

Confrontation

Written By: Skabaard

The first thing Valorie did when she woke up was smile. She could get used to starting every day like this. She cracked her eyes open a hair's-breadth and peered around the room. It was much larger than the room Dawn had called her own in the Archmage's previous home, but was still warm and cozy. Valorie's broad frame lay outstretched on a large bed, delightfully comfortable compared to the ground she had grown used to sleeping on over the course of her journey.

She had to fight to stifle a laugh as she looked down at Dawn. As comfortable as Valorie was, the smaller woman seemed even more relaxed on her own bedding. Dawn's naked body was pressed intimately into Valorie's, her arms thrown around the equine's chest, her head nestled deep in the plush valley of Valorie's cleavage. She was snoring softly, and the fur of Valorie's chest was damp with a thin stream of drool that leaked from her open mouth.

Valorie grinned, struggling to choke off her giggles so she wouldn't wake the exhausted woman currently using her as a mattress. She gently raised her hand to trace the jagged starburst of white fur that covered her chest. Dawn had pushed herself to the very limits to cast the spell that would let her stop the madness that was currently washing over the world, the least Valorie could do was let her get some rest.

The sun was just beginning to rise, Dawn's namesake painting the sky brilliant hues of red and orange. The light of the waking world filtering through the large window shone gold off of Dawn's thick, auburn hair, and Valorie stroked it tenderly. The small woman shifted at the contact, stirring sluggishly as she moved an arm to latch onto Valorie's hand. She pulled Valorie down to press her cheek into the equine's strong fingers. Dawn's smooth, flawless skin was soft against Valorie's palm, and she let it lay there against Dawn's cheek as she watched the sun usher in the new day.

The room around them gradually brightened as the sun chased away the final remnants of the night, and Dawn's eyes fluttered open to look up at Valorie with a dreamy smile. "You're warm." she mumbled quietly into the equine's hefty breasts.

"And your elbow's been digging into my ribs for an hour," Valorie retorted gently, "but you don't see me complaining."

Dawn pulled away the offending appendage, instead moving her arm to wrap around Valorie's chest, letting her press her lips to the curve of Valorie's breast. The kiss was short, but slow enough for Dawn's plump lips to send arcs of electric pleasure tingling across the equine's bust. Dawn looked back up at Valorie, her eyes glittering with the promise of more later as she muttered, "Today's the day, saving the world and all that. Are you ready?"

Snorting, Valorie rolled her eyes. "Absolutely, I can't wait until this is over so I can take a nice, long vacation, maybe work on my book. Does this sort of thing happen all the time? How do you guys handle it?"

"Well, it usually doesn't get this bad, but Daryn loves to help people too much to leave the world to a gruesome fate. I guess it rubbed off on me a bit." Dawn looked pensively up at Valorie with a sly smile, "Although, after I get my stole, I might consider a vacation as well, this has been a bit more excitement than I'm used to." Her look shifted to one of silent questioning, "Maybe you could find room for one more in whatever trouble you manage to stir up next time."

Valorie scoffed, "Trouble, me? Hells no. But my home has always seemed too quiet for me to stay sane. Maybe if I had someone there to break the oppressive silence I would have a reason to kick back and relax, let trouble come looking for me for once."

Dawn slid off of Valorie's chest to stretch out next to her, pressing the length of her slender body into the equine's side. Her large, perky breasts squished delightfully into Valorie's arm before the equine wrapped it around Dawn to crush the tiny woman into her ribcage. Dawn let out a pleased hum and snuggled further into the crook of Valorie's arm as she cooed.

"Normally, I would say that I've sat around for far too long, but as long as I could sit around with you, I could bear it. Oh, Val, after all this is over with, I'd like nothing more than to share my life with you, we could even have Daryn perform the ritual, if you'd have it."

This time, Valorie snorted more derisively. "If I'd have you... Please Dawn, I feel like professing our undying love for each other kind of implies that I want to be with you. And I would love for Daryn to marry us, if he can actually do that. Although I don't see why he couldn't. I guess I never really thought about it. Is there some special wizard wedding-thing I should know?"

Dawn looked up at her, confused, "Y-yes, he can marry us, but that's not what I was talking about." Valorie felt her eyebrows knit together in silent question, and Dawn's did the same. "Oh," she murmured in silent realization, "you haven't thought about it, have you?"

A brief flash of apprehension tightened in Valorie's gut. "What? What did I miss? What's wrong?"

Valorie's concern evaporated as Dawn giggled and pushed herself off the bed and to her feet. The equine watched in fascination as Dawn's soft, full breasts rose and fell with the apprentice's long, slow breath. The early morning sun shone warmly off of Dawn's bare skin and Valorie drank in the sight. Dawn looked down at Valorie with an equally warm smile and asked frankly, "How old do I look to you?"

"Um..." Valorie said uncertainly, "Younger than me, definitely. Early twenties? Twenty-one, maybe twenty-two?"

Dawn smiled, raising her arms and spinning to give Valorie a good, if achingly brief look at the entire length of her perfect body. She hopped back up into the bed, her bust bouncing enticingly as she laid a hand on Valorie's compact stomach. Dawn's finger lazily traced the outline of one of the equine's dense, powerful muscles, suddenly somber. "Please, Valorie," she breathed in a quiet whisper, "Please don't let this change things between us."

Sudden, icy understanding poured through Valorie's veins, and she sat up slowly, scooting over to sit next to the apprentice, dwarfing her tiny body with her own. How could she have been so stupid? The Archmage had as good as told her. Her hand went instinctively around Dawn's waist, holding the smaller woman against her as she spoke. "Daryn's more than two hundred years old, I remember him mentioning it to me before." Dawn nodded, and Valorie squeezed her affectionately, refusing to let her voice tremble as she continued. "How many times older than me are you?"

The lack of any intervening fabric made all the difference as Dawn leaned into Valorie, pressing her cheek into the equine's pliant chest as she answered. "Well, it never really mattered to me enough to ask you how old you were, but I turn seventy-five this autumn. So I'm going to guess around three."

Valorie's cheeks puffed out around a heavy breath. She was, in fact, twenty-five. "How long will you live?"

The equine felt wet tears begin to dampen the fur of her chest and Dawn shook, but she didn't let her sobs reach her voice. "That's not for anyone to really know, but I'll be well into my second millennium before old age starts to catch up with me. That's what I mean by sharing my life. Wizards don't really speak of it often, but with a little bit of magic, we can be bound together so I can share my magically-extended lifespan with you." Dawn's hand went to Valorie's thigh, stroking the warm, chocolate brown fur lovingly for a silent minute before continuing, this time with a voice shaky with barely constrained desperation, "Please, Valorie. Please say yes. Everyone I've ever known will wither away around me before I get my first grey hair. Please let me save you. Please let me grow old with you. Please..."

Valorie didn't know what to say, so she asked a question. "Will it cut your life in half?" Dawn choked on her answer, so she just nodded. It didn't make Valorie feel any better. She didn't know what to do with herself, so she hugged Dawn's shivering frame to hers, her mind frantically searching for the right thing to say. Which answer was more selfish? No, to let Dawn live her full, long life with only her memories, or yes, to make Dawn happy and to live an extra few hundred years, only to essentially stab her love in the prime of her life.

Frustrated tears welled up in Valorie's eyes as she fought to speak. "Damnit, Dawn. I want to say yes. I want to say it so badly, but how can I live like that, knowing that every second I breathe is one I'm stealing from you, like some hideous parasite? I can't hurt you like that. I'd hate myself."

Dawn looked up at her, sudden fire sweeping the tears from her eyes. "No!" she said vehemently, "No, no, no! That is not how it would be! It wouldn't be you stealing my life; it would be me sharing it with you willingly. It's a gift, not extortion. I expect you to live alongside me. I expect you to give me a reason to live, a reason to wake up in the morning, to find joy in the wonder of my life. For hundreds and hundreds of years I will get to spend my life with you instead of spending a thousand or more with only your memory. Please Valorie, I just want a single word, and I'll give you everything I have to give." Dawn abruptly rose and pushed Valorie back onto the bed, bearing her down under her slight weight. "Please, please say yes. It would be the best gift you could possibly give me, hundreds of years of bliss at your side." Her voice dropped to a conspiratorial whisper, her tears forgotten, "Besides, you promised you'd never let me out of your sight. I don't see how you can keep that promise if you leave me here alone."

Valorie huffed a short laugh despite her own tears. At least Dawn wasn't going to let her idiocy go unchecked. The equine briefly wondered how she remembered to breathe without Dawn there to remind her it was a good idea. "Yes." she said with utter confidence. She felt Dawn stiffen against her, and she took advantage of the apprentice's stillness to wrap her arms around Dawn's slim chest and press it into her own. Valorie's lips fit neatly over Dawn's and the equine kissed the smaller woman with slow, hungry movements.

Eventually, Dawn's breath caught in her throat, and her slender fingers latched onto Valorie's cheeks and she returned the equine's kiss with almost violent passion. It felt like the apprentice was trying to crawl inside Valorie's mouth. She writhed against the firm muscle of Valorie's strong frame, and the equine could feel Dawn's body heat as she was swept away with a tide of joyous emotion. Tears dripped once more from the apprentice's cheeks to splatter onto Valorie's short, equine muzzle, but neither woman paid them any mind.

The kiss, coupled with Dawn's excited wriggling, sent jolts of need washing through Valorie's body, and she felt the beast between her legs, already slightly stiff in sympathy, suddenly surge to life, pressing against Dawn's legs. Not missing a beat, the apprentice locked her thighs around its girth and started to pump it slowly between her lean muscles, tight from her

walk to and from the jungle. Valorie let out a short moan, muffled by Dawn's lips, and the apprentice replied with one of her own. Dawn's breasts, though smaller than Valorie's, were huge on her svelte frame, and her lust-darkened nipples pressed like diamonds into Valorie's chest. Valorie's hands went to Dawn's shapely rear and the equine's strong fingers groped the apprentice's fevered skin mercilessly.

Valorie humped jerkily against Dawn, her thickening member slowly spreading the apprentice's thighs apart. Gods' Blood, she had never been more turned on in her life. She thought she was going to cum just from Dawn's weight on her chest. Her skin burned under her fur, mirroring the inferno that rushed through her veins. She felt beautiful, needed, and her hands wandering over Dawn's flawless body were eager to make the apprentice feel the same way. She reached between them to tweak one of the engorged buds that capped Dawn's ample, heaving chest, and she felt her tense suddenly.

Dawn bit down on Valorie's tongue with a strained grunt as she spasmed against her powerful body. Valorie felt something hot and wet splatter against her abdomen as Dawn squeezed out a long, wet orgasm. Dawn pulled away, gasping for breath as the equine felt her nostrils flare around the abrupt, musky smell of Dawn's sex. It was delicious, and she gulped down long, needy breaths through her nose as Dawn pushed herself down to press her soaked pussy against the now steel-hard length of Valorie's mammoth horsecock. Dawn jerked against Valorie with frantic energy as she ran her mouth against the tendons that stood out against the fur of Valorie's neck. It must have been torturous rapture for the apprentice to scrape the hypersensitive folds of her dripping womanhood against Valorie, but she didn't for a second slow her actions.

Normally, Valorie would have tried to hold back, to pull at least one or two more orgasms from Dawn before she let herself go, but the look in Dawn's eyes brooked none of that, not that Valorie could have stopped herself if she had tried. Rising up behind Dawn stood the obelisk of Valorie's titanic member, its now pale skin darkened noticeably with blood. It was nearly as long as Valorie's leg and thicker than her arm, thickly veined with throbbing arteries that pulsed visibly with the torrent of need that filled its tremendously hard flesh. Valorie couldn't summon the muscle control to push herself between the apprentice's legs, but Dawn took care of that for her.

Valorie's scream of agonized ecstasy was choked off into a strangled groan as she locked up, her impressive musculature standing out starkly against her fur as she came. Her blissed out mind couldn't be sure, but as her twitching member swelled with the first load of her thick spunk, she thought Dawn came on her again, just before the first rope of her thick seed arced up through the air to splatter against Dawn's bare back.

Each orgasm was an event for Valorie. Every square inch of her enormous dick screamed in pleasure and her surprisingly dainty womanhood, lurking beneath her heavy, fist-sized testicles, shuddered around nothing as she shook with the force of her release. She gasped frantically as she soaked the sheets. There was always so much, and each hot streamer felt better than the first as her ecstasy peaked. Dawn licked a patch of her fur clean and reached up to kiss Valorie again, letting the equine get a better taste of herself as her pearlescent jizz rained down around them. It was so hot, and Valorie could never place the taste, strong and heady.

Her orgasm stretched on for what seemed forever, but eventually she calmed down, oozing a thick stream onto Dawn's rear as she came down off of her high. She heaved heavy breaths, lifting Dawn up and down as the apprentice trailed a languid finger through the sticky layer that coated everything within reach, tracing the lines of Valorie's still-fluttering muscles.

Dawn giggled as she rolled off of Valorie to flop wetly down next to her. The apprentice scooped twin handfuls of the gooey fluid that drenched her surroundings, looking up at Valorie with grin of amusement as she started to work her slicked hands across her heavy chest.

Valorie snorted and let her head fall heavily back onto the pillow under her. She felt it as Dawn crawled up beside her and leaned on Valorie's shoulder as the apprentice pushed her head over her to look down at the equine, her smile warm and private once more. "Thank you, Valorie."

"Thank me?" Valorie grunted, "I don't think that's necessary. I feel like I'll be getting the better deal here, anyway."

"Only if I can put a value on it." Dawn retorted, "I can't. Can you?"

Valorie chuckled, pulling the apprentice up to give her a comically chaste peck on the cheek. "I guess not." she said softly. Dawn's smile returned, her plump lips tugging magnetically at Valorie's, and the equine let herself be pulled back into another kiss, slow and languorous. It was starkly different than their previous kiss, lacking the burning passion, but somehow more intimate as Dawn's tongue wrestled lovingly with Valorie's comparatively clumsy appendage. Valorie's hands clutched Dawn's back and pressed the apprentice's fragile frame into her chest. She desperately wanted the kiss to stretch on forever, and Dawn did nothing to hurry it along. Valorie's awareness pinched in on itself, her mouth absorbing all her attention as her lips burned alongside Dawn's.

"Alright, seriously. What are you two doing? I've been knocking for five minutes, now." Daryn peeked his head through the door, his deep, booming voice making Dawn practically fly off of Valorie's chest. The dragon instantly recoiled, averting his eyes as he said sheepishly, "Oh. That's what that smell is. Um... Well, when you two see fit to climb out of each other's mouths, the rest of us will be waiting. It turns out Rhona can cook!"

The door slid gently closed and Dawn's eyes met Valorie's, wide with shock. The equine looked around the room at the mess they had made, her jizz plastered across every surface within arm's reach and dripping from the ceiling. She looked back at Dawn and let her lips stretch in a broad grin. "Every fucking time..." she muttered under her breath. Dawn snorted violently and threw her head back, howling with laughter. Valorie soon joined the apprentice, her broad shoulders heaving with her mirth. Dawn's laughs receded into giddy giggles as she struggled to choke out the words that allowed her to clean the room of their mess.

Valorie pushed herself off the bed to her feet as Dawn busied herself with the unfortunate task of covering her perfect body with layers of clothing. She looked out the window at the risen sun glinting off of the roofs of Southcliff, her tendons popping loudly as she stretched the remnants of her morning exercise from her muscles. Dawn called her name and she turned to watch with dismay as the apprentice squeezed her thick hips into a heavy, dark grey skirt before cramming her magnificent bust into a thin, gauzy bra that trapped Dawn's breasts against her chest, ensuring that they wouldn't bounce uncomfortably. She slid her slender arms into a bright blue blouse and started buttoning it over her chest.

Dawn gestured to a pile of clothes that sat on the bed. Valorie's familiar, tight, black pants and delicate but deceptively sturdy underclothes were already laid out for her, and as Dawn started to brush the kinks out of her wavy, auburn hair, she said, "I don't know what would look better on you today. Green, to go with those big, beautiful eyes, or red, to compliment your fur, what do you think?"

Smoothing the fur over her thighs down with a hand, Valorie thought about it for a moment. "Red, I think," she said after a moment's contemplation, "I'm feeling bloodthirsty today."

Dawn clapped her hands together excitedly. "Battlegear it is!" The apprentice cried as she swept a long-sleeved, blood-red shirt from a wardrobe along the wall and tossed it to Valorie. The equine tucked herself into her underclothes and tugged, with some difficulty, her pants over the thick, powerful muscles of her legs, squeezing the firm, round curve of her rear into them with little grunts. Her flaccid horseflesh made an intimidating, stitch-straining bulge in the black fabric, but Valorie no longer felt any embarrassment in showing it off. She had grown used to its presence, and Valorie embraced it as she did the rest of her body. If Dawn was okay with it, then so was she.

Her long, golden brown horse tail hung down to her calves and swished happily through the air as she pushed her arms through the sleeves of the shirt Dawn had given her. It fit her perfectly, as did everything Dawn made for her, the muscles in her strong arms and broad shoulders standing proudly against the crimson fabric. She left it unbuttoned for the moment as she tied her thick, shoulder-length hair back in a low ponytail with a piece of scarlet ribbon. Valorie plopped herself down heavily on the bed, bending over to slip on a pair of warm socks before sliding her feet into her sturdy leather boots. She was lacing them up when she felt Dawn climb up on the bed with her. The apprentice's soft breasts pressed into the hard muscle of her back as Dawn reached around Valorie's chest to start buttoning up the equine's shirt.

Valorie hesitated. Dawn's breath was hot on her neck, and Valorie's long, equine ears twitched in anticipation. Instead of saying anything though, Dawn just pressed her lips just under the equine's jaw, leaning hard into Valorie to get her slender arms around the equine's muscular torso. Dawn's dainty fingers lingered on the curves of Valorie's breasts. Eventually, though, Dawn's job was finished, and she pulled away marginally to whisper into Valorie's ear, "When we get back, you and I are going to make such a mess. I promise."

"I look forward to it," Valorie replied, finishing lacing her boots. "But before we do anything, I need breakfast. I'm starving." Dawn patted Valorie's taut stomach with a giggle before nodding and hopping off the bed to land lightly on her own fine, knee-high boots. She smiled up at Valorie, who stood and offered the apprentice an arm. Dawn took it with a girly giggle and Valorie swept her from the room, following her nose to the source of the tantalizing smells that wafted through the lofty halls of the new-and-improved Sanctum Arcanum.

Through a large set of double doors on the first floor, Valorie could hear muffled conversation, Daryn's vibrant bass reverberating through the thick walls. Valorie pushed Dawn through the doors and immediately stopped, gaping at the cornucopia of food that weighed down the large, sturdy table that dominated the center of the room. Rhona, clad in simple brown robes, sat in a small chair on one side of the table and gave the two women a subdued smile and a silent, knowing nod that Valorie returned. The tiny priestess understood what Valorie had been through, and they had bonded quickly through their shared torment.

The Archmage had his back to the door, but his tail flicked through the air in a wordless greeting as he spoke to Clara. "Yes, I know, but they're hardly dragon eggs. They're chicken eggs, Clara, and unfertilized at that, not to mention delicious."

The dragoness folded her arms underneath her breasts and huffed, her breath crystallizing into a thin cloud of pale mist that drifted into the air. "I know that, Daryn. It just makes me uncomfortable to see any eggs being eaten. Call it mother's instinct. It doesn't sit well with me."

Daryn's shoulder's sagged, but he smiled down at the dragoness anyway. "Alright, alright. I'll go egg free, but only if you'll let me make a dress for you to wear at Dawn's graduation; and you have to wear it the whole day."

Valorie cocked an amused eyebrow as she stepped into the room. It seemed that Clara had laid her egg, by the absence of the huge, gravid bulge that had occupied her abdomen when Valorie and Dawn had returned from their trip. The dragoness shifted her weight nervously from foot to foot and her tail twitched in annoyance. "Fine!" she grumbled, "But you had better make sure it doesn't hide anything. I want to look my best."

"Nothing but, milady. I assure you." Daryn said glibly, clearly believing he had gotten the better of the dragoness, which, if Clara's agitated tail was anything to go by, she thought the same. Valorie grinned as she seated herself across from Rhona and pointedly heaped her plate full of the fluffy, scrambled eggs that the priestess had prepared. Dawn slid into a chair next to her and likewise dug in. After her first bite, Valorie realized that Daryn was right, it was absolutely delicious, and she growled her approval around a huge bite.

"Like I said," Daryn mused as he lowered himself into a simple, if enormous chair, "I feel like everyone I know can cook better than me. It's giving me an inferiority complex. There's just something about doing it the old fashioned way that I can't replicate with magic. It makes all the difference."

Clara deigned to remain standing, instead leaning heavily on the dragon's broad shoulders as she muttered, "If the list of things others do better than you is short enough for that to be a concern, I think you are doing well." The Archmage shrugged and sighed a hesitant agreement.

As Valorie ate, casual small talk filled the air, as if in defiance against what they were all about to do. Eventually, however, their meal was over and the equine leaned her arms lightly on the table as she asked, "So, how is this going to work? How long is it going to take for us to get there, and what are we going to do when we finally arrive? What's the plan?"

Daryn's thickly-scaled eyebrows knitted together in thought. "Well," he said finally, "I've prepared to teleport us to Venna. But without knowing more about the state of the city, it will be difficult to plan ahead. Who knows how much it's changed since Rhona managed to leave? There are, however, a few things that I'm fairly certain of. If this demon behaves like other demons with whom I'm more familiar, it will have placed itself in a large, centrally located structure, which our young priestess here has assured me will be the Cathedral of Amara. It will likely remain there, content to let its "converts" spread its corruption while it gathers more and more strength to itself. If not stopped, it will shroud the world in its taint, forcibly bending the minds and bodies of every living thing to what it believes is perfection." He gestured to Valorie and Rhona before he continued. "You two have experienced it. I feel like you'll agree with me when I say that I would greatly like to stop this today so we can get to the task of setting right the world."

The indicated women both nodded their heads vehemently, and Dawn's warm fingers slipped through Valorie's in a gesture of confident companionship. Valorie squeezed the apprentice's fingers back as Rhona spoke up. "Um... Archmage," she said meekly, "What... what will happen to everyone who's been corrupted after we stop Salaxa?"

The dragon nodded as if he had expected the question. "Like I said, then the job of fixing what the demon broke comes up. With her hold on the world broken through her exorcism, any direct control she may have been exercising over the minds of the corrupted will vanish. Their bodies however, will be a different matter. Any changes to people's physical forms are likely permanent, and will have to be removed with magic, a process that will take... some time, even if

all of the corrupted could be rounded up, which would be impossible." His shoulders sagged and he sighed regretfully. "It's likely that whatever Salaxa has managed to accomplish will have permanent effects on the world. But without the demon's influence, its corruption should spread no further. It can be contained and controlled, but we will have to adapt to what we cannot fix. Perhaps in as short a span as a single generation, people will embrace the changes that have swept over the world."

"The Wizard's Burden." Dawn said with a tired, quiet voice. The Archmage nodded and Valorie looked down at the smaller woman, her expression silently questioning. Dawn leaned into Valorie as she explained, "Wizards live for more than a thousand years. A lot can happen in that amount of time. Entire civilizations can rise and fall. Throughout a wizard's life, time marches on, and things change. We have to watch everything we know warp and twist as time distorts culture and society. We remain fairly static in a tumultuous universe. It's the first lesson I was taught, and for good reason. Every wizard has to understand that change is natural, it can be slowed, but not stopped, and it is sometimes more useful to embrace and guide it than to try to fight it. For a wizard, powerlessness isn't an easy pill to swallow, but it is our Burden to bear."

Shifting in his chair, Daryn nodded sagely, "Well put." he said.

Valorie blinked. "Okay," she said slowly, "what you're saying is that, even though we can put a stop to the collective mind rape of an entire planet, we may not necessarily stop people from fucking in the streets. It's just that they'll be doing it because they want to, not because some demon in the back of their minds is telling them to?"

"Essentially, yes." The Archmage answered. "Surely you've felt it. I don't know how Salaxa did it, but the demon managed to somehow ramp up the collective libido of nearly every living thing. I may have pulled the demon's physical corruption from your body, but I haven't yet found a way to undo what it's done on the large scale. You must have noticed your idle thoughts drifting insistently to sex, how much more sensitive than normal your erogenous zones are. I don't know how far it goes, but that will be the true, long-term goal, but if it turns out to not be possible to remove, we will have to accept it."

Valorie digested the information with a thoughtful grunt. She had thought something was different, but it was subtle enough to defy classification until now. She was certainly more amorous than she once was, but she had attributed that to her newfound love. The sensitivity increase, though, that, Valorie had no legitimate explanation for, but she had certainly noticed it. "Well," she quipped after a few seconds of quiet introspection, "I guess that as good a place any to start. When do we leave?"

Clapping his clawed hands together, Daryn gestured to the door. "As soon as you're suited up, slowpoke. Your armor's still in your room. We'll be in the entry hall when you're ready."

Valorie nodded with fierce determination, rising to a stand just before Dawn did the same. The apprentice practically had to jog to keep up with the eager equine as she rushed through the lofty halls back to the room they had stayed the night in. The mirrored plates of her Argentum suit were stacked neatly in the corner where she had left them the night before. Dawn helped her as she began to buckle the shining Dragonsilver to her body, each individual plate being strapped on over a fine, chain shirt. The exquisite suit covered her body nearly in its entirety. Closed greaves fit over her muscular calves, and an airy, plate-and-chain skirt swirled weightlessly around her thighs. Sturdy gauntlets, delicate enough to not inhibit her motion went over her hands, and smooth, rounded pauldrons covered her broad shoulders.

Finished with the suit, she swept her forest green cloak around her and fastened it with the ornate silver brooch the Archmage had given her. She buckled on her thick, steel broadsword, laying it carefully against her hip where she could access it with ease. She drew it several inches from its scabbard, inspecting the gleaming steel carefully, before sliding it home once more, polishing the thumb-sized emerald set into the sword's pommel with a furred digit. She turned and struck a heroic pose and Dawn clapped giddily.

She grinned down at the apprentice. "Alright, then. Let's go get this over with, shall we?"

Dawn nodded, saying, "Yes and please. I can't wait to peel that armor off of you after we're done."

Valorie could hardly argue, and she swept Dawn out of the room, practically dragging the apprentice along beside her. The long circular hallway eventually emptied out into the lofty foyer, and the two women quickly made their way down the stairs to where the rest of them were waiting. "Much better!" Daryn exclaimed when Valorie stepped off of the gently spiraling staircase, "Now we're ready for this!"

Clara stood next to the Archmage, her tail flicking anxiously through the air, occasionally slowing to brush lovingly against Daryn's. Valorie felt the dragoness appraise her with a critical eye for a short moment before she grinned, showing twin rows of razor-sharp teeth. Rhona stood to the Archmage's other side, her full lips pressed into a thin line of grim determination. The dragon between them beckoned Dawn and Valorie closer until they were huddled in a tight circle. "Okay," said the Archmage, "everyone hold on to something. This is rough until you get used to it."

Valorie latched onto Dawn, uncertain of what exactly teleportation felt like, but the apprentice just giggled and leaned into Valorie's hip. "Don't worry about it." Dawn said even as Daryn started to chant something under his breath. The air around them tightened with tense power for a split second before a sudden jerk yanked Valorie off of her booted feet. There was a brief, almost imperceptible moment of weightlessness before the ground returned to solidity beneath her. Valorie staggered as she blinked at the sudden, sharp change in the surroundings.

The city of Venna wasn't quite the metropolis that Southcliff was, but it was still large and sprawling, host to an equally large population. All at once, Valorie's senses were assaulted by a myriad of sights, sounds, and smells. Her sensitive nose was filled with a dense, musky odor and as she gasped, the air that filled her lungs reeked of sex. Valorie couldn't see the sun beyond the monolithic cathedral that rose up in front of them, and the courtyard in which they stood was draped in brooding shadow.

"Hmm..." Daryn rumbled, "That should have put us directly in the central chamber. Salaxa must have shielded it. Okay then. What we can do is-" He paused, "Are these friends of yours Rhona?"

At least a dozen women and a few well-endowed hermaphrodites were splayed out across the steps of the cathedral, frozen in the middle of what had been a very noisy orgy until the concussive boom of the displaced air brought them to a halt. There was a slow, wet sucking as the hermaphrodites pulled themselves out of whatever hole they had been buried in. The entire group was clad in matching breastplates, bracers, and greaves of a dark, almost black metal. Unsurprisingly, the crotch of each suit was left open, and Valorie could see the women's labia glisten wetly as the hermaphrodite's dicks freely oozed clear precum.

As one, the guards rose to their feet, picking up weapons that had been laying nearby, and started down the steps, clearly intending no good. Valorie scoffed and rested her hand on the hilt of her sword. She wondered idly if the armor was supposed to be intimidating, because it clearly

wasn't meant to turn a blade from any sensitive areas. Valorie was busy picking the order in which she would castrate the herms when Rhona spoke up. "Yes, they're sisters!" she cried, "Please don't hurt them! It's not their fault!"

Valorie groaned inwardly. Incapacitation was more difficult to accomplish in larger fights, but she supposed she could manage. However, before Valorie had a chance to start redrawing her battle plans, Daryn chuckled. "We wouldn't dream of it, I'm sure. I've got a better idea. I'm willing to bet that there are no rooms over the larger chamber." He shot a glance over to Clara, saying, "We'll come in through the roof."

The dragoness nodded, and before Valorie knew what was happening, Daryn had scooped her off of her feet along with his seemingly unsurprised apprentice, tucking one of them under each arm as if they were made of cotton. Clara did the same to Rhona and took off after Daryn, who started sprinting at the oncoming group, heedless of their suddenly upraised weapons. He had covered half the distance between the two groups when Valorie felt him tense powerfully as his taloned toes slammed heavily onto the ground. With grace belied by his muscular bulk, he hurled himself upward, letting his crimson-membraned wings boom out behind him as he took to the air.

The ground abruptly rushed away from Valorie as the dragon carried her up along the thick, stone wall of the cathedral. As they crested the domed roof, the sun momentarily blinded her, and she blinked rapidly, raising her hand to shield her eyes. Daryn's voice rumbled in his chest as he muttered under his breath. Valorie's furred skin prickled as a short, tingling sensation worked its way over her body. She was going to ask the Archmage what it was that he did, but her voice was choked off by her hammering heart when, with one last flap of his wings, he launched himself high into the air over the dome and let himself drop.

He pulled in a huge breath, and where Valorie's body was in contact with his scales, she felt heat bloom outwards from him. Valorie's long, equine ears twitched as far back as they would go when Daryn roared in defiance, a plume of sun-bright, golden flames pouring from his mouth to impact violently with the smooth curve of the dome. Valorie could feel the heat press against her fur, but Daryn's quick spell saved her from the same fate as the roof of the cathedral. The dragon kept up the inferno until just before he would have landed on the dome, but instead he dropped through the neat hole he had melted in the roof, its circular edges glowing red-hot and drooping inward.

The high-ceilinged room they dropped through was large and airy, and at first glance it looked to Valorie like the inside of any other church to the Gods that Valorie had been in. Daryn opened his wings again, slowing their decent and gliding away from the glowing puddle of molten stone that had fallen into the room. He landed lightly on his feet, his legs flexing to absorb the shock and to deposit Dawn and Valorie back onto the ground. Clara, carrying Rhona, landed a second later and did the same.

Valorie quickly regained her footing, and swept her eyes around the room, assessing the situation. A cinder of rage that had burned in her gut for months surged to violent life at what she saw. Where the altar would normally have been sat a massive throne of black marble, its surface veined with lines of amethyst that glittered darkly in the brightly lit chamber. Perched atop the throne, attended but three oblivious, nude women, was the figure from Valorie's nightmares.

It looked much like it had when it had first appeared before Valorie in the jungle temple, but Salaxa's form was subtly different. Were the demon standing, she would have been a foot or more taller than Valorie, and jet black hair cascaded around her shoulders and framed a hauntingly beautiful face, with delicate features, plump lips, and a pert nose. Her flawless, blood-

red skin shone in the pale light that filtered through the lofty space. Seemingly weightless despite their pendulous size, Salaxa's breasts rose and fell softly with her slow, even breaths and hovered over her slim, waspish waist. Thick, womanly hips flared out and filled the available space in the enormous chair Salaxa had fashioned for herself, squishing against the armrests of the demon's throne.

As if in challenge of the demon's absurdly feminine body, Salaxa's meaty thighs were spread wide to allow the women who attended her access to the monolithic member that sprang from her crotch. Its flushed, lust-darkened skin was a deep, ruddy purple, and thick veins throbbed along its titanic length. In spite of how heavy it must have been, it arced upward proudly. It was more than a match for even Valorie's absurd horseflesh, and the three women who were occupied with it literally had their hands full.

One of the blithely ignorant women had both of her hands wrapped around the glans of the massive cock while she worked her mouth lovingly along its tip, coaxing out a steady stream of thick, slick lube that soaked her bare skin. Another busied herself with caressing its hard, vascular shaft as it pulsed under her agile fingers. The last was on her knees in front of the throne, under its length, and had her face and hands roaming softly against the taut, crimson skin of the demon's scrotum as it hung heavily into her fingers, each swollen testicle the size of the woman's head.

Cold pupilless eyes glowed a brilliant violet, their sclera as black as pitch as Salaxa turned them to her visitors. "Ooh, Rhona," she purred seductively, her voice deep and alluring, "I knew you would come back to me. And you even brought friends with you! If I had known we would be having such... delicious looking guests I would have tidied up the place." The demon cocked her head to the side, the light in her eyes flickering thoughtfully. "Oh, you seem to have misplaced my gift! It's alright. That just means I get to give it to you again. I so enjoyed it last time." The complacent smile dropped from her lips and her look hardened dangerously. "This time I won't be so gentle."

Salaxa abruptly tensed, clenching her fang-like teeth in a grimace as a spasm rocked her soft, voluptuous body. Her cock twitched and visibly swelled as it fired a thick jet of demon-seed into the mouth of the woman at the end of its length. The force of it threw her head back, but she hardly noticed. She immediately returned her mouth to the tremendous glans, trying to catch as much of the hot, sticky fluid as she could as it splattered across her face and chest.

The demon hissed in pleasure as the woman stumbled backwards. She lost her footing, but the other two women were instantly at her side, arms under her shoulders. The blissed-out woman paid the others no mind as she eagerly rubbed the demon's leftovers into the smooth skin of her chest. Valorie started to take a step forward when Daryn's warning hand on her shoulder held her back. The equine looked up at him in question, but the dragon only shook his head almost imperceptibly. Valorie returned her gaze to the scene before her and gaped at what she saw begin to happen.

The strength left the woman's legs, and she sagged into the supportive arms of the others as she started to shake. A short whine seeped from her lungs and her hands pressed savagely into her breasts. She bucked her hips wildly as she soaked her nethers in a short, but wet orgasm, thick streamers of girlcum running down the inside of her narrow thighs, mixing with the fluid that already soaked her body. Gradually, the gobs of the demon's cum that plastered her body disappeared, seeming to soak into the thrashing woman's flesh. Her skin flushed a dark, lusty pink as whatever magic the demon was using began to wrack her body.

The woman was small and slender. Narrow could be used to describe everything about her: hips, waist, chest, face; but the body-warping taint coursing through her body sought to change that. Valorie blinked in stunned confusion as the woman threw back her head and forced out a choked groan through fiercely clenched teeth as her body started to shift and change.

It started with her neck. Tendons stood out urgently against her skin as she flexed desperately, the once delicate muscles thickening as the wave of change worked its way south. Her shoulders rippled and bulged as her back broadened with a series of dense, meaty, popping sounds. Her breasts bloomed out into her waiting fingers as her arms swelled quickly, her skin stretching taut over suddenly unrelenting musculature. The woman looked half-formed, an engorging, hulking torso supported by thin, comparatively spindly legs. Salaxa watched hungrily at her handiwork. "I do so love the strong ones." said the demon privately, its eyes flicking briefly toward Valorie.

Valorie was going to retort but a loud moan tore her attention away. She couldn't help but watch in morbid fascination at the metamorphosis taking place in front of her. The woman's spine cracked noisily as it lengthened, allowing for even more dense muscle to pack itself onto her bulging frame. She now towered over her two companions, who looked to be struggling to support the mutating woman's rapidly increasing weight. Row after row of thick abdominals pushed themselves to the surface of her stomach, and when the wave of transformative magic reached her dripping womanhood, she screamed, her voice deep and ragged.

Her slim thighs slapped together wetly as she came again, this time squirting a few jets of musky fluid to splatter across the floor in front of her. Her bones creaked as her pelvis broadened, pushing her hips out along with it. Wider and wider they swelled until they competed with the still thickening girth of her huge shoulders. She ground her thighs together, the thick liquid coating them sticking them to each other. At least that was what Valorie thought as she watched the woman's thighs bulge powerfully, huge, throbbing cords of muscle wrapping her once thin legs in a layer of feminine might. But at the woman's reddish-brown hair began to fall out in huge clumps, Valorie realized that something else was about to happen.

The woman's skin darkened further, pink blushing to a deep, murky purple as it started to stiffen. Thousands of tiny grooves pinched at her skin, and as her skin grew hard and shiny, the changes revealed themselves to be a coat of glossy purple scales that started to cover her body. Salaxa grinned viciously as the woman screamed again, not with pleasure, but pain as the bones in her legs shattered themselves and her entire lower half started to reshape itself. Her thighs stayed stuck together, and the crease between them filled with thick, hard muscle that rippled in powerful waves. She growled through her agony as the changes swept down the rest of her body, the muscle of her calves bulging ludicrously before they finished melding together into a stubby, serpentine tail.

As the hair finished falling from her head, her new tail twitched and began to elongate rapidly, foot after foot of new, tremendously muscled length pouring from her hips and piling up beneath her. Scales rasped against the smooth, stone floor as she wriggled her tail, testing her weight on it as she stretched it out behind her. It tapered gradually toward its tip, and her huge, thick hips, coupled with her enormous, heaving breasts left her with a heavy, voluptuous frame despite her intimidating musculature.

A loud crack followed by a pained grunt brought Valorie's attention upward. The woman's face, left alone until this point, started to writhe under her newly scaled skin as she grimaced in silent strain. Her nose flattened as her face pushed outward, her jaw broadening to match her thick neck. Her nostrils moved to either side of a new ophidian snout as her teeth

morphed into hundreds of backward-curving needles. Her elongating maw dropped open as her canines grew long and thick, filling her mouth with inches of dangerously sharp tooth that dripped a thin, amber fluid onto the ground. Delicate muscles pulled her fangs up against her palate, and she snapped her mouth closed with a noisy click.

She blinked rapidly as her eyes shifted position slightly on her still-reshaping head, their pupils clenching into narrow serpentine slits. Her dark blue irises shifted hue until her eyes shone like burnished gold in the light and her ears melted into her head. Shallow grooves formed along the length of her snout and a long, forked tongue darted out of her mouth, tasting at the air. Her chest heaved in her hands as she violently groped herself, her nipples shining wetly. The scales of her underside were a shade lighter than the rest of her body, and she reflected the light dully as she bent her head down to inspect herself.

Suddenly, she tensed, her hands darting to her crotch. Her womanhood peeked eagerly through her new genital slit, her engorged labia on display to everyone in the room. She jerked, bucking her hips frantically as she came a third time, thick fluid running down the underside of her tail as her thrashing body shoved aside the two women next to her. A bulge of flesh had formed just above her drooling pussy, and it stretched her slit wider around it as it surged outward. Thick veins pulsed needily along it as they fed its growth. The newly born naga hissed out an ecstatic moan as she wrapped the fingers of one hand around it as it throbbed longer.

It pushed her fingers apart as the head of her swelling cock peeked out from her broad palm, giving her enough length to begin to stroke it excitedly. It arced upward against its own weight as it grew, eventually getting large enough for the sinuous woman to grip it with her other hand. Her powerful muscles trembled as she pumped herself frantically, and Valorie began to wonder when it would stop. Eventually, when it was fully the length of the naga's forearm, it seemed content, but the serpentine woman didn't slow her brutal pace.

Salaxa cooed eagerly when the gasping naga's cock began swelled thicker, but instead of the cum Valorie expected, it just continued to thicken. It twitched spasmodically and the naga grunted in frustration as she frantically humped her hands, but it just continued to broaden. It was beginning to look grotesquely out-of-proportion, but that didn't seem to slow its growth. Finally, however, the naga gasped in relief and her motions grew even more energetic. The impossibly girthy tube of flesh in her hands pinched in along its sides, the top half shifting up, and the bottom portion shifting down. The ruddy, almost black skin met in the middle and separated along the length of the naga's throbbing cock until she could stroke each of her new members with a hand.

The naga glanced down at the frail looking women that framed her frighteningly powerful body, a salacious grin working its way across her toothy maw. Without ceremony, she buried her strong hands in the women's hair and jerked them roughly in front of her. She only had to rise up a bit to align her crotch with their rapturous faces. Recognizing the naga's intent, both women's mouths dropped open as wide as they would go, and the snakelike woman shoved their heads brutally into her loins.

The woman choked and spluttered on the massive girth that stretched their lips thin and suddenly filled their throats, but the naga didn't seem to care. Her cocks bulged out the necks of the women as if they were made of something impossibly elastic, and the naga brutally face-fucked their helpless forms. Her long, forked tongue lolled out of her mouth as she tensed in one last orgasm, and one last series of changes worked their way through her body. Her fingernails grew long and thick, darkening to a lustrous black as they sharpened. As if making up for the

loss of her hair, rows of spiky appendages pushed their way from her skull, shortening until they disappeared into the nape of her neck, giving her a thorny, black mohawk.

Valorie could hear the naga's seed coursing through the further distended throats of the two women and into their stomachs. They apparently didn't have to breathe, because although they choked at first, they didn't spill a drop of the enormous serpent's snake-spunk as their bellies bulged outward with the sheer volume the naga was dumping into them.

They coughed, but looked up at the naga worshipfully as she pulled her lengths out of their horribly stretched bodies. Her enormous breasts swayed as her chest heaved with deep, heavy breaths as she turned to look briefly at the demon on its throne before she rounded on the group standing before her. "Two..." Salaxa said in a pleased sigh, "I guessed correctly. I love to play these guessing games with you mortals. It's always so... exciting... to see what you will become."

Valorie grinned as Daryn's hand slid off of her shoulder. Was a giant snake half-again as tall as she was supposed to be intimidating? Fine, two could play by that game. "Yeah, yeah, real scary." Valorie said as cockily as she could manage as she swaggered forward towards the titanic naga. "But I don't really give two shits what you like. I have to admit, I wasn't looking forward to doing this, but now that I've got the chance to see what a gigantic twat you are, I think I'm going to enjoy fucking your shit up."

The naga hissed angrily and rose up on her tail to tower over Valorie's comparatively tiny frame. The serpentine woman flexed her body, huge muscles bulging against her dark purple scales in a show of titanic strength. Valorie laughed harshly as she stepped within range and lunged out with her gauntleted hand, striking the naga squarely in the gut. As Valorie had expected, the serpent's abdomen was as hard as a rock, and her blow seemed to do nothing, but the naga still had to rock backward to keep her balance over her tail, which brought her head low. With all the strength in her body, Valorie lashed out in a savage uppercut that smashed into the naga's jaw. The snake's head shot up, her eyes rolling back in her head as she toppled over backwards, perhaps unconscious, and definitely stunned.

With wordless squeals of fright, the naga's companions rushed to their collapsed companion's side, leaving the path to the demon's throne clear. Salaxa's eyes glittered with excitement and Valorie covered the distance between them in three long bounds. Salaxa twisted, expecting a blow, but instead Valorie gripped her by her neck and pulled, heaving the demon's mass from her chair and into the air above the equine. Valorie gritted her teeth. The demon was heavier than she looked, but her muscles performed faithfully as, with a defiant cry, Valorie hurled Salaxa into the open air.

There was an explosive crack of expanding air as the Archmage shot his hands out and a beam of brilliant energy, glaring like liquid sunlight, briefly connected the dragon and the demon. Salaxa grunted audibly as the energy impacted against her chest and threw her like a ragdoll across the room. A wall of pale blue energy materialized in the air and stopped her flight with a heavy thud of impact before the plane of force slammed the demon bodily into the ground, cratering the stone floor with its force. The plane quickly reshaped into a large, lumpy sphere that pounded into the demon's limp body again and again until the floor had been ground into dust beneath Salaxa's still form.

Dawn stepped up beside Valorie. "Smash her until she can't resist, then screw her clean." she murmured as Valorie looked down at the apprentice's post violence grin, "I'm right behind you. Let's do it."

Valorie resolved to never, ever make Dawn angry before she nodded, grinning back at the smaller woman. She heard Daryn follow behind them as they approached the crater. They hadn't made it halfway there before the crater exploded with a concussive sphere of furious violet energy. The concussion rocked into them, and Valorie had to stagger a step back as she and Dawn were stopped in their tracks. The dragon's heavy hands on their shoulders helped them keep their balance, and they all watched as Salaxa staggered to her feet from the crater.

The demon's long, raven hair swirled through the air as she spun to face her transgressors. Her eyes blazed with unknowable rage and her voice shook the air in the room as she screamed, "INSOLENT MORTALS! YOU ARE UNFIT FOR MY NEW WORLD! I WILL TEAR YOUR SOULS FROM YOUR BODIES AND USE YOUR USELESS FLESH AS KINDLING!"

Valorie popped her knuckles noisily. Serious pants on, then. Valorie could deal with that. Relying on her more mystically inclined friends to deal with whatever the demon could do on that front, Valorie's armored skirt slapped against her legs as she charged at Salaxa, drawing her sword as she ran. Valorie leapt up at the last moment feinting with her blade to force the demon to leave itself open. She then struck out with her booted foot at the demon's inhumanly beautiful face. Salaxa saw it coming and grabbed Valorie by the ankle with her free hand, but the equine just spun herself, pushing her momentum into her other side as her other boot crashed into Salaxa's nose. The demon released her leg as its nose flattened against its face with a gruesome crack, and Valorie ground her foot into the wound as she kicked herself off of Salaxa's torso to land steadily on her feet a few paces away, her sword up defensively. Valorie grinned as Dawn laughed.

Salaxa pulled her hand away from her nose as toxic green ichor oozed from her shattered face a split second before it puffed back out to normalcy. Interesting, thought Valorie. She wondered how many times she could break the demon's body before it stayed broken. She would enjoy every blow. Salaxa looked at her, and the light in her eyes peaked, and Valorie felt a dark haze cloud over her mind for only a brief moment before it disappeared. The demon recoiled at her apparent failure, and Valorie heard Daryn cry out behind her, "Oh no you don't. That's hardly fair, is it?"

Valorie took advantage of the demon's momentary confusion to lunge forward, making Salaxa jump backward, dancing around the crater her body had made. The demon decided to try a more direct magical assault, and a bolt of angry violet lightning jumped out at Valorie. The equine had time to tense in sudden panic before the bolt veered off course to slam into the floor, throwing chips of stone into the air as it powdered the ground. "What's wrong, cuntwaffle?" Dawn called tauntingly, "Worried you can't beat someone in a fistfight?"

Cuntwaffle... Valorie was going to have to stop talking around Dawn all together at this rate. Her nostril flaring in anger, Salaxa turned to Dawn and made to run at the apprentice. Valorie swung out with her sword, knocking the flat of the blade firmly against the demon's ankle, tripping it up and throwing it to the ground. Valorie ran the point of the sword through the meaty part of Salaxa's thigh, and the demon screamed as its flesh parted around the unforgiving steel. Valorie pulled the sword out of the stone beneath the trapped demon and swung again, lopping Salaxa's foot off at the ankle. The demon began to heal immediately, but it let out a keening, inhuman wail of anguish as it writhed away from Valorie.

Valorie's sensitive ears picked up the sound of countless scales scraping along the smooth stone floor, and she heard Clara growl, her voice hard and cold, "If you know what's good for you, you will stay right there, snake." Valorie turned to watch the naga slowly rising to her full

height, fully two feet taller than the dragoness, who appeared frail by comparison. "Alright then." said Clara with a grin of predatory pleasure, and she launched herself at the towering serpent.

Salaxa slowly rising to her feet drew her attention away, but she heard the heavy impact and the dragoness snarl of defiant rage as they engaged. The demon eyed her cautiously now, as if suddenly aware of the threat Valorie and her friends posed. "I sense the spell on you." Salaxa said with surprising calm, "It won't work. I've grown too powerful. You can't stop me." She reached up to gently cup the heavy swell of her full, impossibly perky breasts. "It would be better for everyone if you would just submit to my new world's order. I could make you all akin to gods, give you pleasure unending, undying ecstasy until the end of time. There need be no conflict, no strife, no hate, no pain..."

Valorie scoffed, but stopped when she felt her fur abruptly stand on end. A bolt of furious lightning, a familiar, pale blue, seared into Salaxa's chest. "No life!" Dawn screamed as she sent another lance of energy rocketing into the demon's body, "No love!" Another. "No happiness!" Another. "What kind of world would that be?! What use is pleasure without context?! The touch of a loved one, the company of a close friend, the comfort of a good book, these things you can't possibly understand! I would feel sorry for you if you didn't deserve hellfire for what you've done to countless people!" Dawn's chest heaved with passion and she murmured rapidly under her breath as a small, sun-bright globe of vicious blue energy sprang to life between her outstretched hands. Her voice dropped dangerously low as she looked the demon in the eyes. "But you deserve so much worse for what you did to the WOMAN I LOVE!"

With an inarticulate scream of mindless fury, the apprentice cast her arms out and the sphere of liquid fire streaked toward the demon. It seared mercilessly through the air, appearing to grow larger as it approached its target. Salaxa stumbled backward, her eyes plastered with fear for perhaps the first time in her endless life as she searched for a way to escape Dawn's rage. Valorie's armor grew hot with just the residual heat of its passing and its volume grew to a dull roar just before impact.

When it made contact with the demon's body, it looked like the popping of an overfilled wineskin, but instead of wine, furious, seemingly living flames washed over Salaxa's body. The demon howled and flailed its arms wildly as it collapsed to the ground. The inferno clung to its form, though it burned nothing else, and seemed to spread like a brilliant, flickering stain over every square inch of Salaxa's flawless, ruby skin. Where the flames passed, skin crisped and blackened, and flesh split and oozed rancid, green fluid. After a long, satisfying minute, the flames flickered once more and died out, leaving the demon a quivering mass of horribly burnt meat.

Valorie approached and looked down at it. Yep, she definitely had to never, ever make Dawn lose her temper. Salaxa twitched, her body still repairing itself, but sluggishly. Valorie leaned down and slammed her sword through the demon's charred neck, pinning it to the ground. "Alright, just sit tight right there," Valorie said casually, "Just fix yourself up enough to give me a hole to stick something into and we'll have this done before you can say "Aloe.""

While she waited, Valorie started to idly undo the straps of her armored skirt to free her trapped member as Dawn stepped slowly forward to lean heavily on Valorie's hip, panting, her skin coated with a sheen of sweat. "Do you..." she gasped, "Do you want me to lay on it to give you something nice to look at?"

"I can see fine from right here." Valorie returned, kicking the demon in the ribs as if to goad it to heal faster. "What's up with Daryn? He's been quiet."

As if in defiance of the idea of silence, a hollow boom rocked through the chamber, and Valorie turned to see behind her. Daryn stood stock still, his head bent in concentration, but that wasn't the source of the noise. Behind him, Clara and the naga were twined around each other, the serpent constantly trying to wrap its coils around the dragoness's body. Clara was always able to writhe free at the last moment, and at each failure, the dragoness punished the naga with tooth or claw. The serpentine woman was bleeding from countless cuts and bites and Clara was grinning gleefully with primal violence. The dragoness's scales were slick with the naga's blood and her teeth gleamed red. The naga looked to be fighting for her life. It was like watching a cat toy with a mouse.

Dawn sighed, "I think Salaxa's still trying to get at our minds, so he's stopping it. Do you think we should help her?"

"Nah." Valorie responded, "She can handle herself. Let her have some fun. She's been complaining to Daryn that she never gets to hunt in the city."

"I wasn't talking about Clara."

"Oh. In that case, maybe we should. I was hoping for a zero-casualty trip. Although I doubt Clara will actually kill her."

A wet, gurgling drew Valorie's attention back down; Salaxa seemed to have mostly reconstituted herself. She was trying to speak past the sword in her throat, but all that made it out were bubbles of viscous, green blood. Patches of heat-blackened flesh still receded, but Valorie supposed that it was good enough. Valorie thought briefly about withdrawing the sword so she could castrate the demon to allow for easier access to her pussy, but the threat of having to listen to the demon drone on and on was too great. Instead, the equine just knelt down lifted up and aside Salaxa's massive, scarlet scrotum, baring the demon's womanhood to her. Here went nothing.

Valorie pulled down the hem of her pants just far enough to let free the flaccid length of her still knee-slapping member and started to stroke it to hardness. True to her word, Valorie looked over at Dawn with a lascivious grin, drinking in the apprentice's ample curves and flawless, sweat-soaked skin. It was just a hole, the equine kept telling herself. It was just a hole, and afterwards, she and Dawn would get to take a nice, long bath together. She closed her eyes, imagining what Dawn might have planned for her in the warm, lightly scented water.

The demon's constant twitching kept pulling her from her reverie, though. Valorie's enormous, equine member throbbed fitfully in time with her heart, pushing her fingers apart with its spreading girth. She took pleasure in the delicious irony as she lined the still swelling head of her cock up with the demon's engorged entrance. She unceremoniously crammed herself into the supine demon, pushing forward until their crotches met. Valorie supposed it shouldn't have been a surprise that she fit effortlessly. Blood still poured into her crotch as she started to thrust herself into Salaxa's velvety passage.

Valorie grunted. She supposed it did feel wonderful. Salaxa's walls wrung her stiffening cock eagerly as it thickened and stretched even the demon's delightful tightness around its girth. Salaxa's got tighter and tighter as Valorie finally reached her full, monolithic length. It felt better, physically, than anything Valorie had ever done with her body, and jolts of mind-numbing euphoria raced up Valorie's spine to explode in her mind as white starbursts of giddy ecstasy. But as good as it made her feel, it couldn't compare to Dawn's touch.

As if reading Valorie's mind, Dawn stepped quietly over, straddling Salaxa's waist to press her lips against Valorie's with quiet confidence. Valorie couldn't stop herself from moaning into the apprentice's mouth. Her mind burned with the possibilities of a future with Dawn, and

she was only a single orgasm from seeing it become a reality. She urged it on as Dawn's hands twined around her back; she could feel the apprentice's warmth through her breastplate, and she leaned desperately into the kiss as she rocked her hips faster and faster. She was so close, she just had to reach out and take it, and she would be Dawn's and Dawn hers.

And then her world started to crumble around her...

Valorie felt the demon lurch beneath her as its walls clenched painfully around her length. Dawn grunted as Salaxa wrapped an arm around the apprentice's narrow waist and pulled, yanking the apprentice down onto her chest. Salaxa tore her neck free of the sword that remained stuck into the ground and grinned up at Valorie as her neck healed itself almost instantly. "Aww..." the demon purred, "Just couldn't get it up in time could you. You wouldn't have had that problem if you hadn't thrown away the gift I gave you."

Valorie desperately tried to pull herself out of the demon, but she couldn't do it without tearing her dick off and likely bleeding to death. Dawn opened her mouth to say something, but the demon's hand clamped over her lips. Salaxa slipped her other hand past the waistline of the apprentice's skirt, and Valorie was forced to watch as the bulge of the demon's dexterous fingers played across Dawn's crotch. "Ooh..." Salaxa continued, "So wet. What to do, what to do..."

Valorie looked over to the others, begging for help, but her heart dropped out from underneath her at what she saw. Daryn was hunched over, looking like he was being physically born down under a great weight. He slowly dropped to one knee, a pained expression plastered across his face. Clara had somehow gotten trapped in the naga's coils, and the serpentine woman was currently trying to crush the life out of the dragoness while holding her maw forcefully closed to prevent Clara from freezing the naga solid. Clara managed to work her wings free and she flapped them desperately, dragging the snake with her into the air and trying to scrape the enormous snake off on the walls and roof to no effect. Even Rhona was pinned under one woman while the other had her head buried in the priestess's crotch.

Fighting blind terror, Valorie jerked, trying to work herself free of her silky prison. "You idiots..." Salaxa said, her voice full of disgusted disdain, "While your spell may have worked, you had the audacity to think that I would let you use it!" A long, probing tongue spooled out of her mouth and slipped into Dawn's blouse. Valorie watched it writhe against her love's breasts. The demon molested the apprentice for a long moment while Valorie looked on, horrified. "I should make you watch..." continued Salaxa, unrestrained hatred quivering in her voice, unhindered despite the sinuous muscle hanging through her lips, "I should hold you there and make you watch as I pump this worthless piece of meat so full she pops." The demon's hand jerked under Dawn's skirt for emphasis, and the apprentice's scream was muffled against Salaxa's palm.

"Would that make you hard?" she asked, "Would that excite you? Watching the life flicker in this girl's eyes as she comes apart at the seams around me? Your name would be the last word on her lips before she vomited my seed on your chest, you know it would. She would die thinking of you. How is that for your "love?" What would be meaningless then? Your life? I don't think so. I sensed it in you when you freed me in the temple, your desire for strength, your lust for domination. I thought I had met a kindred spirit. Admit it, you would get oh, so hard, feeling this pathetic creature swell against you and burst. Or would you want to do the popping? That can be arranged, as soon as the dragon loses consciousness. Imagine it. How strong you would have to be... to fit all of yourself into something this small. There would be so much blood, so hot and wet, and then it would turn white as you filled her to bursting. She would explode against you as you exploded within her."

No. Valorie wanted to puke, she wanted to die, to do anything that meant she would no longer have to listen to the demon speak. Tears dripped down her face and she struggled ineffectually against Salaxa's grip. The demon's hold on her seemed to only grow tighter, however, as it continued, its voice harsh and unforgiving, "Or perhaps not. You'll never know, because I am no longer interested in toying with my meat! I have better things to do than care for some ungrateful, ignorant mortals who scorned my gifts! I will TEAR YOU APART!"

She raised her legs, keeping Dawn held to her chest, and abruptly relaxed her hold on Valorie. The equine didn't have time to react before Salaxa's dainty-looking feet smashed into Valorie's chest. The argentum breastplate crumpled into her torso like it was made of foil, and Valorie felt her ribcage shatter as she flew backwards and slid along the smooth floor. She could dimly hear Dawn screaming aloud as she coughed blood onto the floor next to her. Agony destroyed her mind, and each breath was horrific torture.

Suddenly, Dawn bent over her; the demon must have released her at some point, but Salaxa's sticky, green ichor drenched the apprentice's body. Valorie wanted to say something, anything, but her lungs wouldn't pull in enough air to think, let alone speak. Dawn was crying, but something seemed wrong, horribly wrong, and Valorie's mind couldn't comprehend what she was seeing. Salaxa's blood seemed to crawl across the apprentice's skin. "No, no, no." Dawn murmured. Valorie fought to raise a hand to Dawn's face to peel off a sticky strand of the demon's toxically green blood as it approached the apprentice's mouth.

Dawn's voice echoed dimly in Valorie ears, "Don't move Val." the apprentice whined, her hands roving over Valorie's crushed torso in a panic, "Your lungs... they're filling with blood... but I can fix it, just don't move. I've got you, I promise."

Blood... Something about blood. Valorie was tired, and darkness pressed in on her consciousness, but she could still feel the knot of overwhelming dread tighten in her gut as she saw Salaxa loom over the tiny apprentice. Sudden realization burned away the haze of her exhaustion, and she felt the pain tear back into her mind. The demon wanted to hurt them. What better way than to kill Valorie in horrifying agony while the equine's last sight was the corruption of her love?

"Dawn..." Valorie gurgled through the blood pooling in her throat, "Blood..."

"I know, Valorie." Dawn said soothingly, tears soaking her cheeks, "It hurts, but you've got to stay still. I can fix you, I just need to focus. Just... don't close your eyes. Stay with me."

Damnit, Dawn, Valorie wanted to scream, just think about yourself this once. The apprentice whispered complicated strings of words under her breath, and Valorie felt her pain briefly abate. Then Salaxa struck out at Dawn. The apprentice gasped as the demon's strong fingers wrapped around her throat and hauled her off of the ground. Salaxa held Dawn to her chest as the frail woman thrashed defiantly. "No..." Dawn wheezed past the fingers on her neck, "Please..."

The demon laughed harshly. "Begging now, are we?" Salaxa mewed into the apprentice's ear, "What, no more tricks up your sleeve? Out of ideas? Good." Dawn whined as the demon harshly groped her chest with its free hand. "I think I'll keep you. I'd like to know what you will become for me after watching this animal drown in her own blood, something big and strong, or something even more weak and pathetic?"

Her heart fluttering, Valorie was panicking. She was going to drown in her own blood. The pain had been numbed enough for her to think, but she still couldn't force herself to move. She couldn't get enough air into her lungs and she kept trying to force herself up to sit, to no avail. Dawn was repeating a single word with what breath she could manage to get past the

demon's restraining fingers, and Valorie forced herself to stay conscious as she raised a hand weakly up toward the suspended apprentice.

"No..." Dawn whispered, "No, no, no..." Valorie stopped moving when she felt her fur suddenly stand up straight. "No. No. No." A heavy tension pressed in on Valorie's body as the air started to practically vibrate with building energies. The apprentice had ceased struggling against the demon's grip and now hung there limply, muttering the same word over and over with building vehemence. "No, no, no."

The pressure grew to an almost painful intensity, and Valorie thought that she was going to be crushed into the ground by the suppressed violence that hung in the air. The equine couldn't understand why Salaxa wasn't reacting, but she seemed absorbed in taunting the apprentice, who no longer seemed to feel anything as her brows knitted together in anger and her town shifted from pleading to commanding. "No!" she practically screamed, "No! No! No, no, no! NononononoNONONO! NO!"

The light in the room seemed to bend in on itself surrounding the apprentice, and with the last word, Dawn tensed, and a shockwave rippled outward from the apprentice's body. It shot through the air and Valorie mentally braced herself for a new realm of agony, but the shockwave seemed to curve around her, leaving her untouched as it impacted the ground surrounding her, sending stone flying as the top layer of the floor shattered. Salaxa dropped the apprentice as she was knocked backwards and to the floor.

Dawn landed on her feet, her eyes tightly shut and her teeth clenched in apparent pain. She raised her hands up to clutch desperately at the sides of her head as she let out a ragged, agonized scream. The temperature skyrocketed, and a steady breeze kicked up the powdered floor and swept it away as air started to rush away from the tortured apprentice in a swirling vortex. Valorie couldn't understand what was happening, and as Salaxa rose to her feet, even the demon looked shocked and confused.

The virulent, green ichor that clung to Dawn's body peeled away in ragged strips before it could do any harm, shredding to ribbons in the air as the wind rose in intensity, sweeping the dust away in a wide circle. The temperature spiked further, and the clothing covering Dawn's body suddenly darkened and crumbled to ash as it was carried away by the winds swirling around her bared body. Dawn whined and hunched over into a trembling ball, and Valorie felt worry for the apprentice peak over her own agony. A low-pitched hum thrummed through the air, audible over the wind whipping over Valorie's long, equine ears, and she blinked through her growing haze of pain and exhaustion at what she saw Dawn do next.

The apprentice's skin began to glow with a dull, muddy luminance, as if a brilliant inferno was building within Dawn's body. She suddenly jerked upright, strain etched into every line of her slender body, her arms outstretched and her head thrown back. Her fiercely clenched teeth parted around one final, keening wail, and the radiance that roiled within her form exploded outwards. Lances of crystalline, pale blue light pierced Dawn's skin, charring it with unimaginable heat before it flaked away to reveal the creature beneath.

Dawn's skin split open piece by piece like the hatching of a great cocoon before it crumbled to ash around her. Almost blinding, a figure made entirely of the same, translucent energy stepped slowly from the remains of Dawn's vaporized frame as the last of what the apprentice used to be crumbled to nothingness in the gale swirling through the air.

It had Dawn's form, full figured and voluptuous, but the cold, blue light that made up its body made it difficult to distinguish distinct features. The only things that could be seen clearly were the twin pinpricks of furious luminescence that burned in its head as it swept its imperious

gaze around the room. Its eyes landed on Valorie's broken form, and their glow flared violently. It casually reached out a hand toward the mangled equine, and the pain tearing through her mind abruptly vanished. A horrible cracking, grinding sound rattled through her body as her shattered ribcage reconfigured itself and her pierced lungs healed. Valorie rolled to her side as she gasped in delicious air and coughed thick gobs of blood free from her throat.

Her crumpled argentum breastplate, probably what had saved her life to begin with, now dug painfully into her chest as she struggled to breath. "Dawn..." she choked, "What? I don't..." She stopped when the blazing figure seemed to ignore her, turning slowly toward the demon, who had watched the scene unfold in unhidden shock.

The figure took a slow step toward Salaxa, who took a similar step back, fear flickering low in her violet eyes. Cocking its head to the side, the figure stopped, scrutinizing the demon for several endless second before it swept its hands out. Opaque bands of force the same color as the energy that made up the figure's body materialized in the air surrounding the demon and rushed inward, clamping around Salaxa's arms and legs, immobilizing her with unyielding strength. The figure then continued its slow walk toward the now trapped demon, who thrashed desperately against her bonds.

The restraints binding the demon moved as the figure approached, forcing Salaxa to her knees. Even kneeling, the demon was taller than the form that used to be Dawn, but the look of unbridled panic in Salaxa's eyes betrayed her fear of the smaller creature. It seemed to glide gracefully over the fissured ground until it was within arm's reach of the pinned demon, and then it drifted slowly closer, the painfully bright radiance gleaming harshly on Salaxa's crimson skin as the figure stepped to within a hair's breadth of contact. Then it spoke.

Valorie flinched. It was still Dawn's voice, but it shook with unknowable rage and barely contained violence toward the demon. It shuddered through the air and set Valorie's ears ringing with its raw, primal strength. "Are you afraid, demon?" it said in a voice that would have been quiet had the earth not threatened to split under its power.

Salaxa's answer was as wordless as it was obvious. The demon screamed and flailed its trapped limbs with the mindless terror of a cornered animal. It tore at its own body in a blind panic, avoiding touching the angrily glowing form before it with dreadful care. "What does a demon lord know of anger, or compassion?" the figure that had been Dawn whispered, its voice sharp enough to flay flesh from bone, "You are no more than an insect, a worm, crawling through its own filth by instinct alone! It would be disgusting if it weren't so pathetic! Now tell me, demon. ARE YOU AFRAID?!"

Valorie gritted her teeth and clamped her hands over her ears at the last word as Dawn's terrible voice rumbled through her skull. The figure languidly raised its hand to trail a finger slowly along Salaxa's abdomen. Where the two beings made contact, the demon's skin withered and split as its flesh shriveled and died under the figure's strength. Salaxa shrunk away, trying desperately to flee from the figure's unyielding finger as the demon let out an earsplitting wail of inhuman anguish that rose in pitch as more of its flesh dried up and rotted away. Its keening screech grew so piercing that it burrowed into Valorie mind, becoming almost inaudible as it trailed away into near silence.

Seeming to take that as an answer, the figure leaned forward, its lips hovering just over Salaxa's skin. "Good." it whispered again, this time barely audible. It pulled back a single glowing arm, balling its fingers into an angry fist before it threw itself forward, burying its hand to its wrist in Salaxa's chest. The demon arched its back in sudden, overwhelming agony as the

pale, unforgiving light of the figure's fist sunk into its torso between its massive breasts, its mouth open in a silent, terrified scream

They held that pose for several seconds before Valorie heard a heavy thump from behind her. She struggled to sit up, looking over to see the Archmage slowly pushing himself to his feet, shaking his head while he sluggishly regained his balance. He blinked dully as he looked around the room, recognition flaring to life in his eyes when he saw what was going on. His gaze flicked to Valorie, and he scrabbled over to her, sliding to his knees as he pushed the equine onto her back once more.

"Daryn!" Valorie said in a panic, "Dawn, what's hap-" The dragon's strong fingers clamped over Valorie's equine muzzle and he growled. With the claws on his other hand, he quickly sliced through the straps holding her ruined breastplate to her, and Valorie gasped, suddenly able to breath freely. The Archmage muttered a few word under his breath, and Valorie felt a cool, tingling sensation wash over her.

"Okay," Daryn said, apparently relieved, "you'll be fine." He looked Valorie in the eyes, his crystalline sapphire orbs practically burning with urgency. "She'll be fine as long as she has something to vent on, but then we're all in grave danger. There's no time right now, but if we make our way out of this, I'll explain it all to you. It's got a thousand names in languages as old as magic itself, but what you need to know is that she is Burning. This is why people are afraid of magic, even if they don't understand why themselves." He pulled Valorie up to sit, and then latched his strong fingers onto her shoulders, his gaze stabbing into her own.

The seriousness in his eyes scared Valorie more than anything Dawn had yet done. "You've got to listen to me Valorie. I will not let her Burn herself to oblivion as long as I still draw breath, I swear it, but you have to promise me two things." The room shook around them, and he paused, looking over his shoulder at Dawn and the demon.

The hand of what had been Dawn was still pushed into Salaxa's chest, but the glowing figure seemed to be pulling at something, rocking its entire body back and forth, trying to draw something from the demon's form. With each relentless undulation of its brilliant frame, Salaxa twitched violently and seemed to shrink, collapsing in on herself. The demon's enormous, pendulous breasts deflated, pulling up against her body as her elephantine member retracted, inch after inch disappearing back into her crotch. The violet light that burned in her pupilless, alien eyes died out as her skin began to lighten, taking on a more natural, pinkish hue. "Still human enough to save her..." Daryn muttered, "That's my girl."

The demon's ludicrously proportioned curves pinched inwards, her hips creaking even over the whirlwind that roared through the air as they narrowed to a more normal width. The demon's face kept its femininity, but its harsh features softened and lost some of their perfection. Its nose narrowed and lengthened, and its cheekbones shifted upwards, giving back the emerging woman her lofty appearance. Pupils dilated out of nothingness, pushing away the demon's irises as they dulled from a bright violet to a mellow hazel and the demon's sclera gradually whitened.

Small, but perky breasts now graced the woman's tall, thin frame, and as her body finally returned to normal, the glowing figure gave one last tug, ripping it's hand free of the woman's chest, carrying with it a darkly glittering, fist-sized stone that pulsed fitfully with an inner violet light. The woman seemed unharmed, and she slumped backwards into her restraints, which gently lowered her to the floor. The figure took a step back, raising the stone clenched in its fist high above its head in a triumphant pose before the light that made up its body flared furiously and it brought its fingers together, shattering the stone into countless tiny shards that evaporated in the face of the harsh glare of the figure's form.

The figure idly dropped its hand to its side, its mission done, and the air around it shuddered as the light that made up its body abruptly flared into blinding brilliance. Valorie felt Daryn's fingers tighten on her shoulders as she turned back to her. "Listen Valorie, if this kills me, there are two things that I will haunt you forever if you don't do. You have to promise me that, no matter what happens, you will take care of her. She has to know that this wasn't her fault. Also, you have to make Clara understand. She'll be so, so angry with me, but you have to make her listen to you. Please Valorie, promise me." He glanced over his shoulder at his Burning apprentice and then returned his gaze to Valorie's speechless face. "We're out of time!" he yelled, shaking her for emphasis, "Promise me, damnit!"

Valorie nodded weakly. She was crying, and she couldn't understand why. She was trapped in the middle of a raging torrent, with her world spiraling out of control around her. The dragon returned her nod with a short one of his own before he stretched to his full height and turned toward his apprentice. Valorie watched him hurl himself bodily at the blazing figure, spinning through the air at the last moment to swing his tail around at blinding speed to crash heavily into the figure's body. What was once Dawn flew backwards to dig a shallow trench in the stone of the floor as it skidded to a halt. The golden scales of Daryn's tail where he had made contact with the figure's body were scorched black, and he flicked it to shake the pain away.

The figure floated to its feet more than stood. "Come on, you brilliant, amazing girl," said the Archmage to his rage-blinded apprentice, "Let's see what you've got." The glowing form raised its hand, and the Archmage threw himself into the air as the ground he had been standing on cratered under the force of an invisible blow. He covered the distance to his apprentice quickly, and when he got within arm's reach, he did something it wasn't expecting.

He wrapped his bulky arms around its body and caught the ground with his shoulder, rolling himself onto his back and pulling the figure down on top of him, pinching it between his arms and chest. It didn't bother to fight against his grip, it only flared brighter, and Daryn screamed, a sound far too high-pitched for a creature of his size to make. The dragon dwarfed the blinding, sun-bright thing on his chest, but eventually his scream choked off into silence as the figure atop him grew only brighter and brighter.

Valorie couldn't breathe, but almost as quickly as it had begun, it was over. The violent, pale blue light abruptly died out, and Valorie shot to her feet, as the wind died out along with it. She looked around; everyone in sight seemed to be unconscious. Clara and the naga were nowhere to be seen, and the dragon lay limp and motionless in a shallow crater of his own making. Valorie's breath caught in her throat, and she rushed over, slowing when a wave of residual heat washed over her fur.

Dawn, unconscious, but still breathing, laid atop the dragon's chest, her pale, but otherwise unharmed body sheltered in his huge arms. Beneath Daryn's heavy frame, Valorie saw the source of the nearly overwhelming heat. The dragon was lying in a glowing, yellow-hot puddle of liquefied stone, reduced to a fluid by the energies released by whatever had just happened. The soles of Valorie's boots sizzled and clung to the ground as she skirted close enough to pull Dawn's naked form from Daryn's embrace and away from the sweltering heat.

After retreating to what she hoped was a safe distance, Valorie tugged off her tattered, bloodstained cloak and wrapped it around Dawn's body, unsure of what else she could do. She dropped to her knees and cradled Dawn to her chest. The apprentice, contrary to the heat that filled the air, was cool, even through Valorie's cloak, and she trembled in the equine's arms as she slowly started to drift back to consciousness.

Dawn coughed weakly. "Valorie..." she groaned, "What... What did I...?" She stiffened, "Oh Gods, no." With sudden, frantic energy, she struggled her way free of Valorie's arms and ran to the supine dragon. Valorie chased after her, and the heat abruptly died out with an angry crackling as Dawn whispered a phrase under her breath and cooled the still glowing stone of the floor. She jumped up onto the Archmage and pushed his limp arms off of him, pressing her ear to his chest, muttering urgently.

The Archmage didn't look well. Where Dawn had laid on his chest, his jet black scales had lost their luster, and bright crimson blood oozed slowly from his mouth and nose. Valorie couldn't tell if he was breathing. "Come on, Master," Dawn pleaded softly; "don't do this to me." She looked up at Valorie, tears hanging in her large, amber eyes, and motioned the equine downward. "Valorie, help me, I need your ears. Mine... I can't... just come here."

Valorie did as she was directed, laying her head flat against his chest and listened for signs of life. There, just at the edge of her sensitive hearing, Valorie could sense the dragon's heartbeat, slow, weak, and unsteady. "He's alive." Valorie let the apprentice know, "But if he's breathing, it's so shallow I can't tell. He's getting weaker. We need to do something, and fast." She looked over to Dawn, swallowing hard past the lump of rising panic in her throat. "What do I do, Dawn. Tell me what to do."

Dawn's face scrunched up in torment, and the tears began to fall. "I don't know Valorie. I can't tell what's wrong with him. He's dying and I don't know how to stop it. He's hurt, but nothing is bad enough to kill him. He's just dying! Oh, Gods, Valorie, he's just dying!"

Valorie's heart sank. She felt suddenly numb, and she sat heavily back, staring blankly at the dragon as he slowly slipped away from her. Dawn pounded her tiny fists into his ribcage, screaming his name in the vain hope that he would hear her. She shouldn't have promised, Valorie thought to herself. She should have told him to go fuck himself if he was planning on doing anything but living.

Valorie barely twitched when the weakened ceiling collapsed in on itself in another location, and Clara dropped through the new hole. She landed heavily, slitted emerald eyes sweeping over the scene before her, and growled. She staggered to Daryn's side, pausing briefly to cringe as a row of long, curving spikes receded back into her spine. Her thrashing tail sent droplets of blood slinging across the room as two large, ivory blades, like the bits of a massive axe pulled back into its tip. And then she was on them.

"Gods' Blood, Daryn..." she growled, more angry than worried, "I can't leave for a few minutes to take out the trash without you killing yourself. If I didn't know better, I'd say you were trying to get away from me." She brushed aside Dawn without a second glance, bending low over the dragon's unconscious body. Her nostrils flared as she sucked in a deep breath, and her icy blue tongue spooled out of her mouth to lap up a thin trickle of the Archmage's blood. She shuddered and huffed out a short, quiet pant, her breath crystallizing into a fine, white mist that wafted gently over the dragon's face. "Your blood is hot, Calidus. It burns just like you, and now that I've gotten a taste, you are MINE! Do you hear me! Mine! And I have not given you permission to die, Calidus! Not now, not ever! So you'd better wake up RIGHT NOW!"

She gulped in a huge, billowing breath, and Clara's scales puffed out as she unleashed a torrent of frigid energy over the Archmage's body. The effect was immediate. Daryn's eyes shot open wide, and he gasped in a tremendous breath as his entire body flexed, bowing his back off the ground. Clara leapt out of the way as Daryn's wings unfolded underneath him, launching his body into the air for his arms and legs to flail wildly. He landed unsteadily on his feet, and the air

left his lungs in a plume of dense, black smoke, accompanied by tongues of bright orange fire that lapped between his teeth.

"Okay!" he cried shakily, "Nap-time over! I get it! That's what I get for laying down on the job!" He pinwheeled his arms energetically before he finally slowed down, a pained look washing over his draconian visage, "Dripping Ichor, Clara, give a guy some warning, will you? Gods' Blood, I feel awful. What did I..." He finally stopped and looked around him, mouthing a silent "Oh" as his question was answered. The cavernous chamber was in shambles, the floor was spiderwebbed with cracks where it wasn't outright cratered from the violence that had taken place. Clara still dripped crimson blood, and Daryn looked down, prodding gingerly at the scales of his chest, their gleam scorched from them.

Valorie stood. The room was deafeningly silent as the Archmage surveyed, the only sound audible: the quiet rasping of his scales as he brushed the dust off of himself. He sighed heavily, taking in the three women with a brief smile before his features hardened into a scowl and he approached Dawn, once more wrapped in Valorie's cloak.

He knelt before his apprentice, placing both of his massive hands on her shoulders as he spoke, his voice dry and monotone, as if he were reciting a speech, but with no emotion. "Apprentice..." he droned, hardly looking at Dawn, who started to cry as he continued, "Through the heroism or sacrifice of others, the danger presented by your weakness has been ended. I am required by my oaths to inform you that, should you lose yourself again, it becomes the duty of every member of the Ordo Arcanum to end the threat you pose to others by any means necessary, even if it should require your death. Is this understood?" Valorie gaped at the dragon as Dawn nodded, unable to look her master in the eye. "Good." he said with an air of finality, rose, turned, and stalked away.

"Just a fucking minute!" Valorie screeched at his receding back, "What the hells is that supposed to mean!?" She chased after him as Clara knelt down to Dawn. Valorie had to jog to catch up, but the dragon didn't acknowledge her cries of protest. "Daryn stop! Answer me! What do you mean her death?! What the fuck happened?! Listen to me! STOP!" Valorie reached out and grabbed onto the end of the dragon's tail, which, Valorie realized a split second too late, had been a mistake.

He spun, and before Valorie could react, he had his fingers around her neck and had hauled her off her feet with one arm. She kicked at him, but she may as well have been flailing at a mountain for all he reacted. He pulled her close and hissed, his breath volcanic against her fur, and Valorie began to question the wisdom in antagonizing the dragon. His clawed fingers twitched around her neck as if he were struggling not to crush the life out of her, but she quickly saw that that was not the case. He trembled, and tears fell freely from the short spikes that lined his jaws.

"Listen to me Valorie," said the Archmage in a tremulous voice, "I will be happy to answer as many questions as you may have, but right now, I would greatly like to have some time so that I can order my thoughts. Do you think you can grant me that much?"

Valorie nodded quickly, and Daryn thanked her as he gently lowered her to the ground. Valorie massaged her throat and watched the dragon wander aimlessly, until he almost ran into the massive, obsidian throne that dominated the spacious chamber. He leaned heavily on it, resting his horned head in his hands in contemplative silence.

Valorie staggered back to the others and dropped to the ground. "Well, that wasn't the greatest idea I've ever had." she said glumly.

Clara sat next to her and Dawn and peered down at the equine. "No it wasn't." she stated matter-of-factly, "But it was brave, or perhaps stupid. People often have trouble distinguishing the two. He'll be okay, though. Just give him time to vent."

Valorie scoffed, "Vent... yeah. I don't know if he has it in him to get openly angry at anyth-"

She had spoken too soon. She craned her neck around when she heard a rumbling roar of unleashed aggression. Daryn had his claws buried in the back of the enormous chair, nearly as tall as he was. He growled, his titanic bulk heaving under his scales as he levered the throne off of the ground, its glittering black surface mirroring the scales of his underside as he hurled it across the room to slam into the far wall. The solid stone had to have weight countless tons, and he had tossed it like a pebble. A single, booming flap of his wings sent him hurtling toward it to collide solidly with the throne's mass. Daryn let his momentum transfer into the throne, and as he landed, he flexed again, this time spinning the enormous piece of stone over his head to slam once more into the wall. The glittering amethyst-veined marble couldn't take the stress, and it shattered on impact, sending shards of stone raining down over Daryn's golden scales. He swung again and again until nothing remained of the demon's throne but rubble and dust, and he heaved in a huge breath.

Valorie could feel the heat on her face from all the way across the room as Daryn unleashed a maelstrom of furious, golden fire onto the remains of Salaxa's throne. He kept up the inferno until there was nothing left but a glowing puddle of molten slag. Only then did the tension leave his broad shoulders, and he sagged against the cratered wall, standing in the liquid stone as if it were cool water.

Valorie turned to look at Dawn when the racket had ended and she heard the apprentice sobbing. Her face was buried in her hands, but she pulled out of her sorrow when Valorie sidled up to her to wrap her arm protectively around Dawn's slim shoulders. "Why the long face?" Valorie prodded the apprentice, nuzzling her muzzle into Dawn's scalp, "I think we won."

Dawn laughed weakly. "Yeah, I guess so."

""You guess so..."" Valorie mimicked, "As if... If I didn't know any better, I'd say that you probably saved the whole world."

The apprentice wiped the tears off of her face on a miraculously clean portion of Valorie's cloak. "Maybe, but I also could have destroyed everything. I lost myself. I could have killed everyone." She choked, "I could have hurt you."

Valorie disagreed, "You protected me, even when you couldn't control yourself. I was dying, and you saved me." She squeezed Dawn gently into her. "I was terrified, but never once was I afraid that you were going to hurt me. I just didn't want you to hurt yourself. Hells, you didn't even hurt the priestess who was possessed by the demon! No, I don't think I was in danger." She paused, stroking Dawn's thick auburn hair lovingly. "Was Daryn serious though?" she asked after a moment, "Will they kill you if that happens again?"

Dawn nodded. "The other wizards will try to, yes, if I become a danger to others. I'm going to try to stop that from becoming an issue, though. Just try not to get killed again, okay?"

Valorie promised, but continued with her line of questioning, "How often does this sort of thing happen?"

With a sigh, Dawn hesitantly answered. "Not often, and it's even more rare for it to happen a second time, but it's happened before, a few times. Every time, though, the order has managed to put a stop to it before it escalates, and every time, two wizards die.

Clara shifted and spoke up, "Two? Each time? Why two?"

Daryn's bass rumbled deep in his chest as he strolled up and lowered himself to join the circle that has formed on the tortured ground. "Well, one, for the wizard who lost themselves, and one for that wizard's teacher." He heaved a heavy, tired sigh, looking at Dawn knowingly. "Because no wizard can see their apprentice, former or otherwise, killed, they fight back, and so they're also... put down... to protect the innocent. Just keep in mind Dawn, that if this happens again, a great many more than two will die, because I will not let them take you, if I have to tear the order apart to do it." He rubbed the base of his horns with his fingers for a long minute before he spoke up again. "But that's not going to happen, so let's get going. I'm tired of the smell of ash and rancid sex."

Valorie quietly digested that information while they stood, Daryn and Clara seeing to the formerly possessed priestess while the equine followed Dawn to pull the two unconscious women off of Rhona's trapped form. They gently roused them all back to consciousness until the four women were huddled together, weeping into each other's arms. Except for Nissandra, who stared blankly at nothing while Rhona clutched the High Priestess of Amara desperately to her chest. Daryn filled them all in on what exactly had happened, but halfway through his speech, Nissandra suddenly collapsed to the ground and started screaming.

"She made me watch!" the priestess cried, her hands tearing at her eyes briefly before Valorie could restrain her flailing. "She made me watch everything! I could feel it! She used my body! I saw her using me to change them! Rhona! I tried to fight her! I swear I did! Please believe me! It wasn't me! She knew I loved you! She used it against me! I swear I didn't want this to happen! I swear I-"

Rhona's open-palmed slap cracked against Nissandra's cheek, reducing her shrieking to pained burbling. She leaned down over the priestess, and Valorie hesitantly released Nissandra. Rhona pressed her forehead against Nissandra's and sat there for a long minute and the others spread out to give them room to breathe. "I know, Nissa, I know." murmured Rhona privately, "No one is going to judge you for things you did when you weren't yourself." She glanced up at Valorie. "Especially no one here. I don't blame you, Nissa. I just wish my first time could have been with you under happier circumstances."

"Oh Rhona," the priestess croaked, "I was a fool. I can't believe how stupid I was. She laughed at how easy it had been. She tortured me when she was alone. She showed me things... things that-"

"Nissa, hush." Rhona said firmly, "Perhaps blind faith didn't pay off in the end, but it certainly doesn't make you stupid. Refusing to move forward when given the opportunity does. We can talk about... about what happened... later. But right now, there's an entire sisterhood who could really use their Matron."

"Matron..." Nissandra spat in disgust, "As if I could ever be deserving of that title ever again. What right do I have to lead anyone? After what my hands did to them?"

Rhona sighed. "That's the point, Nissa. Who better to help them, to show them how to overcome what has happened than by following the lead of the person who suffered the most at the demon's hands?" Valorie nodded. She could hardly be called unscarred by what she had been through, and by comparison, Nissandra had one hell of a mountain to climb. Rhona continued. "I understand if you can't be Matron anymore. But will you at least be Nissa, a friend that they can talk to when they feel ready?"

Nissandra shuddered out a ragged sigh before she let Rhona help her to her feet. "Nissa is all I can be, now. So yes, I will be there for them, if any of them can bear to look at me again."

The other two women rushed forward and wrapped the former priestess in warm hugs, volunteering to be the first to talk, and Nissandra started to cry again, but less stiffly. Rhona smiled and left them to it, instead approaching where Valorie, Dawn, and the dragons were gathered. "I..." she started, "I think I should stay here and help. I... Thank you for everything you've all done for us. I take it you are leaving?"

Daryn nodded, and Rhona forged on. "I understand; stopping someone from making a mess is always easier than cleaning up afterward. You're needed elsewhere. So I guess this is goodbye?"

"There's that godsdamned word again." Daryn growled halfheartedly. "It's not goodbye if I promise to come see you some time. So how about a "see you later" instead, hmm?" Rhona smiled and nodded, and the dragon bent down to scoop her up in a hug of his own. Valorie felt his tail prod against her back, and she stepped forward into the hug as well, along with both Dawn and Clara. They held it for a long, long minute before they finally parted. "Remember," Daryn reminded Rhona, "If anyone wants to talk about maybe removing some unwanted "additions," you know where to send them."

Rhona agreed and turned back to Nissa and the others while Valorie followed Daryn out through what appeared to be the main door, deigning to take the scenic route out rather than the path they had taken in. They passed the occasional confused young woman, and Daryn took the opportunity to kneel down to each of them to murmur words of encouragement.

Valorie heard what he said, but she wasn't really listening. She mindlessly let her legs carry her along behind the dragon as they wound their way out through the structure. It was over. After months of hideous, unspoken tension, it was finally over. Valorie thought she should have felt happy, but she couldn't tell how she felt. One thing was certain, though; when Dawn's slender fingers wound their way into hers, she felt warmth bloom in her chest. Everything was going to be alright.

She recognized the heavy, wooden doors from the inside, and as the dragon in front of her pushed open the door, she took in a heaving breath of the fresher, outside air, but it turned into a shocked gasp when she saw that the colossal naga, worse for the wear, but hardly dead, rested casually on her tail and regarded the group with an inscrutable expression. The enormous, twin cocks she had grown were gone, or at least pulled back into her body for the time being, and blood still oozed from countless wounds, dripping from her darkly glittering, purple scales.

With an angry snarl, Clara hurled herself at the unreactive naga, but the Archmage moved faster, catching the dragoness by the tail and reeling her back in. She struggled mindlessly against him, and he let himself be pulled partway out of the building before using his grip on Clara's tail to sling her through the air to thud heavily against the outer wall. This stunned her just long enough for the larger dragon to throw himself at her, and Daryn pinned Clara to the wall under his bulk as she fought to free herself.

He blew out a long, hot breath against the back of her neck before he started to warble to her in a rhythmic, musical language Valorie couldn't understand. Valorie watched, impressed, as the dragoness slowly relaxed, seeming to melt back into him as the Archmage spoke. Her tail twined around his leg, clenching and relaxing rhythmically, as her eyes drifted back into her head and her tongue lolled out of her mouth. Daryn finally released her and stepped back, only to catch her as she fell into his arms. She pawed weakly at his body, lost in sudden ardor, and he smiled as he walked her over to Valorie. "Hold this for me," he said with a smile as he unceremoniously dumped the dragoness into Valorie's arms, "She needs to breathe for a little bit."

Valorie stammered an affirmative. The dragoness was heavier than she looked, and she was already a couple feet taller than the equine. Her pupils, instead of angry, predatory slits, were contracted into barely visible pinpricks, nearly lost in the emerald sea of her irises as she stared dreamily at nothing. Valorie could feel Clara occasionally shudder against her body, and the dragoness panted thin puffs of pale mist as she writhed in Valorie's arms. "Gods Blood, Daryn," Valorie muttered, "what did you do to her?"

He chuckled and stroked a hand lovingly along the fluttering muscle of one of Clara's wings. "Nothing, nothing. I just reminded her of some obligations that she has yet to fulfill." Valorie looked at him dubiously when, at his touch, Clara moaned quietly and humped herself firmly against the equine's thigh. "Just some obligations," he said again at Valorie's look, "I promise."

Valorie snorted at his back as he strolled over to the naga. The serpentine woman "stood" almost as tall as the dragon, but as he got closer, she sank lower to the ground, as if folding up on herself. He stopped and loomed over her, and she looked up at him with tears hanging in her burnished golden eyes as she spoke. "I can't go back." Her voice was deep and vibrant, but still strongly feminine, and her jaws chewed over her words awkwardly as human speech issued from an ophidian mouth not meant to bend that way. "I remember what she made me do. I... I don't blame her, and I wish everyone who stays luck, but I won't go back. I can't."

"What would you do instead?" Daryn questioned quietly.

The naga's strong, clawed fingers knitted together uncertainly in a stark reminder of what she once was. "I've been a slave all my life, first to a goddess, then to a demon. Serving is all I know how to do. I want... I want to help people who actually need it." She looked down at her body, as if only now seeing what she had become. Her titanic arms bulged restlessly as she flexed her hard, scaled physique. "I'm strong now. I can protect people. Stop those who would do this to others. There must be some way I can help. I... Will you take me with you? I don't know where else to go. I can't go back."

The Archmage knelt down to inspect the wounds that dripped scarlet blood onto the ground. "That's good enough for me. The world will need those like you in the times to come. Hold still." He ran his hands over the thick, twitching muscles of the naga's body, chanting something alien and musical under his breath, and the naga shivered as her wounds closed.

He stood back up to his full height, and the naga rose with him, the tips of the spikes of her spiny mohawk only a few inches from clearing the top of the dragon's head. "What's your name?" The dragon asked her.

She shook her head. "My name doesn't matter anymore. Call me..." Her tongue reflexively slipped free of her mouth to taste at the air, and as she brought it back in, it brushed against the enormous fangs that were folded up against the roof of her mouth. She blinked slowly, an odd gesture for a snake, and said with equal slowness, "Call me Viper."

Daryn smiled warmly down at her. "Would you like to know the draconic word for viper?" She nodded. "Cerasta. A lovely name, I think, if you'd have it." She nodded again, accepting her new title. "Alright then. Valorie, would you come over here?" Valorie jumped at her name, but responded quickly, laying the still insensate dragoness gently on the ground to lean against a wall before trotting over to stand next to the puzzled snake-lady.

Valorie offered her hand to the naga, who took it slowly. "Hey there, Cera." quipped the equine amiably, determined to lighten the tension in the air, "Name's Valorie. Pleasure to meet you and all that. Don't worry about the whole snake-butt thing you've got going back there. It accentuates your... uh... hips... nicely. Although we might need to find you a good tailor." She

pointed to the threatening bulge in her pants and flexed her shoulders, causing the seams of her shirt to creak ominously, "I thought I had trouble fitting into my clothes."

Cerasta smiled in spite of herself, hissing out a short, snaky giggle, and she let Valorie pull her down into a hug. "I've got it easy, I guess," she said, some of the seriousness seeping out of her voice, "I don't think I'll have to worry about cramming myself into pants."

Voicing her agreement with a good-natured grumble, Valorie turned to Daryn. "Alright then. What's the plan?"

Daryn steepled his fingers together and rested the tip of his snout thoughtfully on his claws. "I think I'm going to do something that I'm not sure any Archmage has seen the need to do before." He rested his hands on the shoulders of the two women in front of him, and his voice dropped into something booming and official, filled with pomp and circumstance. "By my right as Archmage of the Ordo Arcanum, I, Arcana Primaris, Daryn Skabaard, do hereby charter a new order, dedicated to the protection of the innocent from the taint of Salaxa's corruption and her leavings, and officially induct its first members, one Valorie Jasmine McClain, and one Cerasta. Welcome to the Order..." he paused, his eyes lighting on the brooch that pinned Valorie's cloak to his apprentice's body, a shining silver lance on a field of blue. "Welcome to the Order of the Silver Lance. May your gleam be a light to those lost in the darkness, and may your points find the hearts of those that embrace the demon's corruption."

Keeping his hands on Valorie's and Cera's shoulders, he muttered a long, complex string of words under his breath, and Valorie's skin prickled as her fur stood on end. The equine felt a weight settle on her shoulders and her hands went to it source. Pinned to her by an identical brooch was a long, royal blue cape that draped down her back. Shining like liquid silver, a long, viciously pointed lance was emblazoned on the thick fabric, but no stitching was visible. It was cool and metallic to the touch, and Valorie realized that it was actually a thin sheen of argentum, dragonsilver, that had been affixed to the cloth through some unknowable means.

She heard the naga gasp, and turned to look up at her. Cerasta was busy fondling a cape of her own. In addition, a sturdy-looking, leather vest now hugged her powerful, voluptuous chest, resting over a long-sleeved shirt of darker, midnight blue. The naga looked down at Valorie, and they shared a brief, knowing look. Valorie could see the passion burning in Cera's golden eyes. She had purpose again, and Valorie could see how it filled her with fiery energy.

"I'll be able to get you something a bit better than leather later on, but I thought that—Urgh!" The dragon staggered backward under the force of the naga's unrelenting embrace. Valorie strode over to Dawn, flicking her cape back over her shoulder so it would catch the breeze. He really shouldn't be surprised by sudden hugs anymore.

When she neared the apprentice, she felt Dawn's hands slide up her thigh to wrap around her waist. "Blue looks good on you," she said quietly.

"Please, Dawn," she said down to the apprentice, running her hands through Dawn's hair, "You say everything looks good on me."

Dawn only smiled knowingly and leaned into Valorie's hip. The equine's ear flicked around at the sound of Clara staggering to her feet. The dragoness padded heavily to Valorie's side, stretching her arms above her head to the sound of popping tendons. "Wow," she said casually, as if she hadn't just been in a murderous rage at the naga now wrapped around the Archmage, "hugging already. I think he's getting better at this."

The dragon laughed as he peeled the snake off of him. "Let's hope I don't have reason to get much more practice, hmm?" He looked over at Valorie and the others, motioning them over

to him. They all stood in a loose circle and the dragon looked them over, pride in his eyes. "Hold on, ladies. The second time isn't much better than the first."

"Wh-what? Where are we going?" Cerasta asked.

The Archmage looked at her and smiled. "Home." Valorie could see the blissful happiness in the dragon's sapphire eyes just before the ground was jerked out from underneath her, and for a brief, endless second, the only sensation she felt was Dawn's fingers in her own. Home. She liked the sound of that.