down her spine. She was already being affected by the energy in the collar. The idea of taking more was terrifying. (How much?)

Thorn glared at one of the prisoners who was too close. As they stepped away, he looked up at the others crawling up the path. “If you were human, I would give you a week before what you have today eats you alive. If you remained here, I’d give you a three days before I’d start trying to kill you to keep my world safe.” His voice grew harder but she could feel that it was just self-interested tension.

Merrie glanced at him. (How much in the well?)

“If you were normal? It would turn your week into minutes. For you? I don’t know. You are... difficult to understand. You have all the mess of humanity without the grace of plants, but your energy seems to grow significantly the more you are shoved down. You are like a weed, but one made of... something far worse than what I’m willing to deal with.” There was distaste in his voice.

(If I just take what is in the collar away, how long until he recovers?)

“You know that’s impossible to know.”

Merrie’s tail dropped. (You have an idea?)

“Couple centuries probably. You have absorbed a lot in that collar, more than I thought any mortal device was capable of containing. That device is an artifact, isn’t it?”

Merrie nodded. Her eyes remained fixed on the prisoners leaving the prison. They were almost out of sight. Ston was in the rear, glancing back more than once as he struggled with the effort to reach the top.

“Even the gods couldn’t stop Kivas forever. This prison was just a matter of time before he broke free. You aren’t going to be able to kill him either. The most you can do is slow him down and move his attack somewhere else.”

She thought about the difficulty she had at the well, the overriding desire to crawl into it. It had called to her, summoned her and tried to get her to return. It was overwhelming powerful, almost more than she could handle. She tried to mask her growing fear from her thoughts. (If I deal with the well?)

“You probably wouldn’t survive.”

Merrie sent a wave of annoyance. (You know Kivas better than me. How long?)

Thorn grunted. “Thousand years, maybe more. Except when you die before you do whatever you plan on doing, I’m guess it will only be years until he pulls together. I don’t know how, but he can reform with nothing more than sheer will.”

More sunlight speared through the canopy, catching her thigh, stomach, and chest. Each time it burned away her shadowy body. More flames ignited across her skin, peeling back the darkness like mist burning away with the sun. Heat and black flames consumed her as she was immolated in the brilliance of the morning light.

(I might have an idea about how he does that.)

Thorn chuckled. “I guess you would. I saw how you killed my plants as you were recovering from being digested. Which means if someone is going to take that thing out of my valley, you are the best choice. The further away you get, the safer I’ll be.”

(As long as I take the well energy with me?)

Thorn tensed. He worked his mouth for a moment. “If you are capable.”

Merrie thought about Zillia’s rainbow eyes and the way Kivas’ energy had corrupted and changed her spell. She could feel the leaking energy from the collar seeping into her body, changing it in ways she couldn’t understand. Even when she got rid of it, it would continue to assault her for years if not decades. Then she shifted slightly to look directly at Thorn. (I can barely handle what I have now. It’s changing Zillia and I can feel it corrupting my magic. When I’m walking, I can feel it on the edges of my vision but can’t ever focus on it.)

“You may already be dead, Creature. If that is the case, it’s just a matter of where you leave your bloated corpse. You are getting rid of the infestation of humans here—”

Merrie shook her head and smiled. (If I would kindly see myself out before dying, you’d appreciate it.)

Thorn tensed, his tiny body vibrating. She could hear him grind his teeth for a moment. “I don’t like humans and I don’t like talking to them. I despise Kivas and you are a threat. There is no nice way of saying it.” He cleared his throat. “I don’t have those skills and no intent in acquiring them.”

(I understand.)

“Even if you can’t drain the well, I ask that you give me a few centuries of peace before Kivas returns. For that, I will ensure that the remaining infestation of humans will have a comfortable life as long as they remain.”

Merrie considered her options. The idea of taking on the well was terrifying to her. She remembered how difficult it was to pull away and that was before she realized it contains more of Kivas inside it. With the corruption of her magic, taking on more may tear her delicate body apart or send her into a century-long horror of trying to pull her body together again.

With a shudder, she got up. (I should leave.)

Thorn stood up himself. He started to say something but then shook his head. She could feel that he was appreciative that she was leaving but also knew that he would never see her again. The tiny sliver of compassion and regret was easy to miss in the silfae.

He stepped back as the plants surrounded himself. In a matter of seconds, he was gone.

Merrie looked at the prisoners who had remained to stay. Some of them were fighting regret and doubt but none of them were willing to touch the stone.

She felt guilt herself for not taking on the well, but it was too much. She shook her head before turning and heading back into the tunnels.

There were demons to find and the only thing she knew was to go down until she found them.

The Well

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Less than a half hour later, Merrie was crawling in the dark. The stone was rough but she didn't want to switch to her Bel Dark hound form until it was too much for her to move. She couldn't use her living shadow form because there wasn't even a hint of light surrounding her; there were no shadows, only the purest dark.

Her knees scraped over sharp rocks as she sniffed the air. Her vision was clear—there was no way she could find the demons while blind—but there were just long-abandoned tunnels, the occasional human skeleton, or abandoned tools. Everywhere she saw, there was signs of mining and death.

It was Kivas who had forced the prisoners to delve deep into the earth in an attempt to find an escape. Merrie couldn't imagine what lengths a millennium-long desire to escape could inflict on everyone else.

The idea that in a few centuries Kivas would come back left a cloud of guilt hanging over Merrie. In the lifespan of Thorn, Kivas, Rakin, and even Bass, a century was not that long. She wasn't even sure how long she would live, with her body made of shadows and magic permeating every fiber of her being. As far as she knew, she would have the same lifespan as the others and of respite meant she would be facing Kivas later.

(Are you thinking about facing the well now, Mistress?)

Merrie stopped crawling. Warring emotions fought inside her. The strongest was fear. She was already losing part of herself with the energies in her collar. Increasing that dramatically could see her torn apart or even destroyed.

On the other hand, she hated that she didn't even try. She just ran with her tail between her legs.

(You could come back later to get the rest.)

Merrie considered it. Could she ferry Kivas' power between the well and the demons. That was assuming that she found the demons and the creatures would be able to feed on Kivas like the shadows did to Lemetri's corpse.

More importantly, it made an assumption that moving Kivas was like carrying a bucket of water. Not something that continually grew and adapted to every event. No, it would be impossible to do that. She might get a second chance, but she doubted the raw chaos would give her a third.

It was all or nothing. Either she took the measure of Kivas she had already captured or she went back for all of it.

Her thoughts drifted to how to survive the well. She already knew that it would call to her, drag her into the depths. No doubt, it would be almost impossible to escape.

(Are you sure you want to do this?)

The answer came up as a memory.

Shaking violently, Merrie tried to look at Kirin, but the queen's presence was too strong. A tear welled in her eye as she stared into the dark green eyes. She knew what she had to say, but the idea of being bound forever terrified her. But, she also knew that the queen would only accept one of two answers.

She barked.

Queen Vikia nodded once. "Do you swear loyalty to Franome, the crown, and the land, for the rest of your days?" It was the oath of loyalty every child said in school, but when the queen said it, the air beat with power and Merrie felt energy swirling around her.

Her throat dry, Merrie tried to swallow, but couldn't. She barked, a little louder than before.

"Do you swear to protect it with your will, your pride, your power, and your life?"

The swirls of energy shimmered into existence, forming runes in the branches of a giant tree that filled

the room. Merrie whimpered as she felt it sinking into her mind, exploding with intensity as her true nature took the oath and made it something more powerful than a mere geas. It took almost all of her effort to bark again.

“Do you swear to keep its secrets until the end of time?”

She had never heard that phrase in the oath, but she barked again.

“Do you swear to guard the Royal Family from all harm, inside and out?”

Merrie gasped as she barked, her body tingling. The geas poured into her, spreading out to sink into every cell of her body. She expected it to taste like shit, but there was nothing but the hint of flowers and leaves on her tongue.

“Do you swear to serve until released by the Royal family?”

She barked loudly, a single sharp noise. Around her, the oath spell exploded and sucked into her, burning into her mind and body. It didn't hurt, but there was an intense rush as if she had been electrocuted during an orgasm. It just kept rippling through her body, threatening to explode out, but she clutched to it until it spread out through her body and sank into her bones.

She had to go back. Even though the Royal Geas didn't bind her actions, it was a promise she had made in good faith and intended to keep. Even if it meant risking her life, she had to do everything to serve the greater good.

(We almost didn't make it last time.) Zillia's fear mirrored her own.

The anticipation of the command crashed into her. She tried to back away but her limbs still refused to move.

(Back away, Bitch!)

She whimpered and forced herself back. Every step caused her body to shake and her chest to hurt. Her

heart slammed into her chest, the triple beat crashing in her ears.

The idea of going back terrified her more than she wanted to admit. But, she was going back which meant she had to find a way of fighting the well's allure. She needed strength to wrench the power from inside and keep it inside her. It was probably going to hurt, more than anything that she had experienced.

She needed powerful magic, one that would override her consciousness desires to remain. She had to be forced to obey.

Even the thought of being forced into submission brought a welcoming ripple of pleasure. She squirmed as she delved deeper into a forming plan.

(Psionics would be ideal for controlling your body.)

(As would having my mistress commanding me.)

Zillia fluttered against her chest. (This is going to be dangerous.)

(Then my mistress better not waver,) Merrie thought sharply. (I need to obey. I have no doubt that even through the deepest of desires to remain in that well, being an Alpha is one of the strongest tools I have.)

Merrie sighed and turned around. Transforming herself into a Bel Dark hound, she raced back toward the well. As her heavy paws smashed into the ground, she began to craft a new suite of spells. Her combat ones wouldn't help her, but she could create ones that would buffer her from the transforming and corrupting nature of Kivas.

By the time she approached the well, the power of her spells withered the ground. Solid stone and dirt corroded and blew away into dust but her black paws still thudded against the ground with every step. Most of her thoughts were locked in crystals, layer after layer of protections to keep her sane and seal away any desire besides to serve the Royal Geas.

There was no disagreement. She accelerated toward the wall. Around her, the black waves of Shadows tore at the ground. The plants that had grown when Thorn took control of the valley were vaporized almost instantly. Seconds later, the second that had been there for centuries became nothing more than dust.

Chaos and darkness fought as she slammed into the well. The iron cage above it twisted but remained in place. She reared back and slammed into the side again, knocking a few bricks free.

Raw, uncontrolled chaos blasted across her face. It tore at her skin, stripping away the thin layer of flesh that shielded her core of darkness.

The aura of Shadows plunged into the wound, layering on top of it just like the crystalline spells protected her thoughts.

Pain ripped through her senses. Excruciating agony that tore through every vein.

(Push past it, Bitch,) came the order. Even though Zillia was only a few meters away, at the end of the well's influence, the thoughts were already wavering.

Pleasure warred with pain as Merrie ripped open the well. Hunks of stone and rusted iron fell to the side until the opening into the earth was exposed like a festering wound. Inside, it was dark, but she could feel the raw power emanating from inside.

There was no conflict between her mistress' orders and the desires to return to the well. There was no reason to hesitate. With a powerful surge of her back legs, she plunged blindly into the darkness.

It was deeper than she expected. She started to cast a spell to protect her from the impact but the raw chaos around her tore apart the spell before she could shape it.

The side of the wall struck her shoulder and threw her across to the other side. Sharp rocks tore at her skin, gouging deep rents into her pale flesh as she spun helplessly toward the bottom.

Merrie smashed into the bottom of the dry well with brutal force. The impact shattered bone and drove her face into the stone until her skull cracked.

She couldn't even scream out in pain as her body collapsed.

Agony burned her thoughts and tugged her toward oblivion. It would be so easy to let the chaos tear her apart and have her body

(Remember your oath!) Zillia's thoughts were scattered but the desire to obey rose up even though she couldn't hear the words. Anticipation shoved past the pain.

Shadows howled as they poured into her body, repairing and filling her back up. Shattered bones knitted themselves together, flowing

together to reform the false semblance of humanity that she had worn since her rebirth in the shadows.

(Obey.)

Pleasure flooded her senses, blending with the pain that ravaged her body. She snarled as her body reformed. Shadows wrapped tight around her body, shielding her from the foul energies that surrounded her.

There was a tunnel leading out from the bottom of the well. In the distance, she could see the shifting, rainbow energies of chaos flickering.

Fueled by oath and her desire to approach, she padded down the hallway. She tried to concentrate to use magic but the chaos continued to tear apart the magic. She frowned but kept trying as she reached the end of the hallway and looking inside.

There nothing but raw chaos. Just a wall of shifting energies every color that she could imagine and more than a few that she couldn't. They boiled and twisted on each other. Her mind automatically tried to find some pattern in the movements, but just when she thought she caught one, it changed on her.

A piercing headache ripped through her thoughts. There was no pattern to chaos, there never would be. That didn't stop her conscious thoughts from trying.

There was no other shape, no hint of a chamber or an artifact. There was nothing to grab to take with her.

There was only a place to lie down and die, to give up and let her body be torn—

Her oath and the desire to serve tore her thoughts away.

Pain replaced the suicidal thoughts. She struggled to concentrate. All her senses were useless, she got nothing but the same rainbow energies if she used physical or magical vision. Her mental thoughts were also similar corrupted.

It took all her effort to look down. Her body was burning, melting away into the chaos as fast as the shadows reformed her. She could feel the agony of every millimeter of her body as it was torn and reform constantly.

Whimpering, she took a step into the chaos. She had to absorb it, to gather it. Taking a deep breath, she tried to summon the energies to the collar.

It slipped away from her.

She tried again and again, but the chaos refused to be directed. Every second that pass continued to burn her body, dissolving flesh and bone with rapid speed.

Fear flooded her as she tried to find some way to gather the power. She tried not to think about how long the Shadows would last, it was minutes if not seconds before they were burned away.

The suicidal thoughts returned. She just had to give up. Just lie down.

(No!) Zillia projected with incredible force. (I will not allow you to surrender! You have promises, to the Royal Family, to Ston, to Bass, to everyone.)

Merrie dug into herself. She couldn't form a spell but she did have one source of power she could use: determination. It rose up in a wave, Rakin's influence magnifying the overwhelming desire to obey master and geas. She had to save the country, she had to serve her mistress. She had to survive.

Shaking, she plunged into the field of raw chaos. It ripped at her body but she couldn't direct it from the inside. She had to be inside it, she had to channel it.

Merrie knew it was going to hurt. She stepped further into it and opened up her senses to the raw power around her. Sobbing at the pain, she pulled at it instead of trying to shove it into her collar.

It flooded her body, setting all of her nerves on fire. Her skin, bones, and even her heart ached as the chaos consumed her insides. She shuddered with the agony but couldn't stop.

Blood and shadows leaked out of her body as she reflexively channeled the power into her collar, storing it in a place she could take almost all of her power.

The adamantite collar—the one thing in her life that had remained unchanged since the night she had bonded to herself—ignited into flames. The raw power leaked out in all directions.

No scream came out as her throat as immolated but Merrie was on agony. She strained to shove more of the chaos into her collar, but it was like using long-forgotten fingers to stop a boiling pot from spilling out. It poured out as much as it was forced inside.

Zillia's presence rose but she couldn't hear the words.

Thankfully, the anticipation of command, the desire to obey before she heard the words, kept her together. She had to gather the power, she had to drag it to demons so they could feed on it. She sobbed and cried and screamed but couldn't hear the words. Every step, every beat of her heart, was agony.

She needed to gather more of it. The collar had reached its limits but there was still far too much of Kivas.

Merrie bore down, pulling the energy of the uncontrollable being inside her even as she concentrated on forcing it into her collar. It didn't matter if the collar was burning. The white-hot metal against her skin wasn't going to stop her either.

She was an Alpha.

She had to obey her geas.

She had to obey her mistress.

She had to obey her promise.

Determination and anger exploded inside her. The raw emotions mixed with her psychic powers and shadows. Darkness flooded around her before it was sucked into her body along with the chaos.

Something formed inside her. She couldn't call it a spell but more of a raw desire giving shape to her magics. She called on everything she had, every promise and oath, every spell and power, the hunger for every master that she had served, and channeled it into the collar.

Chaos was dragged along with it.

The collar burned brighter against her skin, searing into her very being and even branding her spirit. It was marking her forever, she just hoped it wouldn't be her last.

With all her might, Merrie shoved everything she had into her collar. She didn't what it would do, but she only hoped entangling chaos with her other abilities would allow her.

The collar resisted more.

She pushed harder. It had to take it, she needed it to handle the power. If she was going to deliver Kivas to the demons, she needed it inside her.

The metal burned hotter. A high-pitched whine filled the air, a sound that defied even the random noises of chaos that she hadn't realized were drowning her out. She could feel the collar moving

along her skin, at least where her nerves were not destroyed by the white-hot metal.

It wasn't going to work.

She sobbed at the face of failure.

Merrie couldn't fail. She had promised she would succeed, she had to serve the Royal Family. She needed to.

The overwhelming desire to succeed rose up. She wracked her mind through the fog of chaos and agony trying to find something she had forgotten. She needed to succeed.

There was one.

Just one option left.

One terrible choice, one that would dominate her life for the end of reality.

She could bond with it.

She shuddered at the idea of tying her soul to the chaos. It would more than corrupt her, it would threaten everything in her existence. It could turn her into the next Kivas or something worse. With chaos as a master, there would be no limits because chaos had none.

Merrie fought the urge even as she grew slick with anticipation. It would be seductive to want that power, a hunger for more until she was more powerful than anything known in existence. It would take Parn to—

Her attention was free of her train of consciousness. Bonding to Kivas would more than violate her geas. She had to obey it.

Rakin's determination drove her to fight the urge. She concentrated on the collar. She needed it to absorb more power, it had to take it. Bearing down, she forced more into the collar.

Something began to give. She felt it, just a hint of the collar taking more.

She wasn't willing to stop and investigated what had changed. Instead she kept forcing energy until she was nothing more than a conduit of chaos as it sucked out of the chamber and into the white-hot artifact wrapped around her throat.

Her vision blurred along with the rising agony.

The triple beat was gone.

Merrie kept channeling the power.

She felt her insides being hollowed out, shredded by the power.

t'Sade

Unable to sob, she just concentrated until there was nothing left to give.

Ring of Fire 105

Merrie took one step forward. The ground hissed underneath her feet as it melted away into a burst of chaos and shadows. It took all of her concentration to shift her weight to her paw and lean into the hole that had formed.

She stumbled but managed to keep her limbs straight. Her body transformed back into her humanoid form for only a moment before scales sprouted along her wrist before she turned into something twisted abomination somewhere between octopus and wolf.

The collar at her throat torched her skin, boiling away flesh and muscle. Through the waves of pain, she could feel it scorching her bones. Trembling, she reached up for it but it wasn't icy metal that her wrist bumped against but nearly molten heat.

Despite the agony of touching the nearly liquid metal, she tried to find the one flaw in the smooth surface, the twist of metal where she had seared the shadow gem into the front. It was her focus, the point where the collar no longer turned her energies into a maelstrom of horror and destruction. The gem had created the separation she needed, an artificial difference between master and alpha: Zillia.

She reached all the way around with growing despair. The gem was gone but something had taken its place. There were many bumps and ridges. The metal was thinner somehow, thinner and more delicate.

Pain rose up as her other limbs became to collapse. She looked down to see scales disappearing as her arm turned into a hideous abomination of octopus tentacle and feathers. Then it crumbled away into a glowing branch of raw chaos before even that dissolved.

She fell forward, her body no longer able to maintain her weight. A soft cry left her throat as she smacked against the ground.

Her body burned as the heat finished tearing through her throat and spine. Then her head swung to the side as the collar rolled clear of her smoldering corpse.

Merrie's eyes opened wide as she saw it bounce a few times before it began to fall. The momentum caused the collar to spin like a coin, the hiss of chaos and ring of metal filling the air as scored a deep ring directly into the bare rock.

The collar stopped, looking more like a molten ring of metal burning into the floor.

She tried to look for the gem, but she couldn't see it. It wasn't there along the now featureless ring.

Sadness filled her as oblivion's claws dug into her thoughts. The shadow gem was part of her, it was bound into her soul and made her the Omega that she had become.

The ring began to bubble.

Merrie stared at it, struggling to concentrate as her head began to list to the side.

A gem oozed out of the surface, bubbling up. It was the shadow gem, but much smaller. Then more of them rose to the surface, dotting along the ring like an expensive ring of diamonds. The metal between the gems stretched and narrowed, becoming gossamer strands that connected the crystals into something more akin to a tiara for a princess or something she would see on a model.

Merrie smiled to herself.

Then she caught sight of the tunnel behind the collar.

Perfectly formed circles had been melted into the rock. Some of them were only meters apart while the further apart looked to be twenty or more. They created a trail from her position up to where sunlight still filtered through a dense cover of plants over the tunnel entrance.

Merrie was going to die, but the collar wouldn't let her stay that way. She may only make it a few steps before the collar killed her, but she was going to reach the demons even if it took her centuries to do so.

She had survive the endless deaths before, she would do it again. And again, no matter how long it took her.

Merrie had promised.

With a smile, she let darkness consume her as she prepared herself to resume walking as soon as her body reformed.

t'Sade

One More Step

106

With a sickening lurch, Merrie's senses came to life in a rush of darkness and pain. The sharp taste of the collar's resurrection magic flooded her mouth, pushing past the ever-present taste of sake. It burrowed beyond the icy claws of oblivion in the process of releasing her from her previous death. Even as it drilled into her soul, it was also fading now that she had regained consciousness.

Over the last few... days? Weeks? Years? Time had been meaningless for her as she tried to take the collar into the depths of the earth. Her entire world had become nothing more than the punctuated moments filled with agony in her attempts to crawl a few meters before the collar overwhelmed the resurrection magic and burned through her neck to decapitate her.

(Start moving, Bitch,) commanded Zillia.

Merrie didn't have time to hesitate. Excruciating pain had burned into her consciousness that she had no time for anything but obey. She had to keep crawling.

The collar ignited into multicolored flames. It burned at her skin, peeling it back like withering paper. The ring twisted and expanded, spreading from the simple band into the lace pattern that cradled her entire throat.

Her entire body shaking violently, she reached out and crawled forward. Her naked skin prickled in the contrast of cold air and the heat radiating from her throat. Her body tensed with the effort, the triple beat of her heart rising up to pound in her ears.

"Just two more steps," she gasped through her recently healed throat. Two more steps, three. It didn't matter. She was going to die but at least she could get closer.

Zillia's bolstered her with a wordless presence. The anticipation of the collar's command kept Merrie moving.

The light of the collar shone against the tunnel she followed. It was a rough hewed corridor that burrowed deep into the ground. Veins of silver and gems shone in the light of the chaos magic. Rainbow sparks splashed across the stones, cascading across the ground and glittering off every surface.

Her final steps were made in brilliance. A cacophony of light that fought with the sensation of her insides being eaten away by Kivas' power. The light added to her pain, the intensity burning her freshly recovered skin as if it was sunlight.

Merrie ground her teeth and forced her knees to move another step.

(One more step.)

The tears burned away from her face.

(One more.)

It was just her and her mistress, no words were needed, only the hiss of flames and whimpers that escaped her throat.

The strength fled from her in a flood. Her elbows and knees collapsed underneath her. With a sigh, she turned her head to the side so when she collapsed into the ground, the sharp rocks would catch her breasts and shoulder. It was a familiar pain. It was nothing compared to the overwhelming agony of the collar burning its way through her neck.

Merrie almost gave up but she couldn't. If she didn't take a step now, she would have to take it after her body recovered. Every step now would be one less later.

(I'm sorry, Mistress,) she sent with her fading thoughts. (I failed you.)

(You will never fail me.) Zillia's thoughts shone with love and compassion. She knew exactly what Merrie was going through, not just because the collar shared Merrie's pain.

The ground shook underneath her.

(Something is coming, Mistress. It is not human.)

Merrie's thoughts froze for a moment. She had died countless times with the collar but the ground had never rumbled underneath her. It didn't beat like some drum nor did it get louder until her entire body quivered with the impact of something heavy.

Something crunched on the rocks near her.

The first thought was the demons she had been searching. She had no clue what to expect. She had never encountered an abyssal creature before. She didn't even know what their magic felt like. Would it be the burning red of the Infernals or something entirely else?

She tried to prepare her for a fight but there was nothing left for her draw on. No energy, no power, no submission. Nothing left but a dying girl.

(I have nothing—)

The collar finally burned through her neck. The magic hissed as her spine spit apart, peeling away with the sick sensation of charred muscles and skin. Her head rolled to the side, crushing her ear before it thumped against something heavy and still moving.

In the corner of her vision, she saw a massive obsidian claw. There were two more of them, each one scraping into the solid ground as a presence loomed over her.

Claws gripped the side of her head. An immense strength bore down on her skull, cracking the bone. One claw swung over her vision before the sharp point jammed into her eyeball.

Anticipation surged through her, followed by an intense rush of helplessness.

With a spurt, her eye burst open and black fluids sprayed everywhere. Then her head was plucked from the ground and rolled around like nothing more than a toy in a child's palm.

Her situation sent off an intense wave of longing and helplessness. There was nothing she could do to stop whatever creature had picked her up. She didn't have limbs or a body, only a head with one blinded eye. Pleasure, if that was possible, filled in the gap that the collar had left behind as it became a puddle of light burning into the stone. Her remaining vision sharpened just as whatever creature picked her up peered directly into her face.

Six searing red eyes stared directly at her. The face of the creature didn't have even a shred of humanity. Instead of a mouth and nose, she saw nothing but a vertical slit that almost appeared to be a pussy except for the writhing teeth that peeked out from the drooling lips. Two large fangs, one above and one below, were

poised to bite down and shove the creature's meal into the slobbering hole.

With growing dread, she knew exactly what would be caught in the fangs in mere moments, her head. The anticipation grew, flooding her with power and clarity.

The red eyes on one side of the mouth blinked. (One more? For what?) The creature's voice was a deep, rumbling noise that made no sense to her thoughts but it also projected its intent at the same time, creating an overlapping wave of noise and confusion that somehow made sense. It sounds like a growling voice barely heard in the multitude of other noises that came out of the creature's mouth. The effort to comprehend grated on her nerves.

(I... must... bring....) Despite the rush of energy inside her, her thoughts were fading as her black blood poured from her severed neck. The stench of burned shadows and flesh filled the room.

(Chaos... feed....) She couldn't get the words out, even with her mind. Her thoughts had grown fragmented. She tried to reach out for Zillia but her companion's presence had faded when the collar rolled away.

Merrie wanted to whimper. She wish the collar had remained on for just a few more moments, just long enough to communicate clearly instead of having her fading thoughts struggling to project to a creature she had been hunting.

The beast turned her head to look at the brilliant ring that had melted into the collar. In the edges of her fading vision, she could see the dotted holes in the ground where she had died again and again. (This? What is it? There is power. More than humans usually handle.)

(I died. A lot.)

The thing turned her back to stare at her. (You will die,) it projected with terrible thoughts. (But not from that.) Its hunger filled her mind, bringing the rush of anticipation even before it opened its mouth wide.

The creature's saliva burned her face as it shoved her into its mouth. The two sharp teeth slammed down, puncturing the back of her skull and sending white-hot agony across her mind. The intense pleasure of helplessness and anticipation gave her a few seconds to

feel every teeth as they dug into the side of her face, stripping away flesh and muscle to scrape on the bone.

(Too bad. You have a curious taste.)

The teeth bore down, shattering her skull and crushing her brains. Her organs spewed up, pouring into the demon's gullet and into oblivion.

Zillia. Zillia could help but Merrie was already gone. Her final thoughts drifted out even as her head was ground into pulp by the demon's jaw. (Next time.)

t'Sade

Biting Down

107

Like every time before, Merrie's consciousness came back in a rush of resurrection magic and sake. She moaned and reached out to take the next step toward the demons.

Zillia's presence rushed into her mind. (A demon is here, Mistress.) Then a flood of memories came rushing by, a rapid-fire series of resurrections and deaths all by the demon's claws. The creature had done the same thing every time: questioned her as he devoured her alive.

The intimate sensations played across her mind. She remembered the scrape of his teeth, the slick sensation of his saliva as it draped across her skin. The creature was callous and cruel, but at the same time, intimate and primal.

She stretched out with her limbs.

(No, don't crawl away,) projected the dark rumbling voice. Powerful claws wrapped around her ribs. The sharp tips jammed into her chest, digging into her breasts and hips with tremendous force before piercing the skin. With a jerk, the demon yanked her from the ground and shook her violently.

A surge of lust poured into her. Her bare limbs flailed helplessly in the air as she struggled to tell which direction was up and which was down. The helplessness, both in her current situation and in the memories that were still sinking into her mind, brought a slickness to her legs.

Just as she managed to orient herself, the creature flipped her over on her back.

(You are a strange human.) There was amusement and curiosity in its thoughts. (Your body stinks of the Immortal. But you have

structure. You have persistence. When you die, you return to this form.)

It jabbed her belly with its other claws. The sharp point scraped up from her belly button to her sternum and then to one large, flattened breast. After scratching her nipple, it jabbed her severed wrist.

(The Immortal cannot retain the same shape. Not after destruction. Three times you came back. Each time the same.)

The claw dug into her wrist, piercing flesh until black blood dribbled out. (Yet, your form is broken.) The voice sounded sharper, the impossible to comprehend growl somehow hinting at more than just noise.

The demon shook her until her legs grew limp. (How about answers? Before you die again?)

Merrie struggled to keep her limbs together but they splayed out. It took all of her effort to pull her knees together. She tried to reach out with her mind but her recent consciousness and the shaking made it impossible to concentrate.

Zillia rose up, giving her strength.

The claws around her tightened. The tips ground against her bones, ripping her wounds open more until blood splashed across the ground. (I don't like talking to your familiar. Your personality fragment.)

Merrie was helpless, dazed, and confused. She struggled to gain any control over herself. At the same time, her situation triggered the constant hunger of her needs, the desperation to be used, hurt, and abused.

The demon shook her faster for a second, then stopped. (Your energies change. If I shake, if I hurt, if I bite, you change. You do not get weak. You get stronger. You rise up, gain power.)

It lifted her up. The growling voice grew louder as a cold, tingling breath washed over her naked skin. (You are chaos but order. I can taste it in your flesh.)

Something wet slobbered around her left arm. She tried to pull it back, but the demon's large teeth suddenly jammed down into her shoulder, pinning it in place. (You taste like a thousand meals in one. Countless demons in a single bite.)

Tiny teeth scraped along her skin before they dug into her skin. It felt like a thousand hooks piercing her skin. The demon's mouth slurped up until the creature's lips were working against her armpit and shoulder.

Merrie whimpered.

(You make fun sounds too. Every time you die, you are helpless again. Lost.)

Then a crunch.

It took a moment for the pain to register.

The demon tore her severed arm from her shoulder and pulled back. The sound of loud crunching filled the air. It was quickly followed by the sharp smell of her blackened blood and the increasing pounding of her heart.

Merrie's focus grew sharper. She bore down and let the agony fill her. It added to the energy that came from her submission, rolling around. The power danced along her senses and Zillia's thoughts blossomed with joy.

The demon's amusement radiated across her mind. It was enjoying the taste of her body even as it projected into her mind. (You are unlike any human I've killed.)

(I'm an Alpha.)

A wave of surprise. (Oh, consciousness thoughts this time. Directly from you. Pain does bring you clarity. Your thoughts fade when the collar burns away.)

As if drawing her attention to the collar, Merrie realized it was burning at her skin. Her attention on the demon's shaking and words had pushed back the pain for a few seconds, a few moments of relief. She whimpered. She could have been crawling toward the demons.

(Why? You found a demon.)

Her vision blurred. (You need to feed on Kivas.) Desperate, she sent a dense packet of memories into the creature that had been feeding on her.

(The Immortal? We cannot.)

Her skin crawled as the collar's energy intruded on her thoughts. (Why?)

(The sun is warm and comforting for humans.)

(The sun burns me.)

The demon shook her violently until her thoughts quieted. (Quiet. You are not exactly human. Sun is warm, it comforting. But shove the sun into your stomach and you die. Primal chaos is warm and cold. It is comforting and pain. We are creatures created in the reflection of chaos. But to eat it? It would destroy us.)

Frustrated filled Merrie. Rakin told her to come down her, to offer Kivas to the demons to let them feed on him and prevent him from coming out. Why couldn't the demons feed on him?

While she struggled with the growing discomfort and the sensation of having her throat burning, the demon rolled her over from one side to the other. With a shock, she realized it was looking for the next bite.

An errant thought crossed her mind. What would it feel to have the creature's mouth swallowing her leg, to have the sharp teeth pressed against her sex? Her body responded with pleasure at the idea of feeling the helplessness of the moment she had been cropped so many years ago.

The pain subsided with her desire. She projected her desire to the demon.

The creature flipped her over. (Your leg? You are choosing my next bite?)

She ground her thighs together. She was already growing slick. (Please?)

(Curious. That is new.) projected the demon before sliding her leg into its mouth. The sharp teeth scraped along her limbs before it brushed against her hips.

(Deeper,) she begged. (Tear into me.)

Amusement flooded her thoughts. The demon jammed its mouth deep over her leg, swallowing it entire until the sharp edges were digging into her pussy. The tiny flashes of pain and pleasure pushed back the pain from her collar, the growing need making it possible to accept the burning as part of her submission. She ground her hips along the creature's sharp teeth.

Merrie moaned. (Hurry.)

(Pleasure over pain?) The creature's other claws tugged on her collar, jamming the burning metal tight along the front of her throat. The smell of cooking flesh flooded her nostrils, choking and suffocating at the same time.

(Yes!) Merrie cried out.

The demon's two large teeth slammed down into her skin, punching through flesh and scraping along bone. The creature twisted her slightly and then bit down on her thigh. The powerful jaws easily severed her limb in a flash of agony.

Then nothing except the sweet release of an orgasm.

It flooded through her veins and filled every creative. She arched her back and shoved against the brutal teeth that had cropped her again. Twisting back and forth, she found a hard ridge of the creature's mouth and ground back and forth until her juices were coating the demon's face.

The demon's thoughts brimmed with curiosity and amusement. (You are a creature of lust. I cannot comprehend that. I was born of hunger and grew into violence.)

Merrie panted and slumped into the claws that held her. Panting happily, she nodded. She sent a mental pulse of agreement.

(You're a patchwork. Shadows. Psionics. Chaos. Rage. Lust.)

(Submission.) The afterglow of her orgasm began to fade and the pain from the collar returned.

The demon suckled on her severed hip. The sharp tongue probed the wound, sending sharp agonies arcing up her spine. (Just a seasoning of oath magic. No, the oath magic is your base. That is your core, your deepest flavor. Hidden, subtle. With just a hint of divinity in there.)

Merrie shuddered. Her thoughts were beginning to fracture again.

(That is how you have structure. How you survive the chaos.)

(I need to feed you.)

The demon's mouth moved to her other leg. It was almost like a lover as it sucked on the end of her ankle. It slowly drew up, pulling her limb into the teeth-lined maw and into the cold, wet depths of her through.

The sensations gave her focus. Merrie gasped as she concentrated on them.

(You are feeding me. Infernals—the devils—plan and twist. They gain energy from the consequences of actions. Their energy comes from the dread of some horrible mistake. To have something loved twisted into something terrible.)

The teeth bore down, grinding down into her flesh. The muted crunch of bone.

Pleasure exploded inside her.

(Abyssals, on the other, we are the unfocused dread and horror. Fear of the dark. Unchecked anger. Eyes peering out from the dark. I was born of a parent's starvation while giving their last bite to their child. The bitter anger and regret.)

The demon chewed on her leg, twisting and pulling until the joint popped out from her hip. The agony ripped through her senses, followed by the intense lust of submission. It pushed back the pain of the collar even further, giving her clarity in the strange submission.

Merrie sobbed with relief. (How can you feed on Kivas?)

(By feeding on you. Demons start small: little children, little fears, little demons. But then we eat. We feed on other demons and gain their energies. I consumed a demon of a little child afraid of the dark, the blind anger of a drunk, and countless more.)

It took a crunch out of her hip, shattering bone. (Sometimes we tear apart, but demons feed on demons. We get bigger. The bigger we get, the more we feed. Then we attack each other, tearing into our bodies. Energies gather and we grow. Fears blend together, grow stronger.)

The demon released her collar and then jammed its claws over her hip. Turning her over, it took another bite out of her last arm. The cool was almost a balm before her limb was torn from her body.

The realization that she was nothing more than a torso brought an intense longing. Would the demon fuck her? Use her? Pound her into oblivion. What would its cock have.

(I am not a creature of sex.)

It sent a wave of amusement. (Though, that will change. You are endless. Constantly changing. If I keep feeding, I will change too. I will become a creature of psionics. Of shadows. Of divinity, oath, and lust.)

(Of submission?) she sent.

(Chaos cannot submit. Not possible.)

Merrie whimpered and writhed. Healing magic tickled along her skin but there was no way it would heal her. She was already dying.

If it wasn't from having her limbs torn off, it would be from the collar that would decapitate her.

The creature loomed over her. (You will feed me, human. You will feed. A few minutes of life, a few minutes between your body recovering back into its shape.)

(How long?) she asked.

(I do not age.)

(I cannot die,) she sent with a twinge of fear.

(Then we will evolve. I will feed on the Immortal. I will learn how to keep you alive longer. You will last and chaos changes both. When it comes, then we can talk.)

The demon had no sense of time, no concept of growing old. Without a doubt, Merrie knew it would feed on her resurrecting body endless for years if it could. Every time it did, it would change slightly.

She sank into the pain, her senses assaulted by teeth and the burning collar. (I am Merrie.)

(I have never needed a name.) Then a pause as it grabbed her breast to take another bite to tore out half her chest. (Perhaps, I will evolve into one that does.)

t'Sade

Eight Thousand

108

Merrie's consciousness returned with a rush. She let out a long whine as her thoughts solidified back into her form.

Before her senses could return, Zillia patched in memories that had happened since her last death; the grounding that came with it helped her quickly through the disorientation. She was still in the tunnel heading toward the demons. The ground around her was pockmarked with countless blackened rings; each one represented one time the collar had burned through her neck and dropped to the ground.

(8024 times, Mistress.)

Stunned, she mulled over the number. She remembered a number of her deaths, though most of the more recent ones were by the demon devouring her while probing her for questions, but there were enough that ended with her neck being burned through and her head rolling to the side.

The demon's thoughts intruded into her mind. (Welcome back, Merrie.) Its thoughts were cheerful and dark at the same time, like a psychopath on a warm summer day. There was no question that the demon planned on eating her again.

Its claws dug into her body as it plucked her from the rocks. When it drew her off the rocks, they were no longer sharp and piercing. The edges had been dulled by her body, the rock corroded by her black blood until they were in nothing but smooth bumps along the pocked ground.

The demon didn't waste time before it took a bite out of her shoulder. The broad teeth tore into her flesh and crunched down on bones.

A thousand memories of thousands of deaths added to the pain. It became pleasure, the ultimate submission with her becoming nothing more than an endless buffet for the demon. She was a meal, a thing, meat.

The demon let out a low growl of appreciation. (You always taste so good. A flavor that never stays the same.)

Merrie leaned into the creature's teeth, letting her attention focus onto the sensation of flesh being ripped away and the crunch of bone. She tried to move her shoulder, just to feel that it refused to budge.

Her legs scissored together, her thighs slick with her excitement and orgasms. She moaned and arched her back.

(Let me pick the next bite,) the creature said. Its voice was had become more masculine and commanding. It drew its teeth along her skin. The sharp points traced along her ribs and up to her breast. Thick rivulets of saliva dripped along the sensitive nipple before rolling off her curve.

Merrie moaned and writhed in the grip.

(You have a delicious body,) growled the demon. His thoughts were tinged with lust, an emotion that he didn't have when they first encountered each other.

He was changing, altered by her nature and the constant feeding on her flesh. True to what he said, he was being altered by her magic through her eight thousand deaths.

(Yes,) he said in startling clarity. (Psionics, shadow, lust. Each one is becoming one inside me. Integrated without distinction. That is the demon way.)

Surprised and curious, she reached out for the demon's thoughts. It had a mental defenses unlike her own, but it wasn't a shield of crystal, a wall, or even a body bound in leather. Instead, his defenses appeared to be a shifting cloud. She looked for a design, but it boiled like raw chaos.

She focused further, testing the creature's shields. They resisted with the strength of psionics, but instead of hardness, she found herself getting lost. It was functioned like shadows, chaos, but with the power of psionics.

Merrie tried to see where the spells meshed together but couldn't. The demon had somehow blended everything so finely, or

combined them together, so that there was only power that resisted her mental probing.

But, Merrie was an alpha. The Omega and capable of piercing any shield. She delved into it, piercing through the shifting cloud.

Only to find there was nothing hidden beyond the cloud. The transition between defenses and the demon's core thoughts didn't exist. However, what she found was a growing core of darkness. There was horror inside the demon, nightmares of children mixed with drunken violent and despair. It was impossible to pull them apart, but there was a constant transition from one emotion or to another fear. Throughout everything, she could feel but not isolate the various magics that made up her being.

(Demons integrate. We do not have layers. Not like you.)

Merrie's interest pricked. (Layers?)

(You are distinct. You have shadow magic. You have psionics.) The creature scraped its teeth along her breast. (You have a beautiful body. You have oath magic. Each one different.)

It opened its mouth and drew her breast in. A thick tongue laved along her nipple, bringing it to hardness with wet slurps and cold pleasure.

She ground her legs together.

(Though, that will change. You are integrating.)

Stunned, Merrie froze with her thighs ground together and a slickness dripping along her crack. (What—?)

The demon chomped down. Sharp teeth pierced her flesh as it tore into her chest. Her breast, tipped with aching nipple, was crushed in the powerful grip as the creature snapped ribs and dug into the back core of her being.

Pleasure resonated from the demon's thoughts. (It took a while, but you use magic when you die. Power to pull yourself together. Power to connect to the thoughts in your collar. Each time, in that moment of death, they blur.)

It pulled back and then nuzzled its face into the gaping chest wound. She could feel it licking her internal organs, slithering between the shadowy masses before pulling something from her chest. With a wet, slurp, it bit down and tore it away from her body. (Chaos slips in the cracks. When you reform your shell, it gets inside. Even now, you can feel it.)

Merrie didn't believe the creature at first. She fight through the pain to concentrate, but then just accepted it.

(I want to eat you.)

The desire resonated along her senses. She moaned and gripped the side of the demon's head with her arm. Curling her body up, she pressed one leg and sank into a world of pleasure.

Energy flashed along her nerves, filling her with power. She used it to summon her energies. A spell. That's what she needed. Just a simple spell like when she was with Kine in the mansion.

She drew on the psionic spell to keep time—
(Stop thinking in terms of that.)

Merrie whimpered.

(Create the spell without thinking. Just make it.) The demon reached up to cup her sex with its claws. The sharp points dug into her buttocks and her pubic mound. It was intimate and painful at the same time. (Make magic. Don't cast spells.)

She frowned, even through growing pleasure, she struggled to understand.

(What is your desire?)

It was a simple spell, one of the ones that kept her sanity. (To keep track of time.)

(Then feel it. Concentrate on the desire, the result. Do think of spells, energies, or distinctions.) The creature's voice was filled with lust.

Against her sex, the demon did something it had never done before. It worked one sharp claw down the furrow of her pussy and jammed it deep into her cunt.

Merrie let out a low moan of pleasure. Her entire world shimmered for a moment. Flushed with desire, and submission, she concentrated on what she wanted. Time. To see it pass, o be aware of the endless flow as she died over and over again.

Energies began to gather.

She started to concentrate on giving them shape, but a jab deep inside her cunt stopped her.

(Only the result.) The demon's thrusting grew more intense. It jabbed more than fingered her, but the feeling of the rough ridges against her sex were something she missed. She leaned into the

feeling, letting her lust flood through her and channel into her desire.

There was no hard connection of the magic, no calligraphy to write and then power. One moment she was focusing on the idea of keeping time, and then she became aware of it.

A spell. No, an effect. Magic without obvious structure.

The demon's thoughts grew triumphant. Then it reared back. Her black blood splashed along her chest in ice-cold splattered. (Delicious.)

It tore into her other breast, teeth clinking against the metal collar before it yanked away. The smell of burning flesh filled the air but she lost track of it when the demon began to pound its clawed finger in and out of her sex with brutally powerful strokes.

Blood and pussy juices splattered everywhere as it pleased her. The new sensations were intense, like going years without an orgasm. She sobbed as she was devoured and pleased at the same time.

Her thoughts began to crumble, but for once, she was happy. It felt good, like the cold comfort of darkness wrapping around her.

(You'll be back.)

She moaned and whimpered at the same time. (I know.)

(When you do—) The demon slammed its fist against her pussy, cracking bone before the hard ridges ripped into her. It set off a final orgasm to flood her dying thoughts. (—call me Gnasis.)

t'Sade

Changed

109

Once again, Merrie woke up with the rush of consciousness and Zillia's memories. For the last few times, it didn't even feel like she had died. Only closed her eyes for a few minutes to find her body once again recovering with rapid speed.

Between having Gnasis devouring her insides and her new shell was only eighteen minutes, a far cry from the days between each attempt when she had first recovered.

Something gripped her hips tightly. Her helpless body rolled over the smooth surface of the ground, the ridges that the collars left behind teased and rippled along her body.

Gnasis pried her thighs apart.

She moaned, lifting her hips until the two halves of her sex split open.

His cock slammed into her with a single blow. She resurrected wet, but the friction of his thick, twisted cock plunging deep into her sex brought a burst of power and lust to flood through her body. She moaned and reached out for his thoughts.

Gnasis didn't project words, but there was a hungry lust in his desires. He wanted the same thing she wanted, to fuck her until it hurt. He leaned into her, slamming his cock deep into her body while his claws dug into the sensitive parts of her legs to keep them apart.

Merrie arched her back and writhed happily.

The demon reached up with one claw to wrap around her neck. Sharp points dug into her flesh as he tore into her. With every thrust, his cock scraped against her insides until the narrow point

slammed against her innermost gate. It hurt but also felt pleasurable with the steady pounding that shook her body.

(He is changing,) Zillia said with amusement.

Merrie moaned and reached up. She didn't quite remember when her deaths were only pain and violence, but the last few hundred times had always started to the demon fucking her.

She loved it.

Energy flooded through her, solidifying her form even more. The triple beat of her heart slammed along her ribs, adding to the hiss of the collar that slowly heated up along her neck. It would be an hour before it ignited into flames, though she couldn't remember when that had changed. Everything was a blur, every death, every change. She couldn't place a single one but she could feel the results.

Magic pulsed through her. Like Gnasis said, she couldn't tell where the shadows ended and the psionics started. Even before her trials at the prison, she had seen the blending of her shadow and psychic powers. It used to be calligraphy, now it was simply desire and it responded.

(Good,) came Gnasis' thoughts. He was completely masculine and brimming with power. His changes had turned him into a brutal fuck, a creature who pushed her past her limits time and time again. It didn't matter if it was teeth or fist, pussy or ass or mouth. He slammed his cock into her with brutal speed that bruised her hips and set off explosions of pleasure throughout her system.

Merrie gripped the demon, silently begging for him to fuck her hard. She wanted to be used, to be torn apart. Every time his shell slammed into her inner thighs, she felt the spear of his cock plunge deep. The sharp edges were only a spice to her.

The demon suddenly yanked out of her. With a deep, bone-rattling growl, he flipped her over and slammed her face into the ground.

Merrie was already lifting her hips.

His cock impaled her freshly healed asshole. Immense power surged through his body and he buried his entire length into the freshly healed opening with a single thrust.

Merrie beat her arms against the ground. (Yes!) she cried out as an orgasm rippled along her body. It didn't radiating away from her nor did it flow in the collar. The hard metal around her neck had

reformed into a delicate webbing of adamantite and crystals. It also hummed with power from countless orgasms.

Gnasis resumed fucking her. His claws dug into her shoulders, pulling her arms off the ground as he impaled her repeatedly. Each thrust stretched her insides, rubbing along her sensitive nerves as he thrust almost into her chest. She moaned and writhed on his cock, begging for more and more until she was driving him to thrust as much as he was doing it himself.

His immense cock slammed into her again and again. The demon didn't have mortal limitations. He would fuck until he came, but then keep thrusting until she was dead.

Merrie moaned and smiled. She jammed back. (More, more!) she spurred him on.

Dark thoughts began to blossom in Gnasis' mind but they were shielded away from her in a veil of lust. He was planning something. Something terrible toward her, an ultimate abuse.

Her alpha nature began to quiver as the pleasure grew more intense. The anticipation rose up and her heart beat quickened. An orgasm tore through her as she waited for him to reveal his desires.

Gnasis wrapped one clawed hand around her throat. (You are integrated.)

Her magic had finally merged together. There was no distinct powers anymore, just the raw, shifting lust of an alpha that could take on the world if someone abused her enough.

(You are finally ready.)

Merrie whimpered as his cock rammed hard into her. It felt so big inside her, a powerful spear that tore her asshole open and plunged deep into her organs. Every centimeter brought a feeling of uncomfortable pleasure that only served to set her off again and again.

She let part of her mind sharp into focus in the haze of lust. (Ready for what?)

(For what you came, to let the demons feed on the chaos.) He slammed into her hard, impaling her before he came inside. The tingling heat burst along her bowels, flooding her insides for only a few seconds before he brutally fucking her hole.

Merrie felt a presence around her. Opening her eyes, she looked to see demons coming down the tunnel toward her. There were

hundreds of them with glowing red eyes and twisted bodies. In the air and beyond her physical senses, she could feel a miasma of emotions surrounding them. These were the creatures born of fear, anger, and despair. Personifications of lust and violence. Each one looked at her as if she was nothing but a morsel to eat.

The hard cock pummeled her. (Your chaos.)

His claws gripped her throat, digging into the flesh. Slowly, he drew back as he tore her neck open in a spray of black blood. (Your magic.)

He dragged his other claws up along her belly, splitting the skin. Organs, half formed and shadowy began to swell out of the gaping wound. They were pushed from the inside as his cock continued to ram her from the inside. (You.)

She was their meal. They were going to feast on her like she was Lemetri.

Lemetri screamed out and lost her concentration. With a sucking noise, the Lords of Shadows dug their claws into her beautiful flesh and pulled her into the darkness.

The world grew black as Merrie fell into the shadows. Claws of a thousand Lords of Shadows tore at her and she fell into them, no strength left in her silent body to resist.

Merrie had become their light, the endless meal of chaos that they would feast on until the end of time.

The demons in the tunnel swarmed forward, their mouths opening to reveal thousands of sharp teeth ready to tear apart her body. They would never stop eating, never stop consuming her body every time she recovered.

She was going to be theirs forever, the ultimate helplessness. A submission that she could never escape.

Gnasis tore open her throat and belly, ripping her wide open.

The demons pounced on her flesh, teeth snarling. Only a few saw her as lust, but it wouldn't be long before they became creatures like Gnasis, abusing her with violence, raping her as they ripped her apart.

The orgasm that blossomed inside her was a pitch black of oblivion. Fueled by her helplessness, it felt like it was tearing her apart from the inside. Gravity seemed to twist in on itself as her entire universe became nothing but an explosion of intense pleasure.

Surprise and fear rose in Gnasis' thoughts. (What are you doing?)

She tried to cry out but her ruined throat only gurgled. The collar couldn't take it anymore, there was nowhere self or it to go. She let it rise inside her, filling her with indescribable ecstasy until her body began to melt under the onslaught of her own orgasm.

The demons froze as shock rippled through them.

Zillia's thoughts rose up in the pleasure. (Send it out!) It was as if the cloak had been waiting for the perfect time to command Merrie. (Your mistress commands you now! Send it out, you useless cunt! Make them feeling it!)

Merrie had to obey.

She let every iota of control drop, every shield and defense. There was a crack and her mind went blank.

The demons started to back away.

Gnasis yanked his cock from her sphincter. But before he could withdraw his entire shaft, he was clutched by the pleasure consuming her. Against his will, in a surge of helpless submission, the demon was forced to ram it hard back into her dying body.

Merrie came.

The air ignited into black flames. It radiated away from her in a single blast of energy that corroded stone, melted metal, and pulverized flesh.

The surrounding demons, creatures who absorbed energy for power, were spared destruction as the singularity of ecstasy poured into them. It shaped and twisted their energies in an instant, forcing them to alter and adapt as if they had personally devoured her for ten thousand deaths. Lust, hunger, and desire rewrote the very beings of the creatures.

Merrie's consciousness didn't fade.

She didn't die.

Instead, the pleasure fueled her healing energy. Flesh knitted together, sealing up tight and making her whole. She settled back on the thick cock that impaled her and wiggled into place.

Gnasis' claws shook against her newly healed throat. (W-What happened?) There was fear in his mind, fear of the unknown but also the uncontrollable lust that boiled in his thoughts.

Merrie sighed and looked out at the demons in front of her. They were going to feed on her. They were going to devour her body, but they were also going to fuck her. Fuck her into oblivion time and time again until she was finally sated.

A smile stretched across her lips.

She sent out a single thought, both a command and a promise.
(My turn.)

Crossroads

110

Merrie was in heaven. Or at least, as close to heaven as she could get in the bowels of the earth and surrounded by demons. She swallowed the cool air and then opened her mouth to draw in a deep breath.

A thick cock drove past her lips to smack against the back of her throat. Powerful claws gripped the sides of her head. The demon didn't care about her comfort, none of them. All he wanted was to grip the back of her head and jam his cock deep as far as he could into her throat.

Merrie happily choked on his cock. She moaned around the thick, spiked intruder that ripped at her throat. She pressed her lips into the ridges at the base and swallowed hard.

The demon crushed her head with every thrust. The speed and strength felt like punches into her face.

She moaned and writhed her body with pleasure. There were more cocks impaling her body. Two in her pussy, one in her ass and countless tentacles that were violating every hole from her ears to her cunt. Every orifice was stretched and strained.

It had been months since she had last died. The collar bounced across her body, burning hot but not searing her skin. It radiated warmth among the cold, oily bodies of her fuckers.

The demon in her ass gripped her shoulders painfully tight, digging into her pale flesh. He howled with lust as he came hard inside her. A surge of hot cum blasted into her bowels, more than any human. It sprayed out like a jet as the creature withdrew.

Merrie could feel its exhaustion. He, and the rest of the demons, had been fucking her for over seven months. An endless, month-

long orgy that had resulted in orgasm after orgasm until her body was nothing more than a knot of pleasure.

She arched her back and wiggled her ass. She reached out to the surrounding demons. There were thousands of them, each one endlessly fucking her. Her mind plucked out the next one who was already moving to service her.

Gnasis knelt down behind her and thrust hard. His thick, swollen cock plunged deep into her ass. It filled her completely and she let out a moan of hungry desire.

(That feels good.)

The demon gripped her hips tightly and began to thrust. (All I want is to fuck, to hurt, to drive into you until you break.)

She shivered with pleasure. (Do it.)

(You already know I cannot. You have taken it all. Every lust, every brutal blow, and every attempt to harm you. You are shifting like a demon, adaptable. No, more than adaptable, you thrive on what we've done to you.)

Merrie pushed back against his thrusting cock. Her entire sang with orgasms that rose and fell, filling her with raw power and desire. With a smile, she sent a wave of desire. (Harder.)

He gripped her throat, digging his claws in. He had tried to rip out her throat many times in the last few months. His claws may have torn open her flesh, but her body recovered in a matter of seconds with only a flash of pleasure and pain.

The demon snarled and slammed his cock harder, driving hard until his hips smacked against her buttocks. (You were supposed to be our meal, the corpse to feed upon like flies.) He growled and bit down on her shoulder.

Merrie moaned (You forced my magic to integrate.)

A flicker of regret. (I expected the Immortal's chaos to dominate you. Entropy and chaos always consume.)

(But you got the Omega instead?) She leaned into his teeth and twisted. The other demons were still fucking her and she couldn't open her mouth any more beyond the thick cock choking her.

Gnasis' frustration and anger rose up.

(You are still feeding off me, aren't you?)

The demon had to agree. They were feeding on her orgasm, draining a measure of Kivas' power from her collar. She could feel

the chaos strengthening the demons around her even as they were growing more focused on the violent lusts she craved.

Merrie opened her eyes. She smiled around the demon's cock even as it was blasting a thick load of cum into her gullet. (Fuck me harder.)

Gnasis obeyed, growing loudly as the pulse of all the demons increased. They fucked her harder and faster, crushing her body as their claws dug into flesh and tore out hunks of her body. Black blood splashed everywhere even as she was rapidly healing.

Her orgasm sparked. Merrie let out wash over her, pulses of energy and pleasure dancing along her nerves. She squirmed with the pleasure even as she readied herself for more.

A sour taste tickled the back of her throat.

It wasn't demon cum. She had swallowed liters of it, endless orgasms. She knew every taste of every hole, of hers and the demons. It may change constantly, each demon had their own flavor and she knew them intimately.

Through the lust-filled fog, she vaguely remembered the taste from somewhere in her past.

As one, the demons slowed to a stop.

Merrie realized she was done. She was finally sated, sexually speaking. She frowned as she settled to the ground. It was a strange feeling, a sense of contentment that hummed along with the afterglow that still sang along her sensitive nerves.

One by one, the demons pulled out. She shivered at their withdrawal of cocks and tentacles, fingers and claws. Her skin tingled as her skin healed over.

In seconds, she was sitting in a clear spot in the cave. The demons, her lovers and fuckers, pulled back until none of them were within a few meters of her naked body.

Gnasis growled. (What just happened?) There was confusion in his thoughts, an emotion shared among all the demons.

(I'm done.)

(Done? Just like that?)

Merrie cocked her head and tried to dread up the lust that had been ever-present in her life ever since she had awoken her powers.

For the first, she was completely and utterly sated.

She sighed and enjoyed the afterglow of her orgasm that smoldered inside her. She looked directly at Gnasis. (I'm done.)

Merrie let her mind drift toward the memory of the taste in her throat.

She barked.

Queen Vikia nodded once. "Do you swear loyalty to Franome, the crown, and the land, for the rest of your days?" It was the oath of loyalty every child said in school, but when the queen said it, the air beat with power and Merrie felt energy swirling around her.

Her throat dry, Merrie tried to swallow, but couldn't. She barked, a little louder than before.

"Do you swear to protect it with your will, your pride, your power, and your life?"

The swirls of energy shimmered into existence, forming runes in the branches of a giant tree that filled the room. Merrie whimpered as she felt it sinking into her mind, exploding with intensity as her true nature took the oath and made it something more powerful than a mere gas. It took almost all of her effort to bark again.

"Do you swear to keep its secrets until the end of time?"

She had never heard that phrase in the oath, but she barked again.

"Do you swear to guard the Royal Family from all harm, inside and out?"

Merrie gasped as she barked, her body tingling. The gas poured into her, spreading out to sink into every cell of her body. She expected it to taste like shit, but there was nothing but the hint of flowers and leaves on her tongue.

"Do you swear to serve until released by the Royal family?"

She barked loudly, a single sharp noise. Around her, the oath spell exploded and sucked into her, burning into her mind and body. It didn't hurt, but there was an

intense rush as if she had been electrocuted during an orgasm. It just kept rippling through her body, threatening to explode out, but she clutched to it until it spread out through her body and sank into her bones.

Both of her ears perked up as she realize that the taste in the back of her throat meant the Royal Geas. The magic didn't command her body, but she could feel the pressing need to obey it, a strong request that she was needed to serve.

Merrie knew she would answer. She nodded and looked around. (Yes, I need to go. My promises are calling me and I have oaths to keep.)

(What about the Immortal?)

Kivas' energies still brimmed in her collar. The metal burned against her skin but it was no longer the searing heat that peeled away flesh and tore through her neck. After months of the demons feasting on her energies, a small measure of chaos had been drained off.

It wouldn't last. Kivas had proved that he would return. A millennium in Abbinkey wasn't enough to stop him, nor were the gods. The demons had no chance, but that wasn't what Rakin had in mind. The collar needed to stay away from the rest of the world, down in the depths of the ground where the creatures could continue to feast on it like maggots chewing away diseased flesh. The longer they fed, the longer Kivas would remain dormant.

Merrie was on a crossroads and she had a choice before her: she could ignore the call of the Royal Geas and remain below to endlessly fuck until then end of time; she could risk Kivas and answer the geas; or she had to try to obey both.

The afterglow snuffed out in an instant. She flattened her ears against her head as she looked around, struggling with a sudden sadness that welled up from her thoughts.

The idea of not answering the geas was as foreign as taking Kivas away. She had to do both but there was only one obvious answer and she didn't like it.

With the smallest push, she let the collar come free of her neck. Metal seared along her skin as the adamantite

sealed itself around her neck forever. Spells, hundreds of them, slammed across her mind as power coursed through her. She felt it stretched out from her throat and down into her body, seeping into every fiber of her muscles, every shard of bone, and every tendon. The spells kept coming, burning their way into her body and mind. She could taste the casters but could only identify Rendi's sweetness and the endless rage of Rakin. The others were just tastes and smells and feels as they forced their way through her nerves and dominated her.

A tear ran down her cheek. She tried to think of another way that didn't involve her breaking her collar. Her mind reached and clutched, but there was nothing. Only one object was powerful enough to contain Kivas, only one artifact could be used to dole out energies to the demons to allow them to feast.

If she returned to the surface, the collar had to remain behind.

The tears ran faster as sadness descended on her. A portion of her mind already knew that she would choose it, but it was hard to see through the tears as she tried to comprehend a world where there was no heavy weight around her neck, no presence in the back of her mind, no—

(Zillia?)

Her cloak blossomed out the darkness. It pooled on the ground before reforming into the snake-like shape it had taken so many times. Two glowing red eyes regarded her. (Mistress?)

(How can I do this? I just got you back.)

Her companion sent a wave of comfort. (I am you, yet I'm not. I was created by your own mind because you needed a companion. Later, I became your mistress and your servant because that is what you needed. Like the shadow gem in your collar, I am the flaw that makes you whole.)

Merrie reached up for the gem. It was rough against the smooth end of her wrist. She thought about the memories, of her first master and the years in the mansion. So many things had happened since then, almost as many as the night she had collared herself.

(How can you survive until I get back?)

Zillia fluttered. (You won't be back, Mistress.) There was a sadness in the thoughts that rippled through Merrie's mind. (You know. We both know that.)

Her tail dropped. The soft hairs caressed against the cum that continued to ooze out of her well-fucked cunt and ass.

(Franome needs you now. We are too far away to be summoned by anything less than the threat of destruction. If it got down here, you are truly needed and you may be the only one who can deal with the plot that Rakin told us about.)

She shook her head. (I don't want to lose you.)

The snake slithered forward and caressed her cheek. (You never will. I'm your familiar, your fragment of a personality. I am the mistress you needed and the submissive you craved. But, things have changed.)

She shook her head.

(The demons had been feeding on you. They have been tearing you apart and putting you back together. The distinctions of psionics and shadows, divine and profane, and even master and slave have been shredded, folded, and combined thousands upon thousands of times.)

As much as Merrie hated it, Zillia was right. Gnasis' attempt to make her the perfect feast had also broken down many of the barriers in her head. She felt energy rolling through her, responding to so many different influences around her before it settled back down.

There was no question why she was put into her situation. She was powerful, capable of taking on armies and surviving months of constant fucking by demons. She had been torn apart and killed countless times. She walked through thousands of deaths to get into the depths of the world, using nothing but the collar and her willpower.

(Do you think I'll still have my powers if I remove the collar? It took a god to make it. It took everything Rakin had to forge it.)

Zillia ran along her skin, draping over her before running up between her legs and breasts to reform into a snake. (You killed a god. You bit her throat out.)

(But—)

(Mistress, do you want to lose your powers?)

(No.)

(Then take them with you. Removing the collar doesn't mean your life ends. It means you have a new life, but with all of the experiences and powers you bring with you.)

The cloak kissed her cheek again. (You are bound deeper to the magic in the collar than anything else. Rakin intended for you to never escape.)

Merrie smiled. (What will give first, my spirit or the adamantite?)

(You are the Omega. Your spirit was created to be broken and to rise up. You were made by Parn herself to be destroyed. Every time, you came back stronger and full of more love than before.)

Merrie smiled and wiped the tears. She delved her senses into the collar, not as one bound by it but to feel how it could be physically removed without it snapping back and decapitating her.

The spells were intensely complicated, wrapped in so many different powers and systems. She could feel the god of magic's power as much as Rakin's energies. All of the mages and clerics that went into crafting it were laid out before her.

She understood. The lines of energy made sense as they changed phase and systems. Divine to arcane and back again. Now, after her own powers had been integrated and she had grown, it was trivial to trace along the spells to see where they could be excised from her soul.

Her vision blurred as she focused on her thoughts. Around her, the demons shuffled uncomfortably but remained in place. She worked through the complicated layers of Rakin's ultimate spell to make sure she understood.

She didn't know how long it took, but when she finished, she was confident she could safely separate herself and leave Kivas behind. The clarity that she saw the patterns and the Royal Geas in her head lead her to believe she had reached a point in her existence when the collar was no longer needed.

There was only one cost she wasn't sure about. She focused on Zillia. (I will have to lose you.)

The cloak sent a wave of love and compassion. (It wouldn't be the first time. I have always slipped into your life when you struggle. I leave when you find peace.)

Merrie gave her cloak a sad smile. (Do you think you'll be back?)

(I'm always here, Mistress.)

(Will you forgive me for leaving you behind?)

She already knew the answer. Parn had said that Zillia was her mistress. What Merrie didn't realize at the time was that she would evolve into a being that no longer needed one.

Merrie shifted her position until she was kneeling on the ground. It wasn't in the begging position, but neither was it a dominate pose. It was just her, knees spread, tail curled up and her wrists resting on her breasts.

Zillia coiled.

It was time. There wasn't a reason to stall or hesitate. She needed to answer the Royal Geas.

Merrie reached up for her collar and cradled it along the ends of her wrists. As she did, she delved her senses into the collar and began to carefully cut and reroute the various aspects of the spell to separate it from her soul.

As she worked, she could feel the boiling force of Kivas trying to escape and corrupt the results. She deftly guided it to aid her efforts, using the shifting energies to strengthen the separation just like she did with the spell with the prisoners before.

Zillia reached over and wrapped around the adamantite ring. It tugged lightly.

Merrie ran the edge of the shadow jewel on her skin as she worked. The rest of the world, the demons, and even the cave faded away until there was nothing but the bittersweet parting.

Unlike the brutal slamming of memories and overwhelming personalities, her bond was just eased away. The collar grew hot and cold at the same time.

Zillia tugged.

Despite the collar being around her neck, Merrie just handed it over.

With a burning sensation, the adamantite collar—the indestructible artifact—passed through her neck and was taken away.

Merrie half expected that her entire world would collapse. Instead, she felt an intense wave of closure and joy. She was sad for one life passing away, but at the same time, the anticipation of a new one had just begin.

Zillia wavered in front of her. The collar hung in the air in front of her. The air rippled above it from the heat that contrasted with the icy coldness of the shadow snake.

Merrie looked at her, words welling up in her throat. "I no longer need a mistress. I no longer need a master."

Nothing happened.

She took a deep breath. Reaching out, she looked to see if she had failed to remove the collar but the energies were completely disconnected from her soul. There was no more shadowy connection to the metal, no more magic binding her to it.

Merrie shivered as she reached out mentally, looking for the familiar sensation of her mistress in the back of her mind. It was the place she sent thoughts to come back as her mistress, or the connection where her mistress projected her commands.

They were still there and yet they weren't.

Merrie simply didn't need a mistress anymore.

She felt sad and joyful at the same time. Her tail wagged back and forth. (I guess...) She hesitated, remembering how she had exploded into darkness when she first projected. "I guess it worked," she said in a raspy voice.

Zillia nodded.

Merrie looked at the collar. It was brimming with chaotic energies. Her attention turned to the demons that needed to feed on it to prevent Kivas from recovering.

Zillia was accepting even as Merrie reached out with her magic. (Shape me,) asked the fragment of Merrie's own personality.

Merrie used her powers to reshape her shadow, to give it more solid form and structure. Using the frayed ends of the collar's magic, she bound it into Zillia energies much like Merrie had been. The vast array of her powers went into wrapping spells and powers into Zillia's form, duplicating many of the powers that Rakin had given Merrie and more.

Zillia's body swelled and twisted, turning into a shadowy twin of her own form. The collar settled around her neck as Zillia settled onto her knees.

Unlike Merrie, Zillia had hands and feet. She looked like Merrie before she had been cropped so long ago.

Zillia looked at her hands and her body. She had to twist to look at her backside and then up to her breasts. Her body was one of a twenty-year-old, beautiful and tight with large breasts. She would be the target of lusts for any human that saw her.

Surrounding them, the demons rippled as their interest was caught. They had been altered by Merrie's energies also. They wanted her, to feast on her body and energies until the end of time.

Merrie tied Zillia's pleasure and pain together. There was no chance there wouldn't be anything other than ecstasy as the demons fed.

Zillia let out a soft, kittenish moan. She reached down and pressed her fingers against her sex. The heavy collar shifted on her neck.

(Ready to be my proxy?)

She nodded. There was a hint of fear and hesitation, but Zillia knew exactly what was going to happen. It was a role for the demons, an incitement to resume feasting.

Zillia was about to be gang-banged until the end of time. Fucked in every one of her holes until she almost drowned in cum.

Merrie let out a moan and smiled. It had been fun for her, it would be fun for Zillia.

Her shadow nodded.

Merrie realized that the collar no longer had the shadow gem on it. It was once again a smooth piece of metal.

Zillia turned it around but there was no gem marking anywhere around the smooth length.

Cocking her head, Merrie peered around but the gem wasn't on the ground either. It had disappeared. Most likely dissolved when the binding spell was excised.

Disappointed, Merrie decided it would be something for another day.

She regarded Zillia who had returned to inspecting her body.

Merrie expected to be worried about her decision to leave Zillia and the collar behind but instead there was only contentment. It felt right, as if she was following the will of the universe. Or, more likely, Parn.

Crawling forward, she lifted herself up to Zillia.

Zillia knelt down. "Thank you," she whispered. "I will serve you here. I will be okay."

Merrie reached up and kissed her. As she did, she created another effect without worrying about how her magic would produce it. It was a simple spell, a promise to make sure Merrie would know if Zillia was ever in true danger.

Zillia smiled, a shadow of Merrie's thoughts and her old life. "Thank you, Mistress."

With a kiss, Merrie crawled back. "I promise," she said. It hurt to talk but there were some things that needed to be said.

Then, she turned around and crawled away. With a final thought, she reached out to the demons. (Time to feed.)

There was a snarl and bodies rushing as they charged for Zillia.

Merrie's ear cocked up, listening for the sounds of her shadow.

Zillia let out a cry of lust when the first demon impaled her. The second was interrupted as the second grabbed her face and rammed his cock deep into her mouth and throat. The pleasure that rose up from Zillia's thoughts washed against Merrie.

Tail wagging, Merrie crawled away, at peace with her choices.

Crawling Up



Merrie crawled along an unfamiliar stone tunnel. There was no path or even hint of anything other than natural formations. Underneath her knees and wrists, the ground had been smoothed over by millennium of dripping water that left everything slick and smelling of metal.

Her route had taken her down a different path from before. She couldn't follow the scorched rings of the collar. That also told her that the magic tugging her forward wouldn't bring her back to the inside of Abbinkey.

A rippling noise perked her ears. She cocked her head and peered into the darkness, tracing the lines of stones that her dark sense revealed. When it didn't get closer, she crawled toward it. Around her, the cool air tickled along her naked skin.

It felt strange not having cocks pounding into every hole of her body. No limb caught her movement, no claws grabbed her head while some demon fucked her face. Part of her liked the contentment that came from being abused, but at the same time, she couldn't help but wag her tail at the freedom she now had.

Her destination was a flat, two-centimeter height crack in the stone where a trickle of moisture oozed out like some ancient wound. She regarded it for an instant and wondered if she could dig her way through. With a smile, she shook her head and then let the magic rise up.

The chaotic tingle power filled her from deep inside her chest, guided by the triple beat of her shadowy heart. It coursed along her veins, neither hot nor cold but simply raw magical force. Her ears twitched with the ease that she saw the patterns of power.

The perfect spell wrapped around her and her body melted into a pool of darkness. She poured herself into the suffocating depths and traced along the icy liquid as she followed the demand that tugged her like a leash connected to a collar that was gone but never forgotten.

Last Stand

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Many hours later, she crawled along a much wider tunnel that showed signs of being worked and shaped. Discarded and broken mining tools had been tossed to the side. Exposed veins of metal would have shone if she needed light.

Her ears remained perked as she carefully stepped over a rotting corpse of a human. The rank smell told her that he had died months ago, stabbed in the kidneys by something that had come up behind him.

Soon, she came up on more corpses. All of them were dressed in heavy canvas and only had picks and shovels for weapons. Most of them had been stabbed to death though a few of them had been stripped and there were signs they were still alive when they were raped.

She shook her head. She had seen enough corpses not to be sickened by the exposed bone and slit throats. There was nothing she could do to help the dead.

It took her another few minutes until she found one of the attackers: a short, green-skinned creature about a meter in height. The creature had tapered ears, sharp fangs, and a tiny hand wrapped around the hilt of its jagged sword. She had never encountered a goblin before but she had heard of them from Bass's stories. There were dozens of their bodies around a choke point where some of the miners had gave their lives to defend but ultimately lost.

Sadness clung to her thoughts. She let it simmer in the back of her mind, knowing that it could be used to fuel magic if she came up

to more of the creatures. Carefully, she crawled up and over the corpses and then further down the tunnel.

Minutes later, she heard some of the goblins coming toward her. She cocked her head as they spoke cheerful to each other in high-pitched nasal words. Flashes of their desires rose in her mind: devouring the supplies that the miners had stored, raping the survivors, and continue their raids into the nearby villages.

Merrie froze and then reached out with her thoughts. The creatures had no mental shields to speak of and her probes plunge deep into their subconsciousness.

Tabak grabbed the huge udders of the screaming human's tits and dug in his claws. Her body twisted violently despite having her knees spread out and bound to the metal bars on either side. Despite her inability to move, he had trouble to line up his small cock up against the gaping holes.

There had already been over thirty goblins fucking her and their cum poured out of her in a river. He didn't care, none of them did, and he ground his hips against the sloppy mess just to enjoy the hardness of his prick as it flipped into her cunt and asshole. The hole didn't matter, only the warmth of having something hot and wiggling along his shaft.

He grinned and ground down on her udders. Blood oozed out from his tips as he thrust with all his might.

The breed-master's fist caught the sight of his head. The powerful goblin threw Tabak away from the cunt but he was already coming. Arcs of cum shot into the air, splattering against her writhing stomach and some of it dotted the beard of the breed-master.

"No blood, you disgusting shit of a horse! These things get infected and they fall off!"

Tabak shrugged. He stood up, his cock twitching with the last of his orgasm. Casually, he looked around and then got into line for another of the prisoners, warrior that had been bent over a barrel and his balls nailed to the wood. A lot less wiggling from the sobbing man and

a hole was a hole. He'll be ready to come by the time he gets through the line.

Merrie's ears dropped as she pulled out of the goblin's thoughts. Even as she crawled toward the goblins and their fantasies, a sexual thrill rose up. The idea of being in their of their positions, being tortured and raped, sent a thrill through her. She craved it, not only as the source of her power but also just to submit. However, the humans who had gotten caught didn't need to suffer.

The oath magic tickled the back of her head. She couldn't afford distractions yet, she didn't know why she was called.

Her tail dropped as she prepared herself not to be captured and raped. However, she wasn't going to leave the humans behind to suffer.

Deliberately, Merrie knocked over a crate as she crawled closer.

It crashed to the ground loudly.

The goblins quieted and the rasp of swords being pulled from sheathes echoed down the tunnel. She could clearly feel the fourteen goblins that spread out along the tunnel as they prepared to strike.

Her eyes locked on Tabak. He was the impromptu leader and the perfect focus. Her plan was to slaughter most of them, leaving a survivor to give her the information she needed to head toward their den.

Merrie's body clenched with anticipation. She didn't have her cloak or collar, but she knew that the forces of magic were just under the surface, ready to be fueled by sadness, rage, and determination. She began to shape a spell, but then realized she didn't need to. It felt like it would simple respond with no more difficulty than lifting an arm.

All of them froze when her naked body came out into the pool of light cast by torches. She could feel their gazes caressing her body as sexual thoughts rose up across all fo them. They were horny in a flash and none of them cared why a naked woman had just crawled out of the pitch darkness toward them.

Tabak let out an yell. "Fuck her up!"

They charged.

Merrie continued to crawl forward, waiting until they were less than a meter away. Then, she let out a growl as her body transformed. Blackness enveloped her skin before her limbs snapped out as long tentacles. Sharp edges cut through the limbs of the charging goblins without even a hint of slowing down. The back ranks were coated in blood and gore before their heads were ripped off and their chests torn open.

Tabak came to a stop from her slobbering jaw, his tiny eyes growing wide at the sight of her dripping fangs. When she let out a growl, he lost control of his bowels.

(Where is your den?)

Images flashed through his head and she caught them, casually ripping them from his mind.

“Don’t kill me,” he grunted in his tongue; she understood the words from his thoughts.

Merrie looked down at the creature who had casually raped their prisoners. Her own pussy grew wetter at the thought, but she didn’t have time to even pretend to be helpless.

Corroding energies rose up in the back of her throat. She plucked him off the ground and tore off his arms and legs. The magic withered the sounds, sealing them off as he was whittled down to nothing more than a torso.

His scream echoed shrilly in the tunnel.

Merrie tossed his thrashing body on the pile of corpses and then transformed into a Bel Dark hound. She had humans to rescue.

Twelve Years 113

An hour later, Merrie was covered in goblin blood as she headed down the last tunnel that would lead to the prisoners. She had systematically traveled down almost every single one of the twisted corridors, tunnels, and rat holes to exterminate the creatures.

The only ones she had granted mercy was the breeding chamber. The brood mothers were in no position to fight as they pumped out newborn goblins and the hearth guards refused to step out of the chamber.

Merrie had given them a mental threat not to leave until the bloodbath was over. They had agreed, their thoughts completely soaked in terror, and had barricaded the opening from the inside.

She almost didn't let them survive, but then she thought about the monsters in her life who didn't rage through the world in a horde. The most important were her babies, the creatures of Shadow and herself that were still in Bloody County. There was also herself, touched by so many forces that others feared. None of them needed to die, not until they proved themselves to be cruel.

The others, on the other hand, were willing to throw themselves at Merrie in a wave of green flesh, claws, and swords.

She slaughtered every single one.

With her body transforming back into the naked human, she started toward the opening when a tickle of new thoughts caught the back of her head. Stopping, she cocked her head and cast out her senses.

Gaines crept down the tunnel, his sword wavering as he tried not to think about the horror stories the old

warriors at the adventure's guild had warned them about. He had been hunting monsters for almost three months now and nearly lost his life twice. He wasn't going to make choices.

Behind him, the rest of his group followed with nervousness glowing in their minds: Billy, their mage and Gaines' current object of lust; Pithin, their archer; and Kim, the tiny Copir silfae that was currently thinking about how much she wanted to eat Pinith's ass while pumping his cock.

Merrie's ears perked up. Their thoughts were raw and exposed. None of them had the experiences to keep their thoughts from leaking out. They were new to fighting monsters and it showed in the way they inched into the chamber while flinching at every sound.

Gaines peeked into the next chamber. When he saw the freshly slaughtered goblin corpses, he ducked his head back with a surge of nausea and fear.

"What did you see?" asked Billy. Her tight gown gave him the occasion glimpse of her small breasts but he couldn't let himself be distracted. He gulped and forced his eyes up to her face. "They're dead. Lots of them."

Kim sniffed. "Fresh blood too. What do we do?"

Gaines looked at his companions before letting his gaze linger on Billy.

She smiled back and rested her hand on his shoulder.

He wanted desperately to be with her, to make her his wife. She said the same thing. The only thing stopping them was her step-father's blessing. The merchant from the city had exacting standards and nothing Gaines did even cracked the scowl that Ston gave him.

At the startling clear image of Ston from Gaines' memories, Merrie's heart blossomed. He was alive and safe, he made it out of the prison. She smiled and let a happy whine escape her throat.

“Okay, on the count of three. I go down the middle to draw out anyone, Billy and Pit stay at the opening. Kim, you get ready with a flash. Plan?”

Tears of happiness burning in her eyes, Merrie reached out and delved her thoughts into the four youths. It was a light scan, just a delicate touch that would give her more information of what had happened since she had last seen Ston walking from the prison.

Almost immediately, she found out how long she had been delivering the collar to the demons and being fucked by them: twelve years. She couldn't place how long the decade was spent with her crawling a few steps before the collar burned its way through her neck or the endless rape.

She was almost as surprised that losing a decade of her life didn't register more than an acknowledgment. She wondered if it was because Bass and Tabitha were centuries old or the curiosity if she could ever die of old age had numbed her to the passage of time. With the collar, she got the impression that Rakin would have ensured that she wouldn't fail him, even if it meant a thousand years of servitude.

Memories of her submission to Rakin, to the epic rape that had led to her escape, and everything else brought a warmth to her body. She wagged her tail as she considered the four adventurers that were inching their way deeper into the goblin tunnels.

Rolling her head to the side, she regarded to the tunnel. There were fifteen goblins at the end of it, raping and torturing the three surviving miners. Without distractions, they would continue to get back in line as they fucked each one until the adventures could reach them.

Deciding that the four could use the experience, she decided to let them take on the goblins. While they worked their way through room after room of destruction, she scanned their thoughts and delved into their memories to pick up knowledge that she had lost in twelve years.

It didn't surprise Merrie that Ston didn't return to Franome City. Technically, he was still a criminal. However, he was a merchant and had established a significant trade between the surrounding villages. His leadership role he had taken in Abbinkey had served

him well when the goblin attacks came. Billy's father and brother were killed in the early ones, but it was Ston who had organized the effort to push them back and make the villages safe.

Merrie's tail wagged as she watched Ston grow older and more mature. He looked handsome with the gray beard that he started to wear a few years ago. After a few fits and starts, he had also proven himself to be a good father to Billy and a provider to his family.

The four adventurers became to work their way toward the breeding chambers.

Reaching out, Merrie draped the area with a repulsion along with a warning for the goblins inside the barricaded area. She promised she would tell them when they could escape, but it was clear that they couldn't stay there.

The four youths veered off and Merrie resumed learning about the time that had passed. Not many rumors reached the isolated villages that Ston had called home, but news came by that the Queen of Franome had died six years ago. Claston had briefly been made king but then his elder sister returned from the wars in Luxember and he had stepped aside to let her rein.

Merrie wondered how Claston was doing then. Her thoughts then lead into the rest of the Whores' Guild. None of the four had any knowledge nor would they have even had a chance, but she caught hints of something bothering Ston in the last few years.

She frowned. Whatever haunted Ston may be the threat to the country that had dragged her out of the Abyssal depths. She swore to ask Ston as soon as she could.

By the time she saw the light of Gaines' torch, Merrie had regained the lost time. She drew her attention to the four adventurers and wondered how to introduce herself to them. They needed the experience, so she wasn't going to save them or fight next to them.

She needed them to think she was helpless. Merrie smiled to herself and then crafted an illusion on her body, painting her as a tortured woman who goblins had cruelly cut off her limbs. The images were imprinted on their thoughts more than physical, but Merrie knew how to be helpless and their minds would paint in the ragged wounds as her wrist, the scratches across her body, and the

wetness between her legs as dripping cum instead of growing excitement.

When she was a prostitute in Franome City, the roles for her lovers were important. This was just another one and she threw herself into it.

Gaines missed Merrie huddling on the side of the tunnel when he passed put both Billy and Kim caught her. As one, they gasped.

“Gaines!” hissed Billy. She fought the urge to step back in fear but there was an instant response to rush forward to cradle her.

Kim stepped back, her long ears twitching. She was a tiny thing, just like Tabitha, but without the cruelty that the century-old druid had. She brandished a dagger in one hand and held out her hand to summon a divine power. The holy magic sparked along her fingers and Merrie felt her own dark powers stirring.

Gaines didn’t hesitate. “By the Lords,” he gasped. He and Billy both rushed forward to kneel in front of Merrie. He reached down to press a warm hand against her shoulder. “Are you okay?”

Merrie kept the role and whimpered. When she opened her mouth, the four adventures saw only a severed tongue in her toothless maw.

Billy paled. “By the Golden God, what did they do to her.”

Gaines almost threw up. In his head, he struggled in fear that Billy would see him less than a hero. The innocence and fear was almost amusing.

Merrie reached out and deftly tweaked his thoughts to give him some dignity. Then she made a pitiful noise while pointing down toward the final room.

Gaines growled. “Those monsters. We have to stop them.”

“What about her?” asked Billy. She glanced at Merrie and there was the faintest hint of jealousy at Merrie’s appearance but her mind was mostly filled with concern like the others. Then Gaines’ words registered and she looked at him with pride.

They were good kids and Billy was hopelessly in love with Gaines.

“We can’t leave her, what if the goblins come up behind us?”

“Are we going to carry her?”

They spoke for a while, mostly ignoring her, until they came up with a plan to carry Merrie and then set her down. Pinith

volunteered and was appropriately uncomfortable as he lifted Merrie up over his shoulder.

Despite the little thrill of being carried like luggage, Merrie did nothing as they inched down the hallway until they got to the final opening. It had a leather flap draped over the door, but the distinct sounds of wet flesh slapping against skin along with the choked cries of prisoners being raped filled the tunnel and sickened all of them.

Gaines peeked past the opening. When he looked back, he was paler. "T-They are... raping them."

"How many?"

"S-Seven—"

(Fifteen,) Merrie projected as Pinith set her down against the wall.

"—fifteen of them. There is one big one and the others are in line behind... as they...." He covered his mouth.

"We can do this," whispered Billy. She leaned over and kissed Gaines. "We've fought them before. Just tell us what to do."

"Same thing, I'll go down the—"

Merrie scanned the room and then pushed his thoughts.

"—no. I'm going to break right. The big one is on the left, but if we can get the others to bunch up, we can thin out the group and leave us less vulnerable."

Merrie smiled to herself.

Even without her guidance, Gaines adapted quickly and added his own plan. "Billy, flash the room on two and then drop the choking cloud to the left. About five steps in and two to the left. That's where the larger one is and that should slow him down. Pin, the... the prisoners are all bent over and low to the ground. Aim for waist-high but not much lower. You and Billy hold the opening while I try to flank."

It was a good plan.

After a few more whispered conversations, they finalized her plan.

Gaines too a deep breath. "Okay, remember the key words."

He gripped his sword. "On Three... Two... One!"

They had practiced their entrance. Merrie watched with the view of someone who had seen far more deadly battles in her life. Unlike

the four, or even Bass and his friends, she had never had the adventurer's life. Instead, she had been kidnapped off the street, raped, abused, and trained until her powers blossomed.

It was different seeing the four youths who charged into battle because it was the right thing. They were driven to help, to be the heroes.

Ston had done a good job.

Soon, most of the goblins were dead on the ground. Blood sprayed everywhere but the brood-master remained standing. With a roar, he charged forward.

Gaines braced himself for the final attack.

A cruel smile crossed the green face before the goblin suddenly kicked off one of the raped prisoners and flung himself toward Billy.

Billy froze.

"Billy!" bellowed Gaines. He launched himself after the goblin.

Pinith tried to shoot an arrow but missed.

Gaines caught the goblin's legs and threw him forward but the creature's sword came down toward Billy's throat. The jagged blade sliced into flesh.

The entire room plunged into darkness as Merrie joined the battle. Black tentacles burst out of the shadows. Many of them plunged into the goblin's body, punching holes in every orifice of his body to grip his organs tight and then rip him apart in a shower of blood. More tentacles grabbed Billy by her arms, throat, and legs, and drove her kneeling into the ground.

The burst of helplessness fueled Merrie's power as she sent more tentacles to make sure all of the goblins were truly dead, by pulverizing their body and painting the walls crimson with their corpses.

The shadows disappeared, leaving a red sheet across every surface of the room.

All four of the adventurers froze as true fear rose up. As one, they looked at Merrie as she crawled into the room without her illusions. Her dog ears perked up and her tail wagged as she headed straight for the nearest prisoner. Reaching underneath his upturned ass, she bit down on the nails piercing his balls and pulled them out.

It took her a few moments to free him and he slumped to the ground. (Kim, use a low grade healing spell to stop the bleeding. You

don't have enough to help him completely and the others are going to need your other spells.)

Kim shuddered and a sob rose in her throat. She urinated in her clothes, soaking the fabric.

Merrie directed the others to tasks. (Gaines, help me free the man. Be careful, they wrapped wire around his balls and he is going to be in agony. Also they nailed his nipples to the stump. Billy, free the woman. Her name is Lanil. Pinith help Kim use her healing spells on all of them but only enough to stop infections and bleeding.)

When the four didn't respond, Merrie sent a dominating pulse that stirred them and they started to move.

It took almost twenty minutes to get wounds bandaged and healed. Billy's throat had been cut but the blade didn't reach an artery or her trachea. It would scar, at least a little, but nothing more.

Gaines had the most injuries but he refused to let Kim treat him as he ensured he was always standing between Merrie and the others.

Merrie wagged her tail. (You're a good leader, Gaines. You all did a good job.)

"A-Are you going to kill us?" whimpered Billy. She was seconds from losing control herself.

Merrie chuckled and shook her head. She planted her wrists hard against them ground and transformed her body, shifting into the massive bulk of the Bel Dark hound in an instant. She needed the bulk to carry the three prisoners. (Your father would be very angry at me if I did that.)

The Merchant

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The wagon creaked as the horse pulled it along a well-maintained dirt road. It was a normal day except for the three bloody prisoners in the back. While Pinith guided the horse with his reins, the other three adventurers were in the back staring at Merrie with fear and curiosity burning in their minds.

By the time they got out of the mines, it was near the end of the day but sunlight still painted puddles across the ground. Merrie cringed as the sensation of her skin burning and quickly ducked underneath a heavy tarp. Dragging it along, she helped the adventurers get the prisoners into the back of the wagon and head off.

Merrie stared at the red puddle of sunlight that splashed into the wagon near the tarp. It hurt her eyes but curiosity had taken over. She had integrated her powers with the demon's continual cycle of rape and death. Did it still peel away her skin?

Trembling, she reached out and brushed the light.

Pain blossomed along her nerves. It was intense, white-hot and searing. But the skin didn't blacken instantly nor peel back to reveal her core. Instead, the flesh burned rapidly and pain redoubled.

Gaines watched as he thought about ripping the tarp off her.

Merrie gave him a hard look. (Do you think that is a good idea?)

Billy frowned at looked at him.

He blushed. "N-No. We just... I mean, if you try to kill us, what else could we do?"

Merrie grinned.

Pinith looked back. "How are you doing that? Your lips aren't moving but I can hear you as if you were whispering in my ear."

What was unsent was that he was finding himself getting attracted to the voice Merrie projected. "Are you deaf?"

"Mute," said Kim. "They cut out her tongue, remember?"

"No, they didn't." Pinith gestured back. "I thought they did but then she has it back when we were putting the... everyone in the wagon."

Surprise blossomed across the three others. They looked and Merrie willingly opened her mouth to reveal her tongue and bright teeth. She smiled and let her tail thump against the heavy tarp.

"Illusion?" asked Billy.

Merrie nodded.

"But, if you were using an illusion, why are you still naked?"

All four of them grew flushed with their attraction.

(I don't like clothes. I don't like talking. It isn't... who I am anymore.)

"You can talk though?" Pinith asked.

(Yes.)

There was an uncomfortable silence.

Merrie grinned. She cleared her throat. "I can."

It was as if her voice was connected directly to his cock. She basked in the sudden surge of pleasure that came from hearing her raspy voice.

Then Merrie noticed that Kim was feeling jealous and Merrie dropped her smile. (I prefer not to use my voice, just like I don't like wearing clothes.)

"Why?" asked Gaines. His hand was nestled into Billy's grip.

Merrie peeked out of the tarp at the trees around them. She sighed. (When I gained my powers, I was a sex slave. They turned me into a puppy girl, a slave trained to act like a dog to turn people on.)

Kim coughed with sudden thoughts. "Last I heard, sex slaves can't do that to goblins."

"Have you actually met a sex slave?" snapped Pinith.

Kim blushed. She had and the memories came up of a hidden journal underneath her bed where she had masturbated herself to sleep more than once. Her fantasy recently focused on Pinith.

Merrie looked into her thoughts.

Kim wasn't an Alpha, but she liked the idea of being a slave. A spice for sex and Merrie suspected one that wouldn't start with anything more serious than a collar or a few stern words.

To break the uncomfortable mood, Merrie answered. (I'm special. One might say, one in a billion in one regard, completely unique in the other.)

Those drove in silence for almost a half hour, each one lost in thoughts as they painted vivid images of what they thought a sex slave would do. Gaines and Billy were both virgins but the other two had fumbling encounters including with each other. Probing his thoughts, it was clear that Pinith was interested in both Gaines and Kim, though he didn't know how to broach the subject.

"How do you know my dad?" asked Billy just as it was getting dark.

Merrie looked up from the tarp. It was dark enough to shuck it but she left it on. (That is his story.)

"Is he going to be happy to see you?"

Merrie shrugged. (I don't know.)

"He's a good man."

(Yes,) Merrie said with a smile. (Probably more than you would ever realize. Don't worry, I have no intent to harm him or your family.)

Billy let out her breath and squeezed Gaines' hands. "We're almost home."

Less than a quarter mile according to their memories. Merrie could already smell wood smoke in the air and the spices of Ston's cooking. If she ate, her stomach would be grumbling. (I know.)

"How... are you reading our minds?" gasped Kim. She tried to immediately think about flowers instead of her face nestled between Pinith's buttocks. The blush was intense but the others didn't notice.

"Get out, Billy Goat!" snapped a familiar voice, Ston's. He was relieved and angry at the same time.

Merrie smiled to herself. Her tail wagged faster.

Billy cringed as her thoughts went to the familiar groove of a daughter being yelled at by her father. She crawled over the edge of the wagon and landed on the ground before Pinith had brought it to a stop at the edge of the village. "Daddy."

"I told you not to go."

"I had to. They needed us."

"You could have gotten hurt. You could—"

"Oh, baby!" cried her mother. "Your throat!"

"It's okay, Mom. Just a—"

"You two are in serious trouble!" bellowed Ston. He was worried sick when they ran off the go after the goblins. Underneath the fear, though, he knew that his daughter was safe near Gaines though he felt the young man was too brash. "Starting tomorrow, I'm going to —"

Merrie sent out a pulse of affection to interrupt him.

Ston stopped talking. Then he let out a shuddering sob.

Pulling herself out from underneath the tarp, Merrie crawled up to the side of the wagon and leaned over it. Her tail wagged back and forth as she smiled at him.

Tears were running down Ston's cheeks as he stared at her. His lower lip, barely visible underneath his beard, trembled. Then, all the tension left his legs and he sank to his knees.

Billy and almost twenty villagers that had gathered turned to watch in shock as Merrie crawled over the edge of the wagon and dropped to the ground. Steadily, she crawled over to him.

Ston reached out. "Is... is it..." he whispered. "Is it really you?"

Merrie sent out another pulse and then leaned into his body.

He gripped her tightly. "Oh, Bitch. Bitch! By the Golden God, it's you!"

Merrie closed her eyes and leaned tighter. (I missed you.)

"Well," gasped Billy. "I think he's happy to see you."

Merrie opened her eyes to see Ston's wife watching with tears of sadness in her eyes.

Her name was Nikki and she always knew that Ston's heart had been given to someone else. It was as if twelve years was now about to be lost in a single instant.

Merrie reached out to comfort her when a prickle of danger ran down her spine. Without moving, she opened up her thoughts to scan the villagers surrounding them. Curiosity, disgust, and lust were naked on their thoughts except for five. Five of them were blank, steadfastly normal as if a naked woman always appeared in their midst.

She sent out a targeted wave of lust toward each one. None of them responded to her emotions but then divine energy began to gather around them. She knew the taste of it, holy magic.

Merrie forced her tail to wag. (Ston, I'm sorry.)

"For what?" he whispered. His body tensed but he managed to keep himself

(They were waiting for me. There is going to be a fight, a bad one.)

"Monte is to my right, you can trust him. He was with us in the prison wagon."

A yellow-green glow surrounded Monte's head. Merrie had been healed enough times to know exactly what it mean. She watched curiously as Monte's dazed moaning stopped.

Seconds later, he sat up. "W-What happened?"

"You hit your head," said the paladin. "You needed healing."

"Oh, thank you..." He looked at her and then gasped. "Sir Lilin? What are you doing here?"

"Welcome back, Sir Fainmar. I apologize, we did not know where you are."

Merrie suspect that it was a lie.

"Y-You are wearing the symbol of Galladin."

"We have much to talk about. Lemetri is no more."

Monte looked at Merrie, frowning. "What trick is this? How did you convince her?"

The Presence grew stronger it focused on Monte. "Sir Fainmar, I swear to you on Lemetri's and Galladin's light, there is no trick."

Merrie projected the memory to Ston. (No, trust Gaines and her friends. He was willing to die for your daughter, he will do the same for you.)

Then she focused on Monte, trying to figure out how she missed him. Then it hit her:

A hundred warriors of Lemetri sat on benches in the middle of the Guardian Guild. They were dressed in the rags of farmers and merchants in preparation of the most dangerous mission they would ever take. Fredric, soon to be known as Darrin, had just become ordained by the paladins of Lemetri. He could feel the holy power burning inside him. And he had a target, an evil man who needed to be purged from the world.

The Grand Paladin of Lemetri, Golid, stood in front of all of them. It was one of the few times when he was standing as a paladin instead of the disguised he used for the last three years. His war scythe shone in brilliant white, sparkling as if it wasn't bathed in the blood of a thousand shadow creatures.

It was Gillette, but it wasn't. The eyes were the different. Golid's eyes were burning with righteous fury and anger.

"There is no room for mistakes in this mission and I will tolerate no one ruining this for me. Our attack on Bassimar failed because of Merrie Golddother. But, Bassimar trusts her and she is the only way we'll lure him into a trap."

The paladins of Lemetri were adept at masking themselves underneath a disguise of another personality. That meant that the five may be more paladins, despite the deal made between the gods. There was no reason they would attempt to break a promise made between gods, but she wouldn't put it past the endless rage of the Paladins of Lemetri.

There may be other paladins. Lilin had taken Monte away and Merrie wouldn't put it past her not to be among the others, hiding behind a false persona.

She started to scan the five ones who had masked emotions, but then stopped. It wouldn't be that easy. She focused instead on the female villagers who appeared to be lost in lust and desire. With a second look, she had her potential opponent, a blonde villager still holding her rake. Lilin had a two-handed sword and Merrie could almost imagine that it could be disguised as an instrument.

(Ston, time to move. Tell them to break up and get ready to run.)

She projected the same direction to the four adventurers. She may have missed one of the masked paladins, but that was a betrayal she would have to deal with later.

Ston gulped. “I-I should... we should talk inside. Okay, let’s get these folks to the healer and then—”

The woman with the rake headed for the wagon.

Merrie focused on her but then realized there was another female villager coming straight for Ston. She smiled as she reached out. Then her fingers clamped as if she was holding something.

With a pulse of power, Merrie transformed into a Bel Dark and charged Ston. Her shoulder caught his stomach and he folded in half before flying across the yard.

“Ston!” screamed Nikki.

The invisible blade caught Merrie’s spine. Holy energy burst out in a white flame as it dug deep into the flesh and fractured bone.

Merrie jerked free and then rolled back. Her body blurred as she rapidly transformed to heal. The ground underneath her boiled from the rapid shift of weight and density.

Gaines, Billy, and the other two burst into movement. They grabbed Ston and Nikki and shoved them back out of the fight.

Seven of the villagers turned and charged toward Merrie. The lead was Monte who Merrie finally recognized through the illusion. The man pretending to be a prisoner was older but there was a refinement to the anger and rage in his thoughts.

“Galladin!” came the roar as the glamours peeled away to reveal seven armed men and women charging. All of them had glowing blades and the symbol of Galladin’s Fist on their chest. They had been hiding, waiting for the moment Merrie returned.

Magic pulsed through Merrie’s veins. The world shuddered as the energy structured into spells of speed, strength, and defenses. Black flames rose up from her body as she snarled and charged toward them.

In mid-step, Merrie transformed into a dragon hound and surged forward. Her wings caught three of them in the throat while her jaw clamped down on the chest of a fourth. With a powerful surge, she crushed his chest and tore it clean from his hips.

Holy magic seared the air and struck her from behind.

Merrie whimpered at the burn of a torn wing. Quickly, she lost what little attitude she had and crashed to the ground. Before she bounced off the ground, she transformed back into her Bel Dark.

“I summon the light of purity!” bellowed Lilin.

Brilliance, brighter than the sun, exploded from behind Merrie. It caught her darkened skin, setting off white-hot flames of agony that coursed across every centimeter of flesh.

Merrie tried to roll way but the light followed her. She thrashed out blindly, trying to connect without seeing. Even her physic powers were blinded by the brilliance that transcended physical form.

“Destroy the beast!”

A sword caught Merrie’s leg. It sliced into flesh and cut through muscle before pinning her to the ground.

She tried to transform but the light was too bright and it hurt too much. She concentrated to force the pain away, to turn it into pleasure, but the moment gave time for another paladin to impale her shoulder to the ground with a second weapon.

Agony pinned her in place. She writhed in agony as the holy energy burned at her skin.

Lilin stood up, her entire body surrounded by the halo of light. She brought up her two-handed sword for a killing blow. “No speeches, beast. You will not protect him anymore.”

“Galladin,” Madock said as the air crackled around him, “I invoke the favors you owe me for favorable deals. You have gained benefit and now you shall pay. I demand three things: Bassimar shall be granted to Talus; you will cease all present and future attempts to attack, kill, or otherwise harm Bassimar and his associates; you will cease all hostilities toward Merrie, the Lord of Shadows, and the shadow lands controlled by their union.”

The paladin god, soon to be a god of light, glared at Madock. He balled his hands into fists, squeezing down until his knuckles cracked.

“Do you agree before Parn?”

Galladin's glare shifted from Talus and then to Merrie. Then he looked pointedly away. "To get Lemetri's spark back, I agree."

Before anyone could say anything, he disappeared.

Merrie gasped. The gods had made a promise not to attack her. There was an oath made in front of Parn. A surge of oath magic rose up and gave her strength. She spat out blood from her mouth. "How... do you still have powers?"

Lilin's face twisted in rage. "By Galladin's might!" Then, with all her might, she drove the tip of her sword into Merrie's chest. With a grunt, she twisted hard.

Inside her chest, Merrie's heart was sliced in half and torn apart.

A promise kept it beating. An oath.

Merrie shuddered through the pain, but forced her throat to work to spat out the hoarse words. "There was an oath."

"Against creatures like you and that beast? No promise is worth it. I serve my god until the end of time!" Lilin twisted again, tearing open Merrie's chest until black blood poured out of the gaping wound.

The brilliance around Merrie flickered.

Lilin didn't notice it.

Then it disappeared.

The paladin's sword sparkled and crumbled, leaving a gaping wound in Merrie's chest. Seconds later, the other weapons crumbled and she slumped to the ground.

Lilin staggered back. She snarled and held out her hand. "Summon justice!"

No sword appeared.

From the other side of the wagon, Ston's voice rose up. "Who's the beast?"

Merrie cringed. She wanted to tell him to run away but the words wouldn't come. She tried to get back on her feet, but her injuries refused to heal even when she transformed.

"The fallen knight. Don't worry, prisoner, no one here is going to live to warn him." Lilin waved her hand in his direction. "I will deal with your crimes soon enough."

Ston came around the wagon, flanked by the four adventures. His daughter stood on one side of him and Gaines on the other. Gaines was bleeding profusely from his side. "Which fallen knight?" His voice sounded strange.

"Bassimar, the stain on—"

A column of light pierced the sky above them and shot down. It slammed into Lilin in a flash of heat. She didn't even have a chance to scream as her flesh burned away from the bone before they also dissolved under the light.

More light struck down, catching the other paladins.

Above her, Merrie saw a new column streaking down toward her. She could feel the divine power in the energy as it approach, the anticipation of death coming rapidly.

Merrie tensed for the end.

It never came.

Only darkness.

Merrie gasped and looked up to see the world had turned crimson around her. She was cramped and pinned to the ground, crushed under heavy plates of metal and steel.

Beyond the shield, she could hear the howling power blasting the earth to bedrock.

The roar ended.

Whatever had pinned her stood up and sat back. An articulate hound helm turned to face her, two points of crimson light shining in the darkness of the eye holes. Then a tongue slipped out of the side of the armored hound's mouth.

Someone knelt down next to her. She looked up to see another armored person, this one humanoid but massive. His broad chest was the same crimson as his hound and there was a deep red rose where there used to be the symbol of Lemetri.

Bass reached over to press his hand to her chest. A yellow-green warmth blossomed and sank into her body. Healing magic, something that had never worked on her shadow form, flooded through her.

She let out a cry of relief. She couldn't find the words so she sent out a ragged wave of love and thanks.

Sable caught the wave and sent it back, redoubling it into an intensity that Merrie hadn't felt in decades. (We're here,) came the whiskey and smoke voice in Merrie's head.

Something powerful slammed into the ground, following by intense wave of Presence. It demanded attention, threatening to drown out every thought from Merrie's head.

Bass suddenly reached out and grabbed Sable, pulling her close as he wrapped both Merrie and his mate in a field of fierce determination and love. His Presence wasn't anything close to a god's, but it buffered much of the overwhelming force.

Merrie looked down. Her wound had healed with Bass's laying of hands.

Galladin stood in front of them, the god of light scowling down as he balled up his fist. "No one will ever know."

To Merrie's surprise, Ston stepped up. "Excuse me."

The anger faltered.

Ston glanced at Merrie. His eyes had turned solid gold. Then he turned back to the god of light. "Thanks to Ston's daughter and to-be-husband, your paladin failed to kill the witness. However, your man did hurt Gaines and that caused a certain merchant to call on his patron lord."

Galladin's jaw tightened. "How? I suppressed all prayers."

"I was summoned when he called my name on first sight of the Omega. I was already here, Galladin, watching one of my beloveds find happiness."

The god of light shook his head. "I don't have time for this."

Madock, in Ston's body, turned to the side. "Talus?"

Merrie followed his gaze to where a young man was draped against Kim's body, whispering in her ear and stroking her crotch. Kim was blushing hotly and her knees shook.

"Talus," Ston said firmly.

Galladin let out a grunt. He seemed to be concentrating. Around him, his own brilliance began to flicker.

Talus, the goddess of whores, rolled her eyes. She stepped away from Kim as a young woman. By the time she reached Merrie, Bass, and Sable, she was an older woman with sagging tits but still incredibly beautiful. She stroked Bass's shoulder. "Good boy." Then Sable's ear. "Good girl."

To Merrie, the goddess leaned down and whispered, "I'll get my due later."

An orgasm exploded inside Merrie from just the hint of a promise.

"What is going on?" demanded Galladin.

"Having trouble getting your powers up?" Talus said as a young girl of barely sixteen. "Your little pillar fading?"

Madock gestured to the smoldering piles that were his paladins. "You killed your own paladins, why?"

Galladin drew himself up. "They violated the promise. You know I must honor the boons."

"How long were they here, Galladin?"

"I don't know."

"Ston's memories say eleven years. Are you really saying you didn't know where one of your most powerful paladin was for eleven years? Or six of her men and women?"

Galladin drew up and puffed out his chest. "They are human and have free will. They spend years masking themselves as others, that is what they were trained to do."

"Naturally, you'd honor the deal if you knew about it?" Madock seemed pleased with himself.

"Of course."

"And I would expect you will do an investigation and find out how high up that knowledge of this betrayal went? And deal with any and all paladins and priests of yours who knew they were here in the same manner."

A tick jumped in Galladin's cheek.

"I mean, you made an oath to Parn. Do you really think she should get involved?"

"I told you not to play with those forces. The goddess of oaths is not a tool."

"Said the greater god who treats her like a child. But, no matter what, we had a deal and I'm thinking," Madock said with a smile, "it wouldn't benefit you to let all the gods know that your paladins were violating a deal between gods. Would it?"

Galladin let out a deep, rumbling growl. "What do you want, minor gods?"

“An agreement, to bring in an arbitrator to investigate how deep this corruption is in your followers.”

The god of light glared. “If you think—”

“And a boon, for Talus and I. A major one because if Talus didn’t teleport her champion from across the world, your paladin would have killed the Omega and possibly set off an invasion of shadow creatures to devour the world. And as a witness, Ston would have made sure the rest of the world knew it was your paladins who had done it.”

Galladin hesitated. Then he snarled. “I will end you.”

Madock winked. “Yes, but now with a boon unfulfilled. That could be dangerous in the wrong hands.”

Galladin looked furious. He shook his head. “Deal but no mortal shall ever know of this conversation.”

“Agreed.” Energy rushed into Madock, then a powerful divine spell radiated from his form. It was a powerful one designed to erase memories and stop all thought for a short period of time. Merrie could feel it catch her mind, but then it dissolved with leaving only the hint of its passing. The only thing left was the same hints of how it operated, just like every other geas that had been placed on Merrie since she accepted Parn.

The rest of the mortal survivors, including Bass and Sable, froze in place.

Galladin disappeared in a flash of light.

Talus leaned against Ston as a squat man with a massive cock. “We work well together, Golden Boy.”

“Yes, my lovely whore.”

“Shall we leave the mortals behind? I’m feeling frisky and only two people here could survive the mood I’m in.”

Madock turned and looked at Merrie. He sighed. “Do you think she’s going to win?”

Talus followed his gaze. She smiled broadly and Merrie couldn’t help but feel an intense wave of longing. Talus was close to a goddess that Merrie would have had, if it wasn’t for Parn. The goddess sighed. “I have a feeling that Parn has more plans for her but I don’t think our lovely bitch knows that she will be fighting a loved one she had forgotten for the fate of this kingdom.”

Madock sighed. "We better leave. This body can't take possession much longer. But I owe him good luck, if it wasn't for that frantic prayer, I would have never know we had enemies here."

"Your place?"

"I'll meet you there."

Talus smiled and kissed him. "I'll get my strap-on. It's gold."

Madock rolled his eyes.

"My boon was your ass and you know it." Talus disappeared a cloud of perfume and flowers.

Madock shook his head. Turning around, he blinked and one of his eyes ceased to be gold. "Thank you, Merrie. I was not expecting to ever see you, but I'm thankful to find you safe. The worst is that you won't remember this but you have my deepest thanks. If you survive, I owe you a boon. You have terrible adventures ahead of you, but this is as far as this god can help you with risking my own divinity. Good luck."

He blinked and the golden light faded.

Merrie decided to let him know that she remained lucid. With the last of his presence fading, she sent out a single thought to the god's presence. (Thank you.)

In the briefest of moment as the possession ended, Madock looked shocked before Ston's personality took place once again.

With a groan, Ston sank to his knees again. Blood ran down from his nose. "W-What happened?"

"Daddy!" cried Billy as she rushed up.

Merrie looked around and caught sight of Kim trying to hold her hand over her pussy-soaked trousers.

A hot blush burned on the young girl's cheeks as she looked around helplessly.

Merrie directed a thought toward Bass and Sable, (The silfae needs help.)

"Oh, blessed Talus, that fucking slut does that to everyone suppressing their desires," Bass said with amusement as he stood up. He thudded over as the plate armor disappeared from his body in a cloud of perfume and roses. Underneath, he was bare chested and imposing. His gray skin drew attention as he stood in front of Kim and started to speak to her.

Merrie turned back to see Sable sitting on the ground, naked as her.

It had been a long time and Merrie had almost forgotten that Sable had been cropped at the knees and elbows. The older woman, but almost as immortal as Merrie, still had her youth and enthusiasm. She wiggled her entire body before she jumped forward, slamming into Merrie with her bare breasts and began to lick her enthusiastically. (I missed you!)

t'Sade

Consoling

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“I still don’t understand what happened. Monte has been here in the village for years!” Ston sat on the end of the bench with a hunk of meat from his cooler on his head and a bloody nose. “He was my friend. I trusted him. We all did.”

The betrayal burned bright in his thoughts as he thought about every previous interaction. There was also guilt and fear that he had put his new family at risk. His eyes scanned the other villagers, over thirty people, who were milling around in their own discomfort. None of them knew there were paladins hiding among them and none of them expected the betrayal from decade-long relationships.

Merrie didn’t know what to say. She remained in her spot near his feet as she rested her head on her wrists and let her tail wag slowly back and forth. Despite her casual position, her mind was reaching out to the surroundings looking for hidden traps and thoughts. It was tedious work but she didn’t trust the god to have another follower conveniently disobeying the oaths.

Her attention was also on Nikki, Ston’s new wife. She circled around slowly, struggling to keep a brave face but she was also preparing herself for when Ston left her for Merrie.

(You’d going to need to talk to her in person,) Sable projected from a short distance. (Assuming you aren’t bringing Ston.)

Merrie’s tail wagged faster. She sent a pulse of love before responding. (Ston has done so much for me, I’m not going to drag him into my battles.)

The ground thudded with Bass’ approach. More than few women inhaled and started to look away only to peek at his bare, hairy chest as he came around the wagon. Despite being a thriban—a race

that frequently was treat as a brute or barely above a monster—there was no question that he had a Presence that radiated sexuality.

Merrie could feel it, not only in her own desire to focus on him, but also on the liquid waves of desire that rose up from almost everyone surrounding them. The villagers were ashamed of staring, but most of them wanted him or Sable in some manner.

(There are some advantages of becoming a champion of whores. They are picking that up, the innate desires rising up.) Sable's whiskey and smoke voice echoed in Merrie's head, followed by a pleasurable wave of contentment.

(Talus has been good for you two?)

(Oh yes. Ever since we lost title in Bloody County, we spend our days split between our new home and traveling the world. Whores are the first to suffer when society decides it wants to “grow up,”) her final thoughts were bitter as images of guards trying to burn a whore house rose up.

Bass set down a heavy barrel and wiped the sweat from his brow. His pectorals flexed with the effort and Merrie could almost smell the desire coming from the two nearest women. With an easy grin, he looked at the ground and then sat down heavily right on the earth.

(Oh! My turn!) Sable came bounding up, her cropped limbs flailing with all the excitement in the world as she launched herself into his lap.

Bass chuckled and held out his hand to catch her.

Even though Sable was decades older than Merrie, she was no less beautiful as she squirmed and wiggled. Her bare pussy, always slick with lust, flashed the entire village before she squirmed down between his thick, muscular thighs. With a sigh, she dropped her head on his knee and stuck her tail up straight to expose the tiny asshole between her legs.

A wave of lust, and some guilt, rippled through the surrounding villagers. Those who struggled with their desire for Bass were helpless against the raw, youthful sexuality of the alpha.

Ston sighed. “How could I have known?”

Bass shrugged, his gray skin still glistening with effort. “You wouldn't. They were called the Lanterns of Lemetri. They would

take on personas and guises of those easily overlooked. Sometimes, they would keep those roles for decades before they were called to service. They were trained to keep their guises under the eye of a telepathy.” He gestured to Sable and Merrie. “You had no chance.”

“But why here?” asked Ston.

Bass gestured to Merrie.

The attention felt like a thousand hands caressing her body. Merrie perked up her ears from underneath the edge of the wagon and wagged her tail.

“But, she’s...” Ston held out his hand. “Actually, what is she? I mean, I thought it was always strange that she acted like a dog and refused to wear clothes, but then... then...” He pointed to Sable who rolled over on her back and spread her legs. “There are two of them.”

Bass dropped his hand to rub his thumb along her nipple.

Sable’s leg quivered. (Oh, that feels good.)

“Short answer? Both Sable and Bitch are called True Submissives. Since they both act like dogs, we call them Alphas. They have the ability to bond with a master and magnify powers to an incredible degree. This little bitch here...” His hand slid down to cup her sex.

Merrie’s pussy grew wet as she watched Bass brazenly slid his finger deep into Sable’s pussy. Around them, the villagers shifted to hide erections or pretend they were thinking about being in one of their positions.

“... is bonded to me. She takes my powers, my devotion to Talus, and turns them into something incredible. I’ve taken on armies with her by my side.”

“But,” started Pinith, “she’s just a naked woman without arms and legs.”

Sable perked up her head with her tongue slicking out of the side of her mouth. It was a silly expression.

Bass chuckled. “Never underestimate her. She’s been in wars that have lasted longer than you’ve been walking.”

Pinith frowned but said nothing.

Ston cleared his throat and gave Pinith a hard look before he spoke. “Who is Bitch’s master then?”

Bass shrugged.

(You want to tell them?) asked Sable, her mental voice blending with Bass'.

(I don't have a mistress anymore.)

Shock rippled through the connection. Sable's tail dropped as she sucked up her tongue and stared at Merrie.

Merrie perked her ears. She quickly gathered up a compressed packet of memories and projected them. Between the two telepaths, it only took a heartbeat to communicate years of experiences.

Sable sent back a wave of sadness, comfort, and amazement.

Bass tensed for a moment. Then the easy attitude came back in a wave of Presence. "Bitch is special."

"I know," Ston said.

From the edge, Nikki's mood grew more despaired. She thought about the lonely years before Ston. Just as the tears were about to come, she turned and fled for their house.

Merrie sent a thought to Sable. (I'm needed.)

(We'll give you a distraction. Be safe.)

With a wave of affection, Merrie crawled deeper under the wagon and away from the crowd. Behind her, she could feel Bass' Presence grow stronger as he drew everyone's attention to himself.

"So, think we could have a little fun to lighten the mood?" he boomed.

"Doing what?"

"Well, who wants to see Sable do some tricks?"

Sable's amused thoughts rose up. She was already anticipating commands coming and the very desire sent a thrill. (I give it less than an hour before someone has their cock in me. Maybe two.)

Merrie smiled with the fond memories of obeying commands and doing tricks for everyone. It was from her more innocent days and her body grew slick with the thoughts. She crawled to Ston's house and then slipped through the door.

Nikki was a heavier-set woman. She sat on her couch, hands in her face, and sobbing. Only the light from the hearth lit up her body as she wallowed in fear.

Some things required speech. Merrie settled into place. "He's not coming with me."

Nikki jumped with a scream.

“Sorry,” Merrie said as she crawled further into the house. She sat down on her thighs near the crackling fire. “I want to make sure you understood. Ston can’t come.”

Nikki wiped the tears from his face. “Why are you here? Coming to gloat?”

Merrie shook her head. “No, because there is nothing to gloat about.”

“Why not? He’s going to follow you no matter what you do.”

Merrie sighed. “He can’t. I’m... he wouldn’t survive.”

Nikki closed her eyes tightly and shook her head. “You don’t understand. You’ve always been in his thoughts. Ever since we met, he told me about you. How beautiful you were, how wonderful, how much he couldn’t live without you.”

She sobbed.

Merrie crept forward and rested a hand on her thigh.

Nikki flinched.

“I’m not letting him leave you.” It was more words than Merrie had said in a long time. Her voice came out hoarse and it ached, but she had to speak it. “I’ve seen what is in his head. He loves you, Nikki. Loves you and your daughter with all his heart. It may have started with him in love with me, but he’ll come to realize that I’m just a fantasy.”

“H-How can you know that?”

(I am telepathic,) Merrie sent with a pulse of wry humor.

“He won’t stay. I mean, look at you. Even with... without your...” She struggled for the words.

“Without my hands and feet?”

Nikki blushed, both at the acknowledge but also the brief thought of her in the same place. She gulped. “You’re beautiful. I mean, not just pictures on a page or illusions, you are so incredible beautiful even I...” She blushed.

“You want me?” Merrie said, her tail starting to wag again.

Nikki didn’t say anything.

“It’s okay, that is one way I gain power, through submission and sex. Like Bass and Sable out there.”

“But you look so helpless, there is no way you could have done what Ston said.”

“Which part? Killing a god? Having my head torn off by metal ring? Survive years of being devoured by demons while they used my body? Or being sentence for life for killing thousands?”

Nikki struggled to comprehend the muted images that Merrie sent. “Y-Yes. Wait... thousands?”

Merrie sighed and her ears dropped. “More than thousands. I made mistakes, I hurt people. I wouldn’t be surprise if a million souls had died because of my actions.”

“I can’t imagine that.”

“I hope you never have. I’ve had the gods judge me more than once for what I’ve done. I’ve had my heart torn in half so many times. I am bound by forces that Billy, Ston, and you will never have to suffer.”

Merrie ran her wrist along Nikki’s thigh. “I can’t bring him with me, no matter how much he begs, because it would kill me to see him hurt. And I promise you, I’m going be hurt. I may even die... again.”

Nikki hesitated before she reached down to rest her hand on Merrie’s wrist. “Then why are you doing it?”

Merrie smiled and her tail wagged. “Because I serve Franome now. And Franome needs me for something important.”

“The queen?”

Something drew Merrie’s attention, a prickle of the geas. She couldn’t pick up anything else, so she decided to question it when she had a chance. “Maybe. I don’t know.”

Outside, a cheer rose up.

(The first cock is out!) came Sable’s cheerful thoughts.

Nikki sighed. “Are you going to fuck him and leave?”

Merrie shifted her body closer. “Only if you allow me to.”

Nikki looked away. “I guess.”

“Thought, I’d rather it was the three of us.”

It took a heartbeat for the words to register. Then Nikki’s breath came faster and she tightened her grip on Merrie’s wrist.

“I mean, it’s been a long time since I’ve been with a woman,” Merrie said with a smile. She shifted her body until she could rest her chin between both of Nikki’s knees. She knew it was the perfect place when a wave of half-hidden lust rose up.

“I couldn’t... cheat on him.”

“He’ll be joining us, it won’t be cheating.”

Nikki worried her bottom lip. “I’m not as pretty as you. I’m fat.”

Merrie sent a pulsating wave of lust.

Nikki’s pussy grew wetter underneath her dress. She clamped her thigh together but Merrie’s body was between her knees and she couldn’t.

(I think you are more than beautiful.)

Nikki blushed. “How can you say it?”

(Because I’ve made love to lovers from all corners of the world. I have seen the profane and I have seen divinity. You are beautiful, I promise you.)

Blushing, Nikki’s knees relaxed.

(I would be honored if you would give me the pleasure of seeing your naked body.)

Nikki hesitated but then tugged on her dress. She fumbled with the laces before pulling them open. Her movements grew more frantic as she leaned back to tug the fabric from underneath her ass.

Seeing her hair pussy nestled between her thighs and half-hidden by the bottom of her dress, Merrie couldn’t resist. She dove between Nikki’s thighs and clamped her mouth over the slick folds.

“Oh!”

Nikki’s cunt had a strong taste, but it quickly grew sweet as Merrie lapped at the entire length. She laved up and down each side.

“Oh, oh! Ston never did that!”

(He’s going to have to start then,) Merrie said as she spread Nikki’s thighs and lapped harder. Her tongue dipped between Nikki’s buttocks and then trailed up the slick folds and hair to the hard bump of her clitoris. Then she drew down to plunge it deep into her pussy.

Nikki gripped Merrie’s ear tightly with one hand and the chair with the other. Her thick legs clamped around Merrie’s shoulders and pulled her tight.

Enjoying the pressure and warmth, Merrie redoubled her assault against Nikki’s pleasure. She worked her tongue along every surface until a flood of juices coated her face and tongue.

“Oh... Oh... shit, I can’t call him.”

Merrie grinned. (Madock would forgive you. So would Talus.)

Nikki let out a cry. “I’m coming... oh, it’s coming!”

Delving deeper, Merrie lapped and sucked harder and faster until she felt the orgasm spark. It came an intense wave that pulsed through Nikki's body, flooding her with warmth as hot juices poured out across Merrie's face.

Merrie slowed down and lapped until she could tell that Nikki's clitoris had gotten too sensitive. She drew back, strands of girl cum clinging to her face. She used the smooth end of her wrist to wipe off some of the juices and bring it to her mouth. Lapping them, she grinned. "Yummy."

Nikki slumped into her chair. "Ston never did that."

Merrie reached out to Nikki's husband with a wave of amusement. (You haven't been licking your wife to an orgasm? You know better. In the future, you should start with that.)

Guilt rose up and worry followed quickly. It wouldn't be long before he came running back.

"More?" Merrie said.

Nikki shook her head. "I-I can't. Oh, god, I've never come so hard."

Merrie gestured to her half-worn dress. (Take it off?)

"Y-Yeah. Sorry, I've never come so fast before." Nikki panted as she pulled the dress up over her head. Her breasts dangled before Merrie who caught one with her tongue and sucked on it.

Nikki giggled and playful batted her away. "I'm trying to strip, Bitch."

Merrie's tail wagged. She reared up and tugged Nikki toward the edge of the chair. If she did it right, she knew how to bring the other woman more pleasure before Ston arrived.

Nikki slipped out. She caught herself and dropped to her knees. "I can only go once, you know. Hold on, let me put this dress on the chair so it won't get ruined."

When Nikki turned around and reached up to hook the dress, she turned her ass toward Merrie.

Merrie smiled, her tail wagging. Narrowing her eyes, she waited and then dove down underneath the curve to come up and start licking at Nikki's asshole.

Nikki let out a shriek and fell against the chair.

Merrie used her weight to lap deep and hard, teasing the sphincter with the tip of her tongue before sliding over the ridge to plunge into the wet, dripping cunt underneath it.

“I-I can’t!” Nikki said, her thoughts caught in the lust and pleasure.

Merrie grinned as she sucked and burrowed against the two holes. It was a forbidden area for Nikki, but the touch was hard to resist and soon she was gripping the chair as she thrust back against Merrie’s mouth.

“Fuck, fuck!” she gasped as she came again on Merrie’s tongue.

Merrie could tell there was one more orgasm. She continued to burrow and tease. Magic rose around her, buffeting her senses as she drank in the pleasure being given.

A third orgasm took Nikki, pulsing through her body. She let out a strangled cry and one of the arms of the chair cracked before she slumped back.

“No more!” she gasped.

Merrie grinned and wagged her tail.

Nikki smiled bashfully. “C-Can I try?”

To answer, Merrie rolled over on her back and spread her legs.

Nikki got on her knees again. “The gods above, you are so beautiful.”

“Thank you.”

“I’m jealous, you know,” she whispered as she ran her fingers up Merrie’s inner thighs to tease with the smooth mound of her sex. “I could never look like you.”

From the entrance of the house, Ston peeked his head in. When he noticed Merrie and Nikki, a wave of lust and guilt flared from his thoughts.

Merrie noticed him and switched to using words again. “You look just as beautiful as me, you know. Ston is a lucky man and he knows it.”

Nikki hesitantly kissed Merrie’s knee as she gathered up the courage to work her mouth toward Merrie’s dripping sex. “How can you say that? After you, why would he want me?”

Ston’s thoughts washed with guilt. He was in love with Nikki and adored Billy. As much as he thought he would throw himself toward Merrie as soon as she arrived, the brutality of the fight and the

betrayal reminded him of the sour days of the prison. It was too easy to remember the fear and terror that haunted him in the prison, both when he was being hunted by others and also the unforgiving life.

With a start, he realized he didn't want to leave the village anymore. He was happy right where he was.

(Then don't leave,) Merrie sent him with a wave of affection.

Ston tensed. "Damn it, I forgot you could do that," he whispered.

(Do you love her?)

He looked at his wife and Merrie. It was obvious he found Merrie far more attractive, but there was something about Nikki that drew him. She was beautiful, but also she was his life now. Even if he left, he would be pining for the life he had made in the village. He nodded. "I do."

Merrie drew her attention back to Nikki. "Come on," she said in a low whisper. "Please?"

Nikki looked down at the Merrie's slick pussy. Then, with a deep breath, she lowered and took a tentative taste. Then she lifted her head with surprise. "You taste like rice wine!"

Merrie grinned. "You like?"

Nikki smiled and repositioned herself on her elbows and knees before shoving her face into it. Her tongue wasn't as skilled as Merrie's but it still felt good as she lapped and sucked.

Merrie came quickly but that wasn't unusual. She squirmed and leaned back. In the back of her mind, she sent a quick order to Ston. (Get your dick out and take your wife's other end. She has a few more orgasms to go before you finish.)

Knowing his wife couldn't handle more than once, Ston obeyed. He stripped quickly and then sneaked across the room to position himself behind his wife.

Merrie moaned and writhed underneath the tongue. She sent little thoughts to guide Nikki to places that brought the most pleasure.

When Ston entered Nikki, Merrie pulled her head tight to her pussy.

Nikki came hard at the sudden intrusion of her husband's cock. Then, she moaned and bumped back against it as she began to rock between the two bodies.

“Good girl,” Merrie whispered.

Before she was done for the night, neither Ston nor Nikki would have any doubt about their marriage together. Also, if Merrie did her job right, she would also ensure both would enjoy each other’s bodies for years to come. She grinned and then sent a pulse of affection to both of her lovers.

t'Sade

Intimacy

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Merrie almost purred as she dozed between Ston's and Nikki's sweaty bodies. After an hour of love-making, laughter, and bringing them together, she was sated and content.

It wouldn't last and she knew it. She couldn't even fantasize about staying in the small village and living out her life. If she did, the marriage that she had just bolstered would be ruined. She was also too powerful for the village, too strong for those. Her very presence would disrupt the four adventurer's growth to take on their own epics since they could easily ask her for help, much like when she saved them from the goblins.

Desperately wanting to sleep and relax, she rolled over. The thin blanket slid off her ass and exposed her to the cooler air around them. She twisted the muscles in her lower back and her tail wagged slowly back and forth as she tried to sink into sleep.

After twenty minutes, Merrie knew she wouldn't be sleeping again. Unlike Ston and Nikki, she had the Royal Geas prickling her mind; she could ignore it but it was difficult since she knew it would only have triggered for something important.

She thought about how the geas drew her attention to Nikki's question. Something about the queen was important to her oath to the country. Was she supposed to serve her? Did Franome need a champion against some larger threat that she wasn't aware of? She couldn't imagine anything more threatening than Kivas but she had just spent a decade being raped and eaten to know what else happened in the world.

Slowly, she opened her eyes. There would be no sleep for her.

Merrie considered using shadow magic to slip away but didn't. Instead, she groaned and pushed herself up to her wrists and knees. The small space between the two naked bodies was inviting but no longer for her. She crawled over Ston's legs and then used her wrists to push him to his wife.

With a murmur, he shifted forward until he filled the cool space that Merrie had left behind. One hand snaked around his wife and he smiled.

Merrie felt a flutter of love fill her. She was happy that Ston had found someone he loved. He was a good father and deserved everything after his trials at Abbinkey.

Turning around, she crawled out of the house and toward the center of the village. The fading smells of roasted meats, wood smoke, and sex drifted around her. She wagged her tail as she carefully made her way to the remains of the bonfire in the center.

Only one person remained awake, a man who called himself Kador. She reached out to read his surface thoughts, picking up on his duties to watch the fire until it finally died down and his own worries about other attackers in the village.

(There isn't anyone left to betray you.)

The farmer jumped. He clutched for his knife as he stood up looking for the source of her metal thoughts.

(Sorry.) Merrie crawled up to the fire and sat down. (They wouldn't leave someone behind here. Plus, I've scanned everyone in the surrounding area. Bass and Sable have done the same. There are Galladin's people left behind.)

The old man snorted with amusement. "So if they were at the orgy, they are good?"

Merrie's tail thumped on the ground. She grinned. (Trust the paladin.)

There was a flash of uncomfortable attraction and an image of Bass's naked ass as he fucked someone else in the village. The desire for the thriban was clear to Merrie's thoughts.

Unaware that his desires were being projected, the farmer shrugged and gestured to the side. "Aye, I do trust him. He's Talus' champion. My mum used pray to the goddess and anyone who would have her is someone I believe in. He's lucky he was nearby though, thought I don't remember much of the fight."

Merrie thought for a moment. Was it luck? No, she thought she understood the gods' powers more than before. They needed a presence, an anchor, to use magic. Without Ston, Madock would have never appeared. (Probably you, actually.)

"It couldn't be. I don't pray to her anymore. Besides, you got pretty tits and pussy, aren't you one of Talus? Everyone knows they are all pretty like you." He hefted his pot belly. "We all know, I'm not pretty."

Bass stepped out of the darkness. He was naked and his thick cock swung back and forth as he approach. "As much as we love Bitch, it was you that brought us here. I can't thank you enough, Kador."

The farmer jumped at his name. "How did you know my name?"
"Talus told me."

"I haven't prayed to her name since... sixty years ago." Kador's eyes drifted down to Bass' dark cock and the hidden lust bubbled up. It twitched as if knowing it was the object of the old man's interest.

Bass shrugged and stopped, turning slightly to give a better profile of his body. "The gods don't ever forget."

"Maybe I should start praying again? I don't remember much, my mum knew all the words." The old man ran his fingers along his darkened knuckles. "I wouldn't know how to... start again."

A flicker of Presence radiated from Bass. "We are going to stay in the village for a few weeks. If you want... I could come over some night and we could talk."

Fantasy and desire rose sharply in Kador's thoughts.

Merrie grinned and wagged her tail. Bass knew exactly what he was doing.

"I-I would like that."

After a few minutes of conversation, they agreed on a date. Then Bass sent him home with the promise of watching over the fire. Kador left with plans to masturbate with the what-ifs dancing in his head. He didn't know that his fantasies were going to be coming true sooner than he expected.

As soon as they were alone, Bass turned back to Merrie and gave her a hard look.

She returned the gaze, but didn't use her powers to probe into his thoughts. Unlike everyone else in the village, Bass had strong personal shields that would take effort to see what the century-old thriban thought about.

Her tail wagged as she watched the gray-skinned thriban sit down on the spot Kador had just abandoned. The long, thick cock thudded against the wooden log before stretching down. Even soft and sated, he was larger than what was left of her arm.

"Do you know where you are headed next?"

Surprised at his question, Merrie perked up her ears. She sent a pulse of curiosity.

Bass shrugged. "You should probably get used to that question. It seems to be one of the first ones asked when folks such as ourselves meet each other. You haven't been seen or heard of since you went to Abbinkey and then the prison doors sealed shut about ten years ago. Someone who was an enemy may longer care about that anymore and will treat you to a coffee as if he wasn't trying to kill you a century ago." He chuckled. "There is something surreal about skipping decades between old friends like us."

Across the expanse of memories of being constantly killed and resurrected, she could still remember the moment when she had sealed the door to the prison for a thousand years. It was painful, but she was still sure it was the right thing to do.

She stretched out on the ground. (Like us?)

"Immortal. Or at least as immortal as we can get. I'm pretty sure you're going to live out the centuries like me and Sable." He gave a low chuckle and scratched one massive ball. "Old friends won't see each other for a year will just resume as if they had never left. With immortal friends, it can be that or they become so different you barely recognize them when they return."

There was a sadness in his voice, one that tugged on her heart... or at least the triple beat of what she called her heart.

(What am I?)

His yellow eyes focused on her. The look was piercing, with a mixture of curiosity and accusing. "I don't know anymore. You had already transcended the powers of every alpha I've known a lifetime ago. You have bonded more than any I have ever seen in my years. Your soul has been damaged and recovered so many times."

She tensed at the sadness in his voice.

“But to have your body and spirit ripped apart for years by those demons?” He shuddered. “I can’t imagine that it was random circumstances that brought you to those depths.”

Merrie didn’t respond. Parn had told her she was going to Abbinkey for a reason. Looking back, it was clear that it was only a matter of time before Kivas and her came into conflict. The being of chaos would allow no power to remain near it and she was capable of surviving his energies long enough to defeat him.

A small part of her wondered if Parn knew that Merrie would win, or that she would drag Kivas down into the bowels of the earth to feed him to demons. It only took her a heartbeat to know that the Goddess of Oaths wasn’t guiding Merrie every way, it was Merrie’s own choices and decisions that lead there. Parn had just set up the conflict and sat back to see how Merrie would rise up to the challenge.

Somehow, knowing that Parn was watching somehow brought a rush of joy. Merrie had both succeeded and failed in her trials, but most importantly, she made choices that honored the goddess with every decision.

Bass chuckled and nodded with approval. “You found a calling.”

A scuffling caught her attention and she tilted one ear to listen as Sable crawled out of the darkness.

The older woman was much shorter, with her limbs cropped at her elbows and knees. The squat shape only enhanced her rounded ass that flexed with every step and the full breasts that scraped along the ground.

Sable came up to Merrie and slumped against her, bringing fresh scents of sex and sweat to them. She smiled and reached over and licked Merrie on the face. Along with the touch came an intimate pulse of affection.

Merrie moaned and licked her back, switching to her dog persona. She wiggled her hips back and forth excitedly, wagging her tail as she lapped at Sable’s face and throat.

Bass spoke over the licking noises, “Why not? I’m a paladin. When I see repeated trials and pains, I see the power that be preparing me for battle. When I’m called, I know that a goddess is tell me to obey. I can’t deny her because, as long as I serve her, she

will be there for me. Even if I die, it will be in her name. That faith never faded.”

Sable’s ears drooped. (Except when Lemetri abandoned us.)

Bass sighed and rested his thick fingers over his cock. The joy in his smile faded. “Except for then. We lost ourselves when that happened. Lost ourselves and risked our souls when we became the villains.”

Merrie thought about her early days at the Puppy Mill. As for all the cruelty and torture, Bass was always a good man. He never lost his compassion and tenderness; it was her who had to force him to ram his massive cock into her ass to take her final innocence.

She smiled and squirmed.

(Remembering?) Sable projected with a playful thought. (Thinking about his cock?)

Merrie pressed her cheek against Sable’s. (Just about how you two were terrible villains. You tried to be rapists but I still remember how tender you were on that first night when I sneaked into the bathroom and used it.)

Bass frown for a moment and then chuckled. “I remember that now. You were so frightened, it broke my...” He sighed. “Damn it.”

Merrie grinned. (Terrible villains, good people. You followed up on every sale, made sure they were treated well. You were kind and held back when the bitches were overwhelmed.)

He shook his head. “It doesn’t make up for the fact we kidnapped you in the first place. You didn’t have a choice when we stole the entire street. No matter how nice I was after the fact, that one event has stained my soul forever.”

Sable sighed against Merrie, her body twisting to place as their naked breasts and thighs intertwined. Sable’s mouth caressed Merrie’s neck and and throat before delving down to lap at her nipple.

Merrie moaned. (Talus would have never wanted to you to serve her if your soul was stained.)

“How would you know?” There was no doubt that he felt guilt for his actions. It haunted him, both his time at the Puppy Mill and the fear that Talus only allowed him because somehow the goddess didn’t know his crimes. He didn’t think he deserved Talus. “How do you know she wanted me?”

Merrie thought about the first meeting of the gods she had witnessed.

“You are about to take on the portfolio of Lemetri. I have one condition for that exchange, the favor you owe me for a deal that benefited you.”

Galladin’s eyes narrowed. “What is it?”

Talus pulled her hand from Merrie’s mouth. “Bassimar is mine.”

“What!?! Never! He is—!”

Madock held up his hand.

Galladin batted it away. “He is the stain on Lemetri’s name. I will destroy him the second I gain control. He will—”

Madock’s body grew more solid as he stood up. The force of his Presence beat down on Merrie, pushing her to the ground again. “You will give Bassimar to Talus.”

After a moment hesitation, she prayed to Parn that she was doing the right thing and then projected the forbidden memory to Bass and Sable.

Both of them stiffened. Then, tears gathered in their eyes as she felt them reliving the memory over and over again.

Merrie took advantage of the silence to move her mouth down to nuzzle at Sable’s neck and collar. The skin was soft underneath her lips, delicate and tinged with the taste of sweat and sex. She smiled and used her wrists to bring Sable’s breasts to her mouth. Sucking on the nipple, she projected a wave of love.

(S-She used a divine boon for us? Just for us?) Sable’s voice was brimming with surprise and hesitant relief. Neither could believe it; they weren’t sure if it wasn’t a dream.

Merrie nipped at the hard nipple. (Yes. It was the only thing she wanted.)

Bass wiped the tears from his face. “There were gods in that memory. Actual gods, not clerics, not even avatars. You were in the presence of gods.”

(It wasn't the first time.) She shrugged but secretly she was pleased at their responses. (Besides, I don't think I was supposed to remember that one.)

"Who? I recognize the symbol of Galladin, Talus, and Madock."

(The Lord of Shadows. A few thousand Reapers. It was in the moment before an explosion was to destroy Franome City. A friend...) It was Merrie's turn for her eyes to water. (A good friend sacrificed her life to save them all. No questions, no deals. Just accepted her fate.)

(Kirin, wasn't it? The old guild mistress?)

Merrie nodded. (My friend. She just served the city without hesitation.)

"No one knew what had happened that day, only that she had died in an instant."

Gathering up her memories of the moment, Merrie sent it as a compressed packet. Sable twitched but then pushed it aside to focus back on the conversation.

They said nothing for a long moment. Merrie filled the silence by kissing Sable who began to kiss her back. They caressed and touched.

Bass slipped off the bench and onto his knees. His cock was at half mast. "Where are you headed?"

(Franome City.)

"For the queen?"

Once again, the Royal Geas hummed in the back of her mind. There was something important about the queen, something that Merrie needed to serve. She didn't know if she had to serve the new royalty or something else. All that she knew was the drive to enter the city.

Merrie nodded.

"Do you want us to join you?" There was no hesitation.

(Why?)

"We serve the powers, for Talus and the greater good. There is no doubt you are being guided by something beyond us. A weapon forged on the in the maw of a thousand demons, a being who is neither arcane nor divine. Someone capable of defeating Kivas." He chuckled. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you have been summoned by a divine calling. If you will have us, we will join you."

Parn smiled and rubbed her thigh. “It feels good not to watch my words. To answer your question, yes and no. Paladins are the lone warriors against their god’s enemies. You, on the other hand, must have someone. You must work with others to gain power. You tie people together by your nature, not use them to advance yourself.”

Merrie smiled and sent a wave of love. (I would be honored if you were to join me.)

He straightened his back, balanced on his knees. The light of the bonfire highlighted the furrows of his muscles and the lines of his body. Even his cock cast a shadow that was impossible to miss as his Presence beat against her.

Merrie found herself unwilling to tear her attention away from him as he took a deep breath. Anticipation prickled along her skin and she could almost picture exactly what he would say.

Balling his massive hand into a fist, he thumped hard against his chest where his symbol to Talus would be. “Then, by the Warmth of Talus and her faith in me, I shall serve by your side in whatever duties you demand. I shall serve you with the full measure of my skills and the length of my life. I shall serve until you no longer need me.”

Bass gained power from his oaths. The more restrictive or open-ended, the more power. He had just given one without any limitations or provisions, opening himself up to abuse but also incredible power.

Sable kissed her. (And, from the soul of an alpha to the omega, I will also serve you with all of my powers, from bond to blood and back again. I swear on Talus.)

Energy crackled in the air. It pressed down on Merrie’s skin from all directions as it swooped from Sable to Bass and then back again. Reflexively, Merrie focused on it to see the power of their oath ricocheting between the two of them, the intensity and power of the magic growing with every pass through the alpha and then shaped into will and desire by Bass.

It was the power of the alpha, to magnify the energies of the one they had bonded to, their master. It was the ultimate submission.

The bond was also the thing that Merrie had left behind in the bowels of the earth with Zillia. There were no more overwhelming need to be dominated, all that remained with an ache of desire without all the magical powers that came with it.

As she mourned the passing need to be bonded, she watched the energy gathering between the other two. Her magical senses could easily pick out the swell of energy and how it would reach to a certain point where it burst out of the connection and manifested as magic.

Strands of oath magic became obvious with every bounce. She could see how Bass used the energy to give him restrictions and channel more energy toward his goal. The more limitations, including giving himself up to her without any constraints, the more the restrictions focused the power.

The bond itself was also oath magic, but a deeper kind. It was the promise of submission that had been written into reality itself. It was a channel also, but one that took advantage of Sable's natural ability to boost magic with the structure of her limitations; her own submission created the narrowing of power that focused the energies into brilliance.

Seeing the alpha's bond with new experiences gave Merrie an idea. She reached out with her magical senses, wrapping herself around the vibrating connection that bound master to submissive.

Shock rippled through the connection. (Merrie!? What—) Sable's whiskey and smoke voice was closer than ever before, as if Merrie had delved past metal shields and was communicating directly to the alpha's mind.

Bass' surprise also barreled through the connection, his innermost thoughts bare. The press of his memories and thoughts bore down on her, beating against her own heart without any shields to protect Merrie from the onslaught.

Merrie had entered their bond.

Instinctively, she knew how to respond. Steeling herself against the overwhelming to desire to permanently connect to either Bass or Sable, she weaved herself into the energies that connected the two. The promises they had just made scraped along her senses.

It felt like standing next to a raging river and feeling the power rushing past her.

Merrie delved into the core of their connection, redirecting the bouncing energies from Sable directly into herself, allowing them to be magnified by her own powers, before streaming them back toward Bass with a rush of energy she wasn't sure he could handle.

The ground beneath the three began to shake and vibrate. A large log fell off the bonfire in a spray of embers.

Merrie smiled as she continued to burrow into the intimate connection between Bass and Sable. She wasn't only the submissive in a relationship, she was a master. It took her only a moment to redirect the flow of Bass' will shaping the power into herself and then send it into Sable.

With two forces pouring into her in opposite directions, Merrie became master and submissive at the same time. The power was intense, but no more than everything else she had experienced. She had gained and lost masters more than any other True Submissive. She had bonded with the Lord of Shadows, Rakin, and herself.

With a low moan of shudder, she let herself experienced the waves of emotions and thoughts and energy as they slammed into her from both sides, treating her as a master and a slave simultaneously while enhancing both.

The power quickly exceeded the abilities of the bond to contain it but Merrie wrapped her own power around to let it gather strength more. Their oath needed more power, to transcend a simple promise into a power that could help her fulfill her oath.

The oath crystallized into something beyond Bass and Sable, a quasi-intelligence not unlike Zillia. Merrie could feel the personality fragmenting from all three of them as it gained consciousness. Then, as soon as it became aware, it started to siphon off the energies that the bond couldn't handle when Merrie would finally pull out.

Dimly, she was aware that the ground was liquefying underneath her, the dirt and sand becoming obsidian. The bonfire had burned away from the corner of her vision, leaving only smoke streaming away from the three.

She reached out and touched Sable. There were no words between them, only an ocean of emotions that the two had shared for a century. She could feel love, surprise, and passion beating against her. Even their faith, for Lemetri and Talus, pummeled

Merrie's thoughts and she couldn't help but let them seep into her being.

With the need to keep her own identity apart, Merrie responded with her own emotions: love and trust for the two had helped her become her true self, thankfulness for her time living, and all of the joy she had learned while serving Parn.

The three were as close as they would ever get.

Then it was time for her to leave. The personality fragment, now identifying itself simple as Promise, smoothly took over for Merrie as she pulled out from the intimate bond.

In a flash, she was once again inside her own head and her own body. No more beat of a master or a submissive against her soul, no more intimacy without limitations. The ache of longing returned, a hunger to belong, but Merrie had experienced it before. It wouldn't become despair anymore.

She let out a long, shuddering breath.

And then laughed. Her entire body shook as she let out long, barking yelps of joy and happiness.

Sable's eyes came into focus. Her jaw dropped as she stared at Merrie. But then, she began to bark with laughter herself.

Bass' booming joined in as he crawled the last meter to sweep both of naked women into a tight hug. His cock, full mast and dripping wet, smacked into Merrie's thigh. It felt like getting punched but she didn't mind. She rested one wrist against it before losing herself into the shared joy the three had experienced.

(H-How?) asked Sable, her thoughts discombobulated. (How did you do that? You were in our bond. I bonded... again!)

Merrie radiated love. (I am the Omega. I serve the world now.)

Tight against their bodies, Bass' thoughts were also echoing in their heads. "You did that before, with the gestalt during the Lemetri fight, but this... this was closer." His mouth nuzzled against Merrie's ear. "You were closer."

Merrie could feel that both of them were excited beyond the twitching cock that prodded her belly. It was their intimacy she had invaded but their powers were based on sex, just as hers were. She panted as she lifted one leg to rest her knee against his cock. "I was," she whispered through her sore throat.

“Bonding was the greatest joy I had ever had. I never thought I would experience it twice.” His deep voice shook her body as his hot breath teased her ear.

Merrie moaned, feeling the sharp edge of desire cutting into her own thoughts. She craved the intimacy more, but she knew it would be physical the next time.

Sable worked her way to kiss Merrie’s other ear. The smooth end of her elbow, slid underneath Merrie’s breast and stroked it. (I need more of you. We need your body.) Her thoughts had the same longing and desire.

Turning her head, Merrie kissed Sable’s lips. (Me too.)

“How hard?” Bass groaned. His fingers reached up to cup Merrie’s sex. Two thick fingers plunged into her pussy, the rough edges scraping against her insides. He braced his palm on her pubis and used the leverage to saw in and out with brusque movements.

Merrie’s inner walls clamped against his intruding fingers. She didn’t want the loving tenderness that Ston and Nikki had given her, she needed the brutality of the demons with the passion Rakin would have given her. Her two lovers could, but only if she consented. (As hard as you can, please. I need to feel all of you inside me. I need you at my throat. I need you to hurt me. I need you to use me. Make me submit like a submissive. Please!)

She didn’t have to submit, but with Parn’s loving, she could choose it.

Sable broke the kiss and pulled away. Her lips were only centimeter away as she looked at Merrie with all the affection in the world. (We can do that, Love.)

With a grin, she lowered her head and began to nuzzle against Merrie’s delicate throat. No collar got in the way as she kissed along Merrie’s collar.

Further below, Bass stuffed three fingers into Merrie’s pussy. His thick digits were uncomfortable as they drove into her. The girth stretched her opening in an uncomfortable pleasure.

Merrie moaned as she stroked his cock with her foot. It was going into her and she couldn’t wait. She focused on the thick knot in the middle of his shaft, the fist-like bump that would tear her open if she wasn’t already capable of taking him. No matter, it would hurt when he rammed it into her and she couldn’t wait to feel the pain.

Sable's body shimmered and then twisted. Her kisses became hard and then sharp as she transformed into her war hound form. The hulking dog's teeth scraped against the skin as she kissed harder and more fiercely.

Bass shifted to guide Merrie on the glassy ground. Getting a new angle, he punched his fingers into her pussy, jamming four thick digits into the tight hole until her body slid on his intrusions.

Merrie couldn't help but squeal with joy as she felt every thrust with a flash of pain and a burst of pleasure. Everything felt good.

A command bubbled up through her thoughts, the anticipation causing her to already tense.

Sable also responded to Bass' order before it slipped out of his mouth. Her teeth clamped down on Merrie's throat, sharp edges piercing flesh as she bore down.

"Hold her down," he commanded. His fingers pummeled Merrie's sex, the rough edges scraping as he seemed to be trying to strike her cervix with every blow.

(Are you able to handle this without your collar?) Sable asked, her voice brimming with lust.

Merrie wondered for only a moment, but then dismissed it. She didn't need the collar anymore and she was sure she could rebuild her body no matter what damage happened. (Yes,) she said with all the confidence she felt.

(Good.) Sable sent a pulse of love before she bit down hard on Merrie's throat. Black blood splashed out as the hound slammed her neck into the ground.

The force pinned Merrie down completely. Her body no longer slid along the glass but now was forced to take every blow as Bass continued to finger her. Her muscles tensed as she was crushed between Sable's teeth and Bass' fist.

The only thing that stopped Bass from punching directly into her cunt was his thumb. She already knew that would change in a matter of seconds. She squirmed and gurgling lust and felt an orgasm surging across her senses.

When it leaked out, bursting out in a wave of passion, Bass forced his thumb against her clitoris before he jammed into into the tightly stretched lips that guarded her sex. It was thicker than she could

easily handle and the pain grew as he bore his weight down to force his hand into her pussy.

Merrie wailed with pleasure.

Energies flowed through all three of them as Bass enhanced his strength to destroy her sex.

She came again on the pain and anticipation. The juices that flooded out soaked his fingers but even they weren't enough to force the massive fist into her pussy.

Bass had magic for that.

With a surge of power, he punched hard.

Merrie felt every knuckle as it tore into her sex. It strained against her hip bones before tearing her channel open. The thick digits drove deep into the wet, clenching depths of her sex.

For a lesser woman, it would have been agony.

For Merrie, it set off another orgasm as he focused his entire will into forcing his fist deeper into her cunt, past the squeezing muscles, to smack hard against Merrie's innermost gate.

"I'm going to tear you open."

Somewhere on the fringes of their sex, Merrie heard a gasp of shock. There were people watching them. Having her cunt torn open and abused in public only enhanced the pleasure. She moaned and tried to driven down on the fist.

Sable's armored paw smashed against Merrie's breast. Sharp claws raked across her nipples, opening up a score of wounds that oozed black blood.

Merrie squirmed with pleasure, twisting and writhing.

Bass yanked his fist out of her sex.

Her bones almost cracked from the effort.

With a chuckle, he slammed it back in, punching into her wet hole as his knuckles rammed deep into her pussy.

Merrie came again, lost in her helplessness and pleasure.

He continued to punch her sex, ripping out his fist completely from her gaping hole before slamming it down. With every blow, she loosened up and there was less protecting her cervix from the strikes. He hammered her harder and faster, punching in and out with spray of her excitement and blood. Soon, his punches were raining down on her cervix, tearing it open as he tried to bury his entire arm into her clenching sex.

Merrie wordlessly encouraged them, crying out with her mind since her throat no longer drew in air. She knew her pleasure was radiating away from her, it radiated back from Sable but also the surrounding villagers. One by one, they were dropping to the ground in the throes of their own orgasms.

Then, one powerful thrust and her cervix caved in. With a surge of strength, Bass buried his entire arm up to his elbow inside her body. His fist slammed against Merrie's diaphragm, forcing the air out if it wasn't for Sable's jaws clamped shut over her throat.

He held it there, muscles twitching. She could feel every centimeter of his length inside her. The pleasure and pain became one as everything became a single wall of ecstasy that tore through her with a burst of a black store.

Her orgasm exploded from her mind. It swallowed the entire village in a wave of intense orgasms that their mortal bodies couldn't help to experience personally. The radiating bursts of pleasure came rocketing back, flooding Merrie with more orgasms as she came again and again on Bass' impaled arm.

The thriban clamped his other hand against Merrie's breast. Digging in, he pulled his arm out from her sex.

She couldn't help but focus on every millimeter of the thick arm as it slipped out of her ruined hole. Every ridge of his muscles, the scrapes and scars of a century of fighting, and even the hardness of his bones dragged along hypersensitive nerves.

When he finally pulled out, she shuddered with the intense feeling of being empty along with the dripping of her gaping sex. The smell of sake and sex filled the air, blood and cum.

Bass panted as he looked down. "That hole is ruined."

Merrie smiled and moaned. She wiggled her hips and tail with the aferglow.

"Good thing you have another one. I want to cum inside you."

Merrie shuddered with anticipation.

He roughly grabbed her shortened legs and spread them painfully apart. With one hand, he reached down to line up the large, swollen head of his cock up against her tight asshole. The only lubrication was the juices that poured out of her gaping opening as his own copious pre-cum, but there was nothing inside to ease his passage.

Neither cared.

Bass leaned into her opening and the thick head shoved the ring in more than let it dilate. It was too thick to easily pass inside, only time or force could get it to relent.

Merrie encouraged him to use as much force as he wanted.

"I plan to," he growled. He leaned harder into her, forcing more of his weight until the sphincter began to relent. It slowly opened with a sharp ring of pain.

He stopped after only a centimeter. Not even the entirety of his swollen crown had penetrated her. He was only looking to lodge it into place.

Powerful hands gripped Merrie's legs and hips at the same time. He squeezed down, forcing her short legs up against her chest and opening her open even more.

More juices poured out of her sex.

Shifting into place, he prepared to bury his entire length in a single stroke.

Sable tightened her grip. Her claws dug into Merrie's breast as the transformed hound bore more weight down. A hundred kilograms of metal and muscle caused the glass underneath Merrie to crack.

Strength magic radiated between the two of them before it poured into Bass' muscles.

Merrie's body squeezed with anticipation, an orgasm already brimming.

With a grunt, he slammed forward with all the might and power he could muster.

There was only a single burst of agony as her asshole was torn open and then he was spearing directly into her guts. More of his cock impaled her body before his knot smacked against her asshole. Fueled by magic and lust, it shredded the remains of her asshole as it plunged deep into her sex.

Agony and ecstasy blurred together as he slammed his hips down hard, crushing her body against the glass and shattering it again. The entire length of his cock, from his head jammed into her ribs to his balls against the base of her tail, stopped inside her ruined bowels.

For the shortest of moments, there was nothing but the intense feeling of having an unmoving rod buried in her gut.

Then her entire world exploded into pleasure and pain. She cried out as another orgasm exploded from her, assaulting the minds and libidos of the entire village.

Bass chuckled and yanked his cock out in a spray of blood and cum. He drove it back in, quickly finding in a ruthym that hammered her into the shards of glass as he buried his entire cock inside her body.

(My turn,) Sable projected as she peeled her teeth away from Merrie's throat. She transformed back into a lust-driven woman. With eyes flashing, she gripped Bass' shaking shoulders and used him for balance to straddle Merrie's face.

Merrie only got a moment of looking into Sable's beautiful snatch before it was smashed against her face.

(No teeth, Bitch.)

Merrie lapped at the dripping cunt against her mouth. Blinded, Bass' assaulting on her ass and insides grew more intense. Her entire world became nothing more than the thrusting shaft and the wet pussy.

It was heaven.

With Bass fucking her hard, Merrie lapped and brought Sable to an orgasm.

The pleasure that radiated from the older alpha felt good, but it wasn't enough. Merrie needs to Sable to cum harder. With a grin, Merrie focused on her abilities and partially transformed into the dragon hound. Her tongue grew thick and swollen before it plunged deep into Sable's pussy.

(Oh, you bitch!) gasped Sable as she jerked forward.

Merrie reached up to pin Sable down. She slurped and lapped the alpha's entire passage, laving at her cervix before dragging the thick tongue up and down the entire length of her sex.

Orgasms bubbled up but Merrie wasn't done.

Reaching out, Merrie found the veil between the world and Shadows. With a playful tease, she summoned the dark tentacles of the other world right inside Sable's clenching asshole.

Dozens of the tendrils, each one cold as ice and squirming wetly plunged into Sable's asshole and drove deep.

Sable's orgasm turned into an intense wave as she shuddered on dragon tongue and invading tendrils.

Bass' respond was to pound Merrie harder, shattering glass underneath her as his cock drove up into her ribs. She could feel he was close to an orgasm, no doubt sharing Sable's only pleasure even as he enjoyed the slickness of his cock ruining Merrie's body.

"D-Don't cum before me," he grunted.

Sable whimpered, her thoughts only a haze of consciousness with her two holes being assaulted.

Merrie grinned and summoned more. She came around Bass' cock even as she tried to make Sable come before him. She could feel Sable's juices flooding her mouth as she slapped and slathered the entire channel with long slurps of her transformed tongue.

(No, no, no!) gasped Sable as she was pushed closer to an orgasm.

Bass sped up, trying to beat her. His cock plunge and pulled, fucking Merrie into the ground with brutal strokes that would have killed almost anyone else. She loved how her nerves screamed in agony from his knot abusing her insides even as her entire body hummed with orgasm and after.

Unable to resist Merrie's machine, Sable came first. She let out a strangled scream as it burst from her body and radiated outward. It slammed into Bass who came seconds later, flooding Merrie's insides with hot cum.

Every forceful jet that shot inside Merrie, she let out a cry and came again and again. Her orgasms were leaking out and she didn't mind. She just basked in the afterglow of the intense pleasures.

All three of them fell apart, laying back on the smoking glass and dirt as they gasped for air.

Merrie looked up. Her entire chest was covered in black blood. Down below, both her ass and pussy were gaping open as if they had taken a club each. The white insides were shocking as was the flood of cum that poured out of her ass as a river.

Bass opened his yellow eye and looked over. "You... look like you died."

Merrie felt her body regenerating, the yellow-green energies were darker than usual as the healing had merged with her shadow powers. They seeped through her veins, healing the fatal wounds

before slowing down so she could experience the rest of the healing safely. She smiled and sent a wave of pleasure. (I feel good though.)

Sable glared at Merrie. (You cheated.)

Merrie grinned back. "You said no teeth. Nothing about tentacles."

Bass smacked his chest, right where the symbol of Talus would be. A burst of white energies came rolling out. The black blood and gore faded away in wisps of smoke, leaving behind only the pleasure of the orgasm and her gaping holes. Her skin stung from the holy magic, but it didn't hurt her.

He rolled over on his knees. His cock was sated, hanging low. Looking up, he chuckled. "You look like you've been properly fucked."

Merrie ran a wrist along her sex. She grinned.

"You know," he said as he looked around at the people writhing on the ground. They were fucking each other or masturbating furiously. "We may have screwed this village up for years to come."

Sable pulsed a wave of amusement. (Though, the young lovers have finally gotten over their nervousness and have paired off. I can feel them enjoying each other over there.)

Curious, Merrie followed the connection to where Kim was fulfilling her fantasy of rimming Pinith's ass while both of them stroked his cock. She was soaked completely from her orgasms, but didn't want to stop until he filled her palms with his cum.

On the other side of the room was Gaines and Billy, tenderly making love as they stared into each other's eyes. Neither seemed to care that Pinith was watching them closes as he began to orgasm.

Happy, Merrie brought her own senses back to her body.

Bass sat up, his hairy chest glistening with sweat. He glanced around him and the shook his head. "We better have Talus set up a shrine here. We aren't going to be able to stay long enough to do it ourselves."

Sable kissed Merrie's now healed throat. (Such pillow talk.)

Bass chuckled and shrugged. "Fine. When are we leaving, Merrie?"

Merrie basked in her afterglow but it wouldn't last long. The geas was getting more insistent, or she had become more aware of its need with her orgasms. It was about the queen, she was sure of it,

but something felt off. (A few hours? I should be able to take us to the Shadows to get to Franome City.)

Sable sighed. The idea of going through Shadows didn't appeal to her, but being forced to do it brought a flicker of pleasure. (That's the life of a paladin and his bitch. Battle, fuck and move on.)

Bass stood up. "Remember when we broke Borias out? We traveled across half of Franome to convince Tabby, Dixie, and his mother to come to help."

The door to the room creaked open. As Licker struggled with her own body, Merrie turned to see an older woman walk in. Wearing a loose-fitting black dress, she looked like a fairy-tale grandmother with her hair pulled up in a bun and knee-high boots with buckles. She carried a pile of clothes and a bag. Setting them down, she pulled a silver medallion from her shirt and rubbed it. Her boots tapped along the ground as she walked around the four girls on the floor.

"Oh, Bass." She had a southern voice, worn smooth with age and just a hint of whiskey. She stopped with her hand on Bass' shoulder and Merrie peeked through her hair to watch them.

"Good morning, Mother Rendi."

Through the sadness of remembering how Rendi had died to protect Merrie and her collar, a new memory rose up. This one was abstract as she recalled the entire family tree of the Kivas' kin, from his children and their children clear down to the hundreds of thousands that had chaos in their blood.

"Kivas. You are related to Rendi and Borias?"

"A distant cousin."

"Red door or white?"

For the first time, Haviston hesitated and a flicker of emotion crossed his face. "Red."

Merrie frowned in confusion. The duke and Haviston knew what they were talking about, but Merrie didn't understand the terse question and answer.

Now, Merrie knew what they were talking about. Those with Kivas blood ended up in Abbinkey, whether they wanted to or not. Those who were criminals would pass through the red door that she had sealed while the others visited through the white, visitors or guards.

Runes blossomed around the touch, forming into nodes with names on them: Borias, Haviston, and Rendi. There was a thick line between Rendi and her son with a faint line reaching up and then down to connect Rendi to her nephew, Haviston. Both Borias' and Haviston's circles were red, Rendi's was white. Two criminals and one guard.

"A family tree," she whispered.

She sniffed at the memories. Rendi was assassinated because of what she had done. She was one of the people who had created her collar, despite it being the one thing that she hated most. Her god still hated Merrie for that.

Merrie's ears perked up. (What about Borias and Haviston?)

Bass shook his head. "Haviston disappeared years ago. I don't know where and we've been unable to find him. Borias has that curse and geas on him; if he entered Franome City, his organs will burst out of every orifice and he will die screaming."

Sable's ears drooped. (A shame though. He has gained in powers working with the Shadows. He would be a good complement for you.)

A image of an older Borias projected itself in Merrie's thoughts. He was standing in front of a hut. He had gray hair on the edges of his hair and looked in good shape. He was talking to a group of people she barely recognized from the castle.

On the corner of the memory, she spotted one of her shadow kin. The hulking dark creature stood in the shadow of the hut, watching but not doing anything.

Merrie's heart beat faster, a triple beat of longing and joy. Her baby. But the memory didn't have the depth for Merrie to reach out for it, to caress it like a mother and a companion.

Instead, she sighed. (What about the shadow kin?)

Sable seemed uncomfortable. (When you left, the shadows continued to invade. Our crops rotted and animals died. Without food and clean water, our people began to follow.)

Bass continued her thoughts, “About ten years ago, we had just come back from a month-long battle to find that he had stopped fighting the shadows while we were gone. Something about losing a fight but the kin, as he calls them, didn’t kill him. Instead they showed which mushrooms were safe to eat and which ones caused you to hallucinate and kill yourself.”

He shook his head. “We were only gone a few months, but when we came back, there was life again. Smiles, happiness, and people fucking around. I mean, I don’t know how, the water was fresh enough and most of the food was insects and mushrooms, but the county was thriving again.”

Sable grinned even through her discomfort. (In the years that followed, he worked to establish new trade routes with mages and clerics for things that only grew in Blood County: rare mushrooms, strange rocks and crystals, and even blood of the kin. I heard they are even starting up the fair again, though no bitches with the Puppy Mill closed.)

“He’s a good kid. Waver may have abandoned Blood County after Diffy was captured by Shiel and her pretty boy, but Borias stood up and has been acting like the leader we never could have done.” He frowned. “Though, I think he’s doing a bit more than just talking to the shadows, I’m pretty sure he’s been using shadow magic in the process.”

Merrie’s ears pricked up.

“Yeah, I thought you’d interested. Unfortunately, that geas—”

Merrie interrupted. She could handle the geas, but she felt the need to keep that ability of hers hidden for a little long. (Let’s get him.)

Sable sent a negative. (The geas? Franome City will kill—)

Merrie leveled her attention on Sable. (We are getting Borias,) she projected with a commanding presence. She didn’t want to explain why, only her need.

Sable's eyes unfocused with a sudden gasp from an orgasm that tore through her. Her energies soared from an instant moment of domination.

Bass froze and stared at Merrie with surprise.

Staring back, Merrie transformed into a Bel Dark hound and then back again, shifting through her transformations until she was healed completely and her holes were no longer gaping. She felt good, more than good, it felt right.

Bass shook his head. "You are unexpected, you know that?"

(You said I was called. I'm answering and we need his help.)

"Aye." he nodded. "Two hours and then go? That will give me enough time to finish up here. It looks like everyone is already up."

Merrie thought about Kador and his longing. (If it wasn't an emergency, how many days?)

"Days? Call it four to properly set up everything and pray for a cleric to come and take our place. A proper shrine takes about a day and a good orgy."

(I'll get Borias and be back.) Merrie said, a longing to return to the man who almost became her master. Alone, it would be easier to visit the Shadows and make sure that she had made the right choice when she didn't seal the portal.

"Are you sure?"

(Yes,) Merrie answered. Then fell back through the veil between the worlds and stepped into the Shadows.

The Broken Mill

117

Merrie knew the exact moment she crossed the threshold of Blood County: the shadows grew darker and more liquid as a sense of coming home filled her. That was where she belonged, in the embrace of dark and cold. She moaned with pleasure as she raced along the shadowy reflection of reality.

She didn't know exactly where Borias lived, but she knew two places as if they had been tattooed directly into her heart: the Puppy Mill and Lemetri's former grave. She picked the farmhouse first, easily covering the distance.

When she stepped back across, she landed in the middle of the darkened courtyard.

Everything was in ruins. No plants had grown to swallow it, not with the twilight cast to the sky, but the shadows had corroded and withered the boards and lumber of the building. The edges looked fuzzy where magic had eaten away at the building. Black streaks of fungus traced the shattered glass.

Twelve years had done its damage to the place she called home. She sighed and looked over to the small grid of dog houses that lined one side of the courtyard. They were used as punishment for new bitches and she remembered bringing herself to more than a few orgasms while being chained inside like some worthless cunt.

The memories warming her heart, she looked around and drank up the memories. Her eyes lit on where they fought against intruders, where Tabitha started her hunt that resulted in Merrie losing her hands and feet, and even through the doors to where she had her first breakdown on the stairs.

She got on her knees and crawled up the stairs. The wood was solid underneath her and she stopped to look down. It had been repaired recently, a set of fresh boards had been set down. Along the surface, she could see shadow magic permeating the wood to hold back the withering effect of the county.

Wagging her tail, she pulled back and looked around again for more signs of repair. Along one side, where the demons had broken in, someone had fixed the opening and replaced the wood. The fresh material looked like a patchwork compared to the rest but it was signs that the Mill had not been entirely abandoned.

Merrie smiled to herself and wagged her tail faster. She always imagined coming back to the Puppy Mill later. Things just drew her away and it felt like she could never return to that life.

She continued her path up the stairs and into the house. There were more signs of residence: repairs along the floor and walls, a basket and some dirty dishes where the great hall used to be, and even a cloak hanging from the door.

Curious, she reached out with her magical senses until she caught the edge of Borias' shields from his room below. Even through the knotted defenses, she could feel that his energies had changed to use shadow magic. His old powers were still there, the ones that fed off willing deaths, but they were dormant and quiet. But the shadow energies were alive, protecting him with shield and shade.

He had set up wards that caused attention to slide away from him, hiding in the shadows just like she hid her manor and the entire Shadowed Distract at one point.

Only another being of shadow could sense him sleeping.

A sob rose in her throat with a sense of longing. She missed him as much as the others. Creeping forward, she worked her way down the stairs into the basement and then slithered past the locked door to his room.

Borias was sprawled out in the corner of his dark, windowless room. He had blankets dragged up over his shoulders but his legs stuck out and his bare chest could be seen just on the edges of her vision.

As soon as he came into focus, a sudden rush of memories slammed into her.

A node appeared, a large red one labeled simply “Kivas.”

As she poured more energy into the door and it grew more solid, more shapes appeared, names and connections. She saw Kivas blossom into dozens of children who turned into dozens more. Soon there were thousands of names in a tapestry of red and white. She saw family connections and marriages, children and cousins.

The memory shifted as her mind’s eye raced down the branching paths of the Kivas family until it centered on the red node that represented Borias. She could see how the Kivas blood came down through Rendi, his mother, and formed almost a straight line up to Kivas himself. Borias’ father was just a line that indicated fresh blood had entered the family with an indicator for his gender.

Just as fast as the memory came, it was gone but she could remember every detail in perfect clarity. She frowned and then shook to clear her head.

Nothing else happened.

Dismissing the memory, Merrie crept forward and let new memories rush through of the first day she came down to the time they broke free from the Infernal’s magical traps. On his bed, she kept her weight light enough to avoid movement and then worked her way closer until she could feel the coolness of his body; he was turning to ice with his growing powers also.

She smiled and looked down to his crotch. He only wore a pair of shorts with buttons over his manhood. No doubt, he was finding that the cold didn’t bother him anymore and he welcomed the icy touch of darkness.

There was another touch she was sure he would like. Reaching down, she used her lips to work one button and then the other away from his dick. It was limp in the opening, but not for long.

With a light kiss on the top, she lapped at the end and lifted it up to slide it into her mouth.

Borias moaned in his sleep. In her mouth, his manhood twitched and grew thicker.

She gently worked her lips up and down, letting her own body grow colder as the shadows seeped into her bare skin. She closed her eyes and suckled lightly.

The shaft thickened inside her mouth until it stood up on its own.

She switched from sucking to bobbing. The taste, though she hadn't experienced it in years, brought back familiar memories. With her tail wagging, she leaned into his cock to bury it in her throat so she could lap at his balls.

One hand stroked her ear, caressing along the sensitive edge.

Merrie shuddered and bobbed harder, taking his length before rising up to roll his cock head along her lips. She bobbed down, each one making him harder until his length bumped along the back of her throat.

Borias' hand gripped her ear tighter. "Good girl," he whispered. His voice was older and deeper, but no less encouraging.

Merrie moaned at the familiar words and continued to pleasure him. She wasn't in a hurry and he didn't appear to be either. Instead, they just took their time as she pleased him for an hour with nothing more than the caress of her naked body and her mouth riding his cock.

When he came, it was a hot jet of cum that she swallowed easily. She sucked and gently cleaned him off before letting it thump against his belly.

She looked up and wagged her tail. (I missed you.)

"I be missing you so much." He said with tears in his eyes. "I always be dreaming you'd come back... kind of hoped this was how you be telling me you returned."

She enjoyed the thrill of his desires. With one final lap to clean up the last bit of cum, she crawled up to press her body against him and kissed his lips.

"You be escaping or being let go?" She could tell he was worried.

(I fought Kivas and had to tear him apart before feeding his soul to demons.)

Borias tensed. "W-What?"

(Want to hear?)

He kissed her again. "Yes, you be telling."

It took her hours. She used her telepathy for most of it but there were moments when she would speak for long periods of time. He said nothing, only stroked her body and listened.

When Merrie got to the door, she told him about the lineage and how she had seen the entire Kivas family written out.

“I never be knowing how big our family was.”

(Thousands, hundreds of thousands have Kivas in their blood.)

“He will never be dying, will he?”

(No. What I did only stopped him for a long time, maybe a thousand years.) She paused as she regarded him. He was mortal, not even the near immortal like Bass, Sable, and herself. He wouldn't ever live to see Kivas escape. It saddened her but also gave her hope. Maybe one of his children would be the one to stop Kivas again?

“I be seeing that look.”

(I'm still getting used to being... me.)

He drew her up in a kiss. “You always be being you. You always being wonderful and gorgeous and loving. That won't change any more than me be dying. I can only be hoping that I leave the world a better place.”

Merrie smiled. (Can you help me now? I think I need you to go to Franome City so I can serve the Royal Geas.)

Inside his chest, she felt his own Royal Geas responded. A half-forgotten oath to serve kingdom and family rising up to tell him he was needed. No, it was more than that, it demanded his obedience.

Borias tensed and his back seized up.

Merrie focused her attention on the oath. It was one of Claston's, but it had the same nature as every other geas by the royal family. It gave him no choice but to obey. It was also not what Parn wanted.

Borias needed to have free will like her.

Focusing her attention, Merrie plunged herself into the oath and began to reweave it. The geas didn't give much benefits, it was a restriction, but she could alter it to make it optional or even more.

“Merrie? What you—”

(Quiet, let me focus.)

Then a moment later, she knew there was another question came up. (Do you ever wished you could have bonded with me?)

He squirmed as the geas magic rippled along his bones. "Yes! I be dreaming of it, but I couldn't."

(If you could, would you? Even for a few minutes?)

Borias' hand gripped her thigh. He bore through his discomfort to stare directly into her eyes. "Even if it meant I be dying seconds later, I would be accepting your bond without question."

With her senses still focused on his geas, she reached up. (Will you bond with me now?) With that, she opened herself up to him. Her body grew softer as she felt her heart reaching out.

Borias gasped as he clutched her. His thoughts were bare against her, stripped away by her closeness and intimacy. "Yes!"

Then they were together. His entire life thrust past her mind, trying to rewrite her very spirit into a creature of his own. She resisted it, but still let herself be swallowed up by the fears, doubts, and joys that he had experienced. She lived through his childhood and then later as he came into his powers.

Borias leaned over the whimpering woman. His hand stroked along her bare breast and then to the leather strap that bound her wrist to the table.

She lifted herself up to him, begging him to continue. Blood dripped down the side of her forehead where he had knicked her. There were other cuts along her body: fine lines that crisscrossed her breasts, cuts on her inner thighs where the blood mixed with her own excitement, even more down both thighs to where he had cut off her toe when she begged him to.

"Ready for the final cut?"

She nodded, the desperation and longing in her eyes. She was a spit muffin, a woman who desperately wanted the end of her life to be an orgasm instead of age or disease. There were countless numbers of them in the city, many found their way for weeks or months of sex and romance until they finally begged for him to enter.

Underneath her skin, he could feel the power pulsating. He wanted to see the light in her eyes, to feel her body coming one last time as it faded away.

Tenderly, he brought his knife up to her throat. As she always whispered to him, he reached down with his other hand to slid two fingers into her flooded snatch.

She came again, her body straining its limits. “D-Do it,” she whispered. “Please, now.”

With one last kiss, he plunged his knife into her throat and pulled it across, opening it up like a melon before a fountain of crimson poured out.

He ignored the hot blood on his face as he fingered her to one more orgasm while kissing her. There was nothing left in the world escape for the pulses of pleasure and desire that wracked her body and then faded with her faltering heart.

She gurgled but her lips worked “thank you” before growing slack.

Power poured into him, the raw hungry magic driven by her last moments. It filled him in a matter of seconds, expanding to fill every part of his body. He came from the pleasure, splattering cum onto the floor.

In the corner of his eye, a reaper was waiting for her. Death by Sweet Submission of Desires was always there when he finished his kill. The spectral woman’s eyes sparkled with desire before she departed with the soul of the woman who had given her life to him.

Next time, it may be the reaper on his table.

He smile and stood up.

The door to his room burst open as guards began to pour in.

Merrie sobbed as she lived Borias’ horrors in Abbinkey, meeting up and then being dismissed by his namesake. He didn’t even know he had just met with Kivas other than a feeling of being drained completely from the encounter.

To break Borias free, Bass and Sable had made promises that stained their souls for decades. The first puppy girl Borias trained was sacrificed to a god that helped break them free. There were promises that the former paladin had to fulfill that he refused to talk about.

Merrie knew exactly what god and what promises had been made. They were terrible and one reason Bass called the Mill his darkest point in his life, though he loved it with all his might.

Borias was burdened with another geas, one that supplanted the Prisoner's Mark and prevented it from killing him, but was loaded with restrictions and obligations that even he wasn't aware of. Merrie found hidden keywords and spells wrapped in the magic, future plans that would never happen.

With their thoughts intertwined, she rewove both geasa and removed the restrictions. The forgotten one was torn apart and discard. She left the Royal Geas in place but removed the overwhelming desire to obey it. Like her, he would know what it wanted but also could choose to disobey it. Nothing would hurt him, nothing would liquefy his organs. He simply had the choice.

"W-What?"

(You need this choice.)

His thoughts were tight against her own. He reached out when his lips failed him and then his mind was inside her own. (How can you be doing this?)

She smiled at his verbal tick. It was part of his mind now, his way of expressing himself. (I made a choice myself.)

An image of Parn came up and disappeared. It was unwittingly but sudden, only a flash of a divine power that came up.

(Because of her?) he asked. (You follow Parn?)

Merrie didn't question why he knew who Parn was on sight, he was already in her mind. She had given him something that she didn't share with Bass or Sable. With a wave of love, she finished reweaving his Royal Geas and then relaxed. (Yes. She gave me will to do the thing I feel is right, so I'm giving you yours.)

(Are we really bonded?) His wonderment was fighting with the tears of joy in his hand.

(Give me an order... master.)

His eyes narrowed.

She felt it coming even as he projected his thoughts. She pulled herself up to her knees.

(Present.)

Sliding her knees apart, she brought her wrists up to her throat and wagged her tail. It was the perfect position, exactly what he

wanted and how he wanted it. A surge of lust and desire rose up, flooding their bond.

He moaned at the touch. “When does it be ending?”

(When you make another choice. I need your help. I need to serve the Royal Geas and I would love to have you and your powers by my side.)

“Franome City?” he asked, remembering the fear of what would happen if he entered the city.

(Will never bother you again. You could move, if you wanted.) In the connection, she knew that he would never do so. He was done with the city, Blood County had become his home. (You will always have a choice now, but I want your help.)

He held the side of her face, basking in the closeness. Through the connection, he imagined all the things he thought about doing if he had an alpha of his own but most of them had become glossed-over memories. The only thing he had left was Blood County and the need to protect the people who lived there.

Merrie kissed his palm as her mind worked furious over how to help. (I can help with that. Not as your alpha, but maybe something else.)

He nodded. “Thank you. I be wanting this most of my life now and every second is better than the last, but you be on a different path than me, aren’t you?”

She let the bond fade away. Tears burned in her eyes as she kissed him. “Yes,” she said in her own husky voice. “I’m sorry.”

Borias reached up to cradle her head with both hands. “I never be sorry for what you gave. You be having my heart, Merrie.”

No words were needed as he rolled her onto her back. He brought his knees up between her legs, his cock once again hard.

She spread herself and willingly took him.

They had days before she had to join the battle. Days of rekindling the love that had been growing for decades.

When he entered her, she moaned with need and brought herself up to kiss him.

t'Sade

Doubts

118

They woke up as the sun began to set and the shadows stirred across the county. Merrie's tail wagged slowly as she drew in the wonderful smells of sake and sex, the burn in the back of her throat and the love that radiated from her lover.

"That be unexpected," Borias whispered. He was naked, not bothering after their multiple rounds of love-making and tenderness.

She grinned and her tail wagged faster.

"Do you know what be happening?"

Merrie thought for a moment before she sighed. She didn't have any other clear answers than before, only gut feelings. (No, only that I'm needed. I'm afraid that once I enter Franome City, things are going to come to a head quickly.)

"Be hoping to fuck your way to the solution?" He reached out and tapped her nose.

(Always, this world is obsessed with fucking every hole I have. Then making new ones to take me in new ways. But what if I can't? What if this is something bigger than me?)

He shrugged, the muscles in his chest flexing before he cradled her. "I not be adventurous as the others who were at the mill. I not be going out on adventures or fighting, but I can help in a fight. But I can be feeling that need in the back of my head. It be growing over the last few months and when you be mentioning that the Royal Geas needs me, it be feeling like I'm finally needed."

Merrie nuzzled against his shoulder. (We're being called?)

"You be called. I'm just answering my bitch's summon to join her."

She giggled and nestled closer, moving so her short leg could hike up to rest against his limp cock and her large breast rested on his side. (We'll be grand warriors, the four of us. Two bitches and two warriors.)

"Hey," he said playfully. "I be no warrior. I can do some combat magic but mostly I be a healer and physical mage."

She looked around at the shadow magic that he had been weaving into wards. (Getting pretty decent at shadow magic though.)

Borias sighed. "I be having to. I still be craving that power that comes when a pretty thing begs me to be giving up her life. I mean, I be wanting to have her body gasping a final breath before she surrenders, but Blood County is pretty much dead."

(Bass said you are the leader here.)

He snorted. "I guess. I'm doing what I can, but that not be much helping with the spit muffins. I learned a bit of magic. It got easier with the hulks. They seemed to be liking me, or at least not be eating me." He stroked his hand along her hip, not sexual but tender.

(Bass said they taught you skills.)

"Aye, they be doing that. I can sometimes understand them but I don't understand their names. They be calling...." His eyes flickered toward her. He grunted. "Never be minding. Do you think my shadow magic will be helping in the city?"

Borias sat on the edge of a mushroom, eating a lunch he had packed while waiting for it to be safe again. A few hundred meters away, a pair of shadow hulks were digging furrows into the ground for some strange ritual.

He used to feel fear when he saw them, but now the massive creatures seemed to be around him but never approaching too close. He had noticed they were digging recently but he didn't have the courage to come closer to inspect their work. All he knew was that they would arrive near midnight and work for an hour before wandering off.

His eyes drifted down past the mass of tentacles sprouting from their back and the uncountable claws

that pawed at the ground. There was something new, a jutting of darkness that looked suspiciously like a cock. Smaller than Bass' of course, but easily twice as long.

Borias sighed. It had been long time since he had fucked anyone. Even more since he was on the bottom with someone riding his ass. He leaned back and amused himself by wondering how the hulks would fuck him. It was a good way to pass the time until they moved on and he could safely go back to fixing the mill.

The memories from their brief bonding tickled Merrie's thoughts and she smiled. With a moan, she rolled on her back. She stretched her head above her head and sighed. (I don't know what I'm doing. I have this feeling I'm supposed to be here and there, but nothing clear.)

"The gods rarely be giving clear answers."

(You think this is Parn telling me what to do?)

Borias sat up. "Be it a difference?"

At her look, he continued. "You be a powerful telepath with a sensitivity to compulsions. You can be making an entire city orgasm, which mean you be picking up on an entire city at a time. Even without be following a god, you be always listening to the world around you. You are needed, even if the answers aren't clear. Yeah, the goddess might be be giving you a goose here and there, but I be seeing Bass with Talus and... the light bitch. He and Sable be just... doing things that he be feeling right, it be a gift of surrendering to faith."

Merrie rolled over to rest her chin on his thigh. (Will you come with me?)

"Without hesitation."

(You might get hurt, I don't want to lose you.)

Borias leaned over and caught her chin. Levering it up, he stared directly into her black eyes.

A quiver of desire rippled through her veins, a hint of submission.

"You not being ignoring your mistress, Bitch. You are needed, now get your cunt moving and be serving like a good little bitch."

Her tail wagged happily.

t'Sade

Homecoming

119

An hour later, the sun had fully set across the county and the world had been plunged into the shifting waves of darkness. It wasn't complete though, the forest had given way to bio-luminescent mushrooms and lichen. Dozens of different colors were smeared on twisted trees that managed to stay alive even over the years.

Merrie sat on the edge of the porch and looked out at the dark yard of the mill. She wasn't sure where to go, but she felt a gentle tugging from the one other place that had been burned into her memories, the place where Lemetri had died and where the Lord of Shadows called home.

Borias walked up next to her. He had donned a pair of dark leather armor over his gray clothes. Even his well-worn boots had all the color leached out of them, either by his magic or for style. The black suit him, she decided, as did the brace of knives that he had strapped to his thighs.

(You look handsome.)

Borias laughed. "All I can remember is Tabby be calling me a 'toy' when I dressed up like this."

(She was a little cranky.) Merrie could help but remember the affection for the bitchy silfae.

He sighed. "She be a good friend. I be missing her and the others. I still be wanting the mill back, I just not be seeing how." He glanced at the rotted wood.

(Maybe after Franome City?)

There was a burst of sadness. "Yeah, after the City."

She sent a wave of love.

Borias scratched his head. "Were we be going now, Merrie? Straight to the city? You know, we be enjoying a few more rounds of fucking first."

The Royal Geas hummed in her thoughts.

He shivered. "No, not that."

Merrie sent an image of the dark spot in the distance. (There were only two places I could think of when I approached: here and there.)

"Then we be going there. If you be thinking about it, you be trusting your guts. I be never there because the hulks not be letting me get close to where we fought off the light bitch."

An image escaped his thoughts. What he called the hulks were her children, the shadow kin. Even the memory of their bulks, with long scythe-like claws and tentacles brought a surge of affection rising inside her. Then other moments flickered through her head, when the shadow kid became lovers, and she fought back the flicker of lust.

Her decision had been made. She needed to see her children before she left. (Come on,) she projected. (They'll let us past.)

Borias' thoughts were uneasy but he followed off the porch and across the yard. There were plenty of narrow trails between the mushrooms and twisted trees, clear paths that she had remembered following when she first arrived at the mill.

It only took them twenty minutes to reach the grove of darkness. Unlike the the rest of the county, the shadows were more physical and shifting. She could sense them on the edge of her senses, the magic strong enough that even flicker lights would cause physical manifestations.

She remembered where Lemetri's shield that prevented the others from getting closer. Now, it was a boiling wall of dark and unnatural smoke, palatable even from a short distance like a rustle of a thousand silent insects fluttering their wings.

Beyond the borders, she could feel the presence of the Lord of Shadows and the shard of Olume, the first god of light, that it fed upon.

Borias shivered. "I not be liking this place, but I be coming here for months. Something inside be calling me but I cannot be entering."

(The Lord of Shadows.)

He frowned. "That was it being called? I may not be ready to face another god. The last one almost killed us and we be having Bass and Tabby and the alphas with us."

A stirring of power rippled along Merrie's side. She could feel divine magic shaking and rippling. "And yet you're here," said an old man.

Merrie fought the urge to lash out in surprise. The old man had a deep well of divine power and she could feel summoning spells dancing around him. There was only one man she knew that had the same feel of power. (Duke Natis?)

The duke shook his head as he limped from one of the side paths. "I was expecting you, Merrie." He grunted. "A few years ago, actually, but sooner or later, I knew you would come."

It had been years since the old man had commanded Merrie to present herself to the courts for her crimes against Blood County. His appearance, however, didn't have even a mark of time passing. He was another near immortal, a man who saw centuries pass before he grew older.

Protection spells flickered along his body, dancing with the pure light of some god she didn't know. She could taste the almost completed summoning spells, cast but for the last few words to manifest in rapid succession.

"You be waiting all these years for her?" asked Borias. "Why?"

Natis shook his head. "Not years. Well, somewhat. When I heard that Abbinkey had been sealed, I knew it was her. It was the only change to the prison that had been around for centuries. I spent some time here waiting for her to show up because I knew she would, sooner or later."

He leaned against his staff. "But then you didn't.

Merrie projected a brief image of being gang-banged and fed by the demons. Along with it came a surge of lust as she surrendered to being devoured. "I was occupied."

Natis' only response with a raised eyebrow. "That explains why you didn't show up. What happened to Kivas?"

(Torn apart and fed to the demons.)

"That won't destroy him, you know."

(Yes, but it will contain him for a while.)

He grunted. "That's what we do, kick problems down for the next generation. Immortals beings are always difficult to deal with, Kivas more than any other." Natis eyes flickered to Borias. "No offense to you."

Borias shrugged. "I be me. I may be of the red door, but I feel that I be serving since then."

The memories of Borias' blood line to Kivas flashed across her mind and then faded.

Natis looked old for a moment. He looked around and then sat down on a stump covered with small mushrooms. When he settled into place, little puffs of spores rose up around him. "Serving. That's what they call it now. It used to be the Royal Geas was the ultimate service to the country. My geas was forged to the queen's father's father and I have served loyally ever since."

Anger flickered from Borias. "That not be stopping you from sending Merrie to court."

"Watch your tone, Boy."

Borias shook his head. "No."

Natis' eyebrows rose. "What?"

"No. You be wrong. You be knowing that Merrie has the Royal Geas. You be knowing that she cannot be fighting it. Her actions were for the country and family."

Natis slowly looked away.

"She be serving and you still be sending her away."

"I thought she killed everyone by making a deal with—" Natis gestured to the boiling shadows. "—that thing."

"Yes, she be not!" snapped Borias. "There still be thousands in this county. Thousands being ignored by you and the rest of the country. They be abandoned but they not be dying!"

The duke smiled grimly. "You trying to be the new count?"

Borias stepped back. "No, but they not be deserving to be abandoned like this. We be needing food and supplies. I be having to make new relationships, be working with traders from Dorza and high prices from merchants here. Why you not be putting the count back?"

Natis sighed. "You think I don't know that? Do you think I wanted everything to fall apart when Blood fell apart?"

“Why not be sending someone? Why be taking Bass’ title? Twelve years and we still not be treated well! We protect the border of Dorza, we be part of the defenses, no?”

The old man shook his head sadly. “I know, I know.”

“No, you not. You be a duke. You wander around, see other places. This not be your home. You be able to leave whenever things get rough. You be having other counties to flee but this be my home. My only home now and I won’t be giving it up.” Tears sparkled in Borias’ eyes.

Merrie reached up and rested her wrist on him to send a pulse of affection and pride.

Natis said nothing, just sat with his shoulders hunched.

“That be it?” asked Borias. “No words?”

The old man shook his head. “Do you know Blood County was our dirty little secret? Where we let the crap of the country run away and hide? Everyone knew about the county fests where spit muffins got a chance to have their fantasies, blow their fortunes before they were all snuffed. It was a celebration that kept the rest of the country clean and virtuous.”

“There always be blood in the shadows, even in the city.”

Natis chuckled. “You would know, wouldn’t you, Butcher of Silks?”

Borias blushed but didn’t stand down.

“I never realized how important the county was until everything fell apart and I got see what treasures it really had.”

Borias opened his mouth but said nothing. He closed it with a snap.

“Diffy was an Infernal, you know that?”

“Aye, everyone know she be a devil.”

“Do you know why she was here?”

Borias shook his head.

“This place.” Natis gestured around him. “This county, almost exactly, is carved out of the worlds. It is the closest place to the negative dimensions in the entire continent. The borders were not chosen by man, they were by the gods.” He shook his head. “Or something else.”

Merrie’s ear perked. Near her, she could feel the shadows gathering; it felt like a storm building up. She smiled and breathed

in the smell of sake and darkness that the others didn't seem to notice.

Natis' old eyes focused on her. "I thought you were wrong. I'd apologize but I'm too old to regret my choices and apologizes seem empty now. You were serving the country and the geas faithfully, I know that."

Borias cleared his throat. "How?"

"When she summoned the shadows, they took over the county and the dimensions around it. The infernals who were trying to get their claws into this land, with Diffy leading them, were shoved out of place because Merrie's... agreement was far more powerful and stable than anything the infernal had established. Once here, the shadow land prevents anything else from using this land as a gate between our world and the others."

Diffy looked only eight years old. She had the same face and appearance as she did so many years ago, it didn't look like she had aged even a second. The only thing different was her dress. It was black with a flared bottom that was short enough to reveal the little girl's sex if it wasn't for the crimson lace underneath it. She had both black socks and gloves that went to her mid thighs and almost to her shoulders respectively. Red flowers clung to her black hair that cascaded down her back.

Her appearance would have been benign except for the large meat cleaver in her hand. The blade shimmered in the glare of the infernal runes glowing from underneath the plaster.

Merrie's body grew tighter with anticipation. She finished her spells. Her cloak rippled with her thoughts, caressing her body as it loosened slightly.

"A very naughty little puppy. You ruined my playground and now I can't play on it."

Natis' words made sense. Merrie was fulfilling her oath to the royal family, for as long as she was alive, the shadows wouldn't overcome the country and they would keep the infernals at bay.

Unaware of Merrie's memory, Borias gestured toward the boiling darkness. "Then why you be sending Merrie away? She be saving us then."

Natis stood up. "Because, young man, I didn't know that then. It took me a while to figure it out."

"I thought you be the powerful summoner. Voice of the God's Angels."

"Yes, I am. Better than you, but that doesn't make me immune to mistakes. The only reason I figured it out is I've been coming to this point twice a year for ten years. Just trying to get through that wall!" He pointed one gnarled finger at the boiling shadows. "Despite all my summoning power, despite everything I have at my beck and call, there is something in that dark that fights me. It mocks me. Me! One of the most powerful divine summoners in the land and I cannot pass it."

Borias sighed. "Me not be entering either."

"I saw." When Borias looked hurt, Natis held up his hand. "I wanted to see if you could penetrate what I could not. You have taken to the shadows, I was hoping it wouldn't cast you aside with taunts."

The younger man chuckled. "It be mocking you too?"

Natis suddenly smiled. "Yes, 'Poisoned Light' and 'Stepper in Brilliance.' The shadows are quite lyrical. What do they call you?"

Merrie grinned to herself. The names were distinctive from the Lord of Shadows, they spoke like the calligraphy that used to swirl across her mind. On the edges of her senses, she could feel the Lord approaching.

Borias, on the other hand, blushed. "Not be sure it means the same thing."

Natis hobbled closer.

"They just be calling me the Consort. What that be meaning?"

"Consort? Why would they—?"

His words were interrupted as a Presence slammed into him, a dark power of shifting shadows and raw forward. The boiling darkness peeled back as the Lord of Shadows loomed over them.

(You have returned, Light Snuffer, Shadow Maker. The Shadow Mother has returned to her children and to her home.)

The alien thoughts began against her and she let out a moan of pleasure. She missed the edge of insanity of the inhuman thoughts and basked in the icy darkness that pummeled her. It also brought an instant rush of desire and hunger as memories of the Lord breeding her during their oath came rushing through.

Thick tentacles, each one the girth of trees, reached out to caress her body. They plucked her off the ground and rolled her around before setting her down. She noticed that the thick tips of the massive tentacles lingered over her sex and breasts as the alien thoughts recalled the pleasure it had received itself.

Merrie sent out a wave of lust toward the shadows. The dark minds, the Lord of Shadows and the shadow kin that were stepping out of the darkness, swallowed her passion.

She looked at the hulking forms of the shadow kin. With a smile, she sent out a pulse of affection as the shadow kin surrounded her. (My children.)

They reached out, tentacles and claws.

“Merrie?” Borias said cautiously.

Magic flickered along Natis’ fingers as summon spells became to manifest.

With a sharp pulse of denial, Merrie stopped both of them. “They will not hurt us.”

Then, she stepped forward into the kin’s wiggling tentacles and groping claws.

The first touch of sharp edges along her body were a lover’s touch compared to the way the demons had devoured her. The kin grabbed her breasts and hips, pulling her into their midst as they reached and groped for her body. Massive paws dug between her legs and probed at her pussy, ass, and mouth. More of them mauled her breasts.

She moaned and parted her legs willingly. Around her, the lust and hunger for her grew, caressing her mind as much as her body as she enjoyed the roughness they pawed at her body.

A tentacle wiggled against her sex, squirming up and down the opening before it snaked between two claws to plunge into her moist opening. It roughly drove into her, coiling inside her sex with little regard for her own comfort.

Just as Merrie loved it.

She moaned as more tentacles presented themselves at her ass and mouth, forcing their way in. In a matter of seconds, all three of her holes were plugged with writhing tentacles as they twisted and drove deeper.

There was no romance or tenderness in their actions. They didn't care about comfort or even the need to breathe. For anyone else, it would have been fatal but, for Merrie, it was exactly what she wanted as they stuffed more tentacles into her cunt while raking their claws over her body as each one fought to the one to fuck her next.

Borias cleared his throat. "Merrie, you—"

"I think you should stay out of this unless you want to join in. She seems to be quite safe at the moment."

Merrie grinned and reached out for the nearest shadow kin.

It caught her face with one claw, digging the point into her throat before grabbing the tentacles that fought for purchase in her throat. With a howl, it tore them free.

She only had a moment to gasp for breathe before a thick cock was jammed in. Her gasp turned into a low moan as the shadow kin rammed into her until her lips were pressed against the shifting base at the bottom.

The inhuman roughness set off little sparks of pleasure as she felt more tentacles being torn out of her to be replaced by shadowy cocks that burned as much as they brought pleasure. Ice cold and incredibly hot, they drove into her body with hard, brutal thrusts.

After so long with the demons, it was tempting to just let them have their way but these were her children, her kin. She reached out and let her mind connect with theirs. Their hunger and lusts, inhuman and brutal, beat against her mind as much as they were fucking her holes. She basked in the only way they knew to show love.

In the corner of her eye, she saw the shadow kin tugging on Borias. They sported hard cocks and writhing tentacles, just like his memories.

He resisted but she could feel the curiosity fighting with his own desires. He looked at her, a question silent in his thoughts.

(They won't hurt you,) she projected quietly.

Claws tugged at him. "Consort," whispered the shadow kin.

He fought briefly as the claws tore at his shirt and his pants. She felt his fear, but then there was curiosity and lust. Then, he held out his hand. "Be waiting!"

Natis looked at him curiously.

The kin pulled back.

Borias shrugged and then stripped.

"Do you really think this is the time, Borias?"

With a grin, Borias stood up naked and with a hard cock. His body was pale and bright against the sea of dark creatures that surrounded him. "I be trusting Merrie and I be feeling like I'll be okay."

Claws reached out for him.

Merrie sent a pulse to the surrounding kin. (Be gentle with him, he breaks.)

Her children agreed and the claws gripping Borias softened into dull points. Tentacles tipped with barbs melted into smooth lengths punctuated with ridges and gentle bumps.

There was nervousness brimming in Boris' thoughts as he was drawn into their midst.

"Do you really think you are going to dominate these beasts?" Natis said with distaste.

"No chance in hell, but it not being the first time I be taking it up the ass either." He winked and grinned.

Then he was pulled into the darkness. Merrie reached out to connect to him along with the rest of the kin. Together, she felt as her children caressed and touched Borias with the same roughness as herself.

With a shadow kin fucking her face with sharp, brutal thrusts that bruised her lips, she basked as Borias was touched and caressed before the first tentacle wormed against his asshole.

"Oh," he gasped which turned into a moan as he was penetrated.

Dixie chuckled as he grabbed Borias' face and jammed his small cock into his lips. Without waiting for a moment, he began to hump fast and hard.

Behind him, Borias knew that Tabitha was preparing her own special surprise. He clenched his sphincter as

the silfae stepped up with a massive strap-on on her hips.

When Borias was penetrated by the first cock, Merrie shuddered in pleasure with him. The kin were hammering into her body, but it was a backdrop to enjoying Borias' first time with the kin. She could feel every ridge of the thick cock that slid into his ass.

(Bring me to him.)

The kin obeyed, releasing her face enough for her to swallow Borias' cock. The heat was intense as he moaned and bucked, his entire body shaking from the thick shaft that impaled his rectum with hard, deep strokes.

"Be fucking!" Then his voice was muffled as one of the kin grabbed his head and skull-fucked him. His little gasps and gags only turned her on more as she watched him being used almost as roughly as herself.

Merrie bobbed and sucked on his cock.

Behind her, the shadow kin withdrew from her pussy and ass, leaving the empty and longing.

Then, the powerful presence of the Lord of Shadows was behind her. She moaned with anticipation even before the massive tentacle jammed up into her cunt. It was thick and swollen, ripping at the very edges of reality as it plunged into the very core of her being.

An orgasm burst out of Merrie as she was impaled clear to her throat by the Lord's tentacle. Her lips peeled off Borias' shaft as she was thrust high into the air.

The Lord didn't have to thrust, his cock was constantly writhing and twisting and moving, but he did. He drew out and slammed it home again and again, driving into her as her insides melted around him. Her organs and bones shattered and crumbled as the tentacle drove into her throat; she was being cleaned out of the hints of humanity and reminded that she was nothing but shadow and a triple-beating heart of crystal.

Merrie came again, her pleasure a black burst of ecstasy that tore through the shadow kin, Lord of Shadows, and even Borias.

With one powerful thrust, the Lord rammed its tentacle up and it burst out of her mouth. She choked on it and came back, her body nothing more than a hole for a creature that barely understood the

concept of sex. Alien thoughts hammered at her mind, seeping into the cracks and merging itself with Merrie as if they were bonding once again.

Merrie writhed as she came again and again, her entire body dominated by the tentacle that impaled her cunt to thrust. Every thrust caused her body to swell before it drew. The emptiness left behind was more than physical, the Lord was fucking her through her bond. It left an aching hole in her soul with every withdrawal before filling it with every thrust.

She cried out and lost herself, sinking into the bond with the Lord even as it threatened her sanity. She knew her core would remain said, she could never truly bond with anything, but to feel the rage of alien in her mind was terrifying and exciting and exhilarating all at the same time.

Just as an intense orgasm rose up, the Lord of Shadows withdrew. Merrie whimpered, caught on the edge.

Above her, the massive, black tentacles rose up as they towered over her. They were poised down to tear into her mouth and rip her open.

Obediently, she opened her mouth knowing it was only symbolic. The Lord could snuff her in an instant.

(Light Eater.)

She frowned. Light Eater? She was the Light Snuffer.

Then she saw it. A tiny speck of light smaller than a single grain of sand. It was the purest mote of brilliance she had ever seen, bright and clean and whiter than she could ever imagine. It hovered at the tip of a tentacle, strengthening and darkening the Lord's being with the contrast of light and dark.

(Light Snuffer. Shadow Masker.)

The tentacle plunged down, forcing itself into her throat with inhuman force.

The howling ice of shadows flooded her body, consuming everything but her heart in an instant as the light disappeared inside her chest. She felt it, a touch of divinity that only made the shadows inside her chest stronger. It burned and grew, flooding her very soul.

She came.

The explosion of pleasure burst out of her mind and slammed into the surrounding kin. It spread out rapidly like wildfire, tracing out the lines of the original oath until she felt it reach the edges of the county and the outline of the weakness between dimensions.

Every living being in the county burst into an intense orgasm.

Every shadow creature joined in.

The bursts of black and white, of light and darkness, stormed across the mental field of her surroundings before slamming back into her.

Merrie had no collar, no way of containing it, other than to pull it into herself. She did, letting the energy flood every fiber of her being, turning her insides into a core of almost physical shadow.

And buried deep inside the darkness, was a smallest possible fragment of light that would never die.

The Lord of Shadows had given her the touch of divinity, a hint of the raw power of Olume, the first god of light and the creator of the first shadow.

Merrie came again.

t'Sade

Consort

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In the afterglow of her orgasm, Merrie felt the influx of shadows scraping against the rest of her power. After having the rest of her powers merged together into a unified whole, the new energy felt unnatural yet powerful.

After being forced to integrate her energies with the demons, Merrie realized she craved to have everything combined together once again. It took her a moment to swirl the boundaries between shadow and not-shadow until the edges of shadow, light, and herself began to blur again.

By the time she opened her eyes, the shadow inside her were already blending with the chaos, psionics, and everything else.

The divine spark refused to integrate. It sat deep inside her, boiling away and hardening the shadows of her core. She wasn't sure if it would merge with her soul, but its presence gave her a sense of stability that she hadn't experienced since the day she was reborn.

With a moan, she stretched and dragged her limbs through the puddle of cum that she had landed in. Opening her eyes, she had to wipe it off her face before she saw Borias and Natis only a few meters away.

Natis looked around with disgust in a circular area untouched by the sudden shadow orgy.

Borias, on the other hand, had his ass stuck up in the air and his hole still gaping from being pounded by the kin. His cock hung low, dripping white cum from his own orgasm. He moaned and dug his fingers into the mud as he pushed himself up. "Well, that be fun." She could hear the smile.

“How can you enjoy that?”

Borias turned over and sat back down closer to Merrie. “Which part? Being fucked in the ass or be having sex?”

“Both. It’s unnatural.”

He shrugged. “I be taking it up the ass many times over the year. Prison bullies, Tabitha, Dixie, and others. It be fun. Not all the time, but I also be thinking it brought me closer to the hulks...,” he frowned. “Kin?”

(Shadow kin.)

“Aye, that’s what they said. Not hulks, they are kin.”

(My babies.)

Borias and Natis’ jaws opened at the same time as they stared at her in surprise.

Merrie scooped some of the cum off her ear. She sent a condensed memory of the moment she had made the promise and birthed the shadow kin.

Natis recovered first. He reached over and patted Borias on the shoulder. “Son?”

Stunned, Borias looked at him.

“When they said ‘consort,’ they meant exactly what you thought it meant. You are her consort, just accept that.”

Borias shook his head with amusement.

Merrie giggled.

He shrugged. “I be happy with that.”

(We are also happy with the acceptance. It fits with the ideas that we have cast before us.) The Lord of Shadows thoughts were brutal as they hammered against all of their minds. It was a bulge of darkness right at the edge of the wall, half in and half out. She could feel it paying attention to all of them as the shadow kin spread out to return to their places elsewhere in the county.

Natis groaned and pressed a palm to the side of his head. “Can you be quieter?”

(No, not without using the Shadow Snuffer as a voice. But you will not accept the noises from her mouth. You wish to make a deal, Poisoned Light.)

The old man said nothing but the grip on his staff tightened.

Merrie noticed that the Lord of Shadow’s thoughts were more coherent and structured. Maybe when they bonded during the

discussion with the gods, the shadowy force had been altered just as much as she had been.

(Now that the Mother and the Consort are here, we shall reject your offer.)

Natis glared. "That is a poor starting position."

(You want something.)

"Yes. How long are you going to remain here?"

(As long as the shadows live in the Mother's heart. As promised before. We have no natural lifespan and will outlive all of you. We have been tasked and that duty shall remain as long as light remains in the world.)

"If she dies, then you are no longer bound by these boundaries?"

Merrie crawled over to Borias. He smelled of sake and sex. She smiled and leaned into him. He had some shadow kin's cum on his cheek and she licked it off.

He reached over and pulled her into a hug. Leaning down, he whispered into her ear. "I be enjoying that but not as much as enjoying you."

She wagged her tail and pressed her face against his damp chest.

(You know the answer, Poisoned Light. Make your proposal so we can reject it.)

The duke sighed. He tried to straighten his back and look more dignified, but it was hard while sitting in a field made muddy from an orgy. "Merrie is a desired being for her powers. There will be wars for her. She has made a lot of enemies, powerful ones such as the Infernals but others. Sooner or later, you have to admit that she will fall and then the world is in danger from you. The country and the Royal Family would be threatened."

Merrie felt the Royal Geas pricking in the back of her mind.

(Yes. Then you should make sure she doesn't die.)

"That is difficult," Natis said in a tight voice.

Alien emotions battered everyone, she decided the Lord was amused. **(You want to, but you don't control her, do you? She slips away like the shadows, impossible to contain as long as there is light and dark.)**

Shaking his head, Natis struggled with his words for a moment. "Yes, that is the problem. A single point of failure, a single moment of weakness, and then we are lost. I serve this country to the limits

of my oath, one of the few dukes who have taken the oath and probably the last one who is capable of honoring it.”

Merrie’s ears twitched at his words. There was something important not being said. Something about Natis taking the Royal Geas and his desire to serve.

(You wish the control to survive the Mother, to be passed down to child?) The Lord of Shadows shifted and picked up one of the monstrous shadow kin before setting it down.

“No!” Natis pulled down his outstretched hand. “I... wish for someone loyal to this country to ensure you don’t spread out.”

(Such as yourself?)

Natis pressed his lips together. He struggled for a moment, then shook his head. “I will if I have to.”

(We would not make such an agreement with the Poisoned Light. You have not embraced the shadows. You speak for gods, not me. You will not. You cannot.)

There was a sour smell in the air. Merrie sniffed and then looked at Natis. Inside his shields, she could sense that he was fighting oath magic. He was struggling against the Royal Geas.

(Natis?) she projected.

He held out his hand. Through gritted teeth, he spoke carefully. “I thought it was best to try. I-I made an oath to serve the Franome and the Royal Family. That oath has been tearing me apart because I believe the new oath the queen demands is in conflict with the desire to serve this country.”

Natis groaned and clutched his stomach.

Merrie reached out with her senses but his shield was too strong. She worked to break it to see if she could reach his geas before it tore him apart.

“I don’t trust her and I feel that if I were...” He groaned. “If I was to accept it, she would demand I vanquish you. I no longer feel that such an action is the best for the country. But I had to try, the geas demanded it.”

A dribble of blood ran from the corner of his mouth.

(Natis, I can help.)

He looked at her sharply and then shook his head.

Merrie started to explain but the words froze in her throat. He wasn't suppose to know she could break oaths. She whimpered and flattened her ears.

“Give me something, Shadows. Make sure that there is at least someone else keeps you bound in place. Give me two lives. Give me a way of saving Franome even beyond my death. Give me a way to keep you chained even when Merrie dies.”

The Lord of Shadowed boiled on itself, reforming. Merrie couldn't detect anger or rage at all, only shifting alien thoughts as the entity considered its options.

(You mean the Consort.)

Borias blinked. “W-What? Me?”

Natis glanced at Borias. It was clear that Borias was never considered.

(Very well. If the Mother agrees, then the shadows will not break their bounds as long as the Mother or her Consort lives. If the Mother dies and the Consort becomes the Father, we will allow a new Consort. This will remain, one Mother or one Father and their successor. That will give you a chain that will keep us bound here for as long as you don't forget.)

Natis started to shake his head, but then dropped to one knee as more blood trickled out of his ears. “Y-Yes! Damn the gods, yes, I'll accept him!”

Merrie felt the presence of the Lord of Shadows. Then, to her surprise, a private thought from the alien creature that had never projected to a single being before. **(We are happy here, Shadow Maker. We have no desire for conquest in the near future, only to make a safe home in this place. We have food, we have shelter, we have our needs. Having us known to be contained will help us fulfill our duties to protect the light and to keep our home safe. Do you think this is a good choice?)**

Stunned that the Lord would question her, Merrie protected, (Yes.)

(When you spoke for us with the powers, your thoughts changed us. We see more than just what's ahead of it, longer than until the light faded. It is strange, but a gift the Shadows could have had without you. You are a... “good girl.”)

Merrie quivering with the pleasure that raced along her senses. She wagged her tail happily.

The Lord projected to everyone. **(An agreement is acceptable by three of four. The Poisoned Light and Shadows have agreed and the Mother gives blessing. We only ask the Consort for agreement.)**

Borias whimpered. “W-What?” he asked again.

Natis gasped and slumped. He took a long breath before he stood up. “T-Thank you. It wasn’t the offer I had in mind but one I can accept.” His voice was less strained.

He looked at Borias who was still stunned and confused. “I guess the only thing left is to accept it. If you do, I will make you the official count of the county. This is the only way to fulfill your duties to your oath.”

“I—”

Natis frowned. “I serve this country as do you. Will do you this for Franome?”

Borias whimpered as he looked from Merrie, to Natis, to Lord of Shadows. Then, he sighed. He stood up straighter. “Aye, I be accepting both—”

Natis smiled broadly and held out his hand.

Merrie felt the sparkle of free will rise up, pushing past the restrictions of the Royal Geas. She shivered with pleasure in anticipation, her wagging tail betraying her emotions.

“—right after I help Merrie in Franome City.”

A Child

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Merrie grinned as Borias' announcement echoed in the sudden quiet. She had anticipated it and the pleasure was almost as intense as sex.

Natis stared at him for a long moment, his face darkening. Even through his impressive shields, Merrie could tell that anger and frustration had exploded through his thoughts. Then he threw down his staff and took a step forward. "What is wrong with you, Boy!?"

Borias shrugged and used his hands to sluice off some of the shadow kin's cum on his shoulder. "I be fulfilling my oath, duke. As I be making, as I be honoring." He seem unperturbed, but he had stood up to far worse with one of Tabitha's squalls.

"I just made a deal to see the shadow lands secure! Even if Merrie dies, this country will be safe as long as you are. That means you stay here! You don't just go charging into danger!"

Borias looked around and picked up his shirt. "I be doing the right thing. If you knew the country was in danger, do you stay hidden?"

"Yes!"

Looking up, Borias looked straight at Natis. "Is that what you be doing here? From here in the shadow lands?"

There was a flicker of oath magic around Natis.

"N-No! I'm trying to resolve a conflict." He leaned over to grab his staff. He looked old as he struggled with his emotions.

"Well, I be seeing an answer. The gods be summoning Merrie to save country and family. That be meaning it is something that needs an Omega, right?"

Natis glared at him.

“K. So, even if she be having Bass and Sable, is that be enough? Are you be willing to risk her not having everything to fulfill that oath?”

Merrie grinned and ducked her head. She couldn't help but think Borias standing up to the duke, after having the entire county dangled in front of him was both brave and attractive. She responded with a little pulse of lust and pride.

Borias flinched and grinned.

“You are a mage, not even a combat mage. You snuff delusional women.”

“I be fighting Lemetri too. I be handling invasions of the mill. You not be there. I be fighting paladins also. I might not be a warrior in the front ranks, but as long as I be able to fight, I'm going to serve by my bitch.” He rested his hand on her ear.

Merrie moans at the dominating thoughts. She shivered and let the pleasure flood her. She was his. Maybe not forever, but in that moment, she wish she could bond again. Her pussy grew slick with desire.

“But the county...?”

“If you be thinking the queen is a danger, then this land be threatened sooner or later. This not be a game where you gradually send stronger fighters until you win. I know that from Bass. You be hitting hard and fast and be winning.”

Groaning, Natis shook his head. “You've been around that damn paladin too long.”

“I be wrong?”

Natis clenched his teeth. “No.”

“So, Duke Natis, you be having a choice. You be helping us or you be getting out of our way. I'd rather be helping so we all be winning and then I be a county and a consort, to be honest.”

Another groan. He lifted his head and spoke to the sky. “I hate the cockiness of youth. You always think in black and white.”

“No, I be thinking in shadows.”

Natis let out a humorless chuckle. Then he looked hard at Borias. “And this is how you fulfill your oath?”

“Aye.”

“You did tell the prince that you would accept the Royal Geas willingly in hopes that you would serve with good choices. Very well.”

Borias let out his breath. “You be helping?”

Hesitating, Natis looked around and then nod. “We have to tread carefully though. I have... obligations that will put me in risk.”

Off to the side, the Lord of Shadows stepped back into the darkness. **(Mother, we look forward to meeting you once again.)** came the booming, private projection.

She sent a wave of affection, love, and pride toward the inhuman being. The closest she had to a god besides Parn, a master from another realm.

Borias looked around. Finding a stump that wasn't covered in slime and mud, he went over and sat down.

Merrie joined him, squelching in the mud next to him.

Natis looked around with distaste and then waved his hand. A small stool, remarkably plain-looking, appeared and settled on a hard surface. He sat down in it.

“Now, you be saying a conflict?” asked Borias.

Natis sighed. “Yes. As you know from the geas, we promise to guard the Royal Family from harm, inside and out.”

“Aye,” Borias said with a flicker of the oath magic.

“Well, when Queen Vikia died, the Consort-King Radail stepped aside and Claston became king.”

“I not be remembering that, only the proclamation of Queen Pitia got this far.”

Natis sighed. “Claston was only king-in-name for a few weeks before Pitia arrived from the war in Emberka. Since she was the eldest and Claston had not gotten through the formal ordination, Pitia took his place and became queen.”

“I be thinking Pitia was dead.”

“For decades, actually. She never returned from the war in Emberka and she was declared dead. But she passed the Test of Blood as Vikia's and Radail's child and the councils accepted her.”

Borias sighed. “The only thing we be getting is a fancy piece of paper that said the queen was dead and that we be having a new queen. Waver took the money for a celebration and disappeared. It

was only a month after the big fight with the bounty hunters and Diffy.”

Natis shook his head. “I remember that. By the time I got back, Waver was long gone.”

“And then the world forgot us,” Borias said tensely.

“Not forgotten, just not important. The new queen had her own plans and Blood County wasn’t part of them. New policies and laws, it always happens with royalty.”

Natis dug into his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper. “She brought some barbarians with her also and they are her personal guards. But the part that bothered me, the thing that causes my Royal Geas to fight, is this summon.”

He handed to Borias. The mage read it twice.

“As soon as you return to Franome City at your earliest convenience, present yourself before your new queen to swear to a new oath?”

Natis shrugged. “It doesn’t sound suspicious while reading it, but I have serve the Royal Family for generations. I have never been asked to reaffirm an oath. The Royal Geas has been a core tenant of service for centuries. Just thinking about it causes the geas to respond but I don’t have a different. It isn’t demanding an action, only... warning.”

Merrie frowned and reached up. The smooth end of her wrist slid along the paper and she felt a faint compulsion woven into the paper. Reaching up with her other hand, she pulled it from Borias’ hand and pressed it against the stump underneath him. The bottom had a royal seal on it, she had seen them on letters to and from Claston when she was with him.

“There is a very faint suggestion spell on it,” Natis said. “Not very powerful, but why would the queen try to use magic for this? If I go to the city, I will have to serve but it wasn’t quite worded as demand.”

Borias grinned. “So you be hiding.”

Natis grew flush. “I wasn’t hiding.”

The younger man grinned. “You be hiding. Just be accepting it. Merrie?”

There wasn’t enough magic to pick up a strong pattern. It was subtle and delicate, something easily overlooked. She could tell that

the suggestion had been designed for that purpose, carefully constructed not to alert anyone. She picked it apart, working her way through the neat lines of energy to see how it would drive anyone reading it to rush to the castle.

She looked up and stared at Borias. She could see that the compulsion had begun to take root in his thoughts. Reaching out, she snuffed the spell like a bug before it affected him.

Borias reached down for the paper.

Merrie snarled at him and pulled the summon away.

He pulled back his hand. "Then be guessing?"

Natis shrugged. "I don't know. I'm an old man and I don't enjoy oaths of any form anymore. They are too limiting and I don't have the strength to resist them. Something in my gut tells me that accepting a new oath from the queen will force me to violate my oath to the country, but I have no proof, I have nothing more than a feeling."

"I can be working with feelings. Living with Bass mean we all be feeling." He thought for a moment. "I say we be going to the city and find out more. We not be learning anything new all the way out here."

Natis shook his head. "I can't go back."

"You can be fighting the compulsion in the city, yes?"

"For a few days, maybe a week."

"You be having contacts? Eolis? Others who be discrete?"

"Yes, but—"

"Duke, I not be in the city for many years. They not be remembering me. I be having no contacts. You be having them. You be having ones that Bass, Sable, or even Merrie not be having. You help us?"

Natis stood up. "I can't."

"This how you be serving your oath?" Borias said sharply.

The older man flinched. He glared at Borias. "Don't use that on me."

"I not be accepting count or consort until I risk everything. Why not you?" Smoothly, Borias stood up and held out his hand. "We serve Franome, the crown, and then land—"

"Fine!" Natis grabbed his hand. "I'll help but realize I'm at risk."

“I be a wanted murderer for snuffing rich men’s daughters and wives. Merrie be a criminal for killing thousands.”

(Hundreds of thousands,) she added guilty.

“We both be escaping Abbinkey. Why you be different? Franome be calling us and we must be serving.”

A Band of Heroes

122

The Shadows flickered and shifted around her as Merrie crawled along the darkened path. With every step, the world beneath her slid forward far faster than if she had walked the distance herself. A single step was hundreds in the other world.

Around her, she could feel the shadows reacting to her companions' presence.

There was a hunger with Borias, a welcoming call for him to lose himself forever among the shifting darkness. She knew the same call, it would be tempting to just melt into darkness and flow forever like the Lord of Darkness. With Borias next to her, the temptation had grown stronger. All she wanted to do was reach out with him and bond together so they would melt away forever.

Natis, on the other hand, the darkness feared and hated him. Even in the shifting dark, she couldn't help but feel the purity of his divine magic. It shone through the darkness, strengthening the shadows as much as burned them. Waves of desire rose up around her, a lust to feed upon his power much like the Lord of Shadows fed upon the gods of light.

The duke stumbled behind her. He wheezed as he leaned on his staff while keeping up with the other two. Despite his raw power, she could tell that he was far away from the source of his powers. The realm of Shadows was distant from whatever divine light he used to summon his powers. His defensive spells wavered, still powerful but far weaker than they were before they stepped across into the darkness.

Seeing the duke struggle brought different emotions to the fore. She had always seen the duke as someone more powerful than her,

capable of defeating everyone in the brief moment that he had summoned his angels to stop the fighting during the auction where she had been sold.

She hadn't seen him since and either he was far weaker than she expected or she had grown in so much power that she was now his equal, if not beyond him. She half expected to feel some pride, but it was just one more reminder than she was reaching beyond almost everyone around her.

Lost in her thoughts, she hurried toward her destination.

A sharp tugging at her throat slowed her down. Borias had wrapped his belt around her neck and attached a short distance of rope. It was like being on a leash and the submission brought a surge of pleasure. She pulled on it, to feel the leather dig into her skin, and then slowed down to let her companions keep up as she forged a path through the dark.

As they approached Ston's village, she felt her hopes and mood growing brightening. She wasn't sure what was going to happen in Franome City, but every step felt closer to what she needed to do. It wasn't a voice in her head, but a subtle feeling that she had done the right thing bringing Borias and Natis with her.

She wondered if it was faith that drove her.

It was hard not being able to speak to Parn. At least the Lord of Shadows spoke to her, though the entity was far less powerful than a goddess that could rewrite reality with a casual statement.

Merrie could only trust her gut feeling and that she was doing the right thing. She smiled to herself and let the good mood permeate her thoughts.

She wanted to transform into something faster, but the leather belt wrapped around her neck stopped her with a flush of excitement and submission. She moaned and enjoyed the pleasure that made the darkness ripple around her and leaned into it, digging the leather into her throat until she felt it cutting off her breath.

"Not be pulling too hard," Borias said with a flick of the rope in his hand. The sisal length quivered and caused the collar to pull her back.

A wave of pleasure filled her. Merrie wagged her tail and tugged harder.

"Is this really necessary?" asked Natis in a pained voice.

“No, but her magic be keeping us safe and turning her on be the best way to keep her powers.” Borias chuckled. “Besides, I be liking how she smell.”

“Smells like alcohol. That isn’t a natural smell.”

“Maybe,” Borias said with a sigh. “But as I be embracing shadow magic, this smell is in the back of my throat. Nothing like I drank before, but it taste good. It taste like Merrie’s cunt. Besides—”

The rope tugged as Borias looked back at Natis who trailed behind them follow the path Merrie forged through the shadows. “You be going down on a woman lately?”

“I’m over five centuries old.”

“So... yes?” Even without a direct connection, Merrie could tell that Borias was teasing the much older man.

“Not everything is about sex.”

“Maybe, but we be trusting in a bitch who gets off on submission and be joining forces with a paladin of whores. You may not be enjoying sex, but most of us do.”

“Like having sex with those shadow creatures?”

Borias sighed. “Kin. Yeah, I be curious. I’m glad I tried, I be learning new things. These shadows... they be sounding louder in my head. Like how the alphas speak.”

“You are gaining affinity to the shadows. The more you use them, the more they will pull you into their way of thinking and their plots.”

Borias looked at him. “Like your angel summoning?”

Natis said nothing.

Merrie wanted to listen but they had arrived at their destination. She stopped and crouched down, wagging her tail happily as she peered through the barrier between the worlds to the area south of Ston’s home.

It was night but she could see where the light of the bonfire cast shadows of people along the grounds and walls. The flickering light made out dancers near the flames and others near tables. The unmistakable bulk of Bass painted itself in the shadows as a large, looming creature. Sable was on the other side of the flames, bouncing and bounding in silent barks.

Merrie grinned.

“We be here?”

She barked and then burrowed into the barrier between the worlds. It was like digging into the ground, but she had to use her magic and will to pierce the veil and create a slit in two worlds. Energy flickered around her, dark as night.

On the other side, it corroded earth and wood as she gained purchase in reality and then pulled. The belt around her neck tightened into a sharp pain, setting off little flashes of pleasure that powered her effort to drag the other two out of the shadows and into the light.

In front of her was Sable. The older woman leaned back on her haunches, knees spread to expose her bare and slick sex. Her arms, ending at her elbows angled toward her throat in a classic presentation. She would have been a statue of beauty except that her dark-colored tail wagged violently, causing her large breasts and the rest of her body to jiggle constantly. (Merrie!)

Merrie radiated affection as she yanked Borias forward to throw herself at Sable. She kissed and licked as Sable did the same for her. The belt digging into her throat only added to the intimacy as the two alphas enjoyed each other like puppies, not as warriors capable of killing thousands.

"I was expecting you, just not when," said Bass in a rumbling voice as he came up. He was shirtless, his gray skin dark with sweat except where the white hairs danced in the breeze.

Borias stumbled forward and then stood up. "Evening."

"Borias!" Bass pulled him into a hug. "It's been months! I didn't think you'd ever leave the Mill!"

Even though the thriban dwarfed Borias, Borias hugged him tightly. "I be missing you, old man."

"You coming to enjoy the fight?"

"Might not be a fight."

Bass pulled away and looked at him. "It's going to be a fight. I can't imagine anything else at this..." His yellow eyes flickered up and his voice trailed off. "My lord duke?"

Natis held up his hand. He was pale and obviously uncomfortable at what he saw and his passage through the darkness.

Merrie looked over Sable's bare ass toward the fire where there was more than a few naked dancers. Two of them were new to the village, a man wearing an amulet of Talus and a woman who had it

tattooed on her sweat-slicked skin. They were cheering and having fun as they danced.

Off on the edge, Ston and Nikki sat on the front step of their house, holding hands and keeping an eye on the celebration.

(Things are safe here?) Merrie asked Sable as Bass, Natis, and Borias spoke together.

Sable nodded. (We have a small shrine established and two to guard it. They will keep an eye on everything. With Ston's talent, I have no doubt having two whores will increase the appeal and bring more monies and opportunities. The kids are also fairly good at defending the area.) Sable returned to burrowing between Merrie's legs, her tongue lapping at her sex.

Merrie moaned and leaned back. The rope attached to her makeshift collar caught on her body and tugged at her throat, adding to the pleasure.

(We are ready to leave at any point, if you feel the need.)

As much as Merrie loved the wet tongue lapping at her sex, the gas as getting more insistent. It pricked her senses whenever she thought about Franome City and the queen.

Bass cleared his throat.

Merrie looked up to see his bulge tenting his trousers.

"As much as I—"

Merrie held up her hand as Sable began to lap furiously at her clitoris. Her eyes closed as she sank into the sensations, enjoying the way Sable knew exactly where to lick, where to touch, and where to caress to bring Merrie to a brief but satisfying orgasm. As the pleasure rippled through her body, she lowered her hand.

(My turn next, Bitch,) Sable said with a playfulness. She sent a brief moment of an orgy she had just joined less than an hour later. (... later.)

Bass cleared his throat. "Girls!"

Merrie and Sable flung themselves into presentation, their naked bodies quivering as they knelt in front of them with their wrists at their throat.

There was a flash of lust from Bass and Borias. Natis managed to keep his emotions under his shield, but she knew that he was uncomfortable attracted.

Merrie looked at the duke and winked.

He rolled his eyes and tightened his grip on his staff.

Bass pointed away from the fire. "Let's talk. This is a case where we should just disappear without telling the village. Our people already know what to do. And you two," he pointed to Sable and Merrie, "keep away from each other. You hear me?"

Merrie bumped her shoulder against Sable's. When Bass narrowed his eyes, she shivered at the thrill of disobedience but then obeyed.

They walked a short distance into the wood until they found a small clearing where only Sable and Merrie could hear the sound of the celebration.

Bass leaned against a thick oak tree. "Is this is?"

Merrie wasn't sure who he was talking to, but then realize everyone was staring at her. She was the one who gathered them together. She was the leader, the amputated girl with remarkable powers. Her ears flattened.

Sable sent a wave of affection. (Don't worry, we all trust you. My master is good at strategy in battles, but not larger plans like this. You get us to the fight and then point us like your war dogs.) A pulse of blood lust and then amusement. (You okay with that?)

Merrie nodded. (I think so.)

"So what do we know?" asked Bass.

Borias opened his mouth but then closed.

With a grin, Merrie gathered up all the conversations she had, all the feelings about something being wrong, and everything else, and then sent it out a compressed packet of information. There were bits missing, including the sex and her ability to manipulate oath magic. The only thing that hinted at the geas was that Borias was able to enter Franome City without his organs bursting open.

The others stiffened for a moment.

Natis was the first to respond with a groan. "I will never get used telepaths."

Bass chuckled and reached down to scratch Sable's ear. "Better than a mysterious stranger in the corner of a bar like the first time. So, the queen. Ston said something about that. He doesn't have the contacts he used to have, but he said something feels off. I'm guessing forcing the dukes, and probably the rest of royalty, to

swear a new oath probably is something to get around the limitations of the Royal Geas.”

Natis said, “Only two dukes have ever taken the geas. The rest have demanded their independence but they are closer to the crown than I was.”

“Who was the other duke?”

“Duke Timredor, up near the Belkim border. I haven’t spoken to him in about thirty years though.”

Bass grunted. “It seems too simple.”

“I beg your pardon?” The duke looked miffed.

Bass shrugged. “You are important, but you are just a duke. Having control of royalty is one thing, but for what end? Dominating the country? She’s the queen. She already has the army behind her. The Loyals will kill everyone if she commanded. So, what does Natis give her that she doesn’t have?”

No one had an answer.

The silence grew uncomfortable.

Merrie sighed. (I don’t think we can get the answers unless we go into the city. The only one we know is being targeted is Natis, maybe we can learn more if we do.)

“You are using me as bait?” growled Natis.

Bass chuckled and shook his head. “You are the Divine Summoner, Supplicant of Angles, and the General of the Golden Triads.”

“I know my own titles, thriban.”

Borias held up his hand. “You others be having a better idea?”

Bass and Natis said nothing, then they both leaned back.

Merrie flushed. She reached out for Sable.

The elder alpha sent a wave of support.

Merrie took a deep breath. (Then we do that. Sneak into the city, trying to use the contacts we have with the royalty and Whore’s Guild and anywhere else we can to find out why we think something is wrong. Then, deal with it.)

The Royal Geas hummed with approval. She could see the respond echoed among Borias and Natis with wavers of oath magic.

Unable to resist, Natis agreed, “It is the best plan we have.”

Merrie thought about the next steps. (His place is probably guarded and watched, as would be Eolis if he is town.)

“He is. At this time of year, his wagon is at the south end of the Namedor Park.”

(We should pick somewhere else. How about the manor in the Shadowed District? It had protections against others finding it and would make a good base.) She realized that her decision to boost and repair the wards before her sentencing would have protect her, but after a decade, the spells would be weak and crumbling. She would have to repair them again as soon as they stepped back into reality.

“Through the shadows?” Natis groaned.

Bass chuckled and picked up Merrie’s lead. “You can’t teleport and I think a choir of angels coming down through the clouds would defeat sneaking into town.”

Her pussy grew wet with the thought of him yanking on her leash.

The thriban looked down at the rope and grinned. Then he handed it over to Borias. “Your bitch, you lead.”

Merrie’s cunt grew even wetter. She wagged her tail as she looked at him. Then, slowly, she drew herself up into presentation and wagged even harder.

Endurance

123

Merrie plotted a course through the shifting shadows with the rest of her group following after her. After seeing Natis struggling with the darkness, she kept a portion of her power into creating a field that pushed away the corrosion of darkness.

It felt like betraying her own to even consider it, but then she felt how the shadows responded to the three of their group capable of using divine powers. The hunger was stronger and more violent, dark claws skittering against her shields as Natis, Bass, and Sable all radiating what the darkness craved.

Borias tugged on her lead. “Being a good girl,” he whispered.

A flush of excitement surged through her. She wagged her tail and forged ahead. They were already at the edge of Franome City, cutting a week-long travel into less than an hour along the shifting lands. Ten more minutes and they would be at the manor where she had lost her first master and was now her home away from home.

She reached back for his thoughts. (Is this right?)

“Aye. Though I not be adventuring much like Bass.”

“It isn’t that bad,” rumbled the thriban. He was armored as was Sable, the shimmering plate armor had a glowing symbol of Talus on the chest. It attracted the shadows but also helped Merrie with the shield that kept the hungry darkness from approaching.

Borias wiped his forehead. “I not be liking this not knowing what to do.”

Bass chuckled. “That’s called adventuring. Sometimes, the monsters are right there and it’s just a matter of hunting them down. Other times, it’s a bug hunt, people are dying whenever you

aren't near, and you still can't figure out who or what is doing the killing."

Stumbling, Borias looked back. "Be serious? How often that be happening?"

With a shrug, Bass looked up. "Um... seven... twelve times? A lot more than you realize, it makes you appreciate when you just have something to kill. At the same time, though, you have to make sure you avoid the easy kills because otherwise the kids won't get their training for when you can't be here."

"That be complicated."

"That is is the life of an adventurer."

Merrie listened carefully as she picked her way around the shadows of taller, unfamiliar buildings. From her memory, she was in the middle of the court distract. It had been a crater the last time she was there and she could still see the scars of the explosion in the shadows, but the world didn't stop when she was in Abbinkey. It had rebuilt into a new shape, with much taller buildings and stronger defenses. The darkness was deeper but, at the same time, emptier.

A lot more had been destroyed that day.

She paused briefly over the spot where Parn had made her offer.

"This be where you spoke?" whispered Borias.

Merrie froze.

"I be remembering this from... earlier."

She looked at him in surprise. She had never shared memories of her life during a bonding, how would he have known about Parn?

Bass cleared his throat. "Something wrong?"

Borias shook his head. "No, just be talking about one of Merrie's fucks."

"Is that really appropriate?" asked Natis.

Merrie sent a wave of love toward Borias.

Sable leaned over and bumped her shoulder against Merrie. (You bonded with him, didn't you?)

A nervous giggle rose up. Merrie sent a hard pulse of raw lust back, the alpha version of slap.

Sable shuddered from the sudden orgasm. (Bitch,) she projected with a smile.

"Come on, we be going to the manor." Borias snapped on the lead.

With a flush from being treated as a common animal, Merrie started to move again. It only took a few more minutes until she approached the Shadowed Distract. Her years of despair and the darkness still left scars on the place. Shadows of buildings long since destroyed rose up like claws around them. A choir of abandoned creatures skittered along the edges of her vision, untethered from reality but still strong enough to remain dangerous.

She sighed. Despite the menace, it felt more like home than anywhere but the mill. She reached out for her home, casting her senses ahead of her to find the repulsion spell that warded their destination.

Her mind pressed against strange magic.

She froze, a prickle of fear rising along her back.

Her wards were still wrapped around the manor, but there was other magic woven into the spells. Someone had used her magic as a framework to enhance the repulsion but also thicken the barrier between the worlds.

“What be wrong?”

Merrie reached out and brought Borias into her thoughts, sharing her observations. When he grew worried, she started to burrow her senses into the spell to identify the caster and the purpose. To her surprise, he knelt down next to her and joined her.

With a flush of closeness, they began to investigate the spell not unlike when they had done it during the Infernal attack so many years ago.

“Bass—” started Natis.

“Assume trouble,” snapped the thriban. He turned his back to Merrie and Borias while Sable jumped over to protect them from the other side.

Natis joined him, magic dancing on his fingertips as he started summoning but stopped before the last words. The weight of the connections hung around them, warping the air with the foreign energies inside the shadows.

It only took a few minutes of working together before Borias and Merrie understood. They pulled out and shared a moment of their thoughts close before withdrawing.

(Someone has taken over the manor. There are at least a dozen more wards on the place, mostly to defend against dimensional breaching and teleportation.)

“More spells being to protect against detection and scrying. Someone be hiding.”

(We’re guessing maybe a few years after I went to Abbinkey, but a lot more in the last few years.)

“There also be signs they be maintained daily.”

Bass snorted with amusement.

With a sigh, Natis asked, “What is fun?”

“Borias and Merrie are speaking like they are married.”

Borias blushed hotly and Merrie ducked her head with a smile.

The thriban looked back. “It’s nice. There was a part of me that had hoped Borias would have bonded with you, Girl. I know it won’t happen now, but still nice.”

In the distance, something large growled and there was the sound of shadows being warped.

The smile faded from Bass’ face. “Options? Punch through and reclaim or find somewhere else?”

Disappointed that her base of operation had been invaded, Merrie shook her head. (We don’t know what else is there and we’re trying to be subtle. We also need to conserve our strength. Somewhere else.)

“Eolis?”

Natis shook his head. “He’s about to head out for tax collection. There will be wards tied into the city’s defenses.”

“Your place?”

“I’m the target, they’ll be waiting for me there.”

Merrie spun through her options. There weren’t many other places that she knew intimately enough to step through: the Whore’s Guild, the alley she had spent almost freezing to death, or just a random place and then figure out from there.

Bass grunted. “I say the Whore’s Guild. It has a shrine to Talus there, many followers, and there is always a steady stream of friendlies that could help us investigate.”

Merrie started to respond, but then she felt a creature of shadows approaching. It was a hulking beast, a fusion of fear and darkness

from her time of depression. (We should move, otherwise we're going to be having a fight.)

Bass chuckled. "Hitting something would make me feel better."

A low, screaming howl cut through the darkness. It was the sound of a hundred children crying out in hunger mixed together, a sound of pitiful despair that ended in a deep, rumbling grunt.

Bass' head lifted to look toward the noise. His lips tightened into a thin line. There was a look for longing for battle but his mind was spinning furiously. He turned to the others and to Borias. "Whore's Guild?"

"Aye."

Merrie sent a wave of revulsion toward the approaching creature to dissuade it while leading the others away. (Whore's Guild.)

t'Sade

The Whore's Guild

124

The Whore's Guild was a bright and cheerful building that appeared to stand tall on the corner of the block. It looked small and pretty, a delicate place for the first profession. In reality, the guild owned all the buildings on the block and the ones that faced it. It was sprawling campus of apartments, stores, and services.

Fucking was serious business.

The guild also didn't encourage customers to come up to the main doors. The hall itself was a place of safety away from having to put on a show, where tired sluts washed out the taste of cum and cunt from their mouths with beer and the company of their peers.

Merrie forced open a small narrow of shadows across the street in one of the alleys. She stepped through with her senses active, scanning around while looking for danger. Feeling none, she relaxed her powers and then tugged on her leash for the others to follow.

One by one, they came through and she sealed the opening shut.

A sharp pang of fear rose up.

Bristling and ready for combat, she spun a round for an attack but only saw Borias clutching the wall, his face pale and his heart pounding. In her mind, she could see that the realization that he was inside the city had finally struck. (Borias, it's okay. It's okay.)

He nodded but tears ran down his cheeks. His fingernails dug into the brick wall behind him.

Merrie inched forward and then sat back on her heels to lift herself up and press her wrist against his hip. (You aren't going to die. The geas is just telling you that you shouldn't be there, but it can't hurt you.)

With a sob, he slowly sank to his knees next to her and clutched her tightly.

Natis breathed heavily as he leaned against his staff. "What is going on with him?"

Bass answered as he watched with concern. "He thought he would never return because of a geas. We bribed one of the Oath Master in Abbinkey to suppress the Justice Geas and he did it by changing it into a geas that prevented him from ever returning to Franome City."

"Then why aren't his organs bursting?"

Merrie glared at the older duke. Then she noticed the others looking at her expectantly.

(Merrie?) asked Sable, her thoughts filled with concern. She and Bass both believe Merrie when she said the geas wouldn't stop Borias, but they were still both shocked when they saw it with their own eyes. (How? How did you break that geas?)

Merrie focused on Borias. She moved her wrist over to his heart. She could feel it beating rapidly. Opening herself up, she projected love and calm toward him until his thoughts and body slowed.

(There you go. Nothing terrible had happened. Nothing is going to.)

He looked at her, his eyes shimmering. "I... I not really be believing it be true."

(You didn't believe me?) she asked wryly. (We pretty much shared our lives together in that bed.)

Borias chuckled. He leaned forward and kissed her. "Something about being told and about me be feeling it real. I be trusting you with my life, but that doesn't mean something be going wrong. Even the greatest bitch in the world be occasionally wrong."

She smiled and kissed him back. (Thank you for trusting me then.)

"With my life. I be trusting you with my life."

They kissed again before Borias stood up again. He straightened his outfit and then regarded the others. "Be sorry about that. I not be returning for many years and got emotional."

Natis pointed directly at Borias. There was a scowl on his face. "Why aren't you dead?"

Borias held up his hands. "Not be asking, please."

“No, Boy, I’m going to ask. If you had a geas on you that prevented you, why are not you not dead?”

Borias repeated himself.

Natis shook his head in denial. His grip tightened on his staff. “There are too many mysteries going on and adding one more to the fire is just going to burn us even more. It’s bad enough that you want to use me as bait and things are already not going our way. So, tell me, why aren’t you dead?”

Bass dropped one heavy hand on the duke’s shoulder. “Let’s trust them on this.”

Natis jerked away. “No. Bass, right now, all I want to do is march straight up the front door of palace and present myself for the queen’s oath. Knowing that this isn’t my idea and that a spell is forcing me to think this way is putting me on edge.”

“Been trying to dispel it?”

Natis glared at him.

Borias chuckled. “You be hoping what broke the geas would break the compulsion?”

“Of course. I’m not going to risk my... our lives unnecessarily. This entire thing is because of the compulsions and oaths we made.”

Bass chuckled. “Oh, duke, you have no idea what it is like to have restrictions. I spent years trying to keep those promises.”

“Well, fallen knight, I don’t gain power by that conflict. This isn’t enjoyable.” The duke’s eyes bore into her. “What did you do to break it? How did you break one of the most powerful geasa known?”

Merrie shook her head. In her gut, she knew that Parn wouldn’t want Natis to know about her abilities with oath magic. His compulsion and ignorance had to remain in place.

Bass cocked his head and then shrugged. “We are all allies here, Duke. I swear on Talus and on my honor, we are all united against the queen. Have no doubt, if the same thing that freed Borias from his geas would have broken your compulsion, then they would have used it also for you.”

Natis sighed. “I don’t like this. Things have started going wrong and we’ve only been in the city for twenty minutes.”

Bass chuckled and clapped his shoulder. "Adventure! Now, you put on that old man disguise that is so hard to break and we stroll on up to the Whore's Guild and get some answers."

"I hate paladins. You are always so cheerful."

"Well, if you need to get laid...?" Bass said with a grin, his Presence radiating from in a wave of calm that brought a surge of pleasure to Merrie.

Natis pointed at him. "Stop doing either of those. I have no interest in sex and I'm going to let you corrupt me. Nor do I want to deal with that... smile of yours right now."

The paladin's Presence faded but the amusement remained.

As the other spoke, Merrie crawled forward and peered out at the semi-crowded street. With a start, she realized she had brought them to the same alley she had waited at before entering the guild the first time.

Two very different places of her life. Years ago, she was teetering on the edge of her life, falling further into a pit of despair that she couldn't escape. Now, she had survived her trials, gained and lost many masters, and found the balance of her life and powers.

Her tail wagged slowly as she regarded the street. No one stood out as waiting for her, but she didn't want to scan their minds either. Even with the manor being taken over and the Natis' compulsion, they weren't in a situation of life and death.

Bass crouched near her, the smell of his sweat and musk teasing her. "Sable doesn't detect any hostile thoughts, but you are better than her. Sense anything?"

Merrie shook her head. (I'm not scanning.)

"Why?"

She looked at him, trying to find a way of explaining it. Then, there was only one word he would understand. (Faith.)

Yellow eyes stared at her for a moment and then he grunted. He reached out and patted her head. "You did good for Borias. Something I could never do. Good girl."

She shivered with the phrase that always brought a thrill of pleasure. Somehow, with everything that had happened to her, that phrase always brought her joy.

He grinned and stood up. His armor crumbled away from his body as he released his defenses, leaving only a broad-shouldered

thriban standing next to his naked bitch. Reaching down, he ran his fingers through Sable's hair. "Come on. No one is dying today, so let's not scare anyone by coming in with drawn swords and combat spells."

They headed across the street.

There were two guild members at the door, hanging around and chatting. Even after years, she knew that they were discretely guarding and watching for trouble. She didn't know either of them, but no doubt one of them would be capable in combat.

The first was a slender woman with long white hair tightly bound in ribbons. More ribbons wrapped around her body from throat to toes, with red at the top and violet at the bottom. A pair of thin orange strands wrapped around her small breasts, barely covering the hard nipples that peeked out from the gaps. Greens and blues hung off her hips and delved between her legs.

The other whore was a young fat woman with a beautiful smile. Compared to her brightly colored companion, she was somber with a white sundress that accented her small breasts and wide hips. She was demonstrating a dance that caused people in the streets to stumble as they found themselves watching her swirling hips.

In a flash, the Kivas family tree came rushing across Merrie's mind. She followed it as it ran down the blood line from Kivas through mother and father for eighteen generations until it stopped at the woman in front of her: Peggy Duvin. Her father was a Kivas but they had lost the family name two generations before. Peggy had a sister by her father but with a different mother according to the little line that faded away.

Merrie smiled and projected back to Borias. (The young woman is your cousin. She's a Kivas by blood.)

Borias stumbled.

Bass stopped and turned. "You okay?"

Merrie smirked. She flicked her ears and barked.

Stepping forward a few steps, Borias reached down and smacked her ass. "Not be surprising me like that."

She grinned and wiggled her tail. She sent out a teasing wave of affection. (You never know, it might be useful to know that. You haven't met many family recently, right?)

"Red or white door?"

(Red, but never to Abbinkey.)

The woman in ribbons stepped down as they approached. “Excuse me, this building is for guild members only. If you want—”

Bass tapped his chest and a symbol of Talus appeared.

“—oh, a follower of Talus is always welcomed in our doors,” she said with a bow. “I’m Cloud and this is Piggy. Are... the rest of your companions also followers?”

Piggy, also known as Peggy Kivas, did a little curtsy that reveal a generous view of her thigh and one nipple.

Bass looked back and gestured down to Merrie and Sable. “My pets.” Then his hand pointed to Borias and Natis, who had wrapped himself in a disguise that forced the eye to look away. It was a compulsion, something normally Merrie would have been vulnerable but she ignored it before focusing on Borias. “And that young man is a trusted companion. I vouch for him.”

Cloud’s eyes glanced down at Merrie. Slowly, her lips pressed together in disapproval and Merrie couldn’t help but feel the pity and disgust of the two amputated women on their knees next to him. “I’m... not sure. I’m going to have to ask Guild Master Dith about this.”

Merrie cocked her head.

Bass also seemed confused. “Dith? Monk’s girl? I thought he was guild master.”

Peggy gestured up. “Not for a few years.” She had a western accent. “How long has it been since you’ve been here?”

Bass shrugged. “Not for a few years apparently. May I enter then?”

“Talus fuck my ass! I see Bitchy!” screamed a man from inside the building. Merrie smiled at Elf’s voice, remembering his face as clearly as his high-pitched, effeminate voice. There was a rise of cries of annoyance and pain as people were thrown aside as a buzzing rapidly grew louder.

Bass and Sable stepped away from Merrie, one in each direction and leaving her completely exposed.

Merrie grinned and wagged her tail. Pulling herself up, she presented herself.

A large, nearly naked man came flying out of the door. His strap-on wings buzzed loudly as he swooped down and slammed into her,

knocking both Piggy and Cloud aside. The impact threw both of them into the street.

Merrie transformed into a Bel Dark hound to bounce off the street and then back into her naked form before they landed with Elf on his back and her straddling his belly.

He squealed loudly and began to kiss her face, shoulders, and everything else he could reach while kicking his feet happily around. He was naked except for a leather thong and there was wine and beer dripping from his large belly and hairy chest.

Merrie yelped and kissed him back, licking him almost as much as planting her lips. Her tail ached as she wagged it with her joy of seeing an old friend. They squeezed and touched and played with each other until the excitement died down.

When he rolled to the side and let her slide off his belly, she got back on her knees and looked around.

The street was frozen as everyone stared in shock.

Elf hugged her again. "I missed you so much! What happened? Where were you? What happened? Are you still guild? Are you hungry? Come inside!"

Without waiting for a response, he grabbed her leash and tugged her toward the door. "Come on, Pristine and Scorch going to squeal!"

Tail wagging, Merrie pranced past an annoyed looking Cloud and up the stairs. (Borias, make sure your cousin is okay?)

"Not be match-making!" he called from behind her.

(Well, then don't fuck her,) Merrie sent with a smile. (You managed it with Haviston.)

"Bad girl!" came the annoyed but amused yell.

Inside the guild, Merrie could instantly see a line of knocked over people, tables, and cases from where Elf had noticed Merrie from across the large hall that made up the bottom floor clear to the front door. Brightly dressed folks were standing up and gathering themselves while others had already returned to various games of pleasure and chance.

She took a deep breath and drank in the smells of sex and humanity. Even though she didn't recognize anyone at first, the smells of whores had layered itself into the building for centuries. It

was distinct, like a rich soup that could never be duplicated again. Her pussy grew wet with the memories of her time in there.

Elf tugged her leash and dragged her by the throat. "Pristine! Scorch! I found Bitch! I found Bitch!"

Pristine stood primly next to a couch, wearing a long slender dress that slung to her hips and breasts. Her dress was a dusky blue, the garter that a slit up the side exposed was pitch black. The only shock of color was her white, painted lips. She looked like a high-class escort ready to go out for a party.

Scorch, on the other hand, was a rough-looking man with ash-white hair and smoldering eyes. He wore a simple shirt unbuttoned to expose his hair chest and well-defined muscles. The years had given him a salt-and-pepper beard and chest but the smell of smoke still surrounded him.

Pristine knelt down to hug Merrie. "I missed you," she said. She had a new perfume, something flowery with a hint of spice.

Merrie leaned into her. (I missed all of you too.)

Scorch shuddered and put down his beer. "Forgot how strange it is to have you in my head. Welcome back, I guess. Your voice is beautiful as always."

Merrie sent him a sharp pulse of playful lust.

His cock grew hard in his pants almost instantly and he shuddered again. "I didn't miss that in the slightest," he said with a grumble. "You know I'm married."

(Is she still with the guild?)

"Yes."

(Well, then—) she sent another pulse.

He groaned and squirmed.

Merrie wagged her tail and smiled. She was happier than she thought she would be returning to one of her old homes.

Bass came up with the others. "Pristine. Scorch."

Scorch scrambled to his feet, his own lust prickling his thoughts. "Sir Paladin."

Pristine was also attracted to the paladin and hints of memories came leaking out. Both Pristine and Scorch had spent time with Bass and Sable, though Pristine was the only one who found Sable as attractive as the alpha's master.

Bass pulled both of them into a tight hug.

Elf threw himself in from behind.

Bass reached out to embrace all three. His muscles bunched as he pulled the heavyset man around with little effort.

Pristine closed her eyes and hugged him back, whispering something in his ear. Then, she opened and stared directly at Borias. With a gasp, she pushed away from Bass and walked around his bulk. “Are you the Butcher?”

Borias paled.

“The Butcher of Silk? The Muffin Man?” She gave him a hesitant smile and held out her bare hands. “You were the one who found all those spit muffins all those years back.”

“Um?” He looked uncomfortable. His eyes glanced toward the door leading out, obviously judging how fast he could run away.

Pristine bowed. “I’m sorry. I was only following orders that night.”

The mage stopped and slowly turned his attention back to her.

Her words had caught attention and there were a few people heading toward him, staring at him as if he was a ghost.

“Um... I be knowing you?”

“I was a Resolute then. That was before I left to join here.”

He stepped back from her, an old wound breaking open. “You be the one who arrested me?”

“No, that was Jillthin, our captain. She’s a Loyal now. But... I was on the team that night. I’m sorry. I knew that she was there willingly, but we had orders.”

Borias closed his eyes and held up his hand. “No, I know my mistake.”

“She was consenting. Updated her will and filed notice also. There wasn’t a mistake. You should have never been arrested.”

“Aye, but her family be rich and angry. I be making....” His voice trailed off as one of the other whores reached him and then pulled him into a tight hug. “Um, hi?”

“Thank you,” whispered the new woman.

Bass chuckled and rested a hand on Scorch’s back before sliding it down to his ass.

Scorch shook his head and leaned into Bass. “Every time that bitch comes into our lives,” he muttered. “Every single fucking time.”

Elf chuckled and then circled around to grab Scorch's other ass cheek. "Yeah, isn't she pretty?"

Borias held his hands up and then hugged the woman embracing him. He was clearly uncomfortable at the sudden attention but Merrie could see something waking up in him, an old power that he had not felt in many years. It coursed through his body, flooding him with a pleasure that set off a thrill of ecstasy along Merrie's veins.

"My mother went to you. After so many years of being unhappy, she finally went to you and she was so happy that week. I never saw her smile as much as she did that night she left. You finally gave her what she wanted, what she really needed."

"Really?"

"Y-Yes," sobbed the woman. "Yes! Thank you."

Another one reached him. "Are you back?" There was lust in her voice. "Are you going to start again?"

Spit muffins. Merrie had felt their thoughts before, the women who wanted the erotic release of death. It was Borias' power that drew them, calling to them like a siren.

She smiled at a sudden thought. With her tail wagging, she sent out a private, questing thought to him. (If you could bring the Puppy Mill back, would you?)

Borias frowned as he looked at her.

(But consenting. What if you could find the women who wanted to be broken and trained, to be cropped and sold? You find the spit muffins, why not puppies?)

It took a moment as his mind spun furiously, fantasies rising up as the power inside him awoken even more. In the room around her, she could sense others responding to hidden desires. Most of them wouldn't ever go through with it, but he was teasing their desires with his presence just as she did with her influence over submissives. A smile grew as his eyes shimmered. "Aye, I would."

(When this is all over, let's do that. Let's call it home again.)

A tear ran down his cheeks. "Be a good idea."

The idea felt right, both for the sexual submission but also the one thing Parn asked: free will. No more kidnapping, no more capture, just finding the men and women who wanted it deep inside. The Puppy Mill would be reborn, properly this time.

“Doggy,” said a new voice. Merrie looked up to see a young woman in her twenties coming down the large set of stairs in the middle of the room. She wore a mini-skirt and nothing else to cover her lithe body. She had the symbol of the guild on a ribbon wrapped around her throat. Her piercing eyes seemed to bore directly into Merrie’s soul.

As Merrie looked, a young child came up to her. She ignored the little girl until she felt a tiny hand grabbing her tail and pulling. Jumping, Merrie peered over her shoulder at the girl.

The girl smiled broadly as she stared down at Merrie’s pale tail.

Merrie frowned and wrapped the shade tighter around herself but the girl continued to tug lightly on her rear. Merrie squirmed uncomfortably and pulled it free.

The girl stared up at her and Merrie was briefly caught in her intense gaze. She felt exposed in the girl’s eyes and realized her shade wasn’t powerful enough to protect herself from the young one.

Pushing back her fear, Merrie smiled at her and cocked her head.

The girl giggled and clapped her hands. “Doggy!”

Next to the girl, a woman turned around and sighed. She grabbed the girl’s arm. “There aren’t any dogs here, Dith. This is a festival. No one in the right mind would bring a—”

“Doggy!” The girl pointed directly at Merrie, but the woman didn’t even look at the nearly naked bitch.

“Come on! Let’s find your brother.”

Dith waved as she was pulled back.

Merrie got into a begging position, cocked her head, and waved back. She smiled broadly until the girl was out of sight.

The decades had been good on the young woman. She was now well in the majority and obvious in charge of the entire guild.

Merrie smiled and got into her begging position, wagging her tail. (Guild Mistress.)

Dith stepped off the stairs and walked over. As she did, the room grew hushed. "Looks like we've had some surprise, but honored, guests arriving."

Cloud stepped up, her face still scowling. One white ribbon hung from her fingers.

Dith held up her hand. "Everyone!"

The rest of the room silenced.

"This is Bitch. She is, and always will be, welcomed in this house. She is not guild nor will I will ever ask her to be. The reasons are not for you to ask why, but Kirin, my father, and I have offered her everything we have to offer for as long as this building stands."

Cloud sighed and shook her head.

Dith turned, her eyes raking over the others. At Borias, one eyebrow lifted and she pointed at him and the women hugging him. "We should talk before that... goes any further."

Borias looked down at the three women who were crowding him and then shrugged.

Then Dith turned and looked directly at Natis who everyone had been ignoring. Despite the repulsion spell, her eyes were unwavering just as Merrie remembered. "And I think you would be far better in a private room, sir. I have amenities that even a... duke would appreciate."

Natis looked shocked.

"Come, my office is on the third floor and we probably have many things to talk about." She gestured to Elf, Pristine, Scorch, and Cloud to join her.

"Find me," whispered one of the women to Borias with a stroke along his crotch. Then they peeled away to let the others follow Dith up to Dith's private quarters.

Bass thumped a hand on Borias' shoulder. "So... glad to be back?"

Borias sniffed and wiped tears from his eyes. "I not be thinking this would happen. It feels... good."

"Like when I could start serving Talus."

"Yeah." Borias smiled. "Like being able to myself again." His eyes flickered toward Dith's taut buttocks. "Though, I might be more careful next time."

Dith turned to him. “Don’t worry. This guild isn’t about saying no, but giving protections.” She scanned the building. “Cloud, why don’t you tell Piggy to find someone to guard with her. We don’t want to leave the door empty and you might be a while.”

“Of course, Mistress.”

“She not be there,” Borias said.

Cloud’s gaze snapped toward him.

“No, she be leaving when we go inside. She be a cousin, so I want to be talking but she be heading...” he turned to orient himself and then pointed to the south. “... that way. I think she had somewhere to go.”

Cloud shook her head, the ribbons fluttering around her. “Her mum is picking her up here in an hour and she isn’t working today. She would have said something.”

Dith hummed for a moment. “Problem?” She looked at Bass and Merrie. “We should be careful or....” Her voice trailed off as her eyes widened.

A flash of concern and worry burst from the young woman. Immediately, Merrie and Sable tensed as it rolled along their senses. Bass lifted his hand to his chest as he froze.

Pristine and Scorch responded almost as fast. “Mistress?”

Dith paled. “I have a bad idea. Do you remember....” Her voice faded as her eyes flickered. Then she turned to Elf. “Where is Klang?”

“Meat Market,” said the large man.

“Screamer?”

“Sister’s birthday party on the north side.”

“Digger?”

Elf gestured up to the side. “Marking room, getting a new sterility rune. His disease-proof was also—”

Dith silence him with a finger. Then she looked. “One of you... um, start with Bitch. Come with me.”

“Mistress?” Scorch said as his body began to smoke more. “Danger?”

Dith frowned. “I don’t know but I need to check something. There was....”

“Mistress, you need to learn to finish sentences, we aren’t mind readers.” He looked at the Bitch. “Most of us can’t read your minds.”

Dith gestured for Merrie. "The rest of you stay here and be alert. Elf, find Piggy and see if she's okay."

Merrie took a deep breath and concentrated on the Kivas family tree. Finding Piggy's entry, she sent out a single wide-range pulse to find the same woman. In a flash, it radiated out like a ripple on a lake. A moment later, it came back. (Six blocks south, two and a half blocks east.)

Elf landed on the ground and stared at her. He leaned over and patted her head. "Good bitch!"

"Elf!" snapped Dith.

"Sowwie!" Then he took off with his wings buzzing. Shooting up in the air, he circled once and then flew out of a window near the top.

"Bitch, come. Others...." Dith waved her hands and then hurried up to the second floor.

With concern rippling along her senses, Merrie gathered her power as she followed after. (What is going on?)

"Maybe nothing. It was just after the queen had taken charge of the palace. A number of our members had their usual clients, but I noticed they came home with a strange compulsion."

Merrie's concern turned to fear.

Dith shook her head. "Beautiful work, dense, tight, and even dad couldn't dispel it. But it wouldn't trigger. It was just sitting there, waiting for something. We ran out of money before we could ever figure out what it was for."

The guild mistress led Merrie down a hallway, her worry causing her to break into a jog.

Merrie bounded after her. (Piggy had one? And you think we triggered it?)

Dith nodded. "It is one of the few magics I can't read and I don't know why. If it was triggered by one of you approaches, then the one in Digger would respond and I would have a chance to read it before it does anything."

Merrie found it harder to keep up but she kept in her physical form. Sweat prickled her skin. (I might be able to help, but you have to trust me.)

Despite her concern, Dith stopped. "What?"

(You can see through magic, right? Read patterns? I should be able to boost that.)

A flush of excitement and lust burst from the young woman's thoughts. "You mean bonding?"

Merrie wagged her tail and smiled grimly. (Temporarily. It's overwhelming, but that's what I can do, I can make you more... you.)

Dith blushed. "I-I never... I don't know. I mean, I heard Kirin talking like it was something life-changing."

(I promise you, you won't hurt, but it might be more intense than you expected.) She smiled. (You are younger than anyone I've done before.)

Dith smiled grimly. "Taking a virginity? Looking for a little age play?"

Merrie flattened her ears.

The guild mistress only took a moment and stood up. "Yes. I made a promise to risk everything for my guild. Even if this is just nothing, then I can at least prove it."

She let out a shuddering breath. "How does it work?"

(Touch me and let yourself go.)

"How to break it? I don't think I could handle having an alpha."

(I will break it, I promise. I cannot remain an alpha to anyone anymore.)

Dith looked around nervously. Then she got up and started walking slowly in the direction of the marking rooms. "Give me a second."

(I will never force you to do this.)

She said nothing as they headed to the room. Then, just as they were about to enter the door, Dith reached down and pressed her hand against the back of Merrie's neck. "Do it."

Merrie reached into herself to the part of her body that Parn had blessed, the core of being that needed others. It rose up, a spectral lead that formed almost immediately. The gray shimmering wrapped up Dith's arm and plunged into her heart.

Dith let out a soft whimper.

And then their souls connected.

Her father sat at the guild master table, his face buried in his hands and the typical strip of cloth that covered

his eyes dangling in his thumbs. His shoulders heaved as he quietly sobbed to himself.

Dith brushed her fingers along the archway lock, sealing it shut. "Daddy?"

Monk shook his head. "I can't do this, baby girl. I thought I could, but I can't."

Dith carried the tray over. She had just gotten fresh sterility marks on her inner thigh earlier that day and they stung. "It's just accounting. You've been doing that for years."

He peeked through fingers and she saw two points of brilliance where his eyes used to be. Where others would just see two empty sockets, she saw the raw power that had gathered behind the cloth and gave him a way of seeing the weave of magic.

Benefits of being skull-fucked by a god of knowledge, Kirin always said.

"No, not accounting. The guild. The guilt, the people." He pulled his hands away and let the cloth drop to the ground. "Kirin always made it so easy, I wasn't suppose to be in charge. It was something else, I was going to retire when she did, take your mother and head up to papa's home."

Dith set down the tray and came around to hug him. "Then retire. We'll have a vote."

"And then what?"

"Then you let go. We don't know why Kirin died that day, but you know that she did something to save all those people from that explosion."

He snorted. "What, you don't think Bitch was trying to escape."

Dith thought back to the naked woman she had met as a little girl. "No, it isn't in her soul. She would have never hurt anyone like that. It isn't."

Merrie felt a pang of sadness slam into her. Her own identity was remaining strong under the onslaught of Dith's memories. The rush

of a young life was nothing compared to Rakin's centuries or the other lives she had bonded with. It filled with so much potential.

Months later, Elf bounced happily at the top of the stairs, his wings buzzing as he held the results of the election.

Dith held her father's hand and smiled. Whoever won would take good control of the guild, she was confident of it. Maybe she would offer to help with accounting after he left. After all, she was better at numbers and investments than him.

"Just tell us!" snapped Scorch near the front. He had his arms around Nir's belly, their sixth child. Nir, a former beggar, was no longer an active member of the guild but she had lifetime benefits as a former member and the spouse of one of the guild's protectors.

Elf landed on the ground. "Scorchy-poo, you didn't let me join you last time, so you have to wait." He pointed with every word, much to everyone's amusement except Scorch.

"That was my anniversary date, you damn pixie!"

"You didn't invite me," Elf said with a giggle.

"Elf," Monk said. "Please? We need to gang-bang the new guild master and I'm up past my bedtime. And you know I have to be the last one."

"Dith won," Elf said with a wave, and then pointed at Scorch. "I want to be with you this time, do you hear? It's my time, my time."

Dith froze. She won? She wasn't even on the ticket.

"Elf!" snapped Scorch. "What did you say?"

"I want you to fuck me in—"

"No, you stupid pixie, what about Dith!?" Scorch's face had darkened with annoyance.

Elf shrugged. "She won. Three hundred and nineteen votes, all write-ins."

Dith's ears were burning as she realized they were applauding her. She looked at her dad.

Monk shook his head. "I voted for Barrel, I swear."

Pristine leaned over and kissed Dith on the shoulder. "I wrote you in."

"W-Why?" Dith asked, her head spinning.

"Because you are perfect for the job. Everyone knows it. You have a good head on your shoulders, a mind for the future, and we know that you would give everything to make sure you succeed." The protector gently pushed Dith. "You're going to be the greatest mistress we have ever had, I just know it."

Merrie's eyes burned with tears. She looked up to see that Dith had stopped in the door with tears of her own.

"K-Kirin sacrificed herself for everyone," she said in a quiet, broken voice. In the intimacy of the bond, Merrie saw that Dith had found Merrie's memories of the meeting with the reapers and Kirin's unhesitating acceptance. (She didn't even hesitate,) came the mental words in Dith's voice.

(No,) Merrie said. (She was a good friend and a good person until the very end.)

Dith let out a sob and wiped the tears from her eyes. (I can't ever be as good as her.)

(You can, that is why we are here. Remember?)

"Y-Yes." She pushed open the door and entered the room filled with massage tables. Catching sight of a muscular man sitting in a chair with someone drawing on his arm, she took a deep breath and then stared.

The world exploded in front of Merrie, every piece of furniture peeling away as they both looked at Digger with senses Merrie didn't even know was possible. She could see his spirit inside his physical shell and the soul buried inside. Magic crackled along his body, enhancing his strength and stamina. He was known for being able to fuck for hours without weakening or slowing down.

Inside his head, like a small tick, was the compulsion Dith was looking for. It was a perfectly innocuous piece of magic that would have been nearly impossible to detect. But even with Dith being able to analyze Digger's power, she couldn't see into the spell.

Merrie recognized it in an instant. It had the same energy pattern as the compulsion spell in Natis' letter. The neat, ordered spells had been crafted with a care that was supernatural.

Merrie had to be careful to explore the weave of magic to get to the inner layers. As far as she could tell, the first ones were holding the inner one in place. It was a trap of some sort, one that could be triggered by any of the other ones failing. Remove the repulsion and it would fall apart. Sense something specific, it would open. Even an outside command could drive it to fall apart.

The inner most layer was too protected by the others. She only got a taste of the power. The foulness clung to the tip of her tongue, staining it with something poisonous. She tasted it with a frown, trying to remember where she had felt that same type of energy before.

It was an Infernal trap like the one that had almost destroyed the Puppy Mill. A layered spell with an outer shell to repulse anyone looking for it and inner layers that would activate on certain triggers.

Merrie opened herself and then thrust herself into Dith's power, creating a channel that magnified the spell with rapid succession as the intensity grew in less than a heartbeat to powers far beyond what the young woman would probably ever experience in her life.

Dith let out a gasp as her senses plunged into the compulsion spell and pierced each layer at the same time. She didn't unravel the magic as much as see it in its entirety in a glorious detail. Every ripple of power clear down to how the magic was woven into reality was exposed.

Their minds organized the spell, separating each one into the individual layers to reveal its purpose.

The outer was a repulsion spell, something to prevent anyone from investigating it. But Merrie had become immune them and Dith was always able to pierce those veils.

The second was a trigger, a tripwire that would respond to anyone using telepathy nearby. It was a relatively common one, but it was the exact same sensory magic that was on the spell so many years ago.

The third was another trigger, this one that had been attuned to shadow magic. There were only two beings in their group that were capable of using it, Borias and herself. However, they hadn't used shadows magic.

Merrie transformed into a Bel Dark hound to bounce off the street and then back into her naked form before they landed with Elf on his back and her straddling his belly.

The fourth was the third and final sensory trigger. It was dense and tightly woven, an obvious effort that would have taken someone years to perfect. It only triggered on a single thing: an alpha's bond.

Finally, the compulsion at the center would drive Digger to report what had happened to the nearest person loyal to the royal family with a specific keyword: city guards, Resolutes, Loyals, or anyone else who had made an oath.

There was only one person for the spell, only a single person that was the target: Merrie.

Dith dropped to her knees as she clutched the door frame. Her body was shaking as an orgasm tore through her, the power of the boosting hammering against her sexuality even as they tore apart the spell.

A thin line of drool escaped her lip.

"Guild Mistress!" Digger and the marker were both rushing over to her.

Dith held up her hand. "Back!"

With a sob, she pawed at the door frame but caught Merrie's shoulder instead.

(Grip!) Merrie slammed an order into her.

Dith clamped down on Merrie's hair.

Knowing that Piggy was already telling the guards about Merrie, she ignored Digger and transformed into her Bel Dark hound. The increased weight and height forced Dith to her feet.

Next to her, Digger's compulsion activated through the three triggers. It was a sudden flash as his eyes tightened. She could tell that he was suddenly looking for a way to report his findings.

Merrie looked at him and then sent a single pulse of pleasure that would trigger an orgasm so hard it would knock him back.

With a groan, Digger collapsed.

Dith turned. "W-We have to tell the others!" She was sobbing as she tried to pull herself out of the overwhelming intensity. (Tell them to cockroach!) her thoughts finished where the body couldn't.

Plucked from Dith's memory, Merrie knew exactly what it was. It was one of the guild's emergency plans when they were in danger of an immediate attack. (Use me to tell the others.)

Then Merrie directed a thought to Sable and Borias. (Natis was the bait, but they are looking for me. We're about to be attacked.)

Sable was already moving, her alpha nature anticipating what was happening. There was a deafening bang of metal plates crashing into each other as armor slammed into place around paladin and alpha.

"Holy fuck!" screamed Scorch.

Dith whimpered. "H-How?"

Merrie sank into her thoughts, merging her thoughts until she was speaking in both of their voices. (Tell me who tell.)

Dith's thoughts were incoherent, but Merrie brought structure to them. A plan rose up in memories, organized meticulously by a woman who could see everything.

Merrie took charge, sending out a wave of telepathy to focus only on the protectors of the guild. (Immediate attack, cockroach.)

"You need to get—"

Ignoring the bond, Merrie gathered up her power in a single surge and then sent out a second wave of telepathic command. It spread out across the entire city in a growing wave of intense power.

To the guild members, an order to stop all jobs and marks and to escape at all costs. Everyone, even ones at home or relaxing.

To the guardians who had made the contracts with the whore's guild, the identity and location of every guild member who was risk. A promise of a ten thousand mark bonus for every guild member

who survived the next week was promised, the amount already deducted from the emergency fund.

Months ago, Dith had an idea to use Cloud's family contacts with an assassins guild to use them as protectors. Merrie reached out with one thought and thrust into Cloud's mind. She sent the idea as a compressed memory.

On the other side of the guild hall, Cloud swayed under the onslaught but she knew they didn't have chance. (Yes.)

Merrie plucked the words that needed to be said from her mind and then sent out another wave of telepathy to connect to the assassins that Cloud knew with the right words and phrases to create a contract with Dith's authority.

The final command was directed to everyone in the campus, a suggestion of a path every one should take to escape using the plans from Dith's head. It would also keep everyone calm to avoid panic.

It took less than five seconds.

Dith gasped as she started to collapse. Her connection started to crumble with her young mind struggling.

Merrie snapped their bond, grabbed her leg and threw her over her back. As a hound, she bounded back down the hallway to where the protectors were herding the rapidly leaving guild members from the main hall.

Sable, as a steel-clad hound with glowing eyes, looked at her. (You are terrifying, you know that?)

Merrie stopped and shook Dith off. She directed her thoughts to Cloud and Pristine. (Protect her.)

"How soon—?" started Bass.

A wave of danger and warning rippled through Sable and Merrie.

One of the windows shattered as Elf came flying in. He was bloody and broken, one wing barely able to keep up. He had exposed bone on his left hand and a fairy wand dangling uselessly from one shard of broken bone. He reached out. "Watch—"

The entire top of the hall exploded down in a shower of stone, wood, and glass.

A streak of green shot down from high above, cutting through Elf before slamming into the ground with a booming crack.

Bisected, Elf's corpse fell apart in a shower of guts. They spilled across the green armored figure standing in the middle of the room,

but each one disintegrated before they got within a meter of the crackling field that surrounded the Loyal, one of the country's most powerful warriors. The figure had a two-handed sword in their hand that had moved so fast there wasn't even a droplet of Elf's blood on it.

An explosion to the right of the Loyal blew a hole in the ground as a second Loyal wielding a pair of iron rods appeared in a cloud of sparkling smoke.

A third Loyal buzzed into place, teleporting with a screech that shook the ground and kicked off eddies of dust. The third warrior wielded a one-handed shield but their other hand crackled with combat spells.

"Oh fuck," Scorch said.

(Strategy?) Merrie asked Sable as she brought up her combat spells. The spells were so ingrained that they flashed through her as they enhanced her strength, speed, and defenses.

(Establish mental network,) came the dual-toned voice of Sable and Bass.

Merrie reached out for the others, but there was a high-pitched buzzing from one of the Loyals and the connection broke.

(One-on-one is good, but not group,) said the paladin as he adapted. "Fine. The Mill against two-handed. Guild against single sword. Bitch takes on the third."

Merrie didn't wait for an acknowledgment. She surged forward, hammering against the ground as she launched herself off the second floor toward the ground. Attacking her opponent wouldn't work, but she hit the ground ten meters to the side.

The Loyal was already there in an explosion of a teleport. Their dual rods came down.

Merrie flickered her shape to avoid the blow.

The rods hit the ground which exploded, picking her up and throwing her back.

Merrie flipped and felt the Loyal teleporting to catch her before she hit the ground. She melted into shadows and then launched herself toward the wall.

There was an older man trying to get to the door. He died in a shower of blood as the Loyal slammed into her, the magical energies cutting into Merrie's form in a flash of light and flame.

She snapped out with a bolt of raw power that slammed into the armor but didn't pierce the thousand spells that protected the Loyal. With a burst of power, she ripped herself across the realm and into the Shadows.

When the Loyal exploded into view, she wasn't surprised but at least she had more room to maneuver. Tentacles of darkness speared toward the Loyal as she transformed into the Bel Dark and charged forward between the reaching darkness.

One rod caught her shoulder. It exploded with a force that shattered her bone but she managed to chomp down on the arm before she was thrown away.

Agony tore through her jaw while she ground down, using her magically enhanced power to tear through the green metal as much as corroding the protection spells that layered through the strange material.

The Loyal jammed their other rod between their bodies and ignited it. The force ripped her free and threw her back across the shadowy imitation of the guild hall.

She caught herself by transforming into liquid darkness and shooting to the side before reforming. Through the images and flashes, she could see the other two Loyals were still fighting in the other realm.

Merrie growled and one tooth cracked off with a spark of pain. She embraced it and let her agony fuel her power as much as her growing anger and the logic that was already planning on her next attack.

Gathering up the shadows as a basic, she created a corrosion spell and granted it a simplistic intelligence. Fueling it with power to ensure it would continue to attack, she charged for the Loyal.

The Loyal spun around and caught her in the side. There was a terrible sound as her body was blast out of the shadows, back into reality, and then punched through the front wall of the guild hall.

She slammed into the far side of the street against the wall above a dress shop and launched herself back across. Her body shimmered as it became the dragon hound and she flew straight for the Loyal that was coming through the hole they had just formed.

A wall of a thousand swords pierced the area before her; it was Sable's Thousand Swords attack. The intense power of holy magic burst out as Bass smited their Loyal.

Merrie saw hunks of green armor on the ground from one of the attacks but then she was upon her opponent. With her raw power, she threw them back into the shadows and bite down hard. Her broken tooth ground into the metal but the other fangs punctured into the green metal.

The two rods slammed into her back, hammering her down.

Whimpering, she held on with all her might as she transferred the corrosion spell into the rents of the armor. She knew that it wouldn't be able to seep underneath the Loyal's armor because it was bonded to their bodies, but even a few points may give it enough time to burrow and tear from the inside.

A second set of blows ripped her off.

Merrie slammed into the ground. The force dazed her as did the flurry of strikes that slammed out of the shadows again and hammered her into the ground of the guild. Her vision blurred as she tried to pull away but the Loyal had switched to alternating attacks, giving her no quarter to transform.

She lashed out and twisted, struggling to concentrate to form another intelligent corrosion spell.

Across from her, only a few meters away, the guild protectors were struggling against their Loyal who was steadily going after Pristine. Even with the spells that shielded her, Merrie could feel rage and anger radiating from the Loyal.

Scorch threw gout after gout of fire at the Loyal but his attacks weren't powerful enough to get through the armor.

Cloud was surrounded by a rippling cloud of colors. Ribbons moved around like snakes as they snapped forward, exploding in a series of different energies. She saw fire, cold, poison, and an array of others that were nipping away at the Loyal.

Unable to attack herself, Pristine was blocking and parrying with a black whip that stood up against the blurred attacks of the Loyal. Her body was covered in countless cuts and her dress had long since been abandoned and almost every surface of her naked form was covered in her own blood.

The only non-combatant, Dith was cowering behind Pristine. Her eyes were focused on the Loyal and she had many cuts of her own, but Pristine's defenses were more for her than saving Pristine.

The Loyal attacking Merrie suddenly stepped back. Turning around, they disappeared in a burst of flame and concussion.

Merrie surged to her feet, her body shimmering as she shape-changed repeatedly to heal some of her damage. Her eyes scanned her surroundings for her opponent.

The teleporter burst across from the room and then brought down their rods against the ground, setting off an explosion that buckled the ground with a sudden crater that radiated from the blow.

Cloud lost her footing. Two of her ribbons snapped out to catch her.

The Loyal cut them and then spun around with the blade aimed for Cloud's neck.

Scorch dropped to his knees and slammed his hands together. A sphere of fire shot out from his palms and slammed into the Loyal, spoiling the killing blow.

Merrie's Loyal appeared behind him, rods raised.

With a start, she realized what was going to happen. Merrie kicked off, throwing everything she could to block the blow.

Two rods came down on either side of Scorch's neck, shattering his collar and tearing through his body to rip his arms from his body. The two rods hit the ground and exploded.

Scorch's body shot up into the air, spraying blood everywhere in a fountain as he flew across the battlefield.

Rage and despair slammed into Merrie. With tears in her eyes, she used it to fuel her power and accelerated into a blur. Right at the point of impact, she transformed into the mass she could imagine, one of the shadow kin. Her black tentacles and claws tore through the worlds and she yanked her opponent into the Shadows.

In the few seconds since they were last there, more creatures of darkness had arrived. They howled as they were drawn to a black star in the battlefield. It was Borias, he was summoning them to help and they were answering.

Merrie felt a grim determination as she used her new form to tear and claw and rip at the Loyal. Even as she was, she created

more corrosion spells to spear into the rents and burn their way the Loyal from the inside.

Still strong, the Loyal hammered her with blows that even her shadow kin form couldn't resist for long. Explosion after explore blew away her claws and tentacles. She felt a large rent rip from her chest, exposing the brief flash of divine light before the shadows surged to wrap around it in a tighter knot of purest darkness.

When she saw the Loyal using the double blow that would fire her back into reality, Merrie took a risk and grabbed the Loyal's chest with every appendage she still had. With all her might, she steeled herself.

The double explosion deafened her. She felt the side of the building smash against her spine, stone and wood shattering on her form with the force that threw her back. She landed on the ground on the next street over from the guild. Rubble surrounded her from the gaping hole that traced her flight from the guild hall.

Merrie growled. She was losing. The Loyal had obviously trained against her skills and most of her talents were useless to do anything but stall.

A flash of divine magic and another thousand swords speared the air. Then Sable's armored form flew after them in a streak of rose and white.

When she saw Borias sprint after Sable, Merrie's heart almost broke. He was hurt and bleeding but his hands were still glowing with a shield and healing magic as he raced to bring her back into the fight.

Merrie's Loyal exploded on the other street. The armored helm turned and looked at her, a face unreadable inside the armor. They hefted their rods.

With a whimper, Merrie backed away. Her wrist caught something blood. She tried to scramble over it, but a tiny gasp of pain caught her attention. With a start, she looked over to see Scorch's eyes staring at her. He was still alive, barely, but she could see a Reaper approaching.

(Wait,) she sent to the gray old man.

He wouldn't. Death waits for no one.

"P-Please...." groaned Scorch. "Any... thing."

Merrie looked up at the Loyal who stormed toward her, then to Scorch's death. The Reaper was moving slower than she expected, as if he was giving her just a few seconds before taking her friend.

Desperate, she reached out and opened her bond to Scorch.

Agony ripped through her mind and body, mimicking his broken form along her own. She didn't have time to steel herself against it and lost her own identity as his memories ripped through her suffering.

Scorch leaned against the head of the bed, happier than he had ever been in his life. Who knew an old man with no joy left could find anyone that would bring even the smallest light to his dreary life.

Nir, his beautiful wife, curled up against him as she cradled her swollen belly with one hand and his arm with the other. Her white gown was covered in soot, "daddy's love" she always told the girls.

His three daughters were arrayed out on the bed, snoring and sprawled out over tangled limbs. Even though they started with heavy blankets to push back the cold, they had thrown them aside once he crawled into bed.

Outside, the snow fell down. It was midwinter and they had survived another year. By unspoken decision, they didn't celebrate the winter holidays. Instead, they cherished the day everyone died in an alley that Nir called home. It was an surprise attack with Franome's battle with Emberka, but one that the city held off. But no one cared about the beggars who had died that night, no one but Nir and Bitch.

He reached over and stroked his hand through Nir's hair, pushing it away from her face. It had been a long time since he saw the pain in her eyes. Like him, she had found the one a million that would make her happy.

"I promise you," he whispered. "I will protect you for the rest of my life. No matter what it takes, I will make sure you are all safe."

Scorch's thoughts were already fading. (Use me. Whatever I have, everything I can, but save my family.)

Countless memories of Scorch with the rest of the guild flashed through Merrie's eyes. They were his family as much as Nir, decades of friendship that had only grown through trials, flame, and smoke.

With tears in her eyes, Merrie accepted his power. She surrendered herself to his fading will and felt her body shaping to what he needed.

The Loyal brought down both rods to smash her out of existence.

Merrie snapped forward, her body becoming a snake of fire. Her teeth punched into the green armor as an intense flame burst out of her throat and into the torn green armor. White-hot, it melted metal and burst through defensive magics.

The rods smashed against her spine but she doggedly clung to her opponents body as the flames continued to jet out of her throat.

Scorch coughed up blood. Then he opened himself up more to her, feeding more of his power to her. She felt all of energy being sucked into the flame as it grew hotter and more intense. Then, she felt his consciousnesses burn away leaving only his spirit behind.

Instead of fading, his will kept her focused. An energy Merrie had never felt before surged through her body as he began to sacrifice the core of his being, all of his memories and identity to feed her fires.

She wanted to pull way, to stop, but he wouldn't let her. She sobbed with what he was doing. The flames in her mouth grew into a jet of pure flame, so bright that it ceased to have color except for the air it ignited around her.

The Loyal continued to attack her, slamming into her again and again. Her bones shattered underneath the attack and the rod began to pulverize her body. Every blow was agony, but she was caught in Scorch's final sacrifice and she wasn't going to waste it.

Too quickly, the fragile spirit of the mortal burned away leaving only the bright mote of his soul left. She had only seen hints of it, but never felt it right inside her mind. Only her recent bonding with Dith told her how precious it was and how fragile.

Her thoughts had transcended beyond pain and agony. Like her singularity orgasms, she was caught as the force of his will became her entire existence.

The last of Scorch burned away into a searing jet. With his final thoughts, she tried to thank you. There was no mind left, only will and love.

Scorch's soul ignited into flames with the last of his emotions. It burst out of her mouth in an explosion of colorless flames that ignited the world around her. Oblivion ripped at her insides as the jet finally cut through the Loyal and exploded out from her in a beam of death and destruction.

In an instant, a straight line from her ceased to exist from her throat to hundreds of kilometers out of the city. She felt more than could sense the flames as they disintegrated buildings, people, and centuries of history in an instant.

With a start, she jerked her head up and away to avoid killing others. In the millisecond that the oblivion flame continued to surge out of her throat, the beam of raw power cut through the top of the World Tree and sliced into the the Royal Palace.

Then it snuffed out with the last of Scorch's soul. There was nothing left, not for this life or the next.

The gray reaper held out his hands and then disappeared. There was nothing left to take.

Merrie stared at the reaper, and then to the movement as half of the world tree fell away and crashed to the ground. The impact toppled buildings before kicking up a concussion wave that traveled toward her with terrifying speed.

Unable to grieve Scorch's sacrifice, she sent out a pulse of warning. Her body reformed into the Bel Dark hound and she charged forward, leaving a trail of fire behind her as she rejoined the fight.

In the seconds it took her to reach the guild hall, she knew she was in her last dredges of power. Even flickering her body through different shapes couldn't heal enough to take on one of the other Loyals.

She had to boost someone else to help them fight.

Merrie swore she wouldn't let anyone else sacrifice themselves like Scorch did. With tears in her eyes, she covered the distance in a flash.

She ignored the Puppy Mill fighters. It was obvious that even a Loyal couldn't take on Bass, Sable, Natis, and Borias at the same time. The air was thick with angels and swords and raw power.

That left only Pristine or Cloud.

In the moment she had, Merrie picked the best choice. She slammed into Dith and bonded to the young woman almost instantly.

Fear and terror rose up as Merrie cradled her and brought her out of the fight.

(Pristine!) snapped Dith. (Boost her.)

Merrie spun her around and sent out a single powerful command to the guild mistress. (Analyze!) At the same time, she boosted Dith to the limits of her ability and beyond.

The thousands of spells that were layered into the Loyal armor were laid bare in front of Merrie. With Dith's ability to see magic, they were able to identify every protection, every combat, and every killing blow. Each spell was lacquered on to the others, merging them into a terrible force that was almost impossible to separate or dispel. It was their strength and power.

Dith's mind began to crack under the onslaught of information.

(Find a weakness,) Merrie sent as she helped. (Find something we can attack.)

Dith managed to dredge up some strength as she imagined Kirin would have done and then they were barreling through spells after spells, mentally separating them as they searched for something that would allow a killing blow.

The world around them grew slower as the air warped around them. Raw power surged through Dith as she shook at the growing pain.

The Loyal was Jillthin, Pristine's old captain. The anger was palatable, but it also was disrupting the magic. Loyals were about stoic obedience to the crown and country. The tiny repercussions caused quivers along spells, tiny spots of weakness that would be impossible to catch. They would form and disappear quickly with no pattern that could ever be communicated.

Exhausted, Merrie realized that even if she could find a weakness, she couldn't attack it. A whimper escaped her throat.

Dith also whimpered. The bond was warping her. Merrie only had seconds before she had to break it before it permanently injured the young woman.

Merrie tried to reach for Pristine, but Jillthin's attacks were keeping her too tightly contained. It was using up all of the protector's speed and concentration to parry the blows.

With no other choice, Merrie reached out for Cloud. (I need—)

(Do it!) snapped the woman. There was rage and anger, but also a desperation to win at all costs.

Merrie dug into her very being and drew out a second bond. She had only done it once before, the gestalt spell, to defeat an armor and now she needed it again.

A pain that went beyond her physical form sapped her strength, weakening her as she realized she was pushing her limits just as Scorch did.

She couldn't give up, not after her friends had sacrificed their lives for her.

Merrie threw out the leash and allowed her soul to be bring the two into connection.

“You are failure,” said Hir, the hooded woman who led the assassin's guild. Cloud had never seen her without the hood or the black mask that covered her face. She was a shapeless leader, one that spoke only in whispers and answered in knives.

Cloud bowed her head, one knee on the ground and the other underneath her arm. Blood dripped to the ground as she held the head of the shadow dancer that had tried to kill Cloud only an hour before.

“This is not for me,” Cloud said. She had been thinking about it for years but never had the courage to say anything until she had been poisoned. The sharp agony still burned along her limbs and she struggled to keep her fingers locked on the hair to prevent the head from falling.

“You are given one boon.”

“Let me go safely. I will not harm this guild, but I cannot serve.”

Hir leaned forward. “That is two. Choose one, safety or not to serve.”

Cloud lifted her head and looked directly into the eyes of the woman. “Let me go, Mother.”

Cloud’s senses snapped along Dith’s observations. Ribbons snapped out to attack the weakest points of the Loyal’s armor. Ice and fire magic disrupted defenses, stripping them away layer by layer.

“Hurry!” gasped Pristine. There were deep cuts covering her body. In the fight, one of the blows had cut into her breast and it was flailing long with the few shreds of skin keeping it together. She had one hand on her belly where Jillthin had almost disemboweled her.

Merrie brought Dith and Cloud closer together, fusing their powers.

Ribbons snaked out, smashing against spell and armor. The steady beat became a hum and more ribbons appeared, each one attacking in a blur of brilliant collar.

In Dith’s vision, the thousand layers were stripped away with desperate efficiency. Energy sparked and popped as Cloud chose the elemental powers of her ribbons to inflict the most damage.

A soul-deep agony rippled through the connection from Dith. (I-I can’t hold on!)

(Few more seconds,) Cloud begged. (Just one, please?)

Dith’s eyes rolled up in the back of her head as she collapsed. The last spell’s weakness hovered in the mental connection.

Cloud flung one white ribbon against it, shattering the final spell. “Strike!”

Pristine spun around and yanked the handle off her whip to reveal a stiletto with a black blade. She took Jillthin’s blow to the shoulder as she slammed the point up into her former captain’s throat and up into her brain.

There was a thump as Cloud collapsed.

Pristine and Jillthin sank to their knees.

Gasping, Pristine gasped, “You were always wrong,” before she collapsed.

Jillthin's body fell on top of her, the green armor crumbling away to reveal a woman with no more skin, just raw muscle and organs that spilled out without the shell of her mystical armor.

To the side, a burst of brilliant white exploded as the third Loyal was blasted out of existence.

Merrie's shadowed form ignited into fire as she was throw into oblivion herself from the light.

Aftermath

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Merrie's mind and body burned with agony. She tried to move but she was trapped in some sort of box with her head at the bottom and her hips up over her head. She blinked and stared at her bare pussy and bandaged tail.

A headache pulsed inside her, one that seemed to come from deep inside her spirit. She had hurt something in the combat.

A barrel.

She was in a barrel that smelled of whiskey. She smiled as twisted and shifted. Gingerly, she tried to melt her form into a liquid shadow and was relieved that the magic obeyed. She reformed on her knees and lifted her head.

The top wasn't attached. It lifted up and she saw that someone had put her in the guild master's room. She lowered herself and peered around.

Pristine was naked on the desk. The papers had been scattered across the floor. Blood dripped off the edges.

Borias knelt over her, his hand glowing with yellow-green power as he tried to repair her stomach. Merrie watched as he dredged his own strength to keep going, but the exhaustion was clear.

For a moment, she wanted to reach out and boost him but something twinged inside her. She had hurt herself with so many close connections. She remembered Dith and her ears drooped as she turned around.

Dith and Cloud were on the large bed in the corner of the room. They were shivering as they held onto each other. Sable and Bass were on with them, using their own healing energies but Merrie

could tell that Sable's powers were also trying to heal the physiological damage from the battle.

Merrie's thoughts grew dark. She hurt Dith when she forced the bond, maybe forever.

Sable reached out of rher, her thoughts compassion and caring. (Look at them.)

Merrie peeked at them, then she let her senses shift until she was seeing their thoughts.

There was a bond between the two. It wasn't the same connection as an alpha to a master, but something weaker but no less intimate. Merrie could see her own energies in the connection.

(Somehow, when you brought the two together for a gestalt, they remained connected. They are comforting each other inside it.)

Merrie stared in shock and then crawled out of her barrel. A naked human, she got up on the bed and reached out to feel the warmth of love that radiated between the two.

Sable kissed her shoulder. (They are going to pull through. Though, they are going to be closer than a married couple now. We might have to give them some suggestions on how to have a relationship when you can reach their thoughts.) There was an exhausted amusement in her thoughts.

Merrie whimpered. (I hurt her.)

(She'll forgive you.)

But would Parn?

Bass leaned over to press his lips on one of Merrie's ears. The touch was rough but it brought a little shiver of pleasure. "Good girl," he whispered in a rumble.

The pleasure grew stronger. Merrie wagged her tail, but then winced at the pain. She was still injured.

"You may have noticed we didn't bother healing you." Bass chuckled. "Just chucked your ass in a dark spot and let you recover."

(Good thing I'm hard to kill.)

"It was close. I have never heard of three Loyals ever dying in a single fight before. We have made a lot of enemies today."

(No,) Merrie sighed. (A long time ago. That compulsion was the same energy as the traps from before. I think they want me.)

(Why?) Sable was distracted as she licked gently at Cloud's wound. Her saliva sparkled yellow-green as it healed the tiny scratches.

Merrie glanced back for the last person she expected to see. Natis sat at a small desk, paging through things. Like Merrie, he had no healing power so he obviously intended to keep out of the way. She thought about something he said and then turned back. (Blood County. It's a weak spot between the worlds, a place where Infernals could establish a permanent base as part of an invasion on the realm.)

"A threat to the kingdom. If you were killed, the shadows would spread out and maybe weaken their defenses."

Merrie nodded. (But why now?)

"Why not just have Natis summon angels to make a fortress?"

The duke interrupted. "Because it is comingling against the negative planes: shadows, infernal, abyssal, and some others but nothing my powers can tap. It's a weakness that requires a guard, in this case, the Lord of Shadows." He got up and moved to the bed. "Which is why Borias shouldn't be here."

Bass frowned. "Borias?"

Merrie sent a condensed memory to the others to bring them up to speed.

Bass coughed and Sable stared.

The thriban stared at Natis for a long count. "You are going to make him a count?"

"Well, your title was stripped," Natis snapped. "Besides, Borias has some affinity toward shadows and that makes him an appropriate... ambassador in case Merrie is killed."

He turned and called out toward Borias. "And you should have stayed!"

"Be quiet now," Borias said. "I be healing."

Bass rested his hand on Natis' shoulder. "My lord duke, if Borias wasn't supporting us, we would have all died in that Loyal attack. You know that."

Natis' lips pressed into a thin line.

"Pristine!" yelled a voice from the entrance. Merrie started to gather spells but then she recognized Barrel's voice. Pristine was his

sister. The slender whore was followed by a muscular man who remained close as Barrel ran over to the table. "Are you okay?"

Pristine groaned. She pressed her hand against her chest and then hissed. Looking down, she stared at the flattened area where her breast used to be.

"Sorry, I not be saving it." Borias looked exhausted and tired. He leaned back and shook his head. "You be having so much shock, I had to be choosing."

Pristine groaned and tried to sit up. Barrel and Borias helped her.

As they did, Barrel looked at Borias and there was a flash of lust. "And who are you?"

The mercenary behind Barrel cleared his throat.

Pristine gestured with her chin toward the mercenary. "Who's that?"

Barrel sighed happily and wiggled his ass toward the muscular man. "Guardian. He says he gets a hundred thousand to save my ass until the end of the week. I'm betting I'll have him in mine by the end of tomorrow."

"I'm right here," came the annoyed response but Merrie could tell the mercenary was tempted.

"Now for long," Barrel cooed.

Pristine smacked her brother. "Does it bother you that your sister was almost killed?"

Barrel nodded, tears in his eyes.

"Don't hug me, everything hurts. Thanks to Borias here."

Barrel's eyes widened. "The Butcher that made auntie so happy?"

Borias blushed and got off the table. He backed away and then came to the bed. "How long we be having?"

Bass shook his head. "It's been only a half hour, but there are more Loyals. If we don't get moving, they are going to attack again. I think we need to find a better place, but at least we know what we have to do."

"Yes," Natis said, "and Borias should be sent back to Blood County immediately. No one knows and he's safe there."

"No, I not be going," Borias said firmly. "My oath says I need be here. I be here."

Natis glared at him. "I will have you arrested."

"How? Be going to the queen?"

“That’s suicide!”

Bass held out his hand. “Maybe not a bad idea.”

“Are you insane?” Natis’ face darkened. “We were slaughtered just now and you want to take on the rest of the Loyals? The queen will have all of us executed on sight!”

Bass pointed out one of the windows. “There is a city that has been destroyed. You heard what Sable picked up? Tens of thousands dead, riots, shattered buildings. There is no way the queen is going to have all of her forces gathered in the throne room. Her people are out doing the royal thing because that is where they are needed.”

“Oh yeah,” Barrel said. “Guards, Loyals, Resolutes, they are everywhere. Thick and Handsome over here has been on his toes trying to keep me away, but no one has time to blame us.”

Merrie thought about the oblivion flame from Scorch’s sacrifice. She was responsible for the deaths, but the Royal Geas wasn’t even quivering with a response. She couldn’t imagine that would have been acceptable. Not like she would slaughter every man, woman, and child—”

The geas hummed in her mind.

Merrie flinched and whimpered.

Sable stared at her in shock. (Did you just test your Royal Geas?)

Merrie nodded. (How can the geas be happy with what I did.)

(The greater good. You are fighting for country, not the people. Trust me, there is a reason the oath doesn’t include anything about the people. There will be deaths, of friends and lovers, if you have to save what is precious to you.)

Merrie’s ears drooped.

Sable leaned into her. (I’m sorry. You are doing the right thing.)

Natis held up his hand. “What do we do when we confront the queen?”

“She’s Infernal or at least got a devil working with her. We do everything we can to disrupt the plans. That’s how devils works, they have seven runes that they gain the power when someone suffers. Haviston said that Diffy had innocence, blood, fatherhood, and long-term planning.”

Natis sighed. “Plus impulsiveness and fire, but it wasn’t Diffy that did this. I know her energy. Though, some of you are definitely demonstrating impulsive decisions.”

“Then we have another devil involved. One who takes the long view of the world, decades or even centuries ahead of place.” Bass reached out to scratch Sable’s ears. “That means if we give the devil a chance, they are going to come up with a new plan that screws us.”

Dith opened her eyes. “The infernal marks are for plans, contingencies, memory, betrayal, blood, revenge, and fire.” Her voice was cracked and broken. “I could see it in the spell.”

Merrie whimpered and inched closer. (I’m sorry.)

Dith winced.

Merrie jerked back.

“No, just give me time. My head and heart aches but...,” She turned to look at Cloud. “... something is different.”

Cloud smiled but kept her eyes closed.

(Then we need to move now? Go to the queen?)

Natis groaned. “Any plan we made is going to have troubles. That’s how infernals gain their powers, by having things go wrong. Forget something? Our opponent gains power. Have a contingency fail? We lose even more.”

(Like having the shadow manor occupied?) Merrie asked with frustration. (No wonder there was someone there, that would have helped the queen. But how did she find it?)

Dith groaned. “The queen isn’t there, the prince is.”

Merrie flinched. (Claston?)

Giving a pained smile, Dith pushed herself up further into a sitting position. “He thought the queen was trying to kill him. I didn’t know anywhere else to hide him, I figured a nearly impossible to find manor was the perfect place.”

Merrie smiled and her tail began to wag.

Dith gave her a hard look. “No long term plans.”

“Right, be keeping all ideas short and stupid?” Borias said.

Bass crawled off the bed. “Then Natis and I are going to make a lot of noise heading to the front door. See you there and pray to Talus and whatever gods we follow that we’ll succeed.”

Sable barked, her entire ass wiggling with her excitement. She jumped off the bed.

Natis groaned and levered to his feet. “This is not a plan.”

“No plans!” announced the paladin, his good mood flooding the room in a palatable wave of Presence. “Come on, old man, you’re bait again.”

Dith looked at them. “H-How can you be doing this? You were almost killed less than an hour ago.”

Bass beamed and slammed a fist against his chest. Sparkling energy burst around him as plate armor formed in the air around him. With a powerful crash, they slammed into place.

In mid-jump, Sable transformed into the armored hound. She hit the ground with a thud and a metallic bark.

“Because we’re fucking paladins,” he announced proudly. “The gods give us power to bring joy to others, improve morale in the down-trodden, and bring the light to—”

(We aren’t paladins of light anymore,) Sable said slyly.

“—make everyone cum so we can keep the orgy going.” He bowed. “Thank you, but now we’re going to make ourselves very loud and annoying and slowly so this guild ceases to be a target and our Merrie can see if we can find a weapon to save the day.”

In the stunned silence, he grabbed Borias and Natis and shoved them toward the door.

As he passed Pristine, he pointed at her. “You, stay.”

“I’m not a dog!” snapped the still-naked and injured woman.

“No, your brother is.”

Pristine turned and gasped. “Get off his lap, Barrel!”

And then they were gone.

Merrie sat on the bed and looked back at Dith. She cocked her head to the side. She had to admit, the sudden surge of amusement and joy from Bass gave her the strength and confidence to keep going. (He has been a new man since Talus accepted him. Thank you, I must now serve my country,) she sent and then pulled herself into the shadows.

t'Sade

Font of Knowledge

126

Traveling alone in the shadows was faster and easier than before. She used the darkness to transform repeatedly, healing herself up incrementally as she switched between hound forms until she was almost up to full speed.

The morale boost and knowing Claston was safe had given her strength. An orgasm would have helped more, but she doubted she would have time to find anything willing to fuck her.

She slipped out of the collar and left it behind before racing along the city's shadows. The imprint of the destruction had already started to shape in the shadows and she could see the memory of buildings standing and destroyed superimposed over each other.

Her thoughts and grief began to seep into her thoughts. She had just lost good friends and hurt ones who were trying to help her. Along the way, she hurt and killed so many people that she didn't think she could ever forgive herself.

Merrie came to a halt, surrounded by the darkness that had once personified her despair and depression. Sorrow welled up around her and she could feel the shadows thickening around her.

"No," she whispered. She didn't have time to grieve but she knew it would happen sooner or later. There would also be time for penance for the destruction she had inflicted. There would be consequences, but she would just have to face them once she did what she had to.

With a sniff, she resumed her journey to the manor.

When she reached her destination, she entered into the warded area and then stepped through from the shadows. Unlike before at the guild, there was little resistance and she found herself standing

in front of a well-maintained fence surrounding the place that had been her home.

Inside, she could see that the gardens had been replaced with rock and statues instead of the overgrown trees from the day she had first arrived.

And then she could see her new home. It was a two-story mansion behind a eroded cast-iron fence. The mansion used to be painted white, but now the paint was peeling and a few of the columns at the main entrance had crumbled. The entire top floor had broken windows, some of them boarded up but others had tattered curtains fluttering in the breeze.

It used to have a brick drive, but weeds and even a few trees had grown through the cracks. It was now a foot path barely wide enough for the wagon. The former gardens were overrun in a thick snarl of weeds, vines, and trees.

Scanning the wards, she could tell as soon as she passed through the fence, someone would be alerted. But her shade was still draped around the building and the shadows still kept it secret.

Hoping it was just Claston inside but also knowing they were dealing with an infernal of betrayal, Merrie melted into darkness and then flowed past the gates. Her body slid along the surface as she crossed over the garden she had tried to bring to life and up to the door.

Inside, a few lanterns lit up the entry hall. The debris and garbage had long since been cleaned out and almost every surface shone from being polished and dusted. She smiled to herself, someone had brought the manor into its glory.

Curious, she started toward her bedroom but hesitated. If Claston was there, did he removed the old cage that she used for a bed. It had been broken when there was a rush to get her before she used her collar on herself.

The room still held so many memories of her, so much pain and joy. It was where her first master, Kine, had learned to bring her pleasure.

Steeling herself, she continued down the path and slipped into the room.

Merrie didn't know what to expect, but it wasn't a normal, decorated room. The cage was gone, the old wardrobe in the back had been replaced. Where the old bed stood was a set of tables and chairs. Opposite, someone had set up a writing desk.

She reformed into physical form but left little trace as she padded into the room. The memories were there, but not the physical remains. A pang of sadness for her former life flooded her.

Wiping her face, she melted once again in darkness and explored the rest of the wing. Repairs and redecorating had completely erased any signs of Kine.

She stopped briefly at the spot where she had first bonded. Nothing would ever mark the spot but she could never forget it.

Then she zipped across the manor to the kitchen and dining area. There were more signs of life and she could hear someone cooking. Slowly, she flickered along the dark places until she saw a single man humming to himself as he prepared a meal.

It was Boz, Claston's personal servant:

You'll get used to it, sire," said a bored-sounded older man. The second man was dressed in a black suit just one step from being made of pure Shadow. His shoes shimmered even in the dim light and he had a black tie neatly pressed against the line of buttons. He reached out for the door and took the handle; Merrie noticed he wore black kidskin gloves.

She recognized the younger man. It was one of the princes of Franome, Claston Pador. He was third in line for the throne behind his two sisters, Dinneia and Pitia.

"If we never use this thing, why do we keep it?"

The older man closed the door behind him. "Tradition," came the bored response. "We are also here because the Royal Family is the balance on the opposite side of the courts. Where they must follow the laws by the letter, the crown is the force that provides change when the letter no longer fits the crime."

Time had changed the old man. He no longer had hair on his head but he remained neatly shaved. His body retained the prim attitude from before, straight back and wearing gloves.

Hopeful, Merrie rushed through the rest of the kitchen area before making her way up the stairs. Along one wing that Rimmy had used for her personal quarters, she finally found the man she was looking for: Claston Pador, the Prince of Franome.

The handsome man sat at a desk, reading some papers. He didn't have the long life of Merrie and Bass and she could see ten years of age had weathered him. A bit of gray colored his hair but his beard was neatly trimmed and he retained the fitness that he did from before. She couldn't see new scars on his body nor did he seem in pain, so she guessed he had continued to work out while hiding in the manor.

She thought about her own attempts to exercise. It was one of her first uses of a spell, to create a timekeeper and use it to track how long it took to move from one side of the manor to the other. Back then, it was filled with debris of Kine's and Rimmy's stolen loot and she was only a shadow of the woman she had become.

Her tail wagged slowly and she smiled. Feeling playful, she reformed as a naked woman and reached out for him.

The Red Door flashed across her mind, presenting the family tree of Kivas once again. Stunned, Merrie watched as the path raced away from Kivas to a side family, forgotten but no less important as it married into royalty and then fell out. It came down to a single node burning in her brain: Claston. His mother was a Kivas, a woman named Gwen Ticar, but the father was unimportant to the family tree and was just a faded line into the distance. There were two other nodes from the same mother: Dinneia and Pitia.

Stunned, Merrie sat back. (You're a Kivas?)

Claston jumped with a yelp of surprise. He flung himself to the side as he scrambled to regain his wits.

Reflexively, Merrie presented herself: back arched, tits thrust out, wrists at her neck, and tail wagging. It was what he expected her to be doing when he finally focused on her. A thrill of pleasure raced along her veins as she watched him.

"M-Merrie!?"

Downstairs, she heard Boz racing for the stairs. She looked at Claston and barked happily, moving her entire body back and forth with her wagging tail.

Claston clutched his heart and gave a nervous laugh. “H-How did you get here?”

(Through the shadows, of course.)

“N-No, I mean from Abbinkey. You were in prison for life.”

(I had to leave when the prison was closed.)

Boz reached the door. He had a narrow sword that glowed with enchantments. It was obvious he knew how to use it, but it was also wasn't his forte judging from how he held it. He stopped as he caught sight of Merrie.

Claston shook his head and gripped the side of his bed but missed. His fingers caught a blanket over his foot chest and pulled it down, revealing gleaming black bars of Merrie's old cage.

Merrie stared at it for a moment and then smiled broadly. It brought a familiar lust but also a quiet joy, like a memento of a different life. (You kept it.)

“Yes, I mean Boz fixed it because I... how are you here!?”

Merrie decided to trust the prince with almost everything except the meetings of the gods and Rakin's concerns. She gathered up her memories from when she last saw him and projected it into his thoughts.

Claston shuddered for a moment and then swayed.

Boz's sword clattered to the ground as Claston's man rushed up to catch him. Then, without a word, he led Claston to the bed and sat him down.

With a groan, Claston lifted his hand from his lap to look down at the tent in his suit pants. Then he shook his head. “T-That's a lot of sex.”

Merrie's ears flattened. (Sorry. I filtered out most of the demons and gang-bangs. And the dying repeatedly.)

“No, no, that's fine. I don't need those details.” He groaned again. Then he gave her a hard stare. “You killed Kivas and then escaped Abbinkey by yourself?”

(Tore him apart and fed him to demons, but yes.) It wasn't entirely true, but it was for the memories she gave him.

He groaned. "And all I've been doing is hiding here like a damn coward."

Boz stepped back. "You aren't coward, sire. You survived two assassination attempts."

Claston glared at the older man. "Yes, from my sister."

"Rumored but not confirmed."

"I know it's her. She's trying to make sure I can't use the Hastir Clause."

Merrie cocked her head in confusion.

"Sire, she has proven herself with the Test of Blood. Why would she think you would overthrow her?"

(Excuse me? What is the Hastir Clause?)

Claston waved his hand. "One of my great, great, great uncles tried to take over the throne like a hundred times. It caused so much trouble that the councils declared that royalty could only make a single, formal attempt at regaining the throne before they were exiled for life." He sighed and rolled his eyes. "No one really liked Hastir, but it also means that even though I know that woman isn't my sister, I only have one chance to prove it."

"The Test of Blood has—"

"I know!" snapped Claston. "But I know it." He thumped his head. "I know that she is her."

"It has been decades of war for her, she's change. Sire, one cannot be in a battle for twenty years without that warping everything including her spirit!"

Claston surged to his feet. "She isn't my sister!"

"Just because she became—"

"I don't give a fuck about the crown!"

Merrie could tell that it was an old argument. Claston's anger rose too quickly but she couldn't easily penetrate his mental shields. As a prince, he had been trained to avoid mental intrusions. Across from him, Boz continued to remain steadfast as he spoke, a quiet voice that never wavered.

Boz took a deep breath. "Sire, you have to accept that Pitia is the true queen of this country."

There was a barely perceptible flicker of magic from inside Boz.

Merrie cocked her head as she stared at him.

Claston groaned and walked around the bed. “I know you keep saying that, but I was saying she wasn’t real the second she showed up.”

“Twenty years, sire. You have also drastically changed. You are no longer the brash young man who was content to drink and sleep away his life in his private quarters in the palace.”

No flicker, no triggering of energy.

Merrie felt a tugging, a rising pressure to pay attention. Her tail slowed to a stop and her ears perked up as she continued to watch.

“And what about now? I’m just suppose to cower in the manor for the rest of the life? Trade a broken tree for a broken home?”

“At least until you calm down to present yourself in society, sire.”

The prince groaned and glared at his man. “I will never accept her as my sister.”

“But that doesn’t stop the fact that she is your kin,” Boz said calmly but oath magic flickered inside him.

Merrie’s ears perked up. It was the Royal Geas responding to his thoughts, but in a subtle way. She focused her attention on the magic, delving into the old pattern.

Boz had accepted the oath in his youth. He had grown around the oath, naturally obeying it without needing to corrective action. He knew the right things to say. No, he knew the right things to think to avoid triggering it.

Merrie had a sudden theory. Her tail began to wag. (What is the Test of Blood?)

Claston groaned. “It’s this stupid bucket... bowl... fountain made out of gold on a stone pedestal.”

“Font, sire. It—”

“I don’t fucking care.” Claston let out his breath. “If you toss the crown in it and you bleed into the bowl, it starts to glow which says you are of Pador blood.”

“It also confirmed the paternity or maternity if two people bleed into it. It has been used many times over the centuries to identify true parentage.”

Claston walked over to his desk and grabbed his chair. He pulled it over next to Merrie and sat down heavily. One hand dropped to stroke her ear.

Merrie's tail wagged faster as she leaned into his fingers and thigh.

"So, mother was dead so dad and that woman bled into the bowl and it glowed and proved that she was the rightful queen."

Another flicker of the Royal Geas. Boz knew something but was either unwilling to tell or couldn't. Merrie thought back to the Royal Geas.

Do you swear loyalty to Franome, the crown, and the land, for the rest of our days?

Do you swear to protect it with your will, your pride, your power, and your life?

Do you swear to keep its secrets until the end of time?

Do you swear to guard the Royal Family from all harm, inside and out?

Do you swear to serve until released by the Royal family?

Secrets. Boz had a secret, but the geas would not allow him to reveal it. Something that was important that even he knew was critical to the conversation.

Merrie looked at Claston but kept her senses focused on Boz. (Who is Gwen Ticar?)

The Royal Geas buzzed Boz and she could feel him start with surprise.

"Gwenny?" Claston asked with a frown. "She's my mother's hand maiden from a lot of years ago. She became the head nanny when Dinny was born and she helped raised my sisters and me."

He chuckled. "I remember she used to say that she changed our nappies and that was why we couldn't ever be royalty."

Memories flicked across his mind. He sighed. "She died of a heart attack when I was... seven or so? I missed her so much, she always treated me as a son she had never had."

That was the answer Merrie had been looking for. (Did you know she was a Kivas?)

"What? No, she was so sweet. She wasn't a criminal."
(She had three children, two daughters and a son.)

Claston pulled his hand away. “No, no she didn’t.”

A few meters away, Boz was suddenly struggling with his Royal Geas. With her attention on him, she could hear him groan underneath his breath but that triggered the oath in a different way; he couldn’t show signs that there was a secret there.

Using her senses, Merrie reached out for the Royal Geas. With Dith’s powers still influencing her abilities, she found it easy to work her way into the ancient oath and see how it had been woven together. It was an ancient oath, simple at its core.

And she knew how to change it.

The last few years had let her see there was another way. With everything else, she knew that she could change the oath just like Parn changed her.

Steeling herself, she reached out. (Do you—)

She stopped with the realization she couldn’t use telepathy. It had to be spoken. Clearing her throat, she tried again. “Do you swear loyalty to Franome, the crown, and the land, for the rest of our days?”

Boz looked at her in confusion, but she felt the oath rising up. It knew the words that he had said.

“Do you swear to protect it with your will, your pride, your power, and your life?”

“What you doing?” asked Claston.

Her voice ached from speaking, the hoarseness of barely using her throat caused it to burn but she couldn’t stop. “Do you swear to keep its secrets until the end of time?”

Boz stared at her. He started to shake his head and fear prickled his senses. But the oath was responding, rising up to her words that stirred it.

Merrie whimpered but forced herself to keep talking. “Do you swear to guard the Royal Family from all harm, inside and out? Do you swear to serve until released by the Royal family?”

“Please s-stop,” Boz said in a broken voice. “Don’t do this.”

Merrie had reached the end of the Royal Geas, the final words that sealed so many lives into bondage and took away their free will. All it needed was a single thrust of will and it would seal once again.

She looked directly at him. “Do you swear...” Her voice started to change, to take on a different timbre as if she was speaking with two

voices. "... to take this oath as guidance, to forever know what to do but to retain your will to make that choice?"

The air around them beat with a rippling presence. It was something more powerful than even her own abilities.

With tears in his eyes, Boz's mouth worked for a moment. "I swear," he whispered.

Energy poured through her, coming from nowhere she could sense, but it reached out for the geas and washed over it, changing it like petals turning in a fall wind.

Then, it was gone.

Boz started to fall.

Merrie and Claston reached him at the same time, catching him before he hit the ground. Unable to get him to the bed, they lowered him until he was safely sitting on the ground.

Claston stared at Merrie with a new emotion, fear. "W-What was that?"

Merrie regarded him. "You are Kivas."

Claston shook his head empathically. "No, I'm not. I am Pador by my mother and Otain by my father."

She shook her head. "No," she said as her voice cracked again. "You are Pador by your father's blood but Kivas by your mother. Your mother's name is Gwen Ticar and your father is—"

Claston shook his head. "No—"

"Your father is Queen Vikia Pador."

Tears ran down his cheeks. "No!"

Boz groaned. He looked up from the floor with tears in his eyes. "I'm sorry, sire, but she's right."

Scrambling back, Claston shook his head. "No, that can't be. Vikia is my mother. She's always been my mother."

Boz reached out and caught Merrie's shoulder. He had a strong grip and Merrie helped him into a sitting position. He held his stomach and looked at her with a strange sense of wonder and fear. "I can still feel it. I'm telling the secret but... but...."

Merrie leaned over and kissed him. (You have a choice now, just like me.)

The old man stiffened. "That's how you left Abbinkey."

(I never stopped serving this country. I am fulfilling my oath to crown, country, and family like I always have. Just as I did when I

summoned the shadow land, just as when I went to Abbinkey, and just as I am here.)

“How can you say that!” Claston bellowed. He shoved the pile of letters from his desk. “Just like that, I have criminal blood!?”

Merrie’s eyes caught the letters with the compulsions. Picking herself up, she crawled over to them. (Kivas is not evil. He was chaos and he resists all restrictions, but there are hundreds of thousands that have his blood inside him. Good people, like Rendi and Borias. Others who are not.)

Claston started to say something but stopped, his face growing slack. Then he held his head as he sat down heavily, missing the chair and slamming into the ground. “Pitia isn’t my sister. The queen is not my sister!”

Merrie sent a pulse of raw shadow to destroy the letters before she turned back.

“The Test of Blood... oh, damn it, that stupid prophecy, isn’t it?”

It was Merrie’s turn to be surprised. (Prophecy?)

Claston waved his hand casually. “There is some rule that a bloodline can only have one prophecy on it, so most of the royal families have some bullshit little one with an obscure bit of crap that keeps a god or some mage from putting something nastier on the family.”

Boz stood up, his movements slow as he straightened his outfit. “The line of succession has been broken, sire. A man has been celebrated across our land as our queen.”

Claston groaned. “Shit. Fuck, shit, damn the gods. She.. he...?”

“She was your mother, sire.”

“She knew it, why did she break it?”

Boz shrugged. “Because she was a woman. She was happy that way and her parents knew that it would break the succession, but they would rather have their daughter happy than rule a kingdom forever.”

Claston sighed. Then he glared. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I swore to keep Franome’s secrets until the end of days. I’m sorry, sire, you know what the Royal Geas would do to me.” Even while talking about the threat of his organs bursting out of his orifice, Boz’s voice never rose above a respectful tone.

“So, why did her saying the Royal Geas change that? And what was that last part?”

Merrie flinched and looked up. (I can manipulate oath magic.)

Claston stared at her hard, then he shook his head. “No one can change oath magic. That is why we use it.”

Merrie cleared her throat. “Then why can I talk? How did I leave Abbinkey? Why isn’t the Justice Geas stopping me from using my powers? How can I tell you the secret your mother has kept from you for your entire life?”

He flinched with each question. Then he held up his hand. “No, I accept. So Pitia really isn’t my sister?”

(No.)

“No, sire.”

Claston sighed. “If she isn’t my sister than she would have to claim to the throne. I could use Hastir’s, if I could prove it. How would I—”

(We are dealing with an infernal that gains power from ruining plans. Every minute you strategize, you give them power to use against us.)

“I believe the young lady is saying that you need to plunge heedlessly into action.” Boz said in a dry voice. “So, if you continue as normal, you will be immune from the devil’s influence.”

Claston glared at Boz. Then he shrugged and grin. “Anyone else helping us?”

“Bass, Sable, Borias, and Natis are heading toward the front door to the palace to give me time to talk to you.”

“Then we’ve already planned too far ahead.” He stood up from the chair and held out his hand. “My sword, please.”

Boz walked over to the sword and picked it up. Carefully wiping it down with a cloth from his pocket, he handed it hilt first to the prince.

Claston took it and then slid it into a sheath that appeared at his belt. “Let’s go.”

“Sire?”

“You, Boz, stay.”

Boz favored him with a hard luck.

“I’d tell you to get in the cage, but if I’m going to do something stupid and brash, I don’t want want you to be hurt. You’ve been a

loyal servant, a lying sack of shit, and one of my best friends. So, let me do this.”

As he spoke, Claston’s natural Presence began to fill the room. His growing confidence surrounded her much like Bass’ cheer and hope did earlier. He smiled as he reached down to scratch Merrie’s ears.

“Come on, let’s risk everything because a naked girl told me just told me to do it.”

t'Sade

The Throne

127

They reappeared outside the gates of the royal palace and in the middle of a battle. The marble gates had been knocked town and twisted, the metal still smoking from some attack. A hundred meters away, Bass and Sable fought against two Loyals that were hammering them with streaks of green weapons and killing spells.

Natis and Borias were on the other side of the gate, back to back. Three angelic bears with golden claws and wings were battling against another Loyal and a squad of Resolutes.

The smell of scorched air choked Merrie as she instantly wrapped herself spells before extending her defenses toward Claston.

The prince stepped up. “Holy shit,” he muttered.

The palace had been carved directly into the World Tree, a kilometer tall mystic plant that was the seat of Franome’s power. Until a few decades ago, there was only one in the known world. Now, Emberka had one which triggered the war between the two countries as each one waged war against the symbol of leadership.

Merrie’s eyes drifted to the side where millions of tons of broken branches as tall as a ten story building had crashed into the ground. The sap from the World Tree glowed weakly as it poured out on the ground among the rubble of the buildings underneath it.

Her ears flattened against her head. Then she shook her head. She would give penance later, she had to do her duty.

Claston strode forward.

Side doors of the palace opened up and squads of Resolutes in their heavy armor rushed out with weapons raised.

The price held up his hand. As he did, his Presence exploded out from him. It slammed into Merrie with the absolute realization that

a declaration was about to be given and she must answer. She could have ignored it, but she had never seen anyone use nothing but their voice and raw authority in such a way.

“I demand Hastir!” he bellowed, his voice cutting through the din of battle and the screech of magic.

Spells fizzled and the warriors stopped. Even the Loyals in mid-strike froze in a flash of oath magic and geasa. All of them had taken the Royal Geas among others and the single phrase was enough to stop them.

Bass stepped back and lowered his weapon.

(What are you doing?) Merrie asked as she bounded after him as a Bel Dark.

“Not a fucking clue, but I do know that if they kill... my gods, that paladin is huge!”

(Bass.)

“And the armored dog.”

(Sable, his alpha.)

“I thought she was naked and didn’t have any legs.”

Merrie sent an image of Sable transforming into her armored hound form, and then a dizzying array of images of the alpha’s combat abilities.

Claston made a grunting noise.

Natis, blood running down the side of his face, limped up. “My lord prince! What are you doing here?”

The prince gestured toward the front door where he was heading. “If the Loyals kill you out here, you have no chance of succeeding. I’m just making sure that if someone kills us, it’s going to be that infernal pretending to be my sister.”

Bass and Sable flanked Claston on the other side. The thriban looked at Merrie and nodded. “Good girl.”

Merrie shivered with pleasure. She barked happily and then moved so she walked between Borias and Claston. Her body moved with silence as they approached the double door to the palace which swung up.

As they passed through the threshold, the tiles beneath them began to glow brightly. A soft voice that dug directly into Merrie’s thoughts began to whisper, “The Grand Entrance has been opened. Prince Claston Pador, Duke Natis, and convicted criminals Bassimar

Sarmo, Borias Kivas, and Merrie Golddother have arrived. One other unidentified woman of threat. The Grand Entrance has been opened. Prince Claston Pador, Duke...” The announcement repeated a few times before it faded. Merrie remembered it from the first time she had arrived at the palace, sadly after severely damaging the World Tree the first time.

The floor of the hallways began to glow. Ripples of power radiated from the door that just opened, coursing down the length of the hall and past the furthest door. A soft voice spoke up from nowhere, echoing down the hall in a whisper. “The Sun Crest Door has opened. Eight knights, two strangers, one unnatural creature. The Sun Crest Door has opened. Eight knights, two strangers, one unnatural creature. The Sun—” The voice continued and Merrie shivered at the sound of it. It was just at the edge of her hearing and it felt like the words were burrowing into her head.

They walked straight down the center of the palace, past richly decorated rooms trimmed in gold, crystal, and platinum. Magic hummed around them, centuries of wards built to protect the palace from any and all attacks.

Merrie noticed pictures of the queen, a statuesque woman with a hard look that came even through the paintings. There was something lean and feral in her posture, something that years of brutal battles had forged.

She looked both regal and terrifying at the same time.

Merrie shivered before she realized there was suggestion magic all around her. She switched her focus to see more of the infernal’s touch around her. There were compulsions and suggestions everywhere, almost painted onto the decorations of the new queen.

With a gasp, she looked over her companions and saw they were all beginning to come underneath the control of the influence.

Merrie didn’t have time to analyze the spells to determine their purpose. Instead, she quickly spun through a spell to shield them from the suggestions.

The whispered voice rose up. "Alert, Merrie Golddother is initiating—"

Merrie twisted the magic hard and plunged a repulsion spell along the strands into a tight weave that fused the two spells together. She directed it toward the wards that were watching her.

The whispered voice grew silent.

With a burst of power, she draped her companions with the spell.

As one, they straightened with a gasp. Their eyes, which had slowly glazed over, came into focus as they looked around.

Borias cleared his throat. He leaned over and whispered into Merrie's large, black ear. "You?"

Merrie sent a quiet pulse of affirmative.

"Good girl," he whispered and kissed her furry ear.

She sighed with pleasure.

They reached the door to the throne room and it swung one.

The whispered voice rose up again. "Visitors to the Throne Room. Announcing Prince Claston Pador and five guests. No detected threats."

The throne room was easily a hundred meters long and just as wide. Thin, elegant spires rose up in two lines that framed the carpet that led to the wood and gold throne at the far end.

There were close to a hundred Resolutes standing at attention on both sides of the carpet. Twenty Loyals, each one standing straight but with the air around them warping from their activated defenses marked the distance between Claston and his sister.

Beyond the warriors and on floors above them, she could sense the rest of the royal court was present. Over eight hundred people of title, their families, and double that in servants. The room was packed with a storm of nervous energy from the bystanders and clear threat from the army before them.

Bass chuckled with amusement.

Claston had a smile on his face, but he groaned. "We are going to die, aren't we?"

"I don't plan on dying today, my prince," Bass said.

"She knew we were coming," Natis said.

"She be planning, right? Infernal of mark. What we be doing now has been planned for years. She be having contingencies for everything we be doing."

“Then why are we hear?”

“Because, no plan be surviving the enemy.” Borias gave a grim smile.

Bass laughed, his booming voice cutting through the din of gossip and whispers. There wasn't even a hint of fear or nervousness inside him, nor would there be, he was a paladin sent to the front lines to give hope to his allies.

The silence that filled the hall, they walked up to the throne.

Merrie got her first look at Queen Pitia. She was stunningly beautiful, a grand weapon filled with cold, hard thoughts and a body that would have caused almost anyone to drop to their knees to beg to have a chance at her pussy.

Then Pitia stood up. Her movements were as graceful and purposeful as an enchanted sword. There was little wasted movement and no hesitation or anything to mar the smooth gesture.

No, Merrie decided, they wouldn't drop to their knees as she lifted her eyes to stare up at the almost three-meter tall queen that towered above her. Her breasts were huge as her were hips. The golden gown that clung to her body left little hint that she was nothing but a woman, but somehow the delicate-looking material also covered her with a sense of regal bearing.

Merrie's pussy grew wet as she stared at the towering queen.

Bass grunted. “Claston, were you the runt of your family?” Merrie didn't need telepathy to know that he was thinking about fucking her, as was Sable.

“My brother dear. So good to see you.” Pitia's voice was silk over a blade, a smoothness that hummed with suggestion magic. It was low and husky and utterly feminine. She had the voice of someone who had never submitted in her life, a dominate from the day she was born. It teased Merrie, demanding to dig into her thoughts. Only the spell against compulsions kept it at bay.

Merrie's cunt grew even wetter until it was dribbling down her thighs and matting into her fur.

Claston tensed. “I'm here.”

A woman in blood-red armor decorated with intricate carvings and feathers moved to next to the throne. She had a spear with a

long, curved blade at the end, a bardiche. It crackled with power not unlike the Loyal's weapons.

"Right on schedule," said the queen, dragging Merrie's attention back to the royal.

"Then you know what I'm going to do."

Pitia smiled, her painted red lips curling into a look that would have melted Merrie's heart. The humor never reached the cruel eyes that focused on him. "You have to say it."

"Hastir. I'm here to claim the throne as the rightful ruler."

She pretended to be shocked but the smile never left. "You are coming in with an army of murderers and killers and think you have a chance. What is your plan? How do you think you'll succeed?"

Claston's demeanor cracked for a moment, then he shook his head. "At this point, only an idea and a pair of balls."

"Then I'm going to have to rip them off of you." Her smile never missed. She stretched and Merrie found herself staring at the hard-muscles that rippled underneath the royal's dress. "Very well, your claim."

"You are not Pitia. You are not the true daughter of Pador."

"The Test of Blood says otherwise."

Around her, Merrie felt tiny ripples of resistance of the Royal Geas. About a third of the Loyals all knew that it was true, but they had sworn to keep Franome's secrets. There were others, servants, Resolutes, and others that had known Queen Vikia's secret. Merrie focused on the nearest one, a Resolute.

Claston balled his hands into fists. "The test is flawed."

The queen's eyes flickered to Merrie and then to the Resolute.

The Resolute suddenly turned and broke ranks, pulling back and out of sight.

Pitia turned back. "Then shall we prove again how wrong you were, little brother."

"Y... Yes."

Merrie found another one, a servant near the throne. It was an older man holding himself with his chin high while he waited for orders.

There was a flash of the infernal compulsion.

A Loyal next to the servant reached over and slapped their hand against his back. There was a brief poof of dust as he was disintegrated.

Merrie whimpered and looked back at the queen.

Pitia caught her gaze and smiled even more.

A shiver of fear ran down Merrie's back as she tried to find some other way of revealing the secret.

(What just happened?) asked Sable, her voice blending with Bass'.

Merrie sent a brief image of what she had tried.

The queen shrugged. Turning around, she gestured casually to one of the Loyals. The infernal oath binding them rose up even as she spoke. "Find the old king and make sure he is safe. We need him, one last time."

Claston's eyes widened. "What did you just do?"

Pitia stepped closer, towering over him. His head barely came up to her sizable breasts. "You're the last two, brother dear. It's only you and the king and then there is no one else who believes I'm not queen."

Infernal magic rose up from around her, a choking cloud of a suggestion spell.

"But you knew that, didn't you? Did you get to your father before me?"

It spread out away from the queen, turning her words into a steadfast reality for anyone.

Merrie whimpered and rapidly crafted a spell to dispel it. She had seen enough of the infernal's power to know the right patterns.

The suggestion had slammed into the thoughts of the front ranks of the bystanders, the Resolutes and Loyals, before Merrie could dispel it.

The suggestion fell apart, but it had already seeped into the consciousness of the nearest warriors.

Merrie's ears flattened against her head.

The Queen smiled.

Merrie tried to find another to alter the geas, but the queen sent them away. Frustrated, she sent a pulse to her companions what was happening.

(You need to wait until she's distracted,) Sable and Bass projected.

There was a crack of thunder as the Loyal appeared next to the queen. His green armor, decorated with whorls and patterns of leaves, had been streaked with blood and soot. "My queen, assassins have killed the king."

The Loyal held up a decapitated head, blood dripping from the top. It was the king's, his face twisted in agony and pain.

Another suggestion blossomed from the infernal. "Your plans succeeded then, brother. You have betrayed the country, didn't you."

Claston ground his teeth together.

Frantic, Merrie blew away the suggestion but her spell almost didn't make it. The infernal had changed it, or somehow knew that Merrie would be able to do it. There were slight changes that made it stronger.

Despair flooded her. The infernal had planned this and anticipated Merrie's abilities.

She frowned as she concentrated, trying to figure out how to get around the infernal. Attack was out of the question, not with so many Loyals poised to kill them. The only thing she had different was chaos.

Her ears perked up before she tried to flattened them. In the back of her mind, she prepared a new spell but adding the chaos and pseudo-intelligence into it, something that would tear apart a suggestion.

The queen chuckled. "But, there is enough to prove you are wrong." She turned and picked up the head of her father from the Loyal's hand. With her other, she snapped her fingers and two Loyals dragged a marble font in front of her.

Raising the head above her head. Her suggestion burst out of her, faster and stronger than before. "I shall prove myself again before this court. I am the daughter of King Radail Otain!"

The room grew hush as she grabbed the still-warm skull of the king with one hand, dwarfing the corpse's entire head, and crushed it. Her knuckles cracked as bright blood poured out from her fingers and splashed into the font. It splattered loudly against the inside of the surface but nothing else happened; he wasn't a Pador.

She took one perfectly trimmed fingernail and drew it along her palm. A bright droplet of blood formed for a moment before dripping into place.

Merrie felt the queen's power rising up. Hidden underneath the dress, an infernal mark was awakening as her blood splashed down.

Two streams of gold and blue mist poured out of the bowl, spreading out in rippling brilliance before it faded. "Gold for blood, blue for the crown."

The surrounding audience repeated the phrase.

The queen held out her still dripping hands apart, one that had the crushed head and her other almost untouched with the other. "Satisfied?"

The prince shook his head. His lips were pressed into a thin line and a bead of sweat formed on his brow. He was scared about what he was going to do next.

Merrie wanted to reach out, but she knew there were too many watching, too many people who would claim she had some influence on the results. She was helpless to do anything.

Energy gathered around her, suffusing her body with her helplessness.

Claston smiled. "No. I want to prove something myself." He leaned forward and said a word of power.

All the blood in the font disappeared in a flash and the golden glow faded.

"Suit yourself, it won't change the answer. It is your father and I am your queen." She held the king's crushed head over the font and squeezed again. More blood splashed down into the bowl.

Claston stared at her as he pulled out a knife and cut his palm. Trembling, he held his hand out and clenched his hand tightly.

Two droplets of blood splashed down.

A blue mist rose up and poured out of the bowl but there was no gold.

He let out a shuddering sigh.

For the first time, the queen looked startled.

Claston sniffed before he stared at her with determination. "My sisters and I are not, nor never have, had the blood of Otain in our veins. We are Pador but we are not the king's children. There are

people around us that know it is true, but it has been a secret of this kingdom my entire life.”

Around her, hundreds of Royal Geasa flared to life in the stunned silence.

The queen stepped back, her beautiful tensing as she glanced around.

Merrie felt the oath magic around her crackling to life as so many tried to speak out the secret they knew. Seizing on the point, she opened her mouth and spoke as loudly as she could. “Do you swear loyalty to Franome, the crown—”

The queen stepped back. “Loyals! Silence her, now!”

Merrie tried to belt out the words but spells slammed into her from all angles. Her throat seized up as the air was sucked out of her lungs. Her lips grew numb and her body froze in paralysis. The individual spells ripped through her body in waves of agony as they all fought to silence her in a dozen different ways.

Claston turned. “Merrie!”

“This is done!” snapped the queen. “I have proven time again.”

Her suggestion rolled away from her but Merrie was unable to stop it.

“I am the queen of Franome and my rule is now absolute!”

Her beautiful voice boomed across the room as the infernal suggestion crashed into the bystanders like waves at a beach.

Claston and Borias tried to grab Merrie but then fell back choking. There was no air around her body, only a vacuum that allowed no sound to escape her throat.

She thrashed and tried to transform to escape, but other spells pinned her form in place.

Merrie sent out a mental cry for help, but even more silenced her mind.

She was helpless and in agony.

Her body ignited into the pleasure of her suffering, flooding her senses but there was no magic to fuel. It only gathered as she watched the minds of almost everyone in the hall became utterly convinced Pitia’s words were true.

The queen pointed direct at Claston. “You are an impostor to the crown. I order your immediate death. Loyals!”

Claston only had time to gasp before a wave of killing magic rolled toward him.

Bass and Sable threw themselves in front of him, blocking with their bodies. The crackling force tore through their armor, renting it and spraying blood everywhere.

Borias and Natis backed up against the prince, shields forming around.

And then there was a Loyal in front of her. A green gauntlet snapped forward and caught Merrie by her throat. With impossible strength, she was torn from the ground and swung around.

“Loyal Alestri says stop!” bellowed the Loyal who had almost killed Merrie more than once. Her voice rolled away from her in a field of Presence, another compulsion and suggestion that slammed into the minds of everyone around her.

The grip dug into Merrie’s throat, crushing it as the Loyal shook her around.

“Alestri,” moaned Claston with despair. “Not you too.”

Merrie could see her fighting the Royal Geas, but there was also a new oath that branded her mind. She had sworn loyalty to the queen and the infernal compulsion had dug into her mind.

Desperate, Merrie tried to transform again but a shock from the Loyal stunned her. It tore into her mind and body, setting off little bursts of pleasure as she was rattled like a child’s toy.

“Like you, Loyal Alestri swore loyalty to Franome, the crown, and the land, for the rest of our days! Loyal Alestri swore to protect it with my will, my pride, my power, and my life!” Her mechanical voice boomed throughout the hall.

With every word, she shook Merrie more violently. Merrie’s joints and bones cracked under the stress, waves of agony rolling over her.

Then Merrie felt a wave of oath magic rising up as the Royal Geas in everyone began to respond to Alestri’s reaffirmation. In their hearts, they were reliving their own memories of taking the oath.

“Loyal Alestri swore to keep its secrets until the end of time!”

“Stop that Loyal!” screamed the queen. She raised her hand and brought it down, her fingernails becoming black claws that raked Merrie’s back and peeled away the skin and scrape against bone.

The pain flooded through Merrie, fueling her. She felt the raw power gathering inside her, a burning need to desire. And then... anticipation. A command that was coming, one that would cause her even more agony but she desperately wanted to obey.

Alestri slammed Merrie down and then lifted Merrie's shuddering body to her armored helm. "Show Loyal Alestri," she growled at Merrie.

Then Merrie saw it. Alestri wasn't saying the geas to remind anyone, she was trying to violate it. The oath was in the process of ripping her body apart, but she didn't have orifices for her organs to liquefy. They were burning and boiling inside her armor, gathering in pressure as the Loyal kept herself moving by sheer will alone.

It was too late for Merrie to stop it, but she knew what to do. With all the determination she could muster, she reached out and opened herself to bond with the Loyal.

Alestri gripped the manacles holding her in place tightly as agony ripped through her body. She ground her teeth against the metal rod that had already been fused into her mouth to keep her affixed to the help.

The surgeon clicked his tongue as he used his flensing knife to peel away her skin in long strips. Blood filled the air as he systemically stripped away her skin, peeling it away and tossing it aside like her old life.

"You are going to be beautiful," he whispered as he worked his way up her thighs. Time had no meaning anymore, only the increasing waves of pain and suffering.

He stopped at her sex long enough to switch blades. He was going to remove everything from her. With his tongue stuck between his teeth, he began to cut away her labia.

Alestri's memories crashed into Merrie but they were all infused with pain and agony. The armor bonded to her body never fight right, it never stopped hurting, but she had sworn loyalty and she would obey.

“You are no longer assigned to Prince Claston,” announced Jillthin one more. She was the captain of the Loyals and demanded absolute obedience.

“Loyal Alestri does not understand. The prince needs protection.”

“Not anymore.”

That was the first time she felt the quiver of the Royal Geas. There was something wrong in the orders given her, something that felt wrong as if the person she obeyed no longer had only the country in her thoughts.

“Do you understand?”

“Loyal Alestri obeys.”

“Good. You have an audience with the queen in an hour.”

“Why?”

“You owe your allegiance to her, Alestri. She is the queen and you must serve her.”

For the second time in a short order, Alestri thought there was something wrong. But it couldn't be. She bowed. “Loyal Alestri serves.”

Then it came down to a single moment, when Alestri heard the queen order the prince's death. She couldn't stop anymore and she teleported over.

Alestri's mind was wracked with agony, old and new. She had thousands of spells at her disposal and most of them were used to protect herself from the attacks from the other Loyals. They were hammering her with brutal speed and force. She knew exactly how many seconds she had before she succumbed to their attacks but no clue to what was happening with her insides. She was dying.

Merrie reached out and took her pain, pulling it into herself. The purest agony from a thousand cuts, from armor that never sealed over stripped away skin and nerves that were as raw for years crashed into Merrie's thoughts. Her entire world grew white with pain before Merrie channeled deeper into herself, the place where alphas took abuse and converted into servitude.

Shuddering, she reached into her new master's powers and injected herself.

Spells surged with force as they were boosted. The ground underneath them melted from the raw force as defenses crackled into place. The air around them warped violently as force shields, repulsion fields, and other powers blossomed into brutal destruction.

(Just say the words. Say them with all your heart.)

Alestri spoke again, powering her words with her Presence boosted by her connection to Merrie. It became an overwhelming force that could not be ignored. "Loyal Alestri swore to guard the Royal Family from all harm, inside and out!"

The voice that escaped her throat was no longer mechanical, it was a mixture of Alestri's voice and Merrie's, sake and shadows and the hardest metal. It boomed through the hall and shattered the windows.

"We swore to serve until released by the Royal family!"

There was a powerful jolt. The woman in red near the throne had pierced Alestri's chest and impaled her heart on the cutting blade. Alestri's blood ignited into brilliance as she was burned out from the inside.

Alestri refused to give up. She spoke in a voice that had changed again, a third one finally joining in with a force that no one would ever be able to remember, Parn's. "We swear to take this oath as guidance, to forever know what to do but to retain our will to make our choices!"

Silence.

The attacks stopped and spells sputtered away.

Then, as one, everyone with the Royal Geas in the room and beyond, everyone who had made the oath in sound of Alestri's and Merrie's and Parn's voice, spoke. "I swear."

And the unyielding bonds of the Royal Geas shattered, taking along with it the infernal compulsions.

It wouldn't last long. The woman in red twisted her weapon hard, cutting through Alestri's heart before yanking down to cut through the green armor like paper.

Death swallowed Merrie's thoughts in a wave of agony as the Loyal expired, dropping Merrie to the ground as her armor shattered from the force of her violation. The spell that gave

everyone release was too late for her as she exploded in a shower of magic and blood.

Merrie slumped to the ground, panting for breath to regain enough of her senses to transform to heal herself. She did, slowly at first and then into a blur until her physical wounds were repaired.

In her head, Alestri's agony echoed inside her mind. There was so much of it, beating against her insides as she relived year after year of painful service.

The queen took a deep breath. Her gown had been covered with blood. "Well, that was disappointing." She didn't seem bothered at all by the turn of events.

Claston groaned and got back to his feet. "I think I've proven my point. You are the false queen and not worthy of the crown."

Pitia smiled. "No, brother dear, but I still have Pador blood inside me and I demand Hastir in return."

Merrie groaned. The infernal had contingencies already planned for losing.

The woman who killed Alestri stepped back and slammed the butt of her weapon against the ground. She looked to familiar to Merrie.

As Merrie realized that, she felt infernal marks responding on both the woman and the queen. They were not at the end. She fluttered and stared at the other woman, trying to pierce the familiarity.

Claston scoffed. "You are an impostor and not my sister. Why would I?"

"Because, you know that I've been queen for years now. Years of my people and my influence. You can't just remove me and pretend nothing remained behind. You have to prove that you are the one true king of this country and I have no intent in just walking away. You have to earn that crown and I still have Hastir's Clause on my side."

With a frown, Claston turned slightly.

Natis gave him an unhappy nod.

The queen's smile grew wider.

Merrie continued to stare at the other woman. She had a drawn face, hard like the queens. She had been forced into a weapon and there was a grace that Merrie had associated with the infernals.

Even as she struggled, she could feel the power growing inside the two women. Every second Merrie tried to grasp onto the memory fueled their strength.

The woman in red looked at her and smiled cruelly. She tightened her grip on the weapon.

“At least tell Bass... Borias... Tabitha...” Every name was an agony to pull out. She felt herself dissolving into darkness as the compulsion fueled her magic. “Cinthia...”

There was one more. She knew there was another name but she had forgotten it. She strained against the spell, tasting her black blood on her tongue as she fought with tears and magic. She didn't know why, but the last name was important.

Her thoughts slid away and she almost dissolved instantly.

With a start, Merrie realized they had forgotten someone. “Fir! What happened to Fir!?”

She only had a chance to see a surprised look on both Claston and Natis' face before her willpower crumbled and the compulsion forced her to dissolve into darkness. The overwhelming urge to rush to Franome City slammed into her and she flowed for the door.

Merrie let out a soft cry as she realized who she was looking at. The young trainer at the Puppy Mill who had disappeared. She remembered how she kept forgetting Fir during the fight in Blood County, as if someone was stealing her away.

The infernal marks glowed brightly underneath the queen's clothes and along Fir's side. The horrid color of red seeped through the fabric.

The queen let out a moan. “I demand we fight with champions.” Claston looked over and pointed to Merrie. “Then I choose her.” “You always do.”

Doubt flashed across Claston's face as another mark activated on both women, the infernal sign for planning. It glowed just as brilliantly as the one for memory.

“Then, brother dear, I choose the forgotten friend of your companions, the former trainer of the Puppy Mill, Fir.”

Fir stood up and worked her skirt down, giving Borias a sheepish look. “I can bid on her, right?”

“Of course. She be forty-two. Late enough that most people spent their money and everyone be waiting for Merrie here.” He rested his head on Merrie’s ear. The shiver of pleasure brought a smile to Merrie’s lips.

“About how much do you think she’ll cost?”

Licker’s tail wagged faster.

Borias shrugged. “Small tits but she be eighteen. A lot of years of pleasure. I be saying about fifteen thousand.”

“I-I have that! It was for school, but I can’t go anymore. Not with my brother joining the army. And my ma and pa said I could,” she glanced down at Licker, “buy whatever I wanted.”

“Well, just in case someone bids higher, use this.” Borias dug into his pocket and pulled out an envelope. It had the seal of a bank on it. It was also thick and didn’t flop as he handed it to Fir.

Fir stared at Borias in shock. “What is this?”

“You be opening it and find out.”

With trembling fingers, Fir broke the seal. She opened it and pulled out a thick stack of hundred mark bills. “My gods. There is ten thousand marks in here!”

“Only be having eight, but if you take good care of Licker, then the money be yours.”

There was nothing Merrie could do as Bass, Sable, and Borias all felt an intense wave of guilt. It was palatable just as the reddish hellfire that gathered around queen and her champion. The infernal mark had activated fully and Merrie felt a power comparable to her own raging before her.

Claston looked helplessly.

Pitia grinned. “Go ahead, King. Back out now and show this country your fear. I may not be queen, but you will never hold the crown if you do.”

The prince-turned-king flinched. He looked helplessly at Merrie.

Swamped with guilt and despair, Merrie sent a pulse of agreement. They were still trapped. (I will fight for you.)

Claston stepped back. "Champion verses champion then. For the crown of this country."

Pitia shook her head. The smile never left her face as she backed further away to make space. "You always make this mistake. It will be your last, you know."

Everyone moved away from the two champions. Soon, they had fifty meters clear on all sides. Merrie knew it wasn't going to be enough.

The guilt continued to tear into her. She had forgotten Fir so many times because of magic, but after the geas forced her back to the city, the young woman had been cast off forever.

It was Merrie's fault. She should have remembered.

Realizing that her thoughts were going down a familiar path, one that had led to depression, despair, and eventually the deaths of thousands, Merrie tore herself away. She shook her head to clear the tears.

"You abandoned me," Fir said in a low, hoarse voice that plucked at Merrie's guilt. "I was all alone after the fight. I couldn't find you, but she found my. My queen. She took me away and no one came to save me."

(I couldn't.)

Fir held her weapon by her side as she circled around Merrie. "You could. You were always the special one. The Omega, the Lost Alpha. Everyone told stories about how you were changing the world but when it came down to me, nothing. Nothing!" screamed Fir.

Merrie backed away and watched carefully, waiting for the attack even as she bolstered her combat spells. She didn't have a weapon, she had tooth and magic.

"You killed a goddess but you couldn't save one girl," Fir said. Her infernal marks were pulsating, beating with words that she had planned to say for a decade. The guilt of those listening also fed into the girl who had become an infernal. The pulse of her marks lit up along her sides, glowing underneath her arm and beneath her armor.

(I was vulnerable to compulsions.) It was an empty excuse, Merrie shouldn't have forgotten a friend and ally.

"I waited for you!" The blade flashed, cutting through the air.

Merrie jerked back, barely able to move fast enough to keep from getting sliced open.

"Days! Months! Waiting for that paladin to come burst in and saving me. But it never happened!"

Another attack, this one closer.

Merrie stumbled. She was exhausted from her ordeals and her thoughts were fuzzy from bonding so many times in less than a day. Dith's overwhelming senses plucked at the edges of her vision. Alestri's pain still echoed along her nerves.

"Do you know what my queen did? She broke me like the bitches at the mill. But it wasn't cocks and pussy and licking, it was pain. Pain and loneliness and terror! She beat me into submission, forced me to knee and obey!" More spells flashed around Fir, defenses fueled by the activated infernal marks.

The ground underneath her rumbled and cracked with her increased power. Energy crackled along the haft of her weapon. When she tightened her grip, the crackling grew louder and small bursts of light clung to her knuckles.

Merrie felt the attack with anticipation.

There was a crack of speed.

Even with the forewarning, it was faster than she thought possible. Energy scraped along her senses as she threw herself to the side and melted into liquid darkness.

Fir's spear slammed into the ground and a burst of brilliance exploded from the impact. The light ignited Merrie's form and shredded it.

With a scream, Merrie transformed and rolled away.

Fir swung at her with wide sweeps that pushed Merrie back. Streaks of light followed the curve of the blade, a light so brilliant it burned Merrie's skin like sunlight.

Merrie gathered the darkness to attack.

Fir drove her bardiche into the ground, setting off a burst of light that shredded Merrie's summon and disrupted her spell. Without hesitating, she surged forward and brought her weapon down in an overhead attack.

Struggling, Merrie sent a pulse of lust to try stopping her.

The blade cut into her side, slicing away her skin before the flash of light punched into her very being in an explosion of brilliance and agony.

Fir laughed. "Don't bother with that crap! I spent years planning on killing you. I'm not going to let you turn me into a slut, not anymore." Fir let out a growl and then attacked.

Merrie parried but the weapon flashed with sunlight, peeling away her skin in a blast of smoke and sake. She fell back and then threw herself further way as the blade crashed into the ground.

Even the near miss set off a sunburst which hurt just as much. There was no way to escape the attacks, not being so close to her opponent.

Merrie threw a command out, a compulsion.

Fir laughed. "That won't work either. I had them claw away everything that brought me pleasure, everything that made me submit. Nothing you could use to seduce me."

With a skip, Fir launched a blistering array of attacks. Each one that missed Merrie hit the ground in bursts of light that hurt as much as when the blade cut into her skin.

A psionic blast bounced off a mental shield forged in agony.

Shadows were blasted apart by light.

Compulsions sputtered.

Every spell that Merrie had was cast easily aside. Fir had trained to fight one being, Merrie.

Merrie switched to physical attacks, but despite the long weapon, the power that poured through Fir allowed her opponent to move faster than her. For the one bite she managed to graze against Fir's leg left her bloody and black in dozens of cuts and rents.

They broke apart, both of them leaving smears of blood along the ground but there was far more black and crimson on the files.

Panting, Merrie struggled to find something, anything, she could use.

Her opponent spun her weapon and waited. There was a grim smile on her face. "I'm in hurry. You won't abandon your prince to the queen and you are useless without someone to boost. Alone, you were always going to lose."

Merrie whimpered as she looked around for anything that would help her. Her companions were to the side, but they weren't watching the fight. They were talking to themselves.

Worried that they were trying to establish a plan, Merrie returned back. There was going to be no help for her. Despair and frustration darkened her thoughts. All she had left was exhausted self and most of her weapons were useless.

She wasn't quite helpless though. She still had powers that Pitia may not have planned for: Kivas, Rakin, and Parn.

Merrie mentally inspected herself. She was damaged and exhausted. But she dug deeper into her mind, burrowing through thoughts and emotions.

Compassion. She wasn't putting everything into the fight because of her guilt. Fir was a friend and Merrie couldn't bring herself to kill her.

The armor on Fir's body smoldered with the burning light. She chuckled and reached up to snap off the buckles. The heavy leather fell to the side, peeling off her body.

At the sight of Fir's scars, Merrie almost lost it. Countless scratches and twisted skin. Her breasts had been clawed off, ripped from her muscular body and then allowed to scar. She wore the years on her body and it had warped into an armor.

She had three infernal marks on each side of her body with the seventh right above her belly button. They were all glowing, but Merrie knew that they weren't the same as Pitia's. Fir shared long-term planning, betrayal, memory, and revenge. There were three others that she didn't know.

Fir tapped the butt of her weapon against the ground. A sparks of sunlight rose as the mark on her belly flashed. Light, Merrie's fatal flaw.

She smiled at Merrie. "Goodbye."

Grabbing her weapon, she charged forward.

With a snap, Merrie gathered up all her guilt, regret, and fear and shoved it aside. She would find penance later, but she had to win for more than herself, she had to win for the kingdom she served. And if that meant she would suffer for the rest of her life, then she would.

Immediately, the marks of betrayal and memories dulled.

Anger burst inside her and she growled. With a surge, Merrie launched herself at Fir. She had no intent other to strike as fast and hard, to win. The rage and fury were no longer hampered by her guilt.

There was a brief flash of surprise in Fir's eyes, then Merrie slammed into her with a concussive blast that tore apart the ground and launched her aside.

She drew on the memory of Dith's bonding as she sprinted after Fir. The spells infused into her opponent blossomed around her, the mystical patterns laid bare as Merrie scanned them while running.

Fir smashed against one of the pillars and another rune activated along her right side: pain. The more she hurt, the more power she had. The more Merrie suffered, Fir also gained power.

Merrie traveled the remaining distance in a flash.

Fir snapped her weapon in front of her, slamming the butt into the ground to brace it. The entire weapon glowed brilliantly, disrupting any shadows Merrie would have summoned.

Merrie had something else in mind. She thrust herself past the light that ripped away her skin and opened her jaw to lunge for Fir's throat.

The bardiche spun around and caught her jaw.

Merrie tried to bite through it, but couldn't.

Brilliance exploded inside her mouth, burning away the hound's tongue and jaw in an instant.

Merrie planted her feet against Fir's chest and launched.

Fir swung forward to catch her, but Merrie had thrown herself straight up.

With a howl, she focused on the fury how Pitia had corrupted Fir and the need to win at all costs. Her body twisted into her dragon hound form. With a snap of wings, she sailed up and over before channel all of her emotions through the fire energies still patterned after Scorch.

White-hot flames jetted out of her maw, igniting stone, marble, and warrior.

Fir let out a bellow of pain as she dodged away from the killing heat.

Merrie landed in the middle of the inferno and then jumped off again.

The tiles she had just stood on shattered from Fir's blow.

Beating her wings, Merrie flew straight up and over.

Fir jumped to the second and then the third floor, covering the distance in a zigzag to outrace her to the ceiling. Her weapon burned brilliant with the full fury of the sun as it came around.

The sharp edge caught Merrie's chest and sliced into flesh and bone. Her wing tore in a burst of pain that boosted both alpha and infernal.

Then she was falling.

Fir landed on her chest and drove the bardiche into Merrie's throat. The force rocketed them into the floor of the throne room and into the solid rock underneath.

Merrie froze as the humming blade twisted violent, slashing open her throat and snapping the spine that kept her head in.

The pain was gone, severed from her body. She stared up into the eyes of the furious warrior.

Fir snarled as she twisted hard the other way, ripping Merrie's throat open and severing her head. With a shudder, she activated her weapon and sunlight burst inside Merrie's body.

Unprotected, the black mist of her core evaporated in a second. She felt the heat searing her heart, clawing into the very core of her being as the triple beat pounded across all of her senses.

She had lost.

With all her powers, she had failed. Her hound form faded away leaving her naked and helpless. The flickering of power couldn't power spells though, her body was crumbling.

Fir smiled. "You were always going to lose," she panted. Blood dripped down from her brow and she had hundreds of cuts and bruises. Her scarred, tortured body shuddered with her effort.

The sadness faded away into determination. Her heart still struggled to beat, the triple slowing down but it still moved in her chest.

All she had to do was keep moving. Keep moving with her throat being severed by the collar containing Kivas. To never give up even as her body was burned away by the sunlight every morning in that grove so many years ago.

(No,) she projected weakly.

“You have no more shadows, no more magic. There is nothing to help, nothing to do but die.”

Merrie focused her memories on her journey into the abyss and the demons that had devoured her. She forced herself to remember every single time she managed to reform her body in the sunlight after she had died the first time.

Fir's infernal marks for memory dulled. Merrie wasn't suffering from guilt or forgetting, she was finding a new strength.

And then it was clear.

(To have shadows, you must have light.)

Fir frowned and her other runes started to flicker. Merrie felt confusion rippling through the well-researched plans and contingencies. Her hands gripped her weapon tightly.

Merrie managed to get a smile even as her mind was fading. (And from the bright of lights, comes the darkest of shadows.)

She thrust her consciousness into her being for the one thing she couldn't use, the spark of Olume, the god of light. It was the only thing that kept her alive but she needed more from the former god. She needed to do something impossible.

Fir's eyes widened. “No!”

She forced all of her energy into her weapon and Merrie's body shredded under the force of the sun forming in her chest.

Merrie opened her mouth but no noise would come out, but it didn't matter. She opened herself up and then reached out for the spark. Words formed in her head and her mouth at the same time.

“Then Merrie merged with the spark of Olume.” It wasn't her voice that spoke, it was her goddess. Parn had spoke through her and said a single sentence that came with the force full of reality.

The world stopped.

Her body reformed with quicksilver and dark and light. Naked and glorious, with no transformations or bonds holding her back.

No goddess showed up, no gods interrupted. Just a moment where Merrie saw the world as it really wants. Every mote of energy, every atom, everything that touched light and beyond.

She experience Fir's agonies in perfect clarity. She saw how she had been corrupted by powers, twisting and squeezing until there was nothing left. Even her soul had been stained by the onslaught.

Sadness flooded Merrie in that moment. She hoped there would be guidance, but Parn's presence had already withdrawn.

All that was left was to end the fight.

She reached up, her breasts heaving and the severed ends of her arms sliding through the blood and rubble.

Fir's body was froze in the moment of time.

Merrie kissed her lips. "I'm sorry. I will never forget you again, I swear with all my might."

Then she ripped Fir's throat out with her teeth. Flesh and bone disintegrated as Merrie reached beyond the physical form to the spirit that had been darkened and twisted by torture and pain. She shattered it before reaching for the very core, the tarnish soul of a woman.

It would have been easy to bite down and erase Fir from existence entirely. She had the power in that moment to make it as if Fir never lived.

Instead, she licked the delicate soul and let the light pour out of her. It bathed all that was left of Fir in divine power, buffing away the tarnish and polishing it until it shone. Fir would die in that moment, but her soul would live into the next life without the taint of the infernals or any of her pain.

With a smile, Merrie pulled back.

The soul slid away, to go wherever soul went before their next lives.

The world resumed with a lurch.

Fir's head bounced off the ground before it burned away. Her body slumped over Merrie's pale form before it also disintegrated.

Merrie pulled herself up in the silence of the throne room. Around her, among the destruction, flames, and blood, she saw the world again.

Pitia stood near the throne, her hand clutching the handle as she stared in shock.

Claston was only a few feet away from her. He wasn't looking at Merrie and she could feel the determination as the prince faced his impostor of a sister.

Bass and Sable flanked him.

Behind, Borias and Natis were speaking tensely and Merrie could see shadow magic gathering around Borias.

Pitia recovered first. She reached down and funneled an intense amount of energy into a gem. Behind her, a gateway opened up between the worlds, a contingency plan.

“Stop!” yelled Claston, his Presence radiating away from him as the desire to remain flooded the room.

Pitia froze for just a moment.

Bass held up his hand. He strained as he added his own presence and desire for her to remain in place. “Please, stay long enough.”

“Why?” said the tall woman. “There is no reason.”

Claston stepped toward her. “I need answers. Why? Why are you doing this?”

Pitia looked around, her eyes flickering as her runes glowed with plans already falling into place. “No, I not going to tell you. Even I’m not that foolish.”

Anticipation crawled along Merrie’s thoughts. She stepped sideways and reappearing next to Borias and Natis.

Natis held Claston’s sword between them, the point sparkling with energy. “Witness me and boost him,” he said in a cracked whisper.

Merrie felt energy crackling around them. They hadn’t wasted Merrie’s fight simply watching. They were making a plan of their own. She drew her senses through the summoning spell that Borias was framing in his mind.

He was going to summon the Lord of Shadows.

Merrie almost reached out to bond with him to boost his powers to nearly unlimited levels, but hesitated. With Dith’s senses and the memory of the god’s power in her head, she saw that he was more than capable of doing it on his own. It would hurt and he might fail, but he didn’t need her help.

Inside, the Royal Geas was satisfied. She had done her part to save the country and Borias would ensure that Franome would be safe in the future. There was nothing for her to do.

She was done.

A sense of contentment and happily flooded through her. She smiled and let it wash over her. With tail wagging slowly, she gestured to the two. (I will witness.)

Natis sighed and gulped. He looked at Borias and sighed. “I’m proud of you and I am honored to accept and grant you domain over

Blood County, to be known as the Shadows Marches in light of what has happened. You are now the Count of Franome and charged with protecting us from invasion and danger. I have no doubt you shall do it.”

Borias nodded. Tears ran down his face as he stared at the count.

To the side, Claston and Bass were both straining their raw presence to keep Pitia in place, but it wasn't going to last long.

Borias looked at her. “Ready be helping?”

Merrie smiled at him and sent him a wave of encouragement. (I've fought my battle, this is yours.)

He did a double take. “Be serious? This be going to hurt!”

Merrie nodded. (Finish up, we have a puppy mill to reopen.)

Borias gave her a pained smile. “I be liking you in gray again. But I be spanking you when this is done.”

Merrie glanced down with surprise. The darkness was gone and yet it wasn't. Her body had become gray again, as if all color had been leached out of her leaving only sparks of light that defied color. She smiled and wagged her faintly glowing tail.

The promise of spanking sounded good.

Natis sighed. “Not everything is sex.”

“No, but it be giving me hope.”

The old man sighed. “Then, it is your turn. Borias Kivas, Count of the Shadow Marches...” Natis reached down and wrapped Borias' hands around the hilt of the sword and then angled the tip of the blade back until it was touching Natis throat.

Next to Merrie, an old man walked up. He was gray and not entirely there. The name welled up in her thoughts, the Reaper of Accepting a Good Death. He gave Merrie a nod.

She sent the reaper a wave of welcome and then turned to focus on Natis' final words.

“I surrender my life to you willing, to welcome death in your hands. Thank you for the gift you have given.” His words were strong, as was the jerk he gave as he drove the tip of the blade up into his throat and into his skull.

Necromantic energies burst out of Natis, an invisible storm that fluttered the dust at their feet before it poured into Borias. His long dormant powers activated, gathering it up much like Merrie enhancements and drew the raw power of a sacrifice into his heart.

For the shortest of moments, it stormed inside him, but then darkened into the purest of shadows. His eyes became two black voids as he lifted his hand and released his spell. "Lord of Shadows, come to your Consort! Feed upon the beast who betrayed our oaths and threaten our realm!"

His voice echoed across the realms, piercing the veil and spreading out in a wave of power that swept across the country.

Pitia's infernal marks exploded into reddish light. She let out a cry and spun around to throw herself into the gate she had formed.

The pitch tentacle of the Lord of Shadows punched into her stomach and out her back. The air before her tore in half and living shadows poured in. Tentacles slammed into the infernal, crushing her against the ground as the impossible shape of the Lord of Shadows crawled into the throne room.

(I accept, Star of Darkness,) boomed the thought of the powerful and alien being.

Pitia lashed out, her fingernails glowed as they cut through the Lord's tentacles and shattered claws, but there were always more as they pinned her again into the ground.

The shadow kin poured out from the rent around the Lord in a wave of darkness. They fell upon Pitia, tearing and biting and ripping.

Borias groaned and sank down.

Merrie caught him with her body and prevented him from falling.

He recovered and stood up.

She looked directly at him and felt a sense of peace. (Good boy.)

Borias came in a single burst of pleasure and pride.

His shocked look caused her to giggle. Tail wagging, she led him toward the rent in reality. (Come on, we're done.)

Borias stumbled. "Not be over."

The Lord of Shadows dragged Pitia's corpse toward the opening. Blood streaked along the floor and the shadow kin followed after it like a hunk of bloody meat being dragged across a yard.

(For us, yes. We have served Franome, but we should probably leave it to the others to clean up and heal. We cause entirely too much destruction with our presence, it's our nature.)

“Aye. I not be sure I can be closing this gate,” Borias said as he looked at the three-story tall rent in reality. Beyond it, the shadows boiled and raged outside, at least what was visible around the bulk of the Lord of Shadows still reaching across.

(We can.)

Together, they limped toward the gate.

As they passed Bass, the armored paladin turned and focused on her. There was a moment of silence and then he nodded. “Go, we are needed here.”

Sable sent wave of intense love and lust. (We’ll return home when we’re done, be safe until we meet again. It may be days or years, but I’m going to hump your face the moment I see you again.)

Merrie barked happily.

Claston was focused on talking to two Loyals. He was already working to get everything cleaned up, but he kept glancing at the gate.

Merrie sent a pulse of affection. (Be a good king, but we’re going to take our shadows with us.)

He tensed, the muscles of his shoulders tightening. He wanted to look at her, but he remembered his mother’s words. The king had to show he was worth of respect and had no favorites.

Queen Vikia turned back to Merrie. “The Royal Family does not associate with the Whore’s Guild, do you understand?”

Confused at the queen’s orders, Merrie glanced over at Kirin who was polishing off the second bottle.

“Even if,” Vikia’s voice grew tense, “they have the gall to chug a bottle of thousand year old wine with the grace of a drunken teenager.”

Kirin lowered the bottle and licked the black wine from her lips. She gave a sheepish smile and shrugged. On her belly, the infernal rune for wine glowed brightly, pulsing with a rapid beat.

“And, while I appreciate you considering my son to be bonded to you—”

Merrie cringed at the tense words directed at her.

“—it would not be in his, yours, or his betrothed’s best interest to let a naked slut join that part of his life. And I don’t trust him to do the right thing and say no, which is why I refuse to let him go to you. The Crown must remain free of any obligation that doesn’t further this country’s greatness.”

Claston’s shoulders slumped and he nodded without turning away from the Loyals.

Merrie turned and finished crawling over the threshold of the rip in reality. As she did, she called to the shadows around her to follow and took her family home.

Choice

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With a heavy canvas cloth draped over her head, Junko was trapped between a dusty bag of potatoes and a large crate of apples. The smell of sweet fruit and earth mixed with the stifling heat that bore down through the canvas over her head and choked her.

She tugged on her hair, pulling the black and green braids across her face and breathed through it. It wasn't much better, the last chance she had to clean was in a river that smelled of dead fish and rotting leaves.

Making a face, she looked for the edge of the canvas. Catching it, she reached out with her delicate fingers and pulled it back.

The afternoon light bore down on her, blinding her. She flinched but kept her eyes staring out over the edge of the wagon until her vision cleared.

A heavy hand rested on her head. "Just a little more. I can see the edge now. It's just ahead of us."

The sound of her father's exhausted voice tore at her heart. He was just a merchant, not a warrior, but he had to be both when they ran away from home.

She blinked away the blindness and then peeked up around her. They were on a dirt road leading somewhere. Curious and needing fresh air, she tapped her fingers on the bench next to him in a silent question.

He looked around carefully. She caught sight of his bandage wrapped around his right shoulder. It looked worse than before. The blood had dried into a dark splotch of brown and black, but the edges were green from their dip in the river. It couldn't be healthy

but they didn't have much more material than the canvas they needed to hide her.

With a nod, he lifted one leg and straddled the bench. He was a big man, right on the edge of fat and muscular, with a stocky belly and dark hairs. He also had rough, warm hands.

He reached down and pressed his hand firmly over her mouth and nose, clamping down until she felt a strange quivering deep inside her. With his other hand, he scooped her up and pulled her free of their remaining wares.

With a grunt, he swung her back and set her down. His hand lingered over her mouth as his dark green eyes stared into hers.

She trembled in his look.

"Hand over your mouth," he said, his eyes darkened with pain and sadness.

Junko nodded and reached up with her own hand. She was much smaller than her father, but they had done this many times since they found out about the curse. When he pulled his hand away, she slipped hers over her mouth and clamped it over her lips.

He smiled despite the trouble that boiled inside him.

The horse in front of the wagon made an alarmed noise.

Startled, he turned and grabbed for the reins to regain control.

Junko looked around. Behind them and to the sides was fields and copses of trees. It was a beautiful green expanse compared to rockier terrain of their home in Belkim. Then she looked ahead of her.

It was as if the world had been cleaved down the middle. Healthy, vibrant trees gave way to twisted black limbs dripping with long streamers of moss and mushrooms. A mist clung to the ground, somehow surviving the heat that bore down on her. When she looked, she realized that the wind was blowing in different directions on opposites of the border.

She gasped.

Her father smacked his hand across her mouth, crushing her fingers against her lips.

Junko froze, unable to turn her eyes as she scanned whatever she could see for the telltale crackle of lighting and the buzz of teleportation.

Her father let out one breath and then another. The golden amulet to Madock, the god of merchants, sparkled in the light before it slid back under his shirt. "Damn. That was close."

She cringed, unable to speak. With her heart calming down, she leaned into the powerful hand that clamped over her mouth and kissed her father's palm.

He relaxed minutely. After a moment, he released his hand to reach around her. Pulling her close, he kissed the top of her head. "Just be quiet, we're almost there."

Junko didn't know where they were going. No, she knew, but it was a place that had called to her in her dreams ever since that day in the temple. The day her own uncle had declared their victory had been delivered and her grandmother had cursed Junko's tongue to ensure Junko would never be lost.

The wagon rolled across the line of life and darkness. The air grew instantly cold, frigid compared to the heat of the summer field. Goosebumps prickled along her skin.

A smell of sake wafted past her, a tickle in the back of her throat that reminded her of the days when she sneaked some of her father's drink when he wasn't looking.

He sniffed the air with surprise.

Underneath the whispering scents, there were others of mold, damp, and fungus. To her relief, it didn't smell of dead fish or swamps.

They followed the road for some distance. She expected that the world would grow darker in the lands, but it remained in a state of twilight.

When the wagon came over a hill, she saw the building that had been dancing in her dreams for months: a farmhouse in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by a fenced yard and fields of mushrooms. There was nothing else around it but she could see a town about ten kilometers to the side.

Her breath came faster. Why was she drawn here? What caused the dreams to start? More importantly, why did she think she was so sure she would be safe there that she convinced her father to travel across an entire foreign country?

Her father clenched his amulet and whispered a prayer. He was begging Madock to make sure he did the right thing.

Excitement rose up inside Junko. There was something at the building she needed, something she craved.

For the briefest of moments, she felt a tickle in the back of her head but then it was gone.

They continued along, faster than before but still hesitant. They had stumbled into two ambushes from her uncle and only good luck had let them escape, good luck and a watchful eye.

When they got closer, she saw there were people on the porch of the house.

A man in a black shirt and pants stood leaning against a sturdy post. He drank something steaming.

Across from him, a shirtless thriban of terrifying bulk had his arms crossed over his chest.

Something deep inside quivered, a fear as she looked at the powerful-looking monster. There were very few thriban in Belkim and the ones she had heard of had blue and black skins, not the deep gray of the one waiting for her. Their travel across Franome had brought them up against the gray thribans and everyone terrified her.

A flash of movement caught her attention. A child or animal of some sort bounced off the porch and ran across the yard toward a number of small buildings. The movement was strange and the pet was low to the ground but sailed with every step.

A flicker of movement and another pet raced across the yard toward a small graveyard.

The first one chased after it, barking clearly echoing across the distance.

Junko wondered what type of creatures this new place would have.

Her father drove the wagon up to the sign by the opening in the gate. The words were written in a different language that she had only started to learn, but she knew the words for "Puppy" and "Mill."

She lifted both hands to her mouth and nose, tightening her grip until she could barely make a sound.

Her father got off but gestured for her to stay. "Be safe, be ready to run. Toward that small lake we passed and then into the woods.

Remember that fence we passed? Head for there and I will find you if I can.”

When he turned around, the man in black was strolling up. He had a heavy mug in one hand and his other hand in his pocket.

“Be greeting you. I be Borias, count of these marches.” He had strange way of speaking and his voice sounded almost like the way the air tasted, silky and with a tickle in the back of Junko’s throat.

Her father stepped back from him and up to the wagon. “My name is Ito of the family... just use Ito. I don’t know why I’m here, only that I’ve been traveling for a long time and hope to find something my daughter has been looking for.”

Borias gave an easy smile and a shrug. “This be the end of summer and the fair be over. It be quiet for all of winter and we can be helping. You may not be wanting to stay here, but we be taking you to the town? Blood’s End is only an hour’s drive away and has the local fortress.”

Her father looked at Junko, his face torn. He never understood why she wanted to be here, just as much as she didn’t know why the dreams called for her. He was torn, exhausted, and broken. Neither had sleep in a soft bed for weeks and the only comfort they had at night was their shared warmth as they clutched each other.

He shook his head. “I... it needs to be here.”

The thriban grunted. Junko looked up, but the creature had only raised an eyebrow. Teeth peeked up along his lower lip. She noticed that he was very muscular, with white hairs on his dark gray pectorals.

She clenched herself in fear, not wanting to get closer to him.

“N-Not for me, if that isn’t a choice, but my daughter needs to be here.”

“Really?” asked Borias but it was a curious question, not a mocking one.

Junko wanted to pay attention but she felt a presence on the other side of the wagon. Hesitantly, she leaned over and looked down.

There was a naked woman on her knees on the ground by the wagon. She had her hands up by her throat with dark hair spilling down her large breasts and erect nipples. Junko started to gasp and

then dug her fingers into her mouth to keep herself from making a noise.

The woman reached up and Junko realized that she didn't have hands. She didn't even have forearms. Her limb ended at her elbow.

Heat flickered inside Junko, a curiosity that she had never experienced before. What was it like not to have an arm? Her eyes looked over as the woman began to wiggle her entire body.

The stranger didn't have her other arm either. It ended at the elbow just as her legs terminated at her knees. A dark tail snapped back and forth, shaking like a puppy dog who couldn't control his butt.

Junko started to giggle, then froze. Tears burned her eyes as she looked around sharply in fears that she would see the lightning of her uncle's teleportation.

Heart pounding in her chest, she calmed herself and turned back.

There was another woman kneeling on the ground next to the first.

Startled, Junko jumped and gripped her mouth tighter.

Naked as the first, the second woman's arms ended at her wrists and she had her lower legs tucked underneath, but Junko couldn't see hands or feet. Where the first one was dark brown, the second woman had no color at all. Not even the reflections of the mushrooms that were beginning to shine blue in the shadows. She was utterly colorless.

The second one had pointed ears sticking out through her white hair and a matching tail and bounced back and forth with less excitement than the first one. It was still a movement of joy and happiness.

Looking at the two women, Junko couldn't help but think about how helpless they would have been, how much they couldn't defend themselves. A familiar ache began to grow inside her, one that she had grown to hate every since they fled their home.

The sable one gestured with her chin toward the ground.

Junko shook her head. She glanced over her shoulder toward her father.

Ito was speaking with Borias. "I don't have much money."

“We not be taking any. Ever since we be reopening the mill fifty years ago, we be taking not a single mark. The mill be free, but selective. We all be having choice.”

“Your father built this place?” Junko’s father asked nervously. He had always cherished traditions and Junko knew he was trying to find some common ground to stall.

“No, we five be building it. Many years, rarely be leaving now. This be our home, this be where we stay.”

There was a soft patting next to her. The sable woman was reaching up like a little girl, bouncing on her short little legs as she tapped the bench for Junko to come down.

A longing rose up, a desire to obey. With her stomach fluttering, Junko inched over to the side of the wagon and crawled down. She had to switch hands over her mouth as she did.

Her cloth shoes sank into the soft earth. Heart pounding, she got a better look at the two strange women. They were older than she thought. The sable-haired one had wrinkles around her eyes and smiled like Junko’s aunt. The colorless one was younger but the edges of her body grew hazy when Junko stared at her.

Both of them sat back and brought the ends of their arms to their neck. The older one had a leather collar against her throat with a symbol of a rose on it.

Junko’s eyes drifted down. She almost made a noise when she saw their bare sexes were hairless and smooth.

As if reading her thoughts, they both spread their legs and settled back to brazenly show their womanhoods to the air. Junko knew that Franome women were more open about their sexuality, but this was more than she had seen in her travels.

Junko blushed hotly.

The colorless one lifted herself up and then then knelt again, bringing her wrists to her bare throat.

She did it again, and then both of them did it.

With a start, Junko realized they were telling her to do the same thing. She shivered with an intense longing to obey, to be like the two women who smiled at her.

Sable bounced on her hips and repeated the gesture.

Junko looked up with her cheeks burning but she was out of sight of her father. An image of him commanding her to sit thundered

through her mind, adding to the quivering heat that tickled her insides.

Slowly, she sank to her knees. Her dress fluttered around her hips as she rested on her knees.

Both tails wagged happily together. As one, the two women brought their wrists up to their throat. This time, they arched their backs and pushed their breasts up.

A hunger filled Junko. She wanted to be like them, they were beautiful.

Shaking, she curled her fingers up and lifted them to the bottom of her chin. Her heart pounded with excitement as her knees slipped further apart to balance herself.

They both beamed.

Junko let out a shuddering gasp. Realizing she had almost made a noise, she reached up to clamp her hand over her mouth but the colorless woman crossed the short distance in a blink and pulled the hand down.

Centimeters away, Junko stared into eyes that were the warmest gray she had ever seen. They glowed faintly and she could almost see a universe of stars beyond.

"I am Merrie," came a voice of silk and sake. Where Borias had spoke like a dark drink in the air, Merrie's voice was the lightest touch, a stolen sip in the middle of a party, a giggle after sneaking into store room before the sun rose.

The fluttering in Junko's belly grew more intense, a heat that rippled along her body.

"She is Sable."

The older woman bounced and wiggled her body, her breast and hips quivering excitedly as her tail snapped back and forth. She seemed to be boundless energy, a puppy ready to play.

Merrie stared into her eyes. "What is your name, sister?"

Junko shook her head.

Merrie's eyes grew more intense. "Speak." Her voice seemed to echo in Junko's head with an intimacy of a lover Junko wished she had instead of Tsukodan's pawing in a barn.

A hungry desire rose up, a begging from the very core of her being to just open her mouth and speak. In the briefest moment, the curse didn't matter anymore and she shook her head.

(Speak,) came a command that she couldn't deny.

"Junko."

It didn't matter that she whispered in the quietest voice she had. It didn't matter that it was in tiny space between their bodies. A crack of thunder and lightning shot across the sky and the world grew dark.

"W-What?" Her father called out. "Junko, no!"

Junko cringed and clapped her hand over her mouth, tears rolling down her cheeks as more lightning burst across the sky.

Twenty meters away, a bolt of power slammed into the ground, scorching the earth and kicking up a cloud. When the wind blew it away, there was a man standing there. Hisao of the Natori, her uncle.

More lightning struck the ground, slamming with rapid succession. Each strike left behind another of the clan's warriors, men who were going to take her home and force her into the shrine where she would be chained and never allowed to escape. She was their so-called perfect voice who would surrender to the dark god they worshiped and bring on a dark age.

"Junko!" Her father rushed around the wagon. He flung himself past the two naked women to scoop her off the ground and throw her into the wagon. Face pale, he climbed up after her.

A powerful hand grabbed the reins. It was the thriban. He shook his head.

"Give those to me! We have to run. We have to!" begged her father.

"Ito... why are you running?" Hisao spoke in his low, growling voice. "You can't escape us, just let us take her home. If you want, stay."

The thriban reached out for Junko.

Ito drew his sword but a sharp look from the monster's yellow eyes stopped him from doing anything besides holding it lightly in his hand.

The thriban turned his hand and held it out, palm up. It was massive, larger than her chest and head. She could easily imagine how easily he could have crushed her skull between his thick fingers.

“Junko,” said the thriban but she didn’t know how he knew her name. His voice was lower than she had ever heard before, the rumble of an avalanche pouring down a mountain. “You are welcomed here. We will protect you with our lives, but you must ask.”

She shook her head, grinding her hands over her mouth even though it was too late.

Her heart screamed at her to take the offer. It was the thing that she had dreamed about for months. The reason they risk death, robbery, and insults to reach.

Borias walked past the wagon and toward her uncle. “Be greeting you,” he said in his strange way of speaking. “I be Borias, the count of—”

Hisao curtly interrupted him. “Out of the way, grasslander. We have no interest in killing you today.”

“True, but this be my land and I would be appreciating if you not spilling blood. I be hating to defend myself. There only be fifty of—”

Hisao yanked out his short sword from the sheath. In the same movement, he slashed up and cut Borias from crotch to throat in a single blow. The blade arched high before he flipped it over and drove the point into the space between Borias’ neck and collar to pierce his heart.

Junko and Ito both gasped with surprise and fear.

The thriban, on the other hand, didn’t seem to be perturbed that his companion had just been killed. “Please? Accept our offer. You will thrive here and we know exactly what you need.”

More lightning struck the ground, summoning more of her family. Soon there were fifty armed men arrayed in front of them.

Junko looked back and forth between her uncle and the thriban. Her voice rose in her throat, a whimper of fear and longing. She wanted to say yes, she wanted it with more than anything else in her heart.

“Well, that be rude.”

She let out a cry as did her father and uncle.

Hisao lurched away from Borias and drew his long sword.

The man in black reached up and pulled the blade out of his neck. Black blood dripped down the length of metal. It splashed to the ground before evaporating in puffs of mist.

“Demon!”

Borias shook his head. Around him, the shadows took on a new life as they stretched across the yard without a light moving above them. Something boiled in the depths.

The thriban sighed and dropped the reins into her lap. “He’s going to steal all the kills. Come on, bitch.”

Shaking his hand, he snapped his fingers and strolled toward the attackers. There was something casual about how he moved; he acted as if he was heading to a play or show, not death.

Sable bounded after him, her tail wagging and her bare sex glistening. She barked cheerful.

The air around the thriban shimmered as metal plates appeared in a cloud around him. Then, they rushed toward him, slamming into place with a thud that shook the ground.

In mid-bound, plates of armor crashed into Sable. When she hit the ground, there was a fully armored hound with glowing red eyes. The rose symbol shone on her chest, matched by the one worn by the thriban.

In the distance, something came out of the woods and streaked toward them.

The only person at the mill who wasn’t moving was Merrie. The colorless woman sat on the ground near the wheel, her tail wagging back and forth as she watched.

One of the warriors attacked Borias.

The man in black stepped to the side.

A shadow near the warrior’s foot burst into a writhing mass of tentacles. It grabbed his leg and hips and yanked down, snapping the man’s pelvis before he was bent in half and pulled somewhere impossible.

Junko whimpered. She scrambled around her father and dropped to the ground next to Merrie. She felt safer on the ground, as if someone would protect her. Inching closer, she clutched Merrie’s shoulders and her remarkably soft but cool body.

The armored thriban charged forward. A two-handed sword appeared in his hand that he swung and punched into the front ranks of the warriors.

“That’s Bass, a paladin,” Merrie said in her low, seductive voice. “Borias is the count of the Shadow Marches and the wolf coming up

on us is Tabitha who is visiting for a few years before heading north again. Who are your friends?"

Junko whimpered. "M-My family. They want me back. B-Because I...."

"Because you feel a longing in your heart you can't explain?"

Junko nodded.

"When your father gives you a command, does something pulse inside you? A wish that he would be rougher? Stricter?"

"Y-Yes."

There was another crack of lightning as more of her family were summoned.

Merrie smiled. "I know. I can see it in your eyes."

The melee between the strangers and her family had turned brutal. Even though Bass, Sable, and Borias were outnumbered twenty to one, it was a slaughter. Sword and teeth and tentacles tore into a family that was feared across Belkim.

Not far away, the wolf that Merrie had mentioned was rapidly approaching. It was huge, bigger than Junko thought possible. When it leaped over a small pond, she realized how much she underestimated the creature's size.

Hisao stumbled out of the fight. His blade was still dripping black blood. He spun around. His gaze caught Junko's and he stalked toward her.

Merrie stood up on her knees. Up close, Junko could see she was dripping wet and the smell of her sex was just like her voice, sake and silk. She grinned at Junko. "You will always have a choice. Madock sent you to us because we know what you are and how to train you. We've been through this ourselves."

"You follow Madock?"

The strange dog woman smiled. "Let's say, we have become intimate allies over the years. Make a choice, only you can do. All you have to do is speak."

"I-I don't know how."

Merrie winked. "Then present yourself and bark."

Turning back, she trotted to meet up with Hisao, the famed champion of the family. A naked woman against a killer wearing blessed armor.

Junko whimpered. She looked around and felt the longing rising up. Madock had sent her there, he had blessed her family for many years and he had given her something she needed.

Ahead of her, Hisao slashed at Merrie with incredible speed. His blade sung with the golden energies that could cut through metal and stone.

She hopped to the side casually and circled around him.

He dismissed her but then froze. A shiver of something ran down his back and Junko saw fear in his eyes. Turning away from Junko, he faced Merrie with a scowl and a brandished blade.

Heart pounding, Junko knew what to do. She didn't dare look up to see her father watching her as she carefully knelt on the ground. Trembling, she lifted her bent fingers up over her small breasts and pressed her knuckles to her throat. The touch was electric and felt as natural as if she had been doing it her entire life.

With tears in her eyes, she took a deep breath, arched her back, and let out a single sobbing bark.

The people of Puppy Mill froze, a knowing smile across their face. Then they resumed their slaughter. A wall of swords slashed through the battle. Black tentacles rose up and swallowed men whole. It was chaos and death.

And then the wolf blasted through the yard. It was huge, almost as tall as the house itself. An immense jaw opened up and then chomped down on her uncle's head. There was a wet ripping noise and then the wolf vaulted over the wagon and the house behind it. The impact on the far side shook the earth.

Junko turned back to see Merrie playfully sit down in front of Hisao with her tail wagging back and forth.

Hisao's decapitated corpse dropped to his knees, then Junko's uncle collapsed with a groan.

Merrie's eyes bore into Junko's, pinning her in place. There was a force behind the smile, an intensity that was more loving and powerful than anything Junko had seen in her life.

The warm gaze brought an intense quiver of longing and a rush of unfamiliar heat to her loins. It promised comfort and love and peace.

Junko held her breath as she stared into the warm, gray eyes. The tingle returned, a tickle in the back of her head.

(Welcome to the Puppy Mill,) said the voice of sake and silk inside her head. With it came a wave of emotion that contained all the love and affection in the world.

About the Author

t'Sade has been happily using third-person singular since the late eighties. Besides that strange quirk, they enjoy writing a brutal combination of sex and violence for decades. Most of their stories explore the fringe edges of sexuality in the epic quest of trying to write a story for every fetish and turn-on known to the human libido.

It's going to take a long time.

Their writing can be found on their website, tsade.com. Most of it is free to read and enjoy.

t'Sade

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