Why am I so fucking cold?
I must have kicked it off. Jo slapped her hand around on the cold, rock floor feeling for the comforter.
Is that Rock?
Her eyes slowly opened in confusion.
Glancing around, she saw mostly darkness and shadow. From a distant corner she caught the flicker of torchlight dancing against the wall sending out a weak light for her to see by.
Okay floor, walls, and jail doors?
Wait…jail doors?
Where the fuck am I?
That last glass of wine was a real kicker. Reaching up to rub her forehead, she felt a sharp stabbing pain shoot from her left-hand straight up her arm when she tried to move it.
Yeowch, son-of-a-motherless goat! She hissed out her clenched teeth. She tried again to pull her hand up and found both her wrists shackled together.
What the fuck is going on? Pulling both her hands up to look at the one that hurt, a bright, green pissed off mark of some sort shot little sparks of fire out of it.
Credits for where I find the elven language.

Project Elvhen: An Elvhen Lexicon - FenxShiral
Project Elvhen: Expanding the Elvhen Language - FenxShiral
Project Elvhen: Book of Names - FenxShiral
Elvhen translations are from Elven DAI Translator at lingojam.com/ElvenDAI and Elven DAI spreadsheets at docs.google.com/spreadsheets
Bioware for all cannon dialog, characters, and the general world we all know and love called Thedas.

So many things missing in the original story that my OCD compelled me to fix it.
So here we are...hopefully those who had followed it before will appreciate the re-writes, and the tweaks and the extra storyline that is added.

Ma serannas everyone who will read my drabble...appreciate my imagination and give me ample amounts of patience as I go through the huge story that it is!
Awakening In Thedas

Why am I so fucking cold?

I must have kicked it off again.

Jo slapped her hand around on the cold, rock floor feeling for the comforter.

Is that Rock? Am I feeling rock?

Opening her eyes slowly with confusion, she glanced around and saw mostly darkness and shadow. From a distant corner, she caught the flicker of torchlight dancing against the wall sending out a weak light for her to see by.

Okay, that indeed rocks. Okay, there is a floor, walls, and jail doors? Wait, that can’t be right…jail doors? Where the fuck am I? That last glass of wine was a real kicker.

Reaching up to rub her forehead, she felt a sharp stabbing pain shoot from her left-hand straight up her arm when she tried to move it.

Yeowch, son-of-a-motherless goat!

Breath hissed out from between her clenched teeth. She tried again to pull her hand up and found both her wrists were shackled together.

What the fuck?

Pulling both her hands up to look at the one that hurt, a bright, emerald green, very angry mark of some sort, shot little sparks of fire out of it.

Dropping her head back onto the floor with a resounding thump, she closed her eyes tightly as she let her hands fall back down.

Nope…nope…that is not on my hand. No fucking way! Deep cleansing breaths, just a dream…just a dream…no way this is real. Time to fucking wake up Jo, wake up now.

The ugly mark on her hand sparked at her continuous denial of its existence. Staring at the rock ceiling, she clenched her jaw at the stabbing pain radiating up her arm again.

Okay…let’s just break this down before we start to panic. Stress…been under a shit-ton of it. Work, yeah there was that case you were going to court over, and getting rid of Shawn - well that certainly didn’t help it any. This is the mental break you were sure was coming, right? There is no way in hell you are in a fucking game. This must be a dream; you know this is not a reality…right? Right…just another MMORPG that you fell in love with. I have finally lost my damn mind…poof, gone!

The mark flared angrily again, and she stared at the green glow reflecting on the wall and breathed through the pain.

She continued her mental rant while lying on the floor as the doors to the dungeon flung open to allow two women to walk in. Without looking at them she knew it would be Cassandra and Leliana marching through the door. That’s if this was going to follow the game progression and this wasn’t some sick dream she found herself stuck in.
Barely glancing at Cassandra as she sat up, the woman circled her like a very pissed off panther. Jo listened to her yelling at her, keeping her silence. Finally, she looked at her when she grabbed her shackled wrist with the mark and asked her to explain it. Jo started to laugh. Laughing at inappropriate moments was something she did when she was scared. That was definitely what she was right then, laughing hysterically, scared shitless.

When Cassandra dropped her hand, she was staring at her like she was crazy. Although, she is sure she is at this point.

“Okay, I don’t know how I got this, so you can stop being pissed off at me Cassandra.”

The woman stepped back in stunned surprise as if slapped and rested her hand on the pommel of her sword.

Well shit, you’re not supposed to know her name you fucking idiot! Think quick… okay, you have read numerous fanfics where they did the whole – ‘you can see into the future shit’… yeah, that’s it. Okay, breathe and wait, she will ask how you know her name and then you just give her the whole, ‘I know the shit speech.’ Leliana is watching…better be convincing. Oh, fuck me…I am going to die.

“How do you know my name?” Her dark eyes narrowed suspiciously at her while she gripped her sword tighter.

*Her eyes are pretty in reality, damn the game for fucking with her looks, she’s beautiful.*

Cassandra stared at her, eyes narrowing even more as she waited for her to answer.

*Okay, focus Jo before she kills your dumb ass.*

“I know your name because I see things that have yet to happen. Although I didn’t see this coming,” she grumbled looking at the floor.

Okay, not a complete lie, she had always known when shit was going to happen, but nothing on this scale. Obviously knowing when a car is going to pull out in front of you or your phone is going to ring does not count towards this situation.

She watched Cassandra turn towards Leliana with her hand still on the hilt of her sword and converse quietly. When she saw Leliana walk towards her, she started answering her question before she was asked.

“I really don’t remember much, I was being chased by something or many things…it is unclear. It sounded like a million little clicking feet on the ground chasing me. I was climbing towards a woman at the top of this large hill…or cliff…and that is all I can remember. I don’t know what the hell I am doing here at the Temple of Sacred Ashes; I wished I knew how the fuck I got here in the first place,” she muttered the last more for herself as Leliana watched her shrewdly.

“You saw a woman and you say you don’t remember how you got here?”

Jo shook her head looking her in the eye. If everything she knew about the Nightingale could be thought true, she would know if she was lying, which consequently she really wasn’t. She seriously had no idea how she had gotten here. When Leliana gave Cassandra a small nod of her head, Jo let a breath out that she hadn’t realized she was holding. Cassandra moved to undo her shackles, and she stood up a little shaky leaving her hands out for her to re-tie with a rope. Cassandra bound her hands tightly and glanced at her out of the corner of her eye making sure she was following her.

Outside she looked up at the sickly huge, green whirlpool in the sky.
I can’t believe I’m really here, she thought silently as she stared up at it.

Having heard the dialog so many times she took the moment to have her own thoughts while Cassandra spoke.

Does this mean I’m dead back on earth? Am I missing? How is this even possible? Well hell, why not, I’m here now, focus and get this show on the road. Maybe I can actually do some good here.

She glanced at Cassandra and realized the woman was really damn tall. Her own head reached her at the chin; she has to be well over six foot four, she thought knowing she was six foot one. Taking a deep breath, she gave her the answer she knew she was suddenly searching her face for.

“Come on Cassandra; let’s go see if this mark is going to work. I want to help, and do everything I can to get rid of that thing, and if I can’t…well then just put me out of my misery please if that thing in the sky doesn’t for you.”

Cassandra smirked at her comment with begrudging respect and pulled a dagger from a sheath on her leg and cut the rope. Putting the knife back she led the way out of the front doors while everyone gave her the dirty looks like they did in the game. She kept her head down while she kept up with Cassandra’s slow jog. They followed the uphill path that led towards the bridge she knew would collapse. One of those things…a big green energy ball or fireball or whatever it was that spit out of the breach. Placing a restraining hand on Cassandra’s arm, she dropped it when she saw the look on the woman’s face and immediately removed it.

“Wait, Cassandra, the bridge is going to collapse.”

Three…two…one…and credits.

Cassandra watched in disbelief as the bridge collapsed by a green fade bomb that fell from the Breach. She looked at Jo in surprise.

“I told you…I see shit that’s going to happen, remember? You’ll come to trust me in time and become one of my closest confidants.”

Jo ignored the woman’s expression of shock.

“Come on let’s get down there. That ball of whatever is going to have a couple of demons coming through the ice in a second, and we definitely don’t want those heading back to town.”

That and I’m curious to see what my specialty is going to be. If there was no broken crate with weapons well then, I am destined to be a pussy with a few martial arts moves.

Finding their way down the hill she saw the broken crate…and a staff?

I’m a fucking mage?! Well shit… this should be fun. Let’s hope muscle memory, and the Goddess will help my skills kick in or otherwise I am so royally screwed, and worthless as dog shit on a stick.

Grabbing the staff, she held it and closing her eyes. She felt an energy that raced up her arm and with a smile, her arm swung the staff in a manner she had no idea she could do. Jo watched the magic fly towards the demons that were surrounding Cassandra.

Smiling excitedly, she watched the balls of fire, fly.

Holy shit balls! I can do magic!
Somewhere deep down she had hoped that the Gods would grant her the ability to do something to help save Thedas if they chose to stick her here. Then a thought grew in her head as she hit a demon in the face with a fireball.

*Is this my Summerland’s? Have I truly died Goddess?*

Reaching Cassandra’s side she saw her turn with her sword gripped tightly and dropped the staff. With a raised eyebrow she held her hands up in surrender before she commanded her to. Cassandra stared at her looking somewhat annoyed and then sheathed her sword shaking her head with a small smile playing around the edges of her lips.

“I know… you see things. Get the staff; you’re going to need it, I can’t protect you.”

Jo gave Cassandra a dazzling smile before following her up the hill.

*I am seriously going to have to get some help with this shit from Solas. I wonder if he’s as broody here as he is in the game. Oh, I wonder if he will be as cute as her graphics portrayed or did they fuck with him as much as they did Cassandra?*

Jogging up the hill, Jo stopped at the top and looked back down at the valley. She could hear the fighting from somewhere up ahead and looked at Cassandra with a large smile laughing excitedly.

“Let’s get going, we gotta get up there and help Varric and Solas. Plus close that little rift to see if this damn thing on my hand is worth a nug’s ass.”

Jogging passed Cassandra’s surprised expression; she got to the top and rounded a corner to see the first fight of the game.

*Yupper’s there they are,* she thought, pulling her newly acquired staff from her back.
Jumping down, she started casting, and with the last couple of fights, she was starting to find a natural rhythm to her movements. When all the demons were finally dead, Solas grabbed her marked hand. Holding it up towards the small rift just like he would in the game, she felt a small tingle of awareness with his touch and brushed it aside as excitement. Before he could say anything, Jo started laughing from the experience and smiled at him as she patted his arm.

“Well shit, this thing really does work. Thanks, Solas.”

He stared at her with his eyebrow raised, and Jo started laughing again at his perplexed expression. Hot damn, he's handsome! Best graphics money can buy my ass.

“You’re so much taller than I thought you would be,” she said looking at him from bottom to top.

Ignoring how both his eyebrows shot up at her comment, she turned towards the dwarf with an impressive amount of chest hair and her smile grew.

Bowing slightly, “and you have got to be Varric with the infamous Bianca, and copious amounts of chest hair. Which by the way are seriously attractive. My name is Jo, and it’s good to finally meet both of you.”

Even Varric was stunned speechless and looked at Cassandra questioningly. Cassandra took a deep breath.

“She has foresight,” she told them.

Cassandra looked at Solas.

“Do you believe when she came through that rift it might have given her some special kind of foreseeing abilities?”

His brow now furrowed in thought.

“Possibly Seeker, but I am unsure without further study.”

Jo realized they were staring at her now instead of the normal dialog and shifted from one foot to another nervously under their scrutiny. Clearing her throat uncomfortably, she glanced at Cassandra. They were going to be nervous around her with the foresight stuff for a while. Letting a sad sigh escape, oh well she thought.

Save Thedas, be friendly and shut the fuck up apparently. Speak when you need to and nothing more. Maybe you'll make it out of this alive.

“Well let’s get this show on the road folks. There’s another group of demons up ahead we need to kill before we can get to the rift in front of the forward camp.”

Walking past them, she headed to the right and jumped down over the small rocky edge. She started jogging along the river path with her group following behind her, staring after her questioningly. Finally, after a fifteen-minute jog to the next group of demons, she threw up her hand and pulled her
staff from over her shoulder letting everyone else know to prepare. Jo leaned over Varric’s shoulder hearing his quiet panting breath from all the running and pointed towards a rocky outcrop off to their right as she spoke quietly.

“Varric, see the wispy green demon in the tree’s off to your right on that small hill?”

Seeing him nod yes, she looked at Solas who had been watching her intensely.

*He does have a very intense look about him. Okay, those eyes are a lot sexier of a blue than the game and damned if he wasn’t fucking gorgeous,* Jo thought as she gave him a dazzling smile and leaned closer towards him, pointing to the opposite side.

“There is another one of them on that rocky outcrop right there, do you see that one, Solas?”

He nodded yes like Varric had done, leaving him watching her expectantly if not a little shaken by the feeling that suddenly flared in his stomach from her smile and closeness. She looked at Cassandra who was intently listening.

“There are also two more demons, the big dark ones that you and I fought on the way up to meet them. They are hiding behind the trees near both the green wisps. I will give you your back up Cassandra, let the guys take those distance ones out and then they can follow up with helping you. Does that sound like a plan?”

Cassandra liked how tactical her mind worked and nodded in agreement. She grabbed her shield and headed down the small hill throwing out a challenging shout drawing the demons to her.

*Damn that woman’s a fucking beast,* Jo thought.

Laughing as she placed a barrier around the warrior, the two big demons came charging at her from their spots on the hill. They made quick work of the trash and headed up the large stone staircase. She heard Varric ask her if she was innocent, and laughing at the whole ridiculousness of her situation she answered.

“I honestly can’t remember what happened, so it doesn’t really matter now does it Varric. I want to help, but I will live or die either way now won’t I?”

She continued towards the forward camp in silence and found the waiting demons and another small rift as she had foretold. Throwing her hand up like she remembered doing a million times in the game, she closed the small rift after they removed the demons. Solas moved to stand beside her and leaned slightly on his staff.

“Closed like the one before. You’re growing quite proficient at this.”

She smiling sadly at him, “let’s hope it works on the big one, falon.”

Turning away from him, she followed Cassandra through the gates of the forward camp and heard Chancellor Roderick arguing with Leliana. Shaking her head, she felt an instant adrenaline rush with the possibility of actually getting the chance to tell that man off like she had so many times while staring at her computer monitor. Leliana watched them walk towards them with relief clearly displayed on her porcelain features.

“Thank the Maker you made it. Chancellor Roderick this is…” watching the Chancellor throw his hand up and cut her off, he glared at Cassandra. *What a moron just shiv him Leliana,* she cheered in her head.
“I know who she is, why she is not being prepared for travel to Val Royeaux for trial is what I want to know,” he said angrily staring at Cassandra.

Cassandra shook her head in annoyance.

“She is our only means of closing the breach Chancellor.”

“She is the reason for the breach Seeker,” he said with a sneer while staring at her.

*Why no one has slapped this man for his crappy attitude is beyond me.*

“Yes, you think I did it, I get it. You say trial, but you and I both know that is such a wash of bullshit. You want the Seeker to call a retreat, but where will they go when this giant fucking hole in the sky over your head that you are ignoring like a fool, only gets bigger and swallows the damn planet.”

She shook her head in anger and frustration.

“Dahn’direlan! My wants and your wants do not matter right now Chancellor, we don’t have time for deliberation and a new Divine to get elected. We must act now and protect the people. By the Gods, you’re some kind of special moron. Fenedhis lasa!”

Solas snorted and raised his eyebrow questioningly at her. She gazed at him over her shoulder and winked at him.

*He is way too handsome for my fan-girl to not want to drool over, she thought.*

Turning back towards Cassandra she ignored the Chancellor.

“Can we just go meet up with the Commander now? Today looks to be as good a day as any to die.”

Walking away from the table, she heard Cassandra ask Leliana to get the men, and Varric asking Solas quietly what she had said to the Chancellor. Solas smiled again and found this woman to be quite the curiosity if not quickly becoming charming.

“She called the Chancellor an idiot and told him to suck a wolf’s dick.”

Varric broke into a loud laugh.

“You got fire Vixen. We are going to get along great.”

Keeping her back turned she smiled a little.

*Well, you got a nickname from Varric before you possibly die, epic.*

They reached the valley where she knew the Commander would be, and she couldn’t help getting excited wondering if he was as large and as handsome as they make him out to be. With the number of demons floating around everywhere she was more occupied than she would have liked. Keeping with Solas in the back, she kept up barriers and casting until the rift was ready to be closed. Throwing her hand up again, she watched it finally close in on itself with a stronger zap up her arm. Shaking her hand out, she hissed between clenched teeth as she tried not to cuss.

“Good job getting that rift closed Seeker,” she heard from behind her.

*His voice is way deeper than I thought it would be.* Jo turned around slowly as Cassandra gave her the credit.
“Don’t congratulate me, Commander, it was the prisoner’s doing.”

Okay, try not to stare or drool, Jo. She let her eyes wander from his feet all the way to his eyes.

Holy shit, his eyes are fucking mesmerizing.

“A lot of good men died to get you here, let’s hope it was worth it,” he said crossly while his eyes stared at her piercingly.

Jo gave him a sad smile at his snarky tone.

Not that she could blame him with so many fucking demons everywhere killing everything in sight, she thought.

“Yes, let’s hope it was Commander Cullen. I don’t like anyone dying for me any more than you obviously do.”

He stared after her retreating back and had to grudgingly admire her for not backing down from his shitty attitude. His gaze followed up her very long, shapely legs and attractive rear end and swallowed. Why am I staring at the prisoner’s ass? He thought, clearing his throat uncomfortably.

“The way ahead is clear Seeker, Maker, go with you.”

He said this hastily and turned from them to help a limping soldier away. Jo refused to watch him leave like she would if it were cutaway scene.

You may feel like you know these people Jo, but I wouldn’t go getting attached to anyone here, no point in it, she thought as she waited for Cassandra to lead the way. When they reached the closed rift and the large breach now directly above them, she thought Varric’s right, it is a long damn way up here.

Solas watched her as she followed the Seeker. She appeared skilled with her magic, her movements were decisive and she did not hesitate at the task at hand. In fact, she met it directly and interesting enough with a smile of either joy or excitement on her face. She was most certainly a curiosity to him with her sassy way of speaking, and her apparent intelligence. Before they jumped down to get under the closed rift she looked at him, Cassandra and Varric.

“When we open that up, a Pride Demon is going to pop out of it. This rift will not close the Breach, but it should stabilize it.”

He noticed her tone was somber, almost thoughtfully scared, and he could see she was struggling with something. Had she seen her own death, he wondered nervously. He placed a hand on her arm to stop her before she jumped down behind the Seeker. He felt the curl of her magic slip against his skin sending sparks of awareness running up his arm throwing his thoughts into a spin with the sensation.

“Have you seen your death?” he finally questioned his throat a bit thick.

She smiled imperceptibly looking at his hand as she tried to ignore the tingling shooting up her own arm.

“No, it won’t kill me, but try not to use all your mana up. I’m definitely going to need your mad healing skills when it is over.”

She pulled her arm from his grasp gently and he watched her jump down behind Varric and walk
towards the rift. A *curiosity indeed*, he thought as he rubbing his hand against his leg trying to dispel the magical tingling that was running across his skin.

With the Pride demon dead, he pulled out a vial of lyrium to replenish his mana and felt the rush of energy through his veins as she threw her hand up to close the rift. He could feel the magical fight between the lithe half-breed and the fade. He had to commend her focus and determination; if not her creativity with language as she cursed at the rift knowing it would hurt her severely…that is if she were correct.

When the magical backlash hit her squarely in the chest, he watched it throw her backward mercilessly towards the stone wall. Even from his distance, he could hear the sounds of bones crushing and ran forward as she collapsed on the ground.

*I really wished she would have been wrong.*

Chapter End Notes

- Falon - friend
- dahndirelan - moron
- Fenedhis lasa - suck a wolf's cock
Waking up in Haven

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jo kept her eyes shut, hoping beyond hope she was back home. *Please just let this be my bed with the snoring cat next to me.* She slowly opened her eyes and saw the log styled ceiling. *Nope, still in Haven.*

“Well damn,” she muttered.

The door creaked open and she sat up causing the young elven girl to drop her box of herbs. *Well, you might as well get up and get this over with,* her mind grumbled.

“Go ahead and get up da’len. Cassandra wanted you to tell her ‘at once’ when I awoke.”

She watched the girl jump from the floor, turn, and run out the door at her insistence without a word. Trying not to laugh, she looked for clothes to change into and noticed the small mirror lying on the narrow dresser. *I bet I am seven levels of a hot mess right now,* she thought. Picking up the hand mirror she gazed at her reflection.

“Holy fucking shit!” she shrieked as she almost dropped the mirror with her shaking hand. Touching the slight slope of her nose, the widened bridge, she was half human and half-elf. *How in the sweet Goddess did that happen?* Upon closer inspection, she noticed her hair was no longer just black but was more of a blue-black and longer than what she had before. She slid her fingers over her slightly tipped ears in shock.

Holy fuck is that three different color’s in my eyes? Realizing that she hadn’t really thought that her body would change, she had thought she was still human. Now she started taking stock of all the other changes.

She glanced down at her chest and found her breasts unchanged. Sighing with annoyance *would have been nice if these fuckers had shrunk, well damn it all,* she thought. Okay still got my momma’s hips and ass but the legs looked longer, the waist tapered in more, and my arms are longer but defined. *Well, this is just fucking fabulous. I am going to be hated for my half-blood status, great.*

A loud burst of laughter left her as she ran a shaky hand over her face. *No wonder they were all looking at me so strangely, there are no half-blood elf’s that look like me running around Thedas in the game, they all resembled their human parent.* She started laughing aloud at the dumb luck of it.

“Jo, you’ve entered into a fictional story as a breed seen but not like this. What could possibly go wrong?” she muttered aloud.

Looking around for a comb or brush, she couldn’t find one and used her fingers to rid herself of the major knots in her hair and braided it quickly.

She really didn’t think that dressing was going to be that difficult until she met her nemesis… the so-called bra. *They cannot be serious if they think wrapping your tits with nothing more than a thin cotton swatch was gonna work, who the fuck thought this up?* Finally, Jo dressed realizing the Thedas bra was not going to work, not with the girls she was sporting, she left it off.

With a deep breath knowing there would be a bunch of the townsfolk lined up, she suppressed a giggle as the song of ‘Follow the yellow brick road’ from the Wizard of Oz started playing in her head when she stepped out. She smiled brightly at everyone as she walked towards the Chantry. Slipping through the small opening, she moved towards what she knew would be the war room. She
had to smile when it was like in the game. She could hear the arguing between the Chancellor and Cassandra from behind the door. Well… *showtime.* Taking a deep breath, she pushed her shoulder’s back to stand to her full height and pushed the door open.

“Chain her and prepare to take her to Val Royeaux for trial.”

The Chancellor commanded of the two standing Templars next to the door. Jo stared at him coolly with her eyebrow raised while Cassandra held up her hand at the two Templar guards.

“Disregard that, and leave us.”

Jo knew the dialog and let them banter about, and found that hearing it at the moment was much more exciting. Finally, having heard enough, she couldn’t keep quiet any longer.

“Chancellor Roderick, I did everything that I could possibly do, and it about killed me.”

She took a deep breath because this was always the part at the beginning that frustrated her with the Chantry part of the storyline.

“And yet you still live. I am sure a wonderful coincidence in so far as you’re concerned.”

Before Cassandra could say *have a care*, Jo found herself livid.

“I could say the same of you. How convenient that you also live Chancellor. If it weren’t for me and the soldiers who fought, you and everyone else on this forsaken planet would be swimming in demons. How can you be such a thankless piece of nug shit! Would you rather have demons swimming around than allow me to help?” Throwing her hands up in anger and frustration she crossed her arms as her gaze narrowed on the cleric.

“Tell me, Chancellor… do you think the rest of your faithful congregation would agree with you so readily? Is your precious Maker so selfish that he would rather forsake you all? Felasil!”

Cassandra glanced at Leliana who was currently trying to stop smiling as she was trying to do. Cassandra slammed the inquisition directive from Justinia down on the table. Jo wanted to do a little dance as she watched Cassandra back the Chancellor out of the room and slam the door. Turning back to her Jo knew what she was going to say so she answered her.

“I will do everything in my power to get that hole closed. I know we can do this. So, let’s reconvene once we have Josephine and Cullen in here and then I will answer all your questions as best as I can remember them. In the meantime, I want to check out the camp and familiarize myself with the place if that is acceptable.”

Leliana narrowed her eyes while Cassandra looked hesitant before answering.

“Sounds fine, we shall reconvene.”

Turning on her heel she walked out the door and headed outside. She needed air, and time to meditate since she was going to have to not only come up with a plausible backstory but she would be expected to fight people. She knew that they would be bad people, but still not something she was looking forward too. Shivering in the brisk mountain air, she rubbed her arms and headed to Adan’s.

Chapter End Notes
Felasil - fool
Can you Help Me?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Solas watched Jo through his cabin window walk from the Chantry and turn towards the apothecary’s building. Her steps did not hesitate like one would expect from someone who was new to the area. From his vantage, he could see the ebony blue highlights in her black hair shining in the sunlight. She had full lips that curved up to show strait white teeth when she smiled or laughed. Her eyes were stunning with the dark blue, brown, copper and red tri-color; she was summer and fall in those eyes, which whispered of warm starry nights, and cool crisp mornings upon waking. She was quite tall and very volupitous for most of their kind; he thought this must be her human heritage. High, full breasts, tapered waist to fully flared hips that led to a pair of very attractive long legs.

Leaning back in his chair he rubbed his face, fenedhis! Standing up to get away from the window he needed to stop thinking about her like that. He only did so because she was a curiosity, a puzzle he wanted to figure out. The fact that he was a healthy man, who saw a beautiful woman, was nothing to be concerned over. Once he figured her out, the curiosity would be gone and with it the stirrings of lust best buried and forgotten.

She had fun speaking with Adan, and the book he gave her on the local herbs to read would be helpful. She was good at knowing the herbs back home, making her own potions and oils, of course, nothing on the scale of the potions made here in the game. Suddenly she froze at the thought… but it isn’t a game anymore is it.

Jo turned her face up towards the sky outside of Adan’s cabin and took a cleansing breath. She felt saddened by everything that was now gone. Taking another deep breath she pushed the thoughts away to think about when she was alone. Right now I need to talk to Solas about my magic. She knew he could help her if anyone could; she just had to figure out how to approach him without acting like a damn groupie.

Feeling a bit like a fool standing outside his door, she finally pushed her shoulders back and knocked. She felt the flutter of nerves in her stomach when he opened his door, and she smiled at him nervously.

“I’m glad you’re here Solas, can I have a moment of your time?” She asked politely.

He bowed slightly gesturing her inside, “of course Herald.”

Jo stepped through the door lightly blushing and looked around the tidy cabin. She smiled at the desk with piles of books on it and multiple sheets of notes. She knew he was always the student. Studying, learning, drawing, these were his pleasures and his way of relaxing. He gestured to the only chair in the cabin that sat at the desk for her to sit in. Jo pulled the chair slightly closer to him and sat down as he took up a position on the end of his bed across from her, watching her carefully.

She glanced at his notes on the desk and realized she could actually read them, that’s new. Turning away not wanting to pry, she looked at him. He is too handsome for me not to want to stare… oh, Goddess this is never going to work; I’ll never be able to focus.

“Please don’t call me Herald, Solas. I am no more the Herald of Andraste than you are. Its Jo… just
plain old Jo,” she said as she crossed her long legs in the chair gazing at him.

He gazed at her as he thought about her statement and tried to not watch her long legs as they crossed.

“I doubt there is anything remotely plain about you. However, certain proprieties must be kept.”

He heard her soft snort and watched the laughter dancing in her eyes, and over her face. He suddenly found himself drowning in the scene.

“Please, propriety? Solas, I’m in your cabin, not in public. Call me Jo.”

He laughed then at her well-made point; thankful she had pulled his thoughts back to the present, he bowed his head slightly in agreement.

“If you prefer…Jo, what was it you wanted to discuss?”

He has a laugh that is thick, full and hints at the dark hidden in him…I wished he did that more she thought. Jo uncrossed her legs, unintentionally pulling his attention back to the slender appendages as she leaned forward with her arms resting on her knees.

“I would like your help with my magic. I don’t remember how I got it. I don’t really know how to properly use it yet, and I know you are the man to help me. If you would that is.”

She hadn’t really thought this all the way through she realized. He might not want to help her. She was a half-breed after all, and Solas could be a real dick about such things, and he always had his standoffish nature. Now blushing with her embarrassment, realizing this was probably the worst idea ever she waited for him to tell her no.

Solas was taken aback by her statement ignoring the look of anxiety that was crossing her face.

“You remember nothing? I saw you use your magic; I recognized no flaws in your movements or technique.” Jo looked at him and smiled softly sending a small snap of desire to curl in his stomach.

“Muscle memory, my body remembers but,” tapping her forehead “my brain doesn’t. Thanks for the compliment though coming from you it means a lot.”

He watched the embarrassment and something else he didn’t understand skitter across her face. Now his curiosity was truly peaked.

“What else don’t you remember da’len?”

Her eyes snapped to his. Did he just call me da’len? Hmm, well I suppose no need getting pissy about it. Seriously you’re like thousands of years younger so yeah to him… you’re a kid, she thought and took a deep calming breath as she prepared to give him half-truths.

“Everything really,” she said with a heavy sigh.

He waited patiently for her to continue, watching her curiously.

“I can’t tell you where I am from, who my parents were. Hey, what’s my last name… yeah, can’t tell you that either. I can’t even tell you what the hell I was doing at the conclave or how I got there, I don’t know. I gave my name as Jo, because…well, it works.” She hoped he didn’t realize her bunch of half-truths for what they were. She held his gaze for a long moment before he pulled his away. I am sorry lethal’lin, I really can’t tell you…just like you can’t tell me you’re the Dread Wolf.
They sat in silence with her admission and he had watched as she clenched and unclenched her fists, fidgeted with the edge of her tunic. Her eyes had turned so stormy when she spoke about her current situation, there was much more than what she was saying, but for now, he could wait. He knew she wasn’t telling him the whole truth…but she wasn’t completely lying to him either.

“Okay, I will help you with your magical studies. I have some books that would be a good place for you to start with for now; maybe they will possibly trigger your memory. We shall practice as time will allow if that pleases you.”

He watched her expression go from unsure too happy within a blink. Before he knew what she was about, she had leaped over the small space between them. Wrapping her arms around his neck tightly she projected her excitement through her aura. He felt her arms wrap around him which was surprising enough, but it was her aura that froze him in place. He didn’t know how to react. He felt her breasts pressed pleasantly against his chest while the scent of elfroot and sandalwood assaulted his senses. The heat in his neck traveled quickly to his ears at the pleasant if not new and interesting feelings her aura caused. The instant blossom of desire in his stomach left him frozen.

“Thank you Solas, you’re the best!” she said excitedly before placing a quick kiss on his cheek.

Jo walked towards the door, and with a wave, she said ‘see you later’ over her shoulder. She had no idea that she was leaving a very surprised and aroused ancient elf sitting on his bed. Solas heard his door close and that snapped him out of his frozen state of surprise. Pushing desperately at the arousing part to the back of his mind, his wolf howled with frustration. I will reflect on that feeling much later, he decided. A much later date when appropriate, for now, he would focus on her learning.

Chapter End Notes

Fenedhis - wolf cock (shit, damn it etc...)
Jo finished her walk around the camp and stopped to speak with Harritt. She was returning to her cabin with everything Harritt had given her with a childish enthusiasm. She was excited about the sweet gear and common wear. She saw Cassandra striding towards her and smiled pleased to see her. *That woman doesn’t walk anywhere without looking sexy and scary,* she thought.

“Herald, we have gathered everyone if you have a moment. There are many things we would like to discuss with you.” Jo nodded at her.

“Sure, would you open the door for me first please Cassandra? Harrett completely set me up and as you can see my arms are a bit full.”

Still smiling at her she walked through the door and deposited her goodies on the bed.

“Okay let’s go get your Inquisition up and running, shall we?”

Closing the door behind her, she hurried to walk alongside her. She felt the pulsing in her hand and unconsciously looked down at it as she tightened her fist around it in annoyance. Cassandra watched her out of the corner of her eye but kept walking.

“Does it trouble you?”

She asked with a hint of concern. Jo smiled up at her,

“No, not really, not like it did when I first woke up in the dungeon anyway.”

Cassandra nodded at her comment,

“We take our victories where we can.”

Jo laughed, “You know it.”

Both women walked through the Chantry, and Cassandra opened the door to the war room to allow her through first before following behind her.

Jo looked at everyone around the table and still couldn’t believe it. *This is really fucking happening.*

“Herald, you’ve already met Commander Cullen, he oversees the Inquisitions forces.”

He smiled at her hesitantly, thinking of how he had treated her when they first met.

“Herald, you’ve already met Commander Cullen, he oversees the Inquisitions forces.”

He smiled at her hesitantly, thinking of how he had treated her when they first met.

“It was only for a moment, but I am glad to see you survived Herald.”

Jo stared at him, *holy shit! He is not only fucking gorgeous but fucking big as a house. That man is definitely a panty soaker…I just want to lick that scar…okay, get control of yourself for fuck's sake and stay away from the Chip and Dales Templar.* She realized she was still staring and possibly drooling. Yanking her gaze from him, she touched the corners of her mouth to make sure she hadn’t been drooling as she focused on Josephine.

*Please don’t let me be blushing,* she prayed silently. *Screwed,* she realized as she felt the flush of
heat on her face. Cassandra continued without skipping a beat. Cullen, however, found he was not
immune to her gazing at him so openly. *Maker preserve me, she is lovely,* he thought, keeping his
face empty of his reaction to her.

“This is our ambassador Lady Josephine Montilyet.”

Jo smiled at her and slightly bowed, she couldn’t shake the feeling of being a kid excited for her first
day at school and wanting to please.

“It is a pleasure to finally meet you, Lady Montilyet.”

Josephine smiled back, “An’daran antishan,” she said to her.

Jo smiled at the woman and thanked the Gods for being such a geek and learning the games elvish.

“Ma serannas,” she said easy.

She watched Josephine blush realizing she didn’t know what she had said.

“I was just saying thank you. I know you don’t speak Elvin Josephine, but thank you for trying to
make me feel welcome.”

Josephine had a small fleeting look of shock dash across her face before she squashed it.

“Quite correct Herald, I am glad you understand.”

Jo looked towards Leliana as her gaze slipped across Cullen. She kept a silent mantra going in her
head, *do not look at him…do not look at him, Jo. No lookie silly, horny bitch you've romanced him
a zillion times in the game, leave it at that.* Smiling brightly, she knew what was coming next with
this woman.

“Please Leliana, ask your questions. I know you have many; I may not have many answers for you
though. I do not remember anything.”

Leliana stared at her unblinking. If Jo didn’t know she was really a sweet woman, that look would be
unsettling.

“Yes, I do Herald. We shall start slow and see if you can answer some of them, yes?” Jo agreed with
a nod of her head.

“Ask your questions, I will try my best to give you answers.”

Everyone stared at her with shock at her admission of no memory. Leliana schooled her features
which Jo noticed were also quite beautiful.

“How about we start with where you were born,” she said calmly.

Jo shook her head with a blank look on her face.

“What about your parents, do you remember them?”

“No, I’m sorry…I,” she felt tears begin to well up in her eyes at the thought of her parents. Shaking
her head she focused on the metal clasp of Leliana’s cloak.

“You remember nothing of your past? Surely you must remember something.”
Jo stood there trying to think of something innocuous that could fit into this world and pulled from when she was twelve. Something she still had a scar from that would prove her honesty.

“I know that I must have mixed parents, I just can’t picture them. I do remember falling out of a tree when I was young. I broke my arm when a branch went through my shoulder, but I cannot picture who helped me, but I can recall the tree and the pain.”

Leliana watched her very closely.

“Mixed parents? You look elven.”

Jo started laughing at the blatant lie. She knew Leliana was testing her for breaks in her story; this was not a woman who spoke without thinking it through first.

“Uhu, come on you can do better than that. You were aware I wasn’t fully elven when you first looked at me in the dungeon. You spent an awful amount of time with the Hero of Ferelden, and she was Elven was she not?”

You could hear the laughter in her voice as she pointed out the obvious to everyone in the room.

“Spymaster, I am not only tall for any Elven woman, but um…” trying not to glance over at the gorgeous Commander, “definitely not built like any elf, I’ve seen. My eyes are shaped as a human, the colors are elven. My ears look like yours except for the small yet exaggerated point at the top.”

She reached up and tapped the delicate tips, “So yes, I am quite sure this whole package,” she said as she gestured with her hands around her body, “is a mixed bag.”

Sparing a glance at Cullen, she saw him blushing and trying not to stare at her while Cassandra and Josephine covered their mouths trying not to laugh at the Cullen’s obvious embarrassment.

Leliana smiled in acknowledgment of her statement and then continued undeterred.

“You stated that you don’t remember your magical abilities. We all saw you fight the Pride demon.” Jo watched her eyes narrow at her again.

“I honestly didn’t realize I was a mage or had anything until we, I mean Cassandra and I, first started fighting demons on the path to the forward camp. It was like it just clicked.” Sighing heavily, she stared directly into Leliana's cool, blue eyes. “Look, I know you have potions that could make me speak the truth Leliana. If you want, I will drink one while you ask your questions again.”

She heard Cullen, Cassandra, and Josephine all gasp at the same time. She looked over at them and smiled letting them know it was okay. Leliana watched her closely then shook her head, “There’s no need. I…” she was unsure how to progress further. Jo smiled at her then spoke to Cullen.

“I have already spoken with Solas about helping me make sure I don’t fuck up and get possessed or anything stupid. I know that mage possession is not on your list of happy occurrences. He believes that with some hard work, I will be an asset for the inquisition.”

He nodded, and then thought if she has foresight…does she know about what happened to me? Shit. At that moment Josephine spoke up.

“This must be very distressing for you not having your memory. Hopefully, with time it will come back to you. I’m sure that if you belong to any clans out there, they will notify us quickly.”

Staring down at the table, she said softly,
“I’m a half-breed, Josephine; what they call a blood elf. They won’t claim me, even if they did know me. They would more likely be happy with my lack of memory.”

Bless Cassandra for turning it finally to business and leaving her private life alone. Soon the topic moved to Mother Giselle, Horse Master Dennett, and all that fun to come in the Hinterlands. Listening to them talk mostly around her, she made sure to nod at the appropriate moments, because she knew there were no more comments that she needed to make after she agreed to meet with Mother Giselle. Cassandra said they would leave at the end of the week and the meeting was finally over. Jo followed Leliana out and laid a hand on her arm, “a moment please.” Leliana nodded and waited. Taking a deep breath,

“I did mean it Leliana. I would drink it to bring your mind a piece of security. I am sorry I have no real answers for you. I know that frustrates you as much as it does me.”

Leliana’s eyes went from cold to warm quickly.

“There is no need Herald. I believe you. If you do remember anything I would appreciate it if you would share it with us though.”

Jo agreed with her, and left the Chantry quickly. I’d rather say I have no memory than try to make up a story of being from somewhere I don’t know about, she thought as she went to her cabin. She needed to be alone for a while as she closed her door and lay down. Now she could finally allow the tears to escape as her feelings of truly being alone set in.

Chapter End Notes

An’daran antishan - Formal Welcome
Ma serannas - My thanks
Cullen sat at the desk in his tent staring blankly at his paperwork. He found his mind drifting to the Herald. He had never met anyone like her before. She was unusual, and she spoke her mind. That instant smile with lips that asked to be kissed mesmerized him.

Shaking his head, he picked up the report and started trying to read it again. Asking to be kissed? Maker preserve me! Those eyes were what kept pulling him in and he knew it. He gazed at them and suddenly felt as if he were drowning. He liked the way they lit up when she laughed; it set the copper and red colors glowing from within.

Pinching the bridge of his nose at where his thoughts kept pulling him, he quickly stood up. I need to do something, sitting here is not helping keep my mind from thinking about her. Maker knows I’m going to start thinking about how her body had such enticing curves. Rubbing his face in frustration, for fuck's sake Rutherford, get OUT! He found himself mentally yelling at himself as he bolted around his desk for the tent opening.

Jo felt much better after a nice crying jag and falling asleep for a couple of hours. She got up and decided to find Josephine to hopefully get a bathtub brought to her cabin. Rounding the steps next to the Mabari statue, she ran smack into Cullen’s chest plate. Falling onto her ass, she sat there realizing what had just happened, and her head fell back as she started laughing robustly at the silliness of it. Cullen stood over her trying to apologize profusely for the situation while looking horribly embarrassed.

“Herald, please allow me to help you… I am so sorry for this…”

Jo taking a moment to realize that his papers were scattered on the ground around her, and some were in her lap. She glanced up and saw that he was blushing harshly, damn he is just too cute, she thought. Giggling some more, she took his offered hand holding onto the papers from her lap.

“Oh, stow it, Cullen, it is okay. I wasn’t exactly looking where I was going or I would have seen you,” she said dusting her butt off. “You’re not exactly easy to miss you know.”

Jo had no idea that he could possibly get even redder. She watched as his hand started rubbing the back of his neck with his usual nervous tick and patted his breastplate. Bending over, she picked up the rest of the papers from the ground and handed them to him.

“Really, there was no harm done. My butt is still in the same spot it was before. You knocked me on my ass Cullen, not knocked my ass off.”

She laughed at his expression as he was trying desperately not to look at her ass as she spoke of it. Taking his papers from her, he let out a nervous laugh.

“Well, that is good to know Herald. I would definitely not want you to lose your ass.”

Where in the hell did that come from Rutherford? You might as well have said you look at her ass! Jo was oblivious to his embarrassment and focused more on her annoyance with constantly hearing Herald. She held up her hand finally getting him to look at her.

“Cullen, I am aware you are fond of saying ‘Maker’s Breath’ all the time. So I will use it now to hopefully grasp your attention. Maker’s Breath, will you please call me Jo? If I hear Herald one more
time from you, I might just light your papers on fire.”

He smiled and then began laughing at her expression and wiggling fingers.

“Uh... yes...He...Jo. I shall endeavor to use your birth name, please forgive me.”

Her smile was something he discovered he really liked and suddenly looked away rubbing his neck again trying to focus on the Mabari statue instead.

“Please excuse me for delaying you; I am sure you have somewhere you were going.”

Jo laughed again at his instant awkwardness; he was just so damned adorable when he blushed. This is what totally got me in the game, she thought.

“You’re correct. I was on my way to see if I can requisition a bathtub from Josephine. I shall see you around Cullen.”

With a mock salute, she stepped around the now flustered Commander. He shook his head with a small smile. Maker’s breath, now I am going to be thinking about her in the damn bathtub. Sighing heavily, he started towards his tent resigned to let his mind wander where it would since it seemed he could not control it today.
After the tub was delivered and put where she wanted, a young elven woman came in carrying a bucket of water. Jo took the bucket from her and dumped it in the tub not thinking anything of it. The girl started to stammer and Jo realized that this was her job. Laying her hand gently on her shoulders, she handed her the bucket back.

“You don’t need to do that, I’m a mage. I can fill the tub and heat it myself. I really appreciate your thoughtfulness though.”

The young girl smiled shyly at her and then of all things curtsied.

“May I ask your name? Mine is Jo.”

The girl kind of stuttered her answer with nervousness and a lot of shyness.

“A..A...Alyse.”

Jo dropped her hand from the young girl’s shoulders and smiled welcomingly.

“Well Alyse, call me Jo,” she said watching her curtsy again.

“Yes ma’ lady… umm… Jo.”

Laughing she picked up some clean soft wool towels as Alyse left with a shy wave.

Concentrating on making a big block of ice, she then thought of fire and melted the ice while heating the water. She snorted, oh yeah, you got this you crazy chicka. Stripping the loose tunic over her head and shimmying out of the leather breeches, she slid into the bath and groaned with sheer pleasure. Dunking her head under the steaming water, she thought this had to be the best feeling in the world. Humming softly as she lathered up the bar of soap that Josephine had given her, she washed her hair first. Once it was rinsed, she laid her head back against the rim and relaxed.

Solas had the books in his hands and stood outside her cabin knocking. When there was no answer, he presumed that she must be gone. Opening the door he noticed that the cabins were all similar in layout, and started to round the wall that separated the living quarters from the door. He stopped suddenly when he saw the Herald’s very naked back. Her wet, ebony blue-black hair which now was black more than any other color, was plastered down her back covering an indescribable tattoo at the base of her spine while she was obviously busy washing her toes.

Instantly he turned quickly and backed back around the wall. He stood for a moment taking a calming breath. He could not banish the beautiful site of her smooth skin stretched tautly over her defined backbone. Standing for a few more moments, he realized the ridiculousness of the situation and knocked on the door…hard.

“Herald, I have those books for you.”

Hearing the water slosh around and her softly spoken “shit fuck”, he flickered into a smile and tried
“Great, thanks Solas. I’m…uh…I’m in the bath. Would you mind just leaving the books right where you are? If you round that wall you’re going to get more than just an eye full.”

With a short nervous laugh, “trust when I say you really don’t need the nightmares ma falon,” She muttered to herself.

Solas was bent to place the books down as she requested and give the woman her privacy until she had muttered the last bit. Curious to think that she doesn’t realize her beauty, he thought. If he was willing to be honest with himself…which he was not, he wanted to see all of her. Walking around the corner with the books still in his hands, he heard the water slosh.

“Herald, I highly doubt you are a nightmare. You must be thinking of something else. Besides, the human body is not a mystery and I have healed your body specifically plenty of times.”

Jo squeaked crossing her arms over her very ample breasts and he couldn’t stop the laugh from escaping.

“You are quite safe with me, da’len.”

Jo stared at him frozen in place. Oh, I highly doubt that wolf, she thought with his comment. Solas placing the books on the desk, and appeared to keep his eyes averted as he moved to leave. Once he rounded the corner towards the door, Jo let out a quiet breath of relief when she heard him speak with a thickened voice.

“Oh, and Jo?”

He heard the water lap against the sides of the tub, and her small choked out “Yes?” He could picture her turning towards the door where he stood and genuinely smiled for the first time in a very long time.

“You are most definitely not a nightmare. Quite the opposite in fact,” he said and walked out closing the door behind him.

Jo slapped her hands over her beet-red face.

How fucking embarrassing!

Finishing quickly encase anyone else decided to just drop by, she hopped out and toweled off fast, if not a bit roughly. She would make a point to talk with Josephine about installing some sort of lock on her door. Wrapping her hair in the towel, she pulled out the smalls, leather breeches, and another loose tunic that she noticed was a deep blue.

What the hell did he mean by that? What game is he playing?

Huffing as she pulled up the smalls thinking aloud.

“The game definitely doesn’t prepare you for that Solas.”

She huffed out while pulling her pants up and lacing them quickly. Throwing the tunic over her head, she laced up the front and she sat on the edge of her bed. Placing her elbows on her knees, she threw her head into her hands. Shaking her head, no, no, no Joellen Loise Halton do not let your hormones go there! You girl, do not care how sexy he is, that wolf is off limits! Sliding her feet into the soft woolen socks, she grabbed the nice ram skinned, knee-high boots Harritt had given her earlier that day and slipped them on.

Taking the two steps towards the dresser, she grabbed the brush she had gotten from Josephine and
pulled the towel off her head and started brushing her hair in earnest strokes, directing her mind in another direction. Eyeing the stack of books he had dropped off on the side of the little makeshift desk, she saw that the top one was on runes. Setting the brush down, she walked over and picked up the selection he had loaned her and sat by the fire to let her hair dry while she read.

Interesting selection, she noticed. Runes, basic spell casting, healing magic, and Dalish Deities. All basics she decided except the book on the Dalish. *What the hell do I need this for? He doesn’t even like the Dalish,* she wondered as she opened the book on runes and lay the others on the floor next to her. Good thing she had a very good memory as she devoured the book. She had gotten her Masters and Ph.D. at the same time and memory was key to that success.

She grabbed some paper, quill, and ink from the little drawer in the desk, and sat down to make some notes. She sat like that for a few hours before stretching her arms over her head and heard her stomach growl. She realized she hadn’t grasped how hungry she was until that moment. Standing, she went and grabbed her new thick winter wolfs skinned jacket, and slipped it on along with her matching gloves. Stepping out into the chilly night air, she took a deep breath. *I sure hope Flissa still has some food left,* she thought as she jogged towards the tavern.

She heard the laughter from outside and opened the door. Basking in the warmth that instantly enveloped her, she tapped the snow from her feet before walking completely inside. Standing at the bar she asked if there was anything left to eat.

“ Anything for you, Herald, I still have some stew back there. Here luv, take your ale and go sit yourself down near the fire and thaw out, I will bring it right out. ”

Jo smiled her thanks. Walking to a table in the far corner that was close enough to the fire but dark enough that hopefully, she could people watch unnoticed while she drank her beer. Just as she had taken her first sip, she watched Solas walk in with a thick furry coat almost identical to the one she had. Not lost on the irony of *The Dread Wolf wearing a wolf pelt,* she let a small smile lift her lips at her private joke. That smile soon fell when she realized he had noticed her and was walking towards her. *Fuck's sake! He’s already seen me naked, the Gods must be messing with me today,* she thought. With another sip of her beer, she took a deep breath with his approach to her table. *No time like the present for your embarrassment to be enjoyed, they say. *

“ Herald, might I join you for your nightly meal? ”

He could see the blush on her cheeks as she nodded her agreement keeping her eyes focused inside her mug. *Embarrassment, now this if very interesting,* he thought as he took his seat across from her. Removing his coat, he watched the firelight play with the different colors in her eyes as she watched him warily.

“ Is everything okay da’len? ” he questioned politely.

He couldn’t seem to pull his eyes away from hers, the copper and red swirls trapped him within the blue depths he realized.

Jo placed her beer down and set her hands in her lap watching him carefully. Solas felt the intense scrutiny that reminded him so much like his own, and wanted to shift under the attention. Cocking his eyebrow up questioningly, he patiently waited. Jo kept staring at him trying to figure him out. *This Solas is not the one of the game Jo. Haven’t all the stories told you to not let the Dread Wolf catch your scent? Well does catching you naked count as scent,* she thought.

“ Well Solas, no not really, but it is nothing for you to trouble yourself over. ”
Shrugging her shoulders, she changed the subject efficiently not paying any mind to the questioning look on his face.

“Thank you for the books by the way, I am almost done reading the book on runes. It is quite fascinating.”

Since she had changed the subject quite effectively he decided to bring it back around just as easily.

“Well, I am glad that you are enjoying the book. Hopefully, it is helping you remember things you have lost, and we can practice them. So da’len, maybe you would share with me on what has you unhappy?”

Jo’s quick laugh made his skin tingle. Trying not to show the effect she currently was having on his senses, he took a drink of his own ale.

“I don’t know what made me think you would just let it alone, it’s not your nature.”

Taking a deep breath she looked at him curiously.

“You Solas, your attitude, mannerisms, they confuse me. I was sure that you were unlike what I have experienced thus far.”

She thanked Flissa for their stew and bread. Breaking the bread apart she handed him his half while successfully avoiding his fingers. She tucked into her meal noticing a speechless Solas was now watching her very cautiously, if not a bit curiously. Picking up his spoon and taking a bite of his own meal, she could see the mental wheels spinning behind his calm exterior. *How does anyone miss this?* She thought taking another bite of her stew.

She liked this side of him, the quick mind, the intriguing banter, it was like a dance. You could almost see him picking and discarding reasons as he chewed. *That or you’ve absolutely lost your ever-loving fucking mind poking him,* she thought.

“So maybe, you would enlighten me on how I am confusing to you. I apologize if I have disappointed you. Is it possibly something you see happening in the future?”

She gazed into his eyes and realized he had three different colors to his eyes too. She noticed that his were a shade of blue almost on the dark grey side. They made her think of early spring, foggy mornings. The silver, copper and gold intertwined within, was a nice, almost calming effect. She shrugged nonchalantly and continued eating now purposely not looking at him.

Solas sat back in his chair thoughtful. *This woman is much smarter than she lets on. It is going to be very interesting getting to know her and her secrets,* he thought.

Jo sat back and slid her jacket on effectively pulling Solas out of his current thoughts. She knew the moment he recognized the fur of her jacket from his small smile when he saw her putting it on.

“I see Master Harritt gave you a warm winter coat to wear. Do you know what type of fur it is da’len?”

He questioned her with a mischievous look to his eye. Jo realized she never could leave the bad boy alone, and smiled knowingly at him while she stroked the fur gently causing his eyes to watch her fingers.

“Vin ra is fen, *Hahren,*” she replied dropping her hand and walking by him.
Solas sat there trying to focus on his breathing. *She knows* was the only thought that ran through his now scared mind. He felt his worst fears now coming into a narrow focus. Downing the last of his ale in two swallows; he slid a few coins onto the table. Slipping his own coat over his shoulders he knew what he needed to do. These types of conversations were best had where no one could hear them, and he needed to understand her, and her meaning of *Hahren*.

Chapter End Notes

my falon - my friend
da’len - young one
Vin ra is fen, Hahren - It is wolf, elder
Jo sat in one of the many Starbucks in downtown Seattle and watched people like she had always done on a Sunday. She glanced at the door and saw him as he walked in. Her mouth fell open at his sudden appearance in her memory and his attire. He was dressed in jeans, a grey sweater, and a nice pair of casual brown leather shoes. She snapped her mouth shut at the cocky smile on his face when he sat across from her.

He kept his surprise from showing at her very human appearance, and their surroundings. He looked around questioningly before he looked back to her.

“Where are we?” he asked.

Jo was mentally kicking herself. He is known as a master fade mage you silly bitch! Sighing in annoyance she stared at him. Well fuck it she thought. Why not if he’s going to kill you, he’s just going to kill you, might as well breathe.

“This is a coffee shop in Seattle. Why are you here, I’m pretty sure I didn’t invite you?”

He had not expected her to show defiance. In fact, he had expected some fear or even uncertainty. He found himself enjoying that she was constantly a surprise to him.

“But where are we, da’len?”

Jo smiled at him mischievously, throwing him for a loop as she leaned towards him with obvious excitement.

“In a completely different realm actually; I live two blocks from here, or I use to anyway.”

Solas sat back and looked around curiously. Surprised at her ready acceptance of the situation and her utter honesty, he found himself pleased with her response.

“So am I to understand that you are not from our time?”

Jo gazed at him and shook her head yes. Solas studied his surroundings as he absorbed that information.

“To answer your previous question da’len, you left the proverbial door wide open. Is that not an invitation?”

He watched her shake her head with a small smile playing on her beautiful lips and found himself getting increasingly intrigued by her mouth and the softness it displayed. Pushing that thought away, he knew he couldn’t and shouldn’t complicate things for himself. She stood up grabbing his hand pulling him with her.

“Come on Solas let me show you some of the sights while we talk since you are so intent on knowing my secrets. If you’re going to know them, then you might as well enjoy the tour since we are having a day full of wonderful weather.”

He found himself sliding out of the chair and allowing her to pull him behind her by the hand. Her
aura caressed him, giving him a sense of comfort he had never known.

They stepped through the glass doorway while she still held his hand comfortably, and found himself enjoying the sensation of her tapered fingers entwined in his. Her memory showed an overcast day which she said was common for the area. The town was busy with people and strange horseless carriages she had told him were called cars. The buildings she called skyscrapers, shot into the sky towering over them, and he felt a little closed in.

She pointed to the building she lived in and had to explain she didn’t live in the whole building but in an apartment not unlike the cabins they lived in now. She then pointed to something called a Space Needle, which she said could pretty much be seen from anywhere in the city. She explained that it rotated on its own axis, and from the top, you could see the entire city. Through the entire tour, he had held her hand watching her eyes sparkle with each question and explanation. The free sound of her laugh as she celebrated in sharing her information of the area she called the Emerald City, caressed him. Her magical aura pulling him in tighter to her, and he unknowingly enjoyed every minute of it.

“Oh, now it’s your turn Solas, show me something I’ve not seen before.”

He moved his hand and the scenery changed to a place in his time back in Arlathan. They stood in the middle of the city with different clothes on and it was his turn to watch her as she took it all in with the same excited, exuberance. He did not want to analyze his need to share this with her while she looked at him and laughed excitedly.

“Oh, this is beautiful, where are we?” He smiled, “Arlathan, lethali’lan.” He felt her grip on his hand tighten as she walked among the city streets with him. Jo looked around with a touch of excitement and sadness at seeing what he lost.

“This is before the fall before the veil was cast?”

He looked at her sharply. With a resigned sigh, he had to know and couldn’t stop himself from questioning her any longer.

“What can you tell me of that time, lethali’lan?”

The sudden stiffness of his body and his now reserved tone was enough to say to her the carefree moments of before were gone. She knew he wanted answers, and allowed his hand to slide from hers.

“I know that the Evanuris were powerful mages not really Gods. They elevated to that status in time. I know the Evanuris got a little too drunk on their power that caused a war full of destruction, and enslavement of their own people. Their actions caused Fen’Harel to lock them behind a veiled mirror in order to free the people. Casting the veil unknowingly caused the destruction of Arlathan and his people when Arlathan was sundered as it was from the fade. This place was built on magic and without the fade, it couldn’t survive. He didn’t know that would happen. I don’t think he would have done it if he did. The veil took a lot of magic to create and this took a lot out of him. He entered Uthenera and when he woke he found that the veil had caused the fall of his home, his people and nothing was as it was supposed to be. Angry at what he had done, he was devastated, and decided that he would find any way he could to right his wrong.”

She could see him watching her intently as she continued.

“Leading to how an ancient Magister obtained his orb. When he tried to unlock it, it caused the explosion at the Conclave and the Breach, putting this mark on my hand. But we both know that
Fen'Harel wasn’t always known by that name, it was a name given to him in his struggle to help the people. Care to share his given name Solas, and finish my story?"

He began pacing as his mind raced, and she stood patiently watching him. He finally stopped and looked at her letting go of all pretenses.

“You know of my plans?”

She nodded her head yes and he walked from her leaving his back to her as he stared at a river running under the bridge they were standing on. Jo stood there twisting her fingers wishing he understood that she just wanted to help him. Jo stared at his back and felt a pain in the vicinity of her heart as she spoke quietly.

“Your secrets have always been safe with me, Solas; you have my word.”

When he turned around she was gone. Fenedhis!

Chapter End Notes

da'len - young one
fenedhis - wolf cock
Jo’s eyes slowly open, wiping a tear she hadn’t known she was shedding for what he lost in his
desperation to save his own people. She needed to get out of her cabin and her own mind for a bit
she thought. Pulling her cover’s off, she dressed quickly, throwing her hair into a messy braid. She
slipped the thick gloves on as she opened the door taking a deep breath of the crisp mountain air.
Closing her door, she took off for the gates with an easy pace needing to run and think about
anything but how she was going to convince Solas to let her help him.

Cullen had prepared himself for his morning run as usual. It was barely dawn and the light had just
started to filter over the mountains. He liked that he would be the only one stirring at that hour. No
need to think about anything but running the dreams off. Pulling his cabin door open he bent slightly
under the threshold and watched the Herald gracefully run past him and head for the same loop he
normally took in the mornings.

Taking off at his normal pace, he caught up with her quickly but stayed back to give her space.
Maybe she was running to clear her mind like he did, the pressure she was under was immense, and
he knew what that was like. Not to mention, if he was going to be honest with himself, he was
thoroughly enjoying the view of her very pleasing long legs as they effortlessly carry her forward.

Jo realized Cullen was behind her after a few moments into leaving the gates of the camp. She was
surprised to see him out there. Somehow, she had never pictured him a runner, more like a
weightlifter. *Maybe it has something to do with his nightmares,* she thought. Running always helped
her get her mind like he did, the pressure she was under was immense, and he knew what that was like. Not to mention, if he was going to be honest with himself, he was
thoroughly enjoying the view of her very pleasing long legs as they effortlessly carry her forward.

Cullen lost his beautiful view when she ran through the gates. He pushed the door open to his cabin,
pulling his tunic off as he kicked the door closed. He realized that she kept a much brisker pace than
he normally did because he was covered in sweat and breathing heavier than usual. He poured water
into the basin and began washing himself off with his washcloth and embrium soap. He couldn’t stop
thinking about how agile she had run in front of him. *I’ll get a bath in later;* he thought when he
heard the solid thump against his door.

“Enter,” he said loudly as he stood at the basin rinsing the soap off his chest. Washing his face with
his back turned from the entrance, he stopped frozen when he heard her voice.

“Morning Cullen, I brought coffee and some fruit with cheese for breakfast. I thought you might be a
bit hungry after our shared morning run and maybe you wouldn’t mind a little company.”

She hadn’t even looked in his direction when she walked in but focused on not spilling the coffee or
the food she balanced. Jo moved towards the desk at the window and put everything down. Picking
up a cup to hand to him, she turned realizing he stood half-dressed and slightly damp. No shirt, linen
breeches that left nothing to the imagination and… *Sweet mother, he is really fucking built,* she
sighed a bit breathlessly. Realizing that she was totally ogling him, she threw her unencumbered
hand over her eyes with a solid thud.

“I am so sorry Cullen; I hadn’t even thought that maybe you would be umm… I meant to say I
should have … sweet Goddess you have a nice fucking body.”

Face blazing even more than before; she moved her currently occupied hand that was over her eyes, to thump against her forehead. She kept her eyes tightly shut as she stood frozen with her arm out still holding his coffee cup out to him in huge embarrassment. She couldn’t unsee the broad expansion of back muscle with its peppering of scars, the firm looking ass beneath thin linen. The man was inhumanly built, almost like the Hulk. You have a nice fucking body? Are you fucking kidding me? WOW… leave Jo… move your feet and leave this fucking instant before you start petting him.

Cullen finally turned around at the sound of her slapping her forehead and still holding the offered coffee out. He had to smile, it was rather sweet of her to bring him breakfast, and nice for a change not being the one embarrassed. Taking the coffee from her, he took a drink watching the hand that had held the coffee immediately cover her face as he waited for her to look at him. He couldn’t stop the smile from forming at her apparent embarrassment. She had been throwing him off kilter since she walked into the war room. Watching just one of those beautiful tri-colored blue eyes peek at him through her fingers and he started laughing.

Oh, for fuck’s sake his chest is even better… men should not look like this… Jo, you’re ogling him again time to leave before you make a bigger ass out of yourself than you already are.

“I seem to have a problem speaking inappropriately sometimes, forgive me. I will just take this coffee here and… umm… and leave…yes… leave you to it. Enjoy your breakfast Commander, it was a great run,” she said quickly as she turned to bolt and felt a very large, warm hand on her shoulder stopped her. Jo kept her back to him and bit her lip in nervousness as she stared mortified at the floor.

“I actually would appreciate the company. When I heard the knock, I thought it was one of my captains coming in with reports. I’ll put something on and we can break our fast together.”

Setting his cup down, he turned and grabbed a tunic from off his bed. Turning around he noticed she still hadn’t turned around yet.

“Come now Her... Jo, you’ve seen a man’s chest before I am sure.”

He had almost called her Herald again. Jo laughed and turned to see he was covered, and let a breath of relief escape. She never could keep her mouth shut.

“Well sure I’ve seen a man’s chest before Cullen, just not one built quite like yours.”

She watched him blush at the backhanded compliment as she popped a berry into her mouth. Food equals quiet stupid. They kept the silence for a while both taking their seats lost in their own thoughts as they ate and Jo took a sip of her coffee.

“You will be leaving for the Hinterlands soon. Has Cassandra shown you the maps of the area?”

Popping a berry into his mouth, he watched her drink some of her coffee. He was captivated by how her finger’s unconsciously caressed the side of the mug she was holding as she thought, and he wondered if it would feel as erotic as it looked. Yanking his eyes back to her face, he could feel the heat pooling in his groin from where his thoughts had wandered and wanted to hide. Focus on the conversation. Think of your sister… your mother… dirty clothes…anything but her damn fingers Rutherford.

“Oh yes. I have so much information on the area, I’m pretty sure I can walk it in my sleep. I also promised Adan that while we were there I would gather some herbs for him. He refuses to buy from
Segritt,” with an impish grin on her face she did her best impression of Adan.

“Bloody wanker must think me daft if he thinks I’ll pay that much for Elfroot!”

Cullen was laughing at her impression of Adan.

“I brought all this,” gesturing at the food, “because I wanted to thank you for leaving me with my thoughts this morning while running. I just needed to clear my head, but thank you anyway.”

He watched as she nibbled on some cheese.

“I do that as well, and I also like the moments of just being alone. Besides from where I was running it was not a hardship my lady.”

Her cheeks tinged with his backhanded compliment and Jo perked up unconsciously holding his gaze over the rim of her cup. *His eyes really do look like a cross between good Scottish whiskey and a lion’s,* she thought as she took another slow sip of her coffee. With a challenging look, she set her cup down and tilted her head slightly to the side *well hello there captain handsome. Solas wasn’t the only one with surprising behavior,* she thought.

“Why Commander, are you flirting with me?” she asked.

Cullen put his own cup down watching her expression closely.

“I most definitely am Herald; does that trouble you?”

*Well okay then, those eyes watching me are setting off little fires right in my …*Jo laughed nervously cutting her own thoughts off.

“No…I was … Ah good to know Commander.”

She moved nervously picking up the now empty plate and coffee cups from the desk.

“I’ll just take these back and leave you to your work. See you around.”

Turning to leave she heard Cullen stand up and walk to the cabin door to pull it open and out of her way.

“Thank you for the morning coffee, I hope you and I can do this again.”

Smiling down at her, Jo felt her stomach flip at the sight of that little scar that ran into his lip, mesmerized at the slightly upturned corners.

“Yes…I would… that sounds nice.”

Leaving quickly before she made a complete jackass out of herself, she headed to the tavern with the dirty dishes. *Your life is about to get very fucking complicated little girl are you sure you wanna play with him?* She thought.

Cullen watched her leave with a smile on his face. *This day is going to be a good one,* he thought going back in to finish getting dressed.
The Hinterlands are so beautiful, she thought as they rode along the path while she gazed at the forest and mountainous backdrop. They had come across a few groups of bandits, but Cassandra had confirmed they were almost to the Crossroads where Mother Giselle would be. It was comforting to listen to Varric talk and tell stories as they rode. Solas had not spoken since that night in the Fade, and she knew it was because he thought she would expose him. She wouldn’t do that, but she had to make him see that she was his friend not a potential threat.

She had to get his orb back for him and she had an idea of how she could do that. Sneaking a peek at him out of the corner of her eye, she could see the stress around his eyes, and the tension in his body as he sat rigidly on his mount. She sometimes felt his gaze on her when he thought she wouldn’t notice, but she noticed and it was frustrating her. Looking back to the scenery she thought about what they needed to get done in the Hinterlands. Hunting rams for meat, find blankets and clothes, seal rifts, Dennet and his horses, build the towers. Then there was clearing out the mages and templars. Then they would need to head to Val Royeaux to meet with the sisters, and that asshole Lord Seeker Lucius.

Taking a deep breath there was a lot to do when your ass was in a saddle and already sore. Jo sighted the camp on the hill and felt invigorated at the prospect of finally getting to do something with her life. She could really influence some change for the better and thought about all those years of work and realized that here, she was going to be able to utilize all that overpriced education instead of sitting behind a desk.

They had been in the Hinterlands for a few weeks and she was mentally ticking off the things she had accomplished thus far. Cassandra thought they should start making their way to Val Royeaux, but after a long conversation, she had convinced her that the area was not stable enough to leave yet. She explained to her that if they didn’t remove the threat of the Mage and Templar camps before leaving, then all their hard work would have been a huge waste of time.

Cassandra relented finally seeing her reasoning and said it was logical and agreed. They were becoming the fast friends she had told her, in the beginning, they would become. She had also started sparing with her using some of her hand to hand combat skills since Templars could negate magic, and from what Solas explained it was painful. Bruised and sore after her practice with Cassandra every day, she found a new appreciation for the Seeker. She was as much of a beast as she had always thought the woman to be and enjoyed her moments of being able to flip the Amazon over her shoulder.

She had spent a whole day with one of the locals named Johnson. He had shown her how to skin a ram and explained all the places to make sure not to cut into, or the pelt would smell funny. Who knew that rams had scent glands in their legs?

Jo sat staring into the flames during her shift at the watch and realized that at first, she had felt bad about killing animals. She wasn’t stupid, she realized that food came from somewhere, and if you wanted to eat you had to kill it. It just took a little getting used to. Her mind suddenly drifted to pizza
and she started thinking about how she could make it here. Sighing slightly at the thought of Bocelli’s Pizza’s back in Seattle, she thought she could kill for a slice of that right then as she added another piece of wood to the fire.

Solas watched her carefully from his tent before walking towards her to sit down. Jo was staring into the flames when she felt Solas sit next to her. It was her turn to watch while they were supposed to sleep, so why is he out here? She thought slightly annoyed. He hadn’t talked to her unless he had to in more than three weeks, she couldn’t think of why he would start now.

“Did you need something, Solas?”

She said quietly while staring into the fire trying to ignore him. Solas felt the caress of her magic against his skin and barely restrained the sound of desire that tried to escape. Yes, he thought, I need something. Instead, he chose to focus on the firelight flickering across her features and wondered if she realized she was doing it.

“We have not spoken for some time da’len. I was wondering if there was something you needed from me.” Jo smiled sadly at the thought and then shook her head knowing that to say what she was thinking would not help.

“I am sorry if my knowing all of your plans, and who you really are is troublesome or hurtful to you. I never intend for honesty to happen so quickly between you and I. Your always so mysterious, and I… well I’m not obviously.”

She turned her head to hold his gaze for a moment then looked back at the fire.

“I only ever wanted to help you Solas. I can see that is not a possibility now, you won’t allow me. You won’t let anyone close enough to you. Maybe if I was a spirit of Wisdom, I would have a much better chance at obtaining your friendship.”

He could see the sadness etched into her delicate features and felt his heart squeeze painfully at her whispered words. She was unique. In all his travels, he had never met such a giving, compassionate creature as her, and so help him he wanted her for she was rapidly changing everything for him.

He’d witnessed how she’d run herself ragged to help the people in the Crossroads for weeks. At the same time, he could see she had been running circles in her own head now. Her beautiful eyes were tortured looking when they gazed into his and he stilled as she reached up to hold his face between her hands and place a soft kiss on his lips. He felt the tenderness of the kiss all the way down to the soles of his feet. When she pulled away from him, she was searching his face and couldn’t stop the feeling of loss now that her touch was gone.

“You chose loneliness, but you didn’t have too and you still don’t lethal’lin.”

With a sigh, she let his face go and gazed back into the flames.

“Go to bed Solas, you have a couple of hours before you need to wake and take your turn.”

He sat for a second before he stood up and went back to his tent to think about her words. Was she right? Had he chosen something that he needn’t have? With a shaky breath as he laid on his bedroll he stared up to the tent’s ceiling. Had he chosen wrong, could he be happy and save his people? His wolf cried knowingly.

Cullen watched as they arrived back in Haven with Sera, an elf originally from Dennerim, or that
was what the report had stated. He could see that the two were talking very animated. They were close enough and he could hear their combined laugh at Jo’s muttering.

“You're such an elf snob, Sera.”

The raven that arrived a few days earlier had also said that Madam De Fer would be arriving in a week to join them. The reports out of the Hinterlands spoke volumes about the dedication and success of the Inquisition. Leliana was extremely happy with some of the new recruits Jo had gathered that would be working for her, and Josephine was ecstatic over her diplomacy tactics. Cassandra had sent word that towers needed built as a condition for the horses, and at her appeal he had gathered the men needed and sent them the next day. They would return with the mounts and Master Dennit when the towers were completed.

He couldn’t stop his eyes from following her as she slid from her horse and hand the reigns over to the stable boy. The way she held her shoulders he could see she was exhausted. It is good that she is back for a week at least before going back to the Hinterlands, he thought. He saw her smile at something Varric said, then turned toward him and waved with a tired smile. He smiled and bowed towards her as she headed towards her cabin with her packs. Turning his attention to Cassandra, she spoke to him about what happened with the Lord Seeker and the current Templars. He felt his jaw tighten with the news, knowing the path that was going to be easiest and likely most popular amongst Leliana, Josephine and the Herald.

Chapter End Notes

da'len - young one
Jo dropped her bags just inside the door. Turning to shut it she saw her new lock installed and slipped the bolt home smiling. *The sneaky, elven scholar will not be walking in on me while bathing again.* She started peeling off dirty clothes and had visions of a long hot bath, followed with a weeks’ worth of sleep on something softer than a rock.

She kept replaying in her head the conversation with Solas over the campfire. She could only hope that he would listen to her plea; shaking her head miserably, she filled her tub and prepared the bath. She had found herbs that she could use for bathing and threw some in the water. Letting the herbs seep, she went to her dresser and pulled out some clean breeches, and a cream-colored tunic. She was really going to have to thank Josephine for the new clothing. She would take a nap after her bath and then grab dinner and hopefully back to sleep. She found she really didn’t have any energy for anything else.

Easing herself into the hot water she let out a groan at the sheer pleasure of it. After washing her hair, she laid her head back against the rim and closed her eyes allowing the heat of the water to take the aches from her muscles and lull her to sleep.

Sputtering and choking on water from the rude pounding on her door, Jo realized she had fallen asleep in the tub, and now the water was quite cool. Gooseflesh rose on her skin as she stood up and grabbed the soft woolen towel yelling at whoever was pounding on her door.

“Stop your bloody pounding; I’ll be there in a minute.”

Wrapping her hair in the towel, she slid the clean tunic over herself which came to mid-thigh and clung to her like a second skin from the dampness of the water that still clung to her. She moved to the door and viciously ripped it open expecting Cassandra or Leliana to demand she make time and give them a report.

“What!”

Cullen stared at her while holding a plate of food and two ales. His gaze went from her exposed toes, up the soft expansion of leg to rest on her very visible breasts, *sweet Maker, she is not dressed.* Jo oblivious to her lack of clothing stared at the food. *He is so sweet, he brought me food this time,* she thought. Her state of undress, however, was causing the poor Commander’s face to go crimson.

He was trying not to look at the ample curves her tunic was showing him and continued to look at the ground while swallowing nervously. Jo glanced down at herself and realized that the cream-colored tunic was a little more see-through than she thought. *Sweet Goddess, he has quite the clear picture of what she isn’t wearing.* Crossing her arms over her obviously erect nipples from the cold air, she felt her own embarrassment stain her neck and face.

“Cullen, we really have to stop catching each other in different stages of undress, maybe we should start wearing matching bells.”

Now laughing at the situation, she reached out and took the offered beer and grabbed the plate trying
to command nonchalance at the state of her undress.

“Come on Commander, I’m sure it’s not the first time you’ve seen a woman half naked.”

He stared at the floor as he entered shutting the door behind him. Hearing a somewhat similar version of his own words, he realized now how foolish they had sounded. Maybe she had never seen a man so exposed? He couldn’t even remember the last time he had seen a woman naked, but he was damn sure she didn’t look this good or he would remember, he thought as Jo put the beer and food on the desk. Her voice yanked him out of his own thoughts.

“Turn around please, and allow me to get dressed a bit more since you caught me sleeping in the damn tub.”

He turned quickly with a chuckle escaping his throat and taking a deep drink of his ale as he presently tried not to think of the mostly naked, extremely long-legged, gorgeous woman behind him who had now filled his head with visions of her being wet and naked.

“Yes, well I have been known to do that myself a time or two,” he said huskily while Jo laughed as she tied her breeches quickly.

“Well next time you take a bath let me know so I can catch you sleeping in it and embarrass the hell out of you. You can turn around now.”

She could see he was still embarrassed as she pulled the towel off her head letting her hair fall damply down over her shoulders and back. Cullen barely restrained a groan, Maker, preserve me, I’m falling for a damn mage…again.

“Come share the meal and drink with me Cullen, you were so kind to bring it after all. It has been a really long month, and I would like to hear what’s been going on here.”

He pulled the small little side table from next to her bed to between the chairs in front of the fire to give them a surface to lay the food and drink on.

“You were definitely effective if not busy at the Crossroads. Everyone that has come to join the Inquisition is because of you and what you have either done for them or shown them of yourself.”

She smiled at him as she nibbled on some cheese listening to him discuss the training of the new recruits. The trebuchets were finely calibrated, and Josephine’s anger at his constant need to calibrate them. Laughing at the gossip of Harrett courting Flissa, and that there was a possibility of his second in command Rylen, trying to grab Cassandra’s attention.

“Did Cassandra discuss with you about contacting Sir Baris? I believe he is not in agreement with the Lord Seeker and could be persuaded without much difficulty.”

Cullen nodded his agreement and placed his ale on the table.

“Yes, she did, and I agree with your idea of reaching out to the Templar’s quietly. I trained with Baris, and know he is a good man. I am sure the order is confused at their lack of attention on the Breach. The Lord Seeker was never a man that was known for needing attention and praise as he showed you in Val Royeaux, so his behavior has everyone confused.”

She shrugged her shoulders, “I don’t have much faith in a man who would order one of his men to hit an unarmed woman. His actions cemented the reason for the unchecked hate mages feel towards the order. He is disgusting as far as I see it, but I want to get those men who are not following that worthless ass away from him.”
Seeing his nodding agreement, she continued tentatively.

“Did Cassandra also tell you that we will need to make a trip to Redcliff after I meet the mercenary company on the coast? It should prove interesting as well. I am curious as to why Fiona decided to approach us now, but I guess we will find out when we get there.”

She watched for his expression at the news and saw the tightening of his jaw. He wouldn’t look at her. Sitting forward, she pleaded him with her eyes to see her.

“Look, Cullen, I understand that there are things you will not discuss with me until you’re ready, and I won’t press. However, I’m a mage, and you don’t fear me do you?”

She saw the surprise in his eyes when he looked at her then take a small drink of his beer swallowing harshly.

“No… you’re not… you could never be like that. I am trying to work past that part of me; it is just difficult to do so. I will endeavor to try harder.”

Taking another drink of his beer and placing it on the table next to him. He kept his gaze on the floor when he asked the question that had been plaguing his mind since the first time he was told she had foresight.

“So… you umm… you know everything I gather.” Looking towards the flames of the fire, he felt ashamed and embarrassed at her knowing that about him. She watched this honorable, loyal man withdraw into himself as if he was waiting for her to laugh at him or belittle his past experiences as weakness. She knew it would be difficult for her if someone she barely knew somehow knew all her deepest, darkest secrets. She set her beer on the table and knelt in front of him grabbing his hands.

“Cullen, look at me please.”

Watching the fire flicker across his face, making his eyes glow with a warm dance as he finally looked at her kneeling form in front of him and all she could see was the pure anguished expression on his beautiful face.

“Don’t you dare feel ashamed of what happened to you, fenor. Do you not see how far you’ve come? Everything you have accomplished since? Those that have tried to break you couldn’t, you were the stronger one.”

Reaching up to caress his face, she smiled into his beautiful whiskey-colored eyes.

“You are so much more than they expected, how can you feel shame for having kept your mind from caving; for still choosing to be a good and kind man? I feel no shame in knowing you or knowing what you had to endure to get to where you are right this moment.”

Her words were like a salve to his tormented soul. In such a short time, she had become important to him, and what she thought of him mattered. He reached his hand out to gently cup her chin, studying her eyes for the permission he silently asked for, he bent his head towards her. When her hands went from his face to his neck, she leaned up to meet him the rest of the way with a soft meeting of lips. Angling her head to have more access to his mouth, she nibbled on his lower lip and he took full advantage of her mouth having opened ever so slightly. Sliding his tongue through her lips, he felt the jolt of desire at her meeting and demanding more from him.

Desire, thick as honey flowed through her veins with the silken glide of his tongue over hers. The soft nibble of his lips at her own affected her in a way that produced a growing dampness between her thighs.
She didn’t know how long they had been like that, just kissing, with soft sounds and gentle touches and no demands. He should get out of there before anything else happened, he thought as he lifted his lips from hers. Raising desire-hooded eyes to watch him when his lips had left hers, she realized he looked as desire-drunk as she felt. He gazed into her eyes for a few moments and she wished that she knew what he was thinking right that moment. *I might have just made a grave mistake,* she thought suddenly.

Removing her hands from his neck, she stood and sat back down in her chair, giving him his space and trying not to twist her fingers in nervousness. She realized at that moment that he had been the first man she had kissed, and felt desire for and desired by in a very long time. *Well now, what do I do? This was not supposed to happen, remember? This just got really fucking complicated, way to go Jo.* Cullen cleared his throat nervously and pulled her from her wayward thoughts of her past.

“I know I should apologize for my actions, but it would be a lie. I’m not sorry I kissed you, Jo, I have wanted to do that for a while.”

Her throaty laugh and bright smile showed him he could release the breath he had been holding.

“Well, I’m glad you’re not apologizing Cullen. You should never apologize for kissing like that.”

His cheeks started to heat with his normal blush and his hand went up to rub his neck unknowingly as she used humor to diffuse the moment.

“So…umm… You won’t mind if I…” She stared at him shocked that he had to ask.

“Well, I wouldn’t be much of a woman if I didn’t admit to being disappointed if you didn’t at least try to do it again, Commander.”

She smiled at him as he chuckled, “I would be disappointed in myself too Herald.”

*Well fuck,* she thought as she closed the door behind him and leaned against it.

Chapter End Notes

fenor - friend
Preparations

Lying in bed she stared at the ceiling analyzing the evening’s events between her and Cullen. Her hand absently went up to touch her lips and smiled as she remembered the feeling of kissing him. How his scar on his lip had always looked sexy, but when you're kissing it, it feels sexy. She couldn’t even begin to describe how right it had felt. He had made her skin tingle and she was sure she had never felt that before in her entire life.

She could recognize her desire for him; she was a healthy woman with eyes and hormones. At this moment, the only emotion she wanted to analyze was her fear. Am I afraid he will hurt me or is it the other way around? She realized after ten minutes of studying it that constantly picking at these thoughts were not doing her any good. She needed to let this play out the way it needed too. She couldn’t control those emotions or the outcome of anything. Control is an illusion Jo, and you know it. Closing her eyes, she decided to ignore this emotion for now since there was no basis for feeling it. Sleep lady, you got a busy day tomorrow.

For some reason Leliana just didn’t frighten her, she thought as she sat across from the woman who looked outwardly relaxed, yet you could tell she was wound tighter than a watch.

“Joellen Loise Halton is my full name, I am an only child. My mother’s name was Loise; she was from an alienage in the Free Marches. My father’s name was Varnan, he was human and from Ferelden. Both are dead from a group of Templars because my father was an apostate.”

She stared at her hands ignoring Leliana’s piercing stare. She had, of course, lied about the shit that just couldn’t happen on Earth, but she had not lied about their names or that they had been murdered. They had been killed in a home invasion.

Her mother had come from an orphanage in California, was half white and Korean. She had baked the best cookies in the world and had passed on to her daughter her love of cooking. Her father had been a carpenter. He had built her a treehouse when she was eight and had taught her how to ride a bike and make furniture.

Her parents had grown a garden, belonged to the Elks club, and loved to travel. They had instilled in their only child the drive to succeed and not be afraid to put in the hard work. They were by far the best parents in the world as far as she had been concerned, and some piece of shit had taken them from her. To think of them as gone even know still devastated her as much as it had when they were found dead five years ago. Some things therapy just can’t fix, she thought as she let out a sad sigh.

Leliana watched her carefully and then nodded. She could try to dig up something about their Herald now. She had a niggling suspicion there was nothing to find though. She had asked Josephine to reach out to as many Dalish clans as she could, but since Jo had no vallis’lin, she doubted she belonged to a clan and having mixed parentage did hinder any thought of her having one.

She didn’t care at the moment; the woman was setting a back-breaking pace to get the Inquisition off the ground. She was great with the people, always very respectful. She did not treat anyone different, from a noble to a peasant. Her team thought highly of her and frankly so did she. This past month she had proven herself to be a brilliant, thoughtful, compassionate, friendly woman.

“I am sorry for your loss Herald. However, the good news is we have a full name and I for one think Joellen is much nicer than just Jo. I am sure Josie will be ecstatic over the information.”
Laughing a little, “So it’s either Herald or Joellen,” Jo shook her head in defeat.

“I can see this is a battle that will never be won.”

Leliana laughed at her, “Yes, some are not worth the struggle when it comes to Josephine.”

“Speaking of struggles, you know we’re off to Redcliff to meet with Fiona next week, yes?”

Watching Leliana nod her head in agreement she continued.

“There is a Magister there who has indentured the mages. I will, of course, find out why, but for now, I need you to set a plan for agents to use the families hidden escape passage beneath the castle for later. I am going to go back for them and they will be allies. This, of course, is going to cause a bit of anger with our Commander, I am sure, but they are the best option and opportunity for us as we grow.”

Leliana listened to her words carefully digesting the information about a Magister having control over the Southern mages, while silently pleased at her choosing to ally with them.

“What else is there you’re not saying?”

Jo glanced at her then away. This was a dead giveaway to Leliana.

“I know much more, but I want to make sure it is real and not lies that I saw. There is also the matter with one of your agents named Butler. Have him brought in, he is a spy, but it is unclear for who; regardless if we leave him where he is he will kill Ferrier for finding him out.”

She noticed Leliana’s eyes narrow with anger. Writing quickly on a piece of paper she slipped it into a small tube and onto a raven’s foot letting the bird fly off.

“I also would like to discuss with you about stockpiling some supplies. I will show you where to put everything. I like to call it plan B in case everything decides to go to hell in a handbasket, and we are wearing gas-soaked small clothes.”

Leliana burst out laughing, allowing the previous anger to dissipate, “Okay Herald. Let’s look at this area you want to use. Is there anything specific I should be putting in there?”

Jo looked at her and laid a hand on her shoulder.

“Everything you would need to survive in the elements for three weeks Leli. Tents, food, blankets, medical supplies, everything. Harrett is about finished with all the bear and wolf skins that we brought back from the Hinterlands. Have some of those put in there for blankets.”

Leliana listened to the instructions and watched the Herald carefully. She could tell something was coming yet the woman was not speaking about it yet, but she would.

“You have seen us get attacked.” Jo nodded her head, yes, and Leliana let it go… for now.

Who would know if she would live through her meeting with Corypheus? She could, however, make sure that they did. Smiling at the spymaster, “I just need to make sure that what I saw wasn’t nugshit, okay?”

Leliana smiled at her and bowed her head slightly in agreement.
“So, let me get this straight…You chose to literally sell out your fellow mages to a Tevinter Magister before allying with the Inquisition, do I have that right?” Jo asked looking Fiona down and trying to repress her anger at the woman’s flippant replies from earlier. Fiona looked like a fish with her mouth opening and closing trying to figure out what to say.

Stuttering and stammering out, “It wasn’t … You don’t … It’s not that simple, Herald.” Jo held a hand up motioning her to stop speaking.

“It really is that simple Fiona. I honestly thought I could or would feel some sympathy for you. Empathize with the difficulties you and your fellow mages must have endured to get to such a low place. But it occurred to me, had we never had fucking circles, to begin with, people like you wouldn’t be looking out for others best interests. From this angle, I sure as hell wouldn’t want you looking out for my interests.”

Fiona’s held her head low in embarrassment, and Jo felt no remorse for laying into that woman. She should have known better, she thought angrily.

Fiona spoke quietly in disagreement.

“You speak as though you are not a mage yourself. We are your brother’s and sister’s, our need to be free affects you as well Herald.”

Jo shook her head at the former Grand Enchanter.

“That is where you are wrong Fiona. I am my own mage. You are not my people, and definitely not my family. You lost that idea when you let the Chantry herd you like cattle into towers.”

The tavern door opened and she glanced over her shoulder to see Alexius, and his son Felix, walk through the door.

“Excuse me for my not meeting with you earlier friends.”

He slightly bowed in their direction. I pictured him a gross looking man, but sadly it would seem that all the men running around Thedas are decent looking even the villains. Go Fucking Figure!

“I am sure you’re an extremely busy man since taking on the Southern Mages, Gereon. Shall we sit and discuss you allowing us the use of your recently acquired staff?” She said gesturing towards the nearest table. She enjoyed the surprised look on his face when she used his name. Oh, yes you tricksy fucker, I know you, and everything you’ve been up to. Trust me, dickhead, you’re going to wish you didn’t know me by the time we are finished because your failure will be epic.

Solas enjoyed the control she exhibited in the conversation with the Magister. She was cunning in her speech, and you could see her enjoyment of the Magister’s uneasiness. She was not unlike his own wolf; she hunted the Magister and his wolf cried out for her companionship. Her eyes were dead cold even as her lips lifted in a smile as she listened to him talk.

It annoyed him to see her smile not reflected in her eyes, it was one of the many things he enjoyed about her. Is now really the time to think of that old wolf? Stop this foolishness and let her go. He
tried to shake the thoughts he found himself analyzing every night, and told himself the same thing over and over, *not yours wolf, be quiet.* Changing his minds constant direction as it fell on the woman, he examined the Magister’s son Felix instead. The young man almost fell into her, making him take a protective step towards her as she helped him stand.

He apologized profusely, as he watched her left-hand slide behind her back holding a scrap of paper. *Curious,* he thought. When the Magister had watched his son almost pass out, he all but ran out of the tavern with his son and Fiona. Solas raised a curious eyebrow at her and saw the small glint of pleasure in her eyes.

“What does it say?”

“Come to the chantry, you’re in danger. Well, no shit Sherlock.” Both she and Sera snorted, “Wait, who is Sherlock?” Sera questioned as Jo just smiled at her.

“Keep your guard up kids, this place is crawling with Tevinter’s. There is a rift in the Chantry and another Tevinter, but he is on our side. He will help us defeat that greasy Tevinter asshole.” Looking at Sera then she smiled, “you’re going to love him, trust me.”

Later that evening they sat around a fire and Jo looked at everyone in turn. They were laughing about some joke Varric had told about a Nug King and found it all relaxing until she realized she would have to tell Cullen her decision.

“So, who wants to tell Cullen that we will be coming back for the mages?” looking around the group, “Anyone?” Everyone started shaking their heads in unison.

“No way, sorry Vixen, but that’s on you.” Shuffling a deck of cards as he refused to look at her, she looked to Cassandra who was also shaking her head no.

“I believe that he will take the news from you much better than from me.” Jo looked at Solas and he smiled at her understandingly.

“Not telling that Jackboot shite,” Sera muttered.

“I would agree with the Seeker, Herald,” he spoke quietly.

“Cowards!” she cried at them teasingly.

She joined in on their laughter, yet she couldn’t shake the uneasiness about telling him. The game displays him angry then forgiving, but this wasn’t a game anymore, and if anything, the men of this game were not following a script dictating how they were supposed to act.

Most everyone had turned in for the evening and Jo was unable to sleep. She leaned against a tree and gazed up at the stars. She heard him as he approached and leaned against the other side of the tree.

“Solas?” she said softly

“Hmm,” he answered as he gazed up at the bright night’s sky.

“Do you think I’m doing this *Herald* thing right?”
He glanced at her and saw that she was looking at him anxiously.

“Do you not?” He questioned her gently.

Jo shook her head in annoyance at his evasive ways of not answering.

“I respect and value your opinion; do you have one or no?” She said slightly exasperated with him.

Solas glanced at her and chuckled softly at the slight frown on her forehead.

“It is not that I don’t want to give you my answer lethal’lan, it is that I know my choices have not always been the best.”

Jo stared at him in surprise to his honesty and reached out to wrap her fingers around his. She felt the calm strength of him and let a small sigh of pleasure out. *He might actually let me get close to him.*

“If it means anything, I don’t think you chose wrong lethal’lin,” she said softly.

Solas’ eyes darted to her in surprise.

“I believe you have made the Inquisition something to be proud of,” he said quietly.

Jo let the small smile form and glanced at him.

“Ma serannas,” she said before squeezing his fingers gently and moving towards her tent.

Solas watched her walk back to her tent, and let a small smile tease the corners of his lips before moving towards his own tent.

Chapter End Notes

Ma serannas - my thanks
That Wasn't How it Was Supposed to Go

When she could see the gates leading into Haven, she smiled at Varric and taunted, “You wanna race wee-man? Whoever wins buys the first round.”

Varric laughed loudly, “You’re on Vixen.”

Solas counted down and when reaching one, he shot an ice bolt at the ground signaling there start.

Leaning in low on her horse she gently nudged the animal speaking softly to her, “let’s go get some apples, beautiful.”

The horse took off at a dead run for the gate at the word of apple. She was quite a distance ahead of Varric when she reached the gates. She was holding her arms up with her head thrown back as she crossed the imaginary finish line laughing.

Cullen held his breath in longing. Everything about her was beautiful, and he didn’t know if he could stop himself from wanting her. She slid off her horse and grabbed an apple out of her bag. Giving the fruit to the animal, she stroked her neck crooning softly. He overheard Varric grumble about his loss and something about her being lighter and heard her laugh even harder. Watching her throw an arm around the dwarf’s wide shoulders, he felt a twinge of discomfort in his stomach until she turned those bottomless pools towards him. When she smiled at him, he felt the ground go out from under him.

“Hello Commander,” then feeling sassy after her win she winked at him. *Might as well get him in a good mood if you’re going tell him about the Redcliff mages,* she thought.

He felt the heat climb up his neck and reached up to rub his neck while he shook his head slightly, “Hello Herald.” Jo watched to see if he had the guts to wink back, but alas he wouldn’t if Cassandra was talking to him. She ushered Varric to the tavern for their celebratory beer on him still thinking about how she would approach the topic of the mages with Cullen.

Jo left the tavern with a bottle of wine, bread, cheese, fruit, and some cold meats on a plate. She opened the door of her little cabin and slid the goods onto the desk. On her second beer with Varric, she had come up with the idea of trying to wine and dine the Commander, before telling him the news. After having hugged Sera and giving Varric an innocent kiss on the cheek, she had bid the group a good night.

She filled her bathtub quickly since she wanted to get herself cleaned up, and the smell of the herbs in the air would be a nice touch. Drying quickly and thanking Solas silently for showing her the spell to dry her hair, she pulled on the new leathers she had purchased in Redcliff. She wanted to moan at how good they felt on. They were butter soft against her skin. Sliding the loose purple colored tunic over her head she did not tie up the laces all the way thinking that maybe a hint of cleavage couldn’t hurt as a form of distraction.

Looking around at the small space, she picked up and cleaned a few spots and realized she was being a nervous nelly and stalling. *This is stupid! Go invite the man over for dinner, explain everything to him and be done with it. It’s not going to be that bad, he is your friend.*

Going to the door she pulled it open to take herself the short distance to his cabin. She stopped suddenly when she found him standing on her steps. He must have bathed too she thought as she
smelt the embrium soap he used. His hair was a little damp and he wasn’t wearing his armor she saw. Staring at the large expansion of chest, sweet Goddess, this man must be Odin’s son. She couldn’t stop herself from staring at him, was he always this large?

Hearing him clear his throat she snapped her eyes to his seeing he was enjoying her brazenly admiring him. Taking a step back chuckling, “I didn’t know the armor came off Commander, thought you slept in it. I thought the armor was what made you so…umm…never mind I’m babbling.” She said nervously laughing, “Come in, I was just headed to see if you wanted to share some dinner with me.”

Cullen walked inside at her urging enjoying the knowledge that she had set to seek him out for a meal. It didn’t hurt knowing she was not immune to him either. She closed the door behind him and walked to where the wine was handing him the bottle so he could pull the cork out. Why struggle like an ass when you have Mr. Muscles over here. I wonder if his stomach would feel as tight as his…snapping her thoughts back to the present. Now is not the time to think about such things you horny idiot, she scolded herself.

Cullen noticed the scent of honey and vanilla in the air from her earlier bath. Pulling the cork out of the bottle, he poured them each a glass and handed her one. He noticed that her hair was down flowing around her and that her tunic wasn’t completely laced up. He was getting a healthy view of her…. Whoa there Rutherford, eyes up boy, he snapped his eyes to her face and saw the knowing grin on her face. Feeling his face heat up he slid his hand up to rub his neck nervously.

You would think that when you reached over thirty, women wouldn’t fluster you so much, Rutherford. Well, your nervousness might come from the lack of women in your life Rutherford, he sadly joked with himself. Walking to the chair next to the fire he sat watching her sipping on her wine while absentely twirling a strand of hair, staring into the fire. He surveyed the firelight reflecting off her tanned features; dancing little patterns in her eyes. She was ethereal to him at this moment. Everything about her seemed like a fairytale, and when she looked at him and smiled, he felt his whole world flip upside down.

“Cullen if you keep staring at me like that, you’re going to make me think I’ve got some dirt on my face or something.”

“I would tell you if you had something on your face.” To his own ears, his voice sounded thick. Taking a sip of his wine he turned his attention to the fire. Jo glanced at him and let out a chuckle.

“Are you going to fill me in on why you were staring Commander, or is this just a deal with the attention kind of moment?” He laughed at her then.

“I will tell you what I was thinking, if you tell me what you were thinking earlier, Herald,” he said watching as her face colored and she shook her head.

“Are we negotiating for information now?” She could see his face getting even redder as she leaned forward giving him a full view of cleavage and smooth skin. She barely suppressed a laugh when she saw him taking a deep swallow of his wine. However, when his eyes lifted to hers they were not embarrassed… Jo… you’re playing with fire here, you sure you really wanna do that with this man? She tilted her chin up slightly defiant as she gazed at him.

Well if you plan to play with mage fire Rutherford, prepare for the burn, he thought as he saw the subtle change in her demeanor as she watched him.

“I was thinking how beautiful you were with the firelight dancing in your eyes and across your face. It made me think of something out of a fairytale.” He watched the blush tinge her cheeks and he
raised an eyebrow at her indicating it was her turn as he took a sip of his wine.

She laughed, “Well what I was thinking is appallingly not as romantic as yours for sure. I have a horribly dirty mind when it comes to you, Commander. It appears that every time I’m around you, I can’t seem to leave your clothes on.” She took a gulp of her wine now that she was utterly embarrassed with admitting her thoughts to him. *I can’t think around him.* Cullen laughed at her answer; thank the Maker he wasn’t the only one thinking about that.

Jo looked down into her glass mortified, she had never said anything like that to a man before.

“I told you my thoughts weren’t as poetic,” she all but grimaced.

He placed his glass down on the table and stood to take her glass from her and set it down. Jo looked up at him questioningly and he knew when it came to her he had no common sense. Taking her hand he pulled her to stand. Cupping her chin he gazed into her eyes intently.

“I am glad that I am not the only one who thinks about the state of one’s undress,” he said before placing his lips on hers carefully. Sliding her arms around his neck she pulled him closer suddenly needing to feel all of him against her. She let out a soft moan of pleasure at the feel of him pressed tightly against her. His hands slid down to hold her hips and pull her tighter against him. He felt her fingers brushing against the skin on the side of his neck leaving little sparks with her fingertips, and she heard a soft groan escape.

Jo felt his hardness nestled against her stomach and moaned softly. She could feel his thumbs gently sliding against the exposed skin on her sides, and every little stroke of his thumb on her skin sent ripples through her entire being. He assaulted her mouth slowly, with precision in every stroke of his tongue against hers building a slow, consuming fire in her.

They heard a knock at her door and both growled in frustration. He removed his lips from hers, taking a step back and she could see he was struggling with his own breath and desire as much as she was.

“I should probably…umm…leave,” she heard him say roughly, running his hand through his hair. She saw him take a tentative step away from her and she wanted to grab his hand to make him stop and turn back to her.

“Your right of course,” she said clasping her hands behind herself before she could launch herself at him. He smiled at her and ducked out the door quickly. Sera watched him leave with a shocked expression on her face before turning to her and giggling. *I am so thoroughly screwed,* she thought as she stared at his retreating back.
**What am I Doing?**

Jo gazed at the frozen river as she caught her breath and heard him tell her, “Again lethal’lan.” The ground was clear of snow for them to practice on as Solas pushed her through her paces. Everything she had learned with reading and practicing was now causing beads of sweat to form on her forehead. For the tenth time, he dodged and fade stepped behind her. “Dead,” he said again quietly into her ear. Little shivers of awareness ran down her back from the tickle of his breath along her neck. Groaning in frustration she turned her head to find him gone again.

“Damn it Solas, what am I doing wrong?” she said sitting on the ground in frustration with herself, and the sexual tension that was building in crazy amounts between them.

He smiled at her acceptance of missing something within her own technique. Others would be upset at their lack of countering a simple move over and over or think him tricking her, but not her. She accepted the mistake as her own, and curiosity bubbled out instead of frustrated anger. He was also purposely toying with her. He could see that soon she would no longer need these personal practice sessions, and he couldn’t seem to shake the feeling of unhappiness at the idea.

“You’re allowing your eyes to trick you lethal’lan that is your only mistake.”

He sat down next to her so they were shoulder to shoulder, and hip to hip. He could smell the calming scent of chamomile and elfroot from her soap mixing with the exotic blend of her own woman’s scent; it was intoxicating for him.

“I am pleased to see that you have countered every move that I made before this one. It will require practice is all, but you are proving to be a quick study and a formidable mage. It is refreshing to see one that uses their brain as a weapon as much as their staff.” He bumped her shoulder pulling a smile from her. “Your proficiency with daggers shows your training with the Seeker is paying off as well, and that knowledge will serve you well when pressed into a corner.”

Her smile grew with his praise; it was like pulling teeth to get any out of him. Pulling her knees up and laying her face on them she steadily gazed at him.

“Thank you Solas, I really appreciate you taking the time to help me. I know there are a million other things you would rather be doing.”

He glanced at her and for once she could see past that cool exterior. “There is nothing I would rather be doing,” he said gently.

He stared mesmerized by the look in her eyes as if in a daze, he felt magical, magnetic strings pull him towards her. He observed her eyes widen in surprise just before his lips claimed hers. His magical aura surrounded her, reaching out and intertwining with her own. The flicker of his magic mixing with hers was heady. She felt the little tickles of cool, electrical fingers caressing her face and neck. The erotic feeling it produced made her gasp. Solas took advantage of this moment and waged a sensual assault when he slid his tongue along hers in a slow dance.

She lifted one of her hands from encircling her knee to place it on his smooth face, feeling the softness of his skin and gently caressed the skin along his neck. He could feel the flames of her magic licking against him, spurring his desire for her higher. There was no hurry to his caress, just a slow steady assault on her senses. When he lifted his lips from hers, she saw the swirling lightning within his slate-colored eyes while he watched the flames flicker within her own. He grasped her hand as she started to remove it from his neck and placed a kiss into the palm, feeling the touches of
flames on his carefully placed lips. Her fingers unconsciously closed around it to hold it there when he lifted his face to gaze back at her again.

Jo pulled her hand back to encircle her knees again. *These paths you keep leading yourself down will be the destruction of your own heart Jo, you know this. STOP! Before it's too late.*

She was the first to look away, turning her eyes to look at the mountainous backdrop behind the frozen river. She was consciously pulling her own magical energy back into herself while gaining her composure with slow, steady breaths. She didn’t know what to say to him now and found silence the best course for now.

Solas watched her profile and felt the loss deeply at her mental and magical retreated from him. He had never experienced the co-mingling of magical auras before, and hers had felt warm, accepting, and as intoxicating as her scent. It had been a very long time since he had wanted anything for himself, but he wanted her. He needed to think about this, what these feelings for her mean, and why his magic reached for hers, why she made him feel safe.

She glanced at him briefly and could see the conflicting emotions running across his face. *Well, he is just as dumbstruck as I am,* she thought. With one graceful move, she unfolded her body and stood, deciding that it would be best for her to leave, but she could feel his eyes and his magic caress her from her feet to finally rest on her face. She felt a warm flush run the length of her body from the delicious feelings it was arousing. Shaking her head, she narrowed her gaze at him in frustration.

“I don’t know what you’re about right now Solas, but you had best figure it out quickly. I don’t appreciate being toyed with.”

Solas stayed where he was watching as her long legs ate up the ground. *Good question. What was he about right now?* Taking a deep calming breath, he stood to head back to his cabin in a state of confusion he hadn’t felt since waking.
Cullen watched Jo stroll briskly towards Leliana’s tent wondering what had her looking so confused and agitated. After a few moments, he watched Solas following behind her looking just as agitated and confused as Jo had a few minutes before. He had never thought much about her working with the elven apostate, but now his mind was working overtime and jumping to illogical conclusions.

He had no exclusive claims to her, which he knew. However, he couldn’t stop the roar of jealousy from rearing its ugly head. *We’re they… no, surely not…why not?… because she is mine!* The more his mind ran with ideas, the angrier he got. He did not notice one of Leliana’s envoys coming towards him until the man had called to him twice. He noticed the man shift from one foot to another in nervousness.

“What do you want?” he growled through clenched teeth. The messenger took a precautionary step away from him swallowing nervously.

“I… I was sent by Lady Leliana to advise you of a meeting, Commander.”

Cullen nodded curtly and walked away from the man. *I need to hit something,* he thought. His emotions where getting volatile with his lack of lyrium. The thought of losing her was not helping his anger. Taking a calming breath, he entered the Chantry walking towards the war room. Opening the door, he saw everyone was waiting for him as he entered. Taking his place opposite the Herald, he waited for them to discuss whatever was so important that they had pulled him in the middle of the day.

He still felt angry and agitated with what his mind would not stop replaying. He looked from Leliana to Josephine then to Cassandra, finally resting on the Heralds face that was currently refusing to look at him. This was not helping matters any for him when she continued to stare absenty at the map. Suddenly he heard Cassandra clear her throat letting everyone know she would be starting the meeting, yet he couldn’t pull his eyes from the Herald’s downcast profile.

“After careful thought since our return from Redcliff, I have decided to agree with the Herald in approaching the mages for help with the breach.” Cullen felt his rage boil to the surface making his gaze swivel to the Seeker.

“That is ridiculous! The Templars will be sufficient and we will not need to use the Herald as bait to obtain them.” Leliana stared at him in disbelief, and leaned forward placing her tightly clenched hands on the table.

“I shouldn’t need to remind you, Commander, that there is a Tevinter Magister at our doorstep? The Imperium would rather see the South fall to chaos and rule the South again. We cannot let this happen.” Cullen turned his complete anger on her while holding a tight grip on his sword handle.

“Of course Spymaster, I do not need reminding of this, but again you do not understand that we do not have enough soldiers to even try to take the castle. We won’t even go into the fact that the castle has stood through centuries of sieges including the many Blights and prevailed.” Josephine chimed into the conversation at his vehement reply causing everyone to look at her.

“An Orlesian army on Ferelden soil would cause a war.” Cassandra nodded her head in agreement with Josephine.

“We do not need to cause a war between the nations. However, we cannot allow for this Magister to
continue residence there with control of more than two-hundred mages. He is unto himself a foreign army waiting to strike.” Cullen slammed his fist on the table causing everyone to jump at the sound.

“This is utter madness. With the Templars, we will have sufficient manpower to eradicate the hostile force without putting the Herald in harm’s way.” Jo finally spoke quietly causing everyone to look at her.

“There is another way.” Cullen’s angry gaze swung from Leliana and Cassandra to her, asking her to repeat what she had said. Jo cleared her throat nervously knowing this was what she had dreaded happening when she had thought about telling Cullen their plan.

“There is another way. We will not need an army Commander. We will utilize the hidden tunnel used for the royal families escape during such emergencies. With as few as twelve of Leliana’s best agents, they can infiltrate the castle from below with the help of a Tevinter mage that came to help us stop him. I and a few companions will be an adequate distraction giving Alexius the envoy he is requesting. With little to no fuss, we will take him into custody, and the mages will become our allies.” She watched his face redden with her words.

“Allies?” he barely choked the words out in a whisper and shook his head as if he hadn’t heard her correctly. “You must mean conscription, yes?” He watched in horror as she shook her head no.

“No, I do not mean to conscript them, Commander. We need their allegiance. They will be free to choose their own paths once they have helped us close the breach. You must be able to see that forcing mages into circles, and then keeping them from the general population is what put them into this predicament. You may only recognize them as magical ways to go bad since as a former Templar you were exposed to such things. However, mages are human beings, not all of them are magical fuck ups. I cannot sit idly by as they trade one cage for another,” his eyes narrowed at her.

“That sounds like a lovely fairytale Herald; however, there will be abominations. Conscripting them and watching them closely while the breach is still in the sky, is the only way to limit such things from happening.” It was her turn to narrow her eyes at him in her own anger. She felt the energy of her power instantly caressing her skin at the slap of his callously given words.

“Is that what has happened to me Commander, have I been conscripted into the Inquisition? Were you to be my personal Templar guard against me turning into an abomination? I mean why else would you…?” Shaking her head and staring at the table blinking fast to keep from letting the tears fall; I have been such a fool to think otherwise.

“I guess it wouldn’t be too much of a fairytale to believe that when I’ve worn out my usefulness to the Inquisition, or to you, then you will be personally escorting me to a fucking mage tower to serve out the rest of my sentence then?” She all but yelled at him as her anger elicited sparks of energy to crackle ominously around her. He felt each of her words as if she were slicing an open wound onto his skin. Is your fear of mages worth losing her? You promised her that you didn’t see her that way but you lied didn’t you Rutherford? His anger dissipated as he shook his head.

“I would never…that is you are not our prisoner.” He felt ashamed at his own weakness and knowing that his words had hurt her deeply and possibly irreparably. Everyone around the table stood silently watching them as Jo took a calming breath, and brought her power back under control. She spoke to Josephine, Leliana and Cassandra not looking at Cullen while her heart ached at his betrayal and knowing that she would never be anything more than a mage to him. Well you found out what you feared didn’t you rabbit. She wanted to run from the room, and from him. Instead, she addressed the women and pushed her feelings to the back of her mind to analyze later over a bottle of wine and a lot of tissue.
“I will leave for Redcliff tomorrow with Cassandra and Sera. Dorian will slip in with Leliana’s agents and meet us in the Great Hall of Redcliff Castle.” Turning to Leliana she said calmly, “Please send a raven to Dorian. He is waiting to meet with us outside the village so you may go over the plan with him. You won’t be able to get past the Magister’s magic without him.” Looking to Josephine she smiled shakily, “please send notice to Arle Teagan of our plans and of course to King Alistair. They must know what our plan is. I mean it is his castle were going to break into right?” Her tries at humor sounded flat even to her own ears. Cassandra and Leliana nodded their agreement, and Josephine smiled, “That is a fine idea Herald, I will send raven’s immediately.” With no other orders to give, Jo turned and left the group quietly closing the door behind her as every part of her heart screamed. Cullen stared at the closed door wanting to run after her, and apologize for him being such a complete ass but couldn’t. The look of hurt and betrayal on her face would haunt him tonight more than his own nightmares. Pinching the bridge of his nose, he heard everyone shuffling around him, leaving him in the room alone.

Jo went to the tavern grabbing a plate of lunch sitting with Varric and Sera. She needed a distraction from this afternoon’s episode. When Solas came in, she excused herself reminding Sera that they were leaving at dawn. Passing Solas he placed a hand on her arm to stop her.

“A moment of your time please?” Jo looked at the hand on her forearm then up to his eyes.

“Some other time, I am in no mood for any more discussions today. We can talk when I get back.” Pulling her arm out of his grasp, she went through the tavern door and headed to her cabin. She still needed to pack her bag for her trip in the morning, leaving Solas to watch her departure.

Cullen needed to run and do drills with his men. He couldn’t stop replaying the conversation in his head. It took everything he had to not run to her cabin to beg her to forgive him. He knew it was too soon, that she would need time to calm down. He also could use that time to figure out what he wanted as well. He had no right to be jealous of anyone she chose to be with, yet he couldn’t stop that feeling. He was no fool; he knew that he felt more than just desire for her. With everything that he was dealing with could he do that to her, ask her to be a part of his dysfunctional life? Could he get passed the fact she was a mage?

Gathering up his men he started them off on the run with him leading, and with the anger he was feeling towards himself, he set a grueling pace. When they returned to the training grounds he turned to see some of the men collapsing to the ground in exhaustion.

“You have fifteen minutes until I return and then we will begin drills.” Cullen walked off to his tent to put his armor on, his captain followed closely behind.

“Commander a moment,” Rylen called out quickly. Cullen turned to see Rylen sweating and breathing heavily from the run. He raised his eyebrow at him questioningly.

“When did we start coddling them Captain?” Rylen looked at him in the eye then snorted.

“The moment you decided to exercise your own demons out on them, Commander.” Cullen took a step towards him, and then stopped. He was right; he was punishing the men for his own failures. With a nod in agreement to his assessment, he pinched the bridge of his nose.
“Your right let them go. I will be out in five to spar with you.” Rylen gave him a half smile and
turned to release the men. Cullen’s long legs ate up the ground to his tent to put his gear on, he found
Cassandra standing outside of his tent waiting for him. He should have known today’s display would
not go unnoticed by her. She opened his tent flap allowing him to enter first following closely behind
him. Once inside she watched him pace to behind his desk.

“You’re not sleeping or eating properly I see.” Looking around at the mounds of paperwork on his
desk and more paperwork piled on the ground. Cullen looked around then back to her.

“Is there something you needed Cassandra?” She watched him carefully looking for outward signs of
lirium withdrawal.

“Would you like to explain to me what the hell was going through your head in there Cullen? It is
unlike you to lose control of your anger like that.” Cullen shook his head and felt the headache that
never left him begin to pound a little harder.

“I have no reason or a good enough excuse for my behavior. I will apologize to the Herald as soon
as she will allow me to do so.” Cassandra shook her head and crossed her arms.

“You will also need to apologize to Leliana for your behavior, Cullen. But that isn’t why I came.
You asked me to watch you and I am. I am also your friend, and I thought you might need someone
to talk to.” He smiled at her.

“No, I don’t need to talk about it Cass, but thank you for your thoughtfulness. I will apologize to
Leliana as well. Right now, I am going to go spar with Rylen, and get my anger out and get my mind
back.” Cassandra nodded her head in agreement and turned to leave.

“Keep her safe Cass,” he said softly staring at her back. She turned slightly with a knowing look. “I
will, you work on that apology. Might I suggest you take some flowers to help smooth that out?” He
laughed and agreed with her.

“I will take that into consideration.”
He paced around the small grassy area that Wisdom called its own while his mind ran in circles. His frustration and indecision apparent to the spirit, and it smiled knowingly.

“I don’t know why I kissed her. It was impulsive and reckless.”

“Fen’Harel, it is clear that you desire the woman. For more than just the physical,” it said calmly.

“That is no excuse, there are many things I want and I don’t just take them.”

“Yes, but you could actually have this, the other things are trivial in comparison. Is happiness such a hard concept for you to embrace?” It looked at him inquiringly.

“Happiness is not something that I deserve my friend…not after what I have done to the people.” He looked at it with a saddened expression and finally sat next to the spirit disheartened.

“You did what had to be done. The outcome was what it would be – nothing more or less. That you believe you do not deserve such a simple emotion is absurd.” The spirit looked at him with tenderness as it spoke.

“It does not matter what I do or do not believe. She accused me of playing a game with her like I would do something so childish.” He dropped his head into his hands and shook his head in frustration.

“Ahh, yes but weren’t you? The wolf in you is close to the surface when she is around and he likes to play. You said yourself, that you had toyed with her to prolong her training.”

Solas snorted and looked at Wisdom. “That is different, her claims were absurd. Besides, I control my wolf side, not the other way around.”

The spirit raised a delicate eyebrow at him, “Are you so sure about that?”

He stared at it for a moment then looked at the small rocks that surrounded the little pool of water. “Why does my magic reach for hers, it’s never done that before?”

Wisdom perked up at the information and smiled pleased. “It is called finding your nas’falon Fen’Harel. This is good news that she has finally come, she can help you.”

“It could just be the mark on her hand, which is my magic after all.”

Wisdom looked at him suddenly annoyed. “Don’t be so simple-minded Fen’Harel, it is unbecoming of you. Your soul needs her, and the strength she shows you; you are happier with her.”

“I may be happier with her, but that does not change that I am on the path of dinan’shiral, she cannot follow.”

“You’re a fool if you think this is the only way. You keep denying the truth to yourself; this is
unlike you, my friend. I implore you; think about this before you remove the only possibility of a real future.”

Solas groaned and rubbed his face before looking at Wisdom.

“I will think on what you have said, my friend. Thank you,” he said standing to leave.

“That is all I ask,” it said as it watched him leave.

Jo glanced over the withers of her mount at the slight pink on the horizon. Soon the sun would be cresting the mountains with spectacular color. Her bay nuzzled into her back and she returned to brushing her down for their trip. She knew that if she didn’t, Master Dennet would, but she preferred the quiet time before everyone would show up.

She was checking the cinch when she heard rocks crunching under heavy boots from behind her. She knew who it was before she cast a glance over her shoulder. Turning back to checking the cinch, she found it tight enough and moved onto the Bay’s feet. She could smell his embrium and elfroot soap in the soft morning breeze.

“Will you allow me a moment to apologize for being an utter ass yesterday?” He said staring at her bent frame over the horse’s foot. Jo put the foot down and turned to finally look at him.

“Thank you for your apology Commander.”

Turning away from him she knew her coldness hurt him, but she was still angry and hurt by his words. Cullen lifted his hand to stop her then thought better of it and let it fall away. What did you expect Rutherford? You let her know that you would never trust a mage – and that included her. He watched her for a few more seconds realizing that she was going to continue to completely ignore him and felt a swift pain in his chest.

Clearing his throat, he spoke softly, “please stay safe.” He saw the only acknowledgment was a small nod of her head and he turned to leave. He passed Cassandra and Sera on his way back towards his tent. He hoped that focusing on paperwork would distract him.

Jo walked into the Great Hall of Redcliff Castle followed by Cassandra and Sera. They saw the Venatori that lined the sides while Alexius’s envoy stood in the middle to greet them.

“The message was for Mistress Halton and her alone.” Jo coldly smiled down at the much shorter man enjoying her height advantage.

“I’m sure Alexius understands that all party invitations have a plus one attached. Now run along rabbit and introduce us.”

She looked at her nails as if she were bored while she waited for him to make up his mind. She let out a sigh of annoyance as she glanced at him with a raised eyebrow. Come on you little toad before I throttle you. He finally bowed his head and turned to lead the way to his master. She saw Alexius and his son Felix standing on the dais awaiting them.

“My friend so good of you to come…and, of course, your friends as well.” She watched him turn to sit on Arle Teagan’s throne while picking up a glass of wine to take a sip. Felix stood next to him, and she could see his discomfort.
“So, I have the Southern mages under my command and you need them, so what will you offer in return for their assistance.” Alexius glanced at her with an air of confidence and superiority. She could see he thought himself in control of the situation; she was going to enjoy bursting his bubble.

“I will offer you the opportunity to live Alexius. You will release the Southern Mages, and go home. That is all I will offer you.” Jo looked at him calmly as Alexius leaned forward with anger clearly written across his features.

“You walk in here thinking you’re in control, with a mark you stole and think to threaten me? Your nothing but a mistake, and will not live out this day.” Felix turned to his father to speak, and Jo interrupted him.

Jo laughed and shook her head at him. “This is what happens when you don’t plan things out Alexius – you get mistakes that bite you in the ass. You will not succeed in trying to go back and erase my existence at the Conclave. It will only make things worse for your continued trying. Go home, before that offer is taken from the table.”

“Father, please…listen to her. Leave the Southern mages to close the breach and let’s go home before it’s too late.” Alexius looked at his son angrily.

“You think you can turn my own son against me? When the Elder one gets here he will see to your death himself. Mages will rule again as is our rightful place to be.”

He is fucking crazy, she thought when she heard Dorian. “tsk…tsk…tsk… you sound like the typical cliché that everyone expects from a Tevinter Magister.” Alexius looked angry at the both of them.

“Dorian…I offered you to join me, you declined.”

“Yes Alexius, I declined because what you propose is madness.”

Alexius narrowed his gaze at them as he yelled out for his guards.

“Venatori…take them. The Elder One demands her death.” Alexius looked to where his guards had stood before, and now he saw Inquisition agents standing over their dead bodies.

“You are a mistake – you should never have happened,” he said sounding lost in his own thoughts. Alexius pulled out the necklace and spun the spell that would send her and Dorian into the future, and Dorian magically slapping the necklace out of his hand “NO” Dorian yelled. Jo only hoped that this alternate future would be like the game, but she had a sinking sensation it would be worse.

Chapter End Notes

nas’falon - soul mate
dinan’shiral - journey of death
Hell of a Future

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Landing in knee-deep water, she saw the two Venatori guards turn in surprise at their sudden arrival. One cursed, “Blood of the Elder One, where did they come from?”

Both guards lunged towards them to attack. Jo threw a dagger into the eye of one Venatori guard, while Dorian lit the other man on fire, instantly killing him. She walked over and took her dagger from the man’s head wiping the blood off on his pants. Turning towards Dorian he stared at her with a raised eyebrow.

“I was under the impression you were a mage, yes?” Jo nodded at him.

“I am a mage, and I like knives. Right this moment, anger is the best tool in this mage’s arsenal, not spells or this piece of wood strapped to my back. I want blood for what is about to happen to us, Dorian. Is this a problem for you?” Dorian laughed amusingly.

“No, darling. My only problem is if you only have one knife and not two.” Jo laughed and handed him the dagger currently in her hand and watched him slip it into the back of his belt in a practiced move like her own.

“Alexius dropped us a year ahead. We have to find the others before we confront him. Shall we get the fuck out of here? As far as first dates go you’re not doing so hot Dorian.”

Dorian grabbed a key from one of the dead guards that lay face down in the water and laughed.

“Oh, darling I am going to love you. You might even make me wish I desired women.”

Jo waited as he unlocked the cell door and snorted a laugh.

“Now don’t you go ruining a good thing, I have enough of that type of problem already.”

Dorian raised his brow at her questioningly but didn’t press for answers as they left the cell. “Well, then I say let’s leave this dreadful place, and find somewhere, less…wet shall we?”

They ran up a flight of steps, and she turned down the first corridor that led to Fiona. Fiona advised that they had indeed been brought forward in time and that Leliana was somewhere still within the castle. Jo turned away from the horrible scene and saw that the cells across from her were full of huge shards of red lyrium.

She rubbed her head at the sudden feeling of dizziness that came over her. She felt as if she were suffocating in the horrible song that came from the stuff. Everywhere they turned there were either cells full of the red lyrium, or it was growing up the walls. When they finally found Cassandra and Sera, she realized that the game was kind in the portrayal; reality was, however, not going to be kind.

Jo wrapped them each in a hug as tears fell down her cheeks at what they had become. She saw that both were infected with the red lyrium. Sera’s normally bright blue gaze was flat, and filled with a red haze. Her pale skin was mottled with small growths of red lyrium shards. She listened as Cassandra told them what had happened since her disappearance. Jo nodded her head in understanding and handed Cass a sword.
“Help me kill him for this,” she said frankly.

“Gladly,” Cassandra replied, her voice sounding like it was scraping over glass when she spoke.

She told them that Leliana was being held somewhere still within the castle. She knew that every Venatori they came across would pay for Alexius’s sins. Heading down a hallway covered in the red lyrium that she did not recognize from the game, she rounded a corner and could hear torture from the room to her immediate right.

Throwing open the door she thought she would find Leliana being tortured by a Venatori, but instead found Cullen. His head hung low over his chest that was covered with multiple lacerations. He hung from the ceiling by a thick chain, and manacles around his raw looking wrists. It was nothing like she had seen from the game, and she felt her stomach twist at the sight. Jo’s magic came roaring to the surface with her outrage.

Before the Venatori torturer could move, she froze him in place, and with a clench of her fist, she shattered him with her anger.

“You’re alive,” he said with relief.

To Jo, his voice sounded like it was being scraped over glass and rock as it echoed emptily in the air. Digging for the key amongst the frozen shards of the guard with shaky fingers, she reached up to unhook him. Once he was released he pulled her to him and hugged her tightly. He took a deep breath of her hair as her hands felt the lyrium growing beneath his skin. She cried at the horror of what had been done to him.

“I’m so sorry Cullen, this wasn’t supposed…” she choked out as he hushed her.

“Shh…you are here now; you couldn’t stop this from happening,” he said softly as he wiped tears from her cheeks.

Dorian grimaced at the sight of the man and hesitantly explained what had happened to them. Cullen gently lifted her chin to look at him.

“We have to get you to Alexius before the Elder One comes Jo, and soon. You must get back so this doesn’t happen.” She gave him a watery smile, and a quick nod as she began to turn when he spoke softly again.

“They captured Solas and me together when we waged our last attack. He should be here too. We will need to release him if he still lives, we will need his help.”

Jo turned frantic eyes back to him and he saw what he had thought before she left for Redcliff. *I do share her affections with the apostate.* Grabbing her hand and rubbing his thumb over her knuckles, he spoke softly.

“Let’s go find him.”

Jo turned with Cullen while everyone else followed behind. They opened every door they came to killing Venatori with renewed vigor. They found Leliana within one of the rooms chained to a wall. Releasing her, they moved down the corridor going in every room searching for Solas. They reached the last door of the long corridor and finally found him. He hung by the ceiling in the same position as they had found Cullen. He growled at his torturer like a cornered animal as the guard punched his ribs.

“Tell me how the Herald knew of the Elder One's plans at the Conclave,” he snarled at him as he hit
him again in the ribs.

“Nuva uralas telsyl na i’ga syl nyel laimen!” he growled at him as the guard hit him again.

Jo was frozen and felt her stomach lurch at the sight. Leliana used her shoulder for stabilization and put the guard in her sights, letting her arrow fly into the man’s forehead. The guard dropped dead, and Jo ran forward to dig the keys out of his pockets.

“How is it you still live? Everyone said they saw you die?”

Jo reached up to unlock his shackles unseeing from the tears that fell. She felt his hands on her face and she let a strained sob escape when he pulled her to him.

“This wasn’t…you shouldn’t” she couldn’t finish. He rubbed her back soothingly while Dorian explained what had happened to them. He lifted her chin to look at him while he spoke to the Tevinter mage.

“Then you can reverse this spell so that this future does not become,” Jo nodded her head.

“That is what we are planning on,” Dorian said as Solas took the staff that Cullen handed him.

“Then that is what shall happen. The Magister has locked himself up with Felix in the Great Hall. Let us go change this living hell into something much more livable, shall we?”

Jo nodded her head in agreement and wiped the tears from her face. Rage boiled through her veins at what had been done to them. Turning from one area to the next, they gathered the lyrium shards. Everyone, but her, was unsure of what they would do but continued killing every Venatori Mage between them and the Great Hall.

They found the large door Alexius was hiding behind, and she explained to Dorian how to use the shards to open it. She was beyond caring anymore and roared her anger at him as she raced into the room. She released the raging fire she had rolling through her blood on him in a continuous bombardment. With angry motions of her hands, she slammed a lightning cage down around the surprised Magister, holding him in place as he burned.

Jo fell to her knees with angry tears falling from her haunted eyes when the Magister finally lay dead at her feet.

Dorian fished out the necklace and glanced at her excitedly.

“It is the same one I helped him make in Minrathous. Give me an hour and…” he said hearing the choked sounds of the others and turned to look at them. Everyone looked at him in dismay and she shuddered on what she knew was to come. She knew everyone would die horribly to give them the time. She finally stood to hold both Cullen and Solas’s hands. She shook her head at Dorian as her body began to shake with cold dread.

“No Dorian, we don’t have an hour, we barely have minutes. Cast your spell and get us the fuck out of here.” As she spoke she heard the dragon’s screech from above and felt her skin grow cold as she watched those she had grown to love and respect all look at each other knowingly. Leliana spoke breaking the pregnant silence.

“We will give you as much time as we can. You must return so this future does not happen.”

Jo couldn’t let go of Cullen and Solas knowing what was to come, and she would have to witness their deaths for her. Every piece of her heart shattered at this knowledge. She didn’t know if she
could mentally survive it.

Cullen grasped her chin to make her look at him. “Our death is only temporary Jo, you can do this.” Placing a soft kiss on her forehead she felt Solas squeeze her hand in agreement.

“You must return lethal’lan, we will be waiting for you,” he said kissing her forehead.

Cullen nodded to Solas and she saw him return the gesture. They headed for the door with Cassandra and Sera not once looking back. She felt a sob catch in her throat as she watched the large doors close behind them. Leliana stood with her bow drawn and trained at the door.

She watched in horror when the doors flung open and their bodies were flung onto the floor at her feet while Leliana let her arrows fly. Jo bit her fist to keep from crying out as she gazed upon their mutilated bodies frozen. Spurring into action at the sound of Leliana speaking and threw a barrier around her, before attacking from her place with lightning.

”Though darkness closes, I am shielded by flame,” Leliana begins to recite as she releases an arrow at a demon.

“Andraste, guide me,” she said shooting another arrow and seeing it split a demon’s head in half.

“Maker, take me to your side...” firing more arrows, Jo kept throwing barriers over her. She threw one fireball after another ignoring the tears streaming down her cheeks. Dorian continued working the spell that would take them back to when they left. Jo turned her face away with a choked sob as she saw Leliana being held down by demons. The cry that left her throat was the sound of a mentally broken woman. She watched in horror as they eviscerating Leliana on the floor, while a large group of demons moved towards them.

Dorian grabbed her shaking body and pulled her through the rift with him. She found herself face to face with Gereon Alexius who slid to his knees in defeat. Growling like a crazed animal, she lunged for him before anyone could stop her. Jo wrapped her hand around his throat, her magic crackling around her uncontrolled. Alexius’s eyes were round in fear at the feeling of his flesh burning beneath her grasp.

“You will live in pain and desolation Alexius. You will live there until I decide it’s your time to finally die.”

Jo stared at the man with hatred while tears ran down her face. She could see the Magister staring into her eyes with fear, and knowing she spoke true. Never pulling her gaze from him she snarled at Felix.

“Go, Felix. Find your peace, your father will not for a very long time.”

Felix all but ran from the room as soldiers came to collect Alexius. She released the burning chokehold on the Magister and watched as Fiona hesitantly walked forward.

“Do not speak to me, Fiona. Your mistakes are the reason I am here and have endured the unthinkable for what you have done. The only thing I want to hear from you is will you and your mages ally with the Inquisition to close the breach or not.”

Fiona stared at the woman with barely restrained magic swirling around herself with her anger and spoke anxiously.

“This breach will be closed, and the mages will be proud to help you close it, Herald.” Jo nodded at her and walked towards Cassandra and then quietly collapsed at her feet.
Chapter End Notes

Nuva uralas telsyl na i’ga syl nyel laimen! - May nature strangle you with all the air you have wasted.
Nightmares

Chapter Summary

Da'len - young one

Cassandra sent word ahead that they would be spending a few days in camp after what happened in Redcliff. Jo was ill and unable to keep anything down from depleting her mana. The first night in camp her fever raged. This led to gruesomely, real-like nightmares. Dorian sat with her as she cried and screamed at the hallucinations that came from the fever and her nightmares.

Finally getting her to take the sleeping draft, Dorian staggered from the tent as the sun was just beginning to rise. He saw Cassandra holding a cup of coffee for him and he sat down heavily, looking at her grateful.

“Bless you,” he said and took a sip of the strong brew.

Cassandra gazed at him hard for a moment and then rubbed her face tiredly as she spoke.

“Can you tell me what happened?”

She saw the haunting look in his eyes as he nodded his head, yes. Leliana came from her tent and sat next to Cassandra. She wanted to hear what had transpired in the future they saw. Dorian started from the beginning and by the time he was finished, both women looked horrified.

“I shall look into these things that you both saw in this dark future,” Leliana said quietly.

“Demon army – the death of Empress Celine, who is this Elder One?” Cassandra whispered bewildered.

Dorian shook his head as he answered. “I do not know. I can only assume he is the leader of the Venatori.”

They heard whimpers come from the tent, and Dorian stood gazing at them before he left.

“Whatever you choose to do, right now you need to get her back to Haven. I cannot give her the medical attention she needs if she does not start to accumulate mana soon.”

Both nodded their understanding and watched Dorian enter the tent.

A few days of fever and stomach illness, Jo could finally sit on a horse to ride back to Haven. She stared unseeing at her surrounding as Dorian tried speaking with her. Then Sera and Cassandra tried to engage her in conversation. She only nodded or gave one worded answers to questions. She couldn’t look at them after seeing what the lyrium had done to them.

She rubbed her eyes trying to remove the vision of their scattered, broken bodies thrown on the floor in front of her. Everyone but Dorian decided that after her lack of response they would stay quiet.
They finally arrived at Haven and Jo slid from her horse, landing unsteadily on her feet. She avoided looking at Cullen and moved around him. Dropping the reins, she walked away leaving Master Dennet to care for her mount. Both men stared after her never having seen her look so gaunt and haunted before as she passed by them. Cullen stared after her as she left powerless to help her. That left him to look for answers from Cassandra and the new Tevinter mage.

Dorian looked at the Commander and understood how she found herself quite taken with the man; he was halfway there himself he believed as he introduced himself.

“Dorian Pavus, at your service, Commander.” With a slight bow, Cullen focused his attention on him.

“I don’t care who you are, what the void happened to her.” Cullen was barely in control of his anger as he waited for answers. Dorian studied him quietly and then saw the elven man who she had shown her affection for as well. Solas walked up behind Cullen his anger clearly written on his face.

“She will tell you…when she is ready. I cannot…” Cullen took an angry step towards him when the man stopped speaking. Cassandra put a restraining hand on Cullen’s shoulder.

“Commander, come with me and we will discuss the events of Redcliff.” Solas watched them walk away and turned to Sera.

“Da’len, will you please share with me what happened.”

Sera snorted at him as she handed the reigns of her horse over to a stable hand ignoring him. Solas grabbed her shoulder and turned her towards him abruptly.

“What happened,” he asked with barely repressed rage in his tone. Sera stepped back and out of Solas’s grip.

“She will tell ya if she wants ya wanker, now go fucks yourself off. Yeah?”

Solas stared at the city elf with disdain and turned away, only to suddenly turn back to her with a look of calm placed on his features.

“Sera…as an elf, have you thought that you might have hidden magical talent. I would be happy to help you find out if you do. Maybe you and I could discuss this over some dinner and wine?” Sera looked nervous at him then shrugged.

“I like food and booze, I don’t wanna know about any magical stuff, and I’m not going to tell you shite you got that?” Solas nodded his head in agreement as he followed her towards the tavern. Dorian watched everyone leaving not sure where he should go when the elven mage turned back to him.

“Please come and dine with us Master Pavus, I am sure you need food and drink after such an ordeal.”

Dorian bowed slightly at him and smiled, he was not ready to sleep and fight off his own nightmares just yet. Having held Jo through her own night terrors had greatly diminished his own.

“Yes, I think I shall, thank you Solas.”

The surprised look that crossed his face at the use of his name was worth whatever this so-called dinner and drinks would provide. Falling into step with them, he felt a bubbling curiosity at how she had found herself interested in the two men.
Jo walked into her cabin and locked the door. Throwing herself face first into her bed she began crying. Everything she had felt, witnessed, and endured had finally taken its toll on her sanity. Nothing was like it was shown in the game. *This is real...all of this is real.*

She shuddered with memories of Cullen, and the shards of lyrium growing from his beautiful skin. His skin had been scarred and cast a reddish color. His whiskey colored cat eyes had a terrifying red glow to them. Jo rolled into a fetal position as she tried to push out the visions.

Her mind would not stop, and soon she saw how Solas was not far behind with lyrium beginning to grow from his body. His skin had the same red pallor as Cullen’s. His beautiful foggy colored eyes with the lightning in them also had a chilling red haze to them.

She wrapped her arms around her head as the warped song that the lyrium sang played on repeat through her head and moaning in pain, she couldn’t get any of it out. She sobbed at the sounds of her friends dying for her and she did not feel even one ounce of worthy for their sacrifices.

Whimpering with terror at the memories, she relived watching them thrown on the floor of the keep in front of her by the horde of demons. The vision spun dizzyingly so she could watch Leliana’s guts ripped from her…squeezing her eyes tightly as tears slipped out the sides. *No more...no more,* she moaned as her mind screamed silently.

You were right Cullen; it’s only a temporary death. One that I will relive for the rest of my living days… Sleep...I need sleep that is all; she pulled the covers over her and buried her face in her pillow.

Cullen ran a hand through his already mussed hair in agitation while pacing behind his desk. Cassandra sat watching his frustration and could sympathize with him; she had felt a bit of that when Dorian had given her a report of what had happened.

“She was forced to watch everyone die so she could return. They tossed us onto the floor as they advanced towards them. Leliana from what I understand was disemboweled in front of her by a demon. She has not quite worked through it … yet. I am confident that she just needs a few more days to recuperate.”

Cullen glanced at her as she continued with her report thinking it would be more than a few more days. He had witnessed horrible things in his seventeen years as a Templar, and he still couldn’t shake them.

“This dark future she saw shows an army of demons will sweep across Thedas after the fall of Empress Celine, we will need to consider this,” he agreed. Placing his hands on his desk he looked at Cassandra.

“When are we to expect the mages?”

“In two days, maybe three at the most. I was unsure for a moment if she wasn’t going to kill Fiona, she was so angry. When she stepped out of the rift with Dorian, she had the Magister by the throat; we could smell his flesh cooking. Her magic was swirling around her uncontrolled in her anger, and if everything Dorian said happened, I would have ripped his throat out myself. However, he is now in our dungeon waiting for the Arle to return so that he may judge him.” Cullen rubbed his hand over his face.
“Alright then, we shall see if they will be enough to close the breach. In the meantime, Sir Baris and a group of his men came in yesterday to help in whatever capacity they can. From what he’s reported, there is some troubling news coming out of Therenfal where they had been stationed.” Cassandra looked at him with unease in her eyes.

“Troubling news with the Lord Seeker then?” Cullen nodded, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Sir Baris thinks that there is a demon at play within the order.” Holding up his hand to stop Cassandra from disagreeing, “I know what you are going to say, and I thought that too. However, I would ask you to listen to Baris first then make a decision.” Cassandra twisted the gloves she held in her hands.

“I should have listened to her,” she said softly shaking her head in frustration with herself. Cullen looked at her sharply.

“Listened to whom?” Cassandra stopped twisting her gloves in agitation.

“Jo, I should have listened to her when we were in Val Royeaux. She told me that an Envy demon was passing as the Lord Seeker, but I did not believe her because as a Seeker I know we cannot be possessed. But, if what Baris says is true, it might prove that I am a fool for not listening to her.” Cullen ran his hand through his hair again then grabbed a report he pretended to needed to finish.

“Go get some rest Cass, we can talk later.” She smiled and stood up thinking about a nice hot bath and a book to read.

Solas listened while Dorian gave him the information of what had occurred in Redcliff, and he felt the blood drain from his face. To keep this alternate future from happening she must stay alive. What have I done? I have possibly killed her myself. Dorian watched the expressions play across the elven mage’s face. Interesting he thought as he tapped his finger against his chin. Taking the last swallow of his wine he stood.

“Well it has been fun, but I am going to take a bath and then sleep for at least a week. Good night everyone.” Dorian turned to leave the tavern to look for his cabin as Solas stood up with him.

“I will show you where your cabin is Dorian, it is across from mine.” Dorian bowed slightly, “mighty good of you, thank you Solas.”

The horrible images replayed of them chained, beaten, and then broken on the floor while a horde of demons ran at them. Jo was reliving the horrible scene over and over as Cullen and Solas stood outside of her dream watching in shocked dismay. Both men watched as one horror after another played out in front of them unable to stop it from happening. Neither one could bring her any comfort. Somehow she had dragged them into her dream without knowing it. Even though she was sharing it with them, they were unable to interact with her.

Solas tried everything he knew of the fade to get to her, only to have his efforts denied. Soon his inability to produce a result had his wolf side clambering to the surface and once freed he paced the barrier that kept him from her. He snarled and snapped at the offending barricade.

Cullen pounded at the barrier savagely; growled, cursed at the offending thing keeping him from her. Uncontrolled rage boiled through him at her sobs and screams and he was powerless to do anything to stop it.
Jo tossed in her bed suddenly suffocated by the covers. One body after another thrown at her, and she wrenched from the blankets screaming, “Make it stop, make it stop.”

Crying, and shaking almost uncontrollably, she pulled her legs up and wrapped her arms around them tightly as she began to rock. She did not know that when she had awoken, she had also released the two men from her own hellish nightmare.

Dorian lay with his eyes wide, afraid of going back to sleep and what he would see again. He had tried, but the nightmare would plague him and he found himself lying there not wanting to repeat it. He got up and slipped his shoes on thinking that Jo would also be awake and decided that he couldn’t sleep unless she was next to him. He hadn’t realized that she had kept his nightmares away while he had held her through her own. Slipping from his cabin, he found hers not too far from his and could hear her sobbing behind the door.

Knocking none to gently he tried to open it but found the door wouldn’t budge.

“Jo, it’s Dorian, open up kitten,” he said standing outside her door waiting and heard shuffling behind the door. When the door opened she walked into his arms and held on as if she were drowning.

“Shh…shh…come now, it’s going to be okay. I find that not having you next to me has made the dreams much worse, and from the looks of it you’re having a time of it yourself.”

Walking with her held against him, he shut the door behind them. He brought her back to bed and tucked her under the covers. Lying down next to her, she pillowed her head on his chest and cried. He stroked the hair from her face as it lay over his chest while he softly hummed a Tevinter lullaby to calm her. Dorian felt her breathing begin to deepen, and he felt himself finally falling off to sleep.
Male Bonding

Cullen sat on the edge of his bed drenched in a cold sweat. His fists clenched with every muscle tight from his inability to help her. Everything he had seen...dropping his head into his hands, he rubbed his face. He had never felt so helpless before, except when he had been trapped by the desire demon.

He couldn’t banish her cries or sobbing from his mind, as she threw fireballs at the pouring of demons through the door stalking Leliana echoed through his mind.

Her reaction to finding him hanging in the room of the castle had broken his heart. He didn’t deserve her tears after how he had treated her the last time they had spoken. Her discovery of Solas hung in a similar fashion as he had been, confirmed that he shared her affections. It had upset him at first, but then he thought that he didn’t deserve her. He needed to move and get out of his cabin; maybe going for a walk and getting some fresh air would rid his mind of the echoing of her cries.

Solas leaped from his bed as he was released from her nightmare. He paced his cabin like the caged wolf he felt clamoring to rise to the surface. Every cell in his body screamed at his inability to protect what was his. *I have no right to call her mine,* he thought with a shake of his head.

Her ability to drag him through the fade to witness her nightmare surprised and scared him. The sounds of her cries and sobs at the carnage of dead friends lying at her feet had ripped him apart and left him shaken. He shuddered at the memory of watching the Spymaster being gutted in such a manner. The grotesque imagery that played behind his eyes clenched his stomach in disgust.

He saw her affections for the Commander, and it had angered him, and yet at the same time, he could not blame her for her feelings. He was unworthy of her affection, she deserved someone like the Commander, but he could not seem to walk away from her. The realization that the Commander knew of her affection for him was apparent when he had told her.

“They captured Solas and me, together when we waged our last attack. He should be here too. We will need to release him if he still lives, we will need his help.”

He had seen her react similarly to finding him, and it surprised if not humbled him. He had not expected her to have any kind of deeper feelings for him, especially with what she knew of him. It was even more of a surprise that the Commander knew of them. The whole nightmare replayed over and over in his mind and he felt like he was suffocating in his room. He needed to get out of his cabin to clear his mind of the whole disgusting ordeal.

Cullen took a deep breath of the brisk night air, cleansing himself of the hellish visions. He walked without seeing; he only knew he needed to get out of his cabin. He came to the path he normally ran and followed it absently focusing on the silence, and the crisp night air burning through his lungs. Rounding the second corner of the river, he saw a tall silhouette standing next to the water. As his legs brought him closer to the shadowy figure, he realized it was Solas. Not understanding what he was doing, he walked towards the mage realizing that maybe neither one should be alone with their thoughts.

Solas knew who was coming up the path and felt no annoyance at being disrupted. Maybe he needed companionship with someone right now. Not a common feeling for him, nevertheless he
could not explain why he felt the need to not be alone with his own thoughts. He suddenly didn’t understand it, but he wanted to find friendship with this man.

He glanced over at the large man standing next to him silently. His presence calmed his mind from the torturous thoughts that would not leave him in the crisp air of the silent evening. Both men stared at the slowly flowing water in companionable silence. Cullen shook his head silently at the calming strangeness of the situation he found himself in; Solas glanced at him with a knowing look.

“I have a good bottle of homemade, Ferelden wine that my sister made back at my cabin; care to share it with me?” Cullen asked. Solas glanced at him then replied. “Only one bottle Commander?” Cullen smiled and headed back towards Haven with Solas walking beside him companionably.

After two bottles they realized they had more in common than a woman. Solas refilled their glasses and sat back companionably.

“Did you agree with Knight-Commander Meredith’s choices?” He watched as Cullen took a thoughtful drink of his wine.

“I honestly did at first, but I was bitter and scarred from my own experiences with the falling of the Ferelden Circle. That doesn’t excuse my behavior, just gives one insight into why I was such a narrow-minded ass,” he laughed.

“I knew that when Hawke was forced to choose between the Templars or the mages, she would choose the mages. Meredith was wrong, and I knew it, so I stood with her and her companions against her.”

He took a drink of his wine and a flicker of a smile lit his lips for a moment. Solas was slightly surprised at the small flicker of desire that curled through him as he watched the slight smile on his face. He suddenly glanced into his wine intently. I’ve drunk too much, he thought pushing the feeling away.

“From that first moment, I knew Hawke was an apostate. That didn’t stop her from saving my ass from an abomination within our own ranks because of blood magic. She never hid who she was from anyone. Even Meredith wouldn’t approach anyone with the idea of putting her in a circle. Hell, most of my men either had a crush on her or feared her. In the end, she had become my friend and urged me to take Cassandra’s offer.”

Cullen suddenly smiled with memories and took another drink of his wine.

“Ozana is her name or Oz for short. She is a friendly, out-going woman who takes no shit, and loyal to a fault. Her friends were willing to die for her. She is not unlike our Herald right now.”

Solas laughed and realized that he surprisingly liked him. He did not lie about the man he had been, he owned his mistakes. Something he was not use to seeing in a human. Cullen watched him laugh and felt a soft tendril of magic slip over his hand igniting a small shiver of desire. Am I drunk? He thought silently as he studied the feeling for a moment and then brushed it away as too much wine.

“You, Commander, are not like any templar I have ever had a run in with. Most are quick to anger, to blame, and fear everything outside their own grip on reality. None would willingly admit they respected or had befriended an apostate. It shows that even with the order’s rules, you still followed your own compass. Good on you sir,” Solas said as he raised his glass to him then took a sip.

Cullen raised his glass to him as well, “I can now say that I have met another apostate I respect, and
would befriend. I am thankful for the opportunity.” Solas looked at him sharply then looked at the ground speaking his thoughts before he could really think of the receptivity of them.

“Can you, even when we are both interested in the same woman?” Cullen lowered his glass and smiled sadly at him.

“Even though Solas.”

Taking a sip of his wine he shrugged his shoulders deciding he would speak candidly.

“She is going to need both of us to make it through all of this. It doesn’t matter if it is as a lover or as a friend. She will need us in one fashion or the other, do you disagree?” Solas stared at him in surprise.

“No, I do not disagree. Her nightmare showed us both that she cares for us in some manner. I am surprised that you are…agreeable to the idea though.” Cullen chuckled as he realized that it felt right to talk with him like this.

“Well, I can say I have never had to make this type of decision before. But I believe she deserves grown men, not boys arguing and fighting over her affections. She obviously cares for both of us, and I would rather not be another reason for her to worry. I just want her happy,” he said simply before taking a drink of his wine.

Solas took a drink of his own glass and nodded his agreement at Cullen’s assessment of the situation. “Well if I must act like a grown man, I would rather it be with someone who can as well.” Both men laughed at the situation then Solas raised his glass again.

“To my new friend and to his sister, who makes wine better than I have tasted in a long time.” Cullen raised his own glass, “so very true. Not too sure about the swill at the tavern, but I love that my sister sends me crates of her homebrew so I don’t have to find out.”

Solas raised his eyebrow at him. “Crates?”

Cullen laughed and pointed to the corner wall of his cabin where he could see four crates stacked up.

“Yes, my friend crates.”

They started laughing again and Solas shook his head. “Oh my, I see many hang-overs in my future...” Cullen laughed and then commented off-handedly.

“Since stopping lyrium, I am in a perpetual hang-over twenty-four seven.”

Solas tapped his glass thoughtfully and then decided to say what he had been thinking.

“You know if you would allow me, I can help you lessen some of the symptoms.” Cullen looked at him skeptically, and Solas pressed on.

“There are potions to help with headaches, and there are some things that I can do magically, if you allow it, to help lessen the symptoms. It’s not a cure, but it can make things…manageable.” Cullen looked at him skeptically, and then thoughtfully.

“Really?” he asked almost scared to hope for some relief.

Solas smiled and then nodded. “Yes, there are things that can be of help to such symptoms if you are open to them. I can make the potions tomorrow, and if you would allow, I can do the magic anytime
you are comfortable.”

Cullen looked at him apprehensively, and Solas smiled knowingly. “Only when you’re ready Cullen, nothing before then. Tonight…we will enjoy your sister’s wine and each other’s company since neither one of us is all that eager to sleep. Tomorrow will take care of itself.”

Cullen laughed somewhat nervously and then stared at Solas.

“I am a mess, anything that could help; I will gladly take or try. I don’t care what people think of magic. I know what it can and cannot do and it all depends on the mage wielding it. I…trust you.” Solas felt instantly humbled by his admission. Knowing he had been abused by mages in his past, he couldn’t help but feel awestruck at his trust and belief in him.

“I will not let you down, this I promise.” Both men raise their glasses and toast their agreement. Many hours later when Solas went to leave, Cullen gave him a case of wine to take with him to his own cabin. Telling him that he must share what he had sitting there against the wall first before he opened the case he had given him. Laughingly he had agreed.
Trying to Find a Center

Jo’s eyes slowly opened at the sounds of Dorian’s soft snores against her head. Comforted by the normalcy of it all, she stretched and felt him move in his own sleepy acknowledgment of her waking. When she felt his hand playing with her hair she knew he was awake.

“We can’t keep this up, now can we?” she whispered afraid to break the silence. She felt his snort through her cheek pressed on his chest.

“Did someone make rules while we were sleeping?” he responded with a sleepy voice. Jo chuckled softly.

“Not that I know of, but I am sure sleeping together for three days will go over as well as a whore in church.”

Dorian burst into laughter and his fits of giggles caused tears to slide down his face.

“My dear, I do not know where you get such verbal ideas. However, they are interesting to think about.” Jo smiled up at him then kissed him on his nose and returned to her position of lying on his chest.

“Thank you, Dorian; for staying with me these past few days…You’re right about the dreams…I…Uh…needed you. Thank you for being my friend.” She felt his shoulders shrug under her face while still lying on his chest.

“My dear I hate confessions but…you are a treasure. You know who and what I am, and have encompassed me into your life from the beginning. You are not hard to be a friend too.”

Jo snuggled into his side and held on not giving him a chance to move.

“Oh, my beautiful Tevinter mage,” she said with a theatrical sigh making him chuckle. “I do not understand how your countrymen are so fucked up, but I am really glad you’re not like them.” Dorian smiled and slipping her loose hair from her face to behind her ear, he kissed her forehead.

“Shall we rise, and see what the day offers? I do think that we should probably clean up first before we face everyone….” Jo smiled and nodded her head.

“Your right… I know I smell like ass and so does my breath.” Shaking her head a little, “later we shall talk without offending each other with our breath.” Dorian laughed and kissed her on her lips.

“Yes… for the love of the Maker... please…bathe and rinse your mouth. Three days is too long to go without.” Laughing, Jo moved to get up and Dorian grabbed her hand to stop her for a moment.

“The two men you love… they have been pacing the cabin a few times over the last three nights. Kind of like sentinels, it is rather depressing to watch really. Talk to them dear or they may take offense.” Jo smiled as she thought about his words.

“Both of them?”

Dorian smiled knowingly.

“Yes, both my dear. Sometimes together, and sometimes alone. You can tell that they are waiting for you to approach them first. Talk to them or they will start to think there is something going on here
besides friendship.” Jo looked at him a moment and then nodded her head in agreement. Turning away from him she knew she couldn’t hide from either one of them. Not with Corypheus coming to kill them all soon.

Cullen continued working the mages in with his military with the help of Fiona and Solas. He moved those that were suited for healing, potion making, glyphs, and wards to the appropriate tents and cabins and those that wanted to fight, he paired them with a recruit or templar. The system was working quite well he thought. Some were reluctant to pair with a Templar, but those who had found it a rewarding give and take. He wished he would have thought about this a long time ago. The early friendships he saw growing between them was beneficial, and he was starting to think that if a mage had someone with them, they were less likely to delve into forbidden magics or become possessed by fear or circumstance. It was nice to see the groups working together to help each other overcome their weaknesses.

Talking with a new group of recruits, he saw her finally leave her cabin. He couldn’t keep his heart from stopping for a moment at the sight of her. He knew the Tevinter mage had been there every night since they had returned to Haven. Cassandra had communicated to him that since Redcliff, they had relatively slept in the same place since the ordeal. She surmised that it was because they both shared in the nightmares, and found a comfort with each other. She also hinted that he was the mages type than Jo. *That is a relief,* he thought. It was enough that he and Solas had come to an understanding; he didn’t think he could be any more reasonable then he already was when it came to her.

Solas had taken up helping the Commander with the mage recruits during the day, and from his position, he saw Jo leave her cabin. She hadn’t even looked in their direction and he felt his heart hurt. She had completely ignored both men and had taken to having the Tevinter around. He could understand why she did, but that didn’t mean her rejection didn’t hurt.

Jo took a deep breath of the crisp air and turned towards the Chantry. She needed to speak with Leliana and Cassandra about when they were going to close the breach. Until she had that taken care of she wouldn’t think of speaking with Cullen or Solas. She knew she couldn’t ignore them indefinitely; she just didn’t want to do it immediately. Opening the Chantry door, she saw Cassandra talking with Leliana, and was glad she wouldn’t have to hunt them down. Both women smiled upon seeing her and beckoned her over to them.

“Glad to see you out of your cabin Herald. We have much to discuss now that the mages are here.” Leliana spoke gently. Jo smiled at them and nodded her head in agreement.

“Thank you both for allowing me the time to...umm...well to get my shit together. Why don’t you fill me in on what I have missed while I wallowed in my pity party for one.” Cassandra laughed and gripped her shoulder.

“Follow Leliana to the war room, and I will grab the Commander and Josephine. Everyone will want to update you on what is currently going on with the mages, and we can discuss a timeframe for the closure of the breach.” Jo nodded and watched Cassandra leave the Chantry. Turning to follow Leliana as she led them to the room to wait, she couldn’t help feeling nervous at being in the same room as Cullen. She replayed the last time they were all in here. *That was not a fun conversation; this one will be ten times better as long as you don’t see everyone dead, broken and thrown on the ground in front of you.* Jo shook the morbid thoughts away when she heard the door open.
Cullen walked through the door, and she felt her stomach fill full of butterflies. Goddess knows she had missed him and their easy conversations. She had also missed his very handsome lips on hers, but that was something to think about later. Right now, they needed to talk business and there would be no room for her hormones. Listening to the deep timbre of his voice felt like warm whiskey running through her veins. Closing her eyes, she breathed slowly before she finally lifted her head and looked at him.

Cullen could see the deep shadows beneath her eyes, the tightness around her mouth. She looked beautifully haunted, and he had to grip his sword hilt to keep from grabbing her. *Focus Rutherford, you have a report to give, stop staring at her like some love-struck puppy,* he reprimanded himself.

“The mages have chosen positions that they felt proficient in doing. Some have chosen to join the military and have been paired with warriors, rogues or templars. The pairing has shown great promise so far. Solas has been a great help in getting them included. With your abilities in hand to hand combat, he helped me see the benefit to our own military, and I would have to agree with him. It has shown great promise thus far.” He saw her listening carefully and clenched his hand to keep from reaching out to touch her face.

“Fiona has elected fifteen of her most seasoned mages in preparing to help you with closing the breach. Captain Rylen approached me with the idea of using templars as well. He has gathered ten templars that are also preparing to help as well. I am quite confident that the mixture of templars and mages, with the use of your mark, will give us the edge we need. They are waiting for you to just say when you’re ready.”

Jo was grateful for his application of mages into his military. She was more surprised that he and Solas had worked together to make it happen. She hadn’t thought he would allow the mages any freedom. She smiled at him and watched his face soften, letting her know he had been more nervous than she.

“I am glad you found a way to integrate them into the Inquisition’s military. I know you won’t regret it.” Looking at everyone else around the table she continued. “I would like to approach the breach in two days if that is agreeable with everyone.” Looking around the table they all nodded their agreements. When she had gotten all the updates she turned to leave and heard Cullen clear his throat behind her.

“Herald, if I may have a moment before you go?” She could feel his eyes boring a hole into her back. *Don’t be a chicken,* she thought as she nodded, “Of course Commander.” Watching everyone else file out of the room, she saw Josephine smile at her encouragingly as she closed the door. Taking a deep breath, she turned to look at him.

Cullen kept his grip on his sword feeling nervous now that he had her alone. Clearing his throat again, he laughed nervously.

“I had hoped…you see I wanted to...well this was much easier to say in my head.” He watched her smile nervously at him and grasped for his confidence before it left him.

“I know the last time we spoke I was a royal ass, and for that I am sorry. If I could take it back I would. Knowing that I hurt you is killing me, and thinking that you might never forgive me is unbearable,” he said in a rush. Walking around the table, he had to touch her and reached out to touch her face gently.

“I have felt empty without you, Jo. Please forgive me, and at least let our friendship continue if nothing else. I would rather have that then nothing at all because the thought of you not in my life is too painful to think about.”
Jo knew she was incapable of staying mad at him. She had forgiven him the moment she had left Haven, but he didn’t know that. So here he stood, giving her his feelings to do with whatever she wanted, and it was humbling. Sighing softly, she lifted her hand to place it over his and leaned her face into his gloved hand.

“Cullen, I forgave you the moment I left for Redcliff. I knew your words were based on fears not easily forgotten. My words were anger at those fears and the reasons you had them. I cherish our time together. You have to know that you are important to me, Cullen. No words, no arguments could change that.”

Cullen let out a breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. Pulling her into his arms, he held her as much for himself as for her. He hadn’t realized how much he had come to depend on feeling her touch, and when her arms embraced him he felt as if he were finally home.

Jo wanted to bury herself in his strength; she needed him and knew it. She had spoken honestly when she told him, he was important to her. His normally calm, somewhat shy demeanor was soothing to her and she felt safe in his arms.

Cullen buried his face in her hair and breathed deeply. He did not understand how she had become so important to him in such a small amount of time, but he was thankful for it. She made him feel whole and he couldn’t let that go. Feeling her against him, holding him this way, brought forth such protective instincts in him that it bordered on irrational. Pulling away from her, he smiled into the bottomless depths of her blue eyes.

“There is much I am sure you would like to get done today.” He said softly giving her a lopsided smile. “Though I would much rather stand here and hold you all day.” Jo laughed; you have no idea how enticing that sounds, she thought.

“Yes, I still need to speak with Fiona about the preparations, and then I would like to speak with Captain Rylen. I need to get up to speed on their arrangements, and how this is going to work.” Cullen acknowledged her plan with a nod and turned to open the door for her.

“Then we shall see each other later than?” he asked as he grabbed the door handle.

Jo laid her hand on his arm causing him to turn back towards her. Standing on her tiptoes she planted a soft kiss on his lips and smiled into his eyes.

“I hope so Commander.”

Turning to walk out of the room, Cullen placed a hand on her waist and pulled her back to him.

“That is not a proper way to say goodbye, Herald.”

Bending his head towards hers, he plundered her mouth as if he were waging a war. Every change of angle, the delving of his tongue dancing with hers, the small bites on her lower lip; were all meant to send licks of fire racing through her veins to pool in her stomach. When he released her lips, her eyes slowly slid open to see his Cheshire cat-like grin on his face.

“That is a proper goodbye,” he said as he slapped her behind ushering her through the door. Jo walked through the Chantry in a daze at what had just happened in the war room. Not uttering a word as they both left the Chantry, she watched as he strolled off to his training grounds as she shook her head to clear the daze she was lost in. Touching her lips gently at the memory, she smiled and headed off to where Fiona was set up with the mages.
Solas watched as Cullen came back to the training area looking more relaxed than he had in a week. *They must have spoken,* he thought. Turning back to helping a mage with mastering the fade step, he felt nervous about his own discussion that would happen with her soon. She would have questions, and he for some reason was unafraid to answer them. She had changed everything for him and yet he didn’t know how he was going to approach this sudden change. Could he be content with friendship?

*No, you couldn’t.*

*Focus on the task at hand and time will take care of itself,* he thought as he watched the mage finally utilize the new technique.
He had been helping the mages for hours and he needed some lunch. Walking by Cullen, he nodded at him, “lunch” he said, as Cullen lifted his head in acknowledgment. Making his way to the tavern, he tapped the snow from his boots before he entered. Grabbing some stew and a pint, he walked to the corner table and sat facing the door. He pulled the book Dorian lent him on magic they used to make the amulet from his small pack at his side. Taking another bite of his stew, he glanced up at the sound of the door opening and watched her walk in with Fiona and few other mages.

She was steadfastly discussing something with Fiona, while the other two mages grabbed food and drinks. Fiona led Jo to a table off to the side, and he felt her soft laughter caress his skin. He watched her laughing from the corner of his eye before she took a drink of her ale; smiling at the other two mages over something one had said, she slid a stray lock of hair behind her ear. He tried again to focus on his book and his stew, and ignore the close proximity of her, but he couldn’t.

His magic called to her and unknowingly hers answered. He could feel the warm licks of energy caressing his hand. Closing his eyes, he took a calming breath knowing she was unaware of what she was doing to him. He glanced down to his bowl of stew and knew he had no more appetite, not for stew anyway, and he couldn’t remember the last line he had read from his borrowed book. Closing the book and dropping a coin on the table, he left the tavern ignoring the looks from the other mages as he walked by.

“He is a strange one, that one,” Maeve whispered as Solas passed. Jo had felt his magic dance along her neck and had done everything in her power to not look at him. She was unsure of how to approach him yet. She watched his retreating form, and then looked back at Maeve.

“He isn’t strange at all; Solas just likes his privacy.” Maeve looked nervously at Jo not wanting to offend.

“Don’t get me wrong, I meant nothing by it. He is just so different from other mages. He has immense magical abilities that you wouldn’t normally see in an untrained mage, is all I meant.”

Jo smiled at Maeve understanding her conundrum. You have no idea how trained he really is, she thought. Fiona spoke up then, “Solas is an unusual mage Herald, you must have noticed.” Jo found herself smiling at them.

“He is only unusual to you because he has never set foot in a circle. He has helped me greatly with my own powers and understanding the ebb and flow of the fade. He taught me the many differences between demons and spirits, and how to recognize them. He is immensely talented when it comes to his magic, but if you took the time to speak with him, you would understand how he became so talented. He studies, he practices and he is at peace with himself.” She looked around the table and laughed at their expressions. “He also taught me that being a mage is not a sentence of enslavement, but a freedom to share with others. I always thought I had to hide my talents for fear of others, I will not no more,” she said calmly as she took a sip of her ale.

“The Chant tells you that magic is meant to serve man, not rule man. But putting mages into circle towers, magic serves no one. If you have magic, you are lorded over by every man. I wonder if
Andraste meant that in the end.”

Taking a sip of her beer she watched the women around her stare in wonder at her statement. Fiona laughed, “I never thought of it in that way. It is something I will need to really think about when I say the chant next time.” She said before taking a sip of her own beer.

Jo left Fiona and the other mages to head for Captain Rylen and his group of Templars. She passed rows of mages and warriors, or templars sparring together. Some were using smite on their opponents, forcing them to utilize their hand to hand combat skills instead of magic. Some of the men and women were laughing at each other.

She heard the taunts from a group as she passed.

“Keep laughing at me metal head, and you’re gonna get a pair of frozen smalls to wear.”

Hearing the joking comradery between them made her laugh. She found Rylen and his men circled around a fire, and waved to them.

“Boys here she is, the Herald of Andraste,” Rylen commented as she approached.

Jo grimaced at the name as Rylen laughed at her discomfort.

“Don’t care for the title my lady?” Jo snorted.

“You sir are a menace, and you know damned well I don’t like the title. But I am here to learn what you have concocted to help with closing the breach. For now, show me what you got boys.” Rylen smiled and motioned for her to take a seat, as he began explaining what they would do to help amplify the power of the mages.

Two hours passed and Jo was full of information. She needed to get out of her head and run for a bit she thought. Changing clothes in her cabin, she started jogging for the path. She passed men and women sparring with swords and shields, or daggers with dummies. She passed Cassandra sparring with a young man. He currently was lying on the ground looking up at her with fear and awe as she waved when she went by.

It was a beautiful day, and the air held the prospects of spring she thought as she rounded the first corner. Jogging down the stretch by the river, she heard the birds in the trees and saw ripples from the fish in the water. This is exactly what I needed to relax, she thought. A few more steps and she suddenly felt something snake out and grab her ankle, making her fall flat on her stomach. OOMPH! What the fuck, she thought looking down and seeing nothing. Starting to rise again she felt the pull of it causing her to fall back down. Magic…. where is it coming from? She looked around carefully before she spoke waringly.

“Come out; come out where ever you are.”

She heard a creepy sounding laugh as three men came out from behind the trees. Well, this is just fucking awesome; I’m either going be killed or kidnapped by three dirty men. When will I ever learn to pay attention to my… One man holding a dagger interrupted her train of thought as he spoke to his partners.

“How much you think they will pay for this one?”
Jo watched the mage shrug then look down at her.

“We will just have to ask. I am asking for more than hundred sovereigns for this one though. She’s not like the others.”

Jo snorted, oh buddy you have no fucking idea. The other one stared at her, then looked around quickly scanning the area nervously.

“I don’t care what you two decide. We need to get out of here; we are way too close to the Inquisitions camps.” Seeing the other men nodding in agreement, as one man pulled out some rope. Well, playtime it is.

“There is one problem with your plan boys,” she said as she smiled coldly. The mage stared at her then snarled, “Yeah, and what’s that rabbit?”

“You expect me to go quietly. Well, gentleman, you will not have such luck today.”

Sweeping her leg out, all three men fell to the ground from the unexpected maneuver. Jo threw out a suppression spell not unlike a templars smite at the mage. She saw his face contort in pain while lying on the ground. As the other two jumped up she prepared to freeze them when she heard a vicious growl from behind her. Both men screamed and took off running for the cover of the woods, as a wolf ran past her following them.

Solas, she thought as she caught a flash of the red eyes and black fur. She listened to screams echoing through the forest, and then there was an eerie silence. She watched the large wolf saunter back towards her. Lowering his large wolven mouth towards the mage, she turned her head as she heard the crush the mage's throat. Jo turned back to stare at him unsure as to how much of Solas was really in the animal, or what she should do.

Finally realizing he must be waiting for her, she spoke softly.

“Let’s take a walk Solas; there is much we need to discuss.”

Turning from him she began walking away from the gruesome scene and felt him brush against her shoulder as he moved to silently walk next to her. Finding a spot after fifteen minutes of walking next to the river, Jo sat and waited to see what Fen’Harel would do. He had yet to change back to Solas and she stared at his large, wolven form curiously.

Having him this close, she could feel his magic reaching for her as hers would naturally reach for his. It was a strange occurrence, she thought. I wonder why that doesn’t happen with other mages. She heard his slow rumbling growl. She glanced up at him and found him staring at her intently as if he could hear her thoughts. Slowly raising her hand up towards his face, she watched as he closed his eyes and leaned into her hand. He is so soft, she thought as her fingers ran through his fur. She rubbed his jaw and heard the deep rumbling of a groan from the large beast. Leaning her head against his furry shoulder, she felt him shudder as she rubbed her face into the soft fur. Speaking softly into his furry coat, “What am I going to do with you Solas? Where do we go from here?” Keeping her face pressed into his fur, she felt lost.

Solas watched as she rubbed her face against him in surprise. Bending his head down, he breathed in her scent. Lavender, he thought as he heard her giggle at the puffing of his breath against her ear and neck.

“That tickles Solas. You need to change back so we can talk.”

She stared into the blood red eyes as they watched her knowingly. Then he bent and sniffed at her
ear again eliciting another giggle from her.

“Solas, come on. If you don’t want to talk that’s fine too. Just so you know people are not going to react well to me walking back into camp with Fen’Harel.”

He butted his head against her shoulder, and she watched him softly padded a few feet away. The breath rushed out of her lungs as she watched him change back.

“Well…that…was fucking awesome,” she said as she gasped in a breath. Solas sat back down next to her and he could still smell the lavender of her scent. He had been pleasantly surprised that she lacked fear of him in his wolf form.

“I suppose you have questions,” he said as he watched the river flow by. Jo snorted a laugh, “Yes I do…many, many questions. Some I will store for later though since they don’t pertain to the need to know right now.” Jo took a calming breath since she had been unsure how to start this particular conversation.

“Well is it when we are close our magic touches, or for a lack of a better term, it caresses one another? It doesn’t do it with any other mages.” Solas looked sharply at her.

“It had better not either,” he said savagely.

Jo leaned back from him in surprise at his tone. Not sure how to move forward, she chose to sit in stunned silence. Well, this conversation took a fuckin header quick. She watched as he rubbed his eyes and took a couple of calming breaths before looking at her.

“I am sorry, that was unnecessary. I…” I’m never at a loss for words, what is suddenly wrong with me, he thought.

“Solas, please – just talk to me. You never had that problem before, why is it so difficult for you to do so now?” Jo searched his face for some kind of answer and found only confusion in the lines. She watched as he clenched and unclenched his hands in frustration.

“Your question, albeit a simple one, has no simple answer. I did not imagine that you existed,” he said gazing at her suddenly before glancing back towards the water. “I had read the lore, understood that elvhen such as I had the possibility of that link. In Arlathan, there were special types of mages who would look for you.”

Jo stared at him as he rambled on, and understood nothing of what he had been saying. Solas must have realized he was rambling and finally explained what it meant.

“It is the other half of my soul, my people call it nas’falon.”

Jo’s eyes grew in surprise, and whispered, “Soulmate?”

Solas nodded his head in agreement as he watched her reaction carefully.

NO, her head shouted. This can’t be happening to me. Goddess there is already too much going on. This is too much, I don’t know if I can choose and I cannot have both men…so what the FUCK!!!

Solas watched the panicked look cross her face and felt her rejection as swift as a dagger. Well, there is your answer old wolf; he quickly looked away from her before she would see the hurt he could not hide.

Seeing the rigid line of his jaw, she knew what she had to do. Honesty is always the best policy, best
just get it out there and get it over with. Rip the band-aid, she thought without humor.

“Well, I am royally screwed. I care a great deal for you, Solas. I also care for Cullen. I do not understand how this all came about or how I got myself into this mess.” Rubbing her face she groaned, “I need to be like Sera and go for women because this shit is way too complicated.”

She is not rejecting me, he thought as he listened to her words. He reached over and entwined his fingers with hers as they had in the fade.

“We know you care for us, he and I have discussed this already,” Jo stared at him in surprise. “You and Cullen have discussed this?” Solas laughed at her expression of surprise.

“Yes, the topic came about when you pulled us into your nightmare the first night you got back. We have discussed many things; I would say we have become fairly good friends.”

Jo felt her mouth fall open. How the hell did you pull them into your nightmare? They’re friends? Closing her mouth with a snap, her eyes narrowed slightly.

“How did I pull you…an Erelan dun’himelan into my nightmare?” and Solas laughed.

“I questioned that myself, for I could not leave your dream until you awoke. It was quite…troublesome to be so helpless from two directions.” At her questioning look, he continued. “On one side, I could not leave and on the other side, I could not protect you either. It was painful to be so powerless, and something I am not accustomed to.” Jo shook her head sadly.

“I am sorry I forced you to witness it, I wished I hadn’t. I did not know I could do that.” Oh, Goddess…Cullen was forced to watch it as well, she thought. Solas must have understood where her mind had taken her and squeezed her hand reassuringly.

“He was angry at his helplessness as well, he was unhurt otherwise. It was, however, the opportunity for him and me to open a dialog and begin a friendship. Do not be upset over it, there is good that has come of it.” Wiping a stray tear from her face she gave him a watery smile before gazing at the river.

“Do I even want to know what was discussed about me between the two of you?”

Solas laughed then rubbed a hand over his smooth head nervously. “Probably not, but you should know that we both care about you a great deal. We respect each other to not feel jealousy about our feelings for you, and we both want you happy.”

I wonder just how happy they would be if I cannot choose between them, she thought irritably. Solas laid a finger on her jaw and turned her face toward him.

“You worry too much. Right now, it is you and I, sitting next to a beautiful creek, and the only thing I want to do is kiss you.” Jo watched almost helplessly as he angled his mouth above hers and waited for her to meet him halfway. Well, why the hell not. If you’re going to completely fuck up your life you might as well enjoy the ride there, she thought. Grasping his neck, she pulled him to her and kissed him deeply. A deep groan came from him as she gently bit his lower lip, sliding her tongue over against his, beginning a new assault. Her hands caressed his ears, his neck, and his face pulling small moans of pleasure from him.

Everything she felt, she wanted him to feel as she tried to convey it through this kiss. His finger tightened against her chin as he held on to the heady power she was causing in him to grow. Each stroke of her tongue lit a flame of want in him. He had never wanted anyone as he wanted her. He could feel the small chain between them tighten as it would near your other half. When she pulled
back to gaze at him, he could see the desire in her eyes, but also the knowledge that they were linked irrevocably from this moment on.

She straddled him, wrapping her arms around his neck and he knew there would be no turning back from her no matter what she chose. He kissed her in an almost savage manner. His wolf demanded and hearing her moan made him hold onto her tighter.

Solas had never known a woman to kiss him so completely and thoroughly. His soul was singing and his blood was on fire. He knew she never did anything by half measures, but to have her individual attention on him like this was intoxicating. Her fingers lit little fires along his skin everywhere she touched. Jo lifted her lips and rested her forehead against his, while she took deep ragged breaths.

*This just got so damn complicated,* she thought as she gathered herself. Solas felt her withdrawal from him and held her tighter.

“Live in this moment with me and not worry. You change everything for me, and I will not turn away for this. I am not afraid of your feelings for me and for him; you shouldn’t be either.” Seeing her eyes with desire for him was almost his undoing, but when she touched his face gently and could see the fire swirling within the depths he was undone.

“I could not live with myself if I hurt either one of you. This is unfair or unjust or just…seriously fucked up. I don’t know…I want too much and it is not right to want it all.” Trying to slide from his lap, she felt the tightening of his arms around her. Solas kissed her gently, unwilling to let her go.

“I could not live if you were hurt by me. I want everything from you and for you, and if that includes him then I want that for you too. I am not unwilling to see your heart where it is right now, nor do I think him unworthy of you. Do not push us away ma vhenan, I know I could not bear it.” Jo hugged him tightly as his words swirled around in her mind. *These men are not in a game, they are real, and they are mine for now.*

Jo smiled into his face and kissed him again, then slid from his lap back to beside him.

“We should get back before anyone worries. Half the garrison saw me run off and will be expecting me soon.” Solas agreed and helped her stand as they walked back towards Haven.

As they walked to where the men were still doing drills, Solas excused himself and walked to where Cullen stood showing a recruit how to hold his shield properly. Jo knew that Solas was going to tell him about the men she had encountered on the run. She couldn’t stop the warmth that crept up her skin, knowing that they both would be watching out for any further attempts in the future. She could see Cullen’s head nod at whatever Solas told him, and then glance at her before focusing back on whatever Solas was saying. When she saw him lay his hand on his shoulder, she knew that everything Solas had said was true. These men had become friends. *What kind of fuck up realm have I landed myself in where two men will share someone out of love or strong affection?* Yes, Solas called me vhenan, meaning his heart and she knew that was not something he would say just because, but she was surprised that Cullen would be so easy going with all of it. Shaking her head at the conundrum she found herself in, she continued walking to Dorian’s cabin to talk about everything that had happened to her since leaving her cabin. Swinging by the tavern Jo gabbed two bottles of wine and walked to what she knew had to be her salvation in all her craziness.

“Both are just going to share you…do I have this correct?” Dorian asked as he took another drink of his wine. Jo laughed and then covered her face in confusion.
“That is what Solas told me and after seeing the two together, it would seem to be the truth.”
Drinking deeply of her glass she waited for her best friend to spout some sort of prolific advice.
Watching him start laughing in an almost hysterical manner was not what she expected.

“Dorian…Dorian what?” she watched as her friend wiped tears from his eyes at his laughter. Finally trying to straighten himself up he looked at her with a smile.

“You see this as a problem, but girl, you have to very handsome men vying for your affections.”
Taking a sip of his wine he watched her face grimace at the idea.

“Why is it so hard for you to enjoy both? Are they both willing yes? Stop beating yourself up over this. They have obviously decided to act like grown men, and you are the one not sure. Oh for the love of Andraste, enjoy them both. It is not like it is unheard of you know.”
Smiling he took another sip of his wine watching her stare at him in shock. Dorian shrugged his shoulders and smirked.

“Well, it isn’t you know. Many take on more than one lover and love them both equally. If both are equitable to the arrangement there is no difficulty. Have you not seen such on your own before?”

Jo choked on her wine for a second coughing loudly. Shaking her head, “no that has not been my experience. Most men I knew would rather not…share.”

Staring into her glass she thought about the group of swingers she had counseled and had to laugh. I’m a swinger now…what the fuck has happened to me. Dorian patted her shoulder and smiled knowingly.

“Not everyone is so…reasonable in such situations my dear. But if you have never experienced it, how do you know it will not work?”
Smiling at her he could see her mind spinning at his words as they processed.

“So, you are saying…just go with it?” She stared at him questioningly.

“Yes…and then you will share with me all the details,” he said with a wicked grin.

Dorian took another sip of his wine and wishing it was Tevinter wine instead of this so-called swill they called wine. Jo took another drink and thought, well why the hell not think about it at least.

Leaving Dorian’s, she felt a little lighter at talking with him about everything as she left for her cabin.
It had been a good talk that helped her understand the men of these times.

Chapter End Notes

Erelan dun’himelan - Master Fade Mage
ma vhenan - my heart
Understanding

Jo walked towards her cabin and found Cullen waiting for her on her step. When he saw her, he stood and smiled. *Oh Goddess, how is this fair to either one, please explain this to me before I get lost.* Smiling at him shyly, she opened her door and gestured for him to follow. *I need to be honest with him; I could not forgive myself if I hurt him* she thought.

Cullen followed her into her cabin, and sat at one of the chairs next to the fire. Watching her he could see the strain of responsibility around her eyes and mouth as she gazed at him. Solas had been right when he said that she needed to know he was okay with everything. Cullen gestured to the chair next to him.

“Sit with me Jo, we should talk.” Jo stared at him, and then the chair suddenly feeling like a child in trouble.

“I bet you and Solas spoke about more than just the idiot slavers on the trail.”

Cullen smiled at her and kept his hand directed for the chair. Jo slowly walked forward and sat down. *I should have drank more,* she thought suddenly. Cullen grasped her hand and entwined his fingers with hers.

“Yes, he did. I will ask that if you go running please do so with my recruits, they do it quite often. As for the other part…yes. I know what you and he spoke of, or as much as he was going to share. He told me that you are afraid of hurting us,” he said glancing at her knowingly.

Jo gazed at the fire suddenly embarrassed by the whole conversation.

“I wanted to make sure that you understand where I stand and how this affects me…or us really.” Jo stared at him mostly scared and uncertain. This was a road she had never driven down before. She watched him kneel in front of her and uncertainty rushed through her at what he would say.

Cullen grasped both her hands and placed a kiss on each palm. Smiling at her he finally spoke.

“You have come to mean so much more to me than I could have imagined. I do not care that you also care for him. I respect him, he is a good man.” Blushing slightly, he was unsure how to proceed.

“I see how beautiful, caring, and wonderful you are.” Clearing his throat, he continued, “I can see that you care for us both. I don’t want you to worry over us, Jo. You are important to me and all this,” as he spread his hand out. “Is a lot for one person to have as a burden. We…Solas and I are willing to share in this burden if you will let us.”

Jo couldn’t believe that he was truly saying such things. She had never thought he would be so open about such a thing. She sighed deeply as she gripped his hands.

“I would never forgive myself for hurting you, Cullen. I don’t know if I can do what you both are asking.” Cullen grasped her hands tightly and smiled.

“Let us love you, that is all that we are asking Jo. We can do this…love you that is. We want to, is that not enough?” He asked staring at her. Jo stared back at him, scared of what would happen, what would become of her if she did what they asked.

“Don’t you feel it…unfair?” she questioned him as she watched a small smile lift on his beautiful face.
“I do not, and neither should you. I know your heart is with both of us, and I will see it whole. I am willing to do what it takes to make that happen. I need you…and this is difficult for me to understand and probably you as well. I don’t care if I share you with him. Solas is a good man, and I trust him to protect you when I cannot. I know that he and I agree, we will do whatever it takes to make you happy.”

Jo stared at him and couldn’t think. How can I love them both...why Goddess...why challenge me this way, she thought. She let out a soft sigh as she felt his lips touch hers gently. Jo couldn’t comprehend everything right now. She needed time to...understand all they were asking. Cullen leaned back and could see she was conflicted.

“You need to think this through. I am a patient man, and I can wait for your decision.” Letting her hands go, he stood to leave as Jo grasped his arm. Staring at the ground somewhat ashamed she spoke quickly.

“Stay please” she said suddenly biting her lip. “I…I have gotten used to having someone...would you help me sleep tonight?”

Cullen nodded and moved to take off his breast plate, laying it on the floor. He pulled his shirt over his head and laid it on the chair. Toeing his boots off, he grabbed her hand and pulled her to stand. He slowly removing her leathers and left her in nothing but a shirt. Leading her to the bed, he tucked her under the covers and lied next to her on top.

“Try and sleep, I will be here if you wake.”

Jo snuggled into his chest and held him close. “Would it be too uncomfortable for you, if you slept under the covers with me, Cullen? I would like to just feel you against me.”

Cullen kissed her forehead, and slid under the covers next to her pulling her close. Jo sighed at the feeling and knew nothing could possibly hurt her with him next to her.

“Thank you, I…I just need to feel you close.” Cullen moved a lock of hair behind her head and tightened his hold on her.

“Sleep, I will be right here, holding you.”

He spoke in hushed tones feeling her arms gripping him. Closing his eyes, he knew that this path he had chosen would be a hard one, yet he felt it was the right one. Kissing her forehead, he snuggled in and felt her breath even out, and felt himself begin drifting off.

Jo awoke screaming as she struggled with her nightmare. She felt his arms tighten around her as she heard his soft murmurs from a distance.

“Hush, you are safe, I have you Jo.”

He struggled with his own realization of what he had told her not thinking she would relive it over and over.

“I should never have told you it was only a temporary death, the pain of this is hurting you. Hush now, you are safe.” Cullen rubbed her back calming her as she struggled with the dream. Finally realizing that Cullen was holding her she shuddered and sank into him with a sob.

“I don’t know if I can do this Cullen,” she said on a ragged breath. Cullen continued to rub her back
as he spoke softly.

“You can and will endure Jo. It is not in your nature to give in so easily. Fear is a hard battle to overcome, but I have faith that you can. You are stronger than you think.” He continued to rub her back in soothing strokes. Jo’s breathing slowed as her grip lessened. With her face buried in his chest she mumbled, “I don’t deserve you Cullen. I…want to…but I know I don’t.” She said brokenly. Cullen kept his hands moving along her back in soothing motions.

“It is I who does not deserve you. Sleep Jo, I will be here when you wake up.”

Jo wanted to crawl into him as her grip tightened and she buried her face into his chest for comfort. Hearing his heart beat, feeling the vibration against her cheek and the warmth of his skin against her face she began drifting off again.

Cullen laid there aware of her turmoil and wished he could remove it. He would speak with Solas in the morning; maybe he had an idea of how he could help her. Feeling her hand slide against his stomach he held back a groan. This night would surely be the death of him he thought. He thought of anything but the woman lying next to him. She was pressed so closely to him; he could feel her breasts pressed against the side of his chest through her thin shirt. Keep it together Rutherford; you’re here to help her sleep…nothing more. You said you had patience, yeah start using some of that templar training and show some restraint, he reprimanded himself. Yet he couldn’t stop himself from getting hard. He could ignore it for sure, but now the heaviness of his arousal was pressed tightly against his leathers. When they had gone to sleep, he had thought of nothing but her getting a good night’s sleep and that he would sleep better with her in his arms. Now he was thinking about how she felt pressed against him and he was trying hard to keep his hormones under control.

He felt the even wisps of her breath dance across his skin where her face was nestled into his chest. His hand rubbed her back in slow soothing circles, as he used his other arm to prop his head up. He watched as she slept for a while, seeing the even rise and fall of her chest as she breathed. When she was awake, she was in a constant motion. Her steady focus and physical strength was a remarkable sight. Yet here as she slept she looked so vulnerable, her cries as she slept tore at him as he had tried to wake her. The pure terror in her eyes at what they had witnessed made him reflexively pull her closer. When her hand slid up his chest to lie over his heart, he smiled at her sleeping form. You already have it, for it hasn’t been mine since the moment I saw you, he thought as he closed his eyes.

Jo felt a small rumbling under her cheek from Cullen’s soft snore. She slowly opened her eyes and wanted to let out a small giggle. The poor man was propped up against the headboard to allow for him to fully stretch out. However, he took up almost the whole bed. That left her to practically lay on him, and she had made herself quite comfortable it would seem. I slept better with him than I have in weeks. I only woke up once, and then nothing. No repeating nightmare to plague my sleep, she thought staring at the beautiful man lying in her bed. Can I do what they want? Can I be that woman?

She studied the angles and then thought angrily at herself. You are a doctor of psychiatry. Labels are not what you do, so what type of woman would love two men? It is not as if they are unaware of each other, in fact quite the opposite. So, the holdup is...you...you are afraid – you don’t believe you are worthy of love. She felt anger burn at her realization. Well that is fucked up, she thought. You’re hurting them already with your own bullshit labels and fears of not being enough. For once I want to be loved and I want to love in return.

Feeling invigorated with purpose she glanced up at the sleeping giant knowing she was going to take from him what he offered as she would Solas. They were right, she did need them, and it was about
time she stopped denying herself and them. Maybe Dorian was right when he told her to just go with it.

Slipping across his chest to embrace him more fully, she moved slightly and felt his arm tighten around her. She snuggled into him, and with her small movements she felt his arousal. She realized he had probably been like that for a while, with her shamelessly draped across him. She glanced up at him and saw that his eyes were closed with a slight smile on his lips. She moved a little more and watched the smile on his face grow. She watched him slowly open his whiskey colored cat eyes. They now watched her intently, waiting to see what she would do next. Feeling his arms wrap around her in reflex she let a soft sigh escape at the gentleness she felt in his embrace. She wanted him, needed him and Goddess save me I can’t let him go.
She placed an open-mouthed kiss to his chest. Cullen kept completely still, allowing only his eyes to follow her movements as she slid slowly down his body. She felt his stomach muscles tighten as her tongue swirled around his navel, yet he still had made no move towards her. Jo was enjoying the heady feeling of power she was wielding over this man. She slowly untied his leathers, releasing his thick arousal for her to hold. *Holly Goddess he is big everywhere...he truly must be one of Odin’s kin, this is...wow.*

She slid her tongue over the crown as she watched him. His groan of pleasure spurred her on to lick the length of him. She noticed that he was shaking with his restraint, yet he let her continue her assault on him. She slid part of him into her mouth, and his hips bucked slightly with her attention to him. She applied a suction accompanied with a swirl of her tongue over the crown, and he cried out gripping the headboard to stop himself from grabbing her.

Her magic caressed his chest and worked in tandem with her mouth. He had never felt anything like it before. She continued her steady stroking of his length with her mouth, reveling in the ragged sounds he made with each caress of her tongue on him. She slid him further down her throat and Cullen began begging her. She felt his cock swell as she took him in her mouth enjoying the taste of him as he came. She gazed up to see him staring at her with a wild gleam in his eye.

From the moment, she had started Cullen had tried to keep himself from taking over. For some reason, she seemed determined. She needed something from him and watching her had lit his blood on fire. Realizing what she was about, he was absorbed. He had never had a woman take him into their mouth before, and the sensation had been impossible to imagine. She had watched him with each caress of her mouth on him. He needed to touch her...he needed her.

She could see the determination on his face as he slid his hands under her arms and pulled her up against his body. He wrapped one of his large hands within her hair to hold her in place as he plundered her mouth. He felt his barely restrained passion within him as he held her in place sending her own blood singing, meeting his uncontrolled need.

Biting on his lower lip, she felt the rumble in his chest from a growl he let out vibrate against her. *Maker preserve me I want her and I don't know if I can be gentle.* Her long legs wrapped around him tightly as she sent his control into flames. His hands tightly gripped her ass as he traced kisses down her throat while he ground himself into her.

He bit at her shoulder and then licked the wounded flesh provoking a ragged sound of pleasure from her. Finding the last shred of control, he owned, he looked into her eyes questioningly. She knew he would stop if she asked. She knew he would leave if she told him too. Reaching her hand up to caress his face and he felt the heat of her magic run across his skin.

“Don’t stop Cullen,” she whispered and he couldn’t stop the groan that left him as he crushed his mouth to hers, enjoying the taste of himself on her tongue. *I’m burning,* she thought, feeling his hands sliding under her shirt. Calloused fingers setting her skin on fire everywhere they touched. His hand cupped her breast, teasing the hardened nipple and she let out a ragged breath grabbing at his shoulders.

“Skin, I need to touch all of you...now,” He growled removing his hand and reached up to where her shirt laced and rendered the tunic in half. Throwing it on the floor he felt the magical flames increase against him, caressing him, making his blood boil. Her hands on his skin were almost too much for him. He stopped; frozen at the sight of her exposed breasts and thought, Maker she is
beautiful. Her fingers trembled as they touch many little scars he had that dotted his chest, and groaned at the fires she was lighting beneath the surface.

He grabbed her wrists and pinned them over her head as he took one of her nipples into his mouth, bathing it with his tongue bringing panting breaths from her. Letting her wrists go he slid his hands beneath her bringing her to him as he went from one breast to the other feeling her nails scrape along his shoulders only inflamed him more. Trailing his tongue across the skin on her stomach he felt her muscles underneath tighten. Slipping his hands from her back he slid them beneath her smalls and ripped them from her body throwing the pieces in the general direction of the ruined tunic. She lay completely bare in front of him and it took his breath away.

She moaned heavily with the feeling of his breath at the apex of her thighs. His finger gently ran the length of her wet sex and heard his ragged intake of air.

“You are so wet for me. I have to taste you,” he whispered. He bent his head and the first flicker of his tongue on her sex tore an almost feral sound from her. He drank from her like a man dying of thirst. Her hands gripped the headboard as he had done earlier, oh Goddess I don’t know if I can… I’m on fire. She looked down and saw that he was watching her with every devilish flick of his tongue. Her body bowed at the intensity of the orgasm that ripped through her. She screamed his name raggedly throwing her head back.

Cullen kissed the delicate skin of her inner thigh, then the skin on her right hip. Jo stared into those molten eyes needing him at that moment.

“Stop toying with me Cullen, I want you inside me…now.”

He let out a deep chuckle at her commanding voice. Sliding his leggings off, he positioned himself between her legs and guided himself to her warm opening. She wrapped her legs around his narrow hips and let a deep moan release as he buried himself to the hilt inside of her. Cullen stilled himself at the warm tightness that surrounded him and wanted to savor this moment of being joined with her. When she moved her hips up to him silently begging for more he groaned sliding out then back in slow and deep. The feeling of her surrounding him almost made him lose his mind.

She was sure she was losing her mind at his pace. She reached up grasping his face bringing his mouth to hers kissing him deeply. His slow and deep movements sent ripples of pleasure through her. Flames roaring through her entire body that she expressed with throaty moans into his mouth. Her nails dug into his back at the level of pleasure he was bringing her with each stroke he made. Her moans turned to ragged cries for release as he changed from slow, deep thrusts to harder deep thrusts. Her cries and the clenching around his hardness pushed him to keep his momentum.

Her nails scored down his back when he bathed her nipple with his tongue, lightly nipping at it. Jo begged for him to give her release when he nipped at her nipple again and changed his angle. He slid into her to where he felt the edges of her womb and felt her orgasm rip through her like a forest fire with her scream of completion. She was so tight around him, he could not hold back his own release any longer and with a final hard thrust joined her.

Jo was not sure she was alive; her entire body did not feel quite like her own. She took ragged breaths trying to calm her racing heart. She felt him try to roll off of her and she tightened her legs around him. Cullen laughed at her maneuver and she felt the vibration through his chest and even that small feeling sent tingles along her skin.

“I am too heavy for you, I will crush you.” Jo finally opened her eyes to see him watching her closely. Reaching up she caressed his cheek and pulled him in for a kiss.
“I am fine, now if you are uncomfortable then I will not stop you from moving. Just don’t do it because you think you’re hurting me.”

Cullen shook his head and let out a small laugh. Sliding his arms around her he rolled keeping her on top of him and smiled at the surprise on her face.

“Okay, I think we can compromise then.” Jo laughed at the change of positions.

“Tricksy Sir…very tricksy. Now you’ve got me thinking that I might crush you.” Cullen laughed and wrapped his arms around her.

“I can endure,” he said with a smile. Jo leaned down and kissed the stubble on his jaw before snuggling into his neck. *I hope he doesn’t regret this…us…oh Goddess have I made a mistake, did I take advantage of him?* Clearing her throat, she couldn’t keep the questions from being spoken aloud.

“Do you wish you hadn’t…I mean do you regret what we did?” *Maker preserve me, that can’t be a serious question,* he thought. He could feel her hiding her face from him and felt his anger simmering under the surface. Rolling her beneath him again so she would have no choice, he grasped her chin and held her gaze.

“I have thought of nothing else since the moment I stood across from you in the war room. I do not make it a habit to just hop into a woman’s bed when the mood suits me. So, to answer your question no, I do not regret one moment; now will you stop?” Jo stared at him and suddenly it was like a lightbulb went off in her head. *There is no going back, no more second-guessing yourself. You silly bitch the moment you put that man’s dick in your mouth you made a commitment to him and you knew that* she reprimanded herself.

“I did not mean to offend you I…I have only ever been with one other man and that was a long time ago. He did regret it the moment he had finished, so I…realize it is not fair to compare you to some idiot I gave my virginity too. I’m sorry; I won’t make that mistake again.” She kissed his nose and tried to scoot out from under him. Cullen stared in disbelief at what she had said and kept her pinned beneath him.

“You didn’t offend me…and…well shit.” Looking away then back to her, “only one other guy and he took your gift and threw it away so cruelly. Well, this explains much as to your hesitancy with allowing another to love you.” Jo could feel her hackles rising at the look of pity on his face.

“Don’t you dare feel sorry for me…just don’t. I said he was the only man I had slept with not that I hadn’t had other relationships. I’m just not good at them is all.”

Cullen let her slide out from beneath him and laid on his side watching her stand up without thought to her nakedness, smiling he couldn’t help but enjoy the view. Staring at the space above the swell of her bottom he saw a mark that he had never seen before. When her hair moved over her shoulder he saw another series of marks that spanned from one shoulder blade to the other and he narrowed his eyes to try and see it clearly.

“What is that mark on your back?” Jo felt a little confused at his change of subject as she looked for his shirt on the floor that the anger she had been building left in a blink of an eye.

“What? Oh yeah, that. It is called Triquetra.” Finding it amongst her shredded clothes she slipped his shirt over her head and tied the laces to keep her breast from falling out and realized the hemline fell almost to her knees. *I must look fucking ridiculous,* she thought as she bent to grab the torn remains of her own shirt and underwear. Turning toward him with her eyebrow raised she held the tattered
remains of her clothing.

He felt the quick flame of desire lighting his blood at the sight of her in his shirt and knew he would never be able to look at that shirt without remembering this moment. Grinning at the sight of the torn garments he shrugged his shoulder unashamed.

She shook her head and laughed at him, “maybe next time we could try taking the offending garments off first before drastic measures are taken, yes?” Cullen smiled and motioned for her to come closer. When she stood in front of him he grabbed her waist and pulled her so she could straddle him. “I will keep that in mind,” he said as his fingers deftly undid the laces of his tunic kissing the skin he exposed. Jo leaned her head back at the feeling of his lips sliding against her skin. Sliding the shirt over one shoulder as he trailed kisses up the side of her neck to nibble at her ear. Jo dropped the ripped garments back onto the floor and slid her arms around his neck enjoying his exploring lips on her skin. She felt the shirt slide down her shoulders and pool around her waist as she removed her arms while he continued his exploration of her skin. Everywhere his lips touched sent small little fires to pool in between her thighs. He ran his hands over her back and the contrast of his rough hands on her sent sparks flying along every nerve. His lips gently nibbled at her own, then kissed her slowly, deeply prompting a moan from her. She felt his hands slide up her sides to cup her breasts, while his thumbs slid slowly over each peak. She shuddered and felt her skin heating beneath his palms as her own sex clenched with want.

He needed to take it slow this time. He paid special attention to the sounds of pleasure he would provoke from her with his touches or kisses. He loved the sound she made when he took her nipple into his mouth. The feeling of her breasts pressed against his chest made him groan, her magic caressing him made it almost unbearable. He watched her face as he slipped one of his fingers into her and could feel her tightening on him. She let a low moan escape at the exquisite feeling he was causing with just his finger. He removed his hand and moved the sheet out of his way. Grasping her hips, he slid her slowly onto him and knew he was lost as he clenched his jaw tightly for control at the small flames he felt licking him. The tightening of her sex on him had beads of sweat popping along his brow as he fought himself for control.

Jo moved slowly on him building the fire that he had ignited. In this position, he was deep within her and every movement caused him to hit that sweet spot full of nerves. With each stroke his breath grew ragged; his grip on her hips tightened and slowed her down when she tried to speed up. He didn’t know if he could take much more of this self-inflicted torture. Groaning he knew he was close. With more thrust to his motion, he slid into her harder extracting a panting moan from her. Each stroke harder than the last with her small cries he drove into her and felt her shatter in his arms as he came and he was sure he was on fire.

Leaning her forehead against his trying to catch her breath she felt complete and thoroughly loved. Is this what it’s like to be loved? She thought. Sighing pleasurably, she followed him back and slid off him, snuggling into his side as he stroked her back gently. Enjoying the early morning hours with him like this, felt so right. Running her fingers over his chest she closed her eyes listening to the steady rhythm of his heartbeat and felt for the first time the true comforting pull of sleep.

He recognized the moment she fell asleep. Her breathing evened out, and her hand relaxed and slightly curved on his chest. He studied her features as she slept and realized that even now he could feel the flame of her magic caressing him. He memorized the gentle sweep of long lashes against her cheeks that held a smattering of freckles. Running a finger gently over a small scar above her left eye just under a perfectly shaped black eyebrow, he wondered at when she got it.

Her lips the slightest shade of apple red formed into a perfect slight pout as she slept. At this angle,
he could see that the other design he couldn’t quite make out was a series of birds flying across the expanse of her back. He stared at them and thought they resembled small ravens as he ran his fingers across their pattern. Her skin was the color of buttercream he thought as he traced his finger along the patterns of freckles. He sighed happily feeling whole for the first time in his life. She was everything he had ever wanted in a woman, strong, capable, and compassionate.

His heart filled to bursting knowing that she cared for him. He saw the sun was starting to come up over the mountains through her small window. He knew he should get out of there before the whole camp woke up to see him leaving her cabin. Sliding his arm gently from beneath her head hoping he didn’t disturb her sleep, he felt her arm tighten on him and he laughed realizing she was waking.

“You can’t just sneak out of her Commander, your shirt is still around my waist,” she mumbled into his chest. Cullen kissed her forehead and rolled out of the bed before he decided not to leave.

“Honey I need to leave before the whole camp wakes up. They do not need to see me leaving your cabin in the morning, people will talk and I won’t have them saying anything bad about you.”

Jo watched him slip his breeches on and enjoyed the view of his exposed broad back and tight ass as he slid them over tapered hips and sighed lustily. He held his hand out for his shirt and watched her pout at him. Huffing in exasperation at him, he raised his eyebrow at her still holding his hand out. Grabbing the shirt, she pulled it up and over her head stretching her breasts up with her arms knowing he was watching. When the shirt was finally removed, she handed it to him with a wicked grin. He held his shirt and stared at her breasts. Taking a deep breath, he shook his head and laughed.

“I know what you’re up to, and it is taking everything in me to leave you right now.” Jo laughed at him as she watched him slip his shirt over his head.

“Well, I would put my own shirt on if someone hadn’t torn it from my body earlier.”

He laughed as he sat down to slip his boots on, lacing them up. He felt her lips kiss his neck and then she was laughing while slipping from the bed. He warmed at the sight of her walking towards her bathtub without a care for her nudity. He watched her prepare her bath with small movements of her hand filling the tub with ice, and with a few more flicks of her fingers, the ice was melted and steaming.

He watched as she threw some herbs into the water from a jar she had on a small table next to the tub. Pinching the bridge of his nose, get your ass out of here Rutherford or you’re going to keep her in bed all day. Smiling at the thought he walked over to where she stood swirling the water with her fingers and bent to give her a quick kiss before he found himself unable to leave.

She placed her hand on his cheek and smiled at what she knew was her first intimate moment in her adult life. He bent his head and kissed her deeply this time igniting little flames across her skin with each flick of his tongue against hers. He pulled back and gazed into her eyes hating his decision to leave.

“Do me one small favor today will you?” Cullen looked at her questioningly trying hard to keep his eyes up and not gaze downward.

“Calibrate your trebuchets towards the mountains,” she said nonchalantly. He didn’t miss her tone.

“Have you seen something I should be aware of?” He watched her shrug her smooth shoulders and sighed in frustration. Jo caressed his face again smiling and couldn’t help that it was a little sadly.

“Yes and no. If what I have seen is to happen it won’t be until after we close the breach. I cannot be
sure if it will or not. I would just rather be safe than sorry.” Watching her lover change to the Commander she knew him to be was a little unsettling, but he nodded his head.

“I will get it done,” he said as he walked to where his breastplate was and grabbed it heading out the door. She watched the door for a few moments then slid into the bath to prepare for her own day. *One more day to prepare*, she thought.
Cullen slipped into his cabin without running into anyone, and started his own bath. He thought about how his morning had been the best part of his entire existence…right until she told him to calibrate the trebuchets to hit the mountain. He knew she saw something coming, but wasn’t saying anything…yet. Frustrated he poured the boiling water into his tub remembering how easy she had drawn her own bath. When he finally had his tub filled enough, he stripped and slid in to wash quickly before the water would turn cold. While scrubbing his chest, he noticed small little red marks and laughed.

“She marked me,” he said aloud.

Rinsing the soap from himself, he stepped from the tub and dried quickly. Taking his discarded clothes, he picked them up and threw them in the corner all but the shirt. He pressed his face into the cloth and could still smell her on it. Slipping it back on, he felt like she was holding him as he slipped a woolen tunic over the shirt before sliding his breastplate on. Stepping from his cabin he walked to his command tent and saw on his desk a small plate of fruit, cheese, and meat with a steaming cup of coffee. He smiled knowing she had slipped in there to bring him breakfast. He was still smiling when Rylen entered to give him a morning report.

Jo grabbed her breakfast with Cassandra and Leliana. She spoke with them about preparations for the following day. Leliana asked the same question as Cullen had earlier.

“Are you going to tell us what you have seen happening after the breach is closed?” Jo shook her head and cleared her throat.

“I will when we are all together later this afternoon. There is still much I need to make sure is prepared yet.”

Leliana nodded her head while Cassandra looked as frustrated as Cullen had. Standing to leave she looked at both sincerely.

“I promise I will explain everything later.” Seeing both women nod in agreement, she turned and left.

Walking to the trebuchet she looked for the broken ground. Finding it she threw a pack with healing potions in there, and covered it back up with the boards lying next to it. Seeing that the sun had reached its point where she knew she was to meet with her advisors, she dreaded the reactions she would have from them once she explained. Trudging up the hill towards the Chantry she sighed, *well let’s get it over with.*

Upon entering the war room with the door barely closed Cassandra drilled her with questions.

“Okay, we have all been plenty patient so spill it, what are we up against?”

Jo stared at the table then cleared her throat.
“The Elder One will come.”

“What!” they all said in unison. Jo held up her hand and everyone hushed to allow her to continue.

“I couldn’t be sure until after what happened at Redcliff Castle. He will make an appearance. This is why I asked Leliana to stock supplies in the tunnel leading from the Chantry, and why I asked you Commander, to turn the Trebuchets to the mountain. This is also why I told you Cassandra, to send Alexius to Redcliff to await the Arle to arrive. He will be coming over the pass with what is left of the Templar order to attack us. The Templars that remained will be corrupted with red lyrium, and they will be led by a man named… Sampson.” Cullen hung his head then.

Jo continued with her telling wanting to get the hardest part over.

“When the first wave of fighting starts Josephine, Leliana, you will need to get the people of Haven out and through the tunnel. Cassandra, you, and I will take a group to try to contain the Templars from the Chantry giving everyone time to escape plus pick up any stragglers. Cullen, you, and your men will help with suppressing the first wave. When the corrupted dragon shows, everyone will retreat to the Chantry.” Cullen’s eyes narrowed knowing she wasn’t telling them everything.

“Dragon? What are you not telling us Jo?” No one seemed to notice his use of her name but where more focused on the idea of a dragon.

“He commands a dragon, it will show itself, and no matter what it looks like it is not an Archdemon.” Leliana visibly let out a held breath, as Cassandra looked at her questioningly.

“Are we going to need to fight a dragon as well as this…Elder One?” Jo shook her head.

“No this is going to be more of a show-off moment for him. There is nothing to worry about yet, he only comes to intimidate. The dragon is more of a trophy if anything.”

After all the questions had been answered as best as she could, she watched Cullen gaze at her knowingly. Everyone walked to the door and she felt his hand on her arm.

“A moment please,” he requested to what everyone would think sounded calm, yet Jo could hear the touch of anger in his voice.

“Of course, Commander,” she said calmly, even though her insides quivered in nervousness. Once the door closed, he closed in on her grabbing her by the shoulders.

“What are you not telling me Jo?” She shook her head not looking at him.

“I’ve told you everything I can Cullen.” She felt his fingers tighten around her shoulders as he shook her none to gently.

“I know you’re not telling me everything, spill it.” Jo twisted her fingers together and gathered her courage to lie to him.

“I know there is nothing else to tell right now. I won’t know if everything will happen until it does. Just trust me in knowing I have prepared as best I can for it, and let’s leave it at that.” Cullen began rubbing his neck and felt the beginning of a headache at her obvious play on words. He knew she wasn’t telling him everything for a reason, Maker don’t make me the reason she won’t, I can’t lose her now that I have just found her. Looking at her pleadingly and seeing she was not going to change her mind he shook his head.

“Okay then. I need to prepare my people for Sampson…just keep in mind one thing will you?” Jo
looked at him and could feel his fear as if it were a leather strap slapping her. Clearing her throat, she nodded.

“I need you to not do anything foolish that will put yourself in danger.”

Jo felt her insides cringe at her lie, “of course.”

He nodded at her then left her standing there alone. Jo squared her shoulders and went to talk to the rest of her team for tomorrow; she would leave Solas for last knowing he would be as bad as Cullen.

Leaving Sera, she went to where Varric and Bull sat in the tavern. She told them what she needed them to do to help Cullen and his men tomorrow, then spoke with Dorian and explained the plan.

“Kitten, are you sure about this, shouldn’t all of us be with you out there?” He asked as he held her hands.

“No Dorian, I need you to help Cullen and his people defend those that are trying to retreat to the Chantry. Your magic will be very valuable, and I will have Cassandra, Sera, and Solas with me. I will be fine, I just need you to keep Cullen and Varric safe when the first wave comes in. Trust me please, I just need to know he will be safe, and I trust you to make sure that happens.”

Dorian watched the play of different emotions run across her face and seeing the true fear in her eyes he nodded his agreement. Snorting indifferently, he laughed a bit lasciviously.

“I will definitely not mind watching your Commander’s back,” he said lustfully with a sigh. Jo laughed at his tone.

“I knew I could count on you to find the perk in an otherwise shitty job.” Leaning over she kissed his cheek as he waved her off.

“Oh, you know me, I would never back down from staring at all that…man,” he said on a sigh making Jo laugh even harder. Standing, she only had Solas left to talk with now and felt her stomach knot. She left Dorian’s cabin and stared at Solas’s cabin directly across from his. Taking a deep breath, she walked to his door. She stood there for a moment to gather her wits about her before she knocked hard, and felt the breath leave her as she could see that he answered his door fresh from a bath.

Oh sweet Goddess come on, give me a fucking break will you!

Following him in, she shut the door behind her. She needed to make a conscious effort to keep her mouth from falling open. She had never recognized how well he was built until now. Her eyes followed the broad expansion of a well-defined muscular back. The towel encased narrow hips and athletic legs. She enjoyed watching his form with nothing but a towel around his waist, as he walked away from her. She just couldn’t get passed what he had been hiding all this time underneath all those layers.

She had known he was strong, but to see the definition of his form caused an increase in stomach flutter. Oh, for fucks sake you fiend... you were thoroughly f*cked this morning or did you forget? She thought with a tone of reprimand. She lifted her eyes to see his watching her carefully. They chose you and understand what it means...take what you want for a damn change and let everything else fall where it will. Taking a step towards him she saw his eyes narrow in a feral manner. Jo laughed a little self-consciously, and then ran her hands through her hair.

“Well I guess it’s only fair I catch you naked as well it would seem.”

Solas smiled knowingly and walked towards her slowly with the feral glint still within his eyes. He padded silently, in an almost stalking manner thinking how he had not been able to forget that day.
“It would seem you are correct,” he said almost growling.

Moving his hand in an unhurried manner Jo felt the magic as he locked his door from where he stood and instantly felt a bit unsure. Raising her eyebrow at him she crossed her arms and watched his slow approach. Solas could see the challenge in her eyes as she watched him pace around her and the wolf within wanted to answer it.

“You obviously came for a reason vhenan.” He questioned as he slowly closed in on her. Jo stood stock still watching him circle her slowly knowing that Fen’Harel was closer than he normally would be, and spoke softly almost soothingly to both man and beast.

“I came to discuss tomorrow. I wanted to ask you…I was…I would appreciate it if you would accompany me, Sera, and Cassandra when the first wave of the attack happens.” Well that sounded great with all your fucking stuttering…what the hell is wrong with you?

Seeing his appreciative smile, he nodded.

“What else are you here for vhenan?” still stalking a slow pace around her she felt his magic touching the side of her neck, making it difficult to concentrate.

“That is what I came to discuss. Was there something you wished to discuss with me?”

He stopped behind her and slid her hair away from the nape of her neck. She felt his lips press on the sensitive skin, and her eyes slid closed while she shivered lightly.

“What do you want Solas?” she asked huskily.

His eyes softened as he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her back into him. Gently nibbling at her earlobe, he growled softly. “That is quite the question isn’t it vhen’an.” Bending his head, he kissed her neck, making small bites before bathing the marks with his tongue. He moved along her collarbone doing more of the same.

Jo slid one of her arms up to wrap around his neck. She felt their magic entwine, and stroke each other as he leaned in and kissed her deeply. Each stroke of his tongue against hers sent fireworks behind her closed eyes as he explored every little place. She felt the barely leashed animal in him yet the kiss was gentle, sensual, and setting her blood to boil. Solas slowly pulled back and leaned his forehead against hers taking a calming breath to control the wolfs urges to just take her.

“Is that your answer vhenan, or is there something else you needed?” she questioned softly. Solas groaned, “Why must you tempt me, vhenan?” he growled. Sliding his hands around to the laces of her breaches he began unlacing them. He slipped his hand inside to touch her, and Jo’s head fell back against his shoulder as she felt him caressing her silken folds. He slipped one finger inside of her, and she bit her lower lip as a small whimper escaped her lips. He slid his other hand beneath her tunic and cupped one of her breasts. He gently tested its weight before gliding his thumb over the hardened bud that begged for his attention. He was hammering her senses and she didn’t know if she could take it.

She felt the small electrical pulses from the tips of his fingers that were slowly torturing her from between her legs. He kept her in a constant state of drenched arousal, and she whimpered her need. Her body shook from the onslaught; she couldn’t stop the ragged cries torn from her with each deft stroke of his fingers. He growled against the side of her neck, “I have thought of nothing but this moment for many months vhenan. Ha’mi’in. lasa em tua rosas’da’din.”

Jo cried out as her body hurled over the abyss, and she felt herself break into a million pieces within the circle of his arms. Solas let out a low growl as her magic surrounded him, caressing him to almost
She felt him undress her, and then carry her to lie on his bed. He found himself drowning into her endless blue eyes. The copper swirls mixed with the fire red showed him that her need was as great as his own. Pressing his lips to hers he felt her fingers lighting fires where they touched his chest, and his breath left him at the power of feelings rushing through him. She felt his magic touch her everywhere causing little shivers and goose bumps to form.

She dug her nails into the coverlet as he settled between her legs and continued his assault upon her body. She spoke throatily, “Ar isalan na vhenan.” Solas felt her words as caresses against his skin. Each moan, soft cry she made spurred him to continue. When she came undone in his hands for a second time he rolled her to her stomach kissing the skin on the backs of her knees, caressing her ass. He stared quizzically at the tattoo on her lower back. Touching it gently he felt the magic around the symbol yet it was not one he was familiar with but knew it held power.

Laying his lips gently upon the tattoo, he kissed his way up her spine and found a flutter of small ravens flying across her shoulders. Gently kissing each one, he leaned back grasping her hips and pulling her onto her knees. Sliding one hand around her waist to slip into her wet folds, he teased the hidden nub within and tore a ragged cry from her lips. He thrust into her not allowing her any time for recovery. She leaned back into him and wrapped her arms tightly around his neck as each thrust sent her soaring closer to another orgasm. Solas stroked his fingers over her nipples roughly causing her to cry out. Every stroke of his thick member she felt deep within herself, she felt on a constant edge of orgasm. She couldn’t take much more of this and growled at him, “Pala em elvar’el.”

Solas bit her shoulder and growled back, “ma nuvenin vhenan.” Jo let out a guttural moan as the hands holding her hips tightened as he pounded into her, scraping her nails along his shoulders at the pleasure rolling through her with each sound of skin meeting skin. He felt her clamp down around him tightly as she came and joined her with a final thrust while their magic swirling through the room chaotically. With his head lying on her shoulder, he felt himself and her shudder with the intensity of their joining. He could see the green and red of their combined magic rolling across their skin.

Tears fell silently from her eyes as he held her. *Oh, Goddess...I must be lost.* Solas felt the change in her and glanced to see the tears slipping silently down her face. *I was too rough with her...what was I thinking,* he berated himself as he slid gently from her and wrapped her in his arms. “Jo… I am sorry. I never meant to hurt you, I…” Jo opened her eyes and stared at him in surprise. *He thinks...oh Goddess...* taking a shaky breath she spoke softly.

“Stop, that isn’t it at all Solas. You didn’t hurt me. In fact, that was perfect really…I just…you need to know…” Solas laid a finger over her lips knowing why she was upset now. He had caught his scent all over her before she had walked in, and realized she was upset now thinking she had done something horrible to either one of them. Her compassion and caring was only more endearing when he knew that it was not rejection of him, but fear of hurting him.

“I know, hush now. There is no anger or shame here. I told you that we were here for you, stop thinking you’ve done something wrong when you haven’t.” Kissing her lips softly she looked at him questioningly. He shook his head and smiled at her.

“You are everything I need. Your strength, your belief in me, I never thought it was possible. You are my other half, and my purpose is to make you happy, and that is what I am doing. Stop thinking otherwise vhenan.”
She closed her eyes thinking, *is it really just that simple? Love them, let them love you and endure the nightmare you landed yourself in.* Snuggling into the side of him she enjoyed the feeling of their magic caressing each other. The feeling was constantly sensual but at the same time it made her feel complete.

He slid his hands through her hair enjoying the feel of her against his side. *I can’t stop needing her,* the surprise at the truthfulness of the statement made his heart stutter. *I will need to be completely honest with her about everything eventually. I don’t think I could handle her rejection of me when the truth becomes known. Will she still believe in me then? I mustn’t worry about this now. Besides, you might be worrying about nothing, she knows more than she has told you.* Shaking the thoughts away from him for now he asked her about the symbols on her back.

“Vhenan, what are the symbols on your back? They are magical in nature, I could feel it radiate off them. Will you share with me their meanings?” He knew she was not from this realm so some of it might get lost in translation.

“Where I am from, I am what they call an eclectic witch. I prayed too many gods showing respect to all, yet have not pledge myself to just one. The ravens reflect two gods that I leaned more towards than others, and that is The Morrigan and Ole Father Odin. The other tattoo is called a triquetra. This one represents the maiden, mother, and crone. The cycles women go through, and their connection to the Goddess herself within these cycles.” Solas reflected on her answer.

“So you work spells like the witches of the time here?” Jo enjoyed the intelligence of him as he asked his questions.

“No, not in the same manner, but yes we do work spells. There my spells were energy work and astral. I used herbs for many of my spells; there just isn’t the flash of fire or lightning from the fingers.” Solas realized this explained her easy manipulation of the fade. It is energy she is manipulating, manifestation of her will. It would also work here in the same fashion.

“Have you tried any of your spells here to see if they change shape?” he questioned very interested in her answer.

“I have tried a couple and they are definitely different. The types of protections I would put around my home turn into glyphs here, and they are a little deadlier than I had anticipated.” Solas laughed thinking about what she meant, and realized that the book on glyphs must have explained the patterns to her.

“Well we should discuss tomorrow and understand what is to come.”

Jo breathed calmly realizing that at this angle he wouldn’t be able to see her lie, she knew she didn’t have a poker face. Once everything was explained she felt him reach down and lift her face so he could read it. *Well fuck me; I can’t catch a break* she thought.

“Vhenan, there is a very large hole in your explanation,” he said gently with his eyebrow quirked as he searched her eyes for his answer.

“I…I don’t know what you mean,” she stuttered out feeling an utter idiot knowing he didn’t believe a damn word.

*Why is she lying to me?* He couldn’t think of the reason since she had never done so before. Then as the realization hit him his eyes narrowed on her.

“You are planning to do something you know that I would never agree with you to do, that is it, that
is why you are lying to me isn’t it?” Jo felt instant anger at his words. Pulling her chin from his grasp, she sat up silently seething with anger.

“Agree with? Let’s make sure we are clear on one thing. YOU, do not control me. I am a grown woman and will do things as I fucking see fit. Now if you are still confused on this concept say something now so I can use maybe simpler words for you to grasp.” Solas equally as angry sat up squaring his shoulders narrowing his eyes further; he spoke in a quiet ominous tone.

“I am not trying to control you vhenan, I am trying to protect you.” Jo rolled out of the bed grabbing her shirt and slipping it on as Solas watched her speedy retreat from him.

Taking a calming breath, she slid her leathers on and looked at the angry man staring at her.

“The last thing I wanted to do was argue with you, yet this seems to be my destiny today to fight with both the men in my life. I will say the same thing to you that I said to Cullen. I need you to trust that I know what I am doing, I don’t need you to protect me; I need you to have confidence in me.” Solas felt his anger dissipate seeing the lost expression on her face. Sliding from the bed he walked silently towards her and wrapped his arms around her.

“We anger so quickly vhenan because we are afraid of losing you now that we just found you. We anger from our fears nothing more. I ask that you keep that in mind as you go forward with your plan.” Jo nodded her head in agreement kissing his chin she slipped from his grasp and left quietly. Solas stared at the door with a deep feeling of fear settling into his stomach.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - My heart
Lasa em tua rosas’da’din - Relax, let me make you cum
Ar isalan na vhenan - I need you my heart
Pala em elvar’el - Fuck me harder
Ma nuvenin vhenan - As you wish my heart
Sealing the Breach

Chapter Summary

Na varas - Go away
nas’falon - Soulmate

Jo rode at the front of the groups of mages and templars with Cassandra and Sera. Glancing over her shoulder she saw Solas and Cullen riding together, talking quietly between themselves. Turning her head away from them, she looked forward, and felt the apprehension of what she knew would happen later in the day. Once they reached what was left of the Temple, they dismounted and walked in.

She stood directly beneath the Breach watching the templars and mages spread out. Cassandra, Cullen, Sera and Solas stood under the breach with her, while a small group of Mages prepared the barrier around the Temple encase anything went sideways. Cullen spoke to the Templars first directing them to suppress the magic of the breach, and then Solas addressed the Mages directing them to focus their energy on her. She felt the immense power flowing through her causing the mark to spark angrily, and holding her hand up towards the offending vortex in the sky she felt the connection. Feeling the power of the breach pulling on her, she felt her feet slide when she spoke softly the invocation spell she had prepared.

“Goddess of the universe, I am your magical daughter. I humbly ask that you aid me now Goddess. Grant me your blessing and your power to close this massive hole in your children’s world. For all that is good, I know you will help your daughter in her task.”

She instantly felt the magic amplify even more, and felt her shoulder pop out of its socket at the immense pull of the breach and bit her lip to keep from crying out in pain. She saw her moment, and let the power go with a growl.

“Na varas.”

She watched the ball of magic fly towards the Breach, and with a loud roar it slammed closed shooting out energy that knocked everyone from their feet. Cassandra rolled and swiftly looked to see Jo kneeling on the ground breathing raggedly from the exertion of power. Quickly jumping to her feet, she ran to her scanning her face. Jo smiled at her weakly, and then spoke with pain lacing her voice.

“We did it,” she said slowly slumping forward. Cassandra hit her knees catching her, as both Cullen and Solas ran over to where she lay passed out against Cassandra. Cullen looked at Solas questioningly, and he answered quickly pulling vials of lirium from his pack.

“She used all of her mana up.” Pouring the glowing blue liquid into her mouth his mind screamed at him. *She knows that this magic is yours and that all of this is your fault. She still loves you. She is willing to die for you, is everything you’ve done worth this? Is the return of your people, really worth the life of your nas’falon?* He thought as he poured the second vial into her mouth watching her face grimace at the taste.

Jo slowly woke to the sounds of cheering around her, yet the group surrounding her looked worried.
at her weakened state. She cleared her throat and felt Sera press her water canteen into her hand. Smiling at her friend gratefully, she took a deep drink then looked at Solas.

“I dislocated my left shoulder; can we set it before we leave?” Everyone grimaced at the thought and both Cullen and Solas looked at each other knowingly. Cullen placed himself behind her holding her shoulder in place as Solas grabbed the arm. He looked at Cullen and nodded as Jo felt his hold tighten and then the quick wrenching of her arm as it was put back into socket.

“Son of a motherless fucking goat, that hurts,” she yelled.

Cassandra and Sera both laughed as Cullen helped her stand.

“I will do some healing on it when we return to Haven. Until then drink this, it should help with the pain.”

Jo drank it down quickly and made a face at the taste. “I really need to show Adan the benefits of adding in the essence of berry to these, because they seriously taste like ass.”

Cassandra looked at her, “would that really make them taste better?” Jo laughed and patted her on the shoulder, “you can bet your sweet knickers it will.”

Both women laughed as they walked back towards their horses. Cullen picked her up and set her on her mount, handing her the reins. He turned and walked away from her with an expression that could only be described at thunderous. *He’s worried, and I don’t blame him I am too. I hope Solas can heal this because I need to use it soon.*

On the slow ride back, Cassandra asked her about the incantation she had spoken while sealing the Breach. Jo smiled at her as she spoke, “it is a spell I made to give a little extra push to the magic.”

She heard Solas growl quietly from behind, “quite the spell, it almost killed you.”

Jo ignored his comment knowing she would get an earful once they reached Haven. Cassandra looked confused, and Jo laughed at the obvious discomfort she was in. “Out with it Cassandra.”

Cassandra looked at her then cleared her throat. “I never wanted to ask before…I didn’t want to offend.” Jo raised an eyebrow at her, “That has never stopped you before, so what’s your question?” Cassandra finally looked at her questioningly. “Do you not believe in the Elven Gods? I mean, I heard you call to a Goddess of the Universe, but I have never heard of her before.” Jo smiled knowingly at her and spoke directly.

“I believe in all the Gods Cass, from the Maker to Mythal. There are so many other Gods and Goddess’s out there, and they are all viable divinities to me. Does this offend you?” Cassandra looked at her sharply, and then shook her head.

“No, of course not, I am just surprised by your answer is all. Most people choose one and that is all there is, but I am not so ignorant to think that mine is the only correct one to worship.” Jo smiled, “and hence why we are friends Cass. I have always compared you to a warrior Goddess that I studied. From the first moment I met you, I thought you were a beautiful beast when you fought. It always amazed me at your prowess on the battlefield.”

She saw the blush tinge Cass’ cheeks at the compliment. “Thank you. Maybe sometime you will tell me the stories of this warrior Goddess you speak of.” Jo nodded her agreement, “of course.”

Knowing that her friend was a romantic at heart, she knew the romance of it all would be pleasing for her.
Reaching Haven, she felt Cullen’s hands around her waist as he lifted her from her mount, and placed her on the ground. Solas jumped from his own mount looking at her with his own thunderous look still on his face.

“Shall I follow you to your cabin so we may heal you properly?” Jo nodded in agreement and watched both men follow her. She felt the nervous butterflies flicker in her stomach. *You are so going to hear it now…in stereo* she thought as they walked behind her.

As soon as the door closed behind Cullen, Solas lit into her.

“What were you thinking? That spell could have backfired, you could have killed yourself.”

Jo sat on the bed and shrugged her good shoulder as both men stared at her in disbelief at her recklessness.

“I needed the push to close it and…wait a minute why are you jumping down my throat. It worked didn’t it.” Cullen slid into the chair in front of the fire. Pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration he spoke softly. “That is not damn point and you know it Jo.”

She bit her lip at the quiet, controlled anger radiating from him unsure what she should do. Solas stepped forward and began the process of healing her shoulder. Glancing at him as he focused on her shoulder not saying a word, she saw that he was allowing Cullen to speak for them. *Sweet Goddess I am outnumbered, this is so fucking unfair* she thought. Cullen continued with his softly spoken, controlled anger as he spoke.

“Everyone there felt the power that you called upon. Solas called what you did old magic, is that what that was?” Jo bit her lip and nodded, since it wasn’t a lie, her magic was old. “But Cullen, I was in no…” seeing his hand come up in a silencing gesture she stopped speaking, and continued to sit biting her lip. She looked to Solas for help and he smiled sadly, shaking his head letting her know she would get no help from him.

“Let me make sure I understand this. You invoked old magic…knowing that it could possibly kill you, and you fail to see why that might upset us?” Jo stared at the ground feeling like a child in trouble.

“I knew it wouldn’t kill me. Regardless, if I had been wrong it was worth the sacrifice if it would save everyone else and set the wrong to right.”

Solas dropped his hands, clenching his eyes as he heard in his head *she would willingly die for you, just to fix your mess*, and felt angry with himself. Cullen stared at her incredulously. Jo glanced from one to the other taking a deep breath she looked at Solas ignoring his pained expression.

“Are you finished whenan?” He nodded his head feeling the weight of the bed shift as she stood. Jo walked over to Cullen and laid a hand on his face.

“I don’t expect you to understand all the why’s, or even agree with them. But you must know that this mark will eventually kill me if I cannot find another way to remove it. My life became forfeit the moment this landed on my hand. So yes…I will do whatever it takes.”

Bending down she kissed his lips softly, then stood. “That does not mean I won’t love you in the meantime.” Walking out of the cabin, she left them both to sit with their own thoughts. She needed to get away from them, and make sure her arm was good for what was yet to come.
She watched in dread as one of Leliana’s agents ran through the gate a few hours later, and she knew
it was to begin. Moments later the alarm was sounded, and she heard Cullen yelling, “TO ARMS.”
Jo watched as Cassandra, Sera, and Solas ran towards her as she spoke to them quickly.

“We need to get to the gate.”

They ran to where Cullen, Leliana and Josephine stood. Cullen glanced at her, “The bulk of the
horde is coming over the mountain.”

Looking at her, he nodded his head, “it is as you said. They are corrupted templars.” Jo waited to
hear Cole pound at the gate, and when she heard it she ran forward to open it. She saw the fallen
templars around him, as he stepped forward. He suddenly turned his head questioningly at her as he
heard her thoughts. Please Cole don’t let on that I am not of this world, please I need your help
Compassion...please help me.

“Of course I will help you, that is why I am here.” Jo smiled at him then grabbed his arm pulling him
through the gates as everyone stared at him questioningly.

“Everyone this is Cole; he was at Therinfal, and has rushed here to help us.”

Cole pointed at the mountain pass, “You know he comes for you. He does not care about the village;
he comes to kill you for taking his mages.”

Jo nodded her head as she looked to where he pointed. She saw the blight-ridden Tevinter mage, and
for the first time in her life she felt cold fear run through her veins freezing it. Goddess protect me,
stay with me, I beg you to assist me in this first of many trials I must endure, she prayed quickly.

“Cole, this is Dorian and Varric and the large man there is Commander Cullen. You stay with them,
and help them okay?” Cole nodded to her as she turned to look at Cassandra.

“Let’s go kick the shit out of some templars,” Jo said with a wicked smile. Cassandra smiled
menacingly, “yes, let’s introduce ourselves.” Cullen nodded to Solas in silent understanding, before
he watched them run out of the gate. Maker protect them, keep them safe and bring them back to me.

They fought their way to the trebuchet outside the gates, killing one templar after another, until they
finally reached it. Cassandra kicked the crank and watched it sling the large boulder at the mountain.
Jo saw that the avalanche took out a large chunk of the force, but too soon the dragon screamed
overhead. They dived in different directions while it swooped to take out the trebuchet they had just
deployed.

Jo scrambled up hearing Sera’s cursing, “Come on guys it’s time for us to get behind the gates.”
Running flat out, she saw Cullen standing at the doors yelling for his soldiers to retreat. They were
the last to make it through the gate, and they watched the dragon fly overhead screaming.

“It will be a fight to the Chantry,” he said angrily. Jo nodded her head and moved up the stairs with
everyone following behind. She saw a templar descending on Leliana who was backed into a corner,
and she threw out a fireball giving Leliana the time to land two arrows into his head.
They fought the endless supply of corrupted templars for what seemed hours. Jo saw that they were all tired, and she began reciting one of the Canticles’ from the Chant of Light that she had always appreciated.

“Blessed are they who stand” she saw Cassandra and Leliana smile as they joined her in reciting the verse, as they fought their way towards the Chantry. “Before the corrupt, and the wicked and do not falter. Blessed are the peacekeepers, the champions of the just. Blessed are the righteous, the lights in the shadow. In their blood the Maker’s will is written.” Finally, through the group of the corrupted templars, they squeezed through the Chantry doors, slamming them shut. She saw the villagers behind Cullen being directed through the tunnels. Josephine was telling them to grab a pack or box on their way by the supplies they had prepared and she turned to Cullen.

“We have one trebuchet left that isn’t destroyed at the other side of the camp, what is the plan now?” Jo looked at him knowing this was the moment she had dreaded the most.

“Cassandra, Sera, Solas and I will head to that last trebuchet. There is a tunnel next to it that we can escape through.”

Cullen stared at her in shocked understanding at what she meant to do.

“You plan on burying Haven,” he said almost choking on the words. Jo nodded her head.

“There are provisions in there for us to grab on our way through. We will meet up with you on the other side.”

Cullen shook his head, “no…no…I cannot…you cannot…Jo, I will go with you.”

She laid her hand on his chest shaking her head, “trust me Cullen. These people need you to lead them out of here safely; they need their Commander to direct them. Once you get above the tree line, send up a flaming arrow or fireball, something that I can see so we don’t deploy the boulder too soon.”

She saw that he was furious with her and scared.

“This is what you wouldn’t tell me – damn it, you knew I would never have agreed to this unless posed with no other fucking choice.” Jo laid her hand against his cheek, “yell at me later Commander,” she said sliding her phylactery into his hand. Cullen glanced down to see what she had placed in his hand. His eyes flashed to hers in understanding, “just in case. In the meantime, get your adorable ass out of here so I can focus.” She said leaning up to place a quick kiss to his lips.

She refused to look back at him as she walked to the door. She knew she would see his heartache, his anger at her and this decision. Grabbing the door she opened it, and walked out with her small group. They fought their way towards the last trebuchet. They fought every corrupted templar that came to destroy it. She finally saw the dragon and yelled at them, “run I’m right behind you.”

Cassandra and Sera took off and she saw Solas waiting for her. Yelling, “josas vhenan, I’m right behind you,” she saw his indecision before turning to follow the two women into the tunnel. As soon as he cleared the tunnel opening, she saw the dragon collapse the opening when it landed on it. The large, menacing creature turned to look at her, and suddenly blew lyrium-laced fire at her. Throwing up a spell to repel the flame, she thought as she waited for Corypheus to walk through the flames towards her.

The skeletal monster, with bone and tattered armor walked towards her slowly. She couldn’t stop the shiver of revulsion at the sight, and squaring her shoulders, she stood waiting.
“Pretender, you toy with forces beyond your ken no more.” She saw his eyes narrow on her as she tilted her chin defiantly.

“If you’re supposed to scare me Corypheus, mark me unimpressed.” He snarled at her angrily with her words.

“How you know my name, I care not. Words like yours are often hurled into the darkness. Once they were mine. They are always lies. Know me; know what you have pretended to be. You… will…kneel mortal.” Jo laughed at him harshly,

“Oh please just go fuck yourself,” she spat at him angrily. She could see that her insolence was infuriating him.

“You will resist, you will always resist. It matters not; I am here for the anchor. The process of removing it begins now.” She watched him activate Solas’s foci, and felt a deep hatred take root as his magic held her immobile by the marked hand.

“It is your fault Herald. You interrupted a ritual years in the planning, and instead of dying you stole its purpose. I do not know how you survived, but what marks you have touched. What you flail at rifts, I crafted to assault the very heavens. And you used the anchor to undo my work…the gall.”

“I survived to defeat you. You toy with magic you don’t understand – I know whose foci that belongs to windbag,” she growled out as the pain radiated up her recently repaired arm. She could see the horrifying change of his face as he smiled at her obvious discomfort.

“Ah…you understand much then.” Jo’s relief at his release was short lived as he grabbed her wrist and dangled her in the air. She felt the joint want to release again, and gritted her teeth at the discomfort. Staring into his black eyes defiantly, she saw his eyes narrow at her lack of fear.

“I once breached the fade in the name of another to serve the old Gods of the empire in person. I found only chaos and corruption. Dead whispers for a thousand years, I was confused, no more. I have gathered the will to return under no name but my own. To champion withered Tevinter, and correct this blighted world. Beg that I succeed, for I have seen the throne of the Gods and it was empty.” Flinging her away from him like an empty sack, the breath was knocked out of her at the impact against the trebuchet. Scrambling to get up she gasped trying to gather air back into her lungs.

“The anchor is permanent; you have spoiled it with your stumbling. So be it, I will begin again. Find another way to give this nation the God it requires.” She glanced towards the tree line and watched the flame fly into the darkening sky realizing it was time.

“And you. I will not suffer even an unknowing rival. You must die,” he said as he took a step toward her. Jo laughed at him as she took a small step closer to the crank causing Corypheus to halt.

“Goddess knows you are the most narcissistic mage that was ever made. You must really love the sound of your own voice. If it wasn’t for the pain and you throwing me around a bit, I might have fallen asleep. I only kept you blathering on as a distraction. I’m not fond of dying, at least not today and not by you. So, I will graciously just tell you no fucking thank you.”

Kicking the crank, she bolted for the hole and dove headfirst not looking behind her, knowing how it would end. However, the head first idea may not have been the best idea as she crashed into the ground after hitting she was sure two main structure beams. Hitting the ground, she felt something stab through her right side and cried out in pain, and then everything went black.
josas vhenan - run my heart
Cullen saw Cassandra and Sera run from the designated tunnel, both carrying packs. He was shocked to see them, and then looked down at Haven and watched the dragon land. He saw her standing alone against the beast. *Maker no…. NO.* He stalked towards Cassandra, “you fucking left her?” He questioned her angrily. Cassandra shook her head, “no. She told us to run and that she was right behind us.”

Cullen turned and pointed to where the trebuchet was, and everyone could see where she was standing by the light blue barrier she erected to protect her from the dragon fire. “Does that look like she followed you?” He spat at her angrily.

Cassandra fell to her knees in shocked horror, while Sera turned back to run into the cave. Solas came out looking extremely pale with panic. “It collapsed behind me, I…couldn’t open it…she…” he barely choked out staring at him. Sera joined Cassandra on the snow-covered ground and started crying.

“Why would she do that…why would,” she couldn’t finish her words as she sobbed, hitting the ground angrily. Cassandra stood after a few moments, and wiped her face angrily.

“She will die down there if we send up that signal,” he yelled.

She yelled back, “and we will all die up here, and her sacrifice would have been for nothing.”

Cullen looked at the archer. Clenching his eyes closed, he nodded his head. He watched the flame go into the air with a sense of losing his soul in the action. *I should never have let her go…this is my fault.* He watched in horror as the corrupted mage threw her against the trebuchet. His body jerked at the impact, *get up baby…get up you can do this, don’t you dare die on me…Maker don’t let her die…* he prayed. He watched her run when she deployed the boulder and both he, and Solas saw where she was going.

“She can make it…she will make it…she has too,” he spoke so softly he knew only Cullen could hear him. They stood watching as the avalanche covered the town and the dragon flew away with the Elder one.

Cassandra wiped at her face again, “we have to get these people to shelter.”

Cullen shook his head at her, “you get them to shelter. It is an hour walk to the spot Leliana has already chosen. Solas and I are going to find her.” Cassandra shook her head sadly at him, “Cullen…” he cut her off. “Don’t say it Cass, we will find her. Now get these people to safety.” Turning away from her, Solas followed behind him as they walked away together. Cassandra turned with Sera, and walked towards the group to explain what had happened.

Cullen pulled out her phylactery, and Solas stared in astonishment. “She gave you a means to find her,” he said with relief.

“Yes, right before everyone separated.” Cullen shoved his sword into the ground channeling what little power he had left through the sword. He whispered the words of the incantation for seeking an
If I was still taking lyrium this wouldn’t be so weak, he thought watching the barest hint of a lead stretching out. Angry at his sudden weakness, he felt Solas lay his hand on his shoulder, channeling his mana through him as if he knew what would be his biggest challenge. Cullen nodded his thanks as a sudden magical thread shot out from the sword, directing them to where she was.

Grabbing his sword out of the ground and sheathing it, they took off at a jog following the magical lead. Both Cullen and Solas let out the breath they were holding at the sight of the lead, unwilling to acknowledge the alternative. After fifteen minutes of running through thick snowfall, they found the hidden tunnel. Running into the opening, they followed the lead. Maker, please don’t let us be too late, he thought as he ran.

For fucks sake, I can’t even fall correctly, she scolded herself. She realized that her left arm was dislocated again, if not broken. At present, she was more concerned at the pain in her right side. Glancing down her chest, she saw the piece of wood sticking from her body, and closed her eyes tightly letting her head fall back to the ground.

Well this wasn’t part of the plan, she thought. Feeling around in the dark for the pack she had thrown in the day before, she let out a hiss of breath at the slight movement. Gritting her teeth from the pain radiating through her body, she felt the cloth of the pack. Softly groaning, she pulled it towards her, and rooted around for the health potions. Those should keep me going for a little while, she thought. Slugging one potion down, she looked at the wooden object sticking from her side and knew that if she removed it she would most definitely bleed out. Pulling the vial of lyrium out, she chugged, and felt the rush of magical energy as she focused on trying to heal what she could.

When beads of sweat formed on her forehead, she dropped her head back in exhaustion. You’re not allowed to die here Jo…this isn’t part of the plan. She felt the darkness slowly creep in around her vision and closed her eyes. She heard voiced yelling at her from faraway. I’m over here, she thought. Trying to focus on the sound, she pulled herself from the darkness to answer them. She heard the sounds faintly and struggled to answer but she couldn’t. She felt so comfortable in her dark little cocoon, and unable to fight it anymore she allowed the darkness to swallow her.

“Jo…damn it… I need you to open those beautiful, stubborn eyes of yours honey.” Cullen begged desperately as Solas looked at the wounds.

“Fen’edhis!” He growled in frustration. “If we can get this out, I can stop the flow of blood for a short time.”

Digging in her pack he found more health potions and thanked her foresight for being prepared. Pulling out four of them speaking quickly, “these will help sustain her until we can get her to the camp.”

Cullen looked at the wooden spike the size of his fist that pierced through her side. He listened to Solas direct him on how to pull it out, Maker help me I am scared he thought instantly. Solas laid his hand on the large man’s shoulder in reassurance. “Trust me lethal’lin, we can do this.”

Cullen nodded and grabbed the spike, pulling it free of her body in one smooth motion. As soon as the spike was free he watched Solas pour magic into her to redirecting her blood flow around the hole, while Cullen poured all four vials of potion down her throat. Solas began packing the wound with a cloth she had thought to place in her pack. Ripping a strip of cloth from his tunic, he wrapped it around her tightly to hold the bandage in place. She did not wake through any of it, and both men
were worried. She would surely have been in enormous pain, and she didn’t even flinch.

Solas nodded to him he was done, as Cullen handed him a vial of lirium to replenish what he had depleted while wrapping her in his cloak. When he picked her up he heard her suddenly mumble thickly, “I knew…find me,” and then she was out again. Both men moved quickly through the tunnel reaching the entrance. Solas drew a glyph upon her chest quickly to keep her warm as they traveled in the snow storm. When he looked at him questioningly Cullen shook his head, “I run hot since my lyrium usage.” Solas nodded and drew one on his chest as they took off in the direction of the camp.

“I will prepare,” Solas said before running ahead. Cullen strode into the camp five minutes later carrying her, and Cassandra directed him to the tent Solas had set up with the healers. Laying her down on the makeshift cot, he stepped back and rubbed his face as they cut clothing away hurriedly. He saw the immense amount of damage, and his hands clenched as tears formed. He saw that Solas also took a shuddering breath before wiping at his eyes quickly. Dorian and Adan gasped at the damage. “Maker’s breath,” Dorian muttered.

Sera entered the tent carrying a case of lyrium for the mages, stopping suddenly at the sight of Jo’s still form. Almost dropping the box, Solas told her where to place it. She turned to Cullen and grabbed him in a hug. She was not consoling him but seeking it for herself, as she mumbled into his plated chest.

“She’s gonna be alright, right?” Cullen rubbed her shoulders and spoke with a gravelly voice, thick with unshed emotion.

“She has the best Sera,” was all he was able to say. Letting him go, he watching the muscular elf wipe at her nose with her sleeve, before nodding her head and walking out.

Cassandra stood in the tents doorway with Cullen watching the healers work. Whispering brokenly, “In the long hours of the night when hope has abandoned me, I will see the stars and know your Light remains.”

Cullen glanced at her as she wiped tears from her eyes while the healers worked. He watched as some focused on broken bones or smaller lacerations. Solas, Fiona and another named Dorthea work on the gaping hole in her side. Adan made poultices, and handed out lyrium when one would need it. Dorian worked on the fractured skull, they found upon their examination. He caught Solas ignoring Adan as he tried handing him a potion. He kept his focus on his healing of a nicked artery. Walking forward he grabbed the potion from Adan, and uncorked it holding it in front of his mouth waiting for him to open. Solas gazed at him for a second before opening his mouth as Cullen poured the lyrium. When the vial was empty, he handed it back to Adan and stepped back to where Cassandra stood. Cassandra did not miss the exchange, or what looked to be an intimacy between them.

After three grueling hours, the hole had been repaired as best as it could be; for now she was out of danger. Cullen watched as Solas slumped forward with fatigue, and walked to the man. Throwing his arm over his shoulders he helped him walk to the cot at the other end of the tent, and sat him down. Solas smiled at him, “thank you lethal’lin,” he said tiredly. Cullen nodded at him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“I will bring some broth in for you, and then you will rest.”

Solas nodded his head in agreement, and Cullen left the tent. Cassandra followed him out, and spoke to Dorian. After telling him that she would live and that Solas had sent her into the fade to heal, she walked towards Cullen. Dorian nodded and said he would let everyone know.
“Commander a moment,” she said following him. Cullen stopped and turned toward her knowing why she was following him.

“How did you find her, Cullen?” she asked quietly. Cullen pulled the phylactery out of his pocket and showed her, then slipped it back into his pocket. Cassandra snorted, “She didn’t leave anything to chance did she,” she said. Cullen shook his head, “no thank the Maker she didn’t, or she would have died. We would never have found her.” Cullen poured some broth into a mug for Solas, and heard Cassandra clear her throat. This was a sure sign that she was going to ask a question she found uncomfortable.

“Cullen…you love her yes?” she asked quietly. Cullen nodded, “I do.” Cassandra nodded then blushed but continued, “and Solas?” Cullen stared at her, “he does as well.” Cassandra shook her head, “and you are…” he could see her trying to find the words and spoke quickly. “Okay with it? Yes, I am, is that all you wanted to know Cass.” Cassandra looked at him shocked. “I know it isn’t any of my business, but as my friend, I care about you.” Cullen clasped her shoulder, “I know you do.”

Cullen grabbed a hunk of meat to go with the broth, and went back to the tent. Solas was lying down with his arm over his eyes resting. Sitting on the stool next to his makeshift cot, he spoke softly, “drink, you need your strength. I brought some meat as well to help replenish your energy.”

Solas slid his arm over his head and sat up grabbing the cup from Cullen’s outstretched hand. Drinking deeply of the warm brew he sighed gratefully. He saw that he was holding a plate of the meat and looked at him. “Have you eaten yet?” Cullen shrugged, “I will later, right now I am more worried about you.”

Solas grimaced and swung his legs over the edge of the bed. “You need your strength too, eat some of the meat and I will stop aggravating you.” Cullen chuckled softly, and ripped a hunk of the meat off and shoved it in his mouth. Solas smiled at him as he took another drink of the broth.

Recognizing that they were alone in the tent with just her, Solas spoke what was on his mind. “How complicated has this become?” Cullen shook his head, “very.” Solas nodded his agreement with the assessment. Cullen cleared his throat and spoke as candidly as Solas had.

“I cannot let her go, and it would seem that you are of the same mind. How do you think we should proceed?” Solas took a tentative drink of his broth as he thought about an answer to the question.

“We are both sleeping with her, does this pose a problem for you?” Cullen thought for a moment then shook his head when no feelings of jealousy arose, “no it does not.” Solas nodded his agreement with him, and continued.

“Then for now, we shall continue as we are. Supportive, loving, and our having a friendship helps with smoothing over things that would be otherwise awkward.” Cullen agreed thinking, should I feel this need to care for him as well, a need for him to be in my life as much as I want her in it? Keeping the thought to himself, he left his friend to get some much needed rest. Sitting next to Jo, he held her hand and watched her sleep. The feeling of thankful contentment knowing she would live.

Cullen had no idea that Solas had thought the same as him. How did this man become important to me? It can’t be right, is it? He questioned himself. When his wolf answered, he felt even more confused. She loves you, and him. Would it really be wrong to love her as well as him? Have you changed so much that all love is not welcomed in your life? Family is a family you make. Solas shook his head and thought about it, then pushed it away. Focus on now, worry about all the rest tomorrow. Setting the cup down he threw his arm over his eyes again to rest for a while.
Chapter End Notes

Fen'edhis - wolf cock (literal definition) Universal swear word
Cullen was abruptly awakened by her moans, and slight thrashing a few hours later. Knowing she was in the throes of a nightmare, he walked to where Solas slept and shook his shoulder.

“She’s having a nightmare,” he spoke quickly as he walked back to her somewhat holding her down so she didn’t hurt herself.

Solas knew he had been unable to reach her in the fade, and was unsure what he could do when Cole entered the tent.

“She is scared, I can help.”

Solas knew who he was, but he was sure Cullen would not agree readily.

“Help her Cole, she will not allow me to,” and watched the spirit disappear.

Cullen rubbed his eyes, “where the hell did he go?” and then looked at Solas with a narrowed gaze.

Solas knew he couldn’t lie to him, and spoke frankly.

“Cole is a spirit of Compassion. He can reach her in the Fade in ways that I cannot. He can help her.”

Cullen was about to argue the point when he realized Jo had calmed, and had a small smile upon her sleeping lips. He glanced at Solas and spoke softly in case his voice agitated her. “We will speak of this later.”

Solas nodded and checked her wounds, pouring healing into the now smaller hole in her side. Cullen looked at the hole and could see that it was indeed smaller since the initial. He could at least no longer see to the other side of her back. She would need days of healing before she was well enough to travel. He watched as the wound shrunk a bit more with Solas’s healing and when he looked at him, he could see the haggard lines of his face. Walking around her bed he grabbed his shoulder.

“You need more rest Solas, your about to drop.”

Solas stood up and felt his legs give out. Cullen’s strong arms instantly grabbed him, before he fell. Shaking the fog from his head he felt himself suddenly picked up as if he weighed nothing.

“Okay my lady let me carry you,” Cullen joked and heard the soft chuckle leave Solas.

“I’m never going to live this down am I?” and could feel the man’s rumbling laughter through his side.

“Oh hell no… I will remind you of this moment.”

Solas laid his head on his shoulder as he was carried the few feet to his bed. *This feels nice*, he thought.

“Well then I might as well enjoy the free ride,” he joked.
Cullen laid him on the bed gently and joked, “Let’s not make a habit out of this shall we?”

Solas laughed and pointed his chin at the sleeping woman at the other end of the tent, “Tell her that, will you.”

Cullen chuckled knowingly, and walked back to her bedside.

For the next few days Cole would appear when she was in distress, and Cullen started seeing this spirit in a different light after Solas explained what Cole was exactly. When one day he appeared after her distress had stopped, Cullen spoke to him needing to know.

“Is she okay?”

Cole looked at him calmly.

“Yes, when she is in her home, she is happy. She thinks of you and of Solas a lot. She thinks you will be angry with her when she wakes.”

Cullen snorted in unison with Solas, only Cullen spoke first. “Well she would be correct in that thought.”

Cole looked at him, or more like through him. His head cocked like a dog’s, listening.

“You are worried that caring for him is wrong, that it would be rejected. You would be wrong.”

Cullen paled at having his thoughts invaded, and staring at Jo’s sleeping form as he spoke quietly.

“It is impolite to read someone’s thoughts when they would prefer they were kept private, Cole.”

Cole looked at him questioningly, yet you couldn’t mistake the innocent look on his face.

“But it is causing you pain, and I can help. He feels the same way, you shouldn’t be afraid.”

Cullen shook his head, and Solas spoke up quickly not appreciating the spirit utilizing his thoughts either.

“Cole, he would rather not talk about it, as would I.”

Cole shook his head, “but I can help.”

Solas stared at him.

“No Cole.”

Cole nodded and left as suddenly as he entered.

Cullen could not look at his friend, and watched her sleep while feeling mortified. Maker preserve me, he thought. Wait he said he felt the same way? Continuing to focus on her sleeping form he stood abruptly and left the tent to get dinner for the two of them.

Solas watched him leave and rubbed his face. Well it’s taken care of, no need to say anything, he thought annoyed while watching her sleep. Wait he said he cared about you as well…he is worried about rejection…from me. Shaking his head, he pushed the thoughts to the back of his mind and focused on healing her wound some more. Solas drank a lyrium potion as Cullen came back holding two plates of food. Holding one out to him, Sera and Dorian came in behind him carrying ale for each of them. Everyone watched as Solas rewrapped the bandage holding the poultice to the
shrinking hole in her side. Sera sat on the ground as Dorian pulled up a stool and sat.

“How much longer before she wakes up?” Sera questioned. Solas took a sip of his ale and set it down. “Just a few more days’ da’len, she needs this time to rest and recover.”

Sera nodded as she drank from her tankard.

“I miss her,” she said to no one in particular as Dorian spoke to Solas.

“It appears that she is healing well, how are the ribs?” he questioned.

Solas shook his head, “Difficult. They are apparently healing slower than everything else.”

He took a bite of his stew. Solas watched the steady number of envoys delivering the many messages to Cullen. He felt a curl of desire as he watched him take the information and answer them before returning to his meal. He pulled his focus back to Dorian as he spoke.

“There is a Tevinter method that might speed up their healing,” Dorian said cautiously.

Both Solas and Cullen looked at him questioningly, compelling him silently to continue with his explanation. Dorian took a drink of his ale and set it down.

“Before you both ask it does not require blood magic; however, the magic is of a necromancy manner.”

Cullen wasn’t completely sure what he meant and he looked to Solas for his agreement. When he saw him nod, he nodded his agreement with him.

“Please continue Master Pauvus.”

Dorian nodded at him then spoke about the spell and what it would require. Cullen and Sera shuddered at the idea of dead people, and Solas nodded his agreement.

“I can see what you mean. Can you do this spell?”

Dorian smiled smugly.

“Of course I can, don’t be ridiculous” he said quickly. “You two are not the only ones who love her you know.”

Sera snorted and drank from her tankard, as Dorian stood rubbing his hands together. He began the spell. Cullen and Sera watched curious and then horrified at the feeling of the dead helping to heal her. When he was done, he sat down with sweat on his brow, and drank deeply from his ale. Cullen got up and grabbed Solas’ plate to return to the makeshift kitchen, leaving his stool empty.

Sera jumped up and took it over so she could sit next to Jo and talk to her sleeping form about the craziness of everything. Brushing her hair while she talked, she was braiding it when Cullen returned. He stepped to his own cot across from Solas’s and pulled his tunic off before lying down tiredly. I will think on what happened earlier – later. Cullen closed his eyes and fell asleep to the lull of Dorian, Sera and Solas talking.

Solas awoke a few hours later to the sounds of Cullen fighting his own demons while sleeping. Calling to him to wake up, he watched his friend become more agitated at what he was seeing. Moving from his bed to his side, he laid a hand against his forehead and felt the fever of lyrium
withdrawal.

“Fen’edhis,” he cursed the stubborn man silently. Placing his hands over his head, he worked the spell that would help him with the withdrawals.

Finished he began removing his hands when he felt the crushing grip of his hold on his wrist. Holding still he watched him as he slowly woke. Blinking a few times, he let out a breath he had been holding in fear. Suddenly realizing he had a crushing hold on Solas’ wrist, he let go and laid his arm across his eyes in embarrassment.

“I am sorry about that.”

Solas sat for a moment then spoke quietly rubbing his wrist absently.

“Have you any of the potions I made you, or were they lost with Haven?”

Cullen raised his arm from his eyes, “they are gone. I’ll be fine, but thank you for waking me. I am sorry I woke you.”

Solas stayed where he was and gazed at him quietly.

“I will make you more, and we will continue with the magical means to overcome the withdrawal symptoms.”

Cullen shook his head, and Solas looked at him disapprovingly before the man could argue.

“You are of no good to anyone if you are ill. Trust me, I can help you.”

Cullen looked at him then looked away ashamed of his weakness. Solas laid his hand on his bare chest, and Cullen stilled. He felt a subtle caress of his magic lick against his bare skin, and felt stunned at the feelings of desire the simple touch stimulated.

“There is no shame in this. What was done to you is unfortunate, but you don’t have to let it rule you lethal’lin.”

Cullen nodded and agreed with his idea as he tried to ignore the feelings stirring low in his stomach.

“I…do trust you Solas,” he said a little thickly and mentally winced.

Solas nodded removing his hand, and stood moving back to his own bed. He lay down and analyzed the desire he had felt from touching him. Where had that come from, my magic reached for him he thought. Laying there with his thoughts in turmoil he stared at the ceiling of the tent.

Cullen laid with his arm over his eyes in confusion. I felt his magic on my skin again…like I do with Jo…sweet Andraste preserve me it felt good. Rubbing his face I’m a mess, he thought as he fell back asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Fen’edhis - wolf cock (I seriously love this universal cuss word they have.)
“We can’t move until she wakes up and you know this Seeker,” Cullen said stubbornly.

Cassandra knew that when he used her old title he was angry or frustrated with her.

“Yes, I know that Commander, yet we still need to plan ahead. She is going to wake up eventually, and the people here need to know that,” she said angrily.

Leliana looked from one to another in apparent frustration. “We should send out scouts to see what is out there in the meantime.”

Cullen looked at her surprised.

“To what end? Do you want them to die?”

Leliana looked as if he had slapped her, and Cullen pinched the bridge of his nose.

“I am sorry Leliana that was unworthy of me.”

_What the hell is wrong with me_, he thought catching Leliana’s look of understandingly. They had been camping in this spot for a little over a week, and Jo still hadn’t woken up. Everyone’s nerves were frayed.

“We are all at the end of our proverbial rope, Commander. I understand what you are saying.”

Cullen bowed his head to her as Josie spoke up.

“Without the infrastructure of the Inquisition we are lost, we must maintain some sort of balance.”

Cullen looked at her questioningly.

“And where would you suggest that come from, Ambassador? It can’t come from nowhere.”

Leliana sighed, and argued in Josephine’s defense. “She didn’t say that it could.”

Cullen looked at them, and in frustration slapped his hand on the makeshift table.

“Standing here arguing over what we could or should do is pointless. This gets us nowhere.”

Solas listened to the arguing and shook his head. He walked to Jo’s bedside to check on her, and saw her eyes open wide while she listened to the arguing.

She looked at him and smiled weakly, “help me get out there vhenan.”
Solas shook his head, “no ma’lath, you are not well enough to get up yet.”

Jo stared at him stubbornly.

“Help me outside Solas, or I will crawl there by myself.”

Solas stared at her, and then in resignation he grabbed a fur and wrapped it around her. *He is going to kill me,* he thought quickly as he lifted her from the bed. He felt her lips press against his cheek and gave her a soft smile.

“There is no way to soften the very firm talking to you’re in for now that you’re awake. You know this, yes?”

Jo laughed as she wrapped her arms weakly around his neck. “Yes I know, but could you two at least wait until I am able to run away?”

Solas smiled knowingly, and carried her from the tent to where the advisors argued. Walking towards them no one had noticed their approach, and Jo spoke up a little unevenly.

“You do realize that no one could get a moment of sleep with the four of you arguing as loudly as you are.”

All faces turned towards her, as Solas carried her towards them. Faces blushing with embarrassment at their childish behavior, all stared at the ground.

“Herald, we are sorry to have awoken you with our arguing,” Josephine spoke quickly.

Jo laughed as everyone looked to their feet in embarrassment, except for Cullen, who searched her face and found what he was looking for. He turned frustrated eyes to Solas.

“It was long overdue Josie, don’t be upset. I agree with Leliana, we need to scout around and see what is out there. Send them with enough provisions for a few days, and when they return can hopefully have some information on our surroundings.”

Looking at Solas knowingly she continued, “in the meantime we will brainstorm some ideas for locations.”

Cullen stepped forward looking at Solas, “is it wise to bring her out here?”

Solas laughed, “wise? No, but she threatened to crawl out if I didn’t bring her.”

Cullen looked at her, and Jo smiled sweetly at him. “Miss me?” she said pleasantly.

Cullen shook his head as the others tried hiding their combined laughter.

Cullen looked at Solas, “Okay she was out here, said her piece, now she can go back to bed.”

Before Jo could argue, Cullen placed his face directly in front of hers.

“After the stunt you pulled Herald, I would go back to bed my lady.”

Jo bit her lip then smiled at him. “Of course Commander; Solas would you please return me to my resting chambers before the Commander has some sort of fit.”

Solas tried hard to hide his smile, as Cullen glared at them both. He turned back to the rest of the group efficiently silencing their laughter, while Solas walked back towards their tent.
“We can continue this conversation tomorrow.” He spoke with a finality before turning on his heel to follow after Solas, with Jo back to their tent.

Cassandra smiled perceptively, and Leliana chuckled softly with Josephine.

“I don’t know about you two, but I wouldn’t want to be her right now for anything if that look on his face means what I think it does,” Cassandra said quietly.

They laughed as they watched the retreating trio, and turned back to the map to discuss possible areas for scouting.

Solas carried Jo back into the tent and laid her down quickly covering her up, as Cullen followed behind them.

“Can you put a sound and no entry barrier on the tent please, Solas?”

Seen his nod, he turned his attention back to Jo on the bed. Crossing to her side quickly, he fell to his knees. Grabbing her hand he began crying. Jo was taken aback by the sudden show of emotion. She was expecting him to start yelling at her for her foolishness like he looked to want to do when they were outside, but not this. She felt him lay his head in her lap, and wanting to soothe him, she ran her fingers through his thick hair as he wept with all his pent-up emotion.

“I cannot…your body…was so broken and bruised…don’t …do not ask me to endure it again, I can’t,” he choked out into her lap.

Jo felt her own tears slide down her face. Solas walked to the other side of her bed, and grasping her hand, he had his own tears streaming down his face. Shaking his head, he choked out, “I cannot survive finding you that way again vhenan,” he spoke overcome with his own emotions.

With tears steadily streaming down her own face, she knew she needed to explain why she had done what she had.

“I am sorry, there was no other way,” she said emphatically. “I knew if I told either one of you what I had planned, that you would have done everything you could to make sure it didn’t happen, and it needed to happen that way. If there had been another way, I would have chosen it.”

Solas shook his head kissing the back of her hand and held on.

“If you hadn’t given Cullen your phylactery, vhenan, we would never have found you,” Solas said softly.

Jo smiled, “I knew if you gave a templar a vial full of mages blood, he would know what to do with it.”

Cullen looked at her with his own private hell showing starkly.

“If Solas hadn’t been with me, I don’t think I could have made the incantation work.”

Jo looked at him and then Solas, and realized how much of a horrible situation she had truly put them in.

“Oh, Cullen I am so sorry. I didn’t realize that when you stopped taking lyrium that your abilities might not work. I didn’t understand that…I am such a fool to have put you both through such a shit
Cullen refused to leave his place in her lap, as he mumbled into her legs. “Just promise you won’t do that again.”

Solas with his head bowed over the hand he had gripped, spoke his thoughts as well.

“Yes, I agree. Promise you will not do anything so foolish again.”

Jo looked at their heads and realized that she had put them in as much emotional trauma, as she had experienced physically.

“I promise that I will not hide anything like that from either of you again. I cannot bare the idea of hurting either one of you like I did.”

Solas placed his hands on her face and kissed her gently.

“Ma serannas ma vhenan.”

Solas sat back wiping the tears from his face as he watched Cullen sit up and kiss her gently as well.

“Thank you honey, that’s all we ask. Don’t shut us out.”

Solas cleared his throat and grabbed the vials sitting on the make-shift table.

“I will need you to take something for pain and a sleeping draft vhenan, there is much more healing to be done.”

Jo nodded her head as Solas handed her a small one for pain first, then one for sleeping. He watched her drink them both dutifully. When Jo fell back asleep, he went about checking the wound in her side. Preparing himself for more healing, Cullen stood to leave and Solas stopped him quickly.

“Let me remove the wards first or you’re in for an uncomfortable shock.”

Cullen laughed and stepped back as he watched him move his hands in an intricate pattern over the entrance. Once they were removed, Cullen left the tent to grab dinner for them while he left Solas to his healing.

Chapter End Notes

vhenan - my heart
ma’lath - my love
Ma serannas ma vhenan - my thanks my heart
Honesty

He watched Flissa as she made their plates, and pull out a bottle of wine from behind her. Cullen raised his eyebrow at her, and she smiled shyly.

“I heard the Herald is awake, and I thought that is something that you and Master Solas will want to celebrate.”

He smiled and thanked her, as he took the tray and bottle walking back to their tent. He thought about how they had grown into a routine over the past week. At night, they would talk about many different things. Sometimes Solas would read while he did paperwork, how he would grab food while he healed. He had secretly watched him talk to one of the envoys, and take some of his paperwork for him while he was supposed to be napping.

He pushed through the tent opening, and saw Solas rewrapping the bandage. Walking to the makeshift table, he placed the tray and bottle down. Uncorking the bottle, he grabbed two mugs and poured, while Solas drank a lyrium potion to replace his depleted mana. Cullen realized that he was pouring everything into healing her, and leaving very little for himself; this concerned him greatly. Handing the plate and cup of wine to him, he grabbed his own and sat down. Solas looked at the wine, and then back at him.

“Flissa heard that Jo was awake, and she thought we might want to celebrate.”

Solas smiled and took a drink. He shrugged slightly in indifference to the flavor as he set the cup down. “It is not as good as your sister’s,” he said. Cullen laughed in agreement, taking a bite of his meal.

Cullen found himself taking quick glances at Solas while he ate. He had never found a man attractive before until him, and was unsure how to handle it.

It’s probably just everything we have been through together…and there is Jo, he thought.

Pushing that thought away as he took another bite of his meal, he realized that he would be lying to himself if he placed his feelings on that notion. Be honest with yourself Rutherford. You find the man attractive. His eyes pull you in and make you lose your train of thought when they are focused on you. You find yourself studying his form when he removes his clothes for bed. Then there is the soft caress of his magic on your skin when you stand to close. So yeah Rutherford, it’s not just because you share a woman, he reprimanded himself.

Solas watched the play of expressions that ran over Cullen’s face. He wondered what had him so frustrated. Taking a bite of his ram, he thought to himself about how he was going to come to terms with his attraction to the large templar. His culture was not opposed to bisexuality, yet most humans found it to be a sin against the Maker. Every time he found the man without a shirt on, he had to clench his hands to keep from touching him. He found himself lose all manner of thought when his gaze held his. He enjoyed his companionship, and your magic touches him his thoughts slipped in slyly. Shoving the thought away he chewed thoughtfully on his ram.

Cullen sat trying to relax with his glass of wine when he finished his dinner. He was still trying to make sense of his thoughts, when Solas interrupted the confusing feelings.

“What is on your mind, you look troubled?” he asked him curiously.

Cullen glanced at him quickly, then just as quickly away.
“Nothing of importance,” he muttered as he stood to refill his cup thinking to change the subject.

Holding the bottle up to him he watched him nod, and poured more into his cup before placing the bottle back on the table.

Cullen sat on his stool and stared at the floor. This is the first awkward silence they had ever experienced since starting down this path together with her. Solas watched him for a moment, and then looked at Jo sleeping peacefully. Get it out there and stop this dancing around old wolf. You will regret it if you never speak of it, he thought while noticing that Cullen was looking everywhere but at him. Later, not now, he told himself shortly.

“I did want to speak to you about a place we can safely take everyone too. I believe that it is still standing here in the Frostbacks,” he said calmly watching Cullen look at him finally and restrained the sigh from escaping him.

“What place…how do you know of it?” Cullen asked him curiously.

“I know of it because I found it in the Fade. It was called Tarasyl'an Te'las. The rough translation would be the place where the sky was held back or Skyhold as I would like to call it. It is a journey, but we could reach it within a week. It would accommodate everyone here, and more as the Inquisition invariably grows. This would give it a place to do so, safely.”

Cullen thought carefully about the planning of moving so many on that kind of hike, and how long it could possibly take. Taking a drink of his wine he asked, “Do you know where it would be on a map?”

Solas smiled, “yes I could show you.”

Cullen thought about how that would get rid of so many of the issues with everyone if they had a direction to head too. Setting his cup down, he walked to his bed and grabbed a map from the pile of papers stacked next to it. Removing everything from the make-shift table of crates and laying it out, he motioned for Solas to show him. When the man stood next to him, he felt the inevitable magical lick against his hand. Cullen tried to nonchalantly move his hand, but he still felt it touching him. He watched Solas point to a spot on the map, and felt the electrical touch caress his neck, killing his possibility of focusing on the area. He could not stop the sharp intake of breath at the instant desire that fired through his veins. Solas had heard the sharp breath, and turned his head to gaze at him questioningly. Cullen stared intently into his dark grey eyes, and his head leaned towards him of its own accord. Before he knew what he was about, he ran his hand over the softness of his jaw and felt the cool touch of his lips against his.

Cullen bit at his lower lip teasingly and when his lips parted, his tongue caressed his. Tasting the wine on his tongue, he realized what he had done, and pulled back quickly. He stared at him with embarrassment, and apologized quickly.

“I…I am sorry, that was inappropriate. I…I don’t know what came over me…I…it will never happen again.”

Solas watched the redness of his embarrassment color his face, and spoke quietly, still slightly dazed at the little sparks of desire that flushed his skin with how nice it had been to feel his lips against his.

“Never? If you would prefer.”

Cullen looked at him sharply.

“If I prefer?” he questioned in an exasperated husky tone.
Solas shrugged his shoulders, and turned away to sit back down on his stool. Picking up his wine he took a drink, trying to not show him how much he had enjoyed the brief moment. He watched Cullen run his hands through his hair, and wished he was the one doing that and not him.

“Yes, if you prefer. It is not unwanted attention, or you would currently be a block of ice.” Cullen stared at him, then shook his head, and walked back to his own cup of wine and stool. Falling on it with a complete look of confusion pasted on his face, he gazed at him.

“I’ve never…you see…” letting out an exasperated sigh, “fuck I don’t know what to say. Everything is already all crazy, and I have no idea which end is up anymore.”

Solas watched him try to come to some sort of grip on the reality. He knew he had to say something to him to alleviate the insanity of the situation.

“Okay we have established that you have never kissed a man before. I have, it is not looked down on in my culture to find love within your own sex. I will not deny that I find you attractive, or that I care for you a great deal. We have comforted each other when we needed it. Do you not feel it, the pull between us? And don’t even try to say it has something to do with her,” he said looking at Jo’s sleeping form then back to him.

Cullen let a frustrated sigh escape, as he gazed at him.

“Well okay then. You are right, I have felt this pull. I just thought that…Maker knows, I thought I was losing my mind to be honest. Yes, I have noticed that our friendship has changed since we found her in that damn cave, and that we have grown closer. And if I am to be honest, I find you attractive as well.”

Cullen watched for his reaction nervously. He found himself lost in the grey depths of his gaze as he watched him carefully.

Shaking his head, he continued softly, “I am afraid to find myself caring for you, as much as I do her.”

Solas could hear his wolf howling in his head happily at the idea of having a pack. Smiling comfortably, he spoke as quietly.

“You are not the only one scared about caring for someone else so much, or so quickly. But we should not fear our own feelings.”

Throwing his hands out to encompass the area he stared mesmerized by his eyes. “Are we not afraid of so much already?” he looked at him earnestly.

Cullen nodded his agreement with him, yet still unsure of how to progress anywhere other than what he had already.

“You are right about that…So you have…this is awkward…” breathing deeply he pushed on, “would it be wrong to say I want to…with you?”

Solas laughed, “No not wrong, and it need not be awkward.”

Finishing his wine, he stood and set the cup on their make-shift table, and held his hand out to him. Cullen stood and set his empty cup next to his own, and took his hand.

“One step at a time, yes?”
Solas saw Cullen nod his own agreement in his shy nervousness. Slowly reaching around him he undid the buckles to his breastplate, finally releasing him; he pulled it over his head and walked to the stand to hang it. Walking to the beds, he pulled the bedding from both and prepared a bed on the floor of the tent. He could feel his nervousness, and undid his leathers than his own. Cullen pulled his shirt over his head as Solas did the same, before pulling his leathers off, leaving them in their smalls. Solas took his hand, and led him to their new makeshift bed on the tent floor.

“Tonight, we shall hold each other. If anything is to happen than it is because we want it to be so.”

Cullen nodded and crawled under the blanket of furs with him. Solas laid his arm over him, and snuggled into his warm strength, sighing happily. I should have done this weeks ago, I would have saved myself so much frustration, he thought as he felt happy lying next to him.

Cullen laid his hand on his shoulder and felt him curl into him. He couldn’t stop the feeling of happiness at the solid form pressed tightly against his. He hadn’t realized just how much he had come to care for him over time, but everything felt so right. Gripping his shoulder for a moment, he rubbed his hand against his back in a soothing motion and heard him sigh in pleasure.

Solas laid his hand on his chest and felt the exhilaration at the feeling under his hand. He had wanted to touch him from the first moment he had seen him undress, and crawl into his bed. He felt the solid strength that radiated from him, and basked in the quiet calm that lay beneath. He felt each muscle sculpted to a perfect form, and was pleasantly surprised at it. He let his fingers glided from one part to another, as he felt desire burn low in his groin. Pushing that back, he wanted to enjoy the feeling of his skin beneath his fingertips.

Cullen relaxed at the feeling of his hand drawing gentle patterns on him, even with the feeling of magic against his skin. He also felt himself harden at the soft caresses.

Closing his eyes to enjoy the feeling he asked, “Is it normal to feel the electrical feeling of your magic against my skin? Does that always happen?”

Solas smiled knowingly, “No, it does not.”

Knowing he could feel it, made him happy, and he felt his wolf calm at the knowledge as he continued to move his fingers over the solid musculature of him.

Cullen lying there did not understand the significance of the feeling and smiled. “I have felt it for weeks and thought it a Mage thing…I’ve just never experienced that before until Jo.”

Solas swirled patterns over his sparsely haired chest and laughed. “You have felt it for weeks?”

Cullen nodded, and then realized he probably couldn’t see him and answered. “Yeah, since the night we sat in my cabin, drinking my sister’s wine,” he explained.

Solas thought back to the night. He would be correct, I felt it and the closeness, yet ignored it, blaming it on the wine, he thought. Thinking that he was an ex-templar, the feeling of magic might make him uncomfortable.

“Does it bother you to feel it?” he asked curiously.
Cullen thought about it for a second, and then laughed. Solas felt the rumble through his face and chest as it pressed closely against him.

“At first…yes. I couldn’t understand…there is an intimacy to it. When I felt it with Jo, it was unnerving.”

Swallowing he took a deep breath, “since then, no I expect it…look forward to it really.”

Solas smiled with the knowledge. Turning his head to him he asked cautiously, “may I kiss you?”

Cullen looked at him then threw away all his thoughts and worries at how it should be wrong. “Yes,” he said thickly.

Solas laid his hand against his cheek and pressed his lips against his. The intimate feeling of Cullen’s arms sliding around him excited him, and he deepened the kiss. Sliding his tongue against his, daring him to meet him halfway. Cullen met his silent challenge with his own desire. Angling his head differently, he nibbled on his lower lip eliciting a groan of pleasure from him while pressing him back into the furs. Solas enjoyed exploring the broad expansion of chest, the feeling of Cullen’s lips upon his neck, and the heat that radiated from him. He let his hand slide over the smooth skin of his stomach, enjoying the tightening of the muscle beneath his fingertips. Wrapping his hand around him, he heard and felt him groan against him, thrilling in the vibration of his pleasure.

“Would you prefer I stop,” he asked quickly.

Cullen shook his head, “No,” he answered huskily before taking his lips passionately again.

Feeling bold, he continued to touch him, stroking him, adjusting to the size of him within his hand, and marveled at the steely texture of it. Breathing raggedly, Solas lost all thought at the feeling of his strong, slightly calloused hand encompassing his own hardness. He was returning the erotic sensations by stroking him in slow, steady pumping action. He would allow his thumb to caress the crown, before returning to his methodical stroking.

Solas’ grip around Cullen’s neck tightened at the sensations he was causing to hum through his body. Kissing him now passionately, enjoying the feeling of him touching and stroking him, his naked chest pressed against his own. The skin to skin contact fueling their desire for each other, Solas let a soft moan escape. Stroking him as solidly as he did himself, he slid his thumb over the crown of Cullen’s head and heard his whimper of pleasure, feeding his own desire that was raging through his blood. Within moments both men found their release, panting, and spent they lay in each other’s arms trying to gather their wits.

Cullen reached down and turned Solas’s face to his. Kissing him deeply; needing him know how he felt, and feeling loved he returned the intensity. Raising his head, he planted a small kiss to his forehead before wrapping his athletic form within his embrace to hold him tightly. Solas lay against his chest still breathing slightly heavy, and savored the feeling of his skin against his. Closing his eyes he let the sound of Cullen’s heart lull him into the fade.
Blue eyes slowly opened to a darkened tent. She knew the sun wouldn’t be up for hours yet. Letting her eyes wander around the space, she saw the empty cots for Cullen and Solas. Sitting up carefully, now curious to where they could be, she looked around again. Her eyes fell on the twin bodies lying in amongst a pile of furs in the middle of the floor. Well they look – cozy, she thought. Her eyes could see that Solas was partially lying on Cullen, and that Cullen had his arms wrapped possessively around him. Well, wow…I really have been asleep a while, she thought.

She studied their position and could see that they were really entangled with each other, and suddenly smiled. This could be interesting, she thought at the sight. Lying back down, she threw her arm over her eyes and smiled. They’re in love with each other, as I am with them. The Goddess really does have a strange way of getting you to your destined path. She smiled feeling happy at the new development, and closed her eyes, letting herself drifted back to sleep.

Cullen moved his leg and felt the weight on top of it shift. Opening his eyes slowly he glanced down at the solid weight lying on him. Solas, his mind breathed calmly. He studied his face as he slept, and smiled at the peaceful expression he saw on the man’s face. I know they say this is wrong, but it doesn’t feel wrong, he thought as he watched him sleep.

Cullen let his fingers caress the soft skin of his back, and felt him curl into him bringing a sudden feeling of pleasure at the unconscious move. Sweet Andraste, does this mean I just like men or both? Laying there he thought about it for a moment, and realized he still wanted Jo as much as he had always wanted her.

He studied the sleeping form that lay cuddled against his side, and felt his heart swell… this is more, it’s...beautiful he thought. I need her and I need him. My life will never feel complete again if they are both not in it, he realized as his hand stroked absently against the smooth skin of his back. Rutherford, do you see the irony of having two mage lovers? You sure know how to go from having no one, to having more than you bargained for.

Solas awoke like a cat basking in the sun at the soft caresses on his back. Stretching against him, he enjoyed the differences between them. Running his hand slowly down Cullen’s stomach, he heard the sharp intake of breath as he encompassed his thickness in his hand. He wanted to show him how enjoyable it could be between two men. He felt the gentle lifting of his face towards him, and smiled as Cullen kissed him hungrily. Solas let his lips trail over his rough jaw. He sampled the tender flesh of his neck before he moved onto his broad chest.

He marveled at the man’s quiet strength, as he nipped and licked at sensitive skin. Cullen let out a throaty moan at the feel of his lips on his stomach. The muscles involuntarily tightened in anticipation at what he was about to do to him. He groaned in pleasure when the warmth of his mouth encased the length of him. He felt his magic and mouth stroke him stealing his breath. He could not stop the loud moan that tore from his lips, and grip his shoulders in need.

Solas sliding his tongue along the weighty length, using a small spell that pushed Cullen to the limits of restraint, and enjoyed hearing the feral growl rip from him as he continued working him with magic and his mouth. The almost bruising grip he felt on his shoulders let him know that his gentle
giant was very close. He stroked his thickness with swift strokes while pulling the sounds of breathless begging from him with a swipe of his tongue.

Cullen groaned raggedly as his mouth brought him over an abyss of dark pleasure. His body soared off that precipice of desire and shattered in his skilled hands, ripping his name from his lips as he came.

Cullen felt Solas’ smile on his shoulder as he kissed it and pulled his face to his. He could taste himself on his mouth and a rush of excited desire filled him. He had never experienced anything like that before except with Jo. He pushed him onto his back and let his own hands explore him. He needed to know he could please him as he had him. He bit at his shoulder and provoked a small groan of pleasure from him.

He followed in the pattern of what Solas had done for him. Nipping and licking at sensitive flesh, he could feel the electrical touch of his magic as he became excited. Smiling at the tightening of stomach muscle beneath his tongue, the magic caressing his skin spurred him to boldness as he slid his tongue over the length of him.

Solas’ head fell back at the feeling of his warm mouth working him tightly. With each movement of tongue and suction he felt his body overflow with millions of sensations. Cullen didn’t need magic to drive him crazy; his steady stroking of his thick length was doing that for him. The feeling of his tongue on his balls and he lost any control he thought he had. Gripping the bed as the man’s strong grip stroked him in slow steady pumping movements, the warmth of his mouth sucking on him steadily and he groaned as he came hard, “Cullen…”

Cullen slid up the length of his body, pressing kisses along a slow path over his hip enjoying the soft shiver he felt beneath his lips. Solas kissed him when he was finally reached his face. Cullen pulled him into his arms enjoying the feel of his skin against his. Knowing he had pleased him as much as he had done brought a tender smile to his lips. He lay back, comfortably sliding his hand to Solas’ hip to rest.

Solas lay against him still trying to collect himself after that sensation of complete abandonment. The feel of strong arms wrapped around him protectively, and he felt the safest he had ever felt in a very long time. He had never felt this before with past male lovers he realized. Caressing the arm under his head, they both lay in silence taking pleasure in in everything they had just shared together. Both men stiffened when they heard a distinct throat, clearing from the other end of the tent.

Solas looked at Cullen and could see the fear written on his face as he was sure it was on his. Was she awake the whole time, he thought? Lying there rigidly he hoped she would go back to sleep and both were disappointed if not nervous as she spoke.

“Boys I hate to break up your moment but I am hungry over here.”

Cullen closed his eyes as did Solas, both wishing they had the opportunity to explain first. Solas squeezed him tightly giving him courage, and stood naked slipping his breeches on and walked towards her as Cullen watched happily.

“It is still too early for anything vhenan. I will go check and see if we can’t find you some broth.”

Grabbing his tunic from the floor he exited the tent and Cullen couldn’t help but smile at his retreating form. Sliding from the bed of furs, he ignored his tunic and grabbed his breeches, slipping them on with out tying them and walked towards her.

Jo smiled at him warmly enjoying the view of his beautiful, wide chest.
“So…this is going to get a lot more fun I take it?”

Jo asked suddenly feeling shy, and unsure how to proceed with the conversation. Cullen laughed and kissed her.

“I imagine it will…I accept him…no, that is not quite right,” he said. Taking a deep breath before taking her hand he sat down on the stool.

“I love him…will this hurt us…hurt you?” he asked hesitantly.

Jo laughed, “Oh Goddess no. I am beyond happy. You don’t understand how this makes me feel so…” leaving her thoughts hanging Cullen nodded in agreement and smiled.

“I understand honey.”

Jo laughed and reached a hand for his face and felt the stubble against it and laughed.

“When?” she asked.

Cullen watched her then rubbed his face against her hand.

“Well the actual physical is new…as in tonight new, but I have had feelings for him for a few weeks now.”

Jo smiled happily and laid her head back.

“Good, because that makes all of this,” throwing her hands out to encompass the room “much nicer.”

Cullen laughed knowingly and held her hand, kissing each digit individually as Solas entered the tent. Turning with the broth in his hand, he put a ward against the tent flap for disturbance and sound, and then walked to them. Heating it quickly with magic, he handed it to her as both men watched her drink. Solas sat for a moment unsure what he should say and felt Cullen take his hand, as he held hers. He realized that he had explained everything to her, and that he didn’t need to say anything. Smiling at him and then her, they both watched her drink.

“You two aren’t giving me drafts to sleep so you can get it on, right?” she joked with them as she took another drink.

Both men laughed and Cullen spoke first, “would it work?”

Solas laughed more as Jo watched them.

“Maybe,” she said smartly.

Both men stared at her for a moment, and started to speak at once.

“That is not why we…”

Jo laughed at their combined expressions of horror. Groaning from the sudden pain at laughing she shook her head at them.

“I’m just joking. I know you would never do something like that.” She looked at Solas, who looked to still be unsure. “I am beyond happy…why wouldn’t I be? The men in my life have found comfort in each other as well as with me.”

Solas watched her carefully as did Cullen. When both men looked at each other, and gave each other
nods of some silent agreement, Jo felt a little anxious. She was starting to understand that there was more to it than just the two sleeping together.

Solas spoke first, “vhenan, you do understand what this means for us, yes?”

Staring at him, she felt slightly confused as she answered. “Well I may have hit my head Solas, but I don’t think it struck me stupid. This means that you two are intimate, as are we. I don’t see the big deal here…however; we should consider a schedule of some sort…” She stopped the rambling of her thoughts when she heard them laughing at her.

Both men saw the confused look fall on her face as they laughed. Solas coughed then continued to clearly explain what they wanted.

“We love you vhenan, and each other, saying that,” clearing his throat, Cullen completed his thought.

“It means that…we as in you, me and Solas will sleep from here on out, together.” Laughing slightly then he amended it quickly, “or when you are well that is. I will not give up either one of you,” looking at Solas he saw the love in his eyes as he finished his thought, “and neither will I.”

Jo stared at the men a little overwhelmed, and suddenly very nervous. The rapid thoughts of what they were saying started rushing through her head. Her face instantly started to blush at the erotic thoughts that came into her head.

“You don’t mean sleeping together as in a pile of kittens in a basket kind of sleeping together.” Groaning, she covered her face when she saw them smile at her, as she realized what they were really saying. Well hello slut, can we say ménage à trois? Taking a deep breath she decided this thought could wait for later. I think I watched a porn once where the girl…tomorrow damn it!

Solas grinned at her, knowing where her minds direction had finally taken her too, and it wasn’t to a cuddly group of kittens. Rubbing his hands together he pulled her back to the present. “In the meantime, you need some healing done and today you are taking a bath, it should help with your muscles. I’m sure after having been in that bed for more than a week, you might like to leave it even for a moment.”

Jo looked at him gratefully.

“Goddess yes, I feel disgusting, but what about this thing,” she said pointing at where she knew was still an open hole on her side.

Solas nodded at her question, “I know a spell that will cover it for while you’re bathing, it will be fine.”

Cullen stood back as he watched Solas remove the bandage. He walked to his pack and pulled out a couple of clean tunics one for each of them. Slipping a tin of Jo’s favorite herbs from his pack, and a bar of chamomile soap, he saw Jo raise her eyebrow at him questioningly, and he laughed.

“Leliana was very efficient with your directions of stockpile. She made sure that she nicked enough clothing and simple essentials from everyone, it really is impressive.”

Jo smiled and grimaced as she felt Solas’s magic forcing tissue to reform. Hissing slightly, she spoke a little raggedly.

“I told her to prepare enough for three weeks.”
Looking down at the wound as flesh knitted together, she rested her hand on Solas’ shoulder and pushed more magic through him. Solas immediately stopped, and Jo looked at him a little hurt.

“No vhenan, you keep your energy I have enough.”

Cullen handed Solas a lirium potion seeing him smile his thanks as he drank it back. Jo tilted her chin stubbornly and retorted as she watched him hand the empty vial back, “well it’s not like I’m saving it for a fucking marathon, I don’t see how me helping a little is so damn bad.”

Solas shook his head at her stubbornness.

“Fen’edhis! Hamin ma vhenan” he growled out.

She snarled back at him just as quickly, “lasa adahl sunar masa, felasil vhenan.”

His eyes widened in surprise before burst into laughter. Cullen watched the exchange understanding they were arguing about her taking it easy, and looked at them questioningly when they both started laughing.

“Someone just tell me who won?” he said.

Solas stared at her and then to him. “With the verbal duel she won that round. However, she has no other option but to relax, because if she doesn’t I’ll send her to sleep.”

He looked at her warningly, and Jo stuck her tongue out at him defiantly yet knowing he meant it. Standing up he went to where Cullen had moved the tub to the middle of the tent, closer to Jo’s bed, and went about getting the bath ready. Cullen went to her bedside and undid her braid brushing her hair gently and unlaced one of his shirts she was wearing. Solas set the water to heat, throwing in the herbs from the tin Cullen had pulled out earlier. Walking back to her, he cast the spell to cover the much smaller hole in her side, so she could bathe.

“You want to try walking the small distance to the tub?” Cullen asked her before just picking her up.

Jo nodded gratefully as he helped her to the edge of the bed. Keeping a hold of her, he helped her slowly shuffle to the tub. When she stood next to it, he slipped his shirt over her head. Holding onto him, she slowly stepped into the soothing hot water. Groaning in pleasure she laid back, soaking the sore muscles from lying around for the past week.

Cullen pulled up a stool behind her head, and placed a small basin to catch water as Solas handed him two pitchers of warm water to wet and rinse her hair. Jo noticed that they worked in tandem without speaking to each other, and found it comforting. Lifting her head a little Cullen placed a rolled-up towel beneath her neck and poured water over her head wetting it. Lathering the chamomile soap, he started massaging her scalp while washing her hair provoked a low moan of pleasure from her at his attentions to her scalp. Re-lathering his hands he worked his way down the long locks of blue-black hair. Rinsing the soap out he wrung out the excess water, and grabbing another towel he wrapped her head.

Removing the basin from between his feet he slid closer and spoke gently to her. “Sit up baby, and let me wash your back.”

Jo sat forward at his gentle command, and felt him pay the same attention to her shoulders and back as he had her scalp.

His fingers kept just the right amount of pressure to ease the soreness, and provoked another low moan from her at the absolute pleasure. He rinsed her back off and moved the stool to the side.
Gently picking up her arm he started washing and massaging each single digit, then the palm of her hand. Moving to her wrist, he slowly massaging up her arm with steady strokes. Jo’s head rolled against the towel behind her neck as she watched him. *He is just so beautiful when he is intent on something, even as simple as washing an arm* she thought.

He rinsed off her arm and fingers before moving his stool to her legs. Sliding his hands under the surface of the water to lift her leg out slowly, and propped it on the edge of the tub, lathering his hands again, and starting with her toes he massaging each digit like he had her hand. Closing her eyes, she enjoyed the feeling of his hands rubbing soothingly against her skin, removing the soreness from the muscles as well as a week’s long grime. When he rinsed her leg off, he moved the stool to the other side and proceeded to start on the other leg with the same attention as its mate. When he had completed the leg and other arm she heard him murmur to Solas, “you do the chest and stomach, I don’t want to do something wrong to the wounds.”

She slid her sleepy eyes open and watched Cullen hand him the soap before moving out of his way after he had his sleeves rolled up.

Solas washed her chest, and stomach carefully. He looked for signs of infection as he ran his hands over her stomach, ribs and then her breasts. When he rinsed her off, he dried his hands and walked to where the salves and ointments that he made were. He pulled out a few extra things and made a quick poultice. She returned her attention to Cullen standing next to her, with a towel slung over his shoulder.

She felt so relaxed and tired as he reached down to pick her up, and stand her outside of the bath. Toweling her off with gentle strokes as she held onto his shoulders, he grabbed the shirt he had laid on the stool and slipped it over her head. She felt the hem fell to her knees, as he tied the laces, and helped her walk slowly back to her bed. She hadn’t realized how tired she would be after a bath, but his massage had relaxed her so much she barely stifled a yawn and lay back as her eyes drifted closed.

She felt Cullen’s lips press to her own swiftly, and smiled at the soft kiss. He watched Solas remove the spell that covered the wound, and put more healing into it. He could see how tired he was after he was done. He pulled the cork off a vial of lyrium and hand it to him. Solas handed the empty vial back to him, turn, and grab the poultice he had made to pack the wound with. Rewrapping it, he slid the shirt back down and pulled the covers around her seeing she slept soundly again.

Solas moved back to the tub and replaced the water. Heating it he felt Cullen’s arms wrap around him from behind and leaned his head back.

“Your turn to relax, you need too,” he whispered against his neck, and Solas felt the desire in his veins ignite.

Cullen helped him slip from his clothes. Sliding into the tub he laid back watching as Cullen took the soap they had used on Jo and lather his hands. Taking a seat behind him, he nipped at his ear before whispering, “Sit forward.” Solas had never allowed another man to bathe him before, and sitting forward, he hugged his legs and laid his head against them.

Cullen used strong, sure strokes, removing knots from his shoulders provoking a moan of pleasure from him. He smiled at the sound as he rinsed the soap away. He directed him to lie back, and Solas felt soapy hands massage over his chest and groaned again at the exquisite feel of his fingers working their own magic against his skin. He continued removing knots from stress, and felt his body relax into his gentle attentions.

He felt his soapy hand move lower down his stomach, and his muscles tightened in anticipation. The
feeling of his strong hand grasping him beneath the water and stroke him, pulled a low groan from his throat, and he heard him laugh huskily next to his ear with delight.

“Tell me what feels good to you, what do you want me to do to you, Solas,” he spoke softly as he licked the side of his ear. The warm slickness of his tongue made his cock jump in excitement with the simple action.

Solas’ breath became labored as he felt the hand work him in a torturously slow pace. Cullen assaulted his senses from his erotic nibbling of his very sensitive ear, and the gentle suckling of his neck, to the slow pumping action of his hand on his cock keeping him locked at the precipice of his release. Moving his hand to lie over his, he tried increasing the speed yet Cullen would not allow it, and Solas growled in frustration.

“I said tell me, not show me,” he said against his shoulder before he felt the man’s teeth bite softly into the tendon. He groaned with frustration.

“If you were intent on torturing me lethal’lin, you have succeeded,” he growled out between ragged breathy moans.

He felt his smug smile against his neck. “Hmm…that doesn’t tell me how to please you either now does it?” he said continuing his slow torturous pace on him and sucking at the flesh of his neck.

Cullen slid his thumb over the head of his cock to tease him, provoking a low moan from him. Solas felt him increase the pace ever so slightly, while his tongue bathed and bit at the sensitive skin of his neck. *He’s trying to kill me,* he thought feeling his lips brush against the nape of his neck.

“I can’t think,” he rasped out.

Cullen heard his panting breaths almost matching his own as he slowly stroked himself and him at the same time. The sensation was immensely pleasurable feeling the difference in the textures.

“I can do this for a very…very long time, lover,” he growled before increasing and then decreasing the tempo of his stroking.

Solas growled in frustration, and the feel of his ragged breath against his skin told him he was also stroking himself.

“Take me to bed now, I can’t take this anymore.”

Cullen released him and watched as he swiftly stepped out of the bath. With a wave of his hand he was dry and helping Cullen removed his clothes. Cullen couldn’t stop the smug smile from forming with his hurried movements. Suddenly Solas was pressed against him, kissing him with his pent up sexual frustration, as soon as his clothes hit the tent floor. Solas was much stronger than he looked as he realized he helped him as he backed them to their pile of furs on the tent floor. The seductive glide of his tongue dueling with his own, enflamed his already raging desire as he lay down with him.

Lying down, he felt his mouth everywhere on his skin. His fingers skimmed across his chest exciting fires beneath his skin. He felt his tongue on him, and his hips rose to meet him of their own volition. He glanced down at him, and swallowed hard as Solas stared up at him with molten silver eyes as he took him into his mouth. His head fell back, and the veins stood out on his neck as he tried to restrain himself from grabbing him, and abusing his mouth.

The feeling of his tongue swiping across the sensitive head provoked a ragged cry as the sensations washed over him. He felt him slip a finger into him, and groaned at the feeling as his mouth continued working him. His magic caressed him everywhere as his mouth tortured him, and his
finger moved within him. He didn’t know how much more he could take and then felt him slide a second finger into him, and his breath left him in a rush at the pressure.

Solas lifted his head and looked at him in the throes of his passion and felt himself harden even more at the sight of him panting and breathless for him.

“You asked me how you could please me, yes?” he growled before sliding his tongue across the head of his cock teasingly. Cullen felt like his body was on fire with need for him.

“Yes,” he replied on a ragged breath.

Sliding his tongue teasingly again over the head, he slid a third finger inside him working him slowly, and Cullen was sure he was going to die from the pleasure his mouth and fingers were igniting with in him.

Slipping his fingers from him, Cullen felt frustrated at losing the pleasurable feeling, and before he could object he felt him settle next to him directing him to lay on his side with his hands. He felt him position himself to his entrance, and felt excited and nervous all at the same time. Solas held his hips tightly as he growled raggedly into his ear.

“I want to hear you call out my name as you cum, is what I want.”

Sliding slowly into him, Cullen groaned at the feeling of him filling the emptiness he had felt when his fingers had left. Solas groaned and gritted his teeth to keep his control as he slid himself into his tightness one slow inch at a time. Reaching around to grasp his thickness, he stroked him as he moved and heard his ragged cries with each slowly deepening thrust.

I’m so close he thought as he used his magic to continue stroking him as he grasped his hips to increase the tempo of his thrusts. Cullen moaned loudly at the feeling and couldn’t stop his orgasm any more than he could stop the sun from rising and called out his name raggedly as he came hard with him pumping deliciously behind him to his own release. Lying utterly spent he felt his lover’s harsh breaths against his neck as he slowly removed himself. Solas lay for a moment holding him, enjoying the aftermath of their love making. When their breathing had gone back to normal he slipped out of their makeshift pallet, and reheated his water. Sliding in, he cleaned himself quickly. When he got out and replaced the water, and heated it for Cullen before toweling himself off. He walked back to the bed with the towel wrapped around his waist and grabbed his hand, “bathe lethal’lin, it will relax you.”

Cullen laughed, “If I get any more relaxed I am going to be pudding.”

Solas laughed and kissed him before leading him to the tub.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart
Fen'edhis! Hamin ma vhenan - Wolf Cock! Rest my heart.
lasa adahl sunar masa, felasil vhenan - stick a tree up your ass my heart
When Jo was finally healed enough to travel by wagon, the camp was broken down preparing for the move. Cullen watched as the tent they shared was torn down and felt the spark of sadness flit through him. Running his hand through his hair he looked around what used to be their make-shift camp, seeing the barren spots here and there and took a steadying breath at leaving their cocoon for the new place he turned away and walked towards his horse.

Solas rode next to the wagon carrying Jo, as Cullen rode ahead with Cassandra, Leliana and Josephine. Jo caught Solas watching him occasionally; he obviously remembered something and would let a small smile lift his lips. Shaking her head at him, “you keep that up vhenan, you’re going to make me jealous,” she said teasingly.

Solas’ glance hastened from Cullen and he blushed lightly as he looked at her knowingly.

“There is no need to be, when you are better, you will not know what to do with either one of us I think.”

Jo watched his eyes fire at her and she blushed herself, yeah...two men and you... the thought was scary yet exciting at the same time. Remembering how both had made her body fly apart made her face even redder. Solas was laughing softly at her, as Dorian rode up next to him.

“You two look like cats that ate the canary, care to share,” he said with a wiggle of his eyebrows.

Jo smiled at him and Solas just nodded to him before urging his horse away, while Jo laughed at the expression on Dorian’s face.

“Did I say something wrong kitten?” he asked.

“No, he is just very private is all, nothing to be offended by Pickle.” Dorian looked at her then grinned knowingly.

“I don’t know about that...if I were him I would be singing it to every city crier that the handsome Commander was mine.”

Jo looked at him shocked, and he laughed at her expression.

“Oh please, it is absolutely obvious with the way the two watch each other...it’s like watching magnets.”

Jo smiled and then he looked at her seriously with a show of concern in his hazel gaze. “So what does that make you my darling?” Jo laughed. “The metal in between it would seem,” she said in all seriousness.

He watched as both men turned and gazed at her the same way he had seen them look at each other, and couldn’t stop the flare of jealousy at how lucky his friend was.
After almost a week of camping and traveling they came upon Tarasyl'an Te'las and Jo felt relief flood through her, *finally*. Staring across the large expansion of cliff between them and the draw bridge she couldn’t help but think that the reality of the castle was fucking beautiful. When they reached the draw bridge area everyone looked for a way to open it as Solas stepped forward. Speaking in ancient Elvhen, the bridge lowered to allow everyone to cross. She didn’t miss Leliana’s glance at him. Without a word said, you could see the questions burning within her eyes. Walking to where Jo stood he kissed her forehead and she spoke softly so only he would hear her.

“Thank you for loaning us one of your homes.”

He smiled into her eyes, “it is the best defensible one, and of course it is not a loan vhenan.”

Jo cocked her head curiously then shook it, laughing slightly realizing he had lived for centuries and that he probably owned more than one home. Stepping towards the bridge, Jo walked with Solas across to the large castle awaiting them. Reaching the other side, she saw many of the towns people from Haven cross holding different crates, bags or even children. She was relieved to see so many cross the bridge into relative safety. Standing with Solas, she glanced at him questioningly.

“When will you tell him?”

“When will you?” He asked her with a raised eyebrow.

She looked at him a little annoyed and could see his features turn cautious if not a bit scared.

“I hadn’t thought about it.” He finally said quietly.

“I have.” She replied easily.

Jo laughed at him and wrapped her arm around his waist needing to give him affection.

“Vhenan, thu elana ma harel, ma lath’ish?”

Solas glanced at her sharply and then back to watch the people crossing the bridge where they both watched Cullen striding across the bridge helping people carry their meager belongings, and sighed.

“I will tell him…soon” He finally said watching him smile to them.

They had made great progress in three weeks. The main keep was cleaned out and major repairs were complete. With Solas’ guidance she had chosen the farthest tower from the main keep to set up their apartment. The location he had directed her to was brilliant and spacious. If you took the door to the right it would lead to Cullen’s office over the battlements. If you took the door on the left it led towards the planning room.

The tower had a large loft area perfect for a small office and library. The huge fireplace was large enough to heat the entire quarters. There was an area perfect for a bathroom around a corner that with luck would have plumbing soon. Goddess she had missed indoor plumbing and a shower. Josephine was such a dear that she sent a group of workers to clean and prepare it for habitation.

She met with Harrit about putting in plumbing and how it would work feeling. He at first had sounded skeptical, yet once she drew some rough sketches on paper he realized the possibilities.

In the meantime, she needed busy work. She missed her men, so if she couldn’t have them she could make multiple armor stands and a few weapon racks to be installed when the workers were finished.
The master woodworker had watched her begin her bedframe and once he saw she knew what she was about, had chosen to leave her alone. With the bedframe and headboard complete she only needed to see Josephine about the mattress since it would be quite a large bed.

Finishing the last of the few minor pieces of furniture, she pulled the wood she wanted for making Cullen’s command desk. She knew exactly how she wanted to make it, and how sturdy it would need to be. She felt a tear slip down her cheek when she thought about how her dad and she had made her own desk for college.

“Music is loud to hear over saws…wood has to be cut just right…I love this smell of sawdust…I hope I don’t disappoint him…”

Jo turned quickly…Cole.

His head tilted to the side listening. Clear blue eyes felt like they penetrated through her memories.

“Hi Pet, are you getting along here?”

“Yes? I help.”

She smiled at him knowingly.

“You know me, you understand. Watching, planning, fighting but not fighting. You but not you.”

“Yes, well it is hard to explain.”

“Bright, clear you help the hurt, you understand but I don’t understand. You hurt, no one helps your hurts but you help other hurts…you miss them.”

She laughed a little realizing that he was a lot harder to have a conversation with than she had originally thought.

“Not hard, I can help.”

“Well right now I think I am going to focus on this for now, I need my hurt Pet, and it helps me focus.”

He looked at her questioningly unsure how he could help.

“Panting, hurting but not hurting…skin against skin. Touching that place he likes he feels stronger, calmer in your arms…they both do.”

Blushing now realizing what he was talking about she cleared her throat slightly embarrassed.

“Ah, yes…that is a good kind of hurt. Okay Pet go find someone else to help will you please.”

“Okay”

He was gone as if he had never been. Shaking her head she continued with her carving into the wood that would resemble a desk top in a few hours.

She walked the grounds looking to see what was done and what still had yet to be done. Thankfully
the stable repairs finished quickly with some of the soldiers help and Master Dennett moved his charges under cover from the elements. Solas and Dorian had taken to repairing the library and she had asked Fiona to get the healing tower cleaned and to notate any repairs that they could not do themselves.

Cullen had set the training grounds outside the gates in the valley down the hill. Currently he was focused on the battlements and supervising if not helping with repairs. Cassandra had taken charge of any stragglers making sure they had shelter and food. Vivienne had taken it upon herself to help Josephine with any diplomacy issues since their hurried escape from Haven.

It was wonderful to see that Varric had gotten Sera, Cole, Bull, and his Chargers to clean out the tavern. Sera mostly wanted to just set up her room above in the loft, but having a place for everyone to unwind was important for moral.

She left the undercroft after a follow up meeting with Harrit about the plumbing, and wanted to see Solas. She wandered through the grand hall into the rotunda and found him painting. Even in the game she loved this room, and to see him doing the actual work took her breath away.

“Will you paint murals throughout the keep?” she asked softly.

He glanced over his shoulder and smiled at her.

“No vhenan only here would I want to tell your story. It is the library, a place for stories to be read and heard.”

She laughed at herself realizing she had never connected the two together. The library was above them and he was painting a story. Shaking her head she went and placed a kiss on his cheek and left out the door she had walked in. Cassandra stood in the newly cleaned out grand hall apparently waiting for her.

“There you are Herald.”

“Was there something I could do for you Cassandra?” She looked at her questioningly when the woman started to walk backwards motioning for her to follow and then it hit her…Holy shit, shit, shit…this is where they are going to make me the Inquisitor…. Fuck me!

“Stop Cassandra…you guys don’t wanna do that. You or Leliana would be a better fit, not me,” she squeaked shaking her head vigorously.

Cassandra rubbed her forehead and felt the headache coming. She had told them this was going to happen, but she just had to be the one who drew the short stick for telling her.

“You have already been leading the Inquisition Jo. Your decisions are the reason we are all here.”

Holding her hand up to stop the protest she could see Jo was preparing to launch, she continued.

“Now get your ass out there and take the position Jo, or so help me I will haul you out there by those perky little ears of yours.”

Jo stared at her red-faced and then burst out laughing.

“I seriously need to speak to Captain Rylen about moving up his timeframe, because if he waits any longer none of us are going to be alive, including me and my ‘perky ears’.”

Cassandra’s face lit with embarrassment and looked around furiously to see if anyone had heard her.
“How…never mind.” Rubbing her forehead again she pointed towards the front door. “Go damn it.”

Jo held out her hands as she retreated from her trying not to laugh at her apparent embarrassment. Stepping through the door she saw that Leliana was holding a very large sword that was once part of the original Inquisition out to her. Stepping forward she looked at it and them, peering over the side she saw the large crowd gathering below. Her eyes scanned the crowd until she found Cullen standing next to Josephine. He smiled at her knowingly and nodded his agreement. Turning her gaze back to Leliana she grasped the sword from her hand and took a shaky breath.

“We will not go gently into that good night. We will fight for the injustice that has kicked our door in. We will fight together, not because of religion but because it is the right thing to do.”

Holding the sword aloft the crowd cheered and soon heard Cullen rallying them to fight for their Inquisitor.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart
Vhenan, thu elana ma harel, ma lath’ish? - My heart, how can you lie, you love him?
“Oh for the love of the Gods…why do we have to go to the Winter Palace Josie? Celene and Gaspard are giant tits who don’t deserve our attention.”

Everyone around the table laughed and Josie blushed.

“Yes…well Inquisitor…you see…”

“Jo”

“Sorry…Jo. You see, the future you saw is why we need go. This is why I will focus on garnering an invite. Right now, we don’t have enough influence, but with a few more, well placed associates we will.”

She looked at her and felt embarrassment at giving her such a hard time. *She is right… and you already knew you were going to have to go, so stop making her fight you for it or you’re just like them…a tit!*

“I’m sorry…I know your right.” She took a calming breath, “approach Gaspard after we return from the Fallow Mire. I am sure I will be looking forward to your dance and etiquette classes after I return from a diseased ridden area.”

Leliana cleared her throat and Jo swiveled her gaze to her.

“There is a Warden in the Hinterlands that you could speak with on your way to the Fallow Mire. From all the reports he is in the area recruiting.”

*Blackwall…in the game she would have approached me with this much sooner,* she thought.

“You are speaking of Blackwall, yes?” Leliana nodded.

Taking another calming breath, she found herself at that crossroads of tell what she knew or keep quiet. Realizing that she couldn’t spill it on him, she kept quiet and found she was nodding in agreement instead.

“If you wish Leli, I will speak with him along the way.”

She looked relieved and gave one of her rare, but very genuine smiles.

“All of my contacts within the Wardens are either not answering or missing. I fear that there is more to this than I know…I…”

Jo looked at her and knew that she still loved Alistair, even though he had taken the crown, Cousland a trusted friend helped rebuild the Wardens and she was still his closest confidant and lover.

“Write to him Leli, I know you can reach him. Also, send a raven to Warden Cousland. Confirm your questions or suspicions, I know he can and so can she.”

Leliana looked at her somewhat sharply, and then smiled softly knowing Jo understood.

“If you are sure Inquisitor,” she hedged not sounding sure herself.
“Jo”

“Sorry…yes. I will send a note to her and Alistair. Something doesn’t feel right and I can’t shake it.

Jo laughed, and crossed her arms. “You are not usually wrong with your gut instincts Leli. You didn’t survive the last blight without them, don’t ignore them now.”

Turning back to Cullen she smiled at the softness she saw in his eyes when they gazed upon her.

“Cullen, how are the repairs and troops coming along? Also, before I forget. Bull asked if he could put his Chargers with your men and women to train, he said something about them getting soft.”

He laughed and nodded in agreement.

“Yes, their ideas and expertise would be a welcome change. Repairs around Skyhold are still underway. However, we have taken care of most of the major repair needed. The troops are pleased that we were so prepared for our retreat and are in good spirits. The Mages have made great progress with the healing spire and the herbal gardens. We have found that some are more suited for building than healing, and they are making some of the repairs move much quicker.”

“Good, well I will go and gather my team for our next wonderful adventure. We will depart in two days.”

She heard no one disagreed and turned to leave when she heard Josie clear her throat. Trying to hold back her sigh of annoyance she turned back with a smile plastered to her lips, nope…not done with you yet.

“Umm… I was unsure how to discuss this…well…”

She saw the cautious looks Leliana sent Josephine and couldn’t keep the annoyed look from her face now with Josie dancing around whatever she had on her mind.

“Best course is to just spill it and then we will discuss it calmly…hopefully.” She said smiling.

Josie stared at her knowingly, and then seemed to gather herself up, squaring her shoulders to her full five foot six frame of Antivan bravery.

“Clan Lavellan has reached out to us claiming knowledge of your family and inquired to your wellbeing. They have generously sent a Hart for you to ride to represent your heritage as well. Master Dennet has made it comfortable in the stables.”

Jo stared at her opened mouthed with her surprise.

“Keeper Dishanna has reached out? Why would she?” she said softly.

Josie looked at her, face full of question and anger. I should have listened to Leliana and ignored it.

“No…not Keeper Dishanna, she has passed, it is keeper Revalla that is claiming ties to you and your parents. Would you like me to answer them Inq…Jo?”

Shaking her head and feeling her stomach roll with her anger.

“No Josie…thank you though, I will handle it.”

Without another word, she left the room to find Varric leaving her advisors staring at the door feeling different levels of fear.
“I shouldn’t have…” Josie lamented.

“She will be fine Josephine.” Cullen spoke quickly if not consolingly.

“They lied, that is why she is angry.” Leliana added to the mix and everyone stared at her.

“Jo told me about her parents. Her father was an apostate, her mother from the Free Marches for sure she was elven from but an alienage. Her family was murdered by Templars; she never had a clan… ever.”

Cullen stood their realizing what Leliana was saying and Josephine looked horrified.

“They are…”

Leliana laughed harshly. “Yes they are, and I think that whatever Jo is planning I’ll bet you five sovereigns it will involve Varric.”

“Varric, can you reach out to Daisy for me?” She said walking towards him in his corner of the tavern.

Varric stared nervously at her, showing his discomfort at her knowing so much.

“Damn Vixen, could you at least warn a Dwarf? Maybe start with, hi Varric, or hey handsome…and to answer your question, yes I can get a letter to Daisy. Do I even want to know why?”

Jo grabbed his tankard and downed the last two swallows in one and slammed it back onto the table as Varric stared at her nervously.

“Because…clan Lavellan has decided that they want to claim me, and I don’t fucking know them. I don’t even know why they would think that I need those kinds of ties…I don’t care what it takes… books… knowledge…whatever she wants but they will cease and desist this fucking farce. If they need help they have but to ask, not fucking lie. Daisy is your friend which makes her family, so that would be extended to them; we just need to know what they need.”

She realized she was babbling and by the look on Varric’s face she had been doing it for a while. Holding his hands out, he smiled knowingly.

“Okay Jo…I will reach out to her to speak with them… but you know they don’t exactly like her right?”

Jo snorted…and then laughed. **Yeah, I know…I created that total fuck up wee man, this is a fucking mess.**

“Tell her to talk to them on my behalf, if they reject her in any fashion then fuck’em Varric. I don’t care what happens to them either way. I will send a small detail with her…that will keep her safe.”

He laughed, “Okay, do you have something I can send with it to state she is speaking on your behalf?”

Jo stood stupefied…**well shit.** Looking around herself she saw the pinky ring she wore and had since the beginning. She stared at it for a long moment, it had been her mothers. It was a small black hills gold band with multi-colored leaves. Everyone who knew who the Inquisitor was knew she wore it or heard of it, she could use that. Pulling the small ring off her finger she handed it to a stunned
Varric.

“Tell her to return it with their answer. It will also give her safe passage here, plus give me a minute and we will send her some money to travel as well.”

Varric shook his head. “You know Daisy is a blood mage, right?”

She laughed hard…“Yes Varric… her own blood. If she ever used anyone else’s Fenris would never let her live it down, let alone live. Send the ring, my heartfelt thanks and I will gather enough sovereigns for her trip here, I just need to speak with Josie.”

Varric shook his head and laughed, “I got the money covered Jo…I have friends that will transport her safely, pay me back later.”

Jo laughed and then smiled at him as he made his quick letter to her.

“Isabela? She would be perfect.”

Varric dropped his quill and stared at her.

“You do realize how uncomfortable it is that you know this shit…right?”

Jo laughed harder and motioned for the barmaid to bring more ale for the two of them.

“Well I am sorry for your discomfort Master Dwarf. I will tell you right now I know them all… almost intimately.”

Grabbing the refreshed tankard of ale Varric stared at her nervously and took a deep drink.

“All?”

Jo took a quick swig of her own drink and smiled.

“Isabelle, Hawke, her brother Carver the Templar, sad that her sister Bethany died on their trip to Kirkwall and her mother was murdered horribly. Daisy, Aveline who married Donnic…oh the list goes on and on. I know your brother is passed, which I am deeply sorry for your loss. Losing family is never easy…even if they are back-stabbing jerks.”

Varric felt his hands shake at her words as he watched her drink deeply of her ale and signal Lisa for another even though hers was not done.

“Vixen…is there something you don’t fuckin know?”

Jo laughed heavily and felt instant remorse at being so honest with him since it was obviously distressing him.

“The feeling of your chest hair Varric, it is the only thing I don’t know.”

She watched him choke on his drink and then as she slapped his back he laughed hard and grabbed her other hand slapping it to his chest.

“Mystery over then,” he said winking at her.

She laughed and then kissed him on the cheek thankful he could accept her level of crazy. When she yelled for more, Bull walked over and sat down, as did Dorian and Sera. Well might as well tell them about the shit-show of the Fallow Mire now, and get it over with she thought.
Krem walked into Cullen’s new office and stood waiting for the large man to acknowledge him. Finally he lifted his head from a stack of papers and saw him, his brow furrowed in acknowledgement.

“It’s Krem, right?”

“Yes Commander. Umm…Bull sent me to fetch you…ah…that is…the Inquisitor…”

Cullen slid from his chair gradually and walked towards the man.

“Where is she?”

He watched the young man clear his throat nervously.

“She is in the tavern Commander, you might wanna…”

Cullen shook his head and rubbed his face knowingly. He knew that the scene he would find would probably either anger him or annoy him. Taking a calming breath, he opened his office door.

“Well let’s go see what kind of trouble that woman has gotten into. Lead the way man, don’t just stand there.”

Krem jumped at his tone and hurried from the room, heading for the stairs leading to the tavern.

Cullen ducked through the tavern door expecting to find utter chaos, not her sitting calmly, and soberly playing wicked grace with a handful of her crew mostly naked around the table. Soon, Sera would shortly be included into that small group. He listened to her argue with Jo about her most recent loss that included the last of her small clothes.

“You bet ’em you gotta give em’ Sera. Stop looking at me like that, I did not tell you to bet your damn panties.”

Sera groaned and removed her smalls throwing them on the table with the rest of the pile. She plopped back down in her chair with a huff next to Bull, the soft sound of her now bare ass slapping into the wood. Cullen put his hand over his eyes finding the humor in the situation.

Try to keep from laughing aloud at the scene, he cleared his throat and watched her turn those deeply amused blue eyes on him. He couldn’t stop the instant flush of desire running through his veins at her steady gaze.

“Well that explains why he sent Krem to come get her, the man is bloody naked. Trying to keep from laughing aloud at the scene, he cleared his throat and watched her turn those deeply amused blue eyes on him. He couldn’t stop the instant flush of desire running through his veins at her steady gaze.

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“Cullen, you’re just in time. They are running out of clothes, you want to lend them some of yours?”

He laughed and shook his head not sure if he could ever forget this scene surrounding her, no matter how much he wanted to. She wiggled her eyebrows at him suggestively and he couldn’t stop the laugh from escaping.

“No…probably time for you to leave while you still have clothes on.”

The sound of her laugh slid over him seductively and his mind wandered to his preference of her in no clothing. They had given her enough time to heal and Maker knew he missed the feel of her against him. Sera stared at him angrily.

“Wait…shite…this ain’t right. Come on Quizzy…” she started quickly.

Bull shrugged his shoulders unconcerned as Dorian watched from the next table interestedly. Varric
looked scared in nothing but his boots at the end of the table while Dagna, their new arcanist, drank and laughed talking about the odds while looking Varric over fully. Reaching his hand toward her he smiled knowingly.

“Vous should probably leave their clothes, and let’s get you to bed.”

Jo shook her head and Cullen realized she was either a bit more drunk than she let on or annoyed with him as he dropped his hand back to his side.

“Are you going to be in it? Cause if not and you idiots are going to continue treating me like some broken piece of equipment than I would prefer to stay right here.”

Cullen realized that she was angry at the way they had kept to themselves so they could give her time to heal.

“Honey, maybe we should…”

Jo didn’t let him finish, she snorted.

“Oh please don’t get me started…” Taking a drink of her ale she set it down and stood laughing at the combined expressions. Handing Sera, Varric and Bull their smalls she scooped up the rest of the clothing smirking, as she slipped it into a bag Cole had generously brought for her.

“Beg, borrow or try to steal it back you fuckers, and I will burn the lot with a snap of my fingers. Oh, and don’t forget…since I won, I expect to see you poor bastards the day after tomorrow at sun up for the Mire.” Stomping out the door away from him, he turned and followed her trying not to laugh at the faces she had left staring at her around the table quickly slipping their smalls on.

“Honey…”

Jo turned and cut him off angrily.

“If you two are so wrapped in each other, awesome, but would one of you have the balls to just tell me you don’t need me anymore cocking it up?”

They stared at each other on the battlements and he could see the hurt written plainly for him to see. He suddenly realized that they had been so careful and worried about her that they had forgotten to let her know they wanted her. Reaching out he grabbed her shoulders and pulled her roughly against him.

“That is not the case…at all. So either carry or lose the clothing honey, because all I want is to feel your long beautiful legs wrapped around me screaming my fucking name.”

Jo stood holding clothes with her mouth hanging open. Dropping the garments instantly, she grabbed him around the neck and jumped onto him wrapping her legs around his hips with a pleasurable sigh.

“It’s about fucking time you missed me,” she muttered against his lips.

Cullen grasped her hips and dug in feeling her long legs wrap around him and he felt lost. Fingers kneading her ass, he pulled her tighter against himself and groaned. Her hands snaked under his shirt she grip his back tightly.

“Maker knows I have missed you…all of you.”

Jo smiled against his lips and then bit his lower lip none too gently.
“Then quit talking to me Commander and fuck me already, because this month-long forced abstinence has been absolute shit.”

Cullen couldn’t stop himself from dropping her back to the ground and turning her toward the rampart wall. Biting on the skin of her shoulder, bruising the skin he felt for the laces of her leathers with one hand while the other teased a nipple through her shirt. He growled deep with hunger into her ear.

“Don’t ever think I don’t need you.”

Ripping her leathers down to her knees he slid his hand between her legs to find that she was wet and ready for him. Grasping her hips tightly, he slid into her wet channel with a moan. He had missed the feeling of her wrapped tightly around him, and groaned at the warmth.

“Does that feel like I don’t need you?” He panted into her neck as he slid into her deeply.

“Cullen…Sweat Goddess…”

Cullen slammed into her repeatedly with his own level of frenzied need. Reaching around he slid a finger over her clit and heard her keening moan rip from her throat.

“Oh s…”

She held him tightly within herself, her orgasm close as her body scrambled at the pleasure burning through her. He didn’t think he could take much more when she clamped down around him tightly and his groans of pleasure mixed with hers on the night air.

She pulled her leathers up and leaned against the wall trying to use her shaky fingers to tie the strings while she watched him adjust his own clothing. He stepped forward to grab her gently around her neck and pull her to him. He lowered his head kissing her lips softly. Laying his forehead against hers he breathed her scent into his lungs deeply.

“I will always want you…need you like the breath I take Jo, don’t ever doubt that.”
They walked hand in hand along the rampart, cutting through his office and strolling to the rotunda where Solas was. She wanted to show them at the same time their newly finished rooms. She couldn’t wait to show them all the little things she herself had put into finishing it. The round corner staircase to the loft library turned out just the way she wanted it, the bedframe, the huge bathtub, and the window seats. *I am way to excited… I hope Alyse had time to grab dinner for them from the kitchens… what if they don’t like it… what if…* with an annoyed sigh at herself, she opened the door to the rotunda. *Oh for fucks sake, what if you just shut the fuck up,* she reprimanded herself.

She saw him at his desk reading and smiled at how beautiful he looked when he was concentrating on a problem. She felt desire snake up and coil in her stomach when he saw them and smiled. She held out her hand and returned his smile.

“Stop for the day whenan, come with us, I have something I want to show you two.”

He arched his eyebrow questioningly at the bag of clothes she was holding, but closed his book and allowed her to pull him through the room and out the opposite door. The men looked at each other with questioning looks as she led them through four different doors, a flight of steps leading to the ramparts on the opposite side of the keep. Solas saw that she had workers installing a new path around their rooms so patrols could go the complete length of the rampart without having to turn around. She also had a new stairway under construction that led to the gardens below. Overall, he was impressed with her subtle changes in the castle. They finally reached one of the two doors into their new apartments and she pulled keys out of her pocket, one for each of them and held them out.

“Don’t lose those is obvious, right? There are only two other keys besides our own. Leli has one of course and Alyse has the other.”

She smiled at them and with a deep breath she turned and unlocked the door. Taking a quick peak inside she let the breath she was holding out, *everything is ready.* Stepping back holding the door for them she smiled excitedly.

“Welcome to our new home.”

Both men went through the door and stopped suddenly to stare. She had completely redone the entire building and renovated this whole tower.

“Come on boys don’t be afraid the place won’t bite.” She teased them slightly pushing them forward.

She stood behind them nervously biting her lip, setting down the bag of clothes she had taken off her crew earlier, and took in their expressions of shock. They hesitantly took a few more steps inside only to stop. Jo turned and closed the door, sliding the bolt to lock it. *Okay time to give them the tour, they look like they love it… they love it yeah? Yeah.*

Walking around them she stood in front of them like a tour guide.

“Okay since you two seem to be frozen in place, and I am way to excited to not show you everything I have done.”

She watched as they just stood staring at their surroundings unsure of how they should react. *You*
would think I just transported them to another fucking planet. Grabbing Solas’s hand she led him to the library section and led him up the new circular staircase.

“Okay here is the library section. Since space is a hot commodity in rooms like these, I built the staircase in this corner here to be circular and of course out of the way.”

They reached the top and she pointed out the window seat covered in cushions. It would allow a reader the opportunity to sit there with a view of the valley and natural lighting. She was more excited to show him the bookcase, and started explaining to him that it moved to allow for access to the case behind it. She saw Cullen come to stand behind Solas as she explained how the bookcase worked.

Solas walked over and laid his hand on the revolving bookcase and stared at her delighted with the shelving she had installed.

“You built this?” he asked softly as he ran his hand over the soft wood.

“Well of course I did. Master Martin helped me smooth out the wood and install it, but yeah, I made this and lots of other things in here. I like working with wood, it is relaxing, and I found myself with a lot of time. Okay now come on, I have so much more to show you both.”

Walking around the men she went down the stairs talking about the next wonder she had put in leaving them still shaking their heads in shock to follow her down. She led them by more bookcases, three armor stands, and four weapons racks. She walked them to the room that she had converted to their bathing quarters. Both men stopped in the doorway and stared at the new marvel.

“Okay this one is a bit trickier since Master Harrett insisted it wouldn’t or couldn’t be done. However, I won the argument and got my way proving him wrong.”

The men stared in awe at the large metal tub that could easily hold all three of them at the same time. She had encased the custom-made tub with smooth dark woods that held towels, heating runes, oils and soaps. There was a small drain in the middle of the large metal tub and small spout coming out of the corner of the wall. She pulled the cord hanging from the ceiling and water came rushing from the spout falling into the tub. She heard them both gasp in surprise and had to keep the giggle out of her voice.

“The lever right here,” reaching into the hidden compartment under the tub and turning the lever “is the plug for the drain. When the bath is finished, you flip that lever and the water will drain out. The runes are for you, Cullen, for when both of us are away. You can have a wonderfully hot bath without having to haul boiling water from the fire.”

Leaving the bathroom, she walked back into the main room over to the sleeping area. She showed them the hidden closet, with built in drawers that she built into the wall. Both men realized it currently held all their clothing. Staring in amazement at her, they watched the blush rush across her cheeks.

“The bed was the hardest, since we all are actually pretty tall. The challenge of course making it large enough for all of us and of course long enough. Josie thought I was crazy when I told her the size of the mattress I wanted made.”

Both men walked towards the seven by seven-foot bed. They ran their hands along the headboard touching the carvings of leaves, and intricate knotting that was obviously hand tooled. The bed was covered with pillows and blankets, inviting them to cuddle and sleep.
“You have been very busy vhenan,” Solas said softly as his eyes took in the room and resting back on her. Cullen’s eyes slid from one thing to another and then falling to hers, “how did you get all this finished so quickly?”

They watched as she shrugged her shoulders, and giggled.

“This whole Inquisitor thing has its perks, and I threw in my own labor. I knew exactly what I wanted and well…I…you guys like it right? I mean anything you don’t like we can change.”

They stared at her unbelievably, and then spoke in unison.

“Yes.”

She ran towards one then the other kissing them quickly while almost skipping to the low table and chairs placed in front of the fireplace.

“Good, we have dinner to eat. Cullen there is a bottle of Antivan port on the table if you would be so kind to open that for us, and Solas there are glasses on the mantle of the fireplace would you be so kind as to grab those for us, and I will set the plates out.”

Everyone with their little jobs completed sat down once the port had been poured. Her eyes moved from one to the other admiringly if not a bit anxiously. She still had no idea how their sleeping arrangement was going to work but she was eagerly curious to find out.

Cullen’s eyes slid from one wonder to another in the room thinking she had thought of everything. He found the small window towards the ceiling that was meant to all for ravens to come and go, and thought he had seen a perch for them on the desk in the library area. He leaned his head back against the chair. He listened absently as they discussed Solas painting their library. He had watched him sketch one afternoon in the rotunda. He enjoyed watching the long-tapered fingers skillfully draw a scene across paper. His eyes settled on the chess board set up next to another comfortable window seat and smiled. *She knows us both so well,* he thought turning his attention to their conversation.

“I have Bull, Dorian, Varric, Cole and Sera going with me to the Mire. Cole was pleased to go; Dorian I had to buy him some wine, and the others needed…a little convincing.”

Cullen burst out laughing at her blatant omission. “You call that convincing?” Shaking his head as he kept laughing, he realized she wasn’t going to say anything about her evening. He looks at Solas and winks.

“Krem came to my office asking if I would come and collect the Inquisitor from the tavern. Now understand, I envisioned our lovely lady here in all kinds of forms of intoxicated. I walk through the door and she is pretty as you please telling Sera to put her smalls on the table since she had won them fairly, while the rest of her crew sat around the table with not a stitch of clothing on.”

Solas’s eyes widened and looked over to see she was giggling and blushing then she shrugged her shoulders unremorseful.

“It was their idea, not mine, and it was their own fault. I refuse to feel bad that they had to run through the keep in nothing but a pair of underwear. Next time I tell them we are going somewhere; I would be willing to bet they will agree with me.”

Solas shook his head and laughed with Cullen.

“Why do you want so many of us to go vhenan?”
“Avaar idiot has taken a group of my men, plus the place is crawling with undead... yuck.” She explained with a shiver.

After a few hours of laughing and talking about different topics she sat back enjoying the complete and utter domesticity of the scene. She was curled against Solas listening to the rumbling of his voice through his chest and dozed off. They had not realized that she was asleep until both men heard her soft snore during a lull in their conversation. Cullen smiled at him, and Solas looked down seeing her halfway curled hand lying on his stomach. Sliding his arms beneath her he picked her up and carried her to bed.

Cullen followed him and pulled the covers down. Solas laid her down gently and began removing her clothing while Cullen removed her boots. When they were finished, Solas placed her further into the middle, standing he removed his own clothing and climbed in next to her letting his own sigh of joy escaped as she curled back up on him as she slept. Cullen slipped under the covers from the other side. Leaning over he placed good night kisses on her lips and then his, before lying back with his arm thrown over his eyes he fell asleep quickly.

Jo stretched lazily feeling a hand splayed across her stomach and another on her breast. *If this is a dream then so far this is fucking delicious,* she thought as she slowly opened her eyes. Looking around gradually, she realized it was not a dream. She was in bed and the hand on her breast was Solas’, while the one on her stomach was Cullen’s. She felt her lips twitch with a smile watching them sleep. Her eyes slid over Solas’s sleeping form seeing the sheet rode low on his narrow hips. She loved the paleness of his skin and the way it stood out against the deep reds, and greens of the bedding. One of his arms held his pillow beneath his face, and his lips made this slight pout in sleep. She wanted to feel the velvety softness of his lips and grazed his lower lip softly with her finger. She saw his eyes flutter open slowly still heavy with sleep and felt his mouth smile at her touch. She loved the color of his dark grey eyes as he slowly awoke. The hand on her breast gently squeeze and desire raced quickly beneath the surface of her skin, her nerves like an electrical current. His eyes turned to liquid silver as her tongue wetted her lips in unspoken anticipation and found she couldn’t tear her gaze from them. She moaned softly as his thumb and forefinger squeezed her nipple gently. She felt the hand on her stomach trace lazy patterns on the sensitive flesh that sent sparks of need to her core. With her eyes, she followed Solas as he lean up onto one forearm and bent his head to her own tasting her lips softly. The gentle bathing of his tongue on her lower lip as his fingers continued to tease her nipple set her on fire. Her mouth opened on a moan of need as the hand on her stomach moved to the drenched flesh between her legs and slide a finger inside of her.

Her hand slid around Solas’s neck as he devoured her mouth. Swallowing her moans of pleasure as Cullen caressed her gently between her thighs. A moan of frustration escaped her lips as she felt the hand removed from between her legs and felt Solas’s smile on her lips as he kissed her once more. Her eyes slid open at the feeling of strong hands turning her to her side and found another pair of lips nip, lick and suck at her shoulder. The hands holding her clenched slightly on her hips with desire, a desire she felt pushing against her bottom and she panted into Cullen’s mouth in need.

With two quick, specific spells Solas first rubbed lubricant around her tight ring and then coated himself. He pressed slowly into her, allowing her time to accommodate him. Her moans of pleasure set his blood on fire that it took a healthy amount of restraint to not rush.
Solas slid into her slowly and she cried out at the feeling of his steely length finally inside of her. Her hands reached down and encased Cullen’s hardness and slowly worked him. He grabbed her leg and threw it over his hip and slowly entered from the front. She felt them both inside her and thought she would die at the pleasure. Solas felt Cullen’s length as it entered her from the front and it was almost too much for him. She felt them move in turns. Solas move behind her as Cullen would out and then vice versa, the sensation was overwhelming. She swallowed Cullen’s moans of pleasure, while Solas bit at her shoulder and moaned loudly. The sudden fullness of their combined lengths mixed with the moans of the beautiful men was bringing her closer to sweet release.

They stopped taking turns with their slow thrusts into her and began thrusting into her at the same time, and her world went white. She screamed her orgasm as they filled her so fully. The slide of Cullen’s hardness into her, combined with her warm tightness sent Solas over the edge and he groaned into her shoulder as he came. Cullen couldn’t thrust again and found his own release quickly after. Jo lay pinned between them panting, sweaty and had never felt so loved.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart
I know it has been a time since the last update, sometimes my muse is a real bitch. Thank you, everyone, for your patience and hope you enjoy the update.

Jo stood next to Cassandra with Solas on her other side. While Vivienne stood across from her with arms crossed, and a map of disgust on her face. She pinched the bridge of her nose in annoyance while Vivienne’s words dripped with sarcasm.

“This is not some stray puppy, it’s a demon, Inquisitor, and it has no place being here.”

Jo glanced to where Cole sat on the top of a rough table watching the exchange. She smiled at him reassuringly and then turned her gaze back to look at Vivienne disapprovingly.

“Yes, I realize that Cole is not a ‘stray puppy’ Vivienne, he is a spirit of Compassion that has chosen to take a human form. He came to help those who need it, not possess anyone here. I have heard your concerns; I have chosen to not agree with your assessment. Now leave him be, he is harming no one.”

Both Solas and Cassandra shook their heads in unison at the tone she was using. Giving each other a knowing look behind her back that said, ‘she is going to lose it in a minute’, while Vivienne made an unladylike snort of disrespect.

“There is no such thing as a spirit of Compassion, Inquisitor. I have every right to be concerned with it being here and I disagree with your offhanded attitude towards it all. You obviously have no understanding how possession works apparently since you insist on calling it a “he or him”. Had you been raised in a circle you would understand such things are not possible. It is dangerous to have here running wherever it wants, Inquisitor. Kill it and be done with this mess. If you do not have the stomach for that, then I will do it for you. We must be vigilant for your own safety, my dear.” She said arrogantly ignoring her obvious open gaped mouth at her audacity.

Cassandra and Solas both stared at the First Enchanter in utter astonishment at her unconcealed smugness. Solas already knew this would not end the way the First Enchanter hoped.

Jo felt the anger bubbling to the surface at the arrogance of the woman. With barely controlled anger in her voice as she stared down at her with molten swirls of silver churning upon the surface of her blue eyes.

“You would not know compassion if it bit you on the ass, let alone a spirit that embodies such an emotion. What is apparent is that you have forgotten yourself, so let me help you remember your place.” Placing a cold smile on her lips, ice dripped from her very words chilling the air as she spoke in a barely controlled tone she took a step closer to Vivienne.

“I will only say this once you arrogant, self-serving bitch, so pay close attention.” She poked a finger
into her chest none too gently and coldly spat her words dripping with the promise of swift retribution if they were not heeded. “You make one aggressive move towards him…do anything, and I do mean anything that harms one hair on his head, one small freckle on his skin. I will see that your perfectly preserved skin is flayed from your bones myself before I kill you for insubordination…are we clear?”

Vivienne’s face took a stricken look realizing her misstep before she found her mask of indifference and slid it into place. Cassandra and Solas heard the barely checked anger in her voice knowing that she meant every word and watched her carefully.

Solas felt the flicks of her magic against his skin and the very real danger for the other mage. Cassandra however, recalled a similar situation that expressed the same violent type of anger, and that was when they were in Redcliffe and she stepped through the rift with Dorian in front of the Magister. Her anger at that time had been about everything that had happened to her and her friends…her family. She understood the fiercely protective nature of their Inquisitor and what would bring out such a display. Maker, help anyone who hurts those she loves, for she will be most unforgiving.

“Y…yes Inquisitor.” Vivienne stammered out nervously before bowing her head slightly and backing away slowly to retreat towards the stairs behind them. Jo glanced at the two still standing with her and tried to calm her temper by closing her eyes and taking a deep breath. What fucking balls on that bitch to threaten my friend…not while I still have breath will anyone hurt one of mine, her mind growled.

She felt Solas’s hand lay on the small of her back and her anger began to dissolve. Opening her eyes, she smiled slightly if not a bit shakily. Cassandra with an understanding gaze nodded her head and without a word took her leave of them. While walking by Cole she laid a hand on his shoulder and gave a companionable squeeze before ascending the stairs herself.

“Walk with me vhenan; it will help clear your mind.”

She grasped his hand entwining their fingers as he led her through the main gate to stroll one of the many paths on the hill. After they were well into their stroll she stopped in the middle of the trail obviously still very upset.

“I let my anger get the best of me, didn’t I? I should have handled that better…I could have…” she questioned him softly sounding disappointed with herself.

Solas pulled her into his arms and held her comfortingly.

“Ma’lath, you will always protect your family, your friends. You are fiercely loyal in that way, and everyone who knows you knows that. Your anger was justified at her impudence to challenge your authority. She does not realize that your loyalty also blankets her.”

She leaned into his warmth appreciating the reassuring feeling of his arms around her.

“Ma seranas ma’lath.” Breathing deeply of the fresh crisp mountain air she slipped from his embrace and continued their stroll on the path. I’m going to ask Leliana to watch that woman; I wouldn’t put it past her to do something stupid she thought as they followed the trail.

They had left for the Hinterlands to seek out Blackwall and she still couldn’t decide what to do. She
sat around the campfire with a warm smile on her lips as she studied her group. Bull sat quietly sharpening his weapon. The sound of wet stone sliding along steel was a soothing type of white noise to her. *Jesus, how much her life had changed if she thought stone rubbing against steel was soothing.*

Her gaze moved onto Sera sitting with Dorian and Varric. Varric was writing in one of his many journals while listening to Sera bitch about noble pricks she had pranked in Orlais. Jo absently listened while Sera asked Dorian if he missed being a noble and heard his laughter.

“My dear little Sera…one does not stop being a noble. I am born with position and status and all the trappings that those silly things entail. Let me compare it to something I think you will understand easily. You are a Red Jenny, yes?” She nodded looking slightly confused but decided to give one of her rare moments of truly listening, and allowed him to continue his explanation.

“Well my dear, you also work for the Inquisition. However, as you traipse your beautiful self across Thedas, that does not mean that you have forgotten your responsibilities to your Jenny’s. No matter what you are doing, you will always be a Red Jenny.”

Her eyes squinted, and then punched him in the arm playfully.

“Oy you daft tit, I meant the fucking shiteload of gold. Not your milord of the manor bullshit. No one gives a fuck about all that.”

Jo sat across from them chuckling at her antics. She could see that Sera understood what he had meant, but wanted him to continue thinking her daft. She was sometimes very narrow-minded, especially on anything that had to do with magic, and extremely prejudice towards nobles, but one thing she was not and that was dumb.

She caught a flicker from the corner of her eye and Cole was sitting next to her and Solas near the fire. She loved Cole like he was her own little brother if she had had one. Always kind, curious, willing to learn but then again, he was Compassion after all. She still felt angry when she thought about her argument with Vivienne.

Most of their group was getting used to having him around and his broken chains of insightful, if not personal information. Sera still showed the most resistance towards him calling him “it”, yet just the other day she caught her saying “him” while on the road. She was so pissed when it was pointed out to her, that she rode ahead while leaving her to laugh at her discomfort with the slip.

“Family…soft shoulders tightly holding…helping…heart was bruised, not broken. Healed, happily sings a new song now.” He spoke softly and then pierced her with his light clear blue eyes.

“You love me… care about my hurts…you called me brother…”

“Yes, I do love you Pet. I will not allow anyone to hurt my family, and that includes you.”

He smiled at her.

“You want to help my hurt…but I am supposed to help yours.”

She hugged him tightly and he always seemed awkward in these situations, but tonight he hugged her back just as tightly. Finally letting him go she could see him smiling as he watched the flames of the fire.

She still worried about meeting Blackwall tomorrow up at Lake Luthrias. She had mulled over in her mind, if she should let him think she didn’t know or should she just throw it out there with him and
let him just deal with it? Why did he have to fucking lie, this makes it so much more complicated.

Solas knew she had something troubling her and had since they left Skyhold two days ago, yet she would not speak of it. He rubbed her back in slow circles and her eyes moved from the fire to him.

She slowly smiled at the soothing circles he rubbed into her weary muscles, and he was swiftly gripped by his emotional thoughts. *She is the most exquisite creature I have ever met. She is passionate, caring, intelligent, understanding, strong… all the qualities one hopes to find. I still feel my heart race and my breath hitch every time her eyes fall on me and the feeling never stops surprising me.*

“Ma vhenan, ma ane’souveran. Garas haman.”

She nodded just slightly in agreement and he helped her stand, leading her towards their tent. Solas warded the opening for sound and any interruptions after they went through the opening. When he was done, he turned and helped her remove the last of the armor she wore and set it in the corner next to his own. Pulling one of Cullen’s shirts out of his pack she took it from him and slid it over her head while he removed his travel clothes and exchanged them for lighter sleeping clothes.

She crawled under the covers letting out a sigh of pleasure, not realizing just how tired she really was. She felt him snuggle against her back and wrap his arm around her holding her close to him and let a contented sigh escape. She loved that her men snuggled, held her tightly, and snored softly. She liked waking in a tangle of limbs. She felt his fingers lay gently on her stomach, while his breath slipped across her neck.

“Erathe, ma’lath,” he whispered against her neck.

She closed her eyes thinking she could do that but her mind just wouldn’t stop chewing over the meeting to come with Blackwall.

“Solas?” she said hesitantly.

“Hmm?”

Fuck it! *She didn’t want to have to keep all these secrets to herself,* she thought crossly.

“His name really isn’t Blackwall, it’s Thom Rainier and he isn’t a Grey Warden. I am unsure how to move forward here. I know his truth…and if I allow him to continue this lie then I am also lying to everyone for him. I…don’t think I can do that.” She let all of that out on a rush of breath feeling instantly relieved having spoken her concerns aloud.

Solas turned her words over, evaluating her predicament and pointed out the obvious.

“And I am no apostate, vhenan, yet my truth you have not spoken to anyone but myself. You are not lying for me, you are choosing not to share a story that is not yours to reveal.”

She laid there surprised at the similarity. *Well if he isn’t fucking right…shit, she could be stupid sometimes.*

“Tell him you know who he is, and allow him to deal with that his own way. I had to come to my own realizations, he will as well or he won’t.”

Rising up on one arm he looked down at her with soft understanding shining through his eyes.

“Is this knowledge what has bothered you since we left?”
“Yes… I know… that silly, isn’t it?”

He lay back down and pulled her against him a bit tighter, taking a deep breath of the skin on her neck enjoying the scent of lavender caressing his senses.

“No vhenan, that is not silly. You care deeply about those who have chosen to follow you. It is important to you, and you already know he will be added to that group outside. It is understandable that you would worry that in some way you might betray their trust in you.”

She snuggled into him holding his arm beneath her head and rubbed her cheek against the smooth pale skin.

“Thank you for listening… I guess I just needed to say it aloud to find my way through it.”

She felt the gentle press of his lips against her neck and soon felt his breath even out and knew he was asleep. Closing her eyes cocooned within his arms, she finally felt the strong pull of the fade now that her mind was calm and followed him.

They got closer to the lake and she pointed out to Bull and Cole the group of bandits hidden behind the small hill of trees.

“You two take Dorian with you and subdue those idiots will you.”

Bull smiled playfully, “sure Boss… by subdue you mean don’t kill them right?”

Jo rolled her eyes, and slapped his arm playfully, “yes darling that is what I meant.”

She heard his chuckle and winked at her as he turned walking to Dorian and grabbing his ass as he walked by. Seeing Dorian’s face go scarlet she had to hide the laughter seeing him swat at the groping hand.

“Stop that you big ass,” he growled out embarrassed.

Jo directed everyone else to follow her as they walked up on the Warden talking to a small group of farmers. She felt Solas’s reassuring squeeze on her hand, and smiling at him she took a step toward the small group.

“Good day to you Warden Blackwall,” she waved and smiled at his confused look.

“Who are you, and what do you want? You don’t look like any farmer.”

He studied the group of well-armed people behind her and had an uneasy feeling that settled in his stomach.

“I apologize for my cutting in on your training session here. Introductions are in order, my name is JoEllen, Inquisitor for the Inquisition. I know who you are because…, well, let’s say I just do. May I ask you for a moment of your time we have some questions we think you can answer?”

She could see his discomfort and distrust run across his face.

“Inquisitor you say… well I am busy now and I don’t have time to answer any questions maybe some other time.” He turned somewhat dismissively as Bull threw a few bound bandits on the
ground in front him.

“Properly subdued boss,” he yelled.

Jo smiled at him gratefully, and turning her attention back to Blackwall.

“Well it would seem that you have more time available than you thought. Shall we sit over there on that bench where we can talk privately?”

She walked past him ignoring his flustered rejections and sat down on the bench patting the spot next to her. Don’t make this more difficult than it needs to be you ass, she thought crossly while keeping an open smile on her face.

Varric laughed while Sera snickered and said cheekily if not a bit too loudly, “don’t you worry their big guy, she only bites when you want her too.”

Jo smiled and rolled her eyes at her and turned her gaze back to the non-moving fake Warden losing some of her smile.

“Warden Blackwall, I just have a few questions. Please sit with me a moment and then we can get on about our day, yes?”

Blackwall took hesitant steps toward her then. Sitting next to her, he studied her. Maker’s balls the stories he had heard about her weren’t wrong, she was a looker. Deep blue eyes, tall and curvy for an elf, she had a confident demeanor about her. Hopefully all the other shit they said about her having foresight was just that…shit.

“Okay Inquisitor, since you have taken care of those idiots. What do you ask of me?”

Smiling comfortingly and taking on her psychiatrist’s tone filled with understanding and compassion, she decided to stick to the charade for now.

“Well it would seem that all the Wardens have disappeared since the Divines death except for you. I was hoping you might know something about that and help us piece together what is going on.”

She didn’t need his help, but she knew that he needed hers. She watched the look of disbelief light his features.

“Andrasta’s tits, you think the Wardens are involved somehow with the Divine’s murder?”

No, I know they did she thought with a sigh. Shrugging her shoulders instead she continued as if he hadn’t objected.

“I was hoping you could answer that for me. It is quite curious that a darkspawn magister shows up and kicks my front door in and no one can find a Warden anywhere…except you.”

He stared at her and felt the hairs on the back of his neck twitch by the knowing look in her eyes staring at him. Nope, they weren’t talking shit. She knows something and isn’t saying it...fuck. Jo saw the fear light in his eyes and she smiled reassuringly at him trying to convey that he had her silence.

“Why are you asking questions you have the answers too?”

Confirming her initial thought, she shrugged her shoulders casually.

“Because I know you will want to join the Inquisition to find your redemption. I wanted to give you time to get use to the idea of knowing I knew, but it would seem that is not what will happen.” She
spoke quietly to make sure no one else could hear her but him. “I can help you if you would allow me to.”

He stared at her in surprise hearing the sincerity within her words. Taking a nervous breath, he spoke just as quietly.

“Why would you want to do that?”

Jo instantly felt sorrow for him. There is so much wrong he has done, he really doesn’t think he can be redeemed.

“Because I know you are a noble man Blackwall. Past is just that, the past. People can change and feel remorse at old mistakes. Goddess knows I have a time or two.”

Taking an easier tone, she glanced at him curiously.

“Will you join us and help us stop the blight infected fucker who is trying to make himself a God?”

He laughed a little, “I believe I would be honored my lady.”

“Good…and the name is Jo. Now go get your shit Blackwall, we will be leaving for the Fallow Mire tomorrow.”

Standing up and thrusting her hand out to him, he felt the steady grasp in his and couldn’t help his own mind wondering what he had just gotten himself into. He watched her stride back towards her group and he heard her tell them that he would be joining them. To be honest with himself, he definitely didn’t mind watching her walk away, she had a nice figure. Most of her group seemed happy or indifferent to have him along, except for the tall elven man. He gazed at him with no expression on his face and his eyes narrowed slightly on him as she spoke.

He turned for the cabin to collect his things. If anything, this would at least give him a change of scenery.

Chapter End Notes

vhenan - my heart
ma'lath - my love
Ma seranas ma'lath - my thanks my love
Ma vhenan, ma ane'souveran. Garas haman. - My heart, you are tired. Come to bed.
Erathe, ma'lath - Sleep, my love
Mud, muck, undead…all these things caused everyone to be in a shitty mood. Dorian complained about his clothes, and Bull complained about not being able to get a solid footing in the mud when fighting. It seemed that Sera and Varric were bitching about the uneven ground in some rogue-type of comradery, leaving the only ones not bitching and complaining to be Solas, Cole, Cassandra, and Blackwall.

Sighing heavily, Jo felt Solas grab and squeeze her hand knowingly as they trudged forward towards the castle where the men were being held and stopped suddenly halting everyone’s steps.

“Listen up everyone,” she said expressively if not annoyed with the fucking place herself as she turned to face everyone.

“I get it…it’s wet, dirty and just fucking disgusting here. Who the hell in good conscious would choose to come here…right? The good news is we are almost to our goal,” she says pointing at the run-down castle behind her with her thumb.

“Our men are in there. Now is the time for us get our game face on, kick some ass, and get our men back so we can get the fuck out of this Maker forsaken swamp. Can I get an Amen?”

She looked at everyone standing around their loose circle and saw small smiles lift upon their faces. Varric spoke first giving into a laugh.

“I’ll give you an Amen to getting the fuck out of here, Vixen.”

Everyone else said a loud Amen with small cheers and followed her towards the broken-down castle. After a long fight with an Avar leader, they could finally pick the lock on the door holding the imprisoned troops and take care of them.

Solas and Dorian moved forward to heal those who were in the greatest need as everyone else began to set up a make-shift camp for the night within the ruin. She wrote a quick note and sent it with a raven to Lace letting her know that the path was clear and they needed assistance in getting the men out. She sent a second note to Cullen using her personal raven.

**Cullen,**

*I miss you, my love. This place is fucking revolting…just saying. We have retrieved our men and hopefully getting out of here within two days’ time. However, it will mostly depend on the wounded and how well they can travel. I miss our bed, I miss being in our bed with you and right now covered in some kind of grossness, I am seriously missing my oversized bathtub. Think of me my love as often as I do you, and will see you as quickly as I can.*

*Love, Jo*

Rolling out her and Solas’s bed mats near the fire with everyone else’s, she felt the intense desire to
crawl beneath the covers and sleep. Turning away she started preparing some dinner for everyone before the pull of sleep took her.

Bull moved to sit beside her and she glanced at him quickly as she continued to cut up some more potatoes to add to her hodge-podge stew. She could see he wanted to say something but was rethinking his idea.

“What’s up brother?” She asked quickly.

Bull gave her a soft smile at the nickname and folded his large hands in front of himself.

“You know me too well…you would have made a great Ben Hassrath you know that?”

She laughed at him as she continued cutting veggies for her stew and thought about their conversation in regards to his people. 

*I know they would have made her a re-educator versus a spy, that is if she didn’t have magic then there would be a collar, leash, and mouth stitching… they really took their BDS&M issues seriously, she thought.*

Clearing his throat effectively pulling her back the present, he spoke low so no one would overhear them.

“This Blackwall guy…I do not like how he looks at you, Boss.”

Jo gazed at him with a raised eyebrow then returned her focus to cutting her veggies.

“How does he look at me Bull?”

She could hear the deep rumble of his laughter as he picked up an onion and began cutting it for the stew she was making.

“The way any man would look at you if they thought they had a chance of snagging you away from either Cullen or Solas.”

Not raising her gaze from the carrots she was cutting she just said, “Ahh, I see.”

“Come on… I know you had to have seen it, Boss. Hell, Solas has seen it and he is trying very hard to not hit the man,” he commented with a chuckle and pointed his knife towards the fire as he continued. “Ya know for a mage, he sure isn’t afraid of the physical. I noticed he didn’t hesitate when he punched that undead in the face, and then there is Cullen who is quite physical so you know how it would go if he were here.”

Hearing his approving tone about Solas knowing how to punch made her laugh while dumping carrots into the mix she wiping her hands on a small towel and looked at him still slightly chuckling.

“Do you trust me, Bull?” she asked quietly.

He looked at her surprisingly, “you know I do.”

She nodded at him and smiled. “Thank you. So does Solas. He knows where my heart lies. If he is contemplating taking his annoyance to a physical level, then…that is his choice. But it will have nothing to do with something I did to cause it.”

Grasping his arm, she leaned up and kissed his roughened, battle-scarred cheek.

“I love that you watch out for me Bull. Please trust me when I say that Blackwall might look like he wants something more, but he really doesn’t…not from me anyway.”
He laughed and shook his head in frustration.

“I sometimes forget you see more than any of us. I…”

Jo reached out and patted his shoulder, smiling knowingly.

“Trust me when I say I don’t see all, but knowing you have my back makes it a lot easier knowing I don’t know everything.” Placing a cover over the stew she walked away leaving him next to the fire still digesting her words.

Heading towards the small room where Solas and Dorian were healing, she pulled flasks of lyrium from her pouch and uncorked them with her teeth handing one to each. Both sat back looking dog-tired and drank gratefully for the boost. Solas grasped her hand and squeezed as he set the flask on the ground.

“These two are the worst really. A few more healing sessions and they will transport easily.”

Jo loved that he was so capable of healing and truly cared about the outcome for them. She laid her hand on his shoulder sending her own mana through him knowing that he could use the help. She stopped when he looked at her disapprovingly while grasping her hand.

“No vhenan, it will be fine.”

Jo stared at him and then felt a spark of anger as he removed her hand from his shoulder. She had struggled the first time he had told her no to giving him some of her mana, but now, he had no excuse to refuse her help.

“Why?”

He shook his head and Jo caught the knowing look on Dorian’s face before he looked away from her. Now she was angry, and knew what he was doing and spoke somewhat annoyed.

“Dirth’em mala.” Seeing his refusal to look at her she walked away from him angrily back towards the fire.

“Diana ma vhenan, tel’dara.”

She shook her head and turned furiously glaring at him, speaking quietly so others would not hear their argument.

“Ansul elana ar ’tel din halani Solas?” she said frustrated at his stubbornness.

He shook his head and looked at her pleadingly, holding his hands out almost begging her to understand.

“Ar elana ma vhenan.”

She growled her frustration and walked away from him. Stirring the stew a bit she sat next to Sera by the fire listening to Varric while he told a story to the men and woman who had been captured, and she could see it was lifting their spirits.

She overheard some of the men’s comments of surprise that she had come to get them herself instead of sending a crew. One spoke with confidence telling them I told you she would come. That kind of faith in her was humbling, if not a bit frightening. As night fell, and everyone had eaten she moved to her bedroll and covered up still angry with Solas and his stubbornness she fell into a restless sleep.
Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart
Dirth'em mala - tell me now
Diana ma vhenan, tel'dara - Stop my heart, don't go.
Ansul elana ar ’tel din halani Solas? - Why can't I help, Solas?
Ar elana ma vhenan - I can't my heart.
In the early morning hours, Jo rolled over to snuggle into his back and found an empty bedroll. Her eyes snapped open when she realized that Solas was not next to her and felt a shiver of fear as she looked around. *Where the fuck is he,* her mind scrambled as quickly as her legs. Jumping out of her bed she walked quickly to the injured men still in the room and found him slumped in a chair across from Dorian sound asleep.

Angry with his pigheadedness, she magically studied the young man lying in front of him asleep. She could sense that he still had another bone not completely healed and began pouring energy into him healing the bone while he was sleeping. Her anger gave her more energy than she knew what to do with and what better way to release such frustration.

Solas awoke to feel the spike of magic around him and saw her sweating over his patient, pouring healing energy into the young man. The wolf’s anger flared at her blatant disregard for his objections.

She knew he was awake by his low growl from behind her warning her to back away from the sleeping man she was currently healing. Finishing she sat back and clasped her hands in her lap feeling terrific at her accomplishment since she was no healer, she did not miss the wolf’s anger showing behind those smoky dark grey eyes, however.

Jo felt his magic touching her, checking her to see if she was okay and felt frustrated if not a bit angry at his lack of trust with her.

Solas felt her anger with a little magical slap of his away. He sat back in surprise at the force he felt when she had shoved his magic back at him and was unsure how to approach her now.

“You may not realize this vhenan, but I am not some da’len who needs you to monitor every little expenditure of energy I use,” she said angrily.

She could see him shake his head, yet his eyes bored into hers just as heatedly.

“And you ma’lath, do not understand my need to protect what is mine.” He replied with a growl.

She reached for him and kissed him roughly then smiling into his surprised eyes seeing his wolf pace behind them restlessly. *I just can’t stay mad at you,* she realized.

“No, I do understand that ma’lath. But you…” she said gently poking his chest, “need to see that I am not always in need of that type of protection.”

He grabbed her hand and kissed the tips of each finger before placing it over his heart.

“You are right vhenan, I recognize this. I will attempt to understand this in the future as well. I know you are not helpless…there are just pieces of me that need to protect you.”

Jo leaned over and kissed him this time gently, knowing his wolf would always push for guarding her to the point of suffocation.

“I know vhenan…just please try,” She said quietly.
He bowed his head in understanding and kissed her gently.

“I promise.”

She smiled and patted his cheek, then turning to look at the injured men she spoke questioningly.

“Do we need one more day before we should move them?”

Solas shook his head appreciating her heart when it came to her men.

“No… they can travel. We just need to observe them while on their journey home, and of course, move slowly.”

She smiled and nodded her understanding. Home…yes it was home, she thought. Standing she walked to the door and left soundlessly.

Solas gazed at Dorian who appeared to still be sleeping and started to focus on his patient when he heard him clear his throat. Closing his eyes, refusing to look at him he continued to focus on the injured man lying on the ground in front of him. Not one to be ignored, Dorian spoke.

“Not all flowers require a hothouse to survive. You understand this, yes?”

Solas snorted knowing what he meant and finally looked at him.

“As always you would be correct, Master Pavus.”

Dorian smiled and went to work on his own patient very pleased with himself.

Jo helped break down the camp preparing to leave. She had asked Bull and Blackwall to build two makeshift sleds for the two men who were still in the healing room with Solas and Dorian. Rolling up both their bedrolls she began sliding her armor over her head suddenly feeling hands helping with her buckles. She was glad that he had come out finally and felt the slight graze of his knuckles slide down the side of her neck. When she felt his lips kiss the skin closest to her ear, she couldn’t stop the smile from spreading at his huskily spoken words.

“There is something about watching you put that armor on that sets me aflame vhenan. I think it is watching your entire body stretch up as the plating slides over you. Maybe I am just jealous of the gear.”

He bit her earlobe sending shivers along her spine and whispered with the same sexual intensity to her tone as he had.

“Well ma’lath, I would much rather have you sliding over my breasts than a cold piece of plating.”

Laughing huskily at his growl against her throat, she turned and placed a quick kiss on his mouth. Stepping out of his reach before he could torment her any further she spoke to everyone around that was also gearing up.

“Let’s get a move on here kids; I want us to hit Lace’s camp before nightfall. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I would like a bath, a decent meal, and a tent all in that order.”

Solas raked her body with a heated gaze and instantly her mind went in the same direction as desire
pooled low in her stomach…*ah yes…and some of that too, please.*

Everyone groaned with relief when they could finally see the campsite as it was just starting to turn from twilight to dark as they came into the camp. Lace walked towards her and handed her a couple of missives that arrived earlier.

“Your horses will be ready to leave in the morning your Wor…sorry, Jo. I also have two tents set up for bathing, and that tent back there is yours. There should be food ready when you’re done bathing.”

Jo wrapped her arms around the dwarven woman and kissed her soundly on the lips.

“You had me at bath Lace,” she said with a laugh.

Lace laughed with her and then walked away leaving her to check on the food. Jo grabbed Sera’s hand and began dragging her behind her.

“Come on…there is water in there to wash the bits and I need help getting the fuck out of this armor.”

Sera skipped along giggling and said audaciously, “Why Inky I didn’t realize you felt that way.”

Jo groaned, “you’re just full of it ya know.”

Seeing the basins of water and multiple towels she started peeling her clothes off excitedly looking forward to being clean. Moving her hand over each basin to heat it she threw in washcloths. Turning towards Sera she helped her unbuckle some of her own gear then turned around so Sera could do hers. Both women sighed in pleasure as they removed the grime-encrusted gear, including soggy, moldy feeling leathers.

“I am going to burn these fucking clothes.” She said seriously hearing Sera agree with her.

Turning back to her basin she began washing in earnest. Replacing dirty water with fresh and reheating it for both of them she finally stood with a towel around her as she undid her braid and started washing her hair. Sera helped by dumping the water and replacing it with her as she heated it. They did this about four times before Jo finally felt clean.

“Sweet Goddess, I had fucking mud in places I didn’t know it could get,” she grumbled.

Sera nodded understandingly, “Oy, I had that shite under my tits…how the fuck does that even happen?”

Jo laughed and dug into her pack for some clean clothes. Using magic to dry her hair, she decided to leave it down to give her scalp a chance to relax. Wearing that braid for four days while they trekked through the Mire had made her scalp hurt.

Leaving the bathing tent feeling a hundred percent human or half human again, she handed her armor to the soldier waiting to clean it for her. She thanked him she walked towards the fire where Lace was sitting with Varric talking. She sat down happy now that she was clean.

“You said something about food Lace…I am starved.”
Soon a plate was in her hands and she was digging in like a starved mabari listening to people talk about this or that. Solas sat next to her with his own plate and winked at him.

“I can’t even describe to you what it feels like to be clean again,” he said jokingly.

She laughed understanding exactly what he meant.

“Vhenan, I won’t even begin to tell you where I found mud.”

Finishing their meal she yawned and looked at him with a glint of desire in her eyes.

“Shall we retire so you can finish what you started earlier?”

Solas’s eyes smoldered as he dropped his empty plate on the ground and grabbed her hand without a word. Jo suppressed a laugh of excitement; I guess that’s an affirmative then.

Once inside he wasted no time and pulled her closer to him, running his hands along her sides while kissing the spot behind her ear sending little electrical pulses to race through her. Unhurried, her hands reached for the ties of his leathers neither one speaking letting their actions convey their needs.

Soft, open-mouthed kisses on slowly exposed burning skin brought gentle moans of pleasure from their lips as they kissed. They only broke their connection to remove their shirts and with breathless sighs as all barriers were removed they stood skin pressed against skin lips tangling together again.

Soft moans and heavy breaths filled the tent as they touched overly sensitive skin. Finally sliding to the blanket-filled bed on the ground she pressed him onto his back enjoying the feeling of his skin beneath her fingers.

Grasping his cock within her hand she swirled her tongue around the crown enjoying the little cry of pleasure ripped from him. Each caress with her tongue and the gentle but steady suction on him brought him closer to the edge.

A low moan of desire escaped him before he reached down dragging her up his body enjoying the exquisite torture of her breasts at first encasing him between the heavy globes of satin flesh, before sliding along the skin of his stomach to finally caress his own chest. Her wet sex nestled against his own enticing him and he took her mouth with his, hearing a soft moan from her as his tongue danced with hers before rolling her beneath him.

Trailing his lips down her neck he took turns bathing each breast with his tongue, gently nipping at one dusky nipple and then the other. He could feel her beneath him trying to move him closer to her beckoning warmth and he groaned at each little movement sending fire burning beneath his skin. Sliding further down her torso he kissed and bathed her stomach enjoying the way her muscles would tighten beneath the silky smoothness of her skin. Caressing each exposed inch stretching out the sensations for them both.

Finally, he reached the apex of her thighs and found her wet as he slid his tongue along the slit barely flicking his tongue over her clit. Her little cries of desire as he bathed her wet cunt with his tongue caused his own cock to twitch in warning of his own demands.

Unable to wait any longer as he slid up her body and resting on his forearms slid into her welcoming wet tightness. Forehead falling to hers, he fought for control, wanting to stretch this moment out and fighting a losing battle when her long legs wrap tightly around his hips pulling him in close to her.

“Telamdys,” he growled against her lips as he moved with deep, purposeful strokes within her.
Jo raked her nails down his back, grasping his ass silently begging, urging him to move faster. The walls of her sex tightened as she shattered beneath him crying her pleasure into his shoulder and he followed her taking his own pleasure with one final hard thrust. Both lay covered in a thin sheen of sweat, sharing small ragged breaths and little aftershocks of pleasure causing them to shiver with each one that caressed their sensitive nerves. Kissing her nose he rolled onto his side pulling her against him nuzzling her neck drowsily he heard her whisper sleepily.

“Ar lath ma.”

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart
Da'len - small child
ma'loth - my love
Telam dys - damn
Ar lath ma - I love you
Our camping outside Redcliffe was like finally seeing the light at the end of the never-ending tunnel. *One more week and they would be back in Skyhold,* she thought as she finished helping Solas set up their tent. He grabbed her hand as she turned to move away and kissed the tips of her fingers.

“I miss him too,” he said knowingly.

She laughed, “am I that obvious?”

He smiled and placed a small kiss on her lips, “yes” he replied with a smile releasing her hand and moving back to putting their things inside.

She sighed and strolled off to where Sera and Varric were squabbling over who would go hunting. Holding her hands out to silence them she watched them slowly stop talking and smiled passively.

“Okay, you’re both tired of hunting. Message received kids; I will go while you two help get the rest of the camp set up.”

Both grudgingly agree and move away as she walked off to find that herd of rams she had seen. Picking her way through the brush silently like Sera had instructed she found the perfect tree to climb to find the best perch while she waited. She had finally gotten herself comfortable before she heard rustling from some bushes a short distance.

Jo prepared to let lightning lose as soon as she saw the animal and barely had time to deflect the arrow flying towards her forehead. Feeling the arrow slide like butter across her cheek, it effectively knocked her from the tree limb she sat on. Crying out in fear, she hit the ground and everything went suddenly black.

Solas came out of the tent as everyone was sitting around the fire. Sera was just placing a pot over the fire starting water to boil. He glanced around for Jo and was about to question where she had gone when Cole made a horrible growling noise.

Bull turned at the wild, angry sound that tore from the normally quiet Cole.

“No, no, no…...” his brain chanted. Taking off at a run, he uncontrollably changed into his wolf form on the fly and chased after them leaving the camp behind him.

Sera stood frozen at the sight of Solas changing into the black wolf…*Fen’Harel,* her mind said quietly as she took off at a dead run after him pulling her bow and notching an arrow.

Solas moved like Cole in his wolven form. Soundless, deadly, silently stalking his prey and ran noiselessly, passing both spirit and Qunari as he cleared a hedge of brush landing directly beside her fallen form next to a tree.
He could smell her blood and all seven eyes opened on his head filling with uncontrollable rage. Lunging forward he knocked the sword from the Red Templar standing over her to the ground. Grabbing him by the throat, he ripped it from the Templar's body while blood gushed from the jagged hole where his throat had been. Uncaring of the carnage or the sour taste of blood filling his mouth, Solas moved for the next one a few feet away.

His rage was growing and his form grew to house it as he growled in anger when an arrow pierces his shoulder trying to slow him, and the pain encouraged him to only move faster, kill faster. He barely recognized Cole slicing the throat of the Red Templar quickly killing the one who held the bow preparing to shoot another arrow at him.

Bull barreled through the brush slamming the Templar in front of him with a roar of rage to the ground crushing his skull with a mighty swing of his mall as he watched an enormous black wolf take down another red Templar on his blind side. He wasn’t sure, but he could have sworn the damn thing got bigger.

The rest of the group came running through the bushes and dispatched the few remaining Templars left. Bull watched with a very real fear creeping up his spine at the site of the now larger than a Druffalo, black wolf circling Jo on the ground growling at anyone who took a step towards her.

Sera cocked an arrow in place, holding it waiting to see what the animal would do to the fallen woman.

Solas couldn’t get himself under control; his wolf was in full control of him and not letting him change as he paced around her. Nudging her still form once, he sniffed her and his anger only grew with her silent form. Turning his head at the soft sounds of footsteps approaching his ears laid flat against his head as he snarled a warning at Cole.

“Too much anger…he fears…she can’t die…I can’t live without…help her”

Taking another step towards her the wolf growled lowering his head as Cole took another step even closer to Jo’s prone form.

“Solas, I can help,” he stated simply and knelt down to pick her up.

The wolf growl-whined and finally Solas gained control of the wolf’s raging anger and everyone watched as he finally changed back into the normally quiet elven man with a rush of silent tears running down his face as he took her from Cole’s arms.

“I…thank you, Cole,” he said brokenly and strode towards the camp leaving the group to stare at his retreating form.

“Shit,” Varric said breaking the silence.

“You can fuck say that again,” Bull muttered.

Sera turned at the sound of brush moving and shot the arrow she had been willing to use on the wolf and quickly downed the hidden foraging ram. Staring at it quietly she turned towards Bull and watched him silently walk over and sling the animal over his shoulder as everyone walked back towards camp with their own thoughts running.
Solas strode into the camp slipping into their tent and laid her down gently. Quickly taking inventory of her injuries and found that she had a concussion and a deep slice up her cheek, everything else was fine. Cleaning the wound on her face he knitted the flesh easily knowing she would have a scar there and felt angry at the mark marring her flesh. The first of many probably, he realized angrily.

Pulling his focus back on her concussion he healed while silently still crying. Why were you alone, vhenan? Slipping the dirty shirt from her body and replacing it with a clean one he kissed her softly. The sound of her groaning as she woke up was music to his heart.

“Fucking shit…Red Templars,” she groaned reaching up to rub her head. Solas shook with his relief at her words and placed his face on her chest and finally cried in earnest. Sobs wracked his body as he finally released his pent of fear.

“Whoa…vhenan what’s wrong? Hush now,” she said as she slid her hands caressingly over his head and face.

“No…I…you…” he couldn’t get out anything and finally let himself cry, soaking the front of her fresh shirt.

She continued to massage his neck and shoulders with her hand trying to calm him and felt him take a final shuddering breath and lift his tear-streaked face.

“Why were you alone?” he asked with a hoarse voice.

“I…I was just hunting a ram. I promise I didn’t go far from the camp. I saw the herd when we were setting up so I found a good tree and climbed it to wait. That was when an arrow came out of nowhere and I barely kept it from splitting my head like a canoe, but it knocked me out of the tree and I guess the landing knocked me out.”

Reaching up to her face now, she remembered that she had felt it go through her cheek and ran fingers tentatively along a fresh scar seeing in his eyes that her fingers were indeed not lying. She really had almost died for a damn ram.

Pressing her hand back to his face she closed her eyes and couldn’t stop the feeling of vanity washing over her. She was going to look repulsive to both of them now, turning her face away from him in embarrassment she felt his hand turn it back towards him.

“Stop,” he said softly knowing what she was thinking. She kept her eyes tightly closed not wanting to see the dislike in his eyes.

“Look at me, vhenan.”

She slowly opened her eyes as he ran a finger down the fresh mark.

“You are beautiful, and this,” he said while running his finger along its length softly, “does not diminish that beauty.”

He kissed her gently feeling his wolf still pacing frantically within him. Now that he was calmer, the
realization that he had shown his wolf form to their entire camp set in. Now he felt a fear unlike any other.

Jo felt the stiffening of his muscles beneath her hands and studied him questioningly.

“Solas, what’s wrong?”

He laid his forehead against hers and took an unsteady breath.

“They saw me change whenan… they saw Fen’Harel,” he finally said quietly.

Jo’s breath hitched at the realization of what he meant. Goddess no…they have seen his wolf form. Fuck…Sera…clutching him tightly she shared in his fear with them knowing who he was. Taking calming breaths she rubbed his back with comforting strokes feeling the uneasiness leave him in small increments.

“It’s going to be okay…you’ll see.” She said gently, feeling the rumble of laughter through his chest vibrate her own.

“Well, we will see something… there is no doubt of that.”

Pulling her tightly against him he felt calmer with her next to him even his wolf side began to settle with the feeling of her beside him. He had wished that he had the option of showing Cullen first but that was not to be. Sighing heavily, what a complete cock-up he thought.

After a while, Jo felt his breath even out and realized he was asleep. Between his fear and healing her, he was drained. Sliding from his grasp slowly, not wanting to wake him, she stood up thankful that she was not dizzy and left the tent to face them. Pushing the flap of the tent back she came out hearing Cole using a chastising tone with Sera that she had never heard him use before when speaking.

“He is not that kind of wolf, Sera.”

Sera snorted, “out of my head creepy.”

Jo sighed at the use of the name and strode towards them sitting around the fire. Everyone turned at her approach and she saw that they looked at her inquisitively.

“So what’s the verdict,” she said while taking a seat next to Bull.

Varric shook his head as he spoke.

“Well…the verdict runs between some ancient Elven God and a shape-shifting mage. One side or the other this shit is weird, Vixen.”

She nodded her head in agreement with him. You have no fucking clue how weird it can get.

“So who’s first with the burning questions?” Her eyes scanned the group and when they fell on Sera and her tight faced expression, she knew it would be her.

“He is Fen’Harel,” she said not making it a question but a fact.

She smiled lightly but answered clearly and honestly.

“He is more than just a name Sera, and you know it.”
Sera snorted and gave an uncomfortable laugh.

“Shagging him doesn’t make him different Inky.”

Jo laughed, “yeah, that’s not what I meant. There isn’t one of you here that hasn’t had Solas either protecting your ass or healing it. He has been your friend, fought beside you and for you. Joked or even argued with you. For me…the shagging is just a side benefit Sera.”

Everyone laughed a little then stopped leaving an awkward silence as they looked behind her. Solas exited the tent looking around at the many staring eyes, well this is definitely uncomfortable. His eyes moved and fixed on Jo as she held her hand out to him.

“Come and sit with me, vhenan.”

He focused just on her taking one step at a time keeping her in his sights and felt her hand grasp his pulling him down next to her. Bull looked at him then laughed and slapped his shoulder roughly.

“Man…I’ve never been so fucking scared and like…that was fucking awesome.”

Solas relaxed slightly at the joke and the praise, still glancing around anxiously.

“That was…um…was not anything I had planned on doing in front of anyone.”

Varric laughed, “love makes you do weird shit.”

Solas stared at him and understood what he meant. Yes, …she has definitely made me do odd things. His gaze rested on Sera who had never really liked him and expected the worse, but when she spoke his eyes widened in surprise.

“Knowing your Fen’Harel explains why you are such an arse…but I don’t follow all that elfy-elf shite so I don’t care what or who you are as long as you don’t try to fuckin bite me, ya?”

“No…I will refrain from biting you, Sera.” Then with a mischievous glint in his eye and a playful smile, “unless you want me too” he teased.

Sera’s face went red and stuttered, “uh no… I like peaches, not banana’s ya daft tit. But I guess you’re okay as long as Inky is happy.”

Jo sat astonished at the teasing from Sera and thought, the world is ending.

Dorian had kept silent through everything until he looked at her than him.

“You know I have questions about your history, yes?”

Solas smiled and then laughed nodding his understanding.

“Good, we will have a lengthy discussion at a later date. I see some of that wine Cullen likes to keep from everyone.”

Jo and Solas laughed knowing he meant his sister Mia’s wine and smiled slyly.

“I think I know where a bottle or two might be.”

Dorian nodded, and with a wink, he looked at her and blew her a kiss.

Cole watched silently, listening for hurts.
“I am sorry for how I reacted towards you Cole,” Solas spoke quietly.

“You are whole now…she is true…it is worth everything. I am glad you are finally happy Solas.”

Blackwall sat silently, this is the craziest bunch of bastards I have ever met and realized everyone was now staring at him waiting for him to speak. Clearing his throat nervously, he rubbed his hands on his legs.

“What kind of shit have you fucking gotten me into Jo?”

Everyone burst into fits of laughter while Sera pulled some of the ram off the fire and held it out to her.

“Well, we did get dinner at least.”

Taking some of the offered meat she took a bite and smiled happily at her little family.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart
Almost Home

Chapter Notes

Sorry, it has been a while since my last post. I just want to let you readers know that you are the best!

THANK YOU!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Solas slid from between the blankets and silently grabbed the ink and quill from his bag to quickly pen a letter to Cullen while Jo slept.

Cullen,

We are three days from home and I can’t put into words the joy at the idea of being home or back in your arms, I have missed them and of course you. I wanted to tell you about some of the challenges we ran into while on our way back and had wished for you and your calming presence to have been with me to deal with them as we did in the cave so many months ago. Jo was attacked by Red Templars while less than a hundred yards from camp while hunting. She sustained an arrow shot across her cheek and a concussion. The wound to her face was easily healed yet it has left a scar. As you can imagine our woman was not pleased with the sight of it thinking we would find it unpleasant. I have already explained to her that it matters little, however, I am sure once she sees you, it will finally set in that you don’t care either. Dorian has, of course, tried minimizing the size of it but to no avail. She was overall lucky to have survived the encounter and has assured me that she will never go hunting by herself again.

This incident, however, showed portions of myself to others that I would have preferred no one knew except you and her. I will not explain this further until I am in front of you so that I can explain personally and clearly. We both have kept much of our past quiet and now I find myself in need of sharing a part of mine I was afraid you might not understand or accept. Regardless, the time for you to understand and experience this is upon us and I will hope for your understanding. I do miss you, more than I might have thought possible and will hope that you have felt the same. We shall see you soon, and I promise I will try and keep her safe until we are all together again. However, that will require her cooperation and we know how well she gives that.

Love, Solas

Slipping the message into the small magical cylinder, he lifted his arm and sent Huginn home with a simple command, “Cullen”.

Cullen read and then reread the message a few times absently feeding Huginn some of the dried corn they kept in a small jar on the desk. He was relieved to know that they were safe and healthy, yet curious as to his ambiguous wording. *What don’t I know?* He wondered. Folding the letter and placing it inside their shared desk in their room he wrote quickly back.

*Solus,*

*I was troubled reading your letter yet thanked the Maker that she and you are safe. As you said, we can only hope for her cooperation in trying to keep her safe.* 
Your words, of course, have me curious, yet I do realize there is much we have chosen not to share with each other out of either shame or fear. 
When we first forged this union, we were but friends. Over time we have become much more to each other, and to my pleasure, I never thought I would have two people in my life that meant everything to me. 
I must tell you that whatever it is you need to share with me we can and will work on together, I do love you Solas. I realized that these are words I have been remiss in sharing with you and it shamed me to think you might not know.

*I will admit that I have missed you both greatly and sleeping in this large bed alone has been painful. The thought of you both so close has my stomach in knots with excitement. As to her new scar, the only thing I feel is anger at the idea that something touched her beside us as I’m sure was your feeling as well. She will realize this soon enough when we are all together again.*

*With love, Cullen*

Rolling the letter quickly he slid it into the awaiting tube on Jo’s other raven Muninn. Ruffling his feathers gently he sent the bird off saying “Solas”.

Standing he stretched his arms over his head to remove the kinks building upon his shoulders. Walking towards the steps to the main floor he padded softly to the bathroom and decided to have a good long soak.

Two days from Skyhold and Solas found Muninn awaiting him when he exited their finished tent. Grabbing some dried corn from the small pack on his hip he fed the bird and then removed the message. Reading the words his heart soared, *he loves me…this is…*smiling happily he grabbed Jo into a slow dance in the middle of camp and kissed her soundly. Everyone around the fire whistled and cheered at the impromptu spectacle.

“Ar lath ma vhenan,” he said against her lips and felt her arms tighten around his neck as he twirled her around the campfire kissing him passionately.
The sight of Skyhold through the valley always took her breath away. It flowed beautifully into the mountainous backdrop with its small turrets and battlements. She felt a little flicker of apprehension at seeing Cullen and then pushed it aside. *He isn’t going to care you silly shit…he has a scar of his own remember?*

Crossing the bridge, she looked everywhere for him as she rode through the throng of people welcoming them back. Finally, she caught sight of him on the battlements closest to his office and felt relieved hearing a little sigh similar to her own expel from Solas. Smiling at him she jumped from her mount, dropping the reins, and took off at a quick jog to where he stood to wait for them.

Running up the stairs she ran directly into him causing him to laugh loudly as he caught her, kissing her face happily.

*Home…* she thought as she wrapped arms and legs around him kissing every inch of his face.

Grasping her face to keep it steady for just a moment he placed kisses on her lips and groaned aloud.

“Maker I have missed you.” Hearing her small sigh of joy, her arms tightened around his neck.

“Oh you have no idea…” she said between kisses.

Pulling his face back he ran a finger along the new scar on her face and saw her blush with awkwardness. Holding her face he kissed the length of the mark.

“You are so beautiful to me, you know that right?”

She smiled nervously and touched the mark tentatively.

“I know…this is new. I hope it doesn’t…”

She was never able to finish her sentence as he silenced her with the press of his lips, and tongue caressing against hers.

“It doesn’t…I love you.”

Jo felt her relief at his words and hugged him tightly against her again. She heard Solas clear his throat from behind her and kissed his cheek quickly letting him go.

Cullen let her slide down his body and when Solas got close enough he pulled him into his arms and kissed him as soundly and methodically as he had her.

“Maker I have missed you.” He said against his lips. Hugging him tightly he stood back and took a shaky breath.

“Dinner and a bath…you need both desperately.” He laughed as both Solas and Jo leaned away crossing their arms.

“Why Commander, are you saying we smell?” Jo said with a laugh in her voice.

Cullen shook his head and laughed, “yes, my love I am. Come on you two everything is prepared.”

Feeling him pulling her behind him she smiled at Solas grabbing his hand and followed.
Chapter End Notes

Ar lath ma vhenan - I love you my heart
Seeing the discarded ruin stones in the jar on the edge of the tub, she ran her hand across the water heating it. She felt the slight pull of a side buckle and turning Cullen began removing her armor to place it on a rack.

Slipping out of the rest of her clothing she slid into the tub with a grateful moan from the heat. Laying her head back she watched Cullen remove Solas’s armor and place it on the waiting stand while he also removed his leathers and slid in on the opposite side expelling a groan of pleasure at the encompassing heat of the water.

They both sat back and watched as Cullen removed his own armor and slid it on the last stand before removing his shirt and throwing it on the floor. Grabbing the bar of soap from the ledge he dipped his hands into the water to begin lathering his hands. Washing Solas’s head and then his shoulders massaging as he went, Jo watched in delight as he moved to wash his chest.

Sliding her head under the water she came up to see them kissing each other and desire looped through her body as their love and their combined happiness at finally being together again set in.

Grabbing the other bar of soap from the ledge she lathered her hair and dunked back under. When she arose from the water she felt his strong hands pushing her forward gently to wash her neck and back cleansing her arms and breasts. She thought her skin was on fire from his thorough touches when she felt Solas grab her foot and begin washing up one leg and then another. Oh my Goddess… death by drowning, she thought as she felt their hands cleaning all of her.

When they were finished, she grabbed one of Solas’s legs and began washing as he had done hers. His groans of pleasure were a beautiful song to her ears as between them they had cleaned each other meticulously.

Finished, she stood up while Cullen held out towels for each of them. Drying off quickly they watched him walk back into their chambers and return with a fresh shirt on and clean clothing for both of them. Changing quickly not wanting to miss any time with him, they walked from the room and watched him pull a cork from a bottle of wine.

Sitting down they laughed and caught up while drinking wine and sharing the meal. She knew Solas was nervous but after the meal was complete and a second glass was ready to be drunk he spoke hesitantly.

“I wrote to you about…” taking a calming breath, “I need you to know something about me.” She watched as Cullen set his glass down and focus on him.

“Yes you did, and I can’t say I haven’t been curious as to what it was you spoke of.”

Jo sat back and held her glass taking a sip then grasping Solas’s hand she squeezed encouragingly.

Sitting forward, Solas placed his glass on the coffee table and wrung his hands nervously as he took another deep calming breath.

“When Jo got hurt, I lost control…” he swallowed nervously, “and I changed.”
Cullen sat forward thinking that he meant he had been possessed. Solas could see his fear and shook his head.

“Not like that.”

Cullen physically relaxed from the words and sitting back in his chair he waited for his explanation to continue.

Jo could see his hands shaking slightly as he spoke knowing this was extremely difficult for him.

“Have you heard of the Dalish legends around Fen’Harel?”

Cullen nodded and spoke unsure if his knowledge was adequate.

“Well, I know a bit about how they described him as a trickster. They said he locked the other Gods away for his own gain but I don’t know if my knowledge is accurate.”

Solas nodded his understanding and spoke softly.

“It was never about personal gain, but he did lock the other Gods away. None of them were really Gods, they were but powerful mages called the Evanuris. These others were warring amongst each other, enslaving their own people believing themselves Gods.”

Cullen stared at him confused and felt small tendrils of anxiety run up his spine. Leaning forward he clasped his fingers together and stared at him.

“How could you know what happened to them, Solas?”

Solas stared at the ground and then raised his smoky grey eyes to his whiskey-colored ones showing his fear.

“Because, I am Fen’Harel, I was the one who locked them away. I cast the veil to imprison them, causing the fall of Arlathan. I had used so much power that I was physically drained, so I fell into uthenera, the easy translation would be an eternal waking dream. In the fade is where I stayed for a thousand years and awoke a year before the breach…I woke when my foci was taken from me during my slumber.”

Cullen sat back as if slapped and looked at her unsure of what to say or do. Did he say foci? Isn’t that what he had said Corypheus had…some elven foci? His eyes narrowed slightly as understanding came to him. It is his foci that Corypheus has…Maker’s balls.

“It is your orb that Corypheus has, isn’t it?” he said quietly hoping he was wrong.

“Yes, …he used it to create the breach and…” taking a shaky breath he said quietly, “it is what placed the mark on Jo’s hand.”

Cullen began rubbing his temples as he processed the information. There is more…he said he lost control of himself when Jo was injured.

“Okay…” breath Rutherford, “okay so how does this develop into you losing control? Was it magically then?” Solas shook his head and stared at his hands.

“All of the Evanuris could shapeshift. There is a reason they called me Fen’Harel. The name translates originally to rebel wolf…later it was changed to the trickster, but I was never a trickster.”

Cullen watched Jo hold her hand out to him speaking quickly while grasping him tightly, “just watch
Cullen…please. He is still the same man who has our hearts…try to remember this please.”

Cullen turned his gaze back to Solas as he watched the man stand up and move a few steps from them. With shock and disbelief, he watched him change into a large black wolf in front of him that took up a large part of the room and all breath left him.

Slamming his back against the chair while letting go of Jo’s hand, the chair he was sitting in tilted back and he rolled out of it, landed on his feet as the chair crashed to the floor and held his hands out in front of him in protection.

“Maker’s balls!” he said frightened.

Jo bolted and grabbed his hand trying to pull him closer to her but his strength pulled her to him instead.

“It is Solas, my love. This is Solas…the wolf part of him.”

Watching him let his breath out in a rush he stood holding her with one hand and running the other through his hair in distress and indecision.

“It’s really him Cullen. He’s in there, his heart that is ours…is in there.” She whispered to him trying to get through to him.

Solas paced and watched him carefully as he kept his distance. He could smell his fear in the air and feel the emotional indecision rolling from him.

Jo touched his wolven face speaking softly, comfortingly.

“Give him a moment ma’ lath, you know he loves you.”

Cullen stared at her, and then the wolf seeing the connection between the two that was clearly there. Slowly taking a step forward he gazed deeply into the grey eyes that were lovingly familiar set within the large creatures face; *it really is him*, his mind gazed at him knowingly. Holding his hand out, he felt the soft fur of the wolf’s head under his palm and fell to his knees to grasp him around the neck.

“Maker’s breath…you should have told me sooner,” he said while he rubbed his face into the wolf’s neck.

Jo sat down on the couch feeling emotionally empty and wiped tears from her own eyes at his torn words and actions. Wiping away more tears from her eyes she blinked and realized that Solas had changed back to his normal form and held Cullen tightly around his chest.

“I wanted to tell you, I just couldn’t bear for you to hate me…I’m sorry, I was afraid,” Solas replied raggedly.

Cullen kissed him soundly and grasped his face between his large palms and looked deeply into his eyes. He knew why he would expect him to hate him.

“This wasn’t your fault. The breach, her mark, you did not do that…I love you…all that makes you, you.” He ground out and kissed him passionately. Releasing him he gazed at her over his shoulder.

“You’ve known all this time,” he said knowingly.

Jo nodded her head, “yes” she answered quietly. He held an arm out to her and she slipped from the
couch taking two steps and felt him pull her into the mix. *Everything is going to alright*, she realized as she held them.

Chapter End Notes

ma'lath - my love
“Is there anything else you two are hiding from me?” He said jokingly yet he recognized the look that passed between his two loves and realized that there was more. Pinching the bridge of his nose he groaned, “you two are going to be the fucking death of me.”

Sliding back to sit on his butt he looked from one to the other unsure if he could handle any more.

“Okay, …what else is there?”

Solas looked at her and she finally looked at Cullen seeing his worry, his concern written on his face. Probably thinking you’re going to change into something too…HA wouldn’t that be easier.

“For you to understand my level of crazy we will need to meet in the fade so I can show you.”

Cullen studied both of them for a moment and watched Solas nod his head in agreement.

“It would be easier for you if you see it versus her trying to explain it.”

He shook his head and rubbed his forehead feeling a headache take hold. He felt the slight pounding against his temples and rubbed at them absently.

“Okay, and how am I supposed to find you there…you know I hate the fade.”

Solas smiled and spoke quickly.

“I will take you to her. We know you do not feel safe in the fade, I will be with you…you will be well protected.”

Jo looked at him hoping he would agree and she could see he was wavering.

“Okay, let’s do this then. I would like to know who I’m in love with.”

“Meet me at the coffee shop, vhenan.” She said quickly as she walked to the bed. Slipping out of her clothes, she slid between the sheets and let out a groan of pleasure hearing both men burst into laughter.

“What? This feels fucking fabulous after a month of sleeping on the ground. I’m tired, give a girl a break.”

Still slightly chuckling Cullen asked, “what is a coffee shop?”

Solas helped him from the floor, “you’ll see…it smells divine.”

Slipping from their clothes they climbed into bed next to her and they realized she was already asleep.

She really was tired, Cullen thought as pulled her into his arms. Solas looked at him and spoke softly.

“I am going to send you to sleep. You will find yourself in a small little grove with grass, trees, and a
small pond. You are safe there vhenan and I will be there shortly.”

He nodded his head, “okay let’s go find her then.”

Solas leaned over and kissed him deeply. Pulling back a bit he moved his fingers over Cullen’s forehead sending him to sleep. Laying back he wrapped his arms around both of them and sent himself into the fade.

Cullen glanced around the small grove and had to smile. *It is exactly how he said it would look.*

“Come vhenan, there is a lot of confusion left for you to experience this evening.”

Cullen turned and laughed at how a truer statement had ever been said.

“Right…confusion, lead the way.”

Solas grabbed his hand, and with his other hand he moved it through the air and the fade shifted around them, shaping into Jo’s memories of her home.

Cullen held Solas’s hand tightly as he watched everything change around them. The ground was hard, no grass, and many large stone building’s everywhere.

“Maker’s breath…where the fuck are we?” he whispered visibly shaken.

“This is Jo’s memory; this is where she is from.”

Cullen stared wide-eyed at the scene around him. People passed by them all seeming to be in a hurry. He glanced at Solas and realized he was wearing strange clothing and looking down at himself so was he. *Okay…confusion is an understatement,* he thought.

Solas glanced at him and could see he was trying to keep calm.

“I acted the same way the first time I came. There is much to see here, follow me so she can explain everything.”

Cullen followed him along what he had said was called a sidewalk lined with windows and caught his reflection and stopped. He stared at the strange clothing he was wearing and could see Solas laughing behind him.

“I did that too,” winking at him “you are quite handsome. I prefer you naked but the clothes fit you quite well.”

Cullen blushed and rubbed his neck turning away from their reflection.

“I prefer you that way as well, but I will agree with you…your clothes fit quite well.”

Solas felt desire curl through him and shook his head.

“Come on vhenan or we are never going to get there sweet talker.”

Cullen laughed knowingly and followed him to a door made of complete glass. When he opened it they stepped in and he was immediately surrounded by a delicious smell of baked goods and
something else. He could see her sitting by a window and when she glanced at them with a smile he would know anywhere he realized she was not elven.

“Maker’s balls she’s not elven,” he said in amazement.

Solas nodded his head, “come on, there’s much more to learn.”

He sat down at the table with her and looked around in bewilderment. Where am I? He reached out tentatively and slid a long black lock of her hair behind her very human ear.

“Where are we, Jo?”

She smiled sadly then looked around coming back to rest her gaze on him.

“This is a city called Seattle…on a planet called earth.”

His eyes rounded in shock. Earth? Not Thedas…

“How did you get to Thedas?”

Jo let a little laugh out and shrugged her shoulders.

“I honestly don’t know. I remember having a couple of glasses of wine, crawled into bed and woke up chained to the Chantry floor in Thedas.”

He shook his head fully confused.

“So, this rift pulled you from…here. Did it give you everything else too? I mean, you speak Elven with Solas, you know everything that is going to happen before it does…and magic…do you have magic here too?”

“Come on guys, we are going to my apartment so I can show you how I know all about Thedas.”

Standing up and like she had with Solas the first time he had found her here, she grabbed their hands and pulled them through the coffee shop. Out on the sidewalk, she explained many things on their short walk back to her apartment. She stood outside her building and punched in the code for the door to open. Cullen stared at it in amazement and followed her through the door. When they stepped into the elevator and she hit a button and he felt his stomach flip grabbing the side rails slightly bending them with his strength. Jo grabbed his arm quickly remembering that Solas had reacted the same way.

“I’m sorry I should have warned you about the elevator. Just breathe through your nose we are almost there.”

He glanced at Solas and saw his partner had a death grip on the railing as well with his eyes tightly closed. Well, at least I’m not the only one who thinks this thing is a fucking deathtrap. There was a little bell noise and she stepped out pulling them with her to stand at what she had called her apartment. Pulling keys from her pocket she unlocked the door and slipped her jacket off throwing it on a chair. She walked to where there was a balcony and she beckoned them over.

“This is why I moved to this place. You can see Fisherman’s Terminal and the Ballard Locks. Over there is Shilshole Beach,” she pointed “best place to find driftwood and shells.”

Cullen gawked at the vast city and didn’t know what to say…I’m lost.

Jo walked over to her computer and turned it on seeing that Cullen was staring at it and then her.
“What kind of sorcery is that?” he said pointing to her computer.

Jo laughed a little.

“The mechanical kind. This is called a computer, its run on electricity and all kinds of other crap I don’t even understand. However, this little baby is how I know about Thedas. You see…um…for me…fuck how do I put this?”

Cullen’s eyes narrowed slightly, “plainly for fuck's sake.”

“You world is a fantasy in mine. I knew who all of you were because this game has you in it. Everything about each of you I learned through here.”

She started the game and Cullen watched in horror as she played her Inquisitor running from one area to another. First, she went to his office, then Solas’s rotunda, and finally the library where you could usually find Dorian.

“In here it is set on a very specific path so a lot of what I have experienced in your world you could not do in the game. There are definitely things that will happen for sure, but it doesn’t always happen as it would in the game.”

Cullen walked to the nearest chair and sat down resting his arms on his knees his head dropped. I’m not even real in her world…he felt Solas’s strong, tapered fingers massaging his neck and grasped his hand to make sure they were real. Feeling flesh, and bone he held him fast.

Solas sensed his distress and comforted him as best he could. He understood the confusion and the fear; he had experienced this when she had shown him. He bent down and grasped his face with his free hand making him look at him.

“You are real, I am real. We exist, vhenan, as does she. There is no explanation I can give that will help this make any sense or any easier. This exists as do we.”

Jo sat at her desk and watched him try to process everything and felt horrible. I should have waited… I shouldn’t have thrown all this at him at once. She stood up and walked to her bedroom looking around thinking about how different everything was to her now. If she were to get yanked back to her own world she wouldn’t know how to behave let alone live without everyone. I have a family in their world, she thought. She felt large, strong arms wrap around her from behind as she looked around.

“Do you miss this?” he asked afraid of what her answer would be.

“I was just thinking about that, and no I don’t miss it. I have a family in Thedas…I do not have a family here any longer. I did not completely lie to Leli; my parents were murdered in their home. My father was what you would have called an apostate; he was a witch, as am I. My mother was pagan but not a witch, in our house we joked that she was the tree hugger.” She smiled sadly at the memories and turned in his arms.

“So no, I do not miss this. You would not be here; Solas would not be here…my family would not be here.”

He crushed her to him as his heart soared with her words.

“Maker, I love you” he grated out.

“Oh Cullen, I love you too. Let’s go home now,” she whispered against his chest.
Chapter End Notes

vhenan - my heart
Awaking in a tangle of arms and legs is the most beautiful way to wake up, she thought stretching cautiously feeling their arms around her in different places on her body. Today they would tell the others everything, and the feeling of anxiety was hot on the heels of the realization.

Once they understood who and what she was and what and who Solas was, there was going to be hours of deliberation, if not some serious anger...especially from Leliana and Cassandra. Sighing in trepidation, she felt Cullen’s arm tighten around her and she snuggled into him soaking in his strength.

“You are worried about what the others will say.”

She nodded against his chest and relaxed against the steady thumping of his heart beneath her ear giving her a semblance of peace.

“Cassandra and Leliana are going to be pissed,” she said softly.

He ran his hand comfortingly up and down her back. His eyes caught Solas’ knowingly and he could see the look of his own anxiety reflected there at the truth of her words.

“They will be angry but they will also appreciate the truth. They can hardly blame you for not saying from the beginning who you really were honey. We wouldn’t have believed you if you had, and you were right in understanding that we would have thought you crazy.”

She glanced up at him as he sighed heavily.

“As for what they will say about Solas, yes, they are going to try and blame him for the breach, but he can hardly be blamed for something that happened while sleeping, they will realize that. He did walk through the gates of Haven and offer his assistance when it happened. Regardless, they are going to want to know what really happened at the Conclave and how everything got so...” Jo could see that Cullen was looking for the proper word and there was only one word that explained everything simply.

“Fucked?” she finished for him on a breath. “I know they will, and I am prepared to answer all their questions on what truly happened to the Divine.”

Solas rolled onto his back and laid his arm over his eyes realizing that they would know who he was when this day was over and felt his mouth go dry. He had been so careful to keep himself hidden and now he would be free to be himself around them. Some part of him was relieved at the thought of not having to hide any longer. Jo pulled from Cullen’s arms and rolled towards him placing her hand on his chest hesitantly trying to decipher his body language.

“Are you okay ma’lath?”

He moved his arm away from his eyes and slid it around her in a half hug against himself, kissing her forehead.

“Yes. I was just thinking how much of a relief it will be to finally just be myself. I have been someone else in front of them for quite a time.”
She hadn’t thought about how difficult it must have been to keep up the charade of being an elven apostate versus an actual Evanuris with mass amounts of knowledge and power at his fingertips. Placing a kiss in the middle of his chest she sat up and looked from one to the other.

“Gentleman, I suggest we gird our loins for Cassandra’s wrath then and get ready, hiding here is only stalling.”

Crawling over Cullen she watched the desire flare in his eyes. Kissing his nose on her way over him, she felt his hand slap her ass none too gently.

“Yeowch, what the hell Commander?” she said looking at him with surprise.

He laughed watching her rub the affronted cheek covered with a large red handprint while sitting on his lap. It was exactly what he was hoping she would do. Kissing her soundly, he felt her sigh of desire against his lips and loved that she was always so responsive to his kiss, hoping he could delay their morning meeting for just a bit longer.

“It just seemed like the right thing to do, Inquisitor,” he replied with a cheeky smile.

She ran her finger over the scar on his lip and smiled playfully as the whiskey color of his eyes darkened with the flare of desire at the caress.

“I will make you pay for that…later,” she whispered seductively against his lips and slipped out of his reach quickly before he could grab her. His loud groan of frustration followed her as she walked towards the bathroom softly laughing.

Standing in front of Leliana, Cassandra, and Josephine she began telling them who she was and where she was from. When she finished she watched Josephine sit down in a delicate heap, Cassandra looked from her to Cullen.

“You have seen this…this other world, Commander? How?” she asked her tone full of confusion.

“The Inquisitor and Solas brought me into the Fade and I was able to experience a memory of her home that she had. I have seen this game she was speaking of, it exists in her alternate world.”

Cassandra shook her head in disbelief and stared at the floor of the war room.

“This is how you knew who we were…everything that was going to happen,” Cassandra suddenly looked up at her sharply as she came to the only conclusion left.

“Then you do know how the Divine was murdered. You know what happened at the Conclave,” she said her tone accusing and angry.

“Yes, I do Cass. Corypheus used Warden Mages to hold the Divine in a blood magic ritual. He needed her blood to unlock Fen’Harel’s foci or the orb as we have been calling it. This corrupted Tevinter Magister was trying to rip open the fade to enter the black city and make himself a God of old. It was the Divine standing behind me when I fell from the rift telling me to run, not Andraste.”

Leliana stared at her then to Solas perceptively before asking the one question she had dreaded most of all.
“How did Corypheus obtain such a powerful elven artifact then?” she asked her eyes slightly narrowed.

Solas who up until then had been leaning against the wall quietly stepped forward.

“How could you just give it to him?” Cassandra snarled at him.

Solas shook his head sadly.

“I did not willingly give it to him Seeker; he stole it while I slept the Uthenera, the sleep that takes us to the fade to recover after I cast the veil. I awoke when it was taken from me a year before I found you. Until then, I had been asleep for more than a thousand years and I woke up still weakened. By the time I had tracked him to Haven and planned to take it back from him, it was too late and the damage had been done. That is when I came to you to help stop him.”

Leliana stared at him in disbelief.

“He changed into his wolf form in front of the team in his anger and fear of her possibly being dead.”

Their eyes widened and swiveled back towards Solas. Leliana spoke quietly still trying to piece everything together.

“So the legends about the Elven Gods are true then,” she whispered almost to herself.

Solas shook his head with a slight smile on his lips, knowing that their spymaster had some understanding having traveled with the Hero of Ferelden.

“Not all of them. We weren’t Gods, Leliana, we were powerful mages. We were immortal, harder to kill, yes, and that is why I had to cast the veil to lock the other Evanuris away. However, I did not trick them to do it and it was not out of jealousy or for any personal gain. They were corrupt in their power over our kind; our people were at war with each other for centuries because of their
selfishness. To further explain, all Evanuris have an alternate form they can utilize for travel or fighting if necessary, Mythal was a dragon, mine is a wolf form.”

Cassandra sat down with the others as the knowledge hit her. Realizing everything that had happened was not his doing yet still completely confused.

“You never meant for your orb to be found. How did you survive if they found your orb?” she asked incredulously.

Solas nodded pleased that the Seeker was moving past anger to the logical understanding of the situation.

“My foci or the orb was kept in another room from where I slumbered so as not to build up too much magical energy while I slept, that is how they obtained it so easily and how I survived the encounter. They did not realize I was there sleeping in a chamber just a few short feet away.”

Leliana and Cassandra looked at each other as Josephine still sat trying to digest everything she had been told.

“Then you had nothing to do with the Breach or JoEllen receiving the mark?” Leliana said quietly.

Solas nodded and felt Cullen’s hand on his back and relaxed with the simple gesture.

“I did not have anything to do with that. If I could have stopped them I would have,” he said vehemently. Seeing everyone nod in agreement and then look to Jo for direction.

“How do you think we should proceed then?” Cassandra asked.

Jo laughed mercilessly, “as we have been. I would never steer my family wrong. We continue chasing down Corypheus and disrupt his plans on trying to make himself a God.”

Leliana stood and looked at Jo curiously.

“Can you take me to this…other place, this memory? I would like to experience this for myself,” she asked.

Jo looked at Solas and could see him nod yes and looked at her saying, “Yes we can take you there if you wish.”

She nodded and spoke quietly, “soon, yes?”

Jo smiled and laid her hand on hers.

“Tonight if you would like Leli,” she replied seeing that she needed to completely understand the situation.

She watched the other woman smile at the nickname and nod.

“Yes please, I would very much like to see where you came from and how you obtained your knowledge. Right now, I think it’s all crazy but you have only demonstrated that you are here to help us since the beginning,” she said.

Jo walked around the table and pulled the woman into a crushing hug.

“You have no idea what your words mean to me Leli,” she said sniffing.
Jo was trying to control the tears that were building when she felt the other woman’s arms come around her and hug her back just as tightly. Hearing the whispered confession in her ear sent her own heart soaring.

“I have only trusted one other like I do you, and I know it is not wrong for me to do so now.”

Jo knew she spoke of the Hero of Ferelden and instantly was humbled. Squeezing her again she let her go and tried to collect herself as she took a step back.

Cassandra looking from Jo to Solas and Jo could tell she was curious, Solas understood the look as well when he spoke.

“You want to see the change,” he stated calmly.

Cassandra blushed embarrassed at the idea and then stared at him directly.

“If you would not mind, I think we should see this for ourselves with our own eyes what the others have already witnessed.”

Cullen grabbed her hand pulling her closer to himself still uncomfortable with the change in Solas’s form yet standing proudly. Solas stepped back and smiled at her, then before she could even catch her breath he was in his wolf form in the war room towering a good two feet over the table with his animal form. Everyone stopped breathing but her and Cullen. Cassandra stared at him scared but absorbed the information and let out her held breath in understanding.

“Maker…it really is true.”

After they saw his wolven form, Solas reverted back to his elven form and Cassandra looked at everyone, her expression one of protection.

“No one…and I mean no one must know what we know. They will try to kill them both…agreed?”

Both women nodded their understanding as Leliana spoke gently.

“Those who have already witnessed this must understand that it cannot be spoken of.”

Jo smiled as she held the hands of both men feeling their quiet strength flow through her.

“Those who have seen it know that to speak of it could mean his death if not mine, they can be trusted.”

Seeing her nod of agreement, Josephine cleared her throat and spoke a bit shakily.

“Now that this is out in the open, we should discuss the upcoming ball at the Winter Palace.”

From that moment everyone focused on everything that was needed to make it happen and she felt Solas try to pull away. Holding his hand tightly, she kept him standing with her as they told her everything that was going on and what they needed to make it happen. She needed him to know that he was now a part of the decision making that would affect her and incidentally him.

Chapter End Notes
ma'lath - my love
Jo left the war room relieved to have it over with. She listened to Cullen and Leliana talking about his experiences in her memory. Her and Solas would take Leli into the fade tonight so she could experience it as Cullen had. Jo listened as their conversation became funnier when Cullen tried to explain to her about cars and how they worked. Her face had a look on it that was a cross between curiosity and horror as her eyes darted towards her. *I should take her on my motorcycle; she looks like she could be a good biker chick,* she thought instantly bubbling with laughter while they stopped talking to stare at her. Waving her hand implying that it was nothing, they continued their conversation.

Jo followed Solas and felt his relief roll from him in waves. Touching his hand gently, he turned smiling at her. She saw the pleasure reflect from his eyes as he bent slightly and placed a small kiss on her cheek.

“I am good vhenan, Ir tel'him. Melava inan enansal ir su araval tu elvaral u na emma abelas.”

She smiled a bit sadly at the thought of him being alone and laid her hand on his chest.

“Ane tel u sast elvarel ma vhenan.”

He pulled her to him and kissed her passionately while the others looked on. Cullen, comfortable with such shows of affection between them, continued his conversation with Leliana. Josephine and Cassandra stopped and then sighed dreamily.

“Just once I want to be looked at like that and then kissed passionately in a hallway completely uncaring about who sees,” Josephine whispered to Cassandra. Cassandra cleared her throat and blushed horribly.

“Solas when you are done over there, I need your help with some new mage recruits we received.”

Cullen told him as he finished talking with Cassandra and Leliana, noticing that Josephine still had that romantic look on her face as she listened absently to them.

Josephine suddenly jolted as she thought about something when she saw everyone beginning to leave.

“Oh, before I forget. Measurements will be taken from each of you later today and the dance lessons for the ball will begin in two days, and all of you will be there.”

Josephine listened to the moans and groans from Cassandra and Cullen over the impending appointments and lessons.

Solas smiled against Jo’s lips keeping his eyes closed for one more moment not wanting it to end. He felt her whisper against his lips, her magic a delicious tickle against his face. She caressed the dimple in his chin sending shivers of anticipation up his spine.

“Later…go.”

He grabbed another chaste kiss and found Cullen’s eyes conveying his willingness to leave when he
finally looked at him. *Thank you, Goddess. I don’t know what I did to deserve those two, but thank you,* she thought as she watched them walk away together down the hall. Jo glanced over her shoulder at the remaining group and smiled, thankful for her little family.

Josie’s reminders echoed down the corridor after her as she walked away, and Jo waved her hand letting her know she heard them. *Yay, measurement taking…let’s find out how fat that ass is shall we? HA! Dancing lessons…ten years of ballet should hopefully help get me out of that shit quickly,* she thought, leaving the hallway and walking into the main keep.

Varric had been leaning up against the wall next to the door waiting for her and took a couple of steps towards her when she came out.

“Hey Vixen, can I have a moment?”

She smiled, giving him a wink, and shortened her steps so he could keep up.

“What’s on your mind gorgeous?”

“I know we spoke about you knowing how I knew about Corypheus, and you said that there was no need for *that* particular person to come here.”

Jo stopped and turned to him. *Well shit…you cannot make any actual change in game progression,* she realized. She had thought that if she kept Hawke in Kirkwall then she wouldn’t put her in any danger…*wrong.*

“Where is she, Varric?” she finally asked.

“On the battlements with Fenris,” he replied with a heavy sigh.

She giggled, *oh yeah, just the right combination of sass and ass my girl was.*

“Lead the way then, we don’t want to keep them waiting.”

They took the stairs in the garden that led them to the battlements, passing her quarters. Jo could see from a good distance the shock of white hair and knew instantly who it was leaning against her battlement. *I do believe I’ve always had a thing for elves,* she thought with a sudden realization. *Game one, she had fun with Zevran, game two, it was Fenris, game three it was Solas. Cullen was my only human and that was just because he had been in every game since the beginning of Dragon Age and I was seriously curious.* Trying to keep the excited giggle from escaping, she put her best professional face on as they rounded the corner.

“Hawke, I want you to meet the Inquisitor,” Varric said as Jo walked forward.
She hadn’t thought that Hawke would be so much shorter as her. Gazing slightly downward at her and then towards Fenris. Hawke recognized the difference as well and she looked at Varric while still holding her hand.

“You never said she was as tall as a fucking Qunari, Varric,” Hawk commented looking at Varric.

Laughing at her joke, Jo started to hold her hand towards Fenris and stopped, remembering he didn’t like being touched and dropped her hand.

“Sorry, I forgot you don’t like being touched. Anyway, greetings Fenris, kill any slavers lately?” He stood shocked for a moment when Varric finally broke the awkward silence.

“I told you Broody…nothing is sacred.”

Jo focused on Oz trying to figure out why she came, and then it dawned on her like a lightbulb turning on.

“You want me to go to Crestwood to meet your warden friend Stroud, that’s why you’re here.”

Oz stared at her for a moment then chuckled uncomfortably.

“That is rather unexpected you recognize that right? And yes, that is why we are here. I know you told Varric to ask me not to come, but I had to see for myself why my friend here wasn’t going back to Kirkwall.”

Jo smiled knowingly and leaned in making sure to grab Varric’s attention with the conspiratorial motion and his face went red.

“Inquisitor, I’m sure you have…” he started and dropped his head as he heard what she said.

“You see, Varric is smitten with our arcanist, Dagna,” Jo told her.

Oz and Fenris looked at Varric and everyone burst out laughing when Fenris slapped him on the back.

“About time you quit stroking your crossbow, man.”

Varric’s face got even redder and he looked at Jo accusingly.

“You just couldn’t stop yourself could you? You knew how they would be with that information.”

Jo smiled knowingly, “listen handsome. You give me shit all the time; it is only fair that if you are going to dish it, that you take it in equal portions as well.”

Placing her hand on his shoulder, she spoke to Oz and Fenris.

“I need to speak with Josie and get you two a place to sleep; I will catch up with you guys at the tavern later, I’m sure Varric wants to catch up with you two.”

Oz smiled at her gratefully.

“Maker thank you for a bed, I am tired of the ground. Also, if you could point me towards your bathhouse I will enjoy one of those as well.”

Jo laughed knowing exactly how the woman felt.
“I’ll make sure your room has a tub, almost all of the renovations with the plumbing are complete.”

With a slight nod and taking her leave, she went to find Josie. Crossing the battlements, she came upon Cole watching someone below. She knew that there was someone helping the injured that felt guilt and it called to him to help. He looked at her and smiled hearing her thoughts as she got closer.

“You understand,” He said simply. Smiling happily at him she nodded.

“I like to help the hurt too. Go help her Cole.”

He smiled and disappeared she leaned over and watched him cross towards the woman and started speaking to her. She followed him using the stairs and found him standing there waiting for her.

“Thank you for letting me help; it is not how a human would do it.”

“You would be surprised at how closely your help is like the way I help. The difference is I cannot make them forget me when I’m done.”

He looked at her curiously.

“Would you want to?”

She laughed and shook her head.

“No, it’s part of the helping that they remember who helped. Some need that connection to someone else.”

She could see him trying to understand what she meant just as his eyes glazed overhearing something else.

“Covered in blood…dying…you died. That’s how.”

Jo’s smile slid from her face as she stood visibly shaken, not quite comprehending or not wanting to comprehend his words, she felt her legs tremble as her voice shook when she spoke.

“Wh…what do you m…m…mean?”

He looked at her with his head cocked to the side studying her like a bird might study something.

“He killed you…he knew you would be alone…hate…fear…you left.”

Jo felt her legs give out and she slumped to the ground in a heap holding her face. Cole sat down on the ground with her watching her carefully. _Who would hate me so much that they would want me dead_, she thought as her mind drew a blank.

“Shawn…who is Shawn?” he said simply.

Taking shaky breaths on the edge of hyperventilation, _just breathe Jo…breathe…why?_ Her mind screamed.

“I hurt you…I’m sorry…I can help…make you forget.”

He looked scared at knowing he hurt her with this information, and her heart twisted at the sight. Grabbing his hand with her shaky one, she squeezed.

“No Cole, I want to…remember. You didn’t do anything wrong, you helped really. I always
wondered how I got here.”

She started to stand and he stood to help her and gazed directly into her eyes as he spoke using a lethal tone she had never heard from him before.

“I won’t let anyone hurt you…not like that, …you’re my sister now; you help me help the hurt.”

Jo hugged him tightly and felt lighter knowing that she would never wake up in her world again and felt his strong hug back. *He is becoming more human*, she thought and heard his laughter sounding light and happy.

“Really?”

“Yes, I think you are,” she said quietly.

Pulling away from him, she took a calm cleansing breath and drew a blank on what she was doing before she found Cole and he dropped his truth bomb on her. He smiled and patted her shoulder.

“A room for Hawke.”

“Ah, thanks, Cole.”

She strode toward the keep thinking about what he had said. *If Shawn had killed her for breaking it off then she wished she could thank him or otherwise she wouldn’t have met the loves of her life.*

Chapter End Notes

vhenan - my heart
Ir tel'him - I'm me again
Melava inan enansal ir su araval tu elvaral u na emma abelas - Time was once a blessing but long journeys are made longer when alone inside.
Ane tel u sast elvarel ma vhenan - You are not alone any longer my heart
Fittings

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I like being the Inquisitor...yes, I like it. Keep telling yourself that and maybe you won’t notice that there is a maniac trying to strangle you with a corset, she thought. Anyone who thought that being a girl was so great should try wearing one of these contraptions.

Turning her head, she looked at the man behind her tugging on the strings again tightening it even further and she swore she felt a knee in her back. With a loud “oomph” of what she was sure was the last of her oxygen, she growled at the man with a raspy, oxygen-deprived voice.

“Listen asshole, loosen that up a bit will ya, I need to be able to fucking breath.”

Josephine covered her laugh and shook her finger at her in dismay.

“Inquisitor, we really must work on your language. We cannot have you speaking in such a way at the Winter Palace.”

Mental sigh and rolling her eyes, she felt the laces loosen a bit and took a deep breath for the first time in almost an hour.

“All right Josephine, for you, I shall endeavor to explain myself with the utmost decorum required of my position.”

Josephine smiled and bowed, trying to cover her laugh. Jo turned towards the man who now wore a smug little smirk on his face and smiled at him demurely while laying well-placed fingers along the swell of her breasts making the man blush furiously. With the damn corset on, it pushed them up and out so far, she was sure she could hurt someone with them. However, she did have his complete attention and that was the goal, Goddess men are simple.

“Kind sir, though I appreciate your famous work on my clothing and accouterments, this article of clothing, I will not be wearing, nor do I need it. It is placed upon a person in such a manner that it resembles the adjustments of a saddle upon a broodmare, of which kind sir, I am not. Now...shall we cease this charade?” she said with a seductive glide of her fingers down the sides of her breasts while yanking the corset off and holding it out to him.

Josephine’s jaw dropped realizing that she had outplayed her again and paralyzed their current seamstress...accidenti. She watched the Orlesian tailor take a step back from Jo with a smitten look upon his face as he nodded agreeably before walking back to one of his trunks to find the half quillbone corset that would be more comfortable.

“We will arrive a week before the ball Jo, the corset, uncomfortable as it may be, will be needed for the other gowns you will be wearing during that week.”

“Yes...yes, I know Josie. You get to dress me for the week and I get to dress myself for one night.”

Orlesian’s and their idea of fashion was fine for them, she just refused to look like some stuffed bird, caged within a very tight cage. At first, Josie had fought hard to get her into an Orlesian styled gown saying “you will stand out if we do not follow the trends of Orlais Jo”. Jo handed her a drawing of the gown Solas had in mind for her to wear to the ball and laughed slipping her shirt on while Josie was distracted.
“I want that Josie…make it work or otherwise they are going to get an eyeful of the Inquisitor in nothing because I am not wearing one of those bloated looking dresses, it will look revolting on me, and you know it.” She slipped her leathers on and tied them quickly.

Josephine’s face blushed understanding that she hadn’t found the right cut of gown for her, yet, but the more she looked at the design Solas had drawn, the more she realized that it would be very beautiful on the Inquisitor with her height and raven-blue black hair. Tapping her fingernail against her front tooth, she started thinking about color schemes that might match and spoke quickly before she could leave.

“Inqu…Jo, will you ask Solas to draw something up for the rest of us so that we at least give the impression of being unified?”

Jo turned in surprise realizing that would mean Josie wouldn’t be wearing an Orlesian fashion and she knew that woman loved her fashion. Walking quickly towards her, she hugged her tightly.

“You are going to look freakin fabulous Josie…trust me. I will ask him if he would mind, I know Cullen and Cass would rather wear armor but I would like to see that man in a suite of cloth, not metal for a change and something that showed people Cassandra was a woman.”

Walking away she had one more thought and turned to a lost in thought Josie.

“You get to tell Cassandra she is wearing a dress.”

Josephine turned a little paler as her hand slapped to her chest.

“Why me? Wouldn’t you be better suited to explain such a thing to her? She would take it better coming from you.”

Jo shook her head and smiled cleverly at her knowing Cassandra would be in here shortly to give her measurements next.

“Ambassador, you are a force to be reckoned with, I am sure you will get her to see reason. If that doesn’t work, tell her it’s a direct order from her Inquisitor and she can take it up with me.” She smiled sweetly sharing a knowing look with her. Cassandra would never go against a direct order even if it was for something as silly as wearing a dress.

Jo breezed down the hall towards the rotunda and found her beautiful bald elf bent over a book studying something. She slid her arms around his shoulders and placed a small kiss on the top of his head.

“What’s reading there handsome?”

Solas smiled and looked up so she could place another kiss on his lips.

“Some information on Tevinter fire spells. Quite fascinating really, but I won’t bore you with it right now. I am sure you came here for a purpose or was kissing me your purpose? If so, I do not mind the interruption.”

Jo laughed and kissed him again enjoying the difference in angle and his teasing tone.

“I convinced Josie to use the sketch you gave me. She asked if you could put an ensemble together for the men and the other women.”

He laughed, “I am sure I can come up with something for her unless you have an idea of what you
would like?”

“I have some ideas that I think would work, I just need your sexy hands to draw them.”

“I did not realize that you found my hands sexy,” he said with a slight laugh.

Flopping onto the couch, she watched him pick up some charcoal and paper and come to sit next to her.

“Vhenan, I find everything about you sexy,” she said laughing.

She began to describe what she wanted to see on the male companions, she liked black on the men but ultimately left him to design the outfit since he would be wearing it. When she began to describe the gowns for the woman they were as unique as the women themselves.

“Leliana should have one shoulder bare, to accentuate that porcelain skin of hers.”

She wanted Leliana’s dress to have black ravens along the hem of the gown and down the seam of the V-shaped plunging back leading to a tight waist, with a slight flare over the hips allowing for her to hide the dagger she wore on her thigh, she thought a cream-colored gown would be perfect and said she would need matching slippers with ravens embroidered on them, that woman loved her shoes. She watched him sketch quickly and could see he understood what she was asking for.

She next chose to describe Cassandra’s saying she wanted the woman in black, high necked but sleeveless with deep red and gold threading used to embroider the daggers along the hem of hers. It needs to be form-fitting, with a deep slit up the side to flash a little leg when she walked since she was so tall.

“It needs to show off her kickin hourglass shape, long sexy legs and those arms of hers.”

Solas laughed at her description of the Seeker and listened as she explained that the daggers were a part of her family crest and would be fitting for someone who was Nevarran Royalty.

She moved onto Josie’s and tapped a finger against her chin deep in thought. Solas was enjoying her ideas, they were so different than anything they had seen before. Leaning forward he kissed her nose as she crinkled it up deep in thought and laughed.

“She needs color maybe gold to accentuate her dark skin and eyes, something with lace covering the bodice and the back, tapered lacy sleeves to the elbow then flaring opened sleeves. The dress should be form fitting to the knee where it flares out, gives our little fashionista the pouf she so desires and it will scream female.”

He laughed realizing that she knew her inner circle better than they probably thought.

“She needs color maybe gold to accentuate her dark skin and eyes, something with lace covering the bodice and the back, tapered lacy sleeves to the elbow then flaring opened sleeves. The dress should be form fitting to the knee where it flares out, gives our little fashionista the pouf she so desires and it will scream female.”

He laughed realizing that she knew her inner circle better than they probably thought.

“Sera, now she is going to be my most difficult since getting her into a dress is like trying to catch a greased nug.”

Scratching her head, she watched as Solas started to draw a very seductive looking dress that had a high neck, sleeveless and tapered in on the waist and then fell to pool around the wearer. She smiled at him, “royal blue with silver arrow accents this will be gorgeous on her lithe form.” He nodded his head agreeing with her and set the drawings aside.

“I will work on these and maybe get Cullen’s input on the men’s outfit before I get into it. You know he is not going to want to wear anything but armor, yes?”
She laughed and leaned back against him enjoying the feeling of his fingers gliding up and down her arm absently.

“It’s always armor, that’s the ex-Templar screaming at us but I would love to see him in something nice…something that…” with a sigh of pure lust she felt his burst of laughter vibrate against her back at the sound.

“I agree, vhenan…the man has…qualities…that should be appreciated… by everyone in attendance.”

Now both of them were laughing at their combined dirty thoughts. Slapping his thigh playfully, she stood needing to get a few more things done before she could retire for the evening.

“I best be off, I have more to do before I can relax. See you later ma lath.”

She bent and placed a sweet kiss on his cheek and walked out of the rotunda. Solas laid his head back watching her leave, then sat up and looked at the ideas she had described while he drew. This ball was going to prove to be a rough night for any man looking at these women of the Inquisition he realized as he scrolled through the different drawings she had described. He knew that the tailor Josephine had obtained would not be able to do these designs, not without obtaining help. Dorian will know someone, he thought quickly and took the stairs two at a time.

Chapter End Notes

Accidenti - Italian for damn
Vhenan - my heart
ma lath - my love
Solas noticed that Dorian was not in his usual spot and turned to walk back down the stairs when he saw Leliana on her way up.

“Have you by chance seen Dorian on your way here?” he asked her.

“He was seen heading to the training grounds with Jo and Cassandra to watch Cullen and his men, some sort of hand to hand training thing I guess.”

“Thank you,” he bowed slightly and continued his decent. Seeing that she turned with him he glanced at her curiously.

“I had come looking for you, would you mind if we spoke while walking?”

He smiled with a slight look of surprise on his face.

“Of course, what is it you wanted to discuss with me?”

Leliana looked a little nervous, something he was not used to seeing in her. With a small laugh from her, she looked at him.

“I am apprehensive about going into the fade this evening.”

Ahh, he thought. Smiling reassuringly, “that is understandable. Cullen was uneasy as well. I assure you, you will be well protected.”

She laughed self-consciously, “I am sure you understand then that my reasons for being apprehensive, as you put it, would be the same reasons he was.”

He walked digesting the information understanding that she was plagued by nightmares.

“Fears of the Blight, yes?”

She nodded, grateful to not have to explain.

“You will not be bothered by those terrors this evening. You will be too busy enjoying the change of scenery. However, a word of caution,” he said with a teasing tone. Leliana studied the small glint of teasing humor in his eyes and felt herself relax.

“If she asks you to go for a ride on her motorcycle…say no…just don’t trust me.”

She looked confused, “what is a motorcycle?”

“Cullen spoke to you this morning about a car?”

He saw her nod of understanding.

“Yes, like a carriage without horses.”

He laughed, “this is like catching a ride on the tail of a dragon. Complete with ground moving very
fast and wind so sharp you think it’s peeling your skin away.”

She looked at him horrified, “you rode on this…motorcycle with her?”

He chuckled recalling that it was closer to clinging to her in fear than a ride.

“Yes…it was…” Solas shook his head, “terrifying.”

Leliana laughed at the look of sheer terror on his face from the experience.

“She will be very convincing when she says it is completely safe…trust me, it is not.”

She found herself laughing so hard her sides hurt. Swiping the tears from her eyes she realized that this was his intention, to take her mind away from her own fears.

“Thank you, Solas…I didn’t realize how much I needed that.”

He smiled knowingly, “you are very welcome.”

They crossed the courtyard and found a large crowd around the arena. He escorted Leliana towards Jo standing with Cassandra and Dorian. Slipping his arm around her waist he watched the different men and woman enjoying the exercise. Jo turned her face up for a kiss and was rewarded instantly. Smiling she spoke quickly.

“The prize to the winners is a three-day pass to Val Royeaux,” she said wiggling her eyebrows. He laughed at her silly antics, “your idea I take it?” she nodded and winked.

Cassandra snorted at hearing the prize.

“That’s if anyone can beat me or Cullen. Our sweet little Inquisitor has roped me into being the last challenge for the women’s teams.”

“We have to give our men some dignity Cass,” she said smartly.

Solas felt a sizzle of excitement at the chance to watch Cullen fight and saw the same excitement in Jo’s eyes reflected back at him. Laughing again when she wiggled her eyebrows suggestively, he hugged her tightly against him as she turned to watch the games.

Jo noticed Varric standing with Hawke and Fenris across the way from her and waved seeing it returned and felt Cassandra and Solas tense up around her. She glanced over her shoulder at him and she followed his gaze back to Fenris. Well, that is curious, she thought. Cassandra growled between clenched teeth.

“When did she get here?”

Oh, shit…that’s right. She was looking for the champion before I fell into her lap.

“They arrived today actually. She had some information about the Wardens, she and Fenris will be here until I can get out of here and head to Crestwood.”

She watched Cass take calming breaths thinking she was probably counting to ten before she spoke.

“Were you going to tell us?”

Jo looked at her confused.
“Of course I was when we had our meeting tomorrow morning at o’crack-thirty. I know you’re pissed at Varric for not telling you where Hawke was, but he had his reasons, and the way you interrogate Cass…they are valid reasons.”

Cassandra looked at her furiously for a moment and then laughed, shaking her head.

“Okay…true.”

Jo placed her hand on her arm and squeezed it gently.

“Focus now Seeker, Rylen just entered the ring.”

Cassandra blushed profusely yet her eyes went to watch him enter. Jo could hear the sigh escape from her as the man took off his helmet revealing dark chestnut colored hair that glinted with small red highlights. Stabbing his sword into the ground he placed his helmet on it and leaned his shield against the fence. Slipping from his breastplate and leaning it against the fence with his shield, he reached for his collar and pulled his shirt over his head showing a nice view of carved muscles, narrow waist, and dark chest hair. Cassandra made an unconscious little groan and her and Dorian burst out laughing. Dorian nudged her with his elbow teasingly fanning his face.

“Cassandra my dear, you might consider banging that man like a door in a windstorm.”

Cassandra slapped his arm, trying not to laugh and they could see she was definitely considering it. They watched Rylen progress to the last round. Allowing him time to rest they let the women compete. She watched some of Leliana’s best go toe to toe enjoying the delicate dance that screamed assassin. She could see that Cassandra studied the woman’s moves carefully. Jo saw that competitive glint in Cassandra’s eye as she saw that it would be Jewel, one of Leliana’s people that would face her. This would be a good match she thought.

Oz strolled towards us and Jo smiled happily at the woman.

“Are you enjoying our entertainment, Oz?” she said when she stood next to her.

“Actually, that is what I came over for…I noticed that you have mages within your ranks but none of them fought today. I was hoping you would join me in giving them a magic show.”

She felt Solas’ arm tighten protectively around her and smiled at Oz.

“You just wanna make sure I’m not some pampered tit before we leave for Crestwood…” she said comically.

“Well the thought had crossed my mind, but Varric assures me that you are quite skillful. Shall we have some fun Inquisitor?”

She laughed, “call me Jo, and yes, let’s.”

Trying to move from Solas' grasp, he held her in place making her look up at him with a slight frown of annoyance.

“Do not get hurt.”

“I won’t vhenan; we are going to have fun. Trust me, you’re an excellent teacher.”

Kissing him quickly, she moved towards the arena and watched the crowd get louder than before. She blew a kiss to Cullen as she watched his eyes narrow when he realized what she was doing.
Sera started yelling at her to take her shirt off like the men had and blushing hotly, Jo shook her head no.

Jo took the offered staff from Dorian and twirled it around getting used to the feel as Oz removed her own from her back. She watched Oz start with tentative little ice balls, a fireball, and a small blizzard. Jo started laughing at her timid shots, she was trying to figure her out since she had done nothing but deflect. *Okay, my dear, I’m done fucking around let’s have some fun.*

Jo whispered words of an incantation from her time, and Oz instantly felt roots wrap around her legs holding her in place. Jo smiled at the surprised expression on her face and pulled the fade around her effectively cloaking her and then fade stepped to right behind her and whispered in her ear as Solas had done with her, “Dead” then disappeared.

Oz pulled a wall of flame around her burning the roots holding her and began moving like the little demon Jo knew her to be. *Yes, now she is going to join me in the fun instead of waiting.* Solas watched Jo manipulate the fade as he could and was proud to see she had progressed to a fierce adversary. She utilized some of her other-world spell work with mage work from this time, and it was proving to be a very powerful combination. Her features were alight with pleasure at the sparring and desire snaked through his body at the sight of her body moving and dodging the Champions spells. Cullen, like Solas, was completely turned on at the sight of her. *She is a beast,* he thought as she pushed the ground to rumble under Oz’s feet knocking her to the ground as large balls of flame hit the ground around her. *Maker’s balls when did she learn that?* He wondered and looked towards Solas and saw the surprise on his face as well.

The match was over with the Champion sitting on the ground trying to gather her breath. Jo walked to where the Champion sat on the ground and held a hand down to her to help her stand.

Oz took the offered hand laughing.

“You are going to have to show me how you did half of that.”

Jo’s laughter rang out as she threw her arm over her shoulders.

“I will for sure. Thank you for such a wonderful opportunity to spar with you. It was a dream come true for sure.”

Oz laughed and glanced over at Varric collecting money from Fenris who looked very annoyed.

“We have given the would-be champions a good rest, let’s see who wins.”

Jo winked at her as they left the arena, “Oh I know who I’ll be betting on.”

Oz watched her walk to where Cullen stood and kissed him like she had the elf. Looking at Varric confused, he laughed.

“Oh yeah, forgot to tell you about that part. I’ll explain all that later.”

Cullen entered the ring and removed his armor and slid his own shirt off. There wasn’t a woman that didn’t appreciate that view and a couple of men stared longingly. Elbowing Dorian jokingly, Jo pointed towards the corner of his mouth.

“You have a little bit of something right there dear.”

Dorian pushed her hand away laughing, and then fanned his face.
“My darling, I am but a man enjoying the gorgeous view. It never ceases to amaze me that you actually leave your bed when he is in it.”

Jo blushed hotly and then laughed.

“Not because I want to leave that’s for sure, but someone has to keep you assholes inline.”

Solas’s fingers grazed her side and she leaned into him as they watched their love move with expert ease. She knew that he and Rylen sparred often, so this was a good match for both men. You could see Rylen keeping his distance knowing that Cullen was stronger. Rylen was not slow and every hit that landed on him, she could feel Solas flinching trying to stay where he was. She wrapped her fingers around his, holding him as they watched. Cullen finally flipped Rylen and had the man face down on the ground, his arm twisted up behind him with his knee in his back. Rylen tapped out and Cullen helped him stand, everyone could see they were laughing with each other. He grabbed his shirt and laid it on his shoulder and picked up his armor holding it over his shoulder on top of his shirt. Grabbing his sword from where it was leaning against the railing with his other hand he walked towards them covered with sweat, dirt, bruises, and multiple scratches.

_He looks like something straight out of some Harlequin romance_, she thought as her eyes devoured every inch of him from his tousled golden hair, a streak of dirt down his cheek to his strong, wide shoulders. His carved stomach muscles moved and flexed with each step, accentuated the low ride of his leathers that caressed his hips showing her a teasing glimpse of his hip bones. Leather encased thick, muscular legs that carried him towards her and her mouth physically began to water. Reaching them, Solas let her go and took his armor and blade from him setting it down then began healing some of the cuts he could see. Cullen laughed at him, “I’m fine.”

Jo laughed as Solas snorted, and kissed his cheek reignining in her need to physically jump him right there and then.

“I know you are vhenan, yet after that display, you could hardly blame me for needing to touch you.”

“If you don’t let him fuss then you’re going to have to deal with me fussing, and that could get awkward.”

He laughed recognizing that he was outnumbered, Solas moved to his back and worked on some of the bruising he saw. Once he was done he stepped back feeling better, if not a bit more in control of his need for the man.

“You are now as you said fine, the rest we will take care of with a bath.”

Cullen watched him with a very sexy smirk on his face seeing the reflected desire with a promise reflect back. Rylen walked over to them and asked Solas to look at his wrist, he was pretty sure that the Commander had wrenched it.

Jo asked Dorian to help heal his cuts and bruises as well and he looked all too happy to help. When he came close enough she whispered to him, “no touchy bad boy, Cass will fucking gut you.” He laughed seeing Cassandra narrow her gaze on him and held his hands out in surrender.

“I am but on my best behavior my dear.”

Cassandra blushed hotly when she realized that Rylen had overheard the conversation and was now staring at her. Jo watched Cassandra shake it from her mind for the moment and stride to the center of the arena waiting for Jewel. As the match began she was amazed at how quick Cassandra was as
she moved, tucked, and rolled. She couldn’t stop the small laugh from escaping when Cass flipped Jewel over her shoulder using the move she had taught her. You could see that Jewel was getting frustrated at how Cassandra easily step out of reach or kept using her own momentum to throw her. Finally, in a ditch effort, she employed a rogue move and was behind Cass with an arm around her throat. The little rogue hadn’t expected Cassandra to just fall onto her back effectively knocking the wind out of Jewel. Rolling slightly away, Cassandra placed her knee against Jewel’s throat and with a frustrated look she tapped out. Cassandra stood up and helped the woman stand.

Jo walked to the middle of the arena and with a little magic, she shot sparkles into the air gathering everyone’s attention.

“Everyone that participated today gave their all, and I am so proud to know you. You humble me knowing that you have chosen to continue fighting alongside me. I am a true believer that there are no losers in our ranks, you all fought hard. Captain Rylen, Lieutenant Jewel, I am still gifting you a three-day pass to Val Royeaux, you two earned it after that wonderful display.”

Everyone cheered loudly at her words as both Rylen and Jewel knelt. Jo instantly felt silly and walked to them quickly.

“Oh please get up you two…it was a wonderful show and you deserve it. Now let’s get ourselves a drink before all the ale is gone.”

They stood smiling and walked off towards the tavern. Cullen walked up behind her and kissed the nape of her neck.

“Well that is very nice of you, Inquisitor, however, I do believe I was the winner so where is my prize?”

Jo turned and smiled at him seductively.

“Oh, I’m sure I can come up with something Commander.”

Chapter End Notes

vhenan - my heart
They slipped unseen from the tavern after an hour of celebration and made their way towards their room, needing to be alone with each other before they took Leli into the fade. Entering the rotunda so Solas could grab the drawings he had made earlier, they made their way through the keep. Reaching their room, Cullen pulled his key from his pocket and unlocked their door. They smelled food when they entered and Jo noticed that Alyse had placed food in front of the fireplace. Groaning at the sight, she muttered, “I love that beautiful, thoughtful girl.”

Cullen chuckled, placing his armor on the stand and his sword on the nearest weapons rack. Solas slipped up the stairs to the office and put the drawings on the desk, turning, he grabbed a bottle of wine from one of the cases Cullen’s sister had sent and mentally reminded himself to send her something for her gift of the homemade wine. Holding it for a moment, he chilled it before handing it to Cullen to open while he turned to grab the glasses from the mantle. Jo made a plate for everyone and moaned with joy at the taste of roasted pheasant with potatoes, carrots, and smoked pine nuts. The men both smiling at her noises, gazed at her with cheeky grins as she continued to make the sounds while she ate. Cullen finally cleared his throat and gazed at her roguishly.

“Honey, with those types of sounds, I don’t know if I want to make love to you or the food.”

Solas chuckled, “I would have to agree…I believe we have heard those sounds before.”

Jo gazed from one to the other and with an impish smile, she took another bite of potato.

“Hey now, I didn’t get lunch…when a girl is starved she makes happy noises…these are just my happy noises.”

Cullen shook his head still chuckling at the sounds she continued to make with almost every bite.

“Now that we are alone, there is something I thought we should discuss.”

Seeing that he had both their attention, he continued.

“We have received reports that Sampson is importing red lyrium. It would seem he is using smugglers out of The Emerald Graves and transporting the lyrium via the Kings Road. After our business in Crestwood is complete, I would like to take an opportunity and stop this movement of red lyrium.”

Solas sat thoughtfully for a moment then spoke curiously.

“I didn’t realize that there was a mine in the Graves.”

Cullen shook his head, “there isn’t, it is growing on the surface.”

Solas looked horrified at the idea and Jo finished the last of her meal and spoke quietly pointing out the obvious.

“That shouldn’t be a surprise to anyone here. Kirkwall’s Knight Commander is one big fucking statue of red lyrium…above ground. That right there should tell you what it needs to grow.”
Both men stared at her wearing confused expressions as she took a sip of her wine.

“Bodies gentlemen…it needs bodies to grow. It is blight infected lyrium, blight needs a human or animal host.”

They looked at each other with combined disgust and comprehension as they realized she was right. Cullen pinched the bridge of his nose while absorbing the truth.

“I never put that together but after you say it that way, I can see it.”

Solas leaned forward and refilled everyone’s glass as he spoke.

“Then it would be safe for us to assume that all the Templars that were changed in Therenfal are walking around spreading this…red lyrium everywhere they go.”

“Yes, they are. Eliminating this type of disease is going to be like trying to remove the blight. There is a quarry in Empyre Du Lion where they are growing a majority of it using slaves and whoever they can get their hands on to infect. If Sampson is using smugglers as well, it’s to make sure the Templars in that area are well supplied.”

Jo stood with her glass leaving them to talk some more as she prepared their bath. Sitting on the edge as the tub filled, she sipped her wine thoughtfully. Placing the embrium and elfroot oil into the water she heated it quickly and pulled her clothes off, slipping into the hot water sighing happily as she felt the water lap gently against her skin. Laying her head back, eyes closed, she let the heat work the kinks out of her muscles. She listened to them talking as they entered the bathroom to join her.

“We won’t be able to address either one until after the ball is done,” Cullen said as he slipped his shirt off dropping it on the pile Jo had left.

“Agreed,” Solas answered following in the same motions.

She watched them as they undressed and slip into the bath with her. She smiled as she heard their combined sighs of pleasure from the heat. Grabbing her glass of wine from the side she took a sip. I need candles in here, she thought and felt Cullen slide his hand absently along her leg causing her mind to shift in a different direction. She placed her glass down, “come here Cullen and let me wash your back for you.”

He moved between her legs with his back to her, and she grabbed a bar of soap lathering it in her hands. Moving with strong strokes, she kneaded the muscles enjoying the feel of them beneath her fingers as he groaned while she worked out any knots. She moved on to rub his neck and felt the muscles relax from her ministrations and provoked a small moan from him. She rinsed the soap off and pulled him back into her to relax while she held him, placing a small kiss on the side of his temple, he sighed happily.

With each of her legs placed under one of his arms his fingers teased the skin of her calves. She enjoyed watching Solas wash his legs as she traced lazy patterns on his wet chest. She felt the shift in his body as Solas caressed him and the sound of his moan lit her on fire. She kissed the side of his neck, lazily moving her lips to his ear and suckling the small lobe leaving her hands to continue caressing his chest. She felt her desire coil tightly as she watched Solas take Cullen into his mouth. She was panting as hard as Cullen watching his mouth move over him lovingly. Goddess knew how she loved the feeling of that mouth on her own body, and she loved what that tongue felt like against her own skin. Her head fell back as his magical aura caressed her skin setting her nerves on fire. She heard his own moan when hers reached out and caressed his own hardened cock. Stroking the sensitive skin with soft licks of flame, she scratched her nails over Cullen’s chest as her own orgasm
built with the caress of Solas’s magic against her clit, caressing her hardened nipples that pressed into Cullen’s back.

Cullen didn’t know how much more he could take of this as the magical energy in the room was heavy. He was wrapped in it, with Jo behind him, her magic always felt warm, where Solas’s encompassing him from the front and it was always cooler with hints of electricity to it and combined with the feeling of his mouth suctioning the head of his cock right that moment it was driving him over the edge of sanity. Every inch of his skin was being touched by magic, intensifying the feelings building beneath his skin. Holding Jo’s legs tightly, he was afraid he would break apart as the intense desire to cum he felt building grew. Moaning loudly, his breaths coming fast as he pleaded with the man slowly killing him with his mouth. Sweet Maker, I am dying, he thought as he came. Jo’s cries of completion mixed with Cullen’s begging and when Solas lifted his head he leaned back against the side of the tub trying to catch his own breath from his own climax.

After a few moments to gather her wits, Jo slipped from the bath and grabbed a towel and wrapping it around herself, she kissed one relaxed man and then the other. Picking up her glass of wine, she walked softly to the living area to slip into one of Cullen’s shirts. The men slowly left the bathroom with their own towels around their waists. She poured herself more wine and sat in the corner of the couch to watch the flames eat at the logs lying within. Solas slipped on a pair of loose pants forgoing a shirt and went up the stairs to grab the drawings and retrieve another bottle of wine. Cullen never far from paperwork had his own sitting on the desk upstairs and he, like Solas, had slipped into a loose-fitting pair of pants and no shirt.

Kissing the crown of her head as he walked by whispering, “love you, baby.” She smiled with the love she heard in his voice as he spoke and watched him stop and kiss Solas as well at the bottom of the steps before he headed up. She folded her legs under her and sat back enjoying the moment. She knew that she didn’t have a whole lot of time before she and Solas would bring Leliana into the fade for her own experience. Moments of peace and quiet were so very rare for any of them and their little cocoon was perfect for allowing them to experience moments like these. She watched Solas slip his long frame into a chair and began drawing.

Jo’s mind turned over her conversation with Cole earlier and felt unnervingly calm about it. The thought that Shawn would kill her surprised and confused her. Why? Was dumping him that horrible that his mind would break like that? It just makes no sense…and if Cole could see it then her mind or the pull through the breach is repressing the memory of his attack.

Tapping her glass as she thought it then dawned on her, or it could be the fear demon…the only anomaly that will say whatever for each different inquisitor. Hmm…if he stole the memory, then he will give it back to me when I go there. Cullen is going to have a fit when he finds that Solas and I have slipped through a rift and there is no way for him to know if we are fine. Human GPS would be fucking awesome for that problem….maybe there is a spell…hmm, tapping a staccato beat against her glass, she was unaware that Solas had been studying her while she was lost in thought. He enjoyed the way her eyes would glaze over as she stared off absent, leaving the copper swirls within the depths churn the waters of her deep blue eyes. Or her nose as it scrunched just the slightest as she studied one thing or another.

His hands moved deftly over the page as he sketched the scene in front of him. She does not see how absolutely stunning she really is when she is like this. Her hair falling all around her with a slight curl to it, the small quirk to her lips as she chewed on one corner…it was mesmerizing. The stillness to her was like a calming balm to him. She instilled courage in those she was around, and loyalty that is almost unseen in this age with her kindness and complete commitment to friendship. He felt strong hands squeeze his shoulder and he had been so absorbed in what he was doing that he hadn’t heard Cullen come down the stairs. Cullen looked at the drawing and smiled into his startled gaze.
“I think you caught it, love.”

Solas smiled pleased with his compliment and then glanced at his own work realizing that he had caught what he was striving to capture from the moment. Jo looked up from the flame at the softly spoken words curious.

“Caught what?”

Solas turned it towards her and she stared at herself reflected like a mirror except this woman looked so different than what she saw. The woman he had drawn was lost in thought, yet she looked beautiful, confident even. *Perception is different for everyone, why shouldn’t you look like that to him.* Choosing to study that idea at a later date, she smiled at him admiringly.

“It is a wonderful likeness of me. You are so very talented, vhenan.”

He knew she was avoiding something but just couldn’t put his finger on it…*I will though,* he thought. Setting the papers down he realized how late it was getting.

“I gave Leliana a sleeping draft; we should be there before her.”

She nodded her understanding and set her glass down. Walking to their bed, she slipped the shirt over her head and climbed in, enjoying the covers around her, caressing her skin. Moments later she felt Solas climb in behind her and pull her close, placing a kiss on her neck. She snuggled into his side knowing that Cullen would come to bed a bit later understanding he still had paperwork he wanted to finish before he came to bed. Solas sent Jo to sleep quickly knowing that Leliana would be afraid at first and followed quickly behind her into the fade.

Chapter End Notes

vhenan - my heart
Jo’s eyes slowly slid open in the early hours of the morning and felt cocooned within blankets, arms, and legs holding her in place. She found herself draped over Cullen’s chest and Solas had thrown one of his legs over hers, with one of his hands cupping her ass. She smiled with the sensations and rubbed her face into Cullen’s chest enjoying the feel of his downy chest hair on her skin. *Goddess I love waking up in Skyhold like this,* she thought.

Cullen’s hands that were holding her tightened slightly with her gentle nuzzling against his chest. Sliding his hands up, he pulled her up against his chest gently releasing her from Solas’ pinning leg. With a slow roll, he placed her beneath him bracing himself on his arms so he could look into her eyes. Her large blue eyes gazed up at him and he watched her wet her lips at the raw need she saw reflected at her and he heard the soft sigh escape as her body responded to that need in him. He reached up and caressed her face pressing a small kiss to cheek before he slowly skimmed down the side of her body, caressing the swell of her breast. He watched in amazement as her magic flared against his fingers.

He gently touched her ribs leading to where he could caress the swell of her hip while he continued to study the red-golden flare that spread across her body. Everywhere his calloused fingers touched, sent her aflame and reflected back to him physically. Her magic caressed his fingers where they touched and the sensation was intoxicating knowing he had the power to elicit such strong reactions from her.

He slipped between her legs and her legs wrapped around his hips in an automatic reflex. He panted slightly in anticipation knowing he needed her…this…just her. She looked directly into his whiskey desire filled eyes as he slowly slid into her and just as slowly rolled her hips towards him. He was in no hurry and she knew it when he finally kissed her lips, mingling his tongue with hers and moved again.

Arching her back, she rolled her hips towards him with his slow deep thrusts and her eyes closed enjoying the sensations he was causing. She felt his lips against the sensitive skin behind her ear and let a soft whimper escape on a tortured breath, silently begging him as she lifted her hips bringing him deeper, extracting a small groan of pleasure from him. That small sound from him was all she needed to hear to send her body soaring.

Catching him unprepared, she rolled him beneath her, taking him to the hilt within and let a sigh of beautiful pleasure escape her lips. Cullen watched from beneath as she buried him so deeply that with every steady thrust into her, her magic was now everywhere. The soft hot licks teasing, caressing, exciting him relentlessly.

She leaned forward kissing him deeply, swirling her tongue against his seductive, it was as if she was begging him to play with her, unafraid, unhinged. Her hair fell around them in a dark curtain shutting out everything but this moment. He gazed into her eyes and watched the red of them swirled within
the depths and what he knew would be deep blue in color, were on the verge of black and he was lost. She was at this moment the embodiment of desire, and he felt some of his old fears from his torture fall away; she was replacing the horrible memories with this one.

He leaned up, wrapping his arms around her and bathed each nipple thoroughly; prompting soft moans and small cries to fall from her lips. She cradled his face kissing him, before scraping her nails along his scalp and down the back of his neck, panting, and begging for release against his lips. He rolling her onto her back and slammed into her as she arched up to meet each thrust…pleading with him on ragged breaths.

“Cullen…please”

Her body was on fire and knew that if she were going to do it, now was the time. She whispered the location incantation against his heart as her body wanted to soar. Please Goddess, let this work. De réir chumhachtai Moon, Sun, Earth, Aeir, Dóiteáin agus Farraige cad aon uair amháin Cailleadh ar ais dom.

He felt her body tightening around him driving him crazy. The walls of her sex quickening around him and the feather-light touch of her lips moving soundlessly over his own excited him. Their ragged breaths mingled together as they drew closer to their combined pleasure. Her lips trailed kisses across his jaw and down his neck. She licked his nipple making him groan before he felt her bite his chest softly just over his heart and the skin became hotter than anywhere on his body as she came in his arms with a cry of release. With another thrust, he found his own release and nuzzled her neck while trying to catch his own breath.

Solas had not awoken during their lovemaking; he had been in a small glen with Wisdom having a pleasant conversation. When a sudden intense sexual feeling came over him, he knew he needed to leave Wisdom and awaken. A moan tore from his throat as he woke. His orgasm powerful while her magic worked with his. How had he not woken until this moment was something he would need to study. However, he now felt an unpleasant burning on his chest. When he looked down, he saw the small design her magic had placed on him. It was similar to the one on her lower back. He raised his fingers to gently touch it and the magic pulsing from it was powerful.

Closing his eyes, he studied it. His eyes flashed open when he found its meaning…it’s a location spell. His heart leaped at the meaning and the idea behind it. Himself and Cullen had discussed possibly carrying a phylactery for emergencies, yet both men feared that it could fall into the wrong hands and all the implications that would go with it, but this…this was unique…better.

Watching them slowly gather their wits, he was sure she was regathering her energy after using such a strong spell.

“You have been busy vhenan…shall you share with us now what you have just done?”

Cullen looked over at him with confusion and leaned up so he could gaze at her and saw that she was biting the edge of her lip, it’s her tell Rutherford.

“Jo?”

She closed her eyes and spoke softly. So softly it was barely heard, “it was just a small spell.”

Cullen wasn’t sure he heard her correctly.

“A spell? What for?”
When he rose up further he could see the small tattoo on her breast like the one on her back yet smaller and it was just above her heart. The small design had three different colors; blue, silver, and then gold.

“And when did you get that?” He asked looking at her chest.

He slid from her and sat up a little angry and unsure what the hell had just happened and heard Solas clear his throat looking somewhat pleased with everything.

“We all have one,” he said pointing to one on his own chest.

Cullen’s eyes immediately stared down, and sure as hell there it was, right over his own heart. Same pattern and colors, and his eyes went back to hers waiting for an answer. Jo held her hands out trying to convince Cullen to give her a moment and some understanding of what she did. She could see that Solas had an idea of what it was for he was way to calm, yet Cullen was looking a bit scared, hurt, and confused.

“I cast a location spell that is all Cullen. I hadn’t planned on doing it right that moment but it felt right.”

He ran his hand through his hair still confused.

“Why would you need to cast something like that when I am not lost?”

Jo sat up a little excitedly as she started to get into the meat of the explanation.

“No…okay I am not explaining this correctly,” she said taking a calming breath before she continued.

“The spell works only if one of us is lost. You see, I was thinking about how it would be really handy to have a way to track each other if necessary. You’re not a mage so a phylactery won’t work in finding you if we need to, and honestly, I just don’t like the idea of my blood, or Solas’ possibly falling into anyone’s hands that aren’t yours.”

She watched while he stared at the small symbol and then scratch his head curiously.

“Okay, well how does this work then.”

She looked at Solas who also now sat up interested in how this would work, and he watched her excitement grow.

“Okay, the symbol is placed over the heart because the heart conducts electrical pulses when it beats, not unlike Solas’ magic when it reaches out to touch you. When one of us is missing then you feel that pulse, it will start with a tapping alerting you that the person is being taken or is missing, it should not be painful, just a steady tapping. The color of the one missing will look faded. The tapping will lessen as you grow nearer to whoever is missing, and the color will become clearer, darker as well. The royal blue is me, the silver is Solas and the gold is you.”

Both men were impressed with her thoughtfulness. Cullen had been wracking his brain with Solas trying to come up with some way to do just this. Jo twisted her fingers knowing that the last part still had to be said. The stupid Templar attack proved that she could really die at any moment, and she had so much more she wanted to do yet. She cleared her throat, gathering their attention, and they could see the shift in her immediately.

“If…if one of us is to die, then the color for that person is gone.”
They sat silent for a moment as that reality set in for them all. Cullen glanced at her lovingly, *what will this thing do if she is pulled back to her own world Rutherford...will the color disappear or fade and tap you to death because you can't reach her?*

“What will happen if you are pulled from this world back to your own, how will this work then?”

Jo waved her hand dismissively at his question and spoke off-handedly, completely forgetting that she hadn’t told them about her conversation with Cole the previous day.

“Oh, I wouldn’t worry about that. The last man I was dating and consequently broke it off with, murdered me, that’s how I got here.”

Moving to slide off the bed and prepare for her day, Cullen quickly grabbed her wrist keeping her in place and making her look at them. Solas sat visibly shaken with her words and moved closer to where Cullen was sitting, and choked out, “Pardon me, what did you just say?”

Jo looked from one to the other realizing she hadn’t told them. *Goddess...was that really just yesterday? It seems like it happened so much longer ago...hmm*

“I forgot to tell you...yesterday, Cole picked up the memory but I cannot remember it at all. I don’t know if it is because it was traumatic that my mind is blocking it or if coming through the breach took it from me.” *I think I will just keep option number three under wraps for now.*

Both men stared horrified and angry knowing there wasn’t a bleeding thing they could do about what was done to her. Unaware of their anger with what had happened to her, she blindly continued.

“I’m not sure that is a memory I really want back if it is as horrible as the few words Cole used to describe it. He said, ‘covered in blood, dying, that’s how you got here.’ That was it, but enough to knock the air out of me...I just couldn’t recall it. Nevertheless, at this point in my life, I would have to thank him for killing me.”

Two sets of shocked stares pierced her gaze and Cullen stuttered, “th...thank him? Have you lost your damn mind? He murdered you,” he said with an almost barely restrained growl.

Jo realized she had disturbed them with her unemotional explanation. *You probably could have done that a bit better Jo? You sound like you’ve lost your fuckin marbles.* Smiling at them, she grabbed their hands entwining their fingers with her own.

“Yes, I would thank him. Because had he not killed me, I would not be here with the loves of my lifetime, doing something that is not only important but rewarding to me personally. I would still be back in my world listening to patients who had given up on their lives. Living around those who just didn’t give a nug’s ass anymore about anything, but here, I have found a family, I found you two, and I found that I am truly happy for the first time in my life. So, those are my reasons for why I believe that I would thank the worthless sack of shit for releasing me into my destiny.”

Both men sat stunned with her heartfelt explanation.

Cullen was certain he would not have thought of it like that, yet, realizing there was a very selfish part of him that was thankful she was here because of it. Solas found himself thinking along the same path and realized that the avenue of how she got here was very distasteful, yet he knew himself well enough to realize he was selfish and glad she was here regardless of how it happened. Jo saw they understood and squeezed their hands; once they were released, she slid from the bed to prepare for what she was sure would be a long day.
Chapter End Notes

Vhenan - my heart

Gaelic translation:

De réir chumhachtaí Moon, Sun, Earth, Air, Dóiteáin agus Farraige cad aon uair amháin Cailleadh ar ais dom - By the powers of Moon, Sun, Earth, Air, Fire, and Sea what once was lost return to me.
Preparations

Chapter Notes

Thank you, everyone, for your patience in waiting for this update. I know it has been a long time coming and some of you probably thought I had abandoned it. I hope you enjoy it.

Jo walked across the keep towards the command room, preparing to explain to Josie that she would be leaving for Crestwood the next day instead of participating in her dance lessons. It would be a struggle but she was sure that she would understand. Solas had shown her the finished drawings of the gowns and suit for Cullen and himself. They were absolutely beautiful and then he told her that he had incorporated, with Dorian’s help, a different tailor to help create them. She was too excited just knowing this would be a wonderful surprise for her little family.

Pushing the door open, she noticed everyone was already there and put some maps on the table, sliding them towards Cullen. He glanced at them having gone over them earlier with her in their room and then slid them to Leliana who looked at them curiously.

“Hawke explained to me that he has a warden friend in Crestwood that he thinks can add even more insight to our current situation with Corypheus. I agreed that we should at least meet with him to ascertain if he does have anything helpful to add.”

Everyone around the table made agreeable sounds as she continued.

“The area is also a bloody mess with undead, bandits, rifts, a high dragon and of course Red Templars, because what kind of party would it be without them involved. I will take two groups with me to Crestwood to better stabilize the area. I think we will need the extra manpower to take Caer Bronach from the bandits that are currently squatting in there.” Looking at Leliana and smiling secretly, “you’re going to love this place. It has a secret entrance perfect for your agents.” Leliana nodded at her already thinking of the possibilities of having access to the Kings Road so readily.

“Once the keep is under our control, then we will drain the lake and I can take a group to remove the rift under the lake. The other group can help clean up the remaining bandit stragglers, map any other rifts for me, and generally remove the remaining undead population helping the current people in Crestwood. With the extra group, it will help when we take the high dragon down.” She gazed at Cullen, “I will need a small contingent of men and women to get to Crestwood. The people need not just protection, but healers, food, building supplies, and crop supplies. With the town being terrorized by bandits and undead for a while, the walls are a mess, and the fields have been left dead for a while. Also, I would like it if you sent a healthy number of mages and Templars if they can be spared. I would like the people of Crestwood to see them work together; it might help with the healing process.”

Everyone was agreeing with her strategies thus far and Leliana glanced at her then back to the map then giving her and Josie a knowing look.

“When will you be leaving then?”

“I will be leaving at first light tomorrow.”
Josephine stared at her with narrowing eyes knowing what she was doing and shook her head with frustration.

“Wonderful, then you will have time for a small dance lesson today. Maybe you could practice while you are away.”

Jo couldn’t stop the giggle from escaping as she imagined dancing around while killing one undead to the next like they were dance partners. Trying to catch her breath she wiped the tears from her eyes noticing that Josie did not find anything funny about her suggestion.

“Okay, Josie I will give you two hours today committed to your dance lessons only. I have danced before I will have you know, I’m not always a klutz, really.”

Josie folded her arms which told everyone at the table that she would not tolerate any more defiance on the matter; it was quite obvious she had quite frankly had enough between the Commander and Seeker arguing with her over mere clothing.

“Three hours and I will leave out the elocution lessons and pray to the Maker you can keep a civil tongue in your head when addressing the nobility of Orlais.”

Jo held her hands up in surrender, “of course Ambassador, I shall be there on time and ready for your instruction.”

Josie smiled happily and picked her clipboard up scribbling notes down.

Jo saw that Josie had cleared the main hall of the keep for holding the session as it was the only room in the castle that could hold such a gathering except for the garden. She glanced around to catch everyone’s expressions. Some looked completely bored, and others had a bit of interest, then there were those like Sera that were nervous, then there were those that were obviously wishing they were anywhere but here. Josie paired her first with Dorian wanting to see her dancing form since he was experienced with such types of balls. She found that he was an excellent dancer as he twirled her around the room to the music that was currently playing. After they had made a few turns around the room, she handed him off to Sera who looked horrified and shook her head adamantly no.

Dorian always the determined, bowed and held his hand out to her waiting patiently. After he finally taunted her with a dare, Sera finally conceded. Placing her hand in his and everyone watched how quickly she transformed into a graceful creature as he expertly maneuvered her around the floor. It was delightful observing everyone having fun with the session considering almost all of them were leaving with her in the morning. She stood off to the side enjoying the music and the fluidity of how people moved when they danced.

Her skin began to tingle when she felt him behind her. She closed her eyes, taking a steadying breath and enjoyed the feeling before she turned and watched him gracefully walk towards her, then bowed low, extending his hand to her. As she curtsied deeply back to him, she placed her fingers lightly within his grasp. Her heart sped up as his gaze turned to a molten silver while he bent his head over her hand to place a small kiss on her knuckles while his gaze devoured her and she could feel his magic slowly caressing her face and neck with his look.

The instant sexuality of his gaze made her pulse race and her skin flush. Guiding her gently into his embrace, he began the measured steps of a waltz. Moving to a song only he could hear as he led her
expertly, using steps she did not know, as the small impromptu band began strumming a song to follow their steps. She felt everything change within him, *this is where you meet your ancient Evanuris*, she thought as he held her gaze lovingly. His smile had a rakish tilt upon his beautiful lips knowing he was purposely seducing her with his magic.

Holding her closely against him with his hand resting at the small of her back, she could feel the coiling of his muscles against hers as he turned her into the next tight spin, pulling her back into his arms to tease her breasts with the movement of his chest against hers. She was tremendously turned on with his unrestrained desire on display. Jo moved to the unheard song like she was floating while her desire for him grew as he maneuvered them around the floor.

Josie and Cassandra couldn’t stop the sigh that escaped at how romantic the two moved together, nor could anyone stop how turned on they got watching the couple move intimately around the floor.

Jo felt the heat between them simmering as their magic caressed against each other pushing their desire towards an unseen crescendo. He finally ended their dance with her bent backward, low over his arm, her head arched back deep enough for her braid to dust the floor. The maneuver exposed the flushed, damp skin of her neck, and slightly heaving breasts. She knew his face was close enough to her that his breath teased her skin only increased her desire for him to tighten even more through her body.

Everyone applauded as he pulled her back up, kissing her nose then lips gently. Bowing to her again while she curtsied back, she wanted to do nothing but take him on the floor right then uncaring if anyone saw. She noticed that his desire reflected within the depths of his eyes and blushed hotly at her errant thoughts. He smiled at her wickedly knowing what she was thinking before he turned towards Josephine and smiled eloquently as if nothing had just happened between them.

“I believe she will do splendidly at this ball surrounded by Orlais elite, don’t you Ambassador?”

Josie nodded at him absently wanting to fan her face at how sexually arousing the dance was to witness. No one spoke except Dorian, who spoke somewhat huskily, if not a bit uncomfortably. “Fasta vas! I…I need to find Bull,” turning, he left the hall quickly. Jo wiggled her eyebrows at Solas as he laughed at her silly antics and left the room for the safety of his rotunda. She turned to Josie and fanned her face as she watched her and Cassandra giggle.

“Who would ever think he was…” clearing her throat quietly. “Is he always that…intense?” Cassandra asked quietly. Jo blushed and both women giggled even harder. Josie patted her own face as Jo nodded her head yes.

“Well my goodness…it is so unfortunate that you two won’t be dancing at the ball, you would be the envy of every woman in the Court with a man who exhibits that much…expertise.”

Jo stared at Josephine stunned with her remark and then remembered that in the game he was her manservant, *fuck that shit*, she thought, trying to keep her calm and continue with her teasing tone.

“Why wouldn’t I dance with Solas then? It sounds like every woman there might thank me for it,” she inquired deceptively calm. Josie knew it was a trick and she took a deep breath knowing this would end in a confrontation of some kind.

“You know that dancing with an Elven apostate at court will not earn you any favors amongst the Court. You must appear to be available to them Inquisitor, this will garner approval with the Empress’s and…”

Jo cut her off angrily as Cassandra rubbed her forehead knowing where the conversation was going.
and felt for both her friends. The great game was a waste of time yet it was needed, and Jo being who she was, might struggle with the need to obtain such worthless allies.

“Josie, you make it sound like I give a nug’s ass what the nobility of Orlais thinks of me. You realize I am in all eyes of the Court an Elven half-breed apostate, by the way, right?” she stated bluntly.

“Besides they need us more than we do them. Come on Josie…don’t give me a hard time over who I do or don’t dance with. I can still dance with him and appear available.”

Josie took a step towards her calmly trying to make her understand the situation.

“Inquisitor, we need their approval and their help if we are to defeat Corypheus, and if you were to dance like that…” moving her hands in frustration towards the middle of the floor, “not one noble who saw you could ever see you as available.”

Jo stared at her flabbergasted at the idea of it all. My feelings, my personal body, are nothing but a bargaining piece…this is just fucking disgusting, she grieved within her mind.

“They would rather a Tevinter Magister overrun them, then see a couple of elven apostate’s dance together?” she said incredulously.

Trying to reign in her anger, she looked at Josie.

“How is it seen any differently for a human noble to be seen dancing with an elf?” she said somewhat panting as the idea set in that she would not be allowed to be herself in such a public setting. She would be required to depict herself as cold and indifferent.

“Please remind me again what I’m fighting for Ambassador because I was sure it was for all kind, not just the human kind.” Snarling angrily as tears started to slip down her face, “If those pompous, uptight, hypocrites will allow me to dance with a human man or woman, and then get upset because I chose to dance with an elven man publicly, then fuck’em Ambassador, because I personally don’t care what they like or don’t like.”

Angry, she turned on her heel and left the keep. Her inner circle stared after her with sympathetic gazes. Anyone who had been with her and Solas on the road could see their mutual love, and she was never anything but herself with any of them.

Jo was just realizing that she was fighting against more than just Corypheus and his bullshit. She was fighting for equal treatment for women at the same time she was also taking on Thedas’ racism towards elves and dwarves at the same time. It was frustrating to think that she would have to appear as everything she was not. Cold, shallow… available, she all but spat the words in her head with disgust. Allow them their condescending glares, snide comments, and racial slurs all for the sake of the Inquisition while presenting a big smile and accepting their shit salad.

Standing at the top of the landing leading from the keep, she gazed out to the yard below with unseeing eyes. She heard someone walk up behind her to stand silently at her side and she saw it was Cassandra, while she tried to calm her frustration. Jo shook her head then glanced at her.

“Is this why you didn’t want to associate with the Pentaghast’s anymore Cass? You must present well, fluff the breasts, be beautiful but dumb, cold but approachable? Do not let anyone know that you might have interests or desires of your own. Let some gross little pig approach your family for a marriage contract that you then must tolerate, pop out some rug rats until you fall on your sword for your own mercy killing?”

Cassandra let out a loud understanding laugh and nodded her head.
“That is pretty much what is expected of female nobility. You being the Inquisitor puts similar expectations upon you. Because half-breed or not, you are considered nobility now, even if the nobles do not like the idea, they cannot do anything about it. You are a very powerful woman, and they will want to ally with you and the Inquisition just to garner status amongst their peers. Everything you do is scrutinized down to the smallest detail, and sadly that does include who you dance with, what gown you choose to wear, and the company you keep around you. I agree with your anger at the situation, and I also believe that once the court meets you, they are not going to look twice at who you dance with. You have a way of getting people to like you. But you must give them a moment to gather their wits about them first. Orlesian’s are pompous prigs, but they love their gossip and snide commentary. Once they realize you’re unique… relationship with Solas and Cullen, they won’t be able to stop themselves from wanting to know more.” Blushing brightly, she glanced at her then away quickly. “However, I will caution you my friend…if you and Solas dance like that again, there are going to be people in many different stages of undress. The record of births in the nine months after the ball will be high because that was very…sexual.”

Jo laughed and hugged her tightly to her.

“Thanks, Cass, I needed that.”
Two weeks on the road and we finally reached the outskirts of Crestwood to make camp for the night. Hawke and Fenris sat next to her by the fire and she talked about what they would need to do in the area.

“Tomorrow we will head into the town and get the key from mayor Dedrick to the dam. Then we take the keep and drain the lake.”

Hawke laughed at her confidence.

“Just like that? Take the keep, fight the undead and drain a lake. No big deal, the easy one first right?” she chuckled.

Jo laughed hearing the deliberately teasing sarcasm in her tone and winked at her.

“It is when you know what’s going to happen. You see, the good Mayor of Crestwood flooded the town thinking it would rid them of the blight, which is absurd. He will definitely object to us wanting to drain the lake, but he will give us the key in the end without much of a fuss because he knows that the people living in and around Crestwood will not have any peace until the rift in the lake is closed. Now as for the keep, Caer Bronach is a good building, but right now it is partially full of bandit thugs who barely know the pointy end of a sword but are really good at intimidating the locals and taking what they want. Except for their leader, he is an Avaar and he does know how to fight. What really comes in handy is that I know the layout of the keep so we won’t be wasting any time getting us where we need to be.”

Jo caught the way Fenris’ gaze narrowed on her while Hawke shrugged her shoulders.

“Well, I guess we will see, won’t we?”

Laughing, Jo nodded her head as Bull began teasing Hawke for her obvious disbelief in how easy Jo said it would be.

“Don’t tell me The Champion of Kirkwall is afraid to break a nail because of a little hard work?” he winked.

Hawke faked a horrid look and slapped her hand to her chest.

“Maker, no, not my nails! I just got them even.”

Everyone around the fire was laughing at her antics and well into the evening, everyone was still laughing when Jo said her good nights to everyone. Entering her tent, she found Solas asleep with a book lying on his chest. *He looks so adorable when he falls asleep like that,* she thought picking up the book and placing it in his pack. Slipping into one of Cullen’s shirts leaving just her underclothing
on, she pulled the furs over herself and him as she snuggled against his side.

Solas felt her warmth next to him and wrapped his arms around her, burying his face into the side of her neck, and fell back to sleep.

The Mayor looked at the group uncomfortably, “drain the lake… there must be a better way.”

Jo looked at Oz and winked knowingly as the Champion snorted, rolling her eyes. Bull crossed his arms and sighed disgustedly.

“No, there isn’t… there really isn’t.”

Mayor Dedrick looked resigned and nervously pulled the key out of his pocket handing it to her.

“Here is the key to the door then… but Inquisitor… I wouldn’t linger there.”

Jo nodded quickly and left the small home speaking to the two guards she would leave to arrest the Mayor when he tried to run. Hawke and Fenris followed closely behind and she heard mumbling from the two. Finally, Fenris cleared his throat uncomfortably, knowing he had to speak his mind.

“Does it not bother anyone that you know these things?” He spoke with a Tevinter accent like Dorian and Jo suppressed a small shiver from the deepness of his baritone voice.

Oh, how she had a total love-hate complex when it came to him while playing the game. Here he is, standing next to a Mage, and he hates magic… HA! Stopping and turning slowly to look at him, she could see his discomfort.

“The better question is does it bother you, Fenris, that I know so much about you?”

She was surprised that he wouldn’t make eye contact with her and noticed him clenching his fists together before he finally shook his head and knew he was frustrated as Cassandra had been in the beginning.

“Yes, it does bother me, Inquisitor.”

Jo laughed quickly, “It’s just Jo, Fenris, and I am glad you are willing to be honest with me. The best answer I have for you now is that if you asked anyone here they would tell you they felt the same way at first. Once they got to know me, it didn’t bother them any longer because we had become a family. This discomfort, or maybe in your case it’s more like a distrust, I can hope will pass. All that I ask of you is give me a chance to show you that I’m worthy of my knowledge and hopefully your friendship.”

He looked at her finally and she smiled gently before turning away from him knowing he would ponder her words carefully. If Fenris was one thing, it was that he constantly watched everything with those forest green eyes of his.

_Crestwood sucks big donkey balls_, she thought as she felt soaked to the bone while trekking to Caer Bronach. Her boot’s squished when she walked and she wanted to groan in disgust. _Fucking rain_
will stop when the rift is closed, she reminded herself disgustedly as she wiped water from her eyes trying to lift her own spirits. Glancing over at Cole, she was suddenly jealous of his hat with the large brim. Turning her gaze forward, she could see the keep and pushed onward. This place is worse than the damn Fallow Mire, she grumbled internally.

She had finally resigned herself to look like a prune when her next step landed her into a puddle of water that came halfway up her calves. Stopping in utter disgust, she stared down at the offending water angrily, “well fucking drown me already and be done with it,” she complained throwing her arms in the air and staring towards the sky so the rain could pelt her face.

The sounds of snickering reached her ears and she looked around realizing those who were close enough overheard her muttered profanity and had stopped to stare at her standing in the puddle. Varric laughing loudly, joked, “that’s our girl. Always ready to lift our spirits with her wonderful, spirited vocabulary.”

She smiled at him and then laughed at herself.

“Careful of this one Varric. You might drown.”

Everyone laughing with her now continued to the keep in a better mood than earlier.

She stared at the doors to the keep and felt Bull walk up beside her. Glancing at him then back to the doors she shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

“Do you think we should knock first?”

Bull grinned and retorted cleverly, “well, it would be rude of us to just walk in like we already own it.”

Laughing, he pulled his great ax from his back and ran straight for the door, demolishing it with two large swings. Winking at Hawke with a large smile, she giggled. “Ready to play Oz?”

Oz smiled just as largely back, pulling her staff from behind her as both women began walking with a purpose for the broken door, crackling magic around them.

“You know I’ve been dying to try some of those spells you showed me.”

Just like Jo had explained to everyone earlier, the plan was executed perfectly. Everyone moved as a single unit, clearing the keep from the bottom to the top. Once they were sure the place was cleared and secure, they began setting up camp for the evening. Jo stood on the battlement looking out towards the rift in the lake and felt Solas’s magic reach for her when he walked up behind her.

“Vhenan, let’s go and get dried off.”

She glanced at him over her shoulder and nodded, reaching for the hand he held out to her so he could lead her towards their tent.

The tent was blessedly dry and comfortable, and Jo peeled off her wet leathers and shirt, throwing them into a corner where they landed in a soggy mess. Removing her hair from the tight braid,
ran her fingers over her scalp massaging the aching skin. Solas held out a towel for and she dried herself quickly as the chill of the water mixing with the air raised gooseflesh along her skin.

Solas stood back and watched her dry off trying to contain his flash of need he felt for her, yet when she raised her deep blue eyes to his, he could see that she was purposely moving slower now when she felt his magic caress her naked flesh. He took a step forward and threw his hand towards the entrance of the tent, placing wards quickly without stopping his momentum.

Jo’s breath caught in her throat when she watched his eyes turn molten silver in color before he wrapped his hand around the back of her neck and pulled her to him. Dropping the towel to the floor of the tent, she placed her hands on his chest as his breath caressed her lips teasingly. Gazing deeply into his eyes, she licked her lips and he groaned before his lips crushed against hers.

His hand slid from her neck to cup her ass and pull her against him, eliciting a reciprocating moan of need from her. His constant emotional and physical hunger for her never stopped astonishing him. Watching her when she slept or smiled at him would squeeze his heart and stop his breath. She slid her tongue against his lips suggestively as her hand cupped his arousal through his breeches sending a delicious group of sensations to race across his skin. She helped him from his breeches and they broke apart momentarily as he slid his shirt over his head and finally felt her skin against his. Their magic flared brightly when she skimmed her hands up his chest to flutter across his shoulders, he felt her pull him even closer.

“Vhenan, lath em,” she said breathlessly against his lips.

“Ma nuvenin,” he growled sweeping her up promptly and carrying her to their bed of furs. Lying her down on their makeshift bed, he watched as her skin glowed with their combined power and desire for each other. Sliding his fingers gently across her jawline, he traced the angle and then followed the flow of her skin to her collarbone. He tracked the lines and flow of her magic as it flared and swirled with the slightest touch.

“Ina’lan’ehn,” he whispered against her lips before he nipped her lower lip.

Jo watched him trace her with his fingers and with his words, she felt the shiver of heat from her blush as he studied her gaze intently. He knew he would always find her reaction to him fascinating as he watched her gaze turn shy. Sliding his fingers down her chest to slowly trace the outline of her breast then down her ribs tracing each one, he felt her breath hitch beneath his fingertips when he slipped them over the flat of her stomach, enjoying the shifting contours of muscular satin quivering in anticipation beneath his fingertips.

He moved his hand lower, caressing her hip appreciating the silky skin that surrounded her hips before slowly letting his fingers travel to the apex of her thighs. He loved the sound of her soft cry as he slipped one finger along the folds of her sex finding her wet and ready for him. He gazed into her eyes with desire as she watched him suck the dampness from his finger enjoying her taste on his tongue.

Jo could see that he would continue to tease her mercilessly with his soft touches and her body was impatient with her want for him. She wrapped her hand around his neck and pulled him to her. Her kiss conveyed her impatience and his soft groan only fanned the flames between them higher.

She pushed him to his back and slid down his body, taking his hardness into her mouth before he could stop her. Running her tongue over and around the crown, she marveled at the silken hardness of him. She loved how his breath grew ragged with each stroke of her mouth and tongue on him. Applying a small amount of suction, she heard his swift intake of breath and the wetness between her thighs grew.
“Melana, vhenan tel,” he spat out breathlessly.

He felt her breath brush over him when she laughed huskily. Reaching for her with a growl, he pulled her up his body enjoying the sweet torture of her skin sliding along his as he rolled her beneath him. Slipping between her thighs, he plundered her mouth as he slid into her wetness, swallowing her moans of pleasure.

Her lips danced along his jawline to his neck where she sucked and bit him roughly triggering a rumble of enjoyment to escape. He hiked her legs higher over his hips deepening his thrusts.

Her body was on fire from the fine line of pain and pleasure he gave her with each deep stroke into her. Running her nails along his spine, she allowed the release of magic from her fingertips to crackle against his skin. His skin rippled with excitement when he felt the stirring her magic caused in him when it summoned his.

Jo knew she was driving him insane with the use of her magic on him as he thrust even harder into her, prompting chanting cries of pleasure from her. Her body was racing towards that mind-numbing release when she felt his mouth on her breast and she arched her back to give him better access to the hardened peak.

“Please Solas,” she begged him to give her release while his magic licked across her skin with electricity, teasing every area it touched. She heard him groan against her breast as her panting and ragged cries were torn from her with each thrust he made into her. The walls of her sex tightened around him, dragging him even deeper into her and he knew he couldn’t keep his or her release back any longer. Flames of ambient magic swirled around them when they both found their release and her cries were muffled by his mouth on hers as he drank them from her.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan, lath em - My heart, love me
Ma nuvenin - as you wish
Ina'lan'ehn - beautiful
Melana, vhenan tel - wait, my heart, not yet
Meeting the Warden

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Finishing the rift beneath the lake, they proceeded to use the exit above Crestwood after everyone questioned her.

“Hey Vixen… you know where we are going, right?” Varric asked curiously.

Bull chuckled. “You being afraid of Dwarven ruins is funny.”

Varric smiled and pointed at his head, “you must like those dragging on the rooftop.”

Jo chuckled loudly and held up her hands.

“I know where we’re going boys; you can stop the whining anytime.”

Watching them both laugh and continue their banter, she turned towards the ladder that led to the surface. Leaving the tunnel, she smiled happily at the sunshine as they exited the cave. Thank the Goddess, she thought as she saw and enjoyed the feeling of fresh air and sun on her skin. Looking around at her group who also seemed to be enjoying the lack of rain, everyone walked down the hill to the awaiting rift. She could see that there were four shade demons and an arcane horror waiting as they approached. She looked forward to finishing this rift so they could make their way to where Hawke’s warden friend was waiting for them. Pulling the rift closed after the brief fight, Hawke led the way to where Stroud should be waiting. She followed from behind and watched Solas and Fenris walking together talking about Kirkwall and what happened. She could see that Solas was curiously looking at his marks and she heard him ask about the Magister that had put them on him.

“Did he place these on you to amplify his own magic?” he questioned respectfully. Fenris looked at him quickly and then away, not hearing the concern or respect in his voice.

“Yes,” he said angrily.

Solas looked at the pattern again recognizing his own symbols.

“Since I can see the pattern through the cloth, I can safely assume that it covers your entire body. Do you know the pattern’s meanings?”

Fenris looked down at his arm and then glanced at him angrily.

“Yes it covers my entire body, and no I don't know what it means if anything. I can only remember that the pain from getting it was excruciating and I wanted to die. Everything else that was me before I got these markings is lost.”

Solas could only imagine the man’s pain since his own Vallis’lin pattern was very intricate, though he had never seen it on a living elf until now. He had never marked his followers for they were free, yet seeing them on him was painful. He could see that Fenris was looking at him curiously angry now and Solas continued to walk silently beside him realizing that this Magister Denarius must have been a Venatori or how else would he have found this pattern if it were not from his search for his foci.

Fenris waited for the quiet elven mage to speak not seeing that Solas was lost in his own thoughts.
When there was no response, he felt frustrated. He knew the mage knew something and wasn’t telling him.

“You seem to know a great deal about it all mage, why don’t you enlighten me about its meaning then,” he spat at him angrily.

Solas stopped walking and gazed with swirling silver eyes at the young elf’s disrespectful tone. He had conveyed nothing but concern and respect knowing he would be the only elven who would ever carry them. Clamoring to keep his wolf under control, he watched Fenris take a small step away from him as his lyrium marks flared. Jo stopped behind them feeling the angry swirl of Solas’s magic licking against her skin and seeing the rigid line to his features and body. *Oh, little wolf, meet the big bad wolf*, she thought jokingly to herself as she watched the exchange not realizing it was much more than that.

“Ara seranna ma?” He threateningly growled out and Jo’s head snapped to attention, watching Solas carefully having heard the angry tri-tone.

Fenris felt the hair on his neck stand with the change in the mages tone. It sounded like him but not him at the same time and the magical energy that swirled around him screamed danger as his markings lit up. The change in his body language, and he then realized that the normal calm elf he portrayed was a lie to the outside world. This mage was a threat to anyone if he thought they were. His markings flared against his skin uncomfortably as he watched the tall elf step into his space and for the first time, he felt threatened by the normally quiet elf.

Jo watched the silent exchange and she felt Fen’Harel pacing the surface of Solas’s normally calm manner. If she could see his eyes, she knew that they would be swirling with liquid quicksilver with his anger. She knew Fenris recognized the danger he was in with Solas’ coldly spoken words and it confirmed for her that the wolf was very close.

Taking a small step towards him to intervene, she stopped when his eyes turned to hers and she saw that they were completely molten and held his hand up warning her to stay back and it was enough to make her stop. She had never seen him in this type of a temper before and it was something she would question him about later. Fenris glanced at her and knew it was a mistake when he heard the low growl emanating from the tall mage and pulled his eyes back to him wanting to cringe from the cold that radiated from him in waves as he felt the first threads of fear.

“I am willing to forgive your attitude towards mages since you were abused and enslaved by one, but I will not allow you to speak to me like that ever again.”

Fenris nodded his understanding and watched the mages eyes change back to the normal calm grey. Solas took a step away from the shorter elf and spoke quietly if not politely, acting as if the exchange had not happened.

“Now to address your initial question, I know much about the meaning to your marks, Fenris, and possibly an idea as to why you received them but I believe this is a conversation best left for when we have more time, which I will be happy to share with you.”

Hawke walked up to stand next to Jo having seen the entire exchange and change in Fenris’s stature and whispered quietly.

“I have never felt magic like that before. Did he just wrap himself with the fade?”

Jo glanced at her quickly and shook her head.
“Partially,” she whispered back evasively.

Hawke taking the hint, did not ask anything more but walked passed her to follow Fenris. Jo stood watching Solas questioningly and she could see his anger at himself for allowing the wolf to have control for even a moment in anger. Walking towards him, she entwined her fingers with his and squeezed gently as they followed behind them.

Everyone entered the cave, and walked towards the back finding Stroud crouched into a fighting stance with his blade drawn.

“It is just us, I brought the Inquisitor,” Hawke said as she walked through the door. Jo watched him put his blade away and nod towards her.

“Inquisitor, I am at your service,” he said with a slight bow to his head.

Jo smiled at him as she took a step forward and held her hand out to him to shake. *He has a firm grip, and such troubled eyes,* she thought when he grasped her hand.

“The pleasure is mine Warden Stroud. So it is my understanding that Corypheus is sending out a false calling causing chaos amongst the Wardens. Is Clarel really going to use bound demons to enter the Deep Roads?”

Stroud looked at her surprised, yet curiously as he nodded his head.

“I am afraid so. They are using an old Tevinter ritual tower in the Western Approach. I will be heading there soon. I would appreciate your help in stopping this madness.”

Jo smiled at him, “I wouldn’t miss it. Just give me a couple of weeks to get there and we shall confront this Tevinter blood mage who helped convince Clarel it was the right thing to do.”

Everyone’s eyes snapped to her questioningly and she realized she hadn’t said anything about the Magister… yet.

“My apologies to everyone… I didn’t explain. The Venatori sent a Magister named Erimond to convince Clarel to us a spell to bind demons so they could enter the deep roads to kill the old Gods would work. He also convinced her that to do this they would have to utilize blood magic to make it happen, thus ridding them of their warriors or rogues. Sadly, the binding ritual they use also enslaves the mages and their demons to Corypheus.”

Stroud looked at her sadly then shook his head, “damn.” Jo placed a hand on his shoulder reassuringly as his eyes moved to hers from the ground slowly.

“Not all is lost Warden. There are some we may yet save from this lunacy. I know and understand why we need Wardens for the Blight. However, your people have gone way too far this time just to combat the Blight. There is no cure to get rid of the Blight, and you know this Warden, and the fact that any of you would think this was an excellent idea to try, shows everyone that you need oversight, and not the free-reign the Wardens have taken for granted all this time.”

“Agreed,” Solas quietly said staring at the Warden angrily as he stood behind Jo.

Warden Stroud looked around and knew she was right. Nodding his head at her, he walked to the entrance then turned and looked back at her dismally.
“You are correct Inquisitor. This was a very bad decision, and I will appreciate your help in getting my comrades to understand this craziness.”

Jo watched him leave and felt sorry for their order and how far they had fallen. Most people looked at the order as tools to combat the Blight only and forgot that they were still human beings who sacrificed everything to keep their world safe. Solas stood quietly beside her and gripped her hand. Gazing at him she could see his turmoil and fear reflecting back at her.

“We will stop them vhenan, do not worry.”

He squeezed her hand slightly then placed a kiss to her forehead.

“I have no doubt of that ma’lath, but at what cost to us and them I wonder?”

Jo gazed at him knowingly and spoke quietly so he would be the only one to hear her.

“We will discuss it later with Cullen. You will both want to know what is about to happen after we get back from the Western Approach.”

He nodded his understanding and walked away from her and out of the cave. She stood there rubbing her face with her own stress weighing her down as she felt a small hand on her shoulder and glanced over quickly to see Hawke staring at her understandingly.

“It is never easy when you are the one who has to make the hard decisions that will affect those you care about around you, I know.” She spoke softly then walked out of the cave leaving her to compose herself and follow her out.

Jo left the cave, pasting a smile onto her face looking at her group but mostly at Bull.

“We still have a dragon to kill everyone, so let’s gather the other group and get this done.”

Bull smiled hugely as he grasped Dorian and kissed him roughly.

“Today is a good day. Today is a very good day!” he yelled.

Dorian swatted him away with a blush to his face, “get a hold of yourself, it’s just a dragon.”

Bull looked at him shocked and appalled.

“Just, a dragon? You must be kidding me Kadan. It is the embodiment of raw power…which you will appreciate later,” he said winking at him knowingly causing Dorian to blush even redder.

Jo snorted at the two and walked away from the group, heading back to the keep to gather everyone else.

Bull ran across the field with Cassandra, Blackwall and Fenris following closely behind yelling, “Taaarsidath-an Halsaam!” with his great ax over his head charging the dragon. Jo, Dorian, Solas and Hawke watched in horror as he led the charge at a crazy pace ahead of everyone. Barely able to get a barrier around him before the High Dragon electrocuted the bunch of them, she ran after him and heard Solas mutter, “fen’edhxis.”

Cole spirited behind them as Varric and Sera gave chase. When Sera was close enough to let loose an arrow, she yelled at Bull, “Oye, ya daft tit, it’s not a fucking buffet.”
The fight was over rather quickly with everyone here and as Bull walked towards them covered in blood, he carried a tooth laughing and Jo just shook her head.

“Next time wait for us you big idiot.”

Bull laughed and then scooped up Dorian. Hearing the man squeal and protest loudly.

“Put me down you gigantic ass, you’re covered in blood and ruining my clothes.” Slapping his shoulder hard, Bull laughed even louder carrying Dorian towards the horses away from everyone.

Jo watched as everyone that had helped cut down the High Dragon pull a tooth from the animal and she grabbed an extra for Dorian since he was currently being carried away by an amorous Qunari and she knew he would need it. Solas smiled at her as she shrugged her shoulders at his questioning look.

“It is my first High Dragon, vhenan, and I want to make sure I make something special for this to sit on in our home to represent its prowess and ferocity for life.”

He bent and kissed her at the emotion he felt when she called Skyhold home. *It is home,* he realized completely. *The pieces of my heart live there… after everything I have done, I am still blessed,* he thought in wonderment.

Fenris watched them curiously trying to understand the pairing. Hawke stood next to him and elbowed him sharply in the ribs. Grabbing his side, he glanced down at her annoyed at the sharp pain as he rubbed his ribs.

“What the fuck Hawke?” He grumbled as she laughed at him.

“I get it… he knows more than you wish he did. But would it be so bad to finally know what the fuck these mean or why you have them? What purpose did Denarius get from burning them into you besides amplifying his own magic and turning you into a weapon?”

Fenris absently rubbed his sore ribs and looked at her wishing he had taken his moment long ago and told her how he felt about her instead of choosing to be a coward and ignoring her, giving her up to Revaini instead of showing her. Sighing angrily with himself, he nodded his head.

“I made a right ass of myself earlier. I need to apologize first before I ask him anything,” he grumbled perceptively.

Hawke smiled sympathetically at him and gripped his hand, squeezing gently, not realizing she was sending little sparks of desire and excitement up his arm.

“He understood Feni, just relax and be yourself. They will love you like I do,” she said quickly as she released his hand and walked away. Fenris watched her longingly and didn’t notice when Jo had walked up beside him.

“Why did you always have to let her being a mage get in the way?” she asked with a sorrowful sigh.

Fenris glanced at her quickly and then back to Hawke’s retreating form and shook his head in shame knowing there would be no deflecting or lying to her.

“Because… I was a slave, and I have nothing to offer her, and I was afraid of her magic,” he said quietly directed at the ground.

Jo stared at him realizing for the first time why he had acted like he hated her the entire time.
Watching Hawke walk towards Sera, she smiled as her friend took her by the shoulders and explained a drinking game they would play later. Glancing back at Fenris as he continued to stare at the ground, she grabbed his forearm gently and squeezed slightly.

“She never cared that you were a slave and penniless Fenris… I can promise you that,” she said sadly and walked away leaving him to his own thoughts.

Fenris watched her retreat and heard the truth in her words. *Oz has never lied to you, not once since you met her… never showed anything than being a caring person and an honest mage… nothing that would be considered ugly in your eyes, not once… and all’s she asked of you was give her a chance*, he thought angrily. Striding towards her, deciding he was done letting his past rule him, he walked to where Hawke was gathering their horses leads and stepped in front of her silently staring intently into her eyes.

Hawke stared back holding the reigns of their mounts and felt her own mouth go dry. *Is he going to finally kiss me?* She thought quickly before she felt his hands cup her face and his lips crush against her own, methodically possess her lips with pent up need. Dropping the reigns, she wrapped her hands quickly around his shoulders, pulling him closer before he could pull away and poured every empty, longing night without him into returning his kiss. Sera watched the exchange and started clapping and hooting at them as Varric stood and just whistled. When Fenris pulled slightly away, he gazed into her eyes and saw everything he had ever needed nestled comfortably there within the clear blue depths as her fingertips caressed his cheek.

“What took you so damn long Broody,” Varric joked as Sera slapped him on the back happily before mounting her horse.

Fenris stared into Oz’s eyes and gave a roguish smile.

“Stupidity,” he said bluntly before kissing her deeply again.

Chapter End Notes

*Ara seranna ma* - Excuse me
*ma'lath* - my love
This place is a desolate shithole, she thought. Jo sat staring out over the sand into the night over the flames of the campfire in the middle of the Western Approach. Sand… sand for as far as the eyes can see. The most appealing part in this whole place is the reflection of the moons off of the oceans of sand, she thought. She loved that this world had two moons and the feeling of the moons energy caressing her skin was powerful and relaxing.

Seeing the twin bright orbs in the sky surrounded by stars untouched by pollution was breathtaking. Magic is everywhere Goddess and I am a part of it, she thought, thankfully as she gazed up into the night gathering the stray strands of the fade around her like a cloak. Sighing deeply, her mind turned back to the inner turmoil she had run around in her head for two weeks. There must be a way to get everyone out… I don’t know if I can decide someone’s fate like that… I will find another way, she argued with herself silently.

Solas stood next to their tent from across the camp and watched her sitting on the sandy ground with her arms wrapped loosely around her knees. She is drawing the very magic of the fade from the air around her, he thought as he watched her skin slowly begin to glow. She is so beautiful with her hair swaying with the night’s breeze. Her face turned towards the sky, bathing her beauty in the moonlight and his heart expanded with emotion at the sight. He had worried about her since they’d left Crestwood. Her silence on their trip to the Western Approach had been rough for everyone. Her normal positive, talkative self, had grown quiet and withdrawn the closer they drew to the ritual tower. She will talk when she is ready, he gently tried reminding himself as he watched her relax at the fireside.

Jo could feel his gaze on her from across the camp. Finally turning her revolving questions off and sliding her gaze from the night sky to him over the fire, she smiled. She knew he had been worried about her lack of conversation as of late but she just wasn’t ready to talk about it yet. Tomorrow they would go to the Tevinter ritual tower and she hated what she knew they would find. Dead Wardens, enslaved mages with their new pet demons, and of course, Lord Erimond the douche canoe.

Frowning in thought, I need to tell him about what we will find there and how it will lead us to the Warden Fortress called Adamant, she thought sadly as the change of events to come unfolded in her mind and her thoughts turned back to Adamant and the fight with the Wardens.

What she needed to do was come up with a plan to get Hawke and Stroud out of the fade together. No, what you really need to do is stop thinking about this and talk with Solas and Cullen to come up with a plan after all this shit is over, she chastised herself knowingly. If she didn’t include them in her planning, they would be angry with her… again. Besides, she had promised that she would never shut them out like that again. They are really not going to like the danger I will be in, she thought.

Solas sat down next to her and pulled her into the crook of his arm, enjoying the feeling of her weight against his side as she laid her head against his chest. Kissing the top of her head, he spoke quietly as he absently rubbed her back feeling the tension radiate from her so much that it affected how her magic caressed his own.

“There has been a constant frown on your face for two weeks, vhenan. There is much you have not spoken of yet and the weight of this on you is clearly hurting you. Vhenan, please… let me share in your burden.”
Jo smiled sadly with his pleading and laid her hand on his thigh, gently squeezing the strong muscle conveying her fear of what’s to come and drawing strength from the simple action and from him.

“It will be… horrible, ma’lath,” she said in a breathless rush. “This mage is despicable. His duplicity will be what angers me… I… I don’t know if I can allow him to escape so events will happen the way they are supposed to,” she explained, taking a shaky breath.

Solas listened and finally began to understand where her mind had been wandering for the past couple of weeks and ran his hand up and down her arm in a comforting motion.

“Explain to me what will make this mage so despicable to you, ma’lath.”

Jo snorted and began using her fingers to count each issue she found offending.

“Besides siding with Corypheus? One, he is using blood magic to bind the mages and create a demon army which we will get to see just a few of them tomorrow. Two, he is the one that convinced Clarel that killing the warriors and rogues, exploiting their blood so they could create this demon army and march into the Deep Roads to kill the Old Gods, was the only viable way to stop the false calling. Three… he is the reason I will use the mark to open a rift into the fade, four…”

Solas grasped her hand tightly, stopping her. His heart stammered within his chest with her words and his blood ran cold, causing her to stop talking as he gazed at her.

“The mark will create a rift into the fade?” he questioned quietly.

Jo nodded her head and angrily continued.

“Oh yes… his Blight infected dragon will cause the bridge we will be standing on to collapse but not before it flings Clarel around like a rag doll. Instead of falling to our inevitable deaths, I will open a rift for us to fall through, transporting us into the fade physically. This is where we will be tested…” shuddering slightly at what she could remember of the area and taking a mental route change, “it is not a good place, vhenan.”

Solas sat quietly mulling over her quickly spoken words while Jo clenched her fists angrily. Unsure how to calm down, she started pulling on the loose threads from the hem of her shirt.

“Yes… it will turn out fine… I think… maybe… fuck, I don’t know anymore. There are some things that this Nightmare demon can and will throw at me that I may or may not expect since he took my memories of coming here. That alone scares me since our group, plus Hawke and Stroud will be there and they don’t know about me in the way that you, Cullen and the inner circle do. But overall, I think we will turn out fine except for one hiccup… which I will need you and Cullen to help me figure out.”

“A Nightmare demon?” he said with a raised eyebrow.

Jo nodded and continued pulling at the threads of her shirt.

Solas sighed slightly frustrated with her vague explanation and took a deep breath knowing there would be no point in trying to get her to elaborate any further until they were all together. But he knew whatever it was, this was the part that was weighing her down so heavily. Rubbing her neck removing some of the tension he felt there, he analyzed what she had said and couldn’t fathom why the Grey Wardens would think that killing the Old Gods would be a good idea in their fight against the dark spawn and felt his anger with their sheer stupidity.

Jo leaned her head forward and sighed with pleasure as he rubbed the tension from the muscles as
her mind moved at a whirlwind pace of ‘what ifs’ connected with horrible nightmares.

“There is so much that is coming, vhenan, I worry about you... I worry about Cullen. I know I shouldn’t, but I do. Everything that is coming is going to be one trial after another... and... I don’t know...” she couldn’t continue as she turned and buried her face in his chest crying.

Solas wrapped her within his arms and pulled her onto his lap. He felt her hot tears sliding down his neck and her fear as it poured from her.

“Vhenan, shh...tel telsila.”

Jo gripped him tightly as her own fears overwhelmed her. *I cannot survive without them. I’m not that strong,* she cried to herself. She could see their dead bodies thrown to the ground by the demons in Redcliff and her sobs grew harder causing Solas alarm.

“He te’elan suledin ma sal.”

*That is why she cries, she is reliving Redcliff,* he realized as he ran his hands up and down her back soothingly. Staring into the fire, he watched as some of their group began to gather. When they realized what was going on, he watched Bull and Dorian go back into their tent along with Sera and Varric, giving them privacy. Cole watched and then stepped closer to them turning his head slightly listening to her pain.

“Cold, choking fear. They’re going to die... I’m not worthy... blood everywhere... their bodies... I cannot lose them again... Goddess, I beg you don’t, don’t make me undergo the loss a second time, I won’t survive this time,” he spoke quietly for Solas and waited to help.

Solas needed to get her to their pallet where she could properly cry herself out in privacy. Realizing that they were still sitting on the ground, he would not be able to lift her easily without setting her aside first. He instantly felt her being lifted from his arms as Cole picked her up so he could stand. Handing her back to him, he then walked away knowing he had helped. Solas strode across the camp to their tent where he laid her down and then put wards up for sound and disturbances before moving back to her side, lying next to her, she curled into him and gripped him tightly around his neck. Her body shook almost uncontrollably and her sobbing became louder as her fear overtook her. Solas couldn’t stop his wolf from clambering out and felt the change instantly as her sobs grew louder as he growled at unseen demons.

Jo never felt him change, she didn’t realize anything beyond her own choking fear. She held the wolf tightly around the neck, burying her face into the fur and sobbed out everything she had kept bottled up for two weeks. After twenty minutes, her crying finally began to abate into hiccups and jagged breathing along with small tremors. Rubbing his muzzle against her back, breathing in her scent, he felt her stiffened body begin to slowly relax and soon her grasp around him began to slacken and he knew she was asleep against him. The wolf in him would keep watch this evening over her demons as he closed his eyes and slept curled around her protectively.

Jo woke as something tickled her nose. Opening her eyes, she found herself staring at black fur. *Well, my crazy brings out the wolf I see, I wonder when he did that,* she thought passively. Moving away from the furry body of the wolf, she heard the rumble from the large animal currently taking up all of their tent space with his girth. Turning her head to gaze at him, she placed a small kiss on his nose gazing into his dark grey eyes, “I can’t sleep anymore ma’ lath, I need to move.”

Solas’s eyes followed her for a moment before he changed to his natural form. Standing, he wrapped
his arms around her from behind and placed a small kiss on her neck. Jo leaned back into him closing her eyes knowing he was stalling her from leaving unsure why. He breathed her scent in and held her tightly as he spoke softly against the skin on her neck.

“Telanadas ma’ lath.”

Jo sighed deeply as she heard the ring of truth to his words and turned within his arms, wrapping her own around his neck and pulling his lips to hers, kissing him slowly. Solas leaned into the kiss feeling her change in mood and glad for it. Lifting his head, he studied her eyes looking for the signs of her inner haunting and seeing nothing of her fears instead her joys were reflected from her deep blue eyes. Amazing, he thought when he kissed her forehead softly.

“Ar lath ma vhenan,” he whispered into her skin and Jo felt the chains attached to her soul tighten.

“Ar ma, vhenan,” she whispered back.

Chapter End Notes

Vhenan, shh…tel telsila - my heart, don't worry
Ar te’elan suledin ma sal - I cannot withstand the loss of you again
Telanadas ma’ lath - nothing is inevitable, my love
Ar lath ma, vhenan - I love you, my heart
Ar ma, vhenan - and I, you, my heart

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