

READBEAST

BEASTIALITY STORIES



I - Awakening

Upon awakening, my first sensation was of nausea. The difference, from the prior three occasions, only manifest in degree. Yet I did not have to open my eyes to know that, as before, I lay naked and covered in blood – hardly any my own – that was largely dried, especially around my face; eyes crusted shut, mouth tasting of blood, vomit, and I-dared-not-think what else. Not to mention the other vile bodily excretions in which I lay.

Despite my being largely unconscious of how I came to be in this exact state, now for the fourth time, I was obscurely pleased to note that on this occasion I had retained adequate mental faculties to ensure I returned whence I had left my armour and weapons – conveniently near a source of water to cleanse the filth from my body. That part of my pre-planning, at least, had succeeded.

As my other senses gradually returned, I became aware of the sibilance of nearby running water, to which I half-blindly crawled. Evidently, however, I had not lost consciousness on a gentle beach, for the shock of frigid water abruptly replaced the alarming sensation of falling. The luck of Sai being somewhat with me, the river was neither deep nor swift, but the slimy rocks prohibited decent footing as I flailed to the surface, sputtering and clawing at my eyes to open them enow to orient myself.

The shore was indeed an uneven wall of sharp rock, seemingly with no place of egress. I began shivering uncontrollably, intensifying the aches in my joints, especially – unsurprising, given that I had just endured the transformation from human to animal and back again in but a few turns of the hourglass. I managed to find a break in the jagged wall, enow that I could find purchase to drag myself over the slick edge and on to the clammy surface. Catching my ragged breath, I paused a moment, fighting the nausea that threatened to spew forth yet again. At least I was relatively clean.

The cold penetrating my bare skin induced me to move, thus I left the rocky shore for the slightly less discomfiting brush, commencing the search for my gear. Soon covered in scratches and yet more fresh blood, I gingerly fought the surrounding scrub in my nakedness, trying to discern whence I may have stashed my effects. Frustration mounting, I returned to a spot that, despite being at first repulsed by the smell, I was somehow instinctively drawn: a mound of leaves and detritus beneath a large oak. I tried to hold my breath as I dug through the pungent odour of (I somehow knew) my own urine, to find the stashed gear. Despite it doubtless being similarly fragranced, I donned it, making a fuzzy mental note to wrap it in leather or something next time, as well as to try to find a more accessible spot near water.

I knew why I had to make these nightly preparations; it had been my own choice, after all – a choice I was coming to regret. Nonetheless, I had been under no duress at the time; I had voluntarily drunk of Aela's freely given blood four nights past in the Underforge, receiving the taint of lycanthropy into my own body.

Some of the Companions – the order of warriors in Whiterun that had recently admitted me – such as Kodlak Whitestone, their Harbinger, or leader, considered it a curse, and sought to rid themselves of the 'taint'. Others – Aela, primarily – considered it a gift to be exploited to the fullest. She had made it seem so attractive: to be stronger, faster; to experience the hunt and battle, not to mention sex, more intensely than any human could; in short, to be more alive! I remembered being overcome by lust as we laid together that night, plummeting utterly into her intense green eyes as she urged acceptance of her other gift. I found myself recalling, moreover, my wonder at how it could get any better.

I now knew it was all true.

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## II - Primal Urge

Six nights ago...

"It could be better than this," Aela assured me huskily.

I lay beside the milky-skinned Nord, exhausted, fur coverings thrown aside, allowing the night to cool my dark, sweat-sheened skin inside the benighted tent. I withdrew a bare leg from across hers, moved her arm from my heaving stomach; further contact was too intense just now. Yet, she hardly seemed fatigued, her breathing barely quickened. I could not believe it – after what we had just done?

"H-How?" I demanded, which she took as a response to her query. The odours of sex and sweat-drenched furs pervaded the interior, along with the pungency of smoke from the single brazier that afforded poor reddish light and too much heat.

"Perhaps you noticed that I am barely started with you." She half-rose, flicked both my nipples simultaneously with her fingers, followed by a swift lick and a nip to each, causing me to start and cry out.

"N-No... more!" I attempted to deflect her lips contacting mine. "I n-need... some time." I was almost ashamed; after all, I was supposedly Dragonborn.

"That is what I mean," she growled, rolling fully astraddle me and pinning my arms to the fur mats. "You would not, were you to accept my gift." I had neither time nor senses to ponder her double meaning further.

She was, I had to admit, incredibly strong. No milk-drinking female myself – a Redguard warrior by My Father's Name – yet she had no trouble imposing her carnal will on me, licking and biting around my over-sensitive dark areolas and elsewhere as I struggled beneath her. She emitted another guttural rumble as my exertions only seemed to inflame her – without doubt, they did, for she began to grind her sex against my still-heaving stomach. I glanced down; the contrast of her white skin against my duskiness was thrilling.

"N-No," I whimpered again; but I stilled, surrendering, once more aroused in spite of myself.

"Very well." The lithe, auburn-haired Huntress abruptly rolled off, laid beside me once more. "When you are ready."

All at once, I felt an inexplicable sense of loss. I looked at her pale face; obscured as it was by three diagonal slashes of purplish war paint, I could not discern her expression in the feeble light, and her eyes appeared closed. Nonetheless, I had the feeling her meaning was still double; she was not simply referring to the sex.

"What do you mean?"

Again rising to all fours, she crawled over my lower half, threw the tent flap aside. The frigid night wind rapidly cooled and cleared the interior; a shaft of roseate moonlight penetrated the shadows. Yet, despite the insufficient light, I had a perfect view of her hindquarters not an arm's length away;

undoubtedly, she knew just what she was doing, as her furry cleft glistened at me. Stretching on all fours, back bowed like a cat (or dog), she took a deep breath of the night, wiggled her posterior at me. I caught myself reaching for her, but my curiosity at her dual meaning stayed my hands, delving instead toward my own moistness. A sharp intake of breath and I removed my hand; still too soon.

I could have sworn by the Blade I heard another animal rumble from the redhead before she replied with her own question, speaking into the night: "Do you really wish to know?"

For some reason – instinct? – I hesitated. "Y-Yes."

"You do not sound certain." She stretched again, the muscles along her back, buttocks, thighs, calves rippling in the muted glow. I had an inexplicable vision of a bushy tail switching back-and-forth, maddeningly obscuring, and then revealing, her sex. This time I could not resist, and I heard the growl as I grabbed for a buttock with one hand, cupped her genitals with the other, delved with a digit or two. Whirling on me, teeth bared in a feral grin, yellow eyes glowing (had they not been green just moments ago?), the Huntress leapt atop me, pinning me once more. This time I did not resist the tongue-bath around my ears, neck, and face, followed by a fierce kiss upon my bruised lips. Still squirming, this time with pleasure, I completely forgot my question as she proceeded to my full breasts and ever lower...

Later that night I partook of her other gift in the Underforge.

What Aela had not mentioned was the killing; indeed, the hunger, to kill, in order to satiate the murderous, all-consuming rage. The rage that never abated, was only briefly gratified by intense bouts of lovemaking, hunting, or even deadly combat versus other humanoids. Nor had she mentioned the inability to sleep, the restlessness that drove one, every night, to either toss restlessly or else seek transformation into one's beast-form, and hunt; and eat – but not just anything.

As I had learned on that first night, simply slaughtering game animals and gorging oneself on them raw, would not suffice. Not even predators, such as the sabrecat somewhat anon, had sated me. I had simply assumed, then, the reason I had been sickened was that I had eaten them raw (entrails and all). Nevertheless, I did not want to reflect on how I came to realise the horrific truth, and what it meant...

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III - Beast Mind

Five nights ago...

Through a red haze of frenzy, pain, and sickness, I somehow came upon the recent kill of another predator. My own slaughter and violent consumption of a fox, rabbit, and most of a deer, had not sated me; indeed, I had disgorged virtually all that I had consumed of them. Yet, I was certain that eating these ill-fated victims would do nothing else – as vile as that thought was to the still-human fragment of my crazed mind. So, fighting the compulsion, I approached, slaving, on all fours – and was almost relieved when the explosive roar of the sabrecat slammed into me moments before its massive body. I relished the lethal battle to claim its kills.

Had I been in human form even in full armour, the huge feline would have knocked me sprawling, stunned. Yet my lupine self brushed aside the pain, the blinding rage instead taking over as I leapt to counterattack. I sprang to my haunches, ripped at the giant predator, talons slashing its flanks as it lunged. It circled, sword-length incisors gnashing for my throat as its claws tore my thigh and torso. I dodged, knocking its head aside with one incredibly strengthened forearm, raked it again, opening

more deep gashes along its muzzle with the other. It roared again, part in challenge, partly in pain; I answered, which appeared to give it brief pause; it lost its footing on a precipice of rock, slid over the edge. I leapt after it.

Despite the animal outweighing me considerably still, I managed to land on it, clung to its back. It rolled, slashed at me with all fours. Whilst I ignored the pain of its defensive fury, my talons tore and sought purchase in its flesh. It roared again as I gnashed at its throat, a sound that became strangled as I bit deeper, seeking its life force as we tumbled and fought in the darkness. Each savaging the other, dirt and stones spewed everywhere about the hillside. As I suddenly felt a warm gush, the cat thrashed, its growls gradually choking off liquidly as it stilled and gave a last spasm, claws releasing from my back and shoulders.

I swallowed the warm salty fluid flooding my throat, lapped the rest, ripped further at the throat, seeking more; relishing the victory as, even in beast form and through intense pain, I shuddered in near-orgasmic delight. However, it was not enough. The hunger remained, though I sought to sate it further by slashing into the warm belly of the sabrecat, spilling its entrails and consuming its heart in a few crude bites. Instinctively, I knew this was what I craved – and yet not.

My beast mind turned toward the two mauled corpses that lay in the back of the shallow cave somewhere above, even as my lupine body led me thence. Almost all humanity suppressed, I tore at the woman and then the man, shredding remnants of clothing, ripping apart ribs to get at the cold hearts within, treating them both as had I their killer moments before.

I awoke to a cold, weak sun already drying the dirt-encrusted blood all over my naked frame; pebbles, bones, and other detritus clung to me as I frantically clawed at my eyes, trying to relieve my near-blindness and orient myself as to where – and what – I was. The pain was still there, through greatly diminished. I lay for the nonce, both relishing it and wishing it away.

Appalled at where (and how) I found myself, I did not want to believe what my blurry eyes and memory told me. I was a werewolf, but I had not contemplated all that meant. Must I actually eat humanoids – or their hearts, in particular? The pain had not been mitigated until I had done that very thing; only now did I feel almost good, the best – aside from my filthy condition – since I had partaken of Aela's blood. Thus, was I now obliged to rely upon chance encounters with the corpses of human-kin killed by predators? That seemed an accident unlikely to be relied upon for sustenance. Regardless, I somehow knew even that would not be enough, yet I still refused to acknowledge the alternative.

Somehow, as Azura's star gave way to daylight, I made my way back to our tent whence Vilja and Lydia awaited me in slumber. Myriad thoughts assailed me, almost keeping my mind from vigilance against predators or, perhaps worse, humans whom may espy me and wonder at my naked and bloodied condition, and seek to take advantage. I do not remember how I managed to bathe in the frigid stream nearby and crawl, shivering, into my sleeping fur without disturbing either of my companions.

Vilja lay in her own bedroll, snoring softly, a modest pale breast with its ever-erect nipple poking saucily at me through her almost sheer white nightgown. The sight instantly touched off another kind of hunger in me, but I could not satisfy it just now. Instead, I pretended to awake with them a short time later, wondering how long I would have to keep up this deception.

The second night was worse, only better.

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## IV - Questions

Four nights ago...

In our camp outside Fort Amol, my craving undeniable, I fidgeted the early night away, nervously rising from my bedroll in the tent to pace and dawdle outside by the campfire, and back again. Vilja, Lydia, and I had cleared the stronghold of its evil conjurors earlier that day, and I had only to await my companions going to sleep before I could scavenge the remains. I was partly sickened, partly seething with anticipation; I squirmed in my bedroll, unable to assuage the yearning. Although I felt it most acutely in my innards, my female parts were inflamed as well, my nipples swollen and over-sensitive, sex moist and tender even though I knew it had little to do with sex. Furthermore, despite my keen awareness of my two comrades, I would acquire no solace from either (or even both) that way.

In any case, I was almost certain that Lydia was not inclined toward other females, and as for Vilja, I was unsure; I suspected she would be receptive, eventually, but I had yet to build adequate trust between us to broach the subject. I was assisting her as she sought the whereabouts of a stolen, purportedly magical, flute, as well as something to do with investigating the mysterious contents of a magic bottle that I had helped her recover but a few days ago, a short time after meeting her.

I decided the time was right to slip outside and, nude, make my way carefully in the dark away from the tethered horses and into the night. I willed the shapechange, and in heartbeats, I was a beast. The rest I do not care to remember, other than it was still not enow; the bodies were cold, unfulfilling.

Thus, I returned, my savagery unmitigated – perchance even worsened out of frustration – managing again (or so I thought) to remain undetected as I slid, shaking with cold and fury, back inside my bedroll.

“Where do you go at night?” Vilja asked me as she distributed bread, ale, and goat cheese later that morning.

I sensed Lydia studying me surreptitiously as she ate; doubtless, she wanted to pose the same question but dared not, as I was her thane.

“To the bushes.” It was partially true, to void the indigestible remains of my meals from either end.

“For so many turns of the ‘glass?”

“Do you lie awake timing me with an hourglass?” I demanded, suddenly angry. “What do you care how long I spend behind the bushes?” I stood, hurling the remains of my unwanted breakfast – it turned my stomach anyway – into the campfire. “Strike the camp – we’re leaving now!”

“I’m sorry I upset you – or questioned you,” Vilja apologised a little later as we rode up the Throat of the World to High Hrothgar. Fine snow swirled about us in a bitter wind, frosting her fur mantle, long eyelashes, and the blonde hair not quite tucked inside. Her beautiful Nordic features displayed anxiety. “It’s just that I worry about you. I don’t want to see anything happen to you.”

I was unsure whether to be flattered or even angrier.

“I’ll not speak of it any more, if you wish.”

“I wish,” I snapped, heeling my mount away from her. That was the first time the thought of how she

might taste – her heart, that is – prickled in my mind, which distressed me and caused me to express my anxiety for my travel mates as even more anger, contrarily directed towards the very objects of my concern.

The purported 7,000 steps up the peak to the abode of the Greybeards was perhaps decidedly less on horseback – but, being no pilgrim, I had no compunction about ‘cheating’, as one or two of the locals around Ivarstead grumbled when they saw that we intended to ride up to investigate my summons for supposedly being ‘Dragonborn’.

I did not yet know what that meant, beyond a few myths about supposedly being of ‘dragon blood’ (surely not in a literal sense) and able to absorb dragon souls and to Shout, in their ancient language, using Words of Power. Certainly, I had already slain several dragons, and I had sensed something each time, as their skin and flesh melted away in a fiery tumult about me that left aught but a few scales, bones, and myself untouched. Untouched, that is, aside from the feeling of some kind of power and knowledge burgeoning inside me that I sensed had yet to be unlocked fully.

Thus, this trek up the Throat of the World. I had already learned a few Words – one being Fus, which staggered opponents – but, again, I knew that I had but scraped a patina of rust from the sword, as it were. I would learn more from the Greybeards, and they would set me on yet another series of quests – but I digress.

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V - High and Low Places

A few nights ago...

I return to my tale, relating what betided over the next few nights of my hunger.

Having ridden up the 7,000 steps in somewhat more than one turn of the ‘glass, I spent two agonising nights with the Greybeards, learning what they were willing to teach me. Though the descent took a little less time than the climb, it was already well dark, and so we took separate rooms in Ivarstead at the Vilemyr Inn, myself in one, Vilja and Lydia in another.

While Lydia is my housecarl – my being Thane of Whiterun – I had assigned her to watch over Vilja, to which she reluctantly agreed some days ago. Thus, it was relatively easy for me to slip out into the night.

I was so restless I felt ill; my head twice its size, so that it surely must burst my helmet – which made it doubly a relief when I was able to shed all my armour other gear and stash it some distance away, including my smallclothes, lest they be shredded upon my transformation anyway. I further suffered from starvation, as I could not eat real food, and I am certain that the Greybeards had known something was amiss, if not precisely what. Lydia and Vilja were doubtless aware of my... distress, so much so that they avoided me; we had spoken hardly a word on the way back down the mountain. Even so, throughout my forced confinement, due to my extreme discomfort I had yet been unable to think of anything beyond my hunger – when I was not in lessons with the Greybeards, at least.

Happily, bandits – not to mention necromancers, witches, cultists, and myriad other miscreants – are liberally strewn about Skyrim. I had also forgotten that there was a civil war seething athwart the land; thus, fresh corpses were almost literally at every crossroads. Even so, I realised that I was once again fortunate to come across a recent battlefield of the war between the Imperial Legion and the rebel Stormcloaks. I had ample bodies to feed upon, and yet this night I was to come to the realisation that scavenging would not suffice.

By instinct, I made my way back through the benighted forest toward Ivarstead, having consumed enough to make up for the last few days of deprivation. Despite the surfeit – or perhaps because of it – I still felt sick and unfulfilled. Nonetheless, one animal hunger being mostly assuaged and removed from that part of my mind, I was seriously contemplating taking Elda, the Vilemyr whore, up on her unsubtle offer upon my return – “I’ll tire you out for only five septims!” – when my thoughts were interrupted by cries of “Die, monster!” It would seem I had loped easily into a bandit camp. Suddenly assailed on all sides, instinct took over once again.

Nearly all of them fled in panic when I tested my new ability to terrorise with a ferocious roar, and soon more corpses surrounded me, most of which I had to chase down. The last I grabbed from behind with both paws around his neck, dragged him off his feet to face my slaving jaws. His odd plea of “Mercy!” cut off as I popped his head from his shoulders; fountains of blood showered me, most of which I tried to catch and swallow. I ripped one arm off, then the other, followed by each leg, as though I plucked a chicken; further gouts of blood sprayed, each somewhat lessened. I lifted the torso above my head, opened my jaws as wide as I could; bit through insubstantial hide armour, skin, bone, tore at the heart, chewing it from the corpse. The remainder I tossed aside, went looking for the rest.

Thus presented with yet another feast, this time I found the bliss that I sought. As I ripped heart after heart from still-warm flesh and gnawed at them, the fresh blood pouring down my throat, my wounds – some serious – healed much quicker than they had ere now, in either form. I could have swallowed the tidbits whole with no trouble, of course, but I wanted to savour every morsel, to enjoy this. I howled my ecstasy at Masser, the larger of the two moons, out and full red this night. Answered by several of my cousins, I turned toward Ivarstead.

I would now see to my other need.

Perforce, I was reminded of the necessity to pay even more than usual attention to my ablutions, despite my having bathed in the river before donning my stashed clothing (this time carefully wrapped against my ‘marking’ of the spot). As I entered the inn’s common room and strode up to Elda, wresting her from some fool’s lap and snapping, “Time to back up your boast, wench!” she attempted to shake me off.

“You smell like a wet dog!” she retorted. “Get away from me until you bathe.”

Abruptly infuriated, I thought to eat her heart instead of her other parts; advising myself against it, I pulled her along, forcing her to stumble after me. “Then help me, and join me.”

Raucous laughter pursued us, along with the expected hoots and prurient remarks.

As it betided, Elda was all braggadocio, for she most assuredly did not tire me out; the buxom Nord begged mercy as I assaulted her again, furiously rubbing my sex against hers, like two pair of blacksmith’s tongs inserted one into the other. Troll fat, however, made a poor substitute for a woman’s natural juices, I found, as even I was becoming raw, and Elda had all but dried up. She had apparently passed out again, and so I left her, sprawled naked in my bed with a handful of gold coins – far more than she had demanded – as I dressed and emerged to find Lydia and Vilja waiting for me. Ostensibly, they were eating breakfast, but I realised only then that it was near midday, and it now occurred to me that the entire inn must have heard our passions all morning.

The looks I received ranged from the expected studiously neutral, from Lydia, to something like shock and sadness from Vilja. Yet, instead of mild amusement or salacious grins from other patrons, along with exclamations similar to the night prior, the few others present appeared to avoid looking

at me, whilst one or two glances that I did manage to catch looked almost... frightened.

Despite a pang of remorse I could not yet have identified, I dismissed all feelings other than how energised I felt, instead bidding my companions, "Let us be off!"

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## **VI - The Beast in Me**

I controlled my hunger as we camped the next night, although I could no longer avoid thinking about certain realities and posing myself some difficult questions. I fully understood what Aela had meant, and why she was enthusiastic about the life. Now that we had been separated for a time, I was able to mitigate my bedazzlement of the graceful Huntress, but I knew that the beast in me held certain attractions regardless. It was indeed everything she had promised - yet more. Which was, by Stendarr, the dilemma.

I had not actually killed an innocent humanoid, but then, what defined 'innocent'? Certainly, ere last night none that I had fed upon had heretofore sought to harm me directly, although any number of them could have, given the chance. Was it simply, then, justification for murder - killing humans, orcs, elves, and other humanoid races - by telling myself they were deserving of death anyway, as bandits and other flotsam whom had either attacked me first or would if they had opportunity? I told myself it was not; it is not wrong to 'clean up' bandits and other detritus, especially if one is charged by the local jarl to do just that. It was no different from getting rid of wolves, giants, vampires, or a dragon that also threatened innocent folk.

I especially despised bandits, primarily I suppose because they, unlike wolves and other predators, chose to prey on the weak and innocent. Even vampires were only following their nature, were they not? As did werewolves? The problem was that I knew it was almost inevitable that I would be unable to count on scavenging corpses forever. Then, could I rely on finding a nest of bandits or a coven of necromancers when the hunger became too much? Could I govern the beast in me? What frightened me the most is that I may do harm to innocent folk or, worse, my compatriots. I very much wanted to ask Aela about it - how she and the rest of the inner Circle restrained themselves from murdering others of the Companions whom were not werewolves, or even innocent Whiterun townsfolk. Nonetheless, for at least two reasons I did not wish to see her again for the nonce. One was that she would, I suspected, not be completely truthful with me, but more so I did not trust myself to be near her and not simply believe anything she wished to tell me regardless.

I stowed my effects near Lake Geir before taking beast form (the delicious pain!) and loping tirelessly along the Treva River, whence I shortly came upon Treva's Watch once more. We had scouted it earlier and decided not to attack, as it was already near dark - but I knew, deep down, that my argument against attacking the bandits there and then in human form along with Vilja and Lydia was because I wanted the pleasure - yes, I can admit it - all to myself.

Although they had foolishly left their gates open, I attempted stealth, but was unsuccessful; nonetheless, as I tore into a lookout I learned that my speed precluded any need for stealth. He raised the alarm, yet only two others came at me, with pathetic boasts such as, "I'll rip you apart!" I slaughtered them all with little trouble, fed, approached the entrance to the keep proper. The still-human measure of my mind very briefly pondered that I seemed able to do certain things as a beast - for example, open (unlocked) doors - while other 'normal' tasks, such as searching for loot and rifling bodies, simply did not even occur to me; my focus as a beast was the immediate cycle of hunt, kill, feed. Regardless, I knew my friends and I would be back the next day, when we could ransack the place at leisure.

What I did not count on was my travel mates' reactions – or, for that matter, my own.

“Mother of the Ice!” hissed Lydia, as we rode through the entrance.

Our mounts, halting abruptly just inside, began exhibiting a collective desire to flee the horrific scene. I had not noted the carnage I left behind the night before; the three corpses were in almost identical positions: on their backs with their chests torn open, contents strewn about. I made a mental note to tear the bodies apart next time, as I had the last one I caught two nights past, which should prevent any such diagnosis.

Vilja, a degree paler, if that were possible, gasped. “Oh... Oh, no. They... look like... like they’ve been eaten!” She appeared to be swallowing her bile. “And this one – where is her head?”

For some reason I was disturbed more by her response than anything else – for example, the fact that I was responsible for the butchery – as the blonde had not displayed any squeamishness thus far in our adventures, in spite of encountering, perhaps even inflicting, much worse.

I shrugged off her observation. “Probably wolves. Let us take the horses outside anyway, and you can stay with them if you wish.”

She refused, but I should have insisted. The interior of the fort was worse, and of course, no one would believe that ‘wolves’, or any other predator, could have gotten inside and done the same thing to those half-dozen-or-so bodies, one of whose face was virtually gone, as if peeled off (I vaguely recalled sitting atop someone and ‘slapping’ them with both clawed hands). Thus, Vilja was not able to continue looting, and I trow that even Lydia was grateful, for once, that I had assigned her to the other Nord girl and thus had excuse to leave as well.

I knew I was in for more disturbed looks, if not questions.

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VII - Naked Pursuits

We continued in the same mould for many more days, wandering Skyrim and completing quests, before my luck finally ran out, in a manner I had not predicted. Although I had for quite some time now ceased passing out before changing back – whereupon I had heretofore to wake up, orient myself, and find my gear – I was usually no more than a bowshot away from my stash, and almost immediately fully cognisant of myself and my surroundings. I had also been able to plan my near-nightly hunts, so that I did not roam so far that I was not able to make it back near camp and my cache before I resumed human form, which was always involuntary, and dependent upon how much I was able to feed.

However, one night I found myself pursued by a dragon, and so – perhaps instinctively knowing I was likely no match for it alone, but more so because I had no healing potions, magic, and so on – I fled. I know not how long or how far I loped in beast form ere I suddenly found myself once more human, and realised I was in trouble: Finding oneself completely naked, weaponless, and standing in the middle of a giant’s encampment can generate solemn questions about life’s priorities – but I would have to ponder them anon.

Fortunately, giants seldom attack without provocation; unfortunately, what was most likely to provoke them was coming too near their camps or mammoth livestock. Fortunately, before attacking they tended to make threatening gestures, such as stomping, grunting, roaring, and beating the ground with their huge clubs (apparently mammoth leg bones), just as this one was. All of which

gave me the opportunity to flee, albeit not before an observation oddly came to mind that Vilja had made some while back, about having once seen a giant without its loincloth – or ‘loinclothes’, as she had endearingly put it. “That was scary,” she had added.

Thus, despite my predicament – or likely because of it – I was laughing, which caused me to become out of breath much quicker than I normally would have, even in human form. As a werewolf, I could have run half the night – which I almost had, apparently – but again, luckily for me, giants were disinclined to pursue a threat once they had chased it off, unless it had done them harm, and that I was not about to do.

In any case, I was able to stop after a very short sprint – thankfully for my poor bare feet – and, finding myself near an inviting pool, relished the opportunity to relax, catch my breath, and at least bathe the night’s filth away. I had not counted on the slaughterfish.

Savagely bitten on both legs before I managed to get out of the pool, I retrieved a stick and smashed the two voracious, ugly predators to paste as they tried to attack me even on the shore. I fell to my naked rump in the grass, slumped supine, exhausted. This was not good. Yet, I was still in pain and bleeding, and so I turned to my seldom-used magic to heal myself; at least I did not need anything on my person to be able to cast simple healing spells.

As it betided – again, most fortuitously – I was able to orient myself and found I was only a league or so from camp and safety. Even so, as I reflect on this adventure I should admit that I was quite lucky (again); I could have run into the middle of another bandit camp, this time naked and unarmed; been run down by a pack of wolves or a sabrecat; or any number of similar predicaments, few of which would turn out well.

Ever more to consider, it would seem, as I had further thoughts about my choice.

Although the questions I continued to deflect from my companions were not direct, they were becoming more and more difficult to answer, especially without a blatant lie.

“Tell me honestly,” Vilja enquired one day. “What do you think of my cooking?” Although I replied that I quite liked it – which was the truth – she continued, “Then why do you refuse every time I offer to cook something for you?”

I quickly thought back on the past few weeks, and realised she was probably right. An answer to this would be more problematic without, at best, stretching the truth. “I am just not hungry, I suppose. Or, I have just gotten myself something. Or Lydia did.” I knew my housecarl would not gainsay me; indeed, she avoided looking at me, instead busying herself getting the axe out of her saddlebags and ostensibly going off for firewood.

“That’s not it at all,” Vilja remonstrated. “I think... I think you are lying to me, and I don’t know why. There is something... something wrong, I jest know it.” Her cute Nord accent, and something else, thickened her words.

I looked up from moving large stones into a circle for the campfire. She stood stiffly, still in her form-fitting leather armour, arms folded, crying; I felt as though I had been kicked in the stomach.

“I...” I began feebly, but could not finish.

Yet, it seemed I would not have to, as she turned and fled – though it was not long until circumstance forced the truth from me.

VIII - All is Revealed

They were upon us before we realised we were under attack. We had just despatched a cave troll, encountered suddenly as we travelled in the hills along the Darkwater River near Lost Knife Hideout. Our first indication that we could not yet relax were screams from the horses, which had fled as we came upon the troll just as we rounded a bend in the road. Luckily for the horses, the werewolf skinwalkers and a couple of their wolf companions were intent on attacking us, and so our mounts merely bolted farther away as we turned toward the sound of their terror.

Ere I realised what was betiding I had taken on beast form. I assume it was part instinct, part outrage that my so-called 'brethren' would dare attack me, let alone in company with my friends; and so I would show them just what they had taken on. Yet, perhaps they realised they had made a mistake, for as we slew the wolves and one of the skinwalkers immediately, the remaining two fled back across the river. I was in no mood to let them be, although, since my companions were not able to ford the fast-flowing course as quickly as I was in beast form, I caught and tore apart one and then the other before my friends were able to cross. It was only then that, even as a beast, I dimly realised what I had done.

Up into the surrounding hills I fled, lest I lose control or my compatriots, not recognising me, attacked. As I could not feed on the skinwalkers or the wolves - or, since doing so would not serve me well - and I was not fortunate enow to stumble upon any corpses, I was thus unable to maintain beast form for long. Therefore, once more I soon found myself naked and unarmed, as well as wounded, this time across a significant river from my party.

It need be said here that it is nigh impossible to 'normally' shape change whilst clothed, let alone in armour; clothing will inevitably be shredded as it is suddenly outgrown, and to do so in full armour would be near suicidal, as most armour will, of course, not 'shred'. Even if it did, it would soon become expensive to keep replacing. Aela warned me of this on that first night, and so I have since ensured that I am completely unencumbered prior to a hunt. This time, to be sure, I had had no time for any such planning. Thus, I can only attribute my sudden change to the Ring of Hircine I had acquired in a prior quest to kill a werewolf named Sinding, whom, in beast form, killed a little girl and escaped custody for the crime in Falkreath.

I will not relate that tale, except to say that I chose to spare Sinding and defy the deity Hircine - even though the Father of Manbeasts told me I served him regardless, and bade me keep his ring. In any case, it allows one to take beast form more than once per day, and so it somehow must allow one to shift out of one's accoutrements at the same time. Regrettably, it does not do the reverse. Thus, all I recall is that when I slunk back into the camp that Lydia and Vilja had set up on near our recent battle - doubtless not knowing whence I had gone and when I should return - my two companions had gathered up my shed belongings, intact, and stowed them for me.

It was well after dark when I returned. I had been obliged to turn to my magic once again to heal, keep from freezing, and to find my way in the night, not to mention cross the river, which I was able to do using the whirlwind sprint Shout, which moves one in the blink of an eye several man-spans. It cannot compensate for steep terrain, but otherwise it will move one over quite significant gaps or obstacles, such as traps. Or rivers.

Returning to my tale, then, I do not believe that either Lydia or Vilja slumbered as I crept, shivering, into the bedroll they had set out for me in our tent, but I would be unable to avoid their questions - verbal or otherwise - beyond morning, I knew. Thus, somewhat past dawn the next day, I told them I

would speak with them both.

Amid the purple morning mists, we sat round the campfire for a stretched silence, aught but its occasional crackle and the rustle of the nearby river to intrude upon the uncomfortable quietude.

"I am a werewolf," I finally admitted, although I did not suppose it came as any great shock.

Vilja, holding herself stiffly, began to sob, eyes downcast at her boots shuffling nervously in the brown grass. Lydia regarded me warily.

"I... I do not know what more to say," I added lamely.

"But, w-why?" Vilja cried. "H-How did this happen?"

"I... did it myself."

"But... why?" the blonde repeated. "Why would you do something like this - become a... a monster?"

"'Monster'?" I countered sharply. "See you a monster before you now?"

"Well, not now, no. But—"

"I am stronger, faster... I can stay up and... run all night. I... I feel more alive, like I can do anything."

"Anything but sleep and eat like a normal person," Vilja countered.

"Normal? What is 'normal'?" I did not know why I was so defensive - or perhaps I did.

Choking back more sobs, the Nord girl shook her head. "No... Shrelle, you cannot possibly like what you are - what you have become."

"Why not? What would you know about it?"

"I'll make you a cure diseases potion," she offered.

"No. It will not work." That was true, but I had no wish to admit that I did not want a cure.

She looked at me helplessly; something twisted inside me. "Lydia, please," she entreated the darker Nord. "Help me."

"I... It is not my place."

"Yet you have an opinion," I conjectured.

"Yes, mythane."

"I bid you give it, then."

"I... dare not, mythane."

"Why not? I release you from my service, if that will help."

She rose. "Mythane, I am at your service, to release as you please. If you dismiss me now, I'll await

you at your home in Whiterun. Should you wish still to release me upon your return, that is your right."

Vilja stood, put a hand on the bigger girl's steel-clad arm. "No, Lydia. Don't go. Don't make her leave, Shrelle."

I knew enow about Nordic honour that the stigma of dismissal from a thane's service would be almost unbearable for a housecarl, and I would wish that on no one. Besides, as Vilja observed regularly, I was 'quite fond of Lydia'.

"I do not give you leave to go, Lydia. Please sit. I would have you thoughts on the matter."

"I am at your service, my thane."

"W-Would anyone like a drink?" Vilja interposed. "I'm quite thirsty." She received no response.

Lydia, clearing her throat, sat squarely upon the log. She appeared to have difficulty swallowing, yet looked at me directly. "I cannot imagine that my thane truly enjoys eating people."

I all at once felt flushed; my heart raced as a herd of mammoths thundered between my ears. I needs must admit as well that my female parts twitched, demanded contact – and, I concede, it had nothing to do with present company. It took great effort to remain motionless. "I do not enjoy it, exactly," I dissembled. "I... It is what I must do to heal... to live. And only their hearts," I added, as if that would make the fact more palatable.

Vilja seized upon it: "Oh, is that all, then? Well, that makes it all right, of course." She swallowed; appeared to be holding back more than tears.

I had no answer; I could barely look at her.

"You still have not told us why," she insisted.

"Yes, I did."

"Oh, it's so you can...so you can mate all day and night with some tavern wore?"

Precious Vilja; she could not even swear effectually.

"The word you want is whore, dear, or perhaps slattern, strumpet, or harlot. And what we did was tumble – fornicate, rut, or copulate. Or perhaps even 'make love'."

"No. It sound to me like mating. There is nothing loving about it."

I sprang to my feet. "How would you know?" The beast was nearly upon me.

The other girls must have seen it, as Vilja gasped, eyes flying wide as she fell back off the log; the snick of steel clearing leather as Lydia interposed herself between us.

"My thane! I needs must remind you that you yourself assigned me to protect Vilja, and you haven't released me from that geas." As I wrapped both hands around her throat – noting with some horror that my digits were elongating and sprouting fur – I met my housecarl's gaze; it held no fear, only regret and... resignation, perhaps?

I turned, bolted up the path; this time I noted my accoutrements sloughing away as my beast form

came upon me in the brightening daylight. I was soon loping on all fours, racing through the rough scrub as I tore at any passing forest creature; a rabbit, now a fox; I cared for naught but the rage! I had to kill... something.

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## **IX - Return to the Pack**

I left my travel-mates for several days; I did not trust myself around other humans. I do not recall how long we were apart, or even where I went, for the most part, except that I gave in and sought Aela. We lay as usual, this time in her room in the living quarters of Jorrvaskr.

"It is never the same with... with anyone else," I managed, still quivering from my climaxes.

"'Anyone else'?" the lissome Huntress echoed (this time, I was pleased to note, as out of breath as I). "What do you mean?"

I mistook her query as jealousy. "What do you care? I have enow left for you."

She grabbed the shoulder-length plaits of my sweat-matted, tundra cotton hair, twisted so that I faced her. "Listen to me. Have you mated" -there was that word- "with others- other humans?"

"One or two." I still did not understand why it mattered to her. "What of it?"

"And what happened?"

Now I thought she was seeking gratuitous detail. "The usual," I retorted. "She was pleased - many times. As was I. What does it matter?"

She growled. "Why do you suppose it is so good with me and not any human?"

"I... I do not know. Because you are stronger - you can keep up with me? Let me go!"

She did so, laid down once more beside me. "Pup, you know nothing. That is it exactly, and why you must not mate with a human - unless you are prepared to deal with them afterward."

I still did not understand, and said so as I half-sat to get a bottle of wine. (I was thankful I could stomach wine, at least, as well as other spirits, although I still could not eat.)

"Give me that." Ere I had it to my lips, Aela snatched the bottle from me, drained it in a few sloppy gulps.

"Bitch!" I protested, though I knew it would do no good to attempt to wrest it back from her. "That was the last one."

She belched, tossed the empty aside. "Know your place, pup. Fetch another. And none of that Alto slop, by Frostfire - something decent, like Firebrand or Colovian brandy."

"I am not your servant - get it yourself!"

She was atop me before I noticed her move, preternaturally strong hands about my throat, yellow eyes glaring into mine, elliptical pupils dilated. "There is much for you to learn, cub," she rumbled in my face. Curiously, I was unaware of her sex centred upon my stomach this time, for her visage morphed into a snout, fangs abruptly appeared as her jaws opened and she leaned in until my nose

was practically down her throat; her breath was humid, smelled of iron and cheap wine. Suddenly, I was sweating more profusely; nonetheless, I sought to fight back.

It was a mistake, of course; I was not yet as strong as the rest of the Circle each on their own, let alone against three of them, as Farkas and Vilkas, along with Aela, sought to put me in my place. For, just as did their fully lupine cousins, werewolves had a strict social hierarchy, and if I had had any illusions that Kodlak Whitmane was solely in charge of the Companions, I now knew whom the dominant female of the pack, and likely leader, was.

Furthermore, if I had thought that sex alone with Aela was incomparable, I was completely unprepared for the 'lesson' the twin brothers and the Huntress gave me. I have no doubt that, at certain times during our tryst, we were in beast form, at other times human – perhaps even, yes, both at once. Yet, it is not coyness that compels me to spare my audience the prurient details; I simply do not remember them clearly, and thus I would deign not make up lies or exaggerate – although, judging later from my sheer exhaustion and sense of gratification, embellishment would not be possible. In any event, I will have another chance later in my tale to describe such an encounter that turned out even better.

As I prepared to leave Whiterun sometime anon, intending to return to Vilja and Lydia, Kodlak Whitmane intercepted me halfway down the long staircase into Whiterun proper from the main doors to Jorrvaskr.

"I would have a word with you, lass." Out of breath, the old Nord seemed anxious.

"What is it, old man?" I did not dislike the Harbinger, but he had recently lectured me regarding Aela's and my attempts to wipe out the Silver Hand, the beast hunter group that was dedicated to killing werewolves, ostensibly for slaying one of our number, Skjor. We had met with some success, even despatching their supposed leader, yet Kodlak believed that we had gone too far, that it would only result in escalating reprisals. Further, I shared Aela's and the others' disdain for his desire to 'cure' himself. He had told me on more than one occasion that, with blood of the beast in him, he doubted he could go to his Nordic afterlife of feasting in the halls of Sovngarde with his gods and ancestors, instead of having his soul claimed by Hircine, the god of shape changers and hunters. In fact, Kodlak had already tried to enlist me in removing the curse by seeking the coven of witches that had supposedly laid it upon the Companions some 200 years ago. I had told him I would think about it, although, at the time, I did not intend to do so.

"I wonder if you have thought about my... appeal."

I was about to answer 'No', but something changed my word. "Yes."

He looked at me expectantly.

"I... have thought about it. I must think on it further."

"It is just that I feel... time passing, and I wish to go to Sovngarde."

"I heard you the first time, old—Harbinger."

I looked into his rheumy grey eyes, wrinkled, sad white-bearded face. He seemed about to say something else, but only managed, "Talos guide you, lass."

I resumed my rapid descent down the steps, wondering how old one must be to cease appreciating the benefits of being a werewolf. After all, here I was, in full, heavy armour, well-nigh prancing down



a long flight of stairs, yet still breathing evenly, even after a full night of—.

All at once, it occurred to me that the question might just have been answered; I did not have to look to know that Kodlak laboured back up whence we had both just come.

It was only then that I realised I had not clarified Aela's admonishment not to have sex with humans – other humans. Nonetheless, I would soon discover the reasons myself, as my choices became ever clearer.

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X - Vengeance

Kodlak Whitemane was dead. The Silver Hand audaciously attacked Jorrvaskr, and slew him. Some escaped, and they stole the fragments of Wuuthrad, Ysgramor's battle-axe – Ysgramor, of course, being the founder of the Companions many centuries ago. Heartsick that I was not there to help defend my shield brothers and sisters, we determined that we would take revenge on them; storm their own stronghold, wipe them out, and recover the pieces of Wuuthrad. Vilkas and I accepted the charge, and I decided it was not the best idea to bring my other friends, thus I left Vilja and Lydia behind in my Whiterun house, Breezehome.

It betided that it was not much of a challenge, and so we shortly returned to Jorrvaskr, whence we attended Kodlak's funeral. Jarl Balgruuf and other citizens as well as, of course, all the Companions, listened to a eulogy from Eorlund Greymane, the Companions' smith. Following the service, Eorlund asked me to find the last piece of Wuuthrad that Kodlak had kept near, so that Eorlund could re-forged the weapon. When I did so, I found the Harbinger's journal, as well; and I admit that I felt almost no guilt as I read it. Aside from noting his wish to be cured of lycanthropy, he made mention that I should become the next Harbinger!

I would keep this to myself for the nonce, as I did not know how the others would react, my being a new Companion and still young, after all – not to mention the... social structure of the Circle that I had already grappled with. Nadja Stonearm, for one, who is not even in the Circle, resented me enow already.

Nonetheless, we needs must travel to Ysgramor's Tomb, whence the original 500 Companions from ages past lie at rest; there we will be able to complete the ritual that will free Kodlak, posthumously. Even Aela agrees that, as it was his wish, we should seek to fulfill it for him; it is the honourable thing to do.

Eorlund bestowed upon me re-forged Wuuthrad, and with it, we conquered the spirits in Ysgramor's tomb, Aela, Vilkas, Farkas, and I. Actually, it ended up being only Aela and me at the end, as Vilkas felt unworthy to proceed past the entrance, and would you believe that Farkas is afraid of spiders? Granted, they were giant, frostbite spiders, but still... Nonetheless, when we defeated the last of the ghostly ancient Companions, we met Kodlak's spirit and cured him, despite the fact that he was dead. He named me Harbinger, and Aela heard him. She did not appear too upset, but I sensed a challenge ahead nonetheless.

"Why do you delay, sister?" Aela demanded. We had returned to the entrance, whence Vilkas and Farkas told us they wanted to remain a while, 'to look at the carvings' in the old tomb or some-such. I was reluctant to leave as well, yet I noted that I had apparently graduated from 'pup' to 'sister', at least. I am certain the Huntress knew what I was contemplating. "No reason – let us go." The hungry look she bestowed upon me made up my mind; it was all I needed to stay me from returning to the lower chamber and repeating the ritual at that time, freeing myself.

She had me pinned again, this time playfully - or so I hoped. The naked Huntress' skin shone purplish in the moonlight and by the few smoky braziers surrounding us; full, mauve-tipped breasts hung before my eyes like miniature cousins of the huge orb in the sky silhouetting her. I licked my lips, sought one or the other.

"No, not yet," Aela growled, moving out of reach of my eager mouth. "Tonight you earn your place, pup." Back to 'pup' again, I thought wryly. "Starting with patience - you must have learned some of that on the hunt. Now be still."

I decided to obey; she stood, arms akimbo, straddling me, the gap between her legs enticingly backlit by the full moon. It took almost every dram of my will to keep from squirming, never mind grabbing for her.

"Tonight," she continued, "under Masser, you will show us you are ready to lead. Kodlak thought you were, even though you are young and with us mere months. But we still have our... rituals."

I quivered in anticipation - and not a little cold in the mountaintop air; I was desert-born, not used to cold, let alone the light snow that swirled about us.

"First, the hunt." Aela stepped away from my trembling form, strode a ways off; there she stood betwixt the twins, both naked as well, infuriatingly indistinct in the moonlight - even though I knew both of their bodies well enow: broad-shouldered, heavily muscled, virtually covered in dark hair; penises hanging weightily, half-erect at least.

My heart - among other parts - quickened. This was not what I had expected, but it was no disappointment, either.

"Join us, sister," one of the men rumbled, echoed by the other and the woman.

I did so.

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## **XI - Ecstasy**

Later that night we returned to the outdoor lair the Circle maintained for our purpose, all four of us sated with blood, having savaged a bandit camp. I omit the details of our hunt partly because it is a red haze in my mind, and partly because it succeeded no differently than myriad other such nights, but mostly to relate the portion of the 'ritual' that I recall with clarity, this time.

We kept beast form for the next segment of the Circle's leadership rites. Although I am more able to recall details whilst in beast mind, I will say only that we fought - just short of full earnestness - as well as had sex, oftentimes the twain being indistinguishable. Each of the twins mounted me, as do beasts. However, there are certain sexual practices that are not possible - or are decidedly dangerous - as an animal. With fangs and deadly talons, for example, it is somewhat difficult for two females to pleasure one another. Thus, Aela taught me control of my reversion to human form.

All of us glistened with sweat despite the frigid mountain air. We stood in a small circle, panting, still hunched in partial werewolf posture, on a large spread of fur mats in the purplish moonlight. Masser had begun to set as light snow continued to eddy, yet our senses remained sharp, even in the dim amethyst light.

"Now, sister," Aela growled. "Prepare for your initiation."

I shivered again.

The Huntress sprang upon me, wrestled me to the furs, pinned me on my back as before. I submitted to the tongue-bath; she began with my ears, eyelids, nose, face; proceeded to my neck, her long pink member tracing wet paths across my tingling dusky skin, the scar along my cheek and chin. Suddenly my toes received the same treatment - the twins! One administered each foot; somehow, they retained perfect simultaneity, proceeding from biggest toe to smallest, then soles - causing me to writhe with ticklishness - followed by heels, calves, and knees, paying special attention to the back of each knee.

Aela progressed down my torso - vexingly - between my breasts toward my rippled stomach, probed into my navel; everywhere a trail of wetness left behind to chill in the breeze. Farkas and Vilkas lapped their way past my yearning centre to treat each finger, hand, and arm likewise, to my shoulders and downy armpits. All the while, the three emitted low, guttural sounds; I began to rumble in response.

Despite my most sensitive parts not yet having been touched, I moaned, convulsed in climax. Agonisingly, they held me down to thrash, helpless whilst they dipped and darted, everywhere but the primary areas. Abruptly, a twin found each of my modest mounds, began to lick and nibble their dark-capped tips. Encircling hands rubbed, squeezed; more fingers caressed thighs, calves, slipped beneath my buttocks. I felt warm breath on my nether lips, a tongue dart here and there, tasting; a wet slash across my slit, then along it, up, then down, fingers roving about my sex. I climaxed once more, crying out my ecstasy.

Aela continued her delicious assault on my cleft with her tongue and fingers whilst the males caressed and pinched, roughly yet caringly; one clutched a handful of my hair, pulling back my head as the other strewed kisses about face and neck. They all switched, I trow, but I lost track of who was doing what; I peaked several more times before I found a hard male member thrusting at my mouth.

Dazed, I quickly came round, sat up, grabbed the large appendage in both hands, thrust it eagerly betwixt my lips for a pull or two, began licking, circling the purple bulbous head, tracing the veins. The twin let out a carnal growl as I continued to lick up and down the shaft, shoved it down my throat until I gagged, repeated. I soon felt another insistent poke in an ear, reached to grasp the other, identical pole, commenced pumping it. Having lain between my spread legs as I rose to my knees to pleasure the men, Aela continued to slurp and probe at my heated slit. I moved from one thick shaft to the other, moaning and growing weak-kneed; I had to have one of the rigid members in my sex, but this was my initiation and I was not in control - or was I?

Instinct - or perhaps mere lust - took over. Maintaining my hold on the turgid members, I dropped to all fours, pushing one behind me whilst the other I dragged back into my mouth. Aela, muttering her own arousal, repositioned herself, kept up her ministrations as a twin entered me. I grunted, cries muffled by the engorged appendage in my mouth. I began to coordinate my pleasure as I pumped with my hand; both began to thrust, and I let go the one in my mouth, now savouring the sensations washing over me as I was pounded at both ends whilst feeling a warm tongue ravishing my filled sheath. All at once, tongue flicking, Aela seized the hard nubbin at the top betwixt her teeth; I jerked again, convulsing in sheer pleasure, once, twice, thrice - I lost count - before collapsing.

I pushed their insistence away. "Get me... a drink," I demanded. A bottle of Colovian appeared near my sweating face; I slaked my rampant thirst, willed my body to cease twitching and my breathing to slow. Pawing my matted silvery locks from my eyes, I glanced at my shield siblings. With some sense

of satisfaction, I noted that they appeared as worn as I did. Aela sat half-erect on an elbow, breathing heavily, one silky leg drawn up, arm draped over its knee, a bottle of Colovian in the other. In her gaze, I saw more than lust; it was almost quizzical. The twins – still indistinguishable one from the other – lay one on his front, the other supine, pulling on bottles of Honnigbrew mead. Their muscular, darkly hairy bodies yet inflamed me, especially the shaft I saw still half-pointing toward the near-set moon; but their intense, shining yellow gazes I noted most in the lightening sky. Similar to the Huntress, they held a question – a challenge, perhaps, or even a taunt.

We were not done.

A last mouthful from the now empty bottle and I commanded, “On your back, sister,” as I crawled to her. You,” I pointed at one twin with it, “feed her your prick. You, put yours in me.”

My rear held high, legs parted, I delved between the supple, creamy thighs, sucked in a breath through nose and mouth, relished the heady aromas of sex and, yes, even ‘wet dog’. Fingers parting the slick petals, I stuck my tongue into her fissure, began to thrust and poke and nuzzle at the reddish thatch as I felt a twin’s member plunge into my own pulsating crevice. I had difficulty maintaining contact as I was severely rammed; my rhythmic grunts provided counterpoint to Aela’s moans and the twins’ exclamations.

I poured the remainder of the bottle all over her mound, slurping at the amber fluid as it ran through her reddish thatch, over her swollen, rosy nether lips, down the crack of her buttocks. I shoved the bottle neck all the way into her; at least the size of a modest prick, it was little wonder that she yelped, hips rising from the sweat-soaked furs. I jammed it in and out of her as I felt my own urgency building once more; the twin driving into me intensified his efforts. Sensing he was near climax, I released the thrashing Huntress, tossed the bottle aside, whirled to receive the shaft in my mouth. The twin roared his release, the warm, salty substance erupting down my throat, spilling out as I alternately spat and swallowed, coaxing its entirety with both pumping hands.

Climbing atop the woman and under the other thrusting twin, I restrained her in a reversal of her own favoured position, leaned in to lick the veiny member sliding betwixt her pink sheath. An animal growl erupted from the man as his shaft popped from the Huntress’ mouth and began spewing its load. I released her hands from her sides, grabbed it in one fist, pumped furiously, directing the generous spurts across our faces and gaping mouths as I reached for the hooded hard pistil at the top of her wet fissure with the other hand. Aela howled, lurched in climax, my own bursting once more as I was abruptly penetrated again, this time in my rear hole. I sought the woman’s lips with my own; tongues duelled, swirling the warm milky fluid about as the magnificent sensations washed over us and the first twin pulled out and shot another load all over us.

My body gave a last spasm as I collapsed and rolled off her.

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XII - Agony

I was sick for a different reason. The ‘bandits’ Aela, Vilkas, Farkas, and I slaughtered last night did not appear to be such at all. As I surveyed the scene of the encampment – Vilja and Lydia no longer accompanied me on these ‘follow-up tasks’, whilst Aela and the twins had returned to Jorrvaskr – I could tell these were not bandits, nor any other kind of scoundrel. Although torn apart, they were still recognisable as orcs. Of course, this alone did not prove anything, but Skyrim bandit groups typically appeared of mixed races and sexes, and these all seemed to be male orcs. I did not know much about the tusked, green-skinned peoples of Skyrim – properly known as Orsimer – except that

they were no better or worse, as a race, than any other, including the three distinct ethnic groups of elves: the dark elves or Dunmer; the wood elves or Bosmer; and the high elves, the Altmer. Although racial prejudices abounded, in my experience none were any more or less inclined to violence or criminality than another, including the racial subgroups of humans, such as my own Redguard, the native Nords, the Bretons, or the Imperials. In fact, it may be argued that, since the cat-like Khajiit and saurian Argonians were mistrusted in Skyrim, a disproportionate number were forced to the edges of society, whence oftentimes circumstance obliged one to do what was necessary to survive, thus earning their reputation. Yet, what came first, the mistrust or the behaviour? None of it was an excuse for banditry, however.

Regardless, my hunch appeared confirmed, as a search of the remains and camp revealed nothing of typical bandit loot; they had meat – most in the process of smoking and salting – furs, hunting bows, no heavy armour, and few other weapons but skinning knives.

I buried what was left of them; I could not leave these innocents to scavengers. What little ‘loot’ I found I interred with the bodies; would that I knew who they were, so that I could somehow return it to families.

Thus did my guilt instigate my meeting of Borgakh the Steel Heart. The nearest orc settlement I knew of was Mor Khazgur in The Reach, yet they had no knowledge of a hunting party, missing or otherwise.

Borgakh is the daughter of their chief, Larak, and when we met in the bailey of their fort, she appeared to be taking out her frustrations on a training dummy. When I enquired as to her role in the tribe, she related how she would soon come of age, and hence be off to marry a chieftain in some distant Orsimer community. She did not seem enthusiastic about this future, saying something about feeling as though she were ‘in a cage’, and wishing to see ‘new places and people’, yet I do not believe it was this declaration that prompted me to invite her to accompany me. Hesitant at first, she finally agreed when I offered to pay her dowry and assured her that she would be free to return and marry when the time came.

Aside from the aforementioned sudden remorse for orcs in general, I felt sorry for her, not being free to do as she pleased – although, who am I to question others’ customs and beliefs? Regardless, I needs must admit to lustful curiosity prompting me as well. Although generally considered ugly (to be kind) by almost everyone, to me, orcs were fascinating. I found myself enthralled with Borgakh’s looks: greenish-brown skin; pointed ears lying nearly flat against her head, which was close-shaven other than a broad strip of dark brown hair on top, plaited into a ponytail; deep-set green eyes surrounded by purplish-brown tattoos running cheek to jaw to throat, thus resembling twin rivulets of dried blood. Not to mention the tusks. Of course, I also confess my desire to see what was under her armour – which did not take long.

If she was atypical of her race, then she was certainly not shy, as she often as not walked around nude in our camps, or perhaps wore aught but a pair of ragged trousers. She even liked to cook in the nude, which I thought was risky, considering how many important bits risked being splattered: For example, her full breasts, crowned with huge reddish-brown nipples akin to my own. Somewhat surprisingly, the chief’s daughter had little body hair, but she did have marvelous dark tufts growing in her underarms and betwixt her legs; I yearned to nuzzle and find what remained hidden down below. Otherwise, her body was wide-shouldered, broad-hipped, strong; if she was immature, I could not see where. She seemed innocent of sex, but perhaps this was only due to the dearth of males in our camp (Vilja had rejoined me, but Lydia stayed at Breezehome to look after an orphaned child I had recently adopted), and she had no experience of women. Borgakh had said she was not yet ‘of age’, albeit I do not know what that means, in orc terms. Yet, I would needs check my hunger

nevertheless, in view of the fact that we were not alone in camp.

As it betided, I could not have sex with her regardless, for the slaughter of the orc 'bandits' was not all I had done. Scant days later, I learned what Aela had been trying to tell me: Elda, the Vilemyr whore whom I had... patronised some time ago was found near death right after we left Ivarstead, and in fact died not long thereafter. Justifiably so, there was a bounty on my head in The Rift. I immediately travelled to Riften, intending to see the jarl to clear up the misunderstanding, however, the hold's guards intercepted me just inside the border, and I faced the choice to pay the bounty, get an escort to gaol, or else defy them and flee - or kill them - and continue to be an outlaw in the hold. Thus, I paid my bounty - a mere 40 gold septims (I am not sure why the amount irritated me; perhaps that it was the value of a life?). I also sought to make amends to Elda's family, but found she had none.

The rage abruptly took me, so I went on another hunt. Loping tirelessly in the darkness down a road to I-know-not-where, I reacted to a cry in the darkness of, "Die, monster!" before I knew who was attacking me. I whirled, lashed out, had the man torn apart before I realised he had only a dagger - hardly a bandit, then - and I knew him, even in beastmind: It was Talsgar the Wanderer.

I had met the itinerant bard a few times, and bade performances of him; it was a welcome respite on the road. Now I had killed him, and he would perform no more.

I did not feed. My rage blinding, I raced away from the road; ignoring brush, rocks, and even most trees, I fled on into the darkling woods. I came upon two cave bears about to make a meal of some unfortunate. In my fury, I took them both on, was perforce obliged to feed on them as well as the unknown corpse to heal my serious wounds. Yet it was not enow, and thus I was fortunate to happen upon another battlefield; I fed only enow to heal almost completely, and then lay down amongst the corpses to await my transformation. Although I did not need sleep, I must have dozed regardless, as next it was dawn and I heard voices.

"Damned Stormcloak rebels!" An Imperial patrol approached, likely looking for wounded. Fortunately, it was not quite light, and some trees and rocks hid me. If I could but snatch some bits of armour and clothing, I could at least explain my half-nakedness as a survivor, having lost consciousness on the battlefield and now trying to heal her wounds.

"Gods below!" came more cries. "Damned wolves! Stay sharp, soldiers." They must have seen my handiwork on some of the corpses.

I crept, shivering and ill, toward the nearest heap; a male Stormcloak sat by two female rebel soldiers who embraced, in death, a male Imperial, whilst a female Legionary lay nearby. The male Legionary appeared to be a Redguard, like me. Curiously, although several arrows protruded from the bodies, wounds were not visible, and there was little blood; they looked as though they merely slept. Normally, dismemberments and eviscerations abounded in such battles, and the blood... The lack of such grisliness was perhaps the reason I found it so poignant.

It may heretofore have been the saddest thing I had seen in this war, having witnessed several such skirmishes, either just after they ended or in passing as they raged. I had yet to take sides - I did not want to - but my conscience nudged me toward forcing another kind of choice from me.

Swallowing a lump in my throat the size of Mount Anthor, I sneaked away; found some discarded bits of equipment, donned them, left.

I sought Aela.

Lying together in the room I had taken over from Kodlak, she queried, "Could you not have made the same mistake as a human?"

I doubted that, but she was either unconvinced or indifferent.

"That's just the way it is, sister," she growled. "We are hunters. Humanoids are prey."

"I do not accept that. Not all of them." I told her about my dealings with Hircine and subsequent adventure with Sinding. "I cannot imagine hunting... or feeding... on a child. Nor any other innocent." I had not mentioned the battle scene; she would probably scoff, think me weak.

She snorted - at least, that is how I took the guttural coughing sound she made. "There are no innocents in this world."

I disagreed, but the query she posed next took me in a different direction.

"Yet what of this Sinding - you spared him?"

When I admitted I had, she asked why.

"Because we are the same. How could I kill him?"

"But he killed an innocent, didn't he?" When I did not respond, she continued, "So you joined with him, and slew his hunters."

"Yes. I will not be manipulated - not even by a daedric prince."

"And you fed on them?"

All at once, I did not like where this was going, but admitted to assuaging my hunger and healing the wounds they had inflicted on me.

"What had they done to you - before then?"

I hesitated. "Well, nothing"

Unfathomable, the look she gave me. "So then, were they not 'innocent'?"

I had no answer, instead springing from the bed. "Go!" I spat. "Leave me. Get out!"

Languidly, the Huntress rolled naked from the piled furs, a smirk on her pale features - or perhaps it was simply the way the light fell on her green war paint.

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### **XIII - Bliss**

Our adventures took us to Fort Dawnguard, the seat of an old faction of vampire hunters that was reforming. Their leader, Isran, engaged us; perhaps needless to say, I found it more than a little ironic - not to mention discomfiting - to find myself hunting what were essentially inhuman beasts. For the nonce, however, I did not have to make any commitment; we would initially travel to Dimhollow Crypt to follow up reports of vampires seeking something therein.

What they were looking for turned out to be one of their kin, a vampiress named Serana. After we

slew a senior vampire and his minions, whom had tortured and killed a Vigilant of Stendarr – another vampire-hunter sect – we found and released her from what appeared to be some kind of long slumber. She seemed disoriented, and did not attack us, so we forbore as well. After some initial difficulty communicating, she apparently discovered what language we spoke, and with a strange accent demanded that we take her home – wherever that was. She otherwise refused to answer questions about herself – nor regarding the Elder Scroll strapped to her back. We only gleaned that she had had a falling out with her family quite some time ago, and was unsure of her reception once she did reach home.

I decided to escort her without Vilja or Borgakh, only Aela. I had several reasons for doing so, although at the time I told myself it was to protect my friends from her; Vilja had even commented about the way Serana looked at her, ‘as if she wanted to bite me’. Yet, I admit I had ulterior motives: Serana, presumably being ‘undead’ and otherwise not human, was I able to have sex with her? I could not resist finding out, and what might betide between Serana, Aela, and I. Thus, I left Vilja with Lydia at Breezehome in Whiterun, ostensibly to look after my adopted street urchins, now numbering two.

Aela immediately suspected my intent. “What do you think you’re up to?” she demanded as the three of us exited Breezehome.

“What do you mean?” I countered, attempting innocence.

“You know exactly what I mean.”

I stopped in the street, faced her, gauntleted arms folded. “Serana, would you wait for us a moment?”

“Very well.” Aught but the vampire’s orange-red eyes were visible inside her dark hood, pulled up against the rising sun. “But do not think to leave me here.”

Once more, my curiosity twitched; why did she seem so ready to let us lead her around, dependent yet so resentful at the same time? Nonetheless, it was something else that piqued my inquisitiveness just now.

I turned up the street, motioned with my head for Aela to follow. “Are you not curious?” I was beginning to quiver.

“No, and nor should you be.” The Huntress’ cerulean eyes flashed (had they not been green?).

“Why not? She is no human.”

“That’s exactly why not. At least we are alive. Vampires are an abomination.”

I snorted. “And we are not?”

“Is that what you think?” She halted, glared away a passerby. “That we are nothing but monsters – no better than vampires?”

“I... am not sure. I wish to experience... everything. While I can.”

“While you can?” She studied me intently. “You mean to take the cure, then.”

“I... do not know. But that is why I want to try... things.”



She grinned wolfishly. "By 'things' you mean her."

I felt myself blush, was grateful for my dark skin.

"Are you sure she will be interested?" Aela teased.

I shrugged. "We have a journey of some leagues ahead of us." I tried not to sound too expectant.

Aela laughed. "Serana, come here."

My eyes widened. "Aela!"

"Do not order me about as though I were your thrall," the vampiress scolded, joining us. "Why do we delay?"

"My sister here wonders about you."

"I am aware that thou hast questions. Alas, I cannot answer them."

"That's not what I mean," the Nord advised. "She wants to know about your interest in her."

"Aela!"

The undead woman sniffed haughtily; did her red eyes flash inside that hood? "I am sure I know not what you mean."

"Yes you do," Aela contradicted. "She wants to know if vampires can fuck us."

"'Fuck'?" the vampiress echoed. I myself had recently learned this crude Nord word for any of the terms I had lectured Vilja on a while ago.

"Can you have congress with... us?"

The other woman's face was still not visible, but she dropped the coyness in her tone. "And what art thou?"

I let Aela answer, "Werewolves."

"I thought as much - I can smell it on thee."

An expectant pause.

"I know not," Serana admitted at length. "Now, shall we be on our way?" She did not wait to see if we followed. Apparently, our status would not affect our value as guides.

My heart - and loins - bounded; at least she ruled nothing out.

I had expected her to be cold, being, after all, dead; and at first, she was. However, Aela and I would warm her up.

Skin of face, neck, shoulders - naught else visible as yet - was paler even than Vilja's; chestnut hair, pleated in several places, just touching creamy shoulders; eyes glowing orange, pupils the colour of blood. These tracked me as I stripped deliberately in front of them both, seated on chairs next to one another in my quarters. A wicked smile cracked alabaster features; the vampiress' tongue snaked

out, granting a glimpse of twin deadly fangs as it moistened ruby lips. Otherwise, she remained motionless.

Aela began to growl, wriggle in her seat. I beckoned her to assist me with my unwieldy armour, whilst I reciprocated with hers. Both soon nude, we began to play, moving sinuously about one another, casting indistinct shadows about my brazier-lit chamber as we entwined and explored with hands and mouths. I groped her fleshy mounds betwixt both hands, bent, took each dusky nipple into my mouth; held them in my teeth, twisted with my tongue; a hand delved toward her furred cleft. The Huntress moaned; I lowered her onto her back on the furs spread beneath us as her knees gave. I remained standing, still sensually writhing, stepped toward our rapt observer, held out my hand; Serana shook her head, almost imperceptibly.

Frustrated, I hesitated but a moment, turned back to my shield sister. I deliberately posed her, knees up, legs spread, toward the vampiress as I knelt to one side and ministered to her mouth, neck, breasts. Crawling between her legs, I bent, back bowed, hips high, knees apart, proffering myself lewdly to our audience of one as I began to poke and lick at the pink petals. I additionally hoped I obstructed Serana's view of what I was doing, and thus induce her to join us.

I continued for some time, simultaneously irritated and ever more aroused, wondering what was betiding behind me; was she enthralled; undressing; playing with herself; rising to join us yet?

The instant of actual contact – several fingers abruptly shoved deep into my overwrought cunt – drew a howl barely muffled by Aela's grasp on the back of my head, keeping my mouth buried in her palpitating crevice as she climaxed. The fingers worked in and out of me; one curled up inside of my slit, rapidly flicked; I stiffened, collapsed, convulsed violently. I had heretofore felt nothing like it. I lay gasping and moaning for several moments, helpless as I felt two sets of hands grab and reposition me on the fur mats. Vaguely, I was aware that they had me spread-eagled, vulnerable to their carnal intent. As I regained full cognisance, I realised Aela was on her knees to one side of me, whilst Serana stood on the other – maddeningly, still fully clad.

"Now," Aela was saying, "see here." She took each nipple betwixt her fingers. "Look at how red they are, like the mountain flower – and how they respond."

I gasped as she plucked one, then the other; replaced fingers with lips.

The Huntress continued. "So much different than the rest of her... like here... and here..." She nipped, caressed, prodded elsewhere on my quivering form. "Not black, like other Redguards. Red-brown, like some Skyrim bears. Then there's this" –she grabbed fistfuls of hair, tugged, stroked– "the colour of tundra cotton. And these eyes, clear, no colour at all. Why do you suppose that is? Because she is Dragonborn?" She planted kisses on both. "And this" –traced the tattooed stripe from my hairline, over left brow and eye, to upper cheek– "orange paint like the giants use. And here, here, and here... where she was hurt." Aela tongued the twin scars on the opposite cheek and chin; traced a few more – none significant – elsewhere on my torso and arms, proceeded to my legs.

I whined, tried to keep still; espied Serana, still watching, except that her lusty smile was wider, fangs protruding menacingly. My body started at the sight; both frightening and, oh, so enticing!

"Then we come to this," Aela went on, nuzzling around my slippery sheath. "Barely any fur covering, the same colour as her head. But look here" –she spread my lips– "at these folds, red like her nipples" –she licked– "yet so pink deep inside. This big button, wanting of attention... her Sword of Dibella... longer than a third nipple, yet pink as well." A few sucks and licks, then a middle finger, and a second, thrusting in and out, pushed me over the precipice once more.

I shoved the redhead away, demanded wine. The room was hot, redolent with brazier smoke, sex, sweat. I guzzled the fiery alcohol that did nothing to cool my insides.

Serana sat very close on the mats, feral grin and clothing yet in place. I put the bottle aside, shakily rose to my knees, began to stroke her hair, neck, shoulders. Aela, joining me, nibbled ears, the nape of her neck as I lifted the dark tresses. Slowly we undressed her, fiddling with the buckles and straps of her unfamiliar leathers; but she made no move, neither to aid nor inhibit. When at last we had her naked, I noticed the scent of lotus just slightly overpowering that of a crypt (but then, what had I expected?). Her breasts, larger than mine or Aela's, hung nicely on her slim frame; nipples red and already stiff.

Laying the vampiress on her back, we massaged, stroked, pinched, infused warmth into her extremities. I found the bottle I had procured from The Hag's Cure in Markarth. (I thought, if Bothela could create a 'Stallion's Potion' for men, then why not a stimulating lubricant for women?) As I poured the brandy-coloured liquid on the vampiress' deathly pale skin, she finally moved; her whole body started, quivered everywhere the liquid made contact. I poured some across Aela's breasts, then my own; we both jumped, yelped; it was almost hot. We massaged it into one another's skin, then lay against Serana, one on either side, bodies chafing, nipples carving grooves in the vampiress, secretions adding to the slickness. The heat built; my body felt on fire. Urgently, I rubbed my cunt against Serana's leg. The undead woman finally emitted her first sound, a drawn-out rumble as she clutched fiercely at us both. I am not sure if she actually climaxed then, but we were not done, regardless.

I concluded that sex with a vampiress was far from unpleasant, especially once certain participants had been 'warmed up', as it were. Serana remained passive throughout the night, but readily acceded to our instructions, mostly non-verbal. We discovered that, although the lips on her face were blood red, as were her nipples - and she needed no cosmetic to achieve the allure - her female parts reminded me of a bleeding crown mushroom: outer lips pale, inner (top) red, depths (underside) pink; and the scent was normal. Yet, she had no body hair, apart from that on her head; even her armpits were clean-shaven. I had heard that some women, especially 'snotty Breton girls', as Vilja termed them, shaved everything, especially pits and sometimes even their furry mounds, and I was now intrigued enow to perhaps try it myself.

In any event, my curiosity satisfied - and having gotten away unbiten - I needs must admit that I was not enraptured with vampires in general, although I would not turn down another opportunity. Even though I had little desire to try a male, Serana assured us that only a vampire lord could 'turn' us from werewolves into the undead. What convinced me, however, to have nothing to do with them - except to kill them - was what I witnessed when we finally delivered Serana to her family. Yet, that is another story, and I must return to this one anon.

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XIV - Crossroads

Some days later, Aela, Vilja, and I found ourselves at the crossroads south of Whistling Mine in Winterhold, making our way west toward Mount Anzor. We had another dragon to take care of, this time for the Jarl of Winterhold. Another Stormcloak-Imperial battle had recently ended here, and I found the futility of the conflict, as well as other thoughts, wrestling with my consciousness as I surveyed the grim scene.

I wearied of snide remarks from guards and townspeople about finding my 'wolfish grin unsettling', or smelling like a wet dog, or questioning if I had fur growing out of my ears. Furthermore, despite

Vilja's assertion that she was not afraid of me – both Aela and I had a tendency to involuntarily take on beast form when under stress – or her avowal that she thought I was 'kind of cute' when I was a werewolf, and how she has 'always loved dogs' – I was dissatisfied. Nevertheless, none of this yet decided me; nor even when Vilkas and then Farkas came to me and asked for their cure, and I made but a half-hearted attempt to dissuade them.

"I will never forget hunting with you, sister," Vilkas told me. "And I know the nights will never be again. But, like Kodlak, I am a Nord, and I fear for my soul. I wish to know glory in the afterlife.

"Perhaps you will join me, sister? Then we can still be... together?"

"I... will miss you too, brother, but I cannot."

"As you wish. But it would be my honour if you would accompany me, Harbinger."

I did so, and although I was sore temped again, especially after the twins' comments following – likening it to the effect of 'a warm mug of spiced mead' or how their minds were no longer 'clouded with thoughts of the hunt' – I did not partake. Vilkas, oddly, even said something about no longer being able to 'smell my heart beating', and although I had not thought of it like that, I know what he meant.

Nonetheless, I had yet to collect all of the Totems of Hircine with Aela, and I would know the benefits of having them all. Each on its own bestowed a blessing of sorts when in beast form, similar to various benedictions one received at any shrine in Skyrim. I needs must admit, as well, that I did not want to lose Aela, for I was certain that she would not accept the cure, and I knew this would force me to choose between her and Vilja; but I did not want to renounce any of it.

I found it all quite vexing, not to mention inflaming, especially so when, every chance she had, Vilja stripped naked to swim (despite her complaints that the water in Skyrim is too cold). Her tiny frame, pale skin, wisp of blonde hair not nearly covering her perpetually distended nether lips – it was too much. I knew she was not deliberately teasing me, but I do not believe she is utterly innocent of the effect she has on me, either. Thus, the circumstances that found all three of us – Aela, Vilja, and I – together nude with several other swimmers at the hot pools near Eldergleam Sanctuary a while back, were incredibly frustrating for many reasons, not least of which is that, by all the gods, a dragon attacked us.

There we were, Vilja, Aela, and I, bare as newborns but for a bit of jewellery, along with two other naked women and a man, with aught but weapons – and some magic – to fight a dragon; it must have been a remarkable sight. Withal, if it were not for my Shouts and Vilja's magic, plus whatever the others were able to do – I was too busy to notice – it may have ended badly for us all. Indeed, we were lucky that any of us were alive (and I am a little surprised that Aela and I did not take beast form under such duress). As it betided, the dragon grabbed the poor man in its jaws, shook him like a wolf with a skeever, and later we could not find much left of him to bury or burn.

That left five naked, wounded, stressed girls.

Have you ever noticed how many women's nipples harden after exertion, even if it is not sexual? I have – as I noticed all of ours then. I, for one, was moist betwixt the legs, too. The strangers were so impressed with how I had absorbed the dragon's soul – recognising me as Dragonborn – I am certain they would have been amenable to any advance I proffered. Thus, with all the luscious flesh on display prior and following that battle, Aela and I were all at once in sore need of sating our other lust. Moreover, I had to be hands-on in assisting Vilja to heal the others' wounds, which of course only frustrated me more. Hence, with only one another to rely upon to relieve both hungers, Aela

and I did so that night.

Following our hunt – which, as was now our custom, we restricted to game animals or ‘miscreants’ – I subsequently found myself pondering how finding time and place both for sex and the hunt had become ever more problematical.

I know it hurts Vilja when I have sex within her hearing, let alone sight, and so Aela and I needs must tryst a ways off to spare her. Not too difficult, given that we do not need to sleep in the same, or a nearby, tent, although we set one up anyway, to be out of the oft-times harsh Skyrim elements. Even so, however much I disliked leaving Vilja alone on these occasions, this was not the greatest problem, either; it was becoming... trite. Although we could not wear one another out, I felt some staleness with Aela, and I sensed she felt it as well. By this time, of course, Vilkas and Farkas had been human again for quite some time, and therefore both of us were pining for male company. I admit that we even tried... enticing some of our male wild brethren whilst in beast form, but it did not work; we scared them, it seemed. Neither did we yearn to seek others of our own kind; the skinwalkers, for some reason, did not recognise us as kin, although they would not attack us, either.

Do not misunderstand me, however; speaking for myself as well as, I trow, for Aela, I did not value male and female sex partners in that one or the other was preferable. I prized both sexes equally for their differences, the same as I sought experience with different races. It is the variety I crave, to allay the hunger. Furthermore, I do not see one sex or the other as more or less ‘loveable’ than the other; I deem myself capable of loving either male or female equally – and perhaps even more than one at a time.

As I pondered these thoughts, however, I questioned my notion of ‘love’ in its primal sense. I had not heretofore experienced it – at least the love that all the bards sing of – and thus, what could I know of it? That is, what do I feel for Aela; is it love, or merely lust? What of Vilja? I am deeply attracted to the blonde Nord, but is it only a physical longing for something that is, for the nonce, beyond my grasp? Did I love her as I did Aela, or was it something different? How could I even know, as a beast?

Once more, I cast my mind back a few nights.

“Aela.” We lay beside one another in the tent, no longer touching, on our fur sleeping pallets. The Skyrim wind whipped the omnipresent snow about our tent in the darkness; the chilly draughts soon cooled our ardour. I had regained most of my breath from the latest of my climaxes. “What... do you know of love?”

She emitted that snort-laugh of hers, pulled on her bottled of Colovian, as did I on mine. “Overrated.”

“But, have you ever loved anyone?”

“Are you asking me if I’m in love with you?”

“No.” I downed another gulp or two. For some reason I did not want to know her answer. “I just... I only want to know if I – if we, as beasts, I mean – can know love.”

A moment ere she responded, “I’m not the one to ask.” She finished her brandy, tossed the empty aside.

“Why—I mean, who should I ask, then?”

"Not me." The Huntress turned away, faced the rippling tent wall. I studied her nude form in the brazier light: muscled back and shoulders; slim waist; strong, round buttocks; firm thighs and calves; goose bumps beginning to rise in the chill. I tried to ignore my rekindling desire. Clearly, she would not discuss the subject.

I could thus only speculate that perhaps something in her past had soured her on 'love'; perchance, this was the reason she would be content as a werewolf. On the other hand, mayhap the rumour that she and Skjor had been more than friends was accurate, and the Huntress was not - would never be - over him. Whatever the case, she certainly seemed sincere in her veneration of Hircine, as I knew I could never be; as I have mentioned, I have no use for deities and their manipulations of us 'mortals'.

Which was another reason for my ambivalence; I had been brooding on the rest of the Circle's decision to remove the 'taint' of lycanthropy so they could anticipate their vision of the afterlife. To what could I look forward? As a Redguard, though orphaned young and raised in a tavern, I knew that Tu'whacca Yokudan, god of souls, would guide me as the other gods set a series of trials before me on the way to the Far Shores. If I failed, I would find myself banished to the Dreamsleeve, whence I could either languish for an eternity or, perhaps, be reborn for another opportunity at life, as some races believed (Imperials, for one). Yet, did I wish to sit at the knee of some daedric prince, or take my chances with trials and perhaps move on to a new life? After all, I have proven myself reasonably competent in this short existence thus far.

As I revealed, I never knew my parents, and I spent my childhood in a tavern. I will not speak of it herein, other than to say I disliked my life, and sought to better my lot. I availed myself of every opportunity to learn: to read and write, for example. An old Imperial merchant - notice I did not say 'kindly', as he was not; he used me for his own purposes - taught me my letters and numbers. Thus did I learn how to get what I wanted - using guile, sometimes stealth, and both aspects of my physicality, including sex and, later on, my formidable strength. I also learned of the greater world from travellers, and developed a yearning to see and experience it - as if getting away from my virtual enslavement were not incentive enow.

"Should we return?" Aela asked abruptly.

For an instant, I thought she meant to whence I came, which provoked a violent reaction within me; but I answered, "Yes." I needs must ponder my reaction more closely sometime anon.

I return to the present crossroads.

Even Aela, it seemed, was not unaffected by this war. "Damn shame," she murmured.

Corpses littered the slopes amidst rocks and scrub; guts, limbs, a head or two liberally strewn; blood soaked virtually every speck of snowy ground. This time, I felt no poignancy, only sadness.

Vilja, apparently, thought I had other things on my mind. "If we meet someone when you're a werewolf," she proposed, "we could just pretend that you're a dog. I'm sure they would believe us."

Her comment did not sink in until I heard Aela snickering behind me, apparently unsure if she ought to be laughing, considering the scene.

Trying to hold the mirth inside, I did not turn around; instead heeled my mount, continued westward.

Some weeks later, intending to return to the hot spring near Eldergleam Sanctuary for a little rest

and recreation, we happened upon yet another Stormcloak-Imperial battle. This time, however, a giant had somehow gotten embroiled in the conflict, and – by all the gods, again! – another dragon joined the fray. Even so, combatants would not set aside their differences to confront either, greater threat; everywhere small pockets of soldiers battled one another, whilst a dragon circled overhead breathing fire down upon them and a giant indiscriminately knocked them flying. I was appalled, and incredulous. Withal, I entered the fight myself, albeit only to battle the dragon.

When it was over, the dragon carcass lay atop several soldiers. I had not delivered the final blow, and thus it did not disintegrate, and I was unable to absorb its soul. This was a minor annoyance, however, compared to the stupidity of the entire conflict.

Vilja was not happy when I immediately cancelled our relaxation trip, and instead headed toward Windhelm. I barely stopped – and then only in respect of Vilja and our horses, who still needed rest – until we arrived in Solitude, whence lay Castle Dour and the Imperial Legion's headquarters.

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## **XV - Decisions**

I am still unsure what finally prompted my decision to join the Legion – Vilja will not stop pestering me about it – but I suppose I see it as my best chance to help end a pointless war. I also think that Ulfric Stormcloak is naught but a regicide with his own self-interest in being High King. Furthermore, I detest the way most Nords mistreat other races; 'Skyrim belongs to the Nords!' indeed. Once again, do not misunderstand; I am not enamoured with the Empire, either, kneeling as they did to the Aldmeri Dominion and signing the so-called White-Gold Concordat, which forbade the worship of Talos – a sacred figure to the Nords, if no one else. Not to mention how the Dominion's Thalmor representatives poke their fingers into every pie in Skyrim by sending their 'advisors' to virtually every court in the land, and presuming to arrest and torture anyone they suspect might be guilty of Talos worship. Thus have I developed an abiding hatred for the Thalmor as great as or more so than what I feel for bandits; and I may tell you the story of how I stormed their embassy and freed a prisoner some time anon. Now is not that time, however.

I spent the following few days (was it weeks?) in chaotic activity, moving back and forth across Skyrim, trying to do my duty as a new Legionary soldier as well as follow up various rumours and solve peoples' problems. This brought me some fame, I am immodest enow to say, including becoming Thane of several Holds (I have lost count: Whiterun, Falkreath, Haafingar, The Pale, and Markarth, I think). In turn, I acquired the pleasant but time-eating chore to try to build or at least furnish a home in each hold – even if most are homes where no one lives, save a steward, for the nonce.

Withal, most relevant to this tale is how I rejoined with Serana – or she with me. I had travelled to Riften for some un-recalled reason, arriving just in time to intervene in a vampire attack upon the citizenry. Whilst we had little trouble despatching the nightstalker and one or two of his thralls – my chief difficulty lay in trying not to hit guards or citizens who got in the way – when it was over, we discovered that Aerin, Mjoll the Lioness' one-time saviour and purported lover, was a victim.

"NNNOOOOoooo!" Glass greatsword clattering to the cobbles, the iron-clad warrior dropped to her knees in the street beside the body; no wounds were apparent, but that was a bad thing. "Why?" she wailed; I did not have to know the lanky fighter well to perceive her anguish. "How could he deserve this?" She suddenly sprang to her feet – quite a graceful move for such a big woman in heavy armour – snatched up her weapon, started hacking apart the enemy bodies. Everyone fled, save Vilja, Aela, and I. Once the street was awash with blood and body parts, she fell once more, this time prostrate

over the corpse of her lover. Great, heaving sobs wracked the tall Nord's gore-splattered frame, though she emitted hardly a sound.

After a moment, I gently approached. Fortunately, I knew her well enough – I had retrieved her sword from whence she had lost it in a dwarven ruin and, but for Aerin, nearly died – or I may not have dared. I touched the flared epaulet of her iron breastplate; she probably did not feel it. "Mjoll... Mjoll, I am sorry."

"Leave me," she intoned dully.

"Mjoll, I cannot." My hand moved from her shoulder to the nape of her neck, left bare with no helm or camail; brushed aside the bloody, straw-coloured pleats. "He... Aerin was bitten... drained of blood. I am sorry, Mjoll. You know what must be done." I dared rub lightly with the tips of my fingers, having pulled off my gauntlets.

She did not respond for another moment. Then, "No. I" "will take care of him."

"Let me help."

"No." She gradually stopped shaking, looked up; tanned features mottled; soft brown eyes reddened; broad purple stripe of warpaint down the left side of her face shiny, streaked with blood and tears. "Yes, I... I know. Yes. Th-thank you."

Mjoll prepared him, as did all Nords, washing and dressing Aerin in his best clothes, arranging his most prized possessions around him on a long table in their home. Normally, there would then be feasting and mourning for at least a night and day whilst he lay in state, but we had no time to let him rest so, lest he arise undead. Thus, the four of us took Aerin to the funeral pyre outside of town. Mjoll placed what were likely all of his belongings – perhaps some of hers, as well, even aside from Grimsever, her greatsword that I had recovered – and, tears running freely, yet with no sound and perfect poise, she poked a torch here and there into the piled logs. Each of us at a corner of the pyre held one aloft, in salute; stepped back as the flames intensified.

"You can go now," the big woman murmured.

Feeling that it was more of a command than a release, we did so.

Next morning, still in full, gory armour, face now lined with streaked, dried blood, Mjoll approached our table in the Bee and Barb tavern, stopped before me, helm under one arm, kitbag strapped over the other shoulder; she looked as though she had been awake all night – likely had, in vigil. "I would go with you."

"Whence?" I suspected I knew the answer.

"These vampires must be wiped out!" She said it as though she were spitting poison.

Thus did I travel for a short time with three companions: Aela, Vilja, and Mjoll. We informed the Lioness what Aela and I were, yet it did not appear to faze her, and she lived up to her name – though perhaps we should have renamed her 'Mjoll the Dragon', such was her fury. She wielded the new two-handed blade I gave her, an ebony Sword of Terror (probably much better than Grimsever, though I would not have suggested so) as if every foe we met were a vampire. I almost felt sorry for any undead we would meet, but we happened upon none, all the way to Fort Dawnguard.

We encamped for the night beside the small lake just inside Dayspring Canyon; we would be at the



fortress early the next day. As I have elsewhere mentioned, Aela and I shared a tent, whilst Vilja had her own, shared with Mjoll for the nonce (and I did not know how I felt about that). My blonde Nord companion had long since ceased her offers to cook or do anything for us. In fact, she had had little to say at all since the naked hot spring dragon-fight. I think she knew what was going on in my lust-filled mind, and I should have sensed her discomfort – yet it was much more than that, as it turned out.

“We have to talk.” Vilja came upon us suddenly as I was helping Aela doff her armour just outside our tent – which, as I have related, we maintained a distance away for... decorum. Despite her tone, I would have known something was awry, as she normally said, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice to jest talk a little, you and I?’ or some-such, when she wanted to ask or tell me something. Usually, it was not of major consequence.

“What is it?” I was terser than I meant to be; I saw the flash of hurt in her sad, blue eyes as I glanced up.

“I... I can’t do this... anym-more.” Her Nord-accented voice shook.

“Do what?” I foolishly asked.

“I... w-want to go home.”

We had completed Vilja’s quests, save for finding a relative of an acquaintance of hers, in order to remove a curse under which this acquaintance suffered. Thus, my next mistake. “We will stop at Breezethome on the way to Solitude – I needs must report for new orders at Castle Dour.”

“N-No. Shrelle, p-please, look at me.”

I did so, even though Aela was naked below the waist but for smallclothes, and I felt my nipples twitch, slit moisten, all yearn for attention.

I did not need more than another glance to see those bright eyes shiny with tears, Vilja’s pretty face twisted as had been Mjoll’s the other day – perhaps more so.

“No. I w want to go home... to S-Solstheim.”

Something clutched at my guts. Though distracted by Aela’s flesh as I slowly revealed it, I stopped, turned my full attention toward my other companion. “What? Why? I mean... We are not finished yet.”

“I c-can’t do this,” Vilja repeated. Tears dripped steadily onto the exaggerated bosom of her golden elvish armour.

“What? You do not wish to hunt vampires?” I insisted upon obtuseness. “Very well—”

“Y-You... her,” Vilja went on miserably. “Every n night, what y-you are doing... Eating p people – even if you d don’t... k kills them. And then... And then w what you do h here – in there,” she added, indicating our tent with a shaky hand. She appeared as though she might collapse.

I should have gone to her, but Aela was literally holding on to my arm – for support, as she had her brigandine half-way over her head, arms outstretched through it; she was blind and off balance.

“Get this off me,” came the muffled demand from the Huntress. “Then we can discuss it.”

"No." Vilja's tone hardened as I did Aela's bidding. "N No discussing. I'm going home. I will get a carriage or j jest ride Bruse to W Windhelm for the next ship. I... c can't stay with you any... m more."

"I... uhh... But I need you," I tried lamely.

"Oh? For w wot, may I ask?"

"Uhhh... You are a good companion. I like your cooking." That was incredibly stupid; I had not eaten her cooking since...

Through her pain, she looked at me as though my skin were still green from that experiment that had gone awry at the Mage's College in Winterhold a while back.

"You are a good fighter," I offered instead. At least it was the truth; she asked about her abilities often enow.

"So is M Mjoll and... Aela. And any n number of others who would f follow you if you asked."

"I need your healing skills."

"You can get that p priestess of Azura, Areana or w whatever-her-name-is. Or Collette from the C College."

I did not think that Collette would join me, but that mattered not. "The children love you," I essayed instead.

"What about you?"

There it was, then. "I... uhhh..."

"That's wot I thought." She turned and fled.

Later, through her tent flap, tied shut from the inside, I entreated, "Vilja, I am sorry. I will go with you. I have to investigate those cult assassins—"

"No... p-please." I can't be w with you anymore."

"Vilja, I..."

"L-Leave, please. Please... jest l leave."

## XVI Woe Betide

She left me before Aela and I returned from our hunt. Night found Mjoll sitting nigh the fire as, feeling reasonably clean and satisfied, we ambled back into camp; though we had not found any miscreants to feed on, just game, the flames of lust mounted after our moonlight, cleansing swim, during which we fornicated as much as the cold allowed. We looked forward to some relative warmth and comfort.

Vilja's tent was gone.

Mjoll looked up from stirring the cooking pot, held on andirons over the fire. "I had to move in with you." Her tone was tense, clipped diction more pronounced than usual. "It will be a little cramped

until we can get another tent."

I was suddenly afraid, and felt... something else I could not identify.

"What!?" I spat at the Lioness, my fear turning to anger. "You let her leave all alone?"

She must have seen the beast upon me as I approached; she rose, reached for her greatsword.

"Hold!" Aela interjected, physically getting between us.

"She insisted," protested Mjoll. "Who am I to stop her? Besides, my pledge is to you - I cannot abandon you just like that." Did I detect an accusing note?

"Vilja can take care of herself," Aela reasoned. "She's tougher than she looks."

Indeed, I had overheard banter between them - and between Lydia and Vilja, for that matter - on that very subject; and I needs must agree. Still, it did not feel right. I was torn, though my ire cooled.

"Vilja owes me nothing." I felt confused at my own defence of her decision to leave me. "But, Mjoll, please, I cannot let her go alone. I know you want to kill vampires, but..."

"I will go after her," offered Aela. "And I will go with her as far as she lets me."

I did not know how to feel about that, either. "I..." I bit my inner lip so hard I tasted blood; suddenly inflamed by it, I wanted to hunt again - or fuck.

It made more sense for Mjoll - or all of us - to go after Vilja, but I knew the Lioness would not wait; she would go on to Fort Dawnguard without me. I should therefore let her, and, with or without Aela, catch up with Vilja myself, persuade her to come back. Yet, I sensed the restlessness in the svelte Huntress; I knew she needed to... do something else, whether that be pray to the shrines of Hircine in the Underforge (very disappointingly, they had turned out to bestow no additional benefit, now that all three were together), or something else. Withal, I was more concerned with the thought of the two of them together, albeit I was not anxious - never mind jealous - that Aela might fuck Vilja; I was, disturbingly, more afraid that she was liable to eat her for real than simply eat her cunt. Yet, that was ridiculous, was it not? Aela had learned to control her hungers long ere I had.

At the same time, I yearned to see Mjoll naked, even if I could not 'have congress' with her. (I do not know why I persisted in trying to get myself into such untenable situations.)

"All right. Thank you, Aela."

I helped her pack. We shared no words, aside from a cryptic comment Aela made: "Don't let them intimidate you, sister. We both know how to keep our heads, while the men let their hearts rule." Was it some kind of warning? Advice?

Mounting her horse, she admonished, "Don't worry, sister." She displayed that wolfish grin - which did nothing to assuage my fears. "I'll take care of her."

That is what I am afraid of.

"You two take care of each other now. Perhaps we can hunt together again, sister." The Huntress rode away up the cobbled road at a canter.

I felt another sense of loss.

Not much later, I saw the Lioness in full splendour. She undressed completely before crawling into her sleeping fur in the tent we both now occupied, and I got an eyeful – or two. I myself was a large girl, but, though not a featherweight of fat lay on her, she was bigger: full, high breasts with big brown areolae and nipples lying flat (for the nonce); surprisingly narrow shoulders and hips; well-muscled limbs. She topped my height by almost a hand; head crowned with shoulder-length hair the colour of wheat, held back in several braids, which she shook loose for the night. I barely got a glimpse of the tantalising thatch at her crotch.

The throbbing in my slit and nipples would not abate; my mind felt afire, I wanted her so badly. Thus did I squirm half the night, yet I do not know why I even pretended to try to sleep, as Mjoll knew about me. Even so, I was surprised when I felt her rise and push me over, slip inside the double fur I usually shared with Aela. The abrupt contact was exquisite; my heart and other parts leapt, yet I advised, “Mjoll, I... we... cannot...”

She placed a rough hand over my mouth; the other I felt exploring my quivering body. “Shhh. I know. Let me... heal you.”

I dared not move – I recalled too well what I had done to Elda – and thus I lay at her mercy whilst she reconnoitred; the hand on my mouth moved, fingers traced random patterns across my face, ears, neck; joined the other travelling up and down, delving here and there. Tiny kisses pecked at shoulder, neck, cheek, ear. “Shhh...” she kept murmuring.

Gasping, I tensed as she squeezed my breasts, pinched and thumbed my nipples, probed around my sheath, played with the wispy covering; drew a finger along the bottom of my slit, stroked back and forth; dipped inside with one, then another, thumb flicking my Sword of Dibella. I started, moaned, almost too enraptured to note a furry, moist heat against my leg as she began to rub her sex against me. Perhaps she would get what she needed without my direct participation. I relaxed, enjoyed. The Lioness brought me to climax more than once ere plunging her entire fist within my palpitating cunt and thrusting, whilst tongue flicked rapidly and she seized swollen nipples betwixt lip and teeth, casting me into some kind of swoon.

The next thing I knew it was dawn and I heard her at the fire outside, cooking or whatever. I could not quite believe what had happened; was it only a dream? I thought not, as I recalled ‘waking’ during the night, the big, dusky Nord wrapped around me, shaking with sobs – and my feeble attempts to soothe her.

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XVII - The Visitor

The Lioness and I went on to Fort Dawnguard. There, Isran, in a strange pique, immediately bade us follow him; I had a ‘visitor’ demanding to see me. Mjoll begged leave to explore the huge fortress, adding how it was likely a private matter anyway.

Of course it was Serana. Upon first glimpse of the haughty vampiress – unchanged from when we parted, still wearing the same old-fashioned yet flattering leathers – my heart leapt inside my orcish armour, threatened to burst through the under-padding and wrought orichalcum breastplate. Then again, perhaps it was my nipples and Sword of Dibella; I tried to ignore them all.

After an intense conversation during which Isran threatened to kill Serana on the spot, going so far as to reach for his specialised warhammer, we took her at her word that she wanted to stop her father from finding and using an Elder Scroll that would supposedly render all vampires unaffected by sunlight.

"Well, then?" Those red-orange eyes offered a quizzical look; I saw eagerness, as well as a challenge.

Isran had left us in an alcove, which, lit by a tall, floor-standing candelabrum, appeared to have once been an ancient torture chamber, judging by the scattering of grim instruments and old, dried blood on the stone walls and floor. Cobwebs laced every corner, empty bottles and debris lay scattered; a few hay bales and a loose pile of dirty straw filled the rest of the space near us (for what, I wondered; kept they horses in the castle?). The fustiness of ages stuffed my nostrils.

"How did you know I would be here?" I was just making conversation.

"My... family hast spies."

I had no more to say, so I attacked her.

She was out of her leathers much quicker than on the first occasion, notwithstanding her assistance this time, on her back in the straw a half-moment later, I on my knees between her legs. I slurped at her slick crevice like a puppy lapping milk, sucked her Sword of Dibella as though it were a little cock. This time she immediately gasped her pleasure – and, doubtless, not a little discomfort, as the hay was prickly. I had not the fiery potion to warm her, but I did my best without. I lifted her hips clear of the dirty floor and loose hay, pulling her cool slit into my mouth as I plunged with my tongue as deeply as I could. She cried out, sounding almost in pain – but I could not hurt her, could I? She was undead – not human, at least – and my equal in strength and boundless energy. All the while, I struggled out of my own armour; naked, I gasped, wincing at the cold stone, painful beneath my knees, the chill of the ancient castle. I pulled us farther into the hay pile; better prickly than cold and trying to fuck on a hard surface. Not that Serana noticed the cold, I suppose.

Spinning the vampiress onto her knees, her face now pressed into the straw, I resumed my assault on her hairless cunt. Her cries muffled, I licked and sucked, thrust two and three fingers within her slippery cleft; flicked rapidly with a curled finger inside, the way she had shown me. Serana convulsed; a blood-curdling shriek wracked the mostly empty hallways, raising the fine hairs all over my body. As she collapsed like a broken dummy I flipped her again, sat on her face. I had to writhe and twist urgently before she seemed to notice. Then I was in trouble.

Serana came to life, as it were; preternaturally long tongue snaked into me, drew a long slurp, darted to my erect nubbin; her ministrations and my ardour brought me almost instant release. Yet the undead woman was not about to let me get off that easily. Holding my hips in an unnaturally strong grip, she attempted to force her entire face into my throbbing hole; I found myself bemused, wondering how she could breathe whilst immediately recalling that she did not. Tongue, lips, teeth prodded and pinched, licked and sucked. I groaned, cried out my gratification. I then got a true sampling of her strength as she picked me up bodily, tossed me onto my back into the straw – by all the gods it was uncomfortable! – dived atop me, now assaulting my aching breasts and hardened nipples.

I shrieked as she shoved something into my cunt; she had grabbed a bottle and thrust the cold neck into me, jammed it in and out; withdrew it occasionally to suck and lick my juices off it. At least it was soon warm. I watched it, glossy brown with my juices in the candlelight, disappear betwixt crimson lips; shivered at the sight and sound of sharp fangs scraping its length; observed, mesmerised, as it went back inside me. My body arched as I threw my head back, almost burying it in the filthy straw. "AAAAAGGGGGHHHHH!"

"Gods below!" someone bellowed from the corridor. Whoever it was disappeared before I could turn to see. It sounded like Isran, probably thinking I was being killed by the vampiress. Perhaps he was

not far off...

It betided that, had we moved but a few paces down the hallway, a room lay furnished with a large bed – that it happened to be Isran's was probably the reason he heard us (he and most of the Dawnguard, doubtless). Even so, there were a number of others we could have taken, albeit none private; although we had not been overly concerned with privacy, we could have had a modicum of comfort.

Withal, I had to convince Mjoll that she either needs must stay at the fortress, else tolerate Serana's presence in our little party whilst we hunted (other) vampires. Firstly, however, I felt I had to find Vilja, and this diversion riled the big Nord warrior more than Serana's presence. Thus, I was once more in a quandary: Did I pursue Vilja, as I felt I must, and risk Mjoll and Serana leaving me, or did I abandon my blonde companion (and Aela) for the nonce, and continue vampire hunting? I assumed that Serana would not stay at the fortress – even if the residents would have her – and so we three left together. The tension was palpable, and I soon missed Vilja's inane banter more than I could have imagined. Even so, the choice was taken from me as, emerging from Dayspring Canyon, vampires ambushed us.

A drain spell sucked life from me ere I knew we were under assault, and I suddenly missed Vilja for more than her banter; I seldom noticed her keeping me healed during combat, and thus, under duress, I downed a potion or two. Drawing Volendrung, my artifact warhammer, I smashed a thrall's shoulder; flesh and bones crunching, he screamed, magic flaring as the enchanted weapon drank his stamina. Another blow to the chest caved in his leather breastplate, gouts of blood erupting from his mouth as he fell in a heap; I pulped his head for good measure, splattering myself with ruined brain and bone matter. Intent on the next one, I leapt over the corpse, not much noting what occurred around me, aside from shouts and other sounds of battle. A blooded vampire in chainmail was no match for me next; staggering it with a smash to its stomach, it doubled over; I messily beheaded it just as a magical lance of ice from Serana pierced it through. I turned to find Mjoll down, another fiend rising from her prostrate form, blood drooling down its chin. Snarling, I charged, swung my massive weapon to and fro as though it were a stick; the nightstalker backed away, stunned as I rained blows upon it. Dark blood sprayed and magic flared again as the hammer obliterated its features, crushing its remaining life force.

It was over. I went to Mjoll. She was conscious, coughing blood – but I could see the punctures in her throat, the trickle of lifeblood. With surprising strength, her hand grasped mine as I began gestures to heal her.

"No." She coughed, spat more blood. "I am... done. Did... did we kill them?"

I nodded. "Yes."

"Goo Good. I am... content." Her breath came raggedly.

I swallowed a lump of ore. "Mjoll, I can... I can heal you." I actually doubted that, but wanted to try...

"No, you can't. I'm bitten. And even if you could I wouldn't want you to." She closed her eyes; opened them again, clutched my hand. "Shrelle burn me. Promise! I will not be... one of them. And I want to see Aerin again... in Sovngarde."

What else could I do?

I was angry and frustrated. Serana did not want to follow Vilja and Aela, but we did not catch up with them withal before we arrived in Windhelm. The vampiress was quite reluctant to take ship to

Solstheim in pursuit, though I reasoned that I had yet to follow up reports of a cult of assassins originating there, which had already made several attempts on my life. It had something to do with my being Dragonborn, and thus it was a practical diversion, and mayhap had some connection to her quest to defeat her family's designs besides (I doubted that, as well, but...). Yet she argued that the vampire problem was of greater import, and did I not owe it to Mjoll?

"We must find my mother - she will know of the Elder Scroll we require. She may even have it." Abed in my clammy, near-empty house in Windhelm, the vampiress curled around me, as if seeking warmth. "Besides which," she remonstrated, "thou must cure thyself before she will have thee back."

I did not know what she meant.

"Thou art a werewolf. Vilja cannot abide that. And it may be... dangerous, whence we go. My family... that is, my father and his minions, will not welcome either of us, never mind if he knew that we seek my mother."

"They do not get along?"

She snorted. "Not for... a long time."

"Very well," I conceded. "I shall have you to myself a while longer. We will go to Castle Volkihar first."

She bestowed a throaty growl, rolled atop me in our double furs; tried to shove her prehensile tongue down my throat as she grabbed the back of my head in both hands. I started, gasping as one of her sharp fangs pricked my lower lip; did I taste blood? Yet, all thoughts fled save the amatory.

That had been a few days ago, but my guilt had returned, and my frustration only intensified as, earlier this day, during our sacking of yet another bandit enclave found upon the way, Serana raised a dead male orc to fight at our side. Ordinarily, this would be of no consequence - she had done it often enow, much to my discomfort - but it betided that I had already stripped this one, as is my wont, partially to degrade such villains, but also to more easily denote those we had already looted, should we come upon them again later.

Curiously, the necromantic act of raising this particular male caused his member to swell to what I assumed were exaggerated proportions - but Serana assured me his cock was likely normal size. Thus, although I was sufficiently fascinated to test if it still worked normally, we were beset by yet more bandits, and, unfortunately, such spells do not last long; the corpse shortly turned to dust. Still, I demanded of Serana if she could make them last longer.

The vampiress smiled wickedly. "Thou art a shameless slattern," she accused. Nonetheless, I could tell she was as intrigued as I; fangs protruding, she licked her lips.

We crept deeper into the cavern, came upon a room with a bandit sitting at a table, apparently supping, whilst another stirred a cooking pot nearby. Both had their backs to us. My bow already cocked, I loosed a poisoned shaft, knocked a bottle of wine off the table to shatter on the stone floor. Such was my speed (despite questionable aim) that I had another shaft on its way ere the brigand had half-risen from her seat. The deadly orcish arrow punched through the back of her head, emerged from her forehead; blood sprayed across the table and her last meal as she slumped in her chair (apparently, the poison would have been superfluous withal). Serana's drain spell had already begun to suck the life from the other rogue as I fired again, striking him in the back, then in the chest as he whirled; he collapsed after a barely a step.

Bandits were seldom a challenge any longer.

Once we cleared the outlaws' cave, we carried a body with the fewest injuries – a Dunmer male, whom Serana had drained and shocked to death with lightning – to a room with several beds. Excitedly, we shed our armour; I sat on the edge of a cot as Serana cast her spell. Bent at the waist, the body rose in the air, as if suspended from the reanimating modest cock that swelled and lengthened before our eyes. Blue magic swirled as the corpse stood upright, emitted a moaning sound. Dusky skin blistered in spots where the lightning had arced, and it still smoked slightly, stank of burnt flesh.

The spellcaster could direct such thralls to attack enemies, so why not...? "Come thou hence," the vampiress ordered.

"Unnnhhh," it groaned, obeying stiffly.

Serana sat next to me; cool skin of her naked thigh against mine shocked and thrilled me. We both reached for the erect penis; each with a hand around it, stroked.

"Unnnhhh." A singularly unattractive noise, it, along with the blank stare, revealed naught but unintelligent obedience. The cooling member and its erstwhile owner displayed none of the usual reactions.

Still, I pulled it closer for a taste, which was unpleasant; it needed a wash. I grabbed a bottle of wine, dumped it over the shaft and dark, bulbous head, splashing my lap in the process. Serana and I tongue-bathed the cock; she slipped it into her mouth, raked her fangs along it. Feeding it to me, she bent to my crotch, lapping at the spilt wine running down my ready sheath.

I moaned in time with the animated corpse. "Unnnhhh."

Sadly, I barely got the stiff organ down my throat before the body disintegrated in a puff of dusty magic – which was neither an agreeable sensation nor taste. Experiment concluded we turned to one another.

Afterward, I felt anxious, unfulfilled. I do not know if it was due to our inability to have congress with a corpse; whether I simply needed male company; the fact that I lay next to what was essentially a dead, cold being; I missed Vilja and/or Aela; or altogether something else. I suddenly knew what I needs must do, however.

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## **XVIII - The Treatment**

Castle Volkihar lay on a distant island of its own, thus I again had time to try to think.

Despite my lupine constitution I felt tired as never before. Even so, my ennui did not quite overshadow my thoughts of hunting or tumbling; I understood at last one of the twin's comment about his mind being continually 'clouded with the hunt'. Moreover, I fuzzily understood that I was hurting people, in more ways than simply killing and eating them – or fucking them to death. Elda, for example; despite my finding out that the reason my bounty had been so low was because I could not have been convicted of murder – there being no direct proof of my having killed her – I felt no better. (As an aside, when it occurred to me that Aela had not slain me when we fucked ere I became a werewolf, she assured me it was because she had learned to control herself with humans; I was intrigued, but did not wish to inflict further harm 'experimenting'.)



I had not even loved the whore, yet I felt remorse. Why, then, did I not feel more guilt about harming those I did love? For I was hurting loved ones, was I not? I loved Vilja, or at least, I wanted to know how I felt about her without a 'clouded mind'. I wanted to know how I felt about Aela, too – even though I still doubted I could have her, beyond what we already shared. I had wanted Mjoll, too, barely gotten to know her; now could never know her – though I mayhap could have – because of what I was. I wanted to experience others – very well, I wanted to fuck others – and sample more of what life offered, but I could not, because of what I was. I began to recognise my obsession as virtually all-consuming, yet could not tear myself away from the carnality.

Moreover, I had taken two children off the streets; what kind of life could I give them – was I giving them – living this way? I was avoiding home, as I did not trust myself near them. So, what was the point? Why did I adopt them, if I was not able to care for them? Withal, were I to try to have some kind of home life as a werewolf, how long before I... hurt them? I had even moved us all to Solitude to keep them from harm in the war – Whiterun being in the virtual centre of the conflict, having seen battle once already – and yet I seldom saw them.

I no longer wanted this life. Thus, I made up my mind that, as soon as we were done at Castle Volkihar, I would go to Ysgramor's Tomb and perform the ritual to cure myself. I did not know that the choice would be denied me.

Rowing a dinghy to its island, my first glimpse of Castle Volkihar as it emerged from the mists was unfavourable: A hulking half-ruin, brooding over its island like the huge stone gargoyles bracing its wide main staircase. Further exploration only confirmed my first impression. I felt appalled that Serana had spent her childhood in this dreadful place; it had to have been worse than mine, although she did not seem affected by it, other than, at times, waxing wistful in her remembrances. Yet, I will not dwell on the edifice herein. I needs must only say that we found Serana's mother, Valerica, and the Elder Scroll, but in order to do so I faced the choice of trading a piece of my soul or becoming a vampire.

Despite Serana leading me to believe that only a vampire lord could turn a werewolf, she had obviously lied, for she now told me she could do it herself; I was furious at her deception.

"How could you lie to me?" I hissed.

Deep in the bowels of the half-ruined fortress, we paused in an ancient crypt. Water trickled steadily down the slimy green stone of the walls, collected in dead pools here and there on the floor. The air was dead, smelled of putrefaction, mouldy antiquity.

"I didst not lie," she objected.

"No? What would you call it, then?"

"I didst not know."

I scoffed my disbelief.

"I sayeth true," the vampiress insisted. "I studied the subject, whilst we were apart."

I said nothing, scowled instead.

"It is... personal."

"What do you mean?"

"It is... intimate," she emphasised. "Turning is like... like making love - 'fucking', as you humans are wont to say."

I suspected it was more like fucking than making love, as Vilja (my heart thumped at the thought of her) had differentiated a while ago.

"I thought you told me it was degrading," I remonstrated.

"It was for me... at the time. It shall not be for thee." Her orange eyes glowed; my loins jolted.

I cannot say what swayed me: her expression and my lust, or fear of the loss of even part of my soul. Regardless, were we to be that... familiar, I insisted on leaving the dungeon for the island shore, despite my guess that Serana was not fastidious about where she turned me; the naked hunger I saw her demeanour was frightening - and I am not easily affrighted. Even so, she suggested we take the dinghy back to the mainland, feeling that 'interruption' would be less likely.

We pitched a tent as full dark enveloped us. Though not a breath of wind stirred, a flake or two of snow eddied. The sea was calm, no creatures called out. Perhaps the proximity to evil lurking in the nigh darkness subdued nature, I know not, but I felt unnaturally chilled. Apprehensive, I bade Serana wait until I had a brazier lit and its warmth dispelled the cold. Soon, sweat began to soak my under-padding beneath my armour, and I yet shivered.

Perhaps it was the vampiress' unnerving gaze, affixed upon me as I puttered about the tent, lighting the brazier, arranging the furs, undressing. She was already seated, nude on the mats, unpinning her dark braids, tweaking erect nipples; tongue darting over fangs (were they suddenly longer?), licking taloned fingers. Delving to her lower lips, she spread them lewdly apart with one hand as the other probed and stroked; once more, the bleeding crown mushroom came to mind, albeit one shiny with secretions. In spite of myself, I grew weak-kneed; this, I felt, would be different.

She leaned back, knees up, feet on the furs, legs splayed wider than I thought possible; continued to interchange fingers between mouth and crevice, scrutiny unwavering as I all but collapsed opposite. For some reason my limbs felt heavy; eyelids drooped, as they had not since I partook of Aela's blood in the Underforge. The contrast between loose ebony tresses and cool pallor of skin in the weak light deepened as the vampiress slithered atop me; hands, lips, tongue everywhere at once, squeezing, probing, tasting. I felt drugged; I had never tried skooma, but this, I imagined, is what it might feel like: all senses save touch suspended, the latter intensified as never before.

Skin tingling, I felt her everywhere at once, erogenous areas more sensitive than ever. Lips upon nipples, yet pulling at earlobes; tongue exploring, darting into ear and between toes; fingers probing cleft, brushing nape of neck. How was this possible? I had no senses to ponder, only to revel. When she bit me, it was indescribable: as though I climaxed a half-hundred times at once.

Serana's father defeated, we at last journeyed to Solstheim to find Vilja.

She was not there.

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XIX - The Cure

I felt ill, and I missed Vilja. I missed her banter, her healing; the light she provided deep underground and in murkiest night; her modest battle prowess; her funny accent and mispronunciations; her humour; even her cooking. I missed her complaints of sore feet; frequent

demands to have a say in what we were doing and whence we travelled. How I longed to be able to massage her tiny feet just now; let her cook me something; lead us wherever she wanted to go; play-fight with her (even though I avoided it, like swimming and massaging her feet, because it was too erotic). But I had lost her.

All I knew about her home was that her family lived in Solstheim. Even so, although I had now explored its depth and breadth with Serana – completing several quests, including resolving the issue of my dragon blood heritage – I found no trace of her or her family; she seemed unknown there. Mayhap if I had known her family name...?

Further befouling my mood, Serana began to test my patience. If the insufferable vampiress was not complaining of the weather, she was raising dead bodies. Wolves and skeevers were disquieting enow, but humankind was rather something else; I found it more than unsettling, beyond eerie; it disturbed me greatly, even when she used former enemies thusly. The grain of wheat that burst the sack was when she raised an innocent miner, a victim of draugr in an archeological dig I had financed.

I skewered the zombie that had ‘slain’ the miner’s corpse, which disintegrated into a pile of dust just as had the corpses we animated not long ago. “Stop it!” I snapped, whirling on my undead companion. Still brandishing my dragonbone greatsword, sullied with draugr ichor, I wrenched it free, kicking the draugr off it. Sweat stung my eyes behind my new daedric helm (I needs must improve the lining’s absorbency). I had meant to be threatening, but the perspiration slicking my palms and invading my eyes obliged me to stow my weapon after cursorily dragging it across the zombie carcass in a feeble attempt to clean it. The dry air of the crypt wrenched from me a succession of hacking coughs. I removed my helm and gauntlets, wiped at sweat ineffectually with an equally damp hand. I was exhausted; I refused to feed, as a vampire needs must, thus I was weakening.

“I told thee before, Shrelle: I am what I am, and I do what I do.”

Despite lowered voices, our words resonated off the largely empty stone biers set regularly into the walls of the tomb, down through the dusty stone corridors.

I felt the barb; she was telling me I needed to feed – which she did, without compunction, upon enemy or ‘innocent’ alike. Yet, I would not poke my nose into that trap. “And I have asked you before: Must you raise innocent victims? Leave them alone!”

“Need I repeat myself once again? I am not thy thrall; do not speak to me as though I were. What is more, they are dead; they feel naught. And thou wert not so reluctant when lust was upon thee.” The vampiress held my gaze, something to which I was no longer accustomed; I could intimidate most others with that stare.

I sagged against a wall. “Serana, this is no longer working out.”

“If thou sayeth so.”

“Methinks we must part ways.” I found it difficult to say; I still felt something for the thousands-of-years-old, lonely undead woman. Was it merely lust? Yet, I was too sick and tired lately even for sex.

“If thou sayeth so,” she reiterated, maddeningly.

“You will not seek a cure along with me?”

"Shrelle, we have discussed this. Speak not to me of it again."

I made up my mind. "Very well. When we are done here, I travel back to Fort Dawnguard to seek a cure for myself." I relented somewhat. "You are... welcome to accompany me till then, Serana. But if you choose not to accept it as well, then we must part ways."

"If thou sayeth so." Did I detect smugness, as though she did not believe me? She added, "Thou dost not wish to find your lady love as thou art."

My 'lady love'? Why would she say that, in quite that way? I found myself demanding to know what she meant.

The vampiress' red-orange eyes did not change whilst her tone became almost patronising, as though she instructed a simple child. "Thou wert once a werewolf; Vilja left thee because she could not abide thee thus." My innards twisted as Serana went on, "Believeth thee that she will be any more accepting of thy being a vampire? I endeavoured to tell thee this ere we came hence."

I did not answer, instead tried to swallow bile past an iron ingot lodged in my throat. I knew she was right; why was I here, now, like this? Perhaps it was just as well we had not found Vilja.

Withal, I yet felt my mind was not wholly my own; I knew, albeit subconsciously, that I was still obsessed with feeding and fucking, no different than when I had been a werewolf. Moreover, my guilt at being Dragonborn and yet a slayer of dragons - Vilja estimated some time ago that I must have despatched more than fifty - had begun to gnaw at me. I had added two to that number since arriving in Solstheim, and I now began to question whether I could follow through upon my presumed ultimate destiny if it meant slaying yet another dragon, even if he was 'evil'.

All this, added to my longing for Vilja, only exacerbated my illness. Thus, I do not remember the voyage back to Skyrim from Solstheim, or the trip to Fort Dawnguard from Winterhold harbour. Later, Serana told me that I spent the entire journey essentially unconscious below decks in our cabin and then in a hired carriage. Nor was I aware of the uproar I caused, arriving at Dawnguard in this condition; it was only much later I learned that Serana had come even closer to being killed than she had when she first arrived, for supposedly being responsible for my illness. However, as she reasoned, why would she bring me back to the fortress if she had been trying to keep me thus? She would have taken me to Castle Volkihar instead. Not to mention it was my own fault for refusing... sustenance.

Regardless, Florentius Baenius, Dawnguard's resident alchemist, tended me and brought me back to relative health, despite his inability to do anything about my primary affliction. Thus, although still sick, I asked Ingjard to accompany me to seek the cure and then find Vilja. I longed to invite Serana, but stubbornly clung to my threat to part ways with her, though she surely would be shunned, having chosen, somewhat inexplicably, to stay at Dawnguard instead of going home to Volkihar. So, I left with Ingjard, the only member of the Dawnguard who would have aught to do with me withal.

Setting out, I equivocated for a time as I considered calling upon Aela, and perhaps... But no.

Withal, I was unaware how much I owed Serana ere I left her by herself.

On the road to whence I would find a remedy for my present condition, Ingjard and I met a band of itinerant Khajiit merchants. Their mercenary guard, named Kharjo, told us of his Moon Amulet, stolen by bandits. We traced them to their hideout and recovered it, and the grateful Kharjo offered to accompany me. I was intrigued, as I had never seen a naked Khajiit, either male or female.

By this time, I had learned to control myself and not fuck my mortal partners to death – though I had to admit that I was likely yet too weak to perform up to my ‘usual’ standard anyway. Serana and I had experimented with a few, including myself having ‘sampled’ Ingjard a time or two on this trip, despite my finding the rather slightly built, stern Nord not particularly appealing. However, I found mortal partners generally unfulfilling, as they simply could not keep pace; normally, I was just getting started as they spent themselves. Still, I was determined to try a Khajiit for size, as it were...

That first night, Kharjo began to set up his own tent as Ingjard and I pitched ours.

“Kharjo,” I interjected, “what are you doing?”

“Ehh...? I am zetting up my tent, my lady.” The Khajiit’s low, buzzing accent milled ‘s’ sounds into ‘z’.

“We do not need two.” I tried to infuse a promise into my tone. “Build a fire instead.”

He hesitated only a moment, long striped tail switching, feline whiskers and ears wagging, as he no doubt contemplated the implications of sharing a tent with two human women. “Az you weesh, my lady.”

“And you can dispose of the ‘my lady’ nonsense.”

“Yez, my— Az you weesh.”

Ingjard paused as well, eyed me, a rust-coloured eyebrow raised; turned back to her task. The stiff redhead had not been an enthusiastic lover, as I suspected she was either not attracted to me – perhaps not to women – else was simply afraid of me. Thus, I could not guess how she might feel about our new situation. We would find out anon.

Supper concluded, conversation waned with the remaining daylight. Gratefully, I removed my helmet without feeling as though my brains were cooking whilst my skin reddened and blistered. Ingjard idly poked the fire as I rose, pretending to yawn and stretch. “Well, I am for bed. Will anyone join me?” Of course, Ingjard would not be fooled, but I sensed our newest follower knew not yet what I was.

The tall Nord glanced up – not at me, but at Kharjo.

The Khajiit was staring at me, yellow feline eyes glowing in the firelight. “I am... feeling a beet tired myzself.”

“Not too tired, I trow.” Surely, he could not fail to catch my intent now, as, smiling, I held open the tent flap.

“Khajiit need only a catnap to rise again, ready for... anytheeng.”

“You can nap later. You will need it. And I will see about getting you to rise.”

He began, actually, to purr. Which brought Vilja abruptly to my lust-filled mind, recalling when she had once threatened a Khajiit bandit with something like thrashing him so badly he would be unable to purr. With some difficulty, I thrust thoughts of her aside.

Ingjard, intriguingly, got up to follow him. I tied the flap open as I ducked in after them. Dusk calmed the chill breeze, yet Kharjo soon had two braziers glowing inside. (Instead of campfires, he

tended to build bonfires on a scale befitting the festival of Fiery Night – doubtless because his race, originating in the warm, dry hills and plains of Elsewyr, found Skyrim perpetually cold.)

“Do you theenk... Could you close zee tent, please?”

“Do not fear,” I responded, “I will warm you.”

Purring, he began to remove his plain steel armour. The tent smelled of wet fur, though not unpleasantly (unlike ‘wet dog’). Rather, the cool air was redolent with a spicy scent, the likes of which I had never encountered. Combined with the odours of sweat, the earth and grass upon which we encamped, the night’s promise of snow, it was... potent. My ardour intensified.

Ingjard, staring moon-eyed at him as she knelt nearby on the furs in the confined space of the tent, emitted a small whimper as she began to fumble with her own scale hauberk. I felt rather affronted that she had never reacted to me thusly; however, I assisted her, then Kharjo. Enthrallingly, his torso emerged: arms and biceps well defined, stomach moderately rippled, narrow waist; a mottled pattern of brown-and-black striped fur; under-breeches still covering the main point of focus, which already tented promisingly.

I gestured to Ingjard. “Help him with those.”

She knelt in front of him, unhesitatingly reaching to fumble with the draw to his breeks. Meanwhile, I pulled off the rest of my accoutrements, sat back to watch. As Ingjard jerked down his under-breeches, Kharjo’s member sprang from its confinement like a triggered ballista. Curved toward the roof like a small mammoth tusk, his long cock was the only part of him that was not furry – or so I thought at first. Its stripes matched his tail, which whipped about. Though not quite prehensile, he seemed reasonably adept at tickling her with it, draping it over one shoulder, curling it back and forth across her naked back. The tall Nord giggled and moaned simultaneously as she grabbed for the shaft, began to stroke it two-handed. The head, pink rather than purplish as were most humans’, disappeared in her yawning mouth as she thrust it in, greedily sucking and bobbing on it. Though unimpressed with her technique myself, the feline’s purring intensified.

I knee-walked beside her, began to stroke the soft hair covering the Khajiit’s legs and buttocks, the finer matting on his chest. I flicked and pinched his pinkish nipples, tongued my way from one to the other. Pushing him prone to the sleeping furs, I commenced licking him all over, as I imagined a cat might groom itself – or one another. The taste was of ‘normal’ sweat and the spice I yet could not identify. I licked his ears, cheeks and whiskers, almost lipless mouth, kissed him; he returned it as a cat might lap milk, tongue darting in and out instead of swirling, dueling my own. My tongue travelled over his sharp teeth, reminding me of Serana’s. I shivered, suddenly needing that member to indulge my nipples as I pushed away thoughts of the arrogant vampiress.

Ingjard seemed almost frantic in her treatment of his shaft as I proffered him a swollen teat, then the other. He actually kneaded my breasts – thankfully, claws retracted – purring all the while as he licked and sucked; reached for my dripping sex, prodded, flicked, poked. Growling, I straddled his face. His whiskers tickled my thighs so that I snickered, abruptly gasping as his oral appendage darted at my nether lips, traced the outline, grazed my crevice. When it encountered my Sword of Dibella I shouted my pleasure, grabbed his head in both hands as if to thrust it inside me. It felt... exquisite, certainly unlike anything I had heretofore known. His tongue buzzed all over my aching cleft, darted, as would a hummingbird, probing, seeking my nectar. Abruptly he seized my swollen bud; I climaxed in a shudder, crying out as my trembling body arched, jerked. I half-stood to my knees, removing my over-sensitive sheath beyond reach of that talented tongue. I could not quite believe that he had brought me thus so quickly.

"Kharjo eez..." he began, licking whiskers shiny with my juices, "wet." The man-beast did not appear perturbed, though I had heard that Khajiit did not bathe, as, resembling their wild and domestic cousins, they disliked water - at least immersion in it. Withal, also similar to their animal kin, they were otherwise fastidious about cleanliness, grooming themselves and - dependent upon the closeness of their relations - one another. Of course, what flowed from me was not water, and so Kharjo, purring continually, golden cat-eyes hooded, wiped a hand across his mouth, licked his fingers, combed my secretions from whiskers into furred jowls, over his ears. I do not know why I found the gesture profoundly erotic; astonishingly, I came again, though hardly touching him.

As Ingjard continued to work over his cock, I recovered enough to push her aside. "Let him lick you," I encouraged.

Ingjard, tongue travelling over her own garnet lips, complied, though not without a wistful glance at Kharjo's engorged member as she released it to me. Whimpering once more, she rose, squatted over his mouth, screeched as she experienced the same sensations from which I was still recuperating.

Turning my attention toward her former occupation, I was pleurably surprised to find his long, curvy shaft covered with fine fur, save the pink head. Wrapping my hands around it, there was, to my delight, lots of room, although my hands were not small. I began masturbating him, moving both fists in the same direction, then working them apart and together again; it was a little awkward at first, due to his curvature, but I soon got into a rhythm. Starting slowly then rapidly, I changed pace and direction. His rumbles of pleasure emerged, almost muffled, from beneath the screaming Nord woman who writhed atop his head, thrashing as though he sought to toss her - perhaps in order that he might breathe, she determined to smother him.

A sudden huffing sound vented from the Khajiit as I thrust his cock into my mouth, engulfed it as deeply as I could, pulled away, swallowed it once more. I sucked it, thrilling in the tickling sensation its fur imparted on my tongue and inside my mouth; smooth going in, it resisted as I withdrew, just as though a cat's pelt would resist, were it petted against the lie.

Ingjard caterwauled, her climaxes apparently following one upon the next as I continued to suck, dip up and down on the Khajiit. Just as I anticipated getting that member down betwixt my other lips, Kharjo's whole body stiffened. He managed to thrust aside the other woman, whom had quieted somewhat and turned to observe as she rolled off him.

"Hunk-hunk-hunk," he voiced, in time with the sudden spurts of sweet cream exploding into my mouth. "Hunk-hunk-h-hunk-hunk," he repeated, a seemingly endless stream of ejaculate spraying as I backed off slightly. I let it pulse, aiming for my open mouth, uncaring than much missed, squirting across my cheeks, chin, an eye. Ingjard, panting, joined me, thrusting face and tongue forward to catch stray pearlescent gobbets, lapping them from my neck and cheek. I seized her head in both hands, pressed a fierce kiss upon her as my tongue fought for admittance; swapped the slightly spicy taste of Khajiit semen with the slender Nord. She squirmed, at first resistant, then stiffly accepted the shared gift.

I felt both pleased and, perversely, annoyed that he had cum already, as I was far from sated. "Oh no," I growled, "you do not get to nap yet." Purring contentedly, orgasm subsiding, the Khajiit's glowing yellow eyes were hooded. "You do not put away a stringed bow." I reached for his wilting member, soon had it to full attention with Ingjard's assistance. Climbing atop him, I stabbed myself with his cock. Gasping - its pronounced curve loaned another new sensation as it stimulated my inner parts whence none had gone before - I proceeded to ride him. Surprised yet again at the height of my arousal, soon another series of climaxes wracked me as he hammered his cock into me almost as fast as his tongue.

Ingjard bent to our conjoined parts, probed, sampled our commingled secretions. I fell back as, my juices streaming, he spurted yet again, as though he had not just moments before; the redhead slurped, clambered aboard as my convulsions waned and I slid aside. Moaning, she began to bounce on the poor Khajiit, another succession of screeches bursting from her as she frantically sought yet more climaxes. I crawled betwixt his furred legs, stroking along them and then up, fondling the woman's hips and flanks, groped around to her smallish breasts, then down again as I probed at their connection with my tongue.

Since I lacked full stamina, they both paced me. Yet, I was most impressed at how Kharjo kept up his end, as it were (might all Khajiits be that stalwart?) Withal, we spent ourselves long ere the dawnstar rose, but ere then I directed our finale, bidding the Khajiit fuck first the Nord woman atop the piled furs on her back, then me from behind, beast-style, Ingjard sprawled beneath my ever-eager tongue. I felt his last injection shoot deep inside me as I vaguely wondered what a half-human vampire half-Khajiit baby would look like.

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## **XX - Dreams**

The cure successful, I slept for days - or was it weeks? My dreams were alternately horrifying, amusing, and blissful.

I dreamt of fucking and then eating half-burnt corpses - or was it the other way around? Of being a giant and fucking a dragon - or was it the other way around? I dreamt I met the entire Stormcloak host as a werewolf and defeated them singlehandedly, then sought out the last camps of stragglers and exterminated them, ripping still-beating hearts from flesh, squeezing the blood down my throat before consuming them entire.

I dreamt that Serana tried to turn me into a vampire again, but I died and went to Sovngarde, whence I met Kodlak Whitmane, Ulfric Stormcloak, Mjoll the Lioness, Aerin, and myriad others, all reveling together; opposition, ego, pride forgotten. There ensued an orgy, suddenly disrupted when the great dragon-god Alduin attacked. Hundreds of us, all in the nude, casually slew him, continued the debauch.

I dreamt that I was gang-fucked by an almost endless procession of Khajiit, orcish, and Argonian males. Following, I gave birth to a grotesque, sexless child with Khajiit tail and ears, warty green Argonian skin, orange-red eyes and fangs. Then I became this monstrosity as, grown up into a gross composite of dragon and Shrelle-baby, I ravaged the countryside, spewing streams of cum from my throat that drowned victims instead of consuming them in fire or frost.

I dreamt that Vilja rejected me, told me I was worse than Halvdan, her repugnant erstwhile suitor; she slapped me with a slaughterfish. I dreamt she tied me to a tree, swam naked in front of me, teased and posed lewdly. Aela gave her a foot massage as, using various implements including her flute and a dagger, she alternately masturbated herself, the Huntress, and Serana; the dagger nicked her, causing her to bleed, though this appeared to only arouse them all the more. Suddenly she was in another bacchanalia, this time with the vampiress, Aela, Mjoll, Aerin, Borgahk, Lydia, Farkas and Vilkas, plus half of Skyrim (I was sure this was a dream) whilst I remained bound, infuriatingly naked but unable to even touch myself. Turning into a werewolf, I burst my bonds, lunged to rend them all to pieces - but was abruptly unable, frozen and powerless as Vilja ensorcelled me and mocked me, calling me her 'funny little puppy'.

I dreamt of power; that I could fly, riding upon a dragon and as a real dragon (the latter was a



dream, the former not). Of becoming Jarl of Winterhold (I loathed that fact that Maven Blackbriar had been 'appointed' by the Empire); or was it Hjaalmarch? The Reach? Perhaps it was High-King of Skyrim. Empress Shrelle the First?

I dreamt I was a werewolf and this time killed everyone at the orgy except Serana, who joined me, wearing her father's visage; we tore everyone apart, ate all in a revel of blood that lasted an eternity of sunless nights...!

I awoke.

"My thane." Jordis.

I was home, in Solitude, whence my children abided. All was silent.

I surged from the bed, suddenly terrified that I would... do something egregious, if I had not already.

"My thane," the housecarl repeated, laying her hands on me; pressed me back into the bed. "What do you wish? I'll get it for you - you must rest."

My fears subsided, as did I, momentarily. "No. I have rested enow. "Where is my armour... weapons?" I would kill the dreams. "I must find Vilja."

"You wanted to towk to me?"

She wore her blue dress, my favourite, matching her eyes. I half-sat up for a moment, heart lodged in my throat. Approaching from the bedroom door, she made as though to hug me; I reached for her, suddenly appalled as I noticed fur on my hands, long talons sprouting whilst the hunger leapt, a red haze before my eyes—

I awoke, sweating. Bright sunshine pierced gaps between the planks of the walls; dust motes swirled. I heard children playing in the street outside, the distant call of hawkers from the market.

"My thane." Lydia, this time.

Unsteadily I reached for her, glanced blearily at my hand as I clutched her bare arm; it was normal. I squeezed, ascertained that my housecarl was real.

A dark eyebrow rose. "My thane?"

I snapped my head about the room - a little too quickly, as a wave of dizziness swept over me; Vilja was not here.

"I..." My throat felt like the entire Alik'r Desert had invaded. Yet, I took that as the final proof that I was actually awake and cured; I had felt neither hunger nor thirst, other than as an illness, for what seemed like ages.

Lydia handed me a goblet of water; I emptied it, messily; she refilled it. "Are you hungry, my thane?"

I told her thought I could eat an entire 'flock of mammoths' (as Vilja once put it), and beg for seconds.

As it happened, Vilja found me anon. I am uncertain that my fervent wish for her - I may even someday admit that it was a prayer - was mere coincidence or not. All I know is that I emerged into the daylight later that day (or was it several days later?), paused upon the steps of Breezehome,

turned my face toward the sun; closed my eyes and tried to absorb it.

“Wouldn’t it be nice to jest towk a little, you and I?”

I dared not open my eyes for fear that I was dreaming again. Slowly, I cracked them; Vilja, in her blue dress, stood in the street at the base of the steps, blonde hair shining, just as I pictured her in my dreams...

“Shrelle?”

Sinking into her shocking blue eyes, I read the myriad questions therein. I felt myself trembling, jaw working; countless thoughts and feelings washed over me at once, like the wind of a swooping dragon. Tears threatened; I could not answer past another iron ingot in my throat.

“Are you all right?”

“N—Yes. I am now.”

She smiled, melted into my arms.

“I am sorry,” I began to sob.

“Shh... No matter, sweetheart. Shhhh-shushhh...” She stroked my hair as I simply held her, perhaps a little too tightly, as though afraid to let her go again, lest she disappear...

“M-Marry me, Vilja.”

“Of course, sweetheart. Of course I will marry you.”

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XXI - Conclusions

Withal, it was not as simple as that. I bought a ring for her, but Solstheim girls apparently had other traditions, and Vilja was determined to follow them, one of which included me finding her several wolf pelts and then several more, in order that she could make ‘wolfcry’ armour for us both. She then sent for her parents, and as we awaited their arrival in Dawnstar we resolved a few more quests (one resultant in finding whence Alduin dwelt, though I was yet unsettled regarding my role in the inevitable confrontation with my demi-god kin). Upon their arrival, we were obliged to settle the matter of my bride’s stolen trousseau; her father and I slapped more bandits about for that.

Ere we went any further, however, I felt the need to reach some kind of a conclusion with both Aela and Serana; to know, once and forever, what they meant to me. Strangely, I felt nothing when I met the Huntress for the last time at Jorrvaskr. She was still a werewolf; still followed a routine of almost nightly hunting with her new pack that she had recruited as effective leader, now that I was absent. I told her that Vilja and I would marry.

“We all have our price, and a pain threshold,” she stated, still cryptic as ever. I thought she meant the price we are willing to pay, for what we think we want. Followed by the pain of actually getting it, whilst (almost) losing what we really need.

I left Whiterun, my mind changed about seeking my erstwhile vampire companion. I was uneasy about it, as though I did not trust her any longer not to try to turn me again. Moreover, a part of me still baulked at seeking her, as if it would be some kind of admission of weakness, having as much as

banished her from my company.

"You are being stupid."

I stopped saddling my horse, nonplussed that Ingjard would say such a thing, let alone why. Facing her as she prepared her own mount, I demanded to know her reasoning.

"You owe Serana much," the vampire hunter answered, pausing in her own preparations. "More than you know."

"What do you mean?"

She told me. I turned toward Fort Dawnguard.

I met the vampiress, wandering alone about the near-empty cobwebbed hallways. I no longer felt lust for the undead woman, or love, only something like pity and... regret?

"Thank you, Serana." Ingjard disclosed that I assuredly would have died had Serana not fed me with her own blood during the long trip back from Solstheim. The vampiress did so again ere we set off to find me the cure, this time enow so that I at last regained consciousness, whilst leading me to believe that Florentius Baenius had 'healed' me; of course, he could not. How had I been so willing to overlook that simple fact?

Serana shrugged, said nothing.

I told her about my upcoming marriage.

"I congratulate ye both," she responded. Though her expression told me nothing, my own reaction satisfied me more than her answer; I now felt content with her decision not to take the cure and thus be 'available' for me.

Interested to know how she was tolerated, I asked, "How are you... getting along here?" Did not the Dawnguard fear that she would snack on one of them at virtually any moment?

"I am fine. Thou needs not concern thyself with me."

"Even so, I wonder... what will you do? You will not go home, to Volkihar? Or to your mother?"

"Mayhap. There is no one... at Volkihar." I sensed she was about to add 'for me'. "I no longer know whence I belong." She may have seen the concern deepen in my eyes, and thus repeated, "Yet, be not troubled. I slept and dreamed a few thousand years; I have a few thousand more to consider my place in this new world. Mayhap I have none; it matters not."

"What about dragons?" I proposed.

"What about them?"

"Perhaps you wish to fight them?"

I had piqued her curiosity about joining the Blades, but she reaffirmed her intent to stay to contemplate life - or at least un-death - a while longer. Which may be some time indeed.

I left, thanking her again, feeling guilt and more regret - that I could not help her? I was unsure. Ingjard and I returned home, Ingjard as my wedding guest, after which she would join the Blades.

Anon, my nuptial day arrived and I made my way by myself toward the Temple of Mara in Riften. As was Solstheim – or local, I knew not which – custom, rather than everyone awaiting the bride, the bridal party, as well as the rest of my friends, plus some local guests and dignitaries, waited thence. I had agonised briefly regarding what to wear, deciding upon my daedric armour, although I eschewed the helm. Briefly, I considered wearing an Amulet of Mara as a joke – knowing how Vilja disdained the traditional token of availability for most Skyrim inhabitants – finally opting instead for her mother’s gift to me, an Amulet of Infinite Patience. I had left all my weapons behind in Honeyside, my Riften home, aside from my daedric battleaxe – for ceremony, I told myself. Yet, no longer a werewolf or vampire, I felt helpless without some sort of weapon.

Which was just as well, since none other than Halvdan and a comrade confronted me in the courtyard just outside the temple. I warned them away, but they would not yield.

“You think you can steal my girl?” Halvdan threatened.

“She is not yours – never was.” I stood loosely, gauntleted hands by my sides, though they itched to reach for the greataxe strapped to my back. “Yield, or this time you die. Both of you.”

He snorted as they drew steel, Halvdan a greatsword, his companion a handaxe and shield. Almost immediately, I realised that Halvdan’s skills had improved since I had humiliated him – twice – but then, mine had as well. Even so, it may not be an easy fight, two against one.

Halvdan circled to my left, his compatriot the right; they had apparently rehearsed this encounter, as they both, bellowing, attacked at once. I sprang back, plucking my weapon from the ready hooks built into the back of my armour. Halvdan’s slash twisted him as it met aught but air; his friend nearly took him in the shoulder, as I was suddenly not there. Yet they avoided collision as I leapt forward, swinging horizontally at them both, wicked curve of my axe clipping shrubs in the courtyard; they evaded me. I parried his cohort’s blow, returned it; jolted as he took it upon his shield, I was unable to take advantage, having to counter Halvdan’s swing at my bare head. Ducking, I spun round; but he was quick, dodging as I caught air once more. Both came at me again, and perforce I had to back up. Anon, I sensed the high stone walls of the courtyard behind me as they pushed me into an outdoor alcove. I managed a crashing blow against Halvdan’s friend’s shield, gouging away a chunk of it, driving the man to a knee. Turning toward Halvdan, I was surprised and irritated to be on the defensive once again, parrying his powerful swings one after another. From the corner of my eye I caught movement, was not quite in time to evade the handaxe chopping against shoulder and arm; though it barely penetrated, I was suddenly hurt. Sweating and bleeding, more than a little concerned; this was not going well.

A stroke from Halvdan battered against a leg; buckling, I barely fought off a series of hacks from the second ambusher. Another slice of the greatsword chinked along the side of my breastplate, the underpadding absorbing little of the blow as I grunted in pain. Again, it did not pierce, but it dented and hurt some more. I became angry. I shouted a battle cry, my axe whirling in a blur, driving both attackers backward as they parried. Once more, however, I was distressed, this time to find myself tiring; would that I had my vampire or werewolf stamina now.

Halvdan swung backhanded; sluggish, I took another blow, this time to hip and thigh. I was further weakening, almost falling to my knees. His friend dived in, yelling something like, “Ha! I have you now!” He almost did. A blow that would have split my pale locks abruptly stopped before my eyes, a virtually identical axe intercepting it; the clash accompanied by a shout assailed my ears.

“No you don’t!” Iona, my Riften housecarl.

As though asleep, like watching myself in a dream from above, the drama's conclusion unfolded. The odds now even, we took the fight to my foes. I drove the second attacker back; a smash upon his shield staggered him; I swung my battleaxe up, under it into his groin. He made a strangled sound, eyes rolling, head falling forward; I powered from above, sending the fool's head tumbling away in the grass. Gouts of blood from his severed neck washed across my wedding outfit and further besmirched the courtyard as I spun. I heard Iona battling Halvdan, her grunts of pain as she took more blows meant for me.

Iona fought him off, backed against the far wall. I plunged in just as, with another cry of pain, she took another stroke against her shield, this one knocking her to a knee; another, barely countered, sent her axe spinning away against the wall. Seizing my turn to save her, I swung as though at a tree; axe hewed through the upper back of Halvdan's steel-reinforced leathers, cleaving spine, lungs, heart. A strangled gurgle burst from his mouth amidst a geyser of blood as he bent almost double backwards. I thrust my boot against his lower back, yanked my weapon out amongst another fount of crimson. Kicking the body free, I stood, gasping for air. Vilja's would-be suitor lay half supine, legs folded awkwardly beneath him; I watched him twitch, light fade from pale eyes as blood gurgled from his mouth, adding to that further saturating the ground.

I felt nothing but relief and fatigue. Sweat poured from me to soak my underpadding, no doubt mingled with not a little blood of my own. I looked toward Iona; she was rising, trying to retrieve her weapon with an arm that appeared not to work. A true housecarl, her first concern was for her thane.

"M-My... th-thane. Are... are you... all r-right?"

"Yes," I lied. "But you are not." She bore several wounds, the worst a rent in her side that had split her steel armour, through which blood seeped; I knew that as bad as the surface might look, inside was usually much worse. Her arm may be broken, too.

"T'is n-nothing... m-my thane," she denied, the pain in her voice obvious withal.

"What... happened?" Ingjard, eyes and mouth both wide, stood on the lower steps of the temple in her colourful wedding finery. "We... were waiting... and I... Are you... all right?"

"Why does everyone keep asking me that? Help me with Iona."

We half-carried my seriously wounded housecarl to Honeyside. Yet, a healer would not be necessary, since I had modest skill and we had plenty of potions. Withal, it still hurt, and we would carry more scars even after our lameness mended and the pain receded. As I tended to us both, Ingjard disappeared, murmuring something about returning to the temple to reassure the wedding party. When she came back, Iona and I had washed, changed, and so - although Iona's arm was in a sling and I struggled to hide a limp - we departed once more for my wedding.

Though splotches of blood remained discernible here and there in the courtyard, Ingjard - or persons unknown - had cleaned up the gruesome scene. Had it been left to me I would have nailed both scoundrels naked to a tree - just as I had served a number of bandits and bounty hunters. Yet, a poor sight that would have made for my wedding party as they emerged from the temple following the service; thus, perhaps it was well that I had not been in any condition to do so, notwithstanding my concern for Iona.

Inside the temple, the gathering waited expectantly, thus I endeavoured to push all other thoughts aside as I gazed upon my bride, awaiting me at the altar. Though at first evincing something like curiosity - doubtless at my tardiness - at my reassuring smile Vilja otherwise appeared the epitome

of Mara, all modesty and chastity, blue eyes slightly downcast yet following me, a tiny smile curling her sweet red lips. A wedding wreath of white roses and greenery adorned her shining blonde hair, a similar bouquet held against the bodice of her floor-length gown, it the colour of un-melting snow at the Throat of the World. A pendant - an Amulet of Mara, I wryly observed - hung round her ivory neck.

My heart gave a lurch, as blood began to pound in my ears; I felt a flush at my throat, heat rising beneath a second, inferior set of daedric armour I had some time ago 'retired' to a display stand in my home. Though I felt a tingle in my female parts as well, this was different; I knew I loved her, that I would do anything for her; that I would face Alduin and all the Elder Gods, plus the entire Daedric pantheon, naked and unarmed, to protect her.

I stood before my girl, unable to stop my slight tremble. "Are you l-looking for marriage, then?" I teased her. She had often been similarly questioned by certain of our companions, when she confessed her desire to find one of the popular love tokens - not to advertise for marriage, she vehemently denied, but "for its mayical properties".

"No," she murmured. "I'm already taken." She kept her gaze on the floor at our feet.

"Yes, you are." I lifted her chin with one gloved finger, poured my soul into her moist blue eyes as she sought mine; held them. The crowd, temple, city... the world retreated as I recalled oddments of a conversation not long ago, when I asked her when she knew she loved me...

"Strangely, I think it started to dawn on me when we met Halvdan in Riften. I looked at him, and he was everything I did NOT want. And then I looked at you..."

"Yes...?"

"I looked at you... and it was like I saw you for the first time. Your beautiful eyes, the colour of your hair, your soft dark skin... I never thought I'd feel this way for a woman, but that evening, I couldn't stop looking at you, wondering what it would be like to be loved by you. But I didn't expect that you would feel the same."

"So that was when you realised you loved me?" I wondered.

"No... not really. I knew you were very special to me, that you meant more to me than anyone else. And I also knew that I found you very attractive. But I still was mistaking it for friendship."

She went on to tell me that she only gave herself pause when Wilbert suggested she go with him to Cyrodiil. "You see, it didn't matter that I had dreamed of becoming a bard. Suddenly, all that mattered was that I wanted to stay here, with you. And I was so happy when you asked me not to leave."

"Would you have left if I had asked you?"

"Yes, I would. I knew for sure that if you really cared for me, you would ask me to stay with you. And you did."

"Tell me honestly," she continued, "did you ever think of telling me to leave with Wilbert?"

I admitted that I had. "I knew how you dreamt of becoming a bard."

"You mean... you were thinking of it for my sake? Oh, sweetheart! I'm touched... and at the same

time the thought is scary. If you had said so, I would have left, and I wouldn't have returned. You see, I would have been terrified by the thought of returning here only to find you gone..."

Wrenching me back to the present, my heart felt clenched in a giant's fist as I recalled how I had almost driven her away withal.

Maramal - I wondered at the priest's name, seemingly a derivative of his goddess' - had begun the ceremony. Even so, I recalled little of it, enraptured as I was by my beautiful bride. The giant let go, and my heart swelled...

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## **XXII - Connubial Nuptials**

I would take her home to Lakeview Manor, the grand home I had built for us in Falkreath. Rayya, my gruff countrywoman housecarl, was already there as steward, but my children remained in Solitude for the nonce; I would send for them later. For a few days, we would have the manor to ourselves. Yet, the necessity of travel by coach meant that our first night need be spent on the road, as guests of Borgakh in the Orsimer stronghold of Largashbur. The orc woman had used her skills and the treasures acquired whilst travelling with me - not to mention the dowry I paid on her behalf - to earn a place with another clan, as the respected first wife of their new chief, Gularzob. She would, I believed, be a steadying influence on him, who yet protested his unworthiness to succeed the cowardly Yamarz, whom I had slain after he betrayed an alliance we had formed to lift a curse from his tribe.

Before we could retire, however, the tribe would treat us to their version of a matrimonial fête, celebrating Vilja's and my nuptials as well as those of Borgakh and Gularzob. I was obliged to prove myself repeatedly in wrestling matches and mock combat, as well as drinking and boasting contests (though I decline to confess my prowess - or lack thereof - in either). Vilja joined in as well. Although she began the night shyly performing on her lute and singing, she soon progressed to challenging me to arm wrestle - having often bragged about her ability versus her brothers. Losing that, she professed herself thirsty, so I brought her another flagon of Blackbriar mead. Whilst I was not counting, I estimated her to have consumed at least two of the heady brews already.

"Oh, thank you." She drained half of it in one swig, wiped her mouth with the back of one hand ere she downed the remainder. "I'll tell you what."

Oh no. I knew what was coming.

"Why don't I show you what we do in Solstheim? It will be fun - come on!" Jumping up on a table, she began to dance, writhing as the local bard began a tune and the crowd stomped and clapped, keeping time.

"Awww... isn't this fun?" she beamed.

I gazed at her, no longer even slightly embarrassed by her behaviour; I felt only love and admiration, enow to Shout it at her, project it as through will.

Orcs kept thrusting drinks at her, and she did her best to keep up. She leapt from table to table, a roar erupting as she stumbled or stepped in the remains of someone's meal, knocked over a tankard. Many greenish-grey hands kept her from falling - a few, I noted with some annoyance, a bit too helpful, lingering overly long in places that were not the most likely spots to save her from falling. Yet this, too, I had learned was an Orsimer tradition: A near-orgy would ensue after a

wedding, but although the festivities would begin communally, most paired off with their usual spouses into their own huts or rooms (many of which were shared in any case) ere long.

For now, however, the night was heating up as Vilja continued to dance – and imbibe more spirits. Here and there, a few orcs began the celebratory rites, biting each other's lips bloody – hardly avoidable, given their tusks – as they roughly kissed. A few even swatted one another's cheek or buffeted an ear, playfully professing their love and lust in the orcish way. Soon, clothing and armour made its way to the floor – including, I was suddenly horrified to see, Vilja's!

Several green hands steadied her as my love stepped out of her blue dress, more than one on her round buttocks as others held – or rather stroked – her ivory legs. Again I restrained myself; orcs frequently pawed at one another thusly, going so far as engaging in heavy foreplay, though they rarely actually coupled with someone other than, as I have mentioned, their usual spouse (or spouses; orc chiefs, especially, were allowed – even expected to have – several wives. I briefly wondered if a female could become chief, and thereby acquire more than one husband; I felt it only fair...).

The crowd became more raucous, the smoky longhouse air heavy with the strong odours of orc sweat and intensifying sex, the sweetness of mead, headiness of orcish ale. Couples and trios began to conjoin, grunts, moans, guffaws punctuating the murmured sounds of love: "You're too pretty for an orc, but I still love you." "Grr... Stick that in me, you great, ugly horker!" "My, what big tits you have." "Grr! That's the biggest sword I ever seen!" Not exactly my idea of lovemaking, but to each his or her own, I thought. Perhaps not long ago I would have found the scene intensely arousing; just now I had thoughts and eyes only (well, perhaps not entirely) for Vilja.

Approaching her, I could not believe that she seemed oblivious to the activities around her; whilst at least two couplings went on beneath her she danced and clapped, accompanied by neither music or clothing, quite nude but for a ring or two and the Amulet of Mara, bouncing above her enticingly jiggling breasts. Withal, her eyes did not leave mine as a big, naked orc male bent an ample female over the table virtually between my bride's feet, began to thrust vigorously into her. Another male sat naked upon the same table, large thews splayed, two females slurping noisily at his engorged green member as he rumbled encouragement. I plucked Vilja, half giggling, half shrieking in surprise and (I hoped) excitement, from her perch.

I carried my bare bride over a shoulder into the starry night. She gasped as the cold air nipped her delectable bits, though mere moments passed ere we entered our own hut that the grateful clan had loaned us. Though small, it was larger than a tent. Gently, by the light of a banked hearth and single brazier, I placed Vilja on the low cot. Propped on her elbows, she ceased her giggling, chest still heaving with recent exertion, rosy nipples standing erect a half-finger, one supple pale leg crossed over the other, as though to hide the near-hairless crease betwixt them; the distended pink lips, however, were not as shy. I absorbed the sight, forgetting to breathe.

"S-Sweetheart?" The plaintive tone bespoke tomes to me; she was afraid, almost certainly a maiden. Of course, I knew that, but why had I never thought about it?

The awareness made me dizzy. "You are...? Have you never...?"

"N-No." Her exhilaration had waned; no longer did she appear drunk. Eyes wide, frightened, she seemed to have stopped breathing. Moreover, she was almost in tears.

My mind whirled; no wonder she had drunk so much. Why had it not occurred to me ere now? How could I have been so selfish? What should I do now? I had never had a virgin...



"P-Please..."

"Shhh..." I sat on the bed beside her. She was shivering – I imagined, not solely from the cold. I knew what I needs must do. At least, I could think back to when I lost my maidenhead – not something I cared to do – and consider what I would have preferred. I pulled some furs over her, covering her neck to toe, tucked them in around her.

"D-Do... Do you not w-want to...?"

"Hush, love. You are cold and... frightened – I know. You must breathe, and get warm." I began to chafe arms and legs through the furs, tried not to think of all the naked flesh beneath them.

She stared at me, eyes as twin Harvest Moons – blue ones. "B-But..."

I kissed her, a light pressing of our lips. Sat back, looked at her again; eyes the same size, perhaps some wonderment mixed with trepidation.

"You... we..."

"Have never done that, yes." Vilja had always been content with (frequent) hugs; I never dared ask, either verbally or non-, for anything more. "Do you mean to tell me that you have never been kissed, either?"

She shook her head, looked away. I began to chuckle.

"Don't lawf at me!" she protested.

Ere my mirth degenerated into guffaws, I suppressed it; she had as much as admitted to me some time ago that Halvdan had attempted to press his advances upon her more than once, and thus she had likely not experienced a proper kiss.

Still, her accent, combined with her wide-eyed innocence...

Smiling, I hugged her close. "I am not making fun of you, love."

"You... Oh... I..." She began to giggle. At least she was no longer stammering – and that shy smile...

I released her long enough to toss some more fire salts on the brazier, wood into the hearth, move the kettle of cooling wash water closer to the bed. The room was soon warm, brighter as I sat beside her once more. I had brought a cloth, having dipped it into the warm water, wrung it slightly; laid it beside us. My bride's eyes were no smaller, but I now detected some anticipation therein. I stole a hand beneath the furs, sought her foot, as a snow fox might hunt mice under a blanket of winter. She squealed, snatched it away. I dove in with the other hand, seized a supple ankle and its twin. Shrieking now, she kicked half-heartedly. Grinning, I held her lightly but firmly, looked into her eyes until she quieted. Her blue orbs glowed as a flush crept up her neck, to cheeks; sharp intake of breath as I released one foot to massage the other.

Gradually, I drew one tiny foot from under the furs, kneaded it, the arch, ankles, the ball, heel. She giggled as I worked my thumbs into her instep, writhed as if to pull away; another small gasp when I kissed here and there, treated the other likewise. With the cloth I bathed her feet, kissing toes one by one as I washed between them; took each into my mouth, sucked gently, teased with my tongue as though a Sword of Dibella. I revealed more of her, pulling the furs aside as the room – and my bride – warmed up. I continued upwards, lightly washing legs, thighs, stomach, breasts. For the

nonce I paid no particular attention to her most sensitive spots; withal, her breathing quickened as I lifted one arm, washed it and the near-invisible tuft in the pit, then the other, proceeded to neck and face. Eyes now closed, she emitted slight mewling sounds as I kissed around her shallow belly, torso, breasts - ignoring, again, her engorged nipples - throat, eyes, nose.

"Turn over," I commanded softly.

Her gasps became quiet moans as I helped her roll prone, yet tension remained in her body; legs tightly closed, arms stiffly folded up beneath her chest. After I washed her back, I gently pulled one arm out, then the other, rubbed the stiffness out of each, laid them straight beside her; progressed to her plump buttocks, down each leg. As I kissed the back of her knees, the moans intensified; her legs began to part. I carefully reached between them, rubbed the warm cloth over her cleft, washing the distended lower lips as detachedly as I could. She groaned, moved against my hand.

Bath concluded, I reached for the oil. She emitted a squeak of surprise as the fiery liquid drizzled betwixt her shoulder blades and I rubbed it into the smooth skin of her back, shoulders, neck. Relaxing further, her moans came in a near-continuous stream whilst I worked her round posterior and moved slowly down her legs, to calves and feet. I poured some more oil into her butt crack; let it dribble down along her swollen fissure. Her legs separated a little more as her moans suddenly ceased with a sharp intake of breath; she held it as I kissed each butt cheek, massaged and licked the hot, spicy liquid from the small of her back, up her spine, to the nape of her neck; across shoulders, arms, inside elbows. She jerked when I grabbed handfuls of her fleshy ass and squeezed, worked up and down, rubbed and caressed, kissed here and there.

Meanwhile I had shed my own clothing, whilst working some of the oil into my own skin; my nipples were as flaming arrowheads. When I climbed atop my love and bent over her, thrust my breasts into her back and began to writhe, my nipples engraved her skin; her breath escaped in an explosive groan, then a series of prolonged whimpers. I rubbed against her some more; turned, sat on her, moved up and down, along back, butt, legs, as I held onto her arms and used them much like slippery handrails. I slid off, began kissing and stroking her everywhere, this time centring towards her cleft as I splayed her legs wider. I curled a finger along the sodden crevice, caressed, stroked, probed; thrust one digit inside - by the Eight she was tight! - then another.

For all her prior moaning, her first climax came upon her in silence; yet I could tell it happened, as her whole body abruptly stiffened, convulsed, shuddered; a second time as I slid off to planted kisses all over her quivering form.

"Oh, gods..." she finally groaned. "I... What...? You..."

I gave her no chance to complete her thought, as I bade her turn on her back once more. This time I bent both knees up, splaying her glowing roseate centre for my viewing pleasure - and her sensual delight, as I dove in with lips and tongue. First, I pressed upon her a deep, proper kiss; tongue darting about her mouth, she sucked in another breath through her nose as she tentatively accepted the duel. I bent to breasts, nipples, bringing them to full attention via nibbles and licks; my hands were busy elsewhere. I proceeded to belly, the creases framing her dripping sex, to knees, returned to mound again, plucking at the protuberant lips so like butterfly wings; at last plunged into her sheath like a feeding shore bird, alternately licking and seizing her Sword of Dibella, slashing at it with my tongue. I soon had her screaming in rapture; she actually gushed all over my face.

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, oooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! P-Please... no more!" Quivering, she pushed me away.

I sat back, wiping and tasting the juices dripping off my nose and chin. It was... exquisite, and although she had laid neither finger nor tongue on me, I was nonetheless peculiarly satisfied as I towelled off the majority of our secretions from both of us, banked the fire, fed the brazier once more, snuggled into the furs with her. I wrapped myself about my tiny Vilja, as a mother bear might enfold protectively around her cub. This, I noted, had been what I missed with all my other lovers during my stints as werewolf and then vampire, and even ere then; this post-coital contact, as well as feelings of contentment and love, not simply of exhaustion and assuagement.

"I love you," I murmured into an ear.

Still out of breath, she merely moaned in response, wriggled closer into me.

That first night I slept as a married woman, the Dark Brotherhood kidnapped me. Alas, that is another story.

*The End*