

A Not So Typical Rescue
Written By Klesk Vadrigaar

It was a typically dark and silent night around the fortress. Torches around the perimeter and hanging from the parapets kept the sparkle of the stars at bay, the guards yawned as another shift bereft of anything interesting stretched out before them, and the illuminated windows danced with the shadows of morphs going about their business unbothered by any care or concern.

For the one currently sneaking up upon the outer wall, the need for such dull monotony to remain unbroken was paramount. She had quite the complicated job to do and if anyone were alerted to her presence it would be an instant death sentence. Tossing a grappling hook up onto the edge of the wall, the cloaked figure got her rope good and tight, then carefully pressed her bare feet against the stone. It felt porous and rough against her soles, not all that comfortable but good for keeping a steady grip while she climbed. As the guard above mindlessly stepped through his patrol, the figure scaled the wall and silently dropped onto the walkway behind him. Automatically her hand went to the hilt of the fearsomely large sword sheathed on her back, the instinctive urge to bring steel to neck and neutralize a possible threat stilled only by observation. The guard was walking to his tower post almost as if on auto-pilot, whistling a tune to himself and blatantly not paying the least bit of attention to his surroundings. Unless she did something to announce her presence there was zero risk he'd suddenly turn around and see her.

Uncurling her fingers, the figure turned her attention to the grounds inside the wall. The stables were directly beneath her, which revealed several nice big piles of hay for a soft landing, however she could hear the shifting hooves of horses tethered there and knew if she simply jumped to the ground they could easily startle and garner unwanted attention. To her right a pair of guards were idly minding the main gate of the fortress, and to the left, another pair were pacing across the great stairway that lead the front doors. Entering the normal way was out of the question; fortunately the sight of a second stairway leading underneath the main stairs quickly resolved the issue. Even if the current owner of the fortress wasn't the kind to really care for social status, they still respected the need for servants to never be seen entering the same way as guests or residents.

Carefully retrieving her grappling hook and rope, the cloaked figure slipped off the walkway and let herself hang from it by her hands. Timing her moves to synch with the heavy footsteps of the guard above her, she inched her way over past the stables to where only a sheer drop awaited her. Hooking herself to the wall she rappelled down to where she could safely fall without injury, then with a hesitant breath she yanked the hook off and cringed as she hit the ground. Mercifully the recent rain had softened the dirt so she was met with only a brief spasm of pain as she dropped to her knees and checked around her. The abrupt pull of the grappling hook had torn a few fragments free from the wall, but so far no one seemed to have taken any notice.

With a relieved exhale, the figure lay down on her stomach, balancing with her elbows and knees held outward. Like this she was able to slowly crawl across to the lower stairs, the shifting of her cloak making only a minor disturbance on the air, far too subtle for the very bored guards to take notice of. They were lazily scanning the area every time they reached the end of their patrol, swapping idle banter when they then turned around and crossed each others path. So long as she remained out of the flickering areas illuminated by their torches she may as well have not been there at all. All the better really, though she was well armed, the feel of earth against her body through the thin fabric of the cloak was a telling reminder to the figure that a straight up fight would not end well for her, at least not right now.

Finally reaching the lower stairs, she let herself tumble down onto the landing, reaching up to feel the door and discovering that while it was locked, the lock was of an old antiquated type. Nothing the lockpicks she had concealed on her scabbard couldn't open. A few clicks later and she was inside, the wall sconces revealing the warm but plain décor of a wine cellar.

Seeing she was alone, the figure stood and gleefully dispensed with her cloak, revealing herself to be a most fetching example of a young human maiden. Burnt gold hair cascaded down her body, reaching the small of her back in thick but exceptionally well-groomed locks. Holding it back from her face was a small ornate crown, molded of finest gold and encrusted with precious jewels. A very regal adornment, it was made all the more noticeable by the fact that, save for her sword, it was the only attire the female wore!

Naked for all to see, she boasted a body of most generous endowments, breasts each as big as her head sat pert and pretty above a toned stomach carved with finely developed abs. Her arms and legs boasted similarly lithe but firm muscle, and her hips held a fine manner of female curves. Her skin was bronzed from frequent exposure to the sun, and her face held the same perfect sculpt as befitting a royal princess. Despite her lack of protection the female seemed perfectly fine with her nudity, her mind focused on the next phase of her mission.

Pushing open the other entrance to the wine cellar, she tiptoed her way through the stocked pantry then the kitchen. Her first objective was along these underground tunnels, but she had to be careful not to lose her way lest she run into someone. The door to the servant's quarters creaked open as she exited the kitchen, and the female had to quickly duck into a nearby wall alcove as two figures clad in typical peasant clothing exited carrying a tray and a bucket.

"You sure that's enough food for him?" One of them voiced in concern.

"He's been a most uncooperative prisoner. He should be lucky he's getting anything at all!" The other spat back. "Honestly, I feel more pity for the dogs outside. There's some damn fine scraps o' meat on these bones and now they ain't going to

be getting any of it cause Sir Lucian wants to give that beast another chance to work with us.”

The female’s eyes lit up as the two passed by her alcove, quickly she checked there was no one else in the corridor then followed behind them at a safe distance.

“I understand, but still he’s so...big, I mean you think he’d be more open if the master would let him actually sate his appetite for once?” The first mused, earning herself a groan from the second.

“As I just said, if he’d agree to work with us then he’d get the treatment befitting of a proper guest. Right now he won’t, so he ain’t.”

The armed female crouched as the two rounded a corner, sighing at their admission of such reckless mistreatment. She appreciated the good fortune that they were going to just lead him to their prisoner, but given what they said she feared for what else may have befallen the captive since his capture. The Lucien they spoke of was not known for taking rejection well.

Rounding the corner when it was safe, the female descended further into the depths of the fortress, always keeping the servants just in her line of sight till they came to a wrought iron gate and rapped upon it impatiently.

“Oi, put your card game down and let us in! Got today’s rations for the beast.”

Again her hand went to her sword. She didn’t fancy the idea of having to kill others who were simply trying to work for a living, but this was a perfect shot to get in and get the prisoner out with a minimum of fuss, and seeing as there were only three guards inside, making it a case of five on one, the odds were in her favor.

Fortunately luck seemed to be on her side again as the one opening the gate simply held out his hand, indicating they were to give him the food and take their leave. With expressions that indicated they were perfectly fine with this request the servants made the exchange and the female drew out her enormous blade. Mentally she timed the swish of the closing gate against the two servants now coming towards her, remaining hidden till just after they’d passed, then leaping out and wedging her sword tip behind the gate to prevent it from closing completely. Her heart leapt into her throat as there came the audible CLANK of metal impacting against metal, yet she looked up to be met with the sight of the guards reluctantly approaching the cage in the middle of the room.

“Okay bud, dinner’s served. You going to be nice enough to let us in tonight?”

From inside there came a most feral growl. The guard with the food sighed gesturing for his colleague to ready the crossbow he clutched in his hands.

“Well it’s either that or you starve again. I’m opening the door now so either you play nice or you’re going to get another poisoned arrow through the neck.”

The growl came again, harkening the shape of something very large standing up in the shadows. With the guards still distracted by their charge, the female carefully edged the gate open, her breasts quaking with the rapid beating of her heart as there came a rusted creak across the dungeon.

“Ugh, did you forget to lock the gate again?” One of the guards said. She quickly slipped inside and readied her blade.

“I...uh...ah dammit.” The guard with the food muttered meekly.

“For the sake of the gods, put that down and lock the gate first. We don’t want to encourage this damn creature into making another escape attempt.” The guard with the crossbow groaned.

Setting the tray down the first guard pulled the keys from his belt and turned to do as commanded. A second later his head plopped neatly onto the ground and the collapse of his body was announced with the jangle of his armaments and weapons.

“Huh?” The second guard turned, and silently screamed as no sooner was he met with the sight of his decapitated comrade than the cold bite of metal was felt at his throat and he went down in a hemorrhage of blood.

“What the?” The crossbow wielding guard turned, caught momentarily off as he beheld the naked, extremely voluptuous beauty pointing a massive sword at his face. “Wh-Who are you?” His answer was getting his crossbow cleaved in two, just as two gigantic scaled hands shot out between the bars of the cage and grabbed him from behind. The female stilled her killing blow as the guard’s voice was quickly choked off, right before there came the crack of his neck breaking.

“A nice sight to send you to the afterlife, apparently.” She replied, snatching up the keys and approaching the cage. The hands dropped the dead guard and threateningly gripped the bars as she began trying each one in the lock.

“I was not aware I had a visitor.” A voice within the cage muttered deeply. The hands withdrew as the female finally found the right key.

“My father’s spy network failed to inform you of my arrival?” She stepped inside the cage, gasping in amazement as its occupant emerged from the shadows. He stood nearly 10 feet tall, clad in emerald green scales everywhere save for his chest and the underside of his muzzle, which were a lighter tan. His face bore the horned visage and majestic snout of a prime specimen of dragon, and the powerful muscles that covered his hulking frame spoke further volumes of just how healthy,

not to mention how dangerous, he was. Much like the human female before him he was nude save for a pair of steel manacles and chains restraining his arms and ankles. The female shuddered as the sight of his huge sheaths and balls, both tan coloured, came into view.

"I received word that they were sending the princess." He said, eyeing the human suspiciously.

"And so they did." The female smiled, tilting her head forward to illuminate the crown on her head. "I am her royal highness Princess Aurelia, sent to both free the legendary crafter Cyd, which I'm assuming is you, and retrieve the Drunen Forge from Sir Lucien."

The dragon blinked, scrutinizing the beaming human and her likewise state of undress. "Are you normally in the habit of attempting such undertakings in naught but your flesh?"

Aurelia looked down over herself, hefting up her giant boobs and shrugging. "Usually yes. It's pretty useful actually." She noted the scaled being's looks of disbelief as he snorted a short jet of flame.

"The king of this province sent his own daughter, a madwoman, as a means of gaining my allegiance?" He asked, grimacing when the princess simply smiled wider and held up the keys.

"Correct on all but the second point. Most think of me as quite a sensible soul actually, just with slightly unorthodox means of getting the job done. And seeing as so far I've managed to successfully infiltrate this fortress, dispose of your minders and now currently hold the means of your liberation, I believe I'm doing pretty well." She replied, politely withholding her snickers as Cyd dubiously stared at her before finally holding out his manacled hands as a means of acceptance.

"You truly believe you can get the Forge back from that tyrant and walk out of here unscathed?" He asked in disbelief as she unlocked his cuffs.

"With your help I do, seeing as you look more apt at carrying heavy stuff than I." She knelt to release the dragon's leg irons, again trembling as her head came close to his massive scrotum. She was able to catch a whiff of its scent, a very spicy tang laden with an earthen fragrance. It reminded her of a roaring fire in the hearth, and made her skin tingle. "I trust your treatment here hasn't been too harsh."

Cyd rubbed his neck, his face tightening in evident pain as he brushed over two small puncture wounds. "It hasn't been pleasant. I haven't eaten in days, and the effects of their wretched poisoned arrows still weaken my limbs." He looked to Aurelia, blinking at her worried expression.

“How atrocious. Let me do something about that.” She sheathed her sword and pulled out a small vial from a pouch attached to the scabbard. “Drink this, it’ll ease your pain and replenish your energy, at least temporarily.”

Cyd took the vial and downed its contents, surprise overcoming him when he felt the pain leave his body, finger thick veins pulsing over his muscles as they tightened with renewed vigor. He winced and flexed instinctively, causing the princess to swallow as his body expanded in the rush of feral oomph.

“Better?” She asked, squeezing her legs together when the dragon regarded her again.

“Than I have been in a while.” He replied, still shocked at how potently the potion seemed to have affected him.

“Excellent, do you know where Lucien is, or where he might have stashed the Forge?” She asked. Cymon exhaled a flurry of flames and glowered at the open gate.

“Last I heard he left it with his alchemist, seeing if he could possibly crack its secrets since I would not give them up. As for Lucien himself...” The dragon cracked his joints. “I imagine you’ll find him wherever there’s the most noise in this place.”

Aurelia checked the hallway again and nodded for the dragon to follow. “Can I trust you to follow my lead, and keep silent? Though I can empathize with the rage you must be feeling, we are still two against Lucien’s entire force. First we must locate the man himself. Once we have you can split off and try to find the Forge.”

The dragon looked even more bewildered. “And what will you do while I am searching?”

Aurelia beckoned him into the hallway, sighing as Cyd had to crouch in order to fit. “I shall persuade Lucien that his uprising against my father is folly, and that it would be best for him to depart these lands and never return.” From behind she felt an increasing glare of distrust. Drawing her sword, she turned and confidently faced the dragon. “Don’t worry, I can be very persuasive.”

The massive beast raised a hand as if to argue, then merely shook his head, though as she turned Aurelia could still feel his gaze upon her. Daringly she wiggled her bare bottom at him, her body tingling anew when he grunted with obvious distraction.

“Must you?” He asked.

“Just making sure you’re paying attention.” She replied.

The two carefully snuck past the servant's quarters again and made their way through the underpasses till they reached a set of stairs leading up to a door in the distance. Signaling for the dragon to remain stationary, Aurelia ascended and nudged the door open, being momentarily blinded by the brighter illumination that lay on the other side. Blinking and rubbing her eyes, the human beheld a red velvet carpet leading away from the door and into the vast expanse of the fortress' main floor. They would be exposed more than ever from this point on, but presuming her luck held as it had, the princess felt certain she could get them through any danger.

Carefully she pushed the door all the way open and beckoned for the dragon to stay close. Quick as they could, the two crossed the floor, their bare feet making little noise against the soft plush of the carpet. It was a comfort in more ways than one, especially for Aurelia. Not only was she able to get her escort and herself to the wing's stairway undetected, but it came as a welcome relief after creeping around on the bare stone.

Ascending to the next floor, she again repeated the practice of carefully canvassing the area from the doorway, and promptly froze upon seeing a six strong group of armored guards marching towards her.

"Master seems in good voice tonight. Wonder what he's got to tell us that's so important." The one at the front mused.

"Probably just more of the same morale uplifting schpiel. You know how he loves telling us we made the right decision by defecting to him." The next one in line replied.

"Whichever, least it makes for something more entertaining than watching the front." Another in the group muttered as the procession turned right and headed to a pair of red metal doors down the hall. With a cocked eyebrow of intrigue Aurelia stepped out behind them and plastered herself against the wall. The coldness of the stone against her skin came as a shock but she braved through it as she crept up and listened as the guards hauled the doors open.

"....and what's more, I have something I have been wanting to say since we first took control of this stronghold, valid proof that our efforts and sacrifices have again borne us fruits of glorious progress!"

Aurelia rolled her eyes as the doors slammed shut again. "Sounds about right to be him."

The dragon looked uneasy. "He's far more chipper than usual. That's not a good sign."

Angling her sword in between the doors, Aurelia pried them open again to keep listening.

"Within a day we shall no longer have need of our...draconic guest. The secrets of the Drunen Forge have been cracked, and by none other than our resident wizard, Agastral!" Came the booming voice, followed by the cheer of several hundred. The princess looked to the dragon, seeing his eyes burned with equal parts disbelief and fiery rage.

"Could they?" She asked, jumping when the dragon belched flames.

"Impossible! They...." He broke off when the human sternly raised a finger to her lips. "They can't have. I alone know how to use the Forge, and it is not something a mere human mind could comprehend the workings of." He continued in a hushed whisper.

"Well from the looks of things in there, Lucien's pretty convinced he's accomplished just that. We've gotta get it and you out of here, and I gotta put a stop to this rebellion of his." Aurelia replied, peering through the crack in the door. "Unfortunately there's about three hundred strong in there between us and him so this will require some careful planning."

Cyd's gaze trailed back to the wake of the hallway, a clawed finger and thumb rising to stroke his chin in contemplation. "Even if they have achieved the impossible they can't have had time to restock their arms....I wonder...."

Aurelia turned as the dragon abruptly withdrew from her side. Alarmed she rose to try and call him back, then immediately silenced herself when she remembered she was still holding the door to Lucien's gathering open. Nervously she checked through the crack but the knight was still speaking, and seemed not about to wrap up. Hoping he'd keep going for a little bit longer, the princess secured the door then rushed after her escort, only to turn and find the hallway now deserted of draconian presence.

Puzzled, Aurelia carefully proceeded along, checking every alcove and finding nothing save for a series of decorative statues flagging both walls. With heavy breaths the human gripped her sword tighter, wondering why she wasn't hearing the sounds of footfalls, or a violent scuffle.

Such pondering had to be abandoned, however, when the door at the end of the wing suddenly swung open in front of her and she had to duck behind one of the statues to avoid being seen. Out of it stepped yet another guard, who looked to be as confused as she was upon finding the hallway empty.

"Yes? Someone there?"

Aurelia held back her blade. If this guard had somehow heard her approach then she had no choice but to take him out before resuming her search.

"Hello? Come on guys, this joke's getting old!"

He stepped out, she poised to strike...

Then the statue she hid behind promptly grabbed her arm and held her back.

With a strangled gasp Aurelia looked up, now discovering that the 'statue', despite bearing the same slate grey colour scheme as the others before it, was fashioned in the likeness of a dragon. A very familiar looking dragon, who made a shushing noise with his lips, then reached out and grabbed the guard by his face. A series of muffled protests issued forth till the poor soul fainted from the lack of oxygen.

"Huh, that's a neat trick." Aurelia commented as Cyd stood up and shifted his scales back to green.

"Well you did say keep quiet. Figured I might as well humor your plan so long as it continues to succeed." The dragon replied. He dragged the unconscious guard back into the room he'd emerged from, revealing it was stocked with an arsenal big enough to supply at least three platoons of soldiers. "I heard my minders mention where they'd stashed their armory a few days ago, complaining about how they had to come all the way to this floor in order to get their weapons each day. Figured it was worth a shot to try and find it." He began checking the room's contents, snorting when he came across a shelf laden with small metal spheres. Idly he tossed one to Aurelia and quietly noted that she caught it while still distracted with checking the guard's body.

"Smoke bombs and flash bangs, quite hazardous materials to store in an area where you're going to have people regularly passing by." She commented.

"Indeed, specially considering the inferior manufacture." Cyd said with disdain. "I could make far better versions of all of these armaments."

Aurelia turned the bomb around in her hand, gradually glancing back up to the dragon as he grabbed a cloth sack and began loading it with explosives. "I certainly hope so. We're going to need the edge if any others follow Lucien's example and decide the monarchy needs to be usurped."

Cyd paused in his actions and shot the princess a fiery glare. "Now hold on just a minute, human. I have given word that I accepted your offer of allegiance!" He expected Aurelia to step back, to at least show some sign of caution at his outburst. Instead the princess merely smiled and teasingly traced the circumference of her nipple with the bomb, giggling at the tickle of the cold metal against her fat nub before she tossed it into the sack with the others.

"Yes you haven't, *yet*. I was banking on being able to persuade you it's the right choice."

The dragon's eye twitched, his distrust starting to falter as the human merely stood there, smiling politely while she drummed her fingers against the hilt of her sword.

"And if I turn you down?"

Aurelia shrugged. "You obviously don't care for helping Lucien so I guess I'd respectfully have to let you go free. Either way, I still gotta get you out of here first."

The dragon snorted, then swung the sack over his shoulder. "Fine, then let's at take care of our mutual opponent. I guess I owe you that much for busting me out of the dungeon."

Aurelia gestured for the dragon to take the lead this time and the two hurried back to the amphitheater door, prying it open in time to catch a triumphant banging of fists against wood.

"Take heart my brave troops, on the morrow we shall march through the palace gates and liberate this kingdom of its despicable regent!!" Lucien proudly declared. Aurelia flinched as if hurt, and turned to see that Cyd was hurriedly priming the bombs. Taking advantage of the deafening cheering she pulled both doors open all the way, then dove for cover behind them as the dragon grabbed the end of the sack and sent its contents rolling into the amphitheater. Cheers were soon replaced with surprised gasps as the first volley of explosives detonated blinding the room's occupants, followed by alarmed screams as thick smog erupted from the second volley to envelop everything.

"Go find the Forge, Cyd. I'll handle this from here!" Aurelia commanded. Nodding in satisfaction the dragon tore off down the hall, while she backed away from the smoke filled doorway, took several deep breaths and then proceeded to enter the mirth. Her body itched from the smog irritating her bare skin but that was a good thing, it helped her sense where the mirth was starting to thin out as well as feel her way down the aisle till she reached the stage in the center of the room. Climbing on top of it, the princess held her breath as long as she could, watching as a dark, frantically waving shape began to materialize in front of her. As the smog finally cleared she let it out in a huge WHOOOSH of an exhale, heavily gulping down fresh air as the black being before her regained his sense and looked up.

coughWhat....*hack* What is the meaning of this, who dares to intrude!" He yelled, blinking as the visage of a gorgeous nude siren emerged from the mists in front of him, fixing him with a stern stare as she brandished her sword.

"Oh come now, Lucien. Surely the years spent in exile have not blinded your keen eyes to the sight of one who is of royal blood." She chided, watching as Lucien rose and stared at her in dumb bewilderment, looking first at the crown on her head, then the swells of her giant breasts as they bounced nicely with each labored breath.

"Princess...Aurelia?" He asked, continuing to take in her incomprehensible state of exposure.

"I've grown a bit since we last met haven't I." She said, cutting a pose to show off to the choking soldiers who were gradually getting up from the floor. "Like what you see? I'm told I've blossomed quite well."

Lucien just kept peering at her with his slitted, inhuman eyes. Eyes the princess remembered had filled her with unease as a child, more so when she later heard of what the knight had done in his so called service of the crown. "After all these years... *cough* ...it is you who leads the King's... *cough* ...army to counter my assault?"

"Nothing of the sort, Lucien. They're all waiting back at the palace, ready to march over here and crush your forces into the dirt. I'm here to give you a chance to avoid that." She stated plainly, watching every of Lucien's moves as he stood and found his breath again.

"You...have come here to try and stop me....as...as you are...with no back up? How do you intend to do such a thing, Highness?"

The princess smiled wryly. "By warning you, as I have, and demanding that you pack it up and leave."

Lucien glowered at her; his offense seemingly enhanced by the way her body kept diverting his attention. "Clearly you are as insane as your father! Further proof that this kingdom's monarchy is unfit to rule and must be disposed of!" He declared, getting a wheeze of agreement from his troops.

"So you can do what? Take over the throne in our place?" She leveled her sword at the knight in accusation. "You think you can do a better job running lands as vast as these?"

Lucien sneered. "The oppressed have endured hardship for long enough! It is time we made our voices heard."

Aurelia facepalmed. "Oppressed? Lucien come on, you know that's utter rubbish!" She turned to the room. "Truth is you all hoped you had found a divine messiah when my father was crowned, who would fix all the problems present throughout these territories and scare our enemies into submission. You wanted a

leader who could make everything perfect, failing to see the simple truth that you were expecting more than one mortal being could ever be capable of delivering. Thus when he didn't quite live up to expectations you leapt on his every error like starving wolves to raw meat, never once acknowledging his victories."

Every eye was on the princess now, and not all of them were simply because of her nakedness.

"Our peace treaty with the regions to the north! Such would have been thought impossible before my father's reign! The roads that have connected many of the towns and villages you hail from, which have made transport across the kingdom a thousand times easier, who is to thank for that? Who gave the clerics freedom to experiment, which allowed them to find the cure for the plague that ruined our cities? Is none of this worthy of note?" Aurelia pressed forth, seeing to her satisfaction that at least a few were considering her words. "Fact is, my father's been a perfectly fine ruler and the kingdom's doing nominal under his reign, you're just blowing his failings out of proportion for your own ends." She shot a glare back at Lucien, who notably now had a hand on his own blade.

"Brave words, but they fail to answer for the price that was paid to achieve such so called triumphs. Thousands of my men lay dead on the battlefields for that peace, entire plains of natural lands are now lost thanks to the roads, and the number who suffered in the search for the so called cure was catastrophic!" He argued back.

"Perhaps, but at least they yielded results. Can you say you could do the same? You who jeopardized our relationships with so many of our neighbors because you felt diplomacy was a pointless pursuit and that the only means of subduing opposition was through conquest? You who not only put prisoners of war to death but then hunted down their families and hung their corpses from our walls as an...an example to others? No Lucien, whatever problem there may be with my father's regency you are not the solution. Merely another extremist whom we were right to exile, and is certainly not capable of running an kingdom any better than we!"

The mutterings among Lucien's troops became audible, prompting the knight to round on Aurelia. "You still fail to explain yourself. How can you call yourself a member of a just regency when you show up attired in nothing, with no armor, no shield and no protection?"

Again there was that wry smile, the princess's hands tightening on her sword as she prepared for the true challenge of her mission.

"I have no need for such. I am perfectly protected as I am!" She declared, bringing the amphitheater to silence and all eyes on her now in shocked disbelief.

Even Lucien needed a moment to process what she'd said before finally finding his voice.

"You talk madness woman! Madness born from worse madness!" He growled.

Inhaling slowly, Aurelia raised her sword for battle. "Allow me to prove it then. Pit your blade against mine, one on one. If you defeat me you can do what you wish with me, then carry me back to my father's palace as a hostage to barter for his surrender."

With bared teeth, Lucien drew his own weapon and Aurelia's heart seized as they crossed blades. She knew she could stand up to her claim, but it would require she make no mistake. Plus as Lucien made the first move and she found herself fighting to parry, the years spent in hiding had clearly not dulled the knight's skills. The princess feigned a swing, then ducked under Lucien's counter and drove his sword up against his chest plate. Briefly she exchanged a confident beam of her bronze features with the disdainful sneer of the black haired warrior, and then the two broke and retreated.

Facing one another they circled around the stage, the gasps and wheezes of the troops around them stilling as all watched in rapt attention. Lucien lunged and Aurelia dodged, he crossed and she nimbly deflected. The clash of steel against steel echoed uninterrupted as the combatants tried to find an opening in the other's defense, brutality continually being halted by grace.

Stepping back to dodge a return swing, Lucien stared daggers at his opponent and drove his blade towards her in an attempt to skewer. Barely managing to move in time, Aurelia knocked the weapon aside, only for Lucien to simply wind back and make a second attempt. She parried that too so he went for a third, snarling as yet again the princess managed to twirl her massive sword into the right position between his attack and her flesh.

"You have been given some instruction I see." The knight stated dryly, his mouth twisting into a smile for the first time. Aurelia cocked her head, and then froze as she heard a disturbance on the air, not from in front but from behind. In a flash the princess had dropped to her knees and spun her sword around so it covered her back, the ping of a projectile glancing off it bringing a tired sigh to her lips.

"And you apparently no longer consider cheating to be beneath you." The princess looked over her shoulder and shot a death glare at the audience. Lucien took the opportunity to attack, meeting the edge of his opponent's sword as the two locked eyes over their blades.

"This effort of yours to defy me is pointless. There is no honor to be had in prolonging the inevitable!" He cried, furiously slashing away at his target, which

caused Aurelia to stagger as she caught and countered. Sighing again, the princess regained her footing then executed an overhead swing, nailing Lucien's parry with the flat of her sword and forcing his weapon down against the stage. Making sure she was braced against his struggles to counter, the princess raised one arm and drove her elbow into the knight's face, knocking him for a loop which gave her a chance to retreat, detect another intrusion from the onlooking troops and twirl around to slice the dart that had been fired at her in half.

"I agree, which is why I again am trying to give you a chance here. Call off your uprising, or see it crumble before your eyes!" She threatened; dropping to her knees again as Lucien's sword came sailing through the air overhead. She felt her crown shift slightly from the wake and realized her opponent was really raring to make her pay for her continuing interference. Driving her blade up to meet his and spinning around again, the princess paid the knight a look of pleading. The move only seemed to enrage him further, and she found herself quickly dodging a frenzied series of attacks, madly swing her blade every which way till finally she spied a blessed open and kicked the knight away. Even in his armor, the shock of being physically attacked by one so seemingly vulnerable helped augment the surprising amount of force in Aurelia's kick and so the knight tumbled onto his back, rising and glaring at the princess with a fire that signified he was done fooling around.

"I will not concede defeat to the spawn of insane monsters!" He yelled, leaping to his feet, then jumping to initiate an aerial dive, his sword hurtling towards Aurelia like an arrow from heaven.

The princess stilled, eyes widening as death descended upon her. Then with gritted teeth she charged forward and leapt at the knight, time seeming to slow as the gathered troops watched the two meet in the air, watched as Aurelia twisted her body so her opponent's blade passed safely by her, while she brought her fist up into Lucien's jaw. The knight reeled away from the blow, inadvertently exposing his sword hand, which the princess was all too happy to finally greet with her blade. Two cries of pain announced the pairs' landing, Aurelia on her feet, Lucien on his side clutching his wounded hand.

"Monsters....okay now that really was uncalled for." Aurelia said. Spying the knight's dropped sword, she kicked it off the stage, then turned and leveled her own weapon at his throat. "Last chance Lucien. Concede defeat or lose your life."

Lucien growled ferally at her, his eyes turning to the gathered warriors who were all now looking well recovered and able to turn the tables on the princess' victory in a snap. For a second Aurelia felt worry return....but then a violent rumble outside the room brought her back to calmness.

"Oh and if anyone else is planning to take another shot at me...did I forget to mention I let the dragon you were holding out of his cage?"

The red metal doors caved inward, giving everyone enough time to turn and witness them being blown off their hinges. Two unfortunate souls caught them with their faces and went down for the count, the rest dispersed towards the center of the room as Cyd appeared carrying an ornate, monstrously huge forge on his shoulder and clutching the ashen remains of a human corpse dressed in burned alchemists robes.

"Ah you found it, excellent!" Aurelia cheered as the dragon regarded the scene before him in perplexity.

"And you...appear to have been successful in your negotiations." He said, tossing the charred body onto the stage. "I saw to it whatever their alchemist uncovered about the Forge died with him. His lab, his notes, all reduced to ashes." The dragon sounded pleased. Aurelia respectively winced from the smell of the corpse.

"Well then, I believe we're finished here. Let's take our leave." Aurelia hopped off the stage and walked back up the aisle, smirking as Cyd exhaled several jets of flame to keep the gathered troops at bay. "And to you all please take note of what's happened here tonight, and keep in mind yes your royal family could perhaps be construed as crazy, but as I've just proven, we're the kind of crazy who know what works!"

Cyd cocked an eyeridge, intrigue welling up inside him as Aurelia bowed and turned to leave.

"This isn't over, Princess! Even without the Forge, we will still rise to topple your regime! The dissension of the masses will not be stopped by one measly victory!" Lucian darkly stated. Looking down, Cyd saw Aurelia roll her eyes.

"Perhaps, but for now you may want to consider that your entire army just saw you not only lose to a girl wearing nothing but goose bumps, but also fail to make a single mark on her." The princess checked herself over, carefully examining her breasts, legs, ass, and even her hair. "Seriously, you didn't make contact once with any part of me at all. I would've expected better from one trained to be a royal protector."

Aurelia strutted smartly into the hallway, though Cyd noticed she quickly grabbed his hand as soon as they reached the stairs. Even more intrigued he let her hurriedly lead him back to the main level and out the front door, the guards patrolling the courtyard stirred from their boredom at the sight of a girl and a hulking beast walking pretty towards them, both naked as newborns.

"Okay, the guys inside have something to chew over, but I fear these may still wish to impede us." The princess mused as the guards hastily unsheathed their

weapons and carefully approached. She raised her blade in preparation to fight, but then felt a hand rest upon her shoulder.

"Please, allow me." Cyd said, taking a very deep breath and then spewing a wave of fire towards the guards. Figuring it wasn't worth it, they wisely turned and fled, though the dragon made sure to give them added incentive by setting every flammable object in the courtyard ablaze. Hearing a whinny of fright from the stables, Aurelia ran over and cut the horses free from their tethers, hopping onto the back of one as Cyd grabbed the main gate with his free hand and forced it open. Trying to again not get distracted by the show of such manly strength, Aurelia kicked her horse into action and rode it out the open passageway, surprise overcoming her when Cyd broke into a run and quickly caught up. Despite balancing the crushing weight of the Forge on his shoulder, the dragon kept pace with the princess' mount, the two only slowing when the burning fortress was a speck in the distance.

"I don't think they're coming after us." Cyd said, setting the Forge down.

"Nah, I think Lucien's cause just lost most if not all of its support thanks to our little scuffle." Aurelia replied. She slid off the horse and stood before the dragon, giggling when again he looked at her in blank disbelief.

"You really are completely insane for doing what you just did." He said. The princess merely shrugged as if to say 'what can you do?'

"I also just saved your tail so all in all looks like it was a worthwhile risk."

Cyd nodded, wincing as he felt a prick of agony in his neck. "I think your potion is starting to wear off."

Aurelia smiled. "Can I possibly persuade you to come back with me to the palace then? If only to get a decent meal in you and let our clerics purge the poison from your wounds."

The dragon's face became stern, jets of steam erupting from his nostrils. "And then you'll again bring up the offer of allegiance, to try and get me to help your cause. Tell me, what else can you offer me besides the simple relief of not aiding extremists like Lucian?"

Aurelia cooed as she playfully pretended to think. "Well let's see, security from any other rebellious souls who wish to misuse your skills, a nurturing environment where you'll be accepted and trusted, the knowledge that you're providing for a power that can protect your fellow brethren..." The princess daintily cupped one of her boobs, lifting the giant mass up to lick at the tempting nipple. "And if none of that convinces you, there's also me."

Cyd look lost, almost adorably so, and he only grew cuter when Aurelia let her other hand slip between her thighs to rub at her wet folds causing him to realize what she meant.

“You....truly?”

Aurelia closed the gap between her and the dragon, smooshing her soft tits against his steely pecs. He felt as warm as a furnace, smooth and so delectably strong. The entranced look on her face said it all.

“You truly are not only insane, but also a very odd girl with totally incomprehensible tastes.” The dragon sighed as the princess traced the contours of his arms, a murr escaping his lips when she took them by the wrists and wrapped them around her body. “Unfortunately, I must concede that you were able to do as you claimed. You helped me get the Drunen Forge back and walked out completely unscathed.” He looked deeply into her violet eyes and smiled. “And so long as I’m at it, you indeed can be very persuasive.”

Aurelia giggled, leaning up to kiss the dragon on his nose. “So that’s a yes to the offer then?”

Cyd nodded. “Provide me with a spacious place to work, plenty of raw materials and three proper meals a day, and I will use the Forge to make the finest weapons and armor for your army that I can.”

“Good, because I fear Lucien was right on one thing: there will be others who don’t realize that rebellion isn’t the answer for every case of discord. We have to be prepared for anything.” Aurelia replied. With a smirk and a heft, Cyd brought her up onto his other shoulder, making her squirm with glee as he picked up the Forge and began to walk again unbothered by all the extra weight. “This is going to be a truly wonderful relationship between us!”

Rolling his eyes and snorting in good humor, the dragon nodded. “Certainly a most unusual one.”