

Chimerical

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Episode 17: Restoration

"How much air does Nish need?" Jo'dehki thinks aloud.

Jadhi tilts her head and raises a brow. She looks at the powerful Cathay-Raht, who stares at the front door like a dog waiting for his master to return home.

"Who is 'Nish'?" S'tari asks.

"Ra'kanishu. It's what everyone calls him." Jo'dehki answers.

"Strange." S'tari murmurs.

"We never gave him a nickname, until he earned 'Ra' when he was fourteen." Jadhi adds.

"So young?!" Jo'dehki's eyes widen in surprise.

"Is that strange?" Abari asks.

"Ra' is an honorific prefix given to male leaders; men of high status." Jo'dehki answers.

“Oh... How did he earn such a title as a boy?” Abari turns to S’tari.

The family collectively glance at Hiska-dar, who hangs his head. He closes his eyes and sighs. As many years as it has been, whatever happened still makes him feel ashamed. He opens his mouth to speak when the front door abruptly opens. Everyone turns to the entrance as Nish walks into the home, Tsanavi by his side. The short Suthay holds the Imperial’s hand, their fingers interlocking.

“What kept you away for so long?!” Jo’dehki chuckles.

Abari gives him another swift kick.

“Ow! Stop it!” He growls at her.

“This one did not realize you would be so upset.” Nish chuckles, closing the door behind him.

“Hello, Tsanavi.” Jadhi and S’tari call out.

“It’s good to see all of you again.” Tsanavi says with a smile.

Hand in hand, the Imperial and his Suthay companion walk toward the short table, where the others are waiting. Nish quickly grabs a padded chair from across the room, placing it beside his own. They take their seats, Tsanavi placed between Ra’kanishu and Jadhi. Tsanavi turns to Nish, gazing at him with her golden eyes. She reaches up

with her clawed hand, gently brushing his neatly trimmed beard, which is now very short. He places his hand over hers, holding it still and stroking her fur with his thumb.

Jadhi rests an elbow on the table, her chin sitting atop her upturned palm as she grins at the two. She appears to take great joy in their interactions, her lips curled into a faint smile. After a brief but tense silence, Nazahn clears his throat. The sound seems to snap the Imperial and Suthay out of their trance.

“Are you hungry, Tsanavi?” Nish asks.

“Tsanavi could eat.” She says with a smile.

“Let this one cook something for you! He will be right back!”

Nish quickly rises from his chair and heads for the kitchen, leaving Tsanavi with his family and companions.

“So, *you* are his lost love, yes?” Jo’dehki suddenly says to her.

Tsanavi lowers her head, softly chuckling. The other women also giggle at Jo’dehki’s ineptness. Abari turns to the Cathay-Raht, her eyes wide in shock. She gives Jo’dehki another swift kick, striking his shin.

“Ow! Why do you keep doing that?” He turns to her.

“Because you insist on intruding into other people’s personal matters.” Ābari replies.

“Just making conversation.” Jo’dehki innocently remarks.

“You’re sticking your nose where it doesn’t belong.” Ābari scolds him.

“Is there somewhere else that you would like me to put it?” He asks, winking at the Ohmes-Raht.

The family collectively chuckle as Ābari’s expression changes to one of extreme embarrassment. She isn’t used to the lewd behavior of the Khajiit.

“You must be Jo’dehki.” Tsanavi chimes in.

“Nish spoke of me?” He turns back to her.

“And Ābari.” She nods.

“All good things, yes?” Jo’dehki grins.

Tsanavi doesn’t respond, merely shrugging her shoulders. Jo’dehki takes a breath, but before he can continue speaking, Ābari interrupts. She steers the conversation, avoiding personal matters between the young woman and her Imperial, out of respect for Nish. She does her best to prevent Jo’dehki from interjecting. After some time inside of the kitchen, Nish returns with a carved wooden plate in his hands. He sets the plate in front of Tsanavi and quickly pours her a drink. She looks down at the plate, her lips curled up around her snout as the Imperial serves her

like a queen. He takes his seat beside her and slips her utensils.

“White fish is still your favorite, yes?” Nish asks.

Tsanavi nods her head, her fingers brushing his as she takes the utensils from his hand.

“You remembered.” She murmurs.

“How could this one forget?” He coos.

S’tari stares at the two, her eyes shifting between her Imperial son and the dainty Suthay. Though earlier she had claimed to disapprove of their affection for one another, her pleasant smile would suggest otherwise. As Abari looks around the table, she can’t help but notice how everyone except for herself and Jo’dehki both glance at the Imperial and his female companion; varying degrees of curiosity and joy are visible on their faces.

“Are you staying for the night, Tsanavi?” Nazahn asks.

“No. There would be little room for me in this house.” She politely replies.

“We can always find room for you!” Nish interjects, as if pleading with her.

“You could sleep beside Ra’kanishu.” Jo’dehki teases.

“Shut up, Jo’dehki.” Nish retorts, his gaze fixed on Tsanavi.

“That’s alright.” She giggles. “There is a home already waiting for Tsanavi.”

After finishing her meal, Nish helps his mother S’tari clear the table. Tsanavi assists the two, staying close to Nish and following him wherever he goes. With the main room cleaned, the family prepares the home for the night. They move the table to a corner, stacking the chairs atop it. Using several folding partitions that are pressed against another corner and near the front door, they turn the main room into several bedrooms. While S’tari and Nazahn share the framed bed in one corner of the room, Hiska-dar and Jadhi use exceptionally well-padded bedrolls, which they keep stashed away in a cupboard.

“Ra’kanishu will walk Tsanavi home.” He tells the others.

S’tari and Nazahn simply give him a nod. When Jo’dehki attempts to leave with Nish, Jadhi reaches out, grabbing his wrist and stopping him in his tracks. He turns back to her, looking down at her as she subtly shakes her head. Ra’kanishu and Tsanavi quickly leave the home, disappearing into the darkness outside. The family adjourns to their respective partitions, with Abari using a spare bedroll and lying beside Jadhi. Jo’dehki lies down at the far end, a space he was to share with Ra’kanishu.

Though he waits for Nish to return, he never does. Eventually, after what feels like an eternity of waiting, Jo'dehki is too tired to stay awake; he falls asleep in his bedroll, facing the doorway. The Cathay-Raht yawns and slowly opens his eyes, the bright morning light shining through the windows. He pushes himself up and stretches, flexing his muscles.

"Have a good sleep?" Nish asks.

Jo'dehki turns to see Ra'kanishu sitting on a padded chair, his hand resting on the pommel of his Khajiiti sword. The tip of the claw-like blade sticks into the dark wood of the floor as he spins the sword, watching the light reflecting off the highly polished oricalcum metal.

"How nice of you to finally return." Jo'dehki grumbles as he rubs his eyes with his palms.

"Sorry, my friend. We decided to catch up." Nish chuckles.

Jo'dehki looks around the partitioned room but does not see another bed roll beside him.

"When did you return?" He asks the Imperial.

"A few minutes ago."

"You must have done a lot of catching up." Jo'dehki smirks.

“You would not believe how much. When we were too tired to continue, she graciously allowed me to sleep there.” Nish explains.

“This one doubts that you even had to ask for permission.” The Cathay-Raht laughs.

“Perhaps... When you and Abari are ready, we’ll leave. After we return her safely to Dune, we might even make it be home before dinner. Meet me outside, when you’re ready.” Nish instructs.

The Imperial rises from his seat and lifts his sword, twirling the blade once. It swishes loudly through the air, before he quickly sheathes the weapon. He wears a fresh set of clothes, his weapon belt and his pack, which is slung over his shoulders. He steps outside, leaving the Khajiit sitting upright on the floor, his legs tucked into his bedroll. Jo’dehki stretches again before rising to his feet. He steps around the partition, the claws on his toes clicking on the wooden boards beneath his feet; Abari and Jadhi are still sleeping. Abari shifts and yawns, her eyes slowly opening.

He steps back around the partition and reaches into his own pack, taking out a second set of clothes. After changing, Jo’dehki collects his weapons and gear, walking past a standing Abari and through the front door as she stretches her muscles. He rushes down the stairs, his head swiveling as he looks for his comrade. As his boots hit the rust colored earth at the foot of the steps, he spots Ra’kanishu in the distance, sitting on a large rock beside Tsanavi and looking toward the distant horizon. Her tail sits

to one side, the tip gently curled around his waist, while his arm drapes over her shoulder.

He approaches the two, the stomping of his boots and rustling of his pack contents drawing their attention. The large and powerful Khajiit climbs onto the rock, sitting down beside Ra'kanishu.

"This one hopes he is not interrupting." Jo'dehki begins.

"No more than usual." Nish quips.

After a brief silence, the trio turn back to the sound of several pairs of feet approaching them. Ābari, Jadhi, Nazahn and S'tari approach them. S'tari holds a large bundle of cloth in her hands. Nish and Tsanavi slide down the boulder to meet the others, while Jo'dehki stands atop the large stone.

"You two always did like it out here." S'tari says to her son.

She presents the bundle with outstretched arms. Ra'kanishu takes the bundle, feeling several objects shifting within. He gently unwraps the objects, finding a large loaf of crusty bread and half a wheel of cheese, as well as a leather pouch tied at the top and containing dried banana chips. He grins as he looks down at the gift, glancing up at his mother.

“Banana chips.” He murmurs.

“For your journey to Dune. They are still your favorite, yes?” She asks him.

“Of course. Thank you, mother.” He says softly.

He passes the bundle to Tsanavi before giving S’tari a tight embrace.

“Please, return home safely.” She murmurs.

“As if we would not?” He chuckles. “We should be home by dinner; dusk at the latest. Don’t worry, mother.”

“That is like asking the sun not to shine.” She quips.

He releases his mother and drapes an arm over Tsanavi’s shoulder, holding the Suthay close. Tsanavi presses herself into Nish’s side, resting her head along his collar bone. Nish, Tsanavi and Abari leave the home and head for Abari’s horse and wagon. Jo’dehki jumps down from the boulder, quick to follow his friends. After taking time to feed and water the horse, they head for the road to Dune. To Jo’dehki and Abari’s surprise, Tsanavi climbs into the back of the cart, joining them on their journey rather than waving them off. Nish seems completely unphased, as though he had known she was going with them.

Abari takes the reigns and brings the horse to a slow walk. The two men march beside the horse and wagon, keeping a steady pace down the road. As they leave S-

ren'ja, Tsanavi passes around the food given to them by S'tari; Abari and Jo'dehki snack on the bread and cheese.

"You two don't want any?" Abari asks Tsanavi and Nish.

"No, thank you. We ate this morning. This one cooked for Tsanavi." Nish replies.

He glances over to Tsanavi with an intriguing gleam in his eye. She gazes back at him with an equally enamored expression. Abari looks between the two, silently chuckling as her lips curl into a faint grin. They move along the winding road to the capital city of Elsweyr, admiring the beauty of the great plains. Eagles soar overhead, while Senche sun themselves in the distance. They turn to the group and lick their lips, but do not rise from the warm earth beneath them. The sun reaches its zenith when the outline of Dune comes into view. They have nearly arrived.

Abari sees the ancient city, her eyes lighting up with excitement. She hasn't seen Dune in more years than she can recall, and is eager to visit her family, whose faces she can barely remember. If not for the letters from her parents, she wouldn't even know their address. They enter the city proper and walk through the crowded thoroughfare. Neither Abari nor Tsanavi have been to Dune, captivated by the bustling bazaar. Ra'kanishu and Jo'dehki are far more reserved, both having extensive experience in large and often dangerous cities; they rest their hands on their weapons.

“Don’t wander off, no matter what, alright?” Ra’kanishu warns.

He looks to the women, his eyes focusing on Tsanavi. They nod their heads, trusting in the two warriors. They bring the cart to a stop, parking just beside an alleyway. The women climb out, and Abari reaches into a small pouch, taking out a letter that she had kept with her. Unfolding the letter, she looks back and forth between the parchment and the surrounding streets. After a moment, she returns the letter to her pouch and climbs back into her wagon, leading the three down the main street. She turns a corner, and then another, before abruptly stopping the wagon.

They stand on a thin road, an alleyway only slightly wider than the wagon itself. Tall buildings surround them, apartments that had been recently constructed as the population increased. The men look around, their eyes scanning the surrounding buildings carefully. Ra’kanishu holds Tsanavi close, his right arm shrouding her like a blanket. Abari climbs down from the wagon, walking to a particular building. She takes a deep breath and knocks loudly. After a brief moment, the door swings open and a surprised looking Cathay woman stands in front of her.

The older, white furred female stares at Abari with wide, red eyes. She steps out from the doorway, looking over Abari.

“Hello, mother. It’s good to see you.” Abari says with a smile.

The woman wraps her arms around the dainty Ohmes-Raht girl, holding her tightly. She kisses her cheek several times and nuzzles her face with her snout. A Suthay-Raht male steps out from the house, his coat of black fur gleaming in the sunlight. His green eyes grow wide as he looks at the women embracing in front of the doorway.

“Abari?! Is that you?!” He asks.

“Hello, father.” Abari replies.

“By the eight, it is so wonderful to see you!” He exclaims.

He joins his wife in embracing their daughter. Abari can no longer contain herself and begins to happily sob. Ra’kanishu, Tsanavi and Jo’dehki stand off to the side, watching the reunion with smiles on their faces. Even Jo’dehki considers Abari’s joy an adequate reward. After a moment, the parents finally notice the presence of their daughter’s companions. Abari briefly introduces them, and her mother is quick to bring them inside. They speak with Abari’s parents, who thank them profusely. They are clearly grateful to have their daughter returned home safely, especially after Abari shares her harrowing story with her parents.

Though relatively poor and unable to compensate them for their effort, none would claim a reward even if they could. After spending some time with Ābari and her thankful parents, the travelers say their goodbyes. They have completed their quest to return her safely, and now it is time to return to S-ren'ja. Ābari gives Jo'dehki a tight embrace, his heart racing at her touch. As soon as she releases him, she does the same for Ra'kanishu. Tsanavi's eyes narrow as she watches, a hand balling into a fist. Ābari takes notice, immediately hugging her as well. With Tsanavi pulled close, Ābari quietly apologizes to her.

"It was just to show my thanks. I'm not stealing him from you." She whispers.

"No, you're not. Ra'kanishu is mine." Tsanavi quietly replies.

"Please don't be mad." Ābari softly begs.

"Tsanavi will forgive you, this time." She growls.

The three help Ābari and her parents load the valuables into her home, tying the horse and securing the wagon outside. With their good deed completed, the trio leave the family and return to the main road, retracing their steps. Jo'dehki regularly looks back, glancing over his shoulder every few seconds. Ra'kanishu and Tsanavi hold each other's hand, their fingers entwined. She looks over at her partner, her golden eyes scanning the Imperial. He turns his head, looking down to her. She has a strange smile on her face as she seems to examine the man.

“What?” He asks with a laugh.

“You did a good thing. Tsanavi always liked that about you; as a boy you were always so kind and just.” She replies.

“Well, it certainly did not make this one any friends.” Nish remarks.

“And yet you never changed. You remained true to yourself, even after so long on the road.” She continues.

“Perhaps Ra’kanishu did change...” He murmurs.

“You are a good man, Ra’kanishu. You will always be a good man. It is why Tsanavi loves you so much.”

Nish stops in his tracks, turning to look at the dainty Suthay. Her eyes are sullen, and she glances down at her own feet.

“Tsanavi should have told you a long time ago, and regrets that she did not. Tsanavi has always loved you.” She says, staring at the ground.

He reaches out, placing a finger underneath her chin. He gently tilts her head up to look at him. As their eyes lock, he leans in and rests his hands on her cheeks. He kisses her tenderly on her lips, his fingers caressing her soft fur.

“This one loves you too. He has loved you as long as he can remember.” He says to her.

The lovers embrace, holding each other tightly. Tsanavi's tail flicks happily as he gently rubs her back. Their shared confession makes their embrace all the more satisfying.

"Should Jo'dehki leave you two alone?" The Cathay-Raht teases.

"Shut up." Nish barks.

Taking Tsanavi's hand in his, Nish leads her out of the alley, Jo'dehki following close behind the pair. They move through the bazaar, ignoring the many merchants as they follow the main road back to the edge of Dune. Reaching the city gates, they stop and look at the expanse of the plains, preparing themselves for the long walk home. Tsanavi squeezes Nish's hand, content to be walking beside him after so many years apart. The trio march along the road, heading southwest to S-ren'ja as they leave the capital city behind them.

After barely an hour of walking, something catches their eye. In the distance, a figure sits alongside the road, their back resting on a moderately sized rock. Beside them lies another figure, as still as the grave. Jo'dehki draws his dagger, while Nish takes out his Khajiiti axe from the frog on his belt. They race toward the sitting being, quickly discovering a Bosmer female with visible cuts. Beside her lies the carcass of a deer, a common and relatively harmless creature. The wood elf turns her head to the three travelers, her eyes barely open as she looks them over.

Nish stows his axe, kneeling beside the young woman. He tries to speak to her, but she is barely conscious. A brief examination reveals deep wounds on her body. Using his most powerful restorative spells, honed from his time with Fjorn, he treats her injuries. Jo'dehki examines the carcass of the deer, noting the blood on its antlers, front hooves, and even its snout. It appears to have tried to kill her, as outrageous as that may seem. Its eyes are a solid shade of cobalt blue, altered by sinister magic. As Nish's spells take effect, her wounds closing, she opens her eyes.

"It... It tried to kill me..." She coughs.

"Don't speak. You are far too weak." Nish replies.

The woman's pulse begins to fade as she wastes her energy. Nish frantically searches his belongings, finding one of Fjorn's powerful rejuvenating potions in his pack. He gently pours the purple liquid down the girl's throat. She coughs again, but with more force. Her strength returning, she consumes the remainder of the potion herself. Tsanavi tries to make the woman comfortable while Nish continues to use his magic on her wounds, and Jo'dehki stands guard. After expending much of his energy to restore her health, Nish takes a seat beside her.

"Thank you..." The Bosmer weakly says.

"You're welcome." Nish replies.

"Can you tell us what happened to you?" Tsanavi asks.

“The deer... It charged me out of nowhere. I have no idea why. It’s not even mating season.” The Bosmer begins.

“The deer tried to kill you?” Jo’dehki asks skeptically.

The woman merely nods her head. Nish moves toward the deer carcass, examining it. Though not a powerful magician, Nish can sense the strength of the dark magic that radiates from the body. It has clearly been possessed by some evil force, controlled like a puppet and sent to kill the woman, though he can’t understand why.

“Where did it come from?” Tsanavi asks.

The woman reaches out a hand, pointing northwest.

“You are not far from Dune. Will you be able to make the journey back?” Jo’dehki asks her.

“Yes... I believe so.” She nods.

“Up for an adventure?” Jo’dehki turns to Nish.

Ra’kanishu looks toward Tsanavi, her pleasant smile warming his heart. He looks back at the wood elf, a feeling of dread overwhelming him, but not for himself. He approaches Tsanavi, resting his hands on her shoulders.

“A strong and evil magic is possessing the forest creatures. This could be very dangerous.” He begins.

“You will protect me.” She grins.

“If you were to be hurt or killed, Ra’kanishu could never live with himself. If you want, we can go to S-ren’ja first.” He says.

“Tsanavi will never leave you.” She assures him.

Her wraps his arms around her, holding her tightly. Though her words are comforting and warm his heart, he can’t help but worry about her safety. He turns his head to Jo’dehki, giving him a single nod. Jo’dehki helps the Bosmer woman to her feet, directing her down the road and toward Dune. The three walk northwest, leaving the road and heading into the plains, toward a patch of forest. Not long after starting their hike, they can see signs of the dark magic that possessed the deer; blackened trees and shrubbery, and blue-eyed animals glaring at them.

A bunny rabbit pops out of a hole, peeking out at the intruders as they walk ever closer to the patch of trees. It blinks its solid blue eyes, its nose twitching as it sniffs the air. It hops out of the hole, tilting its head as it looks to them.

“Look at that. Perhaps the mage is using the bunny as a spy?” Tsanavi suggests.

“Perhaps... It’s actually quite cute.” Jo’dehki remarks.

The bunny suddenly bolts towards them, leaping for Jo’dehki’s throat. It screeches loudly as it tries to bite him,

landing on his chest and startling the large Khajiit. Nish draws his sword as Jo'dehki cries out in fear and flings the rabbit from his chest. It lands on the ground and charges once again. As it leaps into the air, the Imperial swings his blade, cleaving the bunny rabbit in half, each section landing at least a meter away from the other.

“By the eight! Did you see that?!” Jo'dehki exclaims.

“Indeed. This one did not realize you could scream like that.” Nish chuckles.

“Whatever. That was terrifying!” Jo'dehki grumbles defensively.

Turning toward the patch of trees, they see a row of several more animals; two antlered deer, one on either side of a Senche tiger, and several more bunnies. They stand like statues several meters from the trio, their blue eyes glowing like stars in the night, though it is barely three in the afternoon. Jo'dehki pulls out his dagger, while Nish takes out his axe. They look between each other before swapping weapons; Nish passes his axe to Jo'dehki, who hands his dagger to the unarmed Tsanavi. They hold their weapons at the ready and slowly approach the still animals.

Their heads turn slowly and eerily, looking at the invaders and picking their targets. As if on cue, they all charge at once, rushing the three. Both deer focus on Ra'kanishu, the Senche tiger attacks Jo'dehki, while the half dozen bunnies rush Tsanavi. The deer charge the Imperial,

who dives out of the way, barely avoiding being gored by either creatures' sharp antlers. The Senche tiger roars as it leaps at Jo'dehki, who swings the axe and nicks its face. The bunnies run circles around Tsanavi, before several leap onto her back, tearing her linen shirt and biting at her shoulders and neck with sharp teeth.

She jabs the dagger over her shoulder, impaling a bunny and poking her own shoulder in her panic. The Senche tiger knocks Jo'dehki to the ground, who kicks at the animal. It swipes at his legs, clawing his left thigh and dragging him closer. He cries out in pain and kicks the Senche in the nose, causing it to flinch and bleed. With the few precious seconds he has, he rolls backward and stands to his feet, holding the axe high. The Senche leaps at him as he swings the axe, striking it in the left shoulder. Tsanavi stabs two more bunnies as they climb onto her legs.

Another bunny bites her wrist, causing her to drop the dagger onto the ground. She cries out in pain and grabs the rabbit's body, gripping its head with her free hand and wrenching hard, snapping its neck. She throws the body at a leaping bunny, striking it in mid-air before grabbing her dagger from the dirt and slashing at yet another. Nish dives out of the way, unable to fight the two deer as they take turns rushing him. As he dives, a deer yanks its head back, slashing his leg with its antlers. He falls to the ground in a heap, grunting in pain.

As the first deer charges him, he reaches out with his free hand, blasting the creature with a bolt of lightning. Its

muscles convulse as it falls to the ground. The second deer rushes him from behind, kicking his leg with its hoof. The force feels as though it could break the bone in his leg, and the Imperial impulsively swings his sword, lopping off the deer's leg. It hobbles around, its flank facing him. It brings up his hind legs, so Nish shields himself with his sword. It kicks the blade, knocking it from his hands.

Desperate for a weapon, he grabs the deer's severed leg and smacks it buttocks with the sharp hoof, cutting it deeply. It stumbles and falls as it flails about. Nish bludgeons the deer with its own leg before tossing it aside and throwing a ball of fire from his palm, engulfing the creature in searing flames as it squirms on the ground. The remaining deer charges him, making a strange croaking sound as it stomps a hoof in preparation. He turns his head to look back at it before quickly diving for his sword, rolling shoulder to hip as he grabs the handle.

He lands on a knee, swinging the blade as the deer charges, cleaving off both front legs and dropping it to the ground. He twirls the sword before driving it into the deer's neck, killing it instantly. Tsanavi grabs a bunny by the ears as it clings to her arm, biting vigorously at her. She yanks hard, wrenching its neck and making the bunny squeal. For a moment, she feels guilty, but then it tries to kick her wrist to free itself. She holds the dagger horizontally and drives it through the rabbit's chest, ending its flailing.

The last bunny lunges for her, but she slashes the blade, cleaving a massive gash through its belly and

disemboweling the little bunny in mid-air. Jo'dehki jumps to the side as the Senche charges him once more, swinging the axe and cracking the predator's skull. It stumbles, turning to look at him. He leaps onto the creature's back, holding the axe high in the air before driving the blade into the spine, just behind its head. Its body falls limp onto the ground, twitching slightly as Jo'dehki straddles its back.

Nish is quick to rush to Tsanavi's side, looking over her wounds. As soon as he begins to treat her cuts, she notices his own injuries. After using his restorative magic on Tsanavi's wounds, all of which were superficial, he closes the gash in Jo'dehki's leg, treating his own pierced flesh last. They sit on the ground, taking a moment to regain their strength and resolve.

"Rabbits will never look the same to me." Jo'dehki comments.

"This one will certainly enjoy cooking them more now." Tsanavi adds.

"Does anyone else suddenly crave venison?" Nish asks.

After sharing a laugh, the three help each other to their feet and continue on through the plains. Only moments later, they reach the edge of the patch of woods, slipping between the densely packed trees. It is not long before the three reach a clearing. In the clearing is a pond, and in the center of the pond is a small piece of land, made of tightly packed dirt. An alter sits atop this patch of earth, bearing strange artifacts made of natural materials. As they look to

the alter, a voice in the distance grows louder. The feminine voice sings a pleasant tune to herself.

They hold their weapons close, prepared for anything. Perhaps it is a Hagraven, or a Spriggan? The bushes shake as the being exits the trees and into the clearing. Before the three is a young, dainty and beautiful Bosmer. The wood elf sings slightly off-key as she approaches the alter, followed by a deer and several more bunny rabbits.

“Ready to join my army, my little ones?” She turns the animals.

“They have better things to do.” Nish speaks.

The wood elf jumps, startled by her surprise visitors. She turns to face the three, a hand clutching her chest.

“Well, you certainly startled me!” She begins. “What is a handsome Imperial doing with two filthy Khajiit?” She asks nonchalantly.

“What did you say?”

“I’m sorry. You must be hard of hearing. WHAT IS A HANDSO-”

“We heard you.” Nish interrupts, holding up a hand.

“Oh. I see! You were surprised!” She giggles. “A misunderstanding. So, would you care to answer my question?”

“The Cathay-Raht is my friend, and the Suthay is my lover.” Nish replies.

“Ew...” The wood elf snickers.

Tsanavi and Jo'dehki both growl, bearing their teeth at the wood elf.

“What are you doing out here?!” Nish demands.

“Why, I'm building an army to exterminate the Khajiit, of course!” The Bosmer giggles.

The three collectively blink, their eyes wide and brows raised in shock. They can't believe that the wood elf so freely admits her guilt and intentions.

“That's a stupid plan.” Jo'dehki snickers.

“Oh, I don't think so.” The Bosmer chirps.

“You realize that you nearly killed another Bosmer with your 'army'.” Tsanavi comments.

“Unintentional. I needed a test subject; she was merely the first target who walked by.”

Nish sighs and steps further into the clearing, scratching his head with his free hand. Tsanavi and Jo'dehki follow behind, gripping their weapons tightly.

“Well, we’re going to have to ask you to stop your attempted genocide.” Nish says politely.

“Why would I do that?!” She laughs.

“Because if you don’t, we’ll stop you. Maybe kill you, but definitely hurt you.” Nish answers.

The wood elf brings a hand to her chin, gently scratching her pale skin. She looks over the Imperial and then his Khajiit companions, glaring at Jo’dehki for an extended period of time.

“I don’t know. I really hate the Khajiit.” She poses.

“Perhaps if you had one, you wouldn’t hate them. You may even prefer them.” Jo’dehki winks.

“... Ew...” She mutters, a disgusted look on her face.

“Come on! You might enjoy it.” Jo’dehki coos, stepping closer.

“Easy boy. No means no.” Nish jokes.

“Not always.” Jo’dehki looks back at him.

Sighing, the Bosmer holds up her hands, a blue orb glowing between her palms. She summons a spirit bear, who roars as it steps out of a blueish-gray mist. The three look to each other, before Ra’kanishu sheaths his sword. He waves his hand, as if presenting the creature to Jo’dehki. The Cathay-Raht cracks his neck and shoulders as he swings the axe. He looks to the Bosmer and blows a kiss at her. Her expression changes to one of embarrassment, her

face flushing as she averts her eyes. She waves her hand, sending the spirit bear toward the Khajiit.

The Suthay and Imperial step to the side, content to only watch the fight. As the bear charges, Jo'dehki dives to the side. He swings, cutting into the bears front leg. It roars as he yanks the blade from its body, rolling over and quickly rising to his feet. It swipes at him with razor sharp claws, but the spirit bear is not as dexterous as a real bear. He swings the axe, cleaving off its paw, before running around the bear and leaping onto its back. He takes the axe and jams it into the creature's neck, destroying the summoned creature in an instant.

It falls dead to the ground, turning to ash before them. The Bosmer is clearly surprised, trying to summon another sprit bear. Her powers are weak, and though she tries, she is unable to bring forth another minion before Jo'dehki can approach her. He swings the axe and let's go, jamming the blade into the ground and leaving the weapon behind. He wraps an arm around the woman, who rests her hands on his chest.

"Are you done now?" He asks her casually.

She stares up at the powerful, Nord sized Cathay-Raht. He looks down at the tiny woman, looking her over. He gently runs his claws through her long and wavy hair.

“Are you done now?” He asks her again.

“Y-yes...” She murmurs.

“Good.” He smiles. “This one does not want to hurt you, but you need to stop.” He speaks softly.

“Y-you don’t?” She asks.

He shakes his head, stroking her cheek with the backs of his furry fingers. Though she previously expressed disgust, she now looks visibly intrigued by the large Khajiit. Ra’kanishu and Tsanavi watch on, somewhat uncomfortable by the strange display. Nish and Tsanavi approach the lone axe. He takes up the weapon, wiping the dirt from the blade before sheathing it, along with his sword. Tsanavi sticks the dagger into the ground in the axe’s place. Jo’dehki and the nameless Bosmer witch continue to gaze at one another.

“You are so small, but this one is not.” Jo’dehki coos.

“R-really?” The Bosmer asks, her voice trembling.

“Really. Would you like to see?” He winks.

“We’re... Uh... We’re going to go.” Tsanavi says.

“See you back at home.” Nish adds.

Jo’dehki doesn’t bother to answer, leaning in and nuzzling the wood elf’s face with his broad snout. He licks her neck and grabs onto her buttocks right in front of Ra’kanishu and Tsanavi. The two quickly turn and depart, walking through the woods and back into the vast plain, listening to the Bosmer’s moans echoing for a moment.

“That was... Different.” Nish remarks.

“It doesn’t always end that way?” Tsanavi asks with a little grin.

“Hah! No.” He says.

She reaches out a hand, gently grabbing onto his. He locks his fingers with hers, looking back at Tsanavi with a warm smile. She suddenly stops, her outstretched arm tugging at his like an anchor. He turns back and approaches her, standing chest to chest.

“You are still as good as you ever were.” She says.

She leans in, giving him a tight hug.

“So are you.” He coos.

He strokes her back gently with his fingertips, before leaning in and giving her a long, loving kiss.

“Let’s go home.” She says with a smile.