The Dread Wolf Took Me

by Tarasyl

Summary

New Chappie!!

"You forget the life you had before, after awhile. Things you cherish and hold dear are like pearls on a string. Cut the knot and they scatter across the floor, rolling into dark corners never to be found again. So you move on, and eventually you forget what the pearls even looked like. At least, you try." - Outlander.

Eliana Courseland, your regular run off the mill type of young adult. Who's just trying to make her life work out, ends up in Thedas; where she quickly realizes that all a sudden, people depend on her. Her own life hasn't been 'normal' and it seems this will not change in this new world. When at first she wants nothing more than to go back home, scared of the
demons and the thought of having to fight.. she finds that after a while, these strange lands and customs start to feel *like home*. She finds comfort in talking to people, making lasting friendships.. and eventually, falling deeply and madly in love with the man that reminds her of a wolf.

But her past will not give up on her so easily, always one step behind her. Will she remain true to who she is? Or will she become the bad guy?

**Notes**

Hello and welcome to my second attempt at a fanfiction!

I realize I already have a fanfiction that is not yet finished, however I am currently kind of stuck with that one. I have made a couple mistakes writing my last fanfiction and there are many things I am not too happy with. So for that reason, I have decided to create a new one, not using the same plot as my old one. This fanfiction has a slow burn, and it will take a long time before you get to the actual NSFW content. The chapters I have made are LONG. So prepare yourself for a lot of fluff, smut and long ass chapters.

Feel free to leave comments, if you have any tips or advice for me. Leaving comments also lets me know if y'all like it or not :)

xoxo
Ghosts, Demons, Elves And Dwarves.

No please... Please don't! Please!

I sense the disgusting taste of iron in my mouth. A thick, warm fluid enters my mouth. I can see white. Pure white light. It's everywhere around me. Surrounded me. A warm hazy feeling. Like big, heavy blankets being draped around my body and wrapping me up entirely. Cocooning me. It's so peaceful, so serene, so lovely. I wish to stay here forever. It's so... silent. I feel some sort of life coming back to me, because the sense of joy and warmth is slowly disappearing. Making way for a throbbing headache.

Nothing.

I can feel again. My senses have returned to me and I feel a cold hard surface beneath my knees. I can tell I'm on my knees because they are hurting. My legs are cramped up from sitting in a certain position for a long time, I can tell. It's almost like I'm at work, filling the lower shelves of the aisles for too long. But this feeling is worse than that. Much worse. I want to open my eyelids, I will them to open but they won't cooperate. It's like my entire body is blocked, frozen in place. I hear breathing with me in the same place, but further away. Not closeby. Like it's at the other end of wherever I am right now.

Did I pass out somewhere?

I try to think hard and long about what happened, but nothing is coming to me. My mind is blank. Like it's been wiped clean. It's hard to imagine me being passed out in this position, kneeled down. Because I barely drink and even when I do it's all girly cocktails and occasionally a few sips of bubbly champagne. I've never been drunk before, so me passed out somewhere is... odd. Unlikely.

Open your damn eyes, for fuck's sake!

I can hear a soft groan escape my mouth as I am forcing myself hard to open my eyelids. Crusty.. but eventually they cooperate and I am still surrounded by darkness. I cannot make out where I am but it's cold in here. There's no real smell in the room but I smell a faint scent of leather nearby. The breathing.. There is someone in the room with me. Two people in fact. There are two different sounds of breathing nearby. On the other end of the room. My eyes are adjusting to the darkness slowly and I can make out two faint silhouettes of people standing further away, facing me. I shift uncomfortably, sliding my feet to the sides of my body so I am now sitting on my behind. My legs underneath me, slightly to the side of me. The breathing further down the room stops for a moment, I can tell the two people are straightening themselves. Like they are bracing for something. I hold my breath instinctively with them.

What? What's coming? Where am I? Who are you two, anyways?

My hands feel tied, constricted. When I look down, that's when I notice it for the first time: my hands are shackled.

What the fuck?!

A sudden wave of panic surges through my body, I can feel my chest getting hot and heavy. And not in a good way. I am panicking, big time. I can hear my breathing has become louder as well. I shake my hands, knowing it's not going to make the shackles fall off at all, but wanting to do something, anything.
Suddenly I can feel a strong pull deep within my lower left arm, and it's moving further down. Then, the feeling of small little pinpricks, suddenly becoming more like knives stabbing into my lower arm and hand. I think I am losing my mind because I am seeing a green faint glow emanating from my left hand. I stare at it blankly, still very much bothered by the unpleasant, almost unbearable feeling from my hand.

_What... is that?_

Suddenly it sputters to life and little tendrils of light are spewing out of my left hand's palm, illuminating part of the room. For a moment I see the shocked faces of two men, seemingly to be in... armour? Again the light in my left palm sputters to life and it crackles loudly. This time it's hurting me so much that I can't help but gasp out loudly and whimper slightly after. I want to hold my left hand, examine it more but I can't. I'm still shackled.

Then a door opposite me, between the two armoured men opens and a bright light shines in my eyes. It's too much for my eyes to handle it, it hurts my eyes a lot. I blink and turn my head away because it's too bright too suddenly. I hear footsteps coming closer and when I think my eyes can handle the brightness that is now within the room, I look to see who it is that is coming towards me.

_I want answers. Why the fuck am I shackled, in a ..._

My eyes dart around the now visible room. It's no room, it's a cell. Or rather a room with lots of cells surrounding me. There's about three on either side of me and then another four behind me. I am in no cell per se, not surrounded by bars of metal but it doesn't matter. I am still in a cell and it's... an odd looking one. Not like any police cell.

I see a towering and intimidating woman with short black hair walk up to me, her hand is resting on the hilt of a sword. My eyes immediately widen.

_A sword? What have I gotten myself into?!_

I look back up at the woman, she has a small but visable cut on her right cheek, just below her cheekbone. But another huge scar running down the left cheek, right next to her mouth, slightly down to her chin. Her entire face has sharp features. Her armour is a shade of purple but it's a faint color, not bright. Her breastplate depicts a white eye like thing, but with big strands coming out of it from every side. It's not the same at all, but the eye almost resembles the eye of Anubis. Then I see another woman move into the cells with her, this woman is less intimidating. She has a nicer looking face, less harsh and sharp. Her outfit looks less intimidating also, though she's wearing mostly leather, she does have what seems like chainmail running down her chest. The same weird eye symbol ontop of a big clasp right above the chainmail, right below her neck. She's wearing a purple hood, and I can barely make out that she has freckles and bright eyes. Her hair color seems to be ginger colored. She moves quietly and soundlessly around the room, lighting torches around me and the other woman. The two men by either side of the door from earlier are wearing simple outfits. All cloth and leather, green and brown tints. And again, the same eye symbol on their clothes.

The black haired woman is walking closer towards me now and she starts to circle me. "Tell me why we shouldn't kill you now. The Conclave destroyed, thousands of people are dead. All, except for you." she stops circling me and is now standing infront of me again, looking down at me. Her accent is odd, not really anything I've heard before. I am trying to place it. Perhaps a mixture between Italian and Russian? But then her words repeat themselves inside my mind.

_Kill me? Conclave? People have died? What?_

I swallow a big lump down my throat and notice how dry my mouth really is. I am almost too afraid
to say anything. "I.. what?" a small voice leaves my mouth, so small it's barely audible.

But she has heard it. Because she starts to sneer at me. Wrinkles appearing on the bridge of her nose, her eyes full of anger. "Answer me!"

I flinch at her sudden raise of voice. My shackles rattle with my movement. If I could, I'd shit seven shades of shit right about now. "I. I don't know what you're talking about, miss. Please, what's going on? Why am I shackled?" I realize I shouldn't be demanding anything right about now, but I cannot help myself to ask her this. There is no need to shackle me, really. I don't even know what I did. I can't even remember what happened before I ended up here.

The woman seems to try and compose herself slightly, but she is doing a poor job at it. She looks to the other woman in the room, and back to me again. Then she takes hold of my left hand tightly and raises it up. "Explain this!" she hisses at me threateningly.

My eyes dart from her eyes towards my left hand and I can still see the faint green glowing of my palm. Absentmindedly I raise one of my eyebrows while looking at it. "I've no idea." I sound less than interested. The woman is losing her temper again.

"You will answer my question!" she releases my hand and raises her own as if to strike me, but before any of us can react, the other woman dashes towards us and stops the mad woman infront of me.

She looks at the angry woman with a reassuring look on her face. "We still need her, Cassandra." her voice soft and lilted. Her accent sounds almost French to me, but some other accent as well. Though I cannot make it out.

Though I am scared shitless right now, I can't help but feel annoyed. "Listen, please. I don't know what you think I've done, but I have not done it! I can't remember shit and your little medieval warrior roleplaying is getting annoying. Will someone please for the love of God tell me what's going on?"

Cassandra looks down at me and snarls slightly, she's gritting her teeth. The other woman releases Cassandra's hand and crouches down next to me, her hands resting on her knees. Her blue bright eyes are staring directly into my own and now I see the intimidating look in her eyes as well. She has nice features, too soft almost.. but she can definitely shut you up by simply looking at you. "You do not remember anything from before you woke up here?"

I sigh and roll my eyes. "That's what I'm trying to tell you two ladies, yes. I woke up just now, shackled, kneeled on a cold hard floor, within a cell. Suddenly you two enter and walk in wearing those weird clothes and-

I am interrupted by Cassandra suddenly because she has unsheathed her sword and is now holding it directly against my throat. Lifting my head slightly up at her while doing so. I can feel the cold metal scraping against my skin and it's not a nice feeling. Suddenly I realize that this sword is all too real. No prop, no fake rubber thing. I look down at the metal and I can see my own upside down reflection in it. There are some scratches on the metal and dents here and there. I gulp. "Stop playing games." she says in a low tone of voice while keeping the blade against my throat.

I keep quiet this time. I don't want to be killed. I don't want to die by a fucking sword for crying out loud. If I could move my hands now, I'd hold them up in the air to show I mean no harm but I can't. I look up at Cassandra with pleading eyes. Chanting in my mind for her to 'please lower your sword'. She squints her eyes at me momentarily and then she lowers it apprehensively.
The other woman sighs and gets up to her feet again, standing next to Cassandra and crossing her arms. "That mark upon your hand. You do not know about that also?" she asks me, tilting her head slightly to the side. Eyeing me suspiciously.

Cassandra warned me earlier with her blade, without using words, to not be so cocky and bold. So I've learned and lower my head slowly and nod. "I don't know." I say exasperated. "I truly, truly do not know. Please, you must believe me. I don't know what happened. I don't know what a Conclave is, I don't even know where I am right now or how I even got here. It's... unnerving to say the least. And then this." I cock my head towards the sword that Cassandra is holding in her hand.

Cassandra sighs and sheathes it again, but still keeping her hand rested on the hilt. As if to use it again whenever she needs to. "That mark upon your hand, it is what has caused the Breach. It's a problem. We have someone with us who told me it is what caused all of those rifts to appear. And it is the only means of closing them again."

All these words, I don't understand. Breach, Conclave, rifts, what the fuck? Cassandra turns to face the other woman now and shakes her head. "Leliana, go to the forward camp. I will join with our prisoner shortly." the woman, apparently named Leliana nodded at Cassandra and turned her heel. The two men on either side of the door saluting her by raising their fists up towards their chests as she passed them.

Cassandra kneels down infront of me and places her hand ontop of my shackles, eyeing me intently. "I will remove these now. However.. try anything and I will not hesitate to use my sword again."

I nod silently. I wouldn't even dare to try anything, while knowing there's a she-warrior infront of me wielding a real life sword. Cassandra finally takes off the shackles and helps me get up to my feet, which isn't going smoothly at all because my legs are entirely cramped up. I can feel tingling in my legs as the blood is now flow through them again normally. Without realizing it, I am starting to rub my wrists. Where the shackles used to be. My flesh feels sensitive and uncomfortable, but rubbing it seems to help slightly. "I still don't understand." I say silently as Cassandra slightly ushers me out of the cells.

She looks next to her and directly into my eyes and nods. "It will be easier to show you." She looks ahead of her again and so do I. There's a small and narrow corridor we are walking through and then there's a set of steps leading up. I slowly make my way up them, as I follow Cassandra who opens a door at the end of the stairs. A big wave of cold icy air hits my body and I immediately get goosebumps. Then I look down and see I am wearing my yoga pants, which I've never used for yoga at all. Usually just as pants to wear when sleeping. I am wearing my usual black tanktop. I am basically wearing my sleepwear. I remember that much. I also remember... my work. I remember, where I used to live, my name, everything. Except what happened to me. How I got here. I am not wearing boots or slippers or anything, just socks.

Cassandra is looking at me questionably. Probably waiting for me to follow her outside but then I see the snow, and the ... town we are in. With people milling around. I don't recognize it at all. Cassandra raises her eyebrow up at me now. "Something wrong? We should get moving."

I stare down at my feet and then back up at her. She notices my socks now too, but I say nothing and continue to step into the snow. Though my mind is screaming at me for doing so. I can feel the cold and wetness of the snow seep into my feet and it's unpleasant to say the least. But I dare not say anything about it really, afraid of Cassandra using her she-hulk sword with me again. Suddenly I am held back by her hand against my chest. "Wait here. Do not run, it will be stupid." she stares at me for a little longer, then turns around and walks off for a bit. In the time that she is gone I stare around. At the people. Some of them are looking at me angrily. Some of them are looking at me with a look
of fright on their faces. Then others are looking up towards the sky from time to time. I wonder where they are looking at, but before I can lift my head to watch where they are watching, Cassandra has returned. With a pair of old worn boots, probably way too big for me. Also, she is holding a big leather coat. Again, this brown leather coat is probably three sizes bigger than me. "Here." she hands them over to me.

I stare at her outstretched hand, holding the boots and coat hesitantly for a moment. "You.. you're helping me?" She had just called me her prisoner before. Now she's being.. somewhat kind to me. Cassandra rolled her eyes at me. "You have been passed out for three days already, we have been waiting for you to wake up. I do not want you to pass out again due to hypothermia."

I nod and quietly take the boots and coat from her hand. I slide my cold and wet socks into the big boots and lace them up quickly. The coat is, as expected, way too big but it is warm on the inside. I immediately feel less exposed to the cold weather here. Speaking of here. "Where is this place, anyways?" I ask Cassandra as I check if my boots are properly laced up. Don't want to trip and fall over the laces.

When I get back up, Cassandra sighs and straightens her back. "You are in Haven." she crosses her arms, apparently she's not really eager to answer my questions right now.

I raise my eyebrow up at her again. Never heard of a place called Haven. Not where I'm from at least. "Haven? Where is Haven? Like in what country?"

Cassandra returns the raised eyebrow now. "Ferelden of course."

I let out an annoyed sigh, though I probably should know better. "And where the hell is Ferelden, pray tell?"

Cassandra lowers her arms and her eyes are all but confusion right now. "Are you joking?" she almost scoffs but there is some interest in her tone of voice. She's not entirely angry with me, not like before, I can tell.

I look around again and watch the people again for a moment. Then return to look at her. "I'm not. Is Ferelden some sort of slang for another area? How far away are we from Brighton?"

You'd think I am speaking a completely different language right about now, because Cassandra is dumbfound. "Bri.. Brighton? What is Brighton?"

I am starting to feel the same sense of panic as before, when I found out I was shackled. It seems Cassandra doesn't know at all where Brighton is. And I don't know at all where Haven or Ferelden is. "Brighton. As in the small seaside resort on the South coast of England, Brighton. Part of the city of Brighton and Hove, Brighton." I am speaking fast and that's because I'm panicked.

Cassandra just stares at me. Seemingly trying to make sense of what I just said. "I've never heard of such places before."

I am starting to breathe faster and uncontrolled now, my chest moving frantically up and down as I do so. I'm having a panic attack, or I'm hyperventilating. Whatever it is, I'm starting to feel light headed. "Cassandra, where is Ferelden exactly?"

"Ferelden is part of Thedas. As is Nevarra, Orlais, the Free Marches, Antiva, Rivain, Par Vollen, Seheron, the Anderfels and of course the Tevinter Imperium." she names all of these unfamiliar, foreign names to me, counting them all on her fingers. I am freaking out more and more by the second. I've never ever heard any of these strange names before. I am starting to lose it slowly. "Are
you... alright?" Cassandra steps towards me, holding out her hand apprehensively.

I instinctively take a step backwards. "No. I am not fucking alright. I don't know anything about what you've just said. I've never heard of these strange names. Where is England? Where is Europe? America? Asia?" I look at her with big shocked eyes, waiting to catch a glimpse of her understanding or recognizing some names, but to no avail. "Oh.. shit. Fuck.. Oh fuck, oh fuck." I hobble backwards clumsily and end up with my back against the stone wall of the building we just exited from.


Cassandra takes me by the shoulders then and stares into my eyes. "Either you are a very good liar or you are... not from here?" she says hesitantly.

I shrug her hands off of my shoulders and feel the tears stinging into my eyes. I can't help but sound pissed off. "I'm not lying! For crying out loud, how many times do I have to tell you?! Where am I?" my voice breaks then as the tears are streaming down my face.

Cassandra steps backwards again and examines me from a distance. "This would explain your strange clothing. However, it would be impossible." her eyes widen slightly.

I glare up at her through the tears. "No shit, it would be impossible!" I hiss at her now. I still remember how scary she gets when she's mad but right now she seems just as confused as I am. So I feel more at ease with being mad and defying.

She shakes her head and looks up at the sky then. With all that's just happened I completely forgot about what the people were looking up at before. I follow her gaze and notice a big swirling green thing in the sky. It's moving around, swirling slowly. It almost looks like the eye of a storm. But this is green and glowing, almost like the thing on my hand. My mouth opens wide. Cassandra notices my reaction. "Wherever you are from, we'll have to discuss this later. That thing, up there? We call it the Breach. Countless more of them have appeared all around Thedas, but in smaller forms. Rifts. Your mark can close them, apparently. We need to close that one."

I look back at her in disbelief. "You want me to close that ... thing? Are you mad or something?" Immediately I notice the wrinkles returning to the bridge of her nose and I can feel my stomach turning around slightly.

*Shit, I pissed her off again.*

"Divine Justinia died! You are the only sole survivor pulled out from the rubble of the Temple of Sacred Ashes. You alone survived that explosion. Whether or not you tell the truth about your country of origin, you alone have the power to close the Breach and the rifts all around Thedas. I do not yet know how, but you must." she sounded desperate and angry at the same time. I almost felt for her then.

I sigh and look up at the sky again. "Fine." Whatever that thing was, it was ominous. I cannot think too much about my own problems right now, not until that Breach thing was .. closed. If I were in their shoes, I'd probably demand the same from a strange mysterious girl who survived an explosion.

Cassandra's eyes widened. "Then you'll help?" she sounded surprised.

I nod at her. "I don't know how. But yes, I'll help if I can. After that, I want to go home."

Cassandra nods back at me. "Fair enough." she gestured for me to follow her and we start walking again.
As we pass the townspeople, they still eye me with suspicion. I look back at them confused. "They blame you for Divine Justinia's dead. They feel like they need to."

I follow Cassandra quietly out of the town's gates and into the snowy areas. With barely any path to walk on. It's all just snow, and a thick layer of it. "Who was this Divine Justinia?" I ask Cassandra as we make our way towards a bridge, leading to a mountain path.

Cassandra looked back over her shoulder, her brown eyes piercing through me. "She was our most beloved Divine. The most holy. She arranged the peace talks with the templars and mages. After what happened in Kirkwall."

"Mages? As in... magic people? Wizards? Like.. avada kedavra?"

She gave me the side eye. "Yes.. Magic people. What was that word you said? A..dava?"

I wanted to smack myself across the face then and there. She didn't know what the hell I was talking about. "Nevermind that last bit. But, magic? How?" We continued walking and she pressed her lips into a thin line.

"You.. don't have magic where you are from?" she asked, her curiousity seemed peaked.

I nodded. "No we don't. None. At all. We tell tales of people wielding magic but it's all fake. Not true, it's fiction. Fantasy."

Cassandra hummed. "I see." she stopped talking then and continued walking. I followed her quietly down the mountain path. I saw carts all around, burning down or already completely burned down. Then some oddly looking black things next to them. When we continued on walking, I noticed then those weren't just any black things.. they were burned, charred bodies of people. Further down the road, I saw more of the burned dead corpses, recognizing they were actually bodies.

My stomach churned and I started to gag as in this part of the mountain path, the smell of the burned down bodies was very much prominent. I stopped again and apparently Cassandra was not amused with me stopping a third time in a short amount of time. "What is..." she stopped as I was hunching over, my hands ontop of my thighs as I was trying to surpress the vomit that was slowly travelling up my throat. I swallowed it back down again, gross I know, and breathed in deeply. She put her hand on my back gently and patted it softly. "Come. If we move from here, the smell will not bother you so." she actually sounded concerned.

I nodded silently and did as I was told, not daring to look at the bodies a second time. Instead, I looked up at the grey and dark sky. Though, what Cassandra referred to as 'The Breach', was scary.. it had an odd look of beauty to it as well. It's glowing emerald light, looked mesmerizing. Though I knew it was probably best not to mention this to her. "What is your name?" I heard her ask me from the side as I was interrupted from my thoughts.

"Eliana Courseland. Though my friends just usually call me Elie." then I felt a sharp pang of sadness through my chest. My friends... My family. Shit, what did I get myself into?

"Despite everything, I am pleased to meet you, Eliana Courseland."

"My friends... My family. Shit, what did I get myself into?"

Cassandra nodded and her lips curled into a half smile then. "Despite everything, I am pleased to meet you, Eliana Courseland."
response to it. I cried out at the extremely painful feeling and dropped down into the snow, on my knees. Clutching my left hand with my right, holding it firmly against my chest.

Cassandra jogged back over to me and crouched down before me, trying to help me to my feet. "The pulses are coming faster now. We must hurry." She squeezed my shoulders gently and gave me a pressing look.

I nodded, a single tear rolling down my cheek from the extreme discomfort I felt earlier. I followed her, staring blankly at my hand. We reached another bridge, with a few armoured men, with the same eye-symbol on their breastplates. "We are almost there, we must." suddenly green glowing rocks were spat out from the skies and landed onto the bridge, completely shattering and destroying it beneath our feet. We fell down, both of us, on top of hard, cold ice. The impact of my body slamming hard onto the ice almost knocked the air right out of my lungs. I gasped and coughed as I was trying to sit up straight. I looked in front of me and noticed a puff of smoke appearing in front of Cassandra, who was already up to her feet, readying her sword. "Stay back!" she yelled back at me.

I was confused. What for?

Then, out of the puff of smoke, a big scary, monstrous thing appeared. With huge claws and tattered cloth around itself. It screeched out loudly. A screech that left my ears ringing and made me feel a very deep and strong sense of fear within my soul. "What the fuck is that?!" I screamed out. But Cassandra did not answer me, instead she charged at the thing, with her shield out to protect her. Her sword firmly in hand as she slashed at it, leaving it screaming in agony. As she was battling the foe, another puff of smoke appeared right behind Cassandra, in front of me.

Oh... shit. No, no, no.

I felt the blood in my face disappear completely, my head became hot with fear. My stomach turned around and as the monstrous thing started to appear in front of me as well, I smelled the most disgusting scent ever before. Some mixture of dead corpses, which I now knew the smell of, and a scent I can only describe as dark, thick, muddy, unmoving water you can find in swamps or something. I looked around, panicked to the extreme as the monster started to fully take shape in front of me. "Cassandra!" I thought I yelled out, but the fear took my voice completely away. Nothing but a soft: "Cassah..." came out.

Behind me, within the rubble of the collapsed bridge, lay a couple of weapons. Most of them were broken by the stones of the bridge that fell onto them. The only two things I saw, that were not broken, were a shield and a wooden staff with a big purple looking gemstone in the shape of a ball onto of it. I quickly took the shield and slid my left hand into the straps of the shield, holding it in front of me as protection. It was heavier than I thought it would be. I took the staff in my right hand, which was lighter than I thought it would be. I don't know what I would do with these weapons but I knew I wasn't going to let that thing kill me. It screeched out at me as I took arms and stood there, flimsily. It lunged right at me and I used the shield in front of my body to protect myself from it's razor sharp claws. With my right hand I lifted the staff up in the air and slashed downwards. However, the staff's gemstone landed into the ice next to the creature and did nothing at all.

I whimpered. That was pathetic. I glanced over at Cassandra who was still fighting her own creature and my enemy quickly shoved me to the ground. With such force, my back hit the ice again, knocking the wind out of me. My left arm fell hard onto the icy floor and the shield's straps snapped. I cursed inwardly as I watched the shield slide away from me on the ice. The creature before me was momentarily staring at the shield as well, as it slid off further away from the both of us.
It's distracted.

I took this as my golden opportunity and used my staff to knock it hard against it's head. Or what qualifies as a head. It screeched out and moved backwards. Then suddenly Cassandra had slain her own foe and watched behind her, to see me doing a poor job of defending myself. She came running to my aid and split it in half with her blade, making it dissolve onto the ice. I stumbled to my feet clumsily, using the staff as my crutch. She immediately pointed her blade towards me. "Drop it! Now!" she hissed at me.

I raised my hands up slightly, my palms towards her and lowered my staff slowly. "Alright. Calm down." she was watching me for a moment then sheathed her blade again. Gesturing for me to stop lowering it.

I frowned at her. What did she want? Lower it or not lower it? She sighed. "Keep it. I cannot protect you and you do need to defend yourself should anything happen." she stared at the staff and then at the shield that was laying far away from the both of us. "I should remember you came willingly. That you wish to help."

I nodded. "Though that shield did nothing for me at all. The fuck was that thing anyways?" I looked down at the ice where the creature dissolved into nothingness, leaving only a green:. sack of something on the ice.

Cassandra reached down into her satchel and pulled out a vial with red liquid inside of it and handed it over to me. "That was a shade. Nasty one's but they pose no real threat. Though, you should probably take this. Just in case."

I take the vial of red liquid from her and eye is confused. "What is this and what is a shade exactly?" I rotated the vial in my fingers slightly and then put it down into the pocket of the leather coat Cassandra had given me.

She continued walking slowly and I followed. "The vial I gave you contains a poultice that will heal your minor injuries should the inevitable happen. Which would be me not being able to rescue you in time and you getting clawed at by shades. Shades, are one of many demons. But like I said before, they pose no real threat."

I stopped dead in my tracks then. "Demons?! Wait, you never mentioned anything about demons, lady!" I knew I had sounded accusing but can you really blame me.

Cassandra turned her head around and raised an eyebrow up at me, with a slight smile across her lips. "Would it have mattered?"

I scoffed and followed her further down the road. "Umm.. Yes? Besides, they pose no real threat? Those claws seemed like enough of a threat to me!"

Cassandra chuckled. It caught me slightly off guard. The entire time she had been so... on edge but now it seemed like I had amused her. "They do no real harm, Eliana."

I started walking backwards infront of her, my body facing her as I did and I slammed my hand against her breastplate. The sound of clanking against the metal breastplate was heard. "You have this. I have nothing! I can't even properly defend myself. I've never had to fight where I'm from!"

Cassandra frowned. "Never?" I nodded frantically. "I see. Then you must definitely stay behind me next time. Use the staff as some form of protection for yourself. Don't do anything stupid." she reprimanded me even when I clearly wasn't the one at fault earlier.
I matched my pace with hers again and walked beside her now. "That shade attacked me. I did nothing." I huffed slightly and stuck up my nose.

She held up her hand to halt me and gestured for me to look in front of me again. "More demons ahead. Stay behind me!" she said and before I could answer her, she ran off towards the demons. The same kinds that were with us earlier. Only this time, followed around by ghostly green looking things. Those are not shades, those are something entirely different. There were three of them in total. Two ghosts and one shade.

I watched in awe as I saw Cassandra easily take down the foes. The ghosts shot some green balls of something towards her, but she simply deflected its attacks with her shield. Then she went on to slice them down the middle of their forms and they vanished in thin air. Defeated. Only the shade remained then. I held the staff tightly against my body as I watched Cassandra shift quickly towards the shade, facing it directly now. The same haunting screeches were heard and it sent shivers down my spine.

*How can she remain so calm and collected when those things are in front of her?*

She grunted and used a spinning attack to strike at the shade with all the power that she had, its claws trying hard to reach her throat but she held it back using her shield in front of her. Then, with one last strike from her blade, it dissolved just like the other one had done before. She huffed and sheathed her sword, swinging the shield onto her back again by the straps of it. She gestured for me to follow her further.

I followed. As I was walking next to her, using the staff as my walking stick, she eyed it for a moment too long. I gave her a quizzical look. Not getting why she looked so distracted by it. "You do realize that is an apostate's staff?"

I looked at the staff next to me and then back to her questionably. "Apostate?"

She nodded and tapped the gemstone on the top of it. "Apostate's are mages. This gemstone on top of the staff is their energy source. They use that to channel their powers and sent it through."

I looked at the purple gemstone adorning the staff and couldn't help but feel even more confused. "How is that even possible? Do all the staffs have a gemstone like that?"

Cassandra shook her head. "No, not all. Some apostates are content with just a simple staff made out of a specific type of wood. How exactly it works, I do not know. Perhaps you can ask our professional later." she turned to look at the road before us again.

I continued staring at the staff. "You don't seem to like apostates. By the sound of your voice."

Cassandra shrugged her shoulders indifferently. "I don't dislike them. A lot has happened that concerns the mages, it's hard not to have a strong opinion about them."

I had begun to understand less and less about this world we were in. "Well, if you're worried about me using the staff, don't. I just needed a weapon and this was the only one that wasn't broken."

Cassandra chuckled again slightly, eyeing me from the side. "I'm not worried about you using the staff. You've no magic. To you, it's simply a wooden stick."

I nodded. "Hm yes. A big wooden stick I can use to hit shades with." I couldn't help but smirk up at Cassandra.

We reached the top of a small mountain and were surrounded by stone ruins. The sounds of fighting
clear as day. "We must help them!" Cassandra yelled out to me as she jumped down the ledge of the ruins, into the battlefield. She just left me there, standing bewildered. I looked down at the ledge and saw a couple of armed soldiers fighting, wearing again the same tunics as the one's I've seen before at the bridge and back at Haven's cells. I also noticed a small tiny man shooting with what seemed to be a medieval looking crossbow and a taller figure dressed in a green tunic, bald head and twirling around a staff. Then my eyes lingered at that same tall figure.

He was using a staff, and lights came out of it. Lights, and balls of fire and tendrils of lightning and even a white bright light that turned the shades and ghosts into icicles. The smaller guy with the crossbow would take advantage of the shades being turned into ice, because he'd shoot his arrow right through it. Shattering it into a thousand pieces onto the stone floor. Above the fighting soldiers was a green glowing vortex, that looked similar to the Breach but only less smaller and less ominous. It still looked freakish, but at least it didn't look like it was going to swallow the world whole. When finally Cassandra had a moment of peace before charging at the next enemy, she'd look behind her to find me. When her eyes caught my own, she gestured for me to come help.

What? No. I just told you, I cannot fight.

I groaned inwardly and tried to climb down the ledge. I've always been extremely clumsy and I just knew I couldn't just jump down like Cassandra had done earlier. I'd surely fall flat on my face or sprain my ankle. Then I'd be no help whatsoever. At least now, I could still hit shades with my stick. When I reached the battlefield, immediately a puff of smoke appeared next to me. I whimpered and hit the area where the smoke was coming from several times with the staff, though no shade had come out yet. I was hoping however, it would not come out at all when I'd hit the floor with the stick. Sadly, this wasn't so. Before I could hit the floor again, a shade appeared right infront of me from the smoke that had risen from the stone floor. I screamed slightly as it immediately flung it's claws at me and dodged it only by an inch.

At least I'm good at dodging.

I jumped to the side and flung the staff towards the shade, hitting it directly against it's shoulder. It didn't even flinch or move away from me. In fact, it seemed to do nothing whatsoever. I slowly stepped backwards, away from it, trying to think of something else. Would pointing behind it help distract it? I shook my head and then gritted my teeth. "Alright, I'm not afraid of you!" I hissed at it. The shade inched closer to me and let out an ear deafening screech, making me flinch immediately. "Okay, I lied. I am afraid of you." It lunged at me and I put the gemstone ball against it's body, trying to keep a distance between it and myself. It's claws swooshing infront of my face as I tilted my head backwards, escaping it's reach. Suddenly an arrow flew right past my ear and straight into the shade's head. It screamed one last time before it dissapeared into the same puff of smoke it had appeared in earlier. Suddenly my staff had nothing holding it back anymore, and because I was using all my strength earlier to push the shade away from me, I suddenly lost balance and fell over. My head knocking against the wooden staff and lastly against the stone cold floor.

Cassandra yelled out from the battle. "Eliana! Are you alright?"

I moved my head up slowly and rubbed my head instinctively. "Ow.. I'm fine!" I put my thumb up in the air, trying to sound and look convincing. I looked up at Cassandra and the other two guys who were looking at me momentarily.

Great. They all saw that.

I stumbled up to my feet and suddenly the bald tall guy jogged up to me, took me by the wrist and dragged me towards the swirling green vortex. "You must seal it, quickly!" he called out and lifted my left hand up towards the thing. Immediately I felt a strong surge of energy radiating through my
body and it completely filled me up. It was very odd. However, soon I felt the same old familiar sharp pain starting from my lower arm, travelling down into my palm. Like bolts of lightning travelling through my veins. I noticed a very apparent link between the mark on my hand and the thing above us. The man was still holding my hand up, palm up towards the vortex. My arm started to shake violently as the power that was coming from it all was causing these wild spasms. However the man next to me kept my hand as steady as possible and then... a loud crashing sound and a small explosion, causing the vortex to close. He released my wrist immediately. I winced slightly at the discomfort it had caused me and looked down into the green glowing light in my palm. It was still shining brightly at first but it slowly fainted and dimmed eventually until it was gone again.

I looked at the bald guy standing infront of me with big shocked eyes. "What the hell did you do just now?"

The man smiled softly and his soft blue eyes were kind. "I did nothing, the credit is yours."

He pointed momentarily at the mark in my hand and I couldn't help but scoff slightly. "I did that? What the fuck.." I mumbled softly as I stared down at my hand in disbelief.

He ignored my curse and instead continued speaking about it as if it were the most normal thing ever. "Whatever magic opened the Breach in the sky also placed that mark upon your hand. I theorized the mark might be able to close the rifts that have opened in the Breach's wake and it seems I was correct."

Cassandra walked up from behind me, leaving me completely dumbfounded still. She looked at the bald man and sounded like she had just had an epiphany. "Meaning it could also close the Breach itself."

The man nodded and clasped his hands infront of his body, looking back at me. "Possibly. It seems you hold the key to our salvation." he dipped his head lowly for a moment when saying this and gave me a... curious facial expression though I could not quite place it.

Suddenly another voice called out from behind us all. I had completely forgotten about the man who saved me from that shade earlier. "Good to know. Here I thought we'd be ass deep in demons, forever." he stepped forwards and I had a chance to really take him in now. His hair was a shade of blonde but more like strawberry blonde. Almost ginger like Leliana's hair had been, but not quite so. He was quite bulky for his size, which just seem to make his proportions look even weirder. But not bulky in a bad way, he was tough and strong looking. He too was wearing a leather coat but underneath it, was a red shirt, with a low v-neck. Revealing part of his bare chest and his chesthair. He had a couple of golden rings around his ears and he seemed interestingly enough. "Varric Tethras, rogue, storyteller and occasionally unwelcome tagalong." he introduced himself to me while winking at Cassandra saying that last bit.

Cassandra groaned slightly and rolled her eyes. I stared at Varric for a moment. "Nice to meet you, Varric. Why do you react that way, Cassandra?" I didn't quite get her reaction.

Varric chuckled slightly. "Well, technically I'm a prisoner, just like you." He tugged at his own gloves a bit, readjusting them and then swung his crossbow back over his shoulder.

Cassandra looked over at me and answered for me. "I brought him here so he could tell his story to the Divine. Clearly, that is no longer necessary." she sneered slightly at Varric then. Who in turn simply shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Yet, here I am. Lucky for you. Considering current events." he smirked up at Cassandra and me both.
I smiled warmly up at Varric and remained polite. "It's good to meet you, Varric. Truly."

The bald guy behind me chimed in. "You may reconsider that stance, in time." he was talking to me apparently.

Before I could ask why, Varric pouted slightly. "Aww, I'm sure we will become great friends in the valley, Chuckles."

I raised my eyebrow up at the bald guy then. "Your name is.. Chuckles?" Odd names they have here, truly.

Varric let out a hearty laugh then, his laugh echoed through the ruins and the silence surrounding us all. The bald guy shook his head but couldn't keep a small smile from his lips. "Ah.. No, not quite. My name is Solas. I am pleased to see you still live."

I stared at Solas more intently now and noticed something I did not notice before at all. Because why would any normal human being look at that part of someone when they meet a new person?!

Varric nudged me slightly. "He means, 'I kept that mark from killing you while you slept.' I couldn't stop staring at Solas however.

Solas raised his eyebrow up at my silence and staring. "Is there something wrong?"

I realized then I was staring a bit too long and though I had heard Varric's remark, I hadn't replied yet. "I ah... I'm sorry. I thank you for that, Solas."

He nodded at me, but remained silent, still not getting why I was staring at him like that. I raised my finger up slowly towards his ears. Everyone was watching me intently, not knowing what I was doing. "Those... are those real?" I stammered, while looking at his long, pointed ears.

*They must be fake. No way that's real.*

Solas frowned at me. "My ears?" he sounded displeased and.. insulted even.

I was a bit scared of his next reply, I didn't mean for it to come out like that. "No! I didn't mean it in a bad way!"

Cassandra stepped forward now, sighing loudly. "Solas is an apostate, Eliana. And he is an elf. So those are just the way his ears are," she glared at me, her voice sounded like a mother would sound like when she'd tell her child it was impolite to stare at a stranger.

I shook my head. "Elf? Wait... what?" My eyes had widened and my voice was croaky. Again, I was hit with the realization that I was no longer in my own world, as it were.

Solas cocked his head to the side curiously. "You've.. never seen an elf before?"

I wanted to speak up but Cassandra spoke for me. "She claims she is not from this world. Her world apparently has no magic, no elves and no demons. She also says she does not remember how she got here in the first place. I find it all hard to believe but I figured we'd get the rifts closed first before we really start investigating these tales."

I shot Cassandra an angry look then. "Hey! I told you I was speaking the truth before!" I really thought she had warmed up to me by now. But even still, she remains weary of me.

Varric walked over towards us all and eyed me suspiciously. "I've heard a lot of weird stories, but
this one is by far the oddest one ever." he crossed his arms.

Solas interjected Cassandra. "And why would it be so hard to believe, Seeker? Does our world not have magic? Do we not have the Veil and the Fade in our world? For all we know, there might be millions of alternate worlds around us, close to our own. There is, after all, a huge tear in the sky as we speak. Some things are simply not so easily explained."

For the first time since I'd been here I felt slightly more at ease. Solas seemed to be the only one who trusted me from the get go. I gave him a grateful smile. Cassandra looked at Solas in disbelief. "You believe the story she has told? Then how did she get here? She is not a mage. She has no magic."

Solas sighed. "Indeed, it seems your prisoner is no mage. However, I would not disregard her story. I travel in the Fade a lot myself, as you know. I've seen a lot of spirits and heard whispers and tales of other worlds. Other dimensions. It is not so strange as you'd think. To me, it is odd. But certainly not impossible."

Varric chuckled again and slapped me hard against the back. "Well.. this shit just keeps getting weirder and weirder by the second."

Cassandra nodded. "Very well. I suppose this all will have to be discussed once we are back at Haven. For now, the Breach remains our main priority. Eliana." she turned to look at me and I immediately looked at her in response. "Now that Solas and Varric will join us, it would be best to stay behind us all. Whenever we engage in combat, sticking close to Solas would be the wiser option. He can cast protective barriers and can help you close rifts as we go."

I nodded. Varric then tapped against the staff I was holding in my hand. "How's your head, by the way, beauty?" I raised my eyebrow up at him slightly for calling me that but ignored it when I realized he was making fun of me falling flat on the floor earlier.

I felt my face flush red and immediately looked down at the ground, not daring to look any of them into the eyes. "I uh... I... I'm fine." I stuttered.

* * * *

We continued walking down the trail, away from the ruins. Though I still couldn't help but stare at Solas' ears. It was remarkable, odd but also extremely fascinating to see real elven ears in person. I had always had a love for Elves in tales and stories. Movies too. First to think about would be Lord of the Rings of course. I just loved the language of Elves and the way they presented themselves, always somewhat ethereal and surreal. Though Solas spoke in no other language than the common tongue, his accent was very posh and decent. When he spoke his voice would sound like every word he spoke was carried with wisdom and knowledge. Varric interrupted my thoughts then. "Why use a staff for a weapon, beauty?"

I looked over to my right side, where Varric was walking, waiting for my reply. I shrugged my shoulders. "As Cassandra said before we ran into you two, it's a big stick and I can use it to fight bad guys." I slightly smirked up at Varric as I said this.

He in return laughed heartily. "I suggest using a bow or sword. Would do a lot more damage you know." he eyed me from the side as we continued walking our way down the path, towards another frozen over lake.

I nodded and then got flustered. I never had to fight or wield a weapon before in my entire life, for
me it was obvious and normal as to why I couldn't wield a weapon. But to these people, fighting seemed as natural as breathing. Especially to Cassandra. She truly was a warrior. I hung my head in shame slightly. "I don't know how to fight. Never had to before in my entire life. I know that must seem odd to you."

Solas interjected. "You don't have wars where you're from?" Cassandra looked at me as well. The silence between us all was almost deafening.

"There are wars of course, however they always seem to be far away from my doorstep. I know they're existent, but it's hard to really understand war until you're in the midst of it. Like you all have been, I take it. Fighting just wasn't necessary." I look at Cassandra's face and notice her facial expression change, though I cannot understand to what. I continue; "I suppose you must think me spoiled and I would agree with you."

Cassandra shook her head then and smiled wryly up at me. Her eyebrow slightly raised. "Not at all. It's just... different."

I scoffed. She was trying to be nice. But I can tell they all probably think me weak and spoiled for not even knowing how to defend myself. As we kept walking I noticed some more ghosts and shades in the distance. I whimpered slightly and quickly jogged up to Solas and stayed behind him. He turned his head to look at me from over his shoulder and he smiled softly. "Not to worry, Eliana. You'll be fine. These demons pose no real threat." his voice was calm and collected. He didn't seem to be bothered by them at all.

I hissed while cowering behind him. "You all keep saying that but I don't understand how ghosts can't pose a threat!"

Varric chuckled while readying his crossbow. "Ghosts? They're called wraiths, beauty."

Cassandra unsheathed her sword and put her shield infront her body before charging right at the wraiths and shades before us all. Solas moved his staff to the side and I noticed what seemed to be a light green barrier around us all while Cassandra slashed her sword at the first shade. He turned his head to look at me from over his shoulder and he smiled softly. "Not to worry, Eliana. You'll be fine. These demons pose no real threat." his voice was calm and collected. He didn't seem to be bothered by them at all.

I hissed while cowering behind him. "You all keep saying that but I don't understand how ghosts can't pose a threat!"

With all of the enemies before us, nobody seemed to hear the slight hissing sound that was heard from behind us. Cassandra was too far away, Varric had seemed to move towards her to help her out some more and Solas was too busy using his staff and twirling it around gracefully, sending out powerful spells and barriers. I heard it though. I slowly turned my head around, hoping that my ears had been wrong but they were most definitely right. A big glowing, seemingly molten pile of... something appeared behind me and it was melting the ice where it was standing. It looked like it's entire body was made out of magma and it had two red glowy holes for eyes. It was slightly hunched over and it had three long fingers for hands. It was absolutely terrifying. I cried out behind Solas and immediately flung the stick at it's head hard. It didn't even make it flinch. Instead it just started to burn brighter and move closer to Solas and I.

Solas turned his body sideways and the moment he noticed the demon inching closer to me, he wrapped his left arm around my waist and pulled me to the side quickly, before it could attack me. My staff fell out of my hands as he did so but he didn't care. When we were back in safety, he turned my body around and pushed me behind him again while he used his staff to send a flash of white
light it's way. It seemed to hurt the demon slightly but it definitely didn't kill it right away. It seemed like the white light he sent out was an ice attack.

*Figures. He would know what kind of attack to use on which enemy.*

He grunted slightly as he hit the end of his own staff against the ice below us, making it crack slightly beneath our feet. The impact of the hit sent out purple strands of lightning up towards the skies above us and it created what seemed like a cage of lightning around the demon, trapping it. Immediately Varric shot a barrage of arrows towards it and Solas' attack and the arrows seemed to do the trick, as it screamed out one last time, raising it's claws up in the air as it vanished in nothing but dark smoke.

"Woah.." I breathed out quietly, but loud enough for Solas to smirk and cock his head to the side triumphantly. I immediately felt my face flush and I averted my gaze from his own quickly.

Cassandra jogged back towards us and picked up my staff from the ice as she did, handing it back over to me. "I told you to stay behind Solas!" she reprimanded me. I frowned at her.

"That thing appeared behind us, you know! It was good I saw it, because I knocked it against it's head. It definitely felt that." I stuck up my nose, pretending my 'attack' had done something. But I knew in the back of my mind, that it wasn't so at all.

Cassandra furrowed her brows then. "That thing was a rage demon. You're lucky your staff didn't go up in flames."

Solas chuckled. "Yes. What would we do without you and your staff?" I glared at him. He was teasing me. I huffed instead and continued walking further down the path, though not knowing at all where we were headed. So once I reached the path again from the frozen over lake, I decided to wait for Cassandra to lead the way.

The warrior sighed and looked up towards the sky then. "I hope Leliana made it through all of this." I could see the woman was pained thinking of it. They must have been close, those two.

Varric was walking next to me still and eyed Cassandra. "I'm sure she will be fine, Seeker. She's resourceful."

Solas was walking slightly behind me and chimed in with Varric. "I suppose we will see for ourselves, at the forward camp. We are nearly there."

We walked up a set of steps and I noticed there was another bridge there. I winced slightly, recollecting the memory of the bridge from before. When the floor beneath us gave out and Cassandra and I plummeted down hard onto the ice. Then my mark started to flare to life again and I cried out suddenly.

I fell to my knees again, the feeling wasn't getting better at all. It seemed to worsen by the minute. I looked up desperately at Cassandra. She helped me to my feet again and patted my back softly. "We will distract the enemies and you need to close that rift."

My eyes widened. "Again?" I breathed out. I didn't want to feel that very same discomfort a second time. It was hardly bearable the first time around.

She nodded. "You must, Eliana." and with that she charged up the stairs and right at the demons at the very top of it. I groaned and Solas gave me a reassuring look then as he too readied himself for the battle to come.
I slowly followed up the stairs and to my relief there were only three enemies. One for each of them, so I could easily sneak my way past the battle and up to the green vortex in the sky. I groaned as my arm started to pulse. Whatever that thing in my hand was, its energy was most definitely linked with these rifts in the sky. I could feel it pulsing through my entire arm. Throbbing almost with the energy. I bit my lower lip hard as I raised my hand up towards the rift above me, remembering what Solas had done with it earlier. Well, he just took it and lifted it upwards so I figured I needed to do the same. To my surprise it didn't take anything special, the moment I lifted my palm up towards it, the same green link appeared between my palm and the rift. I stared at it, at the energy before me and I could feel my link to it.

Close damn it, close!

Then, just as before, the rift crackled and exploded. The same harsh stab of pain in my palm as before. "It's closed! Open the gates!" Cassandra called out and then the gates opened, revealing people huddled together on top of it. In the distance I could see a familiar figure standing next to a unfamiliar man in red and white robes. Leliana.

Varric slapped me hard on the shoulder. "You're getting better at this shit, beauty. Let's hope it'll work on the big one." he smiled up genuinely at me. However I couldn't help but feel slightly uncomfortable with that thought.

I don't even know if I actually can close the big one.

As if Solas could read my mind he spoke up. "It would require a lot of power to close the Breach, however it is possible." We all made our way through the gates and started walking forwards. The soldiers on each side of the bridge were all injured. Some of them, seemed like they weren't going to make it through this day.

Then it occurred to me that I don't even know what time of the day it is. I looked up at the sky but I didn't see a sun. All I could see was the Breach and the dark grey clouds in the sky surrounding it. In my own world, I'd just grab my phone or take a peek at my watch and...

My watch!

I immediately look down at my wrist but see nothing. I stop walking and the rest of them stop and look at me in confusion. Cassandra raises her eyebrow up and watches me quietly. "Something the matter, Eliana?" she asks me then.

I pat the two pockets of my yoga pants, underneath the coat. I'd never take it off, but I assumed they might be in my pockets if not on my wrist. "Cassandra, did you or Leliana take some of my things when I arrived here? Like, say a steel thing around my wrist?" I stare at her intently.

Cassandra thought for a moment. "I can't say I have. But perhaps Leliana has. We can ask her later, why?" the other two guys stare at me too, they all don't get why I'm so freaked out all of a sudden. Perhaps my watch could convince them I'm not from this time. Also, it would be nice if it works, so I can tell time.

I sigh. "I had something on me, I know I did for certain. So, I want it back. Let's go talk to Leliana then." I walk over towards Leliana and the strange man, not knowing what's next to happen.

I can hear Leliana argue with the man. "We must prepare the soldiers!"

"We will do no such thing."

"The prisoner must get to the temple of Sacred Ashes. It is our only chance!"
"You have already caused enough trouble without resorting to this exercise in futility."

"I have caused trouble?"

"You, Cassandra, the Most Holy—haven't you all done enough already?" As I walk up towards a crossed armed Leliana and the strange man, who is hunched over a table with a couple of scrawled papers on top of it, the man turns his gaze towards me then and continues speaking. "Ah, here they come."

Leliana walks over to Cassandra quickly and hugs her briefly. It was a kind gesture. Though quick, I could tell Leliana was relieved to see Cassandra to be well. She couldn't help herself to hug her friend. "You made it. Chancellor Roderick, this is—"

Chancellor Roderick with his, may I say, extremely bushy and unkept eyebrows interrupted Leliana speaking: "-I know who she is." the man before me stared at me angrily. "As Grand chancellor of the Chantry, I hereby order you to take this criminal to Val Royeaux to face execution!"

The blood was drained from my face just then. My eyes visibly widened. "What?! E... Execution?" I turn my head towards Cassandra who is holding up her hand to silence me.

"Order me? You are a glorified clerk. A bureaucrat!" she hisses back at Roderick. I am grateful for Cassandra's help, though I am still very much afraid of this execution he spoke of.

Roderick does not seem impressed by Cassandra in the slightest. "And you are a thug, but a thug who supposedly serves the Chantry!"

*What is this word I keep hearing? Chantry?*

Leliana intervenes between the two, who are now extremely close to one another, ready to fight it seems. "We serve the most Holy, chancellor. As you well know." Leliana's eyes dart from Roderick back to Cassandra. She is trying to calm the quarrel between the two, but I don't see it from happening really. Because Cassandra's eyes look like they are burning with fire.

Roderick focussed his attention towards Leliana then. "Justinia is dead! We must elect a replacement, and obey her orders on the matter!"

I look at Cassandra with pleading eyes then. "What is this about execution?" my voice awfully quiet and low. I know I am shaking in my boots.

Cassandra sighs. "There will be a trial. I can't promise anything else, Eliana." Leliana seemed to be giving Cassandra a surprised look at her using my first name. After all, last time Leliana saw us two together, Cassandra had been ready to kill me in the cells back at Haven.

I started to feel faint then. "Trial?! You never mentioned any of that at all! I said I wanted to go home after I finish this business with the Breach."

Cassandra grabbed me by the shoulders firmly then. "We can stop this before it is too late."

Roderick spoke up before I did. "How? You won't survive long enough to reach the temple, even with all your soldiers."

Cassandra looks over at Roderick. "We must get to the temple. It's the quickest route."

I look over at Solas and Varric for a moment then, the two men are simply standing back, not saying much. It seems they wish to stay out of this conversation. For now at least.
Leliana's voice was heard then. "But not the safest. Our forces can charge as a distraction while we go through the mountains."

Cassandra's facial expression changes. She looks.. sad then. "We lost contact with an entire squad on that path. It is too risky."

"Listen to me. Abandon this now before more lives are lost!" Roderick says but then a explosion is heard closeby. The Breach up in the sky seems to be sputtering. Of course right at this moment, my mark decides to go haywire. I try to hold my hand and stop it from moving in spasms as it does with the Breach's sputtering. Immediately I notice Roderick's snarl at me.

*Man, that guy really doesn't like me.*

Cassandra stares me directly into my eyes then. "How do you think we should proceed?"

I look at her, then to Leliana and back to Cassandra again in confusion. "You want my opinion?" I was dumbfounded. She knows I am not from this place, she knows where I am from, well partially I think. Despite all that she still wishes to know my opinion on this matter.

Solas speaks up from behind me then. "You have the mark." his tone of voice is teasing. I glare at him for a moment before I hear Cassandra's voice again.

"And you are the one we must keep alive. Since we cannot agree on our own.."

They are all looking at me now. Even Chancellor Roderick. I sigh. "I... suppose the mountain then? Perhaps we can save your squad of soldiers there?" I am not sure about it at all, but it's all I can think of right now. Since they asked for my opinion.

Cassandra seems slightly displeased with my answer but nods regardless, shifting her attention back to Leliana again. "Leliana, bring everyone left in the valley. Everyone." Leliana nods and walks the other way, followed by a few of the soldiers next to her.

As Cassandra walks past Chancellor Roderick, who has his hands resting on the table before him in frustration, he speaks up threateningly once more: "On your head be the consequences, Seeker."

I follow Cassandra quietly, a little scared to walk past Roderick myself, so I quickly jog up to her and notice her hardened face. She is trying to hold back emotions and she is definitely biting her tongue right now.

*Oh God. What have I gotten myself into?*
We are making our way up a big mountain, with every step that I take, the snow reaches up to my knees. I am using my staff as a walking stick but it's not making it any easier. We had snow before of course, but never this thick. It was hard to move and walking up a mountain in this thick layer of snow, was extremely hard to do. I was way behind Cassandra and Varric. Solas was staying behind me, though I was sure he probably wanted to push me to the side and move on. I was super slow. The higher up we got, the colder it seemed to get and the thinner the air got. My asthma was getting real hard to deal with now. I never had issues with my asthma back at home, except for the summer time and when I'd do strenuous activities. However, here.. in this thin air so high up in the mountains, it was getting harder for me to breathe.

I stop walking in the middle of the mountain and hunch over, my hands resting on my tighs as I am taking deep breaths. My staff is in the snow now. The squeaking heard with every breath I take, a sign that it was getting worse. Solas walks up to me and calls out to Cassandra and Varric, who didn't seem to have noticed. He places his hand gently on my back and crouches down to reach my face. "Are you alright, Eliana?" his voice concerned.

At this point I am basically wheezing. Cassandra and Varric are watching me, their bodies sideways. I shake my head. "I... I'll need a moment. I'm so sorry. I have asthma."

Solas frowns. "Asthma? What is that?"

I groan. Do I really have to explain this? "Where I'm from asthma is a common lung condition that causes occasional breathing difficulties. It is caused by inflammation, or swelling, of the breathing tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. This inflammation makes the breathing tubes highly sensitive, so they temporarily become narrow."

Solas hums. "How is it triggered?"

I am starting to feel better now that I am no longer moving. "Allergens, like dust, animal fur and pollens. Also smoke, strong smells, gases and cold air." I look at him directly into his eyes now. A beautiful pair of blue eyes, with some grey in the center of them. "Which is the reason why it's happening now. Cold fucking air." I get back up and take a deep breath.

He thinks for a moment and places his hand on my chest suddenly then. It startles me so I slap it
away quickly as my face flushes a bright red. "Hey! Hands off buddy!" I squeal.

Solas seems amused by my reaction. "Calm down, da'len. I am just going to try and heal it for you." his lips curl into a smile. A devious smile, might I add.

I roll my eyes. "You can't heal asthma. It's just there. Sometimes it'll stay with people forever. Which seems to be the case for me. I've had it ever since I was a kid. I'm twenty two years now and it's still not gone."

He nods but hesitantly lifts his hand back up to my chest again. "I understand. May I try something to relieve it for you then? My healing can also relieve your discomfort. It would make hiking up the mountain much easier for you."

Varric quips from infront of us both. "Yeah! I'm sure your magic can relieve a whole lotta things, Chuckles!"

I glare at Varric for a moment, then turn my head back towards Solas'. I nod. Fine, let him do his Elven magic. I can't say I'm not interested to see it work from up close. He places his hand back ontop of my chest, near my lungs and closes his eyes. His hand starts glowing a faint green light. I stare down at it for a bit and can't help but feel like it almost resembles the same green color of the rifts and my mark. But I dismiss that thought quickly when I feel my lungs opening. I can actually feel my lungs opening some more. The same way it would, minutes after I'd take my inhalers and feel relieved to be able to breathe normally again. I look back at his face in shock. He opens his eyes again, while still doing his thing and smiles softly. Then he takes his hand off of my chest and gestures for me to continue walking again.

I quietly turn around, pick up the staff and keep moving. "Thanks." I am royally freaked out right now. He did exactly what my inhalers would do for me. The squeaking in my breathing is gone and I feel like I can hike without problems again. I think I can hear him chuckle behind me but I am not too sure about it because the wind is howling so high up.

As we make our way up higher I decide to ask some questions. I am sick and tired of not understanding almost everything they speak about when they are speaking of 'what I did.' If I'm going to be staying here a little while longer, I'll want to know. "Cassandra. I don't understand some of these words you have been using. Chantry, for instance. What is a Chantry?"

Cassandra turns looks over her shoulder while she keeps moving infront all of us. "The Chantry is the dominant religious organization in Thedas. It is based on the Chant of Light, a series of teachings written by Andraste, the prophet of the Maker, and was founded by Kordillus Drakon, the first emperor of Orlais. The Chantry's followers are known as Andrastians."

So the Chantry is like a Church. And Andrastians are like Christians and all that.

"And the Maker.. is your God?" I ask her.

She looks at me with confusion. "He is the Maker of the world. The Wellspring of All."

I nod. "Ah. And Divine Justinia... she was?"

"She was the most holy." Cassandra didn't like speaking of her yet. It seemed her death was still weighing down on her a lot.

I figured Divine simply meant someone like a pope. I turn my attention towards Solas and Varric then. "Do you two also believe in the Maker? Are you Andrastian?"
Solas shook his head, to the dismay of Cassandra. "Elves have an entirely different belief on the world. We believe in the Elven Pantheon. Our Creators, as it were."

I raise my eyebrow up slightly. "Creators? Plural?"

He nods. "Yes. There are five Gods and four Goddesses."

_The Elven religion reminds me more of Asian religions. I remember when... he... told me._

My face drops. I turn my attention back to the 'road' before us.

Solas seemed to have noticed however. "Something wrong?"

I shake my head. "Let's just move on." I don't want to speak of this.

As we make our way up higher, we eventually reach a couple of platforms, made only out of wooden planks and ladders. I look up in fear.

_I hate heights. I hate ladders. I hate this._

Cassandra and Varric move up the first ladder and Solas is patiently waiting for me to do the same. I gulp and put my hands on the ladder hesitantly. Then I slowly lift my right foot up on the ladder and slowly climb up. Too slow it seems because Varric is up on the first platform yelling down at me: "Come on beauty! You're not gonna tell me you're afraid of heights, are ya?"

I groan and grumble something almost inaudible under my breath: _"Mmsmartassdwarf.Upyours."_

As I finally make my way up on the first platform I can feel my legs are shaking, literally, shaking. I look down at the height and quickly scramble to the walls, staying very, very close to them. I am almost squeezing myself into the stone walls of the mountain on which these platforms are built.

Cassandra can't seem to hide her amusement whatsoever. "Don't like heights, Eliana?" you can hear the amusement in her voice. It irks me slightly.

I stuck up my nose and pretend to be fine but as I make my way to the second ladder I waver a bit and she has to hold me to keep me in place. "Just take it easy." she reassures me then.

Varric chuckles, a smug look on his face, arms crossed. "Yeah, take your time. It's not like there's a hole in the sky or anything.." he smirks at me and I roll my eyes as I slowly ascend the second ladder.

Finally when we reach the second platform, I notice the mouth of a cave then. Two torches on either side of the mouth, still lit, despite the cold air up so high.

"What manner of cave is this? A mining cave?" Solas calls out to Cassandra.

She nods. "These caves lead straight to the temple of Sacred Ashes. It's the fastest way there."

As I enter the cave first, I notice a rage demon and two wraiths on the inside of it and I immediately move backwards quickly, stumbling into Solas and Varric as I do. I push them out of my way and cling to the walls of the cave, too afraid to move. "Demons." I whisper, my eyes wide.

Varric laughs heartily. "It's quite adorable when you get like that, beauty." he takes his crossbow off of his shoulder and smirks up at me. "Not to worry, Bianca and I will deal with them." he winks at me and then he enters the cave. Solas and Cassandra smirk up at me as we hear his crossbow shoot out arrows, followed by screeches from inside the cave.
Then after a while, he peeks his head out the cave. "All clear." he seems content with himself. Cassandra groans but I can tell there's a faint hint of a smile on her lips.

As we move through the cave I stare at Varric. "You really took on two wraiths and one rage demon by yourself?" I am in awe.

He chuckles. "Yup."

I raise my eyebrow up at him. "And you called your crossbow... Bianca earlier?"

He nods his head frantically, a playful twinkle in his hazel brown puppy eyes. "I sure did."

I can't help but giggle slightly. "That's cute."

We keep making our way through the cave and eventually I see bloodstains on the floors, illuminated by the lit torches within the cave. My stomach turns around then. I can't deal with seeing another dead body. I just can't. I see the light at the end of the cave and at the exit, right before our feet, lay six corpses. Their bodies look contorted and some of the corpses have their limbs torn off, or have them broken in unnatural ways. I immediately lift my hand up to my mouth and swallow down another wave of vomit as I turn my head the other way.

Varric sighs. "Well.. It seems we have found your missing soldiers."

Cassandra examines the bodies. "This can't be all of them. The rest must be further down the road." then she simply steps over the bodies and continues moving forward.

I stay put, still not feeling up to par to move on. They wait for me quietly, not saying a word and I try to compose myself by taking deep breaths.

"Oh what a nuisance I must be to them. I keep stopping. I can't defend myself. I have asthma. I have to hold back the puke when looking at dead people."

I curse myself inwardly and continue walking slowly. I notice that Solas is watching me intently. I ignore his staring however. I don't want to deal with that right now. I already feel useless enough as it is.

"There!" Cassandra calls out and immediately runs over towards another rift, surrounded by shades, wraiths and soldiers. Solas casts his protective barrier and Varric readies Bianca quickly. I huff and hold my staff tightly in my hand.

"I will hit them this time. I will be useful."

I jog up to the fighting and past Solas, which wasn't the initial plan. Cassandra will probably scold me for this but right now, I am determined and I am just going with it. A shade notices me coming towards the battlefield and immediately lunges right at me. I don't know what the hell I'm doing but I am using my staff to hold it back, just as I did before meeting Varric and Solas at the ruins. The shade is pushing down onto the staff hard and my arms holding it back are giving up. I can hear Varric call out to me but I am too concerned with keeping this shade away from my face. It's cloaked face coming closer and closer towards my own face and I can see it doesn't even have a face. It's just emptiness and a hole for a mouth, with ungodly screeches coming out of it. I am suddenly frozen in my place and I don't notice it's raising it's claws up at me and lashes out. I am scratched on my cheek by it's razor sharp claws and I can feel the burn on my flesh, followed up by a warm liquid rolling down my cheek. I take a step back and push it away from me for only a moment, quickly I jab the staff into it's non existent face and push harder down. It screeches again and then Cassandra bashes it with her shield, followed up by a stab through the midriff with her sharp sword. It's defeated and
Cassandra snarls at me, but she lifts her head up towards the rift, when another wave of enemies is spat back out. "Close it, now!" she yells at me as she runs off to help her soldiers in battle. I turn my head to find the rift is not far from where I am standing. I drop my staff onto the floor and lift my palm up towards it. I link, my arm again twitching in spasms as I am willing it with my entire being, to close.

"Maker's breath! We're saved! Thank you so much, lady Cassandra." one of the soldiers, wearing a helmet, covering most of her face bows deeply at her.

"You should thank our prisoner. She is the one who insisted we come this way." Cassandra gestured for her to get back up to her feet.

The soldier turns her head towards me then and I can see her eyes widen, through the opening of her helmet. "The prisoner... then you..."

I cut her off, feeling slightly uncomfortable. "It's nothing, really. I'm just glad to see you're all fine."

The soldier dips her head. "Then my soldiers and I will stand by you, my lady."

Cassandra lift her hand. "You will not. Go back to the forward camp and make sure all is well over there." her tone of voice was harsh and curt but it seemed like Cassandra simply wanted her men to be safe again.

"As you say, my lady." the soldier saluted her and quickly ran back towards the cave we just exited from earlier.

Then, Cassandra quickly shifts and turns to face me, her eyes burning with anger. "Didn't I tell you to stay behind Solas?" she walks over to me and grabs my chin with her fingers and turns my face sideways. She examines my scratched cheek and touches the wound softly.

I wince at the feeling. It doesn't hurt that much, but it's definitely not a nice feeling. She clicks her tongue. "Solas. Will she be alright?"

I don't get her concern. It's just a scratch. "I'm sure it will be fine, Cassandra."

Cassandra shoots me another angry look. "You might not be fine, Eliana."

Solas walks over towards me and examines my face as well. Again, I seem to be almost lost in his oddly colored eyes. They're so... beautiful.

"Don't Eliana."

I avert my gaze quickly and he shakes his head. "There is no reason for concern, Seeker. She will be fine. I will heal the cuts once we have dealt with the rift back in the temple."

Cassandra sighs. "Very well." she continues walking ahead and Varric quietly follows her. Solas is still looking at my face.

I give him a quizzical look then and shrug my shoulders. He does not look pleased with me either. "That was a very stupid thing to do, Eliana." his voice was harsh.

I sigh and start to follow Cassandra, picking up the staff again on the way. "I just wanted to be helpful." I murmur quietly.

He follows me closely and stares at me from the side. "And putting yourself in harms way, is being helpful?"
I groan and give him the side eye. "So I'm just supposed to let you all do the work then?"

He nods. "Yes." he says in a matter of fact kind of voice.

Great.

As we reach the temple of Sacred Ashes I am overcome with sadness and grief as I see it all before me: bodies, of charred people, looking more like skeletons before me. All positioned in odd ways. Some of them are on their knees, arms up towards the skies like they are asking their Maker 'why?'. Others are hunched over, or curled up into a ball of despair.

Varric hums. "The Temple of Sacred Ashes... or what's left of it."

I feel sad. Extremely sad. "All of these people... God. This is awful." my voice breaks as I'm overcome with my emotions. This truly looks awful.

Cassandra looks at me, her face seems to be just as much overcome with sadness as my own. "This is where our men found you. They say you came out of the Fade. And there was a woman behind you."

I raise my eyebrow up slightly. "What is the Fade?"

Solas speaks up. "The Fade is the Beyond. It is another realm that is tied to our world and seperated by the Veil. The Veil, is a barrier. Neither spirits nor mortal beings can easily pass physically through the Veil."

So their 'Fade' is like... the between. Between life and death? Between life and moving on to... something else? Like lingering between two worlds?

I am trying to give everything a meaning in my head and I look up in disbelief at Solas then. "Then how was I able to pass through the Veil?"

Varric chimed in then. "Exactly why everyone is so in awe by you, beauty. You are the first to come out of the Fade physically and survive. It's.. a miracle, really."

Solas is looking at me intently now. "More than a miracle, it's extraordinary."

I swallow a lump down my throat then. "But you've said before you been in the Fade many times, Solas."

He smiles. "Never physically. Only in my dreams. It's what some mages can do. Not all though, I am self taught. However if you come across any regular circle mage, they'll tell you they won't be able to do so." he noticed my reaction to the word 'circle mage' then and continued before I could ask. "A circle mage is a mage who has spent their entire life within the Circle of Magi. Which is... a dominant organization for the training of mages within nations of Thedas." I can tell by the way Solas speaks of the Circle of Magi, that he does not approve of their methods of 'training'. But that will be a question for another time.

I nod, trying to rationalize everything within my mind. "So... I've come through the Fade, through the Veil, from my own world... and there was a woman behind me?"

I turn to look at Cassandra again who nods quietly. "Many believe it might have been Andraste herself behind you. Though, I would not know why. Since you are not Andrastian."

I remain quiet then as we make our way through the rubble of the temple and past all of the
skeletons. I walk down a set of stairs and then we see it: a huge rift. Much bigger than the other one's. Big green crystals of matter spiking out of it. Above it, the big eye of the storm as I like to call it. With stones just hovering over each other up towards it. Like there is no gravity there at all.

"The Breach is a long way up." Varric mutters.

We are all staring at it. Suddenly we hear footsteps behind us, it's Leliana and her men. Archers and soldiers wearing the same armour. "You're here! Thank the Maker." she jogs up to Cassandra.

Cassandra is wasting no time, not even greeting her as she arrives. "Leliana, have your men take positions around the temple."

Leliana simply nods and moves with her men, down the stairs and the rubble that is left of the Temple.

Cassandra turns to me then and stares me directly into my eyes. "This is your chance to end this. Are you ready?"

I look back up to the Breach and gulp. How would that even be possible? I don't think my mark's link can go that far. "I can try? But I don't know if I can reach that, much less close it."

Solas interjects, shaking his head. "No. This rift was the first, and it is the key. Seal it, and perhaps we seal the Breach."

"Then let's find a way down. And be careful." Cassandra puts the emphasis on that last bit of her sentence. I know she means for me to be careful.

I follow the way down the stairs and can't help but stare at the devastation that is left within this temple. Everything is broken, shattered into pieces, rubble and rocks lay everywhere. I can't believe I actually survived this. Then again, I can't believe how it even happened. What happened back at home that made me end up here? I remember so much of my life back at home but I can't remember how I got here. Suddenly a flash appears in the entire temple and a distorted male voice calls out: "Now is the hour of our victory. Bring forth the sacrifice."

There is a slight echo to the voice and it sends shivers down my spine, apparently down Cassandra's spine as well. She sounds troubled. "What are we hearing?"

Solas, calm and collected as ever, not fazed by it at all answers plainly. "At a guess: the person who created the Breach."

As we keep walking, I notice some shiny red crystals spiking out of the floor of the temple. It's glowing and shining, the red glow emanating from them. I stop walking to stare at it. It looks.. oddly beautiful.

"You know this stuff is red lyrium, Seeker." Varric whispers towards Cassandra, but because of the temple, his whispers are echoed so all can hear him.

Cassandra's jaw clenches. "I see it, Varric."

"But what's it doing here?" he urges her. As if Cassandra would know. I look back at the trio and give them a quizzical look.

Solas chimes in. "Magic could have drawn on lyrium beneath the temple, corrupted it..."

Varric interrupts Solas' explanation: "It's evil. Whatever you do, don't touch it."
I cock my head to the side, wondering what they're talking about. They simply look like oddly beautiful gemstones to me. You could probably make a lot of money selling it or something. "What's red lyrium-" I get interrupted by the same echoed voice humming through the temple:

"Keep the sacrifice still." I look up at the Breach, where apparently the distorted voice is coming from, another flash appears and I hear a panicked female voice.

"Someone, help me!" it has a French accent and whoever is calling out, she sounds extremely distressed.

Cassandra gasps behind me. Her eyes wide. "That is Divine Justinia's voice!"

I shudder.

Great, now I'm hearing dead people speak. Juuuust lovely. This world keeps getting better and better.

Finally we make it down towards the center of the temple, below. There's just a small ledge we need to jump down from. I awkwardly get on my hands and knees and back up slowly, until my legs are dangling from it. Then I take my staff and throw it down the ledge, onto the floor beneath my dangling feet. I hold on to the ledge for dear life with my hands, though it's not high up at all, I'm still clumsy as hell and I would definitely see myself falling down and hurting myself. I hang onto the ledge until my toes touch the floor beneath me and I drop myself onto the floor. Varric is stifling his chuckles as he, and the others simply jump down with ease. I glare at him and huff slightly, patting my hands onto my leather coat, to get the dust off of them.

Then they all look at me intently. Including Leliana, and her men. The archers are watching me intently from up the ledge, the soldiers are glaring at me from behind us. Right, they want me to approach the Breach. After all, I'm the one with the mark.

I slowly and carefully make my way towards it. As I do, the Breach and the mark flare to life, both at the same time. I grit my teeth at the now familiar feeling of pain. The same tendrils of lightning running through my veins. The faint humming and throbbing in my muscles, spasms are starting and I have to try hard to keep my hand still. This thing, is definitely the strongest in this area. The energy is vibrating through my entire body. I can feel it start at my palm, going down all the way towards my toes. Until even my legs are humming and shaking. Then the same female voice calls out:

"Someone, help me!"

"What the fuck is going on here? What are you doing? Release her!"

My blood runs cold. That is my voice. But I don't remember this at all. I don't remember saying any of that.

"That was your voice. Most Holy called out to you. But-~" Cassandra stops mid sentence and looks at me in confusion.

I look at her with the same look of confusion and suddenly we are surrounded by a green fog, coming from the Breach. Then, a bright white flash appears all around us, blinding us all momentarily. We are looking at... A woman, her arms are covered with a red something. Like magic or energy pinning her down, hanging from somewhere. She's alive, but seemingly terrified. She's wearing the same red and white robes as Roderick was wearing, except she's also wearing a headpiece. She looks like a pope. Infront of her is a black mass of fog, with two glowing red eyes. Claws for hands, seemingly holding something, but what it is, I cannot see. Then we all see me, in my black tanktop and black yoga pants running up towards them. "What the fuck is going on here?
What are you doing? Release her!

The woman spots me and immediately calls out to me. "Run while you can! Warn them!"

The black mass speaks up now, his voice even more low than before, it makes me terrified just hearing it. "We have an intruder. Kill her, now!"

My eyes widen. That thing wanted to kill me? Why, why does everything want to kill me in this world?!

Then another big white flash and the vision is gone. Dissapeared as suddenly as it appeared.

Cassandra grabs me firmly by the shoulder and turns me around to face her. She looks pissed as all hell. "You were there! Who attacked? And the Divine, is she...? Was this vision true? What are we seeing?" she's raised her voice up at me now.

She's bombarding me with all these questions and I don't even know what the hell just happened! "I don't remember! I told you." I shout back at her.

Solas walks over towards the Breach and hums. "Echoes of what happened here. The Fade bleeds into this place. This rift is not sealed, but it is closed... Albeit temporarily. I believe that with the mark the rift can be opened, and then sealed properly and safely. However-" he turns to look at me, his face a serious expression, a warning one. "-Opening the rift will likely attract attention from the other side."

Other side? What kind of attention?

Cassandra calls out behind her, to Leliana's men; "That means demons. Stand ready!"

The soldiers who are down here with us unsheathe their swords and prepare themselves for battle. The archers up on the ledge are taking arrows from their quivers and putting them between their fingers and bowstrings. I gulp down another lump. The tension here... It makes me anxious for what's about to come.

Cassandra nods at me, giving me a sign that I can start opening it. However Solas jogs up to me, holding my left hand tightly, while staring down into my eyes. "Eliana. You must know that the demons who will come out of this rift, are different from the one's we've encountered so far. I will stay behind you and keep you safe as best as I can. However do not try to do what you did earlier in the mountain. You will die."

My eyes widen. "This isn't helping, you know that right, Solas? I'm already terrified."

He squeezes my hand. "Good. You'll need to be. I will help you close it as I did the first time, if you're having troubles. Just remember that this is unlike the other rifts you've sealed. It'll take a lot of your energy. You will be drained."

I exhale deeply. "Okay. So either I die by a big ass demon who wants to kill me, or I die because I'm trying to seal the damn thing. Yep, got it. No problem whatsoever. Thanks for the heads up, Solas." I say in a wry tone of voice.

He releases my hand and says nothing, readying his staff instead. I raise my palm hesitantly towards the Breach and instantly they both link up. This time it feels different than before. Before I was closing opened rifts, now I am trying to open up a closed one.

Alright. Open. Show me what you got waiting in there for me, you big glowy green shit!
The Breach opens with a loud crashing sound and out comes a wave of green energy. It's spat out closeby and it forms what seems like a ball of something... Then a huge purple monster is roaring loudly as it takes form. It has about seven eyes in it's head, razor sharp teeth in it's open mouth as it's roaring, two curly long pointed horns sticking out of it's head. The rest of it's body is covered in spikes. It has a huge and long tail, also with spikes at the end of it. It's body is surrounded by purple streaks of lightning.

_Holy Jesus, Mary and Joseph!_
I immediately step behind Solas' body and cower behind him.

Cassandra yells out to everyone: "Now!"

Suddenly the archers release their arrows, so does Leliana. The soldiers are charging towards it, slashing and hacking the demon before them. Solas is attacking it with fire balls, Varric is shooting a barrage of arrows from Bianca and Cassandra is stabbing it from each angle, while holding her shield close to her body by the straps. I whimper behind Solas and can't help but feel like a pussy. How am I supposed to fight anything in this world? This thing alone takes my breath away, not in a good way mind you.

The demon is laughing maniacally as it's forming balls of lightning between it's claws and sending it towards us. Cassandra and the soldiers are knocked back for a moment and scramble back up, quickly attacking it again. "We must strip it's defenses! Wear it down!" she calls out to everyone.

Solas yells at me while using his staff, gracefully sending attacks towards the demon. "You must disrupt the rift, Eliana!"

I cry out behind him. "Fuck!" it sounds more like a whine but whatever. I know what this means, it means I'll have to leave the safety of Solas' back and get _closer_ to that fucking thing.

Luckily the demon before us, is trying to attack the archers back up on the ledge so it's stomping it's way away from us all. The rest follows it and I take this is my opportunity to disrupt the rift.

I run up towards the rift before me and quickly raise my palm up to it. As I'm trying to disrupt it all I'm thinking is about how quickly I want this to be over with. I just want to go home, for fuck's sake! I want to be in a normal world again, where I don't have to worry about dying every step that I take. I am starting to feel emotional then. I am homesick. Then the rift sputters and I hear the demon behind me cry out loudly. The link dissapears between the rift and my hand and I turn around to see the demon is kneeling down onto the floor, hunched over.

_It's weakened! I did something!_

I feel triumphant as I am watching everyone attack it with all their might. But not for long, because the demon quickly gets back up to it's feet and turns it's head directly towards me in one swift motion.

_Fuck me sideways._

It waves it's hand to the side and a whip of lightning appears within it's right hand, crackling and curling into all directions. It's stomping it's way back towards me and I cry out and run away, towards Varric instead, since Solas is on the other side of the demon by now and I'm too afraid to run past it.

"More coming through the rift!" Cassandra yells out.

I look to the side and notice shades are coming towards Varric and I, the demon is being attacked by
everyone else and has forgot about me, for now at the least. I look around me, panicked. I left my staff on the floor near the ledge and I don't dare run towards it now. Instead I take the only means of a weapon that is closest to me, and take one of Varric's arrows from his quiver and hold it steadily into my hand. It won't keep the shade at bay but if I stab it just right, I might be able to weaken it or even kill it. Maybe.

The shade is inching it's way closer to me and for the first time I don't fear it as I've did before. After all, this fucking demon infront of us, throwing lightning around like it's no one's business, is way fucking scarier than these little shits. Now I get why Cassandra said they pose no real threat. Yeah, she wasn't kidding after all. When it's close to me, I take the arrow and stab it into it's head a few couple of times. Pulling back hard to take it back out and repeat the very process over and over again. The shade is screeching out but I will not give up until I see it move away from me or die before my very feet. Finally, after the twentieth stab, it dissapears in a puff of smoke and I exhale for what feels like the first time in forever.

"Good job, beauty! Now go and disrupt that thing!" Varric calls over his shoulder.

I nod and run back towards the rift, dodging and evading the blows from the demon's lightning whip and the shades that are attacking the others. Once again I repeat the same process as before, disrupting it, weakening the demon. As I do so, the shades all dissapear infront of the battling group and they all move towards the demon again.

However this time, when the demon gets back up to it's feet, it's noticing me again. And it seems like this time, it's not going to get distracted by the others attacking him. Trying to draw it away from me. It immediately conjures two whips of lightning in both of it's claws and throws them down my way. I am hit by both of the whips and the feeling... is excruciating.

I've never been hit by lightning before but it's the absolute worst fucking feeling ever. My entire body tenses up, shocked in place, quite literally. As the tendrils of electricity hit me on both the left and right side of my midriff. The lightning paralyzes me and it shocks me down into my very core. I can feel my heart pumping rapidly, so fast that it's hurting my chest. The lightning is burning down into my skin and my tanktop is completely tattered where the lightning hit me. Leaving my skin beneath slightly exposed. I cry out loudly and fall down onto the floor, curled up into a ball of pain and agony as I shiver, still feeling the burning on my skin. It's like the lightning is still inside of my body, crackling and travelling through my torso, going rapidly into every direction, bouncing off the walls inside of me. It feels like my heart is about to thump out of my chest.

The demon has already moved on to the others and is long gone, I am just shivering and wailing out in pain on the floor, surrounded by rubble and... I see another shade make it's way towards me.

When it's close to my body, I close my eyes.

This is it.

But then I hear it screech out, I slowly open my eyes again and Solas is standing behind the shade, he has impaled it with his staff and it dissapears around it. He crouches down before me and puts a protective barrier around the two of us. "Eliana!" he places his hands on my body as I look up through my tears.

"So much for my help, huh." I say wryly, still shaking from the pain.

He takes out a potion from his satchel and throws it down my throat, I almost choke on it because he did this all so suddenly that I didn't even know what was happening. As I swallow down the bitter poultice, I can feel some sort of energy returning to me. But I'm still in agonizing pain as he helps me get back up to my feet. "We must close it, now!"
At this very moment, everything seems to be in slow motion for me. I look at Varric, who is still going strong, despite his entire face and body being bloody. I turn to watch Cassandra as she's still bashing the demon with her shield and crying out her war cries. Her arm is bleeding heavily but she seems not to care about it. The soldiers and archers are still in place, not breaking formation, hitting the demon from every possible direction. Leliana is shooting out arrows rapidly and without hesitation. She doesn't miss one arrow, hitting the demon over and over again. The demon itself is covered in arrows all around it's spiky body and is roaring unholy roars.

Solas is dragging me towards the rift, he's almost carrying me as my feet are simply not cooperating. He takes hold of my left hand then and raises it up to the rift. I cry out as the pain returns to my palm and I am now feeling pain in my torso, and my hand and arm. The tears are literally rolling down my cheeks but I can feel his energy within my own. It's like he's sharing it with me, giving me enough power to do this. I'm sure I wouldn't be able to do it all on my own. The pain is starting to numb my body at this point. It's so bad, the white hot pain in my chest, the throbbing pulsing pain in my arm and hand, that it's starting to blend in with numbness. I can't figure out if it's because I'm starting to get used to it, or if it's going away. What I can figure out is that I'm slowly losing consciousness. My link between the rift and hand is sputtering and the light is dimming. My eyelids are too heavy, and I can't keep them open much longer. I can feel Solas' energy keeping me awake, sending spikes of adrenaline through my body until the rift explodes with a loud crash and I hear the demon's roars fade out in the background.

Then I collapse. Nothing keeping me up anymore, except for a pair of strong arms, holding me up from hitting my head against the stone floor beneath me.

**Solas:**

I am carrying the poor girl in my arms, back towards Haven. We finally reach the gates of Haven and I look down at her face.

"Will she be alright?" Cassandra asks me, her voice full of concern and worry.

I sigh and shake my head. "I do not know, Seeker. I'll have to examine her body and see what injuries she has sustained."

Varric shakes his head, his eyes look troubled. "She was hit by lightning. Can't imagine the pain she must've felt."

We enter an empty cabin and I immediately lay her down onto the bed.

I am trying to remove the leather coat around her body gently, when I hear Leliana's voice speak up behind me: "You know we must still bring her to Val Royeaux for trial, Cassandra."

I look over my shoulder in disbelief. This girl almost **died** defending everyone here in this world, while not knowing any of the people who inhabit it. After being thrown into Thedas and she has lost all memory thereof. And they still wish to execute her?

"I know this, Leliana." Cassandra's voice is harsh. "She has helped us however, and I will not see them execute her for something she did not do."

Leliana's eyes widen. "So you believe she has nothing to do with the Divine's death?"

Cassandra sighs. "I do. Though she was there with the Divine in the vision we saw earlier at the temple. I don't believe she is guilty of her death. We saw the black mass in the vision. That's our enemy. Not Eliana."

Varric scoffs. "She can't even look at a dead body without throwing up. I don't think her the type that would kill another human."

Leliana looks at me then. "What about you? Where's your opinion in this matter?"

I look down at the pale faced girl before me then and shake my head. "She is not the enemy, nightinggale. She was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. I sense no evil on her whatsoever. If anything, I sense kindness and curiousity."

Leliana nods then. "And what of this story she has told?" she turns her head towards Cassandra again. Who in turn shrugs her shoulders.

"I... don't know. Solas said it is not impossible. Truth be told, I can't imagine anyone within the entire of Thedas, who doesn't know how to defend themselves. Even children are taught how to defend themselves, even they know the basics. Eliana however, seems to be unfamiliar with it all." her eyes widen then. "Leliana. She mentioned she was wearing something when she first arrived here. A steel thing around her wrist. Did you keep anything that she was wearing when she first got here?"

Leliana thinks on it for a moment. "Hm, yes. She was." she reaches down into her pocket and pulls out a steel band with some sort of round thing on top of it. It looks like a compass almost. She shows it to all of us, I can't help but look at it too. It has little diamonds all around the compass. "It's not moving though. It's broken it seems."

I hum. "It is like a sundial. But far more complicated. There's numbers telling time. And these things-" I point at the little arms within it. "-These must tell what time exactly."

Cassandra admires it. "I've never seen anything like it before. Just like her necklace. It has the moon in it." the Seeker's voice full of wonder.

I raise my eyebrow up slightly. "What necklace?" I hadn't even noticed.

Cassandra walks over towards Eliana and takes a necklace hanging around her neck gently between her fingertips, showing me. It's a small and delicate chain, made of silver. The pendant hanging from it, has a blueish looking full moon within it, surrounded by black, depicting the night's skies.

I stare at the pendant in admiration. "This pendant depicts a new moon. The moon’s first phase. But how did the creators of this pendant manage to get it's depiction in there? None of our silversmiths are able to make such an intricate design."

Varric is standing on his tippy toes, trying to look at it also. "Well, if it's not anything we've ever seen before..." he stops to look at all of us.

Leliana thinks for a moment. "Her fashion, her jewelry, it's not from this world. At first I thought it might be Orlesian, but... I know Orlesian fashion when I see it."

I clear my throat then. "Also, she has this condition called asthma. I've never heard of such a condition before in my entire life. Wherever she is from, her people are far more advanced than we are." I look back at the girl and then back to the others. "However, I must examine her now and heal her. Before she succumbs to her injuries. I do not yet know how bad they are."

Cassandra dips her head towards me then. "Very well. I'll leave this with you." she places the band of steel with the time on it, onto the bedside table. "We will all leave and speak to Chancellor Roderick about everything."

Varric scoffed. "Not me, Seeker. I'd rather not enter the Chantry, and piss off the revered mothers."
Leliana chimed in. "I will have to speak to my men, see how much lives were lost amongst our squad."

Cassandra nods. Then they all left the cabin.

I take a deep breath then and examine her body. Her top is tattered, revealing some of the fair skin beneath it. I gently lift the top up, from her abdomen, but stop right before her chest. I want to protect her modesty. On her beautiful pale skin, I see the strands of lightning depicted in red marks. It's a feathery, fern like pattern running down her white skin. Because her skin is so fair and sensitive, I can definitely tell these scars will remain. Though they will be lighter and less visible as they are now, no magic can heal those. She has these scars on both the left and right side of her torso. Starting from her chest, down to her waist.

Poor girl.

I place my hand gently on her skin and start to heal the trauma that's done to it, as best I can. I can feel her relaxing underneath my healing hand. Sending cool tendrils of healing magic down into her body, relieving the pain and soreness that will come after, once she wakes up. Also making sure the blisters won't start to form later on, since that will definitely give her much discomfort. Then I move on to her cheek, removing the three scratches she has sustained from the shade back at the mountain. The blood now dried on her face, I remove with a damp cloth, revealing her slightly flushed cheeks. She's entirely passed out for the moment, her body is trying to regenerate energy, as she's used all of it while closing the rift earlier. Although she hasn't closed it permanently, it's a start and it gives us more time to figure out what our next step will be. She needs to get better at this, or it will surely kill her the next time. I suppose I will have to be the one doing this, helping her get better at it.

I look down at her face, she is quite extraordinary. I can't help but feel intrigued by her story. Where did she come from? How did she get here? What was life in her world like? Her fair skin starts to look slightly better now that I've healed her as best I could. Like the blood is starting to come back to her face, though still very fair skinned, the color is coming back. Her beige blonde wavy long hair is a tangled mess right about now, I'll have to make sure someone get's her a comb for it. Though she is not Elven, I can't help but feel mesmerized by her looks. She's beautiful and has an odd beauty about her. She looks nothing like the humans from Thedas. Her eyes are big, and I remember her ocean blue eyes from before. When I met her, and she was looking at me with big curious eyes. Her lips are now slightly parted and her breathing is soft, her chest moving up and down with every in- and exhale she takes. Her lower lip is slightly bigger and wider than her upper lip, which is barely visible. When she smiles, her upper lip completely dissapears and makes way for her pearly white front teeth. She did have a beautiful smile. It's contagious. Her facial features are not sharp at all, rather she has very soft features. Child like, almost, though she is very mature for her age. She mentioned she was only twenty two years of age, a mere infant compared to my age. I sigh, and roll back down her top.

Then I hear small knocks on the door of the cabin. "Come in."

Three elven servants slowly and hesitantly make their way into the cabin, all women. One of them, with brown messy hair speaks up. Obviously too afraid to speak up to me. "S...sorry.. Messere.. we... We've been sent.. t..... to wash her and... give her... some new attire." the poor girl stammers.

I nod and get up from the bed. "Good. She is in good health now. I will leave you to it." Before I make my way out of the cabin I turn to look at the three ladies before me. "Might I suggest using a comb as well, to sort out her hair before she needs to cut it all off due to the tangles?"

The three women nod and curtsy before me and I leave the cabin, back towards my own. As I do, I pass Varric infront of a fire pit, between some tents. "How is she, Chuckles?"
I stop and clasp my hands behind my back, looking down at the dwarf before me. "She will live. Though the lightning will leave scars on her body. Beyond that, no permanent damage was done."

The dwarf lets out a sigh of relief, I am surprised to hear it. "Well, that's good to hear. Would be sad to see her go so soon. She's something, ain't she?" he smirks up at me.

I simply nod. "You took a liking to her." raising my eyebrow up slightly as I say this.

He snickers softly and looks into the fire before him. Quiet for a moment, then he speaks up again: "Who wouldn't? It's.. endearing to see such innocence in a world like this. You can't tell me even you are not intrigued by her story?" he looks directly into my eyes then, urging me to speak my mind.

"It's interesting.." I remain vague.

He laughs loudly. "Interesting he says! Sure, Chuckles." he stretches for a moment then looks at me one more time. "I think once she's feeling better I'll ask her some more things about her world. Might make a good story, you know." he winks and retires to one of the tents next to him.

I walk away but cannot hide my smile.

We'll see, master Tethras.

Eliana:

I open my eyes up slowly and look next to me. I'm on a bed. The soft mattress beneath me feels nice and comfy. Then I notice my watch, laying on the bedside table and I immediately sit up straight and take it.

They did take it then!

I frown when I notice that the watch no longer works. Time has stopped, possibly at the moment I arrived here. The time is set on a quarter to three.

So it was midnight when I got here, since I was wearing my sleepwear.

I think long and hard about it, but still, I've no memory of how I got here in the first place. It annoys me a lot. I place the watch back around my left wrist, where I always wore it on. Though it's broken and there's no way of it working ever again, it's something from back home... I needed something from back home. I look down at my clothes and I am no longer wearing my own. Instead I am wearing a leather outfit. Long leather pants, mocha colored. With a long sleeved shirt, made of a cotton like fabric, in a beige color. Next to my bed is a chair with a pair of long boots ontop of it, and a leather jacket, in the same mocha color as my pants. Though this jacket is not as long as the old one Cassandra had given me first. It's cropped, and reaches down, just below my breasts. Though it also has long sleeves, which I am glad about. There's a few pockets in it and when I stroke the inside of the coat, I notice it has some sort of wool inside of it. There's also a big white woolen shawl, for the cold weather here. I pick up the boots and admire them, these seem to be my exact size! I put them on quickly but I am interrupted by a lady entering my cabin, holding a wooden crate in her hands. She's looking rather relaxed, until she sees me and drops the crate and falls down to her knees. Her head practically against the floor tiles.

"Oh! I didn't know you were awake, I swear!" the woman, who was also an elf, with short brown hair looked terrified up at me.

I raise my hands up slowly. "Don't worry about it! I only-"
"I beg your forgiveness and your blessing. I am but a humble servant. You are back at Haven, my lady. They say you saved us. The Breach stopped growing, just like that mark on your hand." I look down at my left hand then and notice it's stopped glowing at all. Before it was always visible, though maybe faint, it was still there. Now, it's doing nothing. "It's all anyone has talked about for the last three days."

*Three fucking days?! I've been passed out for three days? Damn...

"Does that mean it's safe now?" I ask her hesitantly.

The woman slowly gets up to her feet again and fiddles a bit with her hands infront of her body. "The Breach is still in the sky, but that's what they say. I'm certain lady Cassandra would want to know you've wakened. She said 'at once'."

I get up from the bed and stare at the woman with pity, she seems so afraid of me. But why? "Where is Cassandra now?"

"In the Chantry, with the lord chancellor. 'At once' she said." then she takes off, running out of the cabin.

I stare at where she stood for a moment and notice the crate. I crouch down infront of it and see some strange looking plant within it. I've never seen such a plant before in my life. I don't really know what to do with it, so I leave it be.

I decide to put on my new boots and lace them up correctly, once I am wearing them, I notice the size is just right. They must've measured my shoe size while I was out. Then I put on the jacket and drape the shawl around my neck tightly. Then I look around the cabin some more. There's a hearth next to my bed and the fire feels nice and warm. Then there's a desk with a scribbled note ontop of it. I take it and read it for myself:

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'Patient observations

Vain hope: Someone better at this than me takes over before the survivor expires. Notes in case.

--Day One--
Clammy. Shallow breathing. Pulse over-fast.
Not responsive. Pupils dilated.
Mage says her scarring 'mark' is thrumming with unknown magic.
Wish we could station a templar in here, just in case.'
--------------------------------------

I gulp and put the note back down.

Unknown magic? There's magic in me? What? The mage they're referring to, is most likely Solas. He has been with me then. Took care of me, but also another person. Some sort of doctor?

Then I see a small mirror hanging from the wall and I immediately dash towards it. In all this time I've been here I never got to see what I looked like. I wondered if I still looked the same. I sigh a breath of relief when I realize I've not changed at all. Though there are certainly dark circles below my eyes, I look the exact same way. I am glad when I see I am still wearing my necklace. They didn't take that off. I put the pendant between my fingertips and move it around between them, as I normally do when I'm troubled by something. My hair seems to be combed and when I run my fingers through it, there's no sign of tangles at all. That's a relief as well. I know how easily my hair
gets tangled up and it's good knowing there are combs in this world. Though I wish to know about plumbing in this world. I look around the cabin some more, and realize, to my dismay, that there's a brown pot standing next to my bed. My nose crinkles as I understand what that is.

*Ugh, a chamber pot.*

I shiver at the thought of using it, but figure I have no other option, since I really, really have to go. I unlace my pants and drop them, including my smalls, doing my thing, squatting over the pot. It takes me a while to do it, it reminds me of when I was back in Taiwan, using the public restrooms when...-

*No. I don't want to think of it.*

I shrug the unwanted thoughts from my mind quickly and finish up. But how does one wipe in this world? I see no toiletpaper hanging from the walls. I groan and curse inwardly. Then once my smalls and pants are back up I stare down at the pot in disgust. I'll need to throw that shit away when no one's looking, probably tonight. Then I stare out of the window, it's light out, but I still can't tell time here so I've no idea what part of the day it is. I sigh and walk outside the door of the cabin and see the same town I've seen before, there are two guards standing infront of my cabin, keeping the visitors at bay.

I raise my eyebrow up as I notice the entire crowd of people, gathered infront of the cabin, anxiously trying to get a peek of me. I feel extremely uncomfortable then.

"That's her! That's the Herald of Andraste!"

"She managed to close the rift."

"Don't stare at her, it's impolite."

I hear all the whispers going around as I make my way past everyone, the two guards are saluting me as I walk by them.

*What the fuck is going on? Three days ago they still eyed me with hatred and suspicion, and now they like me?*

Some gasp in awe as I make my way past them, others bow down or curtsy. I definitely don't like this. I quickly make my way past the crowd of people and up the stairs, walking past an abandoned fire pit and a couple of tents. I see two women in red and white robes, chanting something. Then I notice the big building, I've seen it before, when Cassandra was leading me towards the rifts. That must be the Chantry.

I walk into it's doors, past the religious figures standing before the doors and make my way through, there's voices coming from a door directly opposite of the entrance. It's Cassandra's and Roderick's voice. I follow their voices as I look at the inside of the Chantry, there's candles on the floor, all lit, a few empty benches, some have wood on them. Above the door opposite me hangs a banner, with the same symbol I've been seeing on everyone's armour. So the eye symbol is the Chantry symbol. Got it.

"Have you gone completely mad? She should be taken to Val Royeaux immediately, to be tried by whomever becomes Divine!"

"I do not believe she is guilty."

"The prisoner failed, Seeker. The Breach is still in the sky. For all you know, she intended it this way."
"I do not believe that."

"That is not for you to decide. Your duty is to serve the Chantry."

"My duty is to serve the principles on which the Chantry was founded, chancellor. As is yours."

I linger before the door and listen in on their conversation for a while before I decide to simply enter the room, still a bit afraid to face Roderick a second time.

I see Cassandra resting her hands onto the table before her, Leliana to her left side with her arms crossed and Roderick to her right, his hands clasped behind his back. The moment he sees me, he sneers at me. "Chain her! I want her prepared for travel to the capital for trial."

Cassandra gets up from her stance and regards the soldiers behind me. "Disregard that, and leave us."

The two soldiers salute her and leave the door, closing it behind them. Chancellor Roderick takes a step towards Cassandra. "You walk a dangerous line, Seeker."

She in turn takes another step towards him as well, she's snarling at the man before her. In this light of the room, with some candles and torches lit, her features are even sharper. Her sharp cheekbones more defined than ever. "The Breach is stable, but it is still a threat. I will not ignore it."

I am starting to get quite fed up with this behavior from Roderick. I haven't done anything, I'm not the one who killed their precious Divine and I even helped them all. I could've just.. ran. "I did everything I could to close that damn thing. It almost killed me."

Roderick turns his head sideways to face me, wrinkles forming on the bridge of his nose. His bushy and unkept eyebrows are frowning and his eyes full of dissaproval of me speaking up. "Yet you live. A convenient result. Insofar as you're concerned."

Cassandra is gritting her teeth and hisses at Roderick from the side. "Have a care, chancellor. The Breach is not the only threat we face."

Leliana stands next to Cassandra, backing up her friend and comrade, as well as me, it seems. "Someone was behind the explosion at the Conclave. Someone most Holy did not expect. Perhaps they died with the others- or have allies who yet live." the ginger haired woman is eyeing Roderick suspiciously from the side. Frowning as she takes the man in.

Roderick seems appalled by Leliana's accusation, as he takes a step back, moving his hand up towards his chest. "I am a suspect?!

"You and many others."

He points his finger towards me then. "But not the prisoner."

Cassandra interjects. "I heard the voices in the Temple. The Divine called to her for help."

He shakes his head. "So her survival, that thing on her hand- all a coincidence?" he crosses his arms, staring at Cassandra, urging her.

She dips her head slightly. "Providence. The Maker has sent her to us in our darkest hour." she turns to look at me, I can see some sort of admiration in her eyes. Or perhaps a respect she now shows me.

I hang my head. "Cassandra... I..." I don't feel that way. I don't believe in their Maker and I don't
even believe in a God back at home. I believe there is some higher power, but I don't directly tie that to a make believe figure in the clouds. In white robes with a white beard. Or whatever depictions there are of a God or several Gods. "I can't be-"

She interrupts me, her eyes look saddened. "We lost everything.. then, out of nowhere, you came.” she turns around and walks away for a moment, towards a bookshelf further away. She seems emotional. Overcome with sadness.

Leliana takes over for her. "The Breach remains, and your mark is still our only hope of closing it."

Roderick snarls at Leliana now. This man is really not making friends. "This is not for you to decide."

Cassandra walks back over towards the table infront of us, slamming a big dusty book down onto it with a loud thud. The same eye symbol ontop of the cover of the book. The Chantry symbol. "You know what this is, chancellor. A writ from the Divine, granting us the authority to act. As of this moment, I declare the Inquisition reborn.” she inches her way closer towards Roderick, threateningly. He in turn walks backwards slowly, away from the intimidating woman before him. She's pointing her finger directly at him now. "We will close the Breach, we will find those responsible, and we will restore order. With or without your approval."

Roderick looks at her, then at me for a moment and then he walks off without saying a word. His pride surely stung.

Leliana walks over towards the book on the table and speaks towards me now. "This is the Divine's directive: rebuild the Inquisition of old. Find those who will stand against the chaos. We aren't ready. We have no leader, no numbers, and now no Chantry support."

Cassandra nods and looks at me. "But we have no choice: we must act now. With you at our side."

My eyes widen.

*She-hulk says what now?*

"Okay hold on just a moment. What is the Inquisition of old, exactly?"

Leliana answers me. "It preceded the Chantry: people who banded together to restore order in a world gone mad."

Cassandra continues: "After, they laid down their banner and formed the Templar order. But the Templars have lost their way. We need those who can do what must be done united under a single banner once more."

"But aren't you guys still part of the Chantry?"

Cassandra snorts. "Is that what you see?"

Leliana looks down at the book before us on the table. "The Chantry will take time to find a new Divine, and then it will wait for her direction."

Cassandra steps closer to me, her eyes piercing. "But we cannot wait. So many grand clerics died at the Conclave... No, we are on our own. Perhaps forever."

I shake my head. "No no no, you are trying to start some sort of Holy war."
"We are already at war. You are already involved. It's mark is upon you. As to whether the war is holy... that depends on what we discover." she remains calm and collected, whereas I am royally freaked out right now. I just want to go home, now it seems I'll be staying here even longer.

"And what if I refuse?"

Leliana's voice is curt. "You can go if you wish."

Well then. Great.

Cassandra puts her hand on my shoulder then. "You should know that while some believe you chosen, many still think you guilty. The Inquisition can only protect you if you are with us."

Leliana chimes in then, completely reeling me in for the entire holy war, Inquisition madness: "We can also help you. If you do this for us, I will make sure we won't rest until we find out how you got here and how we can help you return back home."

"It will not be easy if you stay, but you cannot pretend this has not changed you." Cassandra looks at me with pleading eyes. For the first time I completely agree with her. Though there are still some things I want to know about all of this.

"So, let's pretend I agree to all of this... How will it work exactly? You know I cannot defend myself, I don't wield a weapon, I've never had to do any of this weird crap before in my entire life. I don't belong here and I know next to nothing about Thedas and people will notice that. You guys were already not that accepting of me when you found out, how will others react if they hear I'm from some other alternate dimension?"

Cassandra and Leliana look at each other for a while then. Leliana nods. "True. We will have to work on all of this. For starters, I'll make sure I'll prepare some people to mentor you about everything. The Chantry, the history of Thedas, magic, its inhabitants, everything. Before we go out and do anything at all, you'll also need to know at least the basics of defending yourself. Choosing a weapon might be a good start."

Cassandra gave Leliana a murmur of approval. "A big wooden stick cannot be your weapon, Eliana." she smirks up slightly at me. Her dark brown eyes holding a playful twinkle.

Leliana continues: "As for your backstory, since people will ask about that, perhaps we must come up with a fake background story. It has to be legitimate though, we can't just come up with any stories. People will do their research on you. You will have to take on this persona and stick to it, no matter what, no matter who we encounter on our journeys to come."

I nod. That all sounds good to me. Though I will probably be very very busy doing all of this, I agree with them both. If I'm going to stay for God knows how long, I want to be able to make myself useful for once. "Fine." Cassandra holds out her hand to me and I shake it firmly.

Leliana smiles kindly up at me. "Eliana Courseland, this is the beginning. I will start to prepare everything. You will hear from me once I have set everything up. In the meantime, I suppose you should enjoy your free time while you still have it. Because you're going to be a very busy woman in the next couple of weeks."

I swallow loudly. "Yeah... no kidding." I laugh a bit but only because I'm slightly overwhelmed, it's a nervous laugh and Cassandra squeezes my shoulder softly, reassuring me.

Well, no time to waste. Let's see what Haven has to offer.
Reliving Memories

Chapter Summary

Eliana gets to know Solas better, and his ...ears.

She also speaks with Varric alone for a while, teaching him a little something something about her world.
She figures out a way how to tell the time while she's in Haven.

Then, we'll all get to know a little bit more about Eliana's backstory. A part of it, for now.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Once I leave the Chantry I notice the sun is going down then. I take a deep breath and casually walk out of the big building. Haven's inhabitants have all gone back to doing what they normally do. I walk around aimlessly a bit, absentmindedly and really take in the town for the first time. Before I wasn't really doing this, and I wanted to know what this little quaint town had to offer. It was nothing like back home. The little rustic town was hidden between the mountains, surrounded by nothing but snow and a frozen over lake. There was a huge wall made out of wood, surrounding the town, with one big gate at the entrance of it. Always being guarded by soldiers, infront and behind the gates. They only opened from the inside if someone was approaching them and if you wanted to enter from the outside, they'd simply open a little peeping hole within the gate's doors to see who it was. If they recognized you, you were permitted entrance, if they did not... they'd call someone higher up to see if you were legit. They were currently building something within the gates of Haven, big wooden weapons by the looks of it, but I couldn't quite make out what it was exactly, since they were still building them. Like I said, the lake before Haven was completely frozen over, but the area surrounding the lake was rich of iron and the same plants I saw in that wooden crate that was left in my cabin. There was a cabin not too far away from Haven, though it seemed to be abandoned. Following my walk through and around Haven, I also noticed rams prancing about, and some sort of buffalo creature, though they looked different from Earth's buffalo's. Right infront of Haven's gates, were a couple of tents pitched up and what looked like a training field for the Inquisition's soldiers. Then, another structure to the far right side of the gates, where they were making weapons and armour, with a cabin attached to this structure for the blacksmith to sleep in.

I re-enter Haven's gates and walk back up the stairs, immediately I see a familiar face. Varric. He's crouched down infront of the firepit that was abandoned earlier. The moment he spots me he smirks up at me. "Beauty! It's good to see you're up and walking around. Taking in the scenery?"

I nod and smile warmly at the dwarf. I sit down next to him, infront of the fire and warm my hands up. "Yeah, I figured I'd get familiar with my surroundings. I made sure to get back in time before night fell though, I didn't want to get lost."

He chuckles and pokes into the fire with a wooden branch. "So, now that Cassandra's out of earshot, are you holding up all right? I mean, you go from being the most wanted criminal in Thedas to joining the armies of the faithful. Most people would have spread that out over more than one day."
I sigh and stare into the fire before me. "I still can't believe any of this is really happening, you know? It's all so surreal."

He nods. "Ain't that the truth. For days now, we've been staring at the Breach, watching demons and Maker-knows-what fall out of it. 'Bad for morale' would be an understatement. I still can't believe anyone was in there and lived."

I look at the dwarfs face, he looks troubled by it all. I can't help but feel for him, for everyone here. I'm not really a part of this world but I somehow am now. I can't believe any of this is real but I have to, because I've felt the pain, I've seen it with my own eyes, it's most definitely real. "It's a miracle I got here in the first place and a miracle I made it out of there. Or maybe it was luck..."

He looks at me intently. "Good luck or bad?"

I scoff. "When you figure it out, please let me know."

He smirks at me and sighs. "Have you eaten anything yet? You must be extremely hungry by now."

I have been feeling hungry for a while now, yes. I simply nod.

He gets up to his feet and gestures for me to follow him. "Come, let me show you the tavern. I don't know what kind of food you're used to, but the food there isn't half bad."

I follow Varric quietly, as we reach the tavern. I read the sign on the outside of the door: 'The Singing Maiden'. When he opens the door, the tavern is filled with smoke. Some people are smoking something, it smells odd. Not like the tobacco back at home. There's a lady infront of the hearth, with a lute in hand, singing for everyone inside. I can see some people, passed out where they are sitting, their heads on the table. Next to them a mug with ale in it. Varric sits down at a still empty table and gestures for me to sit with him. He calls the lady from behind the counter towards our table. "Flissa!"

The woman, with brown hair, medium length walks over to us both. She's wearing a corset around her waist, a white shirt above it, revealing her bare shoulders. A simple leather apron infront of her long grey skirt. "What can I get you?" she smiles kindly up at Varric and I.

The dwarf scratches his chin for a bit and winks at me. "I suppose we'll go for some roasted ram with bread."

Flissa nods. "What would you like for drinks?" She looks at me then, but I've no idea what they're serving here.

Varric reaches down into his pockets and takes out some big silver coins. "We'll take some ale." he presses the coins into Flissa's hands and she dips her head and takes off.

I look at Varric gratefully then. "I'll pay you back."

He lifts his hand and waves it around slightly. "No worries, beauty. I know you've got nothing to spare right now. By the time we go out on trips, you'll find enough sovereigns to pay me back tenfold."

He's so kind. So far they've all been kind to me, well perhaps not Cassandra and Leliana at first... but now they all seem to have warmed up to me a bit more.

I raise an eyebrow up at him then. "Hey Varric? Why do you keep calling me 'beauty'?" I had been meaning to ask him that since the very first time he did.
He snickers slightly and makes himself comfortable on his seat. "You're a beauty, it's as simple as that. No woman I've met before in my life, looks quite like you. I suppose that's just the way women look over where you're from," he stares at me for a while. "Say, what's it like where you're from anyways? It's... an interesting topic of discussion. I've met a lot of people, but never one from another world."

I roll my eyes slightly at his 'compliment' but I know he means nothing by it. It just seems like he says exactly what he's thinking and I suppose I can appreciate the honesty. After all, I never found myself to be beautiful in particular. I just seemed to think I looked ordinary. But maybe not here, not in Thedas. "Well... what would you like to know exactly? If I were to tell you everything about where I'm from, then we'd be long gone, swallowed up by the Breach, before I'd ever finish telling you."

He thinks for a moment and then points at my necklace. "That necklace of yours and that thing around your wrist."

I frown. "Yes? What about them?"

"What is that thing around your wrist exactly? And what's the story behind the moon in your necklace? All of us took a look at it three days ago, we couldn't make it out at all. It's so... strange looking."

I giggle slightly. "This thing around my wrist is what we call a watch. Normally, when it's working, it tells the time."

He hums. "Chuckles figured that out somehow."

My eyes widen. "Solas did? Well, he was right. See these numbers? Six to twelve is either from evening until midnight or from morning until afternoon. And twelve to six is either afternoon until evening or midnight to morning. Those little dots in between the numbers tell minutes, every dot is one minute. The big arm tells how many minutes have passed and the short arm tells what hour it is. So let's take a look at the way it is now: the short arm is on the number three, the long arm is on the number nine. This means my watch, or clock, stopped ticking at a quarter to the hour three. Since I was wearing my sleeping wear when I got here, I know it was midnight when I arrived here."

He seems baffled by it. Though it's such a simple thing to me. "Is there more to it?"

I nod. "If the short arm moves from one number to the other, that equals one hour. If the short arm has gone full circle, it means twelve hours have passed. Depending on the light outside, you'll determine whether or not it's morning, evening, afternoon or midnight. One day consists out of twenty four hours in total. So by the watch that would mean two times the twelve hours. And this really thin arm over there? It tells the seconds. So if that thin arm has gone around full circle, then one minute has passed and the long arm will move slightly to the next dot."

He whistles. "Woah. How did your people figure that all out? Seems like they got a lot of time on their hands." he winks at the pun he's just made and I giggle hysterically.

"Yeah they sure do."

Flissa returns to our table and places two plates of roasted meat infront of us, with a side of bread next to it. Then she places two mugs infront of us, with a dark brown liquid inside of it.

*That must be the ale from Thedas.*

I shiver slightly. I never really liked ale back at home. I can't imagine I'll like it here but it's a gift.
from Varric, he's paid for it and I won't be a fussy bitch and complain about it. Besides, I am quite thirsty as well.

He takes a bite out of the meat, not using any cutlery, simply his hands. With his mouth full and greasy finger, he points at my necklace. "Whah abouh tha' necklash?"

I chuckle at him speaking with his mouth full. "This does nothing fancy. It's simply... a trinket." I start to feel slightly sad then and take a bite out of my own meat as well.

He swallows it down his throat. "Hey.. you alright?" he looks at me with concerned eyes.

I shake my head and swallow the food down. "It's just.. a painful memory. I'm not sure I'm ready to talk about it yet. I'm sorry."

He nods and takes his mug into his hand and raises it up towards the air, into my direction. "Well, here's to better times then."

I take my own mug as well and clink it against his own. "To better times." then he takes a big sip out of it and I take a small one out of my own. I shiver at the taste in my mouth. It's like the ale back at home, but the liquid is far thicker and the alcohol is definitely stronger in this ale.

Varric laughs loudly and places his mug back onto the table with a loud thud. "Not used to ale, beauty?"

I shake my head as my jaw tenses up at the aftertaste of it. "Not to any liquor in general, truth be told. But it quenches the thirst, so I'm glad for it." I say wryly.

By the time I reach my cabin it's already dark outside. The stars shine brightly up in the skies and the moon shows it's half crescent shape. I'm full, entirely full. The roasted ram was extremely tasty, though I've never had ram before, it tasted like any other meat. The bread was gritty and grainy but not half bad, like Varric said. We had two mugs of ale and I was starting to feel light headed, that's when I decided enough was enough and apologized to Varric. I needed some much needed rest. Even though I'd been passed out for three days already. When I got into the cabin, I noticed the hearth was still burning. Varric had told me that Cassandra made sure I got my own servants, to give me whatever I needed. Especially since I was not familiar with the ways of this world. They probably kept the fire lit. They were also the one's who combed my hair out and left said comb on the desk near my bed. They were the one's who placed my new outfit on the chair and dressed me partially in it. I was thankful for it, if I saw them tomorrow, I'd thank them. I take off the boots, the coat, the pants and the shirt until I realize that I am actually wearing some sort of bra. It's more like a breast band to be honest. No straps, simply a clasp at the back of it, I trace the lines on my skin with my index finger slowly. Will I have these forever? It's... odd. They almost look like a strange tattoo. I'm not even bothered that it's permanent, I don't feel mutilated or anything. If anything, I'm just glad to still be alive after that. And then I fall down onto the mattress of the bed, my head into the pillow. I take the covers and wrap myself in them. Strangely enough, despite the cold weather outside, my cabin is nicely warm inside because of the hearth. It doesn't take long before I doze off and into my dreams.
The sun is shining in my eyes, I groan as I move to my side, out of the bright sunlight. I look around and then lift my wrist up to check the time.

Oh right... I'm in Thedas and my watch is broken.

I sit up straight into my bed and the fire in the hearth is out. Once I get out of bed, I see a bucket of water on the bedside table, with a cloth hanging from the bucket. I gasp out in excitement.

I can wash!

I walk over towards the bucket and see a bar of soap next to the bucket. I take it in my hands and lift it to my nose to smell it. It's a faint smell of jasmine and ...something else. But it's flowery and feminine. I'm extremely relieved to find that they do know about soap in this world. Most of the things in here are so primitive, I was almost afraid they didn't know about any of this. I put my hands into the bucket of water and feel it is still lukewarm. Then that means the servants haven't left long ago. I splash the water into my face and rub it all over, washing off the crust and sleepiness from it. Then I take the cloth and wet it into the water, lathering the soap onto it. First my body, then my pits and then I rinse the cloth out into the water. Lastly, my bits. When I'm doing this, something hits me.

I cannot shave.

My nose crinkles at the thought. Well shit. That's going to be shit. My legs would be hairy as all hell, not to mention the rest. I shudder at the thought.

How do people here get intimate with eachother? Do they just not care about the hair?

I shake the thought from my mind as I finish up and dress up. Well, I suppose I'll be au naturel while staying here. Perhaps I might like it, at least it saves me the stress and worry and time to shave. Not that I'm expecting to get laid here or anything. I chuckle at the thoughts. Once I am all dressed up and ready to go, I leave the cabin and walk around again, past the singing maiden. Past more cabins, until I reach a set of steps. I walk up them and notice three cabins, with Solas standing infront of one of them, his back is facing me. I immediately get excited. There's so much I still want to know, want to ask of Solas. His ears, him being Elven, magic, everything. I stand there for a while, staring at him as he's staring at the cabin before him, his long graceful index finger on his lips. I'm just ogling at him from the side and eventually I notice his ears twitch slightly. My eyes widen.

Woah. They actually twitched! They are real!

He turns around and the moment he spots me he smiles kindly at me and walks into my direction. I immediately feel like a creep for staring at him the entire time, he must've noticed, perhaps that's why his ears just twitched.

When he is before me he clasps his hands behind his back, giving me a intrigued look. "The chosen of Andraste, a blessed hero sent to save us all." he's teasing me, I can see the playful gleam in his eyes.

I snort a bit too loudly. "Am I riding in on a shining steed?"

His lips curl into a smile, his eyes soften. "I would have suggested a Griffon, but sadly they are extinct. Joke as you will, posturing is necessary."
I smile back at him warmly. He averts his gaze then and turns his body sideways, looking down at the people of Haven milling about. "I've journeyed deep into the Fade in ancient ruins and battlefields to see the dreams of lost civilizations. I've watched as hosts of spirits clashed to reenact the bloody past in ancient wars both famous and forgotten." He turns his head back towards mine then and smiles. "Every great war has its heroes. I'm just curious what kind you'll be."

My mouth drops slightly, I heard every word he said but right now all I care about is him speaking about the Fade. "Wait, you've seen ancient ruins and battlefields within the Fade?" I sound like a little excited kid but I can't help my interest.

He chuckles at my reaction and cocks his head to the side, giving me a piercing look. "Any building strong enough to withstand the rigors of time has a history. Every battlefield is steeped in death. Both attract spirits. They press against the Veil, weakening the barrier between our worlds. When I dream in such places, I go deep into the Fade. I can find memories no other living being has ever seen." he speaks about it with so much passion. Every word once again carried with wisdom and a sense of poise. It's mesmerizing to hear him speak, I could listen to him talk for ages.

"You fall sleep in the middle of ancient ruins? Isn't that dangerous?"

He nods, understanding my question, my confusion. "I do set wards. And if you leave food out for the giant spiders, they are usually content to live and let live"

I shudder at the thought. "Giant spiders? Oh god. That sounds... scary to me. Though what you're explaining to me all sounds so wonderful and... extraordinary."

He seems surprised by my reaction. "Thank you. It's not a common field of study here, for obvious reasons. Not so flashy as throwing fire or lightning. The thrill of finding remnants of a thousand-year-old dream? I would not trade it for anything." he looks back towards the people of Haven momentarily then before continuing: "I will stay then, at least until the Breach has been closed."

I raise my eyebrow slightly. "You were... thinking of leaving then?" I am almost sad to think of him leaving. He's so interesting and he has supported my story and background since the very first moment I met him.

"I am an apostate mage surrounded by Chantry forces and unlike you, I do not have a Divine mark protecting me. Cassandra has been accommodating, but you understand my caution."

"You came here to help, Solas. I won't let them use that against you."

He stares at me intently then, his voice low and husky. "How would you stop them?"

I think for a moment, he's right, how would I stop them exactly? But my determination is strong. "They need me, don't they? I'll stop them however I have to. After all, I'm the one with the mark, am I not?" I smirk up at him deviously.

"Thank you..." his eyebrow slightly raised at me. As if he's confused by my reaction. As if he's.. conflicted about something.

I nod and then move around a bit awkwardly, looking around the area. "Sooo... Magic huh."

He gives me the side eye slightly. "Your world truly doesn't have magic?"

I shake my head. "Nope. No Elves either, or dwarves. It's... odd. But interesting to me."

He chuckles. "Yes, I've noticed your staring at my ears."
I flush a bright red and avert my gaze quickly, kicking against a little pebble on the floor. "Ah... yes.. I uh... I'm sorry but... They're just..." I look back up at him and he's trying to find my gaze with his piercing eyes. I stare directly into his eyes then, we're both staring at one another, for a while, not saying anything. I take his facial features in.. I never noticed the dimple in his chin, or the small scar he has right above his right eyebrow. Speaking of his eyebrows, they're a deep auburn shade of hair. And for the first time I notice a bit of a stubble on his bald head.

So he shaves his hair off?

He interrupts my thoughts and breaks the silence, seemingly amused by my reaction. I must be ogling him again and this time he caught me doing it right infront of him. "Yes?" he urges me in a teasing manner.

I clear my throat. "Ah yes. Just... I know this must seem weird to you.. but... Can I... perhaps..." I am trying to put it in a good way so I don't sound creepy. But I'm afraid there's no way to say it without being a total creep. "Touch them?" I look down at the floor, too afraid to look him into his eyes.

He lets out a laugh, and it startles me slightly, surprises me. When I look at him quizzically he shakes his head while smiling. "Touch my ears, huh?" When his eyes meet mine again, I can tell he's amused for sure.

I groan. "Alright, forget I asked. It's just... Elves don't exist where I'm from. Only in fairytales, told to children to make them dream about beautiful things and help shape their imagination. I've always loved Elves in tales I've read and... It's just... I know it's creepy. I apologize."

He looks around for a moment and then takes both of my hands into his own, lifting them up towards his ears. All the while, he's staring directly into my eyes.

Yeah, Solas. That doesn't make it creepier at all.

I take his pointy long ears between my fingers gently then and rub my thumbs over the length of them softly. When my thumbs reach the ends of his ears, the pointy bits, I pinch them softly. They feel just like regular ears. The cartilage in his ears reach up to the pointy ends. I am taken by his ears. Which is... such a weird thought when you think about it. I am no longer looking at his eyes, instead I cock my head slightly to the side as I feel and stare at his Elven ears. Then, he clears his throat, still staring at me. "Satisfied?" he smirks slightly.

I immediately take back my hands and place them infront of my body, feeling slightly uncomfortable. "Yes, thank you so much. I... I'm really not weird." I look up at him desperately.

Again, he laughs. "Come." he gestures for me to follow him into the cabin he was standing infront of earlier. I hesitantly do as I'm told, wondering why he wants me to follow him in there.
He gently places his hand on my back as he ushers me inside of the cabin.

Once we are in there, he points me towards a chair infront of a desk. I sit down onttop of it quietly and he takes a seat onttop of the desk, looking at me. "I've some questions as well, if you don't mind."

I nod frantically. "Not at all. Ask away."

"Where you're from... You say there's no magic there, but your people.. they are advanced are they not? More advanced than us."

I nod slowly. "Yes. My people are more advanced than you guys... We have electricity and machines that make our life a lot easier. I suppose that's our version of 'magic'. For example.. we
have running water wherever we go. Most of the time. Meaning I could take a warm bath by simple pulling a lever or pushing a button. Or, I could watch stories reenacted infront of me through a... screen. I can listen to music through a small device and... well there's many other things. However, being here is not bad. I'm not saying you people are primitive or anything. It's just... different. Like going back to basics for me."

His long finger is rubbing against his chin as he takes all of the information in. His curiosity seems peaked. "You speak about it all so plainly. As if you're not entirely happy with it. It seems like a world of wonders to me."

I chuckle. "Yeah.. I get your reaction. However, I'm not saying it's a bad thing. Just... makes us all very spoiled. With all the technology in my world and the inventions people come up with, society seems less and less open to anything or anyone. It's like we no longer care about our surroundings. We are so drawn into our own little bubble, whenever someone we don't know for example, enters that bubble, we almost freak out. Nobody really cares about anything anymore. We've become... dull.. Everyone doing everything on auto-pilot." I notice him frowning at me using that word and quickly correct myself, to make him understand my meaning: "Mindless. We have all become mindless creatures. Milling around, aimlessly." I grit my teeth. "I myself am guilty of that too, back at home."

"So in that sense, you'd say this world is... better?"

I shrug my shoulders. "I'm not a professional yet. I've only been here for a couple of days and the majority of it, I've spent cowering behind you while fighting enemies and demons, and I've spent it passed out. But... I suppose so. People help people here. Take you for example, from what I gathered so far, apostates and the Chantry don't mix well together. Yet you're here, helping out the Inquisition. You're all strangers to one another. Varric, Cassandra, you. Yet you help. No questions asked. It's just... the way you are. It's your sense of duty, wanting to help and it's amazing to witness that first hand. Makes me glad to see there's humanity left somewhere. Even if it's in another world."

He smiles softly. "I see. Well, you sure give me a lot of praise Herald."

I crinkle my nose and realize I am making an annoyed face. He laughs heartily. It's like music to my ears. Most the time, Solas is so serious. But there is definitely a playful and funny side to him. Sometimes a very cocky side. I like that. I shrug the thoughts from my head then. "Please don't call me that, Solas. Or you wish me to call you Chuckles instead?" I smile defiantly up at him.

His eyes turn serious then, but his lips tell a different tale. "I'd rather you don't, da'len."

I frown at him now. I've heard him call me that before. "What does that mean? That word?"

He cocks his head. "Da'len? It is Elvish. It means 'little one' or 'child'."

I scoff. "Child? You think me a child?"

He shakes his head. "I don't mean it in a bad way. You simply are younger than I. It's some term of respect."

I hum. "Yes, how old are you exactly? Or is that rude to ask?"

"Not at all. But... let's just say I'm at least twice your age."

My eyes widen, I am shocked. "You are forty?! But... you don't look that old at all."

He frowns at me then. His lips pressed into a thin line.
Oh crap! I've insulted him.

"No wait! No.. I didn't mean it like that! I just meant to say you don't look that bad for your age! No... shit. I mean... ugh. Like... You look good for forty.... That doesn't help, does it? I just mean....-"

He interrupts me, chuckling. "-I get it, da'len. You praise me once again."

I hung my head in shame. "I am terrible at explaining myself sometimes. I apologize."

Then when I look back up at him, I notice him staring. It makes my face feel hot and I immediately feel uncomfortable.

I haven't felt this way in a long time.. Not since...

"What's wrong? Your face speaks for you when your mouth does not."

I shake my head. "It's... nothing." I get up from the chair and dip my head slightly. "I should probably get going now, Solas. Thanks for talking to me."

He nods. "I feel the same way, Eliana. Until next time, then?"

I smile. "Yeah, definitely! I still have a lot of unanswered questions for you. But that's for another time."

He gets up from his desk and walks me towards the door of his cabin, opening it for me. As I leave I feel content, but still a bit odd because Solas is... something. Doing things to me for some odd reason. It cannot be for the sole reason that he is an elf. I know it's not. There's just something about the way he carries himself. It's... intriguing.

(...) The next morning I wake up before the sun rises and I am glad about it. I went to bed on time last night. I didn't do much throughout the day, I went to see Adan the healer, close to Solas' cabin. I met him and found out he was the one who has healed me. The one who wrote the note I found the first day I woke up in Haven after closing the Breach. I've helped him find notes that he was missing in the abandoned cabin outside of Haven. I also met up with Harritt, the blacksmith. He's a grouchy man but he's the one who made my armour. Yes, I didn't even know this but the outfit that was given to me, is actual armour. Though it's all just leather, it's good enough for me. I don't think I could wear the heavy chainmail and breastplate Cassandra always wears. Then lastly, I met up with quartermaster Threnn. Interesting woman, that one. I helped her find some resources for the Inquisition, together with Varric. She needed iron and log. I had no idea how to get the iron, but luckily Varric was willing to help me with that.

When I woke up, I was determined to do something that irked me for a long time. When it was still dark outside, I decided to look for a long, straight stick and a couple of pebbles. When I had found them, I sat in the snow right outside my cabin, waiting for the sun to rise. It would be a long and tedious task, but I was determined to figure out the time. When the sun finally rose, I planted the stick into the snow, making sure it was placed correctly. Also making sure the area around it was not going to be stepped on. It was a sunny spot and so it begun.

The moment the sun shone down onto the stick, it casted a shadow. I used one of the pebbles to mark the place where the shadow fell on the ground. Then I started counting. For a full hour, I counted. 3600 seconds. Then, the shadow moved. One hour had gone by and I placed the second
pebble to mark the place where the shadow fell on the ground. Throughout the day I continued this for every single hour. I wanted to make sure I did this now while I still had the free time to myself, before Leliana would find the mentors for me and I'd be busy again. I didn't move at all, still counting the entire time. Ignoring everything and everyone who passed by me, giving me odd looks and stares. Even when Varric came to ask me what in the Maker's name I was doing, I ignored it and continued counting aloud, so that I wouldn't lose count. I would explain everything once I was finished. Of course I had to use my chamber pot, so occasionally I'd move inside of my cabin, but I never stopped counting. I'd count aloud as well, when using the pot, to make sure I didn't fuck up. At one point, the elven servants came up to my cabin, with a bowl of food and a mug of water. Placing them both gently next to me on the snow, not coming near my creation. They looked confused but didn't say a word.

I'll thank you later. I promise you that. 3370.. 3371... 3372..

I ate the slimy and gritty porridge inside the bowl and drank the water that was given to me. Not once stopping the counting. I had gathered quite a following at this point. There were little kids staring at me, sitting infront of me. Some people had stood there, watching me intently and confused, wondering what the hell I was doing. I ignored it and kept going. It was tedious, I knew it would be. But I wanted this. It was a luxury but it was nice to have it once I'd finish. Eventually I noticed Cassandra, Varric and Solas gather infront of me and the few people that were still patient enough to wait for me. Though most had already given up and left. They spoke to one another briefly, trying to rationalize what I was doing. But I was focussed on my task. The sun was about to go down, I had reached the last hour of sunlight. At this moment, Solas was the only one left with me. He walked over to me quietly, not disturbing me. And used one of his spells to keep me warm. After all, I had been sitting in the cold snow for an entire day. He kept me warm, using his spell and sat down next to me quietly. Observing me and my 'invention'.

I got up then, and placed the final pebble where the shadow was cast. I continued counting, but then the sunlight was gone. It was dusk now.

I sighed and smiled triumphantly up at Solas. "Seven P.M. Which is seven hours after midday. It's evening now."

He clapped for me and I jokingly took a bow. "Thank you.. Thank you." I joked.

He looked down at my invention and made a murmur of approval. "You were creating a way to tell time, by using the sun."

I nod. "Yes. I was counting every hour. That's 3600 seconds every single time. I am cold, though not as cold anymore thanks to you... You have my thanks, Solas."

He nodded. "I can't help but admire your determination, da'len. I'm impressed."

I sigh and stretch my arms up above my body. "I just... wanted to be able to tell the time. It's so hard to figure it out here, without my watch working."

He clasped his hands behind his back. "Yes, Varric told me all about it earlier today. Though, the people of Haven and our comrades think you crazy for doing what you did today."

I giggled. "I'll explain it all to them, tomorrow morning. When I can check to see if it worked." I smirk up and I cannot help but feel proud of myself. I'd never do such a thing back at home. But since I didn't have anything to do, literally, nothing. And because not knowing what time of day it is, irked me so.. I figured 'why the hell not'. And the pride I felt, the satisfaction after finishing this, there's nothing like it.
"Here." Solas takes off his own cloak then and drapes it around my body.

I shake my head and try to take it back off again. "No, Solas. There's no need. I have my own coat and-"

He interrupts me in a stern tone of voice, reprimanding me almost. "No, Eliana. You've been sitting here in the cold for an entire day. I've only been able to help you warm up for a little. You'll get sick. Wear this and sleep in it tonight. Underneath your blankets. Make sure your body is properly heated. Or else I'll have to give you that potion I've given you before." he warns me.

The thought of the taste of that poultice immediately sends shivers down my spine. "Fine." I say defeated. "But you'll get it back. I promise."

He simply smiles at me and nods his head, with it, he takes off.

When I am back inside my cabin I yawn loudly and wrap myself up in Solas' cloak. Though I hate to admit, he is right. I was cold, and I would likely catch a cold if I didn't dress up warmly enough right now. I knew my body and I knew I easily got sick. Tonight I'd sleep in full armour then, with his cloak and underneath the blankets as well. With the hearth lit. I'll probably sweat like hell but whatever. Then I smell a scent coming from the cloak. I bring the fabric up to my nose and sniff it. It's a mixture of... old books, or parchment and some type of grassy smell.

It's his smell.

I fall onto my bed and without covering myself in my blankets, I drift off to sleep while inhaling the scent coming from the cloak.

God, I'm so weird sometimes.

* * * *

That night I dream of us. I dream of my own world. But it's not a dream, it's a memory being played out before me. Which is odd because while I know I always have interesting dreams, I've never actually relived a memory in my dreams before. Must be Thedas' effect on me, I suppose.

I see him, I see myself. We are in his country, Taiwan. In his office. We're making out on top of his desk, suddenly we are interrupted by a knock on the door.

I remember this.

He groans and gets off of me, scolding and scowling. I see myself sigh and get up from his desk and pull out a little mirror to make sure I look alright. He opens the door and his friends walk in, speaking to him in his language. I sit down back onto the couch and pull out my phone, ignoring it all.

I see him never interfering with his job. I would usually pretend to be doing something else.

I remember never interfering with his job. I would usually pretend to be doing something else.

His friends leave the room and he closes the door behind them, walking back over to me. "I'm... sorry. Work." he mumbles as he plops down next to me on the couch.

I shrug my shoulders indifferently. "I know, Dan. Don't worry, we'll finish this up... later tonight?" I kiss him on the cheek briefly and wait for his answer.

He nods but gives me a serious expression then, seeing him do that again makes me worry all over again.

"What?"
“Something's come up. The boss wants me to speak with him tonight.” his tone of voice cautious.

"Is this because of what happened to Jackie?” I see my eyes widening. I realized it then and there, but I was hoping it wasn't so.

He grabs hold of my cheek gently and rubs his thumb against my cheek softly and lovingly. "Hey, don't worry about it alright? I'm sure it's nothing to worry about. Jackie was a dick, he was trying to overthrow me. He had it coming, I'm sure the boss agrees with me on that."

"And.. what if he doesn't?"

Dan looks the other way and clenches his jaw. "Let's not speak of this alright? Tonight, after the boss and I have had our talk, we'll go out and do something fun okay? How about..." he pretends to think for a while and then looks back into my direction, smiling wickedly: "How about candles, a nice warm hot bath, some champagne, chocolate covered strawberries aaaand..." he starts inching his head closer to my neck and kisses it gently.

I giggle and swat him playfully. "Promise?"

He nods. "Promise. I'll make sure Logan drops you off at the building. But remember: whatever you do, don't go inside."

I purse my lips slightly. "I know, I know. They're not so accepting towards foreigners."

"Exactly. And they still don't know about you. I'd like to keep it that way.. for safety reasons."

Then he kisses me passionately for a while and gets off of the couch.

The memory fades out and my soul flies off to the next memory.

Oh no....

Dread starts to well up inside of my soul and I don't want to relive this memory. I just don't. I don't fucking want this.

But I feel something pressing against my soul, a energy against my own. Something, higher, something powerful. It's forcing me to relive this and though I try to push it back, it's pointless. Whatever is making me relive this memory tonight, is not letting go.

I see a black car pull up to a building, I get out of it, holding my phone in my hands. I was texting Dan at that moment, telling him I was outside. I see a couple rush by, speaking in Mandarin, when they pass me they dip their heads and say 'good evening' to me in English. I smile up at the couple and return the greeting to them. I look up at the building before me, for a moment then turn my head towards the driver's seat and knock on the window. Logan rolls down his window. "Have you heard anything from him yet, Logan? He hasn't read my messages at all."

Logan pulls out his own phone and checks. "Nothing yet. Don't worry, Elie. He's fine. If you want I'll call him for you?"

I shake my head. "No. I'll wait a little while longer."

Time went by. I remember I stood there for another hour and a half before getting worried. Like really worried. Of course in this memory, time did not take that long. It simply shifts to the next moment.

Logan had already tried calling him but told me there was no answer. Then I got bold. And reckless.
"I think I'll go in... Check on him. I'll pretend to be a lost foreigner who needs help?" I look at Logan's head popping out of the window, he shakes his head.

"I don't believe that's wise.. didn't Dan tell you-"

I interrupt Logan. "I know, Logan but this is been taking forever and I'm worried!" I snapped.

Logan refrains from speaking up again and nods his head. I follow myself walking into the building, trying to scream at her not to do it. To just enter the car with Logan and go back towards the hotel. As I reach the information desk within the lobby, there's nobody there. After all, at that point in time, it was already around 2 in the morning, the staff had gone home. Except for them.

I remembered Dan telling me he'd usually have his meetings on the 24th floor. Also, that Jackie's office was on the 11th floor. I went inside of the elevator and noticed the security cameras following me. I didn't even try to look the other way, to hide my face or cover it up. Then, when the elevator came to a stop on the 11th floor, I went out into a long hallway, with several doors leading to rooms. I walked by the countless doors until I stopped right infront of a door that read: '林家瑜' Which I recogncized as Jackie's real Taiwanese name, which was Lin Jiayu, romanized. I had seen those characters on his phone many, many times before. I'd even ask Dan about it, he'd tell me that was Jackie. I held my breath and slowly opened the door to his office. I was intruding, and everyone had seen it, through the security cameras. The moment I opened the door... there he was, on the floor.

"Dan!" I dashed towards my boyfriend and fell down onto my knees next to his body, my knees and skirt covered in his blood. A knife was laying down on the floor next to him and he was just left for dead there. My tears streaming down as I was holding back the sudden sickness that I felt deep within my stomach. I could never keep my composure when I'd see blood or... more.

"Elie... what are you doing here?"

I was holding my hand onto his wound, trying to stop the bleeding while also trying to reach for my phone with my other hand. "What's the number for the ambulance here again, Dan?"

"You must leave, Elie. It's not safe, if they find out who you are..."

I am shaking my head frantically, blinded by the tears. "What's the fucking number, Dan?!"

He grabs the hand holding my phone then and lowers it gently. "You know my account, Elie. Take it, withdraw all the money and put it onto your own bank account. Then take the first plane back to England. Go home, be safe. Don't return to Taiwan for a while."

"Dan, what are you saying?"

He ignores me and continues, his voice but a whisper at this point. "You were right, the boss didn't agree with me. Jackie was to be his right hand and I fucked it all up." He chokes while laughing wryly, choking because he's stabbed and dying. I look down at his face, paler than ever before. His dark brown eyes are saddened. I shake my head again.

"Fuck, Dan. No.. you cannot... If I can call an ambulance and get you to safety then.. we can both leave and-"

He shakes his head softly. His eyes telling the truth. "Elie. Go home. Please. I don't want them to find you." I am sobbing loudly, looking at the necklace around his neck. The necklace with the same pendant as my own, except his pendant holds the depiction of a half crescent moon. He notices where I am looking down at and smiles faintly. "Promise me you'll always wear mine."
"I will..." I lay my head against his own and kiss his mouth with trembling lips. "I'll send an ambulance. I swear. I'll go and make sure Logan calls one. I'll save you. I love you so much, Dan."

"Wo ai ni."

Then the distant sounds of footsteps approaching. Dan's eyes widen. "Go! Now."

I get up to my feet, and run out of the office, I see flashlights shining onto myself as I make my way towards the staircase. I run down, almost falling down the stairs multiple times before making it back towards the lobby. I run outside the building and wave my hands at Logan, who is smoking a cigarette outside of the car. "Drive! Fucking go and drive!"

Logan's eyes are full of shock as he sees my covered in blood and immediately opens the car door and starts the engine. I quickly get into the car as well, and right at that moment five guys in suits make it outside the building as well, calling out to me angrily. They take something out and then, as we drive off, the car is being shot at.

"Fuck Elie! What the fuck happened?" Logan yells at me while swerving the car on the road, trying to calm down a bit.

"What's the fucking number of the ambulance here?"

"119, where the fuck is Dan?"

I dial the number on my phone, not caring about whether or not it's going to cost me money. "Hello? I need an ambulance in the Dōngqū district in Hsinchu... There's a-"

The memory fades out again. I wake up, drenched in my own sweat, gasping out. Instinctively I reach for the pendant and twirl it around between my fingers frantically. Then.. I break down again. I haven't felt like this in a long time. I thought I had made peace with it, somehow, or simply put it away in my mind. Why did I fucking relive that shit?! I cry out, wailing, sobbing, choking on the tears. My head is in my hands as I'm hunched over in my bed. I cry for what seems like hours, though I can't be sure. It's still dark out and I decide to walk around, clear my head. I leave the cabin, I walk up to the gates and see two guards eyeing me. "Can you open the gates, please?" I ask, my eyes still puffy but luckily they cannot tell because the light from the torches is not bright enough to show them. One of them nods slowly and opens the gates as I make my way out towards the lake. I sit down onttop of a big log and stare out at the skies above me.

For the very first time, I feel absolutely terrible. Even more so than when I was attacked the first day. Though that was excruciating pain done to my body, this was a far deeper pain. A pain I could feel deep within my soul, in my heart. It wasn't mended yet, it was still broken and I started to hate myself for it in this moment.

Why was weird shit always happening to me? First Dan... Now this Thedas bullshit.

I sat there until the sun came up, I started hearing Haven come back to life behind me. I kept staring at the lake, absentmindedly, holding the pendant between my fingers. Just lost in thoughts. I hated myself, I hated being here and I didn't want any of it to be real anymore. I just wanted to go home, I wanted to curl up into a ball on my bed, I wanted to see my mother and hug her, she always knew how to make me feel better. I wanted to eat my feelings, chocolate would be nice. I wanted to listen to music, turn up the music so loud that my neighbors would complain, I wanted away from all of this.

Eventually I felt a hand on my shoulder and it scared the shit out of me. "Fuck!" I turned my head
around and saw Cassandra looking down at me worriedly.

"The guards told me you left early in the morning, before the sun came out and have been here the entire time." she says as she crouches down next to me, eyeing me from the side, waiting for an explanation. "You don't look so well, Eliana. Have you even slept?"

I shrug my shoulders indifferently. I don't want to talk to her about it. I don't want her to even be here, I want to be left alone, to be quite honest.

"What's going on?"

I shake my head. "I don't want to speak of it, Cassandra. I just want to be alone right now."

Cassandra sighs and gets up to her feet, stretching out her hand to me. "Well, I fear that is impossible right now. Leliana has found mentors for you. She wishes to speak to you in the Chantry."

I groan and curse inwardly. "Now?" I look up at Cassandra, her stern eyes locked onto my own and she nods. A simple nod, without saying anything. And so I follow her. I am still here, I am still in Thedas and I need to do what I'm supposed to do here. Though I already knew, today was going to be a shit day.

Chapter End Notes

The only thing I could think of when putting myself in Eliana's position was; how the fuck do these people tell time here?

So hence the sundial :)

Also the shaving and the chamberpot and the washing. Like geez, how awkward would it be doing your thing in a chamberpot and having it emptied by 'servants'. Just me? - K

THANKS for the Kudo's <3 If you have any comments, feel free to leave them. It let's me know if I'm doing alright or not :)}
Britney Spears?

Chapter Summary

Eliana finally meets her mentors ;)

And she learns the fake backstory she should tell people, should she come across curious folk.

Both her mentors don't go easy on her, and Eliana finds herself struggling.. Hard. Solas and Cassandra get mad at her and she introduces Solas to some modern music.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Cassandra and I walk into the big doors of the Chantry, we are quiet the entire time until she speaks up. "I do not know what's troubling you, Eliana but what's important is that your mark is now stable, as is the Breach. You've given us time, and Solas believes a second attempt might succeed- provided the mark has more power. The same level of power used to open the Breach in the first place. That is not easy to come by."

I know what she's trying to say, I suppose. "If you're worried about me exhausting myself the way I do now, then let me say this: I want to close the Breach just as much as you want it closed. I want to go home, Cassandra."

"You'll need strength and power, Eliana. Therefore you'll need rest and the way you look right now.." she stops infront of the door and scowls at me. "Wanting to close the Breach and actually doing it, are two entirely different things. If you continue to treat yourself this way, you will not have this power." It's a warning she's giving me and it angers me that she's berating me like a little child. I know what's at stake, if anything, my determination to go back home is my strongest power.

We enter the door and into the same room we were in a couple of days ago, with Roderick. I see two unfamiliar faces before me and Leliana is here as well. One of them is a woman, with olive skin and black hair, tied into a bun ontop of her head. A few loose strands of hair fall on her forehead. She has hazel eyes, outlined with dark eyeliner.. or kohl I suppose, in this world. There's a big beauty mark right below her lower lip and she looks warmly up at me. She's wearing gold silky clothes, with puffy shoulders, with a dark blue bottom and corset. She's holding some sort of clipboard, but wooden and not plastic, with a lit candle ontop of it. There's also an inkpot on it, in her other free hand, she's holding a quill. Then.... there's a man. And my oh my, what a man. He has blonde hair and beautiful amber colored eyes. His eyebrows are of a darker shade of hair. He has a stubble for a beard and a few cuts on his cheekbones. But most apparanst is the scar running down his cheek onto his upper lip. He's wearing what looks like a steel breastplate, steel pauldrons and gloves as well. Over the breastplate is a simple cloth shirt, but it's opened at the top, revealing the breastplate. He's wearing leather pants and lastly some sort of fur draped around his shoulders.

Hubba-hubba!

"May I present Commander Cullen, leader of the Inquisition's forces." Cassandra's all but politeness right now.
Cullen exhales and looks up at me, with those eyes. Oof. "Such as they are. We lost many soldiers in the valley and I fear many more before this is through."

"This is Lady Josephine Montilyet. Our ambassador and chief diplomat."

Josephine smiles softly. "You... look much different than I expected." her accent is somewhat Spanish like.

"And of course you know, sister Leliana."

Leliana smiles kindly at me. "My position here involves a degree of-"

Cassandra interrupts Leliana, smiling defiantly at me: "-She is our spymaster."

Leliana sighs. "Yes.. tactfully put, Cassandra."

I nod at all of them, feeling slightly overwhelmed by such impressive titles. "Pleased to meet you all." I say quietly.

Cassandra turns to face me. "I've mentioned where you are originally from. They will be your mentors for the time being."

My eyes widen. They are my mentors?

Leliana steps forwards then. "Josephine will be teaching you all you need to know about the history of Thedas, also explaining it's politics and nobility, as she is well versed in it. Cullen will be the one teaching you about combat. Teaching, for now, the basics of defending one self in battle. Once you are ready for more, he will be teaching you to fight. Then.. there's me." Leliana looks at me intently. "I'll be teaching you about the religion and all else that you'll need to know. We've also come up with a backstory in case people will ask questions."

I remain quiet, awaiting Leliana's explanation.

Instead Cassandra speaks up next to me: "You are to be a refugee from the disaster that occured in Kirkwall. Kirkwall is a place within the Free Marches and it is ultimately where both Varric and Cullen are from. So we have 'witnesses' who can help make the story sound more believable. Right now, Kirkwall is still rebuilding after all that's happened there, with the mage rebellion. So, no one will actually go there to find out if it is true."

Josephine interjects; "Though I doubt anyone would go that far to find out who you are. Nonetheless, the story is thought through and I believe it will work."

Cassandra nods. Then continues. "Your parents both died during the rebellion in Kirkwall. You have no other siblings. No other living relatives. Your name, luckily, sounds like one that fits Thedas so you'll keep your original name. After Kirkwall was destroyed partially by the rebellion, you left for Ferelden to start anew. The reason you were at the Conclave is because you wanted to witness the peace talks, perhaps giving you an explanation as to why things ended up the way they did. And the rest... well, the rest is history."

I nod slowly. At least I'm glad I get to keep my real name. That's a relief. They ramble on about my mark needing more power. Leliana, Cassandra and Cullen arguing about whom to side with in this war. Either the rebel mages or the templars. Josephine explains that the Chantry has denounced the Inquisition and me specifically.

"Some are calling you, the Herald of Andraste. That frightens the Chantry. The remaining clerics
have declared it blasphemy. And we... heretics for harboring you.” Josephine points at me with her quill.

Herald of Andraste... I hate that title.

"Chancellor Roderick's doing, no doubt." Cassandra hisses.

"It limits our options, approaching the mages or templars for help is currently out of the question." Josephine glances down towards the parchment on her clipboard and sighs wearily.

"Just how am I the Herald of Andraste?” I look at them all, one by one, questioning them.

Cassandra curls her lips into a half smile. "People saw what you did at the Temple. How you stopped the Breach from growing. They have also heard about the woman seen in the rift when we first found you. They believe that was Andraste."

Leliana chimes in. "Even if we try to stop that view from spreading-

"-Which we have not." Cassandra interrupts her.

Leliana glares at her comrade for a moment, then her eyes fall back on me again. "The point is, everyone is talking about you."

Then, after being silent for a while, Cullen speaks up. He's smiling at me. Fuck, what a handsome man. "It's quite the title isn't it? How do you feel about that?"

I shake my head. "You want the truth?" I stare at him for a while, he dips his head. "I don't like it. It's unnerving to say the least."

He chuckles. "I understand why. I'd hate to be in your shoes right now."

"People are desperate for a sign of hope. For some, you are that sign." Leliana says, hands behind her back.

Josephine mutters quietly. "And to others, a symbol of everything that's gone wrong."

Leliana sneers slightly up at Josephine, I get why, Josephine is not making the situation sound any better to me at all. "There is a Chantry cleric by the name of Mother Giselle and she has asked to speak to you, a month from now. She is not far. And know's those involved, far better than I. Her assistance could be invaluable."

I nod. "Then I'll see what she has to say by then."

Cassandra becomes serious then and turns to face me once more. "I know you are tired. However, your teachings start today."

My eyes widen. "Now?"

Josephine steps forwards. "Come. Follow me." she ushers me out of the room and into a nearby room. "This is my office. Have a seat, Eliana."

And so it begins, my very first lesson on the history of Thedas, with Josephine starts. I learn many things on one day and she makes me write down everything, with a quill and ink. I've never written with a quill and ink before and I find it difficult to do. The first couple of sentences I write down are nothing but blobs of ink. Apparently it amused Josephine. Thankfully I soon got the hang of it and wrote down everything she told me.
The Chantry calendar measures time in "Ages". The current one is the Dragon Age, while the period before was the Blessed Age. Each Age lasts approximately a century and there have been nine so far. The first Age, called Divine Age, was marked by the creation of the Chantry. Time periods before that are called Ancient, so 400 years before the first Age would be -400 Ancient. In the 99th year of each Age, the Divine looks for an event or portent in order to determine the name of the new Age. The last portent was a dragon awakening and going on a rampage, which suggested an age full of violence and destruction. The years before the foundation of the Chantry are referred to as "Ancient" and are counted backwards: the year immediately preceding 1:1 Divine, the first year of the first named Age, is -1 Ancient, the year before that is -2 Ancient, and so on. Unlike the Tevinter and Elven calendars, the Chantry calendar doesn't have a year zero.

First up is the Ancient Age. Reaching far back into unrecorded history, the Ancient Age saw the rise and fall of Elvhenan, the arrival of the first humans to Thedas, the creation of most dwarven thaigs and the Deep Roads, the zenith of the Tevinter Imperium, the defilement of the Golden City, the first and longest Blight, the discovery and loss of golem-making, formation of the order of the Grey Wardens, the barbarian invasion of the Tevinter Imperium led by the prophetess Andraste, which ended in her betrayal and death, and the founding of the second elven homeland in the Dales. Many of the events of this time period are known only from oral tradition and have been heavily mythologized as a result.

Then comes the Divine Age. Following the death of their prophetess, the Disciples of Andraste compile the Chant of Light from her teachings, but it's not until they find support of a strong state leader, the future Emperor Kordillus Drakon I of Orlais, that their cult becomes an organized religion. Drakon forms the Chantry as his new state's religion and has Justinia I crowned as the first ever Divine, giving the first Age its name. Shortly thereafter, the Second Blight strikes Thedas and as the Tevinter Imperium proves unwilling to defend its former provinces, Thedosians turn to Kordillus Drakon for salvation. In the wake of his brilliant military campaigns against the Darkspawn, Drakon's empire and the Chantry it represents grow rapidly. The Nevarran Accord of 1:20 Divine establishes the Circle of Magi, a system that allows hitherto ostracized mages to fight the Blight under the Chantry and specifically the Templar Order's supervision. The Grey Wardens convert to the Andrastean faith in gratitude for Drakon's support, further popularizing his religion. Meanwhile, the Dales repeatedly refuse to help human nations against the Blight, and hostility between humans and elves increases. Although the rapid Orlesian expansion stops after Emperor Drakon's death in 1:45 Divine, the Chant of Light spreads throughout Thedas, including Tevinter Imperium. Archdemon Zazikel is finally defeated by the combined armies of the human nations and the Grey Wardens in 1:95 Divine, ending the Blight and starting the period known as "Rebuilding", characterized by rapid growth of culture, trade, and religion in Thedas.

The Glory Age, named after the popular attitude in the wake of the Archdemon's defeat, sees the tension between the elven Dales and the human nations, first and foremost, Orlais, escalate into open war. Although initially victorious, the elven nation is crushed within a decade after the Orlesian Chantry calls upon other Andrastean countries for help. This "Exalted March", styled after Andraste's march on Tevinter, is successful in annexing the Dales into the Orlesian Empire and scattering the elves once more across the world, now forced to live either in Alienages, or as homeless vagabonds. Another Exalted March lifts the Tevinter occupation of Starkhaven in 2:80 Glory. The first Circle of Magi is annulled in 2:83 Glory in Nevarra.

Soon follow up the Towers Age, The Black Age, Exalted Age, Steel Age, the Storm Age and Blessed Age.

The current Age is named after the first high dragon sighted in centuries. The Fereldan Rebellion successfully drives the Orlesian forces out and reestablishes Ferelden's sovereignty in 9:2 Dragon. The Fifth Blight breaks out in Ferelden, as the Darkspawn defeat the King's army and the few
Ferelden Grey Wardens at the Battle of Ostagar. Amidst a civil war, two surviving Grey Wardens unite the Ferelden armies to slay Archdemon Urthemiel in the Battle of Denerim in 9:31 Dragon. The Darkspawn Civil War follows the Blight but is quickly quelled by the growing Grey Warden order in Ferelden. To the north, the First Battle of Kirkwall leaves the city without a ruler, allowing the long-standing tensions between the Templar Order and the local Circle of Magi to come to a head in the Kirkwall Rebellion of 9:37 Dragon. The annulment of the Circles of Kirkwall and Dairsmuid incites mages to rebel and flee to Andoral's Reach from across Thedas. In response, the Templar Order secedes from the Chantry to wage war on the rogue Circles. Simultaneously, power struggles among the Orlesian nobles opposed to the ruling Empress spark the Orlesian Civil War in 9:40 Dragon.

I groan as my hand is feeling cramped up from all the scribbling down with the quill onto the parchment and drop my head softly onto the table before me.

Josephine giggles slightly. "I suppose this will have to do for one day."

I glare at the olive skinned ambassador and roll my eyes. "Wait, so there's even more?" I can hardly keep up as it is.

She simply nods. "Much more. However, I believe you know enough for now."

I wait for the last bits of ink to dry on my parchment papers and then roll them up neatly. "Alright, I'll go right ahead and study it all."

Josephine walks over towards a bookcase and takes out five different books, placing them before me. "If you've any more questions, you can find the answers in these."

I want to bang my head against the table now. I have about seven papers of my own writing infront of me and now five full books as well? This is too much for one person to read in only one month. She notices my expression change and then removes three of the books from the table, stacking them back into the bookcase. "Alright, perhaps two books will be enough."

I smile up at her kindly and gratefully. "Thanks. That... really makes it less intimidating."

She sits down opposite me on the desk and places her head into her hands then, staring curiously at me. "How did you even end up here, I wonder. It's so... mysterious."

I shake my head. "I still don't know, Josephine."

She hums. "How is life adjusting to Thedas been for you? It must be hard, coming where you're from. I've heard your society is far more advanced than ours."

I nod slowly. "Yeah, it's been... something. Though I'm not complaining. Despite the rough start I had with Leliana and Cassandra, you all have been very kind and helpful. Though I know part of your kindness is because of the mark I have. You don't really have another choice but to teach me things and help me understand it all."

Josephine frowns at me then. "You don't believe we are simply kind towards you because you are, essentially, a stranger in our midst and we wish you well?"

Oh. that was not the way I had intended it to sound.

She sighs but her eyes are kind and warm. "No offense taken, Eliana." she looks down at her own papers then and clasps her hands together. "However, if you don't mind. I still have a lot of work to do and you should probably eat something. Then see either Leliana or Cullen."
I groan inwardly. The day is not over yet...

I make my way towards my cabin and place my papers inside, together with the books Josephine had given me. I take a peek at my sundial then, it's currently around 1 in the afternoon. I am still happy I have taken the time and energy to make that yesterday. It's good knowing what time it is, even if it's not as accurate as my watch is. I walk over towards the singing maiden and find Cassandra, Varric and Solas inside already. Varric gestures for me to come over and sit with them.

"So, how was your first lesson?" Varric smirks up at me and I just sigh loudly and dramatically.

"I still don't understand how one woman can know so many things, without so much as even glance at a book."

Cassandra snorts as she plays a bit with her food, the same kind of porridge I had yesterday. "She is very bright. We are lucky to have her with us."

Solas is drinking something, but I can't make out what, his eyes are on me the entire time. Flissa comes over towards us and places a bowl of porridge infront of me, with a mug of water. I am slightly taken aback by it. "I... I don't have-"

Flissa shakes her head. ":Don't worry, Herald! It's already been taken care of." she winks and storms off, towards another table and takes their order of lunch then.

I stare down at the bowl before me and then look up at my companions. "Seeker Cassandra has taken the liberty of paying for your meal." Solas says plainly while lifting his spoon up to his mouth.

I look over at Cassandra guiltily. "Thank you, so much." She waves it off. As if it's nothing.

Once I finish up eating the gritty porridge and drinking my water down, Solas looks at me curiously. "Have you decided who you'll see next?"

I think for a moment. I don't want to end up writing the remainder of the day, I think I want to actually do something. I've been sitting still for a while and I believe knowing how to defend myself is important. Also, spending more time with a handsome man? Sign me up.

"I think I'll go see Cullen." I say a bit too longingly.

Varric notices it and laughs loudly, his hand smacking onto the table. "Well... It seems Curly has a new admirer."

I raise my eyebrow up at him first, calling him Curly but then I flush a bright red. "I.. I don't know what you're talking about!" I scoff, trying to look elsewhere. They are all staring at me with a look in their eyes, a look that says: I don't believe you for a second.

I get up from the table then and stick my nose up. "I'll need to learn how to defend myself, do I not? It's important."

"Uh-huh." Varric smirks at me, his head resting on one of his hands.

"Good day!" I say resolute and with that I leave the tavern, towards the training field outside the gates of Haven.

Once I reach the training fields I see a dozen of soldiers practicing with swords and shields in hand. It looks impressive to say the least. I realize then that I am way out of my depth here. Also, am I going to be practicing infront of all them? I slowly start to feel myself getting smaller and smaller by
the second. Suddenly a voice calls out behind me. "Herald." It's Cullen's voice.

I turn around and he's giving me a quizzical look, his head slightly cocked to the side, eyeing me. I clear my throat then. "Commander. I came here for my... uh... training?" I say hesitantly.

He looks at me with an amused look in his eyes. "Yes, I figured that was the reason you were here."

Oh man... He looks so... gorgeous.

"So, Herald.. Which weapon do you think suits you best?" He walks over towards a couple of big chests, containing several weapons. The first chest is full of swords, the second is full of bows, the third is full of big axes and the last one is full of daggers. All worn out, used weapons, solely meant for training purposes.

I glare down at the four different chests of weapons and then look at him, not knowing at all which to pick.

He chuckles lowly and turns his body sideways, taking me in. "Let's see..." he looks me up and down and I feel extremely uncomfortable with it. If he was checking me out, I would have felt better about it, but in this case he was assessing me. "You're quite skinny, barely any muscle on you.. Let's try out something first."

He walks over towards a tent and when he returns he's holding a wooden sword in his hand, smiling wickedly. "I'm going to try and hit you with this wooden sword." my eyes widen. "-You'll try to dodge my blows."

I gulp. "At least buy me dinner first before you start stabbing me with your wood." I say jokingly but still thoroughly freaked out.

He raises his eyebrow up at me, seemingly not understanding what I mean by 'wood'. "Never mind that." I quickly disregard it.

"Let us begin then, Herald." He puts the emphasis on the word Herald and suddenly he stabs towards me with the sword.

I jump backwards quickly and look up at him with pleading eyes, hoping he'll go easy on me. But he does not. Again, he jabs at me with the sword and I jump backwards again. Then he slashes it horizontally at me and I quickly crouch down, when I look back up he slashes the sword vertically, towards me. It hits me on the head hard and I grunt out. "You're quick but you don't use your head when dodging. You should make sure you're never cornered or placed in a... odd position." he says sternly while looking down at me while I'm rubbing my head. "On your feet." he commands.

I get back up to my feet and he starts again, without warning. He strikes the wooden sword down vertically, trying to hit me on the right side of my torso. I step to my left and then he immediately slashes it back towards me, without thinking on it, I lift my hand up towards the hand he's holding the sword with and push it upwards. Cullen's eyes widen and then his lips curl into a defiant smile. But he quickly pushes my arm away and tries to stab me with the wooden sword. I notice his legs are not placed in a sturdy manner. I immediately slide my right leg between his legs and try to push his left leg to the side. I was hoping that would cause him to lose balance, but instead he remains right where he is, unfaltered. He stabs me with the wooden sword, right between my breasts, though not as harshly as he hit me on the head before.

He chuckles lowly. "You're clever, but not clever enough. I win."

I huff and swat the sword away from my chest, crossing my arms. "I almost had you!" I try to
Cullen snorts. "If I were a bandit, I'd pierced your heart right then and there. Though, I must admit you tried." Then he drops the wooden sword onto the floor. "Now, let's see how good your stamina is..." he pauses and walks back over towards the chest full of daggers. When he returns, he's holding two of them and measures them against my own arms. "Good. These will do."

He ushers me towards once of the training dummies, made out of straw and a sack. I can't help but giggle at the little frowny face someone had drawn on it's head.

Cullen notices where I'm looking at and rubs his neck, smirking slightly. "One of my recruits thought it funny to give it a face. Anyhow, I want you to stab and slash that dummy as fast and as hard as you can."

I raise one of my eyebrows up at him. "That would mean, destroying it?"

He nods. "Yes. Don't hold back at all. I want it destroyed entirely. Show me what you got." he steps backwards and gestures at the dummy then.

I huff. Well this won't be hard at all! The daggers, though old and used for training, are still very sharp. I don't think it will be that hard to do. I immediately hit the dummy with all my might and strength. I make some cuts into the sack, resulting in some of the straw slightly falling out of it and bulging out. I keep going, but notice that it's actually a pretty sturdy sack of straw. I can feel the muscles in my arms starting to burn slightly as time progresses. Then when my hands are getting cramped up again, and my muscles no longer cooperate, I drop the daggers into the snow and breathe heavily. "Done?" I ask while breathing loudly.

Cullen hums and rubs his chin. "Not very much stamina... Alright. Let's take a short break, then we'll try something else." He sits me down onto a log and crouches down before me. "You've never done this before, have you?"

I roll my eyes. Duh. Didn't we know that already? "No." I say simply.

He sighs. "Listen, Eliana.. It's not going to be easy. I will push your boundaries and you will have to train very hard. I know you're fast and you're pretty good at dodging, but there's much more to it than that." he looks me directly into my eyes. "I need to know you're up to it."

I gulp. Well, I don't have much of a choice, do I? I have to learn how to defend myself, even if it's the basics. But I get what he's saying, he just tested me, to see how much I know, how quickly I pick up things, how long I can hold out... And so far, I haven't been doing a good job. I lower my head. "I am. I just... I need help."

"Right." he claps his hands onto his thighs as he gets back up and holds out his hand to help me up. "Let's get your stamina up first. Ten push ups, thirty jumping jacks, another ten push ups and lastly fifteen crunches."

My eyes widen. "What?"

He smiles wickedly at me. His scar is curled into his upper lip. "You heard me."

And so I do what I'm told. I do the ten push ups, barely. I am fine doing the first five jumping jacks, but start to wheeze doing the remaining twenty five of them. My arms give out during the first two push ups, but Cullen orders me to start all over again. "No mistakes, or you'll have to redo it all." he said. So I begin again. Ten push ups, my head is starting to sweat profusely. Thirty jumping jacks, I'm dying. Another ten push ups, my chest is pounding as my body is starting to give up again. But I
refuse to do it again. I somehow manage to do ten crunches just fine, but the last five of them make my whole body shake and stutter as I do them.

"Fif...........teen." I breathe out loudly and drop my back into the cold snow, my chest moving rapidly up and down as I'm trying to breathe normally. My face is sweaty, some tendrils of my hair stuck to my face and I know I must look as red as a tomato right about now. I move my arm over my eyes and try to compose myself, try to stop the wheezing.

Fuck this asthma.

"Good job, Eliana. Now let's-" but suddenly Cullen is interrupted by Solas:

"-She must rest, Commander!" he calls out sharply to him as he, Varric and Cassandra make their way over to me. Solas crouches down next to me and I remove my arm to look at him. He places his hands onto my chest again and does his magical thing. Immediately my lungs fully fill with air again and my wheezing stops. "She has a lung condition, her stamina is not up to par with your soldiers."

Cullen's eyes widen then. "I... Ah... I'm sorry. I didn't know." Cullen walks over to me and helps me to my feet. When I'm up I remain quiet. I feel like a child. "Why didn't you tell me?" Cullen's expression is full of worry.

I shrug my shoulders indifferently. They are all glaring at me now, Solas too, but he actually looks mad. "I.. didn't want to be any more of a burden. I need to know how to defend myself. I trust that Commander Cullen knows how to train people, so I didn't question it."

Solas slightly raises his voice then. "Had you told Commander Cullen of your condition, he could have adjusted the training to it. Making sure you wouldn't overexert yourself." he's berating me.

I lower my head in shame. He was right. Perhaps I could've told him, and he would've come up with a different kind of training. "I apologize. It wasn't my intention to overexert myself. And it certainly isn't Commander Cullen's mistake."

"Clearly." Solas says curtly. Then he turns around and walks off.

Geez, what is his problem?

I look over at Cassandra, but she too is giving me an angry snarl. Varric just has his arms crossed and looks at me worriedly. "Truly. I am sorry!" I say desperately.

Cullen pats my shoulder softly then. "We will continue this tomorrow, Eliana. Get some rest." with that, he walks off, back towards his soldiers.

I want to walk off too, but Cassandra holds me back. "Solas was right, Eliana. You should have told Commander Cullen about your condition."

I groan slightly and throw my hands up in the air in annoyance. "I get it alright! I said I was sorry twice already! I need to learn how to defend myself and that was all I thought of, during the training!" I yelled at her now. Probably not the wisest course of action...

Cassandra's eyes are shooting daggers now. "You were wheezing! You need to take better care of yourself!"

I push Cassandra out of the way and stomp my way over towards my cabin.

Fuck the training, Fuck Leliana's mentoring, screw you guys, I'm going home! Or... my cabin. Fuck
Once inside I drop myself onto my bed and scream into the pillow, balling my fists. The tears are stinging into my eyes and I am just... exhausted. From the training, from the writing, from all of the information I had to receive today, from last night's dream...

I lay my head onto the pillow and stare at the window. I felt incompetent. I can't do shit here. My whole body is not used to any of it. Slowly I drift off into sleep, my body too exhausted from today.

I quickly realize that I am dreaming because I'm in my old room. Back in my appartment. It feels.. nice, being in a familiar place again, even though I know it's not real. My radio, yes I still had a radio, was playing old 90's songs. I quickly realize that dreams here work differently. Obviously the reason the radio was playing all my favorite 90's songs was because those songs would usually calm me down. Make me happy again, when I'd be upset. Perhaps.... I get up from my bed and walk over towards the desk that the radio is on. I change songs until I hear the familiar beat of Britney Spears' song.

Du-du-du-du!

"Oh baby, baby! How was I supposed to know.... that something wasn't right here!" I yell out loudly as my body starts dancing to the old song.

I need something to make me feel better and my dreams have answered my pleas!

I turn up the volume of the radio to as loud as possible and the music is all I can hear. My hips bump from left to right and my arms are awkwardly moving along with it. Hey, I never said I was good at dancing.

"Show me, how you want it to be! Tell me baby, 'cause I need to know now, oh becauseee: my loneliness is killin' me, AND IIIIIIIIIIII, I must confess I still believe, STILL BELIEVEEEE. When I'm not with you, I lose my mind.... GIVE ME A SIIIIIIIIIIIGN. HIT ME BABY ONE MORE TIME!" I cry, howl with the song and close my eyes. I am lost to the music, I am loving it.

"Quite the performance, though I would suggest you'll need a bit more practise, da'len."

My eyes open up wide again and I quickly dash towards the radio and turn down the volume.

"Solas?!" for a moment I am mortified.. then I realize it's just a dream. "Oh. Hi. I.. didn't think I'd dream of you tonight." I snort at the thought.

He's sitting on my bed, looking around curiously. "You're not dreaming of me. I entered your dreams through the Fade."

"Sure! Whatever." I snort loudly again and smack his shoulder hard. "Whatever you say, dream Solas."

His eyebrows lift up slightly. "It's true. I am really here."

Wait... That does kind of make sense. I've never had conversations in my dreams before. Sure I'd dream of people from time to time, but we never spoke... I just always knew what they would say or... however that works in dreams. But now, I am actually talking to Solas.

"Oh god. Wait, so ... you've seen me...." I feel ridiculous.

His lips curl into wide grin. "Yes. As I said, I believe you need to practise just a bit more."
My face starts to flush a bright red then. I. Am. Mortified. "I wasn't actually trying to sing well, you know. I was... letting loose." I cross my arms, but I still feel extremely ashamed. "What the hell are you doing here anyways?" I quint my eyes at him. This magic thing is getting weirder and weirder.

He smiles kindly. "I... Wanted to apologize for my behavior earlier." then his smile disappear, and he's looking as serious as ever again. "I didn't mean to sound angry."

I sigh and sit down next to Solas, but still keeping a distance between us. "No... I get it. I just... I really wasn't doing it on purpose you know? I just wanted to learn so badly, I forgot to think of my health. You and Cassandra were right though. I don't have the medicine I have back at home. If I push myself too far, I might have a fit."

His eyes look worried now. "A fit?"

I nod slowly. "Yeah.. It's happened to me before. It starts with heavy breathing, then wheezing, then I can't even normally inhale air anymore and I take short sharp breaths. My breathing becomes squeaky, I start to make weird sounds and the breathing becomes too hard for me. I almost passed out once. Luckily I was given treatment fast. My medicine." I look down at my hands, which I have folded into my lap.

"That sounds terrible."

I scoff. "Yeah, it was pretty scary. My mother ordered me to keep my medicine with me at all times, from then on. I wasn't allowed to leave the house without them."

"What kinds of medicine did they give you? Poultices?" Solas looks at me and I have his full attention.

I shake my head. "No, they are like... inhalers? Disc like things, with some sort of powdery stuff in them. I'd have to inhale it. It would relieve the symptoms by relaxing the muscles that can tighten around the airways. Opening the airways up. Then I would always have a second one of them, that would be short acting. They are used to quickly relieve the cough, wheeze, chest tightness and shortness of breath."

He nods, but I know my explanation wasn't what he really wanted to hear. I just don't know how to explain the ingredients of it, I didn't even know what the ingredients were. I just used them for my asthma. That's all.

"At any rate, I wanted to apologize for the way I acted. It wasn't fair. I know you're trying to learn how to defend yourself. Though I still believe you should have told Commander Cullen." his eyes are piercing.

I nod. "Apology accepted. And you're right. It won't happen again." I smile softly. Then an awkward silence surrounds us both.

Solas gets up from the bed and walks over towards my radio then. "What an odd machine." he touches the speakers of it gently. "Is there a minstrel inside of this contraption?"

I snort loudly, followed up by a giggle. "No, Solas. That's a radio. It's what my people use to listen to songs. I don't really know how to explain it thoroughly but there's no minstrel inside. It just plays songs automatically. In this case, because it's my dream, it plays songs that I used to listen to release stress."

He turns his head sideways to show me a wide grin then. "Screaming at the top of your lungs is releasing stress?"
I glare at him and cross my arms. "Yes. You should try it some time." I smirk back at him.

He snickers softly and continues to look around my room. "So this is... where you're from?"

"A part of it, anyway. It is my room. Where I used to sleep."

He hums and eventually he stops right at a picture of Dan and I, that's standing on my bedside table. I immediately lose my amusement. "That's private." I say quickly.

He turns around and looks at me through half lidded eyes. "I saw him in your other dream the other night. He was... your husband?"

My eyes widen, and I am filled with anger all of a sudden. "Wait what?! You saw that?"

Solas looks a bit guilty then. "I... forced your mind more or less. I wanted to know more about you. It was wrong of me to do. I didn't know it would become so painful. You did try to push me out."

Then I remember the force I was feeling during the reliving of the memory. "That force I felt... was you?"

He simply nods. "Again, I apologize."

I look away from him then. I am fuming at this point. I can't control my anger however. "Why would you do that?! That memory... is..." I look down at the floor then. I am overcome with my emotions. Anger, sadness.

"I didn't realize it was such a painful memory to relive. I shouldn't have done it. However I couldn't help but feel like you were hiding something." his voice is so calm, it only pisses me off more.

"Of course I was hiding something! You guys don't have to know everything about me! Especially not that which I want to keep to myself!" I walk over to him and my face is only inches away from his then. He however, remains entirely calm. "You have no right!" I yell at him.

"Calm yourself, da'len. What would you have done were you in my situation? Where you can enter someone's dreams freely. When a strange mysterious woman drops out of the sky and claims to be from another world. I always travel in the Fade, I have seen places no other people have seen, I wanted to know more about you and your world. I willed your mind to think of a memory, and the memory we saw is the one your mind conjured. I terminated it however, that was when you woke up."

My body relaxes then. Though I did not agree with it entirely, I kind of got it... I mean, I was strange to them. I must be. And if I did have his kind of powers, perhaps I would have done the same thing to him or anyone else. "My mind conjured that memory?" I ask softly.

He nods. "Yes. I did not do that, da'len. I was expecting... a happier memory."

I sigh. "So did I." I sit back down onto my bed and look over to the photo. "His name was Dan. He wasn't my husband though."

Solas picks up the photo frame and examines it. It's the picture of us kissing, in the background there's fireworks going off. It was Chinese New Year over in Taiwan and he insisted I would see it at least once. It was hard leaving work during that time, but I managed to take a two week trip. On the photo I'm wearing my purple flowery dress, with beige sandals underneath. My hair was tied into a long braid. He was wearing his casual blue shirt, with black shorts and flipflops. The usual attire whenever he wasn't working.
"But you both have the same necklace. He courted you did he not?" he turns around to face me.

Absentmindedly my hand touches the pendant. "Yes.. but it wasn't like that. He was simply my boyfriend."

He sets the photo back down and cocks his head to the side. "I see."

I feel my sadness taking over and remember the radio then. "Hey Solas? Want to hear another song?" I smirk up at him.

I walk over to the radio before he can answer and search for the next song that I love. "I'll sing it for you!"

Solas smirks back at me. "I... don't believe that's a good idea, da'len. I'm not sure I can handle your 'singing' another time."

The song has already started playing and I am just patiently, no eagerly awaiting the chorus. "Are you sure? Because, I am pretty good at singing."

He holds his hands up. "I beg you." his eyes are full of amusement though.

Then I hear the chorus start and I ignore his previous words. I lift my right hand up in the air and close my eyes: "Tell me why! Ain't nothing but a heartache. Tell me why! Ain't nothing but a mistake. Tell me why, I never want to hear you say-" I quickly dash over towards Solas and yell at the top of my lungs; "-I WANT IT THAT WAAAAAY!"

Chapter End Notes

I know that nothing reaaaaally interesting happened here in this chapter, but I promise, the fluff and whatnot IS coming.

It might just take another couple of chapters ;)

The information about Thedas, I got from the wikia, and I never really read it myself up until this point :x

Anywho, it might be boring but it is something Eliana should know so yeah .

I hope you guys are enjoying the story!

xoxo thanks again for reading and leaving kudo's <3
Eliana finishes her studies and is then quizzed on her knowledge of all she's learned so far. To test her and see if she remembered everything well enough.

Solas, Varric, Cassandra and Eliana celebrate by drinking at the tavern and Eliana becomes... loose lipped and slightly inebriated, which leads to a little 'awkward' moment between her and Solas.

Then she meets someone new and decides to care for said person, resulting in Solas' approval.

She learns some more about the Elves from Solas and before she know's it, she's prepared for her first trip towards the Hinterlands...

The next morning I wake up early again, I do my business and head out for the tavern. I am not too eager to speak with Leliana yet, or Cassandra for that matter. Cassandra will most likely still be mad at me with my behavior from the other day. And Leliana will probably not be too pleased with me not showing up for my classes with her. So because I do want to make at least one good impression today, I've brought my rolled up scrolls and books from Josephine's classes, with me to the tavern. I order a plate of druffalo meat, which is what those weird buffalo looking things outside of Haven are, I find out thanks to Flissa. She returns and places the plate with meat, bread and an apple onto the table, followed by some water. I absentmindedly take bites out of my food while reading and studying the notes I've written down. I haven't touched the books yet, but I brought them with me just in case. I sit there for a while, Haven is slowly starting to come to life as time goes by. Eventually I hear someone clear their throat next to me. I glance up from my studying, with a halfly devoured druffalo in my mouth. "Ello Pharric!" I say with my mouth full.

Varric chuckles and plops down next to me. "Good morning, beauty. You feeling any better after yesterday?"

I swallow my food and take a sip of my water, placing the scrolls onto the table. "Yeah... My body feels sore as all hell, and I'm not too excited about seeing both Leliana and Cassandra today, but... I'm fine, thanks for asking." I smile wryly at the dwarf next to me.

Flissa brings him his own breakfast and of course, a mug of ale. I eye the ale suspiciously. "Already drinking, Varric?" I am baffled how early the townsfolk of Haven drink here. Varric must've only recently woken up and already he's drinking beer.

He shrugs his shoulders. "Yeah? Is that weird where you're from?" he takes a big sip and waits for my reply.

I giggle softly. "Sort of. But I get things are different here, just wondering. I apologize if it came off rude."

He smiles and waves it off. "Oh, I didn't think it was rude. How long have you been sitting here already?"
I look down at my plate and then outside the window and hum slightly. "Well, my food has gone cold and it's light out now. When I got here, it was still dark. So... a couple of hours perhaps?"

He whistles. "Any luck with the studying?" he points towards my scrolls.

I nod. "A bit yeah, though I wouldn't say I'm ready to hold speeches about the history of Thedas yet." I smirk widely up at Varric.

He laughs loudly and shakes his head. "I came here to write a bit actually." he pulls out what seems like a notebook, with a pot of ink and a quill from his satchel. And surprisingly enough, I see him pulling out a pair of spectacles.

"You wear glasses?!" I exclaim, still surprised.

He puts them on the tip of his nose, they're simple and very tiny, half crescent shaped glasses. "Only when I'm writing, beauty." he winks at me and starts scribbling away on his notebook.

I know I shouldn't disturb him but I can't help myself. I peek over his shoulder and look down at what he's writing: They say coin never sleeps, but anyone who's walked the patrol of Hightown Market at midnight might disagree. The pickpockets and confidence men head to the taverns at dusk, the dwarven businessmen and nobles go back to their tiny palaces to fret over the ways they got cheated, and the market falls silent.

His handwriting looks very elegant and medieval-ish.

Well duh, Eliana.

He stops writing and looks at me curiously. "Do you mind?" he's not annoyed though.

I snort. "Sorry, Varric. But... what are you writing?"

He dips his quill into the pot of ink and continues writing as he explains to me. "I'm a writer, you know. I write about my adventures or about what I've seen along adventures."

My mouth drops slightly. "Really? I never took you for a writer."

He chuckles. "Well I am. Before Cassandra interrogated me and before I joined you all, I recently got back from quite the adventure. Which is what I'm writing about now."

I glance down at the rest and read it aloud: "Donnen Brennokovic knew every angle of the market with his eyes closed. Twenty years of patrols had etched it into him so that he walked that beat even in his dreams. The recruit, Jevlan, was another story. The ring of steel striking stone told Donnen that the kid had stumbled into a column again. His new armor would be full of dents by sunrise."

I whistle. "Nice. Where is this Hightown?"

Varric puts the quill down. "In Kirkwall, where Cullen and I are from. And where you are from." he gestures over towards my scrolls then.

Ah. I get it. Without saying it, he's telling me to focus on my studying.

I nod. "Right. Sorry." I say sheepishly. But before I continue the studying I ask him one more thing. "Hey Varric, when you're done writing that, do you mind if I read it? Like... proof reading?"

"Of course, beauty," he says laughing.
"Cool." I say smiling widely. Then I pick up my scrolls and continue my own work.

After a couple of hours, I decide to leave my studying for what it is today. I say goodbye to Varric and head towards the Chantry, towards the war room, where Leliana will be. I muster up the courage to speak to her and I linger a bit before the door. I'm feeling kind of nervous having to face Leliana. I knock on the door softly and I hear her lilted voice coming from behind the door: "Come in."

I slowly enter the room and see her already hunched over the table, looking down at some papers. "Ah, Eliana." she immediately straightens her back and looks at me curiously.

"I wanted to apologize for not coming to you yesterday, I was...-"

Leliana interrupted me, holding up her hand smiling softly. "-I've heard everything from Cassandra, not to worry."

My body relaxes immediately and I let out a sigh of relief then. "Oh. Well... Alright then."

Leliana walks over towards a desk and gestures for me to sit on it. "Let's begin then, Eliana."

_Great. More writing._

Surprisingly enough, Leliana doesn't let me write down anything. She takes a couple of books and pages and reads them aloud for me. Explaining about the Andrastian belief and occasionally asking me if I have any questions about it. She explains about the Chantry, about the revered mothers, about chancellors, and so on and so forth. Eventually we reach the topic of Andraste herself. Leliana tells me her story and I can't help but feel somewhat interested in it. This sure is a whole lot different than the tales from the Bible. I ask her questions that I have about it all and she happily answers them for me. Eventually she puts down the books and looks at me for a while, in silence.

I shift uncomfortably in my seat. Then she breaks the silence. "Do you miss your world?"

I am slightly taken aback by her sudden interest in me and the sudden change of topic. We were just discussing the Chantry and my studies and now she wants to know how I feel. "Um... Yes. I think so."

She raises one eyebrow up. "You think so?"

I shrug. "Well, I do of course. But, I try not to think about it. I have other things to think about now."

She nods, understanding. "You have my word, Eliana. Once the Breach is closed and all danger has passed, I will try everything in my power to find a way home."

I smile gratefully at Leliana then. "Thanks, Leliana. And please, call me Elie."

She dips her head. "Very well, Elie." she hums for a moment then. "Have you noticed how our names are almost the same?"

I giggle slightly. "Now that you mention it."

She smiles at me and then clasps her hands together. "Alright, that was all you needed to know about Andraste and the belief."

My eyes widen suddenly. "Wait. you mean for today or?"

"No that was all. My part is done now."

I am confused. "Just like that? I had only one class."
"It's enough. We cannot expect you to know everything, Elie. You're just supposed to know enough so that you won't look suspicious if anyone questions you about it. I don't believe people will quiz you on it all. So long as you don't proclaim to the world that you're all knowing about Andraste." she smirks.

I scoff. "But people think I'm the Herald of Andraste. Surely I'll need to know a bit more than just this."

"Some of Josephine's teachings cover the religion as well, do they not? Besides, I thought you'd be thrilled. More free time."

She was right though. "Yeah, or more time to spend writing with Josephine or falling flat on my ass with Cullen's training." I say in a wry tone of voice.

She nods. "Or that."

"Thanks though, Leliana. I appreciate you took the time. You're all always so busy."

She dips her head once more and we say our goodbye's. Then I walk over towards my cabin before deciding who I'll see next. It's around three in the afternoon. Then I decide I'll go see Cullen. If we are to head out within a month, I need to get this shit sorted out. ASAP. Once I arrive at the practise fields I see Cassandra training on one of the dummies. She notices me but continues her training. I sigh.

*Alright here we go.*

When she spots me coming closer to her she stops and puts her sword into the snow. "Eliana."

"Cassandra.." I say hesitantly.

But before I can speak, she hold up her hand, stopping me. "I hope you understand that my reaction the other day was coming from a good place."

I remain quiet and let her speak.

"Though I was a bit hard on you, you must forgive me for that. Sometimes, I tend to... snap." she says apologetically.

I nod. "It's fine. I understand, I just hope there's no bad blood between us now?"

Cassandra shook her head then. "No worries. Though I suppose you were not here to speak to me, right?" she gestured over towards Cullen then.

I sigh deeply and walk towards him, as I'm approaching I can hear what he's talking about with one of his recruits. "You must make sure you take a sturdy position, soldier. If you waver for only a second on the battlefield, the enemy will use this against you and you won't survive."

The scrawny boy nods frantically. "Y...Yes ser!"

I stand quietly behind the two of them and watch as Cullen helps the boy hold a sword firmly in hand. The boy himself must be somewhere around my age, maybe a bit younger. And just like me, he looks like he's not ready to use a weapon at all. The boy notices me and dips his head: "Oh! Herald!" he immediately gets down on his knees and bows his head.

I scrunch my nose at him calling me that and dropping to his knees. I gently put my two hands on his
upper arms and lift him up to his feet again. "Please. You don't have to do that."

The boy looks wide eyed at me. Confused by my reaction apparently. Cullen is looking at the both of us in silence. "B... But you're the Herald of Andraste! You've saved us all."

I shake my head. "Believe me, I'm not that special. What's your name?"

The boy looks down at his feet for a moment before looking back up at me. "Tomwise, ma'am."

I smile warmly at the boy before me. He looks like he's my age but he also reminds me a lot of a little kid, the way he's acting. He's fidgety and uncomfortable, like a little kid. "Just call me Elie, Tomwise. And don't worry about the training with the sword. You see, I have to train as well with Commander Cullen and I'm not good at it at all."

Cullen chuckles softly and shakes his head.

Tomwise looks at Cullen then back at me again. "Really? But you seem much more capable than I am."

I shake my head. "I suck at it." I whisper, grinning widely. "But we have to do what we have to do. I'm scared about hurting myself as well, I can see you are afraid. But so am I. We simply have to put aside our fears and just... go for it."

He nods. "You're right. I just... I want to be good. I want to know this so that I can protect my little brother and my mother."

"You will be. It just takes practise. I have to practise too."

He straightens his back and holds his sword firmly in hand then. "Thank you, Elie. I will remember your words."

Then he turns around and goes towards one of the dummies and continues his practising. Cullen clicks his tongue. "I'm impressed, Eliana. Why did you feel the need to talk to him though, if I may ask?"

I shrug my shoulders. "I can tell he's scared shitless. But it's commendable that he wants to try this. I just figured he needed a woman's touch." I smile at the Commander and assume the push up position on the floor then. "How many, Commander?"

He clears his throat, seemingly uncomfortable. "Er... No, Eliana. No pushups or crunches today. I will simply teach you how to attack with daggers."

I get back up to my feet then and raise my eyebrow at him. "I understand you're worried about what happened yesterday but I do need to improve my stamina."

He nods. "Yes. Perhaps another day however. Come, let's get you daggers again."

During the afternoon, Cullen teaches me how to properly hold the daggers in my hands. How to use them most effectively and he teaches me a couple of simple moves to use on the dummy. I notice that we're getting an audience at some point. Solas, Leliana, Cassandra and Varric are watching Cullen and I train together.

Then he places me infront of the dummy, and places his hands on my shoulders. He's standing slightly to the left of me and his voice is close to my ear: "Now, just like Tomwise, you must take a proper stance. Without a proper stance, you will waver and fall. Keep both of your legs firmly on the
ground-“he pushes down slightly on my shoulders to make sure I’m standing firmly. “-Move your torso slightly around-“ he moves his hands down towards my sides and shifts it slightly to the right. I feel slightly flustered at him touching my body like that but I try to ignore the feeling. “-Good. Now take your right arm and bend it slightly, keeping the dagger horizontal-“ he helps me bend my arm so that the tip of the dagger is facing the dummy. “-And slash it horizontally. ” I do as I’m told and pierce the dummy. "Good. Now pull it out and try to use more force when you slash it like that. Try to pierce through it." He keeps his hands on my waist, to keep me in this stance and I swallow a bit too loudly, causing him to notice and immediately lets go. He clears his throat. "Er... Yes.. Well, let's give it a go."

I repeat the same movement and use more force this time, stabbing right through the sack-of-straw-dummy.

Cullen peeks around the dummy and notices the dagger is pierced through then. "Good job, Eliana."

I am way too excited with his praise and I exclaim excitedly: "Yeah! Take that, you sack asshole!" I whoop loudly and do a little victory dance. And as I turn around I notice everyone, including the soldiers around me, stare at me. Some of them look confused, whereas Cassandra, Varric, Leliana and Solas are smirking and shaking their heads.

I immediately feel a bit flustered again and take the dagger out of the dummy. "Well.. At least I'm happy about it..." I mumble softly.

Cullen laughs heartily. "Let's continue your practise tomorrow, Eliana. We've gotten further than we did yesterday."

"Thanks, Commander. However, you too can call me Elie." I smile warmly up at the drop dead gorgeous man before me.

His eyes slightly widen and for a moment we're just staring at one another. I'm almost lost in those amber colored eyes of his. Then his lip curls into a slight smile. "As you wish, Elie."

"Heh." I say sheepishly. Then I'm interrupted by Varric calling out behind me.

"Hey Elie-"

Shit, they've heard.

"-How about dinner?" the dwarf gives me a sly smile.

(...)

The remainder of the month flies by, it seems. Everyday I go to Josephine in her office and recite what she's taught me. Every morning I re-read every paragraph I've written down and try to memorize it. I have breakfast almost every morning with Varric. He's always writing his stories, and I'm writing down moves that Cullen has taught me, in my own words. I didn't speak with Solas all that much, though I thought I would've. I had so many more questions for him. And of course I still wanted to discuss the dream invading thing with him. I wasn't mad about it anymore, I just was curious about it all. However, I barely had time for it. Cassandra would help me train when Cullen would be too busy. Since he too had his duties to take care of. I learned a couple of good moves from her too, and wrote those down too of course. I finally managed to find out who my servants were and I thanked them from the bottom of my heart for everything they've done for me. If I ever had the chance to get them a gift, I would. I started to get to know the people of Haven some more too. Flissa was always nice and willing to talk to me if Varric wasn't at the tavern yet. I helped Adan to gather some elfroot from outside of Haven, which he needed for his poultices. I got to know some of the children in Haven as well. I'd play with them whenever I had time to spare. I taught them how
to play hide and seek, which I later regretted. Haven wasn't that big, but if four children are hiding, scattered around Haven, it's really hard to find them. Eventually I was called to the war room by one of the servants. When I arrived there, everyone was standing there: Cullen, Leliana, Cassandra, Solas, Josephine and Varric.

Leliana stepped forwards. "Hello Herald of Andraste. It is a pleasure to finally meet you." she said.

I frowned at Leliana then and looked at everyone else, but they all had a blank face and said nothing. "Um... what's going on?"

Leliana continued. "Well, I didn't think the Herald would be so rude."

Then it dawned on me. She was pretending. I got it.

"I apologize, my lady." I dipped my head slightly.

Leliana circled me then. "I must say, I've heard some tales about you. I wonder how much of it, is true?"

I kept a blank face and stared ahead of me. "Which stories are you talking about?

"Is it true what they say? Are you a refugee from Kirkwall?"

I nod. "Yes. I left the city after the mage rebellion."

"Oh? Why wouldn't you stay? Surely there was no reason for you to leave."

I feigned being hurt and lowered my head. "My parents... did not survive the rebellion. I had nothing left."

"I wasn't aware of that, my condolences. No other relatives or friends left?"

I cleared my throat. "None."

"So why were you at the Conclave?"

"Word spread that there were to be peace talks between the mages and templars at the Conclave. I wanted answers. I wanted to know why my parents were murdered. I needed it."

Leliana seemed pleased but continued regardless: "And how abou-" I interrupted her.

"I needed to know why the Maker abandoned me in those dark hours. I had almost given up my belief, but during my travels I was reminded by a verse I had ever so often heard my mother say."

Leliana seemed taken aback by my sudden improvise but went with it. "And what was that verse?"

"I shall not be left to wander the drifting roads of the Fade. For there is no darkness, nor death either, in the Maker's Light. And nothing that He has wrought shall be lost.' I had found my strength again and then... all those people died." I hung my head again.

Leliana hummed approvingly. "Well done, Elie. I'm impressed. You could've fooled me."

I looked back up and smiled wickedly. "So I passed?"

Cassandra dipped her head. "Yes. I believe you are ready. And we still have two days left before meeting with mother Giselle."
I clasped my hands together excitedly. "Two days? Does that mean I get to lay back for the next two days?"

Varric laughed. "Unless you need more training with Curly."

Cullen shook his head, seemingly pleased. "Elie has made much progress. She is not there yet, she'll need to continue practising whenever she can. But for the trip, she's ready."

I was super excited then. So much praise today!

"I want to thank all of you for being so patient with me. Even though Solas and Varric did nothing." I smirk up at the two of them teasingly.

Varric scoffs. "Hey! I kept you company every morning in the tavern!"

Solas chuckled. "You have not come to see me, da'len. You can hardly blame me."

Leliana interjected me before I could even say anything. "Well, everything is settled then. Cullen and I will make sure everything is ready for your trip in two days. I need to get into contact with the Inquisition's camps in the Hinterlands."

Josephine nodded. "I still have some matters to attend to. Or, specifically, certain chancellors.." she said in an annoyed tone of voice.

Poor Josephine.

Varric walked over to me then and took me by the arm and dragged me out of the room. "We will all have drinks at the tavern! You coming, Chuckles and Seeker?"

Once we arrived in the tavern, Varric bought us all drinks. All of us were drinking ale, except for Solas, who wanted wine. The minstrel was playing her songs on the lute and the people inside of the tavern were mostly drunk. We had some food and then continued to drink on. Cassandra stopped after three mugs of ale, Solas was only still on his second glass of wine, he was sipping slowly. But Varric and I were still going strong. Which made me feel kind of tipsy at one point.

"So.. Beauty, will you now finally tell us the story behind that necklace?" Varric said as he squinted his eyes at my pendant.

The ale had made me kind of loose lipped and I didn't really care about it anymore. I was feeling all giddy and happy. I took the necklace off for a moment and showed it to Varric. Cassandra and Solas were both staring at it too, though. They must have been curious about it as well. Though Solas knew a little, he didn't know everything. "This pendant shows a new moon, yeah?" I said, slightly slurring my words. "It is the moon phase on which my boyfriend was born."

Solas raised his eyebrow slightly. I continued. "He wore the same pendant around his neck, with my moon phase on it. Which was a cres... crescent moon..-" I slightly struggle to pronounce it. "-I was born under that moon phase." Cassandra takes the necklace into her hands gently.

"That's a beautiful meaning, Elie." she said full of awe while staring at it.

"I didn't know you were taken, beauty!" Varric chuckles.

"Am not. He's dead." I say in a matter of fact tone of voice. Then I take another big gulp from the ale and when I put my mug back onto the table, everyone's looking at me with concern in their eyes. "What?"
I know I should be sad right now but as I said, the ale is getting to me and at this moment my emotions are numbed down entirely.

Cassandra quickly hands the necklace back over to me. "I'm... sorry... I didn't know, Elie."

I wave my hand around and put the necklace back on then. "Tis fine, really, yeah? It's... happened. So whatever!" I want to take another sip of the ale but suddenly I feel Varric's hand on my hands and he's pushing the mug back down.

"I think that's enough ale for you, tonight, beauty." he says, in a slightly uncomfortable tone of voice.

I shake my head. "Pffft! Nah! Tis fine, yeah? I'll be alright."

Solas then gets up from the table and places his hand on my shoulder. "Let's get you to bed, Eliana."

I look up at the elf in confusion. "We're all havin' a good time. We can jus' change the topic!"

Cassandra clears her throat. "No, we should all get some rest actually. It's getting late."

"Party-HUCK" a hiccups leaves my mouth but I finish the word anyways: "-Poopers." I giggle then.

Solas lifts me to my feet and places my arm around his neck. "I can walk, Solassss."

He frowns at me slightly and then lets me go. Once I am no longer supported by Solas, and as this is the first time I'm standing up after drinking so much, I immediately waver and bump loudly into the table with my hip. Moving the table slightly. All the people within the tavern are looking at me sheepishly.

Cassandra gets up quickly then, jogging over to me. "Perhaps I should take her, Solas."

Solas shakes his head. "It's fine, seeker. I'll make sure she gets there in one piece."

I snort loudly and Solas again places my arm around his neck. Then I slightly stumble my way out of the tavern with Solas by my side. "See ya tomorrow!" I call back, as we leave the tavern.

Solas is slightly hunched over as he's supporting me back towards my cabin. I look over to my right, where he is and stare at his ear then. I take my other hand and poke it. Then a fit of giggles leaves my mouth. "Hehehe, your ears are so strange, Solas."

He sighs. "You shouldn't have had that much ale, Eliana."

My body is literally pressed against his side as we're slowly making our way towards my cabin. "We were havin' a good time!"

He shakes his head. "That's no reason to become drunk."

I snort again. "Old man Solas is mad." I say in a teasing voice.

"I'm not mad at all, Eliana. And I thought you said I wasn't old."

We finally reach my cabin and he supports me back in. "No... think my words were that you looked good for your age.." I say as he tries to gently place me ontop of my bed, but me being the tipsy, or rather drunk, me. I stumble a bit and fall backwards onto it, dragging Solas down with me as my arm is still around his neck. We both fall onto my bed, me beneath him.

I laugh heartily. "Oh shit! I think I'm falling for you, Solas. Get it? Falling? 'Cause I fell?"
Solas sighs again and shakes his head as he's trying to get back up. "Very funny, da'len." though I can see a small smirk on his lips.

When he finally gets back up he crosses his arms. "Get some rest, da'len."

I move myself on the mattress, taking a better position and prop myself up on one elbow. "Awww. You leavin' already? Don't you got more stories to tell me?"

"Perhaps another time, da'len. When you're not so... inebriated."

I nod. "Fair enough!" but before he leaves I ask him: "Hey Solas! What's the Elven word for old man?" I can't help but grin.

Without turning around to face me, he answers before he leaves: "Hahren."

Hahren... Hahren... What a funny word! Hah-rehhhnn...

(...) The next morning I'm awakened by a bright light shining on my face. I groan loudly and open my eyes.

Ugh. I feel like shit.

The sun is shining brightly through my window, I must have slept in.. I slowly get up and see the familiar bucket of water with a washcloth hanging over the rim of the bucket. I take it and dip it into the water, it's cold. Whatever, I need to wash my face. As I wash my face, I can feel the headache from last night's ale. I do remember what happened though. I feel terrible for making such a fool of myself. Though I didn't really do anything bad, Solas did have to support me back here. I shake my head, shaking the thoughts from my mind. I'll apologize later. Or maybe, I'll just pretend I know nothing of it anymore. We'll see. I am reminded of the day I woke up in Haven's cells. This headache was different, yet eerily similar. I wondered then why I had so much ale last night. I barely did this back home. Suppose I had a good time.. though in this moment I didn't have a good time at all.

I slowly make my way towards Adan then, and stumble into his cabin. "I didn't need elfroot today, Eliana." the apothecary mumbles as he's flipping through some pages of a book.

"I didn't come to deliver elfroot today, Adan. I have a splitting headache and I need something to fix that."

"Hmph." Adan walks over to me and examines me, opening my eyes slightly with his finger as he does. "Been drinking, have we?"

I nod silently.

He walks over to his station and grabs a vial containing some blue/purple-ish liquid. "Drink this. It'll work within a couple of minutes. Don't worry about paying me. You've helped me with my notes and with the elfroot plenty of times. Consider it a thank you."

I nod gratefully. "Thanks, Adan." I take the potion with me outside and quickly throw it down my throat. This potion tastes sweeter and better than the one that Solas gave me once.

As I make my way through Haven I notice a little elven boy sitting down on the floor, sulking. His clothes look torn and his face is full of dirt. I haven't seen him before. He has short silvery blonde hair, and a tanned skin. His green eyes are full of tears. I slowly make my way over to him. "Hello."
I say softly.

The boy turns his head up to look at me and slightly moves back. "I haven't seen you around here before. What is your name?" I say smiling.

The boy answers shyly. "My name's Fenrian, ma'am."

I crouch down next to him. "My name is Eliana, but you can call me Elie. Nice to meet you Fenrian. Where are your parents?" I look around Haven, but don't see any other strange faces here.

The boy shakes his head, tears forming in his eyes again. "They're dead."

My eyes widen in shock. "How did you come here?"

"I walked. Bandits killed my parents. I've been here since last night but nobody wants to talk to me."

I grit my teeth. How could they just leave him out here like this. "Have you eaten anything, Fenrian?"

He shakes his head, remaining silent.

"Come." I get up and hold out my hand for him to take. He hesitantly takes it and I walk with him inside of the tavern. Once I'm inside I walk over to Flissa. "Can I have a bowl of porridge, some ram, some apples and some water please?"

Flissa smiles warmly at me and notices the boy holding my hand. "Sure, coming right up, Elie!"

I walk over towards a table and sit down with Fenrian. "After we've eaten something, we'll get you cleaned up alright?"

Fenrian nods slowly but he isn't looking me into my eyes. He seems.. afraid of me. Though he realizes that I'm helping him. Once food is served, he devours most of it. I just stick to my porridge and water and smile warmly, watching him eat. He must've been starving. The poor thing. Once he's finished eating he sits back into the chair. "Wow. That was really delicious!" he seems more energized now.

I smile again. "Yeah? That's good to hear, Fenrian. I'm glad you liked it."

"Thank you, Elie." for the first time I see him smile, though it's a small smile, it's something.

After our breakfast, I take him towards my cabin and take the bucket of water with washcloth. Luckily I've not washed myself entirely with it yet, this morning. I just washed my face. I take the washcloth and dip it into the water, then bring it over to Fenrian's face. "This will be cold." I warn him before I place the cloth on his skin softly, washing off the dirt from his face. I take some of the soap and wash out his hair too, while I'm at it. I feel extremely sad for him. I can't imagine losing both my parents at such a young age, in a world like this. Perhaps he's even seen his parents die infront of him. I shudder at the thought.

"Why are you being so nice to me, Elie?" he asks me then.

I look at him surprised and continue to rinse out his hair with some water. "Why wouldn't I be?"

Fenrian shrugs his shoulders slightly. "But I'm an elf."

I raise one of my eyebrows at Fenrian then. "Yes, so I've noticed. Why?"

"Most shems wouldn't help an elf."
"What's a shems?" I ask Fenrian once I finished rinsing his hair out.

Fenrian laughs softly. It sounds adorable. "A shemlen is the elven word for human. Shems is short for humans."

"Ahh, I didn't know that. You've taught me something. But to answer your previous comment, I am not like most shems." I wink slightly at him as I pronounce that word. It's so foreign to me.

"You're way nicer." he says softly.

"How old are you Fenrian?" I take out my comb and start brushing through his hair.

"Nine."

My heart is pained. Poor Fenrian. So young. "I'll make sure you get a place to stay, Fenrian." I say, full of determination.

He nods and once I finished combing his hair, I take him with me towards Varric. Once he notices me and Fenrian approach, Varric is looking at me questionably. "Fenrian, meet Varric. He's a good friend of mine and he writes stories." I say to him.

Fenrian immediately seems excited. Varric goes along. "Yes kid! I have many stories I can tell you, if you want to hear them."

Fenrian's eyes widen. "Truly?"

Varric nods. "Yeah! Let me just talk to Elie here, and then I'll tell you the story about the Champion of Kirkwall!" Fenrian immediately sits down next to the lit firepit, awaiting Varric's return. Varric takes me over a ways further and whispers to me. "What's going on, Elie?"

"I just found him, sitting alone by the tavern. His parents were killed by bandits and nobody has helped him yet! I want to go talk to Cassandra about it. See if there's anything we can do for him here."

Varric nods approvingly. "That's very kind of you to do, beauty."

I shrug my shoulders. "I just need you to watch him for a bit, keep him entertained. While I'll go and discuss with her."

"No problem." Varric turns back towards Fenrian then. "So, kid. You ready to hear the story about the Champion of Kirkwall? So his name was Hawke, and he was a big broad man with a big black beard-" I smile as I watch Fenrian listen intently to Varric's story. Then I make my way over to the Chantry.

Cassandra and Leliana are talking about something but I interrupt whatever it is they're talking about: "Cassandra! How come I just found a poor helpless little boy in Haven, near the tavern, and nobody has helped him yet?!" I yell at her then.

Cassandra turns around, surprised at my reaction. "...What do you mean, Elie?" she is thoroughly confused.

"There's an elven boy who entered Haven last night, his parents were murdered by bandits and he has nowhere to go. I made sure he had something to eat and cleaned him up a bit. But I want to know how come this happened? The guards at the gate must've let him in, there's no other way he could've entered Haven otherwise. But nobody cared to help?"
Leliana sighs, her eyes sad. "An elven boy you say? Elie, most people don't take kindly towards Elves, you know. Probably that's the reason why."

I interrupt Leliana. "-I don't care if he's an elf or a dwarf or a human! He's a little boy and he needs help!"

Leliana held up her hands in defense. "I didn't mean we don't want to help him, I'm just explaining that that's why I think he hasn't gotten any help yet."

"So, what are we going to do about this?" I cross my arms and tap my foot impatiently on the ground. Cassandra seems surprised by my reaction, but she smiles kindly. "It's good you've brought this to our attention, Elie. I'll go have a talk with the guards."

"And?" I prompt her.

"And, I'll make sure he gets a place to stay. Don't worry. We didn't know about this, but we will make sure this doesn't happen again." she says in a reassuring voice.

Leliana nods. "With all that's been going on, there's been an increase in bandits on the roads. More people will find their way towards the cities and the villages. I fear the boy is not the last to come here."

I sigh a breath of relief, knowing my companions will help Fenrian. "Thank you, for dealing with this. I am just... it hurt me seeing Fenrian like that. He's so young."

Cassandra places her hand softly on my shoulder. "Perhaps the revered mothers can take him in. He can stay in the Chantry, he'll have a nice warm bed at night and he can eat whenever he wants."

I nod. "Thank you, truly. He's with Varric now. I'll go and tell him the good news soon."

"I'll speak with the guards. I'll make sure they will be replaced by some decent men." Cassandra said as she walked out.

Before I walk out, Leliana halts me. "Elie. When you go to see mother Giselle, you will encounter these kind of bandits. It's important that they are stopped."

She looks me directly into my eyes. I feel my stomach turn around slightly then. Though I've practised all this time, I am not sure if I can actually end somebody's life. I can't even look at a dead body without wanting to puke. I nod, however. "I understand."

She gives me a slight nod and walks over towards the revered mothers who are in the room to the right of us.

When I get back towards Varric and Fenrian I can hear the boy gasp out. He's almost hanging on Varric's lips. "And then what happened?!"

Varric notices me but continues, staring at Fenrian, he pauses for a moment, building up the tension. "Broody yelled out: 'I am no slave!'-" Varric imitates a different voice for a moment. "-Then he took his greatsword in hands and attacked every single one of the slavers, all by himself! Hawke, Blondie and I wanted to help him but he was so fast, he didn't need our help."

"Woah!" Fenrian exclaims.

Varric nods. "But, I will tell you more later, kid." he gestured over to me. I was smiling from ear to
"Elie! Have you heard about Broody?! He's awesome! Varric told me all about him!"

I snort slightly. "I can't say that I have, Fenrian. But I'm sure you'll be able to tell me all about it?"

Fenrian nods frantically. "Yeah! He was an elf, from Tevinter. His real name was Fenris though, sounds a lot like mine doesn't it? Varric told me his entire body was full of white markings, made by lyrium, and they glowed everytime he got angry. So then-"

Varric interrupts Fenrian then. "-Alright, alright kid!" he laughs. "I'm sure Elie is here to tell you some good news."

I giggle slightly and nod. "Yep! I've talked to some of my friends and you can stay here. You can sleep in the Chantry, that big building over there. You'll have a nice warm bed and food whenever you want."

Fenrian's eyes widened. "Really?"

I nod and wink slightly at Varric then. "Really, really!"

Then, suddenly, Fenrian wrapped his arms around my waist and hugged me. I was taken aback by this sudden sign of affection, but wrapped one of my arms around him. I felt the tears stinging in my eyes. Varric was smiling approvingly at me, while watching.

"Thank you so much!" Fenrian said while his face was buried into my armour.

I pat his back softly and clear my throat, trying not to become too emotional. "It's no problem, Fenrian." I say with a raspy voice.

Then Fenrian turns around to face Varric again and I quickly dry my eyes now that his back is facing me. "Hey mister? Will you tell me the rest later?"

Varric nods. "Will do, kid."

Then I hunch over towards Fenrian and smile at him. "Hey, would you like to learn a game?"

Fenrian nods. "What kind of game?"

"It's called hide and seek." I smirk.

(...)

After teaching Fenrian how to play the game, we practise it a little before he fully understands it. He's getting pretty good at it too. It takes me longer to find him everytime he hides. Whenever I have to hide, I pick the easy places. I don't want to make it too easy, but I also don't want to make it too hard for him to find me. I often make a loud sniffing sound when I'm hiding somewhere, or I stick out my leg so he can notice it and find me. Now that it's my turn again however, I've been taking forever to find him. I check at the first places he's hid. Behind Varric's tent, under the merchants stand, behind some revered mothers who are chanting in one place, but still no sign of him. I did tell him not to go into anyone's cabin, since I wasn't sure how people would react. People of Haven were smirking and stifling their laughter as they watched me search. They must've known where he went. Some of the kids of Haven had been following us around quietly the entire time, probably wanting to join too. But even the kids didn't help me find Fenrian. Eventually I make my way over towards the tavern, and search about. Still no Fenrian. Then, I hear some chuckling from further away. It's Fenrian's chuckle, I can tell. I turn around and look up the stairs and see Solas standing near his ear.
cabin, not moving a single muscle.

_Hmmm.. That looks suspicious._

I usually see Solas standing there, but he moves around. This time, however, he's just standing still. Once I reach the top of the stairs I notice Solas smirking, and I see a pair of little legs behind Solas' legs. Fenrian was hiding behind Solas. I chuckle but feign ignorance.

"Solas! Have you seen a little boy around here? Silvery blonde hair, big green eyes?" I say loudly.

Solas shakes his head. "I have not!" he calls back loudly. Again, I hear Fenrian's little mischievous chuckle.

I walk around a bit, placing my index finger on my chin. "Hmmm. Where could Fenrian be? Fenrian?" I call out loud. Then I get on my hands and knees and pretend to look around a cart of sacks, whilst I'm down on the floor. "Fenrian? Where are youuuu?"

I can hear the pitter patter of footsteps behind me but pretend not to notice. Suddenly Fenrian 'attacks' me from behind, wrapping his arms around my neck and jumping on my back. "I win!" he exclaims excitedly.

I pretend to be startled and gasp out loudly. Placing my hand on my chest. "You scared me!" I gasp out.

I can see Fenrian's smile and he's laughing loudly. "This game is fun!"

I get up to my feet, holding Fenrian ontop of my back, carrying him on it. "There are some children over there, they've been wanting to play the entire time now. Maybe you should make some friends?" I gesture over towards the group of Haven's children who are standing a little ways further, watching the two of us.

Solas walks over to the two of us, his hands clasped behind his back. "Yes, Fenrian. I'm sure they want to get to know you better." Solas' voice is soft and gentle, very kind and genuine. It's odd to see Solas like that, but it also warms my heart.

Fenrian lowers his voice, but Solas and I can still hear him. "You don't think they'll dislike me, because I'm a knife-ear?"

I've never heard of this word before, but I immediately understand it's meaning. It's a curse for elves. I pretend not to be hurt by his words. "I like you very much, and I'm sure they will too. I'm a shem too, am I not? Besides, if they say anything mean to you, you tell me okay?"

Solas raises his eyebrows in surprise at me using the elven word, but remains quiet.

"Hm. Alright!" I lower Fenrian carefully to the ground and pat his back softly. "I'll go and play with them then, thanks asa'ma'lin!" he hugs me once more and then he runs off to the other kids.

Solas and I are standing in silence, watching the kids converse a bit in the distance, then they all scatter around and start playing hide and seek together. None of the kids from Haven were being mean to Fenrian. I sigh a breath of relief then.

"You know he just called you 'sister'?" Solas says suddenly without looking at me, his eyes are still fixated upon the playing children.

My eyes widen slightly. "Really?" my voice raspy again, as I'm overcome with emotions again.
He nods and then turns his body sideways to face me. "Asa'ma'lin means sister. Roughly translated. Though the common tongue could never do the term of endearment justice. In Elvish, the definition is much deeper."

"How so?"

He smiles. "If you take the words seperately, you might understand it's true meaning. 'Asa' means her or she, 'ma' means my, in this context. 'Lin' meaning blood. Putting them all together, it would mean 'her blood is my blood'. Or, sister."

"Wow... you're right. It truly does have a deeper meaning than just sister." I say in awe.

He nods, still smiling warmly at me. "The common tongue can never do Elvish justice." He seems almost proud then. Then he turns his full body towards me. Giving me the sweetest expression ever. Like he's... thankful. "That was very kind of you, da'len. While you were looking for him, he told me what you've done for him."

I feel my face flush then and look away. "It's ah... nothing."

He places his hands on my shoulders then and squeezes them softly. "It means everything to him. You must realize by now, that many humans don't really like Elves."

I place my hand on one of his hands for a moment and then he releases me. "I've heard." I mumble softly. "I don't understand why."

Solas' expression hardens then and he places his hand softly on my lower back, gently ushering me towards his cabin. "Come."

We make our way into his cabin and I take a seat on the chair near his desk then. He's boiling some water above a fire and puts some herbs in it, though I don't recognize them. Then he hands over a glass of it to me.

*It's like Thedas' version of tea! Got it.*

I am holding the tea in both my hands and wait for him to speak. He takes a seat on another chair, next to mine and begins.

"Long ago, the elves were the dominant race of Thedas. Our advanced civilization was based on nature, the Fade and magic. Our empire, was called Elvhenan. It's meaning was 'The place of our people'. The capital city was called Arlathan. We hear stories of them living in trees and imagine wooden ramps and Dalish aravels, which are caravans. Imagine instead spires of crystal twining through the branches, palaces floating among the clouds. Imagine beings who lived forever, for whom magic was as natural as breathing." Solas is speaking full of admiration and ... love for his people.

"That sounds... wonderful." I say slowly, I want to hear more.

He nods. "Indeed, it was. However, Arlathan fell. It fell from the sky. The Empire soon followed after, followed up by the plundering by the Tevinter Imperium. The Tevinter Imperium enslaved the Elves. Thus we Elves lost much of our cultural heritage and identity. They attempted to rebuild their society in the Dales, but after three centuries they fell to the Chantry's Exalted Marches. Since then, the elves have separated into two distinct groups: the Dalish, who chose to lead nomadic lives and strive to keep elven culture alive rather than submit, and the city elves, who live alongside humans, usually as impoverished outcasts, and have adopted many human customs. Overall, the elves are now a people associated with poverty, crime, barbarism, and are often used as scapegoats for
humanity's difficulties. In Ancient Tevinter elves were called "rattus".-" I flinch slightly at that curse. It sounds like rat. Solas continues: "-Modern humans use the racial slurs "knife ears," "slant-eared" or, less cruelly, "rabbit."."

I hang my head and stare down into my glass of tea, some of the leaves he used are floating around in the brown tinted water. I sigh. "That's... awful." my voice is low and full of sadness.

Solas' face is pained. He simply nods. "You, a human, have shown kindness towards an elven boy, where he believed kindness was non existent."

I look up Solas again and nod slowly. "I just... can't believe humans can be so terrible."

"Not all are. But most of them.. yes." Then he gets up from his chair and takes the tea out of my hands, then continues to hold my hands with his own. "You have given him hope. A safe place to stay. Some sort of resemblance of a family, one he no longer has. You made him forget about the pain and misery and you have replaced it all for happiness and joy. Even if it's only for a little while."

I look up into Solas' eyes, taken aback by his speech. He's giving me too much praise right now. "I just did what I thought was right."

Solas smiles warmly at me and dips his head. "Not many humans would have done what you did. It might be a small thing to you, but to him it meant everything." then he looks down at our hands, and lets mine go gently.

I keep staring at my own hands then and blink. "You give me too much praise, hahren."

He chuckles then. "I merely speak my mind."

I smile kindly up at him and take the tea back into my hands, taking a small sip of it. "Tastes pretty good!" I say, bewondered. "Why aren't you drinking some tea?"

He scrunches his nose. I giggle slightly at his facial expression. "I detest tea."

I raise one of my eyebrows. "Why?"

"It is caffeinated. It's a stimulant and helps prevent crossing into the Fade during sleep."

I nod. "Makes sense." I gulp it all down however. "How do you say, thank you in elvish?"

Solas smiles again. "Ma serannas."

I try to pronounce it: "Maa ser-annas, haah-reehn."

He chuckles and shakes his head. He then moves his chair closer to mine, until he's hunched over towards me, quite close. "Try again, da'len. Mah serahnahs, hahrehn."

I say it exactly as he just did then. "Ma serannas, hahren."

He nods his head. "Perfect. You pick up the dialect fast."

I am beaming now. I can speak Elvish! Well, a bit at least.

"So, hahren really means old man?" I eye him suspiciously then.

"It means elder, so yes in a way it means old man. Except this is more a term of respect."
"I hum. "Like you're calling me little one?"

"Indeed. I am surprised you still remember. You were quite inebriated last night." he smirks defiantly then.

My face flushes. I groan slightly. "Ah, yes. I've been meaning to apologize for my behavior from then. I was... troublesome."

He nods. "You were indeed very troublesome, da'len."

I scoff and shoot daggers at him with my eyes then. "Just because I admit it, doesn't mean you have to acknowledge it." I huff and put the glass onto his desk then.

He laughs. I can't help but do the same. His laugh is contagious. "I told you, I merely say what's on my mind."

Then my hand moves towards the pendant again, without knowing I do. It's become a habit. Solas notices though. He points at it. "Your... boyfriend. Why was he killed?"

My face immediately drops then. "That was straight forward." I say a bit awkwardly.

He looks apologetic. "I apologize. I just... I wonder."

I sigh. No point in hiding it all now. Solas saw what happened. So far he's been honest with me, telling me stories about his people, as painful as they may be. He's been taking care of me the entire time. And though the others have been too, I somehow felt like I could tell Solas everything and he wouldn't judge me. "In my world we'd call it a triad. A triad is one of many branches of transnational organized crime syndicates. He was in a triad."

Solas' eyes widened then. "I find it hard to believe you would... fall for such a man."

I frown at him. "What do you mean by that?"

He shakes his head. "I didn't mean it in a bad way at all, Eliana. You're just so kind hearted and... innocent."

I snort. "Yeah, well.... What can I say? I have a thing for bad guys." I smirk wryly.

He smiles slightly, but he wants to hear more.

I sigh. "I didn't know he was like that when I met him. But when I found out, I was already too deep into the relationship. I loved him. I couldn't leave him for it. He always promised me that what he did was safe. That he was never in any danger. He had a friend in the triad and they were fine for a long time. Until the both of them moved up in the ranks. His friend got jealous and tried to overthrow Dan's power. It angered Dan."

"What happened then?"

I clench my jaw. "Dan had him killed. He thought it was a good idea. He thought his boss wouldn't mind. But he did. His friend was supposed to become the right hand of the boss, but neither of them knew this until Dan killed his friend. The boss wanted to talk to him... and well, you know the rest."

"I see... He spoke in an odd language in your memory."

I nod. "We were both from two different countries. Far apart. It would take about a day and a half to visit him, by plane. Which is... a flying machine? I don't really know how to explain it to you. But I
suppose if you were to walk to his country from mine, it would take months to get there." He seemed intrigued but remained quiet. "Anyways, so he spoke a different language than me. We met once when I was visiting his country, and... we immediately fell in love. We were together for four years." I look down at my feet.

"How long ago was this?" he asked me calmly.

"He died two years ago. It's still painful, but I'm starting to move on slightly." I say softly.

"Do you still love him?"

I nod. "I think I do, though it is weird... loving a dead person. Though like I said, I'm moving on. I'm starting to look at men again, I haven't done that for two years. I was mourning."

Solas slightly chuckles. "You're starting to look at men again?" he said in an amused tone of voice, his eyebrow slightly raised.

I clear my throat. "I mean, I am starting to.... Find men attractive again. Starting to feel things again." my face becomes heated then.

He grins and nods. "I understand, da'len. After all, you fell for me last night."

My eyes widen then. I'm stammering and stuttering trying to explain it, but he speaks up.

"I'm just joking." he snickers slightly and pinches my cheek softly.

I shake my head. "Ugh, really. Don't do that anymore." I say still feeling flustered.

"Ma nuvenin, da'len."

"What?" I ask him confused.

"It means, as you wish." he smiles warmly.

I clear my throat again. I feel something pulling within my chest, everytime he smiles like that. I avert my gaze quickly. I can't stand to look into his eyes any longer. In fact, I feel a lot of things right now and I kind of just want out of here before I do or say something stupid. "At any rate, I want to thank you for listening to me earlier. I'm glad you don't judge me." I get up from the chair slowly and dip my head towards Solas.

He too gets up from his chair and nods. "It's nothing. You should prepare for the trip towards the Hinterlands, da'len. It will be a long journey."

"Shit! I totally forgot. But what does one pack when they go towards the Hinterlands?"

"How long of a journey exactly?"

He thinks for a moment. "Around three days, most likely. We'll set up camp in between though." My eyes widen. "Three days? On horses I suppose?"

Solas laughs again. "We have none, da'len. I am afraid we'll have to walk there."

I groan. "Well, I'd best get to Cassandra and ask her about what I should be bringing then."

"That would probably be wise." again, he places his hand gently on my lower back and walks with me, out of his cabin. His warm hand on my lower back like that, is making me feel even more things.
Earlier I dismissed it, but he's doing it again. As the door opens, the cold air hits my face again and he lets his hand go. "Be sure to bring your cloak." he says, then he turns around and re-enters his cabin.

*My cloak? You mean the one you gave me.*

I shake the thoughts from my mind and continue walking back towards the Chantry, on the way there, I see Fenrian, sitting by the firepit with his new friends and Varric. He waves happily at me and I return the wave at him.

The remainder of the time goes by in the blink of an eye. Cassandra helps me pack for my first trip. She gave me a satchel of my own, to store some poultices in. She bought two tents from the merchants stand, since that's all there was. She told me she and I will share one and Solas and Varric will share the other. She decides to braid my hair for me, to prevent my hair from falling into my face. Also, that way, I won't have to comb it that much. However, I put the comb into my satchel regardless. On top of that, I sneak the bar of soap into it as well. I want to properly wash myself whilst on the way. I ask Cassandra how one would relieve themselves out in the wilderness, though I already know the answer. I'm just hoping she will tell me something else, but alas.. I'll just have to dig a hole, and do my business, then close up the hole again.

*Lovely.*

In the day before our departure, I tell Fenrian I'll be heading out with all three of the companions but that he can always go and talk to Leliana, Josephine or Cullen. I see his pained expression, he's afraid. I am too.

Cassandra tells me I've nothing else to worry about and the night before we depart she and Leliana visit my cabin. Leliana hands me a backpack, with a bedroll attached to it by ropes. She shows me how to attach it onto the backpack, and how to tie the knots of the rope, making sure it's secure on there. Cassandra gave me two of my very own daggers, made by Harritt. They were new and not old and worn like the one's I used while training with Cullen and Cassandra. They looked marvelous and oddly enough; beautiful. They were simple really. A steel blade, a leather hilt and nothing noteworthy, but I found them beautiful somehow. Perhaps because they were my very own pair of daggers. With the daggers came a strap that I could tie around my back, in which I could put my daggers when not using them. They would be underneath my backpack, but I would still be able to pull them out no problems. Cassandra taught me how to put on the straps, and also, making sure the straps were secured tightly on my back. Then, it was time to sleep. Tomorrow morning, we would venture out towards the Hinterlands.
Eliana learns of a new way to tell time, medieval style! Or Thedosian style, whatever x3

Also, Cassandra is being a bit of a dick towards Eliana. Pushing her slightly too far.
And then there's poison and fighting and a almost dying Eliana and-

Gasp

Some fluff?
Very minor fluff.
Oooo~
Also, a slight gore warning.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

We leave before the sun goes up, it's about a three day's march towards the Hinterlands and I am carrying everything around on my back. Cassandra, Varric and Solas all seem to be in a good mood. I'm not saying I'm in a terrible mood but I am worried. I am worried for Fenrian.

Will the other kids be nice to him while we're away? Will the townsfolk of Haven treat him well? Will he be alright? I hope they're not making him do hard labour.

"He will be alright, da'len." Solas says soothingly, as he starts walking next to me. I've been so lost in my own thoughts, I am brought back to reality as I look up to Solas questionably.

"Huh, what?" I say absentmindedly.

"Fenrian. He'll be alright." he answers.

Cassandra nods as she slows down her pace to match ours. "Solas is right, Elie. You've nothing to worry about. Cullen, Leliana and Josephine know about the situation and they said they'll take good care of him."

I sigh. "I know. I just... can't help but worry. I'll try not to."

Varric snorts. "You act like his mother already." the dwarf is smirking up at me.

I shake my head. I need to think of other things. The business with Mother Giselle for one, also, I need to be on my guard. We're expected to run into some bandits along the way.
"Try to not let it bother you, as hard as it may be, Elie. We need you focussed for the rifts that are to come." Cassandra notes, her expression serious as ever.

Shit, I totally forgot about the fucking rifts! I mean, during my stay at Haven, the mark has been quiet. No humming, no throbbing, nothing. There were no rifts around Haven, so it has been quite peaceful. I can't believe you actually forgot about the sole purpose you were here in the first place.

I grimace. "Yeah. You're right, Cassandra."

She notices my expression and her eyes start to fill with worry. "Are you alright?"

"I just... forgot about the rifts."

Varric laughs loudly. "How can you forget about that?" he shakes his head in disbelief.

I sigh. "Yeah, I wondered that myself as well." I say wryly.

We keep walking, the sun is slowly rising and it irks me that I can no longer use my self made sundial any longer, to tell the time. I look up at the sky, it's blue, covered in white puffs of clouds. Our surroundings are still cold, full of snow and icicles hanging from the trees and old watchtowers. I am glad for once, that Solas had given me his cloak to wear. Though my armour was warm, his cloak just made it that much warmer. I had yet to properly thank him for that.

We follow the main road, until we reach a big stone bridge, that's high above a frozen over lake. Eventually the main road ends, it started slowly, the main road becoming more narrow the longer we walked. Until soon, there were nothing but a few stone steps scattered about the snowy floor. From then on, the main road had vanished. We had to continue on, by walking through a thick layer of snow. I figured this was a sign that we were walking away from civilization and into the wilderness, more or less. We mostly keep quiet. Cassandra occasionally taking out the map from her satchel and glancing down at it, to pinpoint where we are. I sometimes take a peek down at the map myself, to see if I can figure it out, but I can't make it out at all. She's good at reading maps. Solas is using his staff as a walking stick, he's using slow and steady steps, always keeping slightly behind us all. Behind me mostly. Probably worried about me for when something actually happens. Though the entire trip so far has been quite peaceful and quiet. Varric is, despite his small legs, always the one who's walking ahead of the rest. Even ahead of Cassandra. There's trees all around us, surrounding us from every direction. There's uneven ground, little hills we walk up and down from and occasionally, a big boulder sticking out of the ground. Sometimes, I don't even notice it and almost trip and fall, which leaves Solas snickering behind me slightly. There are literally no signs of people living around these areas, it's awfully remote and I'm starting to feel uneasy then. I remember Leliana's words about the bandits on the roads then, and wonder if they may be following us. Maybe some of them are hiding within the trees and bushes as we speak? I glance around nervously, but all I hear are the birds chirping from the trees. We must have been walking for hours now, the sun is high up in the sky and shining brightly.

"Hey guys?" I say then, breaking the silence that was there for what seemed like hours.

They all turn to look at me, except Solas of course, who's walking behind me.

"How do you guys tell the time without a sundial? Like, how do you know what time it is now?"

Cassandra grins at me, it's a sly grin. Her eyes twinkle a little in the bright light of the sun. "We look up at the sky, Elie."

I nod. "Yes.. I've seen you do this a few times but how do you know what time it is, by looking up to the sky?"
Cassandra slows down her pace until she's walking right next to me and points up at the sun above us. "See the position of the sun? Right now it's directly above us, this means it's noon. When you look to the East and the sun is on the horizon, it means that it is approximately six in the morning. The break of day. If the sun is about forty-five degrees up from the horizon in the East, the time should be around nine in the morning. If the sun is about forty-five degrees above the horizon in the West, the time will be?" she pauses, letting me finish her sentence.

"Approximately three in the afternoon?" I say a bit hesitantly.

She smiles and nods. "Yes. Finally, when you look to the West and the sun is on the horizon that means the time is around six in the evening."

I hum and look up at the sky above us, the sun is directly above our heads right now. Then I make an annoyed face. I scrunch up my nose. "So it's only noon right now? God, it feels like we've been walking for an entire day already!" I whine. My legs are not accustomed to this much walking. Though I did a lot of walking back at home, never for five to six hours!

Cassandra pats me on the back then. "Don't worry, we'll take a break soon. I'm just trying to find a good spot for us to rest."

I nod. "Thank fuck for that."

Varric chuckles. "You use some weird phrases sometimes, you know that right beauty?"

I smile at Varric. "Sorry, bad habit. I should pay attention to what I'm saying sometimes. I keep forgetting people here don't always understand." I pause for a moment and squint my eyes at Varric then. "Hey Varric? Can you come up with a different nickname for me?"

Varric raises his eyebrow at me. "Why? It suits you."

I groan and roll my eyes. "But I can't help but feel like the nickname 'beauty' makes me sound conceited."

Solas chimes in from behind me. "You would only be considered conceited if you acted like it, da'len."

I glare at Solas then.

*Nobody asked you, old man.*

He smiles defiantly at me then.

*Shit. He couldn't have heard that right? I mean, he's a mage. He can invade people's dreams like that. Perhaps he can read minds too. Fuck. All this time, no. No. It's impossible.*

I quickly avert my gaze.

"Well.. I suppose if you really don't like it... I can come up with a different nickname for you."

Cassandra feigns a surprised gasp then. "The Varric Tethras, willing to change a nickname he has given someone? Impossible!" she smiles at him then.

Varric snickers. "What can I say? I got a soft spot for the girl." he shrugs his shoulders and winks at me.

I smile triumphantly. "So. What will it be, master Tethras?" I say daringly.
He thinks for a while. It becomes quiet again. Everyone is eagerly awaiting Varric's new nickname for me and they dare not interrupt his thoughts as he's coming up with one. Then he turns his head back around and smirks at me. "How about, Blue?"

I raise my eyebrow at him. "Blue?"

He nods. "Your eyes. They're blue."

I scoff. "Come on! You're always so creative with your nicknames! Surely you can do better than that."

He sighs. "Alright, I'll come up with a new nickname for you before our trip is over, how about that?" he winks.

I concede. I have to give him time to come up with a good one, I suppose.

Finally, Cassandra finds a decent spot to rest. It's a peaceful little area. Though we're still surrounded by snow, and it's cold, it's peaceful nonetheless. We sit down on the cold floor and I immediately pull up the hood of my cloak, wrapping the cloak tightly around myself to warm myself slightly. Solas simply flicks his wrist and ignites a spark in the logs that Varric had gathered. Soon, the fire starts burning and I hold my hands out to it, warming them up. They're red now, from the coldness. I sure as hell am not used to this kind of cold. I take off my backpack and place it on the ground.

"How about you and I go hunting, Elie?" Cassandra speaks up as she places her satchel down on the floor next to her.

I look at her in disbelief. "Hunting? What for?"

She rolls her eyes slightly at my question. "Food. What else?"

"Ah...."

Varric shakes his head slightly. "How else you want to eat?"

I shake my head in return. "Back at home, we never had to hunt for food... Though I eat meat, I can't stand the thought of having to kill an animal for it's meat." I look down at my legs then.

Cassandra huffs and gets up to her feet. "Well, we have to in this world. Besides, it'll be a good practise for you. You get to kill something. Starting off small."

I scrunch up my nose. I don't like the sound of that at all. Kill something. I shudder at the thought. But Cassandra holds out her arm to get me to my feet. "Come."

I stare at her outstretched hand for a while, hesitantly taking it, but she pulls me up fast and harshly. 

*She ain't bullshittin' no more.*

I slowly follow her, my shoulders are hanging and I glance behind me one more time, to see Solas and Varric left at the 'camp'. Solas in particular, looks displeased as well. Though I can't make out why exactly. Perhaps he feels the same way as me?

We walk a little ways further, until Cassandra halts me. She says nothing, instead holds her arm up. Then she points towards a small white cute looking animal. It's so adorable. It looks like a little fox. It has huge ears and small eyes. It's washing itself and hasn't noticed us yet. Then Cassandra points towards my daggers and then towards the small animal. My eyes widen.
No. She wants me to kill that adorable little creature?

I shake my head at Cassandra then. She rolls her eyes and points again, but harsher this time. Then, when I'm taking too long, she takes one of my daggers from the straps on my back and throws it directly at the fox. It yelps out loudly and I duck my head and close my eyes, wincing at the sight and noise. She grabs my wrist hard though and yanks me forwards, towards the creature, which is now twitching in pain. "Put it out of it's misery!" she raises her voice at me. Her eyes look angry.

Tears are forming in my eyes then and I feel terrible for the little creature, it's in pain. I have to end it's life or it's last moments will be nothing but pain and agony. I take my other dagger and close my eyes, hovering the dagger slightly above the fox's neck. I let out a loud sob and jab it forwards, then... the sound dissapears and when I open my eyes, I see what I've done.

The fox's eyes are rolled back into it's head and the blood is gushing out of it's neck. My other dagger, the one Cassandra flung at it, is still stuck in it's body. There, blood is trickling out as well. My hands start to shake violently and my body starts trembling. I know it must seem hypocrite, I eat meat but I can't handle killing an animal for it. However, I've never killed anything in my entire life and I'm mortified. I leave my daggers then, and run back towards the spot where we came from, I somehow managed to remember how to get back there. The hand which I used for killing the fox, is covered in some of the blood that came gushing out of the fox's neck. I am blinded by tears as I'm making my way back towards the 'camp' and I'm letting out loud sobs. Eventually I see the fire before me and I run towards my backpack that was still down on the floor. Solas and Varric are immediately alarmed by me running towards them. Solas gets up first. "Eliana? Are you okay?" his voice is full of concern.

I walk up to my backpack and snatch it from the ground. I'm angry, extremely upset by what Cassandra just made me do.

"Elie?" Varric asks me quietly.

I ignore the both of them and take my backpack and walk the other way. I don't care where to. I just need to be away from it all. My sobbing never stops though. At some point my legs give out. I drop to my knees and start to tremble again. My head is inside of my hands now and I'm trying hard to shake the image of the dead fox from my mind.

Then, I feel a soft hand on my shoulders. I immediately flinch and move away.

Solas is holding up his arms in defense, his eyes wide. "Calm down, Eliana. It's just me."

I can feel my lower lip quiver and before I know it, I get up to my feet and wrap my arms around Solas. I start to sob into his tunic as I'm clutching the fabric of it between my fingers. He seems taken aback by it for a moment, but allows me to hold him like this, allows me to let it out. He gently wraps one of his own arms around my body, stroking my back softly with his hand. "Ssh... It's alright, da'len."

I let out a loud sob again and let my tears stream down.

"What happened, da'len?" his voice ever so calm and soothing.

I shake my head. "She... She... She made me...." I sob between saying the words. "-Forced... forced me.... to kill.... an... an animal."

He sighs, I can feel his breath against my forehead. "Tundra da'lan. Hush, it is fine."

Part of me feels ridiculous for acting this way, infront of Solas, doing this. But the other part of me is
glad for it. Glad he allows me to act like this, even for a little. It feels nice.

His words, his voice, his soft stroking on my back relaxes me and makes me stop crying. When I look up finally, my tear stained eyes meet his. His own blue-grey eyes look worried and yet, soft and calm. He sighs and presses me back against him then. "Come now, Eliana. It will be alright."

Then he moves away from me, breaking the hug, and I inwardly curse at the miss of his body against my own. Then he smiles warmly at me, giving me a reassuring look. "Come."

He bends his arm for me, so I can lock my arm with his. And I do it. Together we walk back slowly towards the spot where we left Varric.

"She was so... harsh, Solas." I say quietly. My voice still raspy from the crying. He looks at me but he let's me continue. "She didn't even give me a... I don't know. A moment to muster up the courage to do it willingly. No speech, no real reason. She just took one of my daggers and threw it right at the fox. Then..." I bite my lower lip hard, drawing blood. "-I saw it twitching on the floor. It wasn't dead yet. She told me to end it's misery, and I did. I couldn't let it die in agony and pain... That would be inhumane. And..." I stop talking then.

He shakes his head. "The seeker can be... harsh sometimes yes. You've never hunted before, never killed an animal before. She could have taken a different approach." He clenches his jaw, I can tell because I'm looking at his face.

"Poor fox..." I say quietly.

Solas looks at me then. "It is a fennec, da'len." he wasn't berating me or anything, simply teaching me something, even now. Even in this moment.

We find our way back and Varric is still sitting there. Alone. Cassandra has not yet returned.

I sit down and Solas sits down next to me.

"You alright, Elie?" Varric asks me quietly as he notices my red cheeks and swollen puffy eyes.

I nod slowly. "Slightly... better. Thanks to Solas."

At this point I realize, my arms are still locked with Solas'. As a matter of fact, I'm also slightly leaned towards his body, as if searching for safety. A safe place. Solas was that safe place. Everything about him was so calm and soothing. However, I don't want to take back my arm and I don't want to move away from him. Everything within me is begging me to stay like this. Who know's when I'll get another chance to get this close to him again... without being drunk that is.

We all remain silent then, until eventually, we hear footsteps crunching in the snow behind us. It's Cassandra. I glance over my shoulder for a moment, and see her casually making her way back towards us. Two dead fennec's hanging over her shoulder, carrying my two bloodied daggers in her hands. Then I avert my gaze, and stare into the fire before me. I don't want to see it.

When she is right next to me, she drops the fennec's onto the ground next to me, followed up by my daggers. I close my eyes as I hear the loud thud of the corpses falling. "I took the liberty of finishing your task." she sneers at me.

I groan inwardly but before I can open up my mouth to spit something out to her, Solas does it: "How can you react that way, seeker? You know Eliana has never done such a thing before. To force her like that-"
But Cassandra interrupts him harshly. "She needs to learn, Solas. What happens if we run into some bandits on the road, and she has to kill them? Will she too run off like a little kid, crying because she cannot do it? She needs to toughen up."

I am hurt by her words.

Solas is not leaving it at that however. "Perhaps for now, we can protect her. We have done it before have we not? At least let the girl adjust at her own pace. Don't force her to do something that is entirely against her nature. It was wrong of you to do."

Cassandra scoffs. "Against her nature? She is no longer at home. She's here, and she needs to know these things!"

Varric decides to jump in then, trying to calm things down a bit. "Oh come on, seeker. I don't mind protecting her a little more. She never gets in the way anyhow. As long as she stays close to us then perhaps-" his words seemed to do the complete opposite however.

"You're taking his side?"

Varric sighs and shakes his head, he doesn't approve of Cassandra's reaction but he remains quiet now. Realizing even he can't make things better right now.

"Fine. Will the Herald be alright with eating said meat?" she spits at me.

I shoot daggers at Cassandra then. "I will not."

Cassandra scoffs again. "You'd rather starve?"

I turn my gaze back towards the fire and remain quiet. I am hungry as hell, but I refuse to give in. My fucking pride sometimes.

They skin the fennec's and I can't bear to even look at it. Cassandra quietly starts roasting the fennec above the fire and hands out pieces of it to everyone, even me... But I refuse. I simply hold my knees up with my arms as I sit down before the fire and stare in a deadpan manner ahead of me.

I remain close to Solas however, and he still hasn't moved away from me. I am surprised by it slightly but decide not to question it. He felt safe. Finally the group decides to move on and we continue walking. This time, I'm still walking next to Solas. No longer locked arms anymore. And I feel slightly bad because of it. I want to hold his hand or... I don't know, be closer to him than we are now. So as we are all walking in silence, Cassandra and Varric ahead of the both of us, their backs turned towards us, I allow my left hand to search for his hand. I do not look down at it, I simply keep walking and looking ahead of me, as my hand is searching for his. Until my fingers brush against his hand softly, and before I realize it, my fingers are taking hold of his fingers. I dare not look at Solas right now, but he again, allows it. As he takes hold of my hand softly and squeezes it for a moment. Then we continue walking, holding hands. Nobody noticing. I let out a sigh of relief then. I don't know why I did it, but I did and fuck it. It felt nice.

The evening falls and this time Solas finds a good spot to camp up. I hear Cassandra mumble something about 'keeping up the pace as we do' but decide not to react. My stomach is empty, I am running on fumes right now and I am starving. However, I am proud of myself for not giving in earlier, when I was offered the meat. I don't know why exactly, but I wanted Cassandra to feel bad. I wanted her to understand that this is not the way to act with me. I always knew I was a soft person, perhaps too soft at most times. Ever since I was little, I let people walk over me and it took a long time before I kind of learned how to not let people walk all over me. Kind of. I always thought of my
'soft nature' as both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because I often made people very happy and made them feel good, since I always listened to them and provided them with advice when they needed it most. A lot of people I had encountered in my life had praised me for my nature, my 'kind heart'. However, it was often a curse as well. I could never really deal with hurt or painful things. I couldn't handle confrontations or conflicts and I would often cower in a corner, pretending nothing was wrong, when something clearly was. It would take me years to get over something. I'd be heartbroken a lot of the time, not always because of potential lovers but also over friendships ending, family drama and so on. When I was fifteen, during my summer vacation, I was hit by a pretty bad depression. I'd spend every day, doing whatever I did, smiling, being happy. And every night, I'd stay up until four in the morning, crying the moment my mother went to bed. I'd literally cry for hours and went to bed and repeat the same thing the next day. I'd sleep in until three in the afternoon and yeah, I would simply relive the same thing again. I eventually got over it, though I still don't know why. But always fearing that it might return to me. And sometimes it did... for a little while. It was never as bad as it had been back then, but I'd have my moments. I cursed my 'nature' for it and often wished I was more like my mother. She was a strong woman, she could get hurt of course, but she'd always use that hurt to strengthen herself. It was admirable.

So, all in all, to make a long story short, I needed a gentle touch. Not the way Cassandra had handled it. I needed a... I look up at Solas' face, illuminated by the fire before us. I needed a Solas touch. Then he turns his head sideways to look at me and smiles warmly. I feel my cheeks become warm then and look back down at the fire. The entire walk we had held hands and he had not pulled away once. He had not questioned it. Which, still surprised me. Then, Cassandra and Varric started pitching the two tents we had with us and I dreaded having to sleep in the same tent as Cassandra. I didn't want to talk about it with her and I had a feeling she would bring it up. Before Solas and Varric head into their own tent, I quickly jog up to Solas and grab his wrist, halting him. He turns around, looking at me quizzically. "Da'len?"

"Thanks. For what you did today. For what you said... and for what you didn't say." I look up into his eyes then.

He smiles warmly at me and shakes his head. "It was nothing, Eliana. I'm glad I made you feel better, even if it was only a little."

"You made me feel more than a 'little' better, Solas. And I mean it, truly." I dip my head towards him and walk back towards our tent then. He remains standing there a moment longer, watching me leave, but eventually enters his tent.

Once I get into the tent, I notice Cassandra is already laying down on her bedroll. She's only wearing her breeches and breastband now. I wonder momentarily how anyone can sleep in cold temperatures like that, wearing only that. But dismiss the thoughts as I too, slowly undress. My back facing Cassandra. Once I am in my smalls also, cursing at the temperature, I untie the rope from my backpack and roll out the bedroll on the tent's floor. I place my daggers neatly against the backpack with my stuff in them and lay down onto the bedroll, grabbing my braid and sliding it over my shoulder, holding it softly as I close my eyes.

We both lay there in silence for a while.

"I wanted to apologize, Eliana."

I sigh. I knew it.

"I have thought about what Solas said. He was right. It was wrong of me to act the way I did."

I remain quiet. Though I know, she knows, I'm still awake.
She scoffs slightly. "My trainers always said; 'Cassandra, you are too brash! You must think before you act.' And perhaps they were right."

A silence falls again.

"People always told me I was too soft. And I know I am. However, it is just the way I am. As you are just the way you are. You cannot expect me to do things by snapping your fingers and demanding it from me. I don't work like that."

She sighs. "I know. I think partially the reason I got so mad was because I want you to become stronger. I saw your softness and kindness as a weakness. It upset me."

"I am strong, Cassandra. Just not in the same way you are."

She turns around then, I hear her move and I do the same. We are both facing each other then, laying on our sides. "I have no doubt you are strong, Eliana." her mouth pressed into a thin line then. "Truly. I apologize."

"Apology accepted." I don't feel the need to apologize back to her. I didn't do anything wrong.

She smiles softly then. The flicker of the candle in our tent, slightly making her expression visible. "We will protect you. You don't have to fight and kill during this trip if you don't wish to do it."

"I'll kill demons. I've done it before. No problem killing demons." I say in a wry tone of voice.

She chuckles. "Good. That's all I can ask of you."

And with that, we go to sleep.

The next morning I eat, for the first time in... well a day. I'm pretty sure I've never gone so long without food. Though I slightly hated myself for it, I ate the fennec's meat. It was rather tasty, but it doesn't take away the fact that I felt horrible the other day about having to kill one of them. We pack up our stuff and continue our long trek through the snowy mountain area. I look up at the sky from time to time and remember Cassandra's teachings from the other day about the sun's position. Again, we walk for hours. Until, the mountain area makes way for fields and the snow starts to disappear, melt beneath our feet, showing rich green grass as we continue walking. We are now surrounded by forests and before I know it, a path emerges below our feet again. A main road. We are back on our way towards civilization, though the Hinterlands are still about a day and a half away. I am relieved to actually feel warmth on my skin now, and I take down the hood of the cloak. All of us are in better spirits today. Even I am, but perhaps this is simply because we are no longer in the snowy mountains. During my entire time here in Thedas, I hadn't been able to see anything other than snow and mountains. I'd never gone outside of Haven before, or not far away from it. So it was nice to have a change of scenery for once. And with us being on the main road again, comes seeing people again. Travellers, merchants on the side of the road from time to time, houses every now and again with children and families. But also...

Cassandra calls out: "Bandits ahead!" She unsheathes her sword and keeps her shield before her body, blocking the arrow of one of their archers. They're wearing dark blue outfits, there's two archers, one mage and two heavily armoured warriors. Cassandra immediately charges at the warriors, by herself. Varric tries to take out the archers and helps Cassandra from time to time, when she needs it. Solas quickly casts a barrier spell, surrounding him and I as he twirls his staff around graciously, ending the enemy's mage. I am again, dumbfounded at the teamwork. They all help one another, they never get into each other's way and though they've all just recently joined forces together, they work together like a well oiled machine. It's amazing to witness. I am, of course,
standing behind Solas. Trying not to get into their way. I keep my hand close to my daggers, but I know I probably won't do anything. I'm just trying to somewhat look intimidating. Eventually Solas has to rush towards Cassandra to aid her, as she had fallen down and one of the enemy's warriors was towering above her. His greatsword firmly in hand, raising it up in the air to strike her. But Solas was faster, using a .... blast of some kind, to push him backwards. He was rolling on the grass, trying to get back up to his feet quickly, but Varric immediately responded, shooting arrow after arrow into the warrior's armour. Piercing it and trying to end this madman's life.

I am watching the battle from afar now and I didn't notice one of their archers using their stealth to creep up behind me...

Suddenly I feel a gloved hand cover my mouth and the archer unsheathes my daggers and throws them on the floor next to us. "Don't fucking move." he hisses at me.

The sound of my daggers falling onto the floor, and clashing against one another as they do, causes them all to turn around and watch in horror what was going on: I was being held hostage by the archer.

"Apostate! Drop your staff!" the archer addresses Solas. Who in turn, holds up his hands in defense and lets his staff fall to the floor.

I am making muffled sounds of whining under the gloved man's hand and he jerks my body harshly. "Don't fucking move, I said!" his words are like venom and I feel terrified.

Cassandra and Varric are still fixated on my assailant, keeping their weapons ready. Varric aims Bianca towards the archer then. "Let her go, you nug humping bastard!" he calls out angrily. His nose holding the same wrinkles as Cassandra's.

The archer quickly pulls out a small little knife from his armour and holds it against my armour, against my ribcage. "I wouldn't do that if I were you, dwarf! See this dagger? Coated in saar-qamek!"

All of their eyes widen, I however, have no fucking clue what that even means.

I can hear the archer smile behind me. It sickens me to my stomach. "Yeah, exactly! You wouldn't want to do anything stupid."

I can see all three of my companions are looking at one another, contemplating on what they should do, they are willing to lay down their arms. But I will not submit to this asshole. Before I can think about the consequences, I throw my head back with immense force, causing my skull to hit hard against the archer's face. He grunts and immediately lets go of me to grab hold of his nose. "You fucking bitch!" I hear then, and before I can run towards safety, I feel a sharp pain in my right side. The archer jumped forwards, leaping to my side, and pierced the dagger into my ribcage regardless.

Varric takes this opportunity to kill the archer with a barrage of arrows and then, I feel the sharp pain in my side turn to white hot pain, a slow burning pain. Starting from my side, travelling up towards the middle of my torso. I gasp loudly, groaning, taking the dagger into my hands and pulling it out quickly, throwing it onto the floor next to me. I'm pressing my hand against the wound and I'm groaning wildly. I am starting to sweat profusely and I don't even know why. Something is not right...

Solas runs to my side, and quickly goes through his satchel. He takes out a whole elfroot and two potions. "Chew on this, da'len!" he forces the elfroot down my mouth and I do as I'm told. I'm literally eating a plant as we speak. "Don't swallow the root, just swallow it's juices." he coaxes me.
He watches me do as I'm told and nods. "Good, now spit out the root." I spit out the half devoured plant and can taste the weird aftertaste of bitterness.

He places his hands onto my sides and orders Cassandra to open the vials and make me drink them. She helps me drink the first potion but hesitates with the second. "Seeker!" he calls out to her as he's trying to heal me.

I groan loudly, almost screaming at this point. Somehow, the more Solas is trying to heal me with his magic, the more, whatever that poison was, is countering that. It's like there's a war inside my torso going on. A war between his soothing magic, and the thick, hot, fast spreading poison. I cry out a second time.

"Solas... this.... this is a lyrium potion..." Cassandra stares at the vial.

"Do it!" he yells at her now.

Cassandra clenches her jaw and helps me drink the second potion. I've no idea what it's doing, but immediately I'm starting to twitch and spasm in reaction to the potion.

"Aaaghggghh!" I'm crying out, wanting to curl up into a ball, but Solas' hands are keeping me in place, sitting down on the grass.

"I know, da'len... I know." he says, worry spread across his face. The sweat is literally dripping from my forehead onto my nose and down my neck, into my armour.

Then I am starting to lose vision, everything's turning to black. And I'm out.

Solas:
"She's passing out! Quickly! Help me lay her down!" I yell at the two companions who are next to me, staring down in concern at Eliana.

Varric and Cassandra are helping me gently lower her back towards the grass. "She cannot pass out! She will die!" I glance around and notice Cassandra's dagger in her belt. I quickly take it out and place it against the leather of Eliana's armour. With one quick tear, I rip open her entire armour, revealing her bare skin and breastband. Her skin is already starting to pale and big black streaks of poison are visible, coming out of the wound.

"Solas!" Cassandra gasps out. "Why would you-"

I growl in annoyance at the Seeker's reaction. "I need skin on skin contact! I can't patiently untie her laces, we've no time. Let me do my work." I press my hands onto her wound hard then and force my magic down into it. Willing the tendrils of it into her body, towards the source of the poison, that's rapidly spreading across her body. If it reaches her heart.... I shake the thought from my mind then and start murmuring ancient elven spells then. Closing my eyes and focusing solely on helping Eliana survive this.

*I just hope the lyrium potion will help... and not do the complete opposite.*

"Another lyrium potion, Seeker!" I call out. Cassandra doesn't question me this time and throws the liquid down into Eliana's mouth.

I focus yet again. I am using all of my own mana, my own life source to strengthen hers. Which is wrong of me to do, considering everything, but if she dies now, my orb dies with her. My plans die
with her.... I am pressing my aura against her own, sensing that she's still there somewhere, though her aura is faint. Her soul is slipping away... Then to my surprise, a sudden spark of energy emits from deep within her.

*The lyrium must've worked!*

I adjust my magic then, no longer trying to keep her alive, rather forcing the poison to leave her body. To eradicate it completely. I continue my murmur of ancient spells. Luckily Varric and Cassandra do not know elvish.

Then... a loud gasp. Eliana jerks her torso upwards and I notice the poison is gone for now. She's gasping for air and opens her eyes for a moment, full of shock and horror it seems.... Then... she closes them again.

"Solas!" Cassandra cries out. But I sigh a breath of relief and take my hands off her skin then, regaining my mana and energy.

"It is fine, Seeker. The poison is mostly gone... She is out of danger now." I say weakly.

"Woah... what are those strange markings on her skin?" Varric breathes.

I faintly look up at the dwarf. "Those are the scars she sustained from the lightning bolt the Pride demon used at the Breach."

He whistles. "I figured out her new nickname..."

Cassandra places her hand on my shoulder then. Giving me a grateful look. "Thank you, Solas. Without you.... she..." she closes her eyes and stops speaking.

I nod. "She would have died."

I look down at the poor girl... She is *something*.

I take the cloak and wrap it around her torso, covering up her breastband and bare skin. I put my hands underneath her knees and my other hand on her behind softly as I lift her up into the air. "We must continue our journey, Seeker. Set up camp. Some place else.." I kick the dagger coated in saar-qqamek poison away from us and continue walking, carrying Eliana in my arms. Her lips are slightly parted and she looks exhausted. Though I'm glad to see life is returning to her. I can feel her soul more brightly again then. They follow me quietly. Eventually, we reach a clearing in the trees, a lake next to us, away from prying eyes. I order Cassandra and Varric to pitch two tents and when one is up I take Eliana with me inside of it. Gently laying her down on the tent's floor. I make sure she's comfortable and then leave the tent as they're still working on the second tent.

"Well?" Varric asks hesitantly.

I clasp my hands behind my back and look at them both. My expression remaining serious. "She will live, not to worry. However, I will need to ask you a favor, Seeker." I dread having to ask this but I must. She needs constant care from here on out, I need to make sure none of the poison lingers.

Cassandra looks at me questionably. "What is it, Solas?"

I sigh. "I must ask you to share a tent with Varric. As I will have to share a tent with Eliana."

Cassandra's eyes widen. "Surely you-"
I cut her off harshly. "For one, I need to make sure there's no more poison left within her system. I've tried as hard as I can to remove it and I think it's mostly gone, but one can never be too sure with saar-qamek poison. Secondly, even if all of the poison is gone, Eliana might have fits. She could end up foaming from the mouth, shivering and trembling uncontrollably, and worst of all, she could end up with a terrible fever that could kill her. She'll need constant watch."

Varric glares at Cassandra then, crossing his arms. "You have to trust Solas, Seeker. He's a healer, he can help her. We sure as shit don't know what to do if something like that were to happen."

Cassandra rubs her neck uncomfortably by the idea of me and Eliana sharing a tent. "It's... indecent for a man and a woman to share a tent when they are not... courting one another."

I sigh but Varric speaks up again. "He's not going to do any of that, seeker! Better be safe than sorry. I tell you."

She nods then, accepting it. "Very well. In that case... I'll share a tent with Varric..." she glances over towards the dwarf. Then he seems to get it as well.

"Oh... right. I didn't quite get that part... Well shit." he shakes his head and walks over towards the middle of the clearing and starts to prepare a new firepit.

Cassandra walks off as well, presumably looking for logs.

That evening, none of us speak at all. We eat in silence, I check up on Eliana every ten minutes, to see how she's doing. If she's deteriorating or improving. So far, it seems she will be fine. Though I cannot be sure. After I finish eating, I take some of the food with me inside the tent, in case she wakes up and wishes to eat. Though I'm not even sure she'll be able to hold it down anyways. Regardless, I have to make sure there's food ready for her if she so desires it.

I light the candle within the tent and hear the faint sounds of Varric and Cassandra's voices, talking. Though I do not care about what they're speaking of.

I sit down next to Eliana and place my hand softly on her forehead.

Just as I thought. A fever.

Some of the loose tendrils of hair are stuck to her forehead and I gently remove them from it. While I'm doing this, she moans softly, reacting to my touch. I immediately take my hand back and look down at her, wide eyed.

But she seems to still be sleeping... I sigh and think of what happened the last couple of hours. How could she have been so foolish as to act on her own? Surely she knew it wasn't wise. Why else would I lay down my staff. Foolish girl. I berate her inwardly. Glaring down at her. But I cannot stay mad for very long as I recall this same girl, hugging me the other day. Crying into my tunic as she was clutching on to me for dear life. Because she had killed a fennec. And it had left her completely heartbroken by it. The same girl who was unconsciously leaning towards me the entire time at camp the other day. Seeking my presence, wanting to be close to me. The same girl who clumsily and quite obviously 'searched' for my hand to hold and who didn't let go as I took hold of hers. I shake my head, smiling slightly.

This beautiful.... strange... girl.

As I sit there, lost in thoughts I hear another moan escape her mouth and I notice she's blinking, adjusting to the dim light within the tent. I must have sat there for hours thinking of her. Thinking about her. The Seeker and Varric have gone to sleep already.
When her eyes are gazing around, eventually they fall onto my own. "Hello there.." her quiet voice, adorable as ever.

I smile at her. "Da'len. Glad to see you're still with us."

She sits up straight in her bedroll and looks around the tent then. "Where's Cassandra?"

"Asleep, most likely. She's sharing a tent with master Tethras."

Her eyes widen momentarily. "They are sharing one tent?" she asks me in disbelief.

I chuckle. It's good to see her sense of humor and sarcasm are still intact. "Yes." I say plainly.

She snorts. Then, realization kicks in for her. "Then.... you?" she halts. Gazing at me intently, wanting me to finish the sentence for her.

I nod. "Yes. I will be sharing this tent with you tonight, da'len. But only to keep an eye on your health."

I see a faint trace of disappointment in her eyes then, I can't help but grin at it.

*Silly girl. You do not know what you're asking.*

Then I remind myself, berate myself, she is not one of the people. I mustn't think of her that way.

She grimaces in discomfort then. "What the fuck was that stuff inside of my body?"

"That was saar-qamek poison. It's a poison used by the Qunari. They are another race within Thedas. It's a very strong, very powerful poison. Even a little scratch of it, can kill someone."

Her eyes widen. "Then how the fuck did I survive?"

"I used two lyrium potions on you. Which could have killed you, or helped you. I had to take the risk. It worked out well. Also, I used some of my own mana... life force to keep you alive. However, you still could have died even after all of that. It is a miracle you survived indeed, da'len. You are stronger than you think." I could hear the admiration in my own voice.

She flushed a bright red and averted her gaze then, something she would often do whenever I'd praise her or stare directly into her eyes. She was very easy to read. And her behavior had changed drastically towards me within the last two days. Even back at Haven, when we were playing with Fenriam, I noticed her behavior towards me had changed. Her aura opened up to me, she allowed me to feel more of her soul, see more of her. She trusted me.

"Ma serannas, hahren." she said quietly.

My ears twitching at her use of elvish. It was a perfect pronunciation this time.

Then her entire expression changed and she clutched the cloak between her fingers, her eyes full of horror. "Solas! Where's my...."

I dip my head towards her, can't help the big grin on my face at her adorable reaction. "Yes... about that... It's destroyed entirely. I'll make sure Cassandra and Varric get you some new armour tomorrow. For now, this will have to do." I point towards my cloak around her body. "I apologize for ruining your old armour, but I simply could not heal you properly without removing your top. And seeing as how quickly the poison spread, I also did not have the time to patiently roll it up."
"Oh god, I'm mortified." she whispers softly. Then she smiles softly. "However I get it, Solas."

I chuckle and then hand over the bowl of food from tonight. "Are you hungry?"

(...)

I sat there, watching here, as she gobbled up the food within the bowl. I wasn't surprised. I was surprised that she was able to hold it all in though. I surely expected her to throw up. As she was eating, she let her guard completely down. Usually, if I was near her, staring at her, I'd notice she was always guarded. Like her walls were up the entire time, not allowing me to look within her, to search for her energy. Right now, however, she was completely at ease, for the first time since I met her. I took this chance to really examine her thoroughly. Her blue eyes weren't just any blue eyes. Around her pupils, her eyes were a very light shade of blue. With white streaks around her pupils. Then it slowly became darker, in the middle of her eyes. The lining around her eyes, was a dark blue line. It looked very interesting, as most of the humans in Thedas had only one color in their eyes. It was either blue, green, amber or brown. But she had three different shades of color in her eyes.

*Was that normal for humans in her world? To have different shades in their eyes?*

Her beige blonde hair was almost golden when the light shone on it. Whenever we'd walk in the sunlight, or when the fire was burning closeby, you could faintly make out a golden glow around her hair. Her eyebrows weren't thin, but not bushy either. She had prominent eyebrows, the same color as her hair, though slightly darker colored. Her skin was very fair, as I had noticed before, the first day I healed her. But now that she had been here for a month and some days, spending time outside, small little freckles appeared around her nose and on her cheeks. It was adorable. I figured that back at home she probably didn't spend as much time outside as she had here. She had a full figure. She wasn't fat, by any means, even if she were, it probably would have suited her regardless. But no, she had a very small waist, but very full breasts. I could tell when I saw her breastband earlier. She hadn't wrapped it correctly though, it wasn't doing anything for her, except covering up. But it didn't support her breasts in the slightest. Her hips were wide and she had thick upper thighs. I cleared my throat unconsciously as I thought of her body like that. She looked up from the bowl of food, and raised one of her eyebrows.

"What?" she asked, her mouth still full of meat.

I shook my head. I had to come up with something as to not make her suspicious. "I just thought of you, dancing to that odd song."

She chortled and put the bowl down then, she was done eating. "Odd song? That, my good ser, was Britney Spears!" she feigned being insulted and I chuckled.

"Britney Spears? What an odd name for an odd song."

She gasped. "That's not the name of the song! She is an amazing performer! That song, is awesome." she stuck out her tongue at me.

"I see, and what was the title of the song, pray tell?" I sat back, supporting myself on my elbows as I looked her up and down.

"One more time. Or... hit me baby one more time."

I tilted my head backwards, letting out a laugh. "Yes, odd indeed." I smirked at her.

She smirked back to me but suddenly she grimaced and put her hands on her stomach. She started shaking and tensing up. I moved closer to her and looked at her worriedly. "Are you alright?"
She shook her head. "Just got... some cramps in my stomach. I think the food didn't go down right. I feel a bit... sick."

I hummed. "I think you need to rest, da'len. Sleep it off. Tomorrow we'll see how you're doing."

She frowned at me. "No... I think... I need... to....." she was acting flustered and I didn't quite get it. She looked up me in desperation. "I need to go."

Ah... "I'm afraid I can't help you with that." I chuckled a bit and laid down my bedroll.

She huffed and got up to her feet slowly. "No shit." she mumbled underneath her breath as she left the tent quickly.

Eliana:

Of course you can't help me with that, smart ass elf.

I jogged away from the camp, I didn't want them to... smell me. My nose crinkled at the thought. "Ew, gross." I whispered to myself.

I looked around then, we were no longer in an area I recognized. It was dark but my eyes quickly adjusted to the darkness. The fire back at camp was still burning but there was no sign of Varric or Cassandra. Then when I found a good spot, far enough from the camp, but still being able to see the fire, I started digging a hole quickly with my hands.

Hurry up, hurry u-hup!!!

Finally, I squatted down above the hole in the ground, I made sure it was deep enough. I groaned as I hovered above the hole for a while. I could never do my business outside. I remember once when I was a little kid, I was taking horse riding lessons from a friend of my grandmother's and while we were out in the fields, learning the horse riding, I told the woman I had to pee. Her name was Danielle if I'm correct, and she just laughed saying there were no toilets here. It would take another thirty minutes going back towards my grandma's ranch, so I had to do it outside. She lead me to some bushes and told me to do my thing. She stood away from me, her arms crossed, patiently waiting for the seven year old girl to do her business. But I remember squatting there for ages, the cold wind making me shiver until I gave up and yelled: "I can't do it!"

I don't know why I was thinking of that memory at that moment, but I did. Trying to go. But finally, it happened. I was relieved to say the least. I let out a sigh of relief. God how awkward. I shook the feeling from my mind as I kicked the dirt over the hole again, closing it and awkwardly making my way back towards the tent. I slowly got into the tent, opening the flaps and noticed that Solas was laying on his back.

He's not wearing a shirt. He's topless. He... he... has abs. Ohmygod. He has an adonis belt. Fuck.

My mouth almost immediately started to water at the sight of his naked torso. I always loved an adonis belt on men. It was my weakness. My goodness. I was ogling. He noticed, he slowly turned his head sideways to look at me, grinning widely and with an amused twinkle in his eyes. "I believe you are staring, da'len." he said in a teasing voice.

I straightened my back and shook my head, continuing towards my own bedroll. I huffed. "I so was not!"

He chuckled again. Now I understood why Varric had given him that nickname. Chuckles.
I got down onto my bedroll and tightened the cloak around my body some more, I was actually feeling quite chilly right now. As a matter of fact, I was freezing. He blew out the candle that was in between us and I heard him move around. I tried to get comfortable within my bedroll but I just couldn't. I laid there, on my left side, freezing. My body was trembling, my muscles were constantly tensed up, and I believe my teeth were chattering. I thought it might be my body fighting against the virus that had entered my body through that weird named poison. If anything, it reminded me of the flu. Without the sore throat, the runny nose and the headaches. Whenever I'd have the flu back at home, whenever I'd lay down in bed then, my muscles would tense up the entire time and I'd shiver uncontrollably. I heard Solas breathing and the sound of my own teeth chattering. I was trying not to but it happened automatically.

Eventually I heard him sigh loudly and then I heard movement behind me. Suddenly I felt his body pressed up against my own from behind. His arm wrapped around my side, placing his hand gently onto my belly. I stiffened. My eyes wide. Then, I felt his breath on my neck as he spoke. "You are having a fever, da'len. Your body is burning up but you're shivering." I remained quiet, then his hand moved down towards my hand and he took hold of it. "Your hands are freezing. Are you that cold?"

"Yes...." I breathed.

He sighed again and pressed his body even tighter against my own. "I'm trying to keep you warm. Nothing else."

Bah. Nothing else at all?

I shrugged the unwanted, not so decent thoughts from my mind then. "Thanks." I said simply.

We both remained quiet then. I could feel his warmth enveloping me, it was nice, it felt good. I was starting to shiver and tremble less. Then he spoke up again. "Eliana.... would you...." he paused for a moment.

My heart started beating faster. "Yes, Solas?" I asked him quietly, full of hope.

"Would you please be so kind to move your braid? It's tickling my face."

I groaned, loudly and grabbed my braid and flung it over my shoulder. I started sulking, good thing he didn't see me. But he chuckled nonetheless. "Sleep well, da'len."

"Sleep well, hahren."

I don't know what I was expecting exactly. But somehow I was expecting something else than that. He thought it amusing. I rolled my eyes.

Stop it, Eliana. Really. He's just being a nice elf wizard doctor man. Don't do this to yourself.

When I opened my eyes, I recognized my surroundings. It was the old house my mother and I lived in during my depression. So this was another memory. I saw my mother reading one of her books on the sofa in our livingroom. God, I remember this house well. It was a shithole. Don't get me wrong, it was a house and my mother and I had a roof over our heads.. But it was a shithole. It had only one bedroom, with a tiny toilet attached to it. My room, was basically the extension of the livingroom. Seperated by doors. We always kept the doors closed however, there was another way into my room from the hallway. Which was super tiny. Across the door to my room, was the kitchen, barely big enough to fit both of us in there when cooking. It overlooked the walkway of our apartment. Next to the kitchen was the bathroom, with a shower and a sink, nothing else. And then my mom's bedroom next to that. That was the entire house. My mother wasn't picky when it came down to renting this
place, she even told me years later she knew that the landlord was a shady man, doing some shady business on the side. But she wasn’t picky. She just wanted to leave her ex’s house with me at the time. Suddenly I can sense another presence next to me. I look around and see Solas staring around the livingroom.

I cross my arms then. "Hello again, tresspasser." I say in a mocking tone.

He smiles. "Couldn't help myself. I had to make sure you were alright. I wanted to make sure your dreams weren’t plagued by the events from earlier today." he looks around some more then. "It seems you are fine. This is a good memory?" He turns his face towards me again, waiting.

I nod slowly. "I think it is." I gesture over towards my mother on the sofa. "That's my mom."

Solas walked towards the sofa and hunched forwards, to watch my mother from up close.

I pulled his arm then. "Hey! Don't be so weird. I'm sorry mom." I say sheepishly.

Solas chuckled then. "She cannot hear, nor see me da'len. The same goes for you. This is simply a memory. It is being played out before us."

I frown then, but before I can speak up I can hear the front door opening and closing. In walks fifteen year old me, with a backpack and throwing it onto the dining table with a loud thud. My mom looks up from her book then and places it onto the table before her. "Hey sweetheart. How was your last day of school?"

Fifteen year old me groaned and took of her coat. "Great. Miss Arks let us read and talk to one another. Sasha and I spent most of the day finishing our extra work though."

My mom nodded. "Good. I envy you. Having such a long summer vacation. Some of us have to work, you know." she winked at me. "There's dinner for you in the fridge, I will be leaving in an hour. I won't be back home until late tonight. I have a date."

My fifteen year old self shrugged her shoulders and walked over towards my mom, kissing her lightly on the cheek. "Have fun, mom!" With that, I left the livingroom and into my own bedroom. As I usually would. Then I noticed my mom's expression change. She went from happy to.... worried almost. I never saw this because, well, I was in my room. She stared ahead of her for a while, with that very expression on her face.

Solas interrupted my thoughts then. "Are you sure this is a happy memory?" He was obviously referring to my mother.

I shrugged my shoulders. "I don't know... I don't really.. remember this time. I put it far away in my head I think."

He raised his eyebrow then. "Why would you do that?"

I shake my head. Then the images around us change. It goes from light to dark outside and I'm sitting on the sofa with my laptop on my lap, listening to music. Suddenly my mother walks in, all dressed up and her hair and makeup done. "Had fun?" fifteen year old me asks her then as my mom enters the livingroom.

"I did. He was very nice. I'm thinking on going on another date with him." she said, taking off her high heels and throwing them into the hallway. "You?" she asked me as she squinted her eyes at me.

I simply nod. "Mmhmm."
My mom sighs. "I'll go to bed sweetheart. I have to wake up at seven in the morning again. Don't stay up too late." she walks over to me and kisses my forehead, glancing down at my screen as she does. I remember I would usually play games on my laptop, listening to music, or I'd chat with people I met on the internet. I was never really in the livingroom unless my mother was gone. Other than that, I'd spent my days in my bedroom, with my laptop.

"G'night mom."

Solas and I are just staring at what's happening before us in silence. Then we see my fifteen year old self look at the clock on the wall and her expression changes. Suddenly she starts to sob, but very, very quietly.

Solas turns his body sideways and gives me a quizzical look. "What happened?" his voice full of confusion.

I shake my head. "I was... depressed during this time. I don't know why but I would always cry whenever my mom would go to bed."

The music that was coming from my laptop was making sure my mother wouldn't hear me if I cried too loudly, though I would always make sure to be as silent as possible. Solas took hold of my hand then. "Think of a happier time da'len. Focus on a good memory. Will the scenery before you to change to that happy time." he squeezed my hand softly.

I closed my eyes and tried to. But which memory should I pick? I had many good memories, don't get me wrong, but I didn't really know how to change the scenery before us. Then I thought of something, it was an image in my head I still remembered. It was one of the happiest one's I vaguely remember.

When I opened my eyes again... it was right before me. But how? This was a memory from when I was really little. Barely able to stand on my feet yet. Solas smiled and dipped his head then. "What is this place, Eliana?"

I smiled, and a tear escaped my eye then. "This is my grandma's ranch. During Christmas. All those people? -My family." I saw a little girl that I recognized from the baby album my mom had shown me once. "That's me! When I was a kid! And that's my grandmother! She's dancing with my grandfather." The livingroom was full of people, some I still remembered, some I didn't recognized at all. Old Christmas songs were playing, the hearth was lit in the livingroom and my grandma's dogs were on people's laps, being petted. Some people were dancing with eachother. I was sitting on my mother's lap and staring at the huge Christmas tree at the end of the room.

"This is nice." Solas said softly. He was still holding my hand.

I nodded and suddenly my grandmother let out a loud cackle. It made me extremely emotional. I always loved my grandma's laughter. She always cackled, truly she did. But it was contagious and so I giggled. I hadn't heard her laughter in so many years. She died when I was nine years old so it was... nice hearing it again. My grandfather dipped her in his arms and she swatted his arm playfully. Everyone within the room started whooping and laughing as they did. I let out a content sigh. This was nice. It really was.

Then the image before us changed and Solas and I were in the woods, surrounded by little wooden cabins. This was no longer back on earth. So... This was one of his memories?

I looked at him questionably. "Where are we, Solas?" He smiled and started walking with me towards one of the cabins. He gestured for me to look through the window and so I did. There was a small elven boy inside, with long auburn hair, hanging down his shoulders. A woman with dark
black hair was reading him a story sitting in a chair before the boy. "Is that..... you?" I asked quietly, blinking twice.

"Indeed. I was very young here. That woman, is my mother." he said softly.

I stared at the woman. Her hair reached her shoulders and it had little curls everywhere. Her eyes were blue as well, from what I could see, she had the same colored eyes as Solas. She had kind features. Little Solas was sitting crossed legged on the floor infront of his mother, listening to her story.

"She looks beautiful." I whispered as my face was practically pressed against the glass of the window.

"Thank you. I haven't seen her in years. This is the little village in the North I grew up in. I didn't have many friends, you see. There was little to interest a young man, especially one gifted with magic. But as I slept, spirits of the Fade showed me glimpses of wonders I had never imagined. I treasured my dreams. Being awake, out of the Fade, became troublesome."

I turned around to him again and cocked my head to the side. "You were able to do that when you were that little?"

The both of us started walking around the village, it was peaceful and quiet. Some children outside playing and running around. We just wandered in no particular direction, as he continued telling me his story.

He nodded. "Indeed I was. There was so much I wanted to explore." he sounded full of wanting and longing. Almost as if he was sad about it.

I hummed. "You say that like you were not able to so back then?"

"No. Eventually I was unable to find new areas in the Fade."

"Why?"

"Two reasons. First, the Fade reflects the world around it. Unless I traveled, I would never find anything new. Second, the Fade reflects and is limited by our imaginations. To find interesting areas, one must be interesting."

I nodded understanding. "So.... Is that why you joined the Inquisition then?"

He smiled wryly. "I joined the Inquisition because we are all in terrible danger. If our enemy destroys our world, I would have nowhere to lay my head while dreaming of the Fade. That is why I joined. Not why I stayed."

I raised my eyebrow then. "Then... why did you stay?"

He chuckled and stopped walking, I stood beside him, eyeing him. "Well... I found myself meeting with a very interesting girl. One who dropped from the sky, not knowing the simplest things. I found it endearing and I keep having to save her life." he looked at me, with a devilish grin on his face.

I huffed. "Save my- Oh please! I had a wooden stick the first day you know! And that wooden stick served me well! I even knocked a shade right on it's head before meeting with Varric and you. I didn't need your help per se the first hours."

He leaned in closer towards me, his hands were now clasped behind his back. His eyebrow slightly
raised. "Oh? Are you saying that I have not saved your life on several occasions, da'len?"

I looked away from his piercing look and snorted. "Well... I... No, you have." I fiddled a bit with my hands then. Feeling slightly uncomfortable saying that aloud. I hadn't really thought of it before, but Solas did save my life a few times before. When fighting at the Breach, when I was knocked out by the demon from said Breach, when I was stabbed the other day by the bandit. He even helped me get back to my cabin safely when I had been drunk. Not that that was saving my life, but again... he helped.

He laughed. "I couldn't leave while knowing you only had a wooden stick to protect yourself with."

I wanted to say something but suddenly the world around us started crumbling. I looked at him in confusion and fear. "What is happening, Solas?" I asked him, in a panicked tone of voice.

His voice remained calm. "You are waking up, Eliana. Have no fear." he smiled warmly at me... then...

I woke up.

I groan slightly as I turn my body around, Solas' arm is still around my body and I can hear the distant chatter of Varric and Cassandra coming from outside our tent. Our bodies are both facing each other. I look up at Solas' face, and he slowly opens his own eyes. Then he immediately glances down, his eyes widen.

Is he staring?

I frown at him. "What?" I ask him questionably. Then I glance down as well. My breastband had come undone and one of my breasts was out, my cloak was opened as well. Probably because I moved my body around and Solas' arm was still around my body, tugging on it as I moved. I yelped out and moved away from Solas immediately, tugging desperately at the cloak around my torso. Trying to make myself decent again. "Shiiiiit." I whine.

Solas himself has actually turned a shade of pink. I'm surprised to see him this bothered, I don't believe I ever have before. To my amazement, his ears are also turning pink. "I am very sorry for looking down, Eliana. I...-

But his apology is interrupted by Cassandra who storms into our tent. "What happened?! I heard Eliana screaming."

I shake my head but suddenly Varric appears right next to her, holding Bianca out infront of him. "Where's the demons?" he calls out, looking around our tent frantically.

Then... despite the awkward moment that just happened between Solas and I, I can't hold it in anymore. I start laughing uncontrollably, snorting loudly in between. Cassandra and Varric give me a quizzical and confused look, even Solas is.

"I'm sorry guys! Nothing happened. There's no demons. I just... I woke up in a bit of an odd predicament." I said finally, when the laughter had subsided.

Solas cleared his throat as he scrambled to his feet, putting back on his tunic. Cassandra eyed him suspiciously. "What happened?"

Solas sighed. "Eliana needs new armour. And perhaps a lesson in how to properly wrap her breastband. Seeker, I believe you're the right person to teach her that." Then he walked out of the tent, shaking his head, but I could still see his pink-ish ears as he left.
I giggled again, but Cassandra shot me an angry look. "Ugh. I *told* him it was not right for the two of you to share a tent. Varric. Out!" she hissed at the dwarf who was still very much confused.

He left however and Cassandra crouched down before me, gesturing for me to open the cloak. When she saw she made another disgusted grunt. "*How* can you not know how to wrap that properly?"

I bit my lower lip anxiously. She scolded me for something that was extremely easy to her, but weird for me. "I'm sorry Cassandra, we don't have breastbands. We have... easier things. I just thought these wrappings were made to cover them up."

She shakes her head and tells me to get up to my feet as she's wrapping them properly for me. Tightly, rather. She's basically squeezing my breasts together, and flat. "They are in fact meant for support, Eliana. Solas..... he..... *saw*?" she asks hesitantly.

"He.... saw something. Yes." I say quietly.

She groaned as she finished up with my breastband. "*I told* him." she scowled. Then she calmed down a bit and shook her head. "I'll go out and get you some new armour. I believe I saw a merchant on the side of the road yesterday, not far from here. Let us hope he sells armour." With that, she left the tent.

I wrap the cloak back around myself and muster up the courage to go outside and face Varric but... mostly *Solas*.

**Chapter End Notes**

Soooo.... I didn't actually want Solas and Eliana to have a fluff moment yet but as I'm writing this fanfic, it seems like every time Solas and Eliana are together and alone, they take over from me. And things ... just happen.

So that's a heads up for the upcoming chapters ;)

Oh yeah, and did you notice the little 'pun' or 'joke' I used in the part where Eliana is dreaming and Solas is there?

**Translations/Explanations**

tundra da'lan - gentle girl
saar-qamek - poison from the Qunari
Never Have I Ever

Chapter Summary

Sooo I know that I haven't been posting as frequently as I did with the first couple of chapters. However I've been busy with work and also I was a bit stuck with the upcoming chapters. However, I do think that I got the hang of it again now.... maybe.

I don't have a set frequency when I post new chapters because I'm still writing as I'm posting these chapters. I try to always make sure to have several chapters already written before posting one, so there ya go. And because I've been so lazy with posting, I decided I'd give you guys 2 chapters today! I hope you like it :) 

So, summary, right!
- MORE FLUFF.
- Even more fluff than more fluff.
- Solas POV.
- Eliana toughens up and is getting accustomed to living in Thedas.
- HORSES.

^-^

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I walk over towards the two men, sitting around the fire, eating some meat I didn't recognize. It was no fennec meat this time.

Varric noticed my quizzical look and held up a piece for me. "It's ram. Want some?"

I nodded and gratefully took the piece of meat from his hands and started slowly biting little pieces from the bone. I looked at Solas, but he did not look at me. It was like he was deliberately trying to avoid my gaze. He was still hot and bothered by it then. I mean, don't get me wrong, it was awkward as hell. He saw one of my boobs, for fuck's sake! But... I figured a man like him, a man of his age, surely he saw enough boobbies in his life. No need to get all flustered by it.

Varric noticed me staring at Solas and he still did not get what happened. So he put his meat down and moved closer to me. "Andraste's tits, woman. What happened? I asked Chuckles but he won't talk to me."

Solas shot an angry look at Varric, but when his eyes moved towards my own, he quickly went back to staring down at the meat in his hands.

I chortled gleefully and noticed his ears twitching. It was rather adorable actually. Solas... was flustered. And not a little either, he was very flustered. Varric was still eyeing me.
"Varric. I wear no armour underneath this cloak. The cloak being the only thing that hides what's underneath... do I need to say more?" I really didn't.

Varric seemed to get the hint then. He made a murmur of understanding and then he tilted his head
back and laughed loudly. His laughter echoing through the woods. "Oh... That's priceless! Chuckles saw you? Is that it, Chuckles? That why you acting this way?"

Solas let out a deep sigh. "Do you believe it normal to see a young woman exposed like that, master Tethras?"

"Oh, Solas. It was an accident. Your staring didn't bother me." I said it before I thought of it.

Varric opened his mouth as if to say something, but closed it shut again. He started smirking and his eyes slowly moved from me towards Solas.

Solas froze up and visibly stiffened. He stopped chewing the meat he had in his mouth and kept his face down.

Varric grinned widely. "Oh. So you were staring were you, Chuckles?" the dwarf was trying to hold in his laughter but he was doing a very poor job at it. He was very amused.

My eyes widened in horror. I didn't mean to put Solas on the spot like that. I said it before I could think about it.

Varric continued. "Ohhhh... The Seeker will love that part." he nudged Solas slightly with his elbow. Teasing him.

I threw my left over meat at Varric's head. He laughed in turn. "Don't you dare tell Cassandra that! It was an accident and I... I shouldn't have said it. I...-

Varric held his arms up in defense and started getting up and walking towards the tent. "No worries, Feathers, I won't tell."

Then I looked up in confusion at Varric. "Feathers?" I asked him.

Varric turned around and snapped his fingers. "Oh right. I forgot to tell you! I came up with a new nickname for ya. Feathers." then he pointed towards me. "Yesterday, when Chuckles had to rip open your armour to heal you, I saw the marks on your torso. They look like feathers. First I thought of calling you Bolts, named after the lightning bolts that hit you, causing you to receive those markings. However, Bolts sounded too harsh. You're kinder... Hm, softer. So... feathers." he grinned.

I liked that nickname. "Good one! So... Solas wasn't the only one staring at me, exposed?" I eyed the dwarf from afar.

Varric chuckled. "Hey, I didn't see your ...-" he motioned with his hands, cupping his palms infront of his chest. "-Parts." he finished as he motioned.

I grabbed a twig from the floor and raised it above my head, signalling I was about to throw that at him as well, but the dwarf quickly ran off towards the tent laughing. He started taking down the tent.

I sighed and looked at Solas, who was still in the same position. Frozen in one pose. I felt bad then. I felt like I had put him on the spot. "I... I'm sorry, for saying that infront of Varric. The words came out before I thought of them and.. I didn't mean to say you were staring but-

Solas looked up at me, his facial expression serious. His voice was low and husky then and he raised one of his eyebrows up at me. "I was staring, Eliana." then he got up, his expression blank again and he went to help Varric taking down the tents.

My eyes widened and my face became hot then. I thought I had imagined him staring but he just
admitted it himself. He was staring at my breast. I shook my head then.

*Why would he tell me that? If I were him I’d keep it quiet. But he just straight up told me he was in fact staring at me.*

I was blushing I just knew it. I sat there for a while. While the two of them were taking down the tents and packing up our stuff.

Eventually Cassandra came back. She was holding a new set of armour for me. I immediately got changed, behind a couple of trees, Cassandra with me to make sure no harm would come to me. It looked almost identical to my previous armour. I had a cotton tunic, beige colored. Ontop of it, a long dark brown leather jacket, with straps in the middle to close it. Matching, fingerless leather gloves, that came up to my elbows. Some sort of leather waist sash to wrap around myself, just below the hem of the jacket, ontop of my tunic. New leather pants, of the same dark brown color as the jacket. With an odd, sown 'V' shape for my crotch. It looked like it wasn't part of the pants, like they had sown it onto it later, or stuck it onto of the leather after finishing it. Of course it wasn't but what I mean is that it helped made my crotch stand out in the armour. Though Cassandra had pants that were the same. It made me giggle a little.

*It's like saying: HEY WORLD. LOOK! I GOT A VAGINA! LOOK DOWN AT THE 'V', CAN YOU SEE IT? I AM A WOMAN!!*

She didn't buy me boots as they were still intact. Though I kept my woolen shawl from Haven and folded my old pants neatly and tucked them into my backpack, with my cloak. Just in case... I wasn't going to throw my old pants away. Then, we were ready to head out again.

We started walking further down the path. My daggers on my back again, my backpack on my back as well. Cassandra glanced down at the map and told us that she asked the merchant earlier if there was a quicker route to get to the Hinterlands. He marked a path onto the map for her, she said it wouldn't take as long to get there now. If we kept the pace up. And so we did. They were walking much faster this time, than the last days. I was struggling to keep up with them.

"How are you feeling anyways, Feathers?" Varric glanced over his shoulder.

I shrugged my shoulders indifferently. "I had a fever last night and I was out of sorts for a moment, after eating... But I'm fine now."

He hummed. "Good thing Solas was there, right?" he wiggled his eyebrows.

I groaned and rolled my eyes at him. I knew what he was hinting at, but I decided to remain quiet. I didn't want to slip up and say something stupid like earlier, because this time, Cassandra was here. And she was listening.

"I'm glad Solas was able to patch you up, Eliana." She said, staring infront of her.

I nodded. "Me too."

Then the conversation went quiet again. Solas and I did not speak to eachother. He didn't even look at me. He was still behind me the entire trip, but he had kept his distance this time. Did he regret offering to sleep in the same tent with me? Did he regret admitting to me that he did, in fact, stare? I didn't have much time to give it much thought anymore. The mark on my hand flared back to life a couple of hours into walking the path before us again. I groaned softly, but all my companions immediately took their fighting stances. We all knew. A rift was nearby. As if fate responded to my thoughts, in the sky above us, popped out a green crackling rift. Distorting the vision around it,
shades and wraiths were spat out and immediately went for my companions. I stood there, breathed out, and unsheathed my daggers. Like I said before to Cassandra, in our tent, I had no problems killing demons. Or, trying to at least. I remembered some of my training and immediately started twirling my daggers at a shade that was near Cassandra. She could've probably easily handled that one herself, but I wanted to make up for the lack of usage of my daggers. I took a step to the side of the shade, who kept it's attention fixated on Cassandra. I pierced it right through it's back, the tip of the dagger sticking out of it's 'chest'. It screeched out loudly and dissapeared in a puff of smoke. I felt extremely triumphant then. It fed my cockiness as I quickly dashed towards the wraiths nearby, attacking Solas and Varric. I spun towards them and my daggers each hit the two wraiths at the same time as I did. When Varric and Solas finished them both off with their own little attack, I composed myself. I was slightly dizzy for a moment. When I regained my composure, I jogged over towards the rift and quickly lifted my hand towards it. It seemed I had gotten used to feeling pain in my body. No pain in the world, could beat the lightning from the pride demon back at the Breach, or the saar-qamek poison in my body. I gritted my teeth nonetheless, willing the rift above me to close. Instead it disrupted with a loud booming sound and more shades fell out, including a rage demon this time. I remembered this one well, Cassandra had said once it was a miracle my wooden stick did not go up into flames. Best stay out of it's vicinity then... just in case. Real leather would not burn, but it would still hurt like a motherfucker. Solas put up his barrier and used a big blast to keep the rage demon away from Varric and himself. It merely wavered for a moment but it was enough. Solas twirled his staff around, the end of it ended up on the ground and out came icy flurs of power, hitting the shade demon effectively. Cassandra charged right at it, and finished it off with the swing of her sword. Varric and I went after the remaining two shades, he nudged me playfully when the two of us were standing side by side, in our fighting stance. I glanced at him for but a moment, noticing his proud smirk and then we both attacked. Varric shot his barrage of arrows, one by one, at the shade he had targeted. The arrows whistling past my ears as I made my way up close towards the one I had targeted. I jumped to the side, effectively dodging it's razor sharp claws, and when I was beside it, I quickly stabbed both my daggers into it's side. It reached around itself as it screeched in pain and scratched my cheek lightly, but I didn't care. Swiftly I pulled out one of my daggers and stuck it right into it's cloaked head. With that, it dissapeared and I let out a happy squeal.  

I did it! I effectively, for the very first time, fought at a rift and none of my companions had to help out! They supported me through the battle but I did it all myself!!

I skipped towards the rift gleefully and closed it then, the link between my left hand and the rift was bright and burning. Apparently the mark's magic was reacting to how I was feeling: powerful. When it closed and muck and sacks of... whatever it was were flying around my head, I did my little victory dance. Shaking my hips and flailing my arms around happily. All three of them laughed, with me, not at me. Though perhaps, they might have laughed at me just a little.  

We set up camp one more time then, for the night, on Solas' request. It wasn't even sun down yet but he insisted we would. Saying that I wasn't able to make the trip in one go just yet. I didn't quite get it, in the Hinterlands we would still be traveling a lot, every day anyways. What would it matter if we 'rested' earlier this time? We were already on the borders of the Hinterlands, close to the Inquisition's camp, according to Cassandra. However, Solas insisted and so we set up camp.  

"Feathers, why don't you set up the tent this time with me?" Varric set as he set down his pack. I blinked wide eyed for a moment then. I had never set up a tent before. Varric laughed a bit, gesturing for me to follow him. "It's not that hard. Here, I'll show you."

I obeyed and followed him a little ways further, Cassandra and Solas were both preparing the food for tonight, watching me follow Varric's instructions intently from back at the fire.  

"So first you lay down this tarp, yeah? It's a waterproof piece of cloth." He demonstrates it and places it on the grass. "Fold the tarp into the relative shape of the tent, but slightly smaller. You don't
want any part of the tarp to hang out beyond the edge of the tent, otherwise it'll collect water underneath in case it rains. Fold up longer edges and tuck them under the tent." I watched as Varric explained what he was doing and I took mental notes. I had a feeling I'd have to set up the second tent by myself later. "Find the bottom side of the tent and put that side down on the tarp. Now these-" he shows me the tents poles. I recognize those at least. "-Are your tent poles. Very important, Feathers." he winks at me but continues his explanation: "Put the tent poles together and lay them across the flat tent. Most basic tents will have two tent poles that cross each other to form an X that will form the basic frame of the tent. To fit them into the tent, you'll put the end of the pole into an eyelet at each corner, and slide the pole through small flaps on the top of the tent. After you've fit both poles through their connection spots, they should probably bend of their own according, straightening up and raising the tent into what looks basically like something you could sleep in." We both get up to our feet then.

"That's it right?" I ask him hesitantly.

Varric shakes his head. "Not quite, Feathers. When you've got the tent square on the tarp, use the metal tent stakes to fit through the flaps near the ground at the corners and push them into the ground." he shows me the metal tent stakes and pushes them into the ground, as explained. Then he claps his hands. "Ta-da!"

I slowclap for him and giggle slightly. "Suppose I got to do the second one, yes?"

He nods. "I'm glad you caught on. Go ahead then, I'll watch and help you where needed." he smirks widely at me.

I find that with Varric's previous explanation, it's not that hard to set up the tent. I still struggle from time to time, though it's mostly because I'm afraid I'll fuck it up. When I finish setting it up, I'm happy to receive an applause from all of my companions. I take a theatric bow and murmur a couple of 'thank you's'. Then Varric and I take our seat next to the fire. Cassandra hands out some bread she had saved for us, whereas Solas takes the meat from the fire and starts cutting it up into four pieces for us all to have. Then we eat in silence. Varric takes out a flask of water and passes it around, each of us take a big swig of the water to quench our thirst. Then, once everyone's eaten something, Cassandra speaks up. "I'm proud of you for fighting the way you did, Eliana. You did well."

I feel a pull within my chest then. She-hulk is proud of me. I can barely believe it. I nod gratefully at Cassandra.

Varric slaps me hard on the back. "I agree with the seeker on that one, Feathers. It was great fighting alongside you earlier. I had fun," he winks at me then. Again I nod gratefully, this time at Varric. Then I'm lost in my thoughts as my companions start talking about a few things.

I think about the moment where Cassandra berated me, after my behavior when I had to kill the fennec but I couldn't. I had to become aware of the fact that in here, in Thedas, I had to start killing things. Animals for food, humans to survive. The thought sent shivers down my spine, I was dreading it, deep down. However I also knew I just had to swallow the bitterness and to just do it. I couldn't expect to always be cowering behind Solas for protection. I couldn't expect my companions to always come to my aid when needed. I had to start being independent, even if it were just a little. Sure, I would still fuck up occasionally, this was inevitable. I was a clutz and I always did something stupid or childish to fuck up even the most easiest tasks given to me. However, I had to try and do something on my own for once in my life. I had made up my mind then, starting from tomorrow, I'd become more independent. I just had to. I had to forget about my own feelings for a while, shut them out completely, for the time being. I had to do what needed to be done. Maybe once I return to my own world, I can become my old whiney self again. But in this world, I had to become even a little
bit tough. Simply to survive. Long ago, our ancestors had to do the same. Surely there was still a
little bit of a survivor within each and every human that inhabited Earth today? I always read articles
or heard stories about people getting themselves in terrible situations where they had to fend for their
lives. These people, these 'survivors' always spoke of some sort of 'survival instinct'. A primal sense
that took over for them. I figured I'd have that... somewhere as well. Everyone had to.

"Elie? Did you hear me?" Cassandra's question gets me to pay attention to my companions again as I
snap out of my own thoughts then.

"Hm? Sorry. I was... lost in thoughts. What were you asking, Cassandra?"

She smiles softly. Her features softer than ever in the flickering light of the fire before us. "I was
asking you about your world. What did you do back there?"

"As a job you mean?"

She nods.

"I worked in a store. Like a merchant, but much much bigger. Inside of a house. We sold everything,
from day to day items, things to wash yourself with, like soaps and such. But also we sold clothing,
medicines, perfumes, items you can decorate your house with... that sort of crap." I smile at the
memory of my old job. I didn't like it, my job, but it was kind of funny to think of it right now. I
hadn't thought of it at all since my time arriving here. "Anyways, I was someone who sold these
things to people, together with a team of co-workers who did the same. We made sure the store
looked good and clean, we filled the store everyday, we had to do a lot. It was hard work but not
nearly as hard as work is here."

Cassandra hums for a moment, taking in my explanation. "I see. Do you miss it?"

I grimace. Why does everyone here insist on asking me if I miss my old life? Of course I do. When I
think of it. I decide to give her the same answer as I gave Leliana. "I don't think about it a lot. I have
other things on my mind right now."

"But when you do think about it, like right now, what do you feel?" Varric asks me, eyeing me from
the side of me.

I sigh. "I... haven't given it much thought. I suppose.... I feel...." I look up at the sky, it's become dark
at this point. Only a few stars above our heads. "I feel like there's only more questions. Like how did
I get here? Why did I end up here? And..." my head drops, I look down at my feet. At the grass
in time and does my world not yet exist? Did I just... completely vanish from my own world or is my
body still there somehow? Which wouldn't be possible since my body is here but... maybe it is there
too. And if so, did time stop? Does it go on? If that's the case, has it gone by fast? Perhaps time here
is different and months here equal years over there? Or maybe it's only been seconds since I've been
gone there." I sigh again and shake my head. "That's how I feel."

Solas' voice breaks the silence then. "You sure you have not thought about it before, da'len? The
way you just spoke, it seems like you've given it much thought."

I look up back at Solas. "I don't know. I may have, without knowing I did."

"What about your family?" Cassandra interjects. I stiffen immediately.

Solas snaps his head towards Cassandra, glaring at her angrily. He knows a little, and it seems he
understands why my behavior changed so fast at the mention of my family.
Cassandra seems oblivious to it though. "What?" she asks in general as her head is facing Solas'.

Varric clears his throat. "Perhaps she doesn't want to speak of that, Seeker. Sometimes family can be a touchy subject to some people. Maker know's I don't like speaking about my family. Especially a certain brother.." Varric pokes the fire with a branch he found on the floor.

"I don't mind... I just... When speaking of family, I'm immediately faced with my feelings about them. I don't have a big family. Just my mother and her husband."

Cassandra cocks her head to the side a bit. "Your father?"

I shake my head. "I haven't seen my real father since I was sixteen. I ended the contact between us two. No... my mother re married at some point. I love him like my father though, he's been an amazing fatherly figure to me."

Solas seems intrigued, as is Varric. All three of them are intently staring at me. Waiting for me to finish my story. I smile faintly at them all. "Other than that I have no family.. not anymore. They yet live, however we don't speak to one another. There's a lot of bad blood in my family. On both sides of the family. Mother's side and dad's side." I snort then. "I figure my dad's side of the family must really hate my guts." Then I shake my shoulders a bit. "At any rate. I don't want to dwell too much on it." my mouth presses into a fine line. "I don't want to... become sad."

Cassandra nods, understanding my point. "I get it."

Then I shrug the feelings from my mind and stretch my arms above my head lazily. "Anyways. I need a bath."

Varric chokes on his own saliva it seems and Solas' ears immediately twitch at my mention of a bath. I raise my eyebrow up at the two men questionably. "What? You two don't have to take one with me."

Cassandra laughs loudly, for the first time I hear her genuine laugh and it makes me smirk. The two men are still very much affected by the mention of me bathing. I nudge Varric playfully. "Unless you want?" I say playfully. Cassandra realizes I am teasing them and smacks her hand on her leg as she's laughing on.

Varric clears his throat, his hands clutching tightly around the branch he's holding. I giggle slightly then scoot closer towards Solas, who has been silent this entire time. I nudge him too softly. "What about you, hahren? Want to join me in the water?" I smirk maniacally.

He seems really bothered at this point, though I can't know for sure because even though the fire emits light, it's not bright enough to show his features clearly. "Ma nuvenin, da'len." He says softly. My eyes widen. Cassandra and Varric do not know this. But he has explained this to me before. The definition of those words. I slowly move away from him. Cassandra shakes her head and breaks the silence that fills the air around us. Ignoring my reaction entirely.

"Let us bathe then, Eliana. The men can go later if they wish to." With that, she gets up and waits for me to follow her.

Instead I just stare at Solas in disbelief. Was he just serious? Was he joking? He had to go along with me joking, right? I would've believed that if he hadn't admitted to be staring at my breast this morning. I would've believed it, had he not been so calm and collected about it. He had no trace of a smile on his lips as he looked back at me. A blank expression. I blink then slowly get up and follow Cassandra quietly.
He was joking. Don't think on it. Just bathe for fuck's sake. God know's you need it. You smell.

Cassandra and I walk away from camp, towards a stream a little ways back. We had passed it earlier today. Without hesitation, she strips down to her smalls. Leaving her sword at the ready. I look at her in confusion. "Just like that? You're not worried about.. bandits or something? I thought we'd take turns or something."

Cassandra snorts slightly as she takes off her smalls and walks into the stream. "It would only take longer. I don't intend to linger here for too long."

I slowly start to strip down too. I'm not even bothered by her being completely nude before me now. She has nothing that I don't have. If anything, I feel more at ease having to be fully nude, when she is too. I follow her into the stream. The water is cool, but not freezing. For the first time, I get to fully emerge my body in water and my body has long yearned for a 'proper' bath. I turn around to reach for the satchel that I always carry with me and take out my bar of soap and start to lather the soap onto my body. I let out a satisfied groan. Cassandra turns around to face me and frowns at me. I give her a quizzical look. Then remember she said she didn't want to linger here for too long. I huff. "My dear Cassandra. Bathing is supposed to take a while. It's like a luxury. You have to enjoy it while you can. Treat yourself." I say in a mocking tone of voice.

She rolls her eyes at me. That much I can tell in this darkness. "It's a luxury we cannot afford, Elie." she washes her pits without the usage of soap and glares at me.

Once I finish up washing my body I throw the soap into her direction, she catches it without having to be warned. Damn, her reflexes are really sharp. She stares down at the soap, but I can see her wanting to use it. She may be a warrior but she's also a woman. And I know she longs for a good bath as well. "Solas and Varric are closeby, if anything happens we'll just scream and they'll come running," she looks up at me and makes a weird face, causing me to sputter and laugh. "Alright, perhaps that won't be a good idea, considering we're both fully nude. However you get my point."

She grins then and starts using the soap on herself as well. I untie the braid from my hair and let my hair become soaked. I let out a content sigh. It feels wonderful, actually bathing. Even if it means it's outside, not in a warm bath, but rather in a cool stream. She returns she soap to me and I start to wash my hair with it then. Massaging my scalp with my fingers, treating myself. Once that's finished I rinse out my hair slowly and meticulously. I am taking advantage of the fact that I can, for once, actually bathe and I will take all the time necessary for that. It feels nice, finally feeling clean again.

(…)

After the bathing, Cassandra and I return to camp. Feeling clean and refreshed. The two men were conversing with one another but the moment we arrive, they fall silent. Cassandra and I silently warm ourselves up at the fire. Though we got used to the cool water, we are still a bit damp and our hair is wet, and the breeze makes it colder than it really is. Though Cassandra's short hair has mostly dried, mine is still soaked. The drops of water dripping onto my armour, making slight 'dripping' sounds on the leather fabric. I had combed my hair out once Cassandra and I finished bathing so it was still hanging loosely down my shoulders. "You smell nice." Varric said as he sniffed the air around the two of us.

I giggle slightly. "I stole a bar of soap from back at Haven, from my cabin."

Varric chuckles. "Smart kid." then he pulls out his notebook from the satchel and hands it over to me. "You wanted to read it, right?"

My mouth drops open and I excitedly take it in my fingers. I slowly open the notebook and read it aloud for all of us. Making Varric feel slightly uncomfortable it seems. But soon he relaxes and
listens to me reading out his chapter. He’s finished writing the first chapter. It doesn’t take long for me to finish up, but it’s some form of entertainment for us all. Making us forget, only temporarily, about the dangers all around us, forgetting the constant fear and tension hanging in the air.

* * * *

They say coin never sleeps, but anyone who’s walked the patrol of Hightown Market at midnight might disagree. The pickpockets and confidence men head to the taverns at dusk, the dwarven businessmen and nobles go back to their tiny palaces to fret over the ways they got cheated, and the market falls silent.

Donnen Brennokovic knew every angle of the market with his eyes closed. Twenty years of patrols had etched it into him so that he walked that beat even in his dreams. The recruit, Jevlan, was another story. The ring of steel striking stone told Donnen that the kid had stumbled into a column again. His new armor would be full of dents by sunrise.

“Torches would make this easier.” The sound of Jevlan hauling himself off the pavement was like a tinker’s cart crashing.

“Torches make you night-blind. You’ll adjust.” Donnen crossed the square to help the kid to his feet. A breeze scurried across the plaza, sending the banners and pennants shivering and carrying an old, familiar scent. Donnen stopped in his tracks. “Something’s wrong.” His voice was low, warning. He peered into the dark, up at the mezzanine just above them. “Follow me. Be ready for trouble.”

The two guards climbed the dark stairs and there, in a puddle of shadow, found the body. Gold-trimmed satin glittered through the blood.

“Get the captain,” Donnen sighed. “We’ve got a dead magistrate.”

* * * *

A month and a half had gone by. We only needed to walk for three more hours, to find the Inquisition's camp within the Hinterlands. We had met up with lead scout Harding, on top a hill close to the Crossroads, where mother Giselle would be found. She had introduced herself to me and told me of the serious situation within the area. It seemed they had been eagerly awaiting our arrival. There was much to be done. Firstly, we were supposed to help the Inquisition's forces who were fighting back the rebel mages and templars fighting amongst themselves, causing havoc and death wherever they went. They did not seem to care whether people were innocent or with the Inquisition to help them. They simply attacked on sight. Not asking any questions, zero fucks given. The first couple of fights I had lingered behind my companions, though I had mentally prepared myself for fighting people, the moment it came down to it. I couldn't do it. Not right away. When all danger had passed, we went to meet up with Mother Giselle. She was a woman wearing the same red and white robes and strange headpiece I had seen before in the Chantry of Haven. She seemed to be in her mid thirties, though I never asked her for her age. All she wished to discuss with me was my impending doom, having to visit the capital city of Orlais: Val Royeaux. A name I had heard before, leaving Chancellor Roderick's mouth, when he spoke of my execution. She wished me to speak to the clerics of Val Royeaux, show them I was 'no demon to be feared' as she so eloquently put it. Which of course, made me dread the whole thing even more. She was kind to me though, despite her being part of the Chantry. She seemed to not quite know what to make of me, but she helped me. Hoping I would prove the rumors surrounding me, about being a sign of dread and heresy, wrong. Whilst we were speaking, she was tending to the wounded of the Crossroads. Helping them, easing their minds and their fears for the healers, which were mostly mages it seemed. She would go towards Haven after tending to the wounded, providing Leliana the names we needed. Giving us the first help we needed, to advance further with our plans.

Soon after, we went about the Crossroads. There were many people in need of help. I was able to practise with my hunting, by having to kill ram's surrounding the Hinterlands, for a refugee hunter. There was not enough food for the people in the Crossroads and we made sure to help them by
doing so. We had come across a couple of elves, living in the Crossroads. Looking like they were no more than beggars. My heart ached to see some of the humans who inhabited the little village treat the elves like they were nothing but vermin. Once the problems within the Crossroads were solved, we moved on through the Hinterlands. Closing rifts as we came by them. There were a lot of them, sprawled across the vast fields of the area. We had to set up Inquisition camps for our scouts, in total we set up six of them. There was much to be done but we figured getting horses from Horsemaster Dennet, was the first main task to be done. Scout Harding had told us about the man, the day of our arrival. He was holed out somewhere, presumably at his own farm, though nobody had seen him in weeks. When we had arrived at his farms, it turned out he was protecting his farm, workers, wife and daughter from wolves and demons. I couldn’t help but feel admiration for the old grumpy man. He was grumpy for a reason. He looked like a man who had to work hard his entire life. His face was tan from the sun he worked in every day. His hands were old and wrinkly, worn out by the hard labour he had to do day in, day out. His wife Elaina was no different. A stern and strict woman, working in their gardens on elfroot when we first met her. She told us about the wolves and sent us to speak to their head farmhand. These people wasted no time whatsoever, putting us all to work. The days were long and tiring, going by in an instant. If we had but a moment to spare, Cassandra and Varric would teach me to fight more effectively. Giving me tricks and tips to help improve my fighting. At night I would pass out almost immediately, the second my body touched my bedroll in the tent. I was back to sharing my tent with Cassandra.

I had lost weight during our time in the Hinterlands. I noticed because my armour was not as tight as it used to be. Even Varric had commented on my face getting slimmer. While bathing with Cassandra, she had mentioned my body had become fitter. Less plump. During one bath in particular, in the early morning, I decided to check for myself. I looked down at my belly and noticed it was indeed flatter. Not that I had a rounded belly to begin with, but it did seem more fit now. More trained. There was no stopping this from happening. With the daily walking for hours, the fighting, the walking up hills and jumping over obstacles on the road each day. Eventually, after being on the road for about three weeks, I had killed the first human. Because of course, there weren’t just animals and rifts about... There were still the templars and mages fighting amongst themselves, and the bandits trying to rob people from their valuables. The first time I had pierced the bandit with my daggers, I felt queasy. I felt terrible and dread filled in the pool of my stomach. I tried to ignore this feeling however, knowing damn well that if I didn't kill this man, he would kill me instead. Cassandra had spoken to me after the battle, when I emptied the contents of my stomach on the side of the road. Hushing me, telling me the killing would get easier by time. And though at first I didn't believe her words whatsoever, I was soon confronted with the fact that she was indeed right. The following battles after were still hard on my soul, the deaths of the men and women weighing heavy on me. However, it got easier and easier, with every swing of my daggers. With all the blood splattering on my armour and face. At the end of the first month I was accustomed to it. I was used to having to wash the blood from my armour in the streams and lakes nearby. Used to the water turning pink-ish when I'd wash the blood off of my skin.

During our meals we would speak to one another. I asked Varric and Cassandra about their lives. Who they were, where they came from and how they ended up here. Cassandra told me she originally came from Nevarra. She was a member of the Royal Pentaghast family. She used to have a brother, named Anthony. But he was killed when refusing to kill a dragon back in Nevarra. She used to live with her uncle. Her parents were dead since they took the wrong side in the second attempt to overthrow King Markus Pentaghast and were executed by the king. She told me a little about her becoming a Seeker of Truth but at least I got to know her better. Varric told me his family was originally from the dwarven city of Orzammar, though he grew up above the surface. Apparently his family was once part of the noble caste in Orzammar, until his father was caught fixing Provings. He also had to explain to me what Provings were. Orzammar Proving was an arena where Provings take place and in which dwarves fight and are considered favored by the Ancestors, should they win. So
it reminded me of gladiators for some odd reason. Though I did not tell him this. So Varric grew up in Kirkwall, unlike his brother Bertrand. However when I asked him about his brother, he closed up again. I cursed at my own curiousity because he was not ready to speak of this yet. I had clearly hurt his feelings, or maybe I didn't, but he just felt hurt having to speak about it. However he changed the topic, telling me about how he ended up with the Inquisition. That Cassandra had interrogated him, like he had explained briefly before in the tavern back at Haven, but that she did it to find Hawke. Which is a name I had heard before when he spoke about it with Fenrian. Cassandra seemed to sneer at his mention of Hawke, but Varric continued, telling me Cassandra had grown on him. "Like fungus." She had replied, snarkily. But the both of them exchanged smiles. Solas and I barely spoke one on one during the month and a half we had spent in the Hinterlands. We only spoke if he had to heal my cuts and bruises, or when we'd be eating around the campfire. I was sort of okay with us barely having time to speak privately. Ever since the comment he had made, where he basically said he wouldn't mind bathing with me. I hadn't asked him about it, I didn't want to. I was still too flustered about it when I'd think on it. However I could never stop myself from staring at him. Sometimes I would be way too obvious about it, causing Varric to throw his quips at me. There were times when I would be walking next to him and noticed too late, that I was basically right next to Solas. We'd been in the Inquisition's camps a few times and the way I was hovering around Solas caused many of the Inquisition's scouts and soldiers to whisper. Presumably about us. Our actions spoke louder than our words. It seemed like the less we talked, the more we showed interest in one another. Even Solas would sometimes stare at me a moment too long, before shaking his head and putting some distance between us again. But only for a moment, like two magnets we were both pulled right back towards eachother. I berated myself for it many a times. I could not do this to myself. I could not do this, while having so many other things on my mind. It was not right.

As far as sovereigns went, Varric had been right. I came across a lot of coin purses, some from the baddies we had killed. Some were simply laying around in deserted camps. I had offered to pay both Varric and Cassandra back for all the times they paid for my food and drinks at the tavern. Or for the times that Cassandra bought me armour, which had been twice now. Including the daggers and whatnot. But they both wouldn't let me. Though I'm sure that, had I offered two months ago, they would let me pay them back. I suppose by this point in time, we had all gotten very familiar with one another. We'd gotten to know eachother, I guess you could consider us somewhat more 'friendly' with eachother. Though we never spoke of it. I had managed to carry around a big, filled, coin purse of my own at this time. I went up to a merchant's stand one day, back at the Crossroads and decided to buy some gifts. One for Fenrian, which was a Dalish toy soldier. I figured I'd be able to bring a smile to his face that way upon returning. I also decided to purchase some new soap bars. One for myself, two for the elven servants that tended to me back at Haven. I hadn't forgotten about them. When I got questioned by my companions on why I bought two extra soap bars, I told them the truth. They all approved of my kind gesture, but Solas especially it seemed.

I plopped down onto the floor. Not sitting on a tree stump or rock, simply on the dirt before the firepit. I sighed loudly. Cassandra turned her head to face me and smiled warmly. "Tired?"

I simply nodded. As I usually was, lately. We had finished our last tasks within the Hinterlands, for now. Some things were supposed to be taken back to Haven, like for example the building of the watchtowers for Bron and Dennet's farm. Our horses were tied to the trees nearby, including Varric's smaller pony. I continued staring at our horses, Dennet gave them to us today, when we told them we would head back towards Haven. They really seemed to fit all our personalities. Varric's horse was a Dartmoor pony, well here it wasn't named that but I recognized the breed as being the same as their Earthly brethren. One good thing about being raised on my grandma's farm was knowing most the horse breeds and knowing how to ride a horse, though it had been years since I last rode one. So anyways, Varric's Dartmoor had an auburn shade of fur, with white specks here and there. His mane's were cream colored. Varric named him Orson, I had thought it fit the pony.
Cassandra's horse was mighty looking, quite like herself, it was a Friesian. It was completely black, including his mane's. He looked majestic and strong, it fit Cassandra very much. She named her horse Octavian. Solas' horse looked a lot like a Peruvian horse, so I figured that was the breed. He, just like myself had a mare. Her fur was entirely dark brown, her mane's were long and were a slightly lighter shade of brown. He named his horse Valoril, again very fitting. Lastly was my own horse. I picked her out of a bunch of other breeds, I had been hoping to find a mare that resembled my own horse, from back when I was a child. My grandmother had two horses, a male and female one. The mare I picked out, was the same breed, even looked the same. I couldn't help myself. She was an Icelandic horse, her fur was a light shade of auburn, her long mane's were cream colored. I even named her after my own horse: Moonlight.

I couldn't help but smile. Solas chuckled. "You love horses, Eliana."

I nod shyly. "I've always admired their beauty and majesticness. I can't help it. Though it will make our trip back towards Haven a whole lot easier and faster." I snickered slightly.

They all agreed with me. Then silence fell across the camp. I sighed deeply, thinking of what to speak of with my companions, but couldn't come up with anything. Then I came up with something. "Hey guys! How about I explain a little game I used to play with people back at home?" I wiggled my eyebrows.

Varric immediately got excited. Cassandra and Solas were a bit.. unsure about it but I continued explaining it anyways. "It's usually a drinking game, but since we don't have ale at our disposal here, we can play without liquor. We all put up our ten fingers, then each one of us comes up with a 'Never have I ever' statement. Anyone who at some point in their lives has done the action that the first player says, must lower one finger for the action. When you do have liquor, you usually drink instead of lowering a finger. But, that's it! Anyone up for it?" I smirked widely.

Cassandra frowns then. "What purpose has this game?"

I snort. "It's getting to know one another on a more personal level. The people who've used up all of their fingers lose, the one having at least one more finger up, wins. You have to be honest though!"

"Oh, I like this idea, Feathers! I can't wait to get to know all of the seeker's dark secrets." he nudges Cassandra slightly.

Cassandra in turn groans and rolls her eyes at the dwarf but soon everyone is holding up their ten fingers, including me. I'm surprised to see a smirk on Solas' face as well. He's excited for the game, I see. Probably trying to figure out more about every single one of us.

"Alright! I'll start." I glance at everyone around me and giggle. For the first question I'll pick out something I've done, but after that, it's claws out! "Never have I ever..... kissed someone on the first date!" I lower one of my fingers and wait, while staring intently at my companions. Varric laughs loudly at me lowering a finger and does the same, shaking his head while laughing on. Cassandra raises her eyebrow up at the both of us and keeps all her fingers up. Solas doesn't lower a finger either.

"Why would you kiss someone on the first date?" Cassandra says, slightly uncomfortable with the thought of that, it seems.

I chortle and shrug my shoulders. "It just happened."

Varric smiles. "Do we also have to tell the story behind it?"
I shake my head. "Only if they ask and if you feel the need to explain it to them."

Varric hums. "Well, Feathers, it seems like we're the heathens here. Having kissed on the first date! How preposterous!" he mocks Cassandra and Solas.

I giggle. "Alright, alright! Next one, Cassandra. I believe that's you."

She makes a disgusted noise, then thinks seriously for a moment. "Alright... Never have I ever.... Killed a great bear." she starts grinning wickedly at me then and lowers one of her fingers. The remaining three of us keep up our fingers, none of us lowering one.

I shoot daggers at Cassandra with my glaring then for a moment. "Hey! I wanted to- ... I was too scared of it. I admit."

Varric narrows his eyes at Cassandra then. "I was helping you know! But you just had to take the final kill."

Cassandra sticks out her tongue playfully at Varric, which is unlike her, but very amusing nonetheless. Then I giggle. "You know Cassandra, you knew this already. You just fucked up by using up one of your fingers. Knowing we wouldn't. The goal of the game is that you're trying to keep as many fingers up as possible." She berates herself then, cursing something under her breath. "Your own fault! Next!" I say loudly, turning my attention towards Varric.

The dwarf hums. "Hmmm... Never have I ever.... Been cuffed before." he stares at me, extremely amused.

I roll my eyes. "That's low... even for you." I say, while lowering one of my fingers, keeping eight up. Cassandra keeping her nine fingers, as well as Varric, but for the first time, Solas lowers one of his fingers, without saying a word.

Varric gasped then. "Chuckles? You've been cuffed before?"

I turn my attention towards Solas then. He smiles faintly and nods. "I have. I was once captured by a Dalish clan. They thought me trespassing on their grounds. They bound my hands and kept me captive for a day before releasing me."

Varric nods his head in understanding, then waits for him to continue. Solas looks at me for a moment too long, while staring at me he smiles evilly. "Never have I ever had improper dreams." Everyone keeps their fingers up while looking confused.

"Err... Define improper, Chuckles." Varric says as he eyes the apostate next to him.

Solas keeps his eyes on me, a playful twinkle within them. I raise my eyebrow up at him, wondering what he's thinking of. "Suggestive dreams." he answers.

Cassandra and Varric both snap their heads towards me then and my eyes widen in disbelief. "What?" I sputter. "What... Why ... I have never! How would you-"

Varric interjects then. "You do remember Chuckles can enter people's dreams right? He must've seen something." the dwarf's mouth is curled into a grin.

Well of course I know that, you prick.

"I have never dreamed something... suggestive here." I huff and turn my head the other way.
Solas keeps calm however. "Not that you remember, da'len. I believe you're supposed to lower a finger."

Cassandra is trying hard not to laugh but I can hear her stifled giggles. Varric laughs but lowers one of his fingers. "Come on, Feathers. You're not the only one." I groan and lower my finger, keeping only seven up.

"Why would you do that, you cocky little-" but Solas interrupts me.

"-Ah, da'len? I don't think that's what you're supposed to say. I believe the phrase was: never have I ever." he bares his teeth, smiling this time and my eyes narrow even more.

*Oh, so you want to play games huh? Ohhhh I'll show you games.*

I start grinning myself then. I keep my eyes fixated on Solas! "Fine. As you wish, Solas. Never have I ever stared at a woman's nude breasts before."

Varric sputters out loudly, causing him to cough out loud due to his amusement. Cassandra keeps her eyes wide, not quite understanding it yet. "Come now, Chuckles! Rules are rules, lower your finger."

Solas shakes his head, trying to contain his amusement. "It was one breast, master Tethras. She did not ask that. You'll have to be more specific next time, da'len." his voice was low and husky. His gaze was piercing and I saw the playfulness within them. I swallowed, hard.

*Fuck he can be..... sexy when he's like that.*

Cassandra's mouth drops open. "I was not aware Solas, you had been staring." she squints her eyes at him but Solas remains calm and collected.

"I do believe you're up, Seeker." he says, his facial expression back to normal and serious as ever.

We play along for a while, every time Cassandra plays, she picks things that are normal. Such as never have I ever; done something I regret, been pregnant, had a crush on someone before the age of 12. Regular kinds of questions you'd expect during this game, I suppose. However, whenever it was Varric's or Solas' turn, they'd deliberately tried to put me on the spot. Making my cheeks flush a bright red. Of course I was the first to lose, having used up all of my ten fingers. After me, Varric lost and eventually it was between Solas and Cassandra. Solas won. Despite me believing Cassandra would win. It just seemed that Solas knew exactly what to say to make Cassandra lower her fingers one by one. Cassandra, seemed to not know Solas well enough to find something to make him lower his.

We all talked a little about the game after that, until eventually Cassandra and Varric decided to call it a night and they went off towards the tents. Leaving me and Solas alone. I was thinking he'd go to bed as well, but he sat there, with me. Not moving. I wasn't yet tired, I knew we'd leave early in the morning but the game made sure I was awake so I didn't feel the need to sleep yet.

"That was fun, da'len." his voice again, low and husky, like it had been everytime he'd try to put me on the spot during the game. It seemed he was still feeling very much playful...

I swallowed hard again, trying to keep a straight face this time. I was sick and tired of blushing and feeling flustered. "You and Varric were not playing fair." I huffed eventually.

He chuckled lowly. "I apologize, da'len."

"Oh, you're so not sorry!" I glare at him.
A silence falls around us then. He's staring into the fire, but I cannot look at anything other than his face. His sharp jawline, the way his ears are tilted perfectly, the plumpness of his lips... Those lips....

_I want to bite those lips. Lick them, nibble on them._

My own thoughts make me blush again, I can feel my cheeks again. Solas chuckles.

_Shit. Were my thoughts right? Can he read minds? Fuck!_

I panic slightly but he turns his head to face me and the expression he holds...... Is dark. But not evil dark, or bad dark... No... dark as in.... sexual. I gulp. "I wonder what goes through your head when you stare at me like that, da'len." I sigh a breath of relief then, knowing he can in fact _not_ read minds. But then he makes my heart race faster a second time as he continues speaking. "Perhaps it's like your suggestive dreams?"

At this moment I do not know where to look. My eyes fall down towards the floor, I can hear him stifle another chuckle. "I.... I don't know what I dreamed that you saw but... I can assure you-"

He cuts me off. "-It was a dream of me."

I am glad I am looking down at the floor, because I would not be able to look him into his eyes. I was mortified. What did I dream about him, that was so suggestive. Most of the time I'd remember my dreams, yes. But occasionally I'd wake up here not knowing what I had dreamed about. I never imagined it would be... a... naughty dream though. Sure, I had started to look at Solas in a different way. This was apparent the moment we shared the tent together. The way my heart raced when he put his arm around me, the way the butterflies within my stomach were fluttering when I felt his hot breath on my neck when he spoke... I shake my head. Another chuckle. I curse inwardly. 

_for fuck's sake Elie, stop thinking like that. He's obviously looking at you._

"You know, da'len. You're not very good at hiding your emotions. I can read you like a book." he moves closer towards me, until I can feel his leg against my own.

_He's playing with me. Toying with me. You know what? Fuck it. Two can play that game._

I inhale deeply and then turn my head to look at his. Then I notice how close his face is to my own. His eyes look down momentarily at my lips and then they snap back up to my eyes. There's a very palpable tension between the two of us right now. I start to feel flushed again. Shy again. But I tell myself no.

_Okay, time to let out your naughty side. I'm done fucking around now, Solas._

I smirk slightly and move my hand up to his face slowly, expecting him to move back but he does not. Screw it. I place my hand on his cheek gently and move my face closer to his, subconsciously licking my lips as I do. He returns the smirk and again, looks down towards my lips as he too inches closer to me. I can feel his warm breath on my lips and we're only a hair's breadth away from touching lips. I can feel tickles deep down within the pools of my stomach, curling and twisting in every direction, moving further down towards my privates. I close my eyes slowly and I can hear my breathing has become louder at this point.

"Ahem."

The both of us open our eyes and snap our heads towards the direction in which the voice came from: Varric is standing there, arms crossed, a big smirk on his face, twinkles in his eyes I can see from afar with the light of the fire dancing in those brown eyes.
Solas sighs loudly and pinches the bridge of his nose in annoyance then. I can no longer see the same expression his face held before. The moment's gone. Ruined. Thanks a lot Varric.

"Well.... If I had known this is what would happen after playing your games..." Varric chuckled while still staring at the two of us.

I. Am. Mortified. "Yes, well.. Varric, you ah... You know. I think it's time to sleep. Solas? Right. Yes. Sleep. Well, I'll be over there.. I'll go to the tent. I'll sleep. Alone. Yes." I stammer as I clumsily get up to my feet. I wasn't expecting to have an audience when giving in to my feelings. Fuck.

"You do that, Feathers. Sleep well... hope you have good dreams." Varric teases me.

_Fuck. Fuckityfuckfuck.

Solas:

I extinguish the fire with a flick of my wrist and hurriedly walk past Varric, into the tent. I hear him chuckle still as I move inside of the tent and take off my tunic and lay down onto the bedroll. After a while, Varric returns and lays himself down onto his own bedroll.

"I know you're not asleep yet, Chuckles."

I sigh and open my eyes, my back is facing the dwarf and I was hoping not to be mocked any more. It seems that luck is not on my side.

"We have an early start ahead of us, master Tethras. Let us sleep." I say exasperated.

I hear another chuckle follow. 'Chuckles' could very well be his own nickname. "I _knew_ there was something going on between the two of you."

"I've no idea what you're talking about. There is nothing between the Herald and I."

"Ha! Oh Chuckles... Then why were you two about to kiss earlier?"

"It was a heat of the moment. It won't happen again." I say curtly.

I hear Varric murmur something about 'sure thing elf' behind me but choose to ignore it. Lest I give him some more reason to go on about it. Soon I hear his breathing slow down and becoming louder, he's falling asleep. Finally.

_Why would you give in to her like that, you fool! You know this is a bad idea._

I lay there in darkness, and silence. Pondering over what had just happened between Eliana and I. I let out a deep and mostly troubled sigh. I had given in to my feelings earlier. Feelings I have had for the past month and a half. If not longer. It all started with me admitting to her that I had been staring. Who wouldn't? Any healthy man would have stared at her nude chest. The soft skin of it, the roundness of it.. the soft, pinkish nipple, becoming erect when exposed to the chilly morning's air.. I shrug the unwanted thoughts from my mind. Why would I give in? I had so many more important things on my mind. The Herald was becoming astute at her job. Her job at closing rifts, her job hunting together with the Seeker for our food, her job defending herself and helping each of us battle against foes. Though she still was a kindhearted young woman, she now realized she had no other option than to adapt to Thedas' way of living and fending for one's life. The way she moved when fighting, the way her hips swayed slightly when walking ahead of me. I was always one step behind her, at first I had done it for her own protection. But I found that when I noticed she no longer required my protection whilst traveling, I still remained behind her, only to watch her move. My eyes
would unwillingly glide down her body. Starting at the back of her neck, the neck I had wanted to sink my teeth in for a while now. The very same neck I wanted to press my lips against and flick my tongue against. I wanted her to inhale sharply at my gentle touching, wanted to see goose skin forming on her body. Then down towards her swaying hips, the hips I wanted to put my hands on. The hips I wanted on top of me, rolling around when-

I shake my head and close my eyes hard. I can feel my arousal and I must stop. This cannot happen. This shemlen from another world, why had I been so attracted to her as of late? She had been as human as the Seeker or the nightingale, and I never once looked at them in the same way. I berate myself for playing games with her earlier. I was deliberately trying to get a reaction out of her and when I was finally able to do so, I could not stop. I liked the way her face reddened, or rather went crimson at the mention of her suggestive dreams. And they had been suggestive indeed. I had seen how I was on top of her, kissing her collarbone, moving down towards her soft breasts. Pinning her between myself and a mattress. She subconsciously called out to me in the Fade. She had moaned my name and I came to her, seeing the love making before my own eyes. She had not remembered and when I kept my eyes on her the next morning, she simply smiled kindly at me and wished me a good morning. I thought at first she was pretending she did not know, but tonight I realized she really did not know. One morning I went to bathe myself, walking towards the lake, not knowing she was still there. I happened to find her, still in the water, her nude back facing me. She was combing out her beautiful long hair. I had wanted to linger there, watching her but I had forced myself to walk away. She came back and she had changed her hairstyle. She no longer wore the long braid in her hair, like the Seeker had wanted her to keep her hair. No, from then on her long beige blonde hair hung freely down her back, though some of the locks were pulled away from her face and braided around the crown of her head. It fit her well. Though the Seeker had asked her why she would keep her hair down like that, in the case a demon or bandit would grasp it between their fingers. She simply shrugged it off, batting her eyelashes up at the Seeker playfully. Saying she rather liked the way her hair hung freely. I proceeded to stare at her for a moment too long and she noticed. She had winked at me and I had to avert my gaze. I groan softly, making sure not to wake Varric next to me. I had to forget about this and just sleep.

(...) She was trotting next to Cassandra, I caught myself staring at her hips. The way she rolled her hips in the saddle to mirror the movement Moonlight was making while trotting. I wondered briefly how her rolling hips would feel then, but Varric quickly helped me out of my daydreaming. He cleared his throat and I continued to stare forwards, not replying in any way to him.

"You know, you should at the least try not to make it so obvious. You're practically undressing the poor girl with your eyes." the dwarf smirked up at me. His lips curled, eyes twinkling with delight and amusement.

I let out an exasperated sigh. "Will the entire journey back towards Haven be filled with you pester me, master Tethras?"

He tilted his head backwards to let out a deep throaty laugh, which caused the two women in front of us to look back in confusion. When Eliana's eyes met mine, a brief panicked look appeared on her face. But it was gone, the moment Varric sped up with Orson to catch up with the two women. I remained behind, eyeing the trio as they spoke to one another. Eventually, after trotting for a few hours, Cassandra and Varric were speaking to one another about the champion of Kirkwall, or rather, arguing. Eliana slowed her horse down to match up with the pace of my own and eyed me silently for a while. I turned my head to face hers and raised up one of my eyebrows. "Yes, da'len? Something on your mind?"

She scoffed and scrunched up her nose. Little wrinkles appearing on the bridge of her nose, it was
quite adorable. "Really? You're going to be like that?" she narrowed her eyes at me.

I sighed. "I didn't sleep very well, forgive me da'len."

"How so?" her voice sounded worried then.

"You did not have to share a tent with a nosey dwarf."

She giggled slightly. I kept my eyes on her, I liked that sound very much. The sound of her giggles. "I'm sorry. I hadn't even heard him sneak up on us like that. But, nothing happened." she shrugged her shoulders.

I chuckle lowly. "Had he not shown up, something would have happened."

"Oh?" her voice lilted and sounded amused.

I shake my head then, focussing again on the road before us. "This is not something to discuss at this moment, da'len."

She snorts. "Well, fine." then she turned her attention towards Varric and Cassandra. "Hey guys, race you to Haven? Last one there is a loser!" and with that, she clicked her tongue twice and Moonlight started galloping away. Varric following and Cassandra and I as well, lest the two of them get in trouble.

So carefree, da'len. It becomes you.

**Eliana:**

The trip back towards Haven did not take as long as it did walking, which I for one, was very happy about. We had stopped twice more to set up camp and Solas avoided me once more. I understood. What happened between us was not supposed to happen. It was a moment of weakness, I decided not to let it happen again. I mean, what did I expect? An elf and a human together? Even if Solas were really down for it, it would be highly frowned upon. Not something I think Solas would be okay with. And besides, it was probably a heat of the moment for him as well. Nothing to worry about. I had more important things to think about, for example, seeing Fenrian again. I was eagerly waiting for the moment I could give him his little toy soldier and I was hoping very much he'd like it.

We reached the gates of Haven and when I got off from Moonlight, I instinctively started rubbing my behind. It was sore, and I don't just mean a little sore, I mean: every-step-that-I-took-was-agony sore. Cassandra snorted as she was gently stroking Octavian's muzzle. "Not used to riding a horse, Elie?"

I grunt slightly and narrow my eyes at her. "Oh is that funny to you? My ass hurts like hell."

"Perhaps something Chuckles can fix for you?" the dwarf winked teasingly.

I rolled my eyes but immediately they snapped towards Solas, who in turn kept his expression entirely blank.

"Elie!"

The familiar sound of Fenrian's voice, made me instantly beam with happiness and I turned around and saw him running towards me with his arms wide open. He jumped against me and wrapped his arms tightly around me, my only reply being a loud: "Oomph!"

"You're finally back! What took you so long? I had started to worry." he started pouting slightly.
I squeezed him in my arms tightly and crouched down before him, holding him at arms length. "Fenrian! Let me look at you... Is everything alright? Did they make you do hard labour? Did any of the kids bother you?"

I heard murmurs of approval behind me but I only had eyes for Fenrian. I had missed him.

Fenrian snickered. "It was fine. Nothing happened, it was quite boring without you."

I sigh a breath of relief.

"I told you he would be fine, da'len." Solas' voice speaks from behind me.

I quickly but gently raise Fenrian up into my arms and hold him up, he instantly wraps his arms around my neck. I know he's a little old for holding him in my arms like that, lifted up in the air but I don't care. Right now, I want to coddle him.

"You did something new to your hair." Fenrian notes as he takes one strand of my hair between his fingers.

I giggle and turn my head to look at my two male companions. "See? This man gets it. At least one man in my life notices it when I've done something different with my hair."

"Elie, did you bring me something from the Hinterlands?"

I gasp. "Why yes, I did!" I gently lower him back to the ground and reach down into my satchel. The toy soldier still wrapped with some cloth. I hand it over to him. I hold my breath, waiting for him to unwrap it. Awaiting his reaction.

His eyes widen as he unwraps the Dalish toy soldier. "Wow! Awesome!" he breathes while he's twirling the toy between his fingers. "Ma serannas, asa'ma'lin! I love it."

I finally breathe again then. "I'm glad you like it, Fenrian."

Cassandra walks up to me and pats me on the shoulder gently. "I will inform Cullen, Leliana and Josephine about our travels in the Hinterlands. I'm sure they'll want to know."

"Work is never done, huh?" I smile at her softly.

She nods and returns the smile, then she takes off, towards the Chantry.

"Wow! You have horses now?" Fenrian breathes as he sees Varric take Octavian and walk over towards the stables with both horses.

I giggle and gently push Fenrian in the back, towards the horses. All four of us, Varric, Solas, Fenrian and I are walking towards the stables. Fenrian is walking next to Varric, clutching his new gift tightly in his hand. He's talking to Varric, asking why his horse is so small. And Varric happily explains.

I grin a wide grin, my heart warming at the sight of Fenrian again. I don't know why or how, but he became very important to me in such a small amount of time. I feel responsible for him. I have always felt responsible for him, since the day I saw him sitting in the cold snow near the tavern.

"It's heart warming to see you interact with the boy." Solas' voice pulls me out of my own thoughts.

I turn my head to face him. "I can't help myself. I just... he means a lot to me. I know that must seem silly to you all. I barely know him, really."
Solas raises his eyebrow. "It's not silly at all, Eliana. It shows that you have a kind heart. That you can look past race and appearances. Not many people do this anymore. People are scared to trust so easily, even when it comes down to children."

We reach the stables and we all put the horses away. I nod at Solas. And sigh then. "If anything were to ever happen to him.. I wouldn't be able to forgive myself." I hang my head and Solas gently puts his hand on my shoulder to squeeze it softly.

"Don't worry, Eliana. He's well taken care of in your hands."

Then Varric walks past us. "See ya later. I think I'll go drink at the tavern. Maker know's I've earned it."

Fenrian runs up to Solas and I then and looks wide eyed at Solas holding his hand on my shoulder. Quickly Solas removes his hand and clears his throat. "Fenrian. It is good to see you again."

Fenrian nods. "Ba'isa'ma'lin, asa'ma'lin? Is it okay if I go play with the other children?"

I look at Fenrian confusedly for a moment for him using the first word. It sounds similar to him calling me sister, but Solas quickly answers for me. "We will still be here later today, da'len." He nods then and wraps his arms around me one more time. "I'll see you later, Elie!" With that, he runs off, with his toy soldier in his hands.

"What did he call you?"

Solas looks down at the ground and smiles. "He called me uncle."

I giggle. "I love that kid."

Chapter End Notes

So Varric's chapter from his book, I got from the Codex and the Dragon Age Wikia. I think, for funsies, I'll add in some more of his written tales and shit from time to time :) So that's just a little fun extra thingy, hope ya liked it !
Trapped

Chapter Summary

Slight NSFW warning and mentions of rape in this chapter, so just a heads up!

She learns about Hawke's story a bit more from Varric..
Eliana teaches her companions the story of Beauty and the Beast and the life lessons you can take from the tale. Including a few lessons that really speak to Solas on a personal level.

And she becomes an advocate for the Elves in Haven, resulting in major Solas approval!
But also... it marks her as target for assault..

Some fluff inbound!

And of course, mommy Eliana and Fenrian ♥ Gosh, I love that made up little kid ;3

Read the notes for explanation/translation of the Dalish lullaby and the link for the song to listen to yourself ;)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I'm sitting around the firepit with Varric and Fenrian, it's dark out now. Fenrian had been playing the entire day, Solas went into his cabin right after we put our horses away in the stables. Varric and I had been speaking to one another mostly. He told me a bit more about his adventures with Hawke. When he told me Hawke was still alive, I felt excited. I had wanted to meet him. I heard so much about him now, it interested me. Eventually, after supper in the Chantry, Fenrian came to the both of us. Playing with his new toy soldier besides Varric and me. We would watch the kid and continue speaking of Hawke. I found out Hawke was in an on and off relationship with Isabela, which was another companion Varric had travelled with. After the mage rebellion most of the companions Hawke and he had travelled with, went their seperate ways. Merril, the elf who used blood magic went back to her clan. Keeping it safe, mostly from demons and templars outside of Kirkwall. Though he was sure he had heard whispers of her clan moving on to other areas. Blood magic, he explained to me was something considered to be extremely bad. When he explained to me mostly what it involved, I couldn't help but shudder. I had checked on Fenrian to see if he was listening, but he was lost into his own world while playing with the toy. Not something I'd like for him to hear.. Fenris, the broody elf, as Varric always called him, went on to fight slavers mostly. Though he wasn't sure where he was exactly by this point in time. Though 'one could always follow the trail of corpses and death' to find him. Anders, was of course killed by Hawke, the evening he blew up everything. Isabela had gone back to sailing the oceans on her newly aquired ship, though she had invited Hawke to join her, he had refused. Aveline was still Guard Captain of Kirkwall, though she was mostly taking it easy now. As she was trying to have children with her husband Donnen. Of course Carver, Bethany and Hawke's mother had all died. The only family Hawke had left was his uncle Gamlen, but he had been too busy rebuilding his relationship with his long lost daughter. Who, Hawke had essentially, helped return to Gamlen in the first place. I couldn't help but feel bad for Hawke after hearing all of this. He had done so much for everyone, but it seemed that in the end, everyone left him. No one stayed with him. Though of course nobody owed him to do such a thing, I
still felt pity for the man. Occasionally people of Haven would interrupt Varric's stories, as they welcomed me back to Haven. Saying things like: "We're happy to see you're doing well." Or "How were your travels?" stuff like that.

I sighed then, Fenrian had crawled up to me and was sitting on my lap. I was still wearing Solas' cloak and I wrapped the fabric of the cloak around Fenrian as I was wearing it. We were both sharing it at this point. A silence fell around the three of us, Fenrian was starting to get tired but refused to show it. It was quite adorable actually, since I could very easily tell he was dozing off. "How about you go get some rest, Fenrian?" I whispered into his ear, as his head lay against my chest.

He shook his head softly. "No. I want to stay here with you and Varric."

I smiled softly. "How abouuut... I tell you a bedtime story?"

He looked up at me, a twinkle in his eyes. "You know stories as well?" he asked me interestingly.

Varric gave me a quizzical look as well. "I didn't know you knew stories, Feathers."

I snort slightly. "It's not like Varric's stories, I can assure you that much. It's stories my mother used to tell me when I was little. Fairytales. Happy stories. Though most of them are maybe girly." I thought for a moment then. "How about a story called Beauty and the Beast?" I smirked up at the little elven boy snuggled up on me.

He raised his eyebrow. "Beauty and the Beast?"

I nodded. "Once upon a time as a merchant set off for market, he asked each of his three daughters what she would like as a present on his return. The first daughter wanted a brocade dress, the second a pearl necklace, but the third, whose name was Beauty, the youngest, prettiest and sweetest of them all, said to her father: "All I'd like is a rose you've picked specially for me!" When the merchant had finished his business, he set off for home. However, a sudden storm blew up, and his horse could hardly make headway in the howling gale. Cold and weary, the merchant had lost all hope of reaching an inn when he suddenly noticed a bright light shining in the middle of a wood. As he drew near, he saw that it was a castle, bathed in light." Fenrian was eyeing me intently, and so was Varric. However I had not realized that Cassandra and Solas had moved up towards us as well and were listening to me telling the fairytale story to Fenrian.

When Fenrian's eyes darted over to the two of them behind me, I glanced back over my shoulder.

Cassandra smiled and raised her hand slightly to wave at me. "Please. Don't stop because we are here. The story was just getting interesting."

The two of them sat down next to Varric and watched me. I snorted. "You know this story is meant for children right?" I was slightly amused to see how all three of my companions were so interested by the fairytale.

Solas chuckled. "We have never heard you tell stories before, da'len. Not like these. We are intrigued."

I huffed but Fenrian tugged on my tunic's fabric then. "Asa'ma'lin, what happened then?"

I smiled. "The merchant was afraid. "I hope I'll find shelter there for the night," he said to himself. When he reached the door, he saw it was open, but though he shouted, nobody came to greet him. Plucking up courage, he went inside, still calling out to attract attention. On a table in the main hall, a splendid dinner lay already served. The merchant lingered, still shouting for the owner of the castle.
But no one came, and so the starving merchant sat down to a hearty meal. Overcome by curiosity, he ventured upstairs, where the corridor led into magnificent rooms and halls. A fire crackled in the first room and a soft bed looked very inviting. It was now late, and the merchant could not resist. He lay down on the bed and fell fast asleep. When he woke next morning, an unknown hand had placed a mug of steaming coffee and some fruit by his bedside.

Fenrian nodded. "Did the merchant have elven servants as well? Like you?"

I snorted. "No... There are no elves in this story." but I continued telling the story.

(...)
"Her heart in her mouth, Beauty ran into the garden and there crouched the Beast, its eyes shut, as though dead. Beauty threw herself at it and hugged it tightly. "Don't die! Don't die! I'll marry you..." At these words, a miracle took place. The Beast's ugly snout turned magically into the face of a handsome young man. "How I've been longing for this moment!" he said. "I was suffering in silence, and couldn't tell my frightful secret. An evil witch turned me into a monster and only the love of a maiden willing to accept me as I was, could transform me back into my real self. My dearest! I'll be so happy if you'll marry me." The wedding took place shortly after and, from that day on, the young Prince would have nothing but roses in his gardens. And that's why, to this day, the castle is known as the Castle of the Rose."

Fenrian was wide awake at this point, which was the opposite of what I had wanted. Solas, Cassandra and Varric were all looking at me wide eyed.

"Such an odd story, Elie. Why would Beauty willingly stay with Beast after what he had done to her? He jailed her father, he was mean to her, he kept her in his castle against her will..."

Varric interrupted Cassandra. "-But did you not get the part where he gave her a whole library full of books? Or when he went after Beauty when she ran off, and threw himself right into the pack of wolves to save Beauty's life? He tried to redeem himself on many occasions, he even told her she was allowed to leave to visit her sick father."

Solas hummed but Cassandra spoke up before he could say his piece: "She married the Beast! She had Gaston as a suitor. He seemed like the better option."

Varric groaned. "He was a prince. Gaston was vain and an ass-" I glared at Varric, he quickly corrected himself: "-Uh, he was not nice."

I giggled. "There are some life lessons to this fairytale you know. That's the whole point of telling them to children-" I glanced down at Fenrian who was staring sleepily at all four of us speaking about the tale. "-It's not just to make them fall asleep or help shape their imagination. It's also to teach them life lessons."

Solas' curiosity peaked then. I could see the familiar sparkle in his eyes whenever I or anyone else interested him. When he wanted to know more. Always so eager to learn and discuss things. "What are the life lessons from this tale then, da'len?"

I smiled warmly at Solas and returned my gaze back onto Fenrian. "True love is when you're willing to sacrifice yourself for another. From Beauty sacrificing her freedom and taking her father's place as the Beast's castle prisoner to the Beast sacrificing his happiness and letting Beauty go take care of her sick father. Then there's the lesson that it's not what's on the outside but what's on the inside that counts. The Beast is far from the handsome prince he used to be. And his spoiled attitude, rotten manners, and temper tantrums don't help his reputation either. But as he spends more time with Beauty, his hardened exterior starts to melt away to show a lost man with a heart of gold. Beauty
sees beyond the razor sharp teeth and ugly grimace to find the prince he once was. In real life, that’s a good reminder not to dismiss someone just because they don’t meet your checklist for good looks. Sometimes it takes time, patience, and an open mind to see what someone’s heart is truly made of.” I couldn’t help but look at Solas as I said this. He kept his piercing gaze on me as I did.

Fenrian nodded. "So it's the same for you and ba'isa'ma'lin." he said it so plainly and matter-of-factly that it brought a flush to my cheeks. Solas' eyes widened and a chuckle escaped his throat.

Cassandra and Varric were looking at us quizzically. "Fenrian." I said in a warning tone. I wasn't mad at him at all, but I didn't want him to state the obvious. I didn't want to make things even more awkward between Solas and I. The 'almost kiss' between him and I was awkward enough already. Though Fenrian wasn't there when it happened, I knew he could see the change of attitude between him and I. Children are always so honest.

Fenrian pursed his lips. "I'm just saying."

I snorted and ruffled his silvery blonde hair. "There's more. The lesson that your biggest enemy is sometimes yourself. Sure, Gaston was the Beast's nemesis but the Beast's biggest enemy lay within himself. His selfish, spoiled rotten demeanor was responsible for the curse cast over his castle and kingdom. It took some tough love from Beauty for him to quit pitying himself and get a new outlook on life."

Solas' demeanor changed all of a sudden. He seemed to be shifting uncomfortably in his seat. His expression changed. From interested, to.. some expression I couldn't place. Bothered? Troubled? I continued: "Sometimes we need to take a time-out and look inside ourselves to discover if we're the reason we aren’t happy."

"Well said, Elie." Cassandra nodded.

"But, my love. It's time for you to get some sleep. It's very late." I looked down at Fenrian's face again and he nodded, a yawn escaping his mouth. He wasn't even trying to hide it anymore at this point.

"Will you stay with me until I fall asleep, asa'ma'lin?" he asked me, his beautiful emerald eyes looking up at me.

I smiled and planted a kiss on his forehead. "Of course I will, Fenrian. You go and get changed in your room, I'll join you shortly. There's something I need to ask Solas first."

Fenrian nodded and hugged Cassandra and Varric, then he skipped off towards the Chantry. Leaving the three of us before the fire. Solas stared at me blankly. "Solas? He always calls me sister. Is there some elven word I can use to call him something like that?"

Solas thought for a moment. For the appropriate word. "Perhaps you can call him lethalin. It means brother in blood. Kin or family, specifically very close kin or family."

"Better not keep him waiting, Feathers." Varric smirked at me.

I walked by some of the revered mothers into his little chamber. There was not much in there, simply a bed and a book on the bedside table. It wasn't much but it was enough for him, he never complained about anything. Fenrian was already laying down in the bed and had his Dalish soldier on the pillow next to his head. I smiled at the young boy and sat down next to him on the bed. I pulled the covers up some more and tucked him in gently. "I've learned a word from Solas. Lethalin. Am I pronouncing that right?"
Fenrian giggled. "You have a funny accent when you say it asa'ma'lin."

I gasped and started tickling him. "Oh really? Are you making fun of me?"

Fenrian squealed out in delight and wriggled around frantically as I was tickling him. "Stop! Please!" he was laughing loudly. I stopped to give him a moment to breathe and then he looked up at me, his eyes holding a sad expression. "You won't leave me, will you asa'ma'lin?" his voice was quiet, almost but a whisper. His eyes looked down at his hands holding the covers up to his chin.

I felt a pang of sadness in myself. Poor kid. "I will not, lethalin. I won't leave your side, no matter what. You'll be safe with me."

Fenrian grimaced. "Not even when the people of Haven talk?"

I raised my eyebrow up. "What do you mean?"

Have they bothered Fenrian while I was gone? Were my fears right?

"When you were gone... some of the shemlen here, the guards... they... they said things."

I started getting furious, as the anger was bubbling up within me. But I kept a straight face as much I could. I didn't want to upset Fenrian. "What did they say?" my voice was calm, too calm perhaps because Fenrian looked up at me in fear. "Don't worry, Fenrian. I'm not mad at you. I could never get mad with you. Just tell me." I brushed some of his hair from his face and smiled at the kid. Trying to calm him down.

"Well... they said there were reports coming in when you were gone. From during your travels. That some scouts had seen you and ba'isa'ma'lin... together."

I gritted my teeth. I knew I had been careless at times during our trip in the Hinterlands. I had stayed close to Solas, and looked at him far too long for it to go unnoticed.

"You shared a tent together." Fenrian's voice was soft again. But then he looked up at me. "I don't care though, asa'ma'lin! I like you and ba'isa'ma'lin together. You fit eachother well. But the guards, some of the scouts and people here... they don't like it."

I kissed Fenrian's cheek. "I will have a talk with these people about it, Fenrian. Don't worry your head about it, okay? Now get some rest."

I heard the floorboards creak behind me. It was Solas. How long had he been standing there? Fenrian noticed too. "Ba'isa'ma'lin!"

I hushed Fenrian. "Tomorrow you can talk all you want with Solas. But for now, you must sleep lethalin."

Fenrian pouted slightly. "Can you sing for me, asa'ma'lin?"

My eyes widened and I heard Solas chuckle from behind me. "Fenrian, I'm not sure that is a good idea. I've heard her singing before." I shot Solas an angry look then.

How dare he? I told him I don't actually sing that way. I was letting loose back then. I wasn't actually trying.

"I can sing." I said resolute. Fenrian's face lit up and Solas leaned against the doorpost, crossing his arms. His face was amused. I ignored him and turned my attention back to Fenrian then. I started
humming and then I started singing Brahms Lullaby softly. Before I could finish the lullaby, Fenrian had already dozed off to sleep and I smiled. Kissing his forehead once more, before getting up and walk out of his room. I walked past Solas, without saying a word. I didn't know why he followed me here but I didn't really care about it. I was determined to find out about what Fenrian had told me.

Solas followed me quietly. "You are troubled by what he said."
I groaned slightly. "You eavesdropped."

Solas nodded. "Cassandra had heard these things as well from Leliana and Josephine earlier today. She discussed them with me while you went to the Chantry." he paused and took hold of my shoulder then. I gave him an annoyed look. "It's not just what the scouts have reported, da'len. There's more."
I gave him a pressing look. "Some of the people of Haven do not appreciate you taking care of Fenrian. They say he should be sent towards a Dalish clan, instead of sleeping within the Chantry. They say it's blasphemy. An elven child, in the house of their Maker." I felt the anger bubble back up then and clenched my fists. Solas noticed and softly took hold of one of them, trying to calm me down. "Da'len..." he used the same warning voice I had used with Fenrian earlier but I ignored it.

I pulled back the hand he was holding and glared at him angrily. "Someone should teach them a lesson! How dare they!" I raised my voice slightly, causing the revered mothers to hush me immediately.

Solas sighed. "I told you, Eliana. Elves are looked down upon. You had to know this would happen."

"So you think they're right? I should send Fenrian away? To a Dalish clan?" I spat out the words and Solas seemed hurt by my words.

"I would never agree with such ideas, Eliana. I do not think it's wise to send him off to a Dalish clan. Do not think me that heartless and cold. Fenrian has come to care for you, and you for him. It is heart warming to see you advocate for the Elves, but I am warning you, more rumors will spread. I do not think it wise for you to address them so openly. Teaching them a lesson? I would not do it. You might make the situation worse."

"So you just accept the fact that humans look down on you? You don't fight for your rights?" I was livid at this point. Solas always spoke of his people so highly and proudly. Yet here he is now, telling me to leave it be. Not pay it any mind.

He sighed. "It's the way it has always been, Eliana. You cannot change that."

"If I am to risk my life leaving Haven, to protect these people, the least I can ask from them is to respect the Elves living here. Which would be Fenrian, you and the two ladies who serve me. Fenrian has done nothing wrong, if anything, the humans have. They killed his parents, they made him an orphan, they did not help him when needed. They are to blame. Maybe you won't stand up for your rights, or Fenrian's, but I will." I stormed off, back towards the firepit, Solas following me.

Cassandra and Varric were still talking there but I interrupted whatever it was they spoke of. "Tomorrow morning I want each and every soldier, guard and scout, to assemble infront of the Chantry!" I raised my voice at Cassandra.

Cassandra gave me a surprised look. "What for?"

"Just do it!" with that, I turned my heel and left for my cabin. This will not go by unnoticed. I will address this issue. With or without Solas' approval. Or anyone else's for that matter.
It was hard to fall asleep that night. Though I was exhausted from the trip, I could hardly calm down from the anger I was feeling at that point. Thoughts were racing through my head. How would I address this? What would I say? I barely got a wink of sleep that night, morning came way too fast, but I was determined to solve this.

(...) Like I ordered Cassandra to do, all the scouts, soldiers and guards were standing in front of the Chantry. All speaking to one another, asking each other if they might know why they had been called here. Cullen was standing amongst them, wondering the same things. Asking Cassandra why. But of course Cassandra did not know either. I walked up to the crowd and eyed them all one by one. The people of Haven were gathering around as well, probably sensing there was something going on. Good. I needed them to hear it as well. My companions and advisors stood there too. Solas looked uncomfortable. He gave me looks, looks that said: Don't do it.

I stood before the crowd and every soldier, guard and scout saluted me.

Yeah, now you're all manners and politeness, aren't you?

"Listen up everyone! I assume you're all wondering why I have ordered you all to gather around here. I am here right now to answer your question." I paused for but a moment. "It has come to my attention that there are some among you that do not agree with me on certain things. For example: me helping an elven orphan. Giving him a warm bed at night, within the Chantry."

The crowd started whispering, some soldiers gave me an angry look. I cleared my throat. "Is there anyone here who would like to speak up about this?"

One man stepped forward immediately. He was a soldier, he did not wear his helmet and I could see the angry snarl he was giving me. "I would like to, Herald." he hissed my title and I started getting angry, but let him say his piece. "It is preposterous that you'd allow a little knife ear within the house of the Maker. They are barbaric, thieving, conniving little shits that should not be allowed here. Including the one over there." he nodded towards Solas. Who was standing with his hands clasped behind his back not showing any emotion at this point.

I inhaled sharply. "Is that so?" I stepped forwards, only inches away from this man. I was fuming. "Tell me... Does this 'knife ear' not risk his life going out with me on trips to save your lives? Did the little 'knife ear' kill his own parents and become an orphan or was it not humans who did so?"

The man growled lowly at me and kept his eyes on me. "That is not the point."

"It is exactly the point, ser. While you all stay here and live your lives, we go out and fight for our lives to protect this little town. I do it gladly, knowing all the people I've come to know and love are safe, from the dangers beyond these gates. I will continue doing so. However.. I will not, if I know there are people here that do not respect my companion or the child I have taken in, simply for the fact that their ears are not like our own. I will not tolerate disrespect or racism in this town."

"You have no right! You are not this town's mayor. Not the arl, you're a nobody! We go out and risk our lives just as much as you do. As for the knife ear in your group, we have all heard about the reports that came in. Sharing a tent together! It's disgusting."

I got up even closer to the man, my hand instinctively reaching for one of my daggers. Solas jumped in between the two of us within a second. "Please. Let us all calm down."

I pushed Solas out of the way, snarling at the man before me. Cullen ran up to us as well and took hold of the guard's shoulder. "You are way out of line, soldier! You had no business reading those
The soldier laughed at Cullen then. A sign of complete disrespect towards him. "We didn't need to read those reports, Commander. Everyone has heard of them."

"I shared a tent with Solas, for that is his name and you'd do well to remember it, because I was ill. I had a poison within my body that would've surely killed me were it not for his help. He would have done the same for any of you sorry bastards, if it came down to it!"

"We have all seen the way you look at him. May the Maker spit down on you." He literally spat down next to me onto the floor and I could no longer contain my anger.

"Enough! You say I am a nobody, but it is me who has this mark! It is me who protects the entire of Thedas from being swallowed up by the Breach! If you want to try your hand at closing a rift, be my guest!" I turned my attention towards the rest of the crowd. Addressing every single one of them. "As the Herald, I will not allow anyone disrespected Elves. If any of you share the same views as this man here does, then please, step forward now." I glanced around the crowd of people, about six of Cullen's men stepped forwards, the people of Haven remained where they are. "Commander."

Cullen straightened his back and looked at me questionably. "Yes, Herald?"

"These men will need help packing their belongings. They are to leave Haven and never return."

Cullen's eyes widened. Solas stepped in. "You cannot be serious, Eliana."

I huffed. "I am completely serious. I do not allow this kind of behavior."

Cullen rubbed the back of his neck, contemplating on his next move. I needed him to follow me on this one. If even my advisors did not take me seriously, my word would not mean anything. Cassandra stepped forwards then, standing on my right side, eyeing Cullen. "Commander. I agree with the Herald. Soldiers are dispensable, the Herald is not. I urge you to consider her words."

Cullen sighed and turned his attention towards his men then. "She is right. All of you, get out of my sight." he waved them off.

The soldier in front of me snapped his head towards Cullen then. "You cannot!"

"Last time I checked, Commander Cullen was Commander of the Inquisition's forces. The forces, meaning you. I'd say, he can." I hissed at the man.

He huffed and threw his sword onto the floor in front of me. "This isn't over, you knife ear loving bitch!"

Cullen grabbed the man by his throat and held him at arms length. "Get. Out."

The seven of them threw down their arms onto the snow and stomped off, each of them eyeing me as they did. I had a bad feeling inside my stomach about the last words the soldier spoke, but I dismissed them for now. I turned my attention back towards the crowd once more. "Anyone else?" I called out. But nobody moved. "In that case, I bid you all a good day." I turned my heel and walked inside of the Chantry, as the people of Haven and Cullen's men were whispering amongst one another.

Cullen, Leliana, Josephine and Cassandra followed me into the Chantry. Cullen brushed past me, towards the war room. "A word." he said curtly.
I understood his reaction. I just made him 'fire' seven of his men. I didn't even know if they were good soldiers or not, perhaps they were his best men. However, I could not allow them to stay here and pose a threat to Solas or Fenrian. Though I'm sure Solas could handle his own, Fenrian could not.

When we all got into the war room, Leliana closed the door behind us and Cullen was hunched over the war table. With his hands on the table, his head low, he spoke up then. "Though I understand your anger, Herald... Ordering me to release seven of my men...." he stopped talking and sighed loudly.

Josephine took her place next to Cullen, the arm in which she was holding her quill rested on her hip as she spoke to him. "Though I do not fully agree with the Herald's decision, I respect it, Commander. If we are all not on the same page with the Herald when she's making decisions, the Inquisition will not be taken seriously. We need people to respect us and take us seriously."

"Which they will not if you do not stand your ground, Commander." Cassandra said plainly as she was standing next to me.

Cullen shook his head, then looked up to me. "We also need all the men we can get to fight off the demons and bandits that run amok here."

I scoffed. "Cullen. It's only seven of your men. We can find other people willing to join us."

Leliana stepped forwards. "She's right. We have talked about this while she was gone, Commander. We need her influence to gather more spies, soldiers and people willing to fight on our side. She can do this whenever she ventures out into Thedas, I do not believe she'll not be succesful in her endeavor."

Cullen nods. "I understand."

"For what it's worth.. I want to thank you for supporting me back there. Josephine is right, if we are not on the same page, the Inquisition will not be taken seriously."

Josephine nodded and turned her attention towards me then. "Though you could have taken a different approach, Eliana. Perhaps a better idea would've been you addressing everyone one on one, instead of before the entirety of Haven. We have a reputation to uphold, you understand."

I looked at Josephine wide eyed then. "A reputation I've tarnished because of my views on Elves?"

Josephine seemed hurt by my reaction. "I... I did not mean for it to sound like that.... I-"

I cut her off. "-I will continue to share my views on the Elves. For they are not beneath humans in my eyes."

Cassandra gently lay her hand on my shoulder. "She did not mean it like that, Eliana. We've all taken care of Fenrian and have showed Solas the utmost repect, as you well know. We do not think Elves are beneath us. The reputation Josephine speaks of is the one we must uphold to get in the people's good graces."

I looked at Cassandra then. My face expressionless. "I will not change my beliefs simply because other's may not like them. I stand for what I've said earlier and I will continue to do so. If people end up having a problem with that, too bad. I'm not here to please everyone. I'm here to stop the Breach." I eyed every single one of my advisors then. "Now. Was there anything else?"

Josephine glanced down at her notes for a moment before quietly speaking up to me. "There is still the matter of having to address clerics at Val Royeaux. Having Eliana adress them is not a terrible
idea."

"You can't be serious." Cullen's brows furrowed.

"Mother Giselle isn't wrong: at the moment, the Chantry's only strength is that they are united in opinion." Josephine moved the hand holding the quill around gracefully as she spoke.

Leliana did not seem to agree with Josephine either. "And we should ignore the danger to the Herald?"

Josephine was back to being all business then. "Let's ask her."

I scoffed. Moments ago, I stood face to face with an angry soldier. A few couple of clerics did not frighten me so. "What can they do? It's just talk."

Leliana dipped her head. "Don't underestimate the power of their words. An angry mob will do you in just as quickly as a blade."

Cassandra stepped forwards. "I will go with her. Mother Giselle said she could provide us names? Use them." she looked at Leliana then.

She shook her head. "But why? This is nothing but a-"

Cassandra interjected Leliana "What choice do we have, Leliana? Right now we can't approach anyone for help with the Breach." she looked at Cullen then. "Use what influence we have to call the clerics together. Once they are ready, we will see this through."

(...) A day had gone by, I had finally given my 'servants' their soaps and they were thrilled. It was only a bar of soap for each, but to them it seemed like I had given them gold. One of them hugged me tightly and immediately let go once she realized it was 'wrong' of her to do so. She kept apologizing and I had to keep explaining to her that it was absolutely no problem. Then it had occured to me, I did not even know their names yet. The short brown haired woman, the one I met the day I had awoken in Haven, was called Neris. The second girl, with long red hair, tied into a messy bun was called Seya. I told them that since we were now using our names, I would not allow them to call me Herald any longer. They seemed reluctant at first, but once they finally seemed to be more at ease with the idea of using my name, they visibly relaxed. Neris and Seya were adorable and I couldn't help but feel bad for them having to serve me. They explained that they happily did so, stating that I was the only 'nice' shemlen in this town. Again, I was confronted with the way things were here. Where I come from, Elves are considered beautiful and downright awesome. Many 'geeks' would want to have elf ears, including yours truly. But here, the shape of their ears went hand in hand with prejudice and hatred. To me, they had not been servants in my eyes. The remainder of the day had gone by quite peacefully, nothing really happened. We weren't able to prepare for Val Royeaux yet, since we had to wait for the clerics. Leliana had sent out a letter requesting them to gather in the capital of Orlais, to address the matter. I had snuck into the Chantry's kitchen to get some ingredients so that I could make my own food. I had wanted to surprise Fenrian and my companions by making a simple stew. I took some druffalo meat from the pantry, some vegetables that seemed similar to what I was used to back at home, a bit of flour, some spices and herbs, and lastly some oil. I also 'stole' a big pot, to make it all in. Cooking the meal above the firepit, my companions and Fenrian quickly gathered around the fire to see what I was doing. I was making way too much food for just the five of us, so I called for Neris and Seya to join us. We all sat there, eating the stew I had made. Fenrian sat down onto Solas' lap and occasionally asked him questions about what he did before joining the Inquisition. All of us were enjoying the evening and after putting Fenrian back to bed, everyone said their goodbye's and went off to bed. However, Solas pulled me by the arm to speak to
He walked with me towards my cabin and we just stood there for a moment before he spoke up. He looked at me, seemingly confused. "Where's my cloak?"

I giggled. "I thought it was now my cloak." He sighed and gave me a pressing look. "Alright, alright. Fenrian has it. He was cold on the way back towards the Chantry so I gave it to him to wear. I had wanted to ask it back once he was in bed, but he snuggled up into it. I couldn't bring myself to take it from him." I smile absentmindedly recalling the way Fenrian had snuggled into it.

Solas smiled softly. "I'm fine with Fenrian and you wearing it."

I raised one of my eyebrows then. "So are we here to talk about my cloak?" I put the emphasis on 'my' to tease him but his face was nothing but seriousness then.

"No not quite. I've been meaning to talk to you about what happened yesterday and the day before that."

I sighed and leaned against the door to my cabin, crossing my arms defiantly. "Solas. If you're here to give me another lecture, please, don't bother. I've had my fair share of it yesterday, with Josephine and Cullen."

He shook his head. "Actually, I've been meaning to tell you how proud I am of you. Not standing down in the face of Cullen's men, or the people of Haven. It takes a lot of courage to stand up for the Elves rights here in Thedas. You did not cower or step down. It's admirable." his eyes scanned my entire body, but they lingered on my mouth for a moment. Then he clasped his hands behind his back casually. "You continue to amaze me."

I couldn't help but snort slightly. My lips curling into a smile. "So much praise, hahren."

He smiled back. "Just returning the praise you have once given me, da'len."

I giggled and looked down for a moment, sighing. "I realize what I did was... dangerous. Considering the way humans perceive elves here. However, I just cannot let it happen and sit idly by. It's just wrong. I want to do right by Fenrian and you. Neris and Seya also."

He dipped his head. "And for that, we are thankful, Eliana. You are unlike the humans I've encountered so far. It makes me wonder about your world."

"Why?"

He chuckled. "If the world you came from, makes such endearing humans... perhaps it is worth investigating it some more."

Another compliment. You're just full of niceness today aren't ya?

"Well, if you want you can come with me once I return home." I joked.

His face dropped. "You still wish to go back?"

His question confused me. But it also made me think long and hard about it. Did I really want to go back? I mean... Yes it's my home but... "To be honest with you... I don't know."

Why would you say that? Of course you want to go home! Your mother and stepfather are there.
"You seem... unsure."

I shake my head. "The thing is... Ever since I got here, the only thing on my mind has been to 'go back home' once this is over with. However... so much has changed..." I feel the tears stinging in my eyes then. "It's almost as if I have two lives. One back at home, that's been put on hold. And one here, where I am now. The here and now, is here in Thedas. But I know I have another life. I don't even know if there's a real way to go back home. If there really is, can I continue to live my life like I did before?"

"What do you mean by that?"

I sigh. "I don't know. I've seen death, war and... unimaginable things here. Were I to go back home, I don't think I'll be able to deal with all of that. Nobody would believe me if I told them what I've seen here. They would probably think me mad, lock me up perhaps." I snort wryly. A tear rolls down my cheek. "I'd never fit in again. And I don't think I'd feel like I belong there anymore either." So many emotions go through me.

Solas lifts his hand up to my cheek and gently wipes the tear from my cheek. "I'm sorry for bringing it up, Eliana. It was never my intention to trouble you more with memories from back home. Perhaps we should not speak of this right now." his hand stays on my cheek however and I can't help but move my head into his hand. My eyes close as I feel his thumb rubbing my cheek softly.

Stop it Elie. Remember, you don't want to do this. Besides he's way older than you are. Get a grip, girl.

When I open my eyes again, they are trapped into his own. I can't seem to look away. The torch lit around my cabin makes it's fire dance around in his eyes. Then suddenly, he clears his throat and removes the hand from my cheek. 'Rest, da'len.' his voice low and husky.

"Good night, Solas."

"Good night, Eliana." he dips his head once more and walks off then. Before I enter my cabin though, I am distracted by a faint sound coming from further ahead. My head immediately snaps into the direction in which the sound came from. I can still see Solas' back as he walks off, towards his own cabin, there's no way he made the sound. I start to walk around my cabin, trying to figure out what it is I heard. When I reach the place the sound came from, I see nothing.

Perhaps my imagination.

I walk back into my cabin finally and take off my armour, until I am in nothing more than my smalls. I get into my bed and close my eyes. Thoughts racing through my mind. Sometimes I wondered what Solas thought of me. Of course he had been the one that instigated the kiss back while we had been travelling, so one could assume he had feelings for me as well. But it seemed like the both of us were trying not to give in to them. I couldn't help but feel attracted to him. Finally, after what seemed like ages, I drifted off into sleep.

I dreamed of being in my room again, this time I was completely alone. Solas wasn't here. I was laying on my bed, listening to music on my radio again as I was flipping through my old photo albums. I saw old pictures from back when I was a toddler, with both my parents on the picture. Smiling in the background, or while holding me on their laps. I suppose me speaking of my world before sleeping, caused me to dream of this. Suddenly, I was startled by a loud thud coming from outside of my door. I dropped the photo album and slowly got back up to my feet. Hesitantly
walking towards my door. The world around me, my room, everything, started to ripple and crumble before my eyes. I remembered this. It means I'm waking up.

When I opened my eyes, I was surrounded by darkness.

So something woke me up...

Then I heard some shuffling within my cabin and I sat up, suddenly wide awake. But before I could do anything, two hands pushed me back down onto my mattress, another hand covering my mouth harshly. My eyes widened in fear as I saw my assailant's face: It was the soldier Cullen had fired who was on top of me now, holding my body down. The other hand on my mouth belonged to one of the six men who had stepped forward on that day. I recognized his face, as he was crouching down beside my bed, smiling maniacally. I immediately felt panicked. He had threatened me that day, and here we are, him pinning me down, his buddy helping him and my daggers were not close to me at all. I had no means of defending myself, so I did the only thing I could do: struggle. I moved my face and bit down hard onto the hand that was covering my mouth. "Fuck!" the man hissed out, immediately pulling back his hand.

The one above me immediately smacked me across the face with one of his hands. His slap stung my cheek, followed by a warm stinging feeling left on it. "Use the rope, Brann!" he hissed at Brann who immediately tied my hands to the bedpost with rope. I yelled out, but quickly the other man put his free hand on my mouth again.

Brann looked around for a moment and took the washcloth that was still hanging on the rim of the bucket next to the bed and handed it over to the man on top of me. "Moritz, use this!" Brann handed over the cloth and I struggled even harder against my restraints. I wanted out of here, I wanted to run away, grab my daggers and do something. I felt helpless and it wasn't a nice feeling. I had been doing so well during the trip in the Hinterlands, protecting myself against bandits and whatnot. Now, I couldn't do jack shit. Moritz pushed the cloth into my mouth hard, causing my screams and whines to be muffled. Then he sat back up, his eyes scanning my body, like the pervert he was. I felt sick to my stomach. I was laying in nothing more than my smalls and this fucktard was gawking at my body. I huffed as my eyes narrowed at him in anger. He chuckled evilly. "Not so tough now, are ya? I told you this wasn't over yet." he turned his head to face Brann. "Go to the window, make sure nobody comes here."

Brann seemed disappointed. Whatever Moritz had planned to do with me, Brann wanted in on it. "It's too early, Moritz. Nobody will-"

Moritz interrupted Brann. ",Don't worry, you'll get a piece of her ass too."
My eyes widened as he said that and Brann snickered as he moved towards the window, leaning against the cabin's walls as he stared at me from afar. My muffled whines were getting louder but nobody was around. Moritz laughed maniacally. "We know you've been bedding that elf, you filthy knife ear lover!" his face was only inches away from my own and I moved my head to the side as he hissed against my ear. "We're gonna right that wrong. That little cunt of yours is ours." he licked his lips then and I pulled against my restraints even more. Tears rolling down my cheeks. I wanted to kill this asshole. What sick man does this?! He moved his hand down my body and groped one of my breasts. "You can fight all you want, kitten... Brann knows how to tie a rope." he continued moving his hands down my body and I felt absolutely sick at this point. I had no means of defending myself, I could do nothing with my hands tied like this. I used one of my legs to kick him off of me, but he in turn just slapped me across the face a second time. In the exact same spot he had earlier, it stung even more this time. I winced and whimpered at his assault and he just smiled. He fucking smiled.

Then he ripped off my breastband, I was topless and this twisted fuck was drooling all over me. He
moved his head down and started nipping at my breasts. I groaned and whined even louder. I felt so fucking disgusted at this point. Brann was gawking from afar, watching his companion do his sick work. I could feel Moritz getting aroused ontop of me, through the fabric of his breeches. I actually wanted to throw up at this point. I tried hard to spit out the cloth that was pushed down far into my mouth but my jaws were locked as my mouth was open this far, holding the ball of cloth inside it. Moritz kept fondling my breasts and moved his other hand further down.

*I need to stop this. I need to do something.*

Panic was the only emotion I felt at this point and my entire body was frozen, until suddenly the mark in my left hand flared to life. The green light sputtered and crackled out of my palm. Moritz immediately looked up in fear.

"Shit!" Moritz jumped off of me and left me there, tears streaming down my face, my mark was going haywire, probably reacting to my strong emotions. Then Moritz snarled at me. "Fucking bitch!" he wanted to come back to me but my mark was crackling more violently now, causing him to stop dead in his tracks. "Fine." he turned his head to face Brann, who was standing there like an idiot. "Burn the fucking cabin down." Then he turned to look at me one more time with a grin so evil and twisted, I froze up in fear.

*No. No no no.*

Brann laughed and together they walked out of my cabin, leaving me there, tied to the bed. I was wriggling uncontrollably, pulling against the restraints with all my power. I needed to get the fuck out of here. I heard their murmurs outside of the cabin and before I knew it, a bright light appeared through my window. The whole fucking cabin was made out of wood, the roof made of straw. It wouldn't take long before it would completely burn to the ground. With me in it. I struggled, fought, while my mark was still going crazy. I couldn't scream for help, I couldn't do anything..

*Fuck! Please dear heavens, save me. Solas! I want Solas! Help me!*

I was crying, wailing loudly, muffled sounds coming from my mouth as the fire was quickly spreading, it was inside of the cabin now, and it started burning the things around the bed. Soon I would be engulfed in flames and the only person I could think of was Solas.

*Solas:*

I was deep into the Fade, conversing with Wisdom, when I felt it. I heard it. I felt her soul crying out for me, begging me to come to her. But it was louder now. More frantic. "You can hear it too, ma falon." Wisdom said, breaking my concentration. I looked at my friend worriedly. "She needs help. But she is awake. You need to wake up."

Right then, my eyes opened and I was met with complete darkness. The sun was not yet up, I immediately hurried out of my bed, not bothered to put on my tunic. I walked out of the cabin, into the cold night's air when I saw it: smoke rising from where Eliana's cabin was. A big bright light emanating from it.

*Fire!*

I ran towards her cabin, and as I had feared, it was completely set ablaze. I quickly lifted up my hands, trying to take control of the flames before me. It was an arduous task, but when I finally held control over the element, I willed the flames to calm. I willed them to move aside, creating a path into the cabin. The walls were already coming down and it was a miracle the roof had not yet collapsed. The fire was strong and it set ablaze more and more as the seconds went by, I had to be fast or even I could no longer control the flames. Trying to extinguish it with ice attacks would take too much time,
time I did not have. When I got into the cabin, I saw her struggling against her restraints: hands were tied with rope to the bedpost and she was topless, gagged by a piece of cloth, eyes wide in terror and wailing loudly. I dashed towards her and removed her restraints immediately, taking out the ball of cloth pushed down into her mouth. There was no time to speak about this now, I had to hurry. I took her into my arms as she dug her nails into my bare skin. She cried out my name, I lifted her up into my arms and ran out of the cabin quickly, before the fire took control again. At this point, it seemed people in Haven had noticed.

Fools.

She cried loudly, her bare breasts were pressed against my chest as she wrapped her arms around my neck and cried my name over and over. She was filled with terror. I wrapped my arms around her, protecting her modesty as much I could while these fools were staring and standing around us. "Get me a blanket!" I yelled out towards the crowd. A handful of people ran off into their own cabins and came running out with blankets and cloaks. I snatched one from a terrified looking woman and quickly wrapped it around Eliana's body, covering her up. Then I took her into my arms a second time, as she shoved her face into my neck, crying. "Notify the Seeker immediately! Put out that fire!"

I called out to some guards that were suddenly standing around the place.

Where had they been when her cabin was set ablaze?

I shrugged the question from my mind then, no time, not right now. I walked towards my own cabin, Eliana in my arms. People were giving us looks, some concerned looks, some disgusted looks. Even though Eliana held her speech the other day, it seemed many people still thought the same way. It was not right for an elven man to hold a human woman in his arms like this, but I did not trust anyone to take care of Eliana right now. No one but myself. When we were inside of the cabin, I put her down onto my bed and sat down next to her. She immediately clung to me again, sobbing into my neck. I stroked her back softly, hushing her. "I am here, Eliana. I'm here. Hush now." I whispered softly, she dug her nails into my bare skin even deeper. Whatever happened to her... She wouldn't part with me, didn't allow me to leave her side. I gave her the time she needed to calm herself. She was still shaking, but eventually her crying had ceased. I held her at arms length then, examining her face. Her cheeks were red, skin irritated by the tears that streamed down them. There was a bruise starting to form on her right cheek, she had been hit. Her red eyes still filled with fear. "What happened?"

She shook her head. "Moritz and Brann. Two of the soldiers that had a problem with me... They came into my cabin... Moritz tried to... And Brann just watched as he-" she stopped talking, she could no longer speak. Again she pushed her head back into my neck and sobbed. I hushed her, though I was feeling livid at this moment.

"This will not be tolerated, Eliana. We will find them and we will judge them accordingly." my voice broke as I spoke, I was having a hard time seeing Eliana like this. She was beyond terrified. Those filthy humans tried to... or may already have...

No. They didn't finish the deed. She was still wearing her underwear.

I continued to hold her in my arms, moving my hand gently up and down on her back. I had more questions I wanted to ask her about what happened but I had to give her more time. I patted her back softly. "I will make you some tea." she nodded and hesitantly let go off me. She really did not want me to part with her. I slowly got up and walked over towards the jug of water and poured it into a pot above the fire. While I was waiting for the water to boil, she slowly got up to her feet and walked over to me. She was holding the blanket tightly around her body. I glanced back down towards the pot of water above the fire, my back now facing her. Then.. I felt her cold hands wrap around me
from behind and heard the blanket fall off of her body onto the floor. Again, I felt her breasts pressed against my skin. I inhaled sharply. Her hands were flat on my chest, not moving.

She's vulnerable. Don't take advantage of her vulnerability.

"I called out for you, and you came." her voice was soft.

I sighed. "Of course, Eliana. You were in need of help." I was trying hard not to think about how soft her breasts felt. I was trying to focus on the water before me, slightly hoping it would boil faster so I could sit her down and give her the tea. Then, her hands glided downwards, towards my stomach and she left them there instead. Slowly feeling and exploring my stomach cautiously. I swallowed down hard.

"If it wasn't for you..." she stopped speaking and then she glided her hands down even further.

I took hold of her hands then. "Eliana." I said in a warning tone of voice. "This is not right." I couldn't possibly give in to my feelings right now. Not when she's in this state, not after what just happened.

She held her cheek against my back and hummed. "I know. You're right. Perhaps another time?"

Then I felt soft kisses on my shoulder blade.

The water started to bubble a bit and she was silent. She was waiting for me to answer her. "Perhaps another time." Then I took the pot off the fire and poured it back into the jug, adding some leaves of tea into the boiled water.

She took the blanket back up from the ground and wrapped it back around herself. I still kept my back towards her. "You can look now, I'm decent." she said softly. I turned around and handed her the mug with tea.

Suddenly there were several loud knocks at the door, both of us turned around immediately. I stepped in front of Eliana and readied myself for whoever was out there. Both of us were certain it might have been Moritz and Brann. But Cassandra's voice called out from behind the door: "Solas? Is Eliana with you?"

We both let out a sigh of relief then as I walked towards the door, opening it for the Seeker. Her eyes wide, she immediately walked over towards Eliana and embraced her. "Thank the Maker you're alright."

Eliana's expression was surprised, as was my own. The Seeker had never showed this much affection towards Eliana before. It was.. almost odd to see her affected like that. "Seeker. Will you stay with Eliana while I go and help extinguish the fire?" Cassandra simply nodded and so I hurriedly took my tunic and put it on, leaving the two women inside.

Eliana:

I watched as Solas left the cabin, he was probably trying to get away from me after what I tried earlier. I wasn't doing it on purpose, my hands just moved down on their own accord. The way he had cared for me, the way he carried me, the way he smelled when I buried my face into his neck, the way his voice broke... Solas was the only person I could think of when I was in that cabin. He was the last one on my mind. I knew then, at that moment, it was harder than I thought, ignoring my feelings for him. I cared about him already. Cassandra was eyeing me intently. "What are you thinking of?"

I smiled faintly and shook my head. "It's nothing."
Cassandra decided to leave it at that, because she immediately went full she-hulk on me again. "What happened? Who attacked you and why?"

I rolled my eyes. "Geez Cassandra, can you be a little more gentle?" I said in a wry tone of voice.

She sighed. Her eyes dark. "I am worried. I apologize if it came off harshly. But please, won't you tell me what happened?" she asked me desperately. So I explained the whole story to her... Still shuddering at the thought of Moritz on top of me like that. His disgusting lips around my breasts. Cassandra's mouth pressed into a thin line as she listened to me speaking. "Those bastards." she all but growled the words. "When Solas returns, I will send out Leliana's men immediately to find them. They could not have gotten far. I, myself, will join them. I swear when I find them... Maker preserve me."

We sat there for a while longer in absolute silence. Cassandra was mad, I could tell. She couldn't wait to get out there and find Moritz and Brann. When finally Solas returned she immediately jumped up, telling Solas about her plan. "She should stay here with you, Solas. Keep her safe."

"That was my intention regardless, Seeker." he sounded tired. I wondered what happened while he was gone. It took a while after all. When Cassandra had left the cabin, he plopped down onto the bed next to me. He rubbed his temples and shook his head.

"Headache?" I asked him, putting my hand on his back gently.

He sighed. "The fire was... too great. I have used up a lot of my mana trying to put it out. The townsfolk were not helpful at all."

I nodded understandingly. "You should rest."

He chuckles wryly then and turns his head into my direction. "You're telling me to rest? I believe those are my words."

I can't help but smile at him. "Why were you gone for so long? Surely putting out the fire did not take that long."

He nodded, pinching the bridge of his nose. He really seemed exhausted. "I... had a word with Commander Cullen. About his men."

"A word? Meaning an argument."

"Perhaps it was wrong of me, but when we were outside your cabin earlier, I noticed the guards. Where were they when your cabin was set ablaze? I told the Commander he needed to have a good talk with his men." he sighed again and shook his head. "We should sleep, da'len. It's late and..." he looked down towards my chest. "Perhaps I should give you a tunic of mine to wear for the night and some breeches."

I frowned. "A tunic will be just fine, Solas. I highly doubt I'll fit into any of your breeches." He snickered.

"You may be right."

I gasped and swatted him playfully. "Are you saying I'm fat?"

"Never. But you don't quite have the same hips as me, da'len. I am afraid my breeches will be too tight."
I smirked. "So you've been looking at my hips then, hahren?"

He groaned and got up from the bed, walking over towards a closet with some clothing in it. "You are troublesome sometimes." I giggled and peeked around him, he did not have that many clothes to begin with. Probably around three full outfits to wear. He handed a green tunic over to me. Solas was taller than me, so I figured the tunic would probably reach down to my thighs. Then he turned around, waiting for me to get dressed. I quickly dropped the blanket and slid the tunic over my head, down onto my body. It seems I was right. The tunic stopped right above my knees, but if I would lift up my arms, it would reveal my underwear.

Then I patted down on the mattress next to me. He eyed me suspiciously for a while. "I don't know if that's-"

I cut him off. "-Solas, please. This is your bed and I'm not letting you sleep on the floor. Don't be silly. We shared a tent before did we not?" Sure, I understood his reaction. Not even an hour ago, I was touching his abdomen and whatnot. However I would not allow him to give me his bed while he sleeps on a cold, hard floor.

He stood there for a while longer and then sighed. He gave up trying to fight me on it. He was tired, I was tired, we both needed to sleep anyways. He sat down onto the edge of the bed and started unwrapping his feet. "I've been meaning to ask you about that. You never wear shoes. Why's that? And what are those things anyways?"

He chuckles softly. "They are footwraps, da'len. Elves tend to not wear shoes, I detest the things. The footwraps are enchanted. They warm my feet, so even when I walk on snow it will not cause me any discomfort."

Of course they are enchanted. Because why the hell not. It's completely normal.

I nodded and clicked my tongue, then he took off his tunic again, leaving only his breeches. I swallowed hard. I don't think I'll ever get used to seeing Solas without a shirt. How in the hell did he even get those abs? He was a mage, not a warrior. He twirled a staff around for crying out loud, how does that train your abs in any way? He noticed my staring again and shook his head, laughing. But he didn't mention it, instead he flicked his wrist and suddenly the candles in his cabin all went out in unison. Then I heard him shift and he moved down into the blanket with me. His bed wasn't big, so he had no choice but to lay close to me. Our bodies were pressed against each other, and I can't say I was unhappy about it.

We lay there in silence until his hand moved up to touch my cheek. I instantly flinched at him touching it. "Shh, don't worry. I will heal it," he whispered and suddenly the same green light as my mark, was glowing faintly on top of my cheek. "They hit you?" he asks then, as he's healing my bruise.

"Moritz did," once he's done, he starts stroking my cheek. I can feel my cheeks heating up from his touch. "Solas?"

"Hm?"

"The mark... when I was in the cabin.... I couldn't do anything. The mark prevented Moritz from going any further. It flared to life when I was freaking out and that was the reason why they burned the cabin down.” my eyes adjust to the darkness and I can see his face, inches away from my own. We are both laying on our sides, facing one another. His hand is still stroking my cheek softly, his eyes are closed, he's tired.
"That's because the mark reacts to your emotions. It's still magic that is within you, Eliana. Magic is conjured by emotion. The stronger the emotions are, the stronger the magic gets. You were frightened, panicked and angry all at the same time. Very strong feelings. The mark reacted accordingly." his eyes are still closed as he explains all of this to me. I can't help but look down at his mouth when he's speaking.

I hum. "Solas?"

"Yes, da'len?"

"Those men came after me because they thought I was bedding you." I watch him open his eyes slowly, his eyes meeting with my own. I didn't know why I said that to him, but I did. And now we're having some sort of staring competition with one another.

"More rumors like that will spread amongst the people of Haven. Including our companions." he said it so plainly. Like he wasn't at all bothered with the rumors. Neither was I of course, but I wasn't expecting that reaction from him.

"You don't care about the rumors?" I asked hesitantly.

"Do you?"

I groaned. He was answering my question with a question, avoiding it completely. "Stop dancing. Answer me." I said it in a demanding voice.

He chuckled, seemingly amused with my reaction. Then suddenly, he pressed his lips against mine. His soft, full lips on my lips. It's not a violent kiss, it's a soft one. But I'm still taken aback by it completely. When our lips part, my mouth is slightly open and I am holding my breath. "Does that answer your question, da'len?"

"Yes, thankyouverymuch." I am having a hard time speaking, my voice soft and frail.

Again I can hear him chuckling as he wraps his arm around my body and pulls me closer to him. I hold my breath a second time. This evening is nothing but a rollercoaster of emotions. I don't think I've ever felt all of these emotions on one night. "You can breathe now, Eliana. I will not go any further. Now rest." And so I breathe again and close my eyes, my head against his chest, his arm wrapped around me, keeping me close to his body. I feel completely and utterly safe. I actually manage to fall asleep really easily.

The next morning I open my eyes and I am met with the bright rays of the sun. I rub the sleep from my eyes and look around, Solas is not here with me anymore. In fact, he's not even in the cabin. I groan and throw the covers from my body as I slowly get up from the bed. Then I notice some new armour laying ontop of a chair next to his bed. A hastily written note is ontop of the clothing. I read it:

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'Da'len,
I have taken the courtesy to provide you with a new set of armour.
We have checked your cabin but alas, could not salvage your old armour.
I hope this will do. I will return shortly, please remain within the cabin.'
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I snort and look at the new set of armour. This would be my third set of armour. Fucking hell. I hastily put it on and admire it in Solas' mirror. It's very different from what I had before. I sighed, and
this time I could not wear a breastband as mine had been ripped off last night. Unlike my previous armour, I had no tunic, instead I had a light green leather top, with dark brown leather pauldrons attached to the upper part of the top. The top was pretty low cut, without my breastband my cleavage was very much visible. I shrugged the thoughts from my mind. It was armour fit for a rogue, breastband be damned! It didn't really do anything for my breast size anyways. It only squeezed them flat. On the back of the top, was a dark brown hood I could pull up. I had some long dark brown fingerless gloves made from leather. The gloves reached just below my elbows. There was a little bit of space between my top and breeches, showing just a hint of bare skin from my belly. My breeches were made of thicker leather than my previous armour. The same dark brown leather as my pauldrons and gloves, except on my upper tights there were patches of the same light green leather as my top had been. My boots were long, reached up to my knees. They were sturdier than the last boots I had. I had a belt this time, with a big metal clasp at the front. Two more straps below said belt, hung loosely around my hips. I hummed with approval. However, this was not an armour Harritt would make.

As I was admiring my new armour, the door opened and Fenrian jumped at me immediately. I held him in my arms tightly as Solas entered the cabin after him.

"Elie! I saw what happened to your cabin, are you alright?" I squeezed him softly as he buried his face into my top.

"I am, lethalin. Not to worry. Solas saved me." I said to him, while glancing up at Solas. Who stood there, hands clasped behind his back, seemingly approving of my new armour.

"I knew he did! He cares a lot about you." he snuggled against me and I kissed the top of his head lovingly.

"Fenrian. Your classes have already started back at the Chantry, you cannot be late. I promised I'd bring you to Eliana, so you could see for yourself she was fine. Now you must go to your classes." Solas said in a stern tone of voice.

I raised my eyebrow up at Solas.

*Classes? Since when did Fenrian take classes?*

Fenrian pouted up at me. "Must I go? The revered mothers are so boring."

I kept a straight face. "If you are to have classes, Fenrian, you cannot stay here. Boring as they may be, it's important." though I had no idea what he was learning, I simply went with it.

Fenrian groaned and slouched, slowly walking towards the door of the cabin again. But before he left he turned around once more to me. "Asa'ma'lin? You sung for me last time, remember?" I nodded but didn't say anything, letting him continue. "Well... I want to teach you a song I know as well. Later today, after my classes if that's alright?"

I smiled warmly. "I'd love that, Fenrian." the kid smiled widely and nodded, then he quickly ran out of the cabin towards the Chantry.

Solas closed the door behind him and looked at me, while I crossed my arms. "What is this about classes? Since when does Fenrian take classes in the Chantry?"

Solas rolled his eyes, his lips curling into a half smile. "A request made by our dear Ambassador. She believes Fenrian should take classes just like the other children of Haven. Which I understand. Where Fenrian is from originally, they have classes as well. Just... of a different nature."
I nodded. That does make sense. I cannot expect Fenrian to not have classes while the rest of the kids do have them. It would be considered favouritism, and it would cause more problems along the way. I didn't need more problems. "He came from a Dalish clan did he not? I suspect the classes given by the revered mothers are entirely different from what he's learned before."

Solas dipped his head. "You would be correct. Though Fenrian has not complained about it too much, except stating the obvious that the chantry mothers are dull."

I chortled loudly. "Best not to let them hear you say that. Or Fenrian for that matter."

He shook his head and then looked at me with a serious expression on his face. "Da'len. The Seeker has not yet returned with Leliana's men. They are still out there, looking for Brann and Moritz. I believe it's best if you remain in my cabin for the evening's and stay near me the remainder of the day. The Commander promised me you'd be safe within the care of his men, but until I see a change of staff, I don't trust anyone enough to look after your wellbeing."

I nodded. "Thanks Solas. I appreciate it a lot."

"It's nothing." then he cocked his head slightly to the side as he was eyeing me. "How do you like your new armour, da'len?" I started prancing around like a 'model' on a catwalk and made some ridiculous poses, showing off the new set. He chuckled lowly. "I take it you like it, then?"

I nod frantically. "I love it. It's very different from my last two armours. Tell me... Harritt did not make this, did he?"

Solas smiled widely. "You are very sharp, Eliana. Indeed it is not made by Harritt. It is not made by humans at all. Seggrit was selling this at his stand, it is Elven made. Perhaps the Dalish. Though I do not know how he came by it."

I glanced down at the armour and stroked the leather softly. I was wearing Elven made armour. Then I snorted. "I like it a lot. Even more so now that I know it is Elven made. Will surely piss off a whole lot of people." I smiled defiantly up at Solas. Who in turn returned the same sly looking grin.

"I have no doubt about it, Eliana. Say.. what about breakfast? I believe Master Tethras cannot wait to see you."

(...) "Feathers!" Varric jumped up from his seat in the Singing Maiden and ran up to me, throwing his arms around me. I was slightly surprised. Then again, I had been last night as well, when Cassandra hugged me. I suppose I wasn't used to so much affection from the both of them. Though I would expect it more from Varric than from Cassandra, it was still... different. It warmed my heart however, knowing that they all cared about me so. He let go of me and looked concerned then. "Those nug humping bastards. They will not get away with it, Elie, I promise you."

I smiled down at Varric and nodded. "Thank you, Varric. I mean that."

He gestured for me to sit down. We all sat down at the same table we always sit at and he called Flissa over. He ordered breakfast for all three of us and paid it for us. Both Solas and I rejected his offer for paying for our meal, but he waved it off. "You survived a fire and you-" he looked at Solas. "-You saved her life. Let me pay for the meal, please."

We sat there in silence, eating and Varric kept looking at me, eventually narrowing his eyes. "What?" I asked hesitantly.

Varric swallowed down his piece of food and pointed towards my armour. "That is a little too
revealing, don't you think?"

I sputtered out laughing, almost choking on the food I had in my mouth. "You sound like my father, Varric!"

Solas couldn't help but smile himself and Varric shot him an angry look. "I thought you said you were going to give her armour. This is no armour."

"Though the top may be slightly revealing, Master Tethras. It is in fact armour. It is made from hardened gurn hide. Strong leather, wouldn't you say? Stronger and sturdier than druffalo hide or ram's leather."

Varric hummed, eyeing the outfit I was wearing a little longer. "Hmpf." was all he managed.

"I'm not wearing a breastband, perhaps that's why it's so revealing." I said softly.

However, my soft words were definitely heard by both Solas and Varric. Both men choked on whatever food they were initially chewing on and Varric hit himself on the chest hard, trying to stop the coughing.

"Eliana." Solas said in a stern tone of voice.

"What? It's broken. I no longer have it. Besides, it wasn't doing anything for me anyways. I don't know about women's breast sizes here, but the breastbands do absolutely nothing for my size." I huffed.

Varric shook his head and quickly finished eating his food. "Alright, that's more than I wanted to know about you Feathers. You're like a sister to me." he said while he made a disgusted face.

I giggled. "You act more like a father sometimes, Varric."

We remained within the tavern for a little while longer, even when we had already finished eating our breakfast. It was nice talking to Varric, we no longer spoke of what happened last night. Which I was glad for. I didn't want to keep getting reminded of it, not more than I had to. Solas sat there in silence, next to me. As Varric and I conversed about everything and nothing in particular. Eventually Leliana joined us in the tavern. She took me apart from the other two men and told me the building of the watchtowers was nearly finished in the Hinterlands. Soon, we'd have to return. Best would be to return there before going to Orlais to meet up with the clerics in Val Royeaux. Leliana insisted I'd go there as soon as possible to provide horses for the entire Inquisition. Also, she had a request for me. She heard of a warden going by the name of Blackwall. Josephine and I had covered the history of the Grey Wardens in our classes before. Leliana had even travelled with one of them, the hero of Ferelden. She heard he was holed up somewhere in the Hinterlands and she wanted to make sure the Grey Wardens had nothing to do with the Divine's murder. So she asked me to seek him out. I proposed to wait until Cassandra returned from her search but Leliana told me it cannot wait. Perhaps the clerics will write back any day, and once the letter was in, we'd have to depart for Orlais immediately. I almost forgot, with everything that's happened, that time is in fact of the essence here. We cannot afford to sit idly by for too long. We rested for a couple of days after our return from the Hinterlands, and soon we had to leave a second time. At least now, the only things I had to do there was search out Warden Blackwall and speak to master Dennet about his watchtowers and horses for the Inquisition. No hard work, per se. However I wasn't feeling too happy about leaving Fenrian behind, again. Certainly not so soon after what happened with Moritz and Brann. And people of Haven in general. I ordered Leliana to take care of Fenrian while I would be gone. She was to not let him out of her sight, not even for a second. I did not trust the townsfolk of Haven too much anymore. I still believed many people held the same opinions as Moritz and Brann did, but kept quiet about it,
in fear of being thrown out of Haven. She promised me, swore to me, that she would do as I asked.

The remainder of the day I spent packing up my stuff. Though I did not have that much things anymore. My satchel was gone, including the comb. So I had to purchase a new comb and a new satchel. Luckily for me, the daggers survived the fire. Cullen dropped by Solas' cabin that afternoon to hand them over to him. He didn't even so much as look at me. Solas returned my daggers then and told me Cullen's guards had found them outside of the cabin. Apparently Moritz and Brann had moved them purposely outside of the cabin. To make sure I could not reach them at all, were their plan to go wrong.

_Those bastards really thought everything through. Move my daggers outside so I am completely defenseless. Tie me down, gag me so I can't do jack shit. And if all were to fail, they already planned to burn the cabin down. Perhaps they still would've done so if they had the chance to finish what they started. Simply to shut me up, avoid getting caught. I'll kill them. If they get here, I'll kill them._

Fenrian's classes had ended and we had dinner in the tavern, all three of us. Solas, Fenrian and I. After, we went to Solas' cabin. In there, Fenrian told me all about today's classes. The revered mothers had taught him about the Maker and Andraste, but Fenrian told me he did not believe. Which was fine with me. I did not believe in their Maker. So Fenrian told me a little bit more about their Gods. Their Creators. Solas had touched on it a little back when we were travelling towards the Breach, but I hadn't heard too much on the topic yet. Solas remained silent during Fenrian's explanation to me. Their Elven pantheon had five gods and four goddesses. It consisted of Elgar'nan the God of vengeance, Mythal the great protector, Falon'din friend of the dead, Dirthamen keeper of secrets, Andruil Goddess of the hunt, Sylaise the hearthkeeper, June the God of craft, Ghilan'nain the mother of halla and lastly, Fen'harel the Dread Wolf. I was intrigued in Fenrian's explanation of their Gods. It made sense in some way, but I had noticed Solas seemed... bothered by Fenrian speaking of their Gods. Perhaps Solas did not believe in them? Perhaps he... did not believe in anything. Perhaps he was more like me? Fenrian told me his mother and father held the vallaslin of Mythal. Vallaslin was basically called blood writing. It is what the Dalish call the intricate facial tattoos worn by all adult clan members. Many young Dalish receive their vallaslin when they are around 18 years of age, or so. When a Dalish elf comes of age, they prepare to gain the vallaslin by meditating on the gods and the ways of the Dalish, and by purifying the body and the skin. When the time comes, the Keeper of the clan applies the blood writing. This is done in complete silence. Cries of pain are taken as signs of weakness. I shudder at Fenrian's matter-of-factly tone of voice when he speaks of this. To him, this was considered entirely normal. To me, it frightened me a little. I immediately thought of Fenrian, and the Keeper of a clan applying the vallaslin to his face. It made me swallow down hard. But Fenrian spoke of it like it was an honor to receive the vallaslin. I quickly changed the topic then, asking him about the song he had wanted to teach me.

"It's a lullaby my mamae used to sing for me. It is called Mir Da'lenn Somniar."

Solas hummed. "I have heard of it. It is a beautiful song, Fenrian."

Fenrian's eyes widened. "Do you know it as well ba'isa'ma'lin?"

Solas nodded and smiled faintly. "Perhaps we should both sing it for Eliana?"

I was surprised at Solas' request. I had not heard Solas sing before, and he didn't strike me as the kind of guy who would sing infront of anyone. He was always serious and... well, sometimes he acted a lot like his age: old and broody. Not all the time of course, but him singing, just seemed unlike him. But then again, Fenrian brought out a completely different side to Solas, I had never seen before. He allowed himself to be... gentler, more parental around Fenrian. And he allowed me to see that side of him. He did not show it to Cassandra or Varric. Fenrian was more than happy to sing the lullaby
with Solas and teach me. And so they sang. Solas' voice was deep when singing, but definitely beautiful. I didn't think he could sing in the first place. However when he sang, there was some sort of sad emotion in his voice. However Fenrian's high pitched voice when singing was almost angelic. Once they finished singing I clapped excitedly. "That was beautiful! I want to learn how to sing it." Though I didn't know what the words meant yet, they started teaching me how to sing the lullaby.

It took me a few tries, and a lot of correction in my pronunciation, by Solas when I finally memorized the song. I asked Solas to help me write down the lyrics of the song so I could learn it. I wanted to remember the lullaby as I remembered my own lullaby's. By heart.

* * * *

Elgara vallas, da'len  
Melava somniar  
Mala taren aravas  
Ara ma'desen melar  
Iras ma ghilas, da'len  
Ara ma'nedan ashir  
Dirhara lothlenan'as  
Bal emma mala dir  
Tel'enfenim, da'len  
Irassal ma ghilas  
Ma garas mir renan  
Ara ma'athlan vhenas  
Ara ma'athlan vhenas  

* * * *

Solas explained the meaning of the song to me. It was beautiful and I was determined to learn it by heart once we were out on the road back towards the Hinterlands.

"Fenrian. I have to tell you something. Solas, Varric and I will head out soon. Probably tomorrow afternoon. We are to go back towards the Hinterlands and finish some business there. After we've dealt with that, we might have to head straight for Orlais to meet up with the clerics of Val Royeaux. I might be gone for a while again." I say finally, after having a nice calm little evening with the two of them. I had to tell him. I was dreading it, because Fenrian had become so important to me. Before I left to the Hinterlands as well, but now, even more so. It pained me to think of having to leave him behind again, but he simply could not follow or join me. It was too dangerous for a little kid his age.

Fenrian looked at Solas and then back at me with wide eyes. Tears were starting to form within them and I felt a sharp pang of pain in my chest. "I'll be... alone again?" his voice broke and I quickly took him in my arms and pressed him tightly against me.

"Hush now, Fenrian. We will come back. I know it's hard, it's hard for me too. Having to leave you behind again. But I am still the Herald and there are things I must deal with. I cannot send out anyone to do that work for me. Leliana promised me she would take care of you. And you have to promise me that you'll listen to her, and stay close to her, alright?" I said softly into his ear as I was trying to hold my own tears back. I didn't want Fenrian to see me cry.

Solas sat there, on the chair opposite of his bed, where we were sitting on and eyed the two of us from afar. His mouth pressed into a thin line. He did not like it either, but we had no choice. And we would have many more trips ahead of us. It wasn't going to get any easier but, it had to be done.
"I promise asa'ma'lin. Just come back safely."

I squeezed him tightly and held him at arms length then. "Think of it this way; whenever I go out on trips, I'll come back with new gifts for you. How's that sound?"

Solas chimed in. "Yes Fenrian, Orlais has delicious frilly cakes. We might be able to bring some after we return from Val Royeaux."

Fenrian seemed slightly happier then. "Real Orlesian frilly cakes? Mamae always told me about them. She said they were really sweet."

Solas nodded. "Indeed they are. I promise you, Eliana and I will bring them from Val Royeaux so you can have some."

I kissed the top of Fenrian's head then. "See? Aren't you excited about it now? Even just a little?"

Fenrian nodded. "Can I have an entire box?"

Solas and I bursted out into laughter then, causing Fenrian to pout slightly. He was serious about it.

"We'll see, lethalin." I giggled as I got up from the bed with Fenrian. "Now it's time to get some sleep. Classes start early tomorrow. Promise me you'll go to classes while we're gone, alright?"

"Promise." he said, his eyes slightly half lidded. He was getting tired. Poor kid.

Chapter End Notes

The lullaby from Fenrian and Solas:
Elgara vallas, da'len - Sun sets, little one,
Melava somniar - Time to dream
Mala tara aravas - Your mind journeys,
Ara ma'desen melar - But I will hold you here
Iras ma ghilas, da'len - Where will you go, little one
Ara ma'nedan ashir - Lost to me in sleep?
Dirthara lothlenan'as - Seek truth in a forgotten land
Bal emma mala dir - Deep with in your heart
Tel'enfenim, da'len - Never fear, little one,
Irassal ma ghilas - Wherever you shall go
Ma garas mir renan - Follow my voice
Ara ma'athlan vhenas - I will call you home
Ara ma'athlan vhenas - I will call you home

Also, the link to the song so you can get into the 'mood' of the song, I love it! :
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZI3CmzQY1So
The Wolf And His Prey

Chapter Summary

The 'team' prepares themselves to head out again, which leaves Eliana feeling extremely upset. She cannot bear to leave Fenrian behind a second time, while knowing that she may die... Orlais is on her mind, her impending doom. And since her little elf 'child' has become more important to her, she's having a really hard time having to part with him. Also, some more getting to know how Elie really feels deep inside. She's still not entirely okay with being in Thedas, but at the same time she's coming to terms with it... slowly.

But also... More smut and fluf between Solas and Elie :3

Ooooo, the wolf has caught her scent.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I was brushing Moonlight's fur absentmindedly. I had awoken early this morning, my sundial near my burned down cabin was no longer there. It had been destroyed by the fire and the rubble left over from my cabin. I had spent the night with Solas again, though nothing had happened between us. I was thinking of him, when I heard footsteps approaching. It couldn't have been Solas, he was preparing and packing for the trip back at the cabin. I waited, not saying a word. "Eliana.." Cullen's voice was quiet. I hadn't spoken to him since I made him fire Moritz, Brann and the remaining guys. He didn't come to see me, I figured he was busy. Not that I blamed him for it, I just simply had other... things on my mind.

I stopped brushing Moonlight and patted her softly against her side before turning around to face Cullen. "Good morning, Commander." I said politely.

He rubbed his neck as if uncomfortable. It seemed to be a habit of his, whenever he was feeling uneasy about something. He was holding some rolled up paper in his free hand. "I er... I've been meaning to talk to you about what happened."

I sighed and shook my head. "Please, let us not speak of that. I just want to forget about it all. Unless you have news about Cassandra and Leliana's men, I'd rather not speak about it."

He nodded. "I understand, however, I urge you to read this letter that we intercepted late last night."

he handed over the paper and I started reading it slowly.

'---

'Moritz,
You are a right git, you know that?
When you told us to 'take a break', we did not expect you to set the Herald's cabin ablaze.
By the Maker, if I find you, I will strangle you myself!
- Bodo'

---'
Cullen sighed and nodded. "Bodo is one of my best recruits. Leliana found him sneaking around last night, trying to send out a raven. I interrogated him and he confessed, my men were bribed by Moritz to 'take a break' and leave your cabin for a while. That's why they weren't present at the time." he looked down at his feet for a moment and cleared his throat. "I'm... terribly sorry, Eliana. I did not know the men among us were so corrupt. I have arranged for a change of staff. The men who accepted the bribe are relieved from their duties and have been sent to the holding cells." I looked up at Cullen in surprise. That must've been a lot of guards he relieved from duty. "If you wish to speak with them... before you leave... They are in the cells."

I crossed my arms. "Why would I want to speak to them? Why aren't you releasing them? What good will it do keeping them locked up?"

Cullen sighed. "I cannot possibly release them, in case they wish to take vengeance like Moritz and Brann did." his mouth pressed into a thin line. "I'm not yet sure what I'll do with them, but for now they remain locked up. As for speaking to them.. I thought perhaps you wanted answers as to why-"

I interrupted Cullen harshly. "-I know why Moritz and Brann did what they did. They thought I was bedding Solas and they could not stand the idea of a human and an elf together. As for your men in the holding cells, they probably knew Moritz was up to no good, yet they accepted the bribe willingly. They are as much at fault as their co-workers. I do not wish to speak to them."

I walked past Cullen and bumped shoulders with him as I did. He jogged after me however, grabbing me gently by the shoulder. "Are you bedding the apostate?"

I felt the anger bubbling back up. I laughed wryly. "After all I said, that was the only thing you heard? First of all Cullen-- I turned my body sideways and pointed my index finger directly into his face. "-Technically all mages are now apostates, and his name is Solas." I hissed at him now. My eyes narrowed. "Second of all, it is none of your business, who I share my bed with at night. Even if it were true, what does it even matter?"

Cullen took a step back, holding up his hands in defense. "I meant no disrespect, Eliana. I simply want to help clarify the rumors."

"Fuck the rumors! I don't care what people say. Right now, I've got more important things of my mind alright?! I have to close the fucking Breach, there are clerics in Val Royeaux that wish to hang me for a crime I did not commit and I have to leave behind Fenrian because I need to get back out there again." I yelled at him now. Some passer-by was looking at the both of us curiously, wondering what the hell we were talking about. I glared at said passer-by angrily and he quickly moved along.

He squeezed my shoulder gently, his face remained calm. "I understand your anger, Eliana. I simply want to help clarify the rumors."

"Somehow his calm demeanor managed to help calm me down as well. I took a deep breath then and shook my head. "I'm just... so much is happening all at once." I wasn't just talking about the Breach or the assault now. I didn't mention it, but my feelings for Solas were troubling me as well. I didn't know what to do with them. When I first realized I had feelings for Solas, I was quick to want to nip it in the bud. But I had given in to them, did I not? I had allowed him to see my vulnerability, allowed him to hear my heart."

Cullen smiled faintly, his scar again curling with his upper lip as he did. "It must feel like the entirety
of Thedas is weighing down on your shoulders. We often forget about that, as your advisors. I cannot imagine how you must be feeling most of the time. Not to mention this is all so foreign to you, the war, the battles, magic, everything."

I groaned and rolled my eyes at him. "You have no idea. Though I must say I'm getting accustomed to life in Thedas. It's odd, but I'm starting to view it as normal. Everyone wanting to kill me, or.. everything wanting to kill me. The death and destruction everywhere..."

Cullen chimed in. "-The big hole in the sky?"

I nod. "That too."

He chuckled, placing his hand gently onto the hilt of his sword again as he leaned back a bit. "Yeah, all in a day's work in Thedas." he smiled again and then stared directly into my eyes. "You are not alone in this, Eliana. Remember that."

I dip my head. "I know, Cullen." I stare at him a moment too long before we are both interrupted by Solas' polite cough. The both of us turn our heads into his direction then.

He's standing there, hands clasped behind his back, as usual. Half lidded eyes looking down at the both of us. "Herald. I believe we are to leave within the hour. Best prepare for the trip."

Cullen sighed and straightened his back slightly then. "He is right, Eliana. You should prepare for the trip. It'll be a long one." with that, he dipped his head and walked off. Into the direction of the training field.

I looked at Solas quizzically. He barely calls me Herald, he knows I dislike the title. "What was that about?" I asked him, crossing my arms.

He remained void of all emotions as he answers me. "None. It seems we are short one member. No other choice but to leave without the Seeker."

His behavior is slightly pissing me off, he's acting so cold all the sudden. But I decide not to mention it now. We are approaching the Chantry and head inside, Solas is slightly to the back of me when we enter the 'class room'. The revered mother is shooting daggers at me with her glare but I ignore it. "I just wish to say goodbye to Fenrian."

Fenrian jumps up from his seat and immediately wraps his arms around my neck, as I lift him up into my arms. "Asa'ma'lin. Ba'isa'ma'lin. You're leaving now?" his voice soft and frail.

I nod slowly. "Yes. We will prepare the horses after we leave the Chantry and then we'll head out."

Fenrian nods slowly and plays with a loose strand of my hair, trying to stall for time. "I will miss you."

"And I you, Fenrian. Remember to stay close to Leliana, and go to your classes on time. When I'm back, I expect you to tell me all about what you've learned in the time I've been gone."

He nods. "I will."
I kiss his forehead softly. "Now... no tears. I will be back before you know it." I manage to smile at him and wink, trying to reassure him. But right now I don't know if I'm doing it for him or myself, maybe a bit for the both of us.

I lower him softly and then he clings to Solas. Wrapping his arms around his waist tightly. "I will miss you too, ba'isa'ma'lin." he sniffs into his tunic and I have to bite down onto my lower lip hard not to choke up myself.

Solas pats his back gently. "Ea soun, da'len." with that, Fenrian releases Solas' waist and waves the both of us off as we leave the Chantry doors.

When I'm walking away next to Solas I dare not to look back, for I know I'll lose my shit. I'll cry my eyes out and I don't want Fenrian to see me like that. I don't know why I'm so bothered by it. Perhaps... I fear for my own life. After all, once we reach Val Royeaux... the clerics want me dead. I swallow down hard and walk past Solas, almost running towards the cabin. When I reach the inside of the safe cabin, I start to sob. My shoulders shaking as I do.

Soon, Solas enters as well and quietly closes the door behind us. Soundlessly he moves closer to me and puts his hand on my shoulder. "Eliana..

*Oh so now you call me by my name again? Ass.*

But I need his arms around me. I need his comfort, his safety. The same sense of safety he always gives me when I'm upset. I turn around and bury my face into his neck again. "I don't even know if I'll see him again, Solas. What if I am to be hanged?"

Solas hushes me gently. "I won't allow it."

Safety...

I inhale his scent, that lovely scent of parchment and grass. Moss growing on stones, it's an old smell. Yet a safe smell, a nice smell... *his* smell. My crying has stopped and for a moment I feel like an idiot. How much have I cried in his arms? How many times have I buried my face into his neck like this?

He grasps my chin between his index finger and thumb, and moves it up gently. Causing me to stare directly into those beautiful stormy eyes. "Ea soun, da'len." he whispers it.

I wipe my eyes and frown up at him. "What does it mean? You said it to Fenrian earlier as well."

"It means; be strong, little one." I bite down onto my lower lip again, I don't even realize that I'm doing it. Until Solas' thumb brushes against my lower lip and gently pulls it from the teeth that are biting down onto it. "You know... It is very distracting when you bite your lip like that, Eliana." He's staring down at my mouth again, I can feel my cheeks starting to flush again.

*Remember that time in the Hinterlands? Yeah, I didn't get the chance back then. But now we are alone.*

I get up to my tippy-toes and press my lips against his hard. He fully accepts my kiss as he wraps his arms around me and lifts me slightly from the ground. He's really strong...

I close my eyes and allow myself to completely give in to the kiss. Slowly my mouth opens and I let my tongue flick against his lips. He pushes against my body with his own, causing me to walk backwards, into the bed. When the back of my knees hit the mattress, they instantly bend and I drop myself down onto the mattress. Solas hunches over me, his torso pressed against me. Finally, I can feel his tongue against my lips, as I had done before. I immediately give it access to my mouth, and
our tongues are slowly twirling around each other. I put my hands on his back and slide them under the fabric of his tunic, lightly scratching his skin with my nails. He shudders momentarily, which causes me to giggle in the middle of our makeout session. Then he starts to suck on my tongue hard, I can't move it as he's sucking it and so I just lay there. My eyes open, looking up at him. His eyes are closed, but not for long. He notices me staring and he opens them, his usual grey/blue eyes are now a dark grey color. His eyes hungry, the way he sucks on my tongue, then proceeds to suck on my lower lip. Slightly tugging at it, needy, greedily. I can feel the heat within the pools of my stomach, arousal taking over completely. I want him. No, I fucking need him.

I pull away from the kiss, and push him to the side, his back now on the mattress. I climb on top of him and place my hands on his chest. I'm straddling him and he's loving it, as am I. His hands grab my hips firmly, and he's kneading them softly. I want his hands all over my body. I want to feel his hands on my behind, on my breasts. Gods, how much I want this old, unfuriating, broody elf. I tilt my head backwards slightly, lost in his touch. Causing him to slide his hands further down. "Solas..." my breath hitched.

"Feathers? Chuckles?"

We both freeze up immediately. I push my body flat against Solas', trying to hide, in case Varric decides to peek through the window.

"Are you guys in there? We need to leave."

I groan. "Yep! We'll uh.... We'll be out in a minute. Just give us some time gathering our stuff."

"Don't take too long! I want to get this shit over with."

Then, Solas laughs. He laughs. I glare at him. "What's so fucking funny?" I, for one, am not amused. The moment was ruined, again.

He places his hands on my hips again and smiles softly up at me. "I keep forgetting we have absolutely no privacy whatsoever." he slowly pushes me off of him and I can't help but purse my lips.

"Didn't I say Varric was like a father? Always ruining moments like this, just like dad's do."

Solas gets up from the bed and starts taking his packs, his satchel and his staff. Gesturing for me to do the same. "And that while I'm the forty something year old." he smirks.

I get up from the bed and start gathering my belongings as well. "You still don't look fucking forty to me. Have you ever taken a look in the mirror, Solas?"

"Hm, why?"

I huff. "Your bare chest looks.... not like a forty something year old chest." I quickly glance down at my feet. Not that he didn't already knew I had stared at his bare chest before, but I slipped up and admitted it aloud for the first time. It made me feel slightly uncomfortable. And creepy.

He comes closer to me. "Oh? How much do you like staring at my bare chest, da'len?"

I gulp.

Fuck, Solas. Stop being so fucking seductive..

I remain quiet and continue to stare down at my feet. He lifts my chin up again and I can see the
smirk on his face. Oh, he's loving this. "Perhaps you'll enjoy staring at other parts of me as well?"
My eyes widen. Yeah, we had been close to doing the thing-thing's before. But imagining Solas
entirely naked? I hadn't really given that much thought yet. He chuckles lowly and releases my chin,
then he walks over towards the door of his cabin and gestures for me to follow after. But for a while
longer, I am just frozen in place. Can't think of anything other than naked-Solas-body. I clear my
throat then, trying to compose myself. Also, trying to keep a straight face.

"Right. Well... Hinterlands, it is." I walk past him and towards the gates of Haven.

Time for another road trip.

(...) This time around, I took the lead. I had managed to remember most of the way towards the
Hinterlands. Solas would occasionally call out to me if I did take a wrong turn, since he was the one
with the map this time. We all rode next to one another, the three of us in a row. Luckily for me,
Solas had managed to get his cloak back from Fenrian. However, he immediately gave it back to me.
I was happy for it, it still smelled like him. I figured once the smell was gone, I'd tell him to wear it
for a while again. I giggled slightly at the thought. My packs were tied to either side of Moonlight's
saddle, my satchel hung around my body, containing a few more vials from Adan's shop. We rode
for hours, until the sun was going down. Then we set up for camp. The road towards the Hinterlands
was cleared out now. Here and there you'd find the Inquisition's banners placed around the path.
'Under the protection of the Inquisition', it said. The Chantry’s symbol adorned the banners with the
text. The horses were tied to a couple of trees and they were grazing peacefully. Varric, Solas and I,
then went out for hunting. We needed some meat for the evening. We had managed to hunt a
druffalo. Enough meat to supply us for the entire trip, possibly. I was no longer phased by the killing
of animals. Not at all, rather. I now knew that I had to in order to eat. It was survival, it was normal
here. Back at home... It would be considered terrible, awful, animal abuse most likely. If anyone but
a butcher killed an animal for its meat. Back at home? Home.. Where was home? I had already been
here for so long, getting used to life in this world. This was also home... We sat around the fire,
eating quietly. It felt weird, being without Cassandra. However, soon a thought crossed my mind.

"What if we find this Warden Blackwall and turns out the Wardens have nothing to do with the
Divine's death?" I say as I throw the bone left over from my meal, into the fire before me.

Varric hums. "Then we'll head straight for Dennett."

"Can't we... ask him to join us?" I said hesitantly.

Solas seemed to disapprove. "What if he tells us the Wardens have nothing to do with it, but he lies?"

Varric agreed with Solas. "Then we'd have a killer among us. A traitor. I once travelled with a
Warden, remember? He too was a liar."

I groaned. "Yes but... we need all the help we can get, do we not? From what I've heard about the
Grey Wardens, they don't strike me as the sort of people who'd kill a holy figure. They stand above
politics, do they not?"

Varric seemed to think for a moment about what I just said. Scratching his chest hair, without
knowing he did. I moved my hand to my mouth to stifle my giggles. It looked funny when he'd do
that. I couldn't help myself. "True. When Hawke and I were dealing with the Qunari back at
Kirkwall, we ran into a Warden... He didn't help us then either, saying the Wardens had nothing to
do with politics or religion."

Solas clicked his tongue. "We'll just have to see, when we get there. I wouldn't make a decision
about it now. We're not there yet."

I stretched my arms above my head lazily and yawned. "I suppose you're right." I clapped my hands onto my upper thighs as I got up. "Well, I don't know about you two. But I'm going to sleep." I walked off towards my tent, I now had a whole tent to myself. I didn't have to share it with Cassandra. However, I was so used to sharing a bed with Solas at this point... It felt weird and... lonely to stay in this tent by myself.

I lay there for a while, listening to the two of them talking in the distance. I couldn't hear what they were talking about exactly. My tent was too far away from the fire. I snuggled up into Solas' cloak, this time I kept my armour on. I no longer had my breastband, and sleeping in a cold area without armour?- No thank you. Then I heard Varric's loud laughter, and some inaudible words. Suddenly the flaps of my tent opened and Solas casually walked in. I raised one of my eyebrows up at him, though the candle was already out, so there was no way of him seeing me do that. "Hello there." I said questionably.

Solas casually and slowly removed his tunic and put down his pack, proceeding to roll out his bedroll, close to my own. As a matter of fact, his bedroll was laying directly against my bedroll. He never not once said anything, until finally, he laid himself down into the bedroll. "Hello." he said softly.

"I suppose Varric thought it hilarious you wanted to sleep here?"

"Indeed." he answered in a matter of fact tone of voice.

"Well, good thing you're here because I've been meaning to ask you about something anyways." I said resolute.

"What is it, Eliana?"

I thought back on this morning, when Solas had cleared his throat when I'd been talking to Cullen. "Why did you call me Herald this morning? Why did you act so... odd?"

I heard him sigh. "It was nothing."

I snorted. "The hell it wasn't. You know how much I dislike the usage of that title. You only ever call me Herald when you're around strangers and we're trying to keep up appearances. And even then you try not to call me that. Something bothered you, did it not?"

"It's not important."

"Was it because I was talking to Cullen?" I felt anxious then. Did he not like me talking to other men? But... we were hardly even together. Ontop of that, Cullen was one of my advisors. Though yes, he was incredibly handsome, I wasn't intentionally flirting with him or whatever.

"You do not know what effect you have on men, Eliana. Perhaps you do not see it, but I do." he sounded exasperated.

"The effect I have on men? Solas, the only man I want to have an effect on is...." I stopped. Me and my big mouth.

His curiosity peaked, voice amused: "Yes, Eliana?"

I grumbled and turned to my side, facing away from him. My back towards him. "Nothing. Forget I said anything." He loves being in control. He loves it when he's 'pinned me down'. I will not let him
have his fun like that. It's unfair when I'm backed up into a corner like that, I want to do that to him. Not the other way around.

His arm wrapped around me and pulled me close to him. My back flush against his front. His hot breath again on my ear as he whispered; "Believe me when I tell you, that you do have an effect on me. I don't like to share, da'len. Seeing the Commander and you gazing into eachother's eyes like that... it was irritating."

I huffed. "We did not gaze into eachother's eyes, Solas."

"Whatever happened to you calling me 'hahren'?" his voice was threateningly low.

I instinctively pressed my thighs against eachother. I felt myself getting smaller, so to speak. Solas had this really... 'dark' side to him. This, predatory, wolfish side to him. And I don't know what was worse, him being like that, or me... loving it. "I'm sorry, hahren." my voice was soft.

Then, I felt his fingers brush against my hair, as he moved it aside. Placing featherlight kisses on the nape of my neck, sending shivers down my spine. "And you did." suddenly he bit down into my skin hard. I inhaled sharply at the feeling.

"Solas..."

"Sleep well, Eliana." he moved away from me slightly, still keeping his arm wrapped around my body, but not doing anything anymore.

"You're leaving me like this?" the words had come out before I thought about them.

I heard a low chuckle behind me then. "Indeed."

Silence filled the air for a while.

"Solas? How do you say 'go fuck yourself' in Elven?"

"We have a different curse, though similar: fenedhis lasa." a trace of humor was still heard in his voice.

"Ah... What does it mean then?"

"Go suck a wolf's dick."

"Solas?"

"Yes, Eliana?"

"Fenedhis lasa!"

**Solas:**

"Warden Blackwall? The Inquisition accepts your offer." Eliana smiled politely at the big bulky man before her as I stood a little ways further, next to Varric. I was leaning on my staff, watching her persuade him to join us. It was, interesting to witness. She never not once asked warden Blackwall if he wanted to join the Inquisition, she simply peaked his curiousity to the point where he could no longer contain himself. Then... she left him hanging, walking off slowly, smirking at the two of us while counting to three on her fingers. Then he jogged up after her and proposed he could join the Inquisition to help us with our cause. She winked at the both of us before turning around and 'accepting his offer'. She was good. She was very bright and sharp. This shemlen from another world
continues to amaze me.
If she wanted to, she could charm the pants off anyone.

"Pleased to meet you all." Blackwall dipped his head as he held out his hand to shake. Varric took hold of it first, shaking it firmly.

"Varric Tethras, nice to meet you."

Then, Blackwall turned his attention towards me. "My name is Solas, good to meet you." I say politely as I shake his big hand. Eliana walks past the three of us, and I can tell she's swaying her hips on purpose. It causes all three of us to stare. Varric uncomfortably rubs his neck and averts his gaze, however Blackwall keeps staring. I look at the man before me and raise up an eyebrow. The man notices me glaring at him and immediately clears his throat.

"So, where will we be headed? Back towards Haven?" his gravelly voice filled with shame for staring at Eliana like that.

*Oh yes, I noticed.*

"Not quite. This morning we passed by the Inquisition's camp and a scout reported there was news from Val Royeaux." Eliana casually walks through the water to reach the other side of the lake.

"Val Royeaux? You plannin' to go to Orlais?" the warden seems awfully confused.

"Indeed. They wish to hang me." there was absolutely no trace of humor in her voice when she spoke. Her answer had been cold, nothing like her. She was obviously troubled a lot by it.

Blackwall stopped following us and stood still, water reaching up to his knees as he frowned at Eliana. "Excuse me? What for?"

Eliana turned her body sideways and continued to shrug her shoulders indifferently. "The grand clerics believe I'm the Divine's murderer."

"And are you?"

Varric now chimes in. "Do you really think Seeker Pentaghast would allow her to join the Inquisition if she were?" for the first time I see a displeased dwarf before me. He's never displeased, always happy and positive, sharing quips with everyone. Often times I believe he never takes anything seriously. However, this time, he's displeased. He's hurt, insulted even, that someone second guesses Eliana. He really did take a liking to her.

"I didn't mean to offend," the warden mumbles lowly, as he keeps his head down, following the three of us further down the road.

"Coulda fooled me. Let me tell you something, hero; if you can find me anyone who's as nice and kind as Eliana is, you let me know. Because I can assure you, she's the kindest woman you'll ever cross paths with." Varric waved his hand around as he spoke so highiy of Eliana. I shared my surprised reaction with Eliana in fact, as we looked at eachother in unison, raising our eyebrows up high.

Then she giggles. That lovely giggle only she has. "Alright dad. I love you too." she says it in a teasing voice.

The dwarf huffs. "Just don't want the new guy to second guess you or our cause. We are here to find and trial the true murderer of the Divine. And whoever created those green tears in the sky."
Blackwall walks up towards Eliana then, and reaches out to her hesitantly. Varric eyeing the man intently, as am I. "I meant no disrespect, my lady."

Eliana raised her eyebrow then. "It's fine. Don't worry about it, Blackwall."

We have now reached the camp and immediately the same scout from this morning runs up to us. "My lady Herald! Here's the report that came in this morning. It came from the Nightinggale."

Eliana nods and takes it from the scout's hands, thanking him as she does. Then she continues to read it and hands it over to me. "They're ready. They are awaiting our arrival." her voice sounds grim. She's not looking forward to this moment, and to be fair, neither am I.

Varric reads it with me and shakes his head. "'Make haste' they say. Hmpf."

"The Seeker will join us in Val Royeaux. She says going to Val Royeaux is a great opportunity to speak with the Templars who occupy the capital." my mouth presses into a thin line then as I roll up the report and hand it back over to Eliana.

Her eyes look at me in confusion. "You don't seem to approve of this." she states.

I sigh and shake my head. "Indeed I do not. I don't believe we should side with the Templars."

"I don't know Chuckles. Maybe this is because you're an apostate yourself, you might be prejudiced on the matter. I suppose the choice is up to Eliana." the dwarf turns his head into her direction.

She's rubbing her temples in frustration. "Ugh.. I don't need this now. I have too much on my mind currently, to even be thinking of whom to side with."

Blackwall speaks up for the first time in a while. "Fair enough. But what are your current opinions on both parties?"

We all look into her direction now. I cannot say I'm not curious about it. She's learned about the Templars and the Mages, she knows the history of Thedas now. The Mage rebellion, the Circle's, all of it.

She sighs deeply. "I don't know? I mean, the Templars are strong and we might need their armies to fight our enemy. However, the mages... I believe they deserve a second chance. Everyone's been treating them disrespectfully, while many don't have a choice in the matter. You're either born a mage or you're not." she pauses and looks back towards our horses then. "I can't say I've made up my mind yet. It does not matter either. We should head for Val Royeaux as soon as possible. We'll stock up, gather some more supplies and then we'll head out."

"It will take about a week to reach the capital." I clasp my hands behind my back and look at her directly now.

She rolls her eyes. "A week?! Oh for fuck-" she groans and instinctively rubs her behind.

"I could heal that for you, da'len."

She snaps her head back into my direction and flushes a crimson red. I love those reactions. It takes a lot not to burst out into laughter right now. I try hard to conceal the smirk on my face. She huffs. "I will be fine, Solas." then she stomps off towards the requisition's officer.

Varric chuckles and nudges me softly then. "You did that on purpose."
"Perhaps." I say it in a sly tone of voice. Currently I'm not even trying to hide it from Varric any longer. It's true: Eliana makes me careless. I act more like my younger self around her. Careless, cocky and enjoying the power play. I should take caution, I must remind myself not to stray from my path. I clear my throat then as I walk over towards Valoril and pet her muzzle gently.

(...) The very same afternoon we set off on our journey to Orlais. Blackwall has been given a horse that once belonged to a scout. However, said scout did not survive a battle between the rebel mages and templars. And so, it had no rider. Luckily for the horse, Blackwall was more than happy to take it. I ride infront of the rest, since I'm the one with the map. Though my back is facing Eliana and Blackwall, and I pretend not to hear their conversation, I can hear everything. I can tell Eliana is desperately trying to get to know Blackwall some more. She's awfully naive sometimes. I am not even sure yet if I can trust this Grey Warden, and here she is, prying him for information. It's not long before Blackwall gets curious himself, bombarding Eliana with questions about her life. I smile softly as I hear her tell her 'story'. The one she has memorized by heart at this point, to avoid suspicion. She tells him all about her previous life in Kirkwall, Varric chimes in with her, making the story sound even more believable. Telling Blackwall how he saw her running around Kirkwall with her parents from time to time. And that this is the reason why he's so protective over her now, because 'he feels like he's known her his entire life', as he so eloquently put it. Yes, Master Tethras is indeed an author. So well versed and well spoken, he know's how to think on his feet. And I can tell Eliana is thankful for it. When he presses her to tell him about what's happened to her family, she acts hurt. She's very good at pretending to be hurt, she even manages to cry on cue when she speaks of her 'parents' murdered during the mage rebellion. Blackwall immediately apologizes to her and that is the end of their conversation. I am thoroughly amused at this point. She always teases Varric, calling him a fatherly figure. The way she wraps people around her finger, the way she sells her story; she could very well have been his actual daughter. Late in the evening we set up our camp, somewhere near a waterfall and a lake and Eliana decides to go out for a bath. We tell her to yell if she's in any danger, but she simply smirks slyly. Assuring us that whomever disturbs her during her bath will instead be the one in danger.

As she walks off, I cannot help myself but to stare after her. Blackwall's gravelly voice causes me to snap out of it. "She's something, alright. Never seen a girl quite like her. She looks fragile and feminine, however from what I gather, she's a force to be reckoned with." he sounds in awe by her and I try hard to mask my irritation.

Varric hums. "She is. We've been in the Hinterlands before, for about a month and a half. I've seen her fighting, it's an odd style but she manages to be deadly either way." he pauses for a moment and looks to me then. "She's come a long way, has she not?" the dwarf and I the only two here that know what it was like first. The way she was afraid of everything and clumsily followed us around like a lost puppy.

I snicker slightly. "She has. Though she's not become bitter."

"Ain't that the truth. Seems like nothing can stop her from being so damn positive all the time." Varric pokes into the fire a bit, drinking from his flask with the other free hand.

"Not always. Before we left Haven, she was having an argument with the Commander. She feels the weight on her shoulders like the rest of us, however most the time, she manages to hide it very well."

Blackwall cocks his head to the side, questionably. "She wasn't always like this then I take it?"

"She was merely a commoner in Kirkwall. She did not have to fight. She had to learn while joining with the Inquisition." I say it plainly. Though most people in Thedas knew how to fight, there were
still the occasional few who did not know. Though very limited, they still existed. The people who let others fight for them, the people who would usually die during the first few hours of a Blight or a war.

Blackwall hummed, scratching his beard as he did. Clearly thinking on my answer for a while. "And your Seeker Pentaghast did not think it odd?"

Varric chimed in again. "Of course she did. However we needed her. She has the mark. In the time we've spent with Feathers, we've grown attached to her however. She's more than just this little fragile girl, she's strong minded and know's what she wants and what she does not want. She doesn't falter when questioned on her beliefs or opinions. That's what we need."

"I see." Blackwall looks towards me then and gives me the side eye. "What's the deal between you and her?"

I am taken aback by his bluntness, his straight forwardness. I glare at the man before me. "Excuse me?"

Blackwall sighs. "Oh come on. I've seen the way you look at her. I've only been with you all for half a day and I can already tell there's something going on between you two." he smirks slightly up at me.

Have I really been that obvious?

Varric chuckles. "Now that I can agree with, hero. They've got this weird relationship going on between them. One moment they avoid eachother and the next they stare at eachother like they're the only people left in the world."

I remain silent and let the two men figure it out themselves. Truthfully I don't even yet know what the 'deal' between Eliana and I is.

Eliana:

"-No, it was terrible. The boy wouldn't stop talking about himself at all! And then he had the nerve, the audacity, to ask me for a second date!" I groan and roll my eyes, recollecting the memory of an old date I had years back.

Varric laughed heartily as he threw his head back and shook his head. "The gall of some men, huh, Feathers?"

Blackwall hummed. "So did you go out on a second date with him?" he absentmindedly scratched his beard as he was eyeing me. Then he took a big gulp from his ale.

I snorted. "I sent him on a date with one of my er..." I coughed "-friends." then I smirked widely at all three the men around the table.

Solas raised one of his eyebrows. "You say that like the two of you.. weren't friends at all."

I giggled. "Right. She and I used to be friends for a very long time, but she did some shit. I started to dislike her and thus..." I took a sip from my own ale then swallowed it and glanced over at Varric. "I sent them two on a date. She hated me for it." I shake my head and glance down into my own mug. It's nearly empty.

Varric chortled gleefully. "Good one. I bet she had it comin'." he winked then. I simply smiled and nodded.
Then the men around the table started talking to one another and I was lost in my own thoughts. We had been travelling for a while now. Getting closer and closer to Orlais, but we needed to rest. And I do mean rest. A proper rest in an inn. We agreed we'd rent rooms, each one having our own. The prices here weren't that high for a rest in a bed on the side of the road. After that, we'd continue our journey towards Val Royeaux. Before we arrived at the inn, I made sure to stop by a merchant on the side of the road and purchased a long, baggy tunic. It was made of white cotton and it was very plain. I figured I needed something to sleep in besides my underwear. In my mind I had declared it as 'the official sleeping tunic of the Herald of Andraste'. Silly me, I know. I sighed then as my elbow was leaning on the wooden table before me and finished my ale. My lower back and ass had been extremely sore right about now. I hadn't been on a horse this long since I was a kid, and even then I didn't spend ten hours riding one a day. I almost accepted Solas' offer earlier today, to heal it for me, when I winced the moment I got on Moonlight. Alas, I refused and I was paying the price for it now.

Blackwall's question aimed towards me snapped me out of my own thoughts then. "Can you teach the game to me?"

I looked at all three the men in confusion, I had been so lost in thoughts, I had no idea what they had been speaking of. "I'm sorry.. I was.. distracted. What are you asking me exactly?"

Blackwall chuckled. "Varric and Solas told me of the game 'never have I ever'. Though I must say I've never heard of it before."

"I told you hero, it's a Kirkwall game." Varric said as he nudged the big bulky man next to him.

I snorted. "Very well-"

I explained the game once more, and Blackwall seemed to be taking notes. Then he requested for us three to demonstrate it and so we did. This time, the game ended up between me and Solas. The smug elf before me had three more fingers up and I had two. And I wasn't about to let him win from a game I explained to him.

I squinted my eyes at him, thinking of something he might have done. Still waters run deep. "Never have I ever... had a one night stand." Last time he was putting me on the spot, this time I'll return the favor.

"One night stand, da'len?" his question sounded genuine. Geesh, how do I explain this in the Thedosian way?

"Like... you meet someone, then you bed them but you never see them again. Nor are you in a relationship with them."

Blackwall roared of laughter then as he punched me hard on the shoulder. "She's taking no prisoners."

Solas' lips curled into the slightest of smiles and his eyes held a playful gleam. I had actually hoped to take him off guard. The entire game I'd played fair, I hadn't mentioned anything sexual or asked 'inappropriate' questions. He seemed not to care however, which had me annoyed. He's always the one pushing me into a corner, so to speak, and putting me on the spot. I had rather hoped to be able to do this to him, at least once. Slowly he lowered a finger and he was down to two, like me. But I knew, I could tell by his facial expression he was going to do the same to me now as well. I knew he was going to probe for inappropriate things and ask me such questions. Though I was mostly 'well behaved', I wasn't by any means a saint.

Varric grinned from ear to ear. "Really Chuckles? You?" he shook his head. "I like this game. It
makes getting to know you all so much easier."

"Very well." he smiled wickedly at me for a moment before he continued. "Never have I ever shared a bed with more than one person at the same time."

I gasped. "You'd think I did that? You have to do better than that, Solas." I kept my own two fingers up and leaned back into my seat a bit more. "Never have I ever paid someone for sex."

Solas kept his two fingers up and shook his head. "Never." he smiled. "Never have I ever shared a bed with someone more than twice my age."

I hummed for a moment. "Nope." I had a feeling however that he asked this for other reasons, but I decided not to ask. We kept on going, throwing dirty, sex related questions to one another until we both had only one finger left up. There was a palpable tension growing between Solas and I and Varric and Blackwall could both tell. They were no longer laughing at our dirty questions, but instead they both sat on the edge of their seats. Hanging on our lips as we asked question after question. "It seems there's a tie, Solas." I said in a coy tone of voice.

"It would appear so, da'len. Fine, let's end our little game then shall we?" he bared his teeth while smiling at me and stared me directly into my eyes. "Never have I ever shamelessly stared, and gawked, at a bare chest whilst sharing a tent with said person."

I glared at him. That little.... I lowered my finger and did not dare look at the other two men that were next to me and Solas. Solas seemed very cocky and smug with himself then and opened his mouth to declare his victory but then a thought hit me. "Lower your own finger as well, Solas."

He gave me a quizzical look then but Varric poked him hard with his finger. "She's got a point, Chuckles. You did stare that one time."

Solas sighed and lowered his finger as well. "It seems none has won this round." though his voice remained amused.

Blackwall whistled as he shifted in his seat. "Makers balls. I think I've gotten to know you all enough for one evening."

I giggled and shook my head. Then a yawn escaped my mouth. It had to be very late in the evening by now. In truth, we couldn't afford such meaningless chatter. We couldn't afford playing games while we had more important things on our minds. However, it was nice not thinking of my possible impending doom at Val Royeaux. "I think that's enough for one day in general. I'm off to bed." I got up from my seat and dipped my head. "Gentlemen." I said, then I turned around and went up the stairs towards my own room.

It was a quiet little inn. There were paintings on the wall, depicting beautiful landscapes and animals prancing about. Also portraits of people, possibly nobility, staring blankly at whomever it was that painted them. I walked through the hallway to find my room and entered it. I hadn't had a chance to check it out. Upon entering there was a wooden bathtub right to the side of the door. There was a folding screen in front of it, to give some sort of privacy whilst bathing. There was a hearth inside, with a couple of buckets filled with water before it. Most likely for the tub. Then there was a little sofa next to a bookshelf, filled with books to read. Also a chamber pot right next to the bed, which was a big fluffy looking bed. With five different pillows sprawled on top of it. It was a small room, but cozy nonetheless. My pack was already sent up by the innkeeper. She was a nice lady, introduced herself as Gemma the moment we walked in. She was a woman in her thirties, brown curly hair reached to her shoulders. She wore a simple brown dress, with white apron in front of it. She told us a little bit about the area, saying that she used to get many customers. How could she
not? With this inn being right on the border between Ferelden and Orlais. However, with all the war going on between the mages and templars, not to mention the tensions growing between Orlesians and Fereldens as well, she hadn't gotten as many customers lately. So she was happy enough to give us a room and some food. Her daughter and husband worked here as well. Her daughter cleaned most of the rooms and her husband served the ale. I had stripped down to only my underwear and decided to heat up the buckets of water so that I could take a bath. A well deserved bath...

(...) I lay there in the tub, my head resting against the rim of it. I had washed myself and my hair first and was now relaxing into the hot water. My fingers were starting to get pruny but I didn't care. I needed some relaxation. Between the funny banter and quips shared between me and my companions, I had a lot on my mind. I was... troubled, to say the least. I just chose not to share my troubles with them. I didn't want them to worry about me any more than they already did. Well, Varric and Solas that is. I wasn't sure what Blackwall thought of me yet, but it seemed he accepted me and my fake story. Solas seemed to be.. cautious around Blackwall. Though I wasn't quite sure why. As for my thoughts on Blackwall himself, I couldn't quite place him. There was something off about him. Especially when we had met him back at the Hinterlands and he lowered his head, closed his eyes and said: "Grey Wardens can inspire, make you better than you think you are." There seemed to be something behind those words he spoke, something more than just his own admiration for the Grey Wardens and their cause, his cause. Also, all the Grey Wardens had dissapeared, all but him? It seemed.. off. I shook my head then and groaned.

Not now, Elie. God, you have enough on your mind as it is. Don't go and try to play Sherlock Holmes for the Inquisition, for fuck's sake.

Though I shrugged those thoughts from my mind, the other worries came back. My impending doom at Val Royeaux. Would I be hanged? Would I be flogged? How do Chantry clerics deal with someone they perceive as a murderer? Could I even convince them otherwise? What of the templars that occupied the capital? I closed my eyes and held my breath while I emerged my head into the water for a moment. When I was down the water, I heard the faint sound of knocking. I immediately sat straight into the tub. "Who is it?" I called out as I hurriedly made my way out of the tub, wrapping a towel around my body.

"Da'len? Are you decent?"

I sighed. Of course it's you. "Decent-ish." I walked over towards my door and opened it. Sure, I was naked but I still wore the towel around my body. "Is there something wrong?" I asked quietly as he glanced up and down my body.

He cleared his throat. "You were sore from riding, yes? I came to see how you were doing now. However I realize this is an inopportune time." he moved to turn around but I instinctively reached for his arm with one of my hands and held him back. He turned his head around and gave me a questionable look.

"Actually.. I've decided to take you up on that offer." I release his arm then and gesture for him to come in. "I thought it would just go away, but it's become unbearable at this point."

Solas walked into my room casually and I closed the door behind him, then I moved towards the folding screen and started drying myself off behind it.

"I'm surprised. You seemed resolute in your decision."

I giggled as I hurriedly put on my new sleeping tunic. It had long sleeves, and it reached my upper thighs. The hem of it, just above my knees. "I was. However I can only take so much." I stepped
away from the folding screen and crossed my arms together then.

He stared at me. Scanning my body. But his eyes lingered at my legs. "Very well, if you'd please lay down." he gestured over towards my bed and I obeyed meekly.

He walked over to me and placed his hand gently on my behind. I closed my eyes and tried to focus on everything but his hand on my ass. Sure, things got a little heated back at Haven. However I couldn't let this... whatever it was between us get in the way of things. I had so much on my mind, so much to do. I had to close rifts, seal a goddamn breach in the sky and-

I gasped. His cool healing magic seeped into my skin and I could feel cool tendrils relieving the soreness and pain in my muscles. Gradually the pain subsided but he kept his hand where he had initially placed it. Then these very same cool tendrils moved upwards, towards my lower back and I heard him click his tongue. "I wasn't aware the pain had spread. You should've told me, Eliana."

He berated me, again. I groaned slightly at his magic relieving the pain in my lower back. "There's a lot of things I should've done."

He didn't answer, instead placed his other hand on my lower back this time and continued his magic. When all the soreness and pain was gone, he snatched his hands back. "How are you feeling, da'len?"

I rolled over to my side and looked at him for a moment. "The pain is gone. Thank you, hahren."

He sat down onto the bed and sighed. "I meant you. How are you feeling."

"I'm fine." I said curtly and I sat up onto my bed, next to him. He eyed me suspiciously. I rolled my eyes. "I suck at lying."

"That you do."

"Fine. I'm not okay. I have a million things on my mind. But don't worry, I've always been like that. I overthink everything. When there's one thing that must get done, I mull over a thousand possibilities. I need to always have a backup plan, for when my initial plan doesn't go as I want it to. And that requires thinking about it, a lot. Even going as far as thinking of it when I should be sleeping." I pinch the bridge of my nose.

He hums. "Can't you simply... not do that?" he joked.

I snorted. "If you know of a way, please tell me. I've been trying to figure it out for twenty two years now." I smiled wryly. "It's just something that I do and I don't know how to shut it off."

Then the silence fell around us. You could hear a pin drop.

"Solas? Do you think there's ever a way for me to return back home?"

"I'm not even sure how you got here in the first place, da'len. If we are to find a way back home for you, we must first know how you ended up in a different world." he shifted body sideways, towards me then. Eyes staring intently. "You really don't remember?"

I shake my head. "It was a regular work week for me. I had come home from work, tired. Took a shower, read a book, ate dinner and then went to sleep. I had to wake up the next morning early for work again. I was sleeping... then I woke up in the cells at Haven." I huffed. "I'm probably fired now anyways, for not showing up to work. Unless... unless time is standing still back at home."
He placed his hand on my back softly. "Are you alright?"

I shook my head. Tears were starting to form in my eyes and I was trying hard to blink them away. "Home. What is home anyways? I've been here for so long already. As weird as it might sound, this is starting to feel like home. But it can't, right?" I looked at him for a reassuring look but instead his expression remained worried. "I can't look at Thedas as my home, for it is not. My home is back at Earth, in another dimension. With my mother and stepfather, my work, my life is there." I can't hold my tears back anymore and I let them flow. "To be sure I don't even know for certain if there even is a way for me to return home. Sure there's magic here and the fade and all that, but even to you it seems weird and unlikely to happen in the first place. Tell me honestly, is it normal for someone to enter into a different world the way I did?"

Solas sighed deeply and looked down at the floor then. "I'm afraid not. You being here is..." he paused for a moment. "It's remarkable really."

"See? It's a miracle I even got here in the first place. Miracles don't just happen, and if they do, they happen once in a lifetime. There's no way for this to happen again. Even if there is a way home, I will never be the same person I was before. Who am I going to tell about what happened? Nobody will believe me, they'll think I'm crazy. And even if I don't tell anyone, I'd be a different person than before. I've changed drastically in the months that I've already been here. I've killed." I bite my lower lip hard.

He hushes me and pushes me against him to calm me. My head is against his chest and I can faintly hear his heartbeat. "You shouldn't let this trouble you so, da'len."

I shake my head. "How can it not trouble me, Solas? Do you even know what it's like to wake up in a completely different world? Then having to adjust yourself to it entirely, because well, you've got no other option. Then knowing somewhere deep down, that there might actually not be a way to go back to how things were before."

He remained quiet. I looked up at him and his mouth was pressed into a thin line. He seemed... hurt. I cursed myself inwardly.

"Stupid!"

I sniffed then as I moved away from his chest slowly. "I'm sorry. I suppose it's sort of like that for you as well isn't it? What with the elves and the humans."

"In some way, perhaps. Though I could never fully understand your situation." his voice was calm and soothing.

"Humans here suck." I wiped the tears from my eyes then and took a deep breath.

He chuckled. "Perhaps."

"Thank you, again. I seem to be making a habit of me crying into your tunic like that." I point towards his tunic, covered in wet spots from my earlier shed tears. The stains making his light green tunic look dark green, fabric soaked from my crying.

"I'd rather you get it out than keep it all in. It only adds to your burdens. I wouldn't feel at ease, knowing you'd strain yourself so."

I scoff. "That's very nice of you to say, Solas. But you know you're allowed to say: 'stop your
blabbering and get a grip.” I tried imitating his voice as best I could, but sadly I was never really good at imitating people.

He raised one of his eyebrows then. "Is that what I sound like to you, da'len?"

I giggled then. "Yup! Though you should know I suck at impersonating people."

He smiled. And there it was again... that palpable tension growing between us. As if by magic...

HA! By magic. Good one, Elie.

I coughed then. "Well... I... We should probably sleep." I get up from the bed and walk over towards the door, hoping he'll catch on and follow me.

"I suppose that would be good." he gets the hint and gets up as well.

I'd love for him to stay and just.. take me already. But something tells me 'no'.

Before he leaves, he plants a soft chaste kiss on my cheek. "On era'vun, da'len." I give him a confused look and he quickly translates for me. "To sleep well, have good dreams," he smiles softly.

I nod. "On era'vun you as well." I grin widely.

He rolls his eyes and takes his leave. I know I just butchered his language but hey, it was funny to me at least.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all SO much for all the kudo's and bookmarks. And thank you so much penguin0918 for leaving your sweet comments! ♥ It lets me know I'm doing alright with my fanfic and it gives me so much motivation to continue writing :3 XOXO
Diary Of A Wimpy Eliana

Chapter Summary

So first things first: I want to thank everyone who has commented on this little fanfic of mine! Thank you all so much. Y'all are giving me LIFE and LOVE and EVERYTHING. ♥

Also, you are making me want to post two chapters in a row, since I will be working fulltime this week! So.. it might take a while before the chapters after those will come out...
So I hope this will do for now!

So, summary!

I have no idea how Wicked Grace really works, but I've tried my best to make it seem believable. Any tips are appreciated if you have them :3
Elie has a new 'diary', that you may or may not see in upcoming chapters!
She has a little hissy fit, and oooooh, moonblood.

Also, the wolf is relentless in his chase, but Elie is... troubled by it. She's struggling to distance herself from Solas and it seems things will only get worse the harder she tries to get away from the wolf's grasp.

Gaaaaasp maaaaagic? Whuuuuuuut.

"9:41 Dragon – Day One:
So after my mini meltdown earlier today, Varric decided to talk to me one on one. He patted my back and handed me a new notebook. He told me that whenever he feels upset or worried, he writes. Well and here I am; writing with a brand new bought pot of ink and quill. At the inn, while my companions are talking to one another. They're currently giving me space and I thank them for it. Also, this new notebook doubles as guide for me. With some melted down candle wax I've sticked my previous written notes into the notebook. So page 1 to 14 has all my classes with Josephine in them, my training with Cullen and Cassandra, some extra writing on Leliana's teachings and lastly the lullaby Fenrian taught me. Well, so I'm writing yes? And I need to put my thoughts onto words, so here we go.

When we arrived at Val Royeaux I was in awe by the visage of the capital city of Orlais. It truly looked beautiful. Cassandra and a messenger were already waiting for us at the entry gates of the city. And what marvelous gates they were: white marble beams adorned with golden lion statues. The gates themselves were also golden and damn, it was a sight. We ran into a woman and a man strolling casually by, but the moment the woman laid eyes upon us, or rather, me; she freaked out and jogged away from me as fast as she could. Resulting in a clever quip from Varric to Cassandra. Walking past a couple of stone statues, accompanied by the tolling of bells in memorial of Divine Justinia, we entered the summer bazaar. Eight red veils hanging above us, all from different buildings, connecting in the middle of the bazaar. It truly looked amazing, I had almost forgotten about my 'impending doom'. Almost…

Because soon my eye fell on the noose. I swallowed down hard, that could be for me. They already
got it ready for me, I thought. My facial expression must've been full of worry then as I received a
reassuring squeeze from Cassandra. We continued on and heard the inhabitants of Val Royeaux
mumble and whisper about me. They gave us sideways looks and glances. I don't know what they've
been saying about me other than I'm a murderer because they looked down at me as if I were
vermin. I can't say it didn't bother me. Revered mother Hevara was addressing the crowd standing
atop a small pedestal. The moment she laid her eyes on me she immediately taunted me. Calling me
a false prophet, a heretic and the divine’s murderer. I mustered up the courage, believe it or not, to
stand up for the Inquisition and myself but to no avail. Cassandra even backed me up but it did not
work. Eventually the Templars came marching in followed by their leader: Lord seeker Lucius. And
low and behold, one of the templars hit Revered mother Hevara right on the back of her head,
causing her to fall down to the floor in pain. Sure I kind of liked it for but a moment, but I soon
remembered it was not rightly done by the Templars or anyone for that matter. Revered mother’s
are holy figures as well. Hitting one on the head sure as hell doesn’t save you a spot next to the
Maker in his golden city. Cassandra seemed to know the angry man that was the Lord Seeker. But
once she attempted to speak with him, he taunted her, then us and mostly me. I tried persuading the
Templars to follow us like Cullen had done. It seemed like a good enough example. After all, Cullen
used to be a part of the order and a well respected member of the order at that. But none of these
templars seemed to be inspired by my speech. So soon they too left. Leaving us all standing there in
confusion and mostly, leaving us completely empty handed. Though I had been happy enough I
wasn’t yet executed...yet.

Because the moment I walked away from the dispersing crowd of people, an arrow whizzed right past
my ear, almost drawing blood from it as it did. The arrow held a hastily scribbled note, telling us to follow
their clues. Find something red in the bazaar, find something red in the tavern, and find something red at
the docks. Whoever sent the note was very fond of the color red. So following up on the clues, we ended up finding three new notes. Three notes that when pieced together, created a badly written map leading towards some secluded courtyard just outside the bazaar. Whoever wrote these notes, was not only fond of the color red, but was also a very terrible artist... We went for a little bite at the tavern then and once we walked back outside, a circle messenger walked up to me, inviting me to a salon held by a certain Madame de Fer. Well great, I had two appointments with strangers. Awesome right? Cassandra insisted we’d meet these people as soon as possible and then head straight back for Haven to discuss our options regarding Val Royeaux and the Templars. However I freaked out, whining about buying gifts for Fenrian and everyone else. I had wanted to get a few things. For Cassandra, Solas and Varric as well. But I didn’t tell them that of course. After all, during our trips in the Hinterlands, I had managed to save up quite the amount of sovereigns. I ended up getting the pastries for Fenrian, Solas and I. A whole box of it, I admit. And damn was I curious about them. I had six little spongecakes, with home made custard between the layers of cake, complimented by jelly made from red fruits. Then some chocolates with cream inside, chocolates with some sort of cherry paste within them, and lastly some cakes with what seemed like roasted pistachio nuts on top of them, filled with some coffee flavored taste. It was good we were allowed samples, or I wouldn’t have known. I was also glad that most merchants did not seem to recognize me as the Herald. And that made shopping significantly easier. No sideways looks or stuck up noses. I then bought some sketchbook for Solas, with some charcoal to draw with. After all, I had seen him casually sketch things before. For Cassandra I ended up buying a statue of a knight next to a dragon. Perhaps it would anger her, but I was hoping she’d appreciate the gift. As I obviously meant for it to depict Anthony and the dragon he chose not to kill. Like a tribute to her brother. I got Varric some fancier looking reading glasses. I was truly becoming a rogue because I managed to snatch his old reading glasses from his pack while he hadn’t been looking. I had out-rogued the rogue. Hehehe. I needed said glasses to give to the optician so he could use them to make better looking ones. I'm not saying his old one's didn't do the trick. In fact I think they were perfect for him, but they looked so old and worn. Like he had them for years already.
I wouldn’t discard his old one’s but atleast now he would have new one’s, spare one's.
So I can already hear you think: why did you have a mini meltdown? You didn’t die, you got to shop, sample pastries and barely any merchants recognized you.

Yeah, so… Basically after all that wondrous shit, I made my way towards the gates of Val Royeaux and I was approached by a short haired woman in blue and white robes. Her name was Fiona. And she invited us to meet up with the mages, it was an odd timing, why not just send us a message or whatever. So heading out towards the secluded courtyard just outside of the city, I was attacked, almost killed by fireballs thrown at me by this masked asshole. In fact, two fireballs scorched my cheek and burned my skin. I yelped out as Solas and Blackwall took out the assailant. I was shaking due to the second degree burn on my flesh. Rather, I was livid and in agony all at the same time. I screamed and stomped my feet like a little kid. Yelling out: WHY DOES EVERYTHING HERE WANTS TO KILL ME?! CAN I NOT FOR FUCKING ONCE JUST WALK SOMEWHERE WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT SOME GODDAMM FIREBALLS OR DEMONS?!

Yes. I realize that was incredibly childish of me to do. Like, I had come across bandits and fighting Templars and mages in the Hinterlands, and I had not freaked out so. However the nerves and anxiety of the past weeks had gotten to me. And gotten to me hard. As Solas quickly jumped to my side to heal my burn wounds, Cassandra hushed me. Blackwall seemed confused with my sudden outburst. And soon from the shadows came out an elf woman. Blonde short hair with a badly cut fringe. She was holding her bow out but the moment she noticed the dead noble masked prick on the floor she mumbled something about wanting to have killed him himself. She quickly walked up to me and raised her eyebrow at me. Great first impression because she seemed to be the one who sent the notes about the red things. Or well, her friends did. Whatever that meant. Soon she told us to get round cover since reinforcements were coming…. With no breeches. Well okay then. Weird elf is weird. To make a long, and a very odd, story short: she wanted to join. Introduced herself finally as Sera and since we needed all the help we could get, I let her. She would meet us at Haven.

I was pretty much tired as hell at that moment but there was still the matter of the salon I had to attend. I'm not even going there all the way to write about that all. Fuck what a night. Some nobleman taunted me, got frozen by Madame de Fer, then she taunted him right back, reading him to absolute filth after I told her I didn’t care what she’d do with him. Then she told me she was the same as the one who sent the notes about the red things. Or well, her friends did. Whatever that meant. Soon she told us to get round cover since reinforcements were coming…. With no breeches. Well okay then. Weird elf is weird. To make a long, and a very odd, story short: she wanted to join. Introduced herself finally as Sera and since we needed all the help we could get, I let her. She would meet us at Haven.

I was pretty much tired as hell at that moment but there was still the matter of the salon I had to attend. I'm not even going there all the way to write about that all. Fuck what a night. Some nobleman taunted me, got frozen by Madame de Fer, then she taunted him right back, reading him to absolute filth after I told her I didn’t care what she’d do with him. Soon after that she introduced herself as some blabla enchanter of some whatever imperial court of Mountsimmard. She wanted to join as well. Hey listen, I'm never going to call her ALL that, she's simply Vivienne to me. There was something I didn’t like about her. She was everything I loathed in a woman. Her words had been kind, sweet like cotton candy. Sickenly sweet that is. She was playing a game and I didn’t appreciate her for it. But after having chatted with some ‘normal’ nobles at the soiree, before ser asshole taunted me, I knew she’d be invaluable to the Inquisition. She was a very powerful ally. However it would be good to keep my eyes on her. She wore this odd headpiece, reminding me of a dragon’s head with those ridiculous horns on it. Her neckline plunged down deep and revealed almost the entirety of her breasts, supporting them was a white corset that stopped right below them. I wondered briefly then what Cassandra would’ve thought of her attire. Seeing as she already had a problem with Solas and I sharing a tent and him seeing one of my boobies. Oh yeah, didn’t I mention? I was alone at this salon. Cassandra didn’t want to be hanging around nobles, Varric said the nobles would not appreciate a dwarf being there at the salon and Solas... well he was an elf. So, no more than a servant in the eyes of the nobles. So yes, I was alone and after I told her to join us back at Haven whenever she was ready, I soon left. I had about two flutes of wine during my stay there and it was strong as hell. Soon, I joined up with my companions back at the front of the estate of Duke de Bastien Ghislain. We headed back towards the summer bazaar and stayed for the night at another inn.

And guess. fucking. what. The moment I went up to my room to pee into a chamber pot(yes I've gotten quite used to them by now), I realized, to my absolute horror, that I was on my period. I had been wondering about it ever since I got here. I suppose the effect from traveling from another dimension affected my system and my body so much, that it delayed my menstruation. I quickly put
some cloth in my underwear and I felt filthy. How do women deal with all that. So afterwards, I quickly ran downstairs, towards Cassandra and confided in her. Sadly, she was not able to help me, but she said Solas might be. Of course... I'll go speak with him after I finish writing my first entry into this journal of mine. Me being on my period however, does explain the mini meltdown I had earlier."

"Can I join you?" Solas' voice brought me out of my own writing and I looked up wearily at him.

"Sure." I closed my journal and put away my ink pot and quill into my satchel.

He eyed me suspiciously. "Seeker Cassandra told me you needed to speak with me. Though you haven't come to me yet."

I sigh and rub my temples.

Fuck, this is going to be awkward.

I look around for a moment, noting that Blackwall is getting to know Cassandra on the other end of the table we're sitting at. The thought momentarily amuses me, two warriors. Probably also speaking of fighting techniques and whatnot. Varric himself, is drinking ale, as usual whenever we're stopped somewhere in a tavern or inn. And he too is writing in his own notebook. The sound of the inn's customers is so loud, I feel as though nobody would even hear me speak about my awkward situation. Still, I feel like everyone will turn their heads into my direction the moment I say it aloud. Not to mention having to discuss this with a man for crying out loud.

"Eliana?" he urges me.

I sigh. "Okay. It's like this.... I... just realized that I am on my period." I can feel my cheeks starting to get warm and I immediately avert my gaze. Looking down at the table. There's some scratches and damage done to the wood of it. Some people have carved their names into the table with a knife, presumably. And some lovers have carved their names into a heart as well. I don't know, wooden tables are never interesting to me at all. But in this moment, oh boy, are they interesting.

"Moonblood? And why are you so ashamed of this?" Solas seems surprised. For the first time, I look directly up at him again and I can see a genuine surprised and also confused expression spread across his face.

"Because... Well, because you're a man!" I huff. Why is he so confused about that?

He clicks his tongue, cocking his head slightly to the right side. "And.. where you're from this is considered... odd?"

I groan. "Oh come now, Solas! It must be here as well. Back at my world, men don't want to know about a woman's.... moonblood." I've never called a period that way, but it somehow makes it sound less awkward. I sigh and continue on. "They think it's disgusting. And I don't blame them." I make a disgusted face as I say this. I know I am, because I literally feel my expression change on my face.

"Are the men in your world all little children? Why would it be considered disgusting? It's natural for a woman. It means she's in good health and her body works as is intended. It means she's fertile and that she can bear children. It's a beautiful thing really." he speaks of it like he's in awe of it. How odd.

I raise my eyebrow. "Hm.. Yes, but it's still a bit awkward to me. Anyways, Cassandra said I should speak to you about this."
He chuckles and nods. "Don't feel awkward. I can make you something. A potion. It won't be a
good tasting potion but it'll help. The bleeding will cease and the uncomfortable cramps will subside
entirely as well."

My eyes widen. Well that sounds a lot like a birth control pill, except that this is a potion. I didn't
actually think they'd be so far advanced in Thedas as to be able to come up with such a thing.
Though I can understand, it's important. Especially in a world like this, where they have no pads or
tampons. "Really? What's the catch?" I squint my eyes at him. There must be something off with this
potion. "Will there be any side effects?" I prompt him.

He shakes his head. "None da'len. Well... maybe one, but it's not permanent."

"I knew it! Spill the tea mister!"

He seems confused for a moment at me phrasing it like that, but decides not to question it. After all,
they all know by now that I use different phrases and words sometimes. I should really start to pay
attention to that now. Especially when there's three new companions joining us at Haven. Eyes on
me like a 'hawke'.

Budum tsss! Oh Elie, you're so funny. Hilarious.

I know. Thank you.

"Once you take this potion, you will not be able to become pregnant. If you wish to have children,
you must stop taking the potion, wait a month. Your moonblood will return, then after it's stopped,
you may try to conceive again."

I snort, resulting in another raised eyebrow from the bald elf. "Believe me Solas, I'm not trying to
become pregnant."

"You don't wish to have children?" he seems to not approve of that idea somehow.

I shake my head. "Oh no! I didn't mean it like that at all. I'd love to have children some day. I love
kids. Always have. However... I just.... well.." I clear my throat. "I just always thought I'd have
children back... back there. You know? Not in Thedas."

He hums.

What if I never go back to Earth? Then I suppose I'll have to get used to my life here. I'd have to start
that potion?"

He dips his head, smiling ever so sweetly at me. "Of course. I will need some more ingredients, but
luckily I can find many of the herbs that are required for the potion in these areas. Tomorrow
morning I'll go out for you and gather them."

I groan. Tomorrow morning?! I'd have to bleed into a cloth until tomorrow morning? I mean, the first
evening is never that bad for me, but the first day? - It's AWFUL. He notices my reaction because he
immediately grabs hold of my hand that's resting on the table. "I can make the cramps feel less severe
if you wish."

I shake my head. "It's not the cramps that I'm worried about..."

"The Seeker will probably have what you seek." he smiles wryly at me.
"Oh har-di-har! Nice one." I smirk back at him.

Cassandra joins us eventually, scooting closer to the two of us. "Eliana, I'm sorry to interrupt. However, this afternoon I've sent a raven, notifying Leliana, Cullen and Josephine of our new companions."

Blackwall and Varric join in the conversation now too, all two of them also moving closer to us.

I nod. "Good thinking, Cassandra. I hadn't even thought of that yet. I wonder if Haven can handle more people. Go....Maker know's it's not that big of a town."

Cassandra dips her head. "It will be fine. Haven can accommodate a few hundred people. So long as we don't invite half of Thedas to join the Inquisition, I believe we should be fine." her lips curl into a half smile and I return it back to her.

Blackwall chimes in. "That.. Madame de Fer.. what are your thoughts on her, Eliana?"

I roll my eyes, resulting in Solas stifling his chuckle behind his palm. "I don't like her. At all."

Cassandra scrunches up her nose then. "Well we don't really-"

I cut her off. "-Don't worry, Cassandra. I'm not going to let that stop me from being polite to her. I know we need her. I had spoken to some of the nobles before I met her, and they all told me a little bit about her. She has worked for the Empress of Orlais, not to mention her reputation kept growing after becoming Court Enchanter. You know, they gave her the nickname 'The Lady of Iron'? A name that indicated her place as both a respected and feared member of the court."

Varric scoffs. "The Lady of Iron, you say huh?" he immediately scribbles down something into his own notebook then. I wonder briefly what it is, but choose not to pry. Probably new material for his novel. He's always trying to get information out of everyone to use for a new novel.

I nod. "After the Circles revolted Vivienne became the de facto leader of the Loyalists when she rallied those who took up arms against the mage rebels."

"Yes, she struts up and down like a peacock." The disdain is literally dripping off of Solas' every word.

I glance at him and share a moment of mutual agreement with him.

"Regardless... The Inquisition needs her. We need her. Having another mage with us cannot hurt." Cassandra breaks our glancing and I snap my head towards her. I simply nod curtly.

Blackwall hums. "What of Sera? She's an interesting character, is she not?" the bearded warden smiles wryly. His moustache slightly curled with his lips as he does so.

I snort. "She's strange. However she's well in contact with the commoners. The 'little people' as she so eloquently put it tonight. So now we both have the nobles standing by us, and the commoners as well. If we play our cards right."

Varric closes his notebook then and snaps his fingers. "Now that's a good idea, Feathers! Who's up for a game of Wicked Grace? I'm sure the innkeeper has some cards available to us."

I raise my eyebrow at the dwarf. "Okay, one; I didn't mean it in that way. And two; what is Wicked Grace?"
Varric looks smug with himself then and starts to explain the rules of the game to me.

"A bad hand is one with few or no matching suits: of songs, serpents, and so on. A middling hand would be one with two sets of matching suits: two serpents and two songs, for example. A good hand is one with a numerically significant set of matching suits. A set of four of the same suit of cards, for example, is considered a winning hand when the Angel of Death appears." at this point, he shows me the cards he has retrieved from the innkeeper.

"I get it." I have seen people play cards at the tavern back at Haven, and also here. It seemed to be a very popular game amongst Thedosians. "So it's all about bluffing?" I ask him then. Varric nods and Solas sputters then. I glance at him angrily. "What's so funny?"

He shakes his head. "Master Tethras, I don't believe Eliana would be a suitable player. She can hardly hide her emotions as it is. I doubt she'll be able to bluff." he smirks visciously at me.

I scoff. "Hey! I'll have you know that I won at a game similar like this a few times back at... Kirkwall." I quickly looked over at Blackwall who was watching us 'argue' with an amused look on his face.

"Wanna give it a shot, Feathers?" Varric smiles.

Cassandra groans. "We should not stay up too late. We have to return to Haven as soon as possible. There's other matters to attend to." she chides us.

I roll my eyes. "Oh come on, Cassandra. Give it a rest. It doesn't matter if we arrive at Haven three hours sooner or later. As long as we get back there, all is well."

Varric snickers and starts shuffling the deck of cards, then starts handing out cards to each of us. Five cards each. "Let us begin then."

(...) "Ha!" I all but spat out as I threw my cards onto the table before me, outplaying Varric.

He glances down at my cards: two songs of charity. While his own are serpents of deceit and serpents of decay. He scratches his chest absentmindedly, humming as he takes in his loss. "Hmm.. seems like I shouldn’t have underestimated your bluffing, Feathers."

I grin widely and move my hands towards the pot of coins before us all but Solas quickly slaps my hands as I do so. "I beg your pardon, Herald. But I do believe you must wait for all of your opponents."

The game ended between Varric, Solas and I. Blackwall having tapped out after his first four losses and Cassandra throwing a hissy fit when she lost her two golden coins. The entirety of the game Solas had a docile approach. Barely showing any emotions and his hands were always bad. He never really seemed to care about losing his money in the first place. I glare at him. "Why?" I ask hesitantly.

He throws his hand onto the table and I am dumbfounded: two angels, an angel of fortitude and an angel of charity. Also a knight wisdom card. Varric all but choked on his own drink and smacked the table hard. "Impossible!"

"I believe this one is mine, Herald." Solas says smugly whilst shoving my hands away from the pot and sliding all the coins back towards him.

I bite my lower lip. How was that even possible? No angel of death card, yes.. but a perfect hand
nonetheless. I wondered then what would’ve happened if the angel of death was drawn.
“Bah!” I huff and wave my hand around as if dismissing his victory entirely.

“I have said it before, you’re not very good at bluffing. You might have fooled master Tethras but you cannot fool me, da’len.” Oh he’s loving his victory, I can tell. But next time I’ll win, for sure!

I sit back into my chair and rub my forehead then. Blackwall is grinning ear to ear. He’s mocking me, Cassandra is shaking her head. “I told you to tap out, Eliana.”

I groan. “Yeah yeah…”

“And a sore loser too.” Solas makes a ‘tsk tsk’ sound with his tongue then whilst staring at me daringly.

I sigh but I cannot hide my smile any longer. I like this playful side of Solas. I always have. That side and… his darker side. “This was fun.” I say simply, smiling sheepishly at my companions.

Varric yawns and stretches his arms above himself lazily. “Wanna call it a night?”

I simply nod. “Cassandra? I want to speak with you for a moment before we head to bed if that’s alright with you?”

Cassandra simply nods in response. She probably already knows what I need from her. We all get up from the table and everyone leaves towards their chambers. Leaving the Seeker and me alone. “What do women here use to stop the moonblood? Do you guys have pads or something?”

The seeker smiles knowingly. She places her hand onto my shoulder and gestures for me to follow her to her room. Once we arrive there, I can smell a faint scent of lavender in her room. Odd, mine doesn’t have a scent lingering about. “What’s wrong?” She asks me as she notices my reaction. Well, reaction would not be the right word. I’m blatantly sniffing the air around her room, trying to find the source of it.

“I smell lavender.”

She seems flustered. “Ah. Yes. You might be right. While I was waiting for your arrival in Val Royeaux I did a little shopping myself. I bought a bar of soap from a merchants store. Lavender soap.”

I grinned then, and wiggled my eyebrows a little, teasing her. “Oh? If my memory serves me well, I remember you saying ‘bathing is a luxury we cannot afford’.” I nudged her playfully.

She groans and rolls her eyes at me, then proceeds to sneer angrily at me. “I think I liked you better when you were afraid of me, not like this, acting like a smart ass.”

I pretend to be shocked, placing my hand onto my chest and gasping loudly. “You wound me, my lady!” But I cannot stop the fit of giggles that follow after.

“Do you want my help or not?” She says in an exasperated tone of voice.

I nod and chuckle slightly. “Please.”

After leaving Cassandra’s room, holding an entire pile of cloth, I head towards my own room. I am a bit dissapointed with the way women stop their bleeding from ruining their smalls and breeches. It’s simply ripped up cloth, jammed into your underwear and discarding it once it’s entirely soaked. I shiver then.
Gross.

But I suppose there’s really no other way then. Though I would have thought they’d have a better way, considering how they sort of mimicked the birth control pill with a potion. Or would this be a poultice?

Once I enter my room, I notice Solas is inside of it, going through my bookcase. He casually turns his head into my direction once I enter my room. “Eliana.” He says curtly.

I raise my eyebrow up at him and then realize I’m still holding the pile of cloth in my hands. I quickly try to hide them behind my back. Even though he has already seen it and he already knows I’m on my period. “Solas? What are you doing here? Is something the matter?”

He chuckles lowly at my failed attempt of being smooth at hiding the cloth and casually strides towards me. Coming to a halt just before me. He’s staring intently at me then. “I seem to remember a particular morning back at Haven where we… got better acquainted with one another..” he drawls as he slowly raises his finger up to my chest and slides it down the fabric of my tunic.

I inhale sharply.

Wait what?

After that ‘moment’ back in Haven we didn’t have any more of those. Sure there were moments where there was that palpable tension between us. For example during our second never have I ever game. But we hadn’t really acted on it anymore. Yes I liked Solas. Probably more than I should. Yes it was obvious he liked me too. Yes I had wanted to pounce him on several occasions, I had seen him topless and had been gawking like a virgin who’s never seen a half naked man before. Hell, I’d even admit I’ve fantasized about him during our ventures. While walking for hours, or riding for hours. Had thought of his strong hands on my breasts. Imagined his hips pressed against my own, yearning for him to just push me against a wall somewhere and claim my lips as his own. And after our ‘misstep’ back at Haven, I got very close to living my daydreams. I’d even straddled him back at Haven, rolling my hips ever so slightly on top of him. Breathed his name like a small prayer. And I had tasted his sinful kiss. A dark hunger taking over from me, drunk on the taste of him-

“And I wanted to continue that.” He moves his face closer to my own and in doing so, I instinctively moved backwards. Slightly pinned between him and the wall behind me. I dropped the pile of cloth I was holding behind my back and that resulted in another low chuckle from the elf before me.

-but somehow, someway…. Something always told me it wasn’t right.

What the hell are you saying?! You know you fucking want this man. Why are you saying it ain’t right? Bull. Shit.

Maybe it was the fact that there was so much going on in Thedas and it didn’t feel right to indulge in my own selfish sexual desires. Maybe it was the fact that maybe.. somewhere deep down within me, I still loved Dan very much and it felt wrong of me to entice another man. Or maybe it was the fact that he was twice my age. Whatever the reason was, I did not know exactly. And I had brought it on myself, I’ll admit. I started it. I hugged him, held his hand, searched for him. I had come very close that one evening after the assault on me back at Haven. I had seduced him, asked him for ‘another time’. I sighed.

“Solas… I …” I stared down, moving my face away from his own.

He seemed surprised as he withdrew and gave me a quizzical look. An expression that didn’t seem to fit him. Being the wise man he is. “Is this because you are having your moonblood? I can assure you
I have no problem with it, da’len. In fact, it can relieve your pain and cramps. It can help.” He inched closer to me again and I quickly got out of his vicinity, by moving away from the wall and standing slightly to his side.

I shook my head. “We shouldn’t.” My mouth was pressed into a thin line.

“And why not?” He turned his body sideways then, looking slightly down at me through half lidded eyes.

“We just shouldn’t. Please, let’s leave it at that.” I walk over towards my door then and open it slightly ajar for him. Gesturing for him to leave.

*What the fuck are you doing?! You know damn well you want nothing more than for him to get better acquainted with your body, girl! You is stupid!* 

I did not dare to look up at him and remained standing there, awkwardly waiting for him to take his leave.

“Ah. I see.” He sounded less than amused. In fact he sounded angry.

I couldn’t help my quirk my eyebrows at him. What was he thinking I meant? I just don’t want to pursue this.

*Yes you fucking do.*

*Shut up.*

*You know I’m right.*

*Hush!*

“Is it because I’m an elf?” His voice was low.

My eyes immediately widened. “How could you even assume that’s the reason?! You know very well that you being an elf has never bothered me. I don’t care about your race or your ears. To me, you’re simply Solas.” I felt insulted that he would even say such a thing. I stood up for the elves back at Haven, right in front of him. Resulting in getting sideway glances from some of the townspeople, resulting into me being attacked for it!

He clasped his hands behind his back and moved past me, but right before he left the room he turned his head towards me. “But you would lead a knife ear on.” And with that, he left the room.

I groaned loudly, throwing the door shut behind his bony ass.

*But what an ass it was…*

I shook my head, grabbing the pile of cloth from the floor and stuffing it into my pack. Leaving one, which I would use now. I was fuming. Lead him on?! Knife ear!? Fuck you, Solas. That’s low. Especially coming from you.

**Solas:**

I walked down the hallway into my own room. Upon entering I lingered in front of the door for a moment longer. Turning around sharply and quickly casting a barrier around it. I did not wish to be disturbed until I wanted to come out myself. Surely the seeker will rise early and demand us all to leave as soon as we’re able.
I paced back and forth.

What did I do wrong? There is no way I could have imagined her feelings for me, could I? No. That’s impossible. I’ve lived long enough to recognize when a woman fancies me, and Eliana fancied me. She had been the one to press her naked breasts against my back as I was preparing her tea in my cabin. There was always the strong pull of…. Magic between us.

My eyes widened.

How did I not think of this before? She has the mark. A result from my own orb being absorbed into her hand. Into her system, this is why she was able to enter the fade in her dreams, how she had been able to shift the surroundings of it and change her dreams in the blink of an eye. That’s why I could always feel her soul, her aura… that night, she told me her mark helped her. The first day, she used a staff. Poorly, but she chose that of all things did she not? The lyrium didn’t kill her, it brought her back to consciousness. It helped.

I have been so busy trying to avoid suspicion among the Inquisition. Pretending to be some docile hedge mage, infatuated by Eliana and her story, that I never ran any tests on her. I simply assumed she had no magic because she came from another world. And though I wholeheartedly believe there is no magic in her world, I cannot dismiss the possibility that the moment she arrived here something may have happened that caused her to receive the gift of magic. Perhaps something before…. She got out of the fade and she was found by the seeker and her men?

But that’s for another day. For now, it irks me that she refused me. Refused me while I very well know that she wants me too. What’s stopping her? Does she even know herself?

With a wave of my hand, the barrier shattered and I left my room again. Going outside into the chilly and dark night. Collecting the herbs necessary for the potion gives me the time I require to clear my head.

(...) I had barely gotten a few winks of sleep before being disturbed by the loud knocking on my door. “Solas? Are you up? We must leave soon.” The seeker’s harsh voice called out from behind my door. A most unpleasant sound so early in the morning, when one has not had enough sleep. I didn’t even get time to enter the fade and converse with my spirit friend, Wisdom, to speak of Eliana and her possible gift of magic. I groaned and turned my head around to look at the side table. The potion for Eliana’s moonblood was there, ready for usage. I had spent most of the night searching for black lotus, elfroot, rashvine nettle, spindleweed and witherstalk. Then proceeding to mix said ingredients and create the moonblood potion. She wasn’t going to like the taste of it, but it most certainly will do the trick. “Solas?”

What a most unpleasant voice this woman has.

I groan louder. “I’m up, Seeker. I will join you shortly.”

I hear her exasperated sigh from behind the door. “Very well.”

I slowly got up from the bed and a rubbed the sleepiness from my eyes. The sun shone brightly through the window of my room at the inn. I wasn’t a morning person at all, and with barely any sleep at all, I was even grumpier than usual. The only times I had awoken happily was when Eliana was next to me. I’d wake up hours before her and stare at her features. Really take her in. Not just her face but her body as well. My eyes would glide over the curve of her hips and I’d hesitantly reach out for it. I never got to touch them however, because the moment my desire got the better of me, she’d awaken. A growl escapes me as I can feel my morning arousal pressing unpleasantly
against the tightness of my smalls. Thinking of Eliana’s curves this early, is certainly not helping. I lazily get up and walk over towards my pack and put on a new tunic and spare breeches.

*Whenever we set up camp near a lake again, I should wash my clothing again.*

However, it was nice sleeping in a bed for a change again. I gathered my things and flung the pack over my shoulder, grasping the vial of moonblood potion in my right hand. When I walked past Eliana’s room, I noticed her door had been open. Peeking through, I noticed a chambermaid working on tidying up the room. She curtsied the moment she noticed me and continued her work.

Arriving downstairs I only saw Varric and Blackwall standing there. The two ladies were nowhere to be found. The dwarf noticed me first. “Chuckles! You’re up. The Seeker is impatient today, I’m giving you a heads up.” He sighed slightly and Blackwall dipped his head towards me.

“Good morning. Are they both outside?”

Blackwall grumbled. “The Herald seems to be in a terrible mood. She brushed by me earlier without saying a word. She mumbled something about brushing her horse.”

Varric glared at the grey warden. “It might be her monthly period.” I was surprised Varric caught on so quickly. He noticed my surprised reaction and grinned wryly. “I traveled with four women during my time spent with the champion of Kirkwall. I can tell when they’re a little more… hm, agitated.”

All three of us paid for our rooms then and proceeded to walk outside, towards the stables next to the inn. Blackwall seemed intrigued. “Four women? Maker… how did you manage?” He joked.

Varric snickered. “At times… I didn’t. Though they weren’t all that bad. I got along mostly with the Rivaini woman. The Dalish girl was sweet but she freaked me out, with her, no offense Chuckles, freaky blood magic.”

I cleared my throat.

*Of course you would find the idea of blood magic terrifying.*

“None taken.”

Varric continued. “The knight captain was the most terrifying one of all, especially during that time of the month.” Then Varric’s facial expression hardened.

“What’s the matter?” Blackwall asked worriedly.

Varric sighed. “Hawke’s sister Bethany was the sweetest one of all. She was a mage. It was terrible what happened to her. Hawke never really got over that shit. She deserved a fate better than that.”

My curiosity was peaked now too. I had never really paid that much attention to Varric telling his stories about previous adventures. However, this had me slightly intrigued. “What did happen to her exactly? There were whispers about Hawke’s sister dying in the deep roads. Something about ancient rock wraiths.”

Varric sighed and shook his head. “No the rock wraiths weren’t her undoing. She became corrupted by all the darkspawn blood that she had unwittingly ingested during our trip in the deep roads. She didn’t tell Hawke, so right after we fought the rock wraith, and emerged victorious, we went for the surface again. We were so close of getting her out of there, but then she collapsed.” He winced at the recollection of this memory.
Blackwall hummed. “What a terrible fate.”

Varric sighed as he reached Orson and patted him gently on the side. “I can’t imagine what the blight must have been like as a grey warden, hero.”

Blackwall cleared his throat and for a moment there, the human seemed to be uncomfortable. I squinted my eyes at him, it was a fleeting moment, but when our eyes locked for a second.. he seemed panicked.

Cassandra however joined next to us. She had overheard our conversation and spoke up before Blackwall could. “And so is the Golden city blackened. With each step you take in my hall, marvel at perfection, for it is fleeting. You have brought sin to heaven. And doom upon all the world.” The woman lowered her head for but a moment, murmuring something too quietly for any of us to hear. However I figured it was an end to her prayer. Of course they would turn to their Maker. I want to roll my eyes at this moment, such foolishness.

“The Maker is with us. His light shall be our banner. At last, the Light shall shine upon all of Creation. If we are only strong enough to carry it.” Eliana’s voice called out from behind the Seeker. Resulting in the raven haired woman to turn around in surprise and shock at Eliana’s more positive prayer. Though we all, but Blackwall, know she is not really Andrastian, she had spoken those words like she believed wholeheartedly and without fault or doubt. The only reason she did it in the first place was to make her backstory sound even more believable in front of Blackwall. And… perhaps she did it also for the Seeker’s peace of mind. Because for a moment there, I could see a faint shimmer of hope in the woman’s eyes as she looked at Eliana. Even now, when Eliana was in a terrible mood, most likely still because of what transpired between the two of us last night, even now she wished to console people. Comfort her companion, or maybe even her friend, by now. After all they had been through, the time they spent together. “Let us leave then, we have lingered here for too long.” She turned around and mounted Moonlight.

I took Valoril by her reigns and led her towards the main road, followed by Blackwall, Cassandra and Varric. Once there, we all mounted. I trotted up towards Eliana and her mare and rode next to her in silence. The three of them were staring at the both of us intently. She ignored me. Kept looking infront of her in a deadpan manner. “Herald. I’ve the potion you required.” I said politely. I reached down into my pocket and handed the vial over to her.

“You have my thanks, Solas.” She said equally as politely as me. She took the vial and placed her teeth on the cork, biting it off and spitting it onto the ground beside her. Then she chugged it down her throat and made a sour face after. “How long did it take before working again?”

“A day.”

“Very well.” And with that, she sped up her horse by clicking her tongue twice. Leaving me behind her.

No matter. I will have you.

Eliana:

I hissed as the bandit’s blade pierced through my armour, into my flesh. I could feel the flesh tearing and ripping apart harshly as the cold metal of the blade entered my upper leg. I quickly took one of my daggers from the other bandits corpse and slashed it across my assailants face. He yelled out, I had managed to damage his eye. He reached for said eye with his left hand, cursing me in Orlesian. Then I pulled out his blade from my leg and reached it far above myself, then with all the strength I had left in me, I cleaved him in half. His blood splattered across my face, hot liquid dripping off my cheeks in droplets. I can feel the goose skin on me, shivers up and down my spine. It’s always a tad
bit gross and morbid. Enough to make me shudder, but then the adrenaline takes over again and I’m fine.

“Eliana!” Cassandra called out to me.

“I’m fine!” I yelled back. I took my two daggers from the ground and turned around, limping slightly while moving due to my injured leg. I focused on the remaining enemies: one more warrior and two mages.

Scaring my horse? I’ll teach you to mess with my baby!

I charged at one of the mages, yelling out loudly as I did. Once I got close to him, he used a mindblast to throw me to the ground again with a loud “Oomph!” My vision blurred for a moment, but soon I noticed Solas standing in front of me, protecting the both of us with his barrier. It didn’t take very long, Solas finished the mages off quickly. Varric, Blackwall and Cassandra finished off the warrior and Solas kneeled down next to me. “Where did she run off to? Did you see?” I said, my voice a bit panicked.

The bandits had hid in the shadows, the warrior and mages behind the trees. They surprised us and Moonlight freaked out, pranced and threw me off the saddle in doing so. She whinnied loudly and took off, fast. It wasn’t long before they attacked me, I didn’t see where she ran off to.

Solas started to heal my wounds and shook his head. “I’m afraid not, Eliana,”

“She can’t have gotten far. I’ll ride Octavian and look for her, Varric and Blackwall will join me in case I run into any more trouble along the way. The two of you stay here. Keep her safe, Solas.” Cassandra sneered at Solas and gave me a quick nod. Then they left us.

Ugh why leave me with the infuriating old man?

Well that would be because he’s a healer and an exceptional mage. He can protect you.

But I’m mad at him.

Well tough luck, princess.

“What are you thinking about?” His calm soothing voice asks me softly.

“None of your business.” Just because he’s healed me and given me the potion for my period, doesn’t mean I’ve forgiven him for his accusations last night.

“Must I remind you I’m the one healing you as we speak, da’len?” His voice treatheningly low and dark.

“Must I remind you what an insufferable oaf you’ve been?” He snapped his head up, angry eyes meeting my own angry eyes. I didn’t break eye contact however. I did not want to seem weak. “I’m nothing like those racist shemlen you’ve come across, Solas. And you fucking know that. Insinuating that my mind works even a little like theirs, shows how ignorant you can be.”

He growls and removes his hand suddenly, ending the healing in an abrupt manner. It’s a very unpleasant feeling, a feeling he has not given me before. Not even when we first met each other and healed me. It had always been nice and cooling. Soothing and coaxing. But this time, he snapped and so did his magic. My leg was healed, yes, but the feeling his handprint left on my skin, was still burning slightly. I could feel his magic stinging on my skin, humming in the air around us and I inhaled sharply as his tinges were most annoying.
“And if you could refrain from doing whatever the hell that was, I’d appreciate it.” I huffed, as I got up to my feet and turned my heel towards the other side of where he was.

“You could sense that?”

I groan slightly. “I always sense your magic. Most the time it’s nice and soft. However I know you’re making it irritable on purpose now.”

“You’re not supposed to sense it.” He says plainly. His anger from before already forgotten it seems.

I tap my foot impatiently then. “Alright, I’ll bite. What do you mean?”

“The seeker has never commented on my magic, nor has master Tethras. This is because they are no mages. They have no magical talents, no abilities.”

Though I’m still mad at him, he has managed to catch my interest. My curiousity has officially been peaked. “What really? Then how am I supposed to sense it?”

“That night at Haven, you said your mark protected you, did it not? What exactly happened?”

“When I was tied to the bedpost, I wanted nothing other than get Moritz off of me. I thought about that and only that, wanting to get to safety. Suddenly my mark flared to life after being calm the entire time. It frightened Moritz and that’s what caused them to leave me alone.”

He hums. “I only recently came to the conclusion that you may have magical abilities laying dormant.” I scoffed, extremely amused at his comment. He sighed, not exasperatedly but rather annoyed. “I can assure you that I’ve never been wrong on this before, Eliana. Your first weapon of choice, it was a staff was it not?”

“A shield and a staff to be precise and the only reason why I took a staff was because there were no other usable weapons at the ready.”

“Perhaps, but it was still a staff that was presented to you in that moment, and no other weapon. Besides, how do you explain the fact that you are able to enter the fade within your dreams? You’ll have to have some sort of magic within you to be able to do so. What of the lyrium potions I have given you? It helped you, saved your life. Regularly it would kill someone who has no magic, for you it did the opposite.”

I throw my hands up the in the air while groaning. “And how come you’ve only recently figured this out, pray tell?”

“I have been… occupied with other matters.” He says vaguely. Which causes me to squint my eyes at him.

*What matters?*

“The breach threatens us, the chantry threatened us, you needed to train and learn, we had to venture forth towards the Hinterlands and Val Royeaux. We have been recruiting people. There hasn’t been much time to ourselves, has there?” He answered before I was able to question him on it.

“So what does this mean exactly, Solas?” I cross my arms.

“It means we should probably discuss this with seeker Pentaghast and sister Leliana. Magic could
prove useful in our battles to come, Eliana.”

I don’t really know what to think of that. How would I even possibly possess magic in the first place? Well, I did drop from the fade in a different dimension, fought demons, seen magic firsthand, been almost killed a few times already, why am I even surprised anymore in this world? “We’ll see. Right now I’m just worried about Moonlight.” I plop down into the grass and put my head into my hands.

He casually walks over to me and sits down next to me, gently patting me on the back. Our first real contact after the argument back at the inn. My skin immediately reacts to the contact. Though it’s no more than simple patting, the shivers are slithering up and down my spine all over. In this case, in a good way. “She has probably ran off to safety but as the Seeker said, she can’t have gotten far.”

“Did you mean what you said at the inn? Do you truly believe I think of you as no more than a knife ear? And do you truly think I’ve lead you on?” The questions are asked before I can give them some proper thought. Of course I lead him on, I knew this already. Suppose I just had to hear it from him.

He raised one of his eyebrows. “Though the knife ear part was a comment made in poor taste, I am certain you’ve lead me on, and I have given you enough reason to do so. We are both at fault. However we also both fancy one another, you can’t deny it, Eliana.”

I groan. It’s even worse that he knows it too. “I never did deny it. I just don’t think it’s right. With all that’s going on.”

He throws his head slightly back and a throaty laugh escapes him then, causing me to frown at him quizzically. “And you think our companions do not search for pleasures wherever they can find them?”

I make a sour face. “Euw, I don’t want to think about that, Solas.”

“Let me put it this way, then…” he moves his head closer to my own until he is but a hair’s breadth away from me. It startles me a little, but the dark, hungry look in his eyes, also turns me on. A lot. “I’ll have you know that I’ve never had to pursue a woman in my life before, but I like the chase. I relish in it, in fact.” He drawls his every word and I realize I’m just staring at him wide eyed, a flush appearing on my cheeks. “The more you draw away from me, da’len, the more I will pursue. And I will have you.” Then he moves his face away again and I finally inhale some air again. He’s amused by my reaction. “I know you want me.” With that, he gets up to his feet and starts to walk off.

“Where are you going?” I almost squeal. I hadn’t meant for my voice to give away exactly how I felt at this moment: bothered and affected by him.

“A bath, da’len.” His sultry voice sounds before he moves out of sight from me.
Planetary Alignment

Chapter Summary

A little more backstory about Elie and her life back at Earth. A little hinting at what she may remember in time...

Also, Moritz and Brann are caught. Elie is livid and almost gives in to her anger and fury, but is 'reminded' by Cassandra to not stoop to their level...

Some in game dialogue, I felt like that was missing for a couple of chapters, hope y'all don't mind. I don't reaaaally try to follow the exact game, with all the dialogue.. but from time to time it will return to the story.

Also, FENRIAN!!!! My little Fenfen, my little fennlewubblycuddly. Alright. I just love him so much.. ;3;

Aaaand... Solas is really not letting go of Eliana. which results in Elie having to make drastic decisions in upcoming chapters, DUNDUNDUNN.

And yeah, execution and whatnot.

Slight NSFW warning, but do I really have to put up those warnings? ;3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

May 2017, Earth:

"You have to leave, Eliana. It's no longer safe for you to-"

I abruptly cut Logan off. "-I have the right to visit him. You will not take that from me, Logan!"

Logan sighs deeply and rubs his temples in pure frustration. "Eliana, you do not understand. They know you now, they've seen you. They will come after you."

I stare at Dan's 'friend' for a while. In truth, they weren't ever really friends, friends was a big word. Logan was hired by Dan to drive him around, so technically he was his chauffeur. However, Dan always trusted Logan with pretty much everything and sometimes told him more than he told me. His own girlfriend. He was handsome, slightly older, mid twenties though he already had a few grey hairs in his auburn colored hair. He was slightly tanned, but this was only because of the tropical weather in Taiwan and due to the fact that he was always outside. His light shade of green eyes looked good in contrast with his skintone and I always found it hard to believe Logan had not had a girlfriend himself.

I put on my sunglasses then. My eyes puffy and red from all the crying I've been doing for the past six days. They were sore, aching, from the lack of sleep and the irritation of the tears and the rubbing. "Just... will you please do this for me? I promise, I'll go home after. My suitcases are already packed."
He gives up. "Fine."

We get into his car and the entire car ride, I am silent. I don't say a word. I look down at my black dress the entire time. Though I don't expect to run into anyone, it would not seem right to be wearing anything other than black. I stare out of the window as we drive, just staring blankly at everything that moves past us: cars, people, scooters, buildings, rice fields, cab's. The doctor's words keep repeating over and over inside of my head then. The words he spoke with his thick and heavy Taiwanese accent.

"I'm terribly sorry, miss. He lost too much blood. We tried everything we could, but we could not save him. I have notified his family, they will visit shortly, if you wish to stay. The police has also been notified, they want to speak with you."

I said my goodbye's to Dan quickly, moving before the police arrived. It was breaking my heart to have to do so, but I simply couldn't stay. If the police would arrive, they'd interrogate me. No, I will not let them interrogate me. I had to leave. I had not given the doctors any of my personal information. I just told Logan to drive. And keep me notified about his funeral arrangements. Logan was the only one who could get so close to Dan's family without them getting suspicious or wanting answers. To them, Logan had simply been a friend of Dan's. They never even knew about me. Even if they had their doubts about Dan being single, he had never spoken of me before. They didn't know about his work either. In fact, his parents knew nothing about Dan. I probably knew more of him than they knew of their own son.

"We're here." Logan's voice is soft and quiet. I choke back a sob as I slowly leave the car. I haven't visited him yet. The funeral was done quickly, his parents are still trying to figure out what happened. Logan told me his parents have hired people to figure out what happened. Soon, they would probably find out about Dan's work, find the building he worked at, and was murdered at, and then demand to get the camera's footage. Once they'd get that, I would be doomed. The police and his parents would surely try to go after me. I had to leave the country before then. But perhaps, they have erased the footage, who can tell.

Logan walks next to me, close to my side. Looking around to see if there's anyone he recognizes. I am not paying attention to that at all. All I have on my mind is having to see his grave for the very first time, and I am dreading it. I see some people, praying near a shrine. Lighting incense and burning paper money in a bowl on the ground. I have nothing, brought nothing with me to leave at his grave. I wanted to make sure there was nothing that could lead to me being here. I was a ghost, always had been, and I intended to keep it that way. My three month stay in Taiwan was coming to an end soon anyways, soon I'd have to go. And I don't think I'll ever return here again. I look around the graveyard. I've never had an issue with them in particular. If anything, graveyards had an air of peace around them. A sense of serenity, calmth. I am not saying I loved spending time at one, but I felt immediately calmer once I had set foot on the property. "We're close now." Logan notes, as we pass by a couple of urns.

And then.. he halts. To my right hand side, I see his tombstone. Still no picture on it, not even a proper tombstone yet. Because it has only been six days since he died, yesterday he was buried. The dirt still fresh, as is his final resting place. And even though I have cried non stop for the past six days, the odd thing is; now that I'm actually infront of his grave, I cannot shed a single tear. Of course I'm still broken, of course I'm upset and I want to drop to my knees and wail. However, I can't now that I'm actually here. There's no emotion whatsoever as I stare down at his grave. "Can you leave me be for a moment, please?" my voice is so quiet, I'm sure he wouldn't have heard me at all, were his eyes and attention not fixated on me.

"Are you sure you'll be alright?" his voice sounds worried. And he should be, as should I. But I'm
I shake my head softly. "You were in danger. Why, Dan?" my voice breaks. There's a lump in my throat, and I cannot say any more. There's so much I had wanted to say. I had mentally prepared an entire speech. Not that it would really matter, it would just be for my own peace of mind. To try and close a chapter, way too early.. I stared down at the basic white stone, with his full name on it, his date of birth and the date he died.

Will your parents give you a proper tombstone? Or will your family do this? When? Will I ever get to see it? I love you so much...

I whispered my final and very last goodbye's to the wind, to the earth, to his soul, still lingering here. I just knew it. I knew he wasn't fully gone, he couldn't have been. He had to stay here, follow me, protect me.. He can't leave me alone! He cannot! It's unfair! Then, finally I drop to my knees. My legs giving out from under me, I can't keep myself up, can't bother to. I want him back! Give him back! He's not yours to take! If there's a God, let him hear me now: Give him back to me! I will pray, I will serve, I will believe, but tell me why. Why is he gone? Why have you taken him?

....

No answer. Of course, because there is no God. There never was. I sob loudly, choking on my sobs as my head is in both my hands. I'm crying, but no sound comes out. I am finally crying. I have to let my feelings out, I have to give in. If I'll not do it now, I'll never forgive myself. I'll never be able to make peace with it.

"I love you.. so much. I will never forget you. I won't." I take a bit of dirt in my hands and slowly let it fall onto his grave. "Wo ai ni."

(...) "Have you everything you need?" I nod. "Did you transfer the money?" I nod. Again, he sighs. Something he has done a lot for the past week. "Elie.. I.. I'm so sorry."

I look at him then. "Me too." then he smiles faintly, weakly, you couldn't even really call it a smile. There's dark circles under his eyes. He hasn't slept much, neither have I. I wonder then if I can get some sleep on the plane. Would be nice to not think of everything for a while. He pities me. I can tell and I can't deal with that. I don't want his pity, or anyone else's for that matter. I want to leave. I can't stay here a minute longer. He moves in for a hug. A friendly, strong hug. "Let me know when you've landed, the moment you've got WiFi. I won't be able to rest until I know you've arrived safely."

"Thanks Logan." I whisper softly, and he releases me.

"Flight KL 2690, to London England, departing from gate 30H-"

He grabs my bag then and hands it over to me. "That's your flight."

I put the bag around my shoulder and grasp the suitcase handle tightly then as I nod. His mouth is pressed into a thin line, expression sour and.. sad. "Thanks for everything, Logan. I'll notify you when I've landed."

He nods and then I turn my heel, towards my gate, towards security. I glance back one more time, and he's still there, waiting for me to move out of sight.

I go through security, nothing's wrong, as usual. If only they knew about what has transpired the last
couple of days, what the reason behind me leaving was. The reason I would never set foot on Taiwanese soil again. I go through passport check and then I move towards the gate with my ticket in hand, showing it to the flight attendant as she gestures for me to board the plane and take my seat. I sit down and stare outside the window, stare at the illuminated flag on the side of the airport.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Captain has turned on the Fasten Seat Belt sign. If you haven’t already done so, please stow your carry-on luggage underneath the seat in front of you or in an overhead bin. Please take your seat and fasten your seat belt. And also make sure your seat back and folding trays are in their full upright position."

An elderly woman takes her seat next to me and nods curtly as I look up at her wearily. I'm tired, drained, broken. I nod back and take a deep breath. Time to leave. Time to go. What will I tell my parents, what of my work? I'll have one more week until work starts again and I dread that most of all. How does one pick up their life after such a big impact? Shall I tell my parents it just didn't work out between us, after all? Should I tell them we broke up? Will they believe it? I highly doubt it, my mother always knew when I was lying. I know I couldn't keep it from her, but I'd try my damnedest. Luckily I no longer lived at home. I still had a week before I was 'supposed' to return, perhaps I could get most of it out of my system before having to face my parents again. What about Sarah? She'd want to know I'd returned, and she probably would want to celebrate it. Ugh... No, I'd tell everyone we broke up.

"At this time, make sure your seat backs and tray tables are in their full upright position and that your seat belt is correctly fastened. Also, your portable electronic devices must be set to ‘airplane’ mode until an announcement is made upon arrival. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to direct your attention to the television monitors. We will be showing our safety demonstration and would like the next few minutes of your complete attention."

The cabin crew starts demonstrating on how to fasten seatbelts and whatnot, but all I'm doing is staring out the window. I reach down into the bag that's now placed between my legs on the ground and take out my sleeping mask and neck pillow. I needed sleep, and lots of it. Luckily I had about 19 hours to do so.

Two years later:
I walk over towards my locker and grab my handbag and keys, then putting on my coat. I check myself one last time in the mirror: I look like crap.

"Eliana?"

I curse inwardly. "Gina?" I turn around and face my boss. Her expression worried, as it had been for the past week.

"You look terrible. Perhaps should take tomorrow off."

I sneer at her then, I was trying not to, but I was sick and tired of the looks of worry and pity from everyone I knew. And there weren't that many people I knew and spoke to, so you could imagine how fed up I got with it. "I'm fine. Really. I needed the work, I needed the time away from my apartment. I'd only cry and be depressed at home. I didn't want that, I needed distraction."

She shakes her head. "I've already asked Felix to cover your shift for tomorrow. You just stay home and take a breather. Get better."

"Gina, I don't want to stay home. I want to be busy. I need to be." I say in an exasperated tone of voice as I pinch the bridge of my nose.
"It's done. Tomorrow you stay home. I'll see you after the weekend." and with that, she walks off.

Fucking hell, this was just fucking great. I stomp my way over towards the front of the store and some of my coworkers are saying goodbye, but I simply ignore them. Fuck this shit. This bullshit. I can't deal with this. All I wanted is to be busy, the anniversary of his death was coming up and I didn't want to spend it at home. I didn't want to be alone and wallowing in self pity and sorrow. As I walk over to the bus stop, I put in my earbuds and turn on the radio on my phone. In the back of the bus, there's no one but me. I'm absentmindedly looking outside the window as I listen to some music. Then, the sound of the news, interrupting the last notes of the song I was sort of semi listening to. I click my tongue, of course, the news always fucking up the good tune's. I block out the first half of the broadcast but then I start to pay attention.

"-An occultation might sound like some creepy ritual, but it's actually just the term astronomers use to denote that one celestial body is blocking out another one in the sky. And as far as lunar occultations go, this one's a rare sight." the sound of the news reporter from the radio channel I'm listening to sounds young.

Can't be much older than I am. How much money would you make? I'm sure it pays better than working in a drugstore.

"The Moon will be passing in front of Venus, then the first-magnitude star Regulus, then Mars, and finally Mercury. As the Moon orbits our planet, it regularly travels in front of other objects in the sky, but it's rare to get a planetary alignment quite like this one."

"Indeed Jack, the last time we had a lunar occultation of three planets within a 24-hour window was on the 5th of March 2008. Mercury, Venus, and Neptune, and it won't be until 2036 when we get another one with three planets."

"So you better make sure to stay up and witness this first hand folks! Won't happen again for a very long time."

I snort, a bit too loudly apparently because a guy infront of me immediately turns his head around to face me, eyeing me quizzically. I quickly look away and pretend it wasn't me, even though it clearly was. Since we are the only two people on this bus.

Planetary alignment huh? Perhaps I will stay up and witness it. I've never done so before.

**Thedas, present time:**

I warm my hands around the fire I've made myself. I'm actually somewhat proud of it, without Varric's help. Cassandra and the others have been gone for a while now, I hope nothing happened to them, or to Moonlight. I shake the thoughts from my mind.

No. Don't think about that, Elie. Moonlight is fine. They are fine. Stop thinking the worst possible outcomes.

"Copper for your thoughts?" Solas' voice brings me out of my thoughts and I look up, he's holding a pile of wet clothes in his hands and wearing his regular armour. I raise my eyebrow up at him.

"Did you.. wash your clothes while bathing?"

He nods and proceeds to hang them over a tree branch nearby. "I did. What were you thinking of?"

I smile wryly. "I'll tell you my secrets if you tell me yours."

A soft chuckle escapes him then. "You're worried, are you not?"
"They've been gone for a while. Perhaps we should go after them?" I look up at him with pleading eyes. "I've been sitting here, doing nothing for far too long. I feel useless. If we were to go out there and search with them, we could cover more ground. Perhaps find Moonlight faster."

He cocks his head to the side. "And how would you intend to do that, exactly? We only have my horse." then a playful twinkle appears in his stormy blue/grey eyes. "Or perhaps you wish you ride with me?" I know he's talking about riding Valoril together, but I can't help but feel like he means something else with that.

"We could. Would be faster... and better." I purse my lips and continue to stare into the fire infront of me. Ignoring his teasing looks and smiles.

"And risk the fury of the Seeker when she returns and find that we are no longer here? It would be most unwise, da'len."

"Back to calling me da'len, again are you? I thought you were mad with me a while ago." I all but huff right now. I still haven't forgotten.

He sighs. "It's pointless to remain upset about something like that, Eliana. Besides, I've given it some thought. I was careless and I was, as you put it; an insufferable oaf." the corners of his mouth curl upwards.

I cross my arms and scrunch up my nose. "Good. Saves me having to tell you a second time."

But all of a sudden, we're interrupted by loud neighing as Cassandra, Blackwall and Varric return on their horses. Cassandra has tied Moonlight to Octavian with a rope and she looks content. I immediately jump up from the fire and run over towards them. "She was found by a family and they have fed her carrots. When we got there, they were hesitant to hand her over to us. Thinking we might be bandits." the Seeker explains to me while I untie Moonlight.

I nuzzle her neck and pat it softly. "Silly girl. Why'd you run off, huh?" I whisper softly into the mare's ears. Moonlight huffs loudly in response. "Thank you everyone, for getting her back for me. I had almost gotten after you all." I say it quietly, dipping my head to them. I was very grateful for them.

Blackwall smiled. "It's nothing, how are you feeling?" He meant the wounds I had sustained from our earlier battle.

Solas gets up from the fire himself now and speaks up before I can. "I have healed her. She will be fine."

"There is something you should know though, Feathers." Varric says as he gets off from Orson. He looks apologetically towards me then turns his attention towards Cassandra. It worries me.

"What?" I ask hesitantly.

Blackwall and Cassandra both get off their own horses now as well and the Seeker clears her throat before turning her attention towards me. Her expression hardened, sharp features returning to her face. "The reason why it took so long wasn’t just because we had to convince the family to return Moonlight to us..." she pauses and looks at me worriedly for a second.

It’s driving me insane! This dancing around the topic. "Oh, Andraste’s flaming knickers, Cassandra-" I was getting quite good at cursing in the Thedosian way, was I not? "-Just spit it out already!" I crossed my arms impatiently.
She sighs. “The family did not believe us to be Inquisition, that was until a scouting group came by. One of the scouts recognized me from back at Haven. You may know him as well, his name is Tomwise.”

Tomwise… that was the scrawny little boy I ‘helped’ back with his training with Cullen. “I wasn’t aware he was sent out to scout in Orlais?”

Blackwall nodded. “I wasn’t there back then, but the boy wouldn’t stop talking about how much you had inspired him.”

Cassandra nods. “Yes… well, because of the Inquisition’s scouts, the family believed us and handed over Moonlight. However…” she stopped again.

Varric groaned, seemingly annoyed with Cassandra keep having to pause before finishing her sentence. To be honest, so was I. “They had news from Haven. They caught Moritz and Brann.” He spit it out, causing Cassandra to sneer at the dwarf.

My blood ran cold then. So they’ve finally caught the bastards. I just stood there, not responsive at all. Thinking about what would happen next.

“Da’len?” Solas looked at me worriedly. “Did you hear what the Seeker said?”

I simply shake my head and turn to look at Cassandra. “Leliana and Cullen have thrown them in jail for the moment. they, want to wait until you return before passing judgement on them.” Cassandra looks at me for a while.

“Then let’s get back to Haven.” I say resolute and I immediately get up on Moonlight.

“It’s nearly sundown, Eliana. Wouldn’t you rather we-“ Blackwall started but I cut him off.

“-You can stay here for another night, but I will ride towards Haven. With or without you.”

With that, I click my tongue twice and Moonlight gallops away. I don’t know if they’re following me, but right now I don’t care either. I am going back to Haven, I want to, no need to know why they did what they did. I know they hate me for the idea of me bedding an elf, truth be told, I almost did. Twice now. But it does not give them a reason to try and rape me, then proceed to try and burn me alive, while tying me to a bedpost. If you’re coming after me, fine, but at least give me a chance to defend myself. But those assholes were even too cowardly to give me a chance, a shot at defending my own life. I hear another horse approaching and to my surprise it isn’t Solas for once, it’s Cassandra.

“Eliana, it’s still a long trip back to Haven. You can’t ride straight for Ferelden, both your horse and yourself will need to rest. They aren’t going anywhere this time.” Her tone of voice sounds strict and serious as ever.

“But if we camp less, we’ll get there faster, will we not?” I snap my head into her direction as I say this.

The Seeker dips her head but her mouth is pressed into a thin line. She then speeds up with Octavian and quickly steers him around until her horse comes to a quick stop right before Moonlight and I. Which results into Moonlight prancing and whinnying loudly. I take hold of her reins firmly and steer Moonlight’s head into the other direction. “Ho…” I say calmly, trying to calm my mare down. Then I glare at Cassandra angrily. “Are you deliberately trying to spook my horse?” I say accusingly.

She gets off from Octavian and scowls. “Calm down and get off of your horse!” She yells now. I am
pissed off. All I want to do is return to Haven so I can face those soulless bastards and judge them accordingly. I jump off of Moonlight myself and stand directly facing Cassandra, not stepping down. I remember the fierceness she holds within her, I remember that first day I met her but I have hardened myself. I am not nearly as strong as she is yet but I can hold my own. I will not cower any longer in her glares.

“You don’t have to agree with me, Cassandra but I will return to Haven and-“ the woman before me slaps me across the face.

“You will not endanger yourself by storming off without us!” She yells again. “I understand your anger, Eliana! I know your pain! But running off will not solve the problem. You will be alone, you will be vulnerable, regardless of how much you have improved your fighting. In this world you need companions to aid you!”

I instinctively hold my hand against the cheek she slapped me across. It wasn’t a very hard or painful one, but just enough to make my skin sting. It won’t even leave a mark or bruise but still, I am fuming. “You know nothing of my anger!” I yell back at the woman. Our two horses react to our anger by huffing and stepping around anxiously. “They have not tied you to a bedpost and tried to rape you! They have not tried to burn you alive! Do you understand how it feels when you have no other option than to accept your death?!”

She steps down slightly, her expression softens and her eyebrows furrow in worry and pity. “It’s true, I don’t know what that feels like. But I have seen women like you across my travels, many times. Revenge is never the answer. I know what you wish to do. You want to execute them, kill them, by your own hand. It’s not like you, Eliana. And you know this.” She holds my arms tightly and moves in to me, giving me a tight squeeze on my arms with her hands.

“I will have vengeance Cassandra.” I all but spat at her.

“You will not.” Solas’ strict voice sounds from behind us. I turn around and see all three the men behind us on their horses.

“You have no right telling me what to do. Neither one of you!” I yell angrily at Solas. Who in turn remains emotionless.

“We will set up camp here.” He simply states.

I throw my hands up in the air, defeated, there’s no arguing this elf. I start to set up my own tent and once that’s finished I enter it. I roll down my bedroll and sit down, sulking, like a little kid. I know but I need to have this moment for myself. I sit there, for a while, listening to the sounds around me. I can hear the others setting up their own tent, I figure I’ll have to share my tent with Cassandra again, I don’t like the idea of that. But for now, they all leave me alone. I think about my words, the ones I have yelled at Cassandra earlier. Was I right to act like such a spoiled brat?

Yes. They almost raped me. They tried to kill me, I have every right to be angry.

But what if Cassandra is right? Vengeance may not be the answer. It could change me.

I’ve already changed, what does it matter? Was she not the one who kept going on about the fact I had to toughen up?

But what if you’ve out-toughed the toughest woman you know? And even she believes this is unlike you?

So I should accept they’re alive and what? Let them do community service or whatever? To pay off
their crimes?

All I’m saying is that you shouldn’t stoop to their level. Think this through.

I take a couple of deep breaths, trying to calm myself. “Think this through.” I whisper quietly.

(…)
The trip back took its usual time, we set up camp every night, stopped in between to eat and drink. From time to time we’d re-supply at merchants and occasionally an Inquisition camp if we passed by one. Our hold wasn’t that strong yet, but sometimes you’d see a camp with scouts that belonged to us. I hadn’t apologized to Cassandra about my outburst and I hadn’t spoken to Solas about it, in fact, I kept quiet the entire trip back. Listening in to whatever they were speaking of. For the first time, in months, I felt disconnected from my companions. During the nights I could barely sleep, I’d be up thinking about everything. Solas had mentioned I had some sort of magic within me, I was thinking about that. I didn’t want to become a mage, I didn’t want to learn how to use magic. I had only recently gotten used to fighting in general and now he wants to add magic business to my arsenal? Though we all hadn’t discussed it yet. I figured he’d do that once we’d return to Haven, back with Leliana and Cullen perhaps. He did say it was lying dormant, so perhaps it would remain that way. Maybe if I didn’t do anything with it I wouldn’t instigate it.

I hadn’t yet made up my mind on what to do with Moritz and Brann once I’d return. But I no longer wished to kill them anymore. Sure, I wanted to harm them, but I figured it would be beneath me to do so. I’ve always taken pride in the fact that I didn’t stoop down to other people’s levels if they did me wrong. And even though they did me so wrong, it didn’t feel right. Blame my ‘good side’, I suppose.

I was still carrying my gifts with me, the gifts I had for Cassandra, Varric, Solas and Fenrian. I still had to give them that. But as we rode through the gates of Haven, I figured the time was not right. I’d keep them with me for a while longer, until I’d figure it out myself.

I headed straight for the war room, where I of course found my trusted advisors already waiting for me, it was late, and Cullen clearly was a bit grumpy because of the interruption from his sleep.

“Herald.” He said curtly as I stepped into the now familiar war room.

Leliana walked over to me right away. “Have you news about the Grey Warden?” She eyed me up and down.

I nodded. “I do. In fact he’s here with us. If you wish to interrogate him, be my guest. However, I believe he has nothing to do with the Divine’s death.”

She frowned. “You’ve recruited him? Then your faith in him must be strong, for you to make a decision like that.”

“You’ve recruited him? Then your faith in him must be strong, for you to make a decision like that.”

“It is, though you might want to keep an eye on him just in case. For the time being, I know for a fact he has nothing to do with the murder of the Divine. However I don’t think he’s telling us everything.”

Josephine glances down her notes. “With you bringing in new recruits also comes the risk of them finding out about your origins, Eliana. We must be vigilant when it comes to you. Madame de Fer has already been going around, asking about you.”

I groan and rub my eyes, rubbing the sleepiness out of them. “Of course she did.”

Cullen seems surprised at my reaction. “You don’t like her? Why did you recruit her then?”
I glance down over the map at the war table, the Inquisition has done much over the last couple of weeks it seems. Our pawns are all over the Hinterlands area, and now too in Orlais. Albeit a small portion of the region, only Val Royeaux and the small towns lying directly around the capital city. “I’m not stupid, Cullen. I can tell she’s a very powerful mage, we will need all the help we can get, including hers, I’d just rather stay out of her way for now.” I pause for a moment. “How are our new companions settling in?”

Leliana smirks slightly. “Madame de Fer has a room right here within the Chantry, the sisters and revered mothers are in absolute awe of her and she loves it. As for Sera, she has taken a liking to the tavern, she spends most her days in there. No real problems have arisen.”

Cassandra now joins us in the war room, dipping her head at everyone, including me. We haven’t really spoken to one another since our little dispute.

Josephine sighs. “Then there’s the matter of what happened in Val Royeaux. We heard, what happened.”

Cassandra takes her place next to me. “You heard?”

Leliana’s eyes start to twinkle slightly then, she’s amused by the Seeker’s reaction. “My agents in the city sent word ahead, of course.”

Cullen sighs and then crosses his arms, staring at my direction. “It’s a shame the templars have abandoned their senses as well as the capital.”

“Well we had to do something and now we have an opportunity.” I say calmly.

Josephine hums. “Yes, and we have the opening we need to approach the templars and the mages.”

Cassandra seems reluctant, sneering slightly as she recalls her run-in with Lucius. “Do we? Lord Seeker Lucius is not the man I remember.”

“True, he has taken the order somewhere, but to do what? My reports have been… very odd.” Leliana rummages through some papers on the other side of the table and glances down at them.

I walk over towards her and skim through some of the reports: “Lord Seeker Lucius hasn’t been seen in public for over months.” “Rumors between templars of corruption in the ranks.” “Whispers of a fortress, perhaps a new training ground for a new regime?” I hum in agreement, she’s right, they’re odd. Especially considering Leliana’s spies are few of the best one's out there. If there’s anyone out there who could provide clear information about anyone, it’s her and her men. But these… reports, if you could even call them that, are proving to be useless.

“Corruption? Like power corruption? Or does this have anything to do with money perhaps?” I ask the nightingale.

Leliana shrugs her shoulders then. “I’ve no idea.”

Cassandra walks over as well and reads the same reports. “The templars have many fortresses throughout Ferelden, if we do not figure out which one it is they’re using now, we’d be searching for months, time that we do not have. As for the corruption part, almost every high ranked organization has a bit of corruption going on. It’s not immediately something we should worry about. Though Lucius has clearly changed, I do not think he’d allow it.”

“We must look into it. I’m certain not everyone in the order will support the Lord Seeker.” Cullen states as he interrupts the three of us.
Josephine clears her throat slightly then. “Or Eliana could simply go to meet the mages in Redcliffe instead.”

Cullen snaps his head towards the ambassador then, slightly annoyed it seems. “You think the mage rebellion is more united? It could be ten times worse.”

I huff. “We ran into Grand enchanter Fiona during our leaving of Val Royeaux. She too, has invited us to speak with her in Redcliffe. I have tried speaking to the templars and they did not seem too eager to form an alliance, I could at least find out what the mages want.”

“No doubt what they’ve always wanted; support for their cause.” The seeker gives me a serious expression.

“We shouldn’t discount Redcliffe. The mages may be worth the risk.” Josephine’s tone of voice is exasperated. I suppose we are all tired. And me returning in the middle of the night, is not helping matters.

“They are powerful, Ambassador. But more desperate than you realize.” Cassandra turns her attention towards Josephine.

I groan and roll my eyes. “You think they will be dangerous. I’ve been in danger since I walked out of the Fade.”

She looks to me again. “If some among the rebel mages were responsible for what happened at the Conclave…” her voice extremely low and warning.

Josephine chimes in then. “The same could be said about the templars.”

“True enough. Right now, I’m not certain we have enough influence to approach the order safely.” Cullen glances down at the map.

He’s right. We need more people willing to join our cause. More influence.

“Then the Inquisition needs agents in more places, that’s something you can help with.” Cassandra eyes me again.

I dip my head towards her.

“In the meantime we should consider other options.” Josephine says finally. With that, the ‘meeting’ was adjourned.

I turn around to leave the war room but Leliana halts me. “You have heard of Moritz and Brann?”

I simply nod. “Tomorrow I wish to speak with them.”

The nightinggale nods in agreement. “I will be there with you. As for your… cabin…” she looks to me apologetically. “It would take weeks to rebuild it. I’m afraid we cannot spare the resources or the men it will take to rebuild it.”

I smile kindly at the ginger haired woman before me, it was super nice of her to even consider rebuilding the cabin for me. But it’s certainly not necessary. “It’s okay Leliana. The cabin was too big for me anyways. I’ll find other places. I still have a tent and a perfectly fine bedroll.”

She returns the smile. “You shared the cabin with Solas did you not? Perhaps you could-“
My gentle expression quickly hardens. “-No. Sharing the cabin with Solas was a temporary thing. He thought it necessary because Moritz and Brann were not yet caught and he did not trust Cullen with his men. Before we ventured out towards Val Royeaux, Cullen spoke to me, notifying me of a change of staff. I’ll just set up a tent right next to Varric infront of the fire pit in the square. I’ll be fine.”

“As you wish.” With that, Leliana left.

While I was already at the Chantry, I decided to go check on Fenrian. He was most likely asleep, so I’d get to visit him without waking him up, tomorrow I’d give him the pastries. I figured I couldn’t wait too long, before they’d become stale and disgusting. As I snuck into his room, I looked around: his dalish toy soldier was laying right next to his head on the pillow, his blankets were everywhere except on top of his body. He was an unruly sleeper. I smiled softly as I looked further around his room, there were a couple of notes on his bedside table. I read them quickly, it was most likely his homework for today. Or perhaps his old homework, it covered mostly the history of the Chantry and Thedas.

*Oof. Good luck with that kid, I just recently covered all that and it ain’t easy, let me tell you.*

*Perhaps I should lend him some of my own notes and books?*

I tucked him back under the covers and he moved around, facing me now. I brushed some of his silvery blond locks away from his face gently and looked down at the little boy. I wonder when his birthday would be, do they even celebrate birthdays here? I mean, they must, seeing as though people know their age here. Slowly he opened his eyes, I was lost in thought and so I didn’t notice right away.

“As’a’ma’lin?” He asked quietly. His voice still a bit raspy from just waking up.

*Shit. Good job, Elie. You just woke the poor kid up.*

“Oh you.” I whispered back softly.

He opens his eyes further and then I see the excitement, even though he only just woke up. It’s like giving a kid sugar, now I’ve done it… “You’re really here!” He exclaims, but I quickly hush him and press his torso gently down, back onto the mattress.

“I’m glad to see you too, but it’s late lethalin. I’m sorry I’ve woken you up, I just came to check on you.” I can’t help but giggle a little at his reaction.

“When did you come back?” He whispers now. Good, he caught on. I’m sure the revered mothers wouldn’t be happy with him being awake at this time. Neither am I but this is a special occasion. Normally I’d play the mother hen and tell him to sleep and we’d continue this talk tomorrow. But I realize he’s missed me, and I’ve missed him just as much. This calls for a little breakage of rules.

“Just now. I’ve talked to my advisors first, but then I came straight to your room.” I stroked his cheek softly. His cheeks were red and warm, probably because of the tiredness.

“Where’s ba’isa’ma’lin?” He looks up at me.

“Probably at his own cabin, sleeping.”

He thinks for a moment. “Will you join him?”

My eyes widen for a moment. “Are you trying to play matchmaker, you little schemer you?” I smirk
slightly.

He giggles softly. “I like the two of you together. It shows that humans and elves can be together, without the hatred.”

I nod. “I know you do, sweetie.. but Solas and I….”

His eyes widen now. “Did you two fight?” His voice sounds panicked. Damn, you’d think we’re his parents and we’re going through a divorce or something.

“No.” Well we did, but that’s all made up for again. Not that that was any of this little boys problems. “But I don’t think it’ll work out between us. Truthfully we were never together in the first place.”

He starts to pout then. Clearly not approving. “Do you like someone else? Is there something wrong with him? Do you not think he’s a good person?”

I shake my head. “He’s fine. There’s nothing wrong with him, in fact, Solas is a very handsome man. I just have a lot on my mind. I’ve no time for a relationship.” Partially true and partially false.

He hums. “Well maybe you two will get together anyways. Like Beauty and the Beast.”

I burst out into laughter then. “You’re saying Solas is the Beast? I’m not sure he’ll thank you for that comment, Fenrian.”

He smiles faintly. “I didn’t mean it like that!”

I giggle and kiss his forehead lightly. “I know, I know. I was just messing with ya. Now get some rest, tomorrow you can tell me all about your classes and I’ll tell you all about Orlais. And you’ll get your present.” I wiggle my eyebrows up at him slightly.

He gasps. “Really?!”

I hush him again. “Only if you go sleep now.” I wink at the kid.

“I’ll sleep right away! Good night, asa’ma’lin.” He quickly closes his eyes and turns around to his side, grasping the blanket tightly in his fingers.

I giggle and leave his room quietly. Then proceed to walk towards the fire pit, to my surprise, Sera is there with Varric. I haven’t had time to get to know her yet, and perhaps with me sleeping here now, I’d get that opportunity. “Hey, stranger.” The female elf says while smiling slightly.

I dip my head. “Sera. Good to see you’ve settled in nicely. Is this where you normally sleep?”

Varric seems to wanting to speak to me, he seems impatient, but I gesture for him to wait a little. I want to speak to Sera first. “Pft, nah. Normally I sleep in the tavern, yeah? But I wanted to get to know the dwarf.” She jokes slightly as she turns her head towards Varric. “Look, I get you want to speak to me yeah? But this one has been eagerly waiting to tell you something.” Sera smirks.

I sigh slightly. “Alright Varric, what’s wrong?” Somehow I felt like whatever Varric was about to tell me, was not going to be good news. And I kinda didn’t want to hear any bad news right now.

“Chuckles took your stuff from Moonlight and has taken it to his cabin.” He says it all so fast I can’t help but blink and look at him in confusion.

“Say what now?”
Sera groans. “Baldy has taken your shit.” Sera points towards the apothecary, which is right next to Solas’ cabin.

“Why would he do that?” I look at Varric now.

He simply smirks. “Do you really have to ask? He’s expecting you to continue sharing the cabin with him.”

Sera snorts. “Euwwwww, do you and mister sour face have a thing or whatever?”

“We don’t.” With that I get up and stomp over towards Solas’ cabin. I’ll need my tent and bedroll if I’m to sleep outside. I don’t care about having to sleep outside, I just don’t want to continue being so close to Solas. I’ve let myself go, I’ve given in to my feelings, I can’t continue doing this.

And why not?

Oh, shut it, you horny teenager. We’ve discussed this. We’ve had our fun, now that’s it.

You’ve heard him before, he will have you.

He perceives me like some sort of trophy. Like some sort of prey he can stalk after until he finally gets me, I think not.

Once I reach his cabin, I knock hard. “Solas. Open up.”

Almost immediately the door swings open and I step into the cabin, pushing him slightly to the side.

“I was wondering what took you so long.”

“I’ve come to collect my stuff, Solas. It’s no longer necessary for us to share a cabin. Moritz and Brann are locked up, and Cullen has had a change of staff. I’ll pitch my tent near Varric’s and Sera’s.”

He looks at me with a dismayed expression spread across his face. “Why?” He asks me quietly.

“There’s no need for us to share a cabin any longer. Now if you’d please… my stuff.” I say resolute as I’m holding out my hand while making ‘gimme’ movements with it. He slowly moves towards me. Oh god, no. Not this again. “Solas…” I say in a warning tone.

When he’s right infront of me he wraps one of his arms around me and pushes me against his body. “I want you to stay with me, Eliana.” His voice is dark again. I dare not look into his eyes. I’m sure I’ll give in to him, and I don’t want to.

It’s time to stop the playing, the teasing and the flirting. I have a thousand things on my mind and I can’t be distracted by him anymore. I push myself away from him and start looking around the cabin myself then. “Fine. If you won’t hand them over to me, I’ll collect them myself.” I see my pack on top of his bed and I open it to rummage through it. Trying to figure out if everything is still in there. Suddenly I can feel him against my behind. As I’m slightly hunched over to collect my things from the pack. Then his hands, with long slender fingers, slither down my sides, towards my heat. I quickly slap his hand and turn around angrily. “Stop that.”

He smirks, evilly. Dark grey eyes meeting mine. “Do you really want me to stop?” He drawls as he, again, slides his fingers down my body. He’s exploring every bit of me and I’m screaming on the inside.
No… I don’t want you to stop.

I say nothing however and continue to glare at him. Where’s Varric when you actually need him to intervene?

He moves his head closer, his lips brushing against mine. I can feel his warm breath on my skin and it’s giving me goosebumps. “Your silence speaks for you, as does your face, da’len. I can tell, you want me to continue.”

I groan and shove him slightly away from me, to give myself the space between us that I need in order for my brain to work again. “You know nothing of what I want, Solas.” I continue to gather my things and then move towards his door. As I’m walking there, I can feel magic humming around me, like a force brushing past me. Sending tickles down my spine. Once I reach it and try to open it however, the doorknob is stuck. “Solas. Let me go.” I turn around and I see him standing with his hand slightly raised in the air. “I know you’ve put up a barrier. I felt it, great job, now lower it.” I command him.

He smirks again and bares his teeth slightly as he does so. The air around us now filling with what I can only describe as electricity. Though this is not a thing in Thedas, it’s the only way I can think of to describe what his magic does. The little pinpricks of magic on my skin, making me aroused, but I cannot give in. “Do you not wish to know what else I can make you feel with magic, da’len?”

The tingles and tickles are traveling down my skin. “Stop..” I breathe out.

He’s moving towards me again, and I am trying so hard not to jump him now. “Tell me you want me to stop. I need to hear it.”

I groan again, louder this time. I close my eyes. And I can hear him chuckling lowly. When I open my eyes again, he’s right infront of me. And before I can say anything, he pushes me against his door hard. For a moment, I feel like my breath has escaped me. I want to open my mouth and say something but he kisses me full on the mouth, not giving me a chance to breathe. I can’t stop the moan from leaving my mouth. And he greedily absorbs it as he continues to kiss me. Finally, his lips leave my own and he holds me firmly in place, pinning me with his hips. His breathing has become erratic. “I know you want me Eliana, why deny me?”

Oh how his lips taste like the sweetest ale, like the strongest wine, I just want to absorb his kisses and get drunk on them. On that sinful taste. I push him away from me again and move my body towards the door. “Lower the barrier. Now.” I wait for a moment, not looking at him, and then he finally lowers it. I try the doorknob and I can finally open it. Hurriedly I leave his cabin. Enough of this foolery.

Once I reach the fire pit again, both Sera and Varric are looking at me quizzically. Varric speaks up first, hands on his sides, smirking. “Hot, Feathers?”

I look up at him and frown. “No?”

He chuckles. “That’s not what your face says, you’re entirely flushed.”

I roll my eyes. “Screw you Varric.” We both know, but we decide not to speak of it. Good, I don’t think I can speak of it. I’m not annoyed with Varric, per se, but I don’t want to be reminded of what happened earlier.

He’s toying with me, it’s like he’s starting to think of it as a game. Like, how and when can I turn Eliana on? Preferably at the most inconvenient times and moments, when she’s about to face others,
yeah that would be great! I curse him inwardly.

_Fenhedis lasa!_

Sera and I get to know one another a little during our evening together. She's a strange one, I'll admit. But she poses no threat to me, she seems... reluctant of speaking to me. She keeps referring to me as the 'glowy person' and she doesn't seem to like it. The magic mark, that is. Whenever I try to speak with her about elves, she immediately goes straight into defense mode. Apparently she doesn't believe herself to be 'one of the people'. In fact, she's probably the complete opposite of Solas. Which I find... interesting. You'd think all Elves agree with the fact that humans have stolen much from them, but Sera thinks otherwise. "Who's my people, anyways?" she said then as she devours the druffalo meat. "I'm not like that tit, Solas. Oh, I've heard all about him. He even spoke to me a little before you joined here. Going on about 'our people'. Ugh." she makes a disgusted face then and throws the remainder of her food into the firepit before Varric and I.

Well then, it seems like having Sera around will be... interesting, to say the least. Eventually she tells us she's off to bed and I want to do the same, until Varric grabs me by the arm. "Feathers. What is the deal between you and Chuckles? I can't seem to understand your.. relationship." he scratches his chin as he asks me and I groan slightly.

"There's nothing going on between us, Varric. Things got a little heated once, but that's it." then I notice his piercing eyes. I can almost see the little cogs turning inside his head. "Varric." I cross my arms and squint my eyes at him. "You're asking this for your novel, are you not? Spit it out."

He grins slightly, shaking his head. "Alright, you got me. I have a few ideas for a new novel, you're right. However, this little angsty shit going on between Chuckles and you? -It's not helping. It only makes matters more complicated."

I snort. "Well, you'll be waiting a long time then. I'm thinking on distancing myself from Solas a bit more. No more writing material for you, buddy." I wink at him then. Then it strikes me. I could give Varric his gift now, since we're on the writing topic. "Hey Varric. While I was in Val Royeaux, I did some shopping...-" I start to rummage through my satchel then, where I've got his glasses. I pull them out and hand them over to him slowly. "I er.. hope you like them. I had to borrow your old glasses to make sure these would be just right."

Varric takes the glasses from my hands and stares at it in awe, it seems. "Borrow them? You mean you stole them." he smirks. "I love them, Feathers. You didn't have to..."

I smile sheepishly at the dwarf before me. "You've been a good friend to me, Varric. And.. we've gone through some shit already. I think there's more to come. I know your old one's were fine, but I figured you needed a spare set of them... you know, just in case?"

Before I know it, he hugs me. Well, hugs my waist but whatever. Then he quickly lets go off me again and clears his throat. "I don't do that often, Feathers. So... let's not draw this one out. Thanks." he smiles and I return it.
"You're welcome, Varric."

Before he enters his tent he turns around and rolls his eyes. "Don't tell anyone I've hugged you."

"I won't." I giggle slightly and then move into my own tent as well.

(...) "And then the revered mother praised me for my hard work, asa'ma'lin. She told me I'm one of her brightest pupils." Fenrian has been going on for hours about his schooling, but I don't mind it. I like listening to him speak. He's always so enthusiastic and so.. innocent. It's refreshing to listen to a child talk.

"That's amazing, Fenrian. I'm proud of you." I smile warmly at the little kid before me.

Then his eyes widen. "Oh! I forgot, my gift. I went to sleep like you said, asa'ma'lin. I did as you asked.."

I let out a hearty laugh and ruffle his hair. "So you're telling me to hold my end of the bargain, are you? Clever you." He nods frantically. "Alright, a deal is a deal. Let me just get it for you." I get up from the firepit and walk into my tent, going through the pack. The chocolates were for Solas, Fenrian and I, but it can't hurt to give some of them to him now. As well as the cake. I walk back out and hand out his portion.

"Wow! You brought this much for me?! Ma serannas!" he exclaims as he takes the sweets and pastries and starts eating them. He's eating slowly, relishing the taste, enjoying and savouring every bite.

I myself take one of the chocolates as well.

Fuck, this is some good shit. I haven't had chocolate in so long... Shit.

I start making noises as I'm eating the chocolates. Varric is eyeing me from the side. "You didn't bring me any chocolates, Feathers?" he pouts, but I know he's joking.

Fenrian is down to his last chocolate and hands it over to Varric. "You can have my last, Varric!"
I look at the two of them. Varric seems... touched by the kind gesture from Fenrian. "You'd give your last chocolate to me?" he asks the kid.

Fenrian shrugs his shoulders. "I've already had two, you haven't had one. If it's alright with you, asa'ma'lin?" he turns to look at me.

I smile at him. "It's your chocolate, Fenrian. You can do whatever you want with it."

Varric holds his hands up and laughs. "Thanks kid, but that's your chocolate. I was only joking. Eliana already gave me a gift." he winks at Fenrian then.

I hum. "I still have to give Cassandra her gift. And Solas as well." I grimace at the thought. I don't want to be alone with Solas. Perhaps, I'll bring Fenrian with me, to make sure nothing happens between us while I'm there. After last night, I don't think Solas will allow me to leave so easily again. It's like he's hunting for me now.

"You'll have plenty of time, Feathers. Nothing's happening here now. Enjoy it while you can."

Varric says soothingly. But he jinxed it, because a man, who has not been here before, walks into the gates of Haven.

"Who's that?" I ask.

Varric squints his eyes. "No idea. Haven't seen him around."

I take in the stranger some more. I hum. "Not a he, it's a she."

Varric's eyes widen slightly. "What, really? How can you tell?"

I point at the stranger's face. "You can tell by the facial structure. Women tend to have softer features. Also, there's a slight lump underneath the armour. Though she's wearing it well, you can still tell she's wearing a breastband."

Varric laughs. "Well, not all women have those soft features you're talking about, Feathers. Have you seen the Seeker?"

I giggle slightly but then get up to approach the stranger. She's in full armour, and though she's
clearly a woman, she could also very easily pass for a man. Perhaps she prefers it that way, I won’t
question it. She’s looking around, as if searching for someone. But then her eyes fall on me. "Excuse
me. I've got a message for the Inquisition, but I'm having a hard time getting anyone to talk to me."

Damn, even her voice is low. I clear my throat. "Who are you, soldier?"

The woman smiles politely and dips her head ever so slightly at me. "Cremisius Aclassi, with the
Bull's Chargers Mercenary Company. We mostly work out of Orlais and Nevarra. We've got word
of some Tevinter mercenaries gathering out on the Storm Coast. My company commander, Iron Bull,
offers the information free of charge. If you'd like to see what the Bull's Chargers can do for the
Inquisition, meet us there and watch us work."

I squint my eyes at Cremisius then. Odd name.. I know we need more people to join us, but I hardly
know anything about them yet. She's told me some, but not enough. "What should I know about
your commander?"

She seems surprised at my curiousity for her commander. "Iron Bull? He's one of those Qunari. The
big guys with the horns?" I remember Solas explaining a little about them, the day I was poisoned by
saar-qamek. Well not much, only that they were another race within Thedas. But.. big guys with
horns? What? I tried not to let my face speak for me however, I was supposed to know what a
Qunari looked like. She continued. "He leads from the front, he pays well, and he's a lot smarter than
the last bastard I worked for. Best of all, he's professional. We accept contracts with whoever makes
the first real offer. You're the first time he's gone out of his way to pick a side."

*So I should feel honored that hellboy chose me?*

I nod. "What can your Bull's Chargers offer the Inquisition?"

"We're loyal, we're tough and we don't break contracts. Ask around Val Royeaux. We've got
references."

*Ooooh, they got connections. Also, that just totally sounded like she has to recite that everytime
someone asks. She been rehearsing that speech or something?*

"Why did your commander send us this information?" I'm still a bit hesitant to take her up on the
offer. But maybe that's simply because I don't know what a Qunari looks like yet, and all I can
imagine is fucking Hellboy. And that thought frightens me.

"Iron Bull wants to work for the Inquisition. He thinks you're doing good work." she seems fed up
"We'll consider your offer." I'll have to discuss this with Cullen, Leliana and Cassandra first before making up my mind.

She smiles again. "I appreciate it. We're the best you'll find. Come to the Storm Coast, and you can see us in action." With that, she turns around and leaves, back towards the front gates of Haven.

Well.. Storm Coast. Don't that sound lovely...

I walk back over towards Varric and Fenrian then and tell them the deal. Well, mostly Varric.

The dwarf hums for a moment. "Storm Coast huh? It ain't pretty, lots of dwarven shit down there and it always rains. Neverending sodding rain." he grumbles.

"I'll have to-" I start, but I am interrupted by Leliana's voice behind me.

"Eliana. We should... head down into the cells." she says hesitantly.

Oh shit. I totally forgot. If my head wasn't attached to my shoulders, I swear I'd lose it!

I simply nod at the nightinggale and kiss Fenrian on the cheek. "I'll be back shortly, alright? I just need to speak to some people."

Fenrian gives me a quizzical look then. "Speak to who?"

Varric chimes in from behind us. Clearly trying to distract Fenrian from questioning me any further. "Hey kid? Want to hear more stories about Broody and Daisy?"

Aaaand he's lost his attention. This kid is as easily persuaded as me. I mouth a big 'thank you' at Varric then, and move away from the firepit with Leliana. Towards the cells of Haven, within the Chantry. The last time I was actually there, I was the prisoner being interrogated. And now.. the roles have changed, I'll be the interrogater, with prisoners. The idea of that is slightly... unnerving.

"Are you alright?" Leliana asks me from the side.

"Yes. I just... need to calm down. I've wanted to kill them when I first found out you had caught
them. It took me a long time to ease my mind and decide I simply needed to speak to them. Though... I don't know what to ask them now that the moment is finally here." I sigh. What will I ask them?

Leliana nods. "Perhaps you needn't ask them anything. You're their victim, you get to choose their judgement."

I halt right before the door down towards the cells and tug Leliana's tunic then. "But that's the whole problem... What is a proper Thedosian judgement for something like this?"

The corners of her mouth slightly turn upwards. "You don't know how to punish them?"

I groan. "This is serious, Leliana. Where I'm from they'd throw these kinds of bastards in jail for a couple of years and that's it."

Leliana huffs. "Well, in Thedas, it's highly frowned upon to rape a woman. Killing another or trying to; you'd be signing yourself up for hanging by the neck, until death." her expression darkens.

Damn, sometimes I forget she's intimidating as spymaster. She can be... dangerously scary. I gulp slightly. "So.. death it is? But not by my hand."

She dips her head. "We will speak of their punishment after we've spoken to them. Don't give in to your emotions, Eliana. Don't let them sense your doubts, they will try and use it against you. You must harden yourself. Show no emotions."

I swallow down hard. "Is that what you do?" She simply nods. "Alright, got it. No emotion. I am... emotionless." I move my hand across my face, trying to 'remove all emotion' from it.

Can you be serious for one goddamn second?

I'm sorry! I'm just trying to lighten the mood. Geesh.

We walk down the stairs, into the cells of Haven, past a couple of locked doors. But behind them are no cells, simply another desk and some books and papers.

Hmmm.. Perhaps I can ask Sera to open those for me..

I shrug the wayward thoughts from my mind. I need to focus.
As we enter the cells, I can immediately spot the duo; they're both in one cell, both shackled at the wrists, and they look... terrible. Like they've been running for weeks, dark circles underneath their eyes, hollowed cheeks, and their armour, or what's left of it, is broken, dented and covered in mud and blood. Must be their own blood. Damn, Leliana's men did not go easy on them.

*Serves them right. Assholes.*

The moment Moritz spots me, he starts to growl lowly. Brann on the other hand, looks terrified. But maybe this is because Leliana is next to me. Just like on the first day I woke up, in these cells, she moves around soundlessly, lighting the three torches around the room. Then proceeds to stand in a corner of the room, arms crossed, glaring at the two caged men. Brann speaks up first, throwing his arms in the air in a sign of despair. Wailing loudly, crying. "I'm so sorry, my lady Herald! We never meant for this to happen!"

My mouth presses into a thin line then. I'm trying hard not to lose my shit now. Visions from that night, flashing in my head. "Never meant for what to happen exactly? You trying to rape and murder me, or never meant for you sorry lot to get caught?" I start pacing back and forth infront of the cells, eyeing the two men the entire time.

Brann looks down at the floor then and sinks to his knees. "I beg you.... I beg your forgiveness."

Moritz scoffs. "Stop begging, you're no damn mabari, are ya?" he spits at Brann.

I snap my head into Moritz's direction then. "You. Have you absolutely no remorse for what you've done?"

He then spits onto the floor next to him. "Bah! None! If I could do it all over again, I would've done it differently, perhaps... I'd cut your damn throat myself. Instead of trying to take you." then he grins wickedly. The same goddamn grin he had that night, my stomach turns around, I am absolutely disgusted all over again. "Ohh but I'll bet that elf has taken you many a times, has he not? Bet you're his little knife-ear loving slut!"

"Enough!" Leliana snaps at the man then. She turns to look at me and for a moment, she looks worried. She's worried for me. Worried about how I feel.

I sigh deeply. I can't even be mad with people like them anymore. "Execute them. Whenever you want. I've no time for games."

Brann starts to beg for his life then and wails even louder. He even starts to recite prayers and chants.
Moritz on the other hand just places his hands on the bars of the cells and starts rattling them. "May the Maker strike you down!" he continues his cursing as I slowly make my way out of the cells. Leliana follows me and when we're far away from the cells, she stops next to me.

"You did not ask them why..." she says quietly. She's eyeing me up and down, probably searching for my vulnerability, but there is none. I'm pretty void of emotions at the moment.

I scoff. "You know? I was dreading this confrontation. I thought I wanted answers and I thought I'd want to know why they did what they've done. I thought I'd be.. more affected. But... strangely enough, I felt nothing but disgust when Moritz spoke. When Brann pleaded for his life, it did nothing for me. No compassion, no regret..."

Leliana nods. "Perhaps you've already moved on. Their death will come. I'll notify the revered mothers and arrange for an executioner." she dips her head but grabs me softly by my arms then. "You've done well, Elie. I know that must've been hard for you. Perhaps harder than you're letting on right now, but I'm proud of you." with that, she moves away from me and towards the Chantry again.

_Ugh... Okay, I... need a fucking drink._

Chapter End Notes

I have some ideas for the upcoming chapters and I cannot wait to actually write them, so many ideas, so little time, GAH!

Buuuut, I may fear some of you won't really like the outcome of it.. I feel like Eliana needs an actual trauma, something to harden herself for what I intend to do with her story...

So, beware, once that chapter is up (which it is not, not yet for a while at least), I fear y'all may hate me.. slightly ♥

Also, I realize I'm at 11 chapters and we haven't even met Dorian, my fav character, next to Solas of course... I KNOW, I'll get to it, eventually :3

Thanks for reading xoxo
I've written this chapter yesterday and today, right after work to try and give y'all something! ♥

I know it might be boring, maybe? But I need to write these kinds of chapters in order to be able to move on to what I'm most excited for. While also trying not to skip over too many things :3

I hope it will do for now! XOXO

A little Fenrian POV, Solas is.. **fucking pissed** with Elie, like damn, Elie is making things even harder on herself.

*She's playing with fiiiiire~*

Also, getting to know a bit more about Elie and her 'slumbering' magic.

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**Fenrian:**
Mother Petrice is not lecturing us today, there’s a new girl who arrived in Haven. Mother Petrice wants us to get better acquainted with the girl.

“Everyone, this is Samara. Now remember what I asked of you.” Mother Petrice is standing behind the girl; Her eyes are blue, her skin pale, her blonde hair is messy and full of tangles. She’s wearing a blue worn out dress, still a bit filthy from her trip towards Haven. She looks scared… before Samara came in, mother Petrice told us at Samara had lost her big brother during the mages and templar fighting. Her big brother was the only family she had left. We were to be on our best behavior. Mother Petrice ushered Samara into our circle of tables, and hushed the girl softly. Then she proceeded to check our homework.

I hold out my hand politely towards Samara. “Hello! My name is Fenrian.” I smile at the girl, who in turn shakes my hand hesitantly. My friends, Frederick and Martin introduce themselves to her as well. “Do you want a chocolate, Samara?” I grab the little box asa’mal’in has given to me this morning, she said it was for me, but I wasn’t allowed to eat it before noon. There were two chocolates inside it. Asa’mal’in is so kind, she gave me her last two chocolates.

Samara stares at the chocolate in my hand. She doesn’t seem to know what to do with it. “Quickly, before it melts!” I press the chocolate into her hand and smile. Then she eats it. “And? It’s good is it not?”

She makes a murmur of approval and then for the first time, she smiles. It was the same for me too, I
didn’t smile until I had something nice to eat. Elie did that for me, I wanted to do the same for Samara. “Thank you. You are very kind.” She speaks up for the first time. Her voice is so low, so quiet, but she sounds cute.

We speak for a while. Occasionally mother Petrice asks us if we are still alright. We don’t have class today, so we are doing very well. We talk about where she came from, what her hometown was like. Eventually, Samara looks to me. “Fenrian? Where are your parents?”

“My parents died.”

The girl looks sad, she knows what that’s like, I can tell. “Oh. So you’re an orphan too?”

I shake my head. “No, not anymore. I have Eliana and Solas now.”

“Who are they?” Samara asks me questionably.

“They are my asa’ma’lin and ba’isa’ma’lin. They are like family to me, though we are not related by blood.” I say matter of factly.

Frederick snickers. “But they aren’t your parents, so you’re still an orphan like us.”

I hum. “It doesn’t feel like that. They love me, they take care of me.”

Martin nods. “The Herald is a very nice lady.”

Samara’s eyes widen then. “The Herald is the woman you speak of?”

I nod frantically. “Yes! She’s very nice, you will like her. She’s kind to everyone.”

Samara looks interested. But also... somewhat cautious. Maybe she’s afraid to ask me something. Or she’s not sure about it. “But doesn’t the Herald go out on trips all the time?”

I nod again. “Yes, but she always comes back for me. Elie wouldn’t leave me, I know she won’t and she promised, too. Solas is the same. He’s an elf and he is with Elie.”

Martin pokes me hard and shushes me, I glare at my friend. “No he’s not! You know you’re not allowed to say that, Fenrian.”

I giggle slightly. Martin was always scared to get into trouble, but me telling the truth is not getting us into any trouble. Everyone knows they love each other, even Elie told me she thinks he’s handsome. “It’s true!” I pout and stick out my tongue to Martin.

He gasps. “Nuh-uh! They barely talk to each other anymore. Haven’t you noticed? Ever since they came back from Orlais, she has been avoiding him.”

Samara clicks her tongue and starts to draw doodles on the parchment paper before her with charcoal. “Maybe they fought. My parents did that sometimes.”

I huff. “They will make up, they always do. Besides-“ but I am interrupted by a cough from the other side of the room. I turn my head around to see who it is. “Asa’ma’lin!” I jump up from my chair and run over to Elie. She smiles widely and hugs me tightly. “Asa’ma’lin, I want you to meet Samara. She’s new here.” I take hold of Elie’s hand and drag her towards the circle of our four tables. Samara seems hesitant to speak to Elie, maybe it’s because of her title. A lot of people fear her simply because of the title Herald of Andraste. But I know Elie, and she’s kind. She cares. She loves everyone.
Elie smiles warmly at my new friend. “Hello Samara. My name is Eliana, but you may call me Elie. Nice meeting you.”

Samara looks to me for reassurance and I nod my head slightly, letting her know it’s okay. Instantly she visibly relaxes and smiles back at Elie. “It’s nice to meet you too, Elie.” See, I knew it. Only Elie can do that; make people trust her in an instant.

Then I tug her arm gently. “Asa’ma’lin? Why are you here?”

She slaps her forehead. “I almost forgot. Revered mother Petrice.” She says as she turns her attention towards the Chantry mother who’s still sitting at the desk, watching us all intently.

“Herald?” The sister asks quizically.

Eliana smiles politely. “Josephine told me there were no classes today. I was wondering if I could take Fenrian out? Spend some time with him. Then maybe the kids can go out and do something as well.”

The elderly woman sighs. “I suppose this is fine, I have no problem with the children going out and enjoying this beautiful day.” Then her lips slightly turn into a smile. We barely see mother Petrice smile. She’s a very serious woman, always going on about teaching and learning.

“Yay!” Every single one of us exclaims. Including Samara. It must be scary for her, being around mother Petrice on her first day here. I was a little scared of her too my first day. She can be very intimidating. She has that ‘old lady stare’ that can make you feel like you’ve done everything wrong.

Frederick tugs on Samara’s dress slightly then. “Hey Samara? I want you to meet Varric, he’s a dwarf and he’s super cool! He always has a lot of stories to tell.” Samara’s eyes light up then, I like listening to his stories as well. It’s nice.

Eliana looks to me then. “I’m sorry Fenrian, do you want to join your friends? We can talk later if that’s the case.”

I shake my head. “No asa’ma’lin, I want to go with you. Do you guys mind?” I look at my three friends. They all tell me it’s fine and they hug me briefly before leaving, even Samara hugs me.

As we say our goodbye to Mother Petrice, Elie is staring at me as we walk towards Solas’ cabin. I look back at her questionably. Why is she looking at me like that? She notices my reaction because she sighs deeply, then she smirks. “Sooooooo, Samara huh?”

I nod. “Yes, what about her?”

“You like her?” She asks me, her voice a bit higher than usual.

I scratch my head. “Umm yes, she’s nice. We are friends.”

She winks at me. “Do you… liiiiiike her?”

I push Elie playfully. She wavers for a moment but quickly bounces back, bumping me with her hips softly as she does. Giggling loudly. “We are friends, asa’ma’lin!” I can’t help but laugh with her.

“Alright alright! Whatever you say…” she wraps her arm around my shoulder and pushes me close to her, so we are now walking right next to each other. She always smells so nice, my big sister. She smells like… Roses and jasmine. But when we leave Solas’ cabin, her smell is mixed with his. So then she smells like parchment drenched in rose and jasmine oil. I frown slightly, she never visits
Solas alone anymore. I really hope they get back together, they fit one another. I like them together. We visited Solas’ cabin twice before, once last week, and she gave him his new sketchbook and charcoal to draw with. He had liked it very much and had wanted to hug her to thank her. But I noticed, she flinched and moved away from him quickly, before he could hug her, and he straightened himself quickly. I remember looking sadly at him, but ba’isa’ma’lin just smiled at me warmly, shaking his head. Then we visited him again yesterday, because I urged Elie. I told her I wanted to spend more time with the two of them after my classes. He showed me a new trick he’s learned, it’s called fade step and he moves super fast if he does it. It’s so cool... Because I urged Elie, this is probably the reason why we are headed towards Solas together again now. I don’t mind, I will bring them back together!

Elie knocks on Solas’ door softly, almost immediately he opens the door to his cabin and I hug him hard. He pats my back softly. “Da’len. Your classes ended early?” He asks me as he examines me. He always does this, afraid that I may be hurt or something.

Elie answers for me. “No, there’s a new girl in Haven, the revered mother didn’t want to teach with her first day. She let the kids go early, to have fun, play outside, or listen to Varric’s stories.” She smirks slightly at him. I watch the two of them intently. Maybe they will fall in love today?

Solas snickers. Then he turns to look at me again. “And you did not want to join your friends?”

I shake my head. “No ba’isa’ma’lin. I wanted to go see you with Elie.”

He hums then and walks over to his desk, gesturing for me to follow him. Eliana walks over towards the jug of water and starts to boil it over the fire, to prepare tea for herself and me. “Look here, Fenrian.” Solas takes out his new sketchbook and opens it, showing me his first drawing. I gasp loudly, causing Elie to get interested and walk over towards us and look too; it’s a drawing he made of Elie and me. Last week, we were all sitting around the fire pit with Varric and Sera. Varric was telling another one of his stories about his adventure with Hawke and I was sitting on Eliana’s lap, as usual. She had cocooned us into Solas’ old cloak and her chin was softly resting on the top of my head as the both of us were listening to Varric talk. Apparently Solas had drawn us back then, the drawing looked perfect. He even got her signature half smile on the drawing. And the twinkle of the fire in her eyes as she stared ahead of her. She was never aware of the half smile she always did when she was feeling content, but ba’isa’ma’lin had commented on it once with me around. And then I started paying attention to it, and he was right. Whenever Eliana was happy or relaxed, she’d do that. It was usually when she was spending time with Solas and me.

“SoSas… wow, that’s… really well done. You truly have a gift.” Eliana breathed as she stared at the drawing with me.

He smiled. “You can have it, if you want Eliana. I’ve noticed you writing in your journal from time to time, and I have seen your ‘notes’ in it. This drawing may fit in there.”

I smiled brightly at Elie then. He’s given her a gift! She must fall in love with him now... this is that moment. Eliana seems grateful but then her face darkens slightly. She shakes her head. “Maybe Fenrian would like it, instead. After all, you showed it to him.” She walks off, back towards the water above the fire. I frown.

“Asa’ma’lin, I want you to have it.” I say resolute. Which results into a chuckle from Solas.

“I’ll keep it for now. Keep it safe, whenever Eliana wants it, I will give it to her.” Solas said, then I noticed Elie’s demeanor change. She stiffened and even dropped one of the mugs she wanted to use for our tea onto the floor of his cabin. I look confusedly at the both of them then. Why is she acting like that? And why is Solas laughing loudly all of a sudden? Elie starts to clean up the shards of the
mug she's dropped and quickly murmurs an apology towards Solas for breaking it. Then she gets a new one.

“The drawing?” I ask, frowning my brows at the two adults before me. They were having an inside joke, something I did not know. They had secrets and I wanted to know what they were hiding now.

Solas laughed again and Eliana hurriedly handed me my tea. “Of course the drawing, nothing else, just sketches, yes.” I then saw her cheeks had gotten red.

“Asa’ma’lin? Why is your face so red?” I asked her. I didn’t get it. What happened?

She smiles faintly at me, but I can see her eyes dart over towards Solas and she’s giving him an angry snarl for a second. “The fire I was boiling the water over, has made my cheeks warm. It’s nothing lethalin.”

That night, Eliana sung for me, she sung the Dalish lullaby my mamae always sung for me. The one Solas and I taught her. She was pronouncing it perfectly now, no accent, she had a very beautiful voice. It wasn’t like mamae’s singing. Eliana’s voice was deeper, but it fit her and I liked listening to her singing. Solas was also enjoying asa’ma’lin’s singing. I could tell. He was casually sitting back into his chair, smiling and looking proudly at her as she sang. She didn’t have eyes for him though, she looked to me the entire time as she sang. I fell asleep briefly, I had a dream of the day the bandits killed my babae and mamae. It was a nightmare. The bandits stabbing my parents, taking their coin and my mamae’s jewelry. The ring babae gave her on their wedding day, made of Sylvanwood. I woke up screaming and Solas and Elie came rushing to my side, they had laid me down onto Solas’ bed and tears were streaming down my face. So Elie hushed me, holding me tightly in her arms, rocking me back and forth. Solas sat next to me on the bed, I was now between the two of them and he whispered soothingly in Elven to me. She promised then, she would stay with me, sleep by me in the Chantry. I made her promise. And so she did. She carried me in her arms as we made our way to the Chantry and my room. She tucked me in, and laid down next to me, holding me close against her.

“Elie?” I asked her softly.

"Hm?" her eyes were closed, a relaxed expression on her face.

“Please don’t leave me.” I care so much about Elie. I don’t want her to get into trouble, I don’t want her to be in danger, I don’t want to lose her.

“My love, I will never leave you, I could not. I love you too much to even think of that.” She whispered back as she held me even tighter.

“But what if you get attacked one day and you die?” I started to feel really sad then. Perhaps I should learn how to fight… after all, in my old clan, they taught boys how to hunt and scout. How to protect their family, so that when they were of age, they could protect the ones they love.

She kissed my forehead. “I have companions, friends, who will aid me. If I fall in battle, I will survive and I will come back to you, always.”

“And you have Solas. He can heal you.”

She nods. “That too.”

“Can I watch you practice tomorrow, asa’ma’lin?” I ask her softly. I know she trains every day when she’s at Haven, to improve her fighting and battle knowledge for when she ventures out again.
She hums for a bit, giving the idea some thought. “If you want to, but only if you have finished all your homework.”

I nod frantically. “Of course! And I promise I won’t get in the way!” Maybe that way, I can learn some things while watching her practice. And then I could maybe one day help her, go out with her. But I won’t tell her that, I know asa’ma’lin doesn’t want me near fighting or weapons, she fears for me. I’m not a fighter yet, but if I watch her long enough, I might learn!

“I know sweetheart. Now let’s sleep, okay?”

I bury my face in her hair and nuzzle up to her. I am not an orphan anymore, I will always have Eliana and Solas.

**Eliana:**
I walk Fenrian to his classroom, and his friends are already waiting for him outside the room. Even Samara. I smile at the four kids before me.

*I just know Fenrian has a little crush on Samara. it’s adorable really.*

“Have a good day today at class, kids.” I kiss Fenrian on the cheek and ruffle his hair, resulting in Fenrian giggling gleefully.

“Eliana promised I could watch her practice this afternoon, after class!” Fenrian exclaimed excitedly at his friends. They all started talking and then mother Petrice came by. “See you later today, asa’ma’lin!” He waved at me and I waved back, waiting for mother Petrice to close the door to the ‘classroom’.

I sighed and wanted to walk off towards the tavern then for some breakfast. But as I turned around, I noticed Leliana, Cassandra and Vivienne talking further away, glancing over at me, with a worried expression across their faces. Except for Vivienne, who was looking *most* displeased with me.

*What have I done now?*

I groan inwardly, trying to ignore them and walk off, but Cassandra grabs me by the arm to halt me. “Elie. Solas came to me this morning..” she paused and looked me up and down.

“I cock my head to the side quizzically. “And? What of it?”

Vivienne speaks to me directly for the first time since I met her at the salon. “He told the Seeker you may have arcane abilities laying dormant within you, my dear. A most troubling idea, if true. Since you have not trained within the circle, nor have you had a harrowing. If you truly do possess the power of magic, you pose a threat.”

*Alright, let me try something:*

*Ka………*

She continues, scrunching up her nose as she speaks. “The Seeker came to me immediately, as she should. This is a very serious topic, I am just wondering why you have not discussed this with her yourself.”

*Me………*

“Did you truly not know, or did you know and decided not to act on it? Solas has told the Seeker that you are able to dream within the Fade-“
“-Ha……..

“-...of course this should have been brought to our attention immediately, it’s most unwise and naive of you to keep this information from us.-“

-Me.....

“-why anyone would trust an untrained mage is beyond me but of course this was before I joined you all-“

.....-Ha!!!!

I just stared at the women before me, angrily, fuming, livid at this point. Sadly my ‘kamehameha’ did not work on Vivienne. I was rather hoping an extreme force would shoot out of my hands then and there and strike her, but alas, I was not so lucky.

The woman just kept rambling on and on and…. Until I couldn’t take it anymore. “Where is Solas now?” I snapped at her.

Vivienne seemed insulted I had interrupted her never ending scolding. “Why? Was he not supposed to tell us?” She glares at me then.

I groan. “First of all, Viv-“

“-You will address me as Enchanter Vivienne, Court Mage to the empire of Orlais, or Madame de Fer. Not Viv.” She sneers at me.

Oh, we got sass? I’ll show you sass.

I want to bitch at her then but Cassandra and Leliana are giving me both a warning look.

Ugh fine, breathe… calm down.

“Vivienne-“ she clicks her tongue, obviously annoyed but I continue nonetheless. “-first of all, Solas says he believes this but he himself is not even sure of it. I am asking where he is because I am angry with him that he told Cassandra this without speaking to me about it first.”

“He probably thought it wise to tell your advisors and companions. For a hedge mage he’s smart, unlike some.” She interrupts but I breathe slowly, trying to ignore her.

“Second of all, why is it, that when he told Cassandra, you know of this?” I squint my eyes at her then.

She laughs softly, but it’s a fake laugh, everything about her is fake. Ugh. I dislike her so much. “Because the Seeker came to me for advice on the matter.”

Cassandra sighs and speaks up for the first time in a while. “Eliana.. I understand you are upset, but if what Solas says is true, we may have need of Vivienne’s help. After all, she was part of the circle, she can teach you to control your magic, to ward yourself from the grasp of demons.”

I groan louder. Oh, so she’s okay with Cassandra calling her simply Vivienne but not me? “We are not even sure if I really do have magic in the first place. Yes a lot of things point into that direction, I get it. However, I have never met a demon whilst dreaming, or met spirits, the only person I’ve run into before whilst dreaming was Solas himself. On top of that, I don’t want to pursue the magic thing, even if I truly do have it. I’d rather not get involved with it. I’m perfectly fine battling foes with
daggers.”

Leliana shakes her head. “That you can dream in the fade alone is troublesome enough already.”

“Hm, quite right my dear.” Vivienne addresses Leliana for a moment, then she turns her head back into my direction again. “You say you don’t want to get involved with magic, but you are already involved with it. It won’t take long now before you’ll start dreaming of fire in a cabin and wake up to find the entire town swallowed up by flames.” Vivienne crosses her arms defiantly then.

_This is impossible. I need to speak with Solas. Why the hell has he told them, or Cassandra? Surely he must have known she would go straight for Vivienne._

....

That’s it isn’t it? I have been avoiding him, not visiting him alone anymore. Only with Fenrian, and even then I’d try to stay away from him. When Fenrian fell asleep the other night, I was going through some reports from our scouts, and glancing down at the map of Thedas before me, trying to figure out information I could use for our next trip, towards the Storm Coast. He tried speaking to me but I ignored him, it’s driving him insane, I can very easily tell. He said he would have me. He _knew_ that if he told Cassandra, she would tell Vivienne or at least confide in her, since she’s a respected member of the circle and always has been. He _knows_ I dislike Vivienne very much, he _knew_ Cassandra would suggest me training with Vivienne, or learning from her. He _knew_ I would disagree with that idea, and he _fucking knows_ Cassandra or anyone else within the inner circle would have a problem with an untrained mage as Herald. So, that would leave _only him_. He knows how determined I was to stay away from him, but he also knew that if he could force me to choose between Vivienne and him, I’d consider him to be the lesser evil of the two. That sneaky, conniving, traitorous, little shit.

_Oh so he’s trying to force my hand? Forcing me to come to him, to ask him to train me, to teach me? Well then Solas, you do not know how far my pride goes yet._

“Madame de Fer. I humbly ask your forgiveness, please, teach me to control my magic.” I dip my head lowly towards the woman. It stings my pride but not as much as it would when I’d have to ask Solas to teach me and giving him his way.

Leliana’s eyes widen in shock and disbelief mostly, the same reaction that Cassandra has to be fair. “You accept?”

I nod. “It seems none within the inner circle will leave me be unless we test the power of this magic laying dormant. I have no other choice. So I accept, yes.”

Vivienne seems smug with herself. “A most wise decision, my dear.”

“Cassandra, there is one thing I would like to ask of you however.” I turn my head towards her then.

She dips her head. “Of course, what is it?”

I cross my arms. “What did Solas tell you exactly? And did he not suggest teaching me himself?”

Cassandra thinks for a moment. “He simply said he figured out you may have magic within you, he had hard facts; the dreaming in the fade, the sensing of his magic, the lyrium potions he has given you without you dying—” she basically sums it all up. Then her eyes widen momentarily. “However, I haven’t thought of it yet, but he has not suggested himself to mentor you. Which is unlike him.”

Vivienne chuckles. “He probably knows it would be foolish of him to teach the Herald. Amateuristic
Oooooooh girl, you do not know Solas very well. If you did, you’d know he believes himself to be extraordinary with his magic abilities. And in truth, he is, no one can deny that. But he would never send me to train with you, that’s a fact. He’s done it to get me to beg him for his help. Little shit.

Cassandra snaps her fingers then, causing me to snap out of my thoughts. “What’s going on, Eliana?” She asks me, her tone of voice suspicious and her eyes narrowed.

I shrug my shoulders then, pretending to not know what she’s talking about. “Nothing! When do our classes start, Madame de Fer?” I ask sickenly sweet. Though I hate to call her by that name, I figured if I had to learn from her, I might as well try to stay on her good side. For my own peace of mind, I don’t think I can deal with her bitchy behavior like earlier, for more than ten minutes.

She smiles, content with the situation it seems. “Perhaps later this afternoon? I have heard you were to train with commander Cullen, however we can cancel that and start your lessons then.”

I dip my head once more. “Very well. Until then.” I walk off.

Time to speak to egghead.

(…)

I barge into his cabin. Not bothering to knock. He’s reading a book at his desk, but lowers it and smiles amusedly at me when he sees it’s me. “Da’len…” he starts, but I speak before he continues.

“I wanted to thank you for your mingling into my business, thanks to your help I will now be learning to control my magic with Vivienne this afternoon. Truly, I am grateful hahren.” I bow slightly as I do, and I actually sound believable. Those acting classes back at high school paid off. Maybe. Maybe he sees right through me.

His lips press into a thin line then, eyes stormy and dark, face displeased. Check.Mate.

He must’ve realized his facial expression speaks for him then, and quickly musters the energy to give me his best pretend smile. “Ah. Yes, I was wondering about that. You are welcome.” His voice does not sound as emotionless as usual. He is bothered by it, a lot. My inner self does a little happy victory dance with pompoms, flipping him off as she does.

I got you, didn’t expect that now, did ya?

He gets up from the chair then, clasping his hands behind his back. “I must admit, I’m surprised… I thought you disliked Vivienne.”

I raise my eyebrow up at him then, smirking ever so slightly. “Oh? You’re not going to tell me you had hoped for me to have an issue with it?”

“Of course not, da’len. I am simply… curious.” He’s masking it so hard right now, I can tell. He’s irritated.

I hum, eyebrows lifted, my finger on my chin, tapping it softly. “I don’t know, I figured if anyone can teach me magic, it should be from Vivienne. Obviously, she knows more than you.” I glance over at him, his jaw clenched, little wrinkles are starting to form on the bridge of his nose and I can faintly see a vein throbbing on his right temple. I pretend to be shocked and place my hand on my chest, feigning innocence. “Oh! I didn’t mean it like that of course! No offense Solas, but you’re
simply a self taught mage. I could do so much more with Vivienne’s help.”

“Naturally.” His voice low and angry. I royally pissed him off.

**Good. Now you know how I felt earlier. You little shit.**

“Ma serannas, hahren.” I dip my head and then turn around to leave, but within a second he is infront of me. He used fade step. Some new trick he explained to Fenrian the other day.

He glares at me, and were I not so determined, I’d surely succumb under his deathly glares. His nose touches my own, **he. is. pissed.** “I know what you are doing, Eliana. You play with fire.”

I glare back at him, not stepping down in the slightest. “No, Solas. It is you who plays with fire. I saw right through your attempt to lure me to you. Do not underestimate me. I will not give in. You started this. I simply played the pieces I was given.”

He growls. He actually fucking growls. And for a moment I panic, wondering if it’s really the wisest course of action to act this way with Solas. He was after all, an exceptional mage. I had seen the dark side of him, and I figured that was only the tip of the iceberg. He moves his head closer to my ear. “We will see, da’len.” He steps to the side and opens the door for me. “Lets see how long it’ll take you to run back to me.”

I scoff. “Lets see how long you can control yourself.” With that, I walk off. He closes the door shut behind me and my legs are actually shaking as I make my way towards the tavern to have that breakfast I wanted earlier.

* * * *

She circles me, as I sit into the chair of Josephine’s office. She said it would be important to first find out if my magic was slumbering or not. She had to assess me, like Cullen had done before. I survived his assessment so I could survive hers as well. My eyes are closed, like she had ordered me to do. I am breathing in and out, focusing on my breathing and her voice. “Imagine yourself to be back at your cabin, on that dreadful night… your hands tied, your daggers gone, feel the emotions you’ve felt that night. The fear, the hurt, the panic.”

I bite the inside of my cheek. Without wanting to, I relive the entire night. Why does she want me to feel that?

“How? The mark is on my left hand.

*She doesn’t want me to use the mark, she wants me to use actual magic that is supposedly within me.*

*So how do I do that?*

*Try Wingardium Leviosa.*

*For real?*
"I don’t fucking know, I’m not Harry Potter."

"You’re not helping."

"Will yourself, Eliana." She prompts me.

I sigh, exasperatedly and open my eyes then. "No offense, Madame de Fer, but it’s not working. That night, the mark flared to life because of the emotions I felt so strongly. No elements shot out of my hands." I look at the enchanter.

She glares at me. "You are not focused."

"Perhaps I do not have this magic you are all going on about? My mark reacted to my emotions that night, that’s all."

She is starting to lose her patience, she turns around, her back now facing me.

"What is she thinking about?"

All of sudden, she turns around and throws a flurry of ice towards me. I dodge it only by an inch. "Andraste’s dimpled buttcheeks woman! What was that about?!" I yell at her.

She ignores me and does it again, the same attack, thrown at me. I grab one of the books from Josephine’s desk and hold it up to protect my face. The attack freezes the book entirely solid, in fact it’s now a pop sickle.

A booksickle. Heheh...

I look at the frozen book and my fingers are starting to numb due to the coldness. I instantly drop the book to the floor and growl lowly.

She chuckles in return. But again, she attacks me with the same force. "Defend yourself, Herald."

"I bet you’re loving this, aren’t you!" I am still yelling because I’m starting to get royally pissed myself.

Then she switches it up and throws a fireball my direction.

"No. Not again. I remember that evening in the secluded courtyard at Val Royeaux with ser douchebag and those second degree burns hurt like hell."

"STOP!" I yell at the top of my lungs. Holding my hand up in defense. I’m waiting for the fire to burn me, but instead I hear crackling and a loud whooshing sound. Followed by Vivienne’s murmur of approval.

"Ah, and there it is…” she sounds content. I open my eyes and see the faint purple strings of lighting disappearing before my eyes. She hums. "Lightning. Hm. I thought maybe spirit or fire was your element." She cocks her head to the side and eyes me intently. Very amused.

I stare down at my hands then. My green mark slightly humming, my skin tingling all over and my head is throbbing. "What….. how?" I ask her desperately.

I had been attacked and almost killed many times before, why had this not happened earlier?

"You wonder why now is the time your magic presented itself to you?" She asks me calmly.
I simply nod, dumbfounded. I thought I had seen the weirdest shit already and that nothing could phase me anymore. It seems Thedas thinks otherwise.

“To be fair I cannot say I know the answer to that either, it’s a shame you don’t remember what happened back at the fade before the seeker’s men found you. I believe something happened there, that can explain all of this.” She turns around and starts pacing back and forth as she tries to explain to me the best way she can. “My theory however, is this: magic has always been within you, as it can be taught to anyone willing to learn. It’s a hard and arduous task however, not easily learned. Perhaps in the fade, you encountered something that allowed you to receive the arcane knowledge and power you now possess, though we cannot be sure. I suppose all we can do for now, is teach you how to control it, and hope that one day soon, you’ll remember what happened back then.” She looks concerned for a moment then. And for that very small, very fleeting moment, I can feel like I understand her. And I accept her. But only for that one moment.

*If only Vivienne knew I come from a world where there is no magic. So her theory is wrong. But I cannot let her know this. What the hell happened to me in the fade, in the time before I left my world and entered this, that made me possess magic?


She hums. “Understandable. It always is terrible the first time, but it was wise of you to seek for my help. I can help you, my dear.”

All of a sudden I hear Fenrian’s excited voice from the door. “That was awesome! You didn’t tell me you were a mage, asa’ma’lin!”

The door is slightly ajar and Varric is standing behind the kid, eyes wide open. How long have they been standing there? I had been so focused on not dying by Vivienne’s attacks, I didn’t even realize they were there.

Varric chuckled, but his eyes tell a different tale. He looks worried then. “Well.. shit.”

* * * *

9:41 Dragon - Day four

So, this is my fourth entry in the journal and I am royally freaked out, and scared, and nervous and fuck me... I have magic within me, and even a week and a half after I figured this out, I still don't know how I got it in the first place. I have no idea where it came from, how it manifested and what caused it to appear only after my 'assesment' with Vivienne. It's never showed up before. Maybe, just like my period, my system was disturbed so much it only came out months after first arriving here in Thedas? Truthfully, I don’t know what's even next anymore. I've been 'training' with Vivienne for the past week and a half, every day, for hours on end. Training may not be the correct word, even. She lectured me first about all the dangers that may be lurking about whilst in the Fade. Something Solas had not even told me yet. She explained to me about Pride, Desire, Sloth, Hunger, Envy and lastly Despair. She also explained to me that once, these were simply spirits and not demons. So to make sure I don’t forget myself, as this might be important later on(who fucking knows), I will write down what she told me. Notes, so to speak.

Justice to Rage
Compassion to Hunger
Valor to Sloth
Purpose to Desire
Faith to Envy
A demon is a corruption of a spirit: the spirit's quality gone bad, if you will.

So that's just a little about demons, then she went on about the connection of mages and the Fade. People of Thedas visit the Fade mentally when they dream, even though they do not remember the time spent there. Mages tap into the Fade when they cast spells and are able to remain conscious while traveling there. Members of the Circle frequently visit the Fade with the aid of lyrium - in particular during the rite of Harrowing, in which an apprentice is pitted against a demon and ultimately either put to death as an abomination or promoted to full mage status. Ugh, talk about eerie... The Circle's start to sound less and less appealing the more I learn of them. Now I know why Solas is so against them and Vivienne in particular, since she supports it wholeheartedly. Dreamers are capable of entering the Fade at will.

And that's Solas explained then, a dreamer. But apparently, also ... me explained. I have no fucking clue about it anymore. I just always hum and write down everything Vivienne tells me, and pretend that I am getting it all. When in reality, I've no fucking idea what this all even is. She probably knows as well. One good thing about my backstory is that I never claimed to be a mage or that there ever was any magic in my past. Though Vivienne now wholeheartedly believes that my fake Thedosian parents must have had arcane abilities, she's questioned me on it, but I simply said they never told me so. And thus, she gave that particular topic, a rest. However, she is not by any means happy about me turning out to actually being a mage. Neither am I, FYI. She is so annoyed by the fact, that I've never had my harrowing and believes I will burn down Haven when I ever have a bad dream. Geesh, did some mages really do that before? I mean, I'd love to visit Solas at his cabin and ask him all about it. But I have sworn to myself, I'd rather die before running back to him.

Well, enough about my magic shit. I for one have had it entirely with magic for today. I even explained, no, pressed that I did not wish to use my magic abilities in battle. I'd rather stick to metal and steel, thank you very much. It's worked out for me before, and I intend to keep it that way. On the side of me being lectured and taught about magic by Vivienne, I've also spoken to Cullen, Josephine and Leliana about the Storm Coast and hellboy. Insert badly written doodle of Hellboy here:

Psh, fuck it. I can't draw. Anyways, basically the Storm Coast is a region in Ferelden located in the north western portion of the country. The Storm Coast is a sparsely-populated stretch of shoreline along The Waking Sea. Ancient dwarven ruins dot the landscape which have been abandoned since the Divine Age due to darkspawn. Hold on a moment, fucking DARKSPAWN, Elie. Fucking creepy monsters you haven't yet encountered. Fuck me, I better not run into those shits whilst I'm there trying to locate Hellboy-Qunari-Bull-Man. Because, of course Leliana figured it would be wise to get into contact with this Iron Bull and recruit him, if possible. She has already received a letter from him, and she believes it to be a good move on our part. Having a warrior Qunari with us, but she seemed.. reluctant to tell me everything. It's like she doesn't entirely trust Iron Bull and that scares me even more. Varric told me, it always rains at the Storm Coast and well... I don't suppose there will be a merchant selling some umbrella's..' 

Fenrian groans and he throws one of the books I've lent him about Thedas' history to the side of him. "Asa'ma'lin... This is so boring!"

I stop writing and wait for the ink to dry, while turning my head sideways to look at him. "Come on, lethalin, you have to study. I've heard Mother Petrice is going to quiz you on it."

He sighs and nods. Pursing his lips ever so slightly. Then his eyes seem to light up. "Will you be
bringing ba'isa'ma'lin with you towards the Storm Coast?"

He's really trying isn't he?

I shake my head and close the journal then. "No, Fenrian. I've decided to take Vivienne, Blackwall and Sera with me this time. Solas will remain here with Cassandra and Varric. So you can always talk to him, visit him and listen to Varrić's stories." I manage to smile at the kid.

He however, does not smile. "Why aren't you taking him with you? Aren't you afraid that if you fall in battle, you won't have him to help you?"

I snort, then my brows furrow. "I've got Vivienne, she's a mage. Plus, I got a warrior with me as well. The team is well balanced. I'll be fine."

He doesn't approve of my decision, but my mind has been made up. Cassandra didn't like the idea at first, but then I gave her the gift from Val Royeaux, the knight statue next to a dragon, and she was distracted. She loved the gift and soon conceded and simply hugged me briefly, saying she would await my return. And that she was praying for good news upon my return. I figured my companions who had been traveling with me since day one, needed a breather. Just because I was the Herald, didn't mean they had to exhaust themselves traveling with me the entire time. Also, the reason I didn't bring them was because of Solas. I knew my trip at the Storm Coast wouldn't take long per se, but I'd be gone for at least another week or so. If everything went well, of course. I needed that time away from Solas, for the both of us. Our little cat and mice game was really starting to become tiresome, at least to me anyways. Also, the last we spoke, we had unintentionally started some sort of challenge between the two of us: who could stay away from the other the longest?

We were both two very proud individuals. He wouldn't give in because he wanted me to come back to him. Beg him for help with my magic control and classes, beg him for his attention. Basically, he wanted me to beg. As for myself, I wouldn't give in because I didn't want to give him his way.. again. Up until this point it seemed I always somehow gave him exactly what he had wanted. And even if I didn't want to; he'd claim it nonetheless. Or try to, and then eventually succeed. That night I wanted to collect my pack from his cabin was the worst. I was really trying not to give in, but the moment he kissed me.. I shake my head, trying to clear my mind. Not now, Elie.

I stretch my arms above myself then and pat him on the back softly. "I promised I'd stop by the tavern tonight to discuss the plans for the Storm Coast with Sera, Blackwall and Vivienne. I'll be back on time so I can tuck you in, okay?"

Fenrian nods, but then grabs hold of my arm firmly. "Will you sleep by me again tonight, asa'ma'lin? You will be gone for a little while again and.. I will miss you." he looks up at me giving me his best puppy eyes.

I roll my eyes but can't stop myself from smiling at him. He really knows how to manipulate me, this boy. I've been sleeping by him for the past week and a half, the entire time he'd tell me he was afraid of sleeping without me. Afraid to have those same terrible nightmares about the killing of his parents, which tugged at my heartstrings, so I couldn't possibly let him sleep on his own. And now he's using this excuse. But it's fine by me, really. I'm not mad, couldn't be, not with Fenrian. He's become so important to me, I'm actually starting to believe I'm his mother. I read to him, I tell him stories, I teach him things, I sing for him, I bring him to classes, help him study, make sure he eats and so on and so forth. I'm like his guardian, if not his 'mother' by now. I know that I could never replace his real mother and I will never try to. But it's nice knowing that he sees me as his 'big sister' and I see him as my 'loveable child'. "Fine. Keep on studying." I point my index finger at him whilst saying that. Have to be strict sometimes, am I right?
I am putting my packs at either side of Moonlight's saddle and we are all ready to head out. Solas is standing next to a very worried looking dwarf and Seeker, but he himself, looks pissed as all hell. I haven't spoken to him about my decision, but I know he's fuming. Too bad. Shouldn't have messed with me then. His own fault, really. Fenrian is next to Solas, holding his hand tightly. It seems the goodbye's are getting easier for him, or perhaps it's simply the fact that now Solas will remain at Haven, with him. Which makes it easier for Fenrian. They wave us all off, and tell me to be careful. Then, we head out. Towards the Storm Coast. At least the trip towards the place won't take as long as it did traveling to Val Royeaux.

"Tell me, Herald.. What is the relationship between you and Fenrian, my dear?" Vivienne asks me, while she's looking ahead of her, towards the road. Her head is slightly raised. It seems like Vivienne perceives herself to be above everything she does. She even makes riding a horse look like it's an insult to her every being.

I glance over towards the enchanter, wearily.

Why does this woman always ask so many questions?

"I'm taking care of him, is it not obvious?" I say matter of factly.

She hums for a moment, then her eyes finally dart over towards me and she manages to smile genuinely for a second. "It's nice to see our Herald so involved with the less fortunate."

I glare at her then. "What do you mean by the 'less fortunate'?" Was she really trying to come for my little Fenfen?

She shakes her head, however, clearly amused by my reaction. "I did not mean to offend, my dear. The boy is less fortunate is he not? He lost his parents, his former life, he is an orphan. However, you took care of him when needed to. It's... kind."

Blackwall laughs wryly. "Kind is an understatement. Elie basically takes care of the kid like he's her own. It's commendable." he looks to me and I can see the approval in his facial expression.

At least he gets it. Thank you, beardy.

"I do believe you should teach him to defend himself at one point or another however. He cannot always remain by your side. You can also not expect to always be around for him, when possibly needed." she says, piercing me with her dark brown eyes.

I scoff. "Fenrian is way too young to be carrying a weapon around. As long as he has us, he will be fine. And that's the end of it." I snap my head away from her piercing eyes and look before me again.

"As you say, Herald." she said sickenly sweet again.

It remains quiet for a couple of hours as we ride, all four of us. We ride past the Hinterlands border and go into another direction. A direction I haven't been to before. I have no idea what lays ahead and I don't know if I'll like it or not. My blades have been 'checked' by Harritt before we left and he made sure they were both ready, not that there was anything wrong with them, just.. wanted to make sure. To be frank, I did feel a little anxious going out without Varric, Cassandra and Solas. They knew me, like really knew me. Sera, Blackwall and Vivienne were new and only knew my fake backstory. Though I now understood why everyone decided on my fake backstory. Sera, not a fan of magic in the first place, would never have accepted me if she knew the truth. Plus, she'd probably run her mouth and tell everyone she knew about it. Blackwall, may have accepted it. Vivienne,
would loathe me even more than she already does. I trusted Solas, Varric and Cassandra with my life too. Even if Solas and I were mad with eachother, I knew he'd still have my back no matter what. They'd die for me, and if they'd allow me, I'd die for them too. But with these people.. I didn't yet know if I could trust them with my life, let alone with really getting to know me. I felt always on edge, the entire trip, not entirely knowing what to say to them, so I mostly kept quiet. Our trip would allow us to camp for maybe one night before reaching the Storm Coast, so at least that would make things less awkward. However, we did finally have enough resources and sovereigns to make sure we each had our own separate tents with bedrolls now. Which was great. No more having to share a tent with another because... well: because poor. But back to the feeling anxious and always on edge bit; I was quiet. The others had commented on it first, but then decided to leave it at that. And they talked.. and so I listened.

Blackwall at one point looked up towards the sky, the Breach always visible, no matter where you'd go. "That breach. It's hard to look away from sometimes." he says worriedly.

Sera snorted, she was riding behind me, next to Vivienne. Blackwall at the front. "Right, because you know what it looks like?"

Vivienne groaned, clearly she was annoyed and irritated by Sera's childish comment and behavior. I could, however, appreciate the sense of humor. It distracted me from feeling so damn anxious the entire time.

"No. No it doesn't." Blackwall glared at her warningly.

"You knooooow." Sera hinted, as she smirked widely at the bearded warrior infront of her. She was waiting for him to answer her, but instead he glared even more angrily than he had initially done. "Look at you, all serious. What do Wardens do when there’s no Blight, anyway?"

Blackwall shifted slightly in his saddle as he shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "Whatever it takes to keep the world safe." his mouth pressed into a thin line then.

"Like join Inquisitions." Sera said.

Blackwall sighed exasperatedly. "If that’s what’s necessary. Hey, you’re here too."

The blonde haired elf laughed gleefully. "The Inquisition can’t be all broody beards like you and Cassandra."

Finally, the warden curled his lips. And managed to sound extremely amused. "She doesn’t have the hair for it." he winked at Sera then. Finally giving in to her sense of humor.

Sera saw her chance, and boy did she take it. "Oh, I’d bet she does. Places." she snorted loudly, then had an extreme fit of giggles follow after.

Soon, I started seeing dark clouds looming above the direction we were headed. I sighed and looked up at the sky. The last few hours of sunlight. We had to make camp soon. I cleared my throat. "Shall we make camp soon, everyone?"


I looked over to Vivienne and dipped my head. Really, she had her nice moments. Or her.. more acceptable moments. The very few times I did not want to punch her in the face or steal her weird dragon headpiece and burn it, then proceed to dance around the burning headpiece. We trotted a little ways further until we reached a nice clearing, a little off the main path. I dismounted and so did the
others. "Madame de Fer, would you please remain at the camp and keep our property safe, while Sera and I go hunting for some food?" I didn't want Vivienne with me while hunting, on top of that, I highly doubt she would want to hunt or do anything that may result in her 'armour' getting dirty.

Her stupid, expensive, over the top bougie looking fake armour.

She smiled and sighed contently. "Ah, yes. I will surely do just that my dear. Not to worry."

Blackwall grumbled. "What about me, my lady?" he crossed his arms.

I noticed Blackwall didn't seem to have any issues with Vivienne, unlike Sera and myself. I knew Vivienne could handle herself in case trouble came about, however, having a warrior around the camp wouldn't hurt. "Perhaps you could find some logs we can use later on to spark a fire?"

The man approved of this idea it seemed. He dipped his head. "Will do. You two girls just make sure you come back in one piece, alright?"

I smiled warmly at my companion. "We'll be fine. Come, Sera. Let's get dinner."

*McDonalds? - Nah.*

*Sushi then? - Ha! You wish.*

*Fucking fennec again? - .... probably.*

Chapter End Notes

I wish I could actually insert the drawing Solas made of Elie and Fenfen, but I really suck at drawing ;-

So, let's just pretend it's there, alright? ♥
The Storm Coast

Chapter Summary

!!! NSFW WARNING !!!

Elie meets Iron Bull and is anxious about him turning out to be a Qunari spy, but she is quick to figure out her new companions also seem to have her back.

Also, annoying Vivienne is annoying. What's new, amirite?

She's starting to really doubt her decision on having taken Vivienne up on her offer, and regrets leaving Solas behind.

Brief encounter with a desire demon, and oooooooooo girl, when she gets home...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Holy fucking fuck. What the actual…?! How is that even anatomically possible? How can that man walk? Does he not fucking fall over by the weight of his horns alone? Hellboy? Hellboy who? Red Lobster Hellboy ain’t got nothing on a fucking Qunari!

“-Already? Have ‘em check again. I don’t want any of those Tevinter bastards getting away. No offense, Krem.” The Iron Bull smiles smugly at Cremisius from where he’s sitting. He chuckles softly. His eye constantly watching Krem.

Why does he only have one fucking eye in the first place? It’s bad enough already that he’s twice my size, has horns ontop of his head, reminding me of Krampus the Christmas demon, and to top it all off, he’s fucking COVERED in scars. And not your usual; oh-look-I-have-a-barely-visible-scar scar. Fucking lines, all over his barely covered up chest and arms, white, shiny lines. Slightly raised above the skin. Oh his skin? Fucking grey skin. What the fuck, Thedas?

Krem doesn’t seem bothered in the slightest however. “None taken, least a bastard knows who his mother was. Puts him one up on you Qunari, right?” She responds casually.

Ahh, so she likes to be called he. I get it. Won’t be making that mistake.

The Iron Bull shrugs his shoulders indifferently and turns his sharp eye back onto me again. I feel slightly uncomfortable. I had been staring this entire time, I know I did but what the actual fuck. “So you’ve seen us fight. We’re expensive, but we’re worth it. And I’m sure the Inquisition can afford us.”

Vivienne speaks up before I do, not even phased by the size of that… man before us. She must have faced more terrible foes or.. people before. “Just how much money are we speaking of exactly?”

The Bull huffs slightly, shaking his head. “Wouldn’t cost you anything personally, unless you wanna buy drinks later.” He jokes.

Vivienne tuts. “I’d rather not.”
Then he looks back at me. “Your err… ambassador, what’s her name? Josephine? We’d go through her and get the payments set up. Gold will take care of itself, don’t worry about that. All that matters is we’re worth it.”

He’s got a good memory. He’s only spoken to Leliana through one letter exchanged, though I of course do not know what they spoke of exactly, I highly doubt Leliana was very open with him. Her being our spymaster and all… he remembered Josephine’s name and title right away, whereas I took at least a month to memorize everyone’s names and titles. And faces. That too.

I hum. Though I’m freaked out by his appearance, I shouldn’t let that stop me. I came here on the urging of my advisors to recruit mister Giant. I need to have faith in them, if Leliana believes he’s worth it, then I need to believe that too. “You seem like excellent company.” I say sarcastically.

“Good.” He gets up from where he’s sitting and walks over a little ways further, away from his and my companions. “There’s one thing however. Might be useful, might piss you off. Ever hear of the Ben-Hassrath?” I simply shake my head. None of my studies covered this. “They’re Qunari spies. Or, well… Us. We’re spies. The Ben-Hassrath are concerned about the Breach. Magic out of control like that could cause trouble everywhere. I’ve been ordered to join the Inquisition, get close to the people in charge, and send reports on what’s happening. But I also get reports from Ben-Hassrath agents all over Orlais. You sign me on, I’ll share them with your people.”

Wait what.

I pinch the bridge of my nose, trying to wrap my head around everything he’s just told me. “Wait so… you are a Qunari spy and you just told me?”

He shrugged indifferently. “Whatever happened at that Conclave thing, it’s bad. Someone needs to get that Breach closed. So whatever I am, I’m on your side. Better you hear it right up front from me.”

Well at least he’s honest. Or is he? What are spies like in Thedas? I mean just look at Leliana. Can be nice if they want to. But intimidating as hell. They’re like lions, look cool and awesome, but don’t feed the lions. You may lose an arm. Alright Elie, this is your moment to show you are worthy of following. Especially in front of your new companions. Be assertive.

I sigh and glare at ‘Lurch’ before me then. “You run your reports past Leliana before sending them. You send nothing she doesn’t approve. If this turns out to be a trick, or if your reports compromise the Inquisition, Cassandra will eat you alive.” He cocks his head to the side slightly then, his eye on me amusedly. I roll my eyes. “She’s a Seeker of truth.”

He smiles. “Ah. Wouldn’t have it any other way. Krem! Tell the men to finish drinking on the road. The Chargers just got hired!”

Krem pretends to be annoyed by that. Smirking ever so slightly at the Bull. “What about the casks, chief? We just opened them up, with axes.”

I shake my head, walking back towards my companions.

Gods what have I gotten myself into? Why have I let Leliana talk me into this? The Iron Bull is a spy, like Leliana. Except she knows the truth about me. I’ll have to avoid this man as much as possible, I’m assuming. To make sure I don’t stand out. Great… now I’d wished I’d brought some of my ‘old’ companions with me, so they could at least back me up if I slip up. Suppose I’ll have to remain quiet the entire trip back towards Haven.
I let the Chargers and Bull pack up their stuff, while we stand a little ways further. The sound of waves crashing against the rocks on the coast is relaxing, although the ‘neverending rain’ is starting to get on my nerves now. All of us, including yours truly, were entirely soaked. Apart from my boots, which seemed to be pretty water tight. But the rest of my armour? – Ruined. Solas’ cloak was made of wool. So you can imagine how that looked and felt. The wet wool was irritating my skin and itching slightly. Though I suppose the rain acted as some sort of washing machine for your armour.

After all, when was the last time you’ve washed your clothes, Elie?

You point me into the direction of a laundry room and I’ll do it, smartass.

I groaned slightly, as my eyes darted over the shoreline. In the distance I had heard some loud ass roaring and I didn’t even want to know what that was, so I never bothered to ask. Also, I had spotted a few rifts nearby, hovering in the sky. Had to close those again, too.. great. For the time being, I’d ask Bull to stay with us, help us close the rifts and search for the scouts missing party. According to Harding, some of our own had gone missing. I had a bad feeling about it, I somehow knew it wasn’t going to end well, but perhaps this was simply the effect the Storm Coast had on me. It’s always so doomy and gloomy, so dark, so grey, the rain. When was the last time I had seen sun here? We’d been here for two days now. Not long, if you think on it really. I was working on getting the resources necessary for the Inquisition camp here at the Storm Coast. Also, Vivienne thought it necessary to school me some more on magic and shit.

“You alright, Eliana?” Blackwall’s gravely voice brought me out of my daydream. Well daydream would be overreacting but whatever. I glance over towards the dark brown haired man with big beard and nod. I give him the faintest of smiles. I’m tired, exhausted from the cold rain and the having to pretend, the having to deal with Vivienne as my mentor. Everything. I just wanted to be myself, and the only times I truly was myself, was with Cassandra, Solas and Varric. And the only time I’d truly feel comfortable, was with Fenrian. The Warden’s eyes are looking at me with pity hidden within them. “It’s just that you’ve been awfully quiet this entire trip. Do you regret having us with you?”

“Of course not, Blackwall. I am very happy and fortunate to have you three with me. The team is well balanced and you always talk to me. I’m just thinking about a lot of things, don’t mind me.” I dip my head and smile gratefully. His concern was touching, heartfelt and genuine. And for a moment I let my guard down. That was until I heard Vivienne’s voice from behind me.

“You cannot afford to get distracted, Herald. I’m sure you have a lot of things on your mind, but so do we. And the entirety of Thedas, I’m afraid.” I look to her angrily as she crosses her arms defiantly.

She basically told me to stop being so selfish. She’s partially right of course, I’m not the only one with a thousand things on my mind, this threatens the entire world. Not just myself. But she’s a bitch and I’m starting to deeply regret having taken her up on the offer of training me or, more accurately, lecturing me.

Bull finally walks over to us four, with his chargers behind him. For now, they’re all but strangers to me, except for Krem of course. “Ready whenever you are.” Bull says shortly. I nod and we all move towards the last known location of our scouts. They must be here somewhere, according to Harding’s map. He glances down at my map and then looks ahead of us again. “What we looking for?” He asks me then.

“Some of our scouts have gone missing, apparently they have been sent to negotiate with the Blades of Hessarian.” I say curtly.
Sera overheard us and groans loudly. “I still think we should just let me shoot them with arrows. Less of a hassle, no fuss and easily done.”

Blackwall grins. “You can’t just shoot everything with your arrows, Sera.”

“Watch me.” It’s a challenge, I can tell by the tone of her voice.

Bull makes a murmur of approval then. “I’ve heard some good things about the Blades of Hessarian. Their work is mostly misunderstood.”

“And yet my scouts are missing because of them.” I say simply.

"Perhaps there's a reason for it.” But I notice his eye is ever watching me, it makes me slightly uneasy. The silence surrounds us for a moment, but then he speaks his mind. “Never seen a Qunari before, Herald?” His tone of voice is suspicious. I gulp. I have to make sure I get out of this, I’m from 'Kirkwall'. I am to know what a Qunari looks like.

I manage to raise one of my eyebrows up to the big dude next to me. “Of course I’ve seen Qunari before. Just none as… intimidating as you.” Then I quickly glance away from him again.

He chuckles. “Yeah, I get that a lot. Usually the horns doing.” He points towards said horns for a second then fixates his one eye on me again. “I heard you were from Kirkwall. Ever met the Champion?”

I shake my head. “Seen him from time to time, never spoke to him though. Had to hear most stories from Varric. His friend. He’s with us too.”

“The dwarf certainly knows how to tell a story.” Vivienne chimes in then.

Stay out of it, Viv. Or rather, no. Please by all means, distract him from me. Anything will do, really.

It works, because Bull immediately turns his attention towards the enchanter and starts talking to her. I sigh a small breath of relief then.

We're back at the camp, and from here on out we head south, on a path up through the hills. The group of Chargers remain at the camp with Krem. So we move onward, without them, but with Bull. And there they are, the group who was supposed to be negotiating with my scouts. I sneer and bite my lower lip briefly. I hold up my hand to halt my companions. "There's only a few of them, not a hard task." with that, I unsheathe my daggers from my straps and run to the top of the hill.

The Blades of Hessarian immediately notice me then, and charge right at me. But I am quickly followed up by Blackwall and Bull. Sera and Vivienne flanking from behind us. I am face to face with another dual weapon rogue, he's eyeing me intently. As we move slowly around one another in a circle, waiting for one of us to make the first move. I've come to realize I am 'better' at fighting when they attack me first, or maybe that's just my imagination. Maybe it's between my ears and I'm just imagining it. Nonetheless I'm waiting for that asshole to make the first move.

Come at me, bro.

From the corners of my eye I see flurs of ice shooting across the hills, followed by some arrows whizzing right past our ears. Blackwall is shield bashing his foe and Bull? - Bull is fucking twirling his big ass axe around like it's a feather. Then finally, my foe steps forwards and slashes his daggers across my face, but I quickly dodge it. I slash back and manage to cut into his cheek, which of course angers him tremendously. He grabs something from his belt, and throws it into the floor before him, causing smoke to arise immediately. I cough loudly, swatting my hand around to clear the smoke.
from my vision. He's gone, leapt into the shadows most likely. I huff, angrily, and try to focus on every sound and movement around me as I slowly look around. I close my eyes so that I can focus more thoroughly and then, I hear grass rustling behind me ever so softly. I quickly jump forwards and spin around, my blades twirling in my hands as I do, followed up by some grunts.

**Got ya.**

I look at the guy, and he's grabbing his chest. I've managed to wound him on it, blood dripping from the wound and the tattered cloth. For a group of armed militia, they're not so well armoured. Simply cloth and leather, no pauldrons, no chestplates, no chainmail, nothing.. I grin wickedly for a moment, it never bores me to know that I'm winning. In fact, it still makes me cocky. The man before me yells loudly and proceeds to jumps over me, making a full flip. I breathe out, and immediately swing my right arm around, holding my dagger. My back still facing my foe, I can feel the resistance of my blade however, and this notifies me that I've struck him. In fact, my blade is stuck into him. I hear some gurgling sounds and I pull out the blade, followed up by some more gurgles. Then, a loud thud follows. I don't even so much as glance behind me. I know I've slain him. There's no need checking up to make sure. I casually walk over towards the cabin, and my companions are finishing off their own foes. My scouts bodies are scattered across the hilltop. I sigh and shake my head.

Bull walks over to me, followed by the rest. "Suppose we found your scouts."

I click my tongue. "This is not all of them. Let's check the cabin." I walk over towards said cabin and am relieved to be out of the pouring rain for a moment. Within the cabin, there's more bodies. More of the Inquisition's scouts. I sigh loudly and look at their faces, eyes rolled back into their heads and the others, are laying face down onto the wooden floor.

"There must be something in here that can tell us why this has happened." Blackwall says simply, as he starts to look around for clues.

My eye immediately falls on a perfectly looking note on a table within the cabin. The paper is not crumpled or torn—as though it were left behind instead of dropped:

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"It's not our place to disagree. They're attempting to set themselves up along the shore, and we have orders. We are the sword, not the hand that wields it. You taught me that. If they're worthy, let them come with the Mercy's Crest. The Blades of Hessarian will listen. You will only get yourself cast out—or worse."
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I hum. "Mercy's Crest, huh?" I turn the paper around and there's some more scribbled on the back of it. "Two Serpentstone, one deepstalker hide." I say aloud. Turning my attention over towards Iron Bull. "You've been stationed here for a while, yes?" I pause and wait for him to nod his head at me. "Any idea where we might find these things?"

He grins. "No need to go looking for them, the Chargers and I already have them at the ready for ya."

I am happy I've asked Bull and his Chargers to join us now. Saves me some more time and energy having to find these things at the Storm Coast. But, still, I remain cautious of the Qunari spy. There's no need to get careless.

"Then let's head back to Lace, down the hill, and tell her of our discovery." I take the note with me and shove it down my satchel.
"What do you need the serpentstone and deepstalker hide for, my dear?" Vivienne asks curiously as we all make our way out of the cabin.

"The note mentioned some Mercy's Crest. I'll have to ask Lace about it. Perhaps she knows more. However, with it, we might be able to talk to the Blades of Hessarian."

"Talk?" the enchanter raises her eyebrow up at me. "They killed the Inquisition's scouts. I do hope you intend to do more than just talk. The Inquisition should be feared."

I sigh and turn my head towards her then. She's really starting to get on my nerves now. "The note also mentioned, my dear Madame de Fer, that they are simply following orders. So it's not their choice to go around killing scouts. Perhaps there's someone higher up we should blame. Where there's smoke; there's fire."

Bull chimes in. "Couldn't agree with you more. Told you there might be more to it." he winks. Or.. well, he closes his eye, but I take it that's his version of winking. Or perhaps he just blinked. Whatever.

As we make our way back at the camp, I can already see Harding talking to the Chargers.

**Well, at least she trusts them enough to make conversation.**

I clear my throat once I am behind her. The dwarf turns around and straightens her back. "Herald. Have you any news?"

I nod and take out the note from my satchel, then proceed to hand it over to her. "I found this near the bodies of our scouts.." I say softly.

Harding's eye's are darting over the writing on the paper and she grunts. Clearly the deaths of her scouts is hitting her hard. But she composes herself quickly, sighing. "Mercy's Crest? That's an amulet. But you'll need-"

Iron Bull interrupts Harding. "-Already taken care of."

The dwarf dips her head. "Then all that's left for you to do, Herald, is craft it at the Requisition's table."

I nod. "Thank you, Lace. And I'm sorry."

Harding nods and smiles faintly. But her eyes are looking grateful. "Me too, Herald." she turns around and walks over towards the map and starts to speak to her remaining scouts then. I walk over towards the requisition table, followed by Iron Bull.

"I'll go collect the hide and stone from my Chargers." With that, he walks towards one of his Chargers.

I look up at the sky for a moment, the grey and dark clouds still looming above us. The rain is falling on my skin and washes away the blood that was still on my face. I close my eyes for a moment and sigh deeply.

*I wonder how Fenrian is doing?*

Vivienne appears by my side and clears her throat. When I turn to look at her, she looks displeased. "Do you truly believe it wise to bring along a Qunari?"
I roll my eyes. There's absolutely no getting away from his infuriating woman. Now I wished I had brought Solas with me. "Leliana said-"

She abruptly cuts me off. "-Leliana is a spy, just like the Iron Bull. Naturally she'd want more like her to join us. However, I can't help but feel like he's not to be trusted."

Funny.. Coming from you.

"We need all the people we can get, Madame de Fer. There have been moments where I allowed people to join us, when I didn't like them personally. However, we must set aside our personal feelings on the matter and think about the bigger picture. So far, everyone who's joined us, has something to add to the Inquisition. Sera speaks for the commoners, the little people. Blackwall has information about the Wardens that we might need, on top of the skills he has obtained by simply being a Warden. You joined because you have a gift with magic, and knowledge about Orlais and the Imperial Court." I stop and look past Vivienne, at Iron Bull. "The Bull... is an exceptional warrior, as you may have noticed earlier. Besides, he's Qunari and a spy, willing to share his Benn-Hassrath reports with the Inquisition. And don't think I won't have his behavior monitored by Leliana and her men. If he does anything that I don't approve of, we'll be quick to put an end to it."

She sighs but concedes. She better. "Very well, all I'm saying is that we must remain cautious. Not everyone wants what's best for Thedas, my dear." With that, she walks off.

You're preaching to the choir, girl.

(…)
I look down at the amulet that's hanging on top of my armour, as we walk down the hills, towards the camp of the Blades of Hessarian. The amulet is big and gaudy, not my type of jewelry. Perhaps Vivienne will like to wear it after this whole business is over with.

We come up to the main gate of the camp, big wooden gates, two guards in front of it. One of them notices me and to my surprise, he doesn't reach for his sword. "Someone's come with a challenge?"

The female guard, turns her head towards her coworker and seems surprised. "The others failed."

I stand before them and cross my arms. The immediately lower their heads and step sideways, granting me and my companions access to the camp. I'm extremely surprised at this point, but I'm trying not to let that speak for me. It's odd, they did not seem at all bloodthirsty. Perhaps it really isn't them, but their leader.

We walk into the camp and everyone's looking at us questionably in their white and blue armor. None seem to mind our presence there. There's not much there, a few cages with dogs in them, Mabari if I'm correct. Some stables for their horses and a cabin. But then, my eye's dart over towards the right hand side of me: a man in wine red armor is standing there. Big blonde beard and a huge scar across his face.

Well, talk about the elephant in the room...

The man glances down at my amulet and huffs. "So you would challenge the Blades of Hessarian?"

I don't step down. Staring him directly down into his eyes. "You killed soldiers of the Inquisition. We cannot let this stand."

He scoffs. "You want justice? Claim it." Immediately after, he grunts loudly and reaches for his axe.

As I step to the side, Vivienne hits him with one of her attacks, shoving him backwards so that he
cannot attack me right away. Bull and Blackwall charge right at him but I jump infront of them. "No. He's mine."

They look to me quizzically, but step aside finally. I huff and throw one of my daggers at the still wavering man. It immediately pierces him right through the chest, but he's not so easily slain. He grunts loudly and walks over to me, one of my blades still stuck in his chest.

_He doesn't want me to have the second one back. He'd rather be in pain than pull it out to give me a second blade to fight with. No matter.. if I manage to pull it out, he'll bleed dry. Maybe._

I am grasping my last blade firmly in my hand and eye his movements like a hawk. I glance down at his feet, and the way he's moving. Trying to find a weak spot in his strategy. My companions, and the remaining Blades of Hessarian are are circling us. Standing around us, watching intently. Wondering who will emerge victorious. If I fail, Blackwall and Bull will definitely have my back. And I noticed Sera already fixating one of her arrows on the leader, in case he tries to play dirty.

_They got my back.. that's a relief._

When the leader of the group is getting a little too close for comfort, I step backwards once more, resulting in a wicked sneer from the man. "What's the matter, kitten? Scared?"

My eyes widen immediately and the blood leaves my face.

_Kitten... That's what that fucking asshole called me the night he tried to rape me._

I feel anger bubbling upwards and my stomach is starting to feel 'heavy'. I am either extremely sick to my stomach, or the anger is making me feel like this. Perhaps both.

The man notices my reaction and laughs maniacally. _"You truly want to challenge me?" _ he laughs again.

I'm starting to tremble and I can feel my grip on the dagger in my hand getting tighter.

"Eliana. Calm down." I hear Vivienne's voice from behind me, but I ignore it. What is she even talking about? I'm simply trying to kill this asshole for killing our scouts. Or giving the orders to, at least. That's what she wanted, isn't it?

"You are nothing. You're pathetic." the man hisses at me, spit leaving his mouth as he speaks.

My skin is startling to tingle and I can hear some sort of ringing in my ears.

_Water..... is happening?_

He steps forwards and flings his axe right at me, resulting in my upper arm being cut. It stings like a motherfucker. And I can feel slight burning follow after.

_Poison. He's coated his weapon in poison. That little-..._

He laughs again and I lose it. I throw my second dagger at the man and manage to hit him again, almost right next to my first dagger. He coughs, blood coming out of his mouth. "$And now... you are defenseless.""

"Herald!" Vivienne snaps. But it's too late, before I even realize what's going on, my body shoots out what seems like a thousand bolts of lightning. I can feel my head hurting, ears ringing even louder than before, and everything is blurry and foreign. I can't make out what's happening around me, the
sounds around me are muffled, as if there's a big bowl lowered around my head. I shake my head, trying to regain my composure, but to no avail. And then, I pass out.

* * * *

Dan appears right infront of me. I blink twice, rubbing my eyes. "This... isn't real." I say softly. My voice's echo is heard.

Dan smiles softly and opens his arms. "Of course it's real."

He steps towards me, but I take one step back. "No. It's not. You're dead. And you're not in this world."

His expression changes, he looks hurt. It pains me. "Have you forgotten all about me, Elie?" his voice is soft.

I shake my head again and hold my head with both my hands. "No... I.... I love you. I..."

Focus, Elie. This is not real.

"You're not Dan." I say finally, snapping my head up towards fake Dan.

Dan's mouth curls into a grin then and his face starts to distort. As does his voice. A low, distorted voice speaking to me now, as Dan is morphing into.... something else. "Who do you want me to be then? I can be anyone you want."

Then, Solas is right before me. In the exact spot where Dan was earlier. With his signature half lidded eyes looking down at me slightly. "Da'len?" he asks me.

I feel relieved then. "Oh thank God, Solas." I walk over to him and hug him briefly. "It's good you came here. Some sort of Dan imposter was here earlier."

Solas starts to rub my back softly, as he done before.

Man, that Dan thing was really frightening.

"It's fine, my love. I'm here." he hushes me softly.

I bury my face into his neck and inhale his lovely scent.

....

I freeze, stiffen. "What did you call me?"

He ends our embrace and holds me at arm's length, examining my face worriedly. "What's wrong, Eliana?"

I step backwards.

No. I was fighting with you back at Haven. I ignored you. When I left for the Storm Coast, you were mad with me.

"Solas would never call me 'my love'."

This isn't real. This is still that... that thing.
"You're not real. What are you?!" I yell now.

Solas' face distorts also, and appearing infront of me is a purple, barely clothed woman. Big purple horns sticking out of her head, some sort of weird golden necklace, reaching down, covering only her nipples. And some purple loincloth around her bits. She hums. "Why can't you simply accept whatever I offer you, child? I can give you anything you want."

I grit my teeth. "You're a demon!"

She laughs softly, tilting her head backwards slightly as she does. "Some call me that."

*Remember, don't give in to them. What was Desire before? Think... think...*

She steps forwards and hovers around me, touching me slightly on my arms. "Don't worry your pretty little head about anything."

"Purpose. You were a spirit of Purpose before."

She stops and dissapears briefly, only to return right before my eyes again. "No." her voice becomes louder, angrier. A growl is heard.

"You don't have to be like this. Whoever corrupted you, you don't have to remain this way. You can be purpose again."

The demon shakes her head. "Shut up!"

Okay, now she's starting to freak me out...

"You can-" I start, but the world around the both of us is distorting now. Crumbling.

"Until we meet again...." the demon says softly.

* * * *

Then, a wet, cold feeling is felt on my face. I open my eyes and gasp for air, choking on water.

"Sera! You could have killed the Herald." Blackwall gets up from next to me and pokes the elf hard.

Sera huffs, throwing the now empty bucket onto the floor. "It worked, didn't it? She's awake now." she crosses her arms.

I look around and notice that we are now within a cabin. On a bed. "Where are we?" I ask softly.

Vivienne is next to me, eyeing me intently. Examining my face. "We are still in the camp of the Blades of Hessarian, Herald. You faught with their leader and won-"

"It was awesome. I never thought you were a mage." Iron Bull grins slightly as he's standing infront of the door.

Vivienne rolls her eyes. "-Awesome, is not a word I'd use to describe what happened. Eliana, you have been very careless. You used your magic when you were clearly not yet ready to. And it made you faint. This is exactly why we haven't covered the usage of magic in your classes yet. You are not ready. I warned you."

I sit up into the bed and rub the temples of my head. The headache is gone, but my head feels heavy. "I didn't know I was going to use it."
"That does not make it any better. It only makes it worse. If it came out without your control, it's very dangerous." she presses her mouth into a thin line. She's angry.

_Best not tell her about who I ran into while I was in the Fade then..._

"Alright, alright, I get it. What happened to the Blades of Hessarian?" I shift my attention towards Blackwall, Iron Bull and Sera now.

Blackwall grins faintly. "They've accepted us as their new leaders. It's their code of honor, apparently. If you defeat their leader, the winner will be appointed the new leader. They also explained that none of them actually liked their old leader. Was a bastard, apparently." he chuckles and shakes his head.

Bull chimes in. "You've challenged their leader and succeeded. They are more than happy to make up for killing the Inquisition's scouts by following us. They'll send out reports to your spymaster."

I hum. "Good."

Vivienne crosses her arms. "You and I will have a talk. Herald." and with that, she gets up from the chair and moves out of the cabin, past Iron Bull.

I groan. "Fuck me sideways. I can't deal with her right now." I need something else to focus on for the time being. "Before we went here, I've noticed some rifts hanging about. Let's dispose of them, activating some Elven artifacts if we come by them, and then head for Haven."

Sera makes an ugly face. "Oh, you're not going to be like baldy, are ya?"

I giggle softly. "Don't worry, Sera. Those artifacts are only meant to strengthen the Veil, so that the rifts will not return in those areas."

She does not seem convinced however. "Fucking elfy elf human. It's freaking ridiculous, really."

I ignore it. Iron Bull looks at me from afar. "Sure you're up for it already, Eliana? You just passed out, you know."

I smile defiantly up at the Bull then. "I'm sure."

(...) Not even a week went by, and we had already closed most of the rifts at the Storm Coast. I was sure there were more, but I couldn't venture there yet. There was some old abandoned dwarven mine thingamajigger, and it was closed. We could not go beyond it. Even when Iron Bull tried to bash in the doors. I knew there was more behind the doors of the mine, but for now, we couldn't do anything more.

We ran into a fight between an actual giant and an actual fucking dragon. I've never seen one before, well duh, but this was too much for me to handle. I almost passed out a second time, when I first laid eyes upon it. Iron Bull, however, was excited. Screaming something in another language. I'd have to ask my other companions about the Qunari language later..

Vivienne did not leave me alone after I had passed out. I didn't even tell her about the Desire demon I had run into whilst I was in the Fade, but even so, she still managed to keep her eyes always on me. She didn't trust me, and she had all the reason for it, because I was a poor liar. I knew she knew I was hiding something from me, and her being a Circle Mage, she probably knew I had come across some sort of Demon. I didn't question her on it though, didn't want to give her any more ammunition than she already had. During the four days we spent in the Storm Coast, she did not leave me alone, not for a second. Constantly lecturing me on my classes, quizzing me about what she had already
taught me, and always asking if I was sure I was telling her the whole truth about the little incident. I hated to admit it, but I felt like once I'd return to Haven, I had no other option than to confide in Solas. And leave Vivienne to her own hobbies. If she were truly concerned about me or my wellbeing, I may have not had any issues with her behavior. But she wasn't concerned about me, she was disgusted with me somehow. I knew she didn't like the fact I had turned out to be an untrained mage, but she really didn't like it that I was untrained and used said untrained and uncontrolled magic. I'm sure that Solas would support it, praise me even, probably. For the usage of my magic. I mean, I defeated the leader of the Blades of Hessarian, did I not? That was the sole purpose of us being in that camp in the first place, so what did it really matter if I'd slain him with or without my daggers? What mattered to me, was that we succeeded. And we gathered even more allies. Now our pawns would be present on the map at the war room, on the Storm Coast as well. Our hold would get stronger by the day.

When we finally got back to Haven, I was glad to be out of the rain, but a little annoyed to be back in the snowy and icy areas again. Very fucking glad to be away from Vivienne however. I immediately headed straight for the war room with Bull, and told my advisors about what I had come across back at the Storm Coast. I introduced them all to the Iron Bull and I couldn't help but notice the way Bull was looking, no staring, at Leliana. Did he have a thing for redheads? I giggled as she snapped him out of his thoughts, asking him about the Benn-Hasrath. At least every one of them appreciated the fact he had been honest with me right from the start. He would set up his own little 'camp' outside the gates of Haven, next to Harritt's shop, by the stables. Krem would remain there with him, being the Bull's right hand.

And Flissa's stew, tasted amazing, after having nothing but fennec and stale old bread at the Storm Coast for almost a week. Fenrier was next to me, asking me all about the Storm Coast. Solas, was sitting across from me, Cassandra to his side, Varric next to Fenrian and Blackwall on the other side of Solas. Vivienne was back at the Chantry, no doubt. Sera was.. well, wherever Sera was right now. Solas had not looked too happy upon my arrival, had avoided me, rather. But, Fenrian wanted to eat with me at the tavern, and asked Solas to join. So naturally, he could not refuse.

After finishing up our food, finally Cassandra addressed me and what happened at the Storm Coast. I cursed her inwardly for doing it infront of Solas, who in return seemed very pleased about me being scolded. "I have heard you passed out after using your magic."

I groan. "It was a mere accident, nothing else."

Cassandra glared at me. "That's not what Vivienne said."

I noticed Solas' ears twitching slightly at Vivienne being named. He pretended to be emerged into his book reading, but I knew he was listening to every single thing. He was probably hoping to hear about my problems with the enchanter whilst traveling.

"Vivienne overreacted, that's all." I didn't want to give any more details about what and how she had 'trained' me, not with Solas around.

Varric hummed. "I thought you didn't want to use your magic while fighting."

_Damn you, Varric!_

I noticed everyone, but Solas, was staring at me intently. Waiting for my reaction to that, my answer. I knew that I had to answer it, and that was exactly what Solas wanted to hear: me not being able to control it, after Vivienne's training. "I changed my mind." I said casually. Which was lies, of course. But they didn't know that.
Blackwall coughed politely, resulting in Cassandra giving him a questionable look. He dipped his head at the Seeker. Then turned his head towards me and glared at me. "Eliana. When we were in the cabin, you told Vivienne you hadn't intended to use your magic. That it just simply.. happened."

*Is everyone against me today? Do they not realize that Solas is right there?!!*

And of course, he chuckled. Solas, chuckled. I glanced over towards the elf anxiously. I was trying so hard to sound like everything between Vivienne and I went well, insofar as our training went. Now, he has exactly what he wanted, again.

"Alright. Fine. It came out without me wanting to. Happy now?" I said to Cassandra and Blackwall, but I really addressed Solas right now, instead of the others. Then I got up from the table and took off. I was mad. But not really with my companions, but with myself.

I went straight for the firepit and sat there, alone for a while. I needed to think. When I left Haven, I was determined to make it work with Vivienne and I. I wanted her to teach me instead of Solas. I knew this wasn't going to work of course, but I tried to convince myself otherwise. I did see her as the lesser evil out of them two, but now, after everything, I am not so sure anymore. I knew Solas would in fact embrace my magic, and teach me properly. If I really had to use it from time to time, I wouldn't mind. It wouldn't be my go-to weapon, but it would definitely be useful were I trapped in a corner or something. So to know how to exactly use it, would be nice. But all Vivienne did was passing on her knowledge from the Circle's to me. Not teaching me how to use my magic, simply lecturing me about the dangers of it all. Trying to, most likely, scare me into not using it ever again.

*Solas wouldn't do that.*

I shake my head.

*He wouldn't. He'd teach you. He'd accept you for the magic. You know this.*

*But if I go to his cabin now... or later... That would mean he wins. I said I would rather die than go to him for help after that outburst at the cabin.*

*But you missed him, did you not? Just think about it. The Desire demon morphed herself into Solas. Because she knew you desired him, that you wanted him.*

*Shut up. I'm never asking myself for help again.*

I sigh deeply, staring into the flames before me. It was true however. I did want Solas. The time being away from him, not being in his constant grasp the entire time, had made me want him even more than before. I didn't realize this before I left, but when I was gone... Gods, how I had missed him. His playful side, his teasing, that... darker.... sexual...

I gulp.

*Perhaps, I should ask him. Just ask him... about my encounter with the demon. Just asking. You know. For information. Juumt asking...*

I get up and walk back over towards the tavern, peeking through the window. Everyone's gone already, except for Varric, who is now chatting to Sera. Then, my feet instinctively drag me towards his cabin. There's a light shining through his window, he's in. The only question remains; is Fenrian there with him? It's late now... he probably had to go to sleep. I slowly walk over towards the cabin and glance through the window: no Fenrian. I pace back and forth a little infront his cabin.

*Is this really a good idea?*
"You were just going to go in for information, remember?"

"Just going in for information.." I tell myself as I finally muster up the courage to knock on his door. I have completely forgotten about our little 'challenge' the moment he opens up his door and looks at me through half lidded eyes, a small curl of his lips.

"Herald."

"Solas."

He steps aside and gestures for me to enter. And I do. And I can already feel the pull. The heat between my legs rising, tingles in the pools of my stomach. That magnetic force between us, pulling us ever so closely.

I give up.

When he closes the door, and turns around to speak to me, I immediately cling to his body. I wrap my arms around him and kiss him hard on the mouth. Instantly, he allows me, and kisses me back fully. He bites my lower lip while kissing and I moan loudly. My thighs pressing against one another as I try to contain my arousal. But to no avail, he swings me around and pushes me hard against the wall again. I grunt and his lips leave mine as he chuckles lowly and licks his lips. "Da'len..." he breathes.

I lift my hands up to his head and start to caress the tips of his ears softly, whilst looking directly into those dark and stormy eyes of his. The lust is basically written all over his face and the outer lines of his eyes are almost silvery now. "Take me." I whisper. My face is flushed, my legs weak. Almost nothing is holding me up anymore, except his grip on my body against the wall of his cabin.

He chuckles lowly and moves his head into my neck, inhaling my scent loudly, then he presses his lips against my collarbone. Nipping at them softly, whilst tugging on my top, trying to free my breasts from it. "You smell so nice, da'len." He whispers against my sensitive skin. I help him take him off my top, which means his lips have to part from my skin. I groan loudly as I can feel my arousal getting stronger and stronger by the second, it’s almost unbearable now. Once my top is off he immediately puts his mouth to my breasts and starts kissing one of them, while taking the other in his hand. He’s massaging it softly while kissing my other breasts, he lets himself sit on his knees before my body. I take his ears between my fingers again and stroke them softly. Then he proceeds to take my nipple in between his forefinger and thumb and pinches it slightly. I flinch and shudder momentarily, followed up by a soundless moan. He gets up to his feet and claims my mouth again, his tongue playing with my own. He grabs me by the hips and pushes me closer against his own, his hands slide towards my behind and he massages it. I tilt my head backwards, ending our kiss and he just stares at me, his mouth slightly open as I’m lost in his touch. It feels so wrong, and yet so fucking right. Everything about him is dark, bad, wrong, and he’s so good at it. “Hahren…” I whisper.

He chuckles and bites my lower lip again, this time harder than before. “Tell me what you want, Eliana.”

I obey his demands. Bucking my hips against him. “Take me, hahren.” My own voice is low and dark. I am overcome with lust and desire and I am loving it. I want this, I want him.

He moves me towards his desk and presses me against it, shoving the chair infront of it to the side so he can stand before me. “How do you want it, da’len?” He kisses down my neck, towards my collarbone again, whispering against my skin in between kisses. “Do you want it nice and slow?” He presses himself against my body, I can start to feel his arousal pressing against my upper thigh.
“No, Solas. Fuck me.” The words come out before I think of them.

He stops and looks directly into my eyes. He seems surprised. But quickly that surprised reaction makes way for absolute darkness. “Ma nuvenin, da’len.” He goes down his knees again and rips off my breeches, without tearing them. Then he slides my underwear down and starts kissing my heat softly. I groan, it comes from deep within me. He’s teasing. I can’t take it.

I pull his sleeves up and he laughs, but cooperates, allowing me to take off his own shirt. Until he’s in nothing but his breeches. But that’s easily solved. I pull him back up towards me and reach for his laces, fumbling with them as I try to unlace them. He moves his mouth up towards my ear and starts nibbling on my earlobe. “So impatient, da’len.”

I huff and look at him, biting his lips hard as I continue to struggle with his breeches. “You love to tease me, don’t you hahren?” My voice sounds playful, I have given up trying to mask it. Trying to be good.

He chuckles and helps me unlace them for me, then he slides them down and before I know it, he pushes me up his desk. There are papers and journals falling off of it, vials of potions and empty ones shatter onto the ground as he does. I wrap my legs around his waist and dig my nails into his back hard. Then he quickly enters me, I can’t even prepare myself. No more teasing I guess. His mouth in an ‘o’ shape as he penetrates me, grunting softly as he fills me up. I can feel him stretching me from within and it feels fucking great. He doesn’t wait however, he immediately starts to thrust, picking up speed. I throw my head backwards and let the moans come out uncontrolled. My breath hitched with every thrust that he takes, my torso slightly hunched over as my arms are around him. I buck my hips with his movements and then I can feel his teeth sinking into my neck. “You played with me, Eliana.” He thrusts harder. I gasp and moan again, louder this time. I don’t care who hears it. “I won’t stop until you are begging me to stop. I want you sore, thinking of this moment every step that you take.” It’s a threat, it’s that dark, malicious side of him that’s so fucking enticing. I groan again, closing my eyes and breathing his name over and over again. I can feel myself tightening around his cock and he’s relentless, it’s not long until he starts pounding into me.

“Don’t stop..” I moan loudly.

He growls. “Louder.”

And I obey again, I moan louder, begging him to continue. “Please don’t stop.”

I can hear a deep rumbling coming from his throat. I look at his face, his eyes on me, dark lust spread all over his face. He looks so good. “I want to hear you, Eliana.” He breathes against my chin.

“Fuck…. Solas-“ I stop talking. I can feel my climax coming, its starting to rise up and I’ve only eyes for him. For his claiming of me, for his marking me with his biting on my skin. The raw and sensitive feeling of his teeth sending shivers up and down my spine as he’s taking me hard, relentlessly. Then he stops all so suddenly. I cry at the miss of him filling me up. “No..” I whine softly. He chuckles and pulls out, lifting me up into his arms. He’s kissing me and carrying me towards his bed and gently lays me down on top of it.

I push him to the side and climb on top of him, lifting myself and letting myself slide around his cock again. My hips are rolling onto him ferociously and my breasts are moving as I am. He rolls his head back onto the mattress and grunts himself. Quickly grabbing my hips and helps me move on him, guiding me with my movements, with my rolling. With my riding. I’m impatient, all I want is for my release to come. The climax he took away from me earlier, he’s so good, he feels so good.

“So good..” I grunt out, which results into a chuckle from the elf.
“What’s 'so good', da’len?’” His voice teasing as he’s enjoying the view of me now bouncing on top of him.

“You…. You’re so good.” I close my eyes and let the feeling take over from me entirely.

He moves his torso upwards and embraces me as he finally takes over control again. He thrusts into me and I let him. His face is buried into my hair as he’s fucking me and I kiss the top of his ear softly. Repeatedly moaning out his name, his title. “Hahren…."

And the glorious moment is there, I come, loudly. I tighten around him, causing Solas to hiss loudly through his gritted teeth. I shudder as the jolts and waves of my orgasm take over, my back arching as I do. I’m almost yelling right now, that’s how loud I am, and he quickly follows me. He’s groaning and I can feel him releasing his seed inside of me. I’m riding the waves of my orgasm as I feel him fill me up, the warm liquid shooting up. He groans and pushes me more tightly against his torso. Then, he releases his grip on me and kisses my collarbone again, this time, more gently.

But he remains inside of me, not pulling out. I giggle slightly and kiss his forehead. “That was incredible.” I breathe out as I’m trying to compose myself.

He chuckles. “I told you I would not stop until you beg me to stop, da’len.” He looks up directly into my eyes and pushes me off of him.

“Again?” I breathe softly.

“Until you are sore, Eliana. You owe me. Consider this your punishment for making me wait so long..”

_Fuck._

Chapter End Notes

So, I realize the sex part came really sudden. But you have to imagine that Eliana has been holding back for _way_ too long and she couldn't control herself anymore. Completely forgetting about her pride and just giving in to the darn egghead ;3

Also, I must admit I like the dominant Solas.. just saying.

SO YEAH. You might see more of that in the future ;)

XOXO

Thanks for reading and leaving comments and Kudo's ♥ Y'all are the best ;-;
The Little Pup And The Lioness

Chapter Summary

Eliana is sore from her rough little night with Solas but is immediately thrown into an argument with Vivienne and she is fed up. with her behavior. And so she stands her ground and makes a decision for herself, which has consequences...

She's starting to understand the importance of having to choose a side and she's almost ready to make her choice, but not until she practices her magic a bit more with her new mentor... If she can even focus on the classes with said mentor ;)

Also: Sassy Elie is sassy.

Chapter Notes

Y’all didn't think I forgot did ya?!

I have been gone for far too long and I suppose it did me some good, after all. I wouldn't say I was stuck with my writing of the chapters, just a bit unsure of my writing. It seems as though the holidays have done me good, and I feel in shape again to continue. Firstly I want to thank you all for being so patient with me. The holidays are just very important and I had so much work right before Christmas I barely had time to sit and relax. I worked non stop, then had to go last minute Christmas shopping for the family and of course New Years. So let me be the first to say: HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Well, I am a bit late but I mean well :’)

I hope you all had a lovely Christmas and a wonderful New Year, and today, after work; I immediately sat back down and scribbled away. Or typed away, whatever x3

I hope you haven't forgotten about my lil ol' fanfic because it's back. Whenever I have a day off, I'll write another chapter and we'll go right back to where we left off!

XOXO

THANK YOU SO MUCH ♥

The sun’s bright rays of light are shining onto my face. I groan softly, and turn around on the bed, to my side. I open my eyes slowly, rubbing the sleep out of them as I do. The first thing that I see, is a peaceful sleeping, bald elf next to me. I can’t help myself to stare at him. He looks relaxed, the most relaxed he’s ever been is when he’s sleeping, it seems. I cannot hide my smile, as I feel the corners of my mouth raise upwards. His mouth is closed, he’s breathing loudly.

Still fast asleep…
I stretch my arms up above my body and slowly and quietly get out of the bed, trying not to wake him up. I can immediately feel the soreness of my muscles as I try to get up for the first time in... well hours. I groan again, and curse under my breath.

*He really was relentless last night. How long did we fuck? How many times did I come undone? How many times has he spilled his seed within me?*

Memories, flashes from the previous night come back to me. Sweaty bodies, pressed against one another. Rubbing, causing friction, teasing each other. Goosebumps on my skin, my loud moaning, my begging. His grunts, his growling as he proceeded to take claim of my body, of my womanhood. More sweat, rolling in beads off of my body. His chest glistening from his own body’s sweat. Last night was a whole roller coaster ride of sticky, sweaty, dark sexual goodness. I look over at the state of the room, it looks like a tornado went through the cabin. Shattered glass of his broken vials all over the floor near his desk. The chair he kicked to the side, is upside down onto the floor. His papers and notebook sprawled everywhere. I remember seeing the windows fog up last night, in the flickering light of the single candle he had on. All because of our hot love making. Or rather, our fucking really. Like two bunnies, Jesus Christ. There was no restraint on either one of us. We really went at it. I glance over towards the mirror hanging on the wall and notice my own reflection for the first time. I looked a hot mess. I walk closer to it and scan my neck and face more thoroughly in the mirror. There’s red/blue ish marks all over my neck, from his biting and sucking on the skin. My finger absentmindedly traces the marks on my neck, I feel nothing, but it looks painful. I shake my head and sigh. Then I notice how chapped and swollen my lips still are. Chapped from his biting, yeah he was rough alright, drew blood a few times even. I quickly pick up my clothes from the floor and start to dress myself up. I grab the cloak and make sure it covers up my neck mostly, so the marks he’s made are covered up.

*I need a bath.*

I walk over towards the door and glance behind me one last time, seeing the elf still asleep. Still gloriously naked on the bed, on top of the covers. It’s a good thing nobody ever peeks through windows here in Thedas. I giggle softly and then quietly slip out of the door of his cabin. I glance around me but see nobody around. It would be hard to explain this to anyone now. The Herald leaving Solas’ cabin. Especially after making sure everyone knows about how I didn’t want to be with him. I hurriedly make my way towards the Chantry. I am hungry as all hell but first; hygiene. And I know just the person to talk to about that.

As I open the Chantry doors, I can see Vivienne on the left hand side of the room, near her desk, going through some papers. The moment she spots me she casually walks over towards me. I hold up my hand before she even gets a chance to speak up. “Not now Vivienne. I need to speak to Josephine.”

She seems insulted that I cut her off before she even started. Holding some papers in her hands. “Be that as it may, Herald. I’ve the locations of some of the tomes from the Circle. The ones you promised me to find.” She crosses her arms while still clutching the papers in her hands tightly.

I pinch the bridge of my nose.

*Did I promise her to find her stupid tomes? Must’ve been when I wasn’t listening to her rambling.*

She talks so much. Especially during our trip on the Storm coast, she talked so much I just hummed and nodded. Absentmindedly saying yes to her a few times. “Fine.” I literally snatch the papers out from her hands and skim through the locations mentioned on there, including some of the information about them. “Hinterlands, Western Approach and the Exalted Plains? Couldn’t the circle mages leave them conveniently in just *one* place, Madame de Fer?” I say sarcastically.
The first enchanter sighs deeply and rolls her eyes. “Ahh. Alas, we are not so lucky, Herald.” She sneers at me. “I trust you will go look for these tomes the next time you venture out again?” She asks me impatiently.

I roll up the papers and slide them half assed into my pocket, wrinkling the papers as I do. Resulting in a dissatisfied noise from the woman before me. “Yeah yeah, will do. Now, if you’ll excuse me-“

But she interrupts me, this time. “Actually, Herald. I’ve been meaning to talk to you about what happened back at the Storm coast. As I’ve mentioned back at the cabin of the Blades of Hessarian, I wanted to discuss the matter further with you.”

“Oh. You constantly lecturing me about it afterwards didn’t count then?” I know I am being way too sassy, but I cannot help it. Solas has spent himself inside of me way too many times last night and I feel sticky all over. I want, no need a fucking bath right now. And since Thedas does not have modern plumbing I highly doubt my hot warm bath water will be ready immediately. It will probably take a while longer for the water to become hot. If I can even manage to get this all from Josephine.

“Certainly not. That was me making small talk with you, Herald.” Oh but she’s sassing me right back. “I do believe you need more books and more frequent classes with me in order to prevent such things from happening again. It will be dangerous, I tell you. If one night you have a nightmare and you-“

“Yeah, I wake up and the whole town is set ablaze. Listen, I’ve heard this before, and I’ve come to a conclusion about my usage of magic. Madame de Fer..”

Her eyes widen momentarily, seemingly curious. “And that conclusion is?”

“We will discontinue our classes. And I will start learning on my own to control the magic within me. Perhaps I could even ask Solas to help me out.” I keep my eyes fixated on the woman. She looks absolutely horrified and disgusted with me. Even more so than usual.

“You cannot be serious, my dear. And what, pray tell, will a hedge mage like Solas be able to teach you about magic? A self taught mage is an absolute danger to the society of Thedas and especially to the people of Haven. I am sure Lady Cassandra and the nightingale will agree with me on that matter.” She sounds almost amused, perhaps she even is amused by my new decision.

“Solas has proved himself worthy enough on many occasions. You’d do well to remember that he was the first mage within the Inquisition and has not let us down. He’s done things that go far beyond your knowledge of magic, in fact.”

Ah, and I am now in the midst of a fight to the death with a lioness. She stares deadpan at me, directly into my eyes. All traces of humor disappeared. Nothing but a sharp look on her well taken care of face. “Let me guess, he enters the fade? Walks among demons and converses with them? That hardly is astonishing, if anything it is playing with ones life…” she pauses for a moment. “But I suppose you know all about that, don’t you my dear?”

I knew she knew I had been in the fade while passed out.

“Very well. Do whatever pleases you. You are after all the fabled Herald of Andraste. Just don’t come running to me when something goes wrong.” Her voice emotionless. Curt and all but politeness. As she is with most people. She had warmed up to me a little when I had accepted her as mentor, but now, we are right back where we started. No matter, I never truly liked her anyway. I was only trying to make it work. Convince myself I could grow to like her.
“If anything, I will be running from you, Madame de Fer.” I say in the same polite voice.

She turns around and with that, lets me know she is done with this conversation. Finally. But before I get to walk towards Josephine’s room, she speaks to me once more. “I expect those tomes are to be in my possession soon, Herald. As was your promise.”

I ignore it and enter Josephine’s office, a dark stern look on my face. The moment she spots me, she almost drops the quill in her hand and looks wide eyed at me. “Oh! Herald. I… are you alright?” She examines my face cautiously. Her green eyes scanning me, worriedly.

“Please tell me you can arrange a bath tub for me and buckets of water to fill it?” I ask desperately.

She giggled slightly, but tries to mask it by holding her hand infront of her mouth. “I… well, I am sure I can arrange a few things.”

----

Josephine was a miracle worker! One of the rooms within the Chantry downstairs, right before the cells had a bath tub available. The room had always been locked but she had the keys and was willing to let me use it. Whispering it was mostly a luxury we couldn’t afford. And it were to remain a secret between the two of us. Saying “that many women would love to make use of this one and only bath tub.” And that was fine by me. I got used to bathing in rivers and lakes and washing myself only with a bucket and a cloth. But for this one time I just needed a proper bath. Like back at the inn we stayed at. She arranged for a few buckets of water and told me I could use the firepit within the room to heat the buckets up with. The firepit was mostly only used for cooking but whatever. And the bath did wonders for me and my sore muscles. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I thanked Josephine a thousand times and another thousand times over for her kindness. Afterwards, I headed straight for the singing Maiden to get some of Flissa’s food. By this time it was already late in the afternoon. It was basically a very lazy day. All of my companions were relaxing in the tavern or in their usual spots. I even noticed Cullen sitting for once. Still near the training grounds but, he sat. And that alone was a miracle. In the tavern, I was enjoying the food with Varric and Sera. Who seemed to get along just fine with one another, they spent a lot of time together. Bantering and having fun and laughs together. I hadn’t seen Solas yet, and I figured he was busy cleaning up the cabin.. I felt a bit bad for letting him do that on his own, but figured I’d let it be for now.

“-and then I threw a pie right into that twats face! Oh you shoulda seen the look on his face, that noble prick.” Sera smacks her hand onto the table loudly and laughs. Varric himself almost choked on the ale he was drinking and I eye the two of them amusedly as I’m chewing on the meat from my bowl.

“I can’t help but wonder how you get away with doing all that shit, buttercup. If anyone else did that, they’d get locked up.” Varric shakes his head amusedly. Sera simply shrugs and takes a big gulp of her own ale then.

“They can try.” She snickers and snorts loudly. Then the door of the tavern opens and in walks my bald elf. We all turn to look into the direction of the door and the moment my eyes find Solas’, I flush a crimson red and avert my gaze. But Sera has noticed. “So it’s true then…” she sounds like she’s just uncovered the biggest mystery ever.

I look to her confusedly and raise my eyebrow up. “Hm? What are you talking about?” My eyes dart from Sera to Varric and then back to Sera again.

She starts to smirk widely. “Little Johnny saw you coming out of his cabin this morning.
“Little Johnny? And I am supposed to know who that is?”

She rolls her eyes. “He’s one of the little people here in Haven. It’s fine yeah, you don’t have to know them, I do. Anyways, he saw you coming out that tits cabin. When he told me, I didn’t think much of it but… you’re screwing him aren’t you?” She clicks her tongue and my eyes widen.

I punch her shoulder hard. “Do you want the entirety of Haven to hear you? Andraste’s sacred knickers, Sera!” I hiss at her.

Varric chuckles and Sera snorts a second time. “It’s all good, innit? You just… have a thing for….” She scrunches her nose as she continues, her eyebrows furrowing, a true look of disgust on her face. “Old… bald… elfy elves…. Always rambling about…. Magic shite.” She shakes her head and takes another big gulp of the ale.

Finally Solas sits down next to me, eyeing up the blonde elf next to me. “Magic shite? Am I to presume you are speaking about me, Sera?”

She huffs and gets up from the table, patting me lightly on the shoulder before she walks off. Varric laughs heartily. “Well, ain’t this just interesting. Chuckles and Feathers. I think I have just gotten some more material for my novel.”

I shake my head and turn to look at Solas. “Done some cleaning in your cabin, Solas?” I say teasingly. I don’t know why, but today I am feeling bold and reckless. First I am sassing Vivienne and now I am openly teasing Solas. I am playing with the wolf infront of a lot of people. But he seems unfazed by it.

“Indeed. It needed some work regardless.” He smiles wickedly at me, Varric watching the two of us converse with hawk eyes. “But I am not here to discuss cleaning with you, Eliana.” Flissa walks over towards our table and places a bowl of broth infront of Solas. He pays her with some of his coins and turns his attention back to me. “I was just approached by Vivienne. She has told me… in her own words, that you discontinued your classes with her and wish to continue on your own.”


I groan. “She didn’t tell you the part where I told her I might just confide in you for my usage of magic in the future?” I stare at Solas.

He grins again. “Oh yes, this was my most favorite part about her ranting. I dare say I was very amused by hearing it all coming from her. However…” he pauses. “It would seem word has already spread and the nightinggale and Seeker Cassandra are not too pleased with your decision and wish to speak to you about it.”

“Oh oh.” Is all that came from the strawberry blonde haired dwarf opposite of us.

_Uh oh you’re damn right. This can only go two ways: bad and very bad._

“So I am to be expected in the war room I take it.” I say matter of factly.

Solas simply nods.

I get up from the stool and dip my head towards the two men before me. “Well in that case… gentlemen, enjoy your ale and food. I will speak to you shortly.” With that, I get out of the tavern with heavy feet. I should have known this was the reaction I was going to receive. I should have known word would spread so fast in a quiet little town like this. However, I didn’t quite think the consequences through. No matter what, I would stand my ground during this conversation later. I
wasn’t happy being mentored by Vivienne and I wasn’t learning anything too spectacular. Yes, she taught me a few things about magic, but nothing practical. We had been together for a full week and she didn’t even teach me to conjure a simple flame, or a ward. Not even a fire rune, to heat up water or armour. As I was lost in thoughts I walked into the Chantry once again, to find Vivienne no longer there. All the better, didn’t want to run into her smug face while possibly going to be berated by two intimidating women later on.

*Ah but I am intimidating now too. I am no longer that scared little pup. Not the same girl I was back when I first got here. And they know it too. Stand your ground, no matter what, Elie.*

The moment I swing the door open to the war room, the two of them are already standing there. Glancing down at the map of Thedas. And as I thought: our pawns have now found their spot on the Storm Coast. I am pleased about this fact but soon realize again that this is not the time to be feeling pleased… yet.

Cassandra looks up to me and crosses her arms, her lips in a thin line. Leliana simply stands up straight, slightly to the back of Cassandra. Always in the shadows, even if it’s just a bit. “We need to talk.” I remain quiet. I’ll let them say their piece first before I speak. “Do you really think it wise to anger one of the strongest mages we have in the Inquisition? To throw her aside after she’s taken the time and liberty to teach you things about a very dangerous weapon you now have at your disposal?”

Leliana continues for Cassandra. “Though we can all agree Vivienne is not very likable, we cannot afford to drive a wedge between us and her. You have said yourself that we need her. And here you go, insulting her and trading her in for Solas. You could have known she would not let that go by so easily.”

I sigh. “Alright. First of all…” I take a deep breath. “Vivienne is not the only strong mage we have in the Inquisition. Solas is also a very powerful mage, and is more open to thought of entering the fade. And before you two go on about that, no it is not only a dangerous place, I have seen it in my dreams with him before. It can be beautiful, showing you places you have been before. Old memories played out before you, reliving everything as if it was truly happening to you. Second of all, I do appreciate Vivienne taking time out of her schedule to teach me things, but let us be fair here, she has not taught me anything practical. And I doubt she would have done so at all. Vivienne is from the Circle. And though I know you two believe wholeheartedly in the Circle, and restraining mages and whatnot, there is more to it than that. I believe, personally, that I will need Solas’ take on magic. Vivienne only knows to teach about fear for magic.”

Cassandra sputters. “I do not believe all mages should be restrained, Eliana-“

“No, but it is how you’ve been raised is it not? You being a Seeker, part of the Chantry. ‘Magic is meant to serve men, not rule over him.’ And I cannot fault you two for that, you don’t know any better. And perhaps your views have changed slowly over the past few months, but you still support Vivienne more than Solas. And has Solas also not helped us on many occasions with his magic? Has he shown signs of possession or danger to us all, whilst he was using his barriers to safeguard each and every one of us while in battle?”

Leliana interjects. “This is not the point Eliana.”

“It is though. My mind has been made.” I say resolute.

“And is it not because you are biased towards Solas?” Leliana asks me softly.

I snort. “You are referring to us sleeping together are you not?”
Cassandra’s jaw drops. “Eliana! Surely you—”

Leliana interrupts Cassandra however. “I am indeed.”

“Perhaps I am. But let us not forget Solas was the first mage here and if I had not decided to recruit Vivienne he still would have been my only choice of mentor. She would not have been here, I would still have come to realize I had magic within me, and he would be the only option then. Vivienne will just have to swallow her pride and deal with it.”

Cassandra opens her mouth to speak but then closes it again, and for the first time in a while, I can see a look of respect and appreciation from the strong Seeker. I hum and cock my head to the side, waiting for them to answer.

Leliana sighs, defeated and nods. “Point taken. You are right.”

Cassandra nods too. Ever so slightly. “She really can be obnoxious.” Then her lips curl into a smile. And we all share a moment of mutual agreement, when we giggle erratically for a bit.

“Listen..” I say seriously then. “I understand your point, I truly do. And perhaps the way I did wasn’t the most honorable one. I insulted Vivienne and I will surely apologize to her, another time, when I’m not feeling so sassy.. but you must understand as well that I never truly liked her. I wasn’t paying attention half the time when she was explaining things and isn’t that more dangerous?”

The two of them nod silently. So I continue. “Yes I may be biased towards Solas but he can also teach me enough to control my magic and to use it when needed. Once again, I cannot press the matter enough; I don’t want my magic to be my main weapon of choice. I will only want to use it when cornered without weapons and to heat up some damn water for a bath or something.”

Leliana dips her head. “Perhaps we were a bit too harsh as well. Train with Solas if you must… but try to keep the romance hidden away a bit. As we all know the inquisitions position isn’t stable as it is, and the Herald of Andraste having an elven lover will not sit well with the masses. For now, we must try to keep that fact hidden. At least until our grasp has become stronger.”

I nod, understandingly. I get it, truly. Though I do not support this idea in the slightest. Nobody should be cast out of anything simply because of the person they love. But, in Thedas there is no such thing as equality in love. Not for all races at least. And I can protest all I want about the matter, Leliana is right. At this moment, we need the support of Thedas. And if I screw this up for everybody, we won’t get very far. I too, will have to swallow my pride and deal with this. Not like I was going to dry hump Solas infront of everyone anyways…

“Do you truly have feelings for him?” Cassandra asks me hesitantly.

To be honest I do not know how to answer that. Yes I have feelings for Solas, very strong feelings indeed. But they are different from what I’m used to. They are different feelings that I had for Dan, for example. Of course everyone is different and I cannot, could not, ever, compare those two. But my feelings for Solas lay deeper, they stem from a very dark place within me. Places I have not ever discovered before, that I have not ever investigated before. It’s like he brings out the best in me while at the same time, the worst. The darkest version of myself. The sex alone is a very good example of that. But how do I explain this to a prude Seeker? “I do. Though they are very confusing feelings.”

Leliana hums. “Perhaps it is because you are in the midst of a war between the Inquisition and whoever it is that created the Breach? You’ve never been through such a thing before. I understand it can be confusing.”
“Do you?” The words come out before I think of them, and I immediately regret it. Thinking Leliana will be pissed off. But instead she smiles softly. That soft side of her, the humane side, that she barely ever shows anyone.

“I too fell in love in the midst of a war you know.” She closes her eyes and when she opens them again, I can see the vulnerability within them. “I fell in love with the Hero of Ferelden during the fifth blight. She was…. An amazing woman. And every day I regret I could not save her.” She shakes her head. “So I do know how you feel, Eliana. Just try not to let it cloud your judgement or your mind too much. We need you focused.”

“Understood.” I say simply.

Cassandra sighs. “Let us talk of something else instead, while we are already here.” She points down to the map and I see she’s pointing at the Hinterlands again. I groan inwardly. I’ve been there twice now and I don’t really feel like heading back there again soon. The long journey, the sore ass from riding Moonlight. “The mages in Redcliffe wanted to speak with you. You’ve mentioned this before.” I swallow hard. Why does this feel like I’m about to be places before an ultimatum… “- However, there is also the matter of the templars and Lord Seeker Lucius. Cullen and I have spoken to one another while you were at the Storm coast and we believe a decision should be made soon.”

I nod. “You want to know who I wish to side with.” I say softly while staring blankly at the map. Cassandra points towards the other side of Ferelden, a big pawn is placed there. One of Cullen’s pawns.

“Therinfal Redoubt. Cullen has worked hard to figure out where the templars are holed up and this is the fortress in which they are staying, together with Lucius.” Cassandra continues.

“So you have a plan then, I take it?” I glare at the Seeker.

“We have not been sitting idly by whilst you were gone, Eliana.” Cassandra smiles faintly. “Should you decide to choose the Templars, we have already figured out a way for you to do so. Josephine and Leliana have been working tirelessly to convince, coerce and win over some of Orlais’ most influential houses. Ten noble houses in fact. They are willing to help the Inquisition pressure the templars into sealing the Breach, traveling to Therinfal Redoubt and demanding the Lord Seeker deal with them or face the wrath of Orlais.”

Leliana steps forwards a bit and places another big pawn on Redcliffe village. “However, the decision remains yours to make. And though everyone has worked hard to achieve this, we will stand by your decision in the end.”

Cassandra sighs. “But you must know that we do not yet have a plan for the mages. After all, they are the rebel mages and choosing them will not likely gain you any favors within the Inquisition. Or rather, with Vivienne. Unless you choose to restrain them, like the circles do.”

“Rebels or not, Fiona seemed gracious enough to introduce herself to us back at Val Royeaux. And invited us personally. I’d say that would have our priority. After our visit to Redcliffe village I could still decide whom to side with, right? After all, it’s simply just a visit for now.” What harm could there be in simply talking to Fiona and hear her out, before making my final decision.

“True enough. But sooner or later, you will have to decide.” Leliana says resolute.

I sigh. “Fine. I’ll just… think on this for another day or so. Prepare your things however, I want Cassandra, Varric and Solas with me when I travel to meet with the mages in Redcliffe. Like old times.” I joke.
“You wish to head out tomorrow?” Leliana asks me then.

I shrug my shoulders. “Or the day after that, or three days from now. I do want to rest up a little before heading out and I do believe I should start my training with Solas. There are still some things I wish to discuss with him. Regardless, ready your things, when I’m ready, I’ll want to move right away. No need to drag this out any longer than we have to. Just… need a bit longer before heading out again.”

“Fair enough.” Cassandra walks past me but places her hand on my shoulder softly. “Remember that you are never alone in your troubles, Eliana. We are always here if you wish to discuss things.”

I smile gratefully. “Thank you Cassandra.”

* * * *

After that whole ordeal I left the war room feeling relieved I stood my ground, while at the same time keeping Leliana and Cassandra on my side. Perhaps I misjudged them, thinking too harshly about their judgement on me. But still, there was more that needed my attention and for now I really wanted to speak to Solas about what had happened at the fade and get his opinion on things. So I headed straight for the tavern and dragged his skinny ass out of there, demanding I needed to speak to him. To much amusement of Varric who watched it all happen before his eyes.

Solas sat opposite of me, on a second chair he had pulled out and held his index finger against his chin ever so slightly as he watched me explain the story of what happened at the Fade. Once I was done speaking, he took a moment to mull over the information I had given him and finally spoke up. “I must say, you never cease to amaze me, da’len. You encountered a desire demon and came out unscathed without my help. Because you… reminded it of what it used to be?”

I nodded slowly. “I tried to at least, but it only angered her more.” I shook my head. “Which bears the question though… how come the moment I pass out, a demon appears right away? While I was in the Fade before, I never encountered one. Not even a spirit.”

Solas smiles. “It was because you were with me, da’len. I made sure you were protected from spirits and demons. I took you along with me but made sure there was no interference with spirits or demons. Even when you slept and did not dream in the Fade, I made sure no harm would come to you.” He looks down momentarily.

Another side of Solas that I’ve come to care about, the sweet side of him. He does care, he likes to protect. Sometimes it’s like he’s two entirely different people. “You’ve always done that? You didn’t know I was a mage.”

“Still, if you’ve been in the Fade before, it’s dangerous. Especially for people who do not have the gift of magic at all. I didn’t want you to go through such things.” His smile make way for a more serious look then. “However, let us begin your first lesson Eliana. I believe a ward should be a good start for you. If you want to protect yourself from magical attacks, a ward should prove useful.” He gets up from the chair and proceeds to drag me out of my own. He then explains a whole lot about the use of a ward, and how to cast one. For a beginning, amateur mage like myself, he explains it’s always best to think of something that gives me feelings of protection. “Think of something that makes you feel safe, something or someone that makes you feel like nothing can harm you. It has to be as if it’s something nobody can take away from you.”

I think long and hard while Solas holds my hands and extends my arms slightly so that my two hands are now before my body, palms out. “I suppose…” I start but then I fall silent. I’m not sure if that’s the best thing to say aloud.
Solas hums questionably. “What is it?”

“Pride.” I say hesitantly. To which Solas’ eyes widen immediately. For a split second I see some vague emotion spread across his face. But it disappears quickly and makes way for a blank expression again. I cock my head to the side for a bit. Wondering what it was that made him seem affected so by my answer.

“Pride?” He asks.

“Yes, my pride. It makes me feel safe. Hiding behind it does, at least for me. It’s a weird answer I know, but my pride has been a curse as much as a blessing for me. I can hide behind it, pretend I am more than who I really am. It’s an emotion nobody can take out of me, no matter how hard they try. And hiding behind a mask is always a protective feeling. Don’t you agree?”

He clicks his tongue. “Not what I expected but I can understand your point. Though I do believe it’s simply a part of you. Not a mask you wear. Nonetheless, try thinking of your pride. Of the person you become or already are, when using your pride. Use that and close your eyes, imagine now a foe before you, trying to slay you. You’ve no daggers, not a one. Cast a ward to protect yourself. Emotions are strong things, da’len.”

And I imagine it before me, and since I’ve already used my magic before, I can now tell when I’m doing something affectively. I can feel the slight humming and my mark responds with it, burning gently, not painfully in my hand. The tingles spread across my skin, causing goosebumps and again the slight ringing in my ears. I frown, while having my eyes closed and then I feel Solas’ hand gently on my shoulders. “Calm yourself Eliana, it is not a bad thing. Nor is it scary. You shouldn’t be afraid of it. Rather embrace it.” And his calm and soothing words help, as the ringing immediately seems to subside and then I feel power. A power I’ve not felt before, not even when the lightning shot out of my body at the Storm coast. It’s still uncontrolled but yet, more safe than it had been before. And I feel calmer than before, more assured of myself and the magic.

“Good job. Open your eyes and see for yourself.”

As my eyes open, I notice a small, transparent but still visible shield like thing forming from my palms infront of my body. It starts off small, but the more I realize that I am the one doing this, the more powerful and bigger it grows.

Solas chuckles. “Don’t get too excited. I wouldn’t want you passing out on me again. This is good for now, we shall continue practicing this more. So that you’ll grow accustomed to the usage of magic. It can still wear you out.”

I smile widely and keep up the ward. “I’m doing this! Solas, look! How cool is that?!?” I exclaim excitedly. I know I must sound like a little kid right now. But it really is awesome. The ward has now become a solid white shield, protecting me.

He nods, equally as excited as me and lowers my arms softly. Breaking my focus and concentration apparently, because the ward disappears. “Emotions are very strong and powerful things. But don’t let them overcome you. You should still be able to control it. The more excited you got, the powerful it became. But if you let it take over entirely, it can harm you just as much.”

I glare at him, a tad bit annoyed for him breaking the ward. He inches closer to me and plants a soft chaste kiss on my forehead. “Patience, da’len. This is a very good start and it shows me how your magic affects you and what you can and cannot do.”

I huff but then start to feel a bit light headed. “Er… yeah, patience… good idea.” I slur my words
slightly as I try to compose myself. But Solas keeps his arms on my body, preventing a possible tumble. “Will magic always drain me so?”

He shakes his head. “Only at first. I’ll make sure you learn more. Then it won’t be an issue anymore. You only have a bit of mana at your disposal now, but that can be increased by training and learning. Practical learning of course.” He smiles. Then he takes out a vial from his pocket and hands it over to me. “A lyrium potion, I feel confident enough to let you have that now that you are a mage. Drink it and you’ll feel better in no time.”

I greedily drink the content of it and take a seat again.

*He is right, I am starting to feel better again, less drained.*

*Of course he is right, he always is.*

“Copper for your thoughts?” He kneels down infront of me and eyes me.

I giggle. “I was just thinking about how you’re always right. I shouldn’t even be surprised anymore.”

He grins. “Of course I’m right. I am after all very experienced.” The cockiness apparent in his voice.

I snort. “Oh is that how you call being old?” I look him directly into his eyes and the darkness returns within them.

“Careful now, da’len. I can make you feel even more sore than I made you feel last night.” He pauses and looks down at my mouth then. “And please, stop biting your lip. It’s distracting me.”

Then I notice again I am indeed biting my lower lip again. Absentmindedly I bite it when he excites me. He gets up to his feet again and holds out his hand then. “Let us continue our classes then Eliana. Before a certain boy comes back from *his* classes.”
His Vhenan

Chapter Summary

I'm no longer putting up NSWF warnings ;)

So it'll be a surprise in upcoming chapters, after all, the tags of this fanfic say enough :3

Eliana and Solas POV in this chapter, also, we see a bit more of Eliana's darker side in this chapter...

A side to her that only Solas can bring out, it seems.

More worrying, but also- more growing in Elie's decisions and dealings with everything.

And it seems, that Eliana has made up her mind on whom to side with during this Holy War.

...

DORIAN!!!! *Squeals*

He is by far one of my most favorite DAI characters, aside from Solas of course ;3

Hope you all enjoy !! XOXO

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That night we are all spending time getting to know one another in at the tavern. It was an idea of mine, to be honest. After my classes with Solas, I felt very satisfied and happy. I invited everyone, personally went by their spot and asked them to join us later at the tavern for drinks. I'd pay. I went to Krem and Bull's hang out spot and asked, Bull immediately agreed. Krem seemed happy as well. I found Sera shooting some arrows at the training grounds and invited her as well. Her only reply was: "Is that egg going to be there?" to which I simply replied he may be. It took some convincing, but when I told her drinks were on me, she obliged. Cullen was nearby and I asked him too, but he simply said he was too busy recruiting the new soldiers and scouts. After all, he's had a change of staff. He thought he simply couldn't leave his duties.

Well, too bad then.

Josephine was willing to join, as were Cassandra and Leliana. Varric was already at the tavern, scribbling away on his papers so I didn't need to convince him. Blackwall agreed to come but only after he asked me if Josephine was going to be there.
Seems like Solas and I are not the only one's who are looking for a distraction amidst all this shit.

Fenrian came as well, but only because he wanted to spend time with me and Solas. Word in Haven had spread that I was seen leaving his cabin early in the morning, rather hurriedly. And the townsfolk of Haven did the math. Of course, Fenrian heard of it as well and asked Solas and I in a quite straightforward manner if this were true. And if this meant we were now a couple.

"You just worry your little head about your upcoming test, Fenrian." I said in a serious tone of voice. Which had shut him up, but then he asked me if I was willing to quiz him on his knowledge. And so I did. I had initially wanted to get to know everyone even better but Fenrian's classes and test were more important at that moment. After all, he'd go to bed soon anyways. I'd be able to speak with everyone then.

"Asa'ma'lin. Do you think I'll pass the test from Mother Petrice?" Fenrian looked up at me with worried eyes. We had studied his notes for what seemed like hours, sitting a little ways further from the rabble.

My head was resting on my right hand and I glanced down his papers, thinking for a moment. "I'm sure you'll do great sweetheart. Just don't overthink things when you're doing the test and you should be fine. After all, Mother Petrice said you were one of her brightest pupils, did she not?" I smiled reassuringly at my little cub.

He yawned softly and nodded his little head. His silvery blonde hair shone slightly in the flickering light of the candles on top of our table. Flissa came by a third time that evening to hand him some milk to drink.

"What of Samara by the way? Have you played with her and Martin lately?" I ask as I absentmindedly brush some of his locks out of his face.

Fenrian shakes his head softly. "No. I've mostly been spending time with you and ba'isa'ma'lin. Though we did teach her how to play hide and seek for a bit."

I sigh.

_He really spends too much time with Solas and me when we're back at Haven. I don't want him to not hang out with his friends. I want him to be a kid as well. Have fun. Enjoy his childhood._

Though childhood in Thedas is of course different, it should still be important for him to play with his peers. Instead of hanging around adults all day long. "How about tomorrow after your test, you go and play with them, huh? Solas and I are most likely going to prepare for another trip to the Hinterlands anyways."

He starts to neatly clean up his notes. "How long will you be gone this time?" He doesn't even sound sad anymore. I kind of feel bad for him, it's become a normal thing. I go out on a trip, don't see him for a couple of weeks and then come back for a few days, then leave again.

"Does it bother you that I'm always gone, Fenrian?"

"Oh no, don't worry about it asa'ma'lin! I'm not mad at you. I couldn't be. You always come back. I'm just used to it." he smiles up at me.

I smile and kiss him softly on the cheek. Then I pinch it. "Time for you to say good night to everyone, lethalin. You should get plenty of rest before your test tomorrow."

He gets up from the table and runs over towards the corner, where everyone is still sitting, drinking
and talking loudly to one another. I get up from the table and lean against the doorpost, watching him. A smile on my lips. He literally jumps right at Solas and kisses him on the cheek, they exchange a few words and then I see Solas lean in closer to Fenrian and whisper something in his ear. To which they both turn their heads and look at me. Fenrian giggles and then nods. Finally he gets off of Solas' lap and tells everyone good night, then he proceeds to skip back over to me and takes hold of my hand as we leave the tavern.

"What did Solas say to you?" It's ridiculous but my curiosity got the better of me, and I'm actually asking this of a kid.

"He told me that I should sing Mir Dalen Somniar with you again tonight. Said that you practiced the song while you were out last time." he seems content about this fact.

I nod. Squeezing his hand softly. "This is true. In fact, I'm pretty sure I can sing it perfectly now. No weird pronunciation anymore." I smirk at the little one walking next to me.

"Good. I like it when you sing. Solas likes it when you sing as well. He's told me." Fenrian says matter of factly as he continues to stare ahead of him. At the Chantry building thats coming closer towards us as we continue walking.

"Does he now?" I say softly.

"Mmhm! He also really likes it if you speak in Elven."

I giggle. "Wanna know a secret?" I whisper softly next to him. To which he nods his head frantically. "I do too. I really like your language."

"Ba'isa'ma'lin and I will teach you more, Elie!" he says excitedly. I can already see him thinking about it all and giggle yet again. This kid is really something. I'm so glad I found him that day..

* * *

**Solas POV:**

I watch her and Fenrian leave the tavern and I immediately withdraw from any social interaction with the others. The only reason I was here this evening was because she asked me to come. I had wanted to join her and Fenrian prepare for his test tomorrow, but Varric and Blackwall kept me here. Talking to me about today's stew that Flissa was serving.

I glance down at my sketchbook and continue the drawing of Eliana I was making. Last night's images came back to me. Her beautiful hands on my shoulders as I was taking her. Her sweet, gentle whispering in my ear. Her lovely breasts bouncing up and down as she was riding me. I shake my head, glance around a bit to see if anyone's noticed me and my wayward thoughts. But luckily, nobody really pays any attention to me at this point. Then, the door to the tavern opens again. It couldn't be Eliana. Regardless, I look up towards the door and Vivienne walks in. Her facial expression disgusted.

When she spots us all sitting together, she casually walks her way over towards us and takes her seat next to Cassandra.

"Iron Lady! Glad you could make it." Varric exclaims, a bit tipsy from all the ale he's been drinking tonight.

Vivienne scrunches up her nose. "My dear, I only came because Lady Cassandra had asked me to." then she glances around the tavern for a bit. I keep my eyes on her. "Is the Herald not here? I
thought she was the one who arranged all of this."

"She's putting Fenrian to sleep." I say in an emotionless tone of voice as I keep my eyes on her. The disdain was literally dripping off of her every word when she spoke of Eliana just now.

When she spots me, she rolls her eyes. "Surprised to find you here, Solas. I didn't think taverns were for someone like you."

I put down my sketchbook. "Someone like me, Madame de Fer? Do explain."

Josephine is glancing over to us and clears her throat a bit awkwardly. "Come now, everyone. Let's not resort to such behavior. Tonight is a good night. We were about to play a game of Wicked Grace, were we not?" she looks to Blackwall and Varric and nudges them slightly.

Blackwall almost chokes on his ale when Josephine gives him the side eye. "Wha-... Oh! Oh yes. Yes, Varric and I... we... er..."

Josephine sighs and shakes her head. "Do you wish to join us, Madame de Fer?"

Vivienne, as easily distracted as she is, takes the bait. "Hm.. Yes, perhaps I will."

Varric grins. "Oh, this will be good. How about you, Chuckles?" the dwarf nudges me as well.

I'd rather not play with this insufferable woman. However, my pride demands differently. It would be a great end of the evening, were I to win from her. Like rubbing salt in her wounds even more, after losing Eliana as her pupil. "Why not." I say indifferently.

Iron Bull laughs heartily and punches Krem on the shoulder. "Here Krem, join us! Or are you too afraid to lose from Fereldens?"

Krem sputters and throws some of her coin onto the table loudly. "I think they are too afraid to lose from a vint! Count me in, Josephine."

Vivienne feigns a chuckle and returns her gaze to me. "Hm. Charming."

Then, the door to the tavern opens yet again and in walks Eliana. Varric waves over to her. "Feathers! You're right on time! We were just about to start playing Wicked Grace. Join us! Even Iron Lady is playing."

Eliana's eyes fall on Vivienne, and I can clearly see her confusion. "Er... Sure, why not." She awkwardly moves over towards the table and takes her seat next to me. I kept it empty, and no one has bothered to sit next to me regardless. The moment Josephine starts shuffling the deck of cards and handing five to each of us, she leans in closer to me and whispers into my ear softly. "Who invited Vivienne?"

I lean into her own ear as well. "I believe that would be the Seeker's doing."

She lets out a small, almost inaudible groan. But Vivienne's eyes immediately dart over towards her. "Didn't your mother ever tell you it's rude to whisper in the company of others?"

"Didn't your mother ever tell you that- OW!" Eliana begins, but is kicked underneath the table. She squints her eyes directly at the assailant: Josephine.

"Let us begin." Josephine says curtly.

Everyone immediately turns over their cards and glances down at them, silence falling all around the
tavern. Apart from the few townspeople who are drinking here tonight as well. Immediately Sera starts laughing. "Ooooooh. I got a great pair right here." she seems smug with herself.

Eliana snorts. "Do you even know how to play Wicked Grace, Sera?"

Sera sniffs loudly and looks back down at her cards. "I do..." she throws two cards onto the table, upside down and smiles wickedly at all who are playing.

Josephine hums. "Do I play bold or safe...."

Varric himself draws another card and Blackwall discards a pair of his own, proceeding to draw another two from the deck.

Josephine makes up her mind finally then, it seems. "Bold it is!" she throws two onto the table and draws another two from the deck.

I glance down at my own cards, still not making any decisions. I rather wish to wait until everyone's made their move. Vivienne joins the rest with one pair of cards onto the table. So far, everyone's played them upside down. After Vivienne, Eliana joins. When I turn my head to look at her, she smirks, ever so slightly at me.

Does she have a winning hand? She could also be bluffing.

She then proceeds to look at the remaining people who have not played yet. Including myself. I decide to wait until Bull, Krem, Leliana and Cassandra have played and then...

"The Angel of Death card!" Cassandra exclaims.

Vivienne makes a small sound of displeasure and then everyone turns their cards around. Showing their hands. Everyone had a middling hand, apart from Sera, who had a very bad hand. With none of her cards matching.

"Piss.. Shite!" the blonde elf curses.

I smile ever so slightly and proceed to take all the coin onto the table. "Well, it would seem that-" but my hand is slapped by Eliana.

"-My good sir. 'It would seem' nothing." she throws her last card onto the table. Ontop of the four she already had on the table: a matching set of cards. The last one she threw on there was also an Angel of Death card. "I win." she takes all the coins from the table and then calls over to Flissa. "Flissa! Another round of drinks here, please!"

I smile back at her. "Good game, da'len."

But, really, I'm just happy to know Vivienne lost. Turns out I feel even more satisfied when it's Eliana winning from her.

Cassandra grumbles. "There's only two Angel of Death cards in the entire deck, and they have it. There goes my coin."

Varric chuckles and shakes his head. "Seems like Feathers is getting the hang of this game."

"I'm never gambling again." Josephine mutters.

"I should return to the Chantry." Leliana slowly gets up from the table but Eliana halts her.
"Leliana. A moment, please. I wish to depart for Redcliffe village tomorrow."

Leliana's eyes widen momentarily. "You've... made up your mind then?"

Eliana nods and proceeds to get up from her seat and addresses everyone present then. "During my small walk from the Chantry back to the tavern, I've made up my mind. Tomorrow, Solas, Cassandra, Varric and I will head out to Redcliffe village and have a talk with the rebel mages." she then looks directly into Vivienne's eyes. "I've decided to side with the mages. There's no need to speak to the Templars at Therinfal Redoubt. Though I appreciate all the hard work Leliana and Josephine have put into their plan for the Templars, I believe siding with the mages would be our best bet. It would be a chance for the mages to show they're not all evil."

"And what will you do with the mages once they've accepted your offer?" Vivienne sneers at Eliana. She smiles ever so sweetly at the first enchanter. "I will not conscript them. They will be our allies. If... all goes well with our talks, of course."

Everyone falls silent then. And at this moment, I could not be more proud of this woman.

"And how did you come to this conclusion, if I may ask?" Josephine asks Eliana then.

"I believe the mages all across Thedas deserve a second chance."

"Even after what happened at Kirkwall?" Vivienne remarks.

"Even after what happened at Kirkwall, yes. If anything, this will be a great way to redeem themselves for it. And if I'm not mistaken, it was only one mage who screwed up. A fanatic, by the name of Anders." Eliana is all but confidence now. And I must say.. it excites me. She really has changed, grown..

Varric nods. "She's right."

Sera huffs. "So long as you keep them away from me."

Cassandra seems somewhat proud of Eliana as well, despite her leaning more towards the idea of siding with the Templars. "We will support your decision no matter what."

"It's settled then. Let's get to packing after our drinks." she winks at the three of us and sits back down for the last round of drinks she's ordered. However, Leliana and Vivienne leave the group. Leliana to get back to her work, no doubt. Vivienne because she's upset. This evening continues to get better and better.

Soon, the entire group starts bantering with one another again. I sit there, absentmidedly listening and watching at everyone who's speaking to one another. But really, the only person my eyes linger on the longest, is Eliana. Thoughts shooting through my head about stripping her of those pesty little clothes, and claiming her mouth for my own. Tasting her arousal, marveling in her lovely scent. I keep my eyes fixated on her. And she has noticed. Every once in a while she'll glance my way and swallow down hard. I know I have an effect on her, and she's starting to take my subtle hints. Slowly but certainly, everyone from the group starts to leave. And in the end, it's only myself, Eliana, Varric, Iron Bull and Krem left.

"For crying out loud, you two get a room already!" Iron Bull says in an amused tone of voice then. Breaking the staring between Eliana and myself.

"I don't know what you're talking about, Bull. But I will in fact get a good night's sleep." and with
that, Eliana gets up from the table and leaves the tavern.

The three of them proceed to stare at me then. "We saw nothin', Chuckles." Varric smirks widely.

I walk back towards my cabin and wonder which way Eliana went. Did she go to sleep at the firepit, within the tent. Or did she go to my cabin? However, when I reach my cabin and see that there's a light on inside. My question has been answered and the wolf within me howls triumphantly.

Exactly what I wanted.

The moment I open my door, I spot her sitting on the bed in nothing but her smallclothes. Topless. "Da'len."

She gets up from the bed and walks over to me slowly. Once she reaches me, her finger languidly traces up and down my shirt. "Alright. So you've been giving me these looks all evening and I'm not stupid."

I keep my face emotionless as best as I can. But she's teasing me and right now, her being in front of me half naked, is really not making it easy for me. I want to just take her, right here, right now. Against the wall. "You're very bright, Eliana. I did not think otherwise."

She inches closer to me with her head, until her lips are brushing against my own. Her warm breath on my lips as she speaks every word and drawls them out. "So, hahren. What was going through your mind?"

I cannot resist any longer. I claim her mouth, with her tongue quickly playing with my own. She lifts one of her legs up and I roughly take hold of it. Her heat is now pressed against my arousal and she starts to buck her hips already. She's so impatient, so ready. Exactly the way I like her. I gently use some of my magic to caress her aura and she shivers in response to it. In between kisses, she breathes loudly. "We have to make it a quick one though. We still need to pack and it's late."

I start to grin ferociously. "That can be arranged." immediately she falls to floor on her knees and takes off my pants. By now I don't even have to help her with the laces. I myself take off my shirt and wait for her to come back up towards me, but she remains down on her knees. And she's fumbling a bit but eventually she undresses me fully and takes me inside of her mouth.

I tilt my head back and take a fist full of her hair and tug at it ever so slightly. Which results in a low, deep, throaty moan from the girl down on her knees. She bops her head back and forth and slides her tongue against my member. I growl lowly. Eliana tends to bring out the beast within me and tonight, it seems, is no exception. "Eliana..." I whisper softly.

She hums whilst having my member within her mouth, the vibrations of her voice tipping me almost over the edge already. And we cannot have that. I pull myself out of her mouth with a pop and grin down at her already flushed face. "Take off your smallclothes. Now."

She slowly gets up from her knees and obeys meekly. But she likes to tease, loves to in fact. So, instead of doing exactly as I asked, she turns around. Her bare back now facing me, walks over towards the bed, and very slowly she slides down the sides of her smallclothes, revealing her exquisite butt. She then bends over forwards, showing me her already wet heat and takes down the smallclothes all the way to her ankles. Until she finally gets back up and steps out of them. "Like that, hahren?" her voice coy and innocent. But I know better. She's not innocent. She herself is a wolf in sheeps clothes. Perfect for me. I picked out my mate well.
I growl a low growl again and step towards her, until my hand is wrapped around her neck from behind her. "You like to toy with me, da'len." My fingers digging softly into her skin. She hums in response. My lips press against the nape of her neck and I flick my tongue against her sensitive skin. "Now, tell me again what you want, Eliana."

"Fuck me."

"I'm sorry. I did not get that."

"Fuck me, please." she replies a bit louder than before.

"Ma nuvenin." and without hesitation, I bend her over forwards. She immediately places her hands onto the mattress of the bed and keeps her torso up. I enter her, slowly, teasing her. Filling her up slowly and extending her tortuously. She gasps loudly and grunts when I finally cannot go any deeper.

"Stop toying. I know you want to be relentless." she hisses through gritted teeth. And she is right. I place my hands on her hips and take her. Relentlessly. The way I like it, and the way I know she likes it. Her butt smacking against me with every thrust I take. I knead her behind as I lay claim of her, showing the gooseskin forming on her beautifully fair skin. I bend my own torso as I take her and place my lips at her earlobe. "I want to spill myself within you like last night, da'len. I want you to scream for your release." She moans in response, her mouth wide open, eyes closed, reveling in the feeling. She's so feral. "You're so wet for me, Eliana. Tell me, how much have you fantasized about this?"

She groans. "Every night."

I flick her nipple with one of my fingers and she gasps, followed up by a muffled moan as she bites down hard onto her lower lip. I graze her earlobe with my teeth and release her breasts then, placing my hands again at her hips. Moving her faster, kneading her skin ever so slightly as I do. And just when I think I've got her cornered and trapped. Just when I think she can do no more than moan, groan and beg for me.

"Pull my hair, hahren."

I cannot stop the chuckle from leaving my mouth. "The Herald likes it rough, I see."

I flick her nipple with one of my fingers and she gasps, followed up by a muffled moan as she bites down hard onto her lower lip. I graze her earlobe with my teeth and release her breasts then, placing my hands again at her hips. Moving her faster, kneading her skin ever so slightly as I do. And just when I think I've got her cornered and trapped. Just when I think she can do no more than moan, groan and beg for me.

"Pull my hair, hahren."

I cannot stop the chuckle from leaving my mouth. "The Herald likes it rough, I see."

"Shut up and do it." she demands me.

And I obey this time. I move my right hand from her hips, again taking a fistful of her hair in my hand and pull it softly. I want to be rough with her, but not hurt her. In response she groans again. And now I have her panting. Panting for me, as she grows tighter around my cock. I want to reach my climax with her, and so I let go of my inhibitions and grunt close to her ear as I thrust faster yet again.

"Solas.... I-.." she moans.

"Come for me, Eliana."

And she does as she's told. She finds her release as she yells out, riding her waves, she stops her moving against me and stills herself as she groans and pants. And I too spill myself within her. The release tonight even better than last night.

She drops herself onto the mattress now fully and catches her breath and I follow quickly. "That...."
was amazing," she smiles and then starts to giggle. A lovely sound.

"Indeed it was," my chest moving up and down as I compose myself.

"We should do that more often."

I chuckle and turn myself sideways, taking her into my arms gently. Planting featherlight kisses on her neck. "During our trip we could. Although you'll have to be silent around our companions." That thought amuses me much. "I believe it will be most amusing to see you struggle to remain quiet."

She in return chuckles herself. "I can be quiet if I wish to be." she then turns herself around, now facing me. She stares down at my chest and then back up into my eyes. Her beautiful eyes looking up quizzically at me. "Solas?"

"Yes, Eliana?"

"What is this, that we're doing? Are we... together? Or..." she glances down again. She's afraid to look me directly into my eyes now.

I think for a moment before answering. I'm afraid I do not know this myself. "What do you want it to be?" I ask her finally.

She looks back up at me, and seems... displeased with my answer. "Stop answering my questions with questions." I remain silent. "I have... feelings for you. You have feelings for me. And we had sex. So now what? Is that it?"

"Do you want it to be more?" She groans and pushes herself away from my grasp, but I instinctively pull her back towards me. I don't want her to leave me. "I'll have to think about it." the words leave my mouth before I can give them a second thought. Right now, I just simply don't want her to leave my side. I want to sleep with her tonight and I want her to fall asleep feeling at ease. Feeling good. I don't wish to hurt her feelings in the slightest. And I almost did just now. Perhaps that's why I said it.

A glimmer of hope is shown in her eyes then. "Fair enough." she seems.. content with it for now. But I know this is going to be... difficult for me. It's been decades for me since I've actively 'been' with someone. And that was in the time of Arlathan... with another elven woman. Not a human. On top of it... this will mean I'll have to let her get closer to me. Something I thought I would not do. It's dangerous. She cannot find out the truth about me or it will jeopardize everything.

Instead, I kiss her deeply. And when our lips part, and my heart is tightening because of the loving looks she's giving me, I can't help myself. "Let's sleep, vhenan."

(...) 

**Eliana POV:**

"It could be a trap." I sigh as I take the note Felix has slipped into my fingers and slide it down into my pocket.

We all leave the Gull and Lantern and continue our way up towards Redcliffe's Chantry. Something just isn't sitting right with me. The whole Fiona and Alexius thing. She did not even remember that she invited us to come talk to her. And Alexius' appearance was extremely convenient for him. Even Fiona noted that it was 'certainly very timely'. There's more going on here than meets the eye. And now this note that Alexius' son has slipped into my hands. The words scribbled onto it repeat themselves inside my mind:
Come to the Chantry, you are in danger.

Well of course I am in danger. When am I not in fucking danger. Everytime I leave Haven, I am in damn danger. I shake my head and try to compose myself as we reach the Chantry doors. Lord knows what we'll find in there. And so we enter and we are immediately greeted by a grunting male, twirling his staff around at a rift.

"Good! You're finally here! Now help me close this, would you?" he turns to face me, stopping his fighting for a moment as the rift disrupts and he has a moment to breathe. His eyes are dark brown, a tanned and very well taken care of skin. His hair is dark brown, almost black, or maybe that's just the lighting within the Chantry. His moustache is well.. very curly. He looks like a very interesting person. I scoff a bit. But before I can even say something, the rift explodes and out come our enemies.

I am immediately surrounded by the same annoying weird circles on the floor that surrounded me earlier, outside of Redcliffe village. This time, it's the one that slows everything down and I groan as my movements are slowed down. I'm trying to quickly make my way out of this arcane shit thing but everything's in slowmotion for me. In the meantime, the shades are inching ever so quickly closer and closer towards me. But of course, my companions have my back. As always. Varric shoots with Bianca at the shades, resulting in them being distracted for the time being. While I get my boney ass out of this slowmo thing, I unsheathe my daggers and start charging at the shades who are now about to attack my egghead.

Of course he can manage his own. But don't mess with my hahren!

I slash my way right through the shade and tear it in half, causing it to dissapear right before my eyes. Solas and I share a moment of satisfaction and cockiness, as I smirk widely up at my hahren. But quickly, Cassandra's grunting sounds behind us let us know there's still danger around us. I quickly run up to the rift and will it to close. An action I now know very much about. The pain no longer bothering me. A familiar thing to do. As if it's normal. Whereas about half a year ago, I probably would've shit my pants were I forced to do this. The new guy himself wasn't that bad at fighting either. Him, obviously a mage, seemed very well acquainted with the storm element.

"Fascinating. How does that work, exactly?" new guy asks me. I in turn just stare dumbfounded at him.

Well... you er... you do like this *hand up*, and then you like... close it.

He chuckles. "You don't even know, do you? You just wiggle your fingers and boom! Rift closes."

"Alright. Eh, sure... And who are you exactly?" I glance the man up and down hesitantly. To be fair, I don't really know what to think of him.

He pouts slightly. "Ah. Getting ahead of myself again, I see." he then takes a theatrical bow. "Dorian of House Pavus, most recently of Minrathous. How do you do?"

Ah.. A noble.

Cassandra speaks her mind from behind me. "Another Tevinter. Be cautious with this one."

"Suspicious friends you have here." Dorian says wryly. "Magister Alexius was once my mentor, so my assistance should be valuable- as I'm sure you can imagine."

"Alright. So where's Felix?" I glance around the Chantry a bit.
"I'm sure he's on his way. He was to give you the note, then meet us here after ditching his father."

"Hm. Is he sick or something? He pretended to faint to give me this note, but Alexius seemed... bothered by it a lot."

Dorian nods. "He's had some lingering illness for months. Felix is an only child, and Alexius is being a mother hen, most likely."

Alright. Seems fair enough. But if Dorian is from Tevinter..... then.....

"Are you a magister?" I ask him straight away.

Dorian rolls his eyes and pinches the bridge of nose then. Probably not the question he was hoping for. "All right. Let's say this once. I am a mage from Tevinter, but not a member of the Magisterium. I know Southerners use the terms interchangeably, but that only makes you sound like barbarians."

"So tell me again why exactly you're betraying your mentor?" I squint my eyes at him.

"Alexius was my mentor. Meaning he's not any longer, not for some time." He sasses me right back. Then he sighs and gives me an earnest look. "Look, you must know there's danger. That should be obvious even without the note-"

Well yeah.

"Let's start with Alexius claiming the allegiance of the mage rebels out from under you. As if by magic, yes? Which is exactly right. To reach Redcliffe before the Inquisition, Alexius distorted time itself."

"So what? He did that just so he could arrive here right after the Divine died?" I uncross my arms and lower them slowly.

He dips his head and curls his lips into a half smile. "You catch on quick."

Solas interjects however, keeping a small smile on his own lips. "That is fascinating, if true... and almost certainly dangerous." He doesn't seem that convinced about Dorian's explanation, it seems.

"The rift you closed here? You saw how it twisted time around itself, sped some things up and slowed others down. Soon, there will be more like it. And they'll appear further and further away from Redcliffe. The magic Alexius is using is wildly unstable, and it's unraveling the world."

My nerves are getting the better of me and it's making me snort. Resulting in a not so content look from Dorian. "Listen... I ... this is a lot to swallow."

"I know what I'm talking about. I helped develop this magic. When I was still his apprentice, it was pure theory. Alexius could never get it to work. What I don't understand is why he's doing it? Ripping time to shreds just to gain a few hundred lackeys?"

But then, out from the shadows, walks Felix. "He didn't do it for them."

My eyes dart over towards the earlier sickly looking man. Who's now, luckily, looking better.

"Took you long enough. Is he getting suspicious?" Dorian asks Felix then.

Felix shakes his head, but his eyes look worried somehow. "No, but I shouldn't have played the illness card. I thought he'd be fussing over me all day." then he turns his attention towards me. "My father's joined a cult. Tevinter supremacists. They call themselves 'Venatori'. And I can tell you one
thing: whatever he's done for them, he's done it to get to you."

"Alright, so why would he go through all that trouble just for me? I hardly know the man." I say indifferently as I look at the two Tevene men before me.

Felix shakes his head, his brows furrowed, causing big wrinkles to appear into his forehead. "They're obsessed with you, but I don't know why. Perhaps because you survived the Temple of Sacred Ashes?"

Dorian chimes in then. "You can close rifts. Maybe there's a connection? Or they see you as a threat?"

*I don't reaaaaally like the idea of Tevene, possibly very evil men being so obsessed with me as Felix says..."

"All this for me? And here I didn't get Alexius anything.." I say in a wry tone of voice.

Dorian however, seems to appreciate my sarcastic joke. "Send him a fruit basket. Everyone loves those." he smirks slightly at me, then his facial expression becomes dark. "You know you're his target. Expecting the trap is the first step in turning it to your advantage. I can't stay in Redcliffe. Alexius doesn't know I'm here, and I want to keep it that way for now. But whenever you're ready to deal with him, I want to be there." He dips his head and slowly turns around and walks off. "I'll be in touch."

I turn around and face my companions once Dorian and Felix have left the Chantry and sigh deeply. "Well... fuck me sideways."

Varric chuckles. "Sorry Feathers, I'll leave that to our elven friend here."

Cassandra immediately punches Varric hard on the shoulder, causing the dwarf next to her to curse under his breath.

Solas gives me a stern look then. "You truly trust this man, Eliana?"

I shrug my shoulders. "Truly? I have no idea. Though what he told us did make sense... in a way. If they're lying and are in fact the bad guys, I don't think they'd go that far to try and gain our trust." I rub my neck uncomfortably. "You seemed to have a problem with Dorian's explanation however. What do you believe, Solas?" I look directly at the elf before me. Cassandra and Varric are now too.

"It's possible.. but highly unlikely. However, I believe we should take this back to Haven and discuss it with commander Cullen, Leliana and lady Montilyet." he flings his staff back onto his shoulder straps and gestures for us to follow him back outside.

"You guys go on ahead.. I'll.. be out in a minute. Just need to wrap my head around it all." I say exasperately as I turn my back towards them.

Without questioning me on it, they leave. I walk over towards the shrine placed at the far end of the Chantry, near the windows and glance up at the stained glass of the windows.

*Depictions of Andraste, the betrayal and...*

I squint my eyes at the stained glass window in the middle.

*Ha. Funny. That depiction looks almost like Solas.*
A cloaked, seemingly bald elf with sharp features; holding a key. I snort slightly and shake my head. Speaking of Solas.. we haven't talked about 'it' ever since we left. I had asked Fenrian about the definition of the Elven word he had used the night before our departure. Fenrian explained to me that 'vhenan' meant heart. And that it was a term of endearment used by the Elves. He also told me his mother would often call him her heart. But lovers could use the term as well... I shake my head again and take a seat on one of the benches.

All this love business is weird. Fucking is easy. But love.... That's a whole 'nother thing.

Chapter End Notes

So er... yeah... I have a thing for dark Solas and dark Elie.

cough

And for rough love.

So.. er... yep.

BYE ! :3
Sun Sets, Little One

Chapter Summary

Before 'In Your Heart Shall Burn' and the mission itself, but only part of it.

I feel like I'll spoil this chapter if I give you hints on what you're about to read, so I won't do it.

All I'm saying is: shit is about to go down.

Also, this chapter is the one I really wanted to write for a long time. This idea has been with me for ages. I just needed some chapters before it to work up towards it.

Get ready.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Well, that could've gone better." Cassandra says exasperatedly whilst Solas is carrying me in his arms.

I remain silent and look the other way, desperately hoping that she'll stop going on about it.

"We are lucky the Herald wasn't shot in the chest." Solas is calm, as usual.

Varric scoffs. "Those bastards."

Finally we reach our camp again and Solas gently lowers me onto a cot and kneels down next to me. Varric examines my wound as well. "That arrow went in deep. You sure it was a good idea to pull it out right away, Feathers?"

I huff. "What else was I supposed to do? Leave it in?" I snap at the dwarf next to me. I didn't mean for it to sound so angry, but I was pretty bummed out about the whole situation.

"I suppose you're right. Didn't mean to bother you." Varric smiles apologetically at me and scratches his chest hair then. "At least you got that tome Viv was asking about."

"She has only one out of three." Cassandra remarks from afar.

I reach out to my satchel that Solas had placed onto the floor but Solas slaps my hand. "Leave it, Eliana. That's not important right now. I'll need to close the wound and then we can discuss tomes."

I glare at Solas then, but shrug indifferently.

Whatever. Stupid tome. I try to do something good for Vivienne and this is what it brings me: an arrow in the leg.

As Solas is healing me I recollect what happened earlier. I don't want to, but on the other hand I feel like I need to. In order not to make the same mistake again, I'll need to know what had me off guard.
I hiss then as Solas is healing me, the wound slowly closing as he does. It's not a pleasant feeling.

Right. So.. I was climbing that damned ladder to reach the top of the tower, where Vivienne's lame book was. And then, I took it. I went down the ladder, my companions waiting for me on the ground. As I was descending, I was shot in the leg by a bandit archer. I fell down onto the platform below the ladder and lay there like a goof, crying out in pain.

I scrunch up my nose. It wasn't my fault, though I suppose I could've looked around before descending. Solas, Cassandra and Varric couldn't see the archer and the other bandits further down the road. At least I had a good vantage point up from the tower, but I was careless.

"All done, da'len." Solas removes his hands and wipes off my blood from his hands with a cloth.

I nod. "Thank you, Solas."

Cassandra is petting Octavian's muzzle and sighs loudly. "So, what's next for us?"

"We should head back to Haven as soon as possible and then speak to Leliana, Cullen and Josephine about the information we've gathered whilst at Redcliffe village. We should definitely mention Dorian and Felix." I prop myself up on my elbows on the cot and stare off into the distance as I speak.

"How soon?" Cassandra turns towards me and crosses her arms.

I hum. "We could leave now. If we ride fast, we might be able to make it back to Haven at first light."

"Absolutely not." Solas remarks as he gets up to his feet. "You've only recently been shot in the leg."

I smirk mischievously at him. "And I have been healed. So I am fine."

"I'll have to agree with Chuckles on that one. Healed or not, those bandits seemed like they were part of a bigger group. They might be looking for us still." Varric crosses his arms, leaning against a nearby tree.

"If we stay here, they will definitely find us. If we move, we should be fine. Also, I'd love for them to try and attack me again."

Cassandra walks over towards me and starts packing her stuff already. "I agree with Eliana. If we don't have to stay here, we should move."

I'm glad Cassandra sees eye to eye with me on this one.

Varric sighs and walks over to his belongings and starts to pack as well. Solas just pinches the bridge of his nose. "Do you enjoy always being so insolent?"

I get up from the cot and smile at him sweetly. "Yep. Better get used to it, old man." Then I turn around and reach for my satchel. "Let's see what this stupid tome is about."

I take out the dusty old book from the satchel and flip through it a bit, my eyes glancing down every page, skimming through. Then I feel a breath on my neck and it's sending shivers down my spine. "What's the matter, da'len? Is the reading not to your liking?"

I snort. "Whatever this is, is bullshit."

Solas places his chin on my shoulder then from behind me and talks quietly into my ear. "Ah. This is
Circle magic propaganda, da'len."

"Like I said: bull.shit."

"Were you hoping for something a little more... exciting?" he places the emphasis on the last word and I smirk slightly, my eyes still not meeting his.

"In Vivienne's books? Hardly." I know what he's trying to do. But not now. Right now, I just want to go back to Haven, throw that damn tome in Vivienne's face and discuss what we should do about Alexius. I do wonder how Dorian will stay in touch with me and the Inquisition. We don't even know where exactly he's holed up for the time being. Seems like he won't be staying right under Alexius' nose. A long, slender finger brushes some of my hair to the side and I can feel Solas' lips pressing down onto my neck. I groan and turn my head into the other direction. "You do realize the others are right there?" I hiss back at him.

A chuckle. "I do. But they pay us no mind. They're too busy packing."

I turn around quickly and close the tome right in his face then. "You're right, Solas. And we should get to it as well. Chop chop!"

He raises up an eyebrow. "Chop chop?"

I roll my eyes. "It means quickly." and with that I walk off towards my stuff. However, with an intentional sway in my hips. Because I do know that a certain bald elf is watching me. And I just love to tease him.

(...) We are almost near Haven now. We rode fast, no breaks in between. The horses are exhausted by this point, so we're trotting slowly now for the last bit. It won't take long, I can already see the gate in the distance. I giggle. "Alright. I spy with my little eye..... white." I smirk and turn my head around into Cassandra, Varric and Solas' direction.

Varric bursts out into laughter, Cassandra groans loudly. "There's nothing but white around us!"

I stifle my second giggle then. It's so fun annoying Cassandra sometimes. "That's not what I was spying with my little eye!" I call out.

"Snow. It is snow." She says less than amused. Her lips in a thin line.

"My turn!" Varric calls out to me. "-I spy with my little eye... Purple!"


Varric pouts slightly. "I'm never playing with you again."

I throw my head back and let out a cackle. "Oh, come now Varric. That was hardly a challenge. There's nothing purple here except her armour."

"I was really trying, you know. You give us a good one then, Feathers. And no jokes this time." he says while chuckling.

I hum and look around a bit.

*A good one will be hard. There's hardly anything around in Thedas. Not like Earth, where there's so much stuff going on around you.*
"I spy with my little eye..." I pause and grin. "-Amber." I finish my sentence.

"Amber?" Cassandra asks confusedly.

I nod. I hope they give up quickly, or else they'll know what I'm speaking off. We keep moving closer and closer to Haven now. "Give up?"

Silence...

"Commander Cullen's eyes." Solas answers.

"Shit."

Varric laughs loudly again. Cassandra's eyes widen. "That's not fair! He's too far away."

"But you can see him in the distance over there-" I point into the direction of Cullen, who's standing in front of the gates of Haven. Possibly waiting for us already. "-And you do know the color of his eyes. So, it's totally fair."

"I didn't know you were so infatuated with Curly's eyes, Feathers." Varric jokes from behind me. When I turn my head around to smirk back at the dwarf however, I see Solas' less than amused facial expression.

What?

I gulp slightly. That seemed to piss him off? I ignore it however. As we move forwards, Cullen waves at us and the moment we reach the gate, he jogs up to us. "Herald. It's good you've returned. There's a letter for you. Arrived this morning." he goes through his pockets and takes out a rolled up scroll.

I snort as I dismount Moonlight. "Is that why you were here? Has it become so dull around here that Commander Cullen is excited about a letter arriving for the Herald? I do believe more rifts should open up around here. Give you something to do." I joke.

He glares at me through half lidded eyes then. "Very funny." he hands the letter over to me and I read it:

-----------------------------
Dear Herald,

It was absolutely fascinating meeting you.
I am currently on my way towards Haven as we speak, so I should be arriving shortly when you get this.
In the meantime I suggest you speak to your advisors about the incidents happening at Redcliffe.
May I suggest concocting a plan to get back into contact with Alexius?
I do look forward to seeing you again.

Yours truly,
-D
-----------------------------

I snort. "He's something, alright." I say to myself as I roll back up the letter.

Cullen is eyeing me like a hawk. "You mean you know this 'D'?"
I nod. "We should take this to the war room. Are the others awake?"

"Of course."

I continue walking into Haven, leading Moonlight. My companions and Cullen following me. "Good. Meet me there with the others in five minutes. I'll just put Moonlight in the stables with the others."

"Will do." And with that, Cullen is off towards the Chantry.

"Cassandra, I'll require you to be present as well."

Cassandra simply nods.

"Geez, Feathers.. You don't think a nap would be a good idea before you go and plan your next move? We didn't even sleep." Varric says as he's following me and the others towards the stables.

"We can rest after we've discussed the matter of Redcliffe. Besides, we've had a nice week to ourselves before we ventured out towards the Hinterlands. Don't you think we've been wasting enough time already?"

"I just think you two need some rest, is all." he sounds worried for me.

I sigh and put Moonlight into her stable, she immediately bends one of her hind legs and closes her eyes. "You don't have to be there. Get some rest. Cassandra and I will as well, after our meeting at the war room." I smile kindly at my friend, who acts like a father most the time. A father who loves to play Wicked Grace and drink ale all night long.

---

When we've all gathered in the war room, I look down at the map on the table and listen to Leliana's speaking. "So, we've all read the letter and we want to know what's going on. Who is this 'D' person that wrote you and what happened at Redcliffe."

"Do you always read letters that don't belong to you?" I joke, but I am met with Leliana's serious gaze. I shake my head. "Alright. Before we entered Redcliffe village, there was a rift right outside the gates. We fought, as usual. But this time, the rift projected some type of arcane circle onto the ground as well. Which was... new." I looked at the three advisors, but they kept quiet. "There were two types of circles, one that slowed time down. And another that sped time up."

"Is that even possible?" Josephine turns her head towards Leliana in disbelief.

"It is. We have felt it's effects while trying to close the rift." Cassandra replies.

"It was off, but I didn't think much of it. We closed the rift, and entered Redcliffe. We were met by one of our scouts. He told me nobody was expecting us. Not even Fiona."

Leliana frowns. "How is that possible? She invited you personally back at Val Royeaux."

"Precisely what I thought as well. We were then met by a mage, telling us Fiona was no longer in charge of the rebel mages. Instead, a Tevinter Magister by the name of Alexius was supposed to meet with me at the Gull and Lantern."

"The Alexius that was mentioned in the letter." Cullen interjects.
I nod. "Yes. When we arrived at the tavern, Alexius was not there yet. So we had a chance to speak with Fiona privately. She asked us why we were there, and did not remember inviting me at Val Royeaux. Claiming she had not been there since before the Conclave."

The three of them are giving me their confused looks. And I can totally understand it. After all, their reaction is exactly what mine was back when it happened.

I continue. "Fiona was basically under the rule of Alexius at this point. It did not take long before the man himself arrived at the tavern. We spoke. He seemed very interested in me being the survivor of the Temple of Sacred Ashes and eventually, right before we got to an agreement; his son Felix, who was present as well, collapsed."

"Collapsed?" Leliana asks me.

"He 'fainted'," I use airquotes. "He fell into me. When he did however, he slipped a note into my hand. Saying that I was in danger and I should meet in the Chantry. Alexius took Fiona and Felix back towards the castle and we went off to the Chantry to meet with who we thought was just Felix."

"Just a moment. The Castle, you said? Redcliffe castle?" I nod at Cullen. "King Alistair and Queen Anora let him stay there? And what of the Arl? Where is he in all this?"

Cassandra answered for me though. "Though we do not know about the King and Queen, Alexius told us the Arl had left Redcliffe due to some tensions growing. Alexius wanted to prevent an incident from happening."

"Like the good samaritan he is..." I say sarcastically under my breath. It's not like they would understand that phrasing anyways.

"The Arl would never leave his village." Cullen replies, clearly in complete disbelief.

"And there has been no word from the King?" Josephine turns to look at me.

I shake my head. "None whatsoever. It would seem Alexius has simply claimed the castle for himself. But this is not the worst part. When we got to the Chantry, there was another rift and a man. Dorian of house Pavus. The man who wrote the letter."

"A Tevinter." Cassandra says cautiously.

"He and Felix told us about Alexius' plan. Apparently there's time magic involved. And Alexius used it to distort time itself. Dorian also told us about the rifts with the arcane circles; also Alexius' doing. Long story short: we have to stop Alexius before more of those rifts appear. And they will appear, according to Dorian."

Leliana nods. "And do you trust this Tevinter?"

"I do."

"I am not sure of him yet." Cassandra looks to me.

"Look, he told us about Alexius' plan. Without Dorian, we wouldn't have known anything. At least now, we have something to go on." I say exasperatedly.

"So, your plan?" Cullen rubs his neck.
I glance down at the map and think. The tiredness is kicking in right now. It's hard to come up with a plan.

What is my plan? Do I even have one?

"Perhaps the Herald should get some rest and then come up with a plan. We are expecting Dorian to arrive as well. That should still take some time. We might need his help." Cassandra breaks the silence.

"I agree." Josephine mutters. "We don't want to make any hasty decisions with this. We'll come back to this later."

I shake my head. "The longer we wait-" Cassandra interrupts me and grabs me by the shoulders firmly.

"You need rest." she looks directly into my eyes.

You know she is right.

Yeah... probably.

"I just don't want to waste any more time. I don't trust Alexius."

"He will still be there after you've slept." Josephine chimes in.

"Very well." I dip my head at my companion and advisors and walk out of the war room towards Fenrian's room right to the side of me.

When I open the door, I see him still sleeping soundly in his bed. I smile and place my daggers onto his bedside table. Exhausted, I walk over towards the bed and curl myself up next to him quietly. It's still so early, he will probably wake up in a few hours. Perhaps he'll wake me up then. I close my eyes and focus on Fenrian's breathing as he lay sleeping next to me. Doing so however, makes me fall right to sleep.

When I open my eyes, I see Fenrian sitting at his desk with Solas standing next to him. I slowly get up and watch the two of them quietly. I can already see Solas' ears twitch, he knows I'm up already but remains quiet for now. "Is this good, ba'isa'ma'lin?" Fenrian asks Solas while he lifts a piece of paper up to Solas and shows him.

I look at it with my head cocked to the side, that looks like a drawing... of a woman.

"Very good, Fenrian. She will like that." Solas replies, still keeping his eyes on my little cub.

"I'm not as good as you, though." he pouts slightly.

Solas actually ruffles Fenrian's hair and I can't help but giggle. It's so odd to see Solas being so... parental. But it is also very heart warming. Fenrian quickly turns his head around. "You're awake! Look asa'ma'lin, I drew you!" Fenrian quickly jumps out of his chair and jogs over to me, handing over his drawing to me when he reaches me.

I smile widely. "That's really good, Fenrian! I love it!" I hug him tightly and squeeze him slightly as I do. Glad to be waking up with him around, it instantly lifts my spirit.

Solas finally turns around then and walks over to the two of us. "He came to get me when he woke up. I suggested he draw you."
I dip my head. "Well, aren't you full of good ideas?" I smirk at the bald elf. Who in turn smirks back at me. Then my expression becomes serious again. "Any word of Dorian?"

Solas shakes his head. "Not yet I'm afraid. Seeker Cassandra told us you were to come up with a plan for Redcliffe."

I nod. Fenrian is watching the two of us intently as we converse, probably wondering what the hell it is we're talking about. We've never told him about what goes down in detail, a request I made. I didn't feel like he needed to know all these things. He already hears enough from the townsfolk of Haven, who are less than subtle when it comes to their gossip about me and my ventures. I try to protect Fenrian as much I can from all that's happening outside these safe walls. Perhaps this is wrong of me to do, since young boys his age, especially from a Dalish clan, are supposed to start learning how to fight and all. I simply, just can't do it. I don't want him to not be a child. I sigh and look at the kid. "I'm hungry, let's eat."

(...)

I gussy up in Solas' mirror, I look awful again. In the reflection of the mirror I see Solas getting dressed again. My eyes linger on his still bare chest. Once his pants are on again he straightens his back and walks over to me. "You do like to stare an awful lot, da'len." he sounds smug, content with himself.

He wraps his arms around me from behind and kisses my earlobe softly. "I can't help it. You're just..." I sigh and shake my head.

"I am what?"

I groan and push him gently. "Oh shut it." I continue to stare at myself and make a weird face. I try desperately to make my hair look presentable again before heading out the cabin, but to me it just looks like-

"Copper for your thoughts?" he smiles wickedly whilst staring at me through the mirror.

"I look awful. My hair is a mess. It's I-just-had-sex hair." I roll my eyes.

"Really? I did not know this was a type of hairstyle. I do however believe it suits you." he chuckles lowly and grabs hold of my hands that are still trying to flatten my hair.

"It's all... poofy and... They'll know." I turn around to face him, he's holding my hand now and caresses it with his thumb.

"Let them know." he whispers softly. Then he raises my hand and places a soft kiss onto my hand.

I giggle. "Oh look at you being all gentlemanly."

He raises one of his eyebrows then. "I am a gentleman, da'len. I made you come before me, did I not?"

I snort. Then my eyes fall down to his torso again and all I want to do is kiss it. Lick it..... Bite it.....

"And your face tells me you want to come again." he smirks deviously.

"I do." I say longingly. "But, I must also get to the war room again. Remember what Cassandra said
earlier today when we were at the tavern?"

He nods. "Yes. A letter from Alexius himself. I do wonder what's in it."

"Me too." I get up to my tippy toes and kiss him on the mouth. "I'll see you later."

I leave his cabin and walk straight for the Chantry, it's dark now. Solas was supposed to teach me more of my magic, but two minutes into our 'class' and he jumped me. A punishment for teasing me while we were at the Hinterlands, he said. If all of his punishments are like that, I don't mind so much at all. I smile widely as I make my way towards the Chantry. Not at all paying attention to my surroundings, or to the townspeople who are still awake and giving me odd glares. Once I enter the Chantry and walk towards the war room, I hear an annoying lilted voice behind me. "Oh Herald?"

_Fenedhis lasa._

I turn around and try my politest smile. "Vivienne. How nice to see you."

She examines her nails while smiling amusedly. "Hm, yes quite. I heard from the dwarf you had found one of my tomes at the Hinterlands. I must admit, I did not believe you'd actually go and look for them."

I sigh and take out the book from my satchel and hand it over to her. "I made you a deal, Vivienne. I don't make empty promises." I glare at her, a tad bit annoyed of course.

She takes the tome from my hands and then I see a genuine smile appear on her face as she clutches it close to her body.

_A genuine smile from Vivienne?_

_Yeah, I know right?! Totally weird._

_Batshit crazy._

"Thank you, Eliana. This... means a lot to me." she seems to struggle with her gratitude, but she manages to pull it off.

I raise my eyebrow at her. "Er... you're welcome, Vivienne." I'm not used to her being kind. Usually when she is being kind, her sweet words are buried underneath a shit ton of disdain and sarcasm. This time however, she means it. And I am caught off guard. Then she simply walks off.

"Alright. That was weird." I mumble to myself as I turn back around and walk towards the war room again.

Finally, I enter the room and they're there. Eagerly awaiting my plan. And I do have a plan, thanks to Solas. Before we had our 'class' we did talk about the matter, and he spoke to me about it. He advised me.

"Eliana." Cullen says politely as he dips his head.

"I've made up my mind." I say resolute. "We storm the castle and confront Alexius."

Cullen's jaw drops. But Leliana seems to approve. "Good plan." she smiles at me, there's a hint of amusement on her face. And not because she finds my plan so amusing, but because she likes this idea. I can tell by her expression.

"And how exactly do you want to get in there?" Cullen scoffs. Like this is the worst idea he's ever
"We walk right through the front door?"

Josephine stifles her laughter behind her palm.

"With soldiers of course." I add.

"We don't have the manpower to take the castle! Either we find another way in, or we give up this nonsense and go get the templars!" Cullen seems... less than pleased.

Cassandra shakes her head. "Redcliffe is in the hands of a Magister. This cannot be allowed to stand."

Josephine nods. "Let us not forget this letter that Alexius has sent. In it, he did ask for the Herald of Andraste by name. It's an obvious trap."

"Yes well, we have to come to an agreement on this guys." I rub my temples as I hunch over the war table.

"A Tevinter Magister controls Redcliffe, invites us to the castle to talk, and some of us want to do nothing." Leliana looks directly towards Josephine as she says this.

"Not this again." Josephine squints at the nightinggale.

Cullen sighs and turns his body sideways to Leliana. "Redcliffe castle is one of the most defensible fortresses in Ferelden. It has repelled thousands of assaults," then he looks at me. A slight look of worry in his eyes. "If you go in there, you'll die. And we'll lose the only means we have of closing these rifts. I won't allow it."

Leliana hums. "And if we don't even try to meet Alexius, we lose the mages and leave a hostile foreign power on our doorstep."

"Even if we could assault the keep, it would be for naught. An 'Orlesian' Inquisition's army marching into Ferelden would provoke a war. Our hands our tied." Josephine speaks, the hand in which she holds her quill moving up and down as she does.

"The Magister.-" Cassandra says almost desperately.

Cullen interrupts her. "-Has outplayed us."

I groan. "Alright. So not the front door then..." I lower my hand and think for a moment longer. Don't old medieval castle's always have secret passageways, or sewer tunnels or... something?! "Isn't there another way in?"

Cullen sighs. "There's nothing I know of that would work."

Leliana's eyes widen then. "Wait!" She takes a step closer towards the war table and points at the map, just outside of Redcliffe village. "During the fifth blight, when I was traveling with the Hero of Ferelden, we had to enter Redcliffe castle to save Arl Eamon's son from possession. We could not enter the castle through the main entrance. Instead, we used a secret passage. It's within a mill. Under the floorboards there is an entrance."

"Perfect." I say smiling widely.

Leliana nods. "Hm yes... it is too narrow for our troops, but we could send agents through."
Cullen shakes his head. "Too risky, those agents will be discovered well before they reach the Magister."

"That's why we need a distraction. Perhaps the envoy Alexius wants so badly?" Leliana smirks slightly at the Commander.

It seems however, like Leliana has turned on a lightbulb inside of Cullen's mind. "Keep attention on Eliana while we disable the Magister's defenses. It's a gamble, but it might work."

Before I can open my mouth to answer though, the door is kicked open by Dorian. Who walks in, followed by one of our scouts, who seems a little frightened. Probably afraid of Cullen's reaction for letting a 'stranger' through like this.

"Fortunately, you'll have help." Dorian walks over to us and places himself right next to me.

*Well, talk about impeccable timing...*

"This man says he has information about the Magister and his methods, Commander." The scout says hurriedly as he addresses Cullen.

I look at Dorian and smirk, he in turn raises his eyebrows and curls his own lips into a smirk as well.

*I think you and I are going to get along just fine, noble man.*

Cullen remains quiet however and stares at Dorian cautiously. Allowing Dorian to speak his mind.

And he does. "Your spies will never get past Alexius' magic without my help. So if you're going after him, I'm coming along."

Cullen sighs and ignores Dorian, then turns his attention back towards me. "The plan puts you in the most danger. We can't, in good conscience, order you to do this. We can still go after the Templars if you'd rather not play the bait. It's up to you."

I shake my head and straighten my back. Addressing all of them at once then. "It's not you ordering me to do this, when it was my idea in the first place, Cullen."

*I know you're reaaaally set on the Templars, Cullen... But this is my decision.*

He nods. "Very well. Do we all agree on this?"

Cassandra nods, followed by Leliana and Josephine.

"Great. Now we have a plan." I turn sideways to face Dorian then. "You have excellent timing, my friend. I hope the trip towards Haven wasn't too exhausting?"

He smirks at me. "Oh, in Tevinter I am famous for my excellent timing."

I snort. "Alright, everyone. Meeting adjourned. Let's get some rest while we still can. And tell Solas to ready himself. I want him with us on the trip in case something goes wrong, he's a healer. Then we'll have one rogue, one warrior and two mages."

Josephine looks at Dorian then. "You're a mage as well?"

I nod. "He is. Very well acquainted with the storm element. Will most definitely come in hand. I've seen his magic firsthand."
"As well? There are... many mages here then yes?" Dorian asks me.

"There's Solas, whom you've met before at the Chantry in Redcliffe. And there's... Vivienne."

"Well, by the tone of your voice I can already tell that me and this Vivienne lady are going to get along just fine." Dorian says sarcastically.

I snort. "We'll see. Glad to have you with us for this, Dorian." I dip my head politely at the man before me.

He in turn dips his own head as well. "Delighted to be here. Though I must say I didn't quite get your name. Unless you want me to continue calling you 'Herald of Andraste'?"

I roll my eyes. "Please don't. My name is Eliana Courseland. I apologize for not telling you back at Redcliffe. The situation in which we met was... strange to say the least."

"No hard feelings. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to get some rest. I've traveled for far too long and I'd very much appreciate a bed if you have one for me."

I point towards Josephine then. "I believe Josephine can help you with that."

"Ah, wonderful!" Dorian walks over towards Josephine and they start speaking to one another. Which is my cue to return to the tavern, where Fenrian is with the others.

27 hours later:

I am sitting in the snow right before the lake. My knees pulled up, my arms wrapped around them. Staring out into the distance, past the lake. There's nothing there, except for the snowy mountains. I turn my head around and look into the general directions of the trebuchets. They've finished building them while we were at Redcliffe castle it seems. Maybe it's because of all that's happened but I somehow can't shake the feeling like danger is looming about. Like all this nice quietness will soon be replaced with something more... ominous.

"Elie?"

I turn my head into the direction of the voice. My face immediately lights up. Despite the absolute exhaustion. "Fenrian.." I say faintly.

He looks worried and slowly walks over towards me. "Are you okay asa'ma'lin? You've been.. very quiet since your return from Redcliffe." he takes a seat next to me.

I wrap one of my arms around him and pull him in close. "Don't worry about me, lethalin. I'm just very.. very tired. The trip wasn't pleasant."

Fenrian hums. "I've heard you were... sent forward in time?" he looks at me in confusion.

_Damn it.. Why does everyone always know here in Haven?_

"Yes. Magic will do that." I say wryly. Then I remember what I saw in the dark future. I've barely had any time to recover from the trip. I had some rest, but I was plagued by nightmares. Leliana sacrificing herself for me, seeing Cassandra and Solas being sick by the red lyrium disease. Now I remember why Varric had mentioned it was evil, back at the Temple when we first met. I don't want anything to do with red lyrium ever again.

"Eliana?" he asks me hesitantly.
I look at Fenrian quizzically. He seems... troubled by something. "What's wrong, Fenrian?"

He shakes himself out of my grasp and fumbles a bit with his fingers. He's not even looking at me. "Please don't get mad at me... but.." he looks at me then. "I've been practicing with a sword. Commander Cullen taught me while you were away."

My eyes widen. "What?"

But he continues quickly. ",I just want to be able to defend myself. And if I get better, I can defend you as well! I don't want to be helpless, asa'ma'lin." he's pleading with me.

I sigh and drop my shoulders. "Very well... Just... be careful with swords okay? They're not toys, they're weapons and they are very dangerous. You should only use one when you're cornered and got nowhere else to turn to."

It's ridiculous. I've promised I wouldn't let Fenrian fight. But, its pointless. Everyone around us expects him to, himself included. I'll just have to keep my eye on him when I'm at Haven.

"I know, asa'ma'lin. Don't worry alright? I will be fine." he smiles reassuringly at me.

I kiss his forehead lovingly. "I love you, you know that right?"

He smiles even wider than before. "I know. I love you too, Elie. I thank the Gods every day that you found me and took me in. You're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

And that's a lot coming from him, his life hasn't been that long yet. So me being the best thing that's 'ever' happened to him... is a fact I treasure. I pull him in even tighter against my body.

Then, footsteps approaching. "I was hoping I'd find the two of you here." Solas is smiling when he notices us hugging one another whilst sitting on the snow. "Da'len, I believe the festivities are about to commence. Everyone's expecting you."

I groan. I'm super tired, as mentioned before. And now this.. party that everyone's planned in celebration of our siding with the mages and closing the Breach. Even my soul is exhausted, I've used up so much of my mana and energy trying to close it. At least the mages were helpful. I'm still glad I stuck with my decision. Despite Vivienne greatly dissaproving of it. Including some other members of the inner circle..

"There's music, asa'ma'lin! And food, lots of food! I saw people dancing together. Elves and humans dancing together!" Fenrian exclaims.

I look at him. "Really? They've started without me?" I try to joke.

Solas chuckles. "Come, vhenan." he extends his hand and I take hold of it gently. Then we walk off, Solas on the left, Fenrian in the middle and me on the right. All of us holding hands, walking towards the town. I glance up at the sky one more time...

*I have a bad feeling deep inside of me. Something's not right.*

Fenrian was right though, when we arrive, I see elves and humans dancing and partying like equals. I feel somewhat proud. I can't help but feel like I've had some part in that. If it were a few months ago, nobody would've danced at all. I still remember seeing their depressed and sad faces the first day I arrived here. Some even wanted me dead on many occasions. Blaming me for the Breach and everything that's happened to them. And now, I am their heroine. I closed the Breach and brought back safety to their lives. They all cheer and clap once we arrive, none of them giving us weird
looks. They whoop loudly and Harritt pushes a mug of ale into my hands. Then continues to slap me hard onto the shoulder. "To the Herald!" he exclaims, and everyone with a drink in their hand raise their mugs into the air and repeats after Harritt: "The Herald!"

Hours have passed, it's become dark, the last rays of sunlight shining on the horizon. I'm standing atop a ledge, watching the townsfolk of Haven dance gleefully. Varric and Sera are dancing together with Fenrian, in some weird circle. They all look drunk, apart from Fenrian of course, who's just extremely happy it seems. I haven't been dancing, not once. I can't shake this feeling... this bad... awful feeling.

While looking at the people down below, I haven't noticed Cassandra walking up towards me and taking her place right next to me. "Solas confirms the heavens are scarred but calm. The Breach is sealed." she clasps her hands behind her body and looks into the same direction as me. Ever so professional. "We've reports of lingering rifts, and many questions remain, but this was a victory. Word of your heroism has spread."

I sigh. "Though I appreciate their congratulations and gratitude... We have no idea what caused all of this. Who is truly behind all of this, who this... Elder One is. We can't rest easy."

Cassandra nods. "I agree. One success does not guarantee peace. The immediate danger is gone. For some, so is the necessity of this alliance. We must be wary. The Inquisition will need new focus."

I want to say something but there's a low rumbling sound coming from the mountain side, and suddenly the bells of Haven start to toll. My stomach churns.

Dear Heavens......

Cullen runs towards the front gates of Haven, followed by his soldiers. "Forces approaching! To arms!"

Everyone that was celebrating immediately stops, they all look frightened. Including Fenrian. My first thoughts are Fenrian. He needs to be brought to safety! Immediately!

Cassandra unsheathes her sword. "We must get to the gates!"

I nod. "You go on ahead, I'll join shortly!" I immediately jump down the ledge and make a beeline for Fenrian. I wrap my arm around him firmly and wait for Solas to catch up with us.

"Elie? What's happening?" Fenrian sounds terrified.

"Hush... It's going to be alright." I get down on my knees in front of Fenrian and hold his head in my hands. Solas also wrapped an arm around Fenrian now. Shielding him as well. "Listen, Fenrian. I want you to listen to me very carefully. I want you to go to Flissa and stay with her, alright? Whatever happens, whatever you hear, do not leave her side. She will keep you safe for now."

Fenrian's eyes widen. "Won't you be staying with me?"


Solas takes over for me. "Lethalin. Eliana and I have to report to the gates and deal with this danger. You cannot follow us. It is too dangerous."

Fenrian looks to me one last time and nods. Then he hugs me tightly. Wrapping his arms around my neck. "Stay safe, asa'ma'lin. Promise me you'll come back for me."
I grit my teeth, clenching my jaw, trying everything not to cry right now. I fear for his life more than I've ever done before. But I must remain strong. "I promise my little cub. I'll come back for you. I always do."

Then I take his hand and try to find Flissa in the dispersing crowd of panicking people. When we finally find her, I drag her by the arm and pull her close to us. "Flissa! I'll need you to watch over Fenrían for now. While we deal with whatever's happening right now!"

Flissa's eyes look frightened but the moment she hears me speak about 'dealing with this', she relaxes slightly. "I will! You have my word, Herald! I'll guard him with my life."

I dip my head gratefully. "You have my thanks, Flissa. Get to safety! The both of you!" I release Fenrían's hand and watch him and Flissa run off towards the Chantry.

Fenrían glances behind him, fear all over his face. I shake my head and run towards the gates, followed by Solas.

_I have to focus._

When Solas and I arrive at the gates, everyone is there: Varric, Cassandra, Leliana, Josephine, Cullen, Iron Bull, Vivienne, Dorian, Blackwall and Sera. Cassandra sounds panicked. "Cullen?"

Cullen's face is stern. "One watchguard reporting. It's a massive force, the bulk over the mountain."

"Under what banner?" Josephine asks him cautiously.

Cullen pauses for a moment before answering. "None."

Josephine's eyes widen in confusion. "None?!"

I stare down at the lights forming from beneath the gates. A big force shakes and rattles the gate. "I can't come in unless you open!" a freaked out voice calls out from behind the gate.

_A lost watchguard perhaps?_

I walk over towards the gate, followed by Cullen who already readied himself for a fight. The guard opens the gate and closes it right behind us as we walk out. A pale, slender blonde haired man wearing a hat way too big for him is standing next to a couple of freakishly looking corpses. "I'm Cole! I came to warn you. To help. People are coming to hurt you. You probably already know."

"What are you talking about? What's going on?!" I urge the stranger before me.

"The Templars come to kill you." he says in a low tone of voice. Not even bothering to look directly into my eyes.

Cullen charges at him, but Cole quickly steps aside. "Templars? Is this the Order's response to our talks with the mages? Attacking blindly?"

"The Red Templars went to the Elder One. You know him? He knows you. You took his mages." then Cole points into the direction of the mountain. "There."

We all look over there, I see two men standing there. One wearing armour, though I can't make out his face from all the way here. The other... is a freakishly tall man, looking.... distorted. But it could also be the distance between us that makes him look so... monstrously creepy.

"I know that man... but this Elder One..." Cullen replies.
Cole ignores Cullen entirely. "He's very angry that you took his mages."

Worry, panic, fear, spread across my face as I desperately turn to my Commander. "Cullen?! If you have any plans right now, please enlighten me!"

He sighs and shakes his head. "Haven is no fortress. If we are to withstand this monster, we must control the battle. Get out there and hit that force. Use everything you can!" our eyes simultaneously dart over towards the finished trebuchets. Then Cullen turns around, unsheathes his sword and addresses all of his soldiers and my mages. "Mages! You- You have sanction to engage them! That man is Samson. He will not make it easy! Inquisition! With the Herald! For your lives! For all of us!" War cries sound from behind Cullen as he raises his sword high into the sky, followed up by his soldiers.

*Dear Gods. Help us all.*

(...)

My worst nightmare has become reality: Haven attacked. Houses burned, people murdered in cold blood. Fenrian... is lost. Nobody knows where he is. During our fighting through the hordes of enemies, we came across some of the townspeople of Haven who needed our aid. Flissa... being one of them. She was buried underneath some rubble within the Singing Maiden. The building was slowly falling apart. I rescued her and yelled at her, screamed, asking where Fenrian was. She apologized a thousand times, saying they were followed by a group of red templars. They made it into the tavern fine, locked themselves in. But the red templars started burning the building down, with them in it. Flissa had given Fenrian her key to the back door and told him to get towards the Chantry. To run as fast as he could and don't look back. She wasn't expecting us to come and get her, she was expecting to die. She *did* guard him with her life. But now he was gone, lost, amidst the fighting, the screaming and the people running desperately for their lives. We had slain a lot of red templars just getting to this tavern alone. We had already saved everyone, Flissa turning out to be the last of them.

I run outside the tavern, followed by all of my companions. Cole went inside the Chantry, he wanted to help or something. I didn't really pay attention to what he was saying. I was freaking out, my eyes darting in every single direction. Only destruction was seen. I started to breathe faster, almost hyperventilating. Solas grabbed me by the shoulders firmly then. "Eliana! You *must* focus!"

"Fenrian! He-

Solas interrupts me. "-We'll find him!"

I nod. And turn to my companions, fear and worry spread across their faces as well. They look to me for guidance now. "We've attacked their forces, our trebuchets are broken, save for one more. We could use it to attack this dragon! Let's get to the Chantry. Fenrian could be there too." With that, we all run towards the safe Chantry, me hoping mostly that Fenrian found his way there.

When we get there however, we are only met by a sickly looking Chancellor Roderick, Cole right next to him keeping the doors open. "Move! Keep going! The Chantry is your shelter!" When we run inside, Roderick collapses, and falls into Cole. Who in response wraps Roderick's arm around his neck to support him.

"He tried to stop a templar. The blade went deep. He's going to die." Cole says in an emotionless tone of voice.

Roderick coughs slightly, blood coming out of his mouth as he does. "What a... charming boy."
My eyes dart around the Chantry, no sign of Fenrian.

This is not good... this isn't good!

Cullen jogs up to me. "Eliana! Our position is not good. That dragon stole back any time that you might have earned us."

All I think of is Fenrian right now, but Cullen seems too worried about other things. I get it, but I just want to find Fenrian!

"I've seen an archdemon. I was in the Fade, but it looked like that." Cole speaks from beside us both while crouching down next to Roderick. Whom he placed on top a chair to compose himself.

"I don't care what it looks like. It had cut a path for that army. They'll kill everyone in Haven!" Cullen almost yells now.

Kill everyone in Haven... Including Fenrian.

"The Elder One doesn't care about the village. He only wants the Herald." Cole replies, still in the same emotionless tone of voice. This man seems less than phased by it all.

I shake my head. Thinking only of saving Fenrian right now. "If it will save these people, he can fucking have me!"

"It won't." Cole replies monotone. "He wants to kill you. No one else matters, but he'll crush them, kill them anyway. I don't like him."

My heart drops.

"You don't like-..." Cullen starts but sighs, then turns his focus to me again. "Eliana. There are no tactics to make this survivable. The only thing that slowed them was the avalanche. We could turn the remaining trebuchet, cause one last slide."

I shake my head. I don't like that idea in the slightest. "We're surrounded, overrun. To hit the enemy, we'd have to bury the entire town!" I say in a panicked tone of voice.

Cullen nods. "Yes. We are dying. But we can decide how. Many don't get that choice."

I throw my hands in the air then. "What of Fenrian?! I should just let him die too?!

Solas walks over to me and hushes me softly, placing a hand gently on my lower back.

I didn't even notice Roderick glancing towards the war room, Cole's eyes following Roderick's. "Yes.. that. Chancellor Roderick can help. He wants to say it before he dies."

Roderick groans in pain. "There is a path. You wouldn't know it unless you'd made the summer pilgrimage, as I have. The people can escape. She must have shown me. Andraste must have shown me so I could..." he breathes loudly. "-tell you."

"Cullen?" I ask the Commander hesitantly.

"It could work. If he shows us the path. But what of your escape?" I grit my teeth, close my eyes and lower my head. If I must die in order to save them, to save Fenrian... I will. Fuck it. Fuck my former life, fuck everything. I already feel a million times older having lived a life here in Thedas. Everything I've seen, everything I've had to do. I remain quiet. Cullen catches on. "Perhaps you will surprise it, find a way..." Then he storms towards his soldiers and our remaining mages. "Inquisition.
Follow Chancellor Roderick through the Chantry! Move!

I walk slowly towards the doors. Cullen jogs back up to me one last time. "They'll load up the trebuchet. Keep the Elder One's attention until we're above the tree line. I'll signal you when we are. If we are to have a chance... if you are to have a chance, let that thing hear you!" and with that, he walks off.

And so we all, me and all my companions, make our way back outside again. Haven is almost nearly destroyed and it seems like more enemies have entered... "Let's find Fenrian first! Then we'll fire that damn trebuchet." I yell out.

We fight our way through some more hordes. We've passed places I've already checked before, a thousand times.. And yet, still no sign of Fenrian. Solas is closeby, right by my side. The others follow me. The Rogues are flanking, the warriors are charging, the mages are using barriers to aid us, and me? - all I'm doing is looking for that silvery blonde haired little cub of mine. If anything happens to him. I could never forgive myself.

One last fight before we reach the last trebuchet. I'm gradually losing my hopes of finding him and it's killing me. I use my daggers with all the force and energy I have within me, adrenaline pumping through my veins, blood splattered across my face, my eyes stinging with the tears. The tears of desperation. Everyone is fighting their own enemies, all around me. The trebuchet in front of me, still seems miles and miles away. Everything is going in slowmotion for me, time has slowed down and this time it's just my own imagination, not an arcane circle from a rift. Solas leaves my side to help the others and I am alone, but I don't care, I am overcome with emotions and I am using this to my advantage. Until...

"Asa'ma'lin!" a panicked cry spreads across the battlefield, I jerk myself around, completely forgetting about my enemies and run into the direction of Fenrian. He's holding a sword in hands, way too heavy for him, his clothes are ripped and he looks awful.

But I am not the only one who's noticed him. A red templar infront of me, right between Fenrian and I, turns around and charges right at Fenrian. I yell out, raise my hand, cry out for him to run away. Fenrian notices too. His eyes widen, and he freezes up in fear.

No! Dear Heavens PLEASE no!!!!

"FENRIAN!" I cry out. He is pierced by the red templar's blade, I jump ontop of the monster and dig my blades into his body. Once, twice, thrice, I stab him over and over and over and over and-

Fenrian drops to the floor. I cannot stop stabbing the red templar.

"Eliana!" Solas rushes to my side and drags me from the already lifeless corpse of the red templar. I just continue to stab him. In his head, his eyes, his mouth, his torso, his legs, everywhere. Solas shakes me. "ELIANA! Calm yourself!"

My tearstained eyes meet Solas' and then we both glance towards Fenrian on the floor. We rush to his side, and Solas painstakingly conjures a barrier around the three of us to keep us out of harms way. I kneel down before Fenrian and lift his head into my arms. I'm cradling him in my arms like a babe, crying loudly.

"Asa'ma'lin..." he whispers softly.

"Fenrian! I'm so... SO sorry! Are you alright, he will be alright, right Solas?" I look up to Solas, who is nearly drainered of his mana. He in turn just slowly shakes his head. "What do you mean?! You're a
healer! Heal him goddamnit!" I yell at him.

"I ran towards the Chantry, like Flissa said... but there were more enemies, Elie..." Fenrian's voice is soft and low. I look back down at him and kiss his forehead. "I found this sword, and I wanted to look for you. To protect you. I tried to find you, Elie... But I couldn't find you."

"Sshhhh. It's okay, sweetheart. You'll be fine." I whimper against his forehead as I keep kissing it over and over.

"You came back for me... You always do."

"Ssssshhhh."

"Will you sing for me again, asa'ma...." he pauses. My eyes widen in terror. No.... He inhales loudly. "-asa'ma'lin.."

I nod frantically. "Of course my love! I'll always sing for you. I will... Hush now," I choke back the sobs and continue cradling him softly in my arms. My head only inches away from his face. That's starting to get paler by the second. "Sun sets, little one... Time to dream... your mind journeys, but I will hold you here." my voice breaks as I'm singing Mir Da'len Somniar in common tongue. Tears streaming down my cheeks. Solas watching me, his jaw clenched. "Where will you go, little one... lost to me in sleep. Seek truth in a forgotten land... deep within your heart." Fenrian's lips smile faintly, and his eyes are closed. His face looks relaxed. And he's slipping away slowly. My heart breaks. "Never fear, little one..." I choke back another sob, louder this time. My vision completely blurred from the tears. "Follow my voice..... I will call you home.... I will call you home."

"Da'len..." Solas' voice breaks as he calls out to me.

I glance down at Fenrian again... and he's gone. And I lose it. "FENRIAN!!! I cry out. I'm wailing loudly, rocking myself back and forth as he's in my arms. "Fenrian! Come back to me! I'm so so sorry! I should've been there. I should have-" I can't. Not anymore.

The barrier around us is losing strength and Solas reaches out to me. "Eliana. We must leave!"

I shake my head. "No! I can't leave him here!" The barrier dissapears and my companions run over to me. Gasps follow as they see the scene before them.

"Feathers.... I-" Varric starts but he stops again.

"I know this is... not a good time, but we've aimed the trebuchet for you, Herald." Vivienne says softly.

I look around me and the battle is over. It's just the trebuchet now.

"I'm so sorry for your loss, Eliana." Vivienne places her hand gently on my shoulder. I look up at her, and see a genuine heartbroken look in her eyes. It breaks my heart even more.

"Go. Take him! Take him with you! He'll need a proper burial. I'll-" I burst out into tears again.

Sera nods and crouches down next to me. "We'll take him. Don't you worry."

Iron Bull chimes in. "I'll carry the little one safely, Eliana. You've nothing to worry about. I got your back."

Cassandra sobs as well. "Go now, Eliana. Do what you must. We'll bring him with us."
They all slowly move away from us. Iron Bull lifting Fenrian gently into his arms and walking off as well. I am left with only Solas then. I lower my head and sob some more. But I know this is not the moment. I'll have my time to grieve. "Go.... Solas... just... go. Get to safety."

And that's that. Solas walks off, following the other and I make my way through the field of corpses. I am broken. I am completely and utterly broken. My soul, my body, everything. And it's not over yet. Still... it's not over.

**It. doesn't. end.**

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Chapter End Notes

The song Elie sang was Mir Da'lên Somniar, but the English translation of it. This chapter was... actually **hard** to write.

If you've any questions on why I decided for the story to take this turn, feel free to ask, I've got an answer :)

I also feel like Elie needed something very traumatic to prepare her, harden her, for what's next to come. This is the development I spoke of in a previous chapter, the trauma I thought she needed.

This was sort of part 1 of *In Your Heart Shall Burn*, part 2 is coming !

**Also: listen to Mir Da'lên Somniar. It will definitely set the mood better for Fenrian's part in this chapter ;**;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZI3CmzQY1So
Chapter Summary

Eliana is trying to find her way back towards her companions after meeting with Corypheus.

Now she is all over the place, and she doesn't quite know what to do with herself, her feelings, her new title of Inquisitor, and her new suitor apparently. Because she isn't already feeling confused enough...

Pushing Solas away and insulting his feelings, stinging his pride, turned out to be a massive mistake of hers. One that she intends to fix. But how?
When she's swarming in work and just keeps postponing everything until she can no longer run away from it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Pretender. You toy with forces beyond your ken. No more."

...

"I am here for the Anchor, The process of removing it begins now."

...

"What you flail at rifts, I crafted to assault the very Heavens."

...

"So many people died for this! What was this thing meant to do?!"

...

"Beg that I succeed, for I have seen the throne of the Gods, and it was empty!"

...

"I will not suffer even an unknowing rival. You must die."

...

"You're an arrogant fool! If I'm dying, it's not today!"

* * * *

"Mommy! Look! I'm drawing!"
My mother's face lights up. "No Elie, it is called *drawing*.

"That's what I said!"

She smiles softly and brushes the hair away from my eyes. I get up to my tippy toes and show her my drawing. Then, her eyebrows furrow. "Who is this, Elie?"

"It's Fenrian, mommy!"

"Who is Fenrian?" she steps backwards, away from me, she looks scared.

"Mommy? Why are you walking away from me? That's Fenrian! You know?"

"No. Eliana. You're not here. You've left me." my mother starts to sob.

I glance down at my body and notice I've become much older in an instant. "Mom? What are you-.."

"You're gone and we don't know where you are, Elie. I miss you so much."

"Mom... I'm still alive. I'm here." I reach out to her, but the image of my mother fades away. 

*This is not real.*

I gasp for air, sitting straight up. My body aches, hurts. I throw some rubble off of me, to the side. I am freezing cold, a layer of snow atop my body.

*Shit. This really fucking hurts. Fuck.*

I look around me. My eyes adjusting to the darkness, there's a tunnel ahead of me.

*Fenrian... Oh Gods, this is all real. Too real. It really happened, he's really gone. And I... fell through the mine shaft, into the tunnels below Haven. Did the others make it out? I saw Cullen's signal right before I fired the trebuchet aimed at the mountain. They must've all seen the avalanche bury Haven. They must think I'm dead...*

I try to get up, but my body is not cooperating in the slightest. I cry out in pain, my leg is badly injured from some of the rubble that fell onto it.

*Fuck! I need to move or I'll surely die.*

I sit there for a while, hunched over, weeping softly as I remember what went down before I ended up down here.

*Are they looking for me?*

I slowly pull my leg out from underneath the rubble and cry out a second time, when the stones are scraping my shin. The leather from my armour is damaged and the stone literally scraped off part of my skin as I try to remove it. The blood slowly starts to seep from the wound, created on my shin. The dirt from the rubble and the snow irritate the wound further. My body hurts. I look up, at the direction which I came from.

*That's a long way down... I'm amazed I even survived that fall.*

My wound is burning from the dirt and the unsanitary environment. I'll need to get this leg patched up. I glance around myself; nothing to wrap my leg with.
Fuck it. I'll just try to make my way back to the others and hope the bleeding will cease.

I manage to get up, but only barely. Then when I am finally standing upright, my head starts to throb and I immediately fall against the side of the cave, against the walls. I cough, wheeze and notice that my throat is absolutely dry. It hurts to swallow.

*How much dirt did I inhale? Or swallow?*

I groan and try to regain my composure. I need to get out of here, now. And so I move. Slowly, limping my way towards the tunnels ahead of me. My mark is thrumming in my left hand. I glance down at it as I try to inch forwards.

*Great help you've been.*

I scoff slightly as I pull my legs forwards, step by step I make my way further and further down the tunnels, it's dark, so I stay close to the walls. My hand touching the wall the entire time. Then... In the far distance I see the faint glowing of two torches on either side of the walls.

*They were here. They've been here. I'll just need to follow their tracks. Walk the same direction as them and then I'll find them.*

I hear some crackling sounds coming from the end of this tunnel system, and I can hear the faint whistling of the wind.

*There's the exit!*

Then, I hear the crackling getting louder and the mark in my hand is reacting to it.

*A rift. Fuck....*

I groan and take one of my daggers into my hands. Two shades are spat out of the rift.

*Any day I'd take you on for practice... but today, you may cause me death...*

I slow my breathing, try to stand straight, but to no avail. The shades notice me and are inching closer to me. I might die now. The fall did not kill me, but this.. this could be it.

But my mark sputters to life, and does something I've never seen it do before. My arm is shaking violently, and without me wanting or willing it to; it creates some sort of swirling vortex at the height of the ceiling of this cave. Swallowing up the two shades in an instant, and as I try to wrap my mind around what just happened, they're gone. And the vortex closes with a loud boom. Whatever caused that; I don't know, what I do know is that I fall back down onto my knees. My shin scraping against the stone floor. I wince and cry out, choking on my sobs.

*Fuck. That's draining me. Better not use that shit again...*

I sit there for a while again, regaining some of my energy. I just need a little bit to get myself back up to my feet and continue following the Inquisition's tracks. I huff and manage to push myself off from the ground, then I move towards the mouth of the cave. The wind is howling, it's a sharp, cold wind that cuts into my skin the moment I exit the cave.

*I wonder if I should just head back and stay within the cave... But what if that rift reappears. I didn't actually close it. I cannot survive that a second time.*

*No Elie, you must keep moving.*
I stumble and fumble my way down a very small hill, leading up to the cave I just exited. And see a cart, slightly swallowed up by the snow. There's a faint burning of embers, but the moment I come closer to approach it; it extinguishes.

*Am I walking ontop of Haven now? Or....?*

I shake my head and force myself to move forwards. The snow is already reaching my knees. It's getting harder for me to force myself to move. And I'm slowing down. I groan loudly, and grit my teeth. Glancing into the distance I see a couple of pine trees ahead of me, bundled together. I look up to the sky then. The sky, despite the weather, is calm. The stars shining brightly and I decide to just head North.

*Just keep heading North. You'll find them again, Elie. Do it for Fenrian.*

I can feel the tears streaming down my cheeks again, but the icy wind seems to immediately freeze them up. It's burning and cutting into my skin even more.

*Fenrian... I'm so...so sorry.*

I remember Solas shaking his head.

*Why didn't he at least try to heal him?! He always heals everyone. Why didn't he fucking heal him?!*

I drag my feet forwards, through the snow, until finally, after what seems like hours, I reach the pine trees. And low and behold; an old campfire. But it's cold. No embers, no warmth, not even ashes.

*This must've been them, right? Are they looking for me? Am I getting closer to them? Or am I moving into the complete opposite direction?*

I'm in the middle of a blizzard, barely moving forward, I'm hurt, wounded. And not just my leg, my soul. I am broken. I feel like only half the person I was when I first got here. As I move, I reminisce about my first days here.

*Who was I before I got to Thedas? Like... what kind of person was I? I have become this much older, much more mature version of that girl from Earth. I am nowhere near as naive and innocent as I was back then. Was that even me? This is me. This, right now. This... rogue fighter. Dual weapon, tough, decision making Herald of Andraste with a fake backstory. A fake life lived at Kirkwall. With a dwarf friend, an elven boyfriend, if you can even call him my boyfriend. With a Qunari tall as fuck companion. All of this... is so normal to me. I have become numb to the confusion, to the questioning. The wondering of how I got here.*

I wince when the snow is burning on my shin. I groan and shake my head. I need to continue moving forwards. I need to find them.

*The nightmare I had before I awoke in that cave.. My mother... I had almost forgotten what her face looked like. How can somebody forget what their own mother's face looks like?! She gave birth to me! Took care of me for twenty two years... And I... forgot.*

A dark and low chuckle escapes my mouth then.

*What would Dan say if he saw me now? Doing this? Dan... You seem like no more than a distant memory. A memory of a life I once lived. Like a dream, and when I woke, I woke up here. In the real world. Thedas.....*

Another old campfire!
Ambers....... recent? I'm getting closer.

Lost in my thoughts.

Atop of the hill, don't even know how I managed to get up there, I see light in the distance. And smoke! Civilization! It must be because I know I'm close to them now, because the exhaustion kicks in. My sight starts to blur, but I must keep going..

*Just... a little..... further!*

"There she is!"

"Thank the Maker!"

(...) 

"And who put you in charge? We need a consensus, or we have nothing!"

"Please, we must use reason! Without the infrastructure of the Inquisition, we're hobbled!"

I slowly get up, I'm on a cot. I look forwards and see Leliana, Cullen, Josephine and Cassandra; arguing. I glance down at my shin, my leg is patched up. Wrapped.

"That can't come from nowhere!"

"She didn't say it could!"

"Enough! This is getting us nowhere!"

"Well, we're agreed on that much!"

"Shh, you need rest." An old familiar voice I haven't heard in a while speaks to me softly. I turn my head to the left, and see Mother Giselle.

"They've been arguing like this for long?" I ask in a monotone voice.

Mother Giselle smiles faintly. "Yes... But they have that luxury thanks to you. The enemy could not follow, and with time to doubt, we turn to blame. Infighting may threaten as much as this Corypheus."

....Yes.... *Him.*

"Where is he now? Did any of you see?"

"We are not sure where we are. Which may be why, despite the numbers he still commands, there is no sign of him." she pauses and then gives me a serious look. "That, or you are believed dead. Or without Haven, we are thought helpless. Or he girds for another attack. I cannot claim to know the mind of that creature, only his effect on us."

I look over to my companions then.. They're quiet for now, but they seem hopelessly lost. "I should go to them. Figure out what we need to do next." I say resolute.

"Another heated voice won't help. Even yours." she shakes her head whilst smiling faintly then. "Perhaps *especially* yours. Our leaders struggle because of what we survivors witnessed. We saw our defender stand.. and fall. And now, we have seen her return. The more the enemy is beyond us, the more miraculous your actions appear. And the more our trials seem ordained. That is hard to
accept, no? What 'we' have been called to endure? What 'we' perhaps, must come to believe?"

I've no idea why she's putting me up on this pedestal right now. She speaks of me like some sort of....
what? - Prophet? Like, I died and came back to life?

"I didn't...." I say without thinking on it. I decide to finish my sentence then, as I seem to have caught
Mother Giselle's full attention. "I didn't die, and come back..."

She dips her head. "Of course, and the dead cannot return from across the Veil. But the people know
what they saw. Or, perhaps, what they needed to see. The Maker works both in the moment, and in
how it is remembered. Can we truly know the Heavens are not with us?"

*She's a smart woman, yes. But still, she's a revered mother. And she puts her faith in her Maker.
Whereas I... put my faith in myself. The Maker did not send me here. The Maker did not help me
escape. I don't believe in that.*

"Corypheus claimed to have assaulted the Heavens. What's your thoughts on that?" I ask her, a bit
annoyed with her earlier statements.

But, Mother Giselle remains calm as usual. "Scripture says Magisters, Tevinter servants of the false
old Gods, entered the Fade to reach the Golden City, seat of the Maker. For their crime, they were
cast out as darkspawn. Their hubris is why we suffer Blight, and why the Maker has turned from us.
If such is the claim of this Corypheus, he is a monster beyond imagining. All mankind continues to
suffer for that sin." she pauses. She speaks to me, giving me her pretty speech, lecturing me. I sigh.
"If even a shred of it is true, all the more reason Andraste would choose someone to rise against
him."

I shake my head slowly. "I just..." I pause. I am supposed to believe. I almost slipped up there. "I just
don't see how what I believe matters. Corypheus is real. A real threat. We cannot match this with our
hope and faith alone."

She gets up from her seat then and speaks to me one last time before she walks off. "An army needs
more than an enemy. It needs a cause."

I sigh and bury my head into my hands. My hair falling around my face. The people around me are
still unsure of what to do, and I need to lead. There's just so much weighing down on me right now.

"Da'len..." Solas' voice brings me out of my thoughts. I glance up at him. His face dark. Emotionless.
I remain silent. I don't know what to say to him now. "Iron Bull brought Fenrian's body. He's within
a tent.. I thought you might.." he stops for a second and sighs. "I thought you might want to see
him."

Fenrian's body...

"Bring me to him." I get up from the cot and follow Solas into a tent a little ways further, just outside
the camp.

The moment he opens the tent flaps, I see him. His lifeless, pale body. They've placed him on a bare
cot. There's candles placed around the tent on the floor, illuminating his face. My feet feel heavy
then, weighing down further and further on me with each and every slow step that I take towards
him. I kneel before him onto the floor and grab hold of his little hand. It's ice cold. I immediately lose
it. I sob, quietly. Weeping for my little cub. The little cub I have lost to this war and death. I
should've stayed with him. I never should have left his side! How could I have let him walk off with
someone else? I was supposed to be there! Protect him! And I failed him. And now.. I must suffer
"Eliana... I-" he begins but he cannot finish his sentence.

"Let us move elsewhere..." I say quietly as I get up to my feet again. I need to get away from this scene before me, or I'll surely lose it.

And he walks with me, to a secluded spot just outside the camp. I can see my companions faces as we pass them. Pity, and sadness spread across their faces. Even Varric.. is upset.

When we get to the secluded spot, outside of earshot, Solas uses veilfire to create some type of warmth and lighting. We stand there, next to one another, not saying a word. The wind blows softly, it's still freezing cold, but it's ten times better than it was when I was trying to get here. I don't even look at him. I can't. There's so much I want to say to him. So much I want to ask.

"Eliana. There's.. something I wished to discuss with you." Solas speaks quietly. Were we still in camp, I wouldn't even have heard him speak. His volume was that low. I nod and look at him, I know I must look void of all emotions right now. "The threat Corypheus wields... The orb he carries. It is Elven."
My eyebrow slightly raises then.

"Wait what.

He continues: "Corypheus used the orb to open the Breach. Unlocking it must have caused the explosion that destroyed the Conclave."

Okay. I know Solas to be an extraordinary mage... But... how does he know this for certain?

"How do you know about this?"

"Such things were foci, said to channel power from the Elven Gods. Some were dedicated to specific members of our Pantheon. There were even some members of the Pantheon who had more than one foci. All that remains are references in ruins, and faint visions of memory in the Fade, echoes of a dead empire. But however Corypheus came to it, the orb is Elven, and with it, he threatens the heart of human faith."

"Great. That too. Is there anything else you know that can ruin this day even further?" I say in a sarcastic tone of voice.

Solas looks less than amused now. "I thought you should know, Eliana."

My bitterness takes over then. "Hm yeah, thanks a lot Solas. " Then I try to walk away. I haven't forgotten about what happened with Fenrian.

He grabs my wrist harshly then. "Eliana." he says in a threatening tone of voice.

I jerk my hand away from his grasp though. "Just leave me, Solas." I hiss at him.

"What's wrong?" he asks me, his eyes worried.

"Why didn't you heal him when I asked?!" I snap. I tried to hold it in, but he just wouldn't let me leave to calm down. To figure it out myself, to give me the space I needed.

He looks hurt. "Eliana...I-

"-No! You heal everyone all the fucking time! You've healed wounds that were fatal! You didn't
even try to heal him! How could you?!” I scoff and shake my head.

Now I've done it.

He straightens his back and looks at me through his half lidded eyes. "I am no miracle worker, Eliana. Fenrian was dying. I have healed wounds that were fatal if not treated, yes. But none that were actually killing someone at that very moment. It would have been pointless. I could have tried, but it would be for nought."

"At least you could have done something!" I raise my voice now. I can see the emotionless expression on his face and it angers me even more. I turn around and take a couple of deep breaths.

"I would have done everything I could to save him, Eliana. He held a special place in my heart too."

"Yeah. I noticed." I say in a bitchy tone of voice.

It's silent for a while. Solas and I don't speak to one another and I dare not look at him because I know I've pissed him off as well. Finally, he breaks the silence. "Where should we go, Herald?" his voice cold.

"I don't know." the words slip out, and then the realization kicks in. "Shit." my eyes widen slightly. "I... I don't know." I turn my body sideways and look at Solas with a lost expression on my face. He remains emotionless.

"There is a place I know of." He walks past me. "Scout to the North. You will find the place which I speak of. It is called Skyhold."

"Just head North?" I ask him confusedly.

But he ignores me and continues walking away back towards camp. I've really done it. He won't even talk to me properly anymore. I've hurt his feelings. I stand there, next to his veilfire and stare into the flames.

But he should understand my anger. My outburst. It literally looked like he simply didn't want to even try and heal him. If he had tried... I wouldn't have been so mad. I just... lost Fenrian. My emotions are all over the place.

Absentmindedly I walk back to camp as well, but cannot find Solas. He must've gone inside his tent. Though I do not know which one is his. There's so many tents here. While I continue walking on, my feet automatically drag me back towards Fenrian's tent. And I didn't even realize it, until I'm standing before the opening of the tent once more. I slowly enter it again.

We have to bury him...

Once I enter the tent, I find Vivienne and Varric inside of it. They're both standing next to Fenrian, their heads lowered and eyes closed. I stop and look at them, but they've noticed. When they look up to me, their expressions are sad.

Varric is the first to say something. "Elie.." he whispers softly.

I can already feel the tears again. I quickly rub them out of my eyes. I'm their Herald, I should be strong. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't be so emotional. I shouldn't even be here. I'll leave and figure out our
Vivienne rushes over to my side and grabs hold of my arm before I can exit the tent again. "Don't, Eliana. It is perfectly fine to mourn."

Her unexpected kindness does me in. I break down. She hushes me and Varric walks over to me as well. His voice strained. "We should bury him tomorrow, Elie. I know it's soon, but-"

I cut him off. "-I know..." I take a few deep breaths and try to compose myself. My eyes immediately darting back over to the cot on which he lays. "We will. Tomorrow. I just need... can you guys leave me be, please?" I ask them both.

Vivienne nods her head. "I'll tell the others not to disturb you." and with that, they leave the tent.

I walk over towards the cot and sit down infront of it, knees pulled up to my chin. I quietly, ever so softly sing the lullaby again... For him, for myself. Until the darkness surrounds me and I fall to sleep again.

(...)

**9:41 Dragon - Fenrian's Funeral**

The funeral was short but beautiful. Mother Giselle spoke her kind words, as they lowered Fenrian's body into the ground. His body back to the eathern soil. I was weeping, being held softly by Cassandra. An act of kindness I will not soon forget. There was no casket, no real grave neither. It was just his body, wrapped in cloth entirely. Lowered into a deep hole that Bull and Blackwall had dug. There was no real ceremony, nothing. Solas spoke too, in Elven. I did not understand it. Neither did anyone else. But it sounded like it was a cry of pain. I felt it deep inside my heart, though I do not speak the language. I tried speaking, but I was too distraught. I couldn't even properly thank my companions and advisors for doing this for me. For taking time out of this whole shitty situation to bury my little cub. Leliana sang an Elven song. I didn't even know she knew Elven, or a song at least. She spoke first: "I am reminded of a song sung to me, many years ago. It was when my mother died, and this wise elven woman comforted me and told me that we shouldn't fear death, or hate it." she had looked over to me, directly into my eyes and continued. "Death is just another beginning. One day we must all shed our earthly bodies to allow our spirits to fly free." And then she sung. Her eyes closed, her hands wrapped infront of her body. Her head low. I had glanced over to Solas whilst she was singing, and wondered then how he felt about her singing in the Elven tongue. But I was soon caught up in the beautiful song. Once again, I did not understand any of it. But it was... comforting. It didn't mend my broken heart, rather soothed it. And I wept some more. And while she sang, I was hoping Fenrian was somewhere near me. His spirit holding my hand. His voice calling me 'asa'ma'lin'. And I realized I will never again feel that love another time. I will never again hear his little voice, hear his wonderful laughter, or see that beautiful face of him again. When the funeral was over, everyone paid their respects. Except for Solas, who was still avoiding me.

Cassandra had told me afterwards, that Solas had marked a spot on her map the other night. She didn't know what it was for. But I knew; Skyhold. And though it was breaking me down, I knew we had to leave again soon. We couldn't stay here, in the middle of the mountains. We had to go towards this Skyhold place. And when we walked away from his grave, which I had marked with a couple of pebbles in the shape of a heart, a piece of my soul died. And I left it there.

I sigh and put down the quill and stare at the people gathered in the courtyard of Skyhold. The fortress is absolutely massive and we don't have enough people to fill up the place. The healers and surgeons are working overtime to help the wounded and the dying. And then there's Cole... I still have yet to deal with that. But I simply can't. Not right now. I'm so tired, so drained, so exhausted.
I'm tired of life. Tired of this constant fighting. Not just physically fighting foes, but also, just fighting in general. To keep up the appearances. I am the Inquisitor now. I have a real title. Not that 'The Herald of Andraste' wasn't a real title, but this one... is much more scary to me. I actually 'lead' the Inquisition now. I had asked the healers if they needed my assistance. One would think with all the work they've got, they'd be jumping up and down for any help at all. But they kindly refused my offer. Saying they wouldn't want to impose on the Inquisitor's job. I then went around and checked if I could help the soldiers removing the rubble from the main hall in Skyhold. But again, my offer was declined. I have 'better' things to do, I suppose. What those things are yet, I don't know. All I want is my Fenrian back. I want to be genuinely happy and carefree again. He was the only one who could make me feel like that. Solas too.. but...

Solas...

I have royally messed up with Solas. I'm not mad at him anymore, now I'm just vulnerable. And I want his safe arms around me. I need comfort. I tried drinking the ale at the tavern, which was already being used by some of the townsfolk that made it out of Haven alive. The ale didn't quite do it for me though. Turns out, I can't drink my sorrows or pain away. I only get drunk in good company and on nice occasions. But I want to forget, I don't want to feel this pain. And I don't know how to forget. I don't know how to not feel anything. Sex with Solas would make me forget, but that's out of the question now. He avoids me at any chance he gets. Walks the other way, eats before or after I do, makes sure I'm nowhere near him. He resides mostly in the rotunda of Skyhold now. The other day I went up to the library to find solace in a couple of books. I didn't even know Solas was in the rotunda, until I got there to reach the library upstairs. My heart fluttered, I lost control for a moment when my eyes met his. But he looked away, got up from his chair and desk, and walked outside, towards Commander Cullen's tower. Though I highly doubt he went there to chat with our nice commander. He left because of me. He can't even look at me anymore. The worst part was, that there were no 'good' books in the library to help me forget for even a moment. Only books to teach. And that was the last thing on my mind now. But I did get a nice opportunity to speak with Dorian some more. He told me that Chancellor Roderick passed away at the camp before Skyhold. I was so busy wallowing in self pity, that I forgot about Roderick. He passed away... so much death in such a short amount of time. This Corypheus will wish I had died. Whenever I see him next....... Dear heaven's help me. I will rip his head off his torso if I must to take revenge for the deaths of so many.

I sigh and close my journal and place it back inside my satchel. I've managed to speak to everyone privately, they all congratulated me on becoming the Inquisitor. Everyone seems to have already forgotten. Well, forgotten is a big word. But, they simply 'move on'. Not like me. I've not had a good night's sleep in almost two days. I get up to my feet and start wandering the grounds of Skyhold again, to get familiar with this massive new place that we now take refuge in. It's huge and with that size, comes great walls to protect us. This is a much better place than Haven ever was, ever could be. Now I had only wished I'd find Fenrian here, not back at Haven. If I had known what was to happen, I would've never left his side. I would've protected him even more, shielded him even more. Told him not to learn how to wield a sword to try and protect me. Because in the end, I could not even protect him. As much as I tried.

* * * *

A week goes by and nothing happens. Nothing that's note worthy I mean. Everyone is adjusting to life in Skyhold and I am called to meetings with my advisors the entire time. I have my own room now, and everyone else has their own rooms as well. All fit in Skyhold and people have heard.. More people flock towards Skyhold each new day. My days consists of waking up before the sun rises, having breakfast alone in the main hall at the table, speaking to my advisors on what's next to come, and getting to know some of my companions some more. All this time, I have still not spoken to Solas and I'm starting to believe this is the longest we've gone without any contact whatsoever. Not even glances at one another. But whatever he's doing, it's pissing me off. I've seen him speak to
some Elven girls at Skyhold. Some of the refugees, some of the healers, some of the soldiers. When I first got to Haven, there were almost no Elves at all. But since I've advocated for the rights of the Elves, more and more have joined us. There's also a lot of dwarves and humans here, don't get me wrong, but it bothers me now most of all. Because now, Solas is not speaking to me. And he's 'free' again to do as he pleases. Though I haven't actively seen him flirt with women, I've seen the women flirt with him. And he lets them, though he doesn't pursue it. However, I can't help but wonder if it's his way of saying: fuck you, Eliana. I feel like he wants to prove a point, to show me that I'm no longer the only woman he speaks to when alone.

Fine, be like that Solas.

But I still want... no I need, crave a good fucking. I know it sounds horrible, but whenever I had sex with Solas I'd forget about everything. And it was good. Now, I have nothing but myself and I can tell you; not romantic or exciting at all. I sigh and close yet another boring book, as I sit crossed legged on one of the divans in the library. Of course, I know deep down the only reason I sit here and 'read' is because I want to catch a glimpse of Solas when he's down in the rotunda. And sometimes, I'm lucky and I get to be near him in a way. He'll paint on the barren walls of the rotunda, peacefully. And I get to watch him. Longing for him to look up to me and beckon me over. But, I'm never that lucky. "Another dull book, I take it?" Dorian's amused voice brings me out of thoughts and I glance up at the man who's become rather friendly with me.

"Isn't there anything exciting in these books?" I ask him, clearly bored with all the reading material.

He snickers and takes a seat next to me on the divan. "Oh, I know. It's terrible. You'd think the Inquistion could afford some good books." he squints his eyes at me then and tuts me. "You're the blame for that, you know."

I scoff. "Whatever do you mean by that?!!"

"You're the Inquisitor." he smirks slightly.

I groan and roll my eyes. "Please don't remind me."

His eyes turn sad then and they follow my gaze. "You should really talk to him, you know." he didn't even bother to lower his voice. I punch his shoulder.

"Shut up, will you? You want him to hear you?" I hiss.

"It's not like he can hear that well from all the way down there." Dorian chuckles.

"You'd be amazed." I say in a wry tone of voice. Despite my longing for Solas, I don't want him to know that I miss him. Miss us... our... heated moments. Our intimacy. I refuse to let him have that. Though I don't even think he wants to know at this point. I really fucked it up with him. I knew, always knew, he loved Fenrian just as much as I did... Maybe even more so, because Fenrian was an elf as well. My words must've cut deep.

Dorian waves his hand in front of my face. "Come on, Eliana." he berates me now.

I sigh and shake my head. My eyes sadden. "No, Dorian."

"Is it because you've seen him with those elven servants?"

Geesh, he really will not let this one go.

"Elven servants, elven soldiers, elven-"
He cuts me off: "-Yes yes, is that why?"
"Maybe."

He scoffs. "Well, if he is having fun. Why shouldn't you? I really don't see the issue here."

I glance at Dorian and take him in. Drink in his features.

"What are you proposing?" I ask Dorian cautiously.

*Is he suggesting something? Because if he is, then my gaydar is really broken ever since I got to Thedas.*

He catches on quickly and laughs loudly, throwing his head backwards as he does. "Though you're certainly very beautiful, my dove, *that* was not what I was thinking of."

I feel quite relieved then. I've come to adore Dorian, simply because of his constant sassyness. But he's also a good friend if he wants to be serious. I've confided in him a lot over the past week, practically spending every day with him. Which is of course also because I've been at the library every day for Solas. Even if I didn't feel like talking, he'd make small talk and kind of make me forget a little. But not enough, sadly. I like Dorian, when I'm having a better day, we joke a lot. Including a bit of teasing one another, but I never wanted to take it that far.

*At least my gaydar still works.*

"So?" I urge him.

He smiles mischievously. "I do happen to know that our little Commander has been asking about you a lot lately."

I snort. "That's understandable. I'm the Inquisitor and he's my Commander. If I'm not doing well, it could affect the entire Inquisition. He wishes me well because of that sole purpose, nothing else."

He hums for a moment and cocks his head to the side. "So is asking Cassandra every day if 'Eliana is alright' just that then? I think there's more to it. And believe me, I'd jump that any chance I'd get."

His bluntness forces a reaction out of me. For the first time in what seems like ages, though it's only been a week, I laugh. And it's a genuine laughter, not a faked one. "Dorian!" I exclaim.

He shrugs his shoulders indifferently then. "Or.. you could go for the bearded Blackwall. All rough and tough." he wiggles his eyebrows.

"Blackwall is like twice my age." I say resolute.

"And Solas isn't?" he counters.

I roll my eyes. Point taken. "I just.. see Blackwall as a... old fatherly type of guy. Must be the beard." I joke wrly. "Besides, I'm fairly certain he has his mind set on Josephine. And I don't want to stand in the way of their love."

Dorian sputters. "You almost convinced me. But you're still a terrible liar. Alright, fine.. then..." he hums and thinks for a while longer but I stop him before he continues.

"No. No, and no. Before you even start." I get up from the divan and point my index finger at him. "Don't even *dare* to try and set me up with someone. I can see those little cogs turning in your head."
He raises his hands in defense and feigns innocence. "Fine, fine. If you want to be miserable then who am I to try and give you some fun." he winks playfully.

"Ugh, really. Okay, I'm leaving. I've been far too happy for one day." and with that I walk off. Down the stairs, into the rotunda. Past Solas, who's still focused solely on his painting. Doesn't even notice me. Or pretends not to at least.

As I sit down at the table that afternoon to have some lunch, prepared by the cooks in the massive kitchen, I think of Dorian's words some more.


I remember my first reaction when meeting Cullen for the very first time in the war room.

*'Hubba hubba' were the exact words if I'm not mistaken.*

Though Cullen is certainly very handsome, and I would definitely love to use him to make Solas mad.. Or just help forget about Solas all together, I don't think I could do that. I'd have to live with Cullen and whatever possibly happens between us for the entire time. And it would jeopardize the entire situation. I mean, he doesn't seem like the type of guy to just.. bump and grind with and then move on. No I need something, someone that doesn't care. I need a one night stand. And maybe, just maybe, that'll help me forget for a little.

*What are you even saying, Elie? This is nothing like you.*

*It is now. You know damn well I need a distraction.*

*But having sex with anyone isn't you and it's not the distraction that you need.*

"Eliana. I was hoping I'd find you here."

I look up and to my surprise it's Cullen.

*Speak of the devil.*

"Cullen!" I try to get up but I bump my knee hard against the oaken table. He caught me off guard by appearing right when I was thinking about him. "SHIT!" I yell out in pain as I clutch my knee with my hands, slightly hunched over forwards.

He chuckles softly, but clears his throat and places his hand on my back. "Are you alright?"

"Not... funny." I hiss through gritted teeth as I wait for the pain to subside.

"You're right. I apologize." he says to me, but I can still sense the amusement in his voice.

"At any rate, why were you hoping to find me here?" I desperately try to change the subject as I straighten my back and look at him.

"Ah yes. I er..." he rubs his neck. "Josephine and Leliana have been talking about our next move. Perhaps it would be wise if we try to gain some more noble allies, in favor of the Winter Palace."

I curse inwardly. The Winter Palace is the last place I want to visit to gain allies with. Though the peace talks that Empress Celene is planning on holding are important to us. Especially after seeing what could happen in the future if we don't gain her trust and get her on our side.

He continues. "Also there's the Templar matter. It's important we should do some more research
about this. Perhaps speak to Varric's friend?"

"Ah yes, the mysterious friend of Varric.

"That too." I sigh uncomfortably. I've postponed all my work. And now, everything has to be done all at once. Maybe not now, but time is ticking. "I also still need to deal with Cole."

Cullen nods. "His ... lurking certainly is very disconcerting." he notices then my tired expression, which I was trying to hide desperately. He sighs. "Look.. forget all this business talk for a moment. How are you?" he relaxes slightly once he drops the 'professional commander' act.

I groan and sit back down onto the chair, poking into the meat on my plate with a fork. Cullen takes his seat right next to me at the table. "I'm buried in work I keep pushing away and-

He shakes his head. "-No, I mean you. How are you holding up?"

"Dorian was right then. He has been worried about me personally. My emotional state, and not for the sake of business alone it seems.

My eyes widen slightly, and I give him a confused look. "What does that matter?"

His lips curl into a slight smile, scar curling with it and his amber colored eyes soften. I had forgotten how good looking and handsome Cullen was. "It matters to me." then he realizes what that must sound like because he quickly fixes his 'errors'. "Ah.. I mean.. as your advisor and friend."

I smile softly back at Cullen and shrug. "I'm.. not doing great. Obviously. I don't know how you all do it. Move on so quickly. I can't. Not yet at least. I'm still troubled greatly by Fenrian's death and I can't seem to focus on anything. It's weighing down on me a lot. But.. Dorian has been helpful. As have the others, though I try not to speak to them too much." I look down.

"Yes, I've heard from the others that you don't speak to them as often as you used to."

"I feel like I'm being too depressed. I don't want their moods to change negatively because of me."

He places his hand gently on my shoulder then and squeezes it softly. "You're not being too depressed. Your reaction is justified and understood by us all."

I snort slightly. "This is Cullen the friend speaking right? Cullen the Commander would never!" I joke sarcastically.

He dips his head and bares his teeth as he smiles. "Yes."

We stare into eachother's eyes for a while, his hand still on my shoulder when all of a sudden we are interrupted by a polite cough from behind us. I turn my head around lazily, only to find Solas standing there, with a couple of papers in his hands.

Shit!

"No wait. Not shit. Nothing happened, A. And B, even if something did happen; fuck you.

I will not be feeling like crap because of you.

But what.. are you doing here anyways?"

"Ah, Solas." Cullen doesn't take his hand away though, he keeps it right there on my shoulder and I noticed he's moved slightly closer towards me.
"I've the maps you required right here, Commander. I've taken the liberty to draw them out for you and I've updated them as I did." Solas says, looking down at Cullen through half lidded eyes, completely seeming to ignore my presence there.

But I can feel a palpable tension growing between the three of us, the air seems.. thicker somehow. Is it his aura? His magic that I can feel?

Is he bothered?

I shake the thoughts from my mind. Cullen accepts the maps and dips his head gratefully. "Thank you. This will come in handy for when my soldiers go out again. And also for Leliana's men."

Solas' eyes finally dart over towards my direction and for a split second I could swear his eyes turned dark grey. I blink rapidly.

Also... did his eyes just flash?

But he quickly looks back at Cullen then and straightens his back. "Now if there wasn't anything else?"

Cullen looks to me then. "What about you, Eliana? Is there anything you want to discuss now that he's here with us?"

I frown at the Commander before me then. What is he doing? Everyone here knows Solas and I have been avoiding one another like the plague. Though I've not said a word to anyone about it; it's definitely clear we're not on good terms and we're not 'together' anymore. Dorian can be a hand full, true, but even Dorian wouldn't put me on the spot like this right infront of Solas. "No?" I say cautiously.

And it seems I'm not the only one who found this odd, Solas is looking at Cullen like he wants to strangle him. Cullen smiles politely at Solas then and dips his head. "Nothing else then."

Solas turns his heel but before he can move out of earshot, Cullen takes hold of my hand and speaks to me directly. "If you have any need of me, Eliana. I'll be there."

I just stare at Cullen, dumbfounded. Okay, I know that I was thinking of sleeping with you just to forget about everything, but now this is kind of creepy and weird. I quickly come to the realization that I don't want to sleep with anyone else, because this 'sweet' behavior of Cullen is kind of freaking me out. I glance over towards the spot where Solas is. He just stands there, his back facing us. He's stopped moving. Then somehow, I remember the words that Solas once uttered to me, in a tent: "You do not know what effect you have on men, Eliana. Perhaps you do not see it, but I do." During this time, Solas spoke of Cullen and I.

"Thanks?" is the only thing I can answer. Confused and not quite knowing what to do with this. Solas does not move an inch though.

Cullen smiles sweetly at me and brushes some of the loose tendrils from out of my face. His eyes turn serious then. "What happened at Haven.... You stayed behind, you could have-.." he pauses for a moment. Does he forget Solas is right there? "-I will not allow the events at Haven to happen again. You have my word."

And that seems to be enough for Solas, because he walks off. Part of me is cheering. Like a big: "Ha-ha and a fuck-you, Solas!" but the other half of me dislikes what just happened. I don't want anyone else, just Solas. But somehow, I've been marked as a target for Cullen to pursue. Even though I'm fairly certain I've not given him any reason to. My mind's working overtime right now,
trying to wrap my head around this new information. And since my emotions are still all over the place, I can't help but smile politely at Cullen and thank him kindly. What am I supposed to do?

I take my hand from his grasp though and walk off, towards the tavern, I need... something. But what I need mostly is being away from Cullen.

*Well this is just all too much. Solas mad with me. Me not knowing what to do with the situation, the work that's about to bury me alive and also still grieving for my little cub. What is a girl to do?*

Chapter End Notes

I know this chapter is sort of everything all at once. And not really with a main focus. But it is what I think is exactly how Eliana feels at the moment too.

Plus, we need such chapters :3 I still have grand plans for the upcoming one's so bear with me ♥

Also: the song Leliana was singing was 'Leliana's Song' and it's from Dragon Age Origins if you didn't already know. Including some of the dialogue she speaks during the funeral ^^ I thought it was fitting.

XOXO
Always Connected

Chapter Summary

Eliana sets things straight with Solas.

Finally.

In a new location ;) (briefly new location)
And she has some deep conversations with some of her companions. Including some heart to heart with a stranger... A mutual understanding from one hero to another.

She starts to become her own self again. She's beginning to cope with things and give it all a place.

Life is moving on. And so is Elie.

Including letting part of her old life go.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I thought being away from Cullen and Skyhold in particular was a good idea. I mean why not. I had to do something, being the great and mighty Inquisitor. And the people of Skyhold were starting to talk about me not doing anything, besides hanging out in the tavern and library all day. But staying away from the big "missions" seemed like a safer bet. So instead of doing those, I decided to focus on the western approach. After all, one of Vivienne's tomes was there and we still hadn't focused on that part of Orlais yet.

We needed to improve our stability right? - right.

So I went ahead and figured out whom to bring with me in the first place, that was my first obstacle it seemed... Leliana and Cassandra both didn't agree that I didn't want to bring Solas with me. Saying it would be too dangerous to go without a healer, considering what happened last time I ventured out. When I got shot in the leg by the bandits. I tried convincing them that Dorian would join me, but Dorian with his big mouth, exclaimed then and there that he did not know how to cure the simples cut. The Nightinggale and the Seeker then gave me their smug expressions, and I was almost defeated. I had glared at Dorian but then came with the idea to bring both of them, including Blackwall and Sera. So we'd have a very well balanced out team. A warrior, two rogues and two and a half mage. Me being the half one, but also the second rogue. Leliana didn't like that either, so I explicitly explained to her that she did not have need of so many mages at Skyhold. After all, we had a whole group of mages at our disposal, even including Vivienne who were to remain there with them. So if she really needed magic, well, it was everywhere around the fortress. Finally, both the women gave up trying to fight me on it and they accepted.
My second obstacle was avoiding Cullen the next couple of days while all of us were preparing for our trip. After all, I needed to repair my armour that was still damaged from the fall into the mine shaft at Haven. On top of that Solas was apparently still working on a couple of maps for the Inquisition so he had to finish those as well, before we left. I did not talk to Solas but I had heard from Varric, during a game of wicked grace in the main hall one evening. Varric tried desperately to get some information out of me about Solas and I but I stood my ground. And managed to dodge each and every single one of his questions with ease. Until the man of the hour, Cullen that is, showed up and wanted to join me and Varric. At first I didn't think much of it, until Cullen sat down right next to me, while there was a whole table with vacant chairs available to him. After a couple of rounds and a lot of awkward glances from Cullen into my direction I came up with the brilliant excuse to prepare for the trip and left the game and Cullen.

But avoiding him was harder than I thought, he seemed to show up in the oddest moments. And I no longer tagged it as coincidental meetings, especially when he showed up at the library the day following. I had been lightly joking with Dorian whilst skimming through some books about the western approach, when Cullen showed up atop the staircase. Even Dorian had given the commander an arched eyebrow when he saw him there. Turns out that because of my procrastination of all the main jobs and work, Cullen had a lot of spare time. Even so that he no longer had his dark circles under his eyes. And with enough sleep at night and time to kill, Cullen decided to continue his pursue on me. I gave Dorian my best impression of puppy eyes and my now new founded friend quickly caught on and decided to help me out. Dorian walked his way over towards the commander casually and started distracting the commander. Talking to him about stuff I couldn't make out. Seeing my opportunity I quickly made a safe exit through the rookery, onto the attached balcony and into the Skyhold gardens. There I remained for a while trying to wrap my head around this sudden interest from the commander towards me. Of course word had spread about Solas and I not being seen together anymore and the people put one and one together. But I didn't want this.

I sigh in my bedroll and rub my eyes harshly. Then I decide to relight my candle and sit up straight into the bedroll. Listening intently to the sound of sands whooshing in the warm nights air. At least it's not cold here in the western approach. But tonight was another bad night. I had gone to sleep right after dinner and setting down the camp, and had yet another nightmare filled with having to relive Fenrian's death. When I awoke, that's when I started to think of the last couple of days. I continue my thoughts then..

So having finally managed to avoid Cullen that day back at Skyhold, I tried desperately to study a bit of my magic, alone.. without Solas. But to no avail. Perhaps it sounds odd, but it almost seems like my magic has become weaker. Perhaps due to my emotions being so derailed. But perhaps also because I now no longer had Solas near me, and though I hated to admit it, I missed him. I missed his scent, his arms around me, and the conversations I had with him. Even the simplest discussions we once had, I missed. I had watched him from time to time and it seemed like he was no longer speaking to other women the entire time, or maybe he did but I never noticed again. But deep down in my heart I knew I was hoping that he stopped, and that he missed me just as much.

The day of departure Sera kept bothering me about why Solas was coming along with us. And I had to be the one explaining to her that I kind of had no real choice in the matter, with Solas being there right next to us. Sera had scoffed and made some annoyed comments but eventually she let it go. I had noticed Solas’ first real interest in me since days, while on the road towards the western approach. Dorian had asked me how the magic was coming along and I did not feel like lying. Since I barely had the strength to really travel, I had absolutely no strength to pretend or lie to anyone. I told him the truth and said that my magic has been weakening and I can't seem to find my focus. Solas had commented, in general, not directly towards me, that one's mind has to be peaceful and clear for magic to properly work and do as intended. Yeah, easy for you to say. You bald headed emotionless twat. The first night on the border of Orlais, was what seemed like my worst night terror
ever. I had gone off to sleep early in the evening, when the sun had only just set. My companions were still awake and I woke up screaming and covered in cold sweat. They all, even Solas, rushed into my tent and found me crying in the corner of it. It was another nightmare about the night of Haven's demise. I had relived the entire night, but the one moment that stuck with me the most was the vision of the red Templar mercilessly murdering Fenrian. Dorian came to my side and started hugging and hushing me, while telling the others to leave us. He asked me if I wanted to talk about it and so I told him everything, down to the last most disturbing detail of my night terror. The way the red glowing eyes of the Templar seemed to light up right when he spotted Fenrian. The way he impaled my cub with its sword. I broke down, and felt silly right afterwards. After all, Dorian did not know me that well, nor Fenrian. But he was extremely supportive and soothing, he held me against him and hushed me gently while telling me that he was there for me. I swear, if Dorian wasn't gay I probably would've kissed him. Despite what Cassandra might think of him being a Tevene, he's a real good person.

A yawn escapes my mouth then, but I roll my eyes at myself. My body aches for some proper rest, but I know deep down no matter how hard I try, I only get a few winks of sleep before having to set out again. I decide then that I should walk around a bit, maybe. Get some fresh air. I get up from my bedroll and I can feel my necklace's pendant clinging to my skin as I get up. I stop immediately and put my index and thumb on the pendant. I sigh and close my eyes. I stand here for a while, holding my pendant loosely in my two fingers while contemplating.

I grit my teeth and reach around the back of my neck to find the clasp of my necklace. Then I unhook the clasp and take it off of my neck abruptly and shove it down my travel pack. My hand immediately moves towards my upper chest, where usually the pendant is, and my hand touches bare skin. The necklace no longer there and oddly enough, a weight seems to lift from my shoulders.

"I love you, I always will. But it's time for me to move on. I no longer want to be reminded of a world that has been." I whisper under my breath to the nothingness and quietness that surrounds me. Slowly I leave the tent and my steps feel lighter as I make my way towards the edge of the mountain we are camped ontop of. I look up at the sky above me and take a deep breath of fresh air. Then continue to glance up at the moon above. It's so much bigger than the moon on earth. I sigh contently and I take a seat in the sand. My hand absentmindedly picking up some sand from the ground and letting it slide out of my hand slowly, repeating the process over and over as I stare up at the skies.

Suddenly I hear footsteps approaching, and in the darkness of the night I find it hard to make out who it is, until he reaches me. His eyes widen slightly. "Eliana. I'm sorry, I did not know you were here." Solas says surprised. Then he clears his throat as I remain silent, staring at him awkwardly. "I'll leave you here." He wants to move around but I quickly get up to my feet. Dusting off the sand from my butt I shake my head. "No it's fine, you stay and I'll leave. I have to get back to sleep anyways." I brush past him, but the moment I do, I feel a strong pull. The air is thicker now somehow and I can feel a faint tingling on my skin. It's not like before, where it was sexual and dark. This time, the feeling is more sincere, pure, almost longingly. Like he's reaching out to me. Like his soul reaches out to mine. I stop dead in my tracks and turn around to look at him, only to find him looking just as confused as I do. He doesn't seem to get this strange feeling either. I just stare at him for what seems like minutes, but really it could only be a couple of seconds.

He looks right back at me and then his eyes lower lightly, until they land on my neck and upper chest. He arches an eyebrow. "Did you lose your necklace?"

I am surprised by him continuing his conversation with me, although it's no real conversation, just small talk and awkward looks. However, this is the most we've spoken to one another in days. We've been avoiding each other like the plague at first, and then, I searched for him and he looked away as
much as possible. I simply shake my head. "I took it off, actually." I'm surprised he's noticed a detail so small and irrelevant.

"Ah." He looks down for a moment.

It seems like that's the end of our conversation then. I sigh and nod, then attempt to flee back towards my tent again. But he seems to think otherwise.

"Eliana?" He calls out to me, his voice slightly emotional.

I stop again but this time don't look at him. "Yes?"

I can hear him taking a step towards me but he doesn't go any further. "There's... something I want you to have." Then I can hear him moving, presumably getting said thing he wanted me to have. When I finally turn around a second time, I can see him holding out a folded piece of paper. Neatly folded, just like Solas, even him folding a piece of paper is neat and controlled.

I look at him questionably and hesitantly reach out to take the paper from his hands. When it's in my possession, he straightens his back slightly and clears his throat again, waiting for my reaction no doubt. I glance down at the paper and notice however that one side of the neatly folded paper is slightly crumpled and thinner than the rest of the paper. As if someone's been repeatedly folding and unfolding the paper to glance at whatever is on there. Now he's got my attention and curiosity gets the better of me as I finally unfold the paper.

It's the drawing Solas drew of Fenrian and I. Sitting at the firepit in Haven, listening to one of Varric's tales. Me wearing Solas' cloak, wrapped around Fenrian, who's sitting on my lap. My head resting on his little shoulder, the both of us listening and looking intently at the story teller who was in front of us. A slight twinkle in my eyes: the fire. A little half smile on my lips. Solas managed to capture those little details very well, and it's a beautiful portrait of us. A tear slowly starts to roll down my cheek and I let out a small sob of pain, my heart tightens immediately. I just continue to stare at our drawing, my heart aching.

"Fenrian wanted you to have this before, but you insisted he'd keep it." Solas sounds pained. Equally as emotional as I am, no doubt. He's not often so emotional, but when he is, it's usually when the topic revolves around Fenrian.

"How did you..." I start. But I cannot finish my sentence as I'm overcome with emotions.

"One evening, when I tucked him in for bed, he unfolded it and handed it over to me." He pauses and I glance up at him. A slight smile appears on his lips as he recalls this memory. He shakes his head. "When you have this, ba'isa'ma'lin, then you'll always have Eliana and me with you. So when you're sad, you can look at this drawing and remember us, and happier days. Then you will be happy again. And when you're happy, then Eliana is happy. And then I'm happy as well." Solas says as he repeats Fenrian's words to me.

A sad and hoarse laugh escapes me then, imagining Fenrian saying this to Solas. He was always trying to remind me of Solas, trying to make me think of him and it seems that he was doing the same thing with Solas. "Fenrian would say that, yes." I say quietly.

"And over the past couple of days I've been following his advice." He says then as he plunges his eyes into my own. I swallow hard. "No doubt he would have wanted you to have this now." He says finally.

I dip my head. "Ma serannas, Solas. This..." I sigh. "This means a lot to me." He in turn dips his own
head as well. And I'm already preparing myself to turn around and walk away, but before even making an attempt, again, I can feel the same pull. We both look at one another confusedly. "What is that?" I ask it before I can think about it. Honestly I don't even know if I should be asking him what this is. But it happened. And now I'm looking at him.

He smiles apologetically. "This... this is hard to explain."

I frown. "Humor me."

He clasps his hands behind his back then. "Apparently there's a bond between us."

"Apparently?" So he didn't meant for this bond to... happen? That sounds unlike Solas. He always seems to know what he's doing, and every move he makes is well thought out and deliberate. Especially when it's about magic. He makes this sound however, like it was a mistake.

"Our magic, energy, they're attached." He says plainly.

"Attached?"

He nods. "This... doesn't often happen however, I didn't even realize it until just now. Perhaps this is why your magic has been weakening."

"And this makes you uncomfortable." I note.

"Not uncomfortable, per se. It's simply... odd. It has been a long time since-" he stops abruptly. His face becomes emotionless.

"Long time? What, you make it sound like you're ancient. I know I've joked before saying you're an old man, Solas, but you're not that old." I joke wryly.

He quickly changes the topic however, though I wonder why. "At any rate. It will pass."

"You're leaving me with more questions than answers, Solas." I'm not even sure that I want it to pass. It shows that despite his exterior, he desperately longs for me just as much. And he misses me. And that thought comforts me, and makes me bold enough to try and fix this with him. Perhaps now is the right moment. "Do you hate me for what I said Solas?"

He looks up, surprised. "Not at all, why would I?"

I take a few steps towards him, until I am almost touching him. If I reach out my hand now, I can feel his chest. His lovely, firm chest. He tenses up immediately as I'm now this close to him again. "You didn't leave me be, when I needed to be left alone. I had just lost Fenrian, I could not deal with anyone. If Varric would've tried talking to me at that moment, I would have snapped at him too."

"But Varric possesses no magic. Healing magic to be precise." He says in a bitter tone of voice.

I sigh. "You're blaming me for what I said when I was mourning. And I deeply regret saying it. But in that moment, that's what it seemed like to me yes. I'm not going to sugarcoat that for you. In fact I wanted to strangle you."

His eyes slightly light up. "That would have been interesting. You trying to strangle me." He puts the emphasis on 'trying'. It kind of pisses me off a bit, as if I'm no real threat to him at all. I can be. I've killed and he's not immortal. But then I let go of the anger and sigh.

"Be that as it may, I regret what I've said now. And..." I look down for a moment, then reach out to take hold of his hand. It's cold, but soft. I can feel the veins on his hand and immediately a shock
goes through my entire body. A reaction to me touching him again. Turns out I'm more depraved than I thought I was. "Damn it Solas." I grit my teeth and start to feel emotional again. Why do I feel like I'm at a point of no return? Why do I feel like my feelings will not be answered and why does it feel like he's not willing to fix it. Did I really fuck it up?

He gently starts stroking my hand with his thumb then. His unexpected affection catches me totally off guard. "Yes?" He asks me, a sly smile on his face. Was he doing this deliberately?

I huff. Now I get what he's going at. "And why are you fucking flirting with other women, for fuck's sake? I mean, they're all so desperate and annoying." I glance away from him, and feel my cheeks getting hotter thinking of that. I imitate the women's annoying voices, poorly. "Oh Ser Solas, you have such pretty eyes. Ser Solas, tell me about your journeys in the fade again." I roll my eyes. The elf before me chuckles then and suddenly lifts my chin up, so that my eyes meet his again. "And this bothered you, yes?"

"I wanted to strangle them too."

He smiles. "That would've been a poor first impression as the Inquisitor."

His hand moves towards my cheek and he places it there, gently. My head instinctively moves into his hand. "I miss you." I say in a low tone of voice.

"And I you." He leans in to me and when I look up, he places his lips on mine. My whole body relaxes and I can feel a surge of energy flow through. I lean against him, almost melting into his body as he wraps his arms around me and deepens and intensifies our kiss. When our lips part, way too soon might I add, he smirks slightly. "Now there is one more issue however, one that I intend to fix."

I give him a quizzical look. "And that is?"

"Once we've returned to Skyhold, I will prance around with you by my side. Your hand in mine and we will pay our dear commander a visit. I also intend to have a conversation with him. He can do whatever he wants but you are without a doubt, off limits for him. He should learn to keep his distance from a woman who's already taken."

His words send shivers down my spine for an unknown reason. I don't know why, but the way he said that, it was almost menacing and dark. Part of me enjoys hearing it but it does make me a little uncomfortatable. "To be fair, we weren't really together at that point." I don't know why I'm even defending him right now. Cullen was acting creepy with me, but Solas' words instill a fear in me somehow.

"You were always mine, Eliana." Again he plunges his eyes into mine. "You will always be mine. And no other man may lay eyes on you in that way except for me.

His intense gaze makes me feel incredibly small. "But other women may flirt with you?" I ask sarcastically.

"I've never given them reason to." He says matter of factly.

"Neither have I!"

"Your body language said something else entirely. This is fine, you were confused. But he took advantage of this."

I think of his words, have I been so obvious? I only thought of sleeping with Cullen once, after my
conversation with Dorian but quickly decided not to pursue it. But it seems like that one moment was enough for Cullen to take his chances it seems.

"So tell me again how I am yours." I smile slyly at Solas and lean into him again, my whole body leaning against his. He wraps his arm around my waist and pulls me in closer against him.

"Perhaps another day, da'len. It's late." He smiles softly at me and plants a kiss on my cheek. I sigh contently. It feels so good being kissed by him again. I feel a hundred times better, but the thought of having to sleep scares me.

"Will you please stay with me tonight?" I ask him frightfully. "I haven't been able to sleep properly for a while. Perhaps with you next to me."

He kisses my forehead lovingly. "I shall. And in the fade I'll protect you in the dreams, you will have no nightmares, vhenan."

_Solas:_

It didn't take long for Eliana to fall asleep, the moment her head touched the ground, her eyes started to get heavier and I felt her energy waning. I stayed with her, closed my own eyes and followed her around. She was right to be fearful of her night terrors, because the moment I entered the fade with her, I saw the demons lurking. Ready to pounce, to feed on her negative feelings and emotions, to instill even more fear on her. Fear is a very old, very powerful demon. One I have come across many a times before, so it did not take long for me to set wards and gently guide her subconscious into a nice dream. I didn't project anything for her, simply touched a part of her that I knew made her happier. The times she spent with Fenrian for one, but I also saw a glimpse of her and me together. Simply talking to one another. I was tempted to pry and look further into her mind but decided it would be unfair of me to do so. She was very vulnerable still, and I did not want her to feel even more so. Once she was dreaming peacefully, I decided to wake up. After all, I had gotten plenty of sleep myself and the sun was about to rise already.

I slide away from Eliana gently and slowly, as to not wake her up and take her in for a while. Drink in her features. If June or Mythal saw me now, so infatuated by a mere mortal, a shemlen even, they'd laugh. In truth, I still don't know what keeps drawing me back to her. Perhaps it is her mortality that lures me in. Her frailty. And this is where things get dangerous and risky, because I let down my guard more often than not when I'm with her. And it's wrong of me to do. I curse myself for being so easily misled. I didn't even realize I've bonded with her. And this complicates matters only further. Her magic will be fueled by mine and vice versa. This would mean that once she develops her magic even further, she'll unlock powers that are way too much for a regular mage. I can still hold back from using my full powers but only because of my own necklace. It blocks my magic after a certain point, making sure I won't slip up around the other mages. Vivienne especially, since she's always watching me like a hawk. Then there's Iron Bull, who also loves to try and figure me out. I am often very thankful that I've decided to keep this magic blocker with me. I sigh.

But this doesn't mean Eliana will hold back once she taps into this power. Though she's smart, she's still only human. And a human from another world no less, she'll get tempted to use it once she knows about it. Humans get careless, easily tempted to use such powers for their own satisfaction. I can't imagine Eliana being like that but I mustn't be blinded by my feelings for her. Such a frail and vulnerable creature. One that traps the wolf in her claws. She herself is no sheep. She's something entirely else. Her being the Inquisitor now doesn't make things any easier for me. But after contemplating for a while, a thought hits me. I feel almost instantly bad for thinking like this, but I have to protect myself at the same time. If I decide to pursue this, I'll have a perfect chance to influence her mind. She already came to me for advice before. With her being the Inquisitor now, she
wields a lot more influence and power with the masses. And the people who surround us now. If I could steer her into the right directions, while at the same time, try to keep her away from ruins and temples about the Dread Wolf, things could work out for me in the end. She's a smart woman, she will use the information she gathers and she somehow has a connection with my people. If she finds out more, she will know. And no matter the cost, I'll have to make sure that never happens. I must focus on my own path, my own plans. Nobody, not even Eliana, should matter in the end. And that thought pains me to my very core. I knew I shouldn't have become too attached to her. And yet, against my better judgement, here we are. Laying next to her again, watching her sleep. And all I want to do is reach out to her and kiss every inch of her beautiful fair skin. To run my fingers over the feathery like patterns on her torso. To claim her mouth for my own, and claim her in general. I want only her and nobody else may have her. She is, against everything I've tried, my mate. And I could never stay away from her.

After a few hours I decide to head out of the tent, only to find Blackwall and Dorian already up and about. The bearded warden gives me an arched eyebrow once he spots me leaving Eliana's tent. "Morning, Solas." He says in a quizzical tone of voice.

Dorian snickers slightly. "I knew things would work out. You just had to be together." He seems content.

I ignore the Tevene and place myself next to Blackwall who's already preparing breakfast for us all: roasted hyena meat. "Am I to understand you played a part in having me with Eliana during this trip, master Pavus?"

The moustached man curls his lips into a wide smile then and proceeds to act coy. "Oh, I've no idea what you're talking about."

Blackwall chuckles. "Is that so, Dorian? Because I am sure I've heard you speak to sister Leliana a few days prior to this trip."

"I've only pushed them into the right direction. Eliana was doing horrible without you, Solas. Though I cannot understand why," Dorian waves his hand around casually as he speaks. I glare into his direction. He notices my glaring and he smirks. "She could have any man falling to his knees before her and yet she chose you."

He's testing my patience, this Tevene but I manage to react calmly. "And so the Tevinter speaks."

Blackwall grumbles as he turns the meat around above the fire. "This elf-tevinter stuff has to stop. I'm beginning to grow tired of hearing it."

"I jest, of course!" Dorian exclaims. "I've no problems with elves at all. I'm not sure you've noticed but I'm not exactly the evil Tevinter magister everyone thinks I am."

Suddenly we hear Sera's voice coming from behind us, as she emerges from her own tent. "No. You're worse!" Her blonde hair even more tangled and messy than usual. She casually walks over to us and plops down next to Dorian, but still manages to keep a safe distance between herself and him.

Dorian scrunches up his nose as he scans her up and down. "Sera. Have you ever heard of scissors?"

"Those cutty thingies? The snip snappers?" Sera replies.

"Scis-sors" Dorian corrects her. "And they would do wonders on your hair. Who cut that anyways?"

"I did. But no scissors," The elf shrugs indifferently.
"Hm, figures." Dorian replies exasperatedly.

Blackwall decides to change the topic then. "Where's Eliana? Usually by now, she's already preparing our next move."

I shake my head. "She's finally having a good sleep. I say we let her have some rest and idle for a while."

Dorian nods in agreement. "True enough. It's not like those tomes are of any real importance."

"Though we should do what we came here to do in the first place. It's important for the Inquisition to have some hold on other parts of Thedas." Blackwall finally takes off the roasted meat from the spit and starts to cut it up into pieces with his hidden dagger.

Sera greedily takes the meat offered to her. "I only came out of my tent because I smelled food. I'd go back to sleeping if I had to."

But before I can answer the elf next to Dorian, I hear Eliana's voice. "No need. I've rested for a bit." We all turn and look into her direction, though she has only slept for a few hours, I reckon it's more rest than what she usually gets. Because she looks ten times better already. Her skin looks healthier and the way she walks over to us, is less slumped.

She finally sits down and takes the meat from Blackwall, smiling sweetly at the bearded man. "You look better, Eliana." The man says approvingly.

She nods and seems to be in high spirits. "I feel better. Thanks to Solas." She gazes into my direction and smiles gleefully. I can't help but return the smile. It's contagious. "We should head out to find the tome and at the same time, close the remainder of the rifts here in the western approach. Also, I've noticed some lazurite around here that we could probably use for our requisitions officer."

"Planning to do some mining?" Dorian asks Eliana wryly.

She grins back at the mage playfully. "Oh I'm sorry. I didn't think of you and your outfit, did I?"

Dorian immediately counters her, equally as playful. "Precisely! Do you have any idea what effects that mining dust has on my wonderful attire? I'll look absolutely horrendous. And it's such nice quality of fabric as well." He tuts her slightly.

Eliana giggles softly and shakes her head. "Then you stay outside of the mines and keep watch."

"Hm on second thought, my outfit is already ruined by the sandy winds here. I'll not let you have all the fun without me." Dorian winks.

I decide to get up from the firepit, and walk over towards my own tent to take it back down again. In the meantime, the others are sharing quips and for the first time in a while, Eliana is genuinely laughing with them. Even Sera seems to making jokes with everyone. I am again lost in thoughts. At least here in the western approach there are no ruins of my temple, I've nothing to worry about here. Once I finish taking down my tent and gather my own belongings again, I walk back towards the others, passing Dorian from behind. He immediately jumps up when he spots me. I find it a tad bit amusing that I made this sassy Tevinter man jump. "Ah Solas. You startled me. You're always so... nondescript."

Eliana bites her lower lip to contain her amusement and I can see her eyes twinkle playfully. I decide to take this opportunity to quip with the Tevene. "Please speak up! I cannot hear you over your outfit!" Eliana bursts out into laughter and throws her head back as she does. It is truly a wonderful
sound to hear her laugh, so carefree.

Dorian huffs. "At least I have an outfit! What is this whole look of yours about?"

I look at the Tevene questionably. "I'm sorry?"

Dorian squints his eyes at me then. "No. That outfit is sorry. What are you supposed to be? Some kind of woodsman? Is it a Dalish thing? Don't you dislike the Dalish? Or is it some kind of statement?"

I sigh. "No." I'm not going to give him the time of day. I will not bite.

Dorian continues, a smug look on his face. "Well, it says apostate hobo to me."

Eliana claps her hands together then. "Alright, alright! Enough the two of you. Gods, you're like the exact opposite of one another." She gets up to her feet and tells us we're about to move. And so the remaining of our group take down their own tents and gather their stuff.

Eliana walks over to her tent and does the same, but I follow her. Again, I cannot seem to stay away from this woman. "Sleep well?" I whisper into her ear from behind. She jumps slightly but smiles sweetly at me when she turns around.

"I did, thank you. I haven't felt this good about the start of the day in a while." She rolls up her tent and attaches it to her rucksack. I cannot help but look down towards where her necklace used to be. I do wonder why she decided to take it off. She immediately notices my staring and puts her hands into her sides. "My eyes are up here you know." She says teasingly.

"Why did you take off the necklace?" I ask her bluntly. Perhaps not the wisest course of action but I am curious.

Her face drops slightly and she turns around to finish up packing. "No real reason. Just felt like it." I squint my eyes at her but she cannot see it because her back is facing me, so I decide to use my magic. To slightly tickle her senses a bit. She immediately shivers and snaps her head into my direction again. Scowling slightly. "Don't do that." She hisses.

"Tell me." I know I must sound like a little impatient kid but I really want to know. Dan meant a lot to her and all of a sudden she's letting go of such an important trinket of hers.

She sighs. "I just..." she pauses and looks around me towards the others, to make sure they're not listening in on the conversation. She keeps her voice lowered though. "I just felt like it was time to let go of that... part of my life." I give her a quizzical look. "To be frank, Solas. I don't believe there will be a way home for me. At first it was all I could think of, returning back home. But now, I've come to the realization that perhaps even if there was a way back for me, which I highly doubt, I don't think I would want to go back."

She has me curious even more now that she's said that. If she is not planning to return back home at one point, then... she will know. And she will die. Perhaps even by my own hands. And that thought frightens me more than anything. "But I thought-"

She cuts me off however. "-Be reasonable with me here for a second, will you? You, a very powerful and smart mage, still haven't figured out if there even is a way back for me. If you had, you would've told me, right?" I nod quietly. Of course I would. She nods in return. "Exactly. And as I've said before, I'm not sure if I even want to go back." She lowers her gaze at the floor and shuffles uncomfortably. "I'd never believe this if you had asked me half a year ago, but I think I'm starting to see Thedas as my own home now. Though I miss my mother terribly. Something tells me..."
She stops. "Yes?" I urge her.

She sighs again. "Something tells me that she's not even... there anymore. On my way towards the camp, right after Haven fell, I had a lot of time to myself to think about things. And the one thought that crossed my mind was that I already feel a thousand times older by simply having lived a life here."

"Well, you've done a lot of things that would weigh heavy on one's soul, Eliana. Killing for one, is not a small feat." I say reassuringly.

She shrugs her shoulders. "And yet. I somehow know it's not just that. There's more though I cannot place it. Like a sense of responsibility and it's not me being the Inquisitor. A sense of..." she thinks for a moment trying to place her feelings and thoughts. "A sense of belonging. I somehow feel like I belong here. At first I didn't feel like this at all but now.. I do. And I can't shake the feeling like there's something big going to happen. Something that I need to stick around for. Something that means everything." She speaks slowly as she repeats her own thoughts out loud for me. But then she scoffs and laughs slightly, shaking her head. "You must think I'm crazy."

My mouth presses into a thin line. "Not at all." She's really smart. But these feelings cannot truly be her own, can they?

She smiles gratefully and slightly relieved at me. "I knew you would say that. You're the only one who's ever fully accepted me and my weird stories. From the very beginning. Even before Cassandra accepted me, you already did, didn't you?"

Her words get me to thinking about that. I hadn't given it much thought before, but she is right. I don't know why, but ever since the very very beginning I've trusted her enough to believe her. And somehow never felt threatened by her presence, even after finding out that she was not from this world. In fact, it has only fueled my fascination with her. "You're right." I say finally.

She smiles again and kisses me without second thoughts on the mouth, right infront of our companions. "Thank you, Solas."

"Yeah, if you could go ahead and do that whenever we're not around, that'd be great!" A grossed out blonde elf behind us exclaims.

Eliana rolls her eyes playfully and nods. "Sorry, Sera, but I think you should better get used to it."

"Ugh, are we ready to head out?" Sera asks Eliana annoyed.

She hums and continues to pack up her last bits. "Hm, yeah, just about to!" And with that she brushes past me and into the direction of the others. Leaving me slightly confused with my feelings. Which is... new for me.

This idea of knowing that Eliana will most likely stick around until the bitter end, is disconcerting. And I can't say I like the idea of that one bit. I'll have to reconsider everything while at the same time, be the man they expect me to be: the old, docile mage. This... will be troublesome.

Eliana:

The trip in the western approach was successful. I believe we stayed around for about a week and a half before deciding to call it quits and head back towards Skyhold. On our way back towards the fortress however, we got word of Varric. Who had sent a raven with letter attached.

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Feathers,
I hope you decide to head back soon, because it has been hard to keep Cassandra out of my friends way.
I strongly advise you to have a chat with him the moment you return.
After all, it's important for the long run. I'm telling you.

-V
__________________________

And so the moment I returned from the trip, a happy but impatient dwarf came running towards me, almost dragging me off of Moonlight. I didn't even have time to say something to my companions. I was immediately dragged towards the ramparts. Once arriving there, I finally understood why Varric was so anxious for Cassandra to stay away from his friend. It was Hawke! The Hawke. The one that Fenrian's been hearing stories about, but me as well. The champion of Kirkwall Hawke. And I was flabbergasted. I just stood there awkwardly, not at all beaming enthusiasm and leadership. I looked more like a star struck dumbass. The moment that dark haired man walked over towards me, with a huge red cut across his face, I felt extremely small and powerless. That is what a true hero or warrior looks like. Not the way I look like. How in hell did Cassandra even ever accept me as a leader? One look at Hawke and she'd re-evaluate her entire decision of turning me into the Inquisitor. The broad and muscular man extended out his hand towards me, in order to greet me for the very first time. Even his handshake was firm and strong. That's the handshake of a man who's fought a Qunari Arishok. "I've heard many things about you, Eliana." His voice sounded like molten dark chocolate, and leather straps, and everything manly and gods, this man was a sight to see.

Clumsily and quite awkwardly I answered. "Pleasure to meet you, champion."

He smiled politely. "I don't really use that title anymore. Call me Hawke, please."

Varric crossed his arms and looked at me wearily. "Er, Feathers. Get your head outta the clouds and talk to him for a moment, will you? Important stuff."

So we spoke, mostly about some weird things one his friends was looking into. And I was supposed to have a chat with this friend of Hawke's. With Hawke. Somewhere called Crestwood. When he mentioned where Crestwood was generally, I realized that I really should've been paying more attention in doing the smaller missions with my companions to get a grip on how big Thedas actually is. And how many places there are to still discover. I decided then and there that this should be at the top of my list. The weird thing was, that Hawke even knew about Corypheus. And Varric as well. And apparently they had a run in with Corypheus before. And they had killed him. As in: no heartbeat and full of arrows and holes, killed. A bigger sense of fear crept inside of me then. If even such a great warrior like Hawke cannot physically kill Corypheus, what am I to do about him then? Yes, I've improved a lot. I've gotten tougher but what about a God. Because that's what Corypheus is starting to sound like. And his claims of having assaulted the heavens... well, if only Mother Giselle were here to hear these stories Hawke was telling. Varric was near us the entire time, jumping into the conversation whenever he saw fit to. But he mostly let Hawke and I converse on our own, and after the awkward feelings I actually managed to sound somewhat professional. Like I knew what I was doing, being the Inquisitor now. But I also wanted to know about Hawke more. And the way his life continued after Kirkwall. From Varric's stories, it always sounded like Hawke was alone. And somehow that made me feel sad. Because if I ever manage to undo all this evil in Thedas, and manage to slay Corypheus and end all of this, is that what will face me in the end too? The same sadness and loneliness that Hawke is going through now? Granted he doesn't seem affected by it all. But I would. Like: Hey thank you for saving our world! You have been great and all, but er, yeah... go do whatever you want now while we continue to give less and less shit about who you once were.
"Well, what is it specifically that you want to know?" He asked me nicely. His facial features were incredibly handsome, and yeah, once again: if it wasn't for Solas, I probably would've been head over heels for this man.

I lean myself against the ramparts casually and cross my arms. "What became of your old companions, aside from Varric of course. Where are they now?"

Hawke smiled, recollecting the memories of his previous companions. "They've all gone their own ways. I'm sure Varric has told you. He loves telling these stories."

Varric chimed in. "Hey, you know how I always make you sound like the cool one."

Hawke chuckles. I nod and catch his attention again. "I have heard yes, but... what about your life without them after all that you did? Doesn't it make you... I don't know, sad?" I'm being way too forward now, but I kind of need to know this for my own peace of mind.

Varric looks to me worriedly, as if he knows what I'm thinking, what goes through my head. And though I don't know Hawke all that well at all, he smiles reassuringly at me and places one of his hands on my shoulder in a friendly manner. "From one hero to another..." he starts, which makes me scoff slightly. "I know what's going through your head right now, Eliana. The only piece of advice I can give you is to not focus on what comes after. Whatever happens happens. You cannot go ahead and plan this now, as you still don't know where the future will lead you."

I smile wryly. "But you know, planning ahead is kind of my thing."

Hawke nods. "As to not get yourself hurt, right?"

My eyes widen in surprise. For such a tough looking manly man, he seems to be very much in tune with his own feelings. And much like he said, that is exactly why I've always been planning so much ahead of things, even before all of this. It has always been my way of making sure nothing goes wrong for me. If my plan A didn't work, I still had plan B and all the way down to Z if I had to. Even though plan Z was never really that well thought out, it was still a plan. And in truth, the thought of having to be alone without Solas, without Cassandra, Varric, Dorian and yes, even without Vivienne constantly nagging me about little petty shit, that thought worries me deeply. And stirs up emotions within me that I cannot seem to ignore. Sadness, loneliness and a sense of depression even. Who am I to be in this world if I'm no longer important or with my friends and companions by my side. Will they too go their own way? Will Solas leave me in the end, if I'm no longer the leader of a group that he's a part of. "Exactly." I say softly.

Hawke nods understandingly. "If all of this comes to pass and it's all done with, you still have yourself. And making sure not to lose yourself will be the biggest trial you will face along this journey. You will see things that will permanently change you. And those things cannot be undone, but never lose sight of who you are."

Varric remains extremely quiet while he stands a little ways further, listening to his old friend giving me advice. And I appreciate this a lot. Hawke, out of anyone I've met so far, is the only one who knows exactly what I'm going through. The weight of so many lives on my shoulders, and the deaths of so many more. "Thank you, Hawke. I mean we barely know each other and all." I say apologetically.

Hawke beams with joy then. "You're right. I mean, if it wasn't for the title of Inquisitor, you could've been anyone really. A murderer. A baby killer."

I snort. "A murdering baby killer."
Varric shakes his head, smiling slightly. "You two are more alike than you think. Both got that weird sense of humor."

Hawke turns around to face Varric. "You never complained about my weird sense of humor back when we traveled."

Varric laughs. "I was trying to keep you on my good side, Hawke. After all, you do get results."

After my long talk with Hawke, I decided to call it quits. Besides, Hawke had to move away from Skyhold as to be out of Cassandra's reach. If ever she finds out about this... Varric will be dead meat. And all was going so well between the two of them. Varric and I decide to head out towards the tavern for a well deserved drink. While we sit there, he eyes me intently. "You seem to be doing a lot better, feathers." The dwarf notes as he takes a sip from the mug.

I nod. "Solas and I have made up whilst at the western approach. And he's helped me with my night terrors. I no longer have them."

He snorts. "Finally. I've been putting my novel on hold for far too long already."

My eyes light up with excitement then. "How about your other novel? Did you ever finish writing that. I don't believe I've got to read the rest of it."

Varric chuckles. "I did continue with that one. Though I don't have it with me right now. I'll be sure to let you read that another time. I promise." Then his eyes grow sadder. "Hey look... I know this might not be the right time to talk about this.. but why did you ask Hawke all that.. personal shit earlier?"

I place my hands around the mug tighter and stare down at the table, listening in to the minstrel singing softly in the background. I shrug my shoulders. "I can't help but feel that will happen to me as well. Being alone in the end."

Varric sighs. "It might happen." Normally I wouldn't like such honesty in a moment like this, but Varric is a true friend because he won't lie to me. He'll give it to me straight even if I don't like to hear it. "But who knows? I'm getting older. I don't think I'll throw myself into yet another life threatening adventure after this one. If you ever turn out to be alone, you can always visit me."

"Where will you be? In a lonely shack somewhere on the plains of Thedas, writing out your novels and growing out your chest hair?" I joke.

"Something like that." He smirks widely at me. "How are you holding up with the little one's death?"
Tonight Varric seems really set on discussing deep topics with me, it seems. Though again, I can kind of appreciate it. I haven't really spoken honestly about my feelings. Kept mostly to myself after. And I can't say I don't enjoy having someone to talk to again.

"It hurts. It always does. Always will. But I'm coping with it. I'm sorry for neglecting all of you after Fenrian's death, I just... didn't know what to do with myself. I think I was lost."

Varric shakes his head. "We were all lost. It's terrible. And that's putting it mildly. But we all understood. Even Iron Lady got it."

I hum. "Yeah.. she really surprised me then. Her understanding and affection. Though it was probably short lived."

He takes another sip from the ale and places the mug back on the table. "$I think that it will always be like that with her. You just gotta enjoy the small moments you have with her. Then again, that rule
applies for a lot of things." He stares at me directly. And I can't shake the feeling like he's talking about something else now.

"What do you mean by the latter?" I ask him hesitantly.

He shrugs his shoulders indifferently. "You and Chuckles, for example. I mean, everyone knows you were madly in love with one another but at the same time we can't say you two have a normal relation with one another. I don't think anyone will ever understand this weird business between the two of you. Acting so hot the one moment and then so cold the next. But... regardless of that, we can see the happiness when things go well. And it's a rare but beautiful sight to see in times like these."

I keep my full attention on my friend as I take a big gulp from the drink. He continues. "You just got to enjoy the little things with people. And for you and Chuckles this applies as well. Maybe even more so, because the two of you change your mind like the weather."

I snort and punch him hard on the shoulder. "We're not that bad!"

"Coulda fooled me." He snorts.

Soon after that talk, more of our companions joined. Sera, Blackwall and Iron Bull. I spoke to them for a bit as well, but the deep topics were immediately off limits. Especially around Iron Bull. I don't mind their presence, but I don't think I'll ever grow this close with them as I am with Cassandra, Varric and Solas. Maybe because I have to be vigilant when it comes to my backstory and my life prior to the Inquisition. And because they simply cannot know about it, while the other three do. Then of course there's exceptions, like Josephine, Leliana and Cullen, who also know. But they're my advisors and they mostly stay at Skyhold or go out without us. So I never really get to bond with them as much as I'd like to. Though I am certainly not trusting Cullen at this moment at all, so again it's different. Then there's Dorian... he's been.. very helpful and kind towards me. And something tells me I can trust him with anything. But my better judgement tells me I should keep him out of the truth as well. Or maybe it's simply because that's what I've been told in the very beginning by my companions. Truly, what would it matter if I told them the truth? I'm already the Inquisitor. I already have a certain type of power, a pedestal on which I stand that makes it hard for them to reach me if they would try to. It would make things less stressful for me, and perhaps then I could get to really enjoy getting to know the others. And if they turn out to have a problem with it, they can just as easily leave. Right? I sigh and eventually get up from the table and bid them a good night, I believe it's time for me to head back towards my soft bed and sleep.

Once I reach the main hall however, I am greeted by Cullen. And immediately my mood shifts. Not, the person who I wanted to run into right now. "Eliana!" He says excitedly as he rushes towards me. I glance around nervously. Where is Solas?

"Cullen." I say curtly as I try to move forwards.

"How was your trip at the western approach? I didn't see you arriving with the others this afternoon."

I nod and continue walking towards the general direction of my room. "I was with Varric. I spoke to his friend."

Cullen halts me by gently holding me by the arm. "Who was it? I've been hearing some rumors but I can't say I believe them."

I shake my arm to make sure Cullen releases me, there's no need for him to touch me. But I decide to stop being so distrustful and harsh with him. Perhaps, he's given up. And I am just having a regular conversation with him right now, there's no proof that this will go into a weird direction. "What did
the rumors suggest?"

He snorts. "That it was Hawke. Of course this would be impossible and a very dangerous move made on Varric's account."

I cock my head to the side. "It was Hawke. But better to keep that between us. If Cassandra finds out..."

Cullen's eyes widen. "Really?! Ah... yes, I do believe you're right." He smiles sheepishly. "So... are you feeling better after having ventured out?" He moves slightly closer to me and I can tell his body language has changed. It's more... open now. More... luring.

I raise an eyebrow but before I can even answer him, I am turned around by a pair of strong hands and swept into a long deep kiss. My eyes widen visibly and I make a surprised sound as my lips are being claimed by a bald elf. Right In. Front. Of. Cullen.

Who in turn starts to rub his neck uncomfortably and clears his throat. Does Solas have absolutely no shame at all?! Right in front of Cullen okay, but in front of the other people who are still milling about the main hall? He releases me finally then and gives me a dark and sly grin then.

"Solas." Cullen notes sternly.

Solas turns around to face Cullen and immediately places his hand around my waist. Very obviously and not so subtly marking his territory. "Good evening, commander."

Cullen's eyes dart over from Solas and then back to me, as he stands there sheepishly for a while, trying to say something it seems. But finally he dips his head and bids us a farewell as he returns towards his chambers. I glare at Solas then, though part of me loves what he just did.

Solas raises an eyebrow himself. "I told you, didn't I? He just had to go looking for you again. It is useless."

I huff and pretend to be insulted. "There was no need for you to be that obvious. A simple hand on the lower back would have sufficed."

He moves his face closer to my own and flashes me his most darkest smile then. "You can pretend all you like, Eliana. But I can tell it had an effect on you and mostly, that it turned you on." He whispers seductively. I glance around the room nervously. Seeing some of the people within the hall staring at us confusedly. I take him by the arm and drag him towards my chambers without saying a word.

Once we're up the stairs and into safety I push him slightly. "You love making a scene or what?" I cross my arms and tap my foot impatiently onto the floor.

Solas however, seems uninterested by my pouty behavior and walks closer towards me casually. "I must say, I do like it an awful lot when you play hard to get."

I huff. "Is that our thing now? This never ending cat and mouse game?" I am being insolent and rude towards him though deep down inside I know I am loving it just a much as he is. In fact, I've never been more turned on by a man in my entire life.

He again wraps his arm around my waist and pulls me in very close to him. With his other, free hand, he brushes some hair away from my neck, revealing some bare skin. "More like a wolf catching his prey perhaps..." he drawls out each and every word before placing his mouth on my neck. Slightly moving his teeth against the sensitive skin.
I groan. "What is it with you and wolves." But he remains silent, as his hand creeps down towards my top and starts to fondle my breasts. I am soon enraptured by his touching and lost into his world. This dark, menacing, lovely world of his. But despite this, I try to struggle. Though I can't say why exactly. Perhaps I like to be difficult with him, since he seems to always give off this air of always getting exactly what he wants. And me struggling against that, tickles him in a funny way.

He growls against my skin and bites down harder into my neck, resulting in a turned on whimper from me. "You can struggle all you like, but know that it is futile, Eliana. If I want you, I will have you."

I groan again, struggling against his body, his firm chest that's pressing into my own. "Half of Skyhold will be talking about the shit you just pulled."

He chuckles into my hair and it's sending shivers down my spine. "Let them talk."

"You want them to know everything?" I ask him impatiently.

He murmurs against my earlobe and nibbles on the edge of it. "In fact I want them to hear you moan my name in the midst of the night. Begging for a release as I take claim of your womanhood."

I suppress the giggle. Womanhood, sometimes he's so old fashioned, it's hilarious. But he notices. "Do you think that is funny, Eliana?"

I shake my head. His tone of voice back to being dark and menacing. Whereas just moments ago, it was full of lust and desire. A longing for me. "Not at all, hahren,"

He moves his head away from my neck then and stares me up and down, his hands gliding over my curves. "I think it will be most amusing to have the humans within Skyhold talk about how a knife ear fucked the Inquisitor." At this moment, I am sure my head became as red as a tomato. The way he said that... just the tone of his voice. He smiles wolfishly. "And with that said, I believe we've talked enough." Right then, he opens my top, my breasts springing free from the tight leather armour. And he places his mouth on each of them, one by one, kissing them softly, but greedily. "Oh how I've missed those." He murmurs against my skin.

I throw my head back lightly, enjoying the sensations of his kisses on my breasts. And I know I won't be able to resist any longer. He moves his hand down my pants and starts to rub against my small clothes.

I can feel the heat within my lower belly rising, and I know I am losing sense of the world around us. It feels like just the two of us now. And despite everything that's happened, this is what I wanted. And this is exactly what I need. Now more than ever. He sounds delighted then as he takes out his hand and starts to suckle on his own fingers. "And already so wet for me, da'len."

Again, I feel like I'm becoming as red as a beet right now. Jesus tap dancing Christ, Solas. I groan slightly at his inappropriate usage of words. I mean, inappropriate yes but totally hot.

He moves up again and looks at me slyly. "You play too much." I say in a low tone of voice.

"Have you not missed me, da'len?" He presses himself against me so much that I have to walk backwards, that's how much pressure he's using. Until I am against the wall and have nowhere else to run to. I can feel his hard member through the fabric of his trousers and I know he's doing it deliberately. I have missed him. The feeling of him inside me. Gods how I have missed it. He slides one of his legs between mine and opens my legs a little. "Tell me, Eliana." He moves his head back into my neck and that's where I lose it completely. I'm done being good now.

I wrap my arms around his neck and kiss him fully. When I let go of him, I notice I'm breathing loudly. Full of passion and desire for this maddening magic elf before me. "I missed you a lot." He
smiles, baring his teeth and again takes claim of my mouth. He's like the apple of Eden and I am the
gullible Eve trying to resist the effects of the forbidden fruit.

Finally I can no longer take it and practically rip off his own clothes in the midst of our make out
session, until we are both no longer wearing any clothes whatsoever. We're all needy and grabby
hands, tearing the fabric off of one another. Clawing our way towards heated places that make us
both lose control. He eventually picks me up and carries me over towards the bed, the one that I've
had nothing but trouble sleeping in. But I reckon that from now on that won't be a problem anymore.
Before I can even protest, he moves his head between my legs. Placing his tongue right against the
sensitive bud of my heat. Flicking it ever so gently with his warm tongue. I can struggle and fight all
I want but he's keeping me right in place, with his strong arms on my body. Come to think that a few
months ago I was worrying about not being able to shave. And here we are, with an elf between my
goddamn legs who doesn't seem to give a flying fuck about whether or not I shaved. He's going ham
down there and I'm writhing beneath his strong grip on my body. Moaning in pleasure, tilting my
head backwards into the pillow, crying softly for him to continue. Not to stop. But he does,
evertheless, to tease me. Right before I tip over the edge. And then he lifts me up to him. Him, on
his knees on the mattress. Holding my wrist firmly in hand, while I'm on my own knees right before
him on the mattress as well. Staring at him wide eyed, wondering what he's planning. "Touch me,
whenan." He whispers seductively close to my ears. And the hand which he's holding my wrist with,
moves downwards. He's guiding me towards his member, and the moment my hand takes hold of the
firmness of it, he groans softly. His eyes holding mine and I feel I am in control now.

I start to move my hand up and down slowly, teasingly, torturously. He's closed his eyes at this point
and I am mesmerized by staring at him, his reactions. His mouth twitches ever so slightly when I'm
working on his member with my hand, and then his mouth opens a bit to let his sounds of pleasure
come out. When he opens his eyes again, he plunges them into my own. "Faster." He demands. I
grin slightly and do as I'm told, as I speed up the movements. Once my hand reaches the top of his
penis, I slightly tug at it, before moving down again. And it's doing its job as he's starting to moan
louder. And I loooove hearing his: "Oh's" and "Ah's". Making me feel powerful and in charge.

I myself move my head towards his ear and whisper into it. Completely and totally enamored with
his sounds. "I want you to fuck me now, Solas. It has been far too long. And I need it."

He grins wickedly and licks his lips for a second. The thought of him fucking me, seems to work for
him as well. "I thought you'd never ask." He says luringly.

I move away from him slightly, raising my eyebrow up at him. "Oh, but it wasn't a question. It was a
demand."

He chuckles lowly. "As you wish, da'len." He moves towards me, crawling on his hands and knees
and pushes me down onto the mattress softly. He's captured me in his hold. I could go nowhere even
if I tried. "Now let me hear those wonderful sounds again, whenan. I want the entirety of Skyhold to
know." He says as he starts to enter me slowly. Filling me up, stretching my walls. He hisses through
grittled teeth. "I want commander Cullen to hear how you're being fucked by me."

I groan as his dirty talk is working on me, rolling my eyes into my head slightly as I can feel the
sensations of his throbbing cock inside of me. It feels so good. "You feel so good." I wrap my arms
around his shoulders and push his torso down onto my own. I want to feel every inch of his body
ontop of me. I don't want to part with this lovely specimen of a man.

And he thrusts into me, hard, right away. No warning. Once he's in there, he goes for it all the way.
Suckling on my earlobe, biting it and moaning into my ear. I move my head towards his shoulder
and bite the skin of it hard. Muffling the sounds that are coming from me. He growls and moves his
hips in such a manner that I feel like I'm being relentlessly pounded. The way he's taking me now, it
won't take long. All this stress from the past days is leaving me as I'm being taken over and over
again by Solas. My heart, my love. I forget about everything around us. Around me. I forget about
my duties, my responsibilities, everything. This is what I craved for so long. As our moans intensify
and the movements become faster I move towards his ear again. "Tell me what would you do if I
fucked Cullen like this, Solas."

He growls loudly and thrusts hard into me. "If you're thinking of Cullen when I'm making love to
you, I do believe you'll need to be punished for it, Eliana." I suppress my excitement. Solas' punisments are always fun. "You think it is funny, da'l'en. You are mine." He growls again. Such primal sounds are emitting from this man. I giggle then. He sinks his teeth into my neck and it causes
a loud whimper from me.

Then he suddenly stops and rolls me over with one fluid movement. He places his hands on my hips
and forces me into a doggy style position. Before I can do or say anything, he thrust back into me
again. Digging his nails into the skin of my hips. I support myself up on my elbows, my breasts
moving with every thrust he takes. "I want to hear you, Eliana. Tell me what I want to hear." He
growls lowly, and proceeds to smack me once across my butt.

I moan aloud. Forgetting about whoever hears us. "I am yours." I whine.

"I can't hear you." Again he smacks my behind, a bit harder this time, it actually starts to sting. But
it's a lovely stinging sensation. One that only he can leave on me.

"Fuck! I'm yours, Solas." I cry out.

He moves his head into my shoulder, close to my left ear and moves his hands towards my breasts,
cupping them as he continues to take me mercilessly. "Good girl." He starts to suckle on my earlobe
and we are both about to reach our climax. I can feel him throbbing inside of me, and I can feel
myself tightening around him.

"Come for me, vhenan." He all but cries out. And I obey. Immediately after he's said that, I come,
gloriously undone beneath him. Beneath the wolf that he is.

And he follows. Spilling himself inside of me, I can feel his hot liquid shooting up and it's
intensifying my climax as I ride the waves of my orgasm.

I pant, trying to calm my senses down. And he chuckles lowly. "I've missed that."

I nod, still trying to catch my breath. Out of breath I reply. "Me too." He lays himself down onto the
mattress and pulls me into an embrace from behind me. Planting featherlight kisses on the nape of my
neck. "Oh and just for information, I didn't actually think of Cullen. I just wanted to tease you." I say
matter of factly.

He snickers behind me and softly bites my earlobe again, but this time it's not feral, more like a love
bite almost. Ticklish. "I know. Your insolence knows no bounds."

"Just making sure you knew that." His left hand finds its way into my stomach and I take hold of it,
caressing it softly.

"I know, vhenan." He kisses my cheek.

I snort. "I asked Fenriien once what that meant; vhenan. He told me it means heart."

Solas nods. "Indeed it does."
"So how would you say 'I love you'?” I ask him quietly. I've never before said it to him really. But I do love him, and I hope to hear him say the same to me at some point. Despite our rough love making and dirty talk, there's love there. It's a different kind of love than what I'm used to, but I know that's what it is.

"Ar lath ma." He whispers close to my ear. The way the Elven sounds while he's whispering and the way he's rolling his 'r's gives me the good kind of goosebumps.

"I see.” I answer plainly. Somehow now I'm afraid to say it to him.

So he moves his head around my shoulder, to look at me into my eyes. "And?” He asks me. I shrug my shoulders, pretending to not know what he's asking of me. He grabs hold of my hand now too, and our fingers are intertwined. "Do you love me, Eliana?"

"Maybe."

He chuckles and kisses me deeply then. When our lips part he smiles softly. "Ar lath ma vhenan."

I can't suppress the smile that spreads across my face then. "You said it first. Just so you know."

"Ah, but of course." He replies.

And there we lay for a while, just in silence, in one another's embrace. Until finally I cannot keep my eyes open for much longer and fall into, what seems like, the best sleep ever. He loves me.

Chapter End Notes

So yes, I'm sorry for the 'later' updates but... I always try to update within a week, however, I do have a job and I also have long distance relationship with a guy from Taiwan -
(Surprise, surprise!)

~The more you know~

And well, in between having a seven hour difference of my boyfriend and I, and also trying to make promotion at work, working basically fulltime, sometimes that goal of posting within a week isn't so do-able. But I always try!

So I'm terribly sorry, but I will always try and if it takes longer, I will let you know! ^_^

Thanks for sticking with me and I hope this (longer than usual) chapter will suffice :3 I loved writing it

XOXO
Coming Clean...(ish)

Chapter Summary

Finally we move on a bit with the little things that Elie has to do. Hey I'm not forgetting about the 'little things' here :)

And we go to do the little sidequest: All New Faded For Her.

Also, once again, I want to apologize for not being so quick with my updates anymore. But I have a job that requires most of my attention. And when I'm not working, I'm tired and recovering and relaxing <3 But once again; I will always try!

I hope you guys will understand.

XOXO

"You sure you don't want a drink, Inquisitor?" The grumpy dwarf Cabot eyes me intently from behind his bar. I shake my head.

"No thank you. Just here to relax." I say wearily.

The dwarf grunts and mumbles something inaudible under his breath. Probably mad I ain't spending my coin here tonight. I sigh and go through some of the papers laid down before me on the table. It's not much really, just a couple of Solas' maps I've asked for and a few more pages written full of Thedas' history. I sigh then and pinch the bridge of my nose slightly, trying to keep my eyes open. Trying to focus. But without wanting to, my mind wanders to the past week. Everyone of my companions has been able to find their place in this huge fortress. Sera is usually upstairs in Herald's rest, as she is right now. Cullen remains mostly in his tower, lucky for me. Solas resides in the rotunda. Cassandra outside of the main building, close to the tavern. Leliana in the rookery, one floor above Dorian who's always in or near the library. Varric stays in the main hall, always close to a table where he can lure unknowing new people into playing a game of wicked grace with him. Blackwall is always in the stables, taking care of or simply being near the horses. Josephine is almost always in her office right before entering the war room. Vivienne is keen on her privacy and resides upstairs, in the main hall, where she actually got her own bed and balcony overlooking the courtyard. Cole is usually, everywhere and nowhere in particular and-

"Hey boss."

Iron Bull. Shit.

I glance up nervously at the towering Qunari Ben-Hassrath and dip my head. "Evening, Bull." I say hesitantly.

He smirks widely at me and proceeds to take his seat right next to me. I quickly move my papers out of the way and roll and or fold them up neatly. I watch him like a hawk. What is his intention?

"What are you doing here all alone?" He waves over to Cabot and points to himself and me. "Come, have a drink with me."
I don't like the idea of that one bit. If I get loose lipped, I might not be able to keep up my fake backstory and whatnot. I'll have to politely decline. But before I can even say anything he pats me hard on the back. "Drinks are on me!"

_Double shit._

"I don't think that's a good idea. After all I have to-" but he cuts me off.

"Don't worry about it." Cabot quickly comes over to us and places the mugs of ale before us. Iron Bull pays and now I have nowhere to go to. After all he's paid for the drinks already, I cannot possibly refuse now. It would make him suspicious as well, if he's not already suspicious about me. No one would turn down free drinks.

Instead I smile sheepishly at the Qunari next to me. "Why do you want to have drinks with me, Bull?" I ask him cautiously.

Bull laughs. "We haven't really been able to talk much to one another, in private, since the Storm coast. Is it a problem?"

"No, not at all... but I was just curious as to what your motivation was."

"Just trying to get to know you better, boss." He eyes me intently with his one blue eye. It's unnerving.

_Triple shit. Bull trying to get to know me better does not sound good._

I nod. And he takes the first sip from the mug, so I follow. I all but choke on the disgusting liquid from inside the mug. "What the fuck is this shit?!" I exclaim. Which results into an angry looking Cabot. I try to flash the dwarf my most apologetic smile, but fail at it miserably. This is not at all the ale I'm used to from the tavern. Is this shit what Bull normally drinks?

Bull laughs even louder than he did before. "Don't know. Don't care. All I know is that you get completely shitfaced when you drink this stuff. Which is exactly what we need sometimes."

_Shitfaced._ That's like the first time since arriving in Thedas that I hear a modern phrase. People back at Earth used to say that all the time. I smile despite myself wanting to be on alert for Bull's watchful eye.

"Sooooo.. You and Solas, huh?" He starts, while watching me.

_What comes after triple? Because shit shit shit shiiiiiiit. Here we go._

"Yeah.. Me and Solas." I say wryly.

Iron Bull chuckles. "Kinda saw it coming really. The two of you are both weird. I suppose you two go well together."

"Weird?" I ask him, a bit offended by it truthfully.

He nods. "Well yeah.. Solas is just.. odd. But you..." he looks at me. "I don't know, there are a few things I've been wondering about, boss."

I shift uncomfortably in my seat. Is he bluffing? Trying to see if I'll crack? Or is he for real now? Either way, I don't like where this conversation is heading. "Such as?" I try to remain cool. In fact, my answer sounded ice cold.
He smirks slightly. "The way you react to things sometimes. When we were at the Storm coast, for example. You freaked out when you saw the dragon. Damn near fainted." He takes another big gulp and waits for my response.

"I'm sorry, but a dragon doesn't fucking scare you? It's like a billion times bigger and more dangerous than I am." I am pleased with the way I made that sound. Sounds believable, right?

He shakes his head. "Dragons are fucking majestic, boss. Like I said back when we first met, the bigger, the better." He smirks again.

I shrug my shoulders. "Must be a Qunari thing."

"Yeah that's another thing." He places his mug back down onto the table. "You still look at me all wide eyed every time you see me. In Kirkwall there were many Qunari right?"

I try to remember Varric's stories about the Qunari who landed in Kirkwall as best I can. "They mostly stayed in their own section of Kirkwall, near the docks and barely came out. Only during the battle."

He nods. "True enough... I don't know, boss. I'm still not convinced, but don't worry, I'll get to the bottom of it. I've been asking around about you, you know? Blackwall's told me that he's heard that you never had to fight before joining the Inquisition and that explains a lot."

"Are you suggesting my fighting isn't up to par?" Again, I feel insulted. I've improved a LOT.

He smiles. "Just seen some flaws in your movements, is all."

"You've only been with me on one trip, that one time doesn't tell you everything there is to know about my fighting techniques." I huff.

"Maybe, but I've also seen you train back here.."

I sigh, I'm getting fed up with his persistence, he's trying too hard. And I'm not in the mood to be interrogated. "What is your point exactly?" I glare at him angrily.

"My point is that I've been honest with you since the beginning. Telling you I'm a spy up front. Whereas you, are hiding something for some of us." Again, his piercing look with his one eye doesn't comfort me in the slightest. I know he knows there's something wrong. And it's terrifying. Now I'd wished I had come clean towards all my companions right from the start.

I manage to remain nonchalant about it all however. "Everyone has their secrets. Besides, you didn't have to tell us all. Nobody forced you to."

"So you admit you are hiding something then?" He hunches over forwards slightly, his big elbows leaning on the oaken table before us. His head still pointed towards my direction.

I have peaked his interest even more it seems, I knew this drinking with Bull was a bad idea. I'm not even shit faced yet, and I turn out to give him all the wrong answers regardless. "Why are you so keen on finding out?" I ask him coldly.

He shrugs his big ass shoulders. "Just don't like being kept in the dark. Especially not when I work for said person."

"Technically you still work for the Qun, not for me." I keep being evasive and it seems like even Bull is starting to let go. Or maybe that's his tactic.
He nods. "Well, whenever you want to tell the truth, I'll be ready. If it takes too long, I'll just continue digging up some more about you myself." He gets up from the table then. "Have a good one, boss." With that, he leaves. Including leaving his half empty mug of disgusting ale.

I sigh deeply and leave my own mug on the table as well, which leaves Cabot slightly unhappy but I don't care right now. I need to speak to Leliana. Like now. I grab my papers and barge out of Heralds rest, straight into the main hall. Solas sees me walk through the rotunda but remains silent when he sees my stormy expression. Dorian is no longer in the library since it's late and so I get to make my way directly up to the rookery. Once there, I find the spymaster near a shrine of her Andraeste. She's sitting on her knees, her hands folded in prayer, slightly raised up at the statue. Her head bowed lowly. I stand next to her, my arms crossed and don't even wait for her to finish. "Bull knows," I say sternly.

Leliana finishes her silent prayer and slowly gets up to her feet again, as she turns around her eyebrow is slightly raised. As if confused. "He knows what?"

A troubled sigh escapes me then, its long and deep and my brows furrow in concern. "He knows something is up with my backstory." I lowered my voice to a whisper just to be sure nobody but Leliana can hear me. "He's been asking around about me."

Leliana nods slightly. "Yes. I know."

I scoff. "And you're not worried?" I stare at her intently.

She shrugs her shoulders indifferently. "So long as you keep your wits about you and stick to the story we've spun for you, there's no need to worry. This is why we tested you back at Haven that afternoon." She seems unfazed by it all.

I take a step closer to her and continue my whispering. "We practiced for noblemen and common folk to question me on it. Not a Qunari Ben-Hassrath spy." I hiss.

She smiles slightly. "My agents have been keeping their eyes on the Iron Bull as well, Elie. There's no need to worry. He's only asked Blackwall about you and nobody else."

I shake my head. "Leliana... isn't it just best if I tell the remaining of the inner circle the truth about me? Saves a lot of lying and possible fuck ups on my part."

She frowns. Clearly not amused by my proposal. "And why would you want to do that?" She takes me by the arm and drags me towards the balcony right next to the rookery. When we are there, she closes the door behind me and eyes me intently. "What would you think Sera would do if she knows the truth? She's already afraid of mages and magic, if you tell her you're from another world she will surely lose it." I want to open my mouth but Leliana continues. "And what of Vivienne? You and her don't get along that well and-"

I cut her off abruptly. "-What can Vivienne do? What can any of them do? I'm already the Inquisitor."

"Yes but Vivienne still plays a huge role within the imperial court. her name weighs heavy. One word from her and the Inquisition will be reduced to nothingness."

I scoff. "Surely with the support of the left and right hand of the divine I should be untouchable. You both know about it and trust me, as well as Varric, Josephine, Cullen and Solas."

She sighs. "The Inquisition is still young, Elie. We must be cautious with our reputation. The Herald of Andraeste coming from another world, won't sit well with the masses. Your title alone is not
enough to save you from being ostracized." There it is again. That word. I've thought of it before. I knew it then, and I kind of still know it now. She's right. But surely Bull won't let this one go that easily. Leliana continues. "Maybe right now is not the right moment to come clean."

"But if I wait longer, they'll hate me for not telling them sooner, and I'll lose their trust regardless." I counter her.

"Perhaps, but we need them with leveled heads for now. We cannot lose their support or their strengths. Without them, you wouldn't have gotten this far. We need them and if you tell them the truth now, they might leave. Simply because they're... uneasy about the truth."

"What you're saying is they'll lose their shit, basically?" I ask in a wry tone of voice.

She nods, her lips curling into a half smile. Her eyes twinkle slightly with amusement however. "Yes. Or that."

I shake my head and turn my body sideways, looking down at the courtyard. "You guys trusted me from the beginning, well maybe not right away but Solas did. And then you followed after hearing his explanation."

"Solas was biased. Even then."

My curiosity is peaked. I know we were talking about something else but this is important too. "What do you mean, Solas was biased?"

She smiles softly. Her features immediately less threatening than usual. "He was intrigued by you from the very start, it was obvious. Perhaps because he possesses the power to walk the fade and see things we normal folk cannot, but regardless, he liked you even then. I think he saw something in you."

I lean against the balcony walls and stare at the nightingale. She's very sharp. "How do you know this for certain, I wonder?"

She smirks. "I've traveled with others before, remember? I've seen love blossom amongst companions before. It always starts with curiosity."

I remember her telling me she traveled with the hero of Ferelden before. "Was that during the fifth blight?" I ask her slowly.

She dips her head. "Indeed it was. Not just her and me... but also other members. I've not been sitting still after that whole adventure."

I smile kindly at her and then stare down at the courtyard below again, lost in my thoughts. "Yeah..."

She cocks her head to the side. "Do you by any chance know something about your arrival here yet? You and Solas... have you... talked about it?"

Her question kind of catches me off guard. I shake my head. "Solas says he doesn't know. He cannot find an answer with what he knows of the fade and magic."

"And your... memory?" She asks me slowly.

Again I shake my head. "No." I squint my eyes, forcing myself yet again to think of how I got here. "There's... nothing. I remember perfectly well who I was and what I did before I got here. But a huge chunk of my memories are missing. I remember... something vaguely about having drinks with my
friend and then... something important happened, something.. scary perhaps?" I know my answers are vague but that's truly all that comes to mind, and even that I'm not a hundred percent sure of. I sigh as I can almost literally hear my brain crackling, trying to remember. "Truly that's all that comes to mind every time I think of it." I glance over at Leliana who seems to have a sad expression spread across her face. Does she pity me? I straighten my back and clear my throat then. "Regardless.. I don't think it really matters now."

"You don't want to find out the truth?" She asks me, surprised at my less than interesting tone of voice when speaking of the latter.

"I don't know. Something tells me I need to know but then again, I'm here now. I don't want to go back. Thedas is my home now. I have a bad feeling about discovering the truth of how I got here, and how my own world was left behind."

She nods. "I see. Well perhaps your memory will return to you some day soon."

A silence falls around us. Nothing but the cold winter's wind rustling the leaves of the Skyhold trees.

"When are you going to head out for Crestwood? Meet with Hawke?" Leliana breaks the silence.

I groan slightly. "I don't know. I kind of don't want to. There's also still the matter of dealing with the inner circle's proposals."

Leliana chuckles. "Yes, it seems they all flock to you for their problems."

I shrug my shoulders. "I don't really mind it to be honest. It's all for a good cause. Cassandra's worried about the rogue Templars and mages, Varric wants to destroy the red lyrium nodes around Thedas, Blackwall needs his grey warden artifacts, Vivienne is not so nasty when I hand her one of her tomes and well.. the little things matter too."

Leliana nods. "I agree. I've also heard about Josephine's request."

My face darkens. "Yes. The Comte. I still have a bad feeling about having to meet with him tomorrow afternoon." Then I remember Josephine's face when she explained to me the situation of her family. "I feel bad for Josie too.. she always seems so strong and works so hard. I never could have imagined the weight of her family was so great on her."

Leliana hums. "We all have our problems. Josie is not the only one I'm sure. But we do what we must to survive. I am at least glad they can come to you for help."

I scoff. "In truth I'm doing it for myself." I joke, as I take on a cocky stance. "I'm hoping that me helping them with their problems will ensure they won't leave me when they find out the truth about me." I wink playfully at Leliana.

She shakes her head but laughs despite the poor joke I just made. "Well I wish you luck with that then." She turns her body sideways and looks over to the door, back inside the rookery. "I do believe it is time to get some rest. After all, you'll be traveling again tomorrow."

I dip my head and follow her into the building again, saying my goodbye to her when we get there. And walk casually towards my chambers.

* * * *

When I'm doing all of these personal quests for my companions, I actually feel ten times better. At least, when I've solved their problems that is. Arriving at Val Royeaux with Josephine to speak to the
Comte Boisvert went well, but during the talks with this 'Comte' it became pretty obvious he knew a little more than he was actually supposed to. I waited, anxiously until Josephine caught on. But of course she did and we found out the ugly truth. That the Comte was in fact an assassin, and that there was a contract taken out by the Du Paraquettes with the house of Reposes. A contract on Josephine’s life. I had almost slain the man on sight but figured, he had some code of honor at least, to tell her this in person without trying to assassinate her on the spot. I let him go and immediately we sought to find a solution back at Skyhold. Leliana even joined us to come up with a plan: break in the house of Reposes and destroy the contract. After all, no contract, no bloodshed. Of course Josephine had a different plan but I simply did not want to risk helping the nobility out to make sure the Paraquettes rose to nobility themselves again. It would take too much time, and that was something we did not have. I could not lose Josephine. Not as a friend, not for the Inquisition, I could simply not. I had to act fast, and thankfully I had Leliana there to make sure the contract would be destroyed. While I stayed around with Josie to ensure her safety, together with a dozen of extra guards of course. Josephine’s gratitude was rewarding after all that stress, and I even got to find out a little bit more about her own backstory. Who could have thought that my little polite Josie, was once a bard? Though she herself did not quite like that lifestyle after all. It is however how she met Leliana once...

When we destroyed all of the red lyrium nodes in the Hinterlands, Western approach and the Storm coast, while also looking for Cassandra's leads on the Templars and mages, and even finding some of Blackwall's artifacts; it was safe to say my companions held me in high regard. Though I did not expect more to come my way, they did. And for once, it was Solas. I walked into the rotunda to find him grimacing at a cup of tea. "Why are you drinking that if you don't like it?" I asked him, slightly amused.

He looked at me sadly. "Normally I would not. But this morning..." he pauses.

"Now you've got me worried. What's the matter?" I ask him concerned. I take a seat on the edge of his desk and stare at him worriedly.

"I may need to ask for a favor." he seems reluctant to ask me about it and I can't help but wonder why. "I've had a dream last night, where I found out that one of my friends has been taken by captors."

My eyes widen.

Solas has friends?


He sighs. "I got a sense of her location right before I woke, I would very much like to find her and make sure she's alright. I could mark it on our map."

"She?" My brows furrow.

You cheating on me, bald guy?

He sighs, but not because he's fed up or anything. "Well, technically... it."

"It?"

When did I become a parrot?

"It's a spirit of wisdom." He says cautiously.

I sigh a breath of relief then. "Wait... but how is that even possible exactly? They've taken a spirit of
wisdom and... captured it?"

He nods. "Perhaps the captors wanted to use her for something, I cannot be sure. But if they corrupt her she will become a demon. It is foolish of them to try and attempt to take her!" He raises his voice slightly as he paces back and forth infront of the desk.

I remember learning about spirits becoming demons. "Why would they want to use her?"

"I cannot say."

I nod. Resolute I answer. "We will help your friend, Solas."

He visibly relaxes then. "Thank you."

And so we had set out towards the Exalted Plains. A place full of history regarding the Elves. It is where the Elves put their last stand against the Chantry. A bloody war and battle ensued and the elves were defeated. And when we arrived there, I was briefed on it by Harding. Not the happiest place in Thedas.

I had brought Dorian, Solas and Iron Bull. I had only brought Bull with me to show I was not afraid to bring him along with me, after our talk at the tavern. Besides, I had barely traveled with him and I needed a good one handed warrior. Immediately we had to fight a horde of demons, awaiting us just outside the camp. Including some soldiers as well, who were at first fighting the demons off, but eventually charged right at us. No honor amongst them it seemed. I had twirled my dagger right into a soldiers throat and heard his last desperate gurgles of life as he tried to speak to me. I ignored his pleas and the ones from the next armed soldier. When I was done, the sandy floor was stained red by all the blood that was shed. Iron Bull huffed and sheathed his big war axe then. "Good job, killing those men."

He was speaking to me. I remained bitter however. "You sure I was up to par?"

"You've improved." He answered plainly.

I rolled my eyes and continued walking forwards, glancing down at my map every now and again. Solas had marked it the other day and it seemed to not be that far away. I closed about two rifts that were on the way towards the missing friends location, and came to the realization that I never really worry about rifts anymore. They're just.. so mundane now. I've fought much worse and much bigger than a couple of shades and rage demons. And my body was used to much more pain now before it would collapse. Staring down Corypheus was at the top of my list of: fuck-me-sideways. And rifts were not even on this list anymore. I swallowed down hard as I continued walking ahead of the others, thinking of how cold I've become. Sometimes, I don't even feel like a person any longer. On the way towards the marked spot, we all remained silent, until Dorian and Bull started..

"I hope it doesn't bother you to travel alongside a 'Vint', Iron Bull." Dorian answers the Bull while waving his hand around as he speaks.

"That what you are? You people all kinda look the same to me."

"I'm also a mage. Would you prefer me bound and leashed?" Dorian asked the Iron Bull sarcastically.

"I'd buy you dinner first." He replied.

And to my surprise, Dorian actually seemed to blush for a moment when I glanced behind me to check on my friends reaction. But he cleared his throat and continued his steps as if he was not
bothered by it. "Hopefully before you sewed my mouth shut."

But I could tell, and so did Bull, it seemed. Because the big brute smiled wickedly at me when my eyes met his. "Depends on how much you keep yapping." The Bull countered my friend jokingly.

Well... that will be something.

What? - Bull and Dorian? Can you imagine it?

Yeah... poor Dorian.

Eventually we found our way near a stream and followed it, according to the map we were now close.

But I was halted by the sounds of Elvish coming from further down the stream. The wind was just right and so the wind carried the sounds of the speaking Elves over the water. I held up my hand and glanced into that direction. We had to pass the camp. Solas' friend was to be around that area. I noticed then, a big caravan with one bright red sail attached to it. And some kind of wooden attachment to the caravan, that resembled a rudder. "Is that... a Dalish aravel?" I asked quietly.

Solas nodded, sternly he answered me. "Indeed it is. It can ride on the land and sail the waters."

Dorian immediately peeked his head around the two of us. He seemed curious about these Dalish elves. As was I to be fair. I had not met an adult Dalish before. "Dalish? Here?"

Immediately the thought of Fenrian crossed my mind and I bit down onto my lower lip hard. If I had traveled here before, perhaps I could have let Fenrian stay here and he'd be safe. He'd still be alive.

Solas noticed my expression then, as he gently touched my arm. When my eyes met his, he dipped his head and gave me a sweet expression. As if to say: Don't. I'm here. It'll be alright.

Iron Bull yawned slightly. "Perhaps we can ask them to trade with us. I don't know about you, but I'm pretty hungry."

"I am not sure the Dalish would want to trade with us," Solas remarked.

I sighed then and continued walking on. "Only one way to find out." I tried to walk with confidence, but as we approached the camp with only a handful of Dalish, my courage wavered. An old man in brightly colored robes was eyeing me intently. And he looked suspicious of me. For the first time I saw the vallaslin I had heard so much about on an elf. And truly, to know the tale behind them, sent shivers down my spine. "We are not here for trouble." I say politely, as I approach the man carefully.

"Why are you here then, shem?" The man asks me, his tone of voice stern and curt. His white medium length hair shone brightly in the rays of the sun. His wrinkled face told me this man has had a lot of worry in his life. Perhaps from humans like myself?

"We wondered perhaps if we could trade with you?" I remained polite, despite the Dalish man before me being the complete opposite.

He crossed his arms defiantly and shook his head. "We do not know you well enough to trade with you. I am sorry."
I glanced over at Solas, hoping he could make a difference. Though Bull had been blunt about it, he was right. We were hungry, and the only food around here were some nugs and wolves. And I wasn't too keen on having to kill either of them for some food if we could just as easily buy it at a camp.

The man noticed my gaze into Solas' direction and again shook his head before Solas could even attempt to speak. "Your friend is not of the people. He is a flat ear."

Immediately my blood started to boil. Do even Elves curse out other Elves? Flat ear? Really?

Solas again noticed my reaction. "Then perhaps can you tell us if you've seen some strange activity around here? Perhaps, a few mages or Templars, doing some form of ritual?" He changed the subject quickly. And the Dalish man eyed Solas as well.

"Some mages passed us by earlier today, yes. They're not far." The Dalish man pointed towards the other side of the stream, the terrain going up a bit.

"Ma serannas." And with that, Solas walked off, into the general direction the man pointed to.

"No food?" Iron Bull growled as we three followed Solas.

But soon we all forgot about food, when we witnessed a demon crouching down in agony between about five stone pillars. Solas gasped and ran towards the demon. "My friend!" He exclaimed.

I immediately followed suit and placed my hand gently on Solas' shoulder. "Solas... the mages turned your friend into a demon." I say quietly. I can't help but feel sorry for Solas. He cares so deeply about spirits, and now these mages have done exactly as he feared. "You said it was a spirit of wisdom, not a fighter."

Solas shakes his head, his face expressed his feelings: mad. "Yes, a spirit becomes a demon when denied its original purpose."

"So they've summoned it for something so opposed to its own nature that it was corrupted. Fighting." Dorian says.

Suddenly, from behind the massive rocks that are spread across the barren fields of the Exalted plains, comes a mage. A dorky looking mage at that too. I immediately get angrier by the second, thinking it was probably this very dork that did this to Wisdom. "A mage! You're not with the bandits? Do you have any lyrium potions? Most of us are exhausted, we've been fighting that demon."

Solas snaps. "You summoned that demon! Except it was a spirit of wisdom at the time. You made it kill! You twisted it against its purpose!"

The mage lifted his hands up in defeat. Stuttering, trying to justify himself. "I... I... I understand how it might be confusing to someone who has not studied demons! After you help us-"

Solas interrupted the mage. "-We are not here to help you."

I sneer at the man before me. "You don't have to explain how spirits work to my friend here, buddy. He knows a lot more than you ever could."

The mage completely ignored me however. "Listen to me! I was one of the foremost experts in the Kirkwall cir-"
"-Shut.Up." Solas cuts the dork off again. "You summoned it to protect you from the bandits!"

The man lowers his head in shame slightly. "I... yes."

Solas goes on. "You bound it to obedience, you commanded it to kill, that is when it turned!" Then he turns to face me, pleading me with his eyes. "The summoning circle. We break it, we break the binding. No orders to kill, no conflict with its nature, no demon."

The mage seems surprised but immediately turns to me as well. "What? The binding is the only thing keeping the demon from killing us. Whatever it was before, it is a monster now."

Solas shakes his head and looks at me still. "Vhenan, please." His voice breaks. I cannot take it much longer. I can't help but feel sorry for Solas. I love him and he's hurt, and so I'm hurt as well.

But I remember some of my studies. With and without Vivienne. "I've studied rituals like this. I should be able to disrupt the binding quickly." Of course this also means I have to use my magic again. Which I haven't... given much thought about to be honest.

"Thank you." Solas immediately takes out his staff and begins putting a barrier around the demon to keep it from attacking me. But his barriers can only do so much.

The mage quickly runs back towards the rock he hid behind first, presumably with the other mages that should be here with him. Iron Bull charges at one of the pillars and starts ramming his war axe against it. But I know it won't do. It has to be magic.

"Dorian!" I call out to my friend, who immediately jumps to my side. "I'll need your help destroying the pillars. You focus your energy onto me and I'll go ahead and break them as best I can without harming Wisdom."

"You sure you're up for it?" He asks me.

I simply nod my head and he dips his own. Then I close my eyes and focus on the day after my make up sex with Solas. We had remained in my chambers and we reviewed my barriers. But he also finally taught me a bit of destructive magic. Using my storm element as my main focus. "The last time we concluded that a safe feeling can conjure a barrier. Now we must use another emotion, to force a powerful chain of lightning towards your target." His words repeat themselves in my head as I recall him placing a small mug on my balcony. "Use the most powerful emotion you can think of. Anger, but perhaps also perseverance. Whichever works best. Focus on the mug, and will yourself to use the element to your advantage. Break the mug."

I had objected. "That target is way too small! Can't we begin with something bigger first?"

"That would be too easy, vhenan. Better to start with something small, to perfect your aiming."

And I had done it, after first hitting the stone balcony floor a few times. Which resulted in Josephine having to arrange for someone to fix the stone I had damaged. The feeling I felt when I found Dan, dead on the floor in Jackie's office did the trick for me. It was anger and agony all at the same time. A feeling of injustice and as if I could do absolutely nothing about it. But this strong and powerful emotion worked for me, and it gave me something; the ability to now do something about it. Use it and use for a good cause. And now...

I open my eyes. Breathe in and out slowly and focus solely on the first pillar, where Bull is still trying to shatter it with his axe. I can feel Dorian's focus on me, helping me. It's the same feeling I had when all the mages focused their energy onto me while trying to close the Breach. It helps, makes sure I have enough mana and power to do this. After all, despite my improvement. I'm still
only learning and don't yet have enough power to shatter five pillars in a row.

My right hand lifts up slowly as I can feel the power taking over me. And I don't need the anger now. I know how to conjure this power now, and I can recognize and place the feeling inside me. Surely enough, a chain of lightning hits right next to Bull, shattering the stone pillar to nothing but pieces.

"What the-!" Bull exclaims as he jumps to the side. But no harm would be done to him.

*I've practiced on a small mug, Bull. This pillar is ten times that size. You've nothing to worry about.*

Though the situation is serious and dire, I cannot hide my slight amusement at startling the Ben-Hassrath Qunari giant by using my powerful destructive magic.

"You did it!" Dorian exclaims excitedly. "I'll focus my energy onto you again, Elie. Break the others!"

And so I do. I jog over to the next and shatter it, more easily than the first. The third breaks and Solas has to regain himself after keeping up a barrier for this long. Taking a lyrium potion he regains some of the mana but he still needs to rest a bit before trying again.

"So what do I do?!" Bull yells out to us three.

Dorian groans. "Distract it! But don't harm it!"

"Distract it?!" Bull yells again.

"Pretend you are a roasted running Qunari piece of meat! Surely that'll help!" Dorian yells back sarcastically.

"I am *not* a running buffet for a demon!" But before Dorian can answer, Bull starts running due to the towering demon walking over towards him slowly and menacing.

"There you go! Keep at it, Bull." Dorian calls out to the running, terrified looking Qunari.

I bite down onto my lip hard, focusing on the last two pillars. My energy is draining and I'm starting to feel faint. But suddenly I feel a surge of adrenaline through me. I turn my head around and notice Solas and Dorian both are holding up their staffs towards me. They're both helping me. Bless them. Finally I shatter the remaining pillars and the demon immediately falls to its knees, a black mass surrounding it entirely and before any of us can say something, a bright white figure emerges from the black mass. With equally as brightly shining blue eyes. Solas quickly runs over to it and crouches down in front of her. My heart pains to see him like that. He's hurt. And Wisdom... she looks beautiful in all her mystifying beauty. I've never seen a spirit before either, but it looks wonderful. So pure and... true.

Dorian runs over to me and supports me as my body almost gives in. He wraps his arm around me and keeps me on my feet, while searching with his free hand for a lyrium potion. "Here, drink this. You'll feel better." And so I do, the potion tingles slightly as it travels through my body but I can feel strength returning to my body.

"*Lethalin, ir abelas.*" Solas says quietly to Wisdom as he takes her hands into his own.

And we watch from the side as Solas converses with Wisdom in Elvish. I only understand the first bit of it, where he says he is sorry, but after that, I cannot understand. Until Solas looks away, raises his hands up to Wisdom's face and mutters his: "*Dareth Shiral.*" And Wisdom disappears, vanishes in green smoke.
"I am so sorry, Solas." My voice breaks.

"Now I must endure." He says softly. Still broken from having to part with Wisdom.

"I wish there was more I could do to help."

He gets up and looks at me directly, an emotion spread across his face that's not familiar with me. Love, understanding, surprise perhaps? Sometimes he's so hard to read. "You've already helped me, more than you can imagine."

"What about this bastard?" Bull is finally back with us after having ran around earlier, in his left hand he's holding the dorky mage. Who is struggling against Bull's powerful grasp. In fact, Bull is literally holding him by the collar and the mage is flailing his arms and legs around frantically as he's raised above the ground.

"Please! Don't hurt us!" He whimpers. The others are behind Bull, equally as terrified. Solas snarls and walks up to them all so fast, it's insane. Bull immediately drops dorky dork face and steps aside, placing himself next to Dorian and me.

And I know. I somehow know what Solas intends to do. Dorian looks over to me, as if waiting for me to intervene. But I shake my head slowly and close my eyes, when a bright flash of light appears and the group of mages lay dead before Solas. "Fools. Damn them all."

Part of me is frightened to think that Solas wields that much power, that one flick of his hand can kill an entire group of people in an instant. But I also know he will not use it against me or anyone within the Inquisition. And I felt like perhaps Solas needed to do that. If I had the chance, would I kill Dan's murderer? - I know I would want to. For my own peace of mind. I let Solas because he wanted to, no needed to. And who am I to deny him that? Perhaps cruel, perhaps inhumane but the mages were no innocents here.

He walks back over to me, completely ignoring Dorian and Iron Bull. "I need some time alone. I will meet you back at Skyhold." With that, he coldly turns around and walks off. I immediately make a move to follow him, to pull him back, embrace him, kiss him, tell him I'm there. Don't go. But Dorian holds me back and whispers softly into my ear. "It's alright, Elie. Leave him be. He needs this." And to my surprise, though I wholeheartedly appreciate his kindness in this vulnerable moment, Dorian kisses my cheek lightly.

I look over to my friend, and nod. Sadness spread across my face. I feel so terrible for Solas. To see him in so much pain, mourning his friends passing, it's heartbreaking. His pain has become my pain and his happiness has become my happiness. We are truly bound then it seems. Because yet another piece of my soul seems to have been broken, as I'm sure Solas feels right now too. "You're right." I say softly.

Dorian squeezes me tightly. "He'll be alright."

"Thanks Dorian." I say gratefully to him. Then I turn to Bull, who's standing with his arms crossed, but his expression soft. "And thanks Bull."

Bull waves his hand around, as if to dismiss my thanking him. "Oh it's alright. It's not everyday you get to play the bait for a demon."

And despite what just happened, that sarcastic reply elicited a laugh from both Dorian and me.

"You did look ridiculous running away from it." Dorian quipped at the Qunari.
Iron Bull punches Dorian on the shoulder, though something tells me he's being gentler with Dorian than he would be with let's say.. Krem for example. "Don't get smart with me, Vint. Let's get something to eat.. now I'm really starving."

(...) I hunted and killed a pack of wolves, together with the help of Bull and Dorian of course. But I was the one who skinned one of the wolves. I felt bad, despite having hunted and killed an animal for food before. But this time I felt bad because I knew the Dalish would have had food for us to eat. And simply because we were 'shems', I had to resort to killing the wolves. I groan as I throw away the bones into the fire and stretch my body. My muscles feel sore, and my body hurts a bit. It's been a while since I've had this much action. Mostly residing in Skyhold now, not doing any fighting. And when I did go out, there wasn't enough fighting to avoid this muscle ache.

"You think the Dalish would have helped us if we did something for them in return?" I ask absentmindedly, staring into the fire.

"Perhaps. If they required help." Dorian answers me plainly as he wipes his hands on a handkerchief.

"We could ask." Bull says.

I shrug my shoulders indifferently and look up at the sky then. "Perhaps another time. To be honest, I'd really prefer it if we went back to Skyhold soon. I worry about Solas."

"And we're missing one person in our group." Dorian chimes in. At least he agrees with me about wanting to return to Skyhold.

Bull clicks his tongue then as he sits upright and eyes me. "Want to tell me what that conversation with Leliana was about, boss?"

My eyes widen and my blood runs cold.

*Did he hear us?! That's impossible! We were outside on the balcony of the rookery and surely Leliana would have noticed somebody trying to eavesdrop on us.*

"Excuse me?" is all I ask.

Dorian looks to Bull and then back to me, he seems confused about Bull's sudden accusation towards me.

He cocks his head to the side, his facial expression amused. "Your spymaster isn't the only one with eyes and ears everywhere."

*Why here? Why now? Why all of a sudden?! We were just talking about returning to Skyhold and now is the time he wants to discuss this?! Infront of Dorian, no less!*

I panic, slightly wondering on what to do. It seems however, that Bull already knows more than enough. And he's giving me a chance to come clean, before he'll hang out my dirty laundry for me. "What did you hear exactly?" I ask him this, in case he doesn't know all that much. I don't want to fuck this up. Perhaps he is just bluffing after all.

Dorian remains quiet however, as he plucks away at the ends of his moustache anxiously.

*Yeah, the tension here is thick. I get it, Dorian. You and me both.*
"Something about another world." The Qunari's eye is piercing as he shifts into his seat next to me.

I gulp. "How did you even-"

He interrupts me. "-You were talking ontop of a balcony, overlooking the entire courtyard of Skyhold, boss. You didn't think one of my men would be somewhere down there?"

I fiddle a bit with my fingers, trying to think of a good explanation. But I cannot. And perhaps this is it. This could be the moment where I get killed. After all, I've lied to the both of them. The worst is, I lied to Dorian as well. And I've come to care for him a great deal, as a friend. He's been amazing and this could be the part where they turn on me. I've no support, no companions backing me up on my story. I'm alone, and I'm tired to be honest. Tired of having to lie. "I'm not from Thedas."

I am too afraid to look up to my companions. All I hear is the fire crackling before me and I can only feel the scorching heat of it on my forehead. I hear Dorian hum. But he says nothing.

"So, where are you from. And what happened?" Bull continues, his voice void of all emotions. I've no idea what he's thinking right now. What's going through his mind. Is he plotting to decapitate me with his big war axe? Is that why he's so calm and collected?

"Cassandra's men found me one day, in between the rubble of the exploded conclave." I start. I finally manage to pull my head up and look at them one by one. My eyes darting over from the calm and collected Qunari, back to my confused looking friend. "That much of my story is true. They captured me, bound me, and after three days of me being unconscious, they interrogated me." I sigh deeply. Worried about the outcome of this conversation. But I've gotten this far. I might as well continue telling them the truth. "All I remembered is how I was back at home. Which was a another world called Earth. Where we had no mages, no magic, no Templars, barely any wars going on where I lived at least. No Qunari, no Elves, no Dwarves. None of it. I freaked out when I realized this was Thedas and that I was no longer at home. But nobody, not even me, knew how I got here. We only knew that I had the anchor." I lift my left hand up slightly, staring into the green swirls in my palm. "And that this was the means of closing rifts, and eventually the Breach. At first, everyone was suspicious fo me. They didn't believe me, until Solas explained it was not entirely impossible, just very unlikely."

I look at my remaining two companions. Though it seems they do not know quite what to make of me and my story right now, they both leaned in closer to me and the fire. Listening intently to my explanation. "I've tried remembering... so hard. But I don't know how I got here, what happened. I only remember who I was before and what I did. The friends I had, the family I left behind. But I figured, we would find out sooner or later. In the meantime, I had promised everyone that I would try my damndest to fix the big hole in the sky and help them out. I figured I could at least do something good and useful whilst waiting to return home."

"That why you didn't know how to fight at first?" Bull asks me then. Finally breaking the silence.

I nod slowly. "I also didn't realize I was a mage until the Storm Coast. Which..." I sigh deeply. "-Which elicits even more questions. Because as I said, there was no magic back where I come from. Leliana and the others thought it was best to come up with a fake backstory about me. Varric would back me up on it, in case people would get suspicious. They even tested me, taught me things about the History of Thedas and all I needed to know. To make sure I would not fuck it up."

"But nobody expected a Qunari spy, I take it?" Dorian says slowly.

I nod again. "Indeed. However, I agreed to the plan back then because I did not like the idea of being murdered for being a crazy person claiming to be from another world. Also, if I were going to be the
Herald of Andraste, I would need the support of the masses. And the people within the Inquisition. Then... this whole business with Haven, Fenrian and... becoming the Inquisitor happened and... well... I've just sort of accepted my fate. I view Thedas as my home now. I've no idea how to return yet. Nobody does. During the conversation I've had with Leliana, the one you eavesdropped on—" I glare at Bull a bit accusingly. "—We spoke of how I felt about that. And that's the whole story." I clasp my hands together when I end my explanation and wait for them to judge me.

"So who knew about the truth?" Dorian starts, after a silence that was almost deafening.

"Varric, Cassandra, Leliana, Solas, Josephine and Cullen."

"Fenrian didn't even know?" Dorian asks me again.

"No..." My head lowers slightly. "I've wanted to tell him many times. But, I figured he didn't need to know. In hindsight... I kind of wish I had." I scoff wryly. "Yet another regret added to the list, I suppose."

"I also heard you wanted to tell us. But Leliana insisted you kept it a secret, in fear of losing some support from the Inquisition. And losing some of us." Bull sighs. "You want to know what I think?"

I hold my breath. Afraid. This is the moment.

"I couldn't give a damn if you were from here or some other fucking world. So long as you're a good person and you do right by Thedas and the people in it, you're alright in my book. I'm no saint either." the Bull smiles softly at me. And for the first time, I don't perceive him as an angry, towering Thedosian version of Hell Boy any longer. The big giant actually looks... kind for once. Not so menacing and threatening. Not so scary.

*Perhaps there is a big beating heart underneath that hard exterior? Maybe... The Iron Bull... is a big softie.*

I return the smile hesitantly. "Thank you..." but then I slowly turn my head into Dorian's direction. He's the one person that made me feel the worst for lying to.

He eyes me wearily and sighs deeply. Shaking his head. "You've shown me nothing to make me doubt your intentions aren't true, Elie. I'm just... a bit sad." he pouts slightly. I feel terrible then, but when he notices my reaction, he quickly continues. "After all that gossiping we did!" he gasps. "You didn't once think to tell me all of this? Would have been a great ice breaker too, you know?" He tuts me.

I snort. "Think of all the dull evenings filled with boring small talk, when we could've turned all that into sharing exciting tales!" I feign a gasp too. "All wasted." I whisper.

Dorian scoots closer to me then and wraps an arm around me. "Well.. I suppose there's nothing we can do about it now. Can't be helped."

I giggle slightly and turn back to look at Iron Bull. "I know I should've told you guys but..."

Iron Bull shakes his head. "I get it. You're new to all this lying business."

"So are you going to tell the others as well?" Dorian asks me, curious as to my answer it seems. Because both his brows are arched and his expression is genuine.

It catches me off guard a bit that the both of them don't immediately want to run to the others and tell it themselves. "I don't know......" I say cautiously. "The two of you reacted better than anyone
could've expected, but Leliana was right about Sera and Vivienne. Sera would probably freak out and leave, whereas Vivienne would finally have a reason to kick me off my pedestal and take over."

"And Cole?" Bull growls slightly. He really doesn't like anything that has to do with Spirits and Demons it seems.

I shrug my shoulders. "To be fair.. I haven't actually spoken to Cole yet. Though I doubt he'll mind. I help people, don't I? Or... try to at least. What I'm trying to say, is my heart is in the good place. I don't think a spirit of Compassion would give a damn where I'm from."

"Well I think you'll have to discuss it with the others once we are back at Skyhold." Dorian says finally. Planting another kiss on my cheek. "Don't worry about it, my dove."

Iron Bull chimes in then. "Yeah. We got your back, boss."

And I feel emotional. Overcome with happiness that at least these two, especially the big and once scary one, don't judge me and ostracize me. I feel a bit better after having told the truth to somebody else for once. Like a part of a big weight was lifted from me. Though there's still the matter of possibly having to tell the others. But I digress, for now at least, I can relax.

*And relax my muscles perhaps. That would be nice too.*
Chapter Summary

We get another brief glimpse into Elie's life before Thedas, and we're working on moving towards the 'Here Lies The Abyss' mission. I'm hoping to start on that part of the story in the next chapter!

We're getting closer and closer to getting answers on how Elie got here in the first place and a little something more ;)

Also: Gossip time with Dorian!!

And sad egghead :'(

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anxiously I take a look at my phone: the same number. The same odd number that does not belong to England, it's foreign and weird and.. I put away my phone again and speed up the pace quickly, remembering Sarah is waiting for me at the small diner. It is weird however, this fucking number having called me over the past week. I only picked up once, and it worried me deeply. To hear the Mandarin on the other end of the line, spewing angry words at me. Dan never taught me how to speak Mandarin, so I had no idea what the man on the phone was telling me. But I doubt it was something good, by the tone of his voice. I had called my phone provider and given them the number, asking them if they could block it. To make sure I'd not receive another call from them, but a day later... a different number called. And I didn't have to pick up to know it was the same person, calling from a different mobile. I shudder at the thought. My biggest fear... would be them. The ones who killed Dan, finally having caught up with me. Or perhaps it was Dan's father. I hadn't messaged Logan about it yet, though I probably should soon. It's getting ridiculous. My phone is on silent the entire time. Too afraid to pick up any calls, even when they're from my friends or family. Suddenly I feel a hand on my shoulder and I jump, almost slapping the person behind me.

"Woah! Calm down you. It's just me." Sarah's eyes look amused for a moment, then she punches me slightly on the shoulder. "What have you done to be so jumpy?"

I relax instantly as my friend giggles and shake my head. " Couldn't you have called out? You scared the shit out of me!"

She wraps her arm around my shoulder and starts walking forward, with me in her grasp, into the diner. "I did call out to you. You were lost in thought however. Come, let's eat. I'm starving."

Once inside, we take a seat near the window and a waiter takes our order. It's not much, I simply order a club sandwich and some ginger ale to go with it. Sarah, the ever hungry girl she is, orders a steak. For lunch. I shake my head and snort once the waiter walks off. "What?" She asks me, her grin is contagious.

"You still have to eat dinner later tonight."
She shrugs her shoulders. "Yeah, but right now I fancy a juicy steak." Her Scottish accent never fails to amuse me. I just love listening to her talk, with her heavy accent. And she always hates it when I laugh at her for it, and when Sarah gets mad, her accent becomes even thicker than normal. "What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing at all." I say sweetly.

Sarah has been my friend for years. We went to the same school, and that's when I met her. I've seen her grow up from the tubby glass wearing geek she was, into this wonderful lady she is today. She has these beautiful thick auburn curls, cascading down her shoulders. She's traded her glasses in for contact lenses. And her hazel eyes can be so piercing when she wants to know something. She's thick, in the head I mean. Stubborn as hell. She always blames her Scottish heritage for it. Might as well, I never argue with her about that. When she was younger, she was always bullied by the other kids. I was the only one who would talk to her, I always felt like she and I were the same: outcasts. She was one because of her being from Scotland and I was one because I was always considered weird. Just no particular reason really. The kids just thought I was an easy target. And perhaps I was. I never talked back to anyone, always let people walk right over me. Sarah and I understood each other. We were thick as thieves. When we were both fifteen she finally explained to me the word she always used for other kids. I remember it clear as day. "Sassenach means English person. That's what I always say to them." She had said to me, with her big toothy grin. I had chortled in glee, and remembered how many times I had heard her mutter that word whenever another kid would tease her. In that moment, back then, I had felt like my friendship with Sarah had reached a new level. One where we could entrust one another with our every secret.


I blink my eyes rapidly and look down at the table before me, the food is there and Sarah leans forward. Her face saying what she is not. "Sorry. I was just thinking about the first time we met and all." I say apologetically.

She clicks her tongue then and shows me her cheeky grin once more. She always looks so mischievous. Even when she's not trying to. It's just the way her face is and I love it. "Ah yes, our lovely childhood. At that lovely school." She giggles. "I don't miss that time, do you?"

I shake my head. "Not at all." Sarah starts digging into her steak then and snorts. With a half devoured cow in her mouth she continues speaking to me.

"You used to have a crush on that one lad right?" She points to me with her fork and starts thinking. "What was his name? For the life of me I can't remember, something dumb... like him."

I swallow my bite and roll my eyes. "Dave."

She snaps her fingers and slams the table loudly with her fist then, causing the other people to snap their heads into our direction, glaring at us angrily. "Dave! That's the name, yes!" She stabs the meat with her fork and brings it up to her mouth then. "Dumb bastard that one. Can't see why you ever liked him. Turned out to be an arse too. Heard he works at the gas station now."

I take a sip from my ginger ale and stare at her intently. "Where did you hear that?"

She shrugs her shoulders indifferently. "A birdie told me." She tries to keep a straight face but quickly she starts grinning again. "Ran into old Miss Graham the other week. Chatted with her for a good hour or so."
"Miss Graham? Really? She still teaches?" I ask surprised.

"No, she's retired. She told me she was happy to. Didn't miss the classes full of noisy kids at all, she said. We started sharing some memories, she told me about Dave. Asked about you, too."

I smile, recollecting the memories I had of Miss Graham. She was a lovely teacher. An old woman back then, she must've been around the age of seventy now. I always loved her classes. And Sarah did too. One time she told us we were her best students, and we told her she was the best teacher. She was the only teacher who cared about us when we were being bullied yet again. She'd shoo them away and threaten them with her fist in the air. Like the old lady she was. "I do miss her rambling."

Sarah nods. "Agreed."

She wants to say another word, but suddenly my phone vibrates on the table. Instantly my heart jumps, my stomach turns around. I glance down at the screen and see the weird number again. Quickly I decline the call and turn my phone off. Sarah looks at me questionably. "You aren't gonna take that?"

I shake my head. "Not important right now. I'm with you."

"Could be your work you know."

"I work the entire weekend. If they want to ask me to work Monday too, I'll wring their necks." I joke. Mostly trying to change the subject.

Sarah hums. "You've been working a lot lately, haven't you?"

I glare at her. I know where she is going with this. For everything that Sarah is, she's not subtle. At all. "I have."

She puts the fork down onto her plate and takes a big gulp from her coke, continuing her intense staring at me. When I don't answer her and she's swallowed her drink, she continues regardless. "You still not over him, are you?"

I never told Sarah the truth. I told her, and my parents that we had broken up when I was in Taiwan. Nobody knew the truth. And this was something I always felt guilty about. Sarah and I shared every secret with one another. I had never lied to her before. And this was my biggest and worst lie ever. When I found out what Dan did for a living, I never told her either. I came up with some bullshit story about him working as a dock laborer. But when she visited me unannounced a week after my return to Brighton, and found me weeping on the sofa, she knew there was more to it than a simple break up. She knew what a heart ache looked like. The tears that came from my eyes were no simple tears of heart ache. They were tears of loss. And that, was something Sarah was familiar with too. Though she never questioned me about it, I knew that she knew I wasn't telling her the whole story. "I will." I answer finally.

She gazes at me, her hazel eyes piercing. That same look she always has when she wants to know something. Her stubbornness never got the better of her with me. But I fear this will not stay like that for long. I've been lying to her for a while now and she knows. "Why don't you just... find someone else then? Thomas and I are going to a party next Thursday. He has a lot of good looking friends you might want to get acquainted with."

I shake my head and finish my sandwich then. "I have work the next day. Plus I want to stay home for something."
I have managed to change the topic successfully it seems, because she snorts. "That planetary alignment shite?"

"You know about it?"

"It's all over the news. Poor bastards probably can't find anything interesting to report about, so this is all they speak of. As well as on Facebook. Everyone's talking about it." She cocks her head to the side. "You know, in Scotland there might even be people doing some weird pagan rituals during this planetary alignment."

"Really? What for?" I ask her. A bit intrigued by it.

"Ah always some dumb air heads trying to stick to the old rituals and shit. My mom once told me she knew a girl whose mom would do these weird rituals. Usually during Halloween but also when weird alignments were happening. Said to ... bring out spirits and whatnot." She scoffs and shakes her head. "All bullshit if you ask me."

"I knew the Scots were weird, but not that weird." I wink at her daringly.

She giggles. "Hey! Mind what you say about my countrymen, sassenach." She smiles widely.

"So you're not going to watch it?" I decide to continue on about the planetary alignment.

She shakes her head. "Nah, Thomas and I will be far too drunk to even care about some stupid planets. I doubt you can even see anything. Don't know why you'd want to stay up for that."

"I have a small telescope you know."

She bursts out into laughter then. And once again slams her fist loudly onto the table. Some people are getting annoyed now and are muttering things under their breath, but Sarah doesn't care. She never does. "A small telescope? And what do you think you'll be able to spot with that?" She continues her laughter and I anxiously look at all the people around us. Staring at us. I mouth a small apology to the ones that are looking at me. But only to keep the peace. In truth, I love this side of Sarah. She's always so bold and reckless, and loud. And I love her for it. This is who she is and I'll never get bored of it.

(...) Finally she hugs me tightly in front of the cafe and pats me on the back. "Don't be a stranger, Elie." When she holds me at arms length she examines my face worriedly. "Don't bury yourself in work. You know you can always come visit. And if you don't, I will. Don't forget you gave me the key to your apartment."

I smile broadly at my friend. "How could I forget? You always barge in unannounced whenever you feel like it."

"Only when you ghost me like you always do." She winks at me and squeezes me once more in a tight embrace. "I'm serious. I'm always here for you if you need to talk." And I know what she's speaking of.

I nod slowly. "I know, Sarah."

She sighs. "Well then. Off with you! Get your English arse out of here. I have better things to do than coddle you." She giggles and I kiss her on the cheek and wave her off as I walk away from the diner. Leaving her behind as she dials her phone for a cab.

As I move further and further away from the busy streets, I feel anxious and... tense. Like something
isn't right. I get my phone out of my pocket and turn it back on, once it's on, I notice I have another three missed calls. I shudder again. And the wind quickly picks up so I wrap my cardigan tighter around myself as I speed up the pace. My apartment is only a couple of blocks away. Just a little longer. Without looking to see where I'm walking, I bump into a man. I hurriedly mumble an apology as I try to move past the man. But then I realize that I wasn't walking in anyone's way. The person bumped into me. I glance up at the man and see an Asian guy staring down at me. His face emotionless and somehow... threatening. My eyes widen immediately. Either this is a poor coincidence or this is one of them. Perhaps even the man who has been calling me over the past week. I try to move past him again, but he halts me. Simply by putting his arm against my chest. Fear is spread across my face and truthfully I don't know what to do. Do I speak to him? Reason with him? Or run?

We are both startled by the sounds of sirens, as a police car rushes us by and this is my chance. I start running away from the man, and when I glance behind me, he does not pursue. Simply stands there, gaping at me as I take off. I don't know who that man is or what he wants but I don't care to find out. I run past some confused looking people, and even bump into a few as I do. I must look scared shitless right now and I am. I just want to get home and get to safety. I can feel my chest burning, the asthma is getting to me, this much running is not good for my condition. But I just want to get home. Just a few more doors. Then I'm home.

When finally I reach the inside of my apartment, safely. I close the door behind me and try to catch my breath against the door. I'm wheezing at this point and scramble to the bedroom for my inhalers. And I collapse on the bed, my chest rapidly moving up and down as my lungs seem to open up again and air is able to travel freely through them again. I reach my phone again and start messaging Logan, panic still within my system. I need to call with him. So I tell him to get on Skype or Facebook, and that he has to call me immediately. As I lay there, waiting for Logan to message me back I am startled by the feeling of my vibrating phone. When I check the screen, it's not Logan on Skype or Facebook. Instead, I see the same unfamiliar strange number on my screen. And I throw my phone against the wall. "Fuck!" I exclaim. I'm panicking even more now. That man, I bumped into. It wasn't a coincidence was it? It couldn't have been. Yes there's many Asians living here, but right now I am wary of every single one of them. And I still have to work this week, I have to leave the house. This man was close to my house, for all I know he followed me or had me followed and they now know where I live. And even if they don't. If that man was really one of them, it would mean they are already here, in Brighton. They've followed me this far. It won't take long now. But what do I do? I decide to get up and close all the blinds in my apartment, scared to be staring outside and finding someone else looking in. I'm afraid to be found. I don't know what to do. I feel like a wanted woman, a criminal on the run. I haven't done anything. I've just been trying to move on and forget what happened. But it haunts me everywhere I go, doesn't it? And nobody in my life knows. Perhaps I should tell Sarah the truth. And my parents as well.

The remainder of the day, I wait for Logan to call me. It's a miracle my phone didn't break when I threw it at the wall. The calls have stopped, for now. But I know they will continue tomorrow. It's late now. Almost midnight. And I haven't heard anything from Logan. He must be busy. With whatever work he's doing now. Maybe he's doing the same thing but for a different person. If that's the case, then he doesn't have much free time. I lay there on my sofa, trying to watch a movie but my mind is elsewhere. So I decide to call my mom. I need to hear her voice, I need my mother. "Elie? Why you calling so late?" I hear her soothing voice after a couple of rings and immediately feel bad for calling so late. She probably was sleeping and I woke her up.

"Mom... I'm so sorry. I just... I needed to hear your voice." My emotions get the better of me and I break down. I choke back a sob and try to remain strong.

"Oh honey... what's wrong?" I hear her concerned voice on the other end of the line and I break
down even further.

"I just.. I'm ... I don't know... mom..." I want to tell her, I do. But I'm also afraid. And this is not something you just drop on your mother during a phone call.

"Shh, it's alright. Take your time."

"Mom, can I stay with you for a while? Like maybe.. next weekend or something?"

She's silent for a while. "Of course you can dear, but Elie? Is something the matter? Do you want to tell me something?"

"When I'm there, I'll tell you everything mom. I promise. I'd rather not discuss this over the phone."

"Alright, I understand. Do you want us to come pick you up?"

I blow my nose into a tissue. "No.. no it's fine. I still have to work this weekend and a few days next week. I'll let them know at work that I won't be coming back. I'll find another job, I just want to get out of here for now. But I'll finish this upcoming week."

"Alright. That's responsible of you, dear. You're more than welcome to come to us. I'll send you some money for the trip."

"It's alright, I got the money mom. You don't have to do that." I smile a little. I love her so much.

"Well, alright then. I'll prepare your room for you, so that when you're here, you can stay in your old room. And sweetheart? I love you very much, you know that right?"

"I know mom. I love you too."

"Good."

"I'm sorry for worrying you mom. I'll be alright. I'll go get some sleep and then I'll see you next weekend."

"Okay then love. Good night. And if you want to come sooner that's fine too. Just let me know in advance so I'll know when to stay home."

"I will. I'll see you soon, mom."

"See you soon, Elie."

I hang up the phone and wipe my eyes harshly. I'm such a dumbass. Calling my mother in the middle of the night, crying. She must be worried sick about me now. It almost sounded like I killed someone. I swallow hard. I don't know why I called her but I'm glad I did. That's it then. I'll finish the next week, then I'll tell Gina I quit and I'll go to my mom's next weekend. I can wait out one more week, I'm sure. I just need to be cautious. Perhaps I'll take a cab to work every day until I leave Brighton. To make sure I won't run into anyone again. And perhaps it's just my imagination, but I am almost certain this man I ran into earlier wasn't just anyone. There was an air about him. Something off putting. Something threatening. Even though he remained expressionless when he looked at me. And who would try to stop someone when they're trying to walk away? No, it wasn't an accident. I'm sure of it. This was no ordinary man. I sigh. But for now, I need to let this go. And I'll be safe with my mom next weekend, I'll tell her everything and perhaps then we can notify the authorities and I'll be safe. Or safe ish, but at least then people will know. And they can help me, the police, can't they? No. They must be able to help me. They simply must.
"So you really don't remember anything about how you got here?" Dorian asks me from the side. He's riding his own horse, and Bull is on the other side riding his horse as well.

"No, nothing. I wish I did." My mouth presses into a thin line. "My memory is all foggy and.. weird. Iron Bull hums. "So what was life like over where you're from?"

"Easy, a walk in the park compared to Thedas' way of living." I say wryly.

"And you've learned everything there is to know in the short amount of time you've been here?" The Qunari asks me, there's a hint of approval in his voice.

I nod. "Though I had plenty of time to learn, before you all came along. And I'm still learning."

"How long has it been now?" Dorian chimes in again.

I have to think about that for a while. How long has it been exactly? "Perhaps a year by now already. Time flies." I look up at the sky. "I've already been here for a whole year."

"And you don't miss your world?" Bull's face is full of curiosity.

I snort. "That's the first thing everybody always asks me. Had you met me a year ago, I would have said yes. But now, I would say no."

"That's quite something. You've lived there for twenty two years and yet you don't miss it." I know Dorian doesn't mean it in that way, but he almost sounds accusing.

"My home is here now."

"With Solas?" Dorian wiggles his eyebrows.

I shake my head, stifling my laughter. "Yes, with Solas. And all of you lovable dumbasses."

"Except Viv." Bull jokes.

I roll my eyes. "She's got her good side. Just rarely comes out. And I have a feeling she would use this against me if she wanted to."

"You know she hates your guts for siding with the mages, right?" Bull clears his throat uncomfortably. It seems like he doesn't really like it either.

"Oh, I know. But I still stand with that decision. Conscripting the mages would not do the Inquisition good. We need allies, not more enemies."

"Did Varric ever tell you what happened back at Kirkwall? With the mages?" Bull continues.

"He did. I know of Anders and what he did. But that was only one bad mage. There's rotten apples everywhere. Even amongst the Templars too. Besides, they ran to Corypheus the first chance they got. Traitors." I mumble the latter as Moonlight trots onwards.

"Well, I for one am grateful about her not conscripting the mages." Dorian says cheerfully.
Iron Bull snorts. "You're a Vint."

"I am a handsome Vint, thank you very much." Dorian corrects him.

I glance over at Bull and expect him to answer that with a witty one liner. But instead, Bull remains quiet and stares at Dorian a bit awkwardly.

Do my eyes deceive me or does Bull like Dorian? It's almost cute.

"We are nearly there." Bull says finally, breaking the silence as we ride on. The big fortress coming into clear sight before us.

I nod and swallow down hard.

Will Solas be there already? I hope he's alright.

Sadly, to my dismay, Solas was not yet back at Skyhold. When Cassandra saw us arrive, without the elven mage, she took me to a secluded spot and asked what had happened. I immediately gave her a full report, also telling her about Bull and Dorian now knowing the truth. And how they knew. For a moment, I saw concern spread across her face. Her harsh features coming out again, and she kept a distrustful eye on Dorian. But when I told her of the way they had both reacted, she seemed to calm down. "Perhaps Dorian is not as bad as I thought he was." She admitted, eventually. Though it seemed she had a hard time with it. Cassandra eventually called everyone to the war room, the advisors that is. And told them of my story as well. I was there, standing awkwardly listening to Cassandra passing the story on to the others. And watched carefully to how Leliana responded.

Her face grew dark when Cassandra got the point where she told that one of Bull's men heard us talking on the balcony. And Cullen interrupted Cassandra to berate the spymaster. "That was incredibly foolish of you. Discussing that so openly out on the balcony with Elie." But Leliana wasn't the only one who was in trouble. Because the commander turned to me next. "And it was foolish of you to even start the conversation with her, in the rookery no less! What if anyone else heard about it?"

I groaned and crossed my arms defiantly. "The point is now that they know. And I intend to tell the others as well. Blackwall, Cole, Sera and even Vivienne."

Cassandra's eyes widened. "But I thought-"

I interrupt her. "-I have you on my side do I not? If Vivienne or Sera has a problem with it, then so be it. I'll face the consequences if I have to. It'll be my burden to bear. But I will no longer lie to my companions."

Josephine seems to be the only one who approves of this idea. "I agree with Eliana. Perhaps Madame de Fer will have issues with it, but she is here for the same reason as we all are: to fight Corypheus and stop this madness."

Cullen looks away for a moment and then starts to rub his neck uncomfortably. "Do you want everyone to know?" He hisses at me angrily.

"Not at all. Simply the inner circle. And I trust they will keep their mouths shut. No nobility or important people have to know of this."

Cullen stares at me for a while, silently. Probably hoping I will change my mind about it but I shall not. I am dead set on my decision, and whether he likes it or not, I'll tell them. Finally he gives in. "Fine. But I will not be held accountable for anything bad that might happen after you tell them."
"You work for me now, Cullen. If something bad were to happen, you'd have to step in." I say with a cheeky grin plastered on my face.

"And don't I know it." He says in an exasperated tone of voice. "There's no arguing with you, Maker's breath. Women."

And with that, it's settled. We say our goodbyes and I decide to check in on Cole. After all, I haven't spoken to him since that weird stuff happened. Where he could hear the patients thoughts and spoke them out loud. He was a good spirit though. And no, he didn't make me feel uncomfortable. It was just odd. You'd think I'd be used to anything by now. After seeing demons and Corypheus and whatnot. But spirits were a new thing to me. And until recently I didn't even know what a spirit looked like outside of human form. But remembering how true and pure Wisdom had looked, made me feel less anxious to speak to Cole. Despite him looking like any ordinary man. I roam the upstairs area of Herald's rest, knowing this is where he usually hangs out. Or so I've been told by the others before I left the war room to go talk to him.

Just an ordinary man. A man with big bug eyes, staring widely at me when he speaks, but an ordinary man regardless.

But why isn't he here?

"Your thoughts are loud. I can hear them very clearly." Cole's voice brings me out of thought and I turn around to see him standing there.

"Where did you even come from? This place was empty." I ask surprised. A bit jumpy of course, since he just came out of nowhere.

"No it wasn't. I was here already." He replies emotionless.

"Of course you were." I say in a wry tone of voice. I decide to sit down onto the wooden floor then and look around. The entire area is dusty and old. I don't understand why Cole would like to spend time here. You can faintly hear the minstrel downstairs singing her songs, and the chatter of the people in the tavern but other than that, this place looks decrepit and dead. "Do you mind if I sit here?"

"No. I don't mind." He remains standing though. His white blonde hair poking out from under his big hat.

"I just wanted to talk with you. We haven't talked much, have we?"

He shakes his head, his hands folded in front of his body. "You want to tell me about your secret."

My eyes widen. "You know, then?"

"I knew already. Like me, you're not from here. But you're not like me." He answers plainly.

It's like he speaks in riddles. He's something else alright. "And you don't mind that, Cole?"

He shakes his head. "No. You give hope. People know this. They look to you for light. And you cast that light. But it's heavy."

I swallow down hard. It sure is heavy. "Well, thank you for not having a problem with it."

He cocks his head to the side. And looks to me with his big blue eyes. Sometimes he almost looks like a little kid. So full of wonder and curiosity. "He will come back."
"He? Solas you mean?" I raise one of my eyebrows up at him.

"You're feeling hurt. But you don't have to. He's not hurting because of you."

I shake my head. "I know that... he's hurt because of what the mages did to Wisdom." He nods. "I'm sorry about Wisdom."

"His pain is your pain. Bound together you feel each other's pain and also each other's happiness."

He starts to ramble and I get a bit unnerved. It's a bit... weird that he can read my mind like that.

"Bound together?" I ask him then. Solas discussed this with me briefly back at the western approach.

"Yes." But that's all Cole wants to say about it seems. "He's coming back now." And with a poof and a white flash of light, Cole disappears before my eyes again. Though if I would ask him about it the next time, he'd probably say he was still there.

I hurriedly get up to my feet and run towards the gates of Skyhold and just like Cole said, I can see my bald elf slowly walking inside the fortress walls. He seems sad still, however. And my heart instantly breaks when seeing him like that. "You're back." I want to hug him but I stop myself. Somehow it wouldn't feel right if I hugged him now. Though I desperately want to. "How are you feeling, Solas?"

He looks me into the eyes then and sighs softly. "It hurts, it always does."

"Where were you?" I ask worriedly.

"I slept and went into the fade, to the place where we would always talk. But Wisdom was no longer there."

"I'm so sorry, Solas." Is all I can say.

He smiles softly, though it seems to take a whole lot of strength for him to do so. "It's alright, vhenan." He places his hand softly on my shoulder and dips his head. Then he continues to walk away from me, probably back to the rotunda no doubt.

I want to follow him, but I tell myself not to. He needs time. And I need to give him that. He'll be back. He'll be better soon. I trust that he will be.

* * * *

Dorian is sitting on my bed with me. We are like two girls, gossiping about our companions. "And that hair! I couldn't even fix that if I wanted to!" He exclaims.

I giggle again. "If it's her style, then why not?"

"That, is not a style." He rolls his eyes.

"But she's good with her bow. That's all that matters to me." I feel a bit guilty for talking about Sera with Dorian but it just happened. Though she wasn't the only one we spoke of. We also targeted Vivienne, of course. And Blackwall.

"Hm yes, I suppose you're right." He checks his nails then, and acts coy with me. I wonder what he's up to. "I have been wondering..."

"Oh dear. I have a bad feeling about this." I say, trying to contain my amusement.
"You sleep with Solas, yes?" He blurts it out like that, staring at me intently.

I gasp and punch him lightly on the arm. "Really?!" Is all I can ask.

"Well, do you or do you not?" He urges me now.

I roll my eyes. "Yes, I do."

"What is he like... in bed I mean?" He scoots over closer to me and puts his head into his hands.

"Dorian!" I call out, but I end up laughing hysterically.

"What? Come now, Elie! He's such a ... odd guy. So calm and collected. So docile." He starts grinning then. "But I doubt he's docile in bed. Something tells me he's the complete opposite."

I purse my lips and cross my legs. "A lady doesn't kiss and tell."

"Bah! You're hardly a lady! I've seen the way you look at him during dinner. You practically undress the poor guy with your eyes."

"He does look good naked..." I say grinning widely.

Dorian excitedly clasps his hands together then. "Tell me everything!"

I hum. "WEEEell... he can be sweet in bed. Soft and gentle. But mostly he likes to get... dominant with me. And I let him."

Dorian gasps. "Eliana! I never would have guessed you're into that!"

I giggle. "I love it. And don't you judge me for it! All day every day I have to make decisions. And the way my personality is, I always have to be in control. I've always been like that, always have to have a plan for everything. I overthink everything. It's nice... no it's amazing not to be in control for once, and to just let go. And have someone else take over. And I suppose for Solas it's like that but the opposite. He's always so docile. Always in the background. I think he loves to be in control."

"I completely understand, my dove." He kisses me on the cheek lovingly. "I suppose I wouldn't mind it if a man pushed me against the wall and just... went for it." He grins widely.

"Well, maybe you could ask Bull." I wiggle my eyebrows.

"What?" Dorian genuinely seems surprised.

"You're not going to tell me you haven't seen the way he looks at you, right?"

"He looks at me with suspicion, because I'm from Tevinter." He furrows his brows.

"His lieutenant is from Tevinter, Krem, I'm sure you've met him."

Dorian nods but purses his lips then. "I don't know what you've been seeing, my dear Inquisitor. But I can assure you, Bull does not look at me in that way."

Then, a gentle knocking is heard from down the stairs. "Come in!" I call out.

We hear the door opening and In walks Leliana. "Elie, everything is prepared for your trip towards Crestwood."
I dip my head gratefully at Leliana. "Thank you. I have decided to bring Varric, Cole and Blackwall."

Dorian gasps. "You're not taking me with you?"

I giggle and push him slightly, shifting my attention back to Leliana again.

She nods. "Very well. Though I must warn you... I've sent out scout Harding ahead of you, to check the area. She's been sending out some worrying reports about Crestwood. Something about the dead wandering the lands. Apparently there's also a rift in the lake. You might want to deal with that once your business with Varric's friend is concluded."

I nod. "We can always return to Crestwood after we've dealt with this situation. In the meantime, send some of our guards towards Crestwood to defend the people living there. I don't know how long this business will take with the Warden and Varric's friend. But I believe this is our priority for now."

"If the people of Crestwood are in danger due to the rift in the lake, then surely-"

I cut her off. "-I'm not saying I will abandon them, Leliana. I just... feel like we have to do this first. After we've dealt with this mission, we can always return and close the rift. In the meantime, do as I say.. please."

She nods. "Very well." And with that, she turns her heel and walks away from Dorian and I.

When we hear the door close again, Dorian cocks his head to the side. "Worried about something?"

I sigh deeply. "I'm just... a bit afraid about what's to come. I have to meet with a Warden I don't even know. Varric's friend is no friend of Cassandra's so I have to keep her identity safe for now at least. And also, this will be the first big mission since..." my eyes close and I stop talking.

Dorian puts his hand on my shoulder and hugs me tightly then. "I know." He whispers softly. "You never had the proper time to mourn his loss."

"I don't think I'll ever be able to mourn his loss properly. He was just a kid..."

He sighs. "Yeah, you're right. It'll be fine, Elie. I can always come with you if you wish."

I shake my head. "Crestwood is no place for you. I hear it rains over there, a lot." I say in a wry tone of voice.

Dorian chuckles. "You know me so well."

Then his expression becomes serious again. "I know you don't like to talk about this topic too much, but I still wonder... what is it like to live in another world, so different from your own? To no longer be the person you were back then?"

He's intrigued by my story about Earth, I've seen his facial expression before when I spoke about it. An interest he shares with Solas. "What's there to say about it? I'm here now and that's what matters."

He nods. "Yes but you had a life before. And this no longer seems to matter to you."

I smile softly. And I am reminded of a quote I once read in a book. Back when I still lived back on Earth. And I don't know why, but it felt fitting now to recite this to Dorian. Because it explained
exactly how I felt. Because it was the perfect explanation to his question. I didn't know back then, when I read this book that this quote would be so fitting later. "You forget the life you had before, after awhile. Things you cherish and hold dear are like pearls on a string. Cut the knot and they scatter across the floor, rolling into dark corners never to be found again. So you move on, and eventually you forget what the pearls even looked like. At least, you try."

Dorian seems to be shut up then. And nods, his face grim. "That was beautiful."

"Not my own words, I'm afraid. But it is exactly how I see it. The knot was cut when I arrived at Thedas. And whoever I was before and whatever I did, however I got here... it doesn't matter anymore. At least for now."

We sit there in silence for a while, just thinking, the both of us. But it's not an awkward silence. It's a good kind of silence. It's as if two friends are just hanging out, without saying a word. And that to me, shows that it's a good friendship. Where two friends can just say nothing and still be content. It's kind of like my friendship with Sarah back at Earth.

A sharp pang goes through my chest then. I miss her. Despite me not wanting to dwell on that life too much anymore. For all I know, that life is no longer obtainable. Maybe my world will not be what it once was if I even find a way back home. And I don't want to anymore. Call me cruel, call me heartless.. but I love Solas and I would not want to part with him. Though there are things I'll never fully understand about him. The way he reacts sometimes. And the way he is, so hot and then so cold the next moment. And yes, this life I now lead is far different from what I ever expected. But it is my life now. And I live in Thedas, I will die first before seeing Thedas crumble and fall to Corypheus.

Chapter End Notes

I have a couple of extra unexpected days off, so I'm planning on writing ahead in the meantime :) I wrote this chapter yesterday and I'm thinking on continuing with the next chapter tomorrow, or perhaps even tonight. But I am going out for dinner tonight so I'm not sure yet ^^

I really hope you guys are enjoying the fanfiction still !

XOXO as always; thank you so much for leaving kudo's and reading my story ♥ I appreciate it, greatly.

Also, I've decided to change some of the tags of my story. Adding: Dominant Solas/Dark Solas.
Just saying :x

....ANYWAYS:

Naomi Greatly Approves
In Uthenera

Chapter Summary

So the story has taken an unexpected turn!!!!

Dun, dun, dunnnn!

I hope y'all like it, though more heartbreak befalls Elie

Chapter Notes

First things first: I listened to this song when I wrote this entire chapter, on repeat: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zgsPO48wvw

I wanted to share it with y'all since I believe it sets the perfect mood for the entire chapter. And especially for the ending of this chapter. (hint, hint)

Sidenote: I do not claim to know everything there is to know about the Samhain part of this story. I partially used information found on the internet and also made some parts up about it :3

When you're surrounded by white, and cocooned in a warm fuzzy feeling.. all you want to do is stay there. That was the feeling that I had when I first got to Thedas. And I remember it all now.

I remember... everything.

We tracked Hawke to Crestwood, met with him and met his Warden friend Stroud. When we returned to Skyhold, Cassandra and Varric fought because Cassandra finally find out the truth about who Varric’s friend was. When all was said and done, they reconciled but only to keep the peace. We hurriedly prepared ourselves to travel yet again towards the Western Approach and I decided to take my original group of companions with me. Solas, Cassandra and Varric. We met Erimond and found out the ugly truth about the Wardens and their connection with Corypheus. Soon, we’d have to prepare for battle at Adamant Fortress. Which scared me but I had Solas there to ease my mind. I decided to bring each and every member of the inner circle with me, though I had not yet told them the truth about who I was. But I reckon they know now…

I cannot explain to you the feeling of having tasted war for the very first time. Though I’ve fought before, this was different. This was trying to defeat an entire army. This was fighting demons for the sole purpose of stopping this madness. The madness that was Adamant Fortress. I had Cullen with me and my soldiers to ensure we’d made it inside safely. At the lower bailey we’d fought shades and Warden spellbinders. Following the path there were Warden archers. At the main bailey we saw the Warden’s fight amongst themselves. Refusing to be sacrificed for the blood magic ritual. We fought onwards, the battlements, the siege points, until finally we reached the main courtyard. And though I was prepared to fight until my body would give in, I had not prepared to enter the Fade with my companions.
Our biggest fears were displayed within the Fade and this was not the Fade the way I had remembered it. I had remembered it as beautiful memories of my once life at Earth, or the way Solas had shown me his little village in the North. This was eerie and dark. Green swirls everywhere, things were upside down, distorted, nothing made sense. The attackers were spiders in Cassandra and my own eyes, but to Varric, Hawke, Solas and Stroud, they were different looking. Because within this Fade, lurked Nightmare.

We met with whom we thought was Divine Justinia. She had helped me gather my memory, to take it back from Nightmare. And all was displayed before us all, projected before us. I had seen what had happened at the Conclave, but also… the rest.

We saw it all, everything. How I had tried desperately to stay awake back at Earth, to witness the plantery alignment back at home. How I peeked through my tiny telescope to catch a glimpse of it all. But when I couldn’t stay up much longer, remembering I had work the next morning, I decided to call it a night. We saw my past self peek at my phone, and a worried expression crossed my face. I remembered then: the never ending calls. And they were getting worse and worse by the day. We saw how I glanced down at some packed suitcases, placed neatly next to my bed. I was prepared to leave, to go back to my mom’s place after my last day at work. And as I laid in my bed, to drift off to sleep, a loud sound of breaking glass was heard. And there I was, upright in my bed, clutching my blanket tightly in between my fingers. The fear I felt, was felt again within the Fade as my old memory that was once lost to me entirely, came back to me. And there he was. The same man I had run from a week prior. The same man who I feared most of all. And he was one of them, one of the men who had killed Dan. For the first time he spoke to me, as he cornered me within my room. In broken English. “You have seen too much. We cannot allow you to live. You know this.”

I had screamed at him, begging him, asking him why now. “Why wait so long, why didn’t you just do it back when I was at Taiwan?! When I was with Logan?!”

The man shook his head, just a simple shake of his head. And pulled out a knife. “You will be reunited with both of them soon.”

Both of them. Logan had been killed too then.

And I pleaded once more for my life. “No please… please don’t! Please!”

I broke down. I fell to my knees. I had been killed then. And somehow I ended up in Thedas due to that fucking planetary alignment. Justinia came to me and placed her hand gently on my back. “No. You did not die. You were gravely injured but you did not die.”

Another vision was shown to us then. Me being treated at the Conclave, days before the explosion happened. A sickly, pale looking Elie wearing her stupid yoga pants and black tank top. Being treated on a cot by a Dalish, female elf. A staff resting against the table next to my cot. She healed me..

But I was still out. Finally Justinia had entered the room in which the Dalish mage was treating me in. “How is she?”

The Dalish elf sighed. “Not well, but she will live. Her vital signs are weak, but she’ll regain her strength.”

“Thank you for doing this.” Justinia had folded her hands infront of her body and dipped her head gratefully at the elf. “Your name.. it is Lavellan, is it not?” The elf nodded slowly but did not say a word. Justinia took a seat next to Lavellan and eyed her warily. “I know why you are here, child.”
Lavellan swallowed down hard and proceeded to place a damp cloth onto my forehead. “I came here to help at the Conclave.”

Justinia simply shook her head and smiled faintly. “You were sent away by your clan, were you not? Possession?”

Lavellan snapped her head into Justinia’s direction angrily and just continued to stare at her. But Justinia did not budge. “I’ve no idea what you are.-“

“I am no fool. You were the first of your clan, but you made a deal with a demon. That’s why they sent you here, under the pretence of having to spy on the proceedings of the Conclave. But you and I, know better do we not?”

Lavellan looked back at me and clenched her jaw. A single tear rolling over her cheek. “If you know this, then why are you allowing me to stay?”

Justinia smiled softly at the elf, to reassure her, perhaps. “I believe the Maker has other plans for you.”

Lavellan scoffed and got up from the chair. Balling her fists next to her body. “I do not believe in the Maker, I believe in my own Gods.”

“You have a chance to do something good, my child.” Justinia continued without even seeming to acknowledge what Lavellan just said. “You will not live long whilst harboring a demon within you, and you know this as well as I do.”

“I will die.” The elf said bitterly.

Justinia simply nodded. And walked out of the room. Leaving a emotionless Lavellan behind, with me on the cot next to her. And it seemed for but a moment, that Lavellan thought of something. But the vision disappeared before our eyes again.

I had looked at Solas and the others questionably. And the spirit of Justinia took hold of my hand. “That day at the Conclave, you took Corypheus’ orb. And the Conclave exploded. You would have died. Had Lavellan not brought you into the Fade with her. Lavellan knew she would not come out of the Fade alive, and so she transferred her power to you. Hence the reason why you now possess magic.”

“Is that even possible?” I asked Solas sternly.

Solas simply nodded. And his face turned grim. I knew he didn’t like the Dalish, and here I was having received arcane abilities from a Dalish mage.

“What about the demon? Lavellan was possessed by one? Corrupted? How come I am not?”

Justinia’s spirit simply smiled. “Her body was corrupted, and her body perished. And so did the demon. This is the plan that Justinia spoke of.”

And that’s when it all hit us. This was not Justinia, simply a spirit pretending to be her. And when we realized this, Justinia’s form changed into a golden hue and she floated. She had looked just as pure and beautiful as Wisdom. She was a good spirit and she wanted to help us. She got me safely out of the Fade before, and she was willing to help me again. Help us again, to leave the Fade.

But Nightmare was still lurking about, the further we got, the more he whispered frightful things into our ears. “Once again, Hawke is in danger because of you, Varric. You found the red lyrium, you
brought Hawke here.” “Your Inquisitor is a fraud Cassandra. Yet more evidence there is no Maker, that all your ‘faith’ has been for naught.” “Dirth ma, Harellan. Ma banal enasalin. Mar Solas ena mar din.” And finally, my own… “And you know you do not belong here, Inquisitor. And you will be alone. I will see to that myself.”

And me, the naive, foolish girl I was, thought Nightmare simply spoke out my fears. My doubts. But he meant something else entirely. Something I did not understand until later..

We fought the demons, our fears, and the spirit helped us move through the raw Fade. She weakened Nightmare but perished right after, she had sacrificed herself for us. We got so close to getting out of there. I, got so close of getting out of there. I was so ready to embrace Solas and kiss him, thanking the Heavens we made it out of there alive. But right before we got out, Nightmare showed he was not so easily defeated. And with his last strength he showed to me that his earlier threats were no empty words. “And you will be alone. I will see to that myself.”

The first time I traveled between worlds, it was peaceful, serene, lovely. This time, it felt like my soul was being ripped from my body. A hard, painful tug, ripping my very being from the world I had lived in for a year. I wanted to scream in agony, and I opened my mouth but no sound came out. I felt the warm tears streaming down my cheeks. It was pain I had not felt in a long time. Perhaps it was a pain I never felt before. It came close to the time the pride demon struck me with its lightning bolts, but then again, that pain fell short of what I felt now. It was as close to Hell as I’d ever get. And when I came to my senses, my ears were ringing. I tried to open my eyes but I could not. It was as if my eyes were sown shut. I felt the floor beneath me rumble and shake, though that may as well have been my imagination.

I heard careful footsteps approaching, and a door slowly opening. A gasp. A sob being choked back. “Elie!”

I knew that voice. I knew it very well. And my heart broke when I realized who it was.

(...) I groan loudly and move my head to the side. The loud beeping noise heard next to me. Slowly I open my eyes and the whiteness that surrounds me within the room hurts my eyes. It’s almost burning.

The beeping is so fucking loud! Make it stop.

I can hear cars rushing by, the honking of horns, the footsteps of people rushing through a hall, the murmuring of voices.

It’s so loud. It’s too fucking loud!

“Elie?”

I turn my head into the direction of the voice. And I meet the tear stained eyes of my old friend. Her face looks weathered though. And older.. much, much older. “Sarah…” I say weakly. My voice sounds frail and broken. Like a little mouse.

Suddenly Sarah jumps up from her seat and hugs me tightly. It hurts so much. My entire body hurts, its sore. “Oh God! Elie!” Then Sarah starts calling out. She almost screams. “Mary! Mary she’s back! Mary!!”

I instantly wince, her loud voice hurts my ears. But before I can ask her to be quiet, my mother walks into the room, dropping her cup of coffee when she sees me awake.
She just stands there for what seems like ages, silently, wide eyed. As if I am a ghost. And my mother… her brown hair has turned grey. Her skin wrinkled and worn. She is my mother, but years older. “Elie…?” Her broken voice asks me softly.

And she rushes towards me, and hugs me just like Sarah did.

*How long has it been?*

“Oh thank God you’re back!” My mom weeps into my shoulder and I can feel her wet tears on my skin. “Where have you been? My little girl… where have you been.”

Suddenly a man walks into the room, a white coat on, a pair of spectacles resting on his nose. “Well, it seems you have finally returned to us. Welcome back.” He says cheerfully.

I am dumbfounded.

*What is this? How did I come back. And why.*

The doctor starts to examine me, my mother and Sarah moving back from me to let the doctor do his work. He opens my eyelids with his thumb and index finger and shines a little light into my eyes. I immediately back away from him, the light is too bright, it hurts too much. Everything hurts, this world, is too bright, too loud. “I am doctor Finn. Your body has stabilized, you’ve been unconscious for a week. There were no wounds found on your body, except for a remarkable scarring on your abdomen. We’ve examined it.” The doctor steps back and puts his light back into his coat pocket. “Lichtenberg figure.”

My mother’s eyes widen. “Excuse me?”

The doctor smiles softly. “Being struck by lightning can leave a tattoo-like marking or scar known as lichtenberg figure. The patterns created are known to be examples of fractals.”

“So my daughter has been struck by lightning?” My mother asks the doctor confusedly.

“Indeed. Though the scars are not recent. In fact, they were very well treated when she received the markings. Normally they would be much more visible but it seems your daughter has gotten remarkable treatment from a doctor, since the scars are barely visible.”

Sarah huffs. “Barely visible? You and I have a different opinion about that, buddy.”

*Solas. Solas… he.. he healed me.*

Doctor Finn ignores Sarah however. “Miss Courseland. You have been missing for 12 years. According to your mother, you were born in 1995. This would make you 34.” He stares at me, a weird expression on his face. I can’t say if it’s curiosity or suspicion. “You look extraordinary young for 34.”

*12 years… I’ve been gone for 12 years.*

“What are you suggesting, doctor? That this girl is not my daughter?! I think I’d recognize my own flesh and blood!” My mother gets up angrily from her chair takes a threatening step towards doctor Finn.

But I feel my eyelids getting heavier by the second. And before I know it, I black out again.

When I wake up again, from a dreamless sleep, I can once again hear the loud beeping next to me.
Sarah is still sitting on the chair next to me, she looks exhausted. “Hey you.” She whispers softly. I glance around the room, the doctor is no longer here, and neither is my mother. Sarah notices me looking around. “Your mother went home. I had to practically kick her out.” Sarah snorts and shakes her head. Then her expression becomes serious. “She’s very ill, Elie.”

I clear my throat and then notice how dry it is. “What do you mean?” I croak.

Sarah moves her hand to fetch me a cup of water that was sitting on the night stand and gives it to me. I greedily swallow the water.

*It’s so fresh. I’ve been so used to unfiltered water this tastes almost heavenly. So clear, so fresh.*

“Your mum insisted I didn’t tell you, since you only just woke up but… it’s cancer, Elie. She’s been through chemo four years ago. She was doing well, but…” Sarah stops talking and hangs her head.

I should be devastated. But I am not. Yes, I am hurt. To know that my mother is so ill that she may very well die due to cancer. But somehow, I feel so… disconnected from this world. From this place. The people that inhabit it. I didn’t want to come back. At least, not like this. I’m not done and I… I have so many things left to do. I remain silent however. I don’t know what to say or do. I don’t know what Sarah expects me to say.

“I’m sorry I dropped this on you.” She looks sad. “Doctor Finn said you are ready to go home. I agreed to take you with me.”

“You must have questions.” I say slowly. No emotions heard in my voice.

Sarah’s eyes widen. “Yes. I do. But not now.” She gets up and kisses me on the forehead. “Get some more rest, Elie. We are leaving this morning. You’ll still have a couple of hours to sleep.” And with that, she leaves the hospital room.

* * * *

I sit in the passengers seat next to Sarah. She has brought some spare clothes for me to wear, my own clothes, my armour from Thedas, neatly folded laying on the backseat. I look from the armour, back to Sarah who’s focusing on the road ahead of her. She has not asked me about it yet, nor about what happened, where I’ve been. “You learned to drive.” I say finally. Breaking the silence around us.

Sarah chuckles. “Started in 2019. Figured better late than never.”

“Are you and Thomas still together?”

“Caught the bastard cheating on me during a party. Turned out it wasn’t the first time. Ended it with him. I’m single now.”

“Where do you live then?”

She looks to me for a second and I can see her old familiar cheeky grin. “Don’t you recognize the area?”

I look outside the window and frown. “Are we… heading towards my apartment?”

“Yup. Took over your old place when you-“ she starts but doesn’t finish.

“When I disappeared.” I finish the sentence for her.

“Aye.” Her face looks grim then. And finally she enters my old neighborhood.
She helps me get out of the car, though I feel fine now. My body still aches though, and my ears still hurt from all the sounds around us. I’m not used to so many loud sounds anymore. I take my armour into my hands and hold it tightly against my body as I follow Sarah into my old apartment. We don’t say a word to one another, until I enter my old place. She has changed it entirely, nothing looks the same anymore. She’s rearranged the entire place. My old place wasn’t that well furnished, because I didn’t have that much money. But now the apartment looks furnished and cozy, no longer barren and empty. She gestures for me to take a seat on the sofa and walks over to the kitchen to start boiling some water for tea. I’m still holding my armour into my hands and remain silent as I look around the place.

Then I hear Sarah’s voice coming from the kitchen. “I found you in my bedroom, your old bedroom… there had been an earthquake or something, the ground shook and rumbled. And I heard someone groaning.” I listen intently as I stare at Sarah’s back. She’s preparing two cups and puts some tea bags into them. “You… just reappeared after being gone for twelve years, Elie. Wearing those weird clothes you’re now holding.” Silence fills the rooms as she stops speaking and waits for the water to boil. When the kettle clicks, which indicates the water is boiled, she starts pouring it into the cups and slowly walks towards me in the living room.

She places the cups on the table before me and carefully takes a seat next to me on the sofa. Her face looks horrible. She’s pale and I can see the dark circles underneath her eyes. She swallows hard. “Where have you been, for fuck’s sake, Elie?”

*And here we go.*

“Maybe I’ve been kidnapped by fairies.” I say sarcastically.

“Goddammit, Elie! Now’s not the time to get smart with me.” She grabs me by the shoulders and shakes me around a bit. “Tell me what happened. You’ve barely said a word since you’ve woken up. Just shared pleasantries with me. You seem so disconnected and empty. I worry about you.” She frowns and I can see the wrinkles in her forehead. She’s gotten older. And the years do not seem to have been kind on her.

I take a deep breath then. “Let’s see if you believe me then.”

And I tell her everything. Absolutely everything. Every single detail. I pour out my heart with my old friend. Hours seem to pass by in a second. We drink cup after cup after cup, the streetlights outside turn on once it becomes dark, and Sarah listens. She just listens. She never, not once said a word. She simply listened to me. From time to time, it looked like she was about to get up and tell me to shut the hell up. Looked like she was about to show me the door and throw me on the street. But it was simply my imagination it seemed, because she remained expressionless and would simply nod. Sometimes she’d get up and pace back and forth in the living room as I told her of my story. At one point she got a woolen blanket from the bedroom and wrapped it around us, as we sat together on her sofa. And she continued listening, not seeming to judge me, not showing any signs of thinking that I had lost my mind. And when finally I reached the last part of my explanation, she sighed deeply and hung her head lowly. She was thinking, she was pondering over the information I had just given her. And I just sat there, silently, watching her. I was not afraid. I was not scared. Even if she would lose her mind and yell at me and tell me I’m lying, call the hospital and tell them to take me in. I was not afraid of anything. I was emotionless.

“So…” she says finally. “You were injured and ended up in this other world… Thedas.” She looks to me. “And you say it was the man who killed Dan who stabbed you.” She breathes in, trying to rationalize everything for herself. “That would explain the broken windows we found.” She pinches the bridge of her nose. “And you say you’ve only lived there for a year?”
I nod. “Yes.”

“And… magic.”

I nod again. “I know you must think I’m insane, Sarah. I wouldn’t blame you. But-“

She interrupts me. “- I don’t.. I don’t think you’re insane, Elie.” I did not expect that answer. I look at her surprised. She smiles faintly. “You do remember I’m a Scot don’t you? My entire family is into Pagan shite. I was raised that way.” She shakes her head. “But to hear this… from you.”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you remember before you disappeared, when we were having lunch at the diner?” She asks me slowly. I nod silently. Wondering where she is going with this. “I told you my mom knew a girl whose mom did that stuff, right?” Again I nod. “Well…” she sighs and smiles apologetically. “Truth is, my mother did that stuff.”

“Alright… so?” I urge her.

“So-“ she clasps her hands together. “-my family is part of the order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. Also known as OBOD.”

“Oh yes, that makes a whole lot of sense. Now I get it.” I say in a sarcastic tone of voice.

She snorts. “Shut it, I was about to explain the rest.” She gets up from the sofa and walks over towards the window of the living room. She stands there, staring outside, and she continues. “The OBOD has members from all around the world. It was founded in 1964 as a split from the ancient Druid order. Today, it teaches its followers the belief of the sanctity of nature and a belief in Orbis Alius.” She turns her body sideways to look at me and she knows she’s got my full attention now. “Latin for Other Earth or World.”

“So…” I start but she cuts me off and continues.

“So, we believe in being able to travel to other worlds.” She clears her throat. “I.. believe you’ve traveled to another world. Though it is different from what I’ve been taught by my mum. She always told me you can travel to older times, not to an entirely different world altogether. We believe you can travel through time, back and forth, through rituals performed at sacred stones.. like a Stonehenge.” She sighs and plunges her eyes into my own. “But you’ve performed none of those rituals, you’ve been sent there…. By accident. During a planetary alignment. None of our teachings could explain that.”

“So I’ve been sent there through divine intervention then?”

“Perhaps.” She smiles faintly and moves back towards the sofa and sits again.

“And you never told me this because…?” I ask her quietly.

She glares at me angrily then. “Well now, you haven’t been honest with me about Dan and all that shit, Elie. Also, I never told you because I was told not to tell anybody. Even though we don’t do anything wrong, we are still considered Pagan today. And there’s a stigma attached to that word, you know. It’s not something you just tell anyone.”

“I wasn’t just anyone.” I say bitterly.

“You have lied to me as well! And don’t you dare and judge me now!” She yells at me now. Her
hazel eyes seem to almost light up with anger.

I take a deep breath then. “I am sorry, Sarah. I didn’t mean it like that.. I’m thankful you’ve told me. I don’t judge you. If anything…” my eyes widen then.

Sarah looks at me quizzically. “If anything… what?”

“I can return then!” I exclaim. “You! Your mother!” I grab Sarah harshly by the shoulders. “You’ll know of a way to make me return to Thedas! To Solas!”

Sarah pulls herself away from me with force. “Are you out of your mind?! Your mother is dying! You’ve been gone for twelve fucking years, Elie! And all you can think of is going back there?!” She gets up from the sofa again and she is now towering above me, her hands in her sides. “That was not your home! This is where you belong, Elie.”

I get up as well and look at her threateningly. “You don’t understand, Sarah. I must return! Corypheus is not yet defeated. Without me, they will die!”

Sarah starts laughing, but not in a good way. She’s laughing at me. “You…” she points to me. “You’re something alright.” And with that, she storms off, into her bedroom. My old one.

And I am alone.

The following week goes by in a rush. My mother visiting me, asking me about where I’ve been. Sarah has not told her and I just lie to her, saying I can’t remember. I saw the way Sarah had looked at me, judging me, but she also knew I couldn’t tell my mother the truth. Though Sarah had believed me and my insane story, due to her heritage, the way she was raised, did not mean my mother would believe me. My mother was still together with her husband, my stepfather, John. He had hugged me tightly and wept into my shoulder as well. And despite the love they had shown me, I did not feel any of it. I still felt disconnected from them. I knew they were my parents, I knew that they were supposed to be like family to me. But instead I felt as if they were no more than distant memories. Ghosts in my life of what once was. And I couldn’t understand it, not at all. I tried, I really did. Whenever they would come over, I’d try to talk to them, share old memories of when I was a kid. I’d laugh with them whenever they would tell me about the antics I did when I was a child. How stubborn I could be. But my laughter was fake. It wasn’t real. And the worst of it all was that my mother realized this too. I could tell when she looked at me, sadly. She almost looked like she was grieving. Grieving for her daughter that was back, but not really here. Because who I once was, was long lost. I had left that part of me back in Thedas, after Fenrian died. Perhaps even long before that. No, the person who was sitting here talking to my parents, was nothing but an empty shell. An empty vessel, void of its soul and heart. Because my heart, was in Thedas, with Solas.

I cried myself to sleep every night. I missed Solas. My heart ached, I tried telling myself it was nothing more than a dream. A beautiful, dark, twisted, emotional dream. He had a hold on me that I felt even when I was here. No longer in the same world, no longer in the same universe. He had taken me. My body, my soul, my heart. And I didn’t know the severity of it until I was back here. I knew I loved him back then, but now, it really hit me. I couldn’t live without him even if I wanted to. I would do everything and anything to be by his side again. The first couple of nights, Sarah tried ignoring my crying.. but after the first four days, she crawled into bed with me and hugged me tightly. She would rock me gently back and forth and hush me, or try to at the least. Despite her not knowing the strong and intense feelings I felt for Solas, she seemed to try and understand. One night, after again hours of me weeping for him, she crawled into bed with me and asked me what he was like. I explained to her the complexity of his personality. And said that Solas was not so easily
defined. But she asked me to try. And so I tried. I explained how soft and kind hearted he could be. How his touch alone made me feel safe and sound, like nobody could harm me or get to me. How his voice was soothing to my ears, and I could listen to him talk about something as dull and lame as elfroot for hours and still be intrigued. Simply because of the way he spoke, and the way he explained things. How wise and old his soul was, despite him only being forty something. And even though he had been twice my age, he did things to me that made me forget about the age gap. How headstrong and proud he was about ‘his people’, the Elvhen. How he spoke of beautiful times and wonderful beings living amongst one another, magic in hand, peacefully living out their immortal days. But I also explained to her how rough he could be, how cold he could become, how there was something threatening about him that somehow lured me in, and ensnared me. Sarah had joked about how I seemed to fall for the bad guys. And I shook my head. “Solas is not a bad guy.” I whispered softly. “He’s my mate.” And despite the talking not helping me forget about Solas, not in the slightest, it helped me calm down. Sarah knew what she was doing, it seemed.

“He sounds lovely, Elie.” She whispered softly as she tightened her embrace on me. I dried my eyes and then was finally able to fall asleep.

Sarah had to get back to work eventually, so I was left alone in my old place. She had given me a spare key as I had once done for her as well. I didn’t leave the apartment until I felt ready to. And when I finally did, I wandered around my old neighborhood. The sounds of the city hurt my ears still, and I thought I’d never get used to it. I was wandering, aimlessly, staring at the people around me. Finally I sat down at a park, because it seemed to be the quietest place in Brighton at that time. I sat down on a bench and looked around, observed the people, walking around. Children playing, parents watching them, elderly people walking around. And I saw the technology take over again. I saw youngsters sucked into their phone screens, sharing whatever was on there with their friends. Nobody seemed to look up and enjoy nature. Nobody seemed to care. They looked like zombies to me. Like dead corpses wandering around, with no purpose. I was once one of them. I had thought to myself. There was so much beauty around them, the way the tree branches swayed easily in the wind, the soft rustling of the leaves. And yet nobody paused and looked at it. No, technology was all they cared about. Even the parents with their children, would glance down to their phones whenever they had a moment of peace. Anxiously tapping away at their screens.

I returned to the park almost every day, and would stay there until I knew Sarah would return. I did not do anything at her home. Barely ate, drank only water or tea without sugar and milk. The juices and food Sarah would try to give me, I found were too sweet and salty. Too fattening, too disgusting. To think that once I ate and drank nothing else. But after being used to the non processed food back at Thedas, I couldn’t enjoy this processed food. Whenever I’d try to explain it to Sarah, she wouldn’t understand. Yes, she understood that back in Thedas the food was nothing like the food here. But she didn’t understand why this food made me feel sick to my stomach. “Just try it. I bet you’ll enjoy it after the first couple of bites.” She’d say. But I didn’t even want to try. And she ate so much, I thought. Back at Thedas, food was no luxury like it had been here. Sarah would eat whenever she could, whenever she’d feel bored, she’d eat. In Thedas, we’d only eat if we had hunted or when we could. I could go a day with simply a piece of dry bread. Whereas Sarah would eat three meals a day, and still be hungry. And I couldn’t understand. And she didn’t understand me.

One day, I didn’t count the days, or checked the time, even though time and weeks was something ordinary here on Earth, I decided to head towards the library. It was miles away but I’d walk there, despite being able to call a cab again. I was so used to walking everywhere. After all, I had traveled to a different country by simply using my feet. So these couple of miles were nothing to me. I started looking up information about Thedas, but Thedas seemed not to exist in my world. There was nothing in the books that spoke of Thedas. No indication that it was real. So I tried something else: OBOD.
And sure enough, I found information about the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. I started reading about this Otherworld the druids believed in.

“A cornerstone of Druid belief is in the existence of the Otherworld - a realm or realms which exist beyond the reach of the physical senses, but which are nevertheless real. This Otherworld is seen as the place we travel to when we die. But we can also visit it during our lifetime in dreams, in meditation, under hypnosis, or in ‘journeying’, when in a shamanic trance.”

And I continue reading, about rituals and rites, until finally I reach a part in these dusty old books about a ritual of Samhain. Halloween.

“We come to celebrate Samhain, the most sacred of nights, when the veil between the worlds is thin. We give thanks for all that we have, and honor our ancestors and the dead at this time. Let us now say a prayer for our dead, that they may journey to the Otherworld safely, and that we might know them again some day.”

“It is said that when this rite has been performed the spirits will travel to the Otherworld. Though some believe there are other reasons behind this ritual. There were whispers in ancient time, speaking of travelers, being able to travel between worlds. To alter time, change the past. A possible traveler would perform this rite and be sent through time. No records were found about these travelers.”

I sigh and close the books, I had about ten of them on the table before me now. It seems this is as far as I’ll get with my research. I look outside the windows and it’s dark out. Sarah must be home by now.

Once I get back to the apartment, Sarah is standing there with her phone in her hand and her other free hand in her hair. When she hears the door close, the turns around rapidly and runs at me. “Where have you been?!” She yells at me now. “I’ve been worried sick for you! Goddamnit Elie.”

“I was at the library.” I say slowly.

“At the library, she says! Fucking hell, Elie. I was about to call your mum and the police.” She sighs and puts her phone back into her pocket. She tries to calm herself. Taking a few deep breaths. “What were you doing at the library anyways?” She rubs her forehead gingerly.

“Headache?”

“Of course I’ve got a bloody headache! You are the headache. Now what were you doing at the library.” She all but hisses at me.

“At first I tried looking Thedas up, but there was nothing in the books about it. So I looked up the OBOD. And some of their rituals.” I knew Sarah wasn’t going to like hearing this. And I was right, her mouth curled into an angry sneer.

But right when I think she’s about to lose it again, she surprises me and sighs deeply. She throws her hands in the air and takes a seat on a chair. “Right. This is just perfect.”

“There are records about the ritual of Samhain working. The books said it was meant for the spirits to pass through the veil and go to the Otherworld. But there’s also rumors about travelers going to
another world. Travel through time.” I sigh. “Though I did not find exact information about that..”

She shakes her head. “I should never have told you about this…you will not let this go.”

“I will not, Sarah.” I say exasperatedly. I rush over to her side and crouch down next to her. “I don’t belong here. At least, not anymore. I’ve tried, Sarah, really I did. To pick up where I left off. But this entire world hurts me. Pains me, breaks me, I feel like a stranger. Like I could not ever belong here again.” I plead with her now.

Her eyes grow sad then. “I know. I saw it too. You’re.. different.”

“I know I am. Could you expect me to ever become the same Eliana Courseland again?”

“No..” she finally admits it out loud. “But Elie…-“ suddenly her phone rings from her pocket. She sighs and holds up her finger. “Hold that thought.” And she takes the phone out and picks up.

“Mary? I’m sorry I called-“

I sigh and get up to my feet again, staring outside the window.

There must be a way to convince Sarah to help me, if she knows this ritual can be done...

“-John? Sorry, I thought you were Mary. But everything-“ Sarah pauses.

“Are you sure? But… yes, no we… we’re coming right now.”

I turn around to face Sarah and see her facial expression. It’s not good.

Sarah rushed me out of the door, into her car. “It’s your mum.” Is all she said. But she needn’t have said more. I already knew.

(…)

“She’s in a coma. And I fear… she will not come out of it. I’m terribly sorry sir.”

“Oh god… Mary.” John’s voice is full of sadness. And hurt.

I sit there, next to Sarah, emotionless, staring at my mother’s pale face.

Once the doctor leaves, it’s just us three. John turns to me and hugs me. “Oh Elie. I’m so sorry, you only just got back to us and you find your mother like this. We should’ve told you.”

“I know. Sarah told me. She had cancer.” I say slowly. I don’t know how to feel. But I know I’m not feeling what I’m supposed to feel.

“That’s not all..” John blows his nose into a tissue. “She was having these epileptic seizures a lot lately.. her entire body was fighting against her. Probably due to the cancer, though she doctors were never sure. She got out of it before… and she’d be fine. But…” he breaks down and starts crying.

“I didn’t know that… I’m so sorry John.” Sarah says softly.

“She didn’t want anyone else to know. If she ended up in the hospital I’d have to tell people she was feeling sick due to the disease. She didn’t want people to know she was also having these seizures.”

“So what now…” I say finally. “What will become of mom? She’ll likely be in a coma forever. She’ll be a vegetable.”

“No. Your mother would not have wanted that.” John says shaking his head. He’s gritting his teeth.
Sarah pulls me in closer and squeezes me tightly. “Perhaps she will come out of it. She’s a strong woman.”

I listen to the loud beeping of the heart monitor. And all other sounds fade away, until the beeping of the machine is all I can hear. The heartbeat of my mom. Time seems to go on, but I feel like I am standing still. I look at my mom and all I can think of is how I should be feeling. But death does not seem so bad as it once was to me. She’s still my mother, and I know deep down I still love her. She was in pain, had cancer, went through chemo, had epileptic seizures, this was not a life. Ontop of that she had to carry the burden of her daughter being gone for twelve years. She was done fighting it seemed. At least she would die knowing I was back. That her daughter, though no longer the girl she had been, had returned. And that she was no longer missing. Perhaps she was ready to let go. I knew my mother. After all, I was her own flesh and blood.

Sarah and John had left me at one point, though I did not realize. They wouldn’t leave the hospital, but perhaps give me a moment alone with my mother. When finally I realized I was alone, a single tear rolled down my cheek. The hospital room was dark, except for the small bedside lamp next to her hospital bed and the faint glow of the heart monitor’s screen. “I’m so sorry mother. I’m so sorry I am not the daughter you expected to return.” I get up from my chair and sit on the edge of her bed, grabbing her hand and holding it softly in my own. “I love you. I always have and I will always love you.” I bring her hand up to my lips and kiss it. “And I’m sorry I’ve lied to you. You knew I was lying, didn’t you? You knew I wasn’t happy. And yet you didn’t mention it, you didn’t argue with me. You accepted it, you accepted me, despite me being nothing like the daughter I was before I disappeared.” I shake my head and look at the heart monitor. “I’ve caused you pain, so much pain when I was gone, and I know this. I wanted to come back first mom but…” I sigh. “Mom.. it’s so beautiful.. Thedas. The place I was for twelve years. Though only one year went by back there. It’s a world torn apart by war and battle. And there’s many awful things there. But there’s also so much beauty, mom. If only I could show you. The friends I’ve made there, the love I’ve felt there.”

I told my mother everything. As time ticked on, I told her about Thedas, and about Cassandra, Varric, Solas, Josephine, Leliana, Iron Bull, Cullen, Vivienne, Sera, Blackwall, Dorian, Cole, every single one of them. About the first time I had to kill an animal for food, the first time I had to kill a human being, a demon, when I used my magic for the first time, the feelings I’ve felt when facing Corypheus. And though it was probably my imagination, it felt like my mother had squeezed my hand softly. And when I looked at her face, she seemed to smile… ever so slightly. As if to let me know: it’s alright.

I continued, telling her about the flora and fauna of Thedas. The different races, the religions, the languages. I told her I was an Inquisitor now and that I led an army, an entire group of people looking up to me. That I was defeating evil, or at least, tried to. I told her about Fenrian. My little cub. That I came to love him like my own, like he was my son. And the heartbreak I felt when he died. When he was murdered before my eyes. And I told her that must’ve been how she had felt when I was gone. That same heartbreak.

“I know how that feels now, mom. And I’m so… so sorry you had to feel that. That you had to go through that. But I know you had John and Sarah. They were there for you, they were watching over you.”

I break down and cry. My head on her hand and I kiss it over and over again. “I’m so sorry about leaving mom. I’m sorry I lied. I love you so much.”

Mary Elizabeth Courseland died that night. With a smile on her face. She was 62 years young.

She was reunited with her daughter, and everybody kept saying she died happily. That this was the most peaceful and happy they had seen her in years. When Sarah asked me what I had said to her, I told her I explained everything. And continued telling her about how beautiful Thedas was. And how sorry I was. And she believed what the others were saying. She said: “She was happy, Elie. Remember your mum with that smile on her face, knowing that she was at peace.” At this point, three weeks had gone by. In the first week, I was trying to be myself again but failed. In the second week, I was wandering Brighton and researching the Druids. In the third week, my mother passed away. And we buried her. Like she had wanted, next to her mother. John was heartbroken. One afternoon, I was sitting on the sofa, staring outside the window. Sarah walked over to me and started embracing me. It caught me completely off guard, so I just remained silent and wrapped one arm around her. “Right.” She said. “How about a trip to Wiltshire then?” I looked to her confusedly, wondering what the hell she was talking about. This cheeky, mischievous grin I had not seen in a long time returned to her face. Her hazel eyes seemed to light up. “My dear Inquisitor, there’s a Stonehenge there. Sacred stones. And you... you have a date with a bald complex old elf man if I’m not mistaken.” I had wanted to open my mouth to say something to Sarah but she put her finger on my lips. “Don’t, Elie. I don’t want to change my mind. I’ll take care of John for you. Make sure he’ll be alright. After all, he’s been like a father to me over the past twelve years too.” She smiled softly and shook her head, her auburn curls swaying around as she did. “But... there is one problem however...” she smiled even wider. “My mum insists that she come with us.” She clapped her hands on her thighs then as she got up from where I was sitting and gestured for me to follow her. “So... let’s get to it. You’re about to meet my Pagan, witchy mother for the first time in twelve years, sassenach.”
Friendship

Chapter Summary

Elie and Sarah have some tough decisions to make for themselves.

But mostly, Elie is starting to finally get some emotions back. And she's starting to really give thought to what she truly wants and needs.

To the dismay of Sarah. Though she tries to keep it together for her friend.

We meet Agatha, the Pagan mother of Sarah, and we find out whether or not Elie finally gets to return to Thedas or not...

Could it really be that easy? ...

XOXO

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Solas:
She was gone. I should have known it, the moment Nightmare laughed maniacally for the very last time, right before Warden Stroud sacrificed himself to make sure we'd all get out of the Fade alive. She was waiting for us all to leave, before she'd go.

Of course she would do that. My foolish, foolish girl.

She stayed behind, to make sure we'd get out before her. I looked to her one last time, yelled at her to come after me. And I saw that look in her eyes. "Not until you are safe, first! Go! I'll come after you, I swear it!" And I had believed her words. I knew she wasn't lying. She did want to get out of there as well. But... the Demon had other things in mind. The moment we were spat out of the Fade, I looked around me. Everyone was still trying to catch their breath. I looked up at the rift, the one from which we came. And it had closed. And she was gone. I could no longer feel her soul. No longer could I feel her soothing aura. Her lovely spirit had left my side. This girl... I had come to love, left.

"Where's Eliana?" Cassandra called out to me, as she grabbed me by the shoulders firmly and shook me around fiercely. "Why is she not here with us, Solas?"

I dropped my head and shook it softly. "I do not know, Seeker."

"You can go look for her, right, Chuckles? Whenever you're in the Fade again?" The dwarf had asked me, a sad expression spread across his face.

I nodded, but I couldn't dwell on it for much longer. There were still the Wardens that had to be dealt with. And soon, the entire courtyard of Adamant Fortress was crawling with them. And our soldiers. Commander Cullen, Spymaster Leliana. Everyone came back. Our entire group of people, too.

"Where's Stroud?" Hawke asked confusedly.
"He sacrificed himself so that we could leave the Fade." Cassandra bit her lower lip as her eyes fell down to the floor.

"Why is Eliana not with you all?" Cullen looked around the crowd of people, confusedly.

The others turned to me as well.

"I don't know. She's.. no longer here. I do not.. sense her anymore." I said as I searched for her. I tried to feel her presence, with every fibre of my being. With all the magic that I had.

"I don't sense her either." Dorian chimed in as he turned to look at Vivienne.

"What exactly happened in there?" Vivienne gave me her most serious look.

"She said that she would follow us... but Nightmare, the demon we encountered in the Fade.. I fear he did something." I bit the inside of my cheek hard. Trying to keep my calm. "I fear he sent her back to her own world with the last of his strength."

Varric's eyes widened. "Can a demon do that?"

"If it's powerful enough, it can indeed." Vivienne remarked bitterly.

Leliana seemed most calm out of us all. Trying to be the voice of reason through the confusion and the loss we all felt for our Inquisitor. And our friend. "There is still the matter of the Grey Wardens.. With Stroud gone.. who will rebuild them? And should we allow them to rebuild after all they've done?"

Cassandra grasped the hilt of her sword hard, trying to swallow the bitter pill of Eliana's disappearance and the current situation we were in. The decision we had to make on the Grey Wardens. "Perhaps.. we should hold back on making a decision on them for now. At least until Eliana is back with us."

My anger got the better of me. "After all they've done?" I snapped my head angrily towards the Seeker.

She dipped her head and remained expressionless. "We have no leader. Eliana was our Inquisitor. We need her to make this decision. I am certain we cannot reach a consensus on this matter."

"I have to agree with Cassandra, Solas." Leliana chimed in with the Seeker.

Hawke sighed deeply and turned to look at all the Grey Wardens who had gathered around us. "I agree with that as well. Perhaps we should let the Grey Wardens rebuild Adamant Fortress for now. Make them clean up this mess they've created. So that we can all focus on bringing Eliana back."

"I am not sure we can bring her back." Vivienne said in the very same bitter tone of voice.

"Come on, Iron Lady... We've got three great mages with us. I'm sure you can figure something out." Varric remained hopeful.

Vivienne and Dorian turned to look at me, with a sad expression on their faces. A bleak expression, no hope whatsoever. "When we were in the Fade, we got some answers as to how she got here. It was by chance and a planetary alignment." Our companions who were not with us in the Fade seemed to be hanging on my lips as I explained what we had seen.

Vivienne hummed. "So she arrived badly wounded at the Conclave, days before it blew up?"
I nodded. "When she touched the orb Corypheus wields, she and Lavellan both ended up in the Fade. And Lavellan had to choose, either she would come out of it alive.. but corrupted. Or Eliana would."

Cassandra hung her head. "Let us all return to Skyhold for now and try to find a way to bring Eliana back to us.. If it's possible. Solas." she turned to look at me, with a fierce glimmer in her dark eyes. "You have to try and see if you can find her in the Fade in the meantime."

I had nodded. I didn't have much hope. But I had to try. Not only for the Inquisition, but for myself as well. And so the Grey Wardens would remain at Adamant Fortress, serving as their prison for now. Surrounded by our strongest forces. Rebuilding the fortress, but also awaiting their day of judgement. And we.. we would try everything in our might to figure out a way to get Eliana back to us.

* * * *

Eliana:
Sarah was mumbling, or at least, that's what it had sounded like in my ears. I wasn't paying attention, truthfully. My mind was completely elsewhere.

Could Sarah's mother truly find a way to bring me back to Thedas? And if so, when and how would I arrive there? Would I arrive moments after I had disappeared? Or would I arrive years before the Inquisition even begun?

"Are you listening, Elie?" Sarah's slightly annoyed voice brought me out of thoughts.

I hummed, but shook my head. "Truthfully, I wasn't. I'm sorry Sarah.. I was.. thinking."

She sighed, but her expression was soft. "I understand. This is all crazy." She stopped packing and rubbed her forehead. "I was asking if you wanted to maybe watch some television before we left?"

I arched my eyebrow up confusedly. "Why would I do that?"

She snorted slightly. "Don't you want to know what's going on in this world while you're still here? You've been gone for a while."

I pondered over what she said for a bit.

Television. I can't even imagine watching the tv anymore. But I used to do that, right?

"I suppose. But.. wouldn't you rather I helped packing?"

She laughed. Tilting her head back as she did. "Help packing? So far you've done nothing of the sorts, just been sitting there silently, lost in thought. No.. If I need your help, I'll ask." she bared her teeth as she smiled widely at me.

I nodded, faintly smiling back at her. I got up from the bed and walked over towards the livingroom, looking for the remote. I still didn't understand why I was feeling so disconnected from Sarah and this world, in general. I still replied emotionless. I still barely smiled genuinely at her. Even though I knew she was my friend. The best I ever could have asked for. She even understood me and wanted to help me return to Thedas, with the help of her own mother. But I just was... And I felt bad for it. She was so nice. So loveable. She saw how disconnected I had felt, and still felt right now. And wanted me to be happy. Even if that meant she would probably never see me again.

You will not return to Earth ever again, Elie, and you know that.
I wouldn't want to. I want to stay there. After Corypheus is defeated. I want to stay. With Solas. And build a future together. Even if it means I'll have to fight shades and demons the rest of my days.

You will die there, then.

I want Thedas to be the last place my eyes see before I close them for good.

I sighed and turned on the tv. Immediately my ears ringed as the sharp sounds of the television were heard deep inside my ears. I lowered the volume, immediately.

_Gods, I'll never get used to the fucking sounds of Earth ever again._

I went through all the channels, sitting close to the tv, looking at whatever there was on the tv. Nothing of importance. Nothing caught my eye. Nothing was interestingly enough for me. And I started to hate myself for it. I couldn't enjoy a single fucking thing on this planet. Nothing seemed worthy enough of my energy or time. Nothing was good. Everything was bad. And I turned off the tv soon after I had turned it on.

_Why. Why was I feeling so fucking disconnected? Why was I so empty and void of emotion?!

The more thought I gave it, the more angry I got with myself. This place, was once my home. My entire life and it would be the place I'd lay down my head and pass on. But now, it was no more than a prison to me. And the only thing on my mind was, that I was dreading the fact that perhaps, I couldn't leave again. And I'd be stuck here. I curled up into a ball of sadness and laid my head against my pulled up knees. And I broke down. I started to cry. Everything was hitting me now. I had been here for four, soon to be five weeks, and for the first time since I arrived; I felt terrible. I sobbed loudly, though I was really trying to be quiet.

"Elie?" Sarah's distant voice was heard as she called out to me from the bedroom. When she walked into the livingroom and saw my face, she dropped her bag and rushed over to me. "Are you alright?" she kneeled down next to me and hugged me tightly. And I let her. I wrapped my arms around her and sobbed into her shoulder. She rubbed my back softly and hushed me.

"I'm so sorry, Sarah! I'm so sorry I've been such an emotionless piece of shit, ever since I've got here."

And she remained silent once more and allowed me to let it all out. When I finally got some control of my emotions again, I wiped my tears away and pulled away from the hug. Sarah smiled faintly, her eyes full of love and understanding. "There. M she said finally, her voice broke. she was getting emotional as well. "That helped, didn't it? You just had to let it all out." I nodded and got up from the floor to get a tissue to blow my nose in. Once I did, Sarah was behind me and eyed me confusedly. "What was the reason you broke down, love?"

I giggled wryly. She almost sounded like a mother, herself. We were once the same age, exactly twenty two when I left Earth. But now, she could very well be a mother. She had the age to be one, and without her trying to, she sounded like one as well. I shrugged my shoulders and composed myself once more. I breathed in deep and exhaled slowly. "I just don't understand why I've been feeling like this. I've been an ass ever since I got here. I didn't."

"You didn't?" Sarah urged me. I was afraid to be honest with her and tell her exactly how I've been feeling this whole time. "It's okay, Elie.. You can say it." she reassured me.

"I didn't feel like I got back home, Sarah. More like I got into a prison of some sorts. And up until
now, that didn't bother me at all. And that fact bothers me now." I started pacing back and forth in the kitchen. "I mean.. This planet, this place, this home, this family.. It's all supposed to make me happy. It's supposed to make me content. Relieved, to be back home again. And instead, all I've been thinking of is going back to Thedas. I can't love this place anymore. Anything I do, try to do, anything you try to do or say to make me feel better.. it only semi helps. I know it comes from a good place but..

"You're just done with Earth, aren't you?" she finished the sentence for me.

I nod silently. Then I run my hand through my hair, biting down hard onto my lower lip. I'm worried what she might think of me now that I've told her how I've truly been feeling over the last weeks. I walk over to the sofa and stare off into the distance. Not particularly looking at anything, just staring ahead. Not focused, as I try to make what I just said, sound a bit better. "When I first got to Thedas, I wanted nothing more than to go home. I was frightened, scared shitless, and I felt completely out of my element."

Sarah nods slowly as she makes her way over to me and sits down next to me. Her head resting on her hand as she eyes me intently from the side, just listening. As she has been doing for the past weeks..

I continue. "Everything was foreign and weird to me. But I had no time to really give 'going home' any thought, because I was thrust right into action. I just.. had to do what I had to do. Which was close the Breach. That was my main focus. In between the bigger tasks, I'd have some moments to myself. Where I'd ask myself, or my companions would ask me, how I've been feeling. And what my old place was like. I'd explain it to them, but I would always say: I don't like to dwell on it too much, because it makes me sad." I look down at my feet and shuffle them weirdly as I try to explain my train of thought to my old friend. "Then... everything suddenly changed. I.. became good at being a leader. I became good at killing and fighting. I knew what I had to do, as if I was always meant to do this. I had to make tough choices, and sometimes people would get upset, but they always respected my choices. No matter the outcome. I realized.. that perhaps this is what I was meant to do. And I befriended my companions, fought with them, annoyed them, laughed with them.. and they became more than just companions to me. Then.. I met Fenrian and.. Got so close with Solas. I forgot about home." I looked at Sarah and I felt the tears stinging in my eyes again.

She remained silent, still. As her eyes plunged into my own. I saw no signs of resentment.

"I forgot. I became so invested in Thedas and my job as Inquisitor... That I forgot about Earth. And my mother, and John.. and even you. Though I had no memories of how I got there in the first place.. I still should've, I don't know, cared more about it all. When I forcefully was thrown back to Earth by Nightmare.. I just.. hated myself. I hated being here. I hated the sounds that are too loud for my ears. The sweet and salty foods. Though I have everything I need here. My stepfather, you... I had my mum." I sobbed again. "For fuck's sake. My mother died! And I barely gave a shit about it all!"

Suddenly Sarah grabs hold of my hand and squeezes it tightly. "I cannot and could not ever understand what it was like. What it has been like for you.. But that's alright. I suppose this was a journey you needed to make. And it seems like it was good for you. Hell, I'd say it was more than good. You've.. grown so much in the time you've been gone. Even though for you it has only been one year."

"It feels like twelve years actually." I say bitterly as I recall the events that have happened.

"You've had to deal with a lot of shit, Elie. Normally, people from today wouldn't be able to deal with that shit. Unless they're psycho's who get a sick kick out of that stuff." she jokes wrly. "But I
know you. Or I knew the girl you were before you disappeared. And you were so... sweet and innocent. You were at the start of your life. And ready for anything. But still so inexperienced and pure. Now, I see a mature woman before me. Though you haven't aged one bit." she snorts again. "I'd say Thedas does wonders for the aging thing. You look great and young, but you're so mature."

I snort with her and push her slightly with my shoulder. "I've missed this though. And I will continue to miss it." I sigh. "And I'm not saying I won't miss Earth and all the luxuries that come with it... But.. I want to go back home. And I am sorry about that. Because.. I won't come back again, Sarah." I look at her worriedly. I'm not quite sure how she will take that. I think she knew in the back of her mind, but none of us ever said it aloud. There is no way I'd ever come back here. And even if I did... well.. I reckon Sarah would be long gone by then. Seeing as one Thedosian year equals twelve Earthly years.

She nods and I can see her getting teared up as well. "Yup.. I know. Which makes this hard on me, Elie. I won't lie to you. It's not easy letting you go a second time, and this time, I'm doing it voluntarily. And it will be hard to explain to John how you've disappeared a second time. And it will be difficult having to be there for him to pull him together again. He's loved you like a father too."

I nod. "I know and I will always love and treasure him for it... If I could, I'd bring both of you with me to Thedas."

"I'm not quite sure Cassandra will appreciate my odd sense of humor." She winks at me playfully. Then she points her chin towards the tv. "Didn't like what was on there?"

I shake my head. "It's not... entertaining."

"What do you do for fun in Thedas anyhow?" she looks to me and she seems genuinely curious about it.

"You go to the tavern and drink. Listen to the minstrels sing their song and tales. You play Wicked Grace with your friends. I've taught them how to play 'Never have I ever.' And then there's Varric, who has enough stories about previous adventures to keep you entertained for months."

She nods. "I'm sorry to ask... but where and how do you pee? Or do number two?" she squints her eyes at me and I cannot help but laugh.

"You use chamber pots when you're indoors. And when you're on the road.. well you find yourself a nice little secluded bush and squat." I wiggle my eyebrows playfully.

Sarah scrunches up her nose. "Ew! Really? What about.. personal hygiene?"

"We have soap there.. And water, though mostly it's cold. If you're lucky you can heat it up. But if not, you'll have to make do with lukewarm or cold water and a wash cloth. Buuut if you're out and about, you usually have to hope you'll run into a lake or an ocean. And bring soap with you."

Sarah shakes her head. "And you say that like it's the most normal thing in the world." She giggles, then she clasps her hands together. "Well, Inquisitor. I'm about done packing anyways. What say you we get into the car and start driving?"

"We're going by car?"

She nods. "It's only 2 hours and 24 minutes on the M3, if traffic is clear."

"What about your mum?" Sarah pulls me up from the sofa as I ask her.
"She was already near the area. She'll take a train to Wiltshire."

And with that, we were practically out the door, into her little car. On the way towards Wiltshire, Sarah had packed her bags, since we were most likely going to be staying there a little while. And perhaps she took this as an opportunity for us to have one last 'road trip' and one last 'vacation' before never seeing one another again.

The entire car trip went smooth, barely any traffic jams and so we arrived in Wiltshire fairly early on in the day. We went into a Hotel and Sarah checked us in. Paid for us both and we shared a room. She said her mum would join us tomorrow and we had an afternoon to ourselves. She dragged me to the shopping mall and once again, my ears were not liking the sounds within the mall, at all. But she insisted we'd shop one last time. We didn't know for sure how soon I'd be able to return to Thedas, and if it would go smooth at all. But nonetheless, Sarah didn't want to risk it. She dragged me into a jewerly store and I didn't quite get it at first. But then, I saw what she did. She had bought us both matching rings. And no, these weren't cheap.. I could tell. They were beautiful sterling silver rings, with a black sapphire in the middle of the design, embellished with sparkling diamonds. I had opened up my mouth to say something but she hushed me and told me to try it on. The sizing was a little off, so she had the clerk fit it to my size. And once it was all done, she walked me outside and I asked her what the hell she was thinking. She merely replied, casually: "I want you to have something to remind you of me, John and your mum, and Earth. It's the least I can give you before I send you on your way. I want to have a matching one, so that I can always be reminded of you. And it's vintage, so it wouldn't look out of place back at Thedas." she hugged me tightly then. "If I'm letting you go, I want you to have at least something from back here. And I won't be like Dan and ask you to never stop wearing it... but, I would appreciate it if you kept it on."

I hugged her back tightly and nodded. "You're insane, you know that right?"

She smiled broadly. "I know. And you better never forget that, Sassenach!"

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The next morning we were woken up by Sarah's phone ringing. It was her mum. She was outside the Hotel, waiting for us. We were to have a drink, all three of us and get better acquainted. After all, I hadn't seen her mum in twelve years. And even before, I'd only seen her once or twice. We'd mostly spend time together outside, or at my own place. Now I get why we didn't stay much at her house. Because of the whole pagan stuff. When I saw her mother, she looked very .. interesting to say the least. Agatha must've been around the same age as my own mother, but her hair was mostly brown still, with some grey locks here and there. Her hair was long and flowed down freely off her shoulders and down her back. She had a beige skin tone almost, and very soft chartreuse green eyes. Though her clothing was nothing out of the ordinary. Just a simple jeans and purple sweater on top as she smiled brightly at me. Around her neck hung a big, gaudy silver amulet of some sorts, with some gaelic words written on it. Though I couldn't read gaelic, I knew it was gaelic by the looks of it. She had lined her eyes with a black kohl and her lips had been tinted with a dark red. I suppose if you didn't know she was pagan, you'd think nothing of it. But since I knew, she almost exuded paganism and mysticism. I can see where Sarah gets her good looks from. Her voice was that of sweet and sticky honey. It was an aged and mature voice, but there was something sweet and young about it at the same time. "Eliana!" she exclaimed as she embraced me tightly. When she pulled away again, she eyed me as if I was a miracle. She seemed intrigued by me. Figured, I'd think. I was basically living proof that all that she believed in, was true. "Welcome back." she joked wryly.

I dipped my head politely and exchanged pleasantries with her, until we sat down at a little restaurant and had a drink together. Sarah had been mostly quiet around her mum. It almost seemed like she wasn't a hundred percent comfortable with her mother around. As if she still feared having to keep
me out of this. She was so used to pretending and lying about her Pagan beliefs, that it was still etched into her now. As silence fell around us all, Agatha lit a cigarette. Since we were sitting outside, the weather was lovely. She blew out the smoke slowly and looked me up and down. Before finally, getting to business. "Sarah has told me all about you, dear." she said as she inhaled another puff of smoke.

I cleared my throat. "I don't mean to be rude, but she told me you might be able to help me. To return to Thedas."

She nodded and hummed, as she crossed her legs at the table. "I won't lie to you, I've no idea how you even got there in the first place. As I'm sure Sarah has explained before, nothing we've read explains this phenomena. It is... interesting, to say the least." she saw my worried expression and smiled warmly at me. "But yes, I might just be able to help you." Before she finished her cigarette, she put it out in the small ash tray in front of her, on the table. Then she reached down into a big suede satchel and pulled out a book. It was an old looking one but preserved well, it seemed. She flicked through the pages, until she found one of interest, and handed it over to me. Pointing at the page she had left it on. "Read this, dear."

"Traveling between times and worlds is genetic, though it's unclear how specifically it's passed down. There is a theory that all travelers are distantly related, possibly all connected to one notable traveler we may or may not have already met. There are certain times when these portals are open. Namely, Beltane, Samhain, Imbolc and Lughnasa. They are the Gaelic solstice festivals. There are some rare cases where people who do not have the genetic gift get to travel through time. Usually, if this is the case however, a sacrifice is needed in order for the portal to open itself. And the person who wishes to travel, will only have a very short amount of time to get to the portal before it closes again. It is possible to go back through, but it is a sufficiently jarring experience and most people do it by accident. If one has the gift, they can essentially 'steer' their travel based on what they think about. Though this is very hard to accomplish. One has to be perfectly focused in order to get exactly where they wish to be. The stones seem to know what you're thinking and if you're not concentrating hard enough or have some other idea in your head you're going to wind up in the wrong time."

I finish reading the paragraph Agatha had pointed to, and looked up at her confusedly. She smiled softly. The crow's feet around her eyes visible as she did. "This is as much of an explanation I could find about what may have happened to you. Now, of course.. we know some things aren't the same as is described in this book. For one, you were nowhere near a stonehenge at the time. You were badly injured, on the brink of death, during a planetary alignment. Our studied have no answers for this, but... we can conclude it's not entirely impossible either. Druids are very in touch with spirituality, nature but also astrology. I once theorized it's not impossible to travel during a planetary alignment, or any other major phenomena. And it seems you are the proof of that." she seemed content with that statement. She grabbed another cigarette, and lit it. "I do not know whether you have the genetic gift to travel, or if it was an accident. However..." she blows out a puff of smoke into my direction. "I do know of a rite we can perform, near the stones here in Wiltshire. We will find out soon enough whether it was an accident... or if it was fate."

"What if it was indeed an accident? And the ritual doesn't work?" I ask her, a bit overwhelmed by her calm reaction. To her, all of this, seemed extremely normal. Of course I would believe anything right about now, after seeing magic firsthand. But for a 'normal' human, who hasn't been to Thedas and seen what I saw, I'm almost amazed she's so confident in her theories.

"In that case, we'll have to try another way. There's always Samhain we could wait for. It's only a month away."
Sarah sighs and finally speaks for the first time in what seems like forever. "There is, of course, the matter of the stonehenge, mother. You have to pay a fee to see it, during the day. To use the stones at night, would be trespassing and risky."

Agatha scoffed loudly as she waved her hand around, completely dismissing what her daughter had just said. Though I thought it a valid point. "You really think they're going to patrol some old stones at night, Sarah?"

I smiled softly. She was right. It's not like they'd have armed men patrolling the stones. It's just.. stones, to them. Sarah simply nodded.

Agatha put out her cigarette again, before she finished it and leaned forwards in her seat. Towards me. "Are you certain you wish to go back, Eliana?" she looked at me intently. With her green eyes piercing into my own. There sure was something strong and powerful about Agatha. I could tell that, now.

"I am." I said resolute. Didn't even have to give it a second thought.

"How was it the first time you traveled? Did it hurt?" She asked me seriously.

I knew she didn't mean the arrival. I knew she meant what I was feeling in the moment of my traveling. "It was... peaceful. Serene. Like I was in fact dying. And I had no cares in the world. It was... lovely, to say the least." Agatha hummed. But I continued. "The second time, however.. When I was forcefully thrown back to Earth... It was very painful. I remember thinking that 'this was as close to Hell as I'd ever gotten.'" my face changed, I could tell. I knew there had to be some sort of grimace on my face right about now.

She reached out to grab my hand and squeezed it softly. As if to reassure me. "That will not happen a second time, I can promise you that."

"How would you be so sure?" Sarah asked her mother seriously.

Agatha smiled kindly at her daughter, in a way that said: Oh dear, you know so little, yet. "Eliana described it perfectly just now... She was 'forcefully' thrown back here. Against her will."

"I wouldn't exactly say the first time was voluntarily." Sarah scoffed before she took a sip of her iced tea.

"She was very badly injured the first time. Her senses, her body, they gave in. Even if she was fully aware of what was happening, she wouldn't have felt any pain. She wants to return. Her body and her mind will be ready for that return." she said confidently.

"I want to thank you for being so open minded with me. Not many people would believe me and help me try to get back, to a world that doesn't even exist in this universe. At least, not without sending me to an insane asylum first." I said wryly before drinking my own iced tea.

Agatha threw her head back as she laughed gleefully. Her eyes twinkling with delight and amusement. "Oh dear, I could never be a Druid and not be open minded. I'll believe quite anything." she winked playfully. I could also now see where Sarah gets her mischievous side from.

The remainder of the afternoon, we stayed at the restaurant. We talked, exchanged stories. To my surprise both Agatha and Sarah wanted to know more about Thedas. Not just my stories, but what I've seen. The different races, the languages, just cultural things. How I would describe Thedas, etcetera. The day was warm and lovely. A warm day, with a casual soft breeze. As the sun started to go down, I got more and more anxious. Tonight would be the night, then. The only thing I had with
me on this journey was Sarah's clothing she gave me to wear whilst here, and my old armour from
back *home*. And I had my new ring, a reminder, a last parting gift from Sarah to me. To always
remember her face, her mischievous smile and her quirky sense of humor. And yes.. part of me grew
sadder as the day went darker. Because I knew I would most likely never see Sarah or John ever
see cars, or planes, trains even. Perhaps one day Thedas would reach that height of transportation,
but I would no longer be around to see it ever again. I grew sad, because I knew in the back of my
mind, despite her trying to hide it with all her might, that Sarah wasn't all behind her decision to help
me return. She wanted me to stay, against her better judgement, she didn't want me to leave
truthfully. She knew it was best for me, but she would remain here, with probably more questions
than answers. And the worst part was, that even in, probably our final hours together, I couldn't
provide her with the answers she sought. I could not give her the certainty she desired. Could not
give her the right words, to ease her mind and help her get through, what was undoubtedly, going to
be a difficult time. And it pained me to the very core to know this. But would I truly remain here,
simply for that? - *No. I would not. Could not.* And I'd never be the same again, anyways. And Sarah
knew this too. The first months perhaps would be the hardest on her, but soon she'd forget about me
too. She'd find a lover, get married perhaps and have children. She'd grow old and grey, with a good
life led. And the knowledge, that there's more out there than what most people believe in. And on her
deathbed, she'd probably remember me again. And this very day.
Perhaps it was just me trying to ease my own mind. To help me make it easier on myself. So that I
wouldn't come to regret my decision to leave. But whatever it was, it helped, in the moment. At least
until that night...  

We remained in the Hotel room, all three of us, until it was midnight. Agatha told us to go outside
and wait for her there, and when she walked out, she was wearing a loose white dress. As if she was
some sort of deity. She seemed to float as she walked ahead of Sarah and I, towards the Stonehenge.
We would not be taking a cab, simply walk there. In the middle of the night. Sarah had her phone
with her, to shine a flashlight if we needed it. After all, the stonehenge was in the middle of a field.
Oddly enough, as we reached the field, there was a slight fog hovering over the grassy floor. Of
course, this was simply because it was now chilly and it was just the way the weather worked. But
for me, it seemed like almost a sign for what was about to transpire.

And Agatha had been right: there was nobody there. It was eerily quiet and peaceful almost. When
we got to the stones, I felt weird. As if there was some force pushing down onto my chest. Agatha
started preparing a circle with candles she would light. And some sort of herb, she'd light on fire and
waved around the stones, to prepare before the ritual.

Sarah and I just stood there, quietly, observing her mother doing her thing. I was clutching my
armour in my hands tightly. Finally, I whispered to her. "Do you feel that as well?"

Sarah breathed out anxiously. "What? The huge force I feel on my chest? Oh yeah." she looked at
me then. "Actually, I find it hard to breathe as well. Though it could just be the knowledge of you
possibly leaving soon." Her eyes grew sad then. I could tell, even in this darkness that surrounded us.
Only the faint light of the small candles around the stones.

"Sarah..." I started.

But she raised her hand gingerly. "I know, Elie. I know. Don't worry. I won't change my mind." She
choked back a sob then. "I'll just fucking miss you, alright?"

Before I knew it, I pulled Sarah into yet another tight embrace. "You've been... an amazing friend.
You always have been to me, Sarah. And I will *never* forget that." I whispered into her hair as I held
my dear friend close to me. In what could very well be our last embrace, ever.
"So have you, Elie. And I promise I won't curse you once you're gone." She joked. Even in a moment like this, Sarah had her sense of humor. Though it was very short lived.

The humming and mumbling Agatha had been doing the entire time, came to and end. "I'm ready, Eliana." She said, breaking our embrace.

I inhaled deeply and looked from Agatha, back to Sarah one last time. "So am I."

I could see Sarah wiping away her tears as she turned to look at me, walking away from her, towards her mother. Who was holding up one arm to wrap around me as I got closer to her. She looked to me, and kissed my cheek. "Elie, I've seen you as a child and I see you now before me as a woman. I am very proud of you. And I know Sarah is too. And I know Mary would be as well."

At the mention of my mother, I almost lost it. I felt the tears streaming down. So far, this whole evening had been nothing but emotional for me. And this wasn't helping me control my emotions, whatsoever. "Thanks, Agatha." I said, my voice breaking.

*It's time.*

She gently ushered me between the stones, right in the middle of them. I looked to Sarah once more and she seemed to be trying to stay away from the stones as much as possible, while still remaining closeby to watch me.

And so Agatha started with her rite in a singsong voice, as she waved around the herb. I closed my eyes and focused on her words. I was the only one right between the stones. If a portal would truly open up, it would be right where I'd be standing.

"So do we call to the spirits of the Three Worlds, that this rite be blessed by the powers of all Creation. Hail spirits of this sacred land, you whose beauty and power inspires us, as you have inspired those who came before us. Spirits of the high skies that guide us to stretch and grow; gentle lord of the sun, distant stars, ancestral light; cloud folk who paint such art above us; breath of life, soft breeze and chasing winds; feathered folk who know the dance of freedom upon the wing."

For some odd reason, and I of course do not know if this was just my imagination, I could almost swear I heard a low buzzing sound around me. And the feeling on my chest was getting heavier and heavier with each and every word that Agatha spoke aloud. There was definitely something about the Stonehenges, and I knew that now.

"Spirits of the dark earth that holds and feeds us; mud of our lands, rich and fertile soil into which we so deeply root; rocks and stones, gems of the earth, you who give us stability underfoot; trees and plants, creatures four footed and two. Spirits of the open seas that wash and shape the shores of these lands; meandering rivers, guiding our direction, birthing springs of new life, deep still pools holding us upon our journey; you of the tidal waters, emerging and receding, blood and rain, swimming, diving. You who offer us freedom, nourishment and rebirth. As our ancestors knew and honoured your power, so do we now. Honour this our rite, we ask you. Inspire and bless those gathered. Blessed be as blessed is."

And Agatha's voice seemed to be fading away slowly. Disappearing into nothingness. I wanted nothing more than to open my eyes, but before we went here, at the Hotel room, Agatha had explained to me the rite. And that I was to not open my eyes no matter what I heard, no matter what I felt. And I didn't want to mess this up. So I kept them closed. I refused to let my curiosity get the better of me. Which was a hard thing. I could faintly make out the sobs that Sarah was letting out, but soon those too, faded away into nothingness. The buzzing sound however, became louder and louder. And I remembered the paragraph Agatha let me read. "*If one has the gift, they can essentially*
And so I thought, hard, of Thedas. Of its flora and fauna, its inhabitants, its wars, its lore and history. And everything else I had seen and heard whilst I was there. But for a split second, I remembered Nightmare, and the Fade. And the horror and terror I felt when it spewed its angry and ill-willed words at me before sending me back to Earth. And then... some sort of bright light amidst the darkness. Solas' soothing voice calling me vhenan. And I could very clearly picture him before me in my mind. And the thought of him, and being reunited with him, calmed me completely. I was back in my focus and thought of nothing else than going back to Thedas.

I'm going home.

And then... sleep. A slumber of some sorts. I knew I was sleeping. Which meant I was in this weird state of being half asleep, and half awake at the same time. Usually this happens right before you fall asleep or right before you wake up. And I couldn't figure out which one it was this time. So I gave in to the feeling of sleep. Being lulled to slumber by whatever feeling it was that overtook me entirely. After all, such a wonderful feeling should be embraced fully. Not be denied.

Time goes on.

I lay somewhere.

Is it grass?

Perhaps it didn't work after all.

I might just be passed out on the field in Wiltshire, right between the Stones.

Sarah might be happy that it didn't work.

Where's Agatha's voice? Where's Sarah's? Where's anyone's voice?

I hear nothing.

I feel.. a cold surface beneath my body.

I feel a hard surface beneath my body.

Did they move me?

* * * *

Groggily I open my eyes. I groan as I feel a pounding in my head. Gods, it feels like I've been asleep for too long. I start to get accustomed to the faint light in the room.

It's not a room.

It's a te-

"Ma' lath, ma ema garas min."

I know that voice.

Oh gods, I know it all too well.

I start to tear up immediately as I turn my head into the direction of that wonderful voice. "Solas?"
I can see his beautiful blue eyes staring back at me and for a moment I fear it is no more than a dream I am still in.

"Vhenan," he smiles at me. And I can even see his eyes getting glassy, though he's trying hard to blink the tears away.

I immediately sit up straight on the cot and attack him in a tight embrace, burying my head into his neck. But then I change my mind right away, because I pull away instantly and kiss him full on the mouth. His fingers run over my back softly, through my hair and down my spine and it sends shivers, those wonderful all too familiar shivers, down my spine again. I can feel the tingles of his magic, of the excitement and happiness his aura is sending forth. And I in turn lose myself entirely in our kiss.

"Save that for tonight, will ya, Feathers?" I hear a chuckling, smug dwarf. And I open my eyes in the middle of our kiss, to notice that the entire tent is now filled with most of my companions: Dorian, Varric, Cassandra and Iron Bull.

He didn't pull away from the kiss, while knowing we had an audience?

He missed me too.

Our lips part and I look deep into his eyes. "You have no idea how happy I am to see you, egghead."

Varric sputters out loudly. "Damn! Should've called you that, instead of Chuckles."

"Egghead, am I?" Solas answers in an alluring tone of voice.

Right back to being dirty minded, I see.

I giggle as I embrace him once more.

Cassandra smiles broadly too. "Welcome back, Elie. You have some explaining to do."

I sigh. "I sure do. But for now, I just want to enjoy this moment while it lasts."

Thank you Agatha.

Thank you Sarah. I will never forget you. I promise you this.

Chapter End Notes

What Solas said to Elie when she saw him again for the first time:

Ma' lath, ma ema garas min - My love, you have returned to me.

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Thanks for reading, and being patient with me :3 as always, guys! ♥

Please bear with me, while I try to 'adult' in the real world, mmkay? Adulting is not my strongest point, to be honest x3
First, I want to thank you for being patient with me. I have begun my studying (for work), so I am not done yet, sadly. It will take about three months for me to finish it and then hopefully I'll pass the exam I'll have to take afterwards. However, in between, I will also go and visit my boyfriend back in Taiwan in June for three weeks. So, the hiatus is still on.. but I had some time to spare and I really do want to finish writing this story. During some of my 'free' moments, I've gone ahead and thought of where I want to take this story next, as it is still not finished in my Word file on my computer. I still just 'go with the flow' and I've come up with some new things, but I have it in mind. So thank you for sticking with me(If you have) and yes: I am still alive!

What's going to happen in this chapter? - Solas and Elie make up for 'lost time' (winkwink-nudgenudge) and they basically start with the 'Wicked Eyes, Wicked Hearts' mission.

Other than that; there's not thaaaat much going on. Since I've been gone from writing for a little while, I've had issues here and there. I was.. rusty ;x

Hope you'll like it! XOXO

The music was loud in Herald's Rest. Everyone was celebrating my return to Thedas, it was quite a sight to see. Nobody seemed to have a care in the world. Everyone was enjoying themselves, and to my surprise even Vivienne danced a little while seated. It seems that even the sound of drums couldn't stop a stiff person like herself to want to move to the beatings of a drum. I had been drinking all eve, watching the people around me dance happily. Cassandra danced, or stomped, rather clumsily around with Leliana. Leliana seemed so at home with dancing, so at home with being carefree, despite her appearances during most of the talks and run ins with her. Varric was drinking, together with Bull, Dorian, Blackwall and Sera. And of course, playing Wicked Grace. And by the looks of it, Varric was winning a great deal. Cullen was being swarmed by some of the female soldiers and mages, cooing about his swordsmanship. No one was wearing their usual armor, instead all were clad in regular tunics. Despite me being gone from Thedas for a while, nobody mentioned Adamant Fortress, or whatever happened to the Wardens. Though I suspected this topic would come back up at a later date. Josephine was chatting to some of the nobles who had joined us for this evening, no doubt trying to come up with a reasonable explanation as to why we were all celebrating. Though I was sure that by now everyone who resided within Skyhold knew. Perhaps the nobles were too busy with other... er, matters. Who knows. Though I didn't know where Cole was exactly, I was sure he'd be around somewhere. Watching all of us from within a corner, or perhaps above us, I didn't really know for certain. A smooth sounding voice brought me out of my thoughts, as it usually would. "You're awfully quiet on such a joyous evening, vhenan." Solas takes his seat next to mine, holding two tankards of what I believe is wine. Immediately, upon seeing him, my heart skips a beat. And I feel the all too familiar butterflies inside of me, wanting to take flight. I smile sheepishly at him.

"I've missed you." I breathe out, obviously entirely infatuated with him.
He chuckles. "So you have said, repeatedly, this entire day." he places my tankard in front of me on the table and takes a small sip from his own.

"Have you not missed me?"

He wraps an arm around me and pulls me closer to him on my seat. That lovely, addictive scent of his fills my nostrils. "I have," his voice sounds sad. "And I intend to make up for all the lost time." He gently places a soft kiss on my forehead as my face is pressed against his chest.

_Gods, how have I missed Solas._

It almost hurts being around him again. My heart feels as if it's about to explode. I want nothing more than to sleep with him, just lay in his arms. Stay with him. Just be with him.

"Oi, lovebirds!" Sera's drunk, shrill voice calls out to the both of us.

"Ah.. never a moment of privacy." Solas grumbles softly to himself. But I can hear it. I smirk slightly.

"How about you join us for a game? I'm really startin' to get the hang of this crap game!" Sera's cheeks are entirely flushed. She's far gone.

Varric's laughter fills the tavern, even above the loud sounds of the music playing. "You wish, buttercup!"

I decide to ignore them all, they're clearly all shit faced right about now. And all I want is to be with my own elf. For as long as possible. In one big swig, I finish the entirety of my tankard. Smacking my lips shortly afterwards. Solas' eyes linger on my lips, as I feel one drop of the wine dripping down my chin. He grins softly and wipes his thumb against the drop, removing it from my face. Then proceeds to suck said thumb in an alluring manner. I glance down into his tankard and notice it's still half full, but I don't give a damn. I get up from the seat, and take Solas by his hands. All that comes out of my baldheaded elf is a dark chuckle, as I pull him out of the tavern, towards my chambers.

We don't even reach the inside of my chambers, and some of our clothes are already off. Not having a care in the world, knowing full well that almost everyone is back at Herald's Rest. Apart from a few guards, who were trying hard not to laugh as we passed them by. Once we're inside of my chambers, Solas pushes me hard against the door, causing it to close behind me. His mouth is all needy kisses and nips on my, now exposed, skin. Though he's his usual rough self, there is a gentler touch to it this time. His mouth leaves my chest as his fingers desperately try to unlace my breeches. "I've missed you so much, vhenan." The way he said 'vhenan' sends shivers down my spine. "Every Inch. Of. You." he murmurs between kisses. I slide my hands down his bare back and softly scratch the skin of it with my nails, in response he growls lowly. Then his eyes meet my own and he suddenly stops.

"Why are you stopping?" I whine, feeling the loss of his mouth on my skin and lips.

He places a very gentle and loving kiss on my lips, not allowing me to kiss him back. "I want to savor you, tonight.." Then he takes my hand and leads me towards my own bed. He stops right in front of it and sits down on his knees before me. Holding my hips firmly in place, he starts to kiss the skin of my stomach softly. His wet smacking sounds being the only sounds within the big room. Both of us are now only in our breeches though it seems like I'll be the first to step out of them. He starts to roll down the breeches at the sides of my hips and gently tugs them down when he can. Then he starts to kiss my, already aching, heat through the fabric of my underclothes. I place my
hands on either side of his face, wanting him to stop down there and move back up to my lips. But he remains, seated on his knees before me and continues kissing me down there.

I groan. "Stop teasing me."

"I'm not." he nips at my inner thigh as he gently lifts my right leg upwards. "I want to savor you."

A giggle escapes me. "I'm not some kind of dessert, Solas."

A growl. "But that's where you are wrong, vhenan." he starts licking the skin of my inner right thigh and slowly pushes me against the bed, wanting me to fall down onto the mattress no doubt. But I fight back, playfully of course. He growls louder and moves upwards, to my face again, biting my lower lip hard. "Elie.. please." he says in a desperate tone of voice.

My eyes slightly widen at him calling me by my nickname. So far, he's only ever called me Eliana, or since not very long ago: vhenan. "What's wrong, Solas?" I'm almost concerned, he sounds... so serious all a sudden.

He smiles softly, baring his upper teeth as he does. "I want to make love to you tonight.. not fuck you senseless."

I can't recall the last time we've actually made love... In truth, I don't think we have yet. It's all been teasing and games and chases. Not actual love making. But I get it, I have to let go and let him do what he wants to. Not struggle, not be defiant, not tonight at least. He kisses me again and slowly pushes me down onto the mattress, getting on top of my body he continues his slow kissing of my skin. And moving downwards yet again, he stops right at my smallclothes. But this time, he rolls them down as well. Pressing his nose against my heat, he flicks his tongue against it, spreading me open with two soft fingers. He teases at my folds, until eventually, he finally slides two fingers inside of me, while never stopping his licking and sucking. I grasp the fabric of the covers with my fingers, bucking my hips into his face with every languid stroke of his tongue. Softly, I moan for him.

Aching with desire, I want nothing more for him to just fuck me already. But Solas seems to insist.. He moves his fingers in and out of me slowly, not wanting me to reach my climax just yet. "I love you.." I moan hoarsely.

He stops. His eyes peeking up at me. A genuine look on his face, he smiles again. "And I love you, ma vhenan." He crawls back up and kisses me, despite having kissed me elsewhere not too long ago, I don't care. His kisses do so much to me. It feels divine. As we're making out, I can feel his hard cock pressing against my upper leg, even through the fabric of his breeches. He grunts, obviously not liking the fact that he's still wearing them. "Let's get rid of these, shall we?" he get off of me for a little, while taking off his pants. His cock springs free and I can't help but bite my lip in anticipation.

"I've missed him too." I point towards his member and he chuckles.

"He has missed you too." He positions himself between my legs and places the head of his cock against my folds. But he waits, an intense look on his face. "Don't ever leave me again." His voice, now very dark and menacing. And then, he enters me. Filling me up, that wonderful feeling I've yearned for while I was back at Earth.

"I won't." I breathe out harshly. And he starts thrusting, but he's so gentle with me tonight.. It's a new feeling, a new way of having sex with Solas that I haven't had before. I had almost started to believe he wasn't able to make love, just fuck.

I wrap my legs around his waist and push him deeper inside of me, allowing for more pleasure for both of us. His smooth motions, whilst thrusting are already making me lose it while I cry out his
name desperately. "Solas..." Clawing at the bedsheets next to my body. He grunts, his eyes closed as his lips dominate my own. His tongue entering my mouth, as we kiss longingly, savoring the moment together. He starts to move faster, but he's still being gentle. No pounding into me, no hair pulling, no nothing.

"Elie..." he moans between kisses. I make sure my hips are moving with his own movements, taking hold of his head between my hands.

He sounds so good when he moans.

It doesn't take long then for me to come, lost in his touches, in his gentle love making, in his claiming of my body in the sweetest way possible. He's missed me, he really has. He loves me. He doesn't reach his climax yet, he slows down his thrusts. All the while staring at my face while I convulse and spasm around him, riding the waves of my orgasm like some starving wench. He takes me in, really looks at me when I come, a little cocky smile of victory plastered on his face. "You are so beautiful.." he breathes when I finish. Then he starts thrusting again, harder, faster this time. Burying his head in my hair, nibbling on my earlobe.

Gods, at this rate I'll come again and again.

He grunts loudly then as he thrusts once more inside of me and then I feel his warm semen shooting up inside of me. He comes, gloriously undone on top of me, moaning this new nickname he's given me over and over again. "Vhenan... ma vhenan..

(...)

We lay there, the two of us. Both still fully nude, above the covers. Quietly, our bodies against one another. My head on his chest, he strokes my hair softly. I could almost pass out just listening to his steady heartbeat. "Why did you come back?"

My eyes flutter back open. "Hm? Whatever do you mean?"

He never stops stroking my hair. "You were back home, were you not? Why did you decide to come back? You could have stayed there. It is where you belong, evidently."

I shake my head and prop myself up on my elbow, making sure I can see his face now. He looks.. calm, but there's a hint of confusion in his expression. "I used to belong there." His hand moves down to my cheek and a soft thumb caresses it then. "I don't anymore, Solas. I was there for a couple of weeks... I was miserable." My face drops as I recall the despression that I'd felt while being back at Earth. "I was.. a ghost.. An empty shell."

"But you could have-"

I cut him off. "-No. I had missed twelve years. My mother was old and sick, my best friend was years older than me.. I missed too much and I have stayed here in Thedas for too long to ever being able to readjust to life back there. Everything was so loud. So... fake. So unreal. I could not, ever again, be able to understand the people living there." He remains silent. "Did you want me to stay there?" I feel my emotions are taking over, my voice trembled when I had asked him that.

He looks pained. He moves closer to me and presses his forehead against my own, closing his eyes. "Of course not.." he pauses, the silence is deafening. He sighs. "I just.. I don't want you to be unhappy. Don't want you to regret this decision. This could very well have been the one and only time you'd be able to return there."

I nod. "I know. And I knew that then, too. I was and still am sure about the decision I have made,
Solas.

He nods, but swallows hard. "There... I have to tell you something, vhenan.. Something that-

Suddenly we are interrupted by the sounds of drunk chatter coming from the hallway:

"SSHHHHH! You'll wake 'em up!" Obviously Sera.

A loud boom and crashing sound.

"Oh, piss! D'ya think tha' waz expensive?" Yeah... still Sera.

"You's entirely-" a loud burp is heard then. "-Ah.. scuse me.. entirely drunk." Really, Dorian?

"HA. You're one to talk... you... Vint."

I growl. "Shut it, and go to bed you two!" I yell out to my two, very drunk, companions back in the hallway.

"Fuckshitpiss. We.. we better go back." then the sound of another thing breaking on the stone floors of Skyhold.

"You imbecile.. wait, I can mend tha'."

"Don't you dare use tha' creepy magic shite around me."

"I wussant gonna!"

"You wus!"

"Go. To. Bed." I say loudly.

Then the sounds of giggling and chuckling grow distant. They're finally gone.

"What did you want to say, Solas?" I look back up to his face, but his face shows no trace of emotion.

"Let us sleep, vhenan." He kisses my cheek once more, before covering our nude bodies with a blanket.

"But you wanted to tell me something?"

I can feel him smile against my shoulder as he wraps one arm around my body and pulls me in closer. "It is not important. Not now, at least. Sleep, Elie."

Solas:

I watch her sleep, she looks so peaceful, so calm. I have missed her so much. I slowly get up from the bed and tuck her in, she stirs, and I hold my breath. I did not want her to wake up. But instead she mumbles something inaudible and her mouth opens slightly again. I smile.

Still sleeping..

I find my breeches inside the room and my shirt outside the door, and decide to get dressed and to have breakfast downstairs. Surely, the others are awake by now. Trying desperately to cure their hangovers. But as I enter the dining hall, nobody is present yet. I stride into the kitchens and grab
myself a piece of freshly baked bread, a bowl of soup and a few dried pieces of meat. The cooks
gently nods at me as I pass them by and I take my seat at the long table. As I'm trying to eat, I recall
last night and I can feel my chest aching.

I almost told her... I almost messed it all up. Did I truly want her to stay there?

I ponder over this for a little while. Yes and no,. I wanted her to return to me, a selfish and foolish
thing to want. But I had started to love Eliana, more than I could have possibly hoped for. It was
never my intention, it was only ever my intention to have her. The chase, I relished in it. She was my
prey and I loved every bit of it. But then... my feelings took over. My head clouded with my feelings
for her, for this mortal who would never be able to outlive what I had planned for Thedas. And this
is partially why I had wanted her to stay back at her own world. So that she could never see me the
way I truly am. So that she would never get to see the day when I tear down the Veil. I knew,
always knew, that she would have to perish in the end. But now, I had only wished she'd stay there.
Perhaps, with her gone, things would turn out differently here. Yes, Corypheus would still have my
orb. But there were other orbs. All given to specific members of the Pantheon. I could always try my
luck with Mythal, see if there was another way.. With Eliana gone, things might have ended
differently, but in the end, I'd see to it that my people would return to their former glory. I had tried
finding out ways to get her back during her absence, but stopped myself. Telling myself that perhaps
this was best. I could have never prepared myself for the heart ache I felt while she was not near me.

Why, vhenan? Why did you not save yourself from this?

I had my woman back where she belonged, at my side. But I knew this would only be temporarily.
Some day, and it would be sooner rather than later, I'd have to leave the Inquisition and her. I'd have
to do what I had always intended to do. And I let myself get distracted. I allowed myself to be taken
by her. I should have never allowed myself to look at her in that way. My hunger was gone, I had
lost all apetite.

I never want to break her heart. But I will have to.

"Chuckles." The dwarf waved his hand before my eyes.

"Ah, morning master Tethras. Sleep well?"

Varric groggily sat down and rubbed his eyes. "Had better nights, but at least the celebration was a
success," he smiled widely. "How is she doing?"

I cleared my throat. "She's still sleeping. It must've been a very exhausting ordeal for her. Traveling
between two worlds like that."

"Yeah, though I suspect she won't ever have to again." Varric helped himself to the soup I had not
started on. "She's here to stay now, isn't she?" he wiped his mouth and looked at me questionably.

I nodded, trying to hide my melancholy. "She is."

"Hey, who knows? Maybe once this is all over with, the two of you could start a life together." the
dwarf smiled wickedly.

"We sure could." Eliana's voice was heard, as she casually walked down the steps in a graceful
manner.

My eyes followed her movements like a hawk. Gliding down the curves of her body, which were
accentuated by her attire. I could stare at her all day and still not grow tired of it.
"Any idea what you're going to do with the Wardens, yet, Feathers?" Varric asks

I watch my vhenan closely. She shrugs her shoulders but her facial expression tells the both of us that she's been dreading this answer. Her lower lip worms its way between her front teeth. "I am.." she pauses, then breathes out loudly. ".uncertain. Part of me wants to banish them for what they've done. Wardens are supposed to be better than this. They are supposed to be above everything else, except their Warden duties. And yet, they performed blood rituals, worked with Erimond and with Corypheus. They have done inexcusable things."

Varric hums. "But?"

"But... Thedas needs the Grey Wardens. I could not banish them. What if there were to be another Blight? Who will stop it, then?"

I do not like this last comment she has made. "They have corrupted spirits, binded themselves to demons, they-"

She cuts me off. "- I realize that, Solas." her eyes sharply turning to me. They lock on to my own and I can almost feel a shiver run down my own spine for once. She has never looked so determined before. "I never said I'd allow them to run free after all they've done. I will, however, let them join our ranks. Make them atone for what they've done, let them help us fight Corypheus. We will, of course, keep a close eye on them at all times. There may still be the threat of corruption amongst the Wardens."

"And our leader has returned to us." Seeker Pentaghast's voice calls out from behind the three of us. She is accompanied by Vivienne, Sera, Blackwall and Iron Bull. It would seem that the Seeker is quite fond of waking people up.. even when they have a hangover... But the Seeker looks most displeased with Eliana.

Our Inquisitor sighs. "I take it you don't agree with me, Cassandra?"

She remains quiet however, Vivienne of course speaks up. Always so eager to speak her mind. "Is it truly wise to allow them to join us?"

Sera groans. "So you disagree with something, what else is new?"

"For once, I must agree with Madame de Fer." I speak up resolutely.

*Which is a very rare thing...*

Eliana's eyes dart back over to me, and she's shooting daggers with them. We had such a nice reunion, and it would seem that was short lived..

Vivienne sits down gracefully next to Cassandra. "Oh, believe me my dear.. there is more I disagree with."

Eliana rolls her eyes. "Which is?"

"When were you planning on telling us the truth about you, Inquisitor?" The Grand Enchanter is staring at Eliana intently.

She however, remains calm and collected. Placing her hands gently onto the table before her. "I had a feeling the truth would be revealed during my absence." She looks around the table, towards Blackwall and Sera. Those three had been the last one's to find out the truth. "It is true." she finally started. Where she had acknowledged her fears about telling the truth before, she was now entirely at
peace with it, it seemed. She continued. "I am not from Thedas, but as I have no doubt showed each and every one of you in the past year or so, I am not a threat. Nor a demon, nor a spirit." she looks directly at Sera then. "I am real. My world was real. I returned there after Nightmare sent me out of the Fade. And with the help of an old.. very old friend of mine, and her mother, I was able to find my way back to all of you."

"And you didn't tell us this, because you feared we would judge you?" Blackwall asks hesitantly, breaking the eerie silence around the table.

She nods. "Precisely."

Vivienne clears her throat. "In truth, my dear.. had you told me this story a few months ago, I would have judged you, indeed." then, Vivienne surprises both me and Eliana by smiling softly. "However, the situation has changed.. drastically ever since we first met."

Varric chuckles. "Are you trying to say that you've come to like Feathers, Iron Lady?"

Vivienne glares at the dwarf. "She has proven to be a good leader. And we all felt her absence, none of us were able to come up with a solid decision regarding the Wardens, and on what to do next."

Cassandra chimes in then. "Agreed. Though we don't always see eye to eye.." she dips her head towards Eliana. "We need you. And we will support your decision. The Wardens have been taken to our cells. It.. has become quite crowded in them. I am glad to know we will now be moving forward again."

_Eliana:_

"Well... that went better than expected." I let out a sigh of relief as I walk towards Dorian's room with Iron Bull. The two of them have been sleeping together.. I knew it.

The Bull laughs loudly, his voice booming through Skyhold's hallways. "I knew Viv would come around."

"I just wished Solas were as forthcoming as Vivienne." My eyes fall down to the floor, as we continue our walking ahead.

"Ah.. Don't worry about it." Bull pats me on the back 'softly', though to me it almost feels like he's trying to smack my lungs out of my body.

"Ah.. Don't worry about it." Bull pats me on the back 'softly', though to me it almost feels like he's trying to smack my lungs out of my body.

_Perhaps the Qunari way of 'gentle'. Poor Dorian._

I grumble. "Well, at any rate.. Do you think Dorian will be up yet?"

Bull flashes me his biggest smile then. "I doubt it... He was pretty shitfaced when he finally made it to his room the other night."

I giggle. "Sera and him were snooping around my chambers. Breaking two very expensive looking vases. I highly doubt Josie will thank them for that."

Finally we reach Dorian's room, and apparently now also Bull's room. I slowly open the door and enter it. He lies there on his stomach, gloriously naked on top the bed sheets. His bare ass visible for the both of us. His head is pressed into the pillow, it's a wonder he can even breathe like that. I can't stop my fit of giggles then. Bull crosses his arms and smiles longingly while watching Dorian lay there. "He does have a nice ass, does he not?" he chuckles.
I nod. "That he does." Then I slowly walk over towards Dorian and sit down next to him.

*If only you could see yourself now, my friend. If only.*

I grin and poke him in the side hard. Which causes him to grunt out and take a deep breath of air as he raises his head slowly from the pillow. "Whu... Who... What?" He opens his eyes slowly and then he spots me. "Oh. Elie. Why must you wake me? I had such a lovely dream."

I stifle my laughter, holding my hand in front of my mouth. "Really?"

He turns his head around to watch his own nude back and spots Bull then too, for the first time. "Ah. It would appear you've caught me in quite the awkward moment."

"You were drunk." I cock my head to the side, fully aware of the big grin still plastered on my face.

I half expected Dorian to hastily scramble to his feet and cover himself up. But my friend has gotten so familiar with me, he instead rolls over to his side, revealing himself to me and places his head onto his hand. "I was, wasn't I?"

Bull clears his throat then. "Dorian. You're not alone," he says in a warning tone of voice.

Dorian dismisses what Bull just said by waving his hand around. "She's seen naked men before. Besides, I am quite the visage whilst nude, am I not?"

"You do have a nice tush, my goose," I coo at Dorian.

"See?" he extends his arm out to me while looking at Bull. "She gets it."

Bull rolls his eyes then. "I'll leave you two girls be." And with that he leaves the room.

Finally, Dorian gets up from the bed and puts on some robes. They look fancy, a dark red velvet robe with golden linings around the neckline. "So," he starts while dressing himself into said robe. "You have made up for lost time with Solas last night, yes?"

I grin slightly. Recalling the way we made love the last night. "Hmmm," I answer lovingly.

"Oh dear.. You really love him." he says in a wry tone of voice then. His lips curled into a half smile, he sits down next to me again.

"Is that wrong?"

He shakes his head. "No, not entirely.." He rubs his head then, probably the headache after the drinking from last night.

"Not.. entirely?"

He sighs. "Solas.. is... something. During your absence he's spent most his days in the rotunda, doing Maker know's what. He barely spoke to any of us when you were gone."

Maybe he missed me... Maybe he was looking for a way to get me back.

"In truth, there had been times we'd almost forgotten about Solas." Dorian looks at me intently then, and tucks a loose strand of hair behind my ear. "I hate to be that friend who distrusts your choice of lovers, my dove.. but I can't help but feel like he's hiding something sometimes."

I hum. I understood Dorian's caution. There have indeed been moments where I felt like Solas was
not telling me the whole truth. There had been.. little slip ups from his side. Little cracks in his ever calming demeanor. Moments where even I questioned if he had been entirely honest with me. They had been few and fleeting moments, but I had spotted them from time to time. Like.. an eyebrow that twitched slightly when mentioning the Elves or the Dalish. The way his facial expression had hardened for but a second when talking to Fenrior about the Beauty and the Beast life 'lessons'. Or.. the other night. When he had been so open with me, so unguarded, and had wanted to tell me something. But then, so entirely sudden, he had acted like it was nothing and not important.

"What are you thinking?" Dorian's voice pulls me out of thoughts.

"I understand." I glance up into his eyes then. "I agree with you, in fact."

"But you love him."

I nod. "Sometimes I wonder if it's just normal secrets that everyone has. We all have things we don't wish to share with others, even if that other person is our partner. And if that is the case, then I don't mind it. But I cannot shake this gnawing feeling like... like there's more to it." I groan. "I thought I was over this. This constant worrying about Solas. When I was back at Earth, there was nothing more I wanted than to return to him. And he's been so gentle, so loving with me the other day. I truly believe he loves me back, that I don't doubt. But..."

Dorian sighs and takes me into his arms. My face is pressed against his bare chest, between the opening of his robes. "I didn't mean for you to start worrying so, my sweet. I apologize. Besides.." he pauses. I look up at him with worried eyes. "There's other things that are far more important."

I scoff. "Like what?"

"Well.. there is still the matter of the Winter Palace. We still have that invitation laying around somewhere. No doubt, still laying on Josephine's desk."

I entirely forgot. Jesus tapdancing Christ. I've been gone for a few weeks and I've completely forgotten all about my duties as Inquisitor? Shame on you, Elie.

"Where did Hawke go, after ... I left."

"He returned to Kirkwall. Though I don't know the details. Varric and Cassandra actually got into a pretty heated argument, or... fight, while you were away." he pauses for a moment. "It's a shame you weren't there.. I'm sure you could've broken them up."

"I... see." I breathe against his chest. Feeling slightly guilty for not being there to break up their fight. He kisses my forehead lovingly. "Not that there's anything to be done about that now. They've seemed to have reconciled. After you and Solas left the other night, they even danced for a bit."

My head jerks up immediately then. "What? Really?!" I almost yell out.

Dorian smirks. "Oh yes.. Though I am not sure they even remember. They both had been drinking an awful lot."

"Damn. Now that would've been something I had wanted to see."

He chuckles. "Perhaps we should host another party, yes?"

I groan and roll my eyes. Nudging him softly. "I don't think so. Duty calls. And you, my love, have been drinking enough last night to last the inner circle a year."
He feigns being insulted then. Placing his hand onto his chest. "Me? Absurd! You should see me drinking at parties in Tevinter.." he sighs. "I know a few great party tricks. Perhaps I could show them during our visit at the Winter Palace?"

A week had gone by. Part of it, had been spent in Val Royeaux, shopping for attire to wear at the Winter Palace. Every single one of the inner circle had been there. The women and the men, though the men all opted for the same looking attire. Which reminded me a lot of the nutcracker's attire... The women, however, all wanted something else. Vivienne, of course, wanted to wear the most luxurious looking dress. I didn't want to know the price of it then and I don't want to know it now. Her dress was a long white and silvery dress. With of course, her signature low plunging neckline. Cassandra wanted something a little less.. 'girly' and went for a dark blue shade of dress. It wasn't long, in fact, the dress stopped right above the knees. And she wore these beautiful embellished heels underneath it. It was in fact odd, seeing Cassandra in a dress in the first place.. But at least the dress somewhat matched her. Not too feminine but also, not too manly. She was somewhere in between, whilst wearing her dress. A warrior, a strong and fearsome woman, but yet.. there was a softer side to her. I realized this the moment she chose to wear a dress instead of a suit. Sera, on the other hand, did go for a suit. Not quite like the men, but similar. It was a purple suit, dark pants, with golden sash wrapped around the waist. Josephine wore this beautiful golden puffy dress, with puffy shoulders, in fact, the entire dress had looked ... puffy. It matched her olive skintone however, and it brought out the color of her eyes. Though I did think she looked rather beautiful in the red dress as well.. she went ahead with the golden one either way. Leliana wore a lime green dress, hanging flowingly and freely down her body. Her ginger hair stood out more now, and she finally showed her hair too, without that damn hood of hers. Underneath the dress, she wore slippers that were a darker shade of green, with pink ribbons on top of them. She was gawking at the shoes the entire time, and though they had been a tad bit expensive, I allowed her to get them. After all, I was still the Inquisitor and had to look after our fonds, together with Josie at least.. Then came my dress.

It was a laced, off the shoulder, long sleeved ball gown. The color was this beautiful mixture of lavender and a baby blue. There were these little lilac flowers sewn onto the bust of the dress, on my sleeves, and on the hips. And here I was, sitting in the back of a carriage, with the girls of the inner circle, on our way to the Winter Palace. The men had been in a different carriage and went ahead of us. None of them had seen us in our dresses yet. It almost seemed like a wedding, almost. The way the men were being kept away from the women like this. We were all given golden masks, to wear around our eyes whilst at the masquerade. And I was holding mine tightly in my hands, as I stared out at the scenery around us. The women were all talking, about the upcoming party, but also about our job whilst there. It wasn't going to be just fun and games, we were there on a mission. I was repeating Josephine's words inside of my mind as we drove further and further onwards to the Palace: "The political situation in Halamshiral hangs by a thread. The Empress fears our presence could sever it. The Grand Duke is only too happy to have us at the ball as his guests, so our invitation comes from him. Whether we act as his allies, or upset the balance of power, he gains an opportunity.. if not a clear advantage."

I inhale slowly, trying to calm my nerves. Both Josephine and Vivienne have been teaching me how to dance, I knew some, but nearly not enough. And of course, there had been the teachings about 'the game'. Which I had seen before, with Vivienne. Vivienne would always play 'the game' and it was something I hated. But at the same time, I didn't think it would be so hard. The way Josephine had explained it to me, made it seem like it was the hardest thing to master in all of Thedas. To me, it simply meant I had to be as vague and fake as possible. And with or without the mask on my face, I didn't think it'd be that hard. Eventually, the sight of the Winter Palace came into view and for the first time, in a long while, I gasped in awe of it all. The last time I'd been so impressed by a place, was back when I visited Val Royeaux for the first time. The Palace big gates came into view not
shortly thereafter, and a shit load of carriages. People were gathered out in front of the Palace, all wearing suits, and dresses alike. And, of course, masks. Lots of masks. Finally, our carriage halted just before the entrance of the gates and the doors were opened. First, Vivienne walked out, already wearing her golden mask. Then the others put on their masks and we all exited out of the carriage.

Josephine walks by my side, the other women are already walking ahead of us. I cleared my head then, I needn't worry. Everything was already discussed back at Skyhold and the 'possible' problems were already taken care of. I wore my hidden daggers underneath my dress, the reason my dress was so big was because I was smuggling in both my armor and my weapons. During our stay there, I'd choose to bring only men with me, since they wore suits and it would easily cover up their armor. Cole would likely wear his daggers underneath his suit, like me. Solas and Dorian, however, were the only two who'd have trouble with their staffs, so they decided not to bring them. After all, a mage didn't really need their staffs. They only used them to focus their magic better. And in this case, I thought it best to bring two mages and another rogue. As all four of us could easily hide weapons, and in the mages' case, no weapons needed at all. "Are you nervous?" Josephine asks me quietly.

"A bit. But I'll be sure to get my nerves in check before meeting the Empress, I can assure you, Josie."

She smiles softly as we enter the courtyard. "I have no worries about that, Eliana." then her eyes dart over towards the men, who were all walking towards us casually. "And here are our escorts." she giggled slightly.

Dorian and Bull were walking, arms locked together. Cullen would escort Leliana into the Palace, Blackwall would escort Josephine, Cole would escort Sera inside, despite Sera's obvious issues with that... If I remember correctly, she used the words: creepy spirit thing. I groan inwardly recollecting that moment inside my mind. Varric and Cassandra, to my surprise were walking very close to one another as well. It seemed like Varric would be her escort tonight.. Vivienne.. well, she was alone. After all, she was known here and did not want to be seen next to another man. She was, after all, the mistress of Duke de Ghislain. Besides, I hardly think she really needed an escort. As the moment she arrived in the Courtyard, people immediately swarmed her. Of course... Then, Solas walked up to me. He took a polite bow in front of me, and took my hand softly into his own, then proceeded to kiss my knuckles gently. "You are a sight to see, Eliana."

I wanted to lock arms with Solas then, but he immediately backed up. When he noticed my hurt expression, he shook his head. His eyes were soft though. "Remember, I am no more than your elven servant, tonight..."

I cursed softly. "Fucking shit."

He chuckled lowly. "Indeed. We must keep up our appearances. If you are seen with an elven apostate tonight... it would win you few favors with the court."

Normally, I'd say: to hell with the court. But, tonight, it was all about appearances and I had to bite my tongue. I could not afford to be an advocate for the elves tonight, despite my obvious feelings on the matter. It was part of 'the game' and I had no other option. "Right."

Suddenly, a loud, cheerful voice with Orlesian accent spoke up from behind the two of us. "Inquisitor Courseland!" a masked man walked towards Solas and I, and he quickly took his place behind me. "It is a great pleasure to meet you." he took hold of my hand and kissed its knuckles too, like Solas had done earlier. But the only difference was, that his 'kiss' made me want to throw up in my mouth. "The rumors coming out of the Western Approach say you battled an army of demons. Imagine, what the Inquisition could accomplish with the full support of the rightful Emperor of Orlais." his mouth curled into a sweet smile from underneath the mask.
I cleared my throat.

_Duke Gaspard._

"Duke Gaspard, how lovely to meet you as well, my lord." I curtsy politely in front of the man before me, holding either side of my big ball gown as I do. "Forgive me, I keep getting them confused.. Which one was the rightful one, again?" I smile sickenly sweet up at Gaspard. Remembering how well I can imitate fake smiles.

He bowed as well. "The handsome... charming one of course, my lady." he chuckles. "I am not a man who forgets his friends, Inquisitor. You help me, I'll help you." then he bended his arm for me. I could already feel Solas' angry aura curl around me. It tingled my back slightly, goosebumps were forming on the skin beneath both my dress and my armor. I didn't look at him, but I knew he was already fed up with Gaspard. Had it been any other occasion, he probably would've kissed me the way he had done in front of Cullen that one time. Just to make a statement. My cheeks flashed a bright red, recollecting the memory but I quickly locked arms with Gaspard. He led me away from Solas, a little ways further, right before a grand staircase leading up towards the entrance of the Palace. "A bit warm, Inquisitor?" he cooed at me.

_Shit. Damn me and my wayward thoughts. Well, time to act coy. Let the 'game' begin._

I batted my eyelashes at the man. "Either the warm weather tonight has gotten me flushed, my lord, or perhaps it is the result of being in such good company." I make sure to sound overly flirtatious, though it makes me sick to my stomach, having to pretend to be some flimsy little maiden, who gets flustered by a little flirting from a slithering Duke, whom nobody really trusts.

He chuckles again. "Well then, my lady.. are you prepared to shock the court by walking into the Grand Ball with a hateful usurper? They will be telling stories of this into the next age.'

I giggle exaggeratedly "I cannot imagine that crowd has seen anything better than us in their entire lives."

"You're a woman after my own heart, my lady. As a... friend-" he pauses for a second before continuing.

_Oh yes, I know what you're after. Not only do you want my support, you are also after being more than a friend, to me. Slimy little bastard._

"-Perhaps there is a matter you could undertake this evening. This elven woman, Briala, I suspect that she intends to disrupt the negotiations." we walk, arms locked, up the staircase, towards the main entrance. "My people have found these 'ambassadors' all over the fortifications. Sabotage seems the least of their crimes."

_You racist bastard._

"My lord, surely there's more to go on.. I doubt the court will agree with your accusations when the only proof you've got is that the elves are 'acting dodgy'."

_Shit. Too forward. Calm down, Elie._

Immediately I bite the inside of my cheek. Gaspard hums. "That 'ambassador' Briala, used to be a servant of Celene's-"

_Or a lover. Whichever you want to call it, sure._
"-That is, until my cousin had her arrested for crimes against the Empire to cover up a political
mistake. If anyone between these walls wishes Celene harm, Inquisitor, it's that elf. She certainly has
reason. Be as discreet as possible. I detest the game, but if we do not play it well, our enemies will
make us look like villains."

I dip my head and flash the man my sweetest smiles. "Always, my lord."

He smiles back. "We are keeping the court waiting, Inquisitor. Shall we?"

We continue walking onwards, and I notice that Solas is always closeby. A step behind me, the
total time. He's supposed to be my 'serving man' tonight, so he has no other choice. But I know he
hears everything, and the angry, heavy cloak that curls around me this entire time, does not subside. I
should talk to him as soon as I'm able. Privately. We walk inside, into the vestibule, golden statues of
lions adorning the balustrade at the top of the stairs.

_The Empress sure does love her stairs, does she not?_

I keep my back straight and the nobles all around Gaspard and I are eyeing us like hawks. They
immediately begin to whisper amongst one another, holding their hands up as they do. Some of the
noblewomen use fans instead to hide their shameless gossiping. I try with all my might not to roll my
eyes at them all. This is like a puppetshow, and I hate it.

Gaspard moves his head closer to my own, and whispers softly into my ear. "We sure made quite the
entrance, did we not?" I smile again. Then he stops right in front of a big set of doors. "The ball
room, right behind these closed doors. Are you ready, my lady?"

"Certainly."

Then, the two guards at either side of the doors, open said doors and in we walk. The announcer
bows politely before the two of us, then Gaspard unhooked his arm from my own, bows again, and
takes my hand into his own another time. I yell in my mind: not again, please do not put those gross
sticky lips on my- but he kisses my knuckles a second time and then descends the staircase in the
middle of the ball room first. Slowly walking his way over towards the other end of the dance floor,
with poise and grace.

"And now, presenting: Grand Duke Gaspard de Chalons. And accompanying him..." the herald calls
out, his scroll firmly in hand as he glances down all the names and titles written down on there.

I take my place in front of the staircase and graciously walk down it, holding up one side of my dress
only a little, to prevent it from getting caught on my heels and falling down the damn steps. I can
already see the Empress standing atop the balcony, overlooking the dance floor. She looks radiant,
beautiful, and she exudes power and status. I swallow down hard. This will be one big night, I'm
afraid...

"Lady Inquisitor Eliana Courseland! Vanquisher of the rebel mages of Ferelden, crusher of the vile
apostates of the Mage Underground! Champion of the Blessed Andraste herself!"

Shortly thereafter, all my companions, except for Cole of course, join by my side. "Remember to
smile. This is all for show, my dear." Vivienne whispers to me from the side, and I nod curtley at her.
Making sure my facial expression tells everyone how 'delighted I am to be here, tonight.' I slowly
make my way down towards the dance floor as well, but halt, waiting for my companions.

"Accompanying the Inquisitor:" the herald takes a deep breath of air then and continues as each
member descends the stairs accordingly. "Seeker Cassandra Allegra Portia Calogera Filomena-"
Cassandra hisses out at the herald from down the first set of steps. "Get on with it!"


"PPFSCHHHHHHH" Sera snorts from behind me and the others.

I roll my eyes despite knowing full well I shouldn't.

 Damn it, Sera, really?

Though it was fucking hilarious.

I try to hide my smile and laughter behind the mask I am wearing, allowing for full coverage, at least.


I glance over my shoulder to see the herald, he seems to almost be panting after announcing each and every one of us. I try to contain my amusement.

Poor man. You need a drink after all of that!

I continue my way towards Gaspard, however. Leaving my companions behind me on the shiny, marble floors. As I take my place next to Gaspard, he addresses both Empress Celene, and... another woman. "Cousin. My dear sister."

That's Gaspard's sister? The Duchess Florianne, then. I've remembered my books and chapters on the 'current nobility' of Orlais.

"Grand Duke. We are always honored when your presence graces our court." Celene curtsies slightly. Both her index fingers from both hands are interlocked with one another. She wears a beautiful silk dress, of a dark royal blue color. Though there's a hint of golden fabric at her chest, peeking up from under the dark blue bust. She wears a matching golden mask and necklace, and behind her are, what seems like two golden wings. Poking out from behind her back, on either side.

"Don't waste my time with pleasantries, Celene. We have business to conclude."

She nods. "We will meet for the negotiations after we have seen to our other guests."

Duke Gaspard bows towards the Empress, then turns sideways to me. "Inquisitor." he addresses me one last time, before finally leaving my side and walking back up the stairs. I want to see in which way he goes, in case I'll need to remember this for later, but Celene's voice calls out to me.

Remember. Everyone's watching you, Elie. All eyes on you.
"Lady Inquisitor Courseland. We welcome you to the Winter Palace. Allow us to present our cousin, the Grand Duchess of Lydes, without whom this gathering would never have been possible."

Florianne smiles a half smile at me, her eyes dangerously dark, for a woman who should be celebrating. "What an unexpected pleasure. I was not aware the Inquisition would be part of our festivities." she glances then at her cousin Celene for a moment.

Well, talk about being welcome at a party. Geesh.

"We will certainly speak later, Inquisitor." Florianne smiles again, this time more forced than the last, and turns her heel quickly as she leaves.

Celene dismisses Florianne's departure entirely, as she goes on as if nothing's happened. "Your arrival at court is like a cool wind on a summer's day."

I curtsy before the Empress. "Let's hope the breeze does not herald an oncoming storm."

Celene smiles knowingly. "Even the wisest mistake fair winds for foul. We are at the mercy of the skies, Inquisitor. How do you find Halamshiral?"

Well at least this can be something I don't have to lie or pretend about... "I've never seen anything to equal the Winter Palace." It's not a lie. I wholeheartedly stand by that comment.

"We hope you will find time to take in some of its beauties. Feel free to enjoy the pleasures of the ballroom, Inquisitor. We look forward to watching you dance."

I bow one last time, and with it, I am officially dismissed as well. I walk up the stairs, only to bump into Leliana immediately. "Inquisitor. A word, if you have a moment."

I eye the Nightingale suspiciously. It seems the work for tonight, has begun. She walks over to the doors of the vestibule and I groan inwardly when I see all the nobles went back to their 'important' gossip of tonight. I can no longer see Gaspard, and Celene is making her way towards a balcony, overlooking the entire courtyard. She has been watching us earlier, then...

Suddenly, I inhale sharply, as I feel the tiniest of pinpricks on my skin. It's tingling sensations tell me enough: Solas is close. I turn around slowly, and stare directly into his stormy eyes. "Inquisitor." he's already holding a flute of wine for me and I gratefully take it.

"Thank you." I say politely. It feels odd.. addressing Solas so... coldly. With no love in my words, having to pretend he's no more than my servant. Not that I've ever treated my 'servants' like this before in the first place. Even back at Haven I didn't act this cold. I gulp down the wine as if it's soda.

He chuckles softly. "Slow down, Inquisitor. We wouldn't want you to get inebriated now, would we?"

I show him the quickest of eyerolls then and he nods knowingly. "I will be at the guest wing, should you have need of me." and with that, he bows and walks off.

Gods, this is going to be harder than I thought. Playing 'the game', I'm good at. But pretending to be a stuck up, prissy, noble bitch, towards the man I love.. that's a problem.

I walk my way towards the vestibule again and upon entering, I am immediately ushered towards a darker corner of the room. "I was hoping I would catch you. What did the Duke say?" She has lowered her voice, despite the other nobles looking the other way.
I sigh. "He thinks Ambassador Brial is up to something."

She nods. "The Ambassador is up to something, but she can't be our focus. The best place to strike at Celene is from her side." Leliana takes her seat on a divan and gestures for me to sit down with her too. When I do, she continues, her voice still almost a whisper. "Empress Celene is fascinated by mysticism; foreseeing the future, speaking with the dead, that sort of rubbish. She has an 'occult advisor'. An apostate who charmed the Empress and key members of the court as if by magic. I've had dealings with her in the past. She is ruthless and capable of anything."

My brows furrow in confusion. "An apostate? In the Imperial Court? How can Celene openly keep her around?"

"The Imperial Court has always had an official position for a mage. Before now, it was little better than court jester. Vivienne was the first to turn that appointment into a source of real political power. When the Circles rebelled, technically every mage became an apostate. The word lost much of its strength."

I glance around for a moment, still nobody seems to be paying much or any attention to either one of us. Perhaps it is due to the fact that I'm speaking with Leliana. Of course every noble here knows about her position and knows she's a ruthless spymaster. Maybe they're afraid of her. "So you think this occult advisor is controlling the minds of the court? Wouldn't that be considered blood magic? If so, very powerful and dangerous blood magic."

Leliana shrugs her shoulders slightly. "She's worth investigating. Can't be sure of anything, here. Both leads point toward the guest wing. It's a promising place to start. I'll coordinate with our spies to see if I can find anything better. I will be in the ballroom if you need me."

*The fun never ends...*
The Prelude Of A Grey Warden

Chapter Summary

Totally ignoring the goddamned Halla statues needed during the Winter Palace mission. Just pretend that those did not exist at all, and Eliana's lockpicking skill was just high enough to open said doors without those infernal things.

So when she speaks of locked doors she encountered, that's what she meant ;)

She also meets Morrigan for the first time, though it is but a brief encounter. Or in Morrigan's way of speaking: *Tis* but a brief encounter.

Sometimes I wished Eliana knew about Thedas and the Dragon Age games, so she could've been like: *GAAASP* *jumps up and down and points shamelessly:* I KNOW YOUUUU

But alas that was not a decision I chose to make when starting this story x3

Ahh and the diary day counting: who's really counting? I added the questionmark because even Elie lost count.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The night, so far, had been.. interesting, to say the least. Who knew that stuck up nobility could be so bad at keeping secrets? As I was 'admiring' the vestibule, and the guest wing's statues and decorations, I was able to eavesdrop on a lot of gossip. And here and there, I'd find interesting notes, hidden away behind paintings, sticking out from under a divan or a fancy vase. For people such as the Orlesians, being so 'well versed in the game', they were awfully terrible at hiding information about the country's political state. Or it's leaders.. The music was classical, though no songs I'd heard before, of course. There had been no Bach, no Mozart, no Chopin. It was all violins, and harps playing.. all instrumental songs that played whilst the nobility danced, all clearly drunk on the flutes of wine the servants had been serving all night long. I, myself, have had quite a few flutes like these. But I tried my hardest to remain focused, without declining too many drinks. The elven servants, looked.. miserable. They were clad in fancy suits and dresses, wearing pretty nice masks themselves, but I could tell: it was all a facade. Mask upon mask to conceal and hide their true feelings, their emotions, their disdain towards the humans. And I was one of them, one of those 'filthy shemlen'. Some servants had been trying hard enough to conceal their hatred towards me, but the most of them, were doing a poor job at it. I almost wished I could've entered Thedas in the body of an elf then, perhaps I would've been called knife-ear but at the least, I could've spoken to other elves without being looked at weirdly. Without being judged, assaulted, hated, and been made fun of. I could've spent my night by Solas' side, without fearing for my reputation with the court. I did find out about a lot of missing elven servants, who went to the servant's quarters and never returned. And I also found some blood stains on the tiles of the floor, in the guest wing. Though a servant had tried explaining to some concerned nobles that it was no more than spilled wine.

Right now, however, I had been sitting down after a lot of fake smiles and laughter towards the nobility. I was listening to the minstrel playing her songs, singing in Orlesian. I had already been
'ambushed' by the empresses ladies in waiting, the moment I went outside to the balcony, to catch some fresh air. I needed the fresh air. At least I've earned some respect from all the nobles I've talked to, I'm sure. Giving all, or almost all, the right answers when questioned by them. Bull, Sera and Solas were in the guest wing, minding their own business and I had wanted nothing more than to walk up to Solas and kiss him. He did look dashing in his suit. It fit him very nicely, and it showed off his ass, too.

_Not just Dorian has a nice, round bottom. Solas... Ahhh, his ass looks good as well._

The others were in the ballroom, Leliana, Josephine, Cullen, Vivienne, Cassandra, Blackwall as well. I hadn't seen Dorian yet, nor Cole. And Varric disapeared almost immediately after we had been announced in the ballroom earlier this evening. Something about the Merchants Guild being there, and him owing them money. Though I was certain I hadn't seen the last of him yet, Varric needed to drink and piss just like the rest of us. I had also spoken to my companions, including my advisors. Despite me being the Inquisitor, I did need their opinion on some matters as well, to help shape my final decision. If this night would turn out favorably, I'd have to decide on whom to side with. Either Celene or Gaspard.

_At least Josephine's sister was a nice change of conversation._

I smiled, recollecting the moment Josephine introduced me to Yvette Montilyet, her younger, creative sister.

"_Oh yes, especially the parts where everyone was naked and did orgies._" 

Yvette had gasped. "_I knew it!_"

"You have been quite busy, have you not, Inquisitor?"

I groaned inwardly: Gaspard's back.

I smiled politely up at the Duke. "My lord. I did not expect to see you here. You left so suddenly."

He chuckled softly and sat down next to me. "I grew tired of Celene's pleasantries, my lady. You must forgive me for my sudden disappearance."

I hummed. "Whatever brings you to the balcony, my lord?"

He grinned, I could see his blue eyes twinkle through his mask. "I've come to speak with you, of course, my lady. You are, without a doubt, the only interesting person attending this party tonight. I do hope you're enjoying yourself." He suddenly scoots closer to me on the stone bench we're sitting on and I can feel the dread welling up inside of me.

_Seems like I've been too flirtatious with him, earlier. Or perhaps, he's just a slimy git._

"Ah." I clear my throat. "I am, indeed. So far this evening has proven to be... interesting. I've spoken to many people."

"So I have heard." he takes hold of my hand then. "Perhaps, you and I could share a dance tonight?"

"I'm terribly sorry, mister! But sadly, she has promised _me_ a dance, already." Dorian's cocky voice is heard, and he immediately places his rear end onto the stone bench with us, right between the Duke and myself. Shoving him, not so discreetly to the side as he does.

The Duke clears his throat, quite awkwardly, I might add. "Ah.. I see.. Such a shame. Then perhaps,
we will speak later, Inquisitor." He quickly gets up and leaves the two of us.

Once he's out of sight and earshot, I sigh a breath of relief. "Thank. You."

Dorian snickers. "You sure have attracted quite a following, haven't you? First the Duke, then the
countless of noblemen, staring longingly as you make your way down the halls. Swaying your hips
ever so slightly in that beautiful lavender dress of yours." he cooes close to my ear.

I roll my eyes, forgetting for a single moment that all eyes are on me. Dorian tends to have that effect
on me. "I can't help it if I look good in this dress." I smirk as I wiggle my eyebrows. Then I sigh
wearily. "However, I can't wait until this night is over. I've quite had it with nobility."

"I am nobility too, my dove. I'm sure you haven't forgotten."

I giggle, genuinely, for the first time this entire evening. "How could I forget? You're my favorite
kind of nobility." We sit there in silence for a moment then. "Have you noticed anything out of the
ordinary?"

Dorian 'hmpfs'. "Other than an overabundance of lavender perfume? Hmm.. no. You?"

"Not quite yet. Some rumors here and there. Mostly, I've been talking to people. Have you met
Josephine's little sister yet? She's the only fun one in the bunch. So innocent."

"Oh, I have. She mentioned the dancing was boring."

I chuckle. "It is boring."

"Buy me ten silk scarves and I have a dance that will really shock them." Dorian playfully wiggles
his eyebrows back at me then.

I snort, shamelessly, while the nobility move back inside the guest wing. "It would seem the balcony
is no longer entertaining enough?" I ask quizzically.

Dorian shakes his head. "No, my sweet. Soon they will serve the food back in the ballroom. A
perfect time for you to start snooping around." he kisses me on the cheek hastily and points his chin
up towards the lattice, which leads up to another balcony with a few doors.

I nod my head then and watch him leave me too, until only I am left at the balcony. I quickly, yet
carefully, make my way towards said lattice and climb up. As much as I'm able, wearing my dress.
At least my heels make for quite the secure hold in the holes of the lattice, so I'm able to climb
somewhat easily. As soon as I get up there, I move to the biggest set of doors. The plaque on the
outside of the door read: Grand Library. The door was unlocked, unlike some of the doors I'd
encountered before.. Inside, I walked around the library for a bit. I was looking for information,
things I could use to my advantage. About the missing elven servants, Briala, Gaspard or Celene. I
had already spent some time in the library, getting frustrated not being able to find anything. I
couldn't stay away for too long, lest the nobility find out and my court approval would go down. I
was, of course, the 'honored guest' and being that, I couldn't stay away for long. I groaned then as I
had nearly searched every bookshelf for any hidden notes or such. I sighed, rubbing my temples in
pure frustration and leaned against a bookshelf at the far end of the library. I crossed my arms, and in
doing so, my elbow pushed against a book that was neatly placed among other books. Suddenly, the
book which I leaned into with my elbow, slid further into the bookshelf, and a low rumbling was
heard as another one of the many bookshelves shifted and opened, revealing a hidden entrance. I
scoff.

Well, seems like my dumb clumsyness is at least good for something.
As I enter the hidden room, it turns out to be a study of some sorts. My fingers glide over the wooden desk as I glance down at all the papers sprawled on top of the desk. Then my eyes land on a semi hidden letter. "Well, well.. what do we have here?" I mumble quietly to myself.

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'Lady M,
I need you at my side tonight. The unpleasantries in the Royal Wing has convinced me there is no safety within the palace. I do not expect my cousin to employ magic, but I would hardly be surprised if he provoked another infestation: since my court enchanter is not here to assist me, I must rely entirely upon you. There is no one else I can trust.

- Celene'
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The occult advisor Leliana spoke of then?

Suddenly I hear the bells ringing in the distance. Dinner is being served. I groan and roll up the paper, sliding it between my breasts. Then I quickly leave the study, pull back out the book, ensuring that there's no trace of me being here at all. Then I climb back down the lattice, carefully, to make sure my dress doesn't get ruined in the process and quietly make my way towards the ballroom again. As I reach the doors, the second bell tolls. "Fashionably late, now." I mumble.

Before I get to push open the doors, however, I am halted by a strange female voice behind me. "Well, well, what have we here? The leader of the new Inquisition, fabled Herald of the faith. Delivered from the grasp of the Fade by the hand of blessed Andraste herself- a woman in a wine red dress, adorned with golden silk embroidery and black velvet casually walks down the staircase. Placing her hands in her sides as she reaches the bottom of the stairs. "-What could bring such an exalted creature here to the Imperial Court, I wonder? Do even you know?"

I try to contain my amusement. The woman is nothing but sarcasm and cockiness. Though I suppose I kind of like the way she talks. She detests the game as much as I do, it seems. And is making a foolery of the entire eve. "We may never know. Courtly intrigues and all that." I smile wickedly up at the stranger before me. The first stranger I've ever met in Thedas that I do not distrust immediately.

"Such intrigues obscure much, but not all. I am Morrigan." she dips her head. "Some call me advisor to Empress Celene on matters of the arcane." she walks with me, pushes the door open towards the ballroom and talks to me, in a hushed tone of voice. Making sure no nobles get to eavesdrop on the two of us. "You.. have been very busy this evening, hunting in every dark corner of the Palace. Perhaps you and I hunt the same prey?"

"Ohhh.. I don't know.." My eyes flash up towards her own and lock with them then. "Do we, lady Morrigan?"

She chuckles faintly. Though I cannot be certain if it's entirely because of the comment I made, or perhaps there is more to her than meets the eye, in her silk and velvety dress. Perhaps she chuckles because she thinks me a fool for taunting, even if it's only slightly taunting her. She could very well be dangerous. If she does possess the ability to control the minds of the court, by blood magic. "You are being coy."

"Rather being careful."

"Not unwise, here of all places. Allow me to speak first, then. Recently I found, and killed, an unwelcome guest within these very walls. An agent of Tevinter. So I offer you this, Inquisitor-" she pulls out a key from between her breasts then and hands it over to me discreetly. "-A key found on
the Tevinter's body. Where it leads, I cannot say. Yet if Celene is in danger, I cannot leave her side long enough to search. You can."

I carefully tuck the key between my breasts as well, right next to the letter I'd found earlier. Lucky, I ran into her, right after reading the letter Celene had sent her. Fate, and all that shit, I suppose. "Briala's people are whispering about disappearances in the servants' quarters. This key may lead there."

Morrigan smiles softly. "The Ambassador does have eyes and ears everywhere, does she not? Proceed with caution, Inquisitor. Enemies abound, and not all of them aligned with Tevinter. What comes next will be most exciting." then she leaves, soundlessly walking past the other guests. Leaving me behind.

(...) I bring my plate with food towards the guest wing again, and this time, I linger at a standing table where Solas had been all evening. He too, went to the ballroom for the food, but returned here shortly after. I was glad to be somewhat alone with him for a moment. Most the nobles had still been in the ballroom, eating, and growing fatter.. on the rumors and the gossip within the Palace walls. I groan as I stuff half a rabbit's leg down my mouth. "Fuckin' noblesch." I say with a mouth full of food.

Solas chuckles, shaking his head slightly. "Not quite the appearance you should be showing to people, da'len."

I swallow my food then and take a small sip of yet another flute of wine. "Just talk to me for a bit. I grow so very tired of being the stuck up bitch the entire evening."

He dips his head. "For a moment then, vhenan." he smiles.

"Have any of the nobles mistreated you this evening?"

He shakes his head. "The nobility do not quite know what to make of me. They've left me alone for now. Though they all but swarm and stay around you, do they not, Eliana?" his eyes piercing, once more.

"You mean the Duke?" I'm starting to catch on to Solas' vague hints quicker nowadays.

"Indeed. I saw how he approached you outside, on the balcony earlier. He has quite the nerve, touching the hand of a woman who's already taken by another man." he says in a low, threatening tone of voice then. He proceeds to take another sip of his own wine, as his eyes never leave my own.

"Luckily, Dorian came to my rescue."

"I saw that, too."

I smirk. "You've been watching me all eve, or what?"

He hums, looking down deep into his flute of wine. Swirling the wine around as he graciously moves his glass. "One must keep his eyes on you at all times." he pauses for a moment. "I've seen the way you sway your hips several times tonight, I know you're doing it deliberately, Eliana."

I smirk slightly. "Only for you, my egghead." I coo at him seductively.

He sighs deeply. "Remind me to relieve you of that heavy dress, once we return to Skyhold."
My cheeks become red hot then, thinking about sexual related things with Solas. I clear my throat and he smirks wolfishly. He knows what he's done. "Do you want to dance with me later?" the question is asked before I can give a thought.

He chuckles. "I would love to."

I drink the last bit of my wine then and smack my lips loudly. Completely unladylike. "Good. I'll go find Dorian. Get Cole, if you'd please. We have work to do. And I get to take off this heavy dress for a little while." I wink. "Meet us at the servants' quarters."

* * * *

"But, Eliana, you can't-" Josephine's slightly annoyed voice calls out to me, but I cut her off.

"Solas and I will be riding alone and that's final! Good night, everyone." I push Josephine out of the way and close the doors to the carriage, immediately the driver clicks his tongue twice and the horse at the front of the carriage trots onwards. Back towards Skyhold.

Solas laughs heartily as he plops himself down onto the seat, and I immediately jump onttop of his lap. Straddling him, still wearing that damned dress with my armor underneath it. I kiss him full on the mouth, finally being able to be myself again.

As he kisses me back, he places his hands onto my back and messes around with the laces on the back of the dress. He stops, clearly annoyed with the difficult task at hand. "However did you manage to slip in and out of this maddening dress, four times tonight?"

I giggle loudly and throw my head back, when he places his lips onto my chest, nipping at my collarbone. "Ah..." I gasp slightly. Trying to answer him as best I can, whilst he's kissing and sucking on my skin, grazing his teeth on the skin around the edge of my bust's fabric. "I ah... It's.. well.."

He chuckles darkly and stops for a moment. "You were saying?"

I groan and move my hips instinctively, grinding atop the breeches of his suit. Though the dress' fabric is a little bit in the way of... matters. "It was hard."

He smiles against the skin of my upper chest. "Hard, you say?" he drawls out his words. "Are we still talking about the damn dress?"

He laughs again, then he kisses me on my lips softly. I place my forehead against his own, our noses touching. And I close my eyes. "I suppose we'll have to wait until we reach my chambers." I sigh defeatedly.

"I can hardly wait." he grins. Then I get off of him and lay my head against his shoulder.

He proceeds to take hold of my hand and caresses it lovingly with his own thumb. "I am proud of you, Eliana. What you've accomplished tonight, is nothing short of a miracle. Letting all three of them work together, no further bloodshed, taking in Florianne for judgement back at Skyhold and... you've gained the help of yet another mage."

I snort. "Well, when you put it like that... It does sound quite amazing, doesn't it?" I smirk playfully up at him and kiss the hand he's using to hold my own.

"It is remarkable." He sounds almost in awe of me.
"I had help you know. Morrigan helped with the key to the servants' quarters. That poor girl, the agent of Briala's, testified against the Ambassador. Then, there was the tied up Orlesian commander in Celene's bed and of course the mercenary that Gaspard had hired. If it weren't for them, perhaps my words at the end might not have mattered at all. Despite me being their honored guest."

"Your word does hold weight, vhenan. We would be able to testify if not for them."

I nod. "Maybe."

"You've done well. Better than any of us could have done, had we tried." he squeezes my hand softly, reassuring me of my victory this evening.

A yawn escapes me. "Thanks, Solas. I'm glad to finally be alone with you, after such an exhausting evening."

"You should not have used your magic against those harlequin assassins, vhenan. Perhaps then you might not have been so tired." he berates me. He loves to do that, he can't stop himself.

I giggle wryly. "I couldn't get my daggers out in time." then my face hardens. "Been a while since I've used my magic, too." Then I think back on our time in the Fade, where it was explained to me that I've received my arcane abilities thanks to Lavellan. Had she not given those to me... maybe I would not have been here in the first place.

"What's on your mind?" Solas' concerned voice brings me out of thought.

"Hm.. Lavellan." I say softly.

"The corrupted Dalish mage? Ah yes... What about her?"

"Do you think..." I pause. Is it right to talk to Solas about this? I know how he feels about the Dalish, at least the adults. "Do you think I would have survived the Fade had it not been for Lavellan's sacrifice and gift?"

Solas hums, thinking on my question for a little while. "I don't think it would have changed anything had she not, vhenan. Lavellan was corrupted, she knew she was dying and she chose to die whilst saving someone else. I suppose part of her wanted you to be the hero that emerged victorious out of the Fade back at the Temple of Sacred Ashes. She imparted her magic onto you as a last parting gift."

"You romanticize it way too much." I huff.

"It was admirable of her. That much I am certain of. Why are you so troubled by it?"

I sigh. "I think..." I look outside the window of our carriage, though there's not much to see in the darkness of the night. "I believe.. that had I not traveled between worlds, perhaps Lavellan would have been in my place. Leading the Inquisition. True, she was corrupted.. But, who's to say receiving the mark would not cure her of it? Or perhaps, simply surviving the Fade would have left behind the demon inside of her, and she would emerged.. cured of her corruption."

"Ah. So you feel... guilty about it?"

"Guilty is a strong word. But perhaps I did screw up her life, simply by being here. Had I not been here, perhaps she would've lived. I suppose that's another someone else's blood on my hands."

He kisses my cheek lovingly. "Don't do that, Eliana. Don't trouble yourself over what 'might have
been'. For all we know, Lavellan might not have agreed to lead us. And perhaps she would not have been cured at all. And we'd have no one."

I nod. "Yes.. maybe you're right."

"I have been wondering who gave you that ring, though. Another secret admirer, vhenan?" Solas changed the topic, though I am somewhat happy about it.

I snort. "Sarah... My friend from back at Earth.. She gave it to me, as a last gift. A reminder of her world and our friendship."

Solas nods understandingly. "Do you miss her?"

"I would have missed you more." I look at him when he does not answer me straight away, and see a pained expression spread on his face. I want to kiss the frowns away. The melancholy that hides within him, I want it gone. I want him to be happy. "Hey..." I move my face up close to his. "I told you already.. I don't regret my decision, Solas. This is where I have to be. For Thedas, for the Inquisition, for my own happiness and for you. I belong here."

He nods again. His lips curling into a half smile. "Do not mistake my expression for sadness, vhenan. I just worry for you sometimes."

I kiss his lips again. I can still taste the wine on them slightly. "And I for you."

"Ar lath ma, Eliana."

"Ar lath you too, Solas."

(...) 9:41 Dragon - Day four hundred and fifty five?

Well, the last months have been exciting enough. It's been a while since I've written in here. So allow me to update you on the facts: I have successfully entered the Fade, returned to Earth and gotten back here, I proceeded to save Orlais and the entirety of Thedas by avoiding Empress Celene's death by her own cousin Florianne, I've made sure that the three smartest leaders work together in Orlais to secure our victory against Corypheus, and to top it all off: I've spent the last three months working on my Inner Circle's 'problems' and 'requests'. I've gotten much closer to Vivienne, after helping her procure a potion that cured her lover Bastien for long enough, so that they could speak to one another one last time.. before he passed on. I've pranked almost each and every one of my inner circle with Sera, to kill time with, in between, whilst being at Skyhold. I've helped Cassandra track down the Seekers of Truth, back at Caer Oswin and met with the real Lord Seeker Lucius - because apparently the one we met back in Val Royeaux so long ago wasn't the real one, but a demon, how lovely-. I was able to somewhat push Cassandra and Varric closer to one another, by helping Cass get the latest chapters of Swords and Shields(by none other than our renowned author Varric Tethras!). Why she liked that smutty literature is still beyond me FYI.. I've helped Cole, who I never suspected to need help from any of us, by ensuring the fact that he remains a spirit, instead of being more like us mortal human beings.. I still have to hear Varric's complaints about that everyday. I went to Redcliffe village, to the Gull and Lantern, to meet with Dorian's father. And find out why there was bad blood between those two.. Oh, shit.. Wrong use of phrase. Anyhow, that too. Moving on, I think Bull loves me even more now that I've saved his Chargers from the Venatori back at the Storm Coast. And I even had to endure a long an awkward hug from Krem shortly thereafter. Though, in his defense, he had been extremely drunk while doing this. And I'm not even speaking of the things I've done to help my advisors. So yes, all in all, it has been a productive couple of months.
In between, whenever we could, we went out to ensure the Inquisition's hold and reputation got stronger and higher. Closing rifts has never been this easy for me, after dealing with all the shit in the last year, closing rifts has become the easier job for me. Almost like a walk in the park. Figuratively speaking...

Solas and I have never been better. We make love almost every day, and sneak off during missions to secluded places to steal a kiss and cop a feel. Perhaps I shouldn't write about this, but the other day, we snuck off towards the kitchens and almost had sex on the counters. That was, until the cooks returned from their breaks and we hurriedly had to leave. He sleeps with me too, every night, in my bed, in my chambers. We're no longer trying to hide anything anymore. And I can't describe how good that feels. Cullen has given up on me, not that he's tried anything since my return in the first place, but I remember what he's tried. What I almost allowed him to do. Ah, in other news; Cassandra tells me we'll be off towards the Arbor Wilds soon. And Morrigan, who joined us after the Winter Palace, said she had wanted to show me something before we go there. So mysterious...

"Eliana!"

I glance up from my writing and notice Leliana stormed into my chambers. "What's wrong?" I ask her confusedly.

"It's Blackwall... He's... gone." she lowers her gaze. "We found this amongst his personal belongings back at his own room." She hands me a paper.

"Gone? Wherever did he go?"

"We're not sure." Her mouth presses into a thin line as I read the report.

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'Lieutenant Cyril Mornay, one of the soldiers responsible for the Callier massacre of 9:37, was captured in Lydes. Like the others who were arrested for their involvement, Mornay insists that he did not know who he was assassinating, and that he was just following the orders of his captain. This captain, Thom Rainier, is still at large. Mornay is to be executed within the week in Val Royaux.'

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"This report is from your men, no?"

She nods. "It was, indeed. Blackwall has taken it."

I groan and slap myself against my forehead. "That's why he'd been acting so strangely last week!" I exclaim.

Leliana eyes me confusedly. "What are you talking about?"

I start pacing around the room as I speak. "Blackwall came to me, said he wanted to share a drink with me at Herald's Rest. When we went for drinks, he'd been.. different. He told me a sad story about his past, when he had been a kid. Something he had regretted his entire life, it seemed. I tried to tell him he was young, it didn't mean anything today. But he was just so.." I grunt. "He was acting strangely, Leliana. And I didn't even notice it." I berate myself inwardly.

"Perhaps that was a prelude to what has come to pass now. His disappearance."

"The report. It mentioned that guy being executed in Val Royeaux did it not?" she nods curtly.

"Then that's where we'll go. Tell Morrigan she'll have to wait, and I'll visit her as soon as I'm able. Ready the horses, notify Cassandra, Varric and Sera immediately. We're to leave within the hour."
"Noted. I'll go straight away."

What was Blackwall's problem? Leaving us like this? Right before such an important quest. We were to leave for the Arbor Wilds soon, readying ourselves for what was likely to be one of the last missions before facing Corypheus. The madman had been searching wildly around elven ruins, scavenging them, raiding them, in search of something. We had to get there before he could, and now is the moment Blackwall decides to leave?! I slam my fist hard down onto the desk before me. Everything was going so well the last couple of months. Perhaps too well. I should've known it would never be so easy. There's always something, isn't there? I can feel my mark sputtering slightly in my anger and try to calm myself down. What did I miss? What didn't I see? I, no we all, needed Blackwall there with us.

"Grey Wardens can inspire, make you better than you think you are."

My eyes immediately widen. I knew it then, and I should've kept this in mind when speaking to Blackwall. There had been something off that first day we met him and he uttered those words. I knew there was more to it than he let us all believe.

We'll find you, Blackwall. And you're coming back with us. You're not avoiding me that easily. And you're certainly not getting a free pass at avoiding Corypheus either. If I'm gonna have problems facing him, I'll make sure you do too, buddy.

Chapter End Notes

I know this is a shorter chapter than usual, and I had intended to continue writing it more. But I wrote both this and the last chapter in a row and it's already 4 in the morning as I type down this. So I'm calling it a day. But I didn't want to sleep without posting, AT LEAST, two chapters today. Since they will be the last two, for a while again.

I also realize I sped up the Wicked Eyes, Wicked Hearts mission. but I wanted to continue my own writing and not just go by the actual dialogue from the game the entire chapter. Though I enjoy adding the dialogue into the chapters, the Wicked Eyes Wicked Hearts mission is so long, with so much dialogue. It'd feel like I'd just copy the entirety of it and just plop it down into the chapters. I try to keep it balanced, slightly.

And I kind off can't wait to continue with the rest of the story. Though I cannot finish it right away. Again: y'all are gonna need to be patient with me ♥

And: Typo's may be there, as they have been in previous chapters, but I'm honestly too tired right now to correct them. Perhaps I'll re-read and correct at another time ;3
Thom Rainier's Fate

Chapter Summary

Elie, Cullen, Sera, Varric and Cassandra go to Val Royeaux in search of Blackwall. And finally find out the dark and ugly truth behind his story, and behind the words he once muttered when meeting Elie for the first time in the Hinterlands..

There's some more bitchy-Elie-time, and also, the beginning of the 'What Pride Had Wrought' mission.

Elie dreams in the Fade again, after ages of not having done so.. and has a conversation with Solas about the future of the Inquisition... Which results in Solas completely being thrown off by her confession. - What will Solas do?

Solas is being interrogated by both Morrigan, and Leliana back at Skyhold. And he senses something that feels all too familiar, though he could not yet place what exactly it was. Perhaps something lay hidden in the walls of Skyhold that he did not expect...

Read the notes at the end of this chapter, to hear about my explanation on some things and my own personal opinion on matters, regarding Solas/Morrigan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I wipe the wet hair from my eyes, as I dismount Moonlight and stare behind me. "Rain is never a good sign." I mumble softly.

Cullen chuckles softly and pats me on the back. "Do try to be a little bit positive, Eliana."

"Yeah er.. why exactly did you join us?" Sera eyes our Commander wearily as she stumbles off of her own horse, which she named 'Chewie', respectively.

"I know the guards here, and I'm a Commander. If Blackwall's in trouble, I might be able to aid the Inquisitor."

I hum as we slowly walk towards the gates of Val Royeaux, our horses all tied at the stables in front of the city. Varric presses a pouch of cold coins into the hands of the stable master and quickly jogs up to us again. "I can't believe Blackwall's gone off without us."

"Maybe Hero just didn't want to bother you with his troubles. All of us have kept you busy long enough, with our own shit." Varric starts walking next to me, matching his pace up with mine. Though he has to take bigger strides than me, to keep up.

I wave my hand around dismissingly. "Bullshit. I've helped him before. I just don't get it."
Cassandra remains quiet, when I turn to look at her, she looks troubled. She can feel it too. Just like me. Something's not right. Not right at all. I still try to give it all a place, try to come up with a reasonable explanation for Blackwall's sudden 'private mission' he's told no one about. I think back on the many moments I've seen little cracks in his demeanor. I keep repeating the first time we met, back in the Hinterlands, in my mind I try to place everything. To see where it went wrong, what I missed. Granted, I did miss a little bit of time, whilst I was away. But that couldn't have been long enough for Blackwall to suddenly have secrets none of us knew about. There was more to this, and it irked me entirely that I did not see it sooner. I knew somewhere, somehow, that there was something. Yet, I was too occupied with other matters. Mostly my own private matters.. My relationship with Solas. Fenrian, and his death. Then everything that came after. And ever since I've returned to Thedas, though I have worked on everyone's personal matters, it feels like time is just rushing by all of a sudden. There's barely any time to breathe before someone else comes to me for help. No time to sit down and ponder over things, before a new threat arises. No time at all, before hearing yet another rumor about Corypheus and his raidings of Elven ruins and old, abandoned places that should have been long forgotten.

I rummage through my coat's pocket and find the note Blackwall had written to me. I hadn't found it, personally. One of Leliana's men did, in the stables back at Skyhold.

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"Inquisitor,
You've been a friend and an inspiration. You've given me the wisdom to know right from wrong and, more importantly, the courage to uphold the former.

It's been my honor to serve you."
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Goddamnit, Blackwall. Why does this feel like a goodbye?

"They're executin' someone?" Sera's voice brings me out of thought. This entire time I've been walking on auto pilot. Not paying any attention to anything or anyone. Perhaps my companions had been talking, to each other, or to me, but I was simply not entirely there to notice it.

"Executing this Mornay." Cullen's voice is ice cold.

We all walk towards the noose. People are gathered around it, as if it's some sort of spectacle. I shudder. I've never actually seen a real life hanging. And I doubt it's anything like the way they portray it in the movies I've seen. It must be.. much worse.. Much more dark and twisted.

A man is kneeling underneath one of three nooses, hanging from the wooden pillars. People are already boo-ing him and yelling at him. I can see the despair painted all over the poor man's face. No matter what he did, this is cruel. And I have to watch this? Again, a shudder runs over my entire body. The rain is falling hard, and in thick droplets down onto my armour and face. A single drop falls down from my eyebrow, right past my eye, onto my cheek. And for a moment I wonder if my tears are mixed in with the rain as well.

"Cyril Mornay. For your crimes against the Empire of Orlais... For the murders of General Vincent Callier, Lady Lorette Callier, their four children, and their retainers, you are sentenced to be hanged from the neck until dead." The Guard, lowers his drenched scroll slowly and eyes him angrily. "Do you have anything to say in your defense?"

The man however, remains quiet. Just staring up hopelessly into the skies above him. The last thing he will likely see, before he dies. Suffocates, or perhaps until his neck breaks from the sheer force of his body pulling downwards as the wooden floor beneath his feet opens up. And all those masked
faces before him... yelling at him. Will be the last thing this man will hear.

"Very well." The Guard continues, as another one on his left side pulls him up to his feet and wraps the noose around his neck.

Sera sighs. "Poor bastard. So! Where's food? Orlesians always stock these things."

I snap my head into her direction and glare at her angrily. "Are you kidding me, Sera?! Have some fucking respect!" I hiss at her through my teeth. Cassandra places her hand onto my shoulder gently, but I shrug it off. "This is barbaric. At least give him a quick and painless death."

"Proceed." The Guard calls out to his colleague.

He walks over towards a lever on the side of the wooden pillars and hovers his hand over it for a moment. And I breathe out slowly. Every second feeling like an eternity.

I am so sorry.

"Stop!"

An all too familiar voice yells out, and I turn towards the person it belongs to. "Blackwall!" I exclaim. But he doesn't hear me, or notices me, not at all. I don't believe he notices anyone but the guards and Mornay.


The entire crowd gasps, some women, nobles by the look of them, are fanning themselves ferociously. The men are all gossiping, their hands covering their mouths as they do. Orlesians can be disgusting sometimes...

Blackwall steps in front of Mornay and loosens the noose around his neck. "This man is innocent of the crimes laid before him. Orders were given and he followed them like any good soldier. He should not die for that mistake!"

The guard threateningly walks over towards Blackwall, holding his hand firmly onto the sword strapped to his right hip. Ready to strike him down, if need be. "Then find me the man who gave the order."

Blackwall lowers his eyes for a moment, and I seize the moment, the crowd has hushed, nobody's talking or even whispering. "Blackwall!" I cry out a second time.

His eyes meet mine, and I can see the disappointment in them. "No. I am not Blackwall. I never was Blackwall. Warden Blackwall is dead, and has been for years. I assumed his name to hide, like a coward, from who I really am."

I bite my lip hard. He's not just explaining this to the crowd, or the guard, he's speaking directly at me now, without looking me into the eyes. He's ashamed.

Fuck, Blackwall.. What have you done?

"You... after all this time." Mornay speaks up for the very first time.

Blackwall turns to face Mornay and nods gingerly. "It's over. I'm done hiding." Then he turns back around to face the crowd, to face us... to face me. "I gave the order. The crime is mine. I am Thom Rainier."
The crowd erupts into gasps and cries. Everyone in here seems to know that name. Except for me. Except for the Inquisition. Perhaps Cullen knows, but right now I'm only confused and staring at my old companion and friend. Someone I thought I knew. Someone I thought I really understood. He was never really himself, was he? But I cannot judge. I've lied to him as well, haven't I? I pretended to be someone I wasn't. Though my title or name here in Thedas, meant nothing before I told people of it. Thom Rainier was a captain however, and he was being searched by the Orlesians. The guards immediately cling to Blackw... Rainier and capture him, dragging him to the side of the square, into a building near the tavern.

Cullen answers me before I can even ask the question I was thinking on: "They're taking him to the cells." I turn to face him, a haunting look on my face which mirrors his own expression. "If you don't mind, Eliana.. I will er.. Go into the cells and ask them what they intend to do with him for now. See what I can do."

"I'll come with you-"

He cuts me off abruptly, holding me firmly my by arm, almost squeezing too hard. "-No. The guards are too occupied with what's just happened and they have to deal with Mornay as well, while dealing with Blackw... Rainier's recent confession."

Cassandra walks over to me and dips her head, a reassuring look on her face. "We will talk to him. But for now, perhaps, we should rest up a little. Wait for Cullen to finish."

"Come see me in a few hours, Eliana. Outside the cells over there." he points towards where they've taken Rainier. "And then we'll talk about what we should do next."

"I'm the Inquisitor! He's my responsibility, I should be the one talking with him."

"Right now you're too caught up in your own emotions."

I scoff. "Oh? Because you're so well put together!" the word vomit leaves my mouth before I can put a stop to it and I immediately cover my mouth with my hand in shock. Cullen's eyes darken, but I see no resentment within them. "I... I'm sorry Cullen.. I didn't mean to bring that back up."

He shakes his head. "No harm done." but his voice is hoarser than before. I have wounded him in a way. "I will go then. Come speak to me in a while." and he walks off.

Sera whistles when he's out of earshot. "Good job, Inky."

I groan. "I already regret having brought you with me, Sera." I stomp away, towards a vacant chair near a merchant's stand, not giving a damn if it belonged to said merchant who owns the stand, and sit down with a loud sigh. I rub my temples in pure and utter frustration, while my companions seem to leave me be for now.

Good job Elie. First you don't know jack shit about one of your own companions, one you've spent months with. Then you bring up Cullen's lyrium addiction and his past emotions, which he's already overcome, and hurt his feelings. And now you're being a bitch towards Sera. Who you know just uses a weird sense of humor to deflect the awkwarness around the entire group.

I sigh again and thank the Gods above that I decided not to bring Solas with me on this trip, or Dorian. I would've maybe snapped at one of them too, had they been here. Cullen was right, my emotions are all over the place now. And I tend to snap at people closest to me, trying to calm me down, or help me feel better. It's a miracle I haven't slapped Cassandra yet, when she tried to reassure me earlier. I snort wryly, to myself, knowing full well there's no one around me who's said anything.
But I just imagined Solas' half-lidded-eye-look he'd most definitely give me, had he been here to witness this all. He would've said something annoying, for sure. I'd've called him some type of name, and we'd be back into another argument. As for Dorian, he'd surely try to hug me, cradle me some type of way and hush me. And I would, no doubt, hurt his feelings too.

_Gods. Sometimes I can be such a bitch._

"Thinking about what to do with our old friend?"

I look up and see Varric standing in front of me, looking a little disconcerted.

"Don't worry. I'm not going to yell at you."

"Good. That eases my mind." He pulls up another empty chair a little ways further and plops it down next to me, taking his seat. "So what's up, Feathers?"

"I was actually not yet thinking about Blackw... Ugh.. Rainier. This is going to be weird, calling him another name now." Varric makes a murmur of understanding and I continue. "I was, in fact, thinking on how much of a bitch I can be." I look at my friend and I can see his eyebrows raising up high. He's clearly being silent on purpose. "It's okay, Varric.. You can say it. I agree."

"You're just overwhelmed right now. And we all get that."

"But you guys never react this way. And when you do, it's far less frequent than when I do it. I need to learn how to cope with my emotions better. Or I'll end up losing my only friends in this world."

_I'll end up alone._

"You won't, Feathers. We love you too much to leave you. Besides, we can't really go anywhere right now with Corypheus still walking around all over Thedas." he says in a sarcastic tone of voice. "Even if we wanted to run, we'd choose to stay with you." He winks.

I giggle, despite my weird mood. "You're right. Because I'm such a good fighter and protector of the people." My lips curl into a mischievous smile as I eye him sideways.

Then a silence falls around the two of us and I look into the direction of Cassandra and Sera, who are still standing nearby the gallows. Cassandra is kneeled down next to a, still very much bewildered, Mornay. And she seems to be speaking to him. Sera, is just awkwardly standing around. Her arms crossed.

"I think it's high time to go and eat something. I'll need to keep Sera happy." I dread having to go back to both of the girls, but I have to bite through the sour apple.

"We should probably arrange for a stay at an inn, too, while we're at it. I doubt we'll be heading back to Skyhold soon."

I nod in agreement. "We should. And I'll need to send a raven back to the others, letting them know about our delay." we both get up from the chairs and casually make our way back towards the others. Once we reach the gallows, I can hear Cassandra's conversation with Mornay but decide not to say anything yet, and let them finish talking.

"-But I have no one left, my lady." Mornay looks up sadly at my Seeker and hangs his head shortly thereafter.

"If you truly wish to make yourself useful again, you may join the Inquisition. You were a fierce and
strong soldier, loyal to your betters. We could use someone like you and you may be able to find purpose again."

"If only the Maker could ever forgive me."

"World-making Glory," I cried out in sorrow, how shall your children apology make? We have forgotten, in ignorance stumbling, only a Light in this darken'd time breaks. Call to Your children, teach us Your greatness. What has been forgotten has not yet been lost." Cassandra starts the chant of Andraste and I recognize it from my studies.

"Long was his silence, 'fore it was broken. "For you, song-weaver, once more I will try. To My children venture, carrying wisdom, if they but listen, I shall return." I finish the chant. "The Maker will forgive you, as he always does."

Mornay looks up to me with a very small glimmer of hope in his sad and glossy eyes. "You are Andristian, too, my lady? Then the stories they tell of you are wrong."

I walk closer to the man, still atop the gallows, underneath the empty noose which was reserved for his neck only mere moments ago. I gently grab him by the lower arms and lift him up to face me. "I believe reciting the words of Andraste and the Maker to help Andrastians find their way back to better days, are more important than whether or not I believe myself."

"So you do not believe, my lady Inquisitor?"

"I believe it brings hope and love, brings people closer. And hope, is what the people of Thedas need most in even the darkest of days." I squeeze his arms softly and dip my head. Hoping my words will not do the complete opposite.

"Then you surely are worthy of such titles, my lady. I do not deserve your kindness and understanding." he wants to kneel before me, I can tell, but I keep him standing upwards.

"Please don't, Mornay. I am no better than anyone else in this world. And you should not bend knee to me. You deserve better, after all the years of injustice done to you. I'd be honored to have you join the Inquisition back at Skyhold. And have you by the side of our own soldiers."

Mornay nods firmly. "Then I will join you, my lady."

Varric's made his way over to the three of us now too, and presses a couple of gold coins into the old man's hand. "Here. For the trip to Skyhold and some accomodation along the way."

Mornay blinks in surprise at the kind gesture from Varric. "Thank you."

"Cyril-" Cassandra speaks up again. "-You said earlier that the 'stories they told of Eliana were wrong'. What are these stories, exactly?"

Mornay looks shocked for a moment. Stammering and stuttering, trying to find the right words. I take it he slipped up earlier and didn't mean for this to be brought back up. Finally, after a while of sputtering, he gets to the point. "You being with an Elven man, stirred up quite some stories, one's that I never believed to be true, my lady!" he adds to the explanation. "But some say you may sympathize with the Elves too much. Or their Gods, perhaps."

I snort, rolling my eyes in amusement. "Seems like not all people around Thedas are yet open minded about an elf and a human being together, then. But to help you understand, Mornay.. I've never looked into the Elven Creators, myself. Only been told bits and pieces about them. So I'd doubt I'd be able to properly sympathize with them."
Mornay nods. "They are wrong about you. I'll go to Skyhold, my lady."

"Be safe, Mornay. We will meet you there." I bow my head lightly. And he leaves.

We then decide to go towards the tavern, close to the cells of Val Royeaux, to eat something and to make sure we're close by when or if Cullen comes out of the cells. When we plop down onto the chairs, we put our weapons by the side of the table, making sure nobody will trip over them. A waiter takes our orders and leaves through a little side door, right next to the mounted head of a dragon. Squinting my eyes I can vaguely make out what the plaque underneath it reads: "The Head of Madame Snappy-Snips."

Cassandra however seems troubled. The entire time, Varric and I are talking, trying to lure her into joining us in our conversation about the food we are about to receive. But she remains impassive, her eyes darting over towards me from time to time. And I can see the troubled expression flash on her face. "Alright, what's wrong, Cass?"

"It bothers me that there are still people who have problems with your relationship with Solas. I thought we'd be done with this... but.."

"What's the real issue?"

The waiter places our plates of food, roasted boar and dried jerky, onto our tables and when he leaves again after wishing us a good afternoon, I keep staring at Cassandra to hear her out. She's obviously not telling me everything she thinks.

She sighs. "Eliana.. You know I am a devout follower. You also know that I value your friendship more than anything else. And no matter what people might say or think of you, I will support you no matter what. You are a trusted friend of mine, and I would never-"

"-Cut to the chase, Cassandra." When she looks at me confusedly at my phrase of words, I quickly correct myself: "Spit it out."

"If anyone human across Thedas believes you sympathize with the Elven Gods, it may pose a threat later. To Andrastians, the Elven Gods are considered False Gods. Figments of the imagination of the Elves. Nobody should put anyone or anything higher than Andraste or the Maker himself."

"So the Elves are being considered heathens- people who do not belong to a widely held religion. Yeah, we knew this already. What else is new?" I say exasperatedly.

"But you are our leader! You are part of the Inquisition!" Cassandra almost exclaims.

I honestly thought we were done having this conversation a long time ago... Seems I was wrong, yet again. How fun.

"The word 'Inquisition' alone drips of Andrastian beliefs, Feathers. I think the Seeker's afraid of what this will mean for the Inquisition later, after this whole Corypheus business."

Cassandra nods slowly. And folds her hands uncomfortably in her lap as she waits for my response to that.

I hum in thought, waving the piece of roasted boar around a bit before taking a bite of it. Then, with a mouth full I answer. "When Corypheus is defeated we are no longer needed, right?" I swallow. "So what's the big issue, exactly? We'll be thanked by the entirety of Thedas, and then we'll disband and continue our lives as before."
Cassandra's eyes widen. "You'd.... You would disband us?!

I glance around the other two of my companions around the table. Sera, who has been extremely quiet since the last snarky comment I made to her, seems to be frozen in place. As for Varric, he stopped chewing altogether and looks... I don't know, a mixture between hurt and relieved, perhaps.

I drop my food, slightly wondering if I'd offended all of them. "Er... well... I mean..." I don't understand Cassandra's reaction however. "What are we supposed to do after we've cleared all these threats surrounding Thedas? We are not the Grey Wardens, who are around, though not doing anything, and then get back to work once another Blight threatens the lands. And after everything that's happened, I'm not even sure the Grey Wardens will be around much longer.." I say the latter with a saddened expression on my face. Though they've made mistakes, I do not believe the Wardens should ever be disbanded or exiled. If another Blight happens, Thedas and it's people would be doomed.

"So you'd let us... go?" Cassandra asks me slowly. Examining my face as she speaks.

"Yes." I sigh. "You can rebuild the Seekers, like you always wanted. Sera, you could return to being a friend of Red Jenny and wreak havoc, like you always did before. Varric could finish writing his stories, or keep running from the Merchant's Guild his whole life-" I say in a joking manner. "-As for the others.. Dorian might finally return to Tevinter, and reconcile with his family. Or be with Bull, whichever the both of them want. Josephine may return to Antiva. Cullen could spend time with his family in Honnleath. To be honest, I'm not sure what Leliana, Vivienne or Cole would do, but I'm sure they'd find something." Then I turn my head into the direction of the cells, not seeing our Commander there yet. "I don't yet know what will happen with Rainier." I swallow hard.

"And Chuckles and you?"

"Maybe Solas and I could be together. I hope we can." but as I say these words, a strange and unpleasant feeling bubbles up within me. Dread. "Unless he doesn't want to. Then... I'd be alone."

None of them say anything to this. They all continue eating in silence. Myself included.

Today is not a good day.

When evening falls, and we still did not receive word from Cullen, we decide to spend a night at the Inn, like Varric had suggested. We all take separate rooms, and I still did not get any response from my conversation at the tavern. None of my companions spoke up about it, and I started to doubt my own decisions. I did want to disband after Corypheus was dealt with, if he could be dealt with, that is of course. I saw no reason for the Inquisition to continue. We were only there for the Breach, and when we found out what, or who, was behind the Breach in the first place, we shifted our focus to the culprit. And if the culprit was defeated, we had no more reason to exist. Our organization would be done. And though I was never born here, I did not want to go back home. Sarah would be gone, anyways. And I never felt a sense of belonging back at Earth. Was always the odd one out, never truly belonged to anyone, except my mother. And she was gone too. But my companion's reactions made me second guess everything. It seemed like, Cassandra for one, didn't want the Inquisition to be disbanded. Despite her most likely leaving us in the end, regardless, to rebuild the Seekers of Truth. She disagreed with my decision. And though Varric seemed somewhat relieved to think about 'not having to travel and go through adventures anymore', there was a slight pause to him when I had mentioned it. I suppose these people, who I've come to know and love, don't know anything else other than fighting and running for their lives constantly. It seems that even if Thedas could somehow, someday, live in total peace and silence, it's inhabitants would not know what to do.

Yes, Thedas has been in war, and Blights ever since the very beginning of times. But I would be
glad if my world would finally see no evil or threats. I suppose that's where the true evil begins though. When there are no more battles to be won, when there are no longer enemies abound, when people will finally be complacent with their lives, they will get bored. And in a world where magic is 'normal', though some will argue about that of course, I don't see why magic would not be used to stir up other wars or battles. Even if we defeat Corypheus, I've advocated for the rights of both Elves and mages. What will happen afterwards? - Will the Circle Towers be rebuild? And how strong will the grasp of the Templars be on the Chantry, and the Mages? Will the Mages ever accept being imprisoned in Towers again, to live under the 'magic is meant to serve man, not rule over him' rules? I then notice how I've been restlessly pacing back in forth in my room at the Inn, and remember I still have to let the others back at Skyhold know.

I left the room, walking towards the entrance hall, where a younger man stood. The one who sold us our rooms. I had noticed earlier how he didn't have an Orlesian accent, he must've been from Ferelden. "Good evening." I greeted him politely.

The sandy haired man, smiled at me. "My lady, everything to your liking?"

"Everything is well. I was just wondering if you had some parchment, an inkpot and a quill I could buy from you?"

"Certainly. 4 coppers for the ink and parchment."

I reached down into my pouch of coins and handed him over the copper coins he asked. While he was rummaging through his desk nearby, I continued. "Do you know where I could send a raven, here?"

He handed over the things I'd asked for. "There's a rookery nearby, right before you enter the alienage."

I nodded. "Thanks." with that, I left towards my room again.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

"Leliana,

We arrived at Val Royeaux in search of Blackwall early in the afternoon, only to find out that Blackwall was in fact Thom Rainier. He prevented the death of Cyril Mornay, stating he was the one who gave the order for the Callier massacre.

Currently, Rainier, is being held in the holding cells of Val Royeaux. Cullen is with the guards, trying to come up with more information. In the meanwhile, Cassandra, Varric, Sera and I are holed up at an Inn. I suppose tomorrow morning we'll receive word from Cullen and come up with an idea on what to do about Rainier's fate. Undoubtedly, the Orlesians wish to see him hanged for the crime.

Please let the others know.

Yours truly,
-E."
sight. It's just background noise, to compensate for the loneliness I am currently feeling. I take a deep
breath and close my eyes momentarily, then continue to breathe out again, calming myself. It's been a
while since I've dreamt in the Fade. I suppose I, or perhaps Solas, stopped that. I like to believe I did
it myself though, and that I did not need any help from my bald elf. After being in the Fade
physically, I was almost too afraid to end up back there, even only in dreams. Not to mention that the
last time I dreamt in the Fade, I encountered the desire demon, who prayed on my desire for both
Dan and Solas. It feels like ages ago, though, and I have yet to encounter said demon again.

I stare at the tavern, at the outside walls, at one spot in particular: the spot where I found Fenrian
sitting against, one day, long ago. And as much as I willed myself to conjure Fenrian, I could not. So
instead, I chose to conjure a memory. I closed my eyes, and focused solely on the day we played
hide and seek for the very first time. The day where he first started calling me 'asa'ma'lin'. Moments
later, I heard his old familiar voice, though echoed, indicating that this was no more than a simple
memory.
"Alright! Now it's my turn!"

"I'll count to ten and you go hide. Remember the rules, okay? No hiding in other people's cabins."

I watched myself turn around and cover my eyes, counting from one to ten, slowly. While seeing
Fenrian look around at the top of the steps where I was sitting at. Then he made a beeline for it, and
passed me by as he did. I could not feel a whiff of air as he did though, once again making clear this
was not real life.

I wanted to turn my head around, but as I did, the imagine of Fenrian disapeared and instead Solas
stood there, hands clasped behind his back, a slight smile on his face. Though his eyes looked sad.
He ended the memory. Immediately I could feel the air crackling with the same old familiar feeling
whenever he was nearby, the hairs on my arms standing straight up. "Why did you end it?" I ask, a
bit upset, but not angry.

He walks over to me slowly, taking his seat right next to me. "I will be honest; I could not bear to
look at it." he kisses my cheek lovingly then. I close my eyes and revel in the feeling of his soft,
plump lips against my skin. "How's the trip?"

I sigh. "My letter has not yet reached Leliana then." Solas remains quiet. "Turns out Blackwall is
Thom Rainier. The one responsible for the Callier massacre. He's in the holding cells of Val
Royeaux now, with Cullen."

"And where are you?"

"At an Inn."

He takes hold of my hand then, and looks ahead of himself. I follow his gaze: we are still in Haven,
the both of us still sitting at the top of the steps. Then, I see the three of us, another memory, but not
mine this time. Fenrian, Solas and I, goofing around. I sigh, contently, leaning my head against his
shoulder while he caresses my hand softly. We just sit there, in silence, as the time passes by in the
Fade.

"I heard you calling for me, again."

I raise my head from his shoulder and look at him questionably. "I did?"

"Indeed."

"I missed you, I think."
"You think?" he asks in an amused tone of voice and I softly nudge his shoulder. "I miss you too, Eliana." he continues to stare at me a little while longer. "You are troubled by something." it was not so much a question, but an obvious statement.

"I had a bad day. Finding out about Blackwall.. er.. Rainier. I snapped at both Sera and Cullen. Then I had a conversation with Cassandra with the other two around at the tavern..."

"And?"

"Mornay mentioned us. The Inquisitor and an elf together, and that it sparked stories about my sympathy with the elves. I shrugged it off, not thinking it was odd any longer. I've dealt with the judgement from day one. However, Cassandra worries about the Inquisition's status once we dealt with Corypheus. So I told her we've nothing to fear for, since we will be disbanded afterwards."

Solas' eyes widened in surprise, a reaction I'd rarely get out of him. I mirrored his own surprised expression. "You would disband the Inquisition?"

I groaned. "Not you too. Cassandra said the same thing."

He seemed to think for a while, but still held the same expression. He didn't seem.. displeased, just very very confused. "I suppose..." he trails off.

"You suppose, what?"

He turns to look at me then. "I.. I don't know, to be honest. I'd never thought you would think of disbanding the Inquisition after everything. You surprise me yet again, Eliana. Everytime I think I got you figured out.." he shakes his head, a small smile on his lips.

"So? What do you think?" I urge him, impatiently. Solas could never make this decision for me, but his answer would usually put my mind at ease, and put things in perspective for me. He's been giving me counsel before, and it always helped.

"I'd.. have to think on it."

"Geesh, is my answer really that difficult?" I ask in a dry tone of voice.

"I always thought the future would go a certain way, Eliana...." he stops for a moment, and seems to rethink his words. "So I adjusted myself accordingly. However, you saying all this.. I might have to reconsider everything I planned for myself."

"Yeah, not being vague at all, Solas. Whatever do you mean, 'reconsider everything you planned for yourself'?"

A flash of concern crosses his face, my hairs on end, my skin tickling and prickling with an odd sensation.

What was that?

Quickly, all that dissipates again. "I thought on leaving the Inquisition, after all was said and done." I squint my eyes at him. For some reason, distrust creeps up within me. "You lie."

He turns to look at me. An odd expression across his face. "Excuse me?" he was not mad, just.. caught off guard, perhaps.

"That's not true. You did not plan to leave the Inquisition. You're not telling me everything. I can tell,
"Perhaps we should discuss this some other time, Eliana." He suddenly gets up from the steps and turns sideways.

I do the same, taking a threatening step closer to him, wagging my finger around. "Don't you dare end the dream, now! We are going to talk."

"Maybe when you're back. For now, you should wake up."

I gasp aloud, sitting upright in my bed at the Inn again. I put part of my pillow into my mouth and scream muffled, extremely annoyed screams, while I bite down onto the fabric of the pillow.

*That fucking... UGH.*

**Solas:**

I rub my eyes groggily, sitting at the table of the main hall, trying to focus on my book. But I cannot. Last night is still fresh in my mind, and I can't think of anything else other than Eliana's statement. *"You lie."* She's become quite good at seeing through me. It's worrying. And for the first time in a long time, I get scared. Truly scared. If she disbands the Inquisition, she will end up being a tiny speck amongst millions of other humans in Thedas. I'll have no way of knowing where she'll be. What I had planned, will have to be reconsidered.

"Solas." Leliana takes her seat across of me.

"Leliana." I dip my head.

"Early this morning I received word from Eliana. I told almost everyone what was in her letter, but I've yet to tell you."

"Yes, I know. Rainier."

Leliana furrows her brows. "How did you-"

"I've spoken to Eliana last night, in the Fade. She told me, the short story however. I take it you know the details."

"There aren't much details, I'm afraid. In the letter she says they are still waiting for Cullen's say so. This will weigh heavy on her." Leliana hangs her head slightly. "She cares for everyone within the inner circle in her own way. Maybe not so much for Morrigan, yet... But knowing Eliana, she'll find something to like about her as well." I remain quiet, wondering where the Nightingale is taking this...

"She sees the good in everyone, no?" She eyes me.

"She does."

She nods. "She can be complicated sometimes, hard to understand. But what she's not secretive about, is that she trusts and loves without reservation. Especially you."

"Yes."

"Do you? Love her without reservation?"

"May I ask why you are so adamant on knowing about this, Nightingale?"

"It is a simple question, Solas. Do you love her?"
"I do. Very much so. I just don't understand why we are having this conversation. My relationship with Eliana has been made public enough already, in the earlier days of the Inquisition."

Leliana leans on her elbows, hunching slightly over towards me. "You're very good at hiding your emotions, Solas. Ever since the beginning of the Inquisition, I could not find very much information about you or what you did prior to joining us. It's as if you never even existed..." she pauses.

"I've lived a simple life."

"Possibly. Unlike you, however, Dorian is quite the tattletale. He's recently had a conversation with Eliana, about you."

"Yes, I would imagine they would. The two of them are rather close."

She clicks her tongue. I am slightly worried what Dorian and Eliana have talked about. More importantly, what Eliana has said. "I did not mean to bother you with this, of course, Solas. It's simply my job to keep an eye on everyone. Including the Inner Circle."

"I take no offense, Nightingale." I manage to smile at her and she smiles back. Though we both know these are fake smiles.

"And your relationship with Eliana is indeed, none of my business." she gets up from the table. "Well, I still have to tell Josephine and Vivienne about the letter Eliana sent. Perhaps, Cole... if I can find him." and with that, the redheaded sister walks off.

I wait until she's gone from view, and decide to head towards the rotunda. But when I enter it, I can hear the Iron Bull and Dorian upstairs, and in truth, I just want to be left alone for now. So I decide to go towards the Skyhold gardens. There's usually not a whole lot of people there, simply some sisters and elves who tend the garden's soil. Sometimes Mother Giselle is there, but mostly, she's around the infirmary. As I pass some people by, I overhear a conversation about our recently joined companion. Though the two girls at least try to be discreet, I can still hear their whispers.

"Have you seen lady Morrigan? She's quite the enigma, is she not?"

"-Oh yes. She traveled with the Hero of Ferelden, just like the Nightingale. The two of them don't like one another, apparently."

One of the girls notices me behind them, and immediately curtsies. A thing that started happening randomly from time to time when people within Skyhold noticed me. Ever since I'm with Eliana 'openly', some may curtsy as they see me. I smile politely at the two of them and continue on, leaving the two of them gossiping behind me.

Though Morrigan poses no threat to me, I should at least try to keep my distance from her. She's a powerful mage, though not as powerful as her mother. I immediately feel a sharp pang in my chest but shrug it off quickly again as I make my way towards the gardens. When I am finally there, the fresh hair feels nice on my skin. I inhale the scent of the blooming flowers and herbs, recently planted in the soil, and walk around slowly. Taking casual, long strides, I take in the beauty of the garden and wonder why I don't come here more often. It's very peaceful and serene.... and.... My steps falter. I can feel a strong humming power resonating through the walls nearby. And I can almost taste an ancient familiar magic, I've not encountered in a long time. I decide to investigate this strong power source, trying to figure out where it's coming from. It's closeby, I can tell, but something... or someone is trying very hard to mask it's power. To make sure nobody can find it. I walk past a couple of doors, and the room which holds Andraste's statue, until eventually, I seem to have lost the source of power.
What happened? I could almost touch it, earlier. And all a sudden, it is gone.

I stand there, for a while longer, motionless. Waiting for the same power to show itself again. But nothing happens and for a moment, I curse the necklace hanging around my neck. It's useful, but it also cuts me off from using my full powers and talents, including being able to locate an artifact of such power. It's ancient, it must be Elven.

"Walking the gardens to clear your mind, apostate?" a singsong voice behind me calls out. And even though my back is facing her, I know who it is.

"I am surprised you'd use that word for a mage. Taking in consideration your past, lady Morrigan." I spin around smoothly, and notice her piercing golden eyes staring right at my own eyes. Instantly I can feel her trying to prod me. I can feel her magic tendrils stroking my aura, trying to enter my head, read what goes on within me. But I easily block her out.

If I try to flee from this conversation now, she'll have more reason to figure out who I am. I should be careful with my answers.

She no longer wears the big elaborate dress she wore at the Winter Palace, instead opting for a loose top, barely covering up her skin. Though she does wear at least some type of breastband underneath said top to cover up her chest. And she wears a pair of leather pants and high, laced up boots. Three dark blue feathers are adorning her left shoulder pauldron. If nobody yet knew she was from the Korcari Wilds, they would be able to tell by taking one look at her attire.

And they say I dress bad.

"Would you care for a walk, Solas?" she eyes me a little too long, though I can tell she does it to try and figure me out.

"Why not." I place my arms behind my back, but bend one of them so she can lock her own arm with mine. And she does.

We walk, around the massive gardens, back towards the courtyard of the fortress. "To what do I owe this pleasure?"

She laughs shortly, and her golden eyes again pierce my own eyes. "I had simply yet to talk with you. Tis difficult, finding you sometimes. And when I do, you're usually around our dearest Inquisitor. Though I have to admit, the last place I'd expect to find you was the garden."

"You and me both. I never go there."

"So I was told, yes." she says softly. Her voice slightly annoyed.

"Is there anything in particular you'd like to ask me, lady Morrigan?"

"Just Morrigan, if you'd please. Being in the Winter Palace for so long, I've come to dislike the usage of that title. To answer your question, however.." she stops walking and I do too. She unhooks her arm with mine and crosses her arms defiantly. "I am trying to figure out who ...or what you are."

It seems today is the day where I get questioned by everyone.

"I am an elf, though I would have thought you'd know what an elf looked like. Given your past adventures with the Hero of Ferelden."

She narrows her eyes and takes a sharp intake of breath. "Stop playing games with me. You shan't
fool me with your facade. I can sense something on you, and you have been trying very hard to block me out since we've started this conversation."

I smile softly at the witch before me. "You would be correct about the latter, Morrigan. I must admit I do not care for being probed by magic."

"I will get to the bottom of it. Tis only a matter of time." she turns around to want to walk away from me, but then halts yet again. "We will be heading to the Arbor Wilds soon, yes?" she looks over her shoulder back at me, seemingly waiting for my reaction. Expecting for me to crack, perhaps?

"Once the Inquisitor returns, and everything has been taken care of, I suppose we will. Your point?"

She smiles coyly at me. "I am just curious to see what time will tell. As I can imagine you would be, as well."

"Why would I be curious?"

"The Arbor Wilds are full of ancient ruins, are they not?" and having said that, she casually walks off, with a deliberate swing in her hips.

**Eliana:**

"Well?" I tap my foot impatiently as Cullen finally emerges from the cells. I'd been waiting there all morning. When I take one look at my Commander however, I can see the darkened circles underneath his eyes. He must not have slept at all.

"The Orlesians demand his head for the crime itself. And for him having fled, taking on someone else's identity for years, they would hang him twice more if they could." He hangs his head, a sombre look plastered across his face. "I tried everything I could, but the options.. they aren't good, Eliana. The Orlesians want to see justice for the Callier massacre. I do not know of any way we could fix this."

"I'll go talk to him." I say resolute. "And you, should get some rest. There's an inn nearby, Cassandra and-"

"I won't be able to rest until I know what will become of him. I'll come with you. But I will wait outside the cells."

"Fair enough."

And so we enter the damp and yet cold building, and I can already see the rats scurrying away from the guards walking around, doing their rounds in the building. Though most of the cells are empty, I can see some are filled with exhausted and malnourished prisoners.

*If I cannot help my old friend, he will die. But before he would die, he'd be malnourished too. I have to help him, somehow.*

Cullen points me into the general direction of Bla-.. Rainier's cell and I walk past a couple of armored guards. I can already see him, in the distance, coming closer into view as I approach his cell. He's sitting on the stone floor, with nothing but a bit of straw beside him to sleep in. He looks... awful. I stand there, for a while, looking directly at him, thinking on how to address him. Or what to say to him. I cannot think of anything. Nothing comes to mind. What would one say to someone like Rainier? After having thought him to be a friend, a trusted companion. Once again, I'd never be able to judge him the way the others would, seeing as I hid my true origins from most of them as well.. But ...a murderer?
"I didn't take Blackwall's life. I traded his death. He wanted me for the Wardens, but there was an ambush. Darkspawn. He was killed." not once does his eyes meet mine, however. And his tone of voice is so void of emotion. "I took his name to stop the world from losing a good man. But a good man, the man he was, wouldn't have let another die in his place."

"You spoke to me that night in Herald's Rest about the courage you never thought you had. You have proven yourself wrong yesterday, Thom. There was honor and courage in what you did for Mornay."

"Honor?... Courage? I killed innocent people, destroyed Mornay's life and the lives of others like him. One moment of courage will not make up for that." finally he looks at me sadly. "Why are you here, Eliana?"

I approach his cell some more, almost standing against the iron bars of it. "I had to see you. Had to speak to you for myself. Get answers, maybe.. I had to do something."

He gets up from the floor abruptly. "Don't you understand? I gave the order to kill Lord Callier, his entourage, and I lied to my men about what they were doing!" He suddenly slams his hands against the bars of the cell, rattling them loudly, so I flinch and step away quickly. My eyes shocked. "When it came to light, I ran!" he hissed. "Those men, my men, paid for my treason while I was pretending to be a better man!" He glances down at his own hands and shakes his head. "This is what I am! A murderer, a traitor.. a monster." he collapses onto the floor and I can see a lone tear rolling down his cheek.

"What made you decide to tell the truth? Was it the conversation we had at Herald's Rest?" I say in a monotone voice.

He looks up at me, hopelessly lost. "You did, actually. Your telling the others about who you really were."

"But why?"

"You gave me hope. You always have. Showed me that I needn't fear the outcome of it, but rather face it's consequences. Even if it means having to die for it, or end up being alone because of it. You are hope. You represent it in it's entirety. Not just to the people of Thedas, but to us as well." he scoffs. "Though your story ends on a much happier note than mine."

"I will get you out of here. You are more than who you think you are." And I turn around and walk back towards Cullen and the guards, feeling like my shoes are filled with lead.

When Cullen notices my stern expression, he grabs a piece of paper from the desk nearby. I stop and look at him. "I have Leliana's report on Thom Rainier." As he hands it over to me, I skim through said report. Culen remains standing, watching me read it.

"Thanks Cullen... This will.. help.. Maybe."

"Don't blame yourself, Eliana." he places his hand onto my shoulder and squeezes it. "We all made this mistake."

"But I am the leader. I should've known there was something off. And I did, ever since I met him I had a sense something was wrong. I just never went with my gut and inspected the feeling. I regret this greatly, now."

"Even if you had tried to figure it out, it may not have changed anything." he pauses. "What do we do now? Black-... Rainier has accepted his fate, but you don't have to. While you were talking, I
checked on our situation a bit more. We have resources. Options available to us. If he's released to us, you may pass judgement on him yourself."

My eyes widen. That gives me hope. "Right. Have Rainier released to us."

He dips his head. "We must move quickly. We can explore our options back at Skyhold."

I nod and we both exit the cells, leaving our friend for a little while before we can get him back to us. Back to familiar grounds. I feel bad as we assemble the others and ride off, away from the Orlesian capital city.

*I will make this right.*

* * * *

I enter the war room, being immediately followed by all my advisors, including Morrigan now too. Though she has no particular stake in this matter, she is now part of the advisors and insisted on being there with us all.

"So what's the plan then?"

Josephine sighs. "Leliana has one."

I turn my focus towards the nightingale. She smiles wickedly. "I have contacts in the underworld, that could aid in having Rainier released from prison."

"This would also conveniently mask your own, and the Inquisition's involvement." Josephine chimes in.

I nod. "And what will happen if Orlais finds out about it, afterwards?"

"To be frank, Orlais will be angry. But they also have far more important matters at hand, what with Corypheus and all. The Empress has already sent most of her soldiers towards the Arbor Wilds, preparing for when we go there. Though some will naturally hold some resentment towards us, for having released him into our custody, they won't pursue it. Nor will they get the resources or the approval of the Empress for it." Leliana seems smug with herself then. I am glad to have them all on my side. Leliana knows this sort of thing. How to work the system, find 'loopholes'. And she is completely right.

"What judgement do you want to pass on Rainier once he gets here?" Cullen asks me softly.

"I cannot say yet. I'll have time to think on it before he gets here."

"Though I do not wish to be rude, Leliana did mention the Arbor Wilds earlier. When did you plan on going there? Corypheus will not wait forever." Morrigan speaks up before Cullen can answer me again. Resulting in a sour look from the Commander.

"You are right. I had initially wanted to wait until we got Rainier back, but getting him here may still take some days. I think it's best we leave as soon as we're able, and I'll pass judgement on him once we're back from the Arbor Wilds."

"Then we should prepare ourselves, Inquisitor. Also, I still wish to speak to you in private, if you recall." Morrigan smiles faintly at me, but I can see a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"Then let's talk. In the meanwhile, I want each and every one of you to prepare for our trip to the
Arbor Wilds. Josephine, have our allies send scouts to meet us in the Wilds. Leliana, your fastest agents will join them. Cullen's soldiers will have to be notified, this may take some time. But together we'll have enough spies to slow down Corypheus' army until Cullen's soldiers arrive. Meeting adjourned."

Chapter End Notes

SO, a few things I wanted to make clear about this chapter.. I've obviously been preparing ahead a little bit for what's next to come. And on top of that, there were a few TEENY TINY things that bothered me in the main game, that I wanted to 'correct' in my story.

For one: Morrigan and Solas.
Why is it, that in the main story of the game, it never shows any distrust between Morrigan and Solas? - Morrigan being the daughter of Flemeth, therefore the 'daughter of Mythal' in some type of way, right? Then there's the fact that Morrigan is a powerful mage, though not nearly as powerful as Solas, yet, she should have sensed there was something amiss about Solas- RIGHT?!

And as for Solas towards Morrigan, yes, they've never been seen conversing with one another in game.. but Solas should have a bigger opinion on Morrigan being there with them, right? RIIIIIGHT?! - Or just me? I don't know maaaan, just some things I didn't understand in the main story that I wanted to bring up here.
Of course in the main story, Solas is still weakened, but at this point in time(right before What Pride Had Wrought), we are nearing the 'end' of the main story. Therefore, Solas should've at least regained like what?- 70% if not 80% of his original power back. So he should've known, somehow.

Then there's the Eluvian : HOW IN SEVEN SHADES OF SHIT DID SOLAS NOT COMMENT ON THE PRESENCE OF THE ELUVIAN, ALL OF A SUDDEN BEING IN SKYHOLD?! Sure, he has no need of it(yet), but COME ON. Maybe all of this and the above would've given away spoilers way before the Trespasser DLC and that's why Bioware didn't include it, but shiiiiit. And as for Morrigan's 'spell' I made up: like I said, she's not as powerful as Flemeth but certainly powerful. And you know this if you've played Dragon Age Origins. Plus, she's the DAUGHTER of Flemeth. I'm sure she's picked up some odd spells here and there after reading the Black Grimoire and after finding out how Flemeth stays alive for so long(partially finding out about this, of course). So yes, Solas may be 'stronger' than Morrigan, but she's not weak. And he still is slightly weakened and his full magic is being 'blocked' by his necklace. Which if you don't know about, is a theory a fan created once about how he 'enchanted' his jawbone necklace to be some type of magic blocker so that even if he regained his full powers back, he would not fuck up. And other mages wouldn't be able to tell he's more than just a clever hedge mage.
So because of all that, Solas knows something's nearby, something he knows to be Elven and Ancient, but he is still thrown off by Morrigan's spell and cannot find it.

Now a little explanation about Elie's dream in the Fade, and Solas' reaction.. I am slightly scared some may not understand where I am taking this... SO! I'll give y'all my two cents on it(and you may or may not disagree with it):
Obviously, in my story, the relationship with the 'main character' is slightly different. Elie being human for one, not elven. So it will be different, but the way I see it is this:

- Solas does not yet know his orb will be destroyed in the final battle, so naturally his original plan would be to tear down the Veil immediately after defeating Corypheus. Which would result in chaos and terror all 'round Thedas. Since all the Elves would regain their magical abilities (poor Sera and Fenris, amirite?). And mages who've been oppressed for years, would finally be able to wreak havoc on anyone. So, long story short; another war.

- On top of that, the Elven Gods and Goddesses would be released from the 'Beyond' and would likely go after Solas, right? As much of the fans have speculated after the Trespasser DLC. So, MORE WAR AND DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.

The reason why I wanted Solas to be so thrown off due to Elie's thoughts on wanting to disband the Inquisition, is because if that happens.. Elie would be, like he said, a tiny speck amongst millions of other people across Thedas. And it would be difficult for even Fen'Harel to keep track of where she'll be. And since he loves her, he fears for her. Because he cannot stay/be with her- right? Or can he? So, he has to rethink his options and future plans. To make sure he won't fail, but also, in a sense, not to lose Elie.

OF COURSE we all know what will happen, so Solas will be thrown off yet AGAIN, at the end of the main story, when his orb is destroyed. And none of this will 'matter anymore'. But I just thought I'd explain this, in greater detail a bit more...

I hope it wasn't vague for you all!
Chapter Summary

Elie finally sees the Eluvian for the very first time, and is being told about it by Morrigan. Thus preparing themselves further for the trip towards the Arbor Wilds. Also, now, three companions/friends have spoken about their distrust and doubts regarding Solas with Elie. And she's starting to get restless because of it.

So, before she heads out with everyone, she decides to talk to Solas about the Fade Dream they shared a day ago. And Solas admits to having secrets, but that he could not tell her.

And Elie knows, she knows, that even while it pisses her off; he has taken her, body, mind and soul. And she'd follow him into the depths of Hell if she had to. Or Thedas' version of Hell, anyways. She would do anything, ignore anything odd about Solas, just so she could stay with him. It seems the wolf has got her in his claws, finally. And both of them don't even know it yet. But there's more to come.

And.. What's Fen'Harel's connection with the Temple of Mythal? - Why does Solas act so weird?
What's next to come?

Chapter Notes

Translation of Sentinel:
Na melana sur, banallen! - Your time comes, darkspawn!/ Your time comes, enemies!

TWO Chapters, because I really wanted to. I wrote these two yesterday, on Saturday. Today I'll continue my studies and this week I work. Then there's one more week before I go on vacation. I'll TRY really, will, TRY to write at least Part 2 of the Well of Sorrows before I leave for vacation. Because that's what I initially wanted to end on yesterday. Because.. Ooooo, I've got PLANS for the Well of Sorrows, y'all!! And what this all will mean in the future for Elie, the Inquisition and of course, Solas.

Buut it was, LITERALLY(I shit you not), 05:43 A.M. when I had finally finished writing Part 1 last night, so it was already light out and I really needed my sleep. Hence why I'm only posting these two chapters today(Sunday).

SO STAY TUNED!! XOXOXO

I follow Morrigan out of the war room, towards the gardens. I haven't spoken to Solas yet. But I intend to do this as soon as I'm done with Morrigan's 'secretive talk'.
As we walk, Morrigan breaks the silence. "I've had quite an interesting conversation the other day, with your... lover."

I raise my eyebrows. "Solas?"

"Indeed. He was wandering these very gardens when I spotted him." We walk until we reach the gazebo, and she looks to a door to the right of it.

"Solas never leaves his rotunda. I am surprised." I say wryly.

"He seemed to be... looking for something." she walks towards the door, right to the gazebo and stops in front of it. I want to ask her about it but she continues. "After you, Inquisitor."

I enter said door and am quickly followed by Morrigan. When we enter the door I can feel I am walking through some kind of invisible wall. And immediately I shudder and turn around to face the wickedly smiling witch. "Is this room sealed off by a barrier?"

"I am amazed you noticed. You must have trained your abilities, haven't you?"

"Somewhat. Why did you put up a barrier?"

"To keep others away from this room. In particular, away from that," she points to a big object, being hidden by an equally as large type of blanket. I approach it slowly as she continues speaking. "The barrier prevents people from finding this room. Regular people would simply.. ignore this entire room's presence. As if it's not even there. For mages, of any sort, it's slightly different. One may come close to discovering the room, should their powers be strong enough, but they will be led astray. They will become confused and then.. simply pass it by."

"A handy sort of trick."

"True. Though Solas came pretty close to finding it."

Again she mentioned Solas, and I get the feeling she knows more than I do. Or at least, somehow shares the uneasy feeling I sometimes get. And although I barely know Morrigan, compared to Solas. And though Leliana has warned me about her intentions back at the Winter Palace, I can't help but bite. "Your point? What is hidden underneath there?"

She pulls away the blanket, revealing some type of massive mirror. The only difference between this and a normal mirror, is that this one seems to glow. It's 'glass' looks rippled, like water in a stream. And it has a purple undertone to it's 'fake watery glass'. "This is an Eluvian. An Elven artifact, from a time long before their Empire was lost to human greed. I restored this one at great cost, but another lies within the Arbor Wilds. That is what Corypheus seeks."

I hear her speaking and register every word, but I cannot seem to look away from the mirror, or, Eluvian. I stare at it's glass and somehow I feel... something shifting in there. "Did you feel that?"

"It's the effect of the Eluvian."

"It's.. remarkable." If I hadn't thought it before, I would definitely think it now: the Elves were pretty awesome with magical things. It was so.. beautiful.

"I found legends of an Elven temple within the Arbor Wilds, untouched. It proved too dangerous to approach, and thus I turned elsewhere to find my prize. If Corypheus has turned Southward, he could succeed where I failed. The Eluvian would be his."
"But what is it?"

Morrigan smiles and then extends her arms, blasting some type of force, no... a spell into the Eluvian, and it immediately bursts to 'life'. The slightly purple undertone completely makes way for a blue-ish hue. "A more appropriate question would be 'where does it lead'?" And she walks into the mirror.

INTO THE MIRROR.

Okay, calm down, Elie. You've seen weirder things.

I shake my head and somehow linger there, wondering if Morrigan is coming back. But then I facepalm, and get that she wanted me to follow her. So I carefully approach the Eluvian, and as I do, the blue glass ripples further and it almost feels like 'passing through water', in some type of way. When I get out on the other side, wherever that is, I see Morrigan tapping her foot.

"Took you long enough."

I look around me, and see old ruins of Elven origin, and some broken down, small walls. Including several weird types of 'trees', if you could even call them that. Instead their branches reach upwards, curling together into a ball, almost. But the end of it's branches never fully touching the other ends. Stopping just short of actual contact between one another. And then there are several other Eluvians around us, in this foggy, ancient, heavy feeling place. But none of them glow, glimmer, or have any sort of color to their glass. It's either entirely dark, or some are broken. As for the heavy feeling I described earlier, it's almost like a sad, crushing feeling on my chest. But not painful, just enough to make you feel uncomfortable. And yet, there's some type of uplifting feeling here as well. It's all very.. confusing and almost maddening. The contrast between these two entirely different feelings, leaving me all but breathless as I take in our surroundings.

"If this place once had a name, it has long been lost." Morrigan's voice is soft, almost sorrowful. We walk forwards, towards some of the other Eluvians. Whenever she talks, I can hear an echo filling up this place. This is insanely weird, yet beautiful. Almost like the Fade in some way, but not quite so. And far more beautiful and less scary and dark. "I call it the Crossroads, a place where all Eluvians join... wherever they might be."

"This... This... place.. I don't have the words for it, truly. How is this even... here? How is this real?"

"Who can say? Formed from the fabric of time and space, perhaps. The Ancient Elves left no roads, only ruins hidden in far-flung corners. This is how they traveled between them. As you can see, most of the mirrors are dark: broken, corrupted, or unusable. As for the rest, a few can be opened from this side. But only a few."

"It feels weird in here. I can only describe it as feeling extremely sad, but at the same time, extremely uplifted.. hopeful, yearning to remain here. And yet, I want to leave. It's maddening. If the Ancient Elves could do this..."

"It seems remarkable that the Magisters of Tevinter could ever challenge them, yes."

"But.. correct me if I'm wrong, it also feels... like it's.... dying?" I close my eyes, trying to hone in on that particular feeling, while there's so many other, different feelings that cocoon me. "It will be erased in time."

"Who can say how old it is? For now it stands, and thus retains its value."

"So how did you find this place?"
"My travels have led me to many strange destinations, Inquisitor. Once they led me here. It offered sanctuary."

"Sanctuary?"

She hums for a bit. Trying to answer the best way she can, I take it. "Not all the mirrors lead back to our world. The Ancients were nothing if not... resourceful."

"So where do they lead then?"

"Places between, like this one. I can describe it no better. For a time, I was safe from those who hunted me. But only for a time. One cannot remain 'in between' forever."

"And what did you mean when you said 'a few can be opened from this side'?"

"Some of the Eluvians have been left unlocked, like doors accidentally left ajar. All others are closed. They can be opened only from beyond."

"How?"

"With a key, of course."

I think back on how she 'opened' the Eluvian we came through, back at Skyhold. "And I take it you have said key?"

"You are referring to me opening passage through the Eluvian earlier? The key can be many things. Each Eluvian is different. I have knowledge as well as power. Often that is enough."

"So why would Corypheus want this?"

"This is not the Fade, but it is very close. Someone with enough power could tear down the Ancient barriers."

It all clicked then. Corypheus still wanted nothing more than to enter the Fade physically. "So if he used this.. the Crossroads, the Eluvians, he could enter the Fade in the flesh."

"He learned of the Eluvian in the Arbor Wilds, as I did. He marshals the last of his forces to reach it." then she beckons me to follow her back towards our own Eluvian, which has been glowing a bright blue ever since she 'opened' it. "You have made Corypheus desperate, Inquisitor. We must work together to stop him, and soon."

And with that, Morrigan once more steps through and leaves me behind.

I take one last glance at the dreamy, yet dreary world around me and finally follow her, and step through as well. Coming back out again on the other side, in the room near the gazebo at Skyhold. As if nothing happened, the mirror again 'slumbered' as we both had passed through it. And Morrigan hid it again underneath the massive blanket.

I cross my arms then and stare at her back for a while before speaking up again. "So why mention Solas, before?"

Morrigan remains standing with her back facing me, but I can see her lips curling into a slight smile. "You do not know either, do you?"

"Don't know what?"

"What his secrets are. He does have many, does he not?" finally she spins around to face me.
"And you know?"

"Unfortunately.. no. But, my dear Inquisitor.. I can tell you that there's more than meets the eye. You are no stupid woman. In fact, I'd say you're quite smart. I'm sure you've figured it out as well."

I had wanted to speak to Solas regardless, after that dream the other day. And now, this conversation with Morrigan fueled that even more. "So let me get this straight, all of this you bring up because he 'almost' found the Eluvian?"

"I have not seen Dorian or Vivienne snooping about these parts of Skyhold. And no, tis not the only reason why. I... sense something on Solas. Though I cannot wrap my head around it. Tis odd." I want to speak up but she continues. "And I believe I am not the only one who has doubts. Leliana has been inquiring about it, with Dorian no less."

I'll mess up Dorian's beautiful hairdo if I find out he's been feeding information to Lelie. Though I love and trust both of them, Leliana's not known to be discreet when wanting to know more information about someone. And I don't want a wedge created between any of us. Dorian is quite the talker, and if he, by accident, told Lelie of our conversation shortly before my departure towards the Winter Palace.. about my doubts sometimes, the feelings he gives me lately. The feelings of unrest and uneasiness. I know for a fact Leliana's done multiple background checks on all of us, except myself, before joining the Inquisition. And I've heard there wasn't much information available about Solas, prior to joining. All I know is that he simply just 'did' and that's all there was to it. And I know Leliana; give her vague information and she and her spies will do anything and everything to get more insight on said topic.

Morrigan eyes me amusedly, cocking her head slightly to the side. I sigh. "We should prepare for the Arbor Wilds as well. And perhaps tell the others back in the war room about the Eluvian."

And so we walk back towards the war room, Morrigan follows me but says nothing more about the topic we discussed earlier. And when we re-enter the war room, all of my advisors are still there. Working on sending out reports, and instructions to their people. Josephine to our allies, Leliana to her spies and Cullen to his soldiers. We haven't been gone long.. They all look to the both of us in surprise. Not at all expecting either one of us back there so soon.

"So there's an Eluvian, in the Arbor Wilds. And Corypheus wants it." I break the silence. Josephine stops scribbling and Cullen rubs his neck.

"Perhaps you should explain to them first, what an Eluvian is." Morrigan says from beside me.

"Short story? - It's a magic mirror, that can send you into a place that eerily resembles the Fade, but isn't quite the same. The Crossroads, as Morrigan likes to call it. It's a place 'in between', though neither one of us know exactly what to call it. We were in there, earlier. It's... an odd sensation I can tell you that much." When I saw the confused reactions from the three of them, I sighed. "How we got there, is not important right now. What is important is that there's dozens of other Eluvians there, some unusable, but there's yet some that work. One of the working Eluvians... is in the Arbor Wilds. Wanna bet why Corypheus is exactly there?"

"So where does it come from, originally? Such... Eluvians? And what does it mean for Corypheus to want to find one in the Wilds?" Josephine asks me, but keeping her eyes at all times on Morrigan.

"It is Ancient Elven and well.. Morrigan explained it far better than I ever could, so I'll use her exact words: It is not the Fade, but it is very close. Someone with enough power could tear down it's Ancient barriers. And what does Corypheus want nothing more in this entire world? - To enter the
Fade physically."

Leliana hums. "With an Eluvian, Corypheus could cross into the Fade in the flesh?"

Morrigan answers. "Indeed. The Inquisitor can attest that these artifacts still work if one knows how to use them."

"What happens when Corypheus enters the Fade?" Cullen places his written orders down onto the war table.

"Why, he will gain his hearts desire, and take the power of a God. Or.. and this is more likely, the lunatic will unleash forces that tear the world apart." Morrigan says matter of factly.

"That cannot happen." I say resolute. Thedas is my home now, too. And the home of my friends.

"Indeed. Should Corypheus succeed, do not doubt you would be first to feel his holy wrath."

Josephine scoffs. "Pardon me, but... does this mean everything's lost unless we get to the Eluvian before him?"

Cullen sighs. "Corypheus has a head start, no matter how quickly our army moves."

"Then I suggest you all send out those reports and orders fast." I turn my heel to take my leave, yet again, wanting nothing more than to speak to Solas next. But I am stopped by Leliana.

"Mornay arrived here before you all did.. He's to join us, then?"

I nod. "Yes. Leliana, have you spoken to Solas?"

Her facial expression immediately changes. "I have. Among many others of the Inquisition, why do you ask?"

"Is there.. something you wish to say about Solas?"

She glances behind the two of us, back towards the war room where the other three still are. "Morrigan told you."

"You knew that she knew?" I ask bewildered.

"I've traveled with her for a while, remember? I know her tactics. I know her ways. I also knows she's a shapeshifter. Being able to easily spy on me or anyone else for that matter. But to answer your question.. I've just found some things.. odd about Solas. And my suspicions were confirmed when Dorian told me you sometimes feel the same way." she notices my expression turn extremely sour then. Sure, I have my doubts, but I somehow hate it now that three different companions have stated the same. "Elie.. If you love him, then we are nothing and no one to stand in the way of your happiness. And if you trust him regardless of him keeping secrets from you, from all of us.. then I shall leave it be."

"We've more important things to worry about right now, than whether or not 'my boyfriend is being weird'." I say in a sarcastic tone of voice. "While we head out to the Wilds, I want you to get Rainier here as fast as you're able. And as for Mornay, make sure people are not mistreating him if they know about him. He's been through enough."

She nods. "I suppose you'll want to talk to the others soon then? Tell them about the trip."

"I will."
"In case we do not see each other again, until after the Wilds... Stay safe, Elie." her voice is sad.

I smirk up at the nightingale. "What could possibly happen?" I snort and turn my heel then, walking towards the rotunda...

When I get there, I can see Solas painting yet another one of his murals.. Depicting the course of the Inquisition's journey so far. It's getting really beautiful, and somehow there's some type of... sad beauty to Solas' style of painting. When I enter the rotunda, silently, I notice his ears twitch. Though his back is facing me, and he doesn't stop painting, he knows I'm there. "I was starting to worry you'd found another man. You did not come to see me upon your arrival, Eliana."

I lean against one of the walls, and cross my arms staring at his work. "Well.. you did piss me off in the Fade the other day."

Finally he puts down his paint brush and wipes his hands onto a dirty looking rag, hanging from his hip. Then he takes said rag, entirely smudged with paint splatters and stains and throws it onto the scaffolding that's against the wall. Dropping down from it with ease, he takes long strides towards me and kisses me hard on the mouth, dipping me as he does. I exclaim in surprise but kiss back, regardless. When our lips part, we hear a whooping coming from above us. And our heads turn into the direction of the culprit: Dorian, who's leaning against the balustrade of the library.

"We should talk. In private." I make sure to enunciate the latter.

"Don't go because of me! Just pretend I'm not there!" Dorian calls out after us, before we head out towards the courtyard of Skyhold.

As we arrive there, we walk side by side, quietly for a little while towards the stables. Rainier's not there now, so we'll have all the privacy we need. "I'm still mad at you." I say once we finally reach the stables and I pet Moonlight's muzzle.

My horse whinnies and huffs loudly, blowing some of the loose tendrils of my hair out of my face. "I would expect nothing else, Eliana."

"What did you mean when you said you had to change your plans? And why lie to me?" I squint my eyes at him. He has nowhere to run to, now.

"Eliana... I can't." his eyes close. But I can see a pained expression form on that lovely face of his. "I love you, vhenan. I do. But there are things I could not.. ever, fully explain to you. And I ask you to please accept and understand that."

"I've told you everything, always. About anything. I never kept secrets from you. Why is this so difficult for you? Okay, I can live with the fact that you don't wish to tell me about 'future plans'. Who knows, right? Maybe you were planning on proposing to me with the entire Inquisition at your back and that's why you were so weirded out by me wanting to disband us." He snorts slightly then, a faint smile on his lips. Though it is fleeting and disappears almost as quickly as it appeared. I take a step closer to him and take his hands into my own. Staring directly into his eyes. "But do not, ever, lie to me please, Solas."

"I... I'm sorry."

"Sorry about what? You lying to me, or keeping secrets from me?"

"Both."

I sigh and let go of his hands then, taking a seat on the wooden bench nearby. He follows me and
mimics me, by sitting down next to me, quietly. "Do you remember when we first met? Everything was a game, wasn't it? You chasing me, me chasing you, heated arguments and steamy sex afterwards."

"I remember those days fondly."

"We've come so far since then. I was afraid to love again, to give in to that feeling again. And I could sense you were having trouble facing your own feelings for me as well. We had to hide our feelings, from ourselves, from others, and we've overcome that. So we can overcome this as well."

"I love you." he says then, completely throwing me off guard. It's not him saying it, its the way he said it. Like a statement, like... a fact. And like he only just realized it for the very first time, which slightly worries me since he's said it before.

"Promise me, you won't lie to me again, Solas."

He opens his mouth to speak, but we are both startled by Cole appearing right in front of us both. "Aching, hurting, I could feel it. I came to help."

"Cole.." I say in a warning tone of voice.

"There is no need, Cole. We are fine, we're working it out." Solas explains calmly.

"But you are hurting still. Gnawing feeling, regret, tearing you up from the inside. You want to tell her many things, but you-"


"I'm sorry." Cole replies. And I can't help but wonder if it's him apologizing or if he's reciting it from Solas' mind.

I take a deep breath then and kiss Solas on the cheek. "You should get ready for the Wilds. Both of you." I look at Cole then as well. "I take it we are to leave soon. Perhaps tomorrow. Who knows, maybe even tonight. We shouldn't waste any time, we should get to packing."

And with that I leave the both of them, to talk, or to get ready. I still have to tell the others about getting ready as well..

(...)

The trip towards the Wilds was a long and difficult trip. We barely slept, and if we did, someone would always keep watch, to make sure we'd not be ambushed or surprised in any way while trying to get a few winks of sleep. It took about a week, traveling there, and I brought each and every single one of my companions. Even Cullen joined us, saying he'd want to be there if his soldiers finally found their way to us. Though I was certain his men would be there already by the time we'd arrive as well. Only Josephine and Leliana stayed behind at Skyhold, in case Rainier would arrive there. In case anything else happened while we were gone. There were many.. many things on my mind during the trip. Thom Rainier, and his fate upon arriving at Skyhold, awaiting his judgement from me, no less. Also, the safety of my friends and trusted companions while we were on this journey. About to, quite possibly face Corypheus again. And I wasn't sure how we'd fare. I was worried about Solas and me, though we hadn't spoken about the conversation we had at the stables, it felt.. different. He still slept beside me in my tent, we still kissed and held hands during our 'breaks'. But there was something different about his demeanor and it worried me a great deal. We've had moments before, but this was so much different than before. It was almost as if he was not entirely there, with his mind. Which is much unlike himself. He never spoke much about the upcoming
mission, and avoided joining in talks about Eluvians and the ancient ruins we'd most likely run into whilst there. And he always loved talking about the Elves and their history. I would've thought he'd be thrilled to share his own tales and expertise about the matter. But instead, he let Morrigan talk us all to death, with her fascination for the culture and artifacts. Solas wasn't the only person Sera now hated; she hated Morrigan too. 'Talked too elfy,' apparently.

It was intriguing however, to see the landscape change before our very eyes. From snowy mountaintops, to dry and barren places, until finally, we got closer and closer to the Wilds, and the scenery made place for lush forests, almost like jungles, surrounded by beautiful, oddly colored flowers and plants I'd never even seen before. Though I'd already been here for such a long time, these were flora I hadn't seen yet. It wasn't long, before all of us were already exhausted from the trip. We were on the border of the Wilds and I could not sleep that last night, so I volunteered for keeping watch while the others slept. After a satisfying meal, everyone went to bed early. Preparing themselves for what was yet to come. As we had gotten closer to the Wilds, we'd noticed burned down tents, belonging to the Venatori and Corypheus' army. Leliana's spies doing, no doubt. And more and more signs of battles being fought nearby, people having been here, setting up camps along the way. That night, however, I could indeed hear the faint noises and sounds of battle in the distance. And I wondered if it were our men against Corypheus' men. And hoped, prayed almost, that they'd too, be safe. I felt a soft hand on the back of my neck then and looked up into the beautiful eyes of my man. The man who has completely taken me. And will continue to do so, even if he obviously has secrets he does not wish to share. And yes, I get mad at him for it, and want to smack him right across the face for it. But... truth is? - If he'd ask me to die for him, I would. I would do anything to remain by his side. No matter what his secrets were. And somehow, that frightened me a little. He was my mate, my lover, my partner, my everything, my entire world. And I had changed drastically since meeting him for the very first time. Not just by what happened through time, but also because of his effect on me. Being able to sense things I'd never sense before, having accepted magic and being able to use it, having my magical abilities amplified by him. In truth, a lot of things had gotten stronger within me, due to him. He once said, that we are now connected. And I had always wondered about that. Had he shared some of his soul with mine? Was that a thing between mages here, or a thing that Elves could do? Were we now, truly, entwined with one another? Both body and soul?

"You should be resting." I say grimly as he takes a seat next to me.

"I could not. You weren't next to me."

The fire slowly weakens and again, as I have been doing for the past hours, I extend my hand. Palm out towards the fire and shoot out a sharp, brightly burning flame from said palm. Then I throw a couple of dry twigs and leaves into the fire as well, making sure it burns brighter and warmer. "I am worried about what we will face, Solas. I'm scared. Truly, scared."

He wraps his arm around my shoulder and pushes me against himself, kissing my forehead. Against my skin he murmurs. "Fear is good. Use it, tomorrow. And know that we are all with you, Eliana. That I am with you."

I lean into him some more, rubbing my face against his tunic. Taking in his wonderful scent. "What do you think will happen?"

"Who's to say? We will most likely be seeing Corypheus, perhaps even run into Samson. It is a good thing you found the rune to weaken his Red Lyrium armor."

"Thank Dagna for it." I say wryly. Then I sigh contently. Being just next to him, so close to him, is marvelous. "Ar lath ma, Solas." I whisper softly into his tunic. But he has heard me. Of course he
"Ar lath ma, Eliana." he lifts my head by my chin and plants a soft and gentle kiss onto my lips. Pressing his forehead against mine, eyes closed. I, however, watch him close his eyes and drink in his features.

"It is unfair, really."

His eyes flutter open and he gives me a quizzical look then. "What is unfair, vhenan?"

"You're too handsome. It's painful sometimes." He laughs, softly, as to not wake the others but still, he laughs. "You think I am joking? I'm serious, you know. You are a fine specimen of a man."

"And you are far too beautiful, as well.." he nips slightly at my collarbone and moves aside some fabric of my top. Biting softly into the skin.

"We'd have to be quiet." I whisper mischievously as I totally get where he is going with those nips and lovebites of his.

"We do indeed." he breathes hoarsely against my skin as his mouth finds a nipple and takes it into his mouth. It immediately becomes erect to the touch of his wet tongue, and feeling the slight chilly air of the night.

And my hand finds its way, of it's own accord, towards his breeches, where they feel around. He's already hard. I try to stifle my giggles and he presses me down onto the grass, while he gets ontop of me.

Who said keeping watch over camp would be boring?

* * * *

"Inquisitor!" I am greeted by one of our captains at the Wilds' camp.

"How's everything here, captain?"

We walk, all of us, towards the edge of the thick forest. Surrounded by ballista's. "We're holding, barely. The red templars are fighting harder than ever with their master nearby. Our scouts saw Corypheus traveling toward an Elven ruin to the North. We can clear you a path through his armies."

I dip my head gratefully. "Don't take any risks, do only what you have to do. Nothing else. Keep everyone else safe, and yourself included, captain."

"We will not fail you, my lady. No matter what comes." she salutes me by pressing her closed fist against the chest. The all too familiar salutation of the Inquisition and I return it to her. "Andraste guide you, Inquisitor."

Morrigan speaks up once the captain is out of earshot. Sounding sarcastic as ever. "I wonder... Is it Andraste your soldiers invoke during battle, or does a more immediate name come to their lips?"

I eye the witch quizzically. "They respect me, is all. Believe me when I say they don't think I'm some kind of prophet who works for their Maker."

"True. You are far more likely to come to their aid than a Chantry fable.. But I digress. If your scouts report accurately, I believe these ruins to be the Temple of Mythal."

I look around, and my eyes land on Solas first. His face.. remains unreadable. My eyes glance back
"Exactly. A place of worship out of Elven legend. If Corypheus seeks it, then the Eluvian he covets lies within." Suddenly we are all distracted by sounds of explosives nearby. The obvious sight of smoke and fire not soon following after. "Let us hope we reach this Temple before the entire forest is reduced to ash."

And so we start walking, further into the jungle that is the Arbor Wilds. Every single one of my companions follow. Except of course.. Rainier. I already readied myself, taking out my two daggers and walking ahead of the group. I'm just waiting for someone to attack us, hearing the sounds of battle coming closer as we move through massive, hollowed out, fallen down trees. Through the grassy bushes and onto paths that have been carved out by soldiers and red templars before us. And then, the sounds of fighting closely. I hold up my hand, signalling the others to ready themselves as well. And after seeing the compliant nods of my companions, we move, quickly towards the fighting. I charge at one of the red templars, who is being attacked by a cloaked figure. I ignore said person however, and twirl around in viscous, quick spins as my two daggers keep cutting deeper and deeper into the flesh of the red templar before me. He screams aloud, and hacks at me with his sword. I only jump backwards just in time, he only manages to scratch me with his blade. The cut it leaves bites into my skin, and I hiss angrily. Before I can stab him directly into his head, however, the red templar is being attacked by a stone fist swooshing right past me from behind: Solas' doing. I smirk slightly back at him, but see his eyes widen and follow his gaze: the hooded figure from earlier is shifting his attention towards me, now that the templar has fallen. I kick him right in the stomach, making him stumble backwards, and the hood of his cloak falls down. Revealing an elven face, though very different from the elves I've seen and met before in Thedas. His skintone, almost a mixture between a very soft and almost invisible green and golden, and his eyes an odd type of green. His vallaslin is different too, nothing I've seen before on the Dalish and I am almost distracted by his appearance. Until he too, whips out two daggers and clashes them with my own. I barely lose focus and almost give him enough space to hurt me. Before I can react accordingly, however, Cassandra bashes him hard with her shield. Knocking him to the ground with a loud 'oomph'. And then.. he gets up, whistles to his 'friends' who are fighting amongst my soldiers and companions and they disapear into nothingness as they all together, throw some sort of smoke bomb to the grounds.

I cough and wave my hand around, trying to clear my vision. Still on edge, thinking they'll strike back at any given moment. But.. nothing happens. And there's nobody other than us, and the fallen red templars we've all been fighting. "Elves?" I turn around to look at my companions confusedly.

"Dalish elves, by the looks of 'em." Varric mutters.

"No. Though they wore vallaslin, they were not Dalish. I can assure you." Solas chimes in.

"So what kinds of elves were they, then?" I ask Solas impatiently.

His face dark. "A kind I have not seen outside of the Fade before."

"Great. Now we are seeing a different kind of Elves, Solas has only seen whilst wandering the Fade. Lovely." I groan as I continue, following the path before us.

"They must be protecting the Temple." Solas states. But I have almost no time to reply, before seeing a blockade before us. With many.. many, red templars guarding and patrolling the area.

"They've set up blockades!" I hiss out.

Cullen jogs up to me. "There must be more beyond this point. We have to destroy them all."
I nod in agreement. "Everyone ready?"

And we charge, all of us, the entire group, towards the first out of, possibly, many other blockade's. Varric and Iron Bull are playing this odd game of 'how many more can I kill than you kill' whilst fighting. And their banter is heard even over the loud sounds of the fighting. Eventually I get cornered, near a waterfall and some old pieces of a broken down bridge of some sorts, having lost my two daggers earlier. And my companions being too busy for now, to help me out. I concentrate and hone into my magical powers and quickly feel the adrenaline pumping through my veins as I can tell my power is filling me. My hands are crackling and humming and waiting for my mind to give the order. And when two red templars are inching closer and closer towards me, I strike them with, quite possibly my strongest attack of lightning yet. It even startles me, for but a second, before unleashing the same amount of power onto them. Striking them both down at once. Hurriedly, I run back over towards my fallen daggers, pick them up and charge at the next group of templars.

After what seems like ages, and with the sweat on my brows, I turn around, glancing at the battlefield. Panting and almost heaving, I manage to smile. "Inquisition: One. Corypheus: Zero."

"Eliana." Cullen jogs up to me."Like I said, I believe there will be more blockades up ahead. But I think I should stay behind. Stay here, and make sure no more templars come after you. Eventually our soldiers will find me here, and I won't be alone."

I nod in agreement. "Alright. But I'm not leaving you entirely alone. Bull! Sera! Stay with Cullen. Keep each other safe. And... don't do anything stupid."

Bull and Sera nod. "Don't cheat, Varric! I want the exact count of deaths once I see you again. And don't make anything up." Bull calls out at Varric.

"That goes for you too, Tiny." Varric replies with a smirk plastered on his face.

I rush up to Bull and Sera and hug them briefly. "I meant what I said. Stay safe."

"Don't worry, Inky. I've got plenty of arrows left."

"And if all else fails, I'll just throw Sera into their line of defense." Bull punches Sera hard on the shoulder.

"Eliana?" Morrigan calls out to me impatiently, I sigh and dip my head towards the three of them, leaving them behind as we go further into the jungle.

The next blockade finds us soon, and luckily there are some of our men already fighting there. But also, the elves we've encountered earlier. Or perhaps these are different one's, but still... there's a lot of people to fight. And this fight takes significantly longer than the first one.

*I'll be exhausted well before we reach the Temple, at this rate.*

When we finally slay our enemies then, and after having seen the elves flee a second time, they were definitely the same group as before, I decide to stick to Cullen's plan. "Soldiers! Half of you, who are still able to walk and fight; find Commander Cullen, he's at the first blockade, trying to keep the roads safe from the red Templars. Help him! Cole, Cassandra... You two stay here with the other half and keep them safe."

Cassandra dips her head and Cole remains silent, as always.

But Cass holds me back by my lower arm for a moment, looking directly into my eyes. "I believe you can stop Corypheus, Eliana. You are stronger than he believes you are to be."
"Thanks, Cassandra. Please... return to me after we're done."

She nods and then we move on. Again, another blockade appears, but we can also finally see the Temple's gates coming into view as we approach said blockade.

"This must be the last one." I huff, and move the leaves slightly to the side as I examine the area. "No elves. Just the red Templars. Alright, everyone, let's make quick work of this group so we can finally get to the Temple!"

And so we fight, and I notice myself growing more and more exhausted as the fight drags on. As well as my companions, it seems. We're all spent at this point, and I hope to the Gods that there won't be much more fighting inside the Temple. For I'm afraid I won't be able to go on for much longer.

*It'd be nice to catch our breaths as we explore a nice and serene temple, no?*

With each strike from my daggers, I can feel my arms burning more and more. And my mana too, is being drained slowly. Once I get but a moment to myself, I quickly reach down into my hip satchel and take out a lyrium potion, chugging down it's contents in mere seconds. It gives me the power surge I needed to continue, and I can feel the power inside of my left palm building up. I never use the anchor, outside of closing rifts, but something tells me I should. So, despite there not being any rifts nearby at all, I lift my palm up and a bright green ball of light appears above the red templars. And it booms, and hums, and throbs and I can feel my head almost ringing from the power that is resonating from the mark in the sky. It swallows up the red templars entirely, leaving my companions alone. And within a flash, they're all gone. Vanished into the mark, and so the mark explodes one last time, leaving the rest of us to look away from the bright, blinding light that it leaves for a moment longer.

I pant, catching my breath, when I feel a strong, calloused hand on my arm. "You okay, Feathers?"

I nod. "I will be. Once we get inside." I point my chin towards the Temple then.

Vivienne hums. "So.. who will you be bringing with you and who will stay and guard this final blockade?"

"I go with the Inquisitor. That goes without say." Morrigan chimes in, resolutely.

Vivienne squints her eyes at the 'Witch of the Wilds'. If she disliked Solas, she must've really hated Morrigan with every fibre of her being. "Of course you'd say that."

I think on it for a moment. "Vivienne and Varric stay. Dorian, Morrigan and Solas... You three come with me."

Solas’ eyes seem shocked for a moment, was he hoping to have stayed behind? I quickly shrug off the unwanted thoughts. I need to focus for now, not question everything he does or says.

Varric's eyes sadden. "You better get back to us, Feathers. Or I'll be coming in there to drag you out myself. You hear me?" his voice breaks slightly.

"I will." I dip my head and give him my most grateful look. I really love my friends...

"You may need these." Vivienne throws her own satchel towards me, and out comes rolling a few more Lyrium potions. When I look at her quizzically, she shrugs her shoulders indifferently. "I'd hate to hear how your 'mana ran out' right before destroying Corypheus' plans, my dear."

"Thanks, Viv." I say in a teasing tone of voice. She rolls her eyes, but I can see her lips curling into
the faintest of smiles.

And finally, the four of us walk towards the Temple's entrance. And as we do, we can hear the murmurs of talking ahead of us. We all crouch down, sneaking our way further towards the source of the sound: and end up observing the Elves from earlier, conversing with the Red Templars. Corypheus and Samson, too. My eyes widen, I hadn't personally seen Samson since the fall of Haven. And even then he'd been miles away, standing atop the mountain next to Corypheus. He looked sickly pale, and monstrous, though not as much as his master. The Elves were aiming their arrows onto the red Templars. And their leader, I assumed, spoke in a dialect of Elvish I had not heard before: "Na melana sur, banallen!"

Samson scoffed, directing his attention towards Corypheus. "They still think to fight us, Master."

Corypheus walks towards the Elves threateningly. "These are but remnants. They will not keep us from the Well of Sorrow."

As he said that, I immediately glance over to Morrigan, who's right next to me. She shrugs her shoulders, not seeming to know either. Suddenly the stones around the Elves seem to glow a bright blue light, startling Corypheus for a moment. But then he bellows on: "Be honored! Witness death at the hands of a new God!"

The stones next to the Elves shoot out a golden light, cocooning Corypheus. It seems to weaken him temporarily but still he manages to grab the face of the Elven leader, and lift the man into the sky, wanting to crush his head, no doubt. But before any of us could even interfere, Corypheus' face 'melts'-would be the only right way to try and describe that- until there is no more than bones laying bare. And an explosion follows, leaving nothing but empty rags of clothes behind. Both the Elves and Templars are being thrown backwards, as we turn our heads away due to the sheer force of the explosion.

Then... Silence. And the Templars are following Samson into the Temple's doors, leaving behind the few scattered bodies of the Elves.

We all look to one another slowly, and emerge from our hiding spot, towards where Corypheus was standing not too long ago. But find nothing, and no one to threaten us any longer. He could not have been destroyed... Right? Of course part of me celebrates, hoping that it really only took this much to defeat the evil creature. But as I turn to look at Morrigan on my side, I can see the distrust and caution written all over her face. It's not over. Not yet.

I look at the group before us, and notice Samson halting, turning his head around to look at me. And see his wicked smile. He moves on, and a deafening screech is heard behind us. When I turn my head around, to look at the pile of rags Corypheus left earlier, I notice that said pile is coming to life. And a force seems to jump from it into the body of a fallen Templar. Then, the once lifeless body of the red Templar comes back to life, revealing it's now hideously disfigured face, mirroring Corypheus' own.

"It cannot be!" Morrigan exclaims loudly. Her eyes entirely full of shock, for the first time I'd met her.

"Across the bridge, now! Into the Temple!" I scream out.

And my companions do as they're told. Following into the Temple, running for our lives as we're being chased by whatever is left of Corypheus' being. We barely make it in time, and somehow manage to close the heavy doors to the Temple, just in time before we're being scorched by the Magister's extremely powerful attack. And as the doors of the Temple, finally shut closed, a golden
light envelops it. Seeming to seal it permanently. There's no way for him to follow us through here. But also, no way for us to leave again. Unless Solas knows some weird ass spell.

I let out a sigh of relief then as I drop myself against the door, onto the floor. I pant, again, trying to catch my breath.

"Who... were those Elves?" Dorian finally asks. Though I do not know why he's looking at me. I don't know it either!

"They were sentinels. Said to protect Ancient artifacts and places of worship." Solas says finally. My head snaps into his direction.

"You didn't think to tell us sooner?"

"I wasn't sure at first. But after hearing one of them speak before..." he actually manages to look apologetically.

"Fair enough.." I groan and sheath my daggers onto my back again as I gingerly get up from the floor. My body hurts already, and the bruises and cuts I've sustained from the earlier battles, are not helping matters. My fingers lingers on a recently made gash across my cheek, inches away from my jaw and neck. I look down at the blood now covering my middle- and index fingers.

"Allow me to heal-" Solas starts but I slap his hand away.

"No. I need you to regain as much mana and energy as possible. That goes for all of you, myself included. I can live with a few cuts and bruises, Solas. You can heal me once we get out of here alive." I smile warmly at him.

He dips his head. "I understand."

Morrigan seems to be focused on other things, however, as she's looking around the entrance of the Temple. "This place is... extraordinary." She gasps as her fingers trace the walls, painted with ancient murals.

"We have to go after Samson, we can gawk at the marvels of this Temple, later." I bump shoulders with Morrigan as I pass her by, resulting in an annoyed grunt from the witch. As we walk onwards I address Morrigan yet again. "You said Corypheus wanted the Eluvian, yet he mentioned a Well of Sorrows."

"I am uncertain of what he referred to." Morrigan answers me, while Dorian and Solas remain suspiciously quiet. Listening to us two, talking.

"Maybe they're the same? Maybe 'Eluvian' could translate into 'Well of Sorrows'?"

She shakes her head. "No. It seems an Eluvian is not the prize Corypheus seeks." I stop walking and glare at Morrigan angrily. She sighs and throws her hands into the air exasperatedly. "Yes, I was wrong! Does that please you? Whatever the Well of Sorrows might be, Corypheus seeks it, and thus you must keep it from his grasp."

I take a step forwards then. "Let's enter this Sanctum and find the Well of Sorrows before Corypheus or his people do. But I do wonder how Corypheus returned to life. We saw him die."

"And his life force passes on to any Blighted creature, darkspawn or red Templar."

Solas finally speaks up again then. "And Corypheus cannot die. Destroy his body, and he will
I remain quiet, however, biting down onto my lower lip hard. That would explain why Hawke and Varric hadn't been able to 'properly kill' him before. In the middle of the room, stands some type of 'monument'. Two stones next to one another and I can't help myself to walk up the steps to the monument, wanting to read the inscribed description underneath the stones. As I do, the floor stones beneath me glow a bright blue, almost like the Eluvian's color. And a faint, high pitched chiming sound is heard.

Morrigan chuckles. "It appears the Temple's magicks are still strong."

I point at the inscribed words underneath the stones. "Is that Elven? What does it say? Anything about the Well of Sorrows?"

Solas' smooth voice is heard then. "Atish'all Vir Abelasan. It means 'Enter the path of the Well of Sorrows'."

Morrigan huffs, clearly annoyed with Solas taking all the credit for translating. "There is something about knowledge. Respectful or pure. Shiven... Shivennen... Tis all I can translate. That it mentions the Well is a good omen."

I hum in agreement. "Must've been important."

"Supplicants to Mythal would have first paid obeisance here. Following their path may aid entry."

Morrigan gets off the glowing stone tile on the floor and when I step onto the same one we had been initially standing on, a lower pitched chiming sound was heard, and the same stone that faded to a bright blue before, now faded back to its original grey color. After messing about with the path a few times, and the glowy stone tiles to walk on, I realized it was a puzzle. And I had to step on each and every tile, without stepping on the same one a second time, finishing the path. When finally I had finished the puzzle, after a few cussing on my part-I will add-, all the tiles I had stepped on glowed the same golden light as the door at the entrance had done. A door across the room from us, across the monument with the magic tiles which glowed, opened magically on it's own.

"Well done. Let us see what awaits." Morrigan smiled.

"What else do you know of Mythal, Morrigan? I've heard some, but since we're here, I wish to know more. She was a Goddess."

"So one assumes. What is a God but a being of immense power? The Dread Old Gods were nothing more than dragons, after all. They rise as Archdemons, and they die. Perhaps Mythal was a powerful elf, a ruler among her kind. History often plays storyteller with facts."

Solas chimes in. "You admit lack of knowledge, and yet dismiss her so readily?" he all but snapped at her.

Morrigan sighs. "I do not dismiss her. I question her supposed divinity. One need not be a God to have value. Truthfully, I am uncertain Mythal was even a single entity. The accounts are... varied."

"This is don't know. There are varied accounts of Mythal?" I can't help but feel interested now, more than ever about the Elven Goddess.

"In most stories, Mythal rights wrongs while exercising motherly kindness. 'Let fly your voice to Mythal, deliverer of justice, protector of sun and earth alike'. Other paint her as dark, vengeful. Pray to Mythal, and she would smite your enemies, leaving them in agony."
"More Dalish tales, I assume?" Solas narrows his eyes as he speaks to Morrigan. This is the first time I've seen and heard Solas speak like this about the Elven Gods. It's.. odd. Back when Fenrian had mentioned the Elven Pantheon in Haven, Solas would refuse to comment on it. Now, however, he almost seems.. bothered by Morrigan's explanations. Like none of what she's saying comes even close to the 'truth'. But how would he know, anyways? It's not like her version of the truth could be much different than his version of the truth about Mythal.

"Well, Solas.. If you know more, please tell me." I look at him softly. And his expression immediately changes, from annoyed, to lovingly. Approving of my want for knowledge.

"The oldest accounts say Mythal was both of these, and neither. She was the Mother, protective and fierce. That is all I will say. This is not a place to stir up old stories."

Morrigan clicks her tongue. "Whatever the truth, all accounts of Mythal end the same: exiled to the Beyond with her brethren."

"How do you mean, exiled?"

"Tricked by the Dread Wolf, as all the Elven Gods were said to be, trapped in a land beyond the Fade. Many Dalish believe this is why the Elves fell from grace and their Gods did not save them. Or perhaps they were simply rulers slain by Tevinter. Who can say?"

We walk around a bit, until we follow a set of stairs, I wish to look around a bit more. Regaining my breath for one, and two, marveling in the beauty of the Temple, as promised to Morrigan. And it was beautiful. We see many painted murals, and pictures in mosaic on the walls as well. It is marvelous. Then, from the corner of my eye, I see something huge to the right side of me and I turn to face it: a huge statue of a wolf. 'Laying down' onto the floor, it's head turned towards the wall on it's left side. I find some type of scribbled down letter at the base of the statue. Others have been here before then, but how did they pass with the sentinels guarding the place? I read the letter aloud.

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The Rebel God.

The Dalish use 'harellan' to mean 'traitor to one's kin', but the word does not appear in any Elven text before the Towers Age. The Ancient root-word is related to 'Harillen', or opposition, and 'Hellathen', or noble struggle. The Dalish call Fen'Harel a God of deception, but I posit a far more accurate translation would be 'God of Rebellion'.

What he rebelled against is a story lost to time. In Dalish Legends, Fen'Harel seals away the other deities out of love of trickery. If we understood more ancient elven, we might find earlier versions of the Dread Wolf's story give him a more nuanced motivation beyond spite.

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"Why would this be here?" Morrigan stares at the statue, completely ignoring my reading.

"What's wrong with it?"

"It depicts the Dread Wolf, Fen'Harel. The one you just read about. Like I explained before, in Elven tales, he tricked their Gods into sealing themselves away in the Beyond for all time. Setting Fen'Harel in Mythal's greatest Sanctum is as blasphemous as painting Andraste naked in the Chantry."

"Don't some Chantries display statues of Andraste's Betrayer Maferath as part of the Chant?"

She hums. "It might fulfill a similar function. A reminder of vigilance for the faithful."
Solas again, chimes in. "For all your... 'knowledge', Lady Morrigan, you cannot resist giving legend
the weight of history. The wise do not mistake one for the other."

"Pray tell, what meaning does our Elven 'expert' sense lurking behind this?"

"None we can discern by staring at it."

"Alright, let's just leave already. But thanks, both of you, for the history lesson." I say in a sarcastic
tone of voice, tucking the paper I found into my pocket.

Finally, we go back down towards the door that had opened earlier and go through it. As we enter,
what seems to be the 'main hall' of the Temple, we notice a hole in the ground, and it's massive.
Samson's forces and himself are standing right before it, and again, the monstrous looking man is
smirking at me evilly before he and the others jump down into it. I click my tongue, aggravated with
him doing this. He's obviously trying to lure me into following him. And part of me.. fucking wants
to. Just so I could kill him myself. And I run after him, but Morrigan halts me by pulling me back
with a spell, of some sorts. "Hold! A moment. Are you so keen on attacking Samson that you forgot
to look around and use your brains?" she points towards a door on the opposite side of the hole in the
ground then. It's massive, and golden, just like the door of the entrance. "While they rush ahead, this
leads to our true destination. We should walk the petitioner's path, as before."

"In this case, I must agree with the witch. This is ancient ground, deserving of our respect." Solas
speaks up.

I sigh and nod. They are right, of course. I was too caught up in my emotions to try and stomp
Samson's annoying face into said 'ancient ground'.

"You see the urgency. We cannot find the Well of Sorrows unprepared."

"I agree." I turn to look at all of my companions in turn. "Let's go then. Let's not waste any more
time."
The Well Of Sorrows, Pt. 2

Chapter Summary

Eliana goes further and further into the Temple of Mythal, until they finally solve all puzzles and reach the end. Where they meet Abelas. In the meanwhile, Leliana and Josephine are notified of Rainier's arrival.. and the arrival of a strange woman, found near the Temple of Sacred Ashes. When Eliana leaves the Arbor Wilds, she immediately goes to speak to this strange prisoner.. and is gobsmacked by the information she holds. When placed before this woman, and speaking to her in private.. Eliana will be faced with her own emotions and will change... not in a good way. Eliana's old self is slipping further and further away from her grasp, and soon, she will be beyond saving. And the mystery prisoner realizes this as well. Elie's losing sight of what's right and what's wrong.. And soon, in the end, she will have to make one final decision: Will she go back to who she once was? Or will she follow in her lover's footsteps?

Abelas' translation: From a fan's perspective; “ven” means “to go”. Given the fact that he is saying “venavis” in a scene where he stops your progression forward, I assume that “-avis” acts to negate the preceding word. In short, it's a very, very stern command for “halt”.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Leliana:

"The Light shall lead her safely, through the paths of this world, and into the next. For she who trusts in the Maker, fire is her water. As the moth sees light and goes toward flame, she should see fire and go towards Light." I open my eyes up slowly towards the statue of Andraste. "The Veil holds no uncertainty for her, and she will know no fear of death. For the Maker shall be her beacon and her shield, her foundation and her sword."

"You pray for her?"

I smile softly. "I knew you were standing there, Josie."

"I apologize, I didn't want to disturb your chanting."

When I get up from my knees and turn around to face my friend, I see a troubled and yet questioning look on her face. "I know she is not Andrastian, yet I could not sit idly by. I had to pray for her safety, her wellbeing. Not just hers, the others as well."

She sighs and nods. Then a silence falls around the rookery. Finally, she breaks the silence again. "He's here."

She turns around to walk away, but knowing she wants me to follow, I fall into step with her quickly as we descend from the stairs. Into the library, towards the courtyard. "Rainier?"
"They brought him in early this morning, however. You should know they brought in a second prisoner." Josie hums. "She's quite the mystery. The guards found her on their way back towards Skyhold. They had to take a different route back to us, in case the Orlesians would be patrolling the borders."

"Where did they find this mystery prisoner?"

"Near the rubble of the Temple of Sacred Ashes, in fact. Entirely unconscious." Josie's brown eyes shine with a glimmer of curiosity. "I have not seen her yet. I wanted to bring you along with me."

"First let us speak to Rainier. We owe Eliana some sort of report when she returns from the Wilds." And then I take a deep breath and prepare myself to be hardened.

"Certainly. It seems our mystery prisoner is not yet awake anyways." Josie lets me enter the cells first. When I enter it, I curse inwardly. All those resources, all that time and energy spent into repairing and rebuilding this massive fortress, and still we haven't repaired the cells. It looks destitute, to say the least.

I almost feel bad for our old friend. When we reach his cells, Josephine wisely stays away. I know why. I feel the urge to smile, she has a soft spot for the fake Warden. And I know he has one for her as well. But I cannot let this cloud my judgement. Josie can decide to stay away, but I can't. I am the spymaster of the Inquisition. And I have hardened myself countless times before. I have stood face to face with old friends and foes, alike. And have not shed a single tear. Not even when Marjolaine betrayed me. The bearded warrior huffs slightly as he notices my presence in front his cell.

"Why am I back here?" he grumbles softly, his head hanging low. He does not even have the courtesy, or strength, to look me in the eyes.

"You almost sound sad about that."

"I wanted to die. I was ready to atone for my mistakes. And yet I am back here.." he pauses. Then he finally looks directly at me. He looks terrible. Dark circles under his eyes and his cheeks are hollowed. He must've been treated awfully at the cells of Val Royeaux. "Did she order you to bring me back?"

I say nothing, instead deciding on a simple nod of my head.

"Hmpf. Figures. She would not have let me go so easily, would she?"

"She considered you our friend, our companion. And despite what you have done, she believes in you. Perhaps right now, she is the only person who does."

"She is a remarkable woman."

I look to my left, where I can see Josie standing. She's clearly listening in on our conversation, but when my eyes meet hers, she shakes her head sadly. "She was upset she could not bring you with her to the Arbor Wilds. When she returns, she'll pass judgement on you. As she has done before, with the others."

He remains quiet.

"I will send the guards with some food and water." and with that, I turn around and walk away towards Josephine again.

"The mystery prisoner is just over there, in that cell." Josephine points to one a little ways further.
I've noticed she's whispering. She doesn't want Rainier to know she's there, but he's not that clueless, I'm sure.

"Very well. I'll go and speak with her."

Josie's eyes linger on the sleeping form on the cot in said cell and her eyebrows slightly raise upwards. When I follow her gaze, I can understand her reaction: strange clothes. We both look at one another at the same time, both of us holding the same surprised expression.

"Send for one of the guards, I want to hear his report on how they found her exactly." I all but bark out. But I know Josie doesn't blame me for it.

"Certainly." and with that, she exits the cells, leaving me standing before the one with the strange girl inside.

As I stand there, waiting for the guard to show up, I examine her more thoroughly. She's still passed out. She has beautiful thick auburn curls, cascading down her shoulders, falling slightly over her face now that she's laying there. She wears an odd type of breeches, they look light blue, though I cannot make out what type of fabric it is. It looks sturdy, yet she must've fallen down onto her knees before, because the breeches are ripped on her knees. And she wears a dark black type of shirt, but unlike the way we have them here. In fact, it looks mostly like the same type of fabric as the top was that Eliana wore when we first found her. Though we never got a chance to fully examine the fabric, since most of it was lost when she first got her armor. We never fully knew where she left her old clothing. Perhaps she burned it, or perhaps it could not withstand the harsh weather of Thedas. Lastly, her shoes are something I have never seen before. They look so odd, so out of place. They would do nothing for fighting. If one would strike down with a sword, her feet would be cut off. No protection, whatsoever.

"You asked for me, Nightingale?"

I turn around and see an exhausted looking guard. He's still wearing his outfit, though I suppose he was seconds away from changing into more comfortable sleeping wear. "I'm sorry I asked for you right after you returned. I promise you can get some rest soon. I just wanted to know-" I turn around to face the sleeping girl again. "-How and where exactly did you find her? And were there any oddities surrounding her at the time?"

The guard thinks for a moment. Then he simply shakes his head. 
"No, Nightingale. As I've mentioned to Lady Montilyet, we found her on the way back to Skyhold from Orlais. We had to take a different route, so we had to pass by the ruins of the Temple. When we passed by, however, Falk noticed a figure slumping to the grounds. When we approached, we found her, passed out in between the rubble. She looked fine, however, apart from being entirely pale and exhausted looking. No cuts, no bruises, nothing." I can almost hear the admiration in his voice then. "Falk had said he'd found it odd she had no injuries, considering the armor... or... lack thereof."

"You say that this Falk saw her slumping to the grounds?"
He nodded. 
"Aye. But like I said, once we approached, she was laying down. Unconcious the way she is now. We decided we'd throw her in with Rainier. He didn't protest. In fact, he said nothing at all. Not a word, during the entire trip. Didn't even fight us when we got him out of the cells in Val Royeaux."

Hmmm. Not what I wanted to know. I had hoped for more information about this stranger. But, I suppose it will have to do.

"Very well. I thank you. You're dismissed."
"My lady." he salutes me once more, then turns his heel as he leaves me. Once again, I am alone. Apart from Rainier a few cells further away.

I sigh and get even closer to the cell door, then I rattle the bars and call out to the stranger. "Wake up!"

It takes a little while.. but eventually, she stirs and moans softly as she opens her eyes. The first thing she does, is sit upright on the cot and examine her own arms and hands. As if she's looking for injuries, or perhaps checking to see if she's still in one piece? Then her eyes: big surprised hazel, eyes, stare right into my own.

"Who are you?" I ask her with no trace of emotion in my own voice.

"Am I with the Inquisition?"

Her accent is odd. Strange. A thick type of accent I've not yet heard before. "You are. Let me ask you again.. Who are you?"

She blinks a few times, looking around the cell with a strange emotions plastered across her face. "My.. My name is Sarah."

**Eliana:**

I stand in awe in front of the door, just marveling at it's beauty and age. When I try to open it, however, it's sealed shut. "Not budging. Let me guess, more puzzles?" I turn around to face Morrigan.

"It would appear so. There is, however... a danger to the natural order." She follows me towards the door and halts right next to me. Her hand gliding over said door. "Legends walked Thedas once, things of might and wonder. Their passing has left us all the lesser." Then her eyes dart over towards Solas and Dorian, whom are both still standing a little further away from us and the door. "Corypheus would squander the Ancient power of the Well. I would have it restored."

I huff. "I didn't expect you to be so sentimental about it, Morrigan."

"Trust me. Your surprise is matched only by my own." a sigh is heard. "Mankind blunders through the world, crushing what it does not understand: Elves, Dragons, Magic.. the list is endless. We must stem the tide or be left with nothing more than the mundane. *This* I know to be true."

She is right. Everywhere you go, everywhere you look, mankind fucks up everything. Not just in this world. It was like that in my own world as well. It seems no matter which Universe you go to, which world.. Men do not change. And it sometimes saddens me to know that I am one of this race. I turn my head sideways to glance back at Solas.

*The elves are always looked down upon, no matter what. And what have they done, besides fight for their culture? And yet again, mankind wanted to suppress them. Force them to abandon their own religion and beliefs. To leave behind their culture, their Pride. My own world and this one, are not so different from one another.*

If such a world like Thedas still holds magic and unexplainable, but yet beautiful things, I will not see it destroyed.

"I read more in the first chamber than I revealed. It said a great boon is given to those who use the Well of Sorrows.. But at a terrible price."
Then it hit me. Leliana's warning back at the Winter Palace: 'She is ruthless and capable of anything.' It would seem that Morrigan has some type of ulterior motive. Though I believe her sincerity about the Elves and the magic of this place, I feel like there's more she's not telling me. If she could lie so easily to me, back at the first chamber, then what else is she hiding from me. "What else did you not tell me? What did the altar say?"

"Like most Elven writing, it was insufferably vague. The term I deciphered was 'Halam'Shivanas' - The sweet sacrifice of duty. It implies the loss of something personal for duty's sake. Yet for those who served at this Temple, a worthwhile trade."

"So why didn't you tell me this earlier?" I all but spat at her then.

"I hoped to find more information. If I intended to cheat you, I would have feigned ignorance entirely. My priority is your cause, but if the opportunity arises to save this Well, I am willing to pay the cost."

"And gain what?"

"That is what we must discover. The rituals may point the way."

So we walk, further into the Temple of Mythal. Past the huge hole in the ground, and Solas finds his way next to me. Easily falling into step beside me, whilst the other two are walking slightly behind us. "Are you alright, Eliana?"

"There's... a lot to consider, Solas." I pinch the bridge of my nose in frustration. Then decide to lower my voice, so only he can hear me speak. "Morrigan wishes to use the Well of Sorrows."

His eyes widen momentarily. "That's assuming we even find it."

"You don't sound... unhappy about it, whether we do find it."

"I don't." he looks ahead of himself for a second. "Such a Well... could contain incredible powers."

"Exactly why I don't trust Morrigan with it." I snap at him.

"So who should take it's powers if not for her?" he looks down at me again. I can feel his irritable aura stinging on my skin.

"Exactly why I said there's a lot to consider." then I push onwards and leave Solas slightly behind me, until we reach yet another 'ritual', though to me they are no more than puzzles. And again, I take a while to figure it out. This second one is much larger than the last, and it has levers, which when pulled, opens several gates for me to continue on to. My companions wisely stay behind, letting me figure it out. They give me no pointers, and it takes me a while, and a lot of cursing yet again, to solve said puzzle.

"Time to proceed to the next ritual, I should think." Morrigan says softly when I step off of the platform.

We, or rather I, pass the second ritual slightly faster than the first two. I like to believe I'm getting the hang of it. When we move on to the 'last' one, Dorian walks next to me. "You're awfully quiet, my dove." Again, a lowered voice to but a whisper. I decide to answer in the same volume.

"As are you."
He hums. "I can't say I feel.. entirely welcome here. As a Tevinter in an Ancient Elven Temple." he smirks wryly.

"You are no more welcome here than Morrigan and I are. We're all humans. The only difference being is that you're from Tevinter. Believe me, I feel.. slightly out of place here as well. I suppose the only one who should feel.. welcome here, would be Solas." I fight the urge to glance behind me, to look at the topic of our current discussion.

"Yet he too, is awfully quiet."

I can almost hear the confusion, or perhaps even.. accusation in Dorian's voice. "I agree. You would think he'd have more to say. He normally never shuts up about the Ancients."

"Are you troubled by this.. Well of Sorrows?"

I nod. "When we came here, I thought the sole reason Corypheus was here, was because of an Eluvian. Now we learn there's some type of powerful Well of Sorrows, that holds unexplainable powers. What can he gain by taking it? Perhaps a better question would be: what would anyone gain once they take it's powers?"

"I don't know. There was never any mention of said Well in any of our texts. Even Tevinter wouldn't know about it. If they had known, I'm sure they would've tried taking it long ago. What I do know is that if it holds any power, no mage should take it."

I snort. "That rules out everyone then. We're all mages."

"Yes, and yet there are some amongst us that have no ulterior motive. Some amongst us that have not used their arcane abilities as much as others."

I stop dead in my tracks and stare at Dorian, right before the last platform. The other two have noticed we've been whispering in secrecy to one another, and stand back as well. Despite their growing urge to find out what exactly it is we're talking about.. no doubt. "What are you saying, exactly?"

"Look.." he sighs. "The way I see it now, we have three options when we find this mysterious Well of Sorrows. One, would be to destroy it."

"Not an option."

"Two, would be to let Corypheus take whatever powers lay within it."

"Hell no."

"The last... would be you take it's powers, instead."

"But why me. Why not you or Solas?"

"I don't think the Ancient Elves would be all too pleased with a Tevinter mage taking it's powers, wouldn't you agree?" He glances at the bald elven mage behind us, who's looking around the Temple, in slight awe it seems. "As for him.. You'd have to ask."

"Well.. we haven't even found it yet. I still have to solve these damn puzzles, first. Though according to Morrigan, this would be the last. And it troubles me, thinking on what's next to come once I solve it."
Dorian leans in to me and kisses me softly on the cheek. "You will be able to face whatever comes next, I'm sure of it, Elie. You're so strong, and you've proven yourself to be, time and time again. I believe in you. And the others, do too."

"Let's hope they're all still in one piece when we return to them. If we return to them." I sigh and walk towards what's supposed to be the last platform and solve it's puzzle relatively quick.

When the last chiming sound is heard, and I'm glad it is the last time, because my ears are ringing at this point. Morrigan speaks up, almost in a hasty, impatient manner. "Come. Let us see if the doors have opened."

"I want to look around a bit more. Perhaps learn some more about this Temple." I linger by a mural, it's text is written in common.

---------------------------------------------
'Song to Falon'Din

The people swore their lives to Falon'Din.
Who mastered the dark that lies.
Whose shadows hunger.
Whose faithful sing.
Whose wings of death surround him.
Thick as night.

Lethanavir, master-scryer, be our guide,
Through shapeless worlds and airless skies.'
---------------------------------------------

"Who is Falon'Din, in more detail?"

"Falon'Din. Overseer of funerals and guide to the Elven dead. I have heard the Dalish invoke him on their deathbed, or before quests from which they expect no return."

I sigh. A dark, saddened feeling overcoming me for some odd reason. "People cling to whatever gives them hope when their time comes. Death is never easy."

Morrigan chimes in again. "Perhaps that's why the Dalish sometimes refer to Falon'Din as 'The merciful one'."

Solas decides to join in as well, again, with the same sharpened tongue as he has used before when speaking to Morrigan about the Elven pantheon. "I do not believe they sing songs about Falon'Din's vanity."

"Do you know more, Solas?"

"It is said Falon'Din's appetite for adulation was so great, he began wars to amass more worshippers. The blood of those who wouldn't bow low filled lakes as wide as oceans. Mythal rallied the Gods, once the shadow of Falon'Din's hunger stretched across her own people. It was almost too late. Falon'Din only surrendered when his brethren bloodied him in his own Temple."

"Damn." I swallow hard. "How come they allowed him to even live?"

"One does not likely kill a God, Eliana. Even in Legend."

We move along, to another side chamber, guarded by some type of golden fence between stone half
walls. Another mural depicting another of the Elven pantheon. Again, I read it's inscription aloud:

Elven God Andruil,

One day Andruil grew tired of hunting mortal men and beasts. She began stalking the Forgotten Ones, wicked things that thrive in the abyss. Yet even a God should not linger there, and each time she entered the Void, Andruil suffered longer and longer periods of madness after returning.

Andruil put on armor made of the Void, and all forgot her true face. She made weapons of darkness, and plague ate her lands. She howled things meant to be forgotten, and the other Gods became fearful Andruil would hunt them in turn. So Mythal spread rumors of a monstrous creature and took the form of a great Serpent, waiting for Andruil at the base of a mountain.

When Andruil came, Mythal sprang on the hunter. They fought for three day and nights, Andruil slashing deep gouges in the serpent's hide. But Mythal's magic sapped Andruil's strength, and stole her knowledge of how to find the Void. After this, the great hunter could never make her way back to the abyss, and peace returned.'

"I believe we are in the presence of the Elven Goddess Andruil, Lady of the Hunt." Morrigan says in a sarcastic tone of voice.

"Or a Goddess of sacrifice, according to some." Solas speaks up yet again.

Honestly, I am somewhat curious and almost fascinated about both the Ancient Elven lore about their Gods, as well as Solas' and Morrigan's 'disputes'. And I decide to just watch and listen to them closely. I hardly ever get to see Solas so hot and bothered about his people.

"Truly? I wonder if that is why Andruil's patron animal is the hare. Tis said the Dalish invoke her before a chase. Especially if they happen to be stalking humans."

"Well... alright then. I suppose we're lucky there's no Dalish here that wish to hunt me." I say in a wry tone of voice.

"Or a Tevinter..." Dorian says cautiously.

"Some admire the Dalish for avoiding the 'gifts' of progress for so long. Many Orlesian commanders consider skirmishes against the Dalish excellent sport."

If I hadn't said it before, I'll say it now: Orlesians can be gross fucking people.

"Let's go towards the doors." I say resolute. I can't wait any longer, I've satiated my curiousity for the Elven Pantheon and truthfully, I just want to get this over with. This gnawing, dark feeling in the pools of my stomach. It almost makes me want to twitch in frustration.

When we get to the Sanctum again, the doors which were sealed shut before, now glow a bright blue. As was expected, ever since stepping into this Temple. I hover my hand against the door and look back at all three my companions. A look of caution written over my face. "I feel... something. I... we should...." I stop talking and take a deep breath then. "Let's be careful, everyone." And with that, I push open the massive golden doors and we are marveling at a huge open room.

When we enter it, there's a staircase leading upwards, facing yet another massive door. But at least
this one doesn't seem to require any rituals.

"Tis not what I expected. What was this chamber used for... Hmm."

Then my hairs all stand on end. I take a short intake of breath, almost like a loud gasp and close my eyes. A strong, powerful feeling surrounds me and I can feel something itching on my back: There's people here with us. By my guess, they're pointing weapons right at us. "We're not alone."

A hooded figure atop the staircase faces us, coming seemingly out of nowhere. "Venavis." Then he stares me down. "You.. are unlike the other invaders. You bear the mark of magic which is... familiar. How has this come to pass? What is your connection to those who first disturbed our slumber?"

I make sure I take a somewhat confident stance as I face the strange elf. "Slumber? Who are you, exactly?"

"I am called Abelas. We are sentinels, tasked with standing against those who trespass on sacred ground." I turn my head around and see what I felt earlier: a group of sentinel archers aiming their arrows right at the back's of our heads. Abelas continues. "We wake only to fight, to preserve this place. Our numbers diminish with each invasion. I know what you seek. Like all who have come before you, you wish to drink from the Vir'Abelasan."

Morrigan whispers to me from my left side. "The place of the way of sorrows. He speaks of the Well!"

Abelas, however, has heard her whispers. "It is not for you. It is not for any of you."

"What is the Well of Sorrows, anyways?"

"It is a path, one walked only by those who toiled in Mythal's favor."

"He speaks of priests, perhaps?" Morrigan whispers yet again. Though it is futile, Abelas can clearly hear her every word.

"More than that, you do not need to know."

"So.. you're elves from Ancient times? Before the Tevinter Imperium destroyed Arlathan?"

Dorian coughs uncomfortably behind me. "Er.. yes.. perhaps not mention Tevinter destroying the Elves, right in front of an angry Ancient?"

Abelas ignores Dorian however. "The Shemlen did not destroy Arlathan. We Elvhen warred upon ourselves. By the time the doors to this sanctuary closed, our time was over. We awaken only when called, and each time find the world more foreign than before. It is meaningless. We endure. The Vir'Abelasan must be preserved."

"I understand, Abelas, I do. But you must understand.. there is a very powerful Magister that seeks it's power. We cannot let him have it! And I fear even you and the other sentinels cannot stop him should he get there. We mean no harm, we only wish to use it's power for a greater good. Unlike Corypheus, we do not wish to use it's powers for war."

"It is not power. Not such as you could use, even if I permitted it."

"Yet Corypheus's minions are here to claim it. Unless you've defeated them already."
"We have not-"

I interrupt him. "-My point exactly."

His eyes shoot daggers at me but he continues nonetheless. "Trespassers you are, but you have followed rites of petition. You have shown respect to Mythal. If these others are enemies of yours, we will aid you in destroying them. When this is done, you shall be permitted to depart.. and never return."

Solas grabs me by the shoulder and looks at me with desperation. "This is our goal, is it not? There is no reason to fight these sentinels."

Morrigan turns to face me now, and her eyes are full of the same type of desperation. "Consider carefully. You must stop Corypheus, yes, but you may also need the Well for your own."

"I accept your offer, Abelas."

"You will be guided to those you seek. As for the Vir'Abelasan.. it shall not be despoiled, even if I must destroy it myself." he turns around and wants to walk off into the doors behind him, but Morrigan gasps aloud.

"No!" and she shapeshifts into a black crow before I can even stop her.

"Morrigan! Don't-" I stop as she flies after Abelas through the doors which are now closing behind the both of them. It happened all so fast, I couldn't do anything to stop it.

I groan and stamp my feet onto the floor, like a little kid. "Fucking... Morrigan!" I hiss out.

Dorian grabs me softly and hushes me slightly. "It's fine, Eliana. We will run into her, for now, it matters that we follow.. her." he points with his chin to another sentinel, a female, apparently. Hooded the same way Abelas was, and the other sentinels for that matter. As for the sentinels who were aiming their arrows at us, moments before: they have lowered their bows and stand quietly, watching us all.

I walk with the other two, towards the female sentinel and sigh deeply. "I just... I don't trust her. There is something she's not telling us. I won't let her have the well, or have her cause it destroyed."

"Mythal'Enaste." the female sentinel addresses me before she waddles off through the, now open, door in front of us.

"Well, at least we have a guide. Which is helpful, since Morrigan chased off on her own."

"She seeks to protect the Well of Sorrows."

"Does she, really?" I snap my head at Solas then. "The way I see it, she wants to take whatever power lies within it, for her own ulterior motive. Whichever that may be."

"And why are you so upset about this, Eliana? What if the power that lies within the Well of Sorrows is incomprehensible? It would be dangerous and unstable, considering the price that needs to be paid. Why not let the witch pay that price?"

I groan louder and shove Solas in a fit of anger and frustration. "Gods! You really don't get it do you? I don't trust her. Leliana warned me about this back at the Winter Palace. She is ruthless, Solas. And apparently capable of doing anything! I don't want her to ruin what we've taken so long to achieve."
We stand still, all of us, while our guide waddles further away from us. Solas looks frozen in place, face unreadable. Dorian wisely keeps his mouth shut. Knowing he shouldn't try to calm me down right now.

"And I don't want you to pay that price." Solas hisses back at me.

I want to open my mouth to say something, but instead our guide calls out to all of us. "Penshra! Ghilas vellathan!"

"I believe she would prefer that we remain close." Solas looks at me accusingly.

I roll my eyes, making sure he sees it and then continue to follow the sentinel. "I apologize." I mumble softly to her.

We make our way further into the Temple, and find more murals about the rest of the Elven pantheon. And as much as I'd like to linger and read them all, I realize the sentinel has zero patience, so I decide to meekly obey and follow her. In silence, we walk after her. And everytime we reach what seems like a dead end: a wall blocking our way, she mutters something inaudible, and the walls slide open. Granting us passage further and further in.

Here and there lay corpses of dead red templars and more of Corypheus's monsters. And often I see what seem to be like shrines, with old worn out coins laying in front of them. As if paying homage to whichever God or Goddess the shrine belonged to. It's oddly beautiful to be walking here, and I feel privileged that I am allowed to even set foot here. Of course, I am only allowed it because Abelas has permitted it. And he wishes us to leave after we face our enemies. I wonder where Morrigan is, and I pray to whomever that she doesn't wish to harm Abelas or any of the other sentinels. It would be unfair, it would be cruel if she did. These sentinels only seeking to protect what little is left of Mythal and her Temple. They are truly without ulterior motive, they have a pure cause, only to preserve their culture and keep what power they have from grabby and unpure hands.

*Like Morrigan's.*

Finally we reach a set of double doors and the guide stops walking, simply pointing ahead of her.

"End of the line, I suppose." I say wryly. But before I go through them, I make sure to bow slightly towards the female sentinel. "I don't know if you'll understand me, but I wish to thank you. Ma serannas."

The Elven sentinel remains impassive, not showing me any sign of emotion.

"Let us move on." Dorian says, still slightly uncomfortable it would seem.

When we go through the doors, we are outside yet again. The skies have gone dark, the birds are chirping and the cool breeze hits my face. I am able to breathe for the first time in what feels like forever. Though I know it is only temporary, because I know what lays beyond the walls that ward us three off from whatever is behind them. I can only guess, and my guess was right: The Well of Sorrows. Including the Red Templars, Venatori and Samson, fighting the remaining sentinels, brutally killing them. Savagely ending their lives. I shudder.

"You tough bastards! A day's march, hours of fighting and still fierce as dragons. The Chantry never knew what it was throwing away." Samson chuckles darkly as he addresses his red Templars.

"Samson, sir! Watch out!" One of them calls out to him as he spots us moving closer to them all.

My dark and menacing sneer the only written emotion on my face.
You fucker.

Samson scoffs. "Inquisitor. You and those Elf things don't know when to stop. We come to the back end of nowhere and here you are."

"I didn't come here for you. And it'd be best if you stand down. I guarantee, I'm not so much of a nice person once a fucking monster like yourself threatens my friends. I promise you, if you do not stand down, I will end you."

"You came too far this time. Corypheus chose me twice. First as his general. Now as the vessel for the Well of Sorrows. You know what's inside the Well? - Wisdom. The kind of wisdom that can scour a world. I give it to Corypheus, and he can walk into the Fade without your precious anchor."

I laugh, though it is a dark laughter. "A vessel, you say? That about shows you how much you mean to your master. You're nothing but an empty vessel, one that Corypheus wishes to use. He used you, Samson. He did it before and he will do so again. You're more stupid than you look."

"Am I? I'll carry it's power to Corypheus, one more task entrusted to me. It is an honor. An honor you would never begin to understand! Being force-fed Chantry Lyrium was good for something. This armor makes me a living fortress! Mind and body. I won't forget a word of the Well's knowledge. Corypheus will be unstoppable."

"Once Corypheus is that powerful, he'll just cast you aside."

"Huh. Is that the best you can do? You're no match for Corypheus! Even if you drink from the Well, you'll never master it's wisdom as he could! And this-" his armor starts to shine an almost blinding red light. He's charging it up.

"-is the strength the Chantry tried to bind. But it's a new world now, with a new God! So Inquisitor. How will this go?"

I smile wickedly at the monster before me. I reach down into my armor and grab the rune that Dagna had made, to be able to destroy his stupid fucking armor. "Power's all well and good. Until it's taken away." I hold the rune upwards in my hand. It's red glowing sword symbol inscribed into it, starts to flash a bright red. And Samson screams out in agony until he falls down to his knees onto the floor.

"What did you do? What did you do? My armor, it's gone... The Lyrium- I need it! Kill them all!"

I sneer one last time, before unsheathing my daggers and charging right at Samson.

Oh, he's mine.

And Dorian and Solas seem to catch on quick, as well. Solas hurriedly casts a protective barrier around Samson and I, so that nobody can interfere as I lunge at him. While Dorian then focuses his attention onto the remaining Red Templars, Solas joins in with him as they make short work of them. I only have eyes for Samson. "You're just like me now, Samson! No more armor protecting you-" I jump onto his body, digging both my daggers into his flesh as he screams unholy screams. "-You're no more than a scared little boy-" I stab my blades further and further up his torso, leaving a bloody trail of gaping gashes. He kicks me off of him and readies his blade to strike me down, but I've slowed him down insignificantly. I scramble back up to my feet and charge at him once again, and he manages to slash me across the shoulder. A diagonal cut from my left shoulderblade down to my right side. It hurts, of course it does, but the adrenaline is preventing me from being stopped by the pain. It's no more than a lick of fire burning my skin at this moment. Though I know it will be awful
With one big swing, I throw my two daggers into either side of his torso, and blood is dripping out of his mouth as he gurgles. I place my hand onto his badly damaged armor and charge up the magic within me. ",And this is where it ends. You were no more than his pet. I hope you find peace in the afterlife, you wicked monster!" And I yell, loudly as the lightning bolts emanate from my hand and leave my own body, entering his torso. I have made sure to place my hand near his heart, and the magic seems to be doing it's job as Samson stiffens for but a second but then continues to twitch and flail around miserably. Screaming in agonizing pain, I hope. And he stills, all too quickly and slumps down to his knees before me. His eyes rolling down into the back of his head, blood gushing from his mouth, his ears, every orifice I can see. I huff loudly, blowing away the stray tendrils of my hair from my face. Then I proceed to take the daggers from his torso, and pull them out, causing his body to once more move. But then he just lays there and I turn around. No doubt with blood all over myself.

I notice my two companions are staring at me, wide eyed. And the barrier has gone down, though in the madness and adrenaline of the fighting, I couldn't quite tell how long the barrier has been gone.

"Remind me to never get on your bad side.." Dorian finally mutters, his face almost pale.

Solas jogs over to me and quickly places his hands onto my body, onto the wounds I have sustained on my shoulder and side. I breathe in through my nose, relaxing as I feel his soothing cool magic tendrils stroking my skin and suturing the gashes and wounds shut. His eyes never leave mine, however. And he's staring directly down into them. While he's still healing me, I suddenly feel the butterflies within my stomach take flight. I get up onto my tippy toes and kiss him full on the mouth, and his hands move from my torso, into my hair. His fingers knotting into the tendrils of my bloody and sweaty hair. Both of us are covered in bloodstains and splatters, but neither one of us cares. This is no more than a passionate kiss of victory and the knowledge of knowing that we both survived it. All the fear, immediately gone. Just enjoying one another's lips and taking advantage of the needy and passionate lust that overtakes us completely. Normally, I wouldn't ever find this type of scenario romantic: bloody corpses all around us, red templar and sentinel alike. Covered in blood and muckus, sweat dripping down our brows, and I don't even want to know what I smell like right now. But we still take advantage of it, we seize the moment while we can.

A polite cough is heard behind us then, and when my lips part and my eyes flutter back open, the first thing I see is Solas' half smile, and the heated passion in his eyes. Then my eyes snap towards an amused looking Dorian.

"If you two are quite finished?" he smirks widely.

Then Abelas appears out of nowhere, followed by Morrigan who seems to shapeshift back into human form. "Abelas!" I call out to him, as his eyes dart over towards the Well that's behind us all. He ignores us all however, and runs towards said well, creating a set of steps as he does. Morrigan uses her magic to appear right before him, she's now between Abelas and the Well. And they're facing eachother off. I follow quickly, with Solas and Dorian behind me.

"You heard his parting words, Inquisitor. The elf seeks to destroy the Well of Sorrows!" Morrigan says angrily as she stares Abelas down.

"So the Sanctum is despoiled at last."

"You would have destroyed the Well yourself, given the chance."

Abelas takes a threatening step towards Morrigan then. "To keep it from your grasping fingers!
Better it be lost than bestowed upon the undeserving!"

"Fool!" She hisses at him. "You'd let your people's legacy rot in the shadows!"

I decide to step in then, pushing Morrigan back. "Samson's dead. Corypheus needed him. Without him, there's no vessel to claim the Well's power."

Morrigan throws her hands into the air. "The moment we leave, he will send more forces to secure this place. The Well clearly offers power, Inquisitor. If that power can be turned against Corypheus, can you afford not to use it?"

Abelas' voice has lowered as he addresses me then. "Do you even know what you ask? As each servant of Mythal reached the end of their years, they would pass their knowledge on.. through this." he gestures at the pool of water below him. "All that we were. All that we knew. It would be lost forever."

I feel a sharp pang of pain in my chest then. "I'm so sorry, Abelas. It can't have been easy, all those years, decades even, holding on to what's left."

"You cannot imagine-" his eyes visibly sadden. "-Each time we awaken, it slips further from our grasp."

Solas speaks up from next to my side. "There are other places, friend. Other duties. Your people yet linger."

"Elvhen such as you?" Abelas asks Solas cautiously.

I blink rapidly a few times.

Elvhen... such as... Solas?

"Yes. Such as I." Solas answers Abelas resolutely.

Abelas looks away for a moment, then his eyes find mine again. "You have shown respect to Mythal, and there is a righteousness in you I cannot deny. Even if you are human. Is that your desire? To partake of the Vir'Abelasan as best you can, to fight your enemy?"

I dip my head. "Not without your permission, Abelas."

"One does not obtain permission. One obtains the right." he steps away from the Well then, walking away, facing me now. "The Vir'Abelasan may be too much for a mortal to comprehend. Brave it if you must, but know you this: you shall be bound forever to the will of Mythal."

Morrigan scoffs. "Bound? To a Goddess who no longer exists, if she ever did?"

Abelas ignores her catty remark however. "Bound, as we are bound. The choice is yours."

"You, an Ancient sentinel, protecting Mythal's Temple, still exists. So is it plausible to think Mythal still exists as well?" I ask the elf cautiously.

He smiles faintly. "Anything is possible."

Morrigan chuckles, apparently at my 'stupid' question. "Elven Legend states that Mythal was tricked by Fen'Harel and banished to the Beyond."

Abelas hisses back at the witch. "Elven Legend is wrong. The Dread Wolf had nothing to do with
"her murder."

"Murder? I said nothing of." But Morrigan is cut short by Abelas.

"-She was slain, if a God truly can be. Betrayed by those who destroyed this Temple. Yet the Vir'Abelasan remains. As do we. That is something."

"Are you leaving, Abelas?" part of me almost feels sorry for the man.

"Our duty ends. Why remain?"

"There is a place for you, lethallin.. if you seek it." Solas says quietly.

"Perhaps there are places the shemlen have not touched. It may be that only Uthenera awaits us. The blissful sleep of eternity, never to awaken. If fate is kind."

"Thank you for this gift, Abelas." I bow my head.

"Do not thank me yet, Shemlen."

"Malas amelin ne halam, Abelas." Solas addresses him one last time, before Abelas nods his head towards Solas' spoken words and turns to leave. "His name. Abelas means sorrow. I said... I hoped he finds a new name."

When we are all alone, just the four of us again... Morrigan points towards an Eluvian standing behind the Well of Sorrows. "You'll note the intact Eluvian. I was correct on that count, at least."

"You want a cookie or something?" I hiss at her as I narrow my eyes. When I see her confused reaction I sigh. No use in smacking her with my Earthly phrases now, she won't even understand them. "Can Corypheus still use it to travel the Fade?"

"You recall when I took you through my Eluvian. I said each required a key? The Well is the key. Take it's power, and Mythal's last Eluvian will be no more use to Corypheus than glass."

Solas walks up to me, abruptly taking hold of my shoulder then as he turns me around to face him. "An Eluvian? Her Eluvian? What does she mean, Eliana?"

I bite my lower lip. Well, that lovely romantic moment we've shared earlier sure is ruined now. No thanks to Morrigan. "There was an Eluvian back at Skyhold." Morrigan's eyes dart over to me, for a moment I can see an accusing look in them. Or perhaps she's mad that I told Solas of it. But then I see her 'stepping down', as she no doubt realizes she was the one who fucked up first.

I note Solas' expression, he seems to be thinking, but then his narrowed eyes meet mine again. "An Ancient Elven artifact, in Skyhold? When were you planning on telling me about this, Eliana?"

I scoff. "I'll tell you my secrets if you tell me yours." I cross my arms defiantly at Solas. And he opens his mouth to say something, but closes it quickly again.

Another cautious cough behind us; Dorian. "I don't want to interrupt your little.. dispute, but there is still the matter of this Well."

Morrigan hums in agreement. "True. I did not expect the Well to feel so... hungry."

I walk back over to Morrigan and hold her back with my arm against her torso. "Hold on a moment. Let's speak about this first. You make it sound like I've already made up my mind about who's going to take it's powers."
"And you haven't yet? I thought you'd agree I were to be the best option."

"I never agreed to anything, Morrigan." I narrow my eyes threateningly at her.

"I am willing to pay the price the Well demands. I am also the best suited to use its knowledge in your service."

"Or more likely to your own ends." I counter her, my arms still crossed.

"And what would you know of 'my ends'?"

"All this time you've been going on and on about how you should be the one to drink from the Well, to take it's power. Why is it that only you seem to want it so badly? I feel like there's more behind your reasoning, Morrigan. You may have aided us before, but it does not mean I take your explanations at face value so easily."

"So your point?" She takes a step closer to me, but I have just faced down Samson, I'm not afraid of her empty threats.

"I do not trust you."

"Of those present, I alone have the training to make use of this. Let me drink, Inquisitor!"

"Oh really? You're not the only mage here, you know."

"I have studied the oldest lore. I have delved into mysteries of which you could only dream! Can you honestly tell me there is anyone better suited?"

"What about Solas?"

He quickly answers me, however. "No. Do not ask me again."

Before I can even mention Dorian, he raises his hands up defensively. "I have told you before my reasoning behind not wanting to take it's powers, Eliana. Please. Don't even ask me."

"Then I would be." I say resolute.

"You lead the Inquisition. This is not a risk you can take."

"Oh my dear Morrigan, you are so good at making it sound like you care about my wellbeing." I say in a sarcastic tone of voice.

Desperation seems to be her only reasonable emotion then. "I have the best chance of making use of the Well.. for everyone. Let me drink!"

"Thoughts?" I ask my other two companions.

"She is right about only one thing: we should take the power which lies in that well." Solas speaks plainly.

"As I've said before, Eliana. You know my thoughts." Dorian sighs.

Morrigan breaks the silence that falls shortly after Dorian's reply. "Enough deliberation. Give me your decision."

"If anyone is to use the Well, it will be me."
"So you will take what little knowledge you can understand, and let the rest go to waste?"

"And who's to say it will go to waste?"

"I do." She hisses.

I ignore her however, and walk towards the pool of water. Solas rushes to my side. "Vhenan! This is not what I meant!"

I sigh and look at him sadly, taking hold of his hand gently. "I know, Solas. I know. But I will not risk Morrigan fucking this all up. Neither one of you wish to drink from it. So what other options are there? You don't want it destroyed, you don't want me to drink from it, and I don't want Morrigan to take it's powers."

"Eliana... please," he's pleading with me.

"I will use the Well for good intentions, only Solas. You know this. And perhaps this is a chance for a human to make up for all the wrongdoings the Elves have had to endure over the centuries. What if this.. simple thing, can be that much more? What if I can be more?"

He lets go off my hand slowly, until his fingers no longer touch my skin. And I slowly emerge myself, into the water. I stand, knee deep, into the pool of cool waters and feel it's magic. Blue, soft, lights embrace me gently, cradling me almost as I do this. I can hear the faintest of whispers, filling my ears, but not quite reaching my mind. Not quite being able to make out anything from it.

A slight fog covers the waters now, and I can feel power resonating through me. If I can feel this by just stepping into the water.. then how immense is this power, truly? But I've no second thoughts about my decision. I don't want Morrigan to have this, don't want her to screw everything up. She was the last to join us, and I will not have her risk it all. I look up, as I face my three companions and I can feel the corners of my mouth curling upwards, into a bright smile.

*It feels.. incredible.*

My body almost hums, my own magic, entwined with the magic from this Well's waters. I can feel it softly stroking my insides, it's very.. personal. Very.. intimate.

I can see the disdain on Morrigan's face, she completely hates my guts right now. Whereas both Dorian and Solas are looking in both awe, and in confusion as the lights engulf me, taking hold of my figure slowly. Like a mother, almost, cradling her child. I finally cup my two hands together and take the water into my cupped hands, slowly lifting it towards my mouth. When my mouth touches it's cool liquid, I open wide and swallow the water down in one gulp. Then, the cool water almost turns immediately to liquid fire in my mouth, creeping down my throat. I cry out in pain, and close my eyes in an instant reflex to it's painful feeling. And when I open them again, I am still in the Well of Sorrows, but it's water has disappeared and I am surrounded by complete darkness and fog.

I can hear whispers and voices all around me. From behind me, in front of me, both sides of me. It's almost maddening as I try to focus on one single voice, to try and make out what it is they're all saying to me.

"Garas quenathra?"

It's Ancient Elven, and yet I can understand every single syllable of the two words. I can understand Elven! It's remarkable. "Why am I here?" I look around, but see no faces. "There is a Tevinter Magister by the name of Corypheus. He wishes to rip open the Veil. I must learn how to stop him!"
Some more whispers follow after my explanation. And I hope and pray that they believe I'm sincere. I hope I am worthy enough. "I will give you anything you seek. If you will only help me destroy Corypheus. Take whatever price you wish."

"Vir Mythal'Enaste."

Suddenly, several small blue orbs appear in front of my face, as they rush into my head, seeping into my skin. I instinctively reach for my head, in order to 'protect it'. Though I feel no pain, just.. a strong and powerful feeling. It's insane, the amount of flashes that appear on the inside of my eyelids as my eyes are closed. I see millions of strange faces: all elves, all with the same vallaslin on their faces. I see flashes of white crystals, flashes of magic being used by said elves. Places, beautiful floating homes, high, far up in the dark skies. Amongst the stars. I see elves laughing, dancing, kissing, hugging, holding little one's, and then I see sentinels. Protecting.. something, someone. I see a woman, black hair. Her hair is adorned by some type of headpiece, representing almost what seems like a dragon's horns. And to her sides, I see flashes of only seconds of other elves, wearing the same type of armor she is wearing. One man, directly by her side, wielding flames. Long dark hair, a loving smile on his lips but a determined and strong look in his eyes. I see two male elves, looking similar to one another, cloaked in some type of darkened aura almost. I see a female with long red braids, a bow strapped to her back. Another woman, skin as pale as snow. Hair equally as white with a horned, but differently horned, headpiece adorning it. And two men. One with some type of hammer in his hands, a book strapped to his hip. And lastly, the last man, dark auburn dreadlocks peeking out from underneath a wolf's mask, preventing me from seeing what he looks like.

The Elven Pantheon!

Then, multiple green flashes of light, and the images before me distort and crumble. Breaking the 'dream like' visage. And a loud boom is heard, as I can feel the orbs from earlier burning into my skin. I scream, without sound, as the searing pain is felt in my every nerve. "Vir Mythal'Enaste."

The orb, the one Corypheus had, flashes before my eyes, a couple of times before I can see no more than complete darkness.

"Eliana? Eliana!" I hear Solas' voice call out to me.

I open my eyes and see nothing but dark skies above me, and the faces of my companions and lover hovering above me. I quickly get up from the ground and notice the waters of the Well are gone. I walk around, stumbling slightly, as I try to get my bearings. I saw so much information earlier, flash by in mere seconds, I could not understand, not fully comprehend what it all was that was shown to me. I'm still trying to give it all a place. And I feel... so... different. So much fuller. Like I am no longer just me. Like there's millions of others who are with me, at all times. And it brings discomfort, pleasure, joy, love, and angst all at once. I reach for my head, as Solas rushes to my side, helping me stabilize myself. "How... do you feel?" He asks me softly, gently holding me upright, but still with enough strength to prevent me from falling back down to my knees.

And when I look up into his eyes, he takes a step backwards from me. His eyes flashing with a familiar emotion. But yet, one I personally, have not ever seen before. It's someone else's familiar feeling. It's a memory, of his eyes.. Or eyes similar to his..

He stepped backwards, why? Did I startle him? It's like he's looking at an entirely different person.

I say nothing, simply trying to get my bearings. Trying to place everything. When I turn around, I see grey smoke surround me once more and I feel the sudden urge to laugh. I feel so... strong. It's exhilarating! Blue light emanates from my entire body. If all light were to go out within this World now, I would be a brightly burning beacon, that's how strong and blinding the blue light is. Then, the
figure of Corypheus comes into view as he finally, makes his way towards the, now empty, Well of Sorrows. And the moment he sees it empty, and notices me. He screams loudly in anger, in defeat. I have bested him, yet again. And he lifts himself up into the sky and hovers over to us, in utter rage.

Morrigan calls out to all of us then. "The Eluvian!"

And as I ran towards it, my companions at my heels, the Eluvian 'opens', it's glass rippling due to the sheer force that's still emanating from my body. The Well was the key. And now I am that key. "Through the mirror!" I cry out, the slight panic heard in my voice, because of Corypheus creeping closer and closer towards us all. I wait, I'll be the last to pass through, knowing that if I go first, the Eluvian would close again. I push everyone inside, quickly, Solas being the last to go through. A concerned emotion spread across his handsome features, and I too, push him through quickly. Corypheus creeps even closer to me, and the water that had disappeared earlier, reappears in a swirling vortex. Inside; a blue glowing figure, though I cannot see who, or what it is. But I understand it's meaning: It's protecting me. And it's holding back Corypheus as he clashes against it, and tries to claw his way through the watery shield, trying desperately to reach me. And I jump through, seeing no more than white light as I fall through to the 'other side'.

(...) The other side, was the Eluvian back at Skyhold. I was the last to emerge from the mirror, as it slumbered yet again, behind me. Though I have no doubts that Morrigan was the one who 'willed' the mirror to return us to her own. Without a second to compose myself, I get up and barge out of the room near the gazebo, the others following quietly behind me. "We have to find Leliana, have her send out reports, calling the others back to us. They're still in the Wilds."

"I think Corypheus has turned elsewhere, now that you've bested him again, Elie." Dorian hushes me, slightly.

"Be that as it may, I want them back here as soon as possible!" and I continue onwards, towards the rookery, where I expect to find my spymaster. The others leaving me be, except for one. As I enter the rotunda I hear him.

"Eliana." he calls out to me as he reaches for my arm and abruptly halts me. When I snap my eyes into his direction, I immediately soften when I note his pained expression. "Please.. Let me hold you." and without me being able to say anything, he pulls me into his embrace. He's holding me so tightly against him, I can do no more than wrap my arms around him as well. Even if I'd try to struggle, I could not succeed. He's holding me so strongly. He breathes into my ear as his face is buried into my hair. "I was so worried for you, vhenan."

I pull back slightly, and see a single tear roll down his cheek. My eyes widen and I immediately kiss the cheek with the lone tear. Then I proceed to kiss his closed, wet, eyes softly. "Don't, Solas... Don't-" my own voice breaks now. "I won't ever leave you. No matter what. Do you hear what I'm saying? Even if I somehow get lost, even if I somehow lose you, I will always find my way back to you."

He hangs his head and I cup it quickly. "What is wrong, Solas? Why do I feel like there's so much you're not telling me? Why did I feel things, earlier? In the Wilds? After I had absorbed the power of the Well.. There was so much... emotion when I looked at you. And I could feel you felt it too. I
could see it in your eyes."

"Eliana?!" Leliana's voice is calling out to me from way above us. When we both glance up, we see her puzzled face as she's hanging over the balustrade of the rookery. "You're back? Maker be praised!" and she moves away, we hear her footsteps as she quickly jogs down the stairs.

In the small amount of time we have to wait before she reaches us, I look back into Solas' eyes, urging him almost. But he simply kisses me gently on the lips. "Another time, vhenan." and he lets go off me, right before Leliana appears behind us two.

"Where are the others?"

"Morrigan and Dorian are here. The others, still back at the Wilds. I need you to call them back, immediately, Leliana."

She stands there for a moment, motionless. Then she snaps back to attention. "I'll ask later how you managed to get back here without them. I'll get to it right away. But Eliana?" I give her a quizzical look. "Rainier is here."

My face hardens.

"And... Sarah."

I feel my head start to throb heavily, and almost fall over as I lose all control of my leg muscle strength. "Who?!" I snap at her, taking a step closer to her. I can read it in her eyes, she knows which Sarah I'm talking about.

"Sarah Coutts."

"Take me to her, now!" before we leave however, I take Solas by his arm and pull it harshly. "You're coming with us."

Solas doesn't even have a chance to say something before I drag him along with Leliana and I. And she's taking us towards the cells of Skyhold. I decide not to say anything, not until I see her with my own eyes.

*There can't be another Sarah Coutts here in Thedas, right? It can't be a mere coincidence that a strange woman from Thedas shares the exact same name as my childhood friend. My friend, who sent me back to Thedas with the help of her mother. It can't be!*

As we enter the cells, my eyes immediately land on an open cell, with no one in it. Leliana notices. "We've taken Rainier to his old room. I figured you didn't want him to be a prisoner any longer than he had to be." Then she points me to a cell, that is still occupied. A woman with long thick auburn curls, cascading down her shoulders. And I'd recognize that silhouette from anywhere.

I slowly walk towards the cell and grab hold of the bars, and as I do, Sarah turns around slowly. Her eyes immediately tearing up as she sees me: I'm still a right mess. My armor still damaged from the fighting in the Wilds, entirely covered in dried up, crusty, blood. No doubt looking like I'd just stepped out of a horror movie, in Sarah's eyes. "How-" I start but I lose my breath, and my voice with it. Where I'd felt so powerful and strong before, I feel so small and weak now.

"I followed you." she says softly, her voice overcome with emotions. She lunges at the same bars I'm holding and our hands touch through the iron bars. She doesn't look that much older than the last time I saw her. She must've come after me almost immediately after I left. Perhaps a few weeks, months after?
"Open this cell, now!" I bark at Leliana. Who in turn, quickly rummages through her pockets and finds the correct key. She opens the cell door and I immediately cling to Sarah's body.

Sarah groans slightly. "Ugh. Look I'm really fucking glad to see you, alright, Sassenach? But you're disgusting!"

I take a step backwards and tilt my head back as a loud, shrill laughter escapes me then. "How in seven shades of shit, did you manage to get here and why?!"

The other two are just watching our exchange, silently, not saying a word. Equally as curious about Sarah's arrival as I am, no doubt.

"Samhain, remember? I went back to the stones. But I did some research first. About Thedas. I found it, Elie! Information."

"What? How?! I've looked into every book possible, looked into histories of long forgotten places that might have existed and found nothing! For days I've searched."

"That's because you didn't look online, Elie." her eyes dart back over to my two companions and for a moment too long for my liking, they linger on Solas. She pulls me into another embrace, and whispers quietly into my ear: "It's a fictional place, Elie. Thedas is from a game."

My eyes widen as she releases me, a disgusted look on her face. She must've been thinking about the questions that would arise from the other two had they heard her, hence the reason she decided to hug me and whisper it to me. Despite her obvious disgust for me at this moment, covered in all sorts of dried up liquids and, possibly, pieces of flesh. She simply nods. "What?" is all I can manage.

"I've delved into it's lore and information, Elie.... Perhaps we should discuss this... privately." she lowers her eyes, obviously just as much intimidated as I was the first time I laid eyes on our spymaster.

I shake my head, trying to wrap my head around everything. "Well... er... Leliana... Meet Sarah, my friend from Earth." when I say the word 'friend', Leliana finally visibly relaxes.

She dips her head. "It's a pleasure to meet you, any friend of Elie, is a friend of ours. And.. I would like to apologize for treating you so... badly, earlier."

I snap my head into Leliana's direction. "What did you do?"

Sarah chuckles. "Calm down, Sassenach! She didn't do anything, specifically. Just... intimidated me, a lot. Trying to get information out of me. I don't blame her. I kind of knew what I was getting myself into, from the stories you've told me." Then her eyes fall back onto Solas, who's still looking confused as all hell. I slightly feel bad for him. "And this must be Solas. The one I've heard sooooo much about." she snickers, but immediately her eyes darken. Part of me momentarily wonders why, but I decide not to question it right now.

I cough, trying to hide my obvious blush. "Er... yes. This is him. Solas, this is Sarah."

Solas immediately straightens himself and extends his hand politely out to hers to shake it. "Nice to meet you, Sarah."

She shakes his hand. "Wanna know all the things she's told me of you, then?"

I quickly punch Sarah into the stomach with my elbow, a little too hard apparently. I thought I was being gentle...ish, at least. "Oof!" she exclaims as she immediately reaches for her stomach. "Shit,
Elie! What have you been eating? You're strong as an ox!"

"I... There's no need." Solas says quietly, a slight smile on his lips. He's eyeing me questionably though.

"Leliana, thanks for bringing me to her, but please. those reports? The others?" I urge my spymaster, whose smiling broadly from ear to ear now.

"Of course, Inquisitor. Immediately." And with that, she takes her leave.

"I must ask.. what is this... Samhain... business Sarah mentioned, vhenan?" Solas immediately goes back to business as Lelie left. Undoubtedly happy that the conversation's topic is no longer about him.. or us.

"Samhain was a celebration back at Earth, many still celebrated it when I was there. It was called Halloween, or 'All Hallows Eve' by most. Though Samhain, originally, was only celebrated by a select few people. Some you may call, witches, but without the magic part of course. Since Earth had no magic. Though... I suppose, some might argue about that now, seeing as how I traveled between two worlds, as well as Sarah has. In any case, these 'witches'." -I used airquotes. ”-Were said to have the power to open up 'portals' as it were, during Samhain. Only during that, and some other celebrations, by means of a chanting. A verse spoken out loud, a ritual performed. It is how I got back here, without the celebration that is. Sarah's family still strongly believed in these rituals, rites and way of living. Hence they knew how to get me back, and how she managed to get here too, apparently."

"Though I am sure would we use our magic right now, she would lose her shit." A smirk appears on my face.

Solas dips his head. "Fascinating. Sarah, you said earlier you knew of Thedas, whereas Eliana could not find anything about it in books."

Sarah immediately scrunched up her nose. "Er, yes.. Though I would very much like to discuss that only with Elie, if you'd not mind."

"Why?" his voice suddenly went super dark and menacing. And for a second, I wanted to punch Solas in the stomach too. But Sarah stood her ground.

"I don't know you, yet. Despite hearing many things. I'd rather.. not get into it with you around, if that's alright."

"I'm sure Eliana could attest that I am to be trusted."

"Solas." I hiss at him, warning him not to continue on about it.

"It's fine, Elie. Listen-" she steps forwards, closer to Solas and addresses him, solely now. "-I don't want to be rude or anything, but I've read some things in my research and I am not sure how to put them into words myself. I'd rather you, or anyone else for that matter, not get the wrong ideas. Thedas is not a 'real' place back at Earth. It was created, like a fictional place. By people who have nothing in common with you. And so were you, as people; created."

"Sarah... some things from Earth cannot be explained here in Thedas, even in the simplest ways."

"Yeah but-" I cut her off.

"-I just left a place, seen things, felt things, heard things, that were all too real. I've seen death and
destruction for months on end. No matter who we were back at Earth, it means little now that we are both here. That's what I had to accept during my stay here in Thedas. It doesn't matter who you were back at Earth anymore. You're here now, and it's all real."

She narrows her eyes at me. "I suppose you're right." But I can hear the tone of her voice. This discussion is not yet over.

"Solas." I turn around to face him, he looks... distraught, almost. "I will take Sarah with me to my chambers and I do not wish to be disturbed by anyone. Unless if it's about the others."

He dips his head. "As you wish." but by the tone of his voice as well, I can tell he's thinking just like Sarah: our conversation is not done either.

* * * *

When Sarah steps away from the folding screen in my chambers, she's wearing a simple linen dress. One I had in my closet for a long time, but had yet to wear it. It's slightly too small for her, her bosoms clearly about to bulge out of the dress, but for now: it'll do. It's no more than a casual, beige dress, really. But frankly, I don't want to put armor on her. She doesn't need, won't need it. She'll stay here in Skyhold, no matter what. Until she leaves, if she's planning on leaving, that is..

"Are you not happy I'm here?" she asks me then.

I take a seat on my chair and sigh deeply. "I am, but there's... so much going on. You have... quite a terrible timing, Sarah." I say wryly. "We're just about to, hopefully, defeat Corypheus. There's four of us who just got back from an exhausting trip. I've... been through a lot emotionally, mentally, whilst staying at this place for a while.. Like, we literally just got back before I came to see you."

"I can see that. How about a bath?"

"Ugh. Not now. Sarah, what about John?"

"He's fine, Elie. I wouldn't leave him if I didn't think he'd be alright. I promise. He's dealing with Mary's death, as best he can. But he'll live."

"So did you just come here to tell me Thedas is fake? And do you plan on staying here, or?"

She sighs and starts pacing back and forth in my room. "Right. So I'll tell you everything that I should tell you."

"Should tell me?" I ask her confusedly.

She nods. "I've shared the information with my mum, and told her the things you've told me. Then discussed if I should go after you and tell you all, or not. So, on her advice, I've decided to tell you what I know, without exposing too much. You see, we believe, that you being in Thedas, changed... some things in the initial storyline of the ... game." she looks to me and stops pacing for a little. "Yet, from what I remember you telling me when you were at Earth, and from the information I've found on the storyline... not much else has changed. Aside from the fact that you are now Inquisitor."

"Somebody else should've been Inquisitor?"

"Aye. Though the game had.. several options on who was going to be that person. Either a qunari, an elf, a noble human or a dwarf."

"There was an elf who sacrificed herself so I could get out of the Fade, before I met the Inquisition.
Sarah snaps her fingers. "Exactly! That wasn't in the story's lore. And thus, so far, that seems to be the only thing that changed. So... the future has changed... but not enough so to fuck with the entire universe." She rubs her head. "I don't know. It's just our theory, right? We believe, some things are meant to happen, in order for the storyline to continue down it's normal path. And so far, you, without the proper knowledge of which 'right' decisions to make, have done alright. You haven't changed anything. You're following the right path. As far as it can be right, there are thousands of possibilities. The game I'm talking about, has three parts. This story, your story, your life thusfar... belongs to the last and so far, final part of the game's story. But they're making a new one, apparently. But it won't be out for another couple of years. Maybe, if I go back eventually, I could find out what's next to come."

"Stop talking about my life as if it's not real! As if it's all fake! I've lived here, Sarah. I've been here all along, this is real to me. To any of us here. This isn't just some game."

She looks at me desperately. "I know. Alright? I get it. But you wanted an explanation and I'm giving it to you, so shut it and let me talk."

I motion for her to continue. And she does, pacing back and forth as she has done the entire time. "So anyways, I do not know exactly how it will end. Because despite you making the 'right' decisions so far, you're not supposed to be part of this world. And... you're with Solas. Which, in the 'story' isn't possible, for a human at least."

"You'd be surprised how much I've heard that." I snort sarcastically.

She ignores me however. "Meaning, you could change the entire course of time by doing something even slightly different than the game had anticipated. Hence... I can tell you some things, give you pointers as to what to do... as far as I can, since you seem to be pretty close to the end..." she pauses. "But I can't tell you everything. I don't want to fuck it up. Even if it goes against everything I stand for. It means I'll have to keep things from you. Things that... concern you."

I get up from the chair and look at her quizzically, almost hurt. "So if there's anything major I need to know about, you won't tell me?"

She looks upset. "I want to, Elie, I do. But I promised my mum I wouldn't. I can't. And I see the importance of it. If I do, perhaps the entire Universe will crumble and everything, everyone within it will cease to exist. With you in it. I cannot take that risk. But what I can tell you, is that you won't die."

Now it's my turn to pace back and forth, leaving a sad looking Sarah standing there, quietly. Until she speaks up again. "Back at Earth, in movies and books about time traveling.. they always said: do not change the history, because you do not know which effects it'll have on the future, right? You could change so much, people could end up not existing simply due to one tiny decision you make. I promised I wouldn't alter anything major, because this world was not supposed to be real. So we do not know what type of effect it would have if I told you everything."

She halts me by grabbing me by the shoulders then. "But you will live. As will all the others in your group. At least... they all do until the end of the last part. What comes after, I do not know." she looks at me reassuringly.

"Everyone? Solas, too?"

She nods. "Aye. Him, too." she turns away from me and then sits down onto my bed. "So where are
you in this story now? What did you last do?"

"I drank from a Well of Sorrows. Absorbing it's powers. Beyond that, I do not know what will come next. My companions are still in the Arbor Wilds, the place where this Well of Sorrows was. Leliana is getting them back now. I also still have to judge Thom Rainier. He was a companion of ours, but took on a different name and identity." And I continue on, telling Sarah about what I've done ever since returning to Thedas. Updating her, as she hums and nods, listening to me.

When I'm finished she takes a deep breath. "Well then, you're closer to the end than you think. Though you still have about two years.... Before.. the end-end. I can't describe it any other way." then she snorts. "How much do you love, Solas, Elie?"

I groan. "Why is everyone against him?"

"Do you truly feel he's not hiding anything from you?"

"So he is hiding something?" I narrow my eyes at her.

"I'm not talking about what I know now, Elie! I'm speaking as one friend to another. I worry about you. He seems... wrong."

"So this has nothing to do with what you know? Really?"

"Not everything I'm going to say to you implies that I'm hinting at how I want you to handle things, Elie! I'm also here as your friend! I care about you!" She's yelling at me now. "And I worry. He's... you were right when you told me at Earth there was something dark and threatening about him. And honestly, I can see the appeal. He's handsome, for an old man. He's probably likely to be more around my current age, than yours. But still, there's something... off about him. And you asking about it earlier verifies that you have your doubts about him too. Why stay by his side?"

"Because I love him!" I yell back at her. "And it's not a love you can compare to Earth's love, I swear it! It's different. And I don't know whether it's because it's magic, or because he's elven, or because we share part of a soul because of some fuck up he made or whatever. It's so much stronger, Sarah. I'd do anything for him. And I won't leave him. No matter what. Yes, I'm mad he's got secrets. Yes, he's infuriating! But I love him, and the thought of him being alone.... the thought of..." I lower my voice as tears leave my eyes. "The thought of me being alone without him.... I can't.... Nothing, no Earthly feeling, compares to that feeling of loneliness and emptiness. I would be lost without him, Sarah. I would."

Then silence fills the room. We are both, obviously standing at different sides of things. She wishes me to leave Solas, because of a hunch she has about him, or perhaps there is more, and she's holding out information from me now. Regardless, I won't budge, but neither will she. "What do you plan to do now, Sarah? I can't have you intervene with my life here, as happy as I am to see you alive and well."

"I won't intervene." she says coldly. "But I will stay, if you'll let me. Observe... Stay closeby."

"I can deal with that."

She nods. "Very well." And when she gets back up, I can't help but feel like there's not much left of our friendship, right now. Like we now only accept eachother's presence, but we both have a different agenda. She only just got here, but knows so much more than I do. Yet I've been here for over a year now, who knows by now already two years. And I too, know so much more than she does. We're each on the other end of the spectrum. Like a protagonist versus antagonist.
"We've both changed." I whisper.

She looks at me sadly one last time. "That's true. And I cannot change it."

"Neither can I, Sarah. I've made my decision. No matter what comes next, I'll stand by Solas' side."

And when I leave the room, I cannot hear the last thing she whispers: "And I wish you wouldn't, my friend."

(...)

I barge into the rotunda, where I find Solas reading a book on his chair. A few candles lighting up the small space around him. When he raises his head up to look at me, his expression changes. I'm crying, silently, and I need him. Need him to tell me it's going to be alright. He gets up from his chair and holds me tightly against him. "Vhenan."

"I need you."

He smiles against my skin and kisses my earlobe softly. "Let's bathe."

And so he leads me to the bathing chamber. Then he proceeds to fill the tub with water, heating up said water with his magic as I undress. And he follows after me, his face showing nothing other than lust. When we are both nude, he reaches out to me and I take hold of his hand as we slowly get inside the stone tub. It's just big enough for both of us, though clearly it's not meant for two people to sit in it. He's sitting behind me, I'm between his legs, my back facing him. He starts to untangle my hair with his long delicate fingers. I lean my head backwards into his soft touches as he then proceeds to massage my scalp softly, while at the same time, ridding my hair of the dried up blood and filth in it. When that job is done, he reaches out to a bottle of some type of scented oil. When he opens it, I can smell the jasmine. I grin.

"You've planned this bath. Haven't you?"

"While you were talking with your friend, yes. I've set up the bottle with scented oil. This is your favorite, right? I think I've memorized your scent well enough over the course of time."

"Mmm." I hum approvingly.

Then he starts to drip it onto my skin, softly rubbing the scented oil into it. And scrubbing me gently with a washcloth that was laying around nearby. He's so gentle, so soft.

"I love it when you make those sounds." he whispers into my ear from behind me, and I can already feel him hardening against my lower back.

I grin wickedly. Feeling triumphant that even in a moment like this: where I'm still half covered in gross disgusting blood and crap, I still manage to turn him on. "I love to feel your hands on my body, what can I say? I'm all yours when you touch me like that, Solas."

"And I love to touch you." he proceeds to nibble on my earlobe and I lose myself into him entirely. After a while, he hums approvingly. "All clean, vhenan."

I turn my body sideways, looking at him with heady eyes. "My turn." I grin wickedly as I take the washcloth from his hand, and try to turn around, getting on my knees in front of him. The water slightly gushes over the rim of the stone tub and he snickers. "Want to be washed with the same scented oil? Or do we have a manlier smell for you?"
He leans in closer to me and presses a soft kiss on my lips. "I don't mind." he places his hands gently onto my hips and starts to massage them.

I start to wash him with the same washcloth and same scented oil he's used on me before. Starting from his neck, down to his chest, sliding down to his abdomen, where his firm sixpack slightly tenses underneath my touch. I giggle softly, and bite my lower lip while I continue as he watches me intently. I meticulously wash and scrub the dirt and filth off of him as well. Until I reach down his member, and 'drop' the washcloth into the water. He clenches his jaw, as he takes a short intake of breath. My hand wraps around it, feeling around, feeling the firmness of him and yet the softness of his skin atop of it. "I don't believe that part of me needs washing, da'len." he purrs.

"I believe it does. And I also believe you want it touched." I lean in and claim his mouth, opening my own, giving his tongue free passage to explore my mouth. But never stop my torturous movements.

He opens his mouth and moans into mine, and I absorb it greedily. Then he tilts his head backwards, onto the rim of the tub and I lean in to press soft, featherlight kisses on his neck. Moving upwards towards his strong jawline, where I linger and bite the skin there.

His eyes flutter back open, back onto my form and suddenly, he moves his hands to underneath my behind and jerks me upwards as he smoothly positions himself between my legs. Without a second thought, I move down, sliding myself down further onto his cock. He hisses loudly, and I open my mouth, but no sounds come out. I'm just silently enjoying, reveling into the feeling of him inside of me. "You once said that I was 'so impatient'. But who's the impatient one, now?" I whisper against his lips.

He chuckles lowly. "I couldn't wait. You're... intoxicating. And I needed more."

I'm surprised that, despite the small size of this tub, we still manage to make love. As I slowly move up and down on top of him, and he's helping me move with his strong hands. Which have found their place, firmly holding onto my butt. He's kneading the cheeks softly as I can feel my insides clenching. But I breathe in and out, trying to hold back from coming so soon. He notices and proceeds to speed up the pace, within a second, without warning. A sly smile plastered on his face.

As I start to already lose myself, I lean over forwards, wrapping my arms around his neck. My face in the crook of his neck. My eyes closed as I moan soft whimpers. "I love you, Solas. I love you so much."

He groans, biting into my skin hard. "I love you, Eliana." And he stills inside of me, releasing his seed within me. And I follow immediately after, his twitching cock tipping me over the edge. I moan loudly, but no sounds come out. I'm just silently enjoying, reveling into the feeling of him inside of me. "I love you, Solas." The water now lukewarm, almost getting chilly.

I giggle softly as he holds my hand, helping me get out of the tub first, before getting out of it himself. He grabs two big cloths to dry ourselves with, and we take this time to also scrub our faces one last time afterwards. As he stands there, gloriously nude before me, trying to find a clean pair of clothes for himself, I press my own naked body against his from the side. Kissing his cheek lovingly. "I love you, Solas."

He stops trying to find clothes and smirks, kissing me again on my mouth. "Ar lath ma, Eliana." Then he hands me a clean shirt of himself. "Here, you wear this. At least until we make it safely back to your chambers. I'll just wear my pants. I wouldn't want the people of Skyhold to see you in your natural outfit." he winks. "I'm afraid I didn't bring an extra pair of clean clothes for you. So this will
have to do for now."

I hurriedly put on his shirt, and thank the heavens it reaches down just far enough. Still showing my bare legs, but nothing too much. He reaches for his necklace and puts it back around his neck. "I hope Sarah is no longer in my room." I say quietly as we grab our dirty clothes/armor and carry it with us outside the bathing chamber.

"What did you two speak of?" he grabs my one free hand with his own free hand and we walk side by side, towards my room. Ignoring all the looks the guests of Skyhold are giving us.

I sigh. "Apparently she knows what will happen in the future. She knows.. everything, or at least enough. But she said she will not tell me. Only bits of what she knows, to help 'guide' me. And she won't tell me because she's afraid of what it might mean for the future as she knows it. She's afraid, it will alter time in such a way, it could destroy everything. Even cause Thedas to... cease to exist."

"That so?"

"So I don't know much. And she will not tell me. The only thing she did say, is that we all live." We reach my room and I slowly open the door first, to find it empty: I reckon she must've somehow found her way out. Perhaps made her way towards Leliana and.. well, she's a grown up, she'll be fine.

We both enter and I throw our dirty clothes into a pile onto the floor, beckoning Solas to join me in my bed. I don't care what time it is, I need sleep and I know Solas does too. As he gets in next to me, he pulls me in close to him, my head resting on his bare chest. He's still only wearing his pants, and I'm still only wearing his shirt. And we're both fine with that.

"Eliana.. there's a lot... of things we should discuss."

I sigh. "There is. But you know what, Solas?" I lift my head to look up to him. And he gives me a puzzled look. "Honestly, despite this... gnawing feeling that there's more to what you're not telling me.. Despite the.. confused images that were shown to me whilst I absorbed the Well's power.. I don't care anymore. I realized, during my talk with Sarah, that no matter what comes next, I will stand by you."

He remains quiet. Not saying a word. So I take this as my cue to continue. "I don't know what it is you're hiding from me. But I do know that you love me. And I love you. And thanks to Sarah, I now know that we will both survive Corypheus. Meaning we will defeat him. Whatever may come afterwards.. I'm prepared to face it together. With you by my side. And if there's ever a moment, after Corypheus, that you decide to tell me the truth.. I'll listen, and I won't judge you. I won't get angry anymore. This I promise."

"And what if there are.. others who will disagree with your decisions?" he asks me quietly. A darkness in his eyes that sends a shiver down my spine.

"Fuck what the others think. I'm the Inquisitor. I will continue to lead us until we are done. And when we're done, none of what they 'think' will matter anymore. Then it's just you and I." I prop myself up on one elbow and stare directly into his eyes. "I have questions, of course. But I can live with those, as long as I get to have you by my side. You... do love me, right?"

His eyes widen momentarily. Shocked perhaps that I even had to ask him that. "More than you could possibly think, Eliana."

I sigh, contently. "Then that's all I need to know. That's all I want. Solas, I would follow you to the
ends of this world, and into the next if I had to. I just want you to know this."

"I was thinking about ending it with you..."

My heart seems to stop beating for a moment, and my breathing ceases entirely as well. He kisses me on my cheek, looking reassuringly into my eyes. "-But not because I wanted to, not because I don't love you. I was thinking about that, because I love you too much. And I didn't want to end up hurting you in the end. To prevent myself from doing so. I didn't trust myself enough, vhenan. I trust you. I love you. But I didn't trust myself."

"When were you planning on doing that?"

"The next time we'd speak after the Arbor Wilds. But then... I chased after you, when you were looking for the Nightingale. Before I could even think about it, my feet dragged me after you. I had wanted to take my distance right then and there, but without realizing it, I followed you. And I needed to hold you. That's when I told you I didn't want to lose you."

When he cried for me...

"You mean so much to me. More than I ever thought possible. I couldn't even bring myself to follow up on my own plan. And when you came to me after speaking with Sarah.. When you needed me.." he pauses and plants a soft chaste kiss on my lips. His forehead resting against my own, both of our eyes wide open, looking at one another. "I realized I don't want to be alone. Not without you. Whatever comes next, Eliana. So long as I hold your trust... I will not abandon you. I will fight for you."

I am dumbfounded. This is the closest I think I've ever seen Solas to being pure and true with me. No games, no lies, nothing. Just him, opening up to me, laying his heart bare, for me. "I was furious however, when you drank from the Well... You have given yourself into the service of an Ancient elven god."

"Why did that bother you so?"

"You are Mythal's creature now. Everything you do, whether you know it or not, will be for her. You have given up a part of yourself," he sighs. "Of course.. I suppose it's better you have that power than Corypheus. Which leads to the next logical question.. What will you do with the power of the Well once Corypheus is dead?"

"I'll try to make the world better. I'll try to help it move forward."

"You would risk everything you have in the hope that the future is better? What if it isn't? What if you wake up to find that the future you shaped is worse than what was?"

"I'll calm down, not panic, see what I did wrong, or where things went wrong, and try again."

"Just like that?" he stares into my eyes intently.

"Just like that. If I don't keep trying, I'll never get it right."

"You're right. This has.. calmed me down more than you think. Thank you."

"For what?" I frown at him quizzically.

"You have not been what I expected, Eliana. You have... impressed me. Time and time again. You have offered hope, that if one keeps trying, even if the consequences are grave.. that someday, things
will be better. Forgive my melancholy. Corypheus has cost us much. The Temple of Mythal did not
deserve such a fate. And.. I feared for your life as well." he sighs. "The orb, and it's stolen power..
that, at least, we may still recover. With luck, some of the past may yet survive."

"You're being grim and fatalistic in hope of getting me to make love to you again, aren't you, Solas?"
I smirk playfully.

"I am grim and fatalistic. Getting you into bed, making love to you, is just an enjoyable side benefit." he
kisses me deeply, passionately. Then, when our lips part, he shakes his head. "In all my years.. I
never thought..I could love someone as much as I love you now." he stops talking and closes his
eyes. A smile on his lips.

Then I smack him playfully, causing him to open his eyes surprisingly. "And don't you ever dare
break up with me, mister! I'll stalk you, you know!"

He chuckles. "I wouldn't dream of it, vhenan. Come, let us get some sleep. Who knows how long
it'll take the others getting back here. Besides, you will have more coming your way. There's still
Rainier."


"Meaning?"

"Spoilsport, damper, downer, grouchy, killjoy.. whichever one you prefer."

"Did I just ruin your mood, da'len?" he smirks evilly.

"You did, old man." I pout.

"Then allow me to make it up to you.." he leans in again, his hand on the back of my head as he
kisses me longingly. "But no sex. You are exhausted, vhenan. Sleep." he kisses my forehead once
more and then helps me turn around in the bed. He's spooning me and I marvel in his soft caressing
on my exposed skin.

"Sweet dreams, my love." I mumble quietly into the covers.

Chapter End Notes

The tumblr of the fan who figured out the translation: http://geeky-jez.tumblr.com (I will
not be taking this credit!)

I will post another chapter, but it won't be the actual chapter. I will take this opportunity
to explain my thoughts on the story and where I'll be taking it. Also, explaining some of
the things I've written in this chapter. I tried working it all into the chapter's notes, but it
was too much to write in here, and too little characters. So if you want to know, then
read the next chapter, there may be spoilers on where I want to take this story, so if
you don't wish to know, don't read it!!!!!

Also, said chapter will be deleted after I come back from vacation and continue writing
it. I leave in a day and a half and intend to play some more Dragon Age Inquisition on
that last day xd (nerd).
SO this may be very well the last actual chapter for a while longer, since I won't be writing during my vacation and I will be studying after I come back and preparing for my exams. But y'all probably knew this already. Hence the reason why this chapter is so long, it's the longest I've written so far, I'm sure. I hope it'll be enough for you for a while ♥

Thank you so much for your comments and love and support! Truly, you are the only reason I keep writing on, when I have the time for it. And I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for caring so much about the character I've created. And how you guys get upset when she's bitchy or get giddy when she's cornered Solas for once(which almost never happens, I know!). I love how close some of you feel to Elie, and I always strive to make you guys happy as well as shock you from time to time :3 Without pissing you off, not too much, at least. God it feels like I'm saying goodbye, anyways- NOT BEING MUSHY! Just wanted to thank you. And please, if you've any questions, or pointers, or things you want to tell me: comment ! And I'll reply whenever I can, even if it's during vacation. If I have WiFi and if I have alone time, I'll answer :)♥

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥
The Little Things

Chapter Summary

Did y'all miss me?! I'm almost done with my work thingamajigger. But in the meantime, I'm so sorry for the super long wait. I did warn. And ALMOST. But I hope you are ready..

- Eliana has changed.
- Sarah looks back on her life.
- Solas trusts Elie.

Oh. My. Gawd.

Hi, my name is Naomi and my middle name is drama.

Just kidding ;)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It would be safe to say my life has always been a bit... off. When I was but a child back in my homeland, everyone knew who my family was. They knew what we did. So growing up in a family full of druids and "witches" was... interesting to say the least. When my mum told me at a certain age we'd move to Brighton for a fresh start.. well I did'nae think it would work out. Little as I was, I was smart for my age. Kept my wits about me. I had to, what with all the things I've been taught at a young age. But it was wrong. The moment we moved to Brighton, everything only got better. Of course there'd still be the occasional twats and cunts bullying me for looking 'fat' and 'geeky', but it was nothing I couldn't handle. Twas better than what I'd been used to back in Scotland. Nobody knew our family name, nor what it meant or who we were. We were anonymous to the Sassenach's. It wasn't until I actually went to school, when I met my dear friend Eliana. We gravitated towards one another almost immediately upon meeting for the first time. And we stuck together no matter what. Held hands during recess, played games together in the shade while all the other kids were hanging about in the sun. We'd climb trees and chafe our knees on the branches together. We were thick as thieves.

As we grew older, I started realizing how big of a heart Elie had. Despite her always being bullied and teased. She did'nae stick to just her friendship with me, and I didn't fault her for it. She wanted to be friends with everybody. I just disliked seeing her being used by all those people. I hated seeing her heart crushed by yet another asshole kid. She wasn't naive or anything. She was just a good person. Inherently, a good person. When one reaches a certain age however, they start to understand things better. And Elie understood, at one point, that I was pretty much the only one who accepted her for who she was entirely. And she was the only one who accepted me for who I was. Well... she accepted all she knew of me, at the time. Right before we left high school, people kept telling us: "Your friendship won't last through time. You will both go your own ways, and forget about eachother." - But we stuck through, didn't we, Elie? We sure showed them. Because even when she moved out of her mum's place and got her own little apartment; we stayed in contact with one another. Even though I too started seeing men, and started working on my own future. I just knew, well, we both knew.. that we'd be a part of eachother's future's. No matter what. It wasn't something
we forced on one another, it was just a fact. And we were fine with that. After starting our 'adult lives', we found we'd have even more in common than before. We both didn't love our jobs, we both didn't have a good relationship with other family members, we both secretly murdered our bosses within our heads. And well, we'd get together on Friday's complaining about it all together. Just huddled together on a tiny, cheap sofa. Drinking the occasional glass of wine or whatever was on sale that week in the supermarket (cheap drinks for the win!).

Then I met my bitch of an ex-boyfriend and Elie too started seeing someone. Though... as much as I'd like to say we didn't let love get in the way of things... we're all human. We want to say love doesn't ruin friendships, or gets in the way of things, but it always does a little, doesn't it? Especially when you're young. We didn't fight. None of us got jealous of the other one. But when you're in love, you never look at the little things. Never look at the details. I too, was enamoured with my ex. Though of course I didn't know then what I know now about the cheating bastard; I was in love. And failed to notice how deeply pulled into her relation Elie got. She met someone, aye, but refused telling me about it until she went to Taiwan for the very first time. I didn't trust it. How can you? When she'd never even personally met the boy. Part of me wanted nothing more than to join her on that trip but I'd been visiting my boyfriend's family that summer. And she said she'd keep me updated through it all no matter what, so that reassured me enough. As time went by I was too caught up into my own love life and failed to notice the little things. The details. Like: How'd she get the money to visit Dan so often? Where did it all come from? - Certainly not from her shitty job as a storeclerk in a drugstore. Why was she always acting to vaguely about his line of work? About his family? How come, during all that time, her parents hadn't even met the boy? What kept her on her toes like that around the people closest to her?

She went again, and again and again... She'd only work to 'earn money' so she'd be able to see him again. Though in truth, I think she only worked that much to keep up the facade. She had the money, alright. He gave it all to her. I wasn't dumb, I wasn't blind or oblivious to it all. I was simply... too caught up in my own life to really pay attention to the fucking little things. She'd say hi to me on occasions, and there she went off again. Our friendship lasted, aye. But it was'nae perfect. Then one day, it all changed. Elie had changed. She came back but wasn't her usual happy, bubbly self. She was holding out on me. Told me only they'd broken up. I knew, in the back of my mind, that something about that story was off. I knew pain of heartache, and hers was something far deeper than a mere break up. As shitty as those can get. But despite knowing this... Love makes you blind to the details, right? - So I didn'nae press the matter further. Instead tried taking her out with me, on little trips to the occasional bar in Brighton. Sometimes just the two of us, sometimes Thomas was there with us two. I'd try setting her up with some of his friends, his family members. Anything and everything to make her feel human again. Because Elie... wasn't herself any longer. It was breaking my heart. Not only because she wasn't happy. But moreso because I didn't pay attention to it all any better. I felt guilty, somewhere deep down, I know that now. I felt bad. For being such a bad friend. And yet, she assured me she'd be alright sooner or later. But the guilt kept gnawing at me from within. At nights I could barely sleep. We were friends, still, but there was something between us and I felt the blame for that. If only I was there more. Less sucked into my own life. If only I went with her on that first trip. Laid eyes on Dan and saw him for who he really was: a gangster. A lowlife. A parasite sucking Elie dry of her life's spirit. Because once he was gone, she was gone. I thought there'd be no end to it.

Then finally, after a long while, though she never quite gave it a place... she returned to me. My long lost friend. Sure, there'd be moments where she was feeling melancholic. She'd have that sad look about her. But she always crawled out of that dark deep hole again. She picked herself up and started anew. I set aside my guilt and that was that... right? I am not blind. I saw her panicking when I'd meet up with her in public. She barely picked up her phone anymore. Insisted that I'd visit her personally instead. So she gave me her spare key, so I could always come to her place. Though part of me
wondered then, maybe she wanted someone she trusted, to be able to freely enter her home. In case of an emergency, perhaps? I was worried for my friend, for my best friend. Though I could not place it though. What was she afraid of? Why didn't she share it with me? What was plaguing her?

Then one night... she disappeared. Without a trace. I went by her place, after receiving a call from her worried mother at work. Police had secured the area. Tape all 'round her apartment. Neighbors claiming they did not know where she was and that they hadn't heard anything. But the glass was shattered. A single broken window being the only evidence that something may have happened to her. But authorities were baffled. They did'nae know shite. They searched for months. *I searched for years.* They told me to give up on Elie's disappearance. But I never stopped looking for her. I felt it was once again: **my fault.** Thomas cheated on me, because I devoted my life trying to relocate Elie. I did'nae have time for him. I spent too much time on him when she'd still been there with me. And now, I felt my best friend, my **only** friend required my full attention. I went to Taiwan, several times. Went to places she told me of. Looked for familiar faces, though I knew none there. Trying to search for a guy named 'Dan'. But truthfully, I wouldn't ever get very far. His English name was the only thing I knew of him, and of course, though I didn't know it then: he was dead already. Buried in some unknown grave to me. In an unknown cemetry, on the soil of this unknown country. Though I'd been raised 'Pagan', I never connected the dots. Knowing full well Elie didn't know about my true heritage and beliefs. And even if she had known, we never believed something like 'traveling between two entirely different worlds' were truly possible. Let alone a world that did'nae exist in our Universe. A world, created by normal human beings. In the form of a game, for fuck's sake. Who, in their right mind, would **ever** think of that?

Poor Mary and John.. Their lives had been ten times worse... There's no describing the loss of a child. I haven't even ever felt it. Mary was absolutely heartbroken about it, and her pain fueled her lingering illness only more. John, though not being Eliana's biological father, was just as heartbroken about it as Mary had been. He'd met her for the very first time when she was fifteen. Went through everything she went through, with Mary by his side, and loved her more than her real father ever did in his entire miserable life. There was no comforting them two. And I, who had been such a huge part of their life as well, couldn't do anything to help them. So I kept searching, in the hopes of one day, being able to track her down. And show Mary and John there was hope yet.

When she came back to me, I expected her to be slightly different. Her not having aged one bit since her disappearance was proof of that already. But to see her so heartbroken, so empty, so void of everything.. I never imagined it could become this bad. I recognized some of it, having seen it before with Dan and Taiwan. I thought it was the same. Until I saw nothing of the old Eliana Courseland anymore. Nothing that I knew. Nothing that I remembered about her. No smile. Not a genuine one, at least. I tried ignoring it, hoping it would pass, just like it did with Dan. At least back then, she'd improve gradually, agonizing week by agonizing week. But this time, though it were only four weeks in total, she was lost. When she told me all.. I had no choice but to accept it. I'd heard weird shit before, and having been raised the way I was raised, you'd have to keep an open mind no matter what. Then again, there wasn't really much room to doubt since she literally did not even look close to thirty four. I was placed before a dilemma: Would I keep her close to me. Be selfish, and not let her out of my sight ever again. Force her to stay with me. Or.. would I choose to be selfless. Have her return to Thedas, to be by the side of the one man she loved even more than Dan? Just so I could imagine her happy again. Laughing genuinely again. To be her old self again, as much as that were possible after Fenrian's death and having seen so much in such a short time. I chose the latter. I chose to be selfless. I loved my friend too much, to force her into a life she didn'nae want anymore. Though it broke my heart all over again.

*She was gone so fast too.*

Solas, that man she spoke of so much,. he must've been such an important person to her. More
important than life itself. It seemed to be he was her oxygen. Her sun and moon. Her shore and sea.
Her world. Everything.

Samhain was coming up, and I searched. Online, rather than in books. And I found it. I found it all.
Everything I'd never even heard of in my entire life, before she mentioned it all. I took a long paid
vacation from work and threw myself into the lore and history these people had created. This fiction,
that seemed all too real now... From start to finish. Reading, watching videos, people talking about it.
How could it be, that these characters from a videogame, were real?! How could Elie have lived with
them for over a year. I kept telling myself to keep an open mind. This world would not accept me
running my mouth about it, telling some crazed story about how my best friend, who was no longer
here, spent time in Thedas. In this world, created by people from Earth.


That was who she was with. That was the man who was her oxygen. Her sun and moon. Her world.
Everything. He was with her. I told my mum everything. I asked advice. I told her I had to put a stop
to it.

"If you perchance tell Eliana all about what has yet to happen.. you might inadvertently change the
entire course of that world. We, us simple human beings, are not supposed to know what secrets the
future holds. If we are gifted with the rare opportunity to find out about it all, we should never try to
change the course of it."

"-Och, mum! Elie needs to-

"-What do you suppose might happen if she knows the truth?"

"I don't know! She'll change her ways with that.. that man. She'll steer clear of him. She won't get
hurt."

"She is already too deep into it, Sarah. You've said so yourself. She was lost here. Without him. She
explained to you the two of them are bound by something stronger than just love. They're bound by
fate. Let it go."

"I will not let it go, mother."

"Then go. I will not stop you. But heed my words, Sarah: Do not tell her. You can push her into the
right direction. See if she still holds you as close to her heart as you do her. Perhaps she'll see the
truth of it. Or perhaps.. it is simply too late. We don't know what may happen to their world. This
world was created. It came from the minds of men. Men from this Universe. It could entirely seize to
exist. With Eliana in it."

"... Do you really think that's possible?"

"No one knows. But can you truly risk it?"

"But I must try to save Eliana from herself. If I can."

"Samhain is near. Do what you think is right. But think this over."

And thought it over, I did. I had made up my mind then. I wrote down as much information as I
could find about what was yet to happen. And I took it with me. I went.

(...)
I glance up from the dinner table, from the wooden bowl with... God know's what inside of it. It tasted bland. Not at all what I'm used to from back home. Sometimes, I regret dearly having left Earth. And steaks.

God, steak. I could go for some steak now.

Oddly enough, though the 'end' is near.. No one's really rushing it. Everyone seems to have taken a break from it. Though it may be different now that I'm actually in it. Online, you read pages and paragraphs about the ending of the game, and you'd think it would all go down in a flash. But, these.. characters. No.. these people. These actual living and breathing people, take breaks in between fighting and venturing out. They need to eat, sleep, piss and shit. Just like 'regular' people from Earth. I look around the dinner table: everyone's eating and talking. The Inner Circle.. has accepted me. But they still look at me with questionable looks. They want to know why I've come, no doubt. Elie has made up something, though I do not know what story she's told them to be fair. I'm still trying to wrap my head around the people within the Inner Circle. I've read about them, know some things about them, and here they are: in front of me. I daresay I know more about them, than they know of me. And it frightens me slightly. Worries me. They've all been nice enough. I suppose knowing their Inquisitor since childhood gives them reason enough to relax around me. It really is some sight to behold, the way they revere her. You'd think she's a mighty deity of sorts. They heed her every whim. They follow her wherever she goes. If she'd go to the depths of Hell, they'd follow her there, too. It is heartwarming to see. I am happy for her. Happy that she did not need to spend days feeling alone and miserable. Unwelcome and out of place.

Suddenly I get nudged hard. I turn to look at the person who did it. "Come on, new girl! Share your stories of Elie when she was little!"

The gleeful looking man with strawberry blonde hair and way too much chest hair grinned slyly at me.

Varric. His name is Varric.

"Well er.." I start, but I cannot finish my sentence.

"-She's been here for a while now, Varric. You still calling her 'new girl'? Your nicknames get more and more dull." Eliana walks into the main hall, with Solas next to her.

I narrow my eyes unwillingly at the tall man at her side.

"Besides-" she gracefully sits down at the head of the table, Solas taking his seat quietly next to her. 
"-There's no embarrassing stores about me when I was little, is there, Sarah?" She looks to me then. But the way that sounded. So.. clinical. So professional. This is a matured woman, in a younger woman's body.

"I suppose not." I say softly. My head dipping again, eyes fixated on the tasteless mess in the bowl in front of me.

"It's not that bad, my dear." the woman on my left hand side whispers quietly into my ear. "Though I must admit, when I first joined the Inquisition, I was quite appalled at the... food served here." She scrunches up her nose slightly, though not a fold or wrinkle in her perfectly perfect skin.

A loud roaring laughter is heard then from the other end of the table. "You really need to lighten up, Viv. When Krem and my boys would stay camped up on the coast of some Gods forsaken place, we'd sometimes only have grass to chew on."
"Ah. But I am no mercenary, Iron Bull. I am a lady of standing." Vivienne smiles sickenly sweet at the monstrous... Qunari.

The quips keep coming from the left and the right, but my eyes glide back towards them. Solas is sitting so close to Elie, they're practically glued together. He never seems to leave her side anymore. He's keeping her closeby, always. And when he does finally leave, Elie is back to being all clinical and professional. At least with me. He whispers something into her ear. Then he gets up from the table, excusing himself, rather quietly, and leaves the main hall. Her face is unreadable. I can't make out what's going through her head. Whereas in the past, I was so easily able to read her. We sit there for a while longer, Elie being quiet, as usual. I finally start to eat my mush and grimace as my taste buds protest.

Suddenly the entire main hall goes quiet, as a bearded, gruff looking man enters the room and takes his seat at the farthest end of the table. Eyes narrowing, scrutinizing looks from each and every member of the Inner Circle.

Eliana is the first to speak up. "Welcome back, Rai-... er..." she fumbles a bit with her hands on the table. "Would you.. prefer to be called Blackwall or..."

"Whichever you like best. If you wish to call me Blackwall, I see no fault in it. However, if you think you should call me by my real name.. Then by all means, call me Thom. Or Rainier." he looks to all of them then.

*He's the prisoner that was in the cell right next to me. Supposedly the man I traveled in the back of a caravan with when I first arrived here.*

"And I speak to all of you. Call me by whatever name suits you best."

None reply. Some nod curtly, while some don't even bother to show that they acknowledged what he just said.

"Blackwall has promised to serve the Inquisition to make up for his mistakes. Mistakes made long ago. None of us here are perfect. All of us have had.. troubling times behind us." Elie pauses momentarily. "I hope none of you will hold this against him. He has stood by our sides in battle before and gave us no reason to doubt his loyalty."

_Elie is just a good person. Inherently, a good person. She always has been and she always will be.. Right?_

(...) A couple of gentle knocks at my door. I look up from my papers. I was so caught up in my reading about what's next to come, that it took me some time to realize someone was at my door for a while now.

"M... My lady...." A quiet, shy voice is heard from behind my door.

I stand up to open the door and see an elven looking woman, refusing to meet my gaze.

*It's still strange to see elven ears.*

"Hi there." I say smiling. "I don't think we've met before."

She nods. "The Inquisitor asked you to meet her in the War Room, my lady."
My brows furrow. "She couldn't have asked me this herself?"

The elven woman flinches. "P...Please... I'm only relaying her message to you, my lady. If I have offended you then-"

"-Bah! Of course not, silly!" I pat her hard on the shoulder. "Why are you so afraid of me?"

Her eyes widen momentarily. "I'm not afraid, my lady! It's just...-" she stops and seems to be shocked by her own words. Though I do not get why.

"It's alright. I'm no monster. Tell me." When her eyes finally look up at me for the first time, I show her my cheekiest grin. Hoping she will warm up to me. And she visibly relaxes.

"You're from the lady Inquisitor's world. It's... I mean, it was already so amazing to find out she came from another world. But... now you're here too, my lady. I'm just... amazed. Not scared. Not scared of you, anyhow. There's this woman who oversees all the servants in Skyhold, and she's.... scary." She huffs. "She's an elf like me, but because she was granted the job of overseeing all of us, she's gotten...-"

"-Bitchy?"

She nods and stifles her laughter behind a palm. "The rest of the servants don't like her either."

"Are all the servants elves?"

"Oh no, my lady. There's humans too. Many in fact. More than us elves. The Inquisitor didn't want us to feel inferior to the humans. Most elves chose to serve in the Inquisition's forces. And as mercenaries. Or as spies."

"We got spies now too, huh?" I casually lean against the post of my door and cross my arms.

She takes a sharp intake of breath. "For the Inquisition, yes, my lady."

*For the Inquisition...*

"Why did you choose to become a servant then?"

"I cannot fight, my lady. It's very simple, really." she smiles a bit sheepishly at me. "Er... My lady?"

"Please, just call me Sarah. No need to be so professional. And if that bitch who oversees you has a problem with that, she can come speak to me."

She snorts. "Right.. Sarah. My name is Glenna." she curtsies.

"Nice to meet you, Glenna. So what is it you wanted to say?"

"The War Room."

I snap my fingers. "Oh. Right! Forgot about that. Where uh.. is this War Room, exactly?"

After Glenna told me which way to go to, I clumsily found my way towards it. I stood before two big doors, in a small hallway, the walls on my right hand side broken and crumbled. Showing a nice view of our surroundings, though.

*Why would Elie want me in there with her?*
Suddenly, I hear a murmur of voices coming closer. When I turn to look, I see the three advisors walking towards me, busy in conversation. Behind them, a woman with raven black hair and... skimpily dressed casually walks into the same direction. Cullen, Josephine, Leliana and...... Morrigan. The woman who was there during the Fifth Blight as well as Leliana. When they spot me, they stop talking to one another and smile warmly at me.

"Mistress Coutts." The Antivan woman curtsies before me as well. "We were told you'd be joining us today."

I clear my throat. "Er, yes... About that... You have any idea... why?"

"You're from there. And Eliana has told us you know much. Perhaps you could help us." Cullen smiles brightly at me.

Hellooooooooooo again, tall drink of water.

"Does she?" Morrigan walks towards me, closer than Josephine did before, while I'm ogling the Commander. "I've not heard about this." she takes me in. Her golden eyes scanning me, up and down my body. Examining me.

"You do not need to know everything, Morrigan." The ginger haired Leliana chimes in, remaining calm and collected. There's definitely bad blood between those two, though. I can tell. Despite her being able to hide her disdain towards Morrigan well.

"And what, pray tell, does this stranger from another world know that we do not already know ourselves?"

"Precisely what we will find out. Follow us, Mistress Coutts." Josephine gently ushers me towards the doors by my elbow. "Pay her no mind." she whispers softly into my ear before we enter the War Room.

Once inside, Eliana is already there with Cassandra. Both of them looming over the map on the huge table before them. I've never seen this room before. But it looks... intimidating. I cannot believe, actually believe, Eliana oversees everything that happens within this Inquisition from in here. How she orders everyone, supplies them with tasks and jobs to do, without knowing what I know. It's... admirable. And yet... scary in some type of way. Once we enter, Cassandra sighs loudly.

"Finally. You've all decided to join us." She seems unhappy, tapping her foot impatiently on the floor.

"Please, Cassandra." Elie holds up her hand, stopping Cassandra from speaking any more. "I'm sure you're wondering why I've asked for you, Sarah." She looks me directly into my eyes.

"I too, am curious, Inquisitor." Morrigan takes her place next to me, still her arms are crossed.

She straightens her shoulders slightly, exuding power and demanding attention from all. Though Morrigan seems unimpressed. "Sarah. When you first got here, you told me.. you knew certain things." I narrow my eyes at her. She knows I cannot tell her. What is she doing, telling others about it and putting me on the spot like that? "I was wondering maybe you could help us, with small missions out into the lands. For more security. After all, though the threat inches ever closer to us all.. we cannot afford to be reckless. You're aware of our forces, are you not? You know where we stand. What we lack. What we need, to be able to come out of this victorious."

"Haven't you gathered enough troops and people already?"
"We could always use more. I suppose you would be the right person for this."

"But you're the Inquisitor."

"But you know things I do not. We have time yet. Corypheus is not upon us... Yet. I suggest you help us while we still have time to spare."

I am fuming at this point, but mostly because I do not understand what she is trying to do. Stall for more time? Honestly, the way I've read it, the only way the final battle comes to pass is when the Inquisitor decides it is time to start it. But that's in the hands of the player. The one behind the screen. This is real, is it not? We do not know how much time there actually is left.

Morrigan chuckles. "Is that all?" She shakes her head and sighs. "I suppose it wouldn't harm our chances of survival, had we more stability before deciding to take on Corypheus. Though, I warn you, Inquisitor... Time will run out."

"Precisely why we need this to happen now." Elie beckons me over towards the war table. "Cullen, make sure your troops are ready. They may need to go out soon. Leliana-" she fixates her stare onto her spymaster. She continues to hand out orders to everyone. While they start their own business, I wait for the right moment to tell her off. But that moment doesn't come. Not for some time. We ponder over areas on the map that haven't been liberated from Red Templars yet. There's still a lot of places Elie hasn't gone to. Time passes by, slowly, agonizingly, without damn clocks. I familiarize myself with the way this all works, I almost forget about scolding Eliana for what she did earlier, that's how caught up I am in her throwing orders around, without her advisors getting angry with her. In fact, they seem to not mind at all. It's like business as usual, for them. I take notes, here and there. Of how she approaches things. How she speaks to her advisors. How she handles problems. It's... admirable.

When there's no one but us two left, a yawn escapes her. She stretches her arms high up above her body and groans. "And that's that." She smiles softly at me. But I see the same clinicalness in her eyes as before. Only when she speaks to me though.

"What was that all about, Eliana?" I narrow my eyes at her. Making sure my eyes match my scolding look.

She raises her eyebrows. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, don't play coy. You know what I mean. Why throw me in here with your advisors for this? Why put me on the spot. For crying out loud, I thought you were going to tell them everything."

She shrugs indifferently. "I just need to make sure you understand how things work here."

"Why would I need to know how things work here? You plan to take me out on missions next?"

"I do, indeed."

"What? Why in God's name would you do that?" I scoff.

She looks around for a moment, then without saying a word, she casually strides over towards the doors of the War Room. Opening them slightly ajar, she peers through, making sure no one is there, she closes them again. "Alright, I'll be honest Sarah." she walks back over towards me. "I plan to leave, after the Inquisition, with Solas."

My eyes open wide. "You... wait... What?"
"Once the final battle with Corypheus is over and done with... I will leave with Solas by my side. He
does not yet know of this plan of mine. But I intend to leave. I never wanted to continue the
Inquisition after we've faced Corypheus." she sighs. "I had thought about it a while ago. I decided to
disband the Inquisition."

I think about this. While she and I both remain quiet for a while. She doesn't know about what will
happen after the Inquisition. Perhaps, if she were to leave with Solas.. she could prevent him from
doing what he wants to do. And none of it all will come to pass. Thedas won't be, possibly,
destroyed by Fen'Harel, I won't have to tell her the truth, this world will continue on. And so will
she. I'd have saved her. After all, in the original story, once a female Inquisitor romances Solas, he
will leave the Inquisition after the last battle. Leaving the Inquisitor behind, clueless and heartbroken.
This entire story between them is already very different from the original. She's slightly altered the
future already, by simply being with him. And having him love her back. Maybe...-

She continues. "The reason why I need you to pay attention and to be a part of this all... Is because I
need you to take over from me, once I leave." I stand there, quiet, flabbergasted.. Unsure of what to
tell her. She starts pacing. "The others... they have said they accept my wish of wanting to disband.
Cassandra, Cullen, Josephine, Varric, Blackwall.." she stops midway and turns back around to face
me. "They lied." A small sad smile forms on her lips. Her eyes turn away from me again, back facing
me. "Maybe some will return to their former lives. But in truth.. the core of the Inner Circle will want
to stay."

Aye.. You're right. They would stay. No matter what. Whatever comes their way.

"And they need someone to lead them." She faces me. "You know things, Sarah. What it is you
know... I can't say. But you wouldn't have come all this way just for the last battle between the
Inquisition and Corypheus. There's more.. isn't there?" her blue eyes search for my own, as I
desperately try to look away. "You've said we'll live. But that's not the end of it, is it Sarah?" Before
I know it, she dashes towards me and grabs me harshly by the shoulders, rattling me. "Answer me!"
She yells.

"Elie..." the words I want to say cannot leave my mouth.

"Damn it, Sarah! Why have you come here, if the only reason was to tell me Thedas is from a
fucking game?! That's not it! I know you. What. Do. You. Know?"

I push her away with all my strength. It wounds me deeply having to withhold from my best friend.
The girl who once was.. my best friend. "I told you, Elie. I cannot tell you."

She takes a step backwards. Hurt in her eyes. Tears glistening in those deep pools of light and dark
blue. Her mouth presses into a thin line. "If you will not tell me this, at least tell me... Will this story
end after the final battle?"

"It will not."

I cannot give you the details. The little things.

She takes a deep breath then, composing herself and blinking away her tears. For a moment I think
she'll press me further on the matter. But instead..

"They'll need someone to lead them, then. You will be that person. Take over from me. I can't take
another year or so having to be this person. I feel..." her voice breaks. "I feel so very tired, Sarah. I
just want to be happy. I'm tired of having to run for my life, whether that's here or back on Earth. I am tired of losing people I care about with all my heart. I want to be with Solas. I don't want to lose him. Everytime we set out, I fear for his life. You said he'll live. But what after?"

*If only you knew. If only I could warn you.*

"I cannot fight like you do."

"I learned. You will too, if you have to, Sarah. Besides, if the battle is over, they'll just need someone to guide them. Pick up the pieces once we've left. They need a leader. They trust you because I've told them I trust you. They will follow you, too."

"Just tell me one thing, Elie. And be perfectly honest with me, here."

She looks back at me, her eyes still wet from unshed tears. Melancholy within them. "Ask."

"That girl, I once knew... Who saw the good in everyone, who was inherently good, is she still there? You've drank from the Well of Sorrows, though I cannot give you the details, obviously you know there was massive power in those waters you drank from."

She takes a sharp intake of breath. "What are you asking me, exactly?"

"You are in the service of this... Mythal now, right? That Goddess? From Elven lore?" she nods slowly. "You've gained powers. You know this, right?"

*Mythal will live on within Elie, right? So if my theory is wrong, Mythal could still emerge from within Elie and reappear if Solas doesn't take her up on her offer to run away with her.*

"I know. Though I do not yet know what this may mean for the future. Do you?"

"Honestly, I do not. I've a hunch, but that's my own theory and it's not by all means certain."

*I just hope it is.*

"So you can't tell me this, either?"

I shake my head no. "My explanation would only bring more questions. Questions that I can then, not answer." she nods curtly. "So my question stands.. Is that girl still there?"

"Of course she is. Jesus Christ, Sarah, who do you take me for? What will happen next that makes you question my morality so?"

"You've seen a lot, Elie. Been through a *lot* Fenrian-"

"Do not-" she holds up her hand. Her eyes burning all of a sudden, whereas moments ago they were glistening. "-Don't. Just don't."

"But I am right. You've been through Hell and back. Shit, half of it, I can't even begin to imagine myself! You've changed. I've said this before."

"**We have changed.**"

"No. You have. I've lived twelve years without battling for my life. Without seeing death and destruction. Without having to deal with magic and monsters. Demons and gut wrenching pain. Sure, my life hasn't been sunshine and roses since you left. While you were gone for those twelve years, I've done nothing but search for you. Wondering what happened to you. Things like these, change
someone. Even the kindest of hearts, could turn dark and dim."

"My friends would never let me become that person. And so I've not become that woman." she straightens herself.

I pinch the bridge of my nose. "Never mind, alright? So she's still there? You will remain this person?"

"Fucking-.. Yes!" she all but growls at me now.

"Then I trust you. As you trust me."

*Take Solas. After the final battle. Leave with him. I trust that your good, kind heart will change him. And if it does not... There's still Mythal.*

She nods and wants to turn around to walk away. I stop her. "When will you tell Solas?"

"The night before the battle. I will stall as much as possible. So you can get better acquainted with everything and everyone. I'll make sure they will trust you with their lives as they have done with me."

"Perhaps you should let him know now." *Before it is too late.*

"Perhaps."

And she leaves me. A last favor asked from me. The last bit of friendliness we had left in one another. I doubt I'll see much more of her after this. I made her a promise, she made me one in return. A favor for a favor. That's not friendship. That's accepting each other's presence. For the time being.

*I trust you will come out of this unscathed, Eliana. I put my last bit of hope in you. Do not let me down.*

**Solas POV:**

"Come with me." her voice draws me out of thoughts, as my eyes have been glued to the inside of a dull book. When I look up, she's sitting on my desk, her soft cool hand on my cheek. Gentle fingers stroking my skin.

"Where to?" I ask her, a content smile on my lips as I take in her beauty once more.

"Anywhere, just.. away from here for a bit. Away from the Fortress, from the Inquisition. Let's... venture outside these walls and just... chill." She sighs longingly as she speaks the last word.

I chuckle softly as I place a soft kiss on her hand. "We could instead go to Herald's Rest. We needn't go that far to 'chill', as you've said it."

She grimaces. "Solas.."

"What's wrong, da'len?" she turns her face away from me, a pained expression on her face. I get up from my chair and stand before her. "War council didn't go that well?"

"I don't want to speak about it."

"Come then, vhenan. Let's go." I take her by the hand and lead her outside of the rotunda. Through the front gates off Skyhold.
"Inquisitor. Solas." The guard nods curtly and salutes the both of us as we pass him by. "Open the gate!" he roars.

As we walk the snowy path, she clutches her cloak tighter around her body. Both of us are silent, not saying a word the entire time. Our fingers are intertwined with one another, as we silently continue our walking. When we are far away from the Fortress, but still within eyesight of it, she halts me and wraps her arms around my neck. I embrace her fully and slightly lift her up into my arms, up from the ground. "I love you, so much." she breathes against my lips, before she kisses me tenderly and lovingly.

"And I you, Eliana." I say, slightly out of breath when our lips part again.

She smiles against my lips. And I gently put her back down onto her feet. "Let's sit here." she takes off her cloak, spreading it out onto the cold snow floor.

"You'll catch a cold." I say in a warning tone of voice.

She snorts. A wonderful, unladylike sound that I've come to adore about her. Like so many other things. "Fire rune." she snaps her fingers, and they start glowing. She traces the outline of said rune onto her clothes and then repeats the same process onto my own clothing. Though she needn't have, it was a loving gesture.

"I thought you'd only use magic when cornered." I say teasingly.

"Oh shut it, old man." We sit down together, her head falls softly onto my shoulder as we look out over the snowy mountain tops. Our backs facing the big Fortress looming behind us two. "I needed this. Some well deserved alone time."

"We could've gone to your bedchambers, instead."

"The walls have ears everywhere in Skyhold. No.. I meant truly alone. Here. Just you and I."

"What is troubling you, vhenan? What transpired at the War Room that has you so worried and... saddened?" I urge her.

She sighs. "You've said you love me, right?"

I am confused. "I do, Eliana. With my entire heart."

"Will you...- ah.." she falls silent.

I take her chin into my fingers and urge her to look me in the eyes again. "Will I, what?"

"Leave with me. After the Inquisition. Let's go away. Just us two."

My heart aches. The look of longing when she said this just now. It wasn't a question at all. She declared it. "What of the Inquisition?"

"Sarah. She'll take over from me. We discussed it earlier."

"You trust her with that?"

"We made a deal, more or less. Sort of."

I look at her quizzically. "Excuse me?"
"I stay true to who I am, who I was, used to be. Back at Earth. She takes over. Leads the others while we elope, together."

"Why would she ask that of you?"

She shrugs her shoulders. "Apparently I've changed."

"This was inevitable." I cut in.

She nods and continues. "-Not just that. Apparently too much. I've seen too much. She... fears for me, in some type of way. Though I do not know why. Also...” she pauses. "She's told me, after I urged her, that after the final battle... this story... will not end. It will, somehow, continue. I cannot continue this life another year, or three more years. I know we will all live. But what after? She did not tell me. Won't tell me. It's... complicated. But despite her vagueness, I trust her judgement. I do not wish to see more people die. People I love," she looks directly into my eyes then. "Solas.. I..- I cannot bear to lose you. It would ruin me. Death would be kinder."

Fenhedis lasa. I would protect you with my life. No matter what. I'll not let anyone kill me. Not while you still draw breath, my heart.

"I feel the same way, thenan." Against everything I've told myself. I feel the same way. I could not abandon her now. Not after what she said. That she'd stay with me no matter what. Despite knowing I've secrets for her.

"I know... we argued about this in some type of way before. But I really want to disband the Inquisition. When Sarah takes over, they won't be alone. They won't have to disband. The one's who wish to stay will keep having purpose to fight. Since I know some of them won't agree to sit idly by and get fat after the Inquisition.” she smiles faintly. "She knows. She can lead them. We can leave. Together. Please... Let us leave after the final battle."

And have you see what I'll become? No.

"Alright, thenan. Let's leave."

My head says no. And yet my heart says yes. She trusts me, even if she knows I'm holding out on her. Perhaps... Perhaps I should trust her, too.

I sigh deeply. Scared. Worried. "After the final battle, I'll tell you everything you need to know."

Her eyes light up. "You will?"

I nod and kiss her again. "I will, Eliana. Everything. Down to the last secret I've kept from you. Any questions you'll have, I'll answer them. When we're gone."

I can feel her aura becoming brighter. Her entire heart flutters. I can almost hear her heartbeat quickening. This bond between us.. there's no way around it. It's there and it's very much real. And strong. Stronger than anything I've ever felt before. In all of those years I've lived.

"Thank you, Solas. Ma vhenan." She whispers, as a single, lone tear falls onto her beautiful pale skinned cheek.

I wipe it away gently with my thumb. "Please do not cry."

"It's tears of joy." she smiles contently. And we glance up at the night's skies together. Silently, again, for a while. Just enjoying being in one another's presence.
"Do you trust Sarah, Solas?" she breaks the silence.

"I cannot see why I shouldn't trust her."

"Do not lie to me. You promised me."

_The wolf inside me smiles. She's too clever for her own good, sometimes._

"...I don't." I say finally.

"Neither do I."

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**Chapter End Notes**

A little info about Sarah's theory: She _thinks_ she knows where this story is headed. Hence why she 'trusts' Elie with wanting to elope with Solas after the final battle.

But little does Sarah know, that _I'm_ writing this story. And I've got some surprises for her :3

XOXO
"Mistress Coutts." Josephine smiles brightly down at me as I groggily get up from my bed. My hair is still a tangled mess, my eyes still crusty and half closed. I groan loudly and place my pillow over my head, trying to escape from the nice Antivan Ambassador. "Please, it's late. The Inquisitor has prepared a schedule for you today. We mustn't be tardy."

"Late?" I quickly peek from underneath my pillow towards the window and see it's still barely light out. "You and I, have a different take on 'late', Josephine. It's not even six in the morning, is it?"

"Well.. Er... We have lots of things planned for you, today, Mistress Coutts."

"Ah, and for the love of God, just call me Sarah." I grumble quietly. I hear a small chuckle. A manly one at that, coming from behind my bedroom door. My eyes instantly go wide with curiousity. When I remove the pillow from my head, entirely, Josephine smiles knowingly at me. "Cullen's there, isn't he?"

She nods. "Commander Cullen is waiting outside, for your first lesson: horse riding."

"Why is he waiting outside?" I finally kick my legs out of the bed and instantly I regret doing so. The cold of the early morning's in Thedas is terrible.

"I can't just enter a lady's room." I hear him answering behind the door.

"At any rate. If you'd please get dressed. I've made sure you have the right attire." Josephine holds up a new set of clothing. "Better suited for riding and moving about." She places it neatly onto a desk nearby and dips her head, then she continues to leave the room, closing the door behind her. "We'll be waiting here for you, Sarah."

I blink a couple of times and then rub the sleepiness out of my eyes. Finally I get up and get out of my shift, glancing at the new attire: It's mostly leather. In fact the trousers are made of leather and so are the high boots and jacket. The only thing that's made of wool, is the long sleeved shirt that goes underneath said jacket. I groan as I grab the breastband that I was forced to wear. Eliana made sure my old clothes were quickly disposed of. Saying 'I no longer need those'.

Funny. First she wanted nothing more than me gone, but now she's practically making sure I don't leave. Ever.

I remember the way Glenna taught me how to properly wrap my breastband. While she showed me the first couple of times, she commented on how 'beautiful' my breasts had looked. I had felt a bit awkward at that moment, but Glenna was just really amazed at how 'big and round' they were. All
women's breasts here were small, and... well, I suppose Elie and I were the only women in Thedas who had... bigger one's. But with bigger breasts, came more trouble with the breastbands, designed for smaller breasted women. The way I wore mine now, was completely different than the way Glenna had initially wanted me to wear it. The poor thing had to come up with an entirely new way of wrapping mine, to ensure it was giving me enough support. I'd wondered then if Elie had the same issues. Briefly.

When I was finally fully dressed, I brushed my hair and pinched my cheeks a few times, to give them some more color. Then, I confidently walked out of my room. Where the Ambassador and Commander were still waiting for me. Both of them smiled politely at me when I finally got out. "Much better suited for horse riding." Josephine made a murmur of approval as she checked my attire.

"I'll be learning how to ride a horse today? With Commander Cullen?"

Cullen nodded. "I've no more work to do, regarding the Inquisition. At least, not today."

Josephine chimes in, as all three of us start walking out of the guest wing, towards the stables in the Courtyard. "Indeed. And Commander Cullen is our best option as tutor. After all, whenever he goes out with his soldiers, he's riding all day and night."

"No offense, but why are you here then, Josephine?" I ask politely. If Cullen's going to teach me how to ride a horse, then why does she need to be there as well? What's her job?

"None taken." The olive skinned woman smiles kindly. "I'll be around, to keep track of your progress. And to make sure we make it on time for our next lesson. Since you're not yet familiar with the way of telling time here in Thedas. Once you start your first lesson, I'll go back to some of my work, then I'll be back on time to escort you to the next."

"I know it's early." I narrow my eyes momentarily. "Anyhow, what next lesson?"

"There's also a bit of self defense training, you'll learn the basics, as Eliana did. But you'll be training with Cassandra."

Cullen chuckles. "I remember Eliana's first time training like it were yesterday. And now she's a natural talent."

"She trained with you?"

Cullen nods. "However, this was before I knew she had a lung condition. Luckily Solas came to her aid. Had he not told me, I doubt Eliana would've said anything about it." His facial expression turns grim for a moment.

I hum. "Yeah, I did wonder how Elie manages to do all that fighting, with her asthma and all."

"Solas is treating her for it. Every day he... does something." Cullen sighs. "A magical treatment, no doubt. But it's helping. Her health has been getting better and better and now she barely has fits anymore." Still, his facial expression remains the same. I wonder why. Perhaps I could ask him about it later.

"Well, here we are. You can choose between these three horses." Josephine shows me the mounts with pride. "We came a long way. It wasn't that long ago when we didn't have any mounts. Now, we have more than enough."

I stare at the big horses and a tanned skinned man walks towards me. His eyebrows and beard are
grey, he's bald and his expression looks serious. "You can have your pick between the chestnut, the grey one and the black horse."

"Ah, Master Dennet. Good morning." Josephine curtsies politely. "This is Master Dennet, Sarah. He's the Inquisition's horsemaster."

Yeah, I remember reading a little part about him.

"Morning, Ambassador. Commander." He nods curtly at Cullen. "I do hope you're not going to exhaust them today?"

Cullen clears his throat. "Of course not. I will merely be teaching Lady Coutts how to ride."

"Hm.. Alright then. Lady Coutts, have your pick." Dennet dips his head and walks away as quickly as he walked towards us.

"What a nice man." I comment dryly.

Josephine giggles softly. "He just takes a great interest in the welfare of our horses. He's the best horsemaster around." She glances up towards the sky then and gasps. "Oh my, is it already this late? Excuse me, Sarah. I must get going. There's a few more things I want to get done before your next lesson." And there she goes; walking, or more like powerwalking, away.

"Right." I say then, as I turn around and face the three horses. "I think I'll go for the grey one." I cautiously approach said horse and reach out my hand towards it's muzzle.

"You've really never been on one before?" Cullen asks me then.

I shake my head. "Never. I didn't have a grandmother who owned horses. Unlike Elie." The horse whinnies softly and takes a step backwards. I quickly do the same as well, slightly startled by the sudden movement of my horse.

Cullen slowly walks towards the horse as well and does the same I did, instead, he's able to pet the horse gently on it's muzzle. And when he does, he quickly grabs it's reins. "Yes, Eliana was lucky. Though she was no born talent at riding a horse either. She had the worst saddle pain the first couple of weeks. Or so I was told." He brings the horse towards me, and gestures for me to take hold of the reins myself now.

The horse seems a bit unsure, but finally relaxes slightly as I take hold of it's reins and sigh a breath of relief then.

"Good job."

I smile sheepishly at the handsome blonde man in front of me. "At least I don't suck at this completely."

He laughs softly. "We'll see about that. The next step is getting on the horse. Put one foot into the stirrup and place your hand on the saddle-" I do what he's telling me to do and wait for further instruction. "-Right. Now pull yourself up onto the horse, kick your other leg to the other side of the saddle and you're on it."

I struggle a bit, as I'm not used to 'climbing' such heights. But manage quite well. "Right. Why isn't there like a stool or something? That I can use to get ontop of the horse more easily?"

"That would be too easy." The Commander gets the Chestnut from out of the stables and easily and
quickly gets on, himself. Then he trots towards me. "Now, the most important thing you need to know, is to not click your tongue twice, or thrice. And also, do not kick the horse into it's sides. As both of those signs mean to go 'faster'."

We slowly trot next to one another, towards the gates of Skyhold. "I'll be sure to remember that."

"For now, we need to make sure you stay on the horse. Then, we can try a canter. To halt the horse, just gently tug at the reins." He demonstrates it, right before the closed gates. And I do the same. My horse seems to disagree with me a little bit, but eventually it stops, right before the guard who's on duty to man said gates. Cullen chuckles when he spots the nervous look on the guard's face. "It would seem you've picked a bit of a stubborn mount, Sarah."

I snort wryly. "Yeah. Just my luck. I pick out a horse that's just like me."

"Commander." The guard salutes him.

"I will be accompanying Mistress Coutts outside of Skyhold."

"Very well, sir." The Guard nods and within seconds, the gate opens and we go through them.

As we trot on, I try to get used to the saddle. And mostly, I try to stay firmly within it. As I don't want to fall off and hurt myself. Apparently Cullen has noticed my struggle and chuckles again. "It's not funny." I huff.

"Try moving your hips in unison with the pace of the horse."

I groan and do so, but apparently it only looks funnier to him. He laughs, this time, not at all trying to hide his amusement. "I'm really trying!"

He tries to stop laughing, but it seems the harder he tries, the more he fails at it. "I-... I'm terribly.. sorry." He manages to say in between his laughter. "You just look so out of your element."

"Yeah, no shit." I glare at the Commander angrily for a moment, but his laughter is contagious. And I start to giggle myself. "So Eliana never had this kind of trouble?"

His face turned sour real quick then.

*That touched a nerve, didn't it?*

He notices my surprised reaction at his sourness and clears his throat, turning his face towards the road before us again. "Er.. No. Eliana was not perfect at it, as I've said before.. But she knew the basics."

"What happened between you and her?"

Cullen's eyes widen visibly. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me." I glare at him again.

"I did... It's just... Well, that was a rather straight forward question to ask."

"That's just who I am, get used to it, Commander. I see no point in playing games or dancing around a subject. If I notice something's astray, I'll mention it."

"I can see that." He sighs. "But to answer your question, nothing happened between Eliana and I."
"Bullshit." I scoff. "So far, everytime Eliana's name is spoken aloud, your face turns grim and sour. There's obviously *something*.

"I don't see why this is any of your business." He's obviously losing his patience.

"Ah.. So *that's* it, huh. You liked Eliana." I don't think I've ever seen a grown man react so bashful. Immediately his head turns red and he starts stammering and looking everywhere but at me. "Well well." I snort loudly. "She's sure has quite the admirers. You *and* Solas. Hm.. And I take it she chose Solas in the end, and that hurt your feelings."

"It's got nothing to do with that, I assure you." I stare at him for a moment longer and he cracks. "Maker's breath, can we speak about something else?"

"No." I ignore his request entirely. "If I'm going to be staying here, if I'm going to be a part of the Inquisition's Inner Circle, I'll want to know these kinds of things." He looks hopeless at this point and I'm actually starting to feel bad. I sigh deeply. "I promise it'll stay between just the two of us, Cullen. I'm not some tattletale."

He rubs his neck, clearly still very uncomfortable with the current topic. "I liked Eliana a lot. She's... a remarkable woman..." He finally admits it, aloud. For the first time, perhaps. He almost looks relieved saying it. I say nothing instead, not wanting to push him too hard. He looks unsure for a moment but then continues anyways. "You know what Eliana used to be like.. When she first came here, she was this.. really scared girl. She was terrified of everything and everyone. But she never really let it get to her. At first." He bites his lip. "I believed in her power to lead us once I saw all what she'd done for us. For the Inquisition. She's a very strong woman, but I think she always tried to hide her pain away from us. There was a moment.. a very brief and small moment where I thought I might be able to help her. To not feel so alone. When she was at her lowest."

"But?"

He shakes his head. "It was foolish of me. I thought they had broken up..."

"What made you think that?"

"It was right after... The little one's death." He says it quietly. "Fenrian."

"She told me of him when she was back at Earth."

He nods. "I don't know the details, nobody did, but apparently they got into a fight. Solas and Eliana. They avoided one another. Solas was being chased around by other women and Eliana spent most of her days in the library, talking to Dorian."

"Isn't he gay?" I blurt out.

Cullen chuckles. "We didn't know that for certain back then, but he's with Iron Bull now, yes."

"Alright. So you thought the both of them were looking for someone else?"

He nods. "I never forced her, or pushed her, but I think she was so confused. She didn't know what to do with my sudden interest in her. She fled everytime she saw me. And I even believe she asked Dorian to help her flee." He hums. "Anyhow, none of it matters anymore. She's with Solas and that's that."

"But?"
He eyes me intently. "But what?"

"There's still something else. The way you talk about him."

"Solas is... a mystery. To all of us. Except for Eliana, perhaps. When he first made contact with the Inquisition, he lowered his staff and 'surrendered'. You should know that this was right after the Conclave blew up and when a lot of people still feared mages. We were.. unsure about him. But he never struggled or gave us any reason to worry. But, we also never found any information about him. Everyone who's joined the Inquisition has had their history checked by Leliana's men. We know everything about everyone within our ranks."

"Except for Solas?"

He nods. "When asked, he told our people he was from a small village in the North. But would never properly tell us which village, or where exactly in the North. Perhaps I'm being too distrusting towards him.." he lowers his head slightly. "After all, he's helped us more than once. He's healed many wounded, he's been a great advisor to Eliana and he's been the shoulder for her to lean on."

I hum. Not wanting to say too much. But I can tell Cullen's not stupid. Nobody probably fully trusts Solas, and yet they accept him.. Because he's been such an important figure in the Inquisition thusfar. But nobody really questions anything about him. They all have a gnawing feeling, but they do not act upon said feeling. It's.. interesting.

"You said you liked Eliana. Is that still the case?"

He smiles faintly. "I know when to quit. She's a taken woman and there's no need for me to pursue something that doesn't need to be pursued. Truth is, there really never was anything between us."

"I see. So you're not looking for someone else?"

He looks surprised then. "Er.. No. Not really. I think. Maybe in the future.. but... Well, that is, of course, if we survive..." He falls quiet then and eyes me for a bit longer. Then he clears his throat abruptly. "Well, at any rate.. It would seem you know how to trot. Let's try a canter shall we?" His scarred upper lip curls into a wicked grin then, and for a moment I gulp in fear.

Well shit.

(...)

I've been a busy woman today, horse riding with Cullen, self defense with Cassandra, and with a dagger. And, a little bit of my own questioning. I questioned Cullen about Eliana and Solas, I questioned Cassandra about them, as well. Though Cassandra didn't really have anything to say to me about it. I even went so far as to ask Vivienne, Dorian, Blackwall and Iron Bull about Solas and Eliana. And with everyone I've asked thusfar, it seemed like they all had doubts, but none were really straight forward about them. Well, maybe except for Vivienne, but her distrust towards Solas came from the magic he's using. More importantly; the way he's using it, not being taught in a Circle, like she was.

Other than that, no one really told me what I wanted to hear. What I wanted to hear, was: "I don't trust Solas." But none really said it. They gave me reason to think they implied it, but then they quickly changed the topic. His hold on the Inquisition is stronger than I thought. Perhaps it's because he's Eliana's partner. And since they revere her, they dare not question him too much. It's just too perfect, isn't it? - He doesn't want anyone to find out the truth about him, doesn't want anyone to really question him. And the best way to ensure nobody does, is to be by the side of she who rules
everything and everyone. To be the boyfriend of the one they respect greatly. My head is leaning on the palm of my hand, as I sit in Herald's Rest, with a mug of ale in front of me. This whole thing has been eating away at me. I don't know why I still want to hear people say they don't like, or don't trust Solas. I already know everything there is to know about him, and I've already made up my mind: I trust Elie, with her decision to leave with him. Hoping to God, none of what he had planned will come to pass. I haven't personally spoken to Eliana ever since that evening. I don't know if she's told him or not, and I don't know how much she really knows of Solas. But I still feel compelled to help her, and I came here for a reason. No matter how clinical she is with me, I don't want to see her getting hurt in the end. Or see her become the opposite of who she really is.

I don't want her to die. In the sense of literal death, and also in the sense of her characteristics.

I was so lost in thoughts that I didn't even notice Sera and Varric joining me at my lone table. "All by yourself, new girl?"

"She's broodin' again, that one. Liven up, will ya?"

Varric laughs. "Too bad the nickname 'Broody' is already taken. Or I would've started calling you that, instead of new girl." he nudges me and takes his seat right next to me.

"Hi guys." I say softly. Still trying to shrug away the gnawing feeling.

"Oi, ale guy!" Sera yells over the volume of people talking and the minstrel singing. An angry looking dwarf makes his way reluctantly over to our table.

"I told you, my name is Cabot." he huffs angrily.

"Two mugs of ale, please." Sera ignores Cabot's earlier comment. "And what do you want, Varric?" she grins cheekily at him.

"I'll have the same, Cabot." Varric winks and presses two extra coins ontop of the usual fee for the drinks, into his hands.

"Coming up." He murmurs before taking off again.

"You didn't just hand him extra sovereigns for that." Sera sputters.

He shrugs. "If you want people to treat you better, Buttercup, you're gonna have to be nicer to them."

"I am nice!"

"Hm. Just not very subtle." Varric shakes his head while smiling. "How was your day?" he's talking to me now. I've just been watching the two of them converse, in silence, so far.

I shrug my shoulders indifferently. "Elie wanted me to learn some horse riding with Cullen and I went for some self defense training with Cassandra right after. Josephine's been keeping track of my 'progress'" I say the latter using airquotes. "-And that's about it."

Cabot comes back and places the full tray with four mugs of ale onto our table. He's asking me if I'd like another one, but I refuse and he quickly leaves again. Standing back behind the bar again.

"What's our Inky making you do all that shite for?" Sera asks me, then she takes a big gulp from her first mug of ale. At that rate, she's going to be shitfaced before the end of this night.
"Need to come up with a good excuse."

"She wants me to help her, lift some of the weight from her shoulders. You know?" I say nonchalantly.

"That so?" Sera snorts. "I'd've flat out refused to help. It's a lot of work, for no real reason, yeah? Not like you're going with us on trips or anything."

Varric hums. "I believe you may be surprised to hear that that's exactly what Elie plans to do next, Buttercup."

Her eyes widen. "What for? No offense, new girl -"

"-None taken." I say wryly.

"-Right.. But.. aren't we almost done with this pish? I mean... Unless she expects this to continue another decade." Sera groans loudly. "I just wanna get back to a normal life." She pauses for a while and drinks another gulp. "Besides, how'd you know about that?"

"I have my sources." Varric smiles slyly. But quickly cracks. "She told me." He shrugs his shoulders. "Whatever her reasoning behind it, I trust her decisions. Besides, it would never hurt having someone extra with us."

"But she can't even fight!"

"Elie learned." Varric replies calmly.

"Right. Listen, new girl-" Varric laughs at the use of his nickname for me but Sera ignores him. "-If you're going to actually go with us. I'll teach you next time. Some real fighting skills. Cassandra's great and all, but does she carry daggers? I don't think so. She's a warrior. She only knows how to handle the big swords."

Varric laughs again, obviously thinking about the double entendre for 'handling big swords'.

I blink rapidly a few times. "But you're an archer."

"I'm a rogue. I can teach you both. But I think you'll be shit at using a bow, so I'll just stick with the little swords." Then she finishes her first mug of ale in one big gulp and takes the second into her hand, standing up from our table. "I'll take this and leave. I need some serious de-stressing after this conversation."

Sera's loud voice obviously attracts Cabot's attention. "Try not to ruin this door, too, will you? Last one we replaced for you was full of daggers."

She snickers and winks at me playfully when she notices my confused reaction. "Back then, I was practising my throwing skills at Coryphullus' target."

Varric sighs deeply and overly dramatic as Sera takes her second mug and walks upstairs, where her room is, apparently.

When she's finally gone, I take a deep breath. "She's.. something."

Varric nods. "So, what's really got you down today?"

I give him a scolding look. It would seem Varric is as straight forward as I am. When he gives me his best impression of puppy eyes, I decide to change the topic.. To a topic that's more.. agreeable with
me. "Tell me something, Varric..." He looks curious and proceeds to give me his full attention. "What do you think of Solas and Elie, together?"

He looks troubled for a split second. "Why you asking about that?"

"Just wondering."

"You're as subtle as Buttercup." he murmurs into his mug before taking a swig of it. "There's not much to say about them. As long as she's happy, then we're happy."

"But, what about Solas?"

"What about him? Chuckles is good company to be around with. I like him. I wouldn't go as far as saying that we're best friends, but... you know." He shrugs.

"You really like him?" I notice my own surprise at his answer. I didn't see that coming. Varric's smart. I'd've thought he would have more to say about him.

"Yeah. Don't you?"

I hum. Thinking on my next words carefully. "Just... wondering about him, is all."

"Oh, please don't tell me you're one of those 'concerned' friends. That worries about the man their friend has chosen?" He says teasingly.

Thank you for the cover, Varric.

"I am." I lie. Well, it's not exactly a lie... But it's a perfect cover for now. To make sure he won't question me about these things instead.

He chuckles and pats me hard on the back then. "Elie and Solas are fine together. If anything, I'd say she's gotten better since she started officially dating him. Sure, their relationship was a bit.. weird at first. No one really knew what was going on between them. But ever since they came out into the open with it, she's doing better. She has someone she can trust, and you can tell that they're in love with each other. It's a rare thing, in times like these. I'm actually using them as material for my next novel." He winks. "At any rate, don't look too much into it. She's happy, he's happy. Solas isn't someone to distrust."

I hum and nod. But only because I can tell Varric is not on the same page with me. "I suppose you're right." I finish my ale and pat him on his shoulder gently. "Well, I think it's high time for me to hit the hay." He gives me a questionable look. I snort. "Sleep."

"Ah, well, another time then, new girl!"

I nod and leave Herald's Rest, buttoning up my jacket as I walk into the cold night's air. As I enter Skyhold's main hall, I can see no one around. I haven't even seen Eliana today. There's moments where I'd briefly spot her, walking around the fortress, but today, I've not seen any sign of either her or Solas. Then a lightbulb goes on inside my head. I quietly walk over towards the rotunda and decide to peek inside once I'm there.

If he's there, then I'll just pretend to go towards the library or something.

Once I reach the rotunda, I look around: No sign of Solas, or anyone. The entire room is dark, except for the blue-ish flame flickering and burning atop the scaffolding he's using to paint the room's walls. Almost the entirety of the walls are covered in his frescoes, save for one last part of the wall. That's
still bare and painfully white, in comparison to the colors around it. I move over towards his desk, and see piles of books and papers scattered about. I don't think he'd be so stupid as to leave anything private laying around, but it's still worth a small gander.

I slowly and carefully lift up some papers, making sure I'm remembering their old exact spot, as to not mess anything up. And have him know someone's been snooping around his desk. I see some scribbles here and there about maps, some 'notes' he's made for himself, as to not forget certain tasks that were assigned to him, and other than some dusty old books with no pictures inside, there's nothing really noteworthy around his desk. I am disappointed, somehow. Though I kind of knew he wouldn't leave anything important behind for just anyone to find. Still, I was hoping I'd find... I don't know something. The gnawing feeling hasn't left me, at all. And after the talk with Varric, it's only gotten worse.

*What if Elie cannot change him? Cannot stop him?*

I was perhaps, hoping to find something I could use as a last resort. To show to Elie if all else failed. Even though I'm not sure it will fail. Why do I distrust her so? I used to trust her with my life, once...

"Found something interesting?"

I freeze entirely, hearing *that* voice behind me.

*How in the HELL, did he sneak up on me like that? I didn't even hear him!*

I slowly turn around, trying to look as casual and nonchalant as possible. He's eyeing me with a dead, and cold look in his eyes. It's sending shivers down my spine. This is not at all the man I've been seeing around Eliana. This.. Is someone else, entirely. "I was looking for some reading material."

He takes a step closer towards me, his hands behind his back. Still the same dead and cold look in his blue and grey eyes. "I believe you're in the wrong area then. Though you were close. The library is just up those stairs." he points at the latter. "So, why you were looking around my desk, is beyond me."

"I just figured, you would have the good books." I can almost feel a bead of sweat dripping down my brow. This man has got the iciest stare I've ever seen in my entire life. But despite this, I still manage to sound calm. I'm surprised by it myself.

"Ah." He takes another step closer to me. Though he's still keeping enough space between us, I feel as if I'm almost trapped between him and his desk. "Still.. this does not justify sneaking around and going through my belongings like that." He glances down at the way I've left his desk. "You've even managed to place everything in almost the exact same way I've left them."

"Didn't want to anger you." I shrug my shoulders indifferently.

"You've been asking an awful lot of questions about Eliana and myself, today. And now, I find you going through my personal notes and books. Give me a very good reason why I should not be angry right now."

Then, I panic slightly.

*How would he even know about me asking questions, today? I did not hear or see him at all this entire day. And with Cullen I was even outside the Fortress.*

He notices my expression change. A knowing smile creeps onto his face.
I just stand there, frozen in place. And for the first time in thirty four years, I am truly and utterly dumbfounded. I was never really scared of anyone or anything in my entire life. And the older I got, the less things got to me. The better I got at thinking on my toes, and talking my way out of situations like these. But this... man... And I can literally feel my stomach drop, when I see his eyes flash momentarily. It was brief, but I definitely did not imagine that. I gulp.

"Sarah? Solas?"

I hear Elie's voice behind Solas, and I find my voice yet again. "Hey." Though it comes out of my throat more like a croak, than an actual voice.

She makes her way over to the both of us and takes her place next to Solas. Crossing her arms and giving the both of us a quizzical look. "What's going on here?"

I want to speak up, but Solas beats me to it. "I found Sarah snooping around my desk. Looking through my notes and books."

"Why would you do that?" She asks me, still very much confused about it, it seems.

Again, he beats me to it. "-And, I do believe we need to think over the position of our dear spymaster." When she urges him to continue, he seems to gladly do so. His eyes on me, the entire time he speaks. "Because it would seem that Mistress Coutts, is doing a far better job at questioning people than sister Leliana is. Perhaps you gave her the position to do so, vhenan... But I doubt you want sister Leliana replaced."

"Alright... Stop being vague, please. Sarah? You've been questioning people? About what?"

"Rather about whom. About us. And now she's here."

Solas keeps his icy stare on me at all times. And then it seems to connect inside of Elie's brain. I look apologetically at her then. Trying to make her forgive me. But I can see her expression change before my very eyes, and she looks like she's about to kill me. Literally. "With me. Now." And with that, she turns around and walks away, obviously wanting me to follow her.

When I follow her, I turn around one last time, seeing Solas' creepy stare still on me.

Once we enter the main hall, she harshly grabs me by the arm and drags me with her, towards her room. The entire walk towards the room was silent, and though it is not far, the 'trip' towards her room, seemed to last forever. With every step that I took, feeling like I've got lead in my boots. She pushes me into the room and slams the door behind her. I am just staring at her back as I notice her placing her fingers on her temples. She's obviously trying to remain calm. But then she turns around and snaps at me. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?!"

I want to say something, but as I open my mouth to do so, she holds up her hand. "I trusted you with the Inquisition, I'm giving you the resources and time to take over, and learn things, I'm allowing you to stay. I ensure everyone's treating you with respect. And yet I get nothing in return for it! You question the relationship between Solas and I, asking around?! Asking my companions? Questioning them? How fucking dare you." She breathes in and starts pacing back and forth the room then. I feel as if I'm the child being scolded now. While I'm older than her, it's almost ridiculous.

"I don't trust Solas."

She laughs. But not in a good way. She's losing it. Before my very eyes. "I told you.. Sarah. I fucking told you." The tone of her voice lilts upwards as she says the latter. "Do you stick to your
promise made to me that you'd lead the Inquisition after we leave?"

"I do, but-"

"Then fucking leave it at that!" She all but spat at me, as she inched closer to me. Her nose almost touching my own. "You do not need to save me from Solas. Even though for some fucking reason you think you do. You do not need to protect me from anything! I know how to fucking take care of myself, alright? And you do not have the right to question my friends about us. Or to go through his personal belongings like that," she scoffs. "I mean.. who the fuck do you even think you are? I call the shots around here. I'm the one who brought the Inquisition to the place where it is now. And you will not ruin that! Do I make myself perfectly fucking clear?!"

"Calm down, will you? I'm just looking after you."

"You're not my fucking mum!"

"No, you left your mum back at home and never bothered to go back to her! While I was taking care of her!"

Her jaw tenses up. "Don't even go there."

I scoff. "Oh? You want me to not touch sore spots? How about Fenrian? You say you can take care of yourself, but you can't even protect a little kid from dying! Such a great leader you are!"

A dagger is at my throat, quicker than I realised it.

She's holding it firmly in hand, I can feel it slightly cutting into my skin. It burns. And I swallow down hard. Her eyes are literally glowing.

"You're really going to do that? What the fuck happened to you. Now I'm really going to make sure the Inquisition will be led by me. Since you can't fucking think straight anymore!"

Her hand is shaking. Her eyes still glowing a white light. It terrifies me, but I won't have her know that.

"Get. Out." She lowers her dagger and pushes me towards her door again. Before I can say anything, she speaks up again. "I find you sneaking around like that one more time, Sarah... I will do it. And to Hell with who's going to lead the Inquisition after I'm gone, then. Clearly.. It was a mistake keeping you here. But it's a decision I've made." She puts her dagger back into it's sheath. A hidden dagger at her inner thigh. I'll need to remember that.

"You'll remain here. But we will not speak to one another again. Do you understand?"

I can feel my heart being broken into tiny pieces. I'm mourning for the friend I once had, that's left the empty vessel that's standing before me now.

"And if you ever bring up Fenrian, or my mum like that ever again... I will make sure you'll suffer before you bleed dry. Nobody, and especially not you, is going to talk badly about Fenrian or my mum. And nobody will take Solas from me. By sowing discord within the Inquisition."

That came through.
I leave her room, without saying a word.

She would kill me, for talking badly about Solas. She would kill me, for bringing up Fenrian or her mum. She's lost it. When I walk back into the main hall, I pass Solas by, who's smiling at me. He knows. He fucking somehow knows. I blink away my tears quickly, hoping he hasn't seen any of them.

*Fine Eliana. Whatever you intend to do next... I don't give a shit anymore. I'll take this serious from now on. I will take your place. Whether you're really leaving with him or not. And if I have to, I will stop you. No matter what. Since you'd do the same to me.*

Chapter End Notes

So, I suppose we're past the point of 'mending' their friendship now. The damage is done. And if any of you think that: Hmmm Elie may have acted too dramatically about it all, in the end.

Allow me to explain: Sarah brought up both her mum and Fenrian, and insulted her greatly. Wounded her greatly, by saying she couldn't even protect Fenfen, and implying that she did not give a shit about her mother back at home. On top of it all, to Elie, it looks like Sarah is trying to sow discord within the Inquisition, by placing distrust into Solas within the others. Maybe not directly, but definitely indirectly. And that would endanger their relationship, their love. Especially so close to the 'End'. And Elie, as I've explained a few chapters ago, would(at this point) do ANYTHING to keep Solas by her side.

And oooooooooly boy, what else she would do to ensure they'll stick together no matter what.

- But that's for later chapters ;)

Also: glowing eyes bit; she's bonded with Solas. AND drank from the Well of Sorrows.

Do I need to say more? :) Elie is no longer that helpless little pup from the first chapter.

She's not inherently evil. She would just do anything to keep him by her side. And to not lose face with her companions.... for now, at least.
Eliana POV:

I place my hands onto the desk before me and stare out at my balcony on the right hand side of me. Just looking at the night's skies, the twinkling stars, and the darkness that surrounds the tiny lights. I shake my head, trying to shake away the haze, the pure anger I had felt only moments ago. I had heard her walking away, all the way towards the door to the main hall, that's how silent it had become after Sarah left my chambers. Part of me... felt odd. Extremely odd. When Sarah started about Fenrian and mom, earlier... It had almost felt like my own anger was multiplied by millions of others. I frightened her, I saw it. I saw the pure fear in her eyes. A fear that was once my own, and for a moment, I wondered if I was still doing well.

No. I'm fine. She's the problem. She's trying to spew lies about Solas. She's trying to make everyone doubt him. She's going around the Inner Circle, asking questions about Solas. Why? For what fucking reason?

Suddenly I hear a gentle and soft knock at my door. It can't be Sarah, she wouldn't dare.

"Who's there?" I snap my head towards the door, and it slowly opens. And I see the face of my man. Soft features, and a worried look on his face. "Solas." I breathe out his name.

"Vhenan. I saw Sarah leaving your chambers." He closes the door behind him and walks over towards me then. Placing a hand on my neck. "She did not look happy."

"Well, neither am I."

"Believe me, I entirely understand. Things don't often anger me, but her snooping around earlier... I lost my temper with her."

"Don't even think about apologizing for it." I turn my body to face his. "She had no right to do that. Your anger was more than justified."

He nods. "You're right." his eyes linger on my own and he tilts his head to the side a bit. "Are you well, vhenan?"
I sigh. "I... It got pretty heated with Sarah." My lower lip once again murmurs it's way between my teeth again. "I had my dagger at her throat, Solas."

His eyes widen. "What for? I understand you were upset with her but-"

"She brought up Fenrian. Saying I'm a terrible leader because I couldn't even protect him from everything that went on back at Haven. She also mentioned my mum. Saying I didn't care about her, while she was back at Earth taking care of her. I.." I breathe in through my nose. Trying to compose myself as I can hear my own voice trembling with anger yet again. "I lost it. Then the fact that she's trying to... Gods. She really doesn't trust you. I've tried telling her over and over again that she needn't worry."

He looks troubled for a moment. "I never would have intended for your best friend to dislike you so, because of me."

"It's not your fault, Solas." I place my hand on his cheek, rubbing it gently with my thumb. He moves his head into my hand some more. "You promised me you'd tell me everything once this is all over and done with. And I trust you. You know that. When Sarah got here..." I stop.

He looks to me. "Yes?"

I finally tell him everything she's said to me upon arriving here the very first day. The first talk we had in my chambers, where she explained everything to me about Thedas being from a game, and knowing about everything and everyone. I told Solas bits and pieces before, but I never entirely told him the whole thing. Scared, he might not understand. I didn't know how to explain 'games' to him either, so I tried my best. Explaining it was some type of projection, where you could see stories being played out before you, being able to control the people you saw on the projection before you. Being able to make the choices of the main character, and shaping the story into the way you want it to be. It was hard, but I suppose he finally got the gist of it.

He's quiet. Pondering over the information I had just given him.

"So, you see... Sarah claims this world was created by people from my own world. From Earth. So everything that's happened thusfar, she found information about it all, back at home. She remembered as much as she could, and came here to tell me. But... as I've said before, she worries that if she tells me everything she knows, Thedas will seize to exist entirely. That was her fear at first. She knows things, Solas. But refuses to tell me anything about it. She told me this story will continue, but that's all." He took a seat on my bed a while ago, and I'm still standing before the bed, looking at him. He's processing everything, I can see the cogwheels turning in his head. "Say something, will you?"

He sighs deeply. "It's.. a lot to take in."

"Tell me about it."

"So you say she knows how our story will end? The fight with Corypheus?"

"She says we'll all survive. But more than that she won't tell me. Well, that there's more to it. That even after we defeat Corypheus, there's going to be more. And like I told you... I don't want there to be more." I glance down at my mark. "I think I've done enough for Thedas once Corypheus is defeated. I don't want to end up in the political shit that comes after. The Inquisition's there for wars like these, for fights like these. And once it's over with, there's no need for us to continue. There was a time, in the very beginning, when I spoke with Hawke, where I was afraid to lose my friends. To end up being alone. But... I have you. I won't be alone." I take my place next to him on the bed. "No
matter what comes, I'll still have you."

He smiles faintly and lifts my hand up to his lips to kiss it gently. "You will always have me. You're the only person I can trust. There was a time where I was afraid of this, Eliana."

I nod silently, knowingly.

"It has been... a very long time since I was able to trust someone so much." his expression is pained. I've seen this expression before, but he always tried to mask it soon after it appeared. This time, however, he's not trying to hide it from me. "I'm.. not perfect, Eliana. I've made... a lot of mistakes."

"Who's perfect? I know I'm not." I snort wryly.

He smiles weakly. "You don't understand."

A long silence fills up the room. For a while, there's no other sound than our own breathing. For a moment I wonder where this conversation is headed to. Fear grips me. He's told me before he was thinking of breaking up with me, once. Perhaps he's finally made up his mind about it? He intends to do it now? And he's just trying to find the right words for it.

"You have advocated for the rights of Elves, since the very beginning of the Inquisition. Whereas most humans within Thedas view us as filth and vermin. You, were always curious about us. About our culture, about the race, and not in a perverted way, like some humans are. Some humans are only interested in Elves for sex or servitude." he pauses. "Even after you almost got raped... You still stood with the Elves. You have shown kindness towards us that I have not seen for countless of years."

I simply nod. Not quite knowing what to reply to that.

He continues. "It always showed me that you were different, but... I was always wary. Why would a human be interested so in our culture? You listenend to my ramblings about the past, about Arlathan and Elvhenan. You showed interest. You cared. I could see it very clearly on your face. And I could feel your heart being pained by hearing the sad truth." He kisses me on the lips softly. When our lips part his eyes flash.

My own eyes widen. "That. I've seen it before. I've seen your eyes flash like that before. And it's not something normal mages can do. I know this now, from my studies."

"Vivienne's books would probably tell you I am possessed by a spirit. But it is not that." he smiles faintly yet again. "Do you remember the Temple of Mythal? Abelas?"

I nod. "How could I forget?"

"And you also remember I told him there were other places for him to go to? That his people yet lingered?"

"I do. He replied with 'Elvhen such as you?'."

"Yes." he presses his face into my neck and smiles against my skin. I can feel his soft and gentle smile. "I had a feeling you would have caught up on that. You're so smart, Eliana. You're not so easily fooled like the others."

"Mythal really exists, doesn't she?"

"She does."
"She was slain, as much as any Elven God or Goddess can be slain. What does that mean?"

"The first of my people do not die so easily. Mythal was smart. She found... other ways to continue on living."

"Then, are the stories they tell of the Elven Pantheon false? If Mythal is still here..."

"You've heard the stories of Fen'Harel?"

I nod.

"Now let me tell you another story.." He moves his head out of my neck and smiles. "The first of my people were immortal. They could only sleep for decades if their powers were too weak."

"Uthenera."

He nods. "Indeed. The closest they got to 'dying'. If they used up all of their powers to do something great, they would sleep... for centuries. Only to be awoken in a new and different world. Now imagine, that the Elvhen warred amongst themselves. Each member of the Pantheon had their very own temple, and their servants. Which they marked with blood writing. Vallaslin. The marked Elves were considered to be slaves. Though Mythal had servants in her temple, she was the only one out of the entire Pantheon that treated her servants with respect and kindness. She did not mark them. And in return, she became the most loved one of all. They revered her, she was a mother figure." He grabs hold of my hand and squeezes it softly. "But she and Fen'Harel were the only one's who saw what the Evanuris had become. Ruthless rulers, while they all started out to be saviors. Very powerful mages who had done great deeds in order to become so revered by others. Their arrogance got the better of them. It blinded them. Mythal was the first to notice this, and later.. Fen'Harel followed."

"What did they do?"

"They noticed how the servants were being treated in other temples. They saw how unhappy the slaves were. They started a rebellion. There was a spell, Fen'Harel used, to remove the Vallaslin, and the Elves he freed joined Mythal's ranks. Naturally, the other members of the Pantheon were not too happy about this fact. A war began. Between them all." He looked like he was about to cry. "She was the best of them. And they dared slay her. With the last of his powers, Fen'Harel created the Veil to trap the Evanuris and the Old Gods altogether."

I look him directly into his eyes. My breath all but taken away by the story. "This is... very different from what people know today."

"Indeed."

"But that's not all, is it?"

He shakes his head. "You're so bright, Eliana." he chuckles softly and kisses me on my forehead.

"Tell me.. Please."

He thinks for a moment longer. Pondering over his options, no doubt. "By creating the Veil, the Empire fell. Mythal was gone. The Evanuris and the Old Gods were gone. Fen'Harel slept. For decades. In the meanwhile, Elves were seperated from one another. Some ended up in cities, some still ended up as being slaves, for Tevinter noble families. While others tried to stick to the 'old ways' as much as possible. Thinking they knew the true meaning behind their Vallaslin. Thinking they knew all there is to know about the Evanuris. About their Gods."
"The Dalish. They don't know that the Vallaslin are slave markings? Fenrian once said it was an honor to receive them."

"They know nothing." He closes his eyes.

"How did Fen'Harel create the Veil, exactly?"

"By using his orb." A knowing smile creeps onto his face. It isn't scary, it's... reluctant and sincere. "I told you once every member of the Pantheon had one."

"You did. So... If Mythal has returned after all those decades..."

"Fen'Harel has returned as well."

We stare at one another for a long time. Both of us not saying a single word.

He continues, eventually. "He awoke, decades later. To find the Empire had fallen. To see that the world he once knew was no longer the way it used to be. When he created the Veil, he thought he did a good thing. But when he woke and saw what had become to the people.. There was no more magic amongst them. Some... mages, still had it. But it did not even come close to the old days. He instantly regretted his decision, so he wanted to tear down the very Veil he had created so long ago. To undo his mistake."

"But?"

"But he was still too weak. His powers, were too weak. He couldn't even unlock his own orb. So he pointed some powerful Magister into the direction of his orb. Hoping he would be able to unlock the orb for him. Unlocking it, should've killed him. I never thought he would survive it." He says the latter while gritting his teeth angrily.

"Fen'Harel.... gave Corypheus the orb?"

"I could never have foreseen Corypheus being immortal." He gets up from the bed and starts pacing back and forth. Raising his voice slightly, but still not entirely yelling. "He should've died. If I had known Mythal endured, if I had known Corypheus could jump into other bodies and live on, even if the first body dies... I would not have made that decision back then!" He stops abruptly.

"And... Sarah... She knows this." I say slowly.

He walks over to me and kneels before me, taking my hands into his own hands and staring directly into my eyes. "I love you, with all my heart, Eliana." He's whispering now.

"So... you joined us.. To undo the mistake you made, by giving the orb to Corypheus." I whisper back. "When I got to Thedas, I ended up, somehow ended up at the Conclave. Corypheus entered, wanting to do his evil work... I touched the orb. Your orb."

"Our magic was already linked long ago. Just like Corypheus, you were not supposed to survive it. But somehow you did. I was always fascinated by that fact, Eliana. How could a mere mortal survive it? True, it was killing you at first. I was able to slow it's effects a little, but eventually you... mastered it." He sounds in awe of me now. "This, and the fact that you are from another world, intrigued me so.. That I stayed close to you."

"And then the cat and mouse game began." I say in a wry tone of voice. A half smile on my lips. He nods. "We bonded. You drank from the Well of Sorrows. Mythal's Well of Sorrows."
"You didn't want me to be in service to Mythal because of the past? Because of the servants?"

"I do not yet know what this may mean, Eliana. Being in her service. I didn't want you to pay a price later on in life. I wanted you to be safe. And I didn't want you to see who I'd become."

"Who would you become?"

"After the final battle. When Corypheus is slain. I will take back my orb. And tear down the Veil, once and for all." he says grimly. He looks like a man that's signed his own death warrant.

"You would release the Old Gods and the Evanuris? They... They would be furious. They'd kill you."

"Yes. And this world, the world as we know it today... Will no longer exist. I will bring back the old glory my people once had. I will not sit idly by and watch as my people live like vermin."

I take his head into my head and press my forehead against his own. "No. You can't die. I can't watch you die. We've come so far and now..." My own voice betrays me. I start to weep.

"It should have been kinder of me to not pursue you. I should not have gotten so involved with you. I never wanted you to be in this pain."

"That's why you wanted to break up with me, isn't it?"

"It would've been the easy way out, yes. But, Eliana..." He kisses my hands over and over and over again, as I hang my head lowly. "I love you. I want you, and nobody else. You're my mate. I never thought I'd be able to find someone I'd trust with anything such as this. I've decided to tell you now, rather than after the final battle. I owe you that much."

"But I also don't want you to be unhappy. To fight with the only friend you had from back home. I leave this choice into your own hands. I cannot decide for you. You said you'd stay with me no matter what... But I can understand if you'd back down on those promises now."

I abruptly get up from the bed and slap his hands away from my own. "Don't you fucking dare!" Tears are stinging in my eyes. "I will not leave you now, Solas. I told you!"

"But..."

"No! I said I'd stay. And I will. If you'll let me."

He says nothing, instead he moves towards me and kisses me passionately. He needily grabs me, suckles on my lips, biting them harshly. In between kisses, he murmurs, entirely out of breath. "Lay with me. Now."

And even though I am exhausted. He's exhausted. I nod. "Take me."

He pushes me down with force, onto my own bed and starts to unlace my clothing. I all but rip off his own shirt, tearing down his breeches, our lips never not once parting. We're panting, without even really doing anything yet. There's so much heat within me. I need this heat gone, I need him. I will never leave him. He's not wasting any time, once we're butt naked, he enters me, grabbing hold of my thigh. Digging his fingernails into my skin. I arch my back as I feel the all too familiar
sensations coming back to me. His lovemaking. No. His fucking, there's nothing else like it. I move my torso up towards his neck and leave hickeys all over said skin. I do not care who'll see it. I do not care what people will say or think. He's mine, and it's about time I show everyone.

He places his fingers onto my skin and I can feel a strong tingling sensation trailing up my flesh. All my hairs are standing on end. I gasp loudly. Whatever it is, he's doing, I don't want him to stop. He looks at me while he continues to screw me hard and smiles wolfishly. "I love that reaction, vhenan."

"What... what is it?" The sensations are getting stronger now, he's doing it deliberately. My senses are working overtime. Everything's heightened. Stronger. Messing with my head. I can't even think straight anymore. I moan loudly, throwing my head back. He starts to go slower, but the tingling, the vibrations he's sending through my entire body, are getting more and more intense.

"Magic, my heart." he purrs into my ear. Then he moves the hand with which he's using the magic, towards my heat and places his fingers right on top of my throbbing clit.

I'm slowly losing it entirely. Double the sensation. I don't think I've ever felt this good in my entire life, before. "Don't... Don't stop... Ah... Don't stop!"

He claims my mouth yet again, absorbing my murmurs and moaning as he continues this divine torture. He slowly accelerates his own pace again, I can feel my legs getting weaker by the second. I am like putty in his hands. Literally. I scrape my fingernails over the skin of his back, digging my nails further and further into his flesh. I can hear him grunting, when I open my eyes again, his jaw is tense. His eyes full of lust and desire. Just those two stormy eyes staring directly into my own. I come the first time. Loudly. Trying to scream out his name, but my voice fails me entirely. I lose my voice, and my breath, for a moment I forget to breathe in at all. I gasp as he suddenly pulls out and lifts me up into his arms, moving me over towards my desk.

He literally bends me over the desk and pushes my body down, moving apart my legs with his own free leg and before I can even think straight, before I can come back to my senses, he enters me yet again. One hand is keeping me in place, on my hip. The other free hand he has is tangled into my hair from behind, slowly tugging at it ever so slightly. But just enough to make me lift up my head from the desk. I can't even hold up my own head at this point. I am beyond exhaustion already. Not just from my earlier orgasm, but also due to the information I've just absorbed. And yet, I couldn't care less. Before I know it, his mouth is next to my right ear and he's cooing into it. Just murmuring Elven words into my head. And I can hear and understand each and every single one of his words. "Ma ane emma ma. Ar lath ma. Tel' vara em."

"You are mine. I love you. Do not leave me."

"Never." I say through gritted teeth.

He goes faster, placing featherlight kisses on my neck from behind. And then moves his lips towards my back, going as far as he's able to reach with his head. My entire skin feels like it's on fire. He's definitely still using some magic. It's not as strong as before, but it's there, alright. Briefly the thought crosses my mind, that I can do it as well. I want to be able to make him feel the same way I do. "Turn me around." I say between short and ragged breaths.

I can hear him smile behind me. "Ma nuvenin." And with one quick and smooth motion, he pulls out of of me yet again, and turns me around. My legs are almost giving up, but I force myself to stand on them firmly. As firmly as I can, of course. He hovers his head over my own, waiting before entering me again. His eyes asking for my permission, though he clearly knows he needn't bother to ask for permission.
I place my hands onto his chest, gliding them downwards, tracing his firm and strong abs with my fingers. And as I do, I try to imitate the feeling I've felt before. His mouth opens slightly, apparently feeling something at first. But then he chuckles softly, penetrating me yet again, my legs feeling like jelly once more. I keep my fingers there, and focus as much as I'm able, while I'm being fucked senseless. He grins wickedly. "What are you trying to do, Eliana?" he asks me in an alluring tone of voice.

But I ignore him, instead trying to make my fingertips excude the same power like his earlier. And just when I want to give up and just give in to the lovely feeling of him fucking me... He gasps, his eyes rolling to the back of his head. And I can see the gooseskin forming on his chest. Beyond explanation. He groans, his breathing becomes ragged now, he's losing control slowly. I wrap my legs around his waist and urge him to go faster, still keeping my tingling fingertips onto his torso. But he's slowing down, getting distracted by the sensations I'm returning to him now. "What's the matter, hahren? Can't focus?"

He groans, opening his mouth wide, tilting his head backwards slightly and he growls a low growl when his eyes next meet mine. "I love you." Then he picks up the pace yet again, and he loses himself within me. The entire desk is shaking, my papers and books falling off of it, a clay mug I used for drinking tea, one day ago, falls down as well. And shatters into pieces onto the stone hard floor of my chambers. And he comes. I don't think I've ever heard Solas being this loud before. He has given himself to me, entirely now. There's no more doubts. No ifs, ands or buts about it.

He collapses atop of me, his breathing harsh and uncontrolled next to my ear. I groan out of pleasure one last time, and we lay there for a while, collecting ourselves again.

"I want nothing more than to have you remain by my side, vhenan."

Sarah POV:

"Shit. That was absolutely shit." Sera remarks from the side of the training field.

I groan in frustration. "Alright, how about you try it instead?"

"Don't need to." She shrugs her shoulders indifferently. "I use arrows."

"Then let me try a bow."

"Maybe another time. Looks like you've got company." Sera makes an icky looking face and turns her head sideways. Morrigan is standing to the side of us two, her arms crossed.

"Don't mind me. I'm just here to speak to our latest companion." She says in a sing song voice.

I huff and move my sweaty hair from my face. I must look like a tomato right about now.

"Morrigan."

Sera doesn't even say goodbye, she just awkwardly moves away from the two of us. She really doesn't like mages. Especially not the 'wild' one's. And wild she looks.

"Sarah. I just came to speak with you for a moment. It won't take long, I promise." She beckons me over to her, and I slowly and hesitantly do so.

"Alright. So what's up?"
"I was wondering if you have spoken to our Inquisitor lately. I barely see her anymore, and I was wondering if she's been talking to you about our next move."

"Why would she talk to me about anything?" I say indifferently.

"Oh." she smiles a bit sickenly sweet. "So tis true. You two are no longer... friendly with one another?"

"A lot has changed. Anyhow, why would you think she'd confide in me? If anything I'm sure she'd tell Leliana or Cassandra about her next move."

"Hm, yes, I would've thought so as well. But it would seem even they are being left in the dark by her. The last two days she's kept herself locked into her room, and we haven't seen any signs of Solas either." I furrow my brows then. Odd. "I can tell you find this troubling as well." she remarks upon seeing my reaction.

I hum. "It is.. a bit. But then again, she wanted me trained properly before setting out again."

"Yes. I was aware of that as well. And it makes me wonder... why would our dear Inquisitor go above and beyond to have you trained, right before our last battle."

"Extra pair of hands?"

"And does that extra pair of hands need to be in the War Room with us Advisors, to oversee what our next minor move against Corypheus will be?"

I sigh. "Look, Morrigan. I don't have to tell you, that there's something off going on between Solas and Eliana. She's locked herself into her room, we see no signs of Solas anywhere about, definitely not where he usually resides, and she's keeping her advisors and companions in the dark about what's next. I've no idea what's going on through her head anymore, but what I do know, is that if she becomes a danger to the Inquisition, I'll take over from her."

"Ha." she shakes her head, a playful twinkle in her golden eyes. "And what pray tell, will you do to help us win this final battle? We still need Eliana, since she's the only who drank from the Well of Sorrows."

"Once I've trained enough I can be of help during the final battle."

"And after?"

"After.. I'll return home." I lie.

"How nice of you, to drop into Thedas, right before the last battle... Just to help us. And then you'd simply up and leave again. Interesting."

"What can I say? I'm a nice person." I say drly, and try to walk away from her. But she halts me.

"A moment, longer.. if you please." I give her an annoyed look. "I am no fool, Sarah. I can tell there's something going on. More than what you or the Inquisitor let on. Why would you truly travel all this way if not for some bigger purpose? If you and the Inquisitor are no longer on good terms with one another, then why stay at all?"

"Because I worry for her. And I may have not spent as much time here with all of you guys, as she has.. But that doesn't mean I don't recognize danger and fear when I see it. Eliana has told me much about Thedas, and the people she's met along the time she's been here. While she was back with me,
back home... Where we're from. And I am here now, myself. I see what's happening and I understand the threat is bigger than what I initially thought it was. Whatever comes next, you'll have an extra pair of hands to help you. Whether you like that, or not, lady Morrigan, is truthfully one of the least concerns I've got. Good day."

I leave her behind me, to find myself a wooden tub of lukewarm water.

_Fucking Thedas, with no fucking plumbing._

On the way towards the tubs, however, I run into Leliana. We almost bump into one another, but she quickly and swiftly manages to dodge me last minute. "Mistress Coutts," she says smiling.

"Just, Sarah please."

"Sarah, very well. Do you have a moment? I wish to discuss some of our next moves against the red templars, still holding power over some of the areas."

"What of Eliana? Have you spoken to her about it? Is she okay with it?"

Leliana nods. "She has... notified me, via letter. I haven't personally spoken with her about it. But I trust she's very busy with the preparations for the final battle. Or... figuring out the Well of Sorrows' power."

"Right." Just making sure that Morrigan was right about Elie keeping everyone in the dark, lately.

I follow her to the War Room and find that Cullen and Josephine are not there. For the first time, perhaps. When she spots my curious look she smiles. "The others are busy attending to other things. For now, it'll just be the two of us. As you can see-" she immediately walks over towards the wartable and the map, showing some red pawns that do not belong to the Inquisition. "-The red templars still have some hold on these areas. The unliberated one's. Emprise du Lion for example is still crawling with them. Then there's the matter of the Fallow Mire.. Eliana once wished to venture there, for the swamps and the undead that linger there. But we haven't been able to actually do something about that yet." She looks troubled. "At least I am glad that Eliana agrees we have to liberate these final places, before we take on Corypheus. Though our hold is firm and strong. We can always use more people agreeing with us."

_Aye. Especially once this is over and we have to go to Val Royeaux to speak to the Exalted Council... We'll need all the support we can get. I agree._

"You're right. Perhaps once my training is up to par, we could head out there. To both areas. Though they are both completely on either side of the map."

"I'm afraid it's never _that_ easy." I make a murmur of approval to that. "I trust in Eliana's decision to have you temporarily take over for her. For now. But I do wonder, why."

I snort. "It's getting to her."

Her expression turns serious then. "As I suspected."

"You knew?"

"I had my suspicions. Eliana's been.. different as of late. She speaks less and less to us all, and hides away with Solas. I wonder what it is they're doing exactly."

"I wish I knew as well. But sadly, I can't give you any more details than what you know already,
"Perhaps it is wrong of me to say this... Too straight forward..." she pauses and looks around for a moment, looking worried someone might hear her speak.

"Go on." I urge her gently.

"I fear for her state of mind. We don't know what's going on through her mind. And the only person who does, is locked away with her in the same room. I'm sure they do come out, but only at nights. When they're certain nobody is around any longer. She has at least made the right decision into entrusting the welfare of the Inquisition with you."

"You don't mind?" Somehow I had thought some of the Inner Circle would have issues with me 'taking over slowly'.

"Your mind is not full of millions of other voices. Like Eliana's. After she drank from the Well... She's been... acting up. We all love her, do not mistake me saying this for being cruel or mean... We just worry for her wellbeing. And we trust that when she steps down, she'll let someone she trusts take over."

"You have a feeling she'll step down?" Leliana's smart indeed.

She smiles weakly. "We're not blind. Some of us just hope she will not step down. Varric for instance, has come to adore Eliana. He respects her greatly. Cassandra too. And Dorian. But we have our doubts. Is it true, that she actually wants to step down after the last battle?"

"Aye."

"She doesn't want to uphold the Inquisition?"

"She's tired."

_I can't tell you that she'll leave. And I won't. But I can at least tell you half of the truth._

"I suppose I can understand. She's been through a lot." she pauses for a moment. "At least she'll have Solas, no?" Her facial features harden immediately at the mention of him.

I look at her a bit surprised. "I suppose so. I wouldn't know what they intend to do next."

"Do you not?" She urges me slightly.

I shake my head and try to contain my amusement. "Let us focus on the maps, shall we? Emprise du Lion first, or the Fallow Mire instead? Which seems like the more pressing mission?"

And even though I can tell she doesn't agree with my latest answer entirely, she lets it slide, for now.

Sometimes I wonder how I ended up even being here. And sometimes I wonder why I've decided to stay. I was never forced to. I never truly _had_ to. But in the meantime, I was already here for a while and I didn't know how much time had passed back at home. When I left, I made sure my mum knew I'd be gone for a long while. Perhaps even forever. I had no more business there. Sure I could pick up my life where I left off. Finally being able to focus on my job, perhaps even start a family. Just live a normal fucking life, for _once_. But now I was here. And I got sucked into the life that Elie had lived for so much longer than me. I got acquainted with the people and the work she used to do,
everyday. And despite me thinking I'd want to leave and go home as soon as possible... Seeing Eliana fall, and become the opposite of who I thought she'd be... gave me all the more reason to stay.

If I cannot save her now... Perhaps I can save her later. And the only way to be able to do that, is to take over. And maybe... Just maybe, one day, I can save her from herself. I can save her from that man. I don't think she knows everything yet. I don't think he'll trust her enough with it. I pray... That when she finds out eventually, she'll leave him, once and for all, and return to me. Return to the Inquisition. And perhaps then, we can leave together. Either back home, if she wants to. Or perhaps stay here, in Thedas. But only if we can ensure the world will be at peace. Only if Solas is no longer there to muddle those plans of mine.

Despite everything that I thought after that fight with Elie... I will not give up entirely. I will not go see her, will not speak to her, I will not try to force her to see things the way I see them. But if she ever comes to me, I will try my hardest to help her. I will try my damndest to redeem her. Without that foul wolf by her side.

Chapter End Notes

Oooo-la-la.

Hope y'all like this :x
Calm Before The Storm

Chapter Summary

Preperations for 'The Final Piece' mission from the game ;)

Eliana is determined to help Solas, no matter what.. Even going as far as tricking someone she knows very well.. Too well.

Sarah is being prepared for her first trip, to the slight dismay of Eliana and Solas.

And Morrigan and Eliana have a little face-off.. Things are about to get interesting.
Buckle up :3

(Seriously, read the notes at the end, I am flabbergasted)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Eliana POV:

I see a woman, black hair. Her hair is adorned by some type of headpiece, representing almost what seems like a dragon's horns.

One man, directly by her side, wielding flames. Long dark hair, a loving smile on his lips but a determined and strong look in his eyes.

I see two male elves, looking similar to one another, cloaked in some type of darkened aura almost.

I see a female with long red braids, a bow strapped to her back.

Another woman, skin as pale as snow. Hair equally as white with a horned, but differently horned, headpiece adorning it.

And two men.. One with some type of hammer in his hands, a book strapped to his hip.

And lastly, the last man, dark auburn dreadlocks peeking out from underneath a wolf's mask...

"Itha Ish."

To see him. Look at him. See him.

I find myself following the voice that tells me to look. And I slowly reach out my hand towards the wolf mask, wanting to gently take it down. When I do so, his face looks at me, with pride in his eyes. The younger, more hotheaded Solas. The Dread Wolf, the Rebel God.. Fen'Harel. But I recognize him. That's my mate. My partner. That's him.

"Is isalemah na." The voices speak again.
"He will be needing you."

"Ahn sul?" I ask the voices.

*What does he need me for?*

Suddenly, all the other voices are gone and I hear but one whisper. This isn't the first time I've heard this. And it frightens me just as much as it did the first time.

"*Mythal speaks the Calling.*"

"*Without blood.*"

"*He is bound to the stake.*"

"*Travel far.*"

"*She speaks the truth.*"

"*She's fallen.*"

The voice stops talking altogether. The Dread Wolf's expression softens. His dreadlocks disappear. Fen'Harel makes way for Solas as I know him today. "*Vhenan?*

Vhenan?

(...)

"Vhenan, wake up."


"Are you alright?" When I turn to look at him, I see him, gloriously shirtless, in my bed, right next to me. His eyes still a bit sleepy looking.

"I had another nightmare... Filled with Elven voices. I... I saw what I saw when I had just drank from the Well of Sorrows. But.... I saw.. Fen'Harel. I saw you."

"Dreaming of another man?" He tries to lighten the mood, but I give him a serious look then. I know he means well, but it's actually got me shaken up. When he notices my expression he sighs and pulls me closer to him. "I am sorry. That was a joke made in poor taste. Obviously you're affected by the dreams. Do you have these type of dreams a lot?"

I sigh and lean my head against his chest, listening to his calm and steady heart beat. "Lately.. they've been getting worse. The voices from the Well.. They speak to me."

"What do they say?"

"It varies. At first, I relived the moment I had drank from the Well of Sorrows. While I was there, inside of it, I heard many whispers. But I couldn't make out what they were saying at all. Eventually, a voice asked me why I was there. I convinced the voices to help me, and so I came out of the Well of Sorrows unscathed." My face becomes grim then. "Tonight, the voices told me 'He will be needing you'. Perhaps that refers to you. But.." I rub my temples in pure frustration.
"But?"

"The same nightmare always comes back, tonight was no different, it just started differently. It's where I relive the very first time I drank from the Well. And the millions of voices... Turn into just one whisper. It's... eerie... And it frightens me and I don't know what to do with it's information."

"What does the whisper say?"

I look up at him and move away slightly, holding my shoulders, covering myself instinctively. As if shielding myself. "Several things... Mythal speaks the calling, without blood, he is bound to the stake, travel far, she speaks the truth and lastly.. She's fallen."

He processes my words carefully before answering. "There's millions of Elvhen that speak through you now, that speak inside your mind. But you say the most reoccurring nightmare is that of a single voice."

"-I think... I think it wants me to go to her." I say resolutely then, cutting Solas' theory off completely. When he looks to me with confusion I sigh deeply. "The nightmare keeps coming back. I've been having them ever since I drank from the Well. And that's already been well over a week. If not longer. To be honest, I haven't been keeping track."

"Why haven't you told me?"

I smile wryly. "You hadn't told me everything yet."

He nods. "Point taken. Though I feel awful knowing you had to endure these nightmares for so long, Eliana. I could've... helped you. Listened to you."

"So far I managed to wake up, covered in a cold sweat before you awoke.. But tonight you beat me to it, it seems."

"You weren't going to tell me at all?"

"I... I wasn't sure."

There's a long pause and I look outside. It's still dark outside, but I have a feeling it's already morning. Just very early.

"So you want to go to a place, but you do not know where?"

"I've become pretty good at tuning the voices out during the day. But when I'm asleep, my subconscious isn't fully aware enough and they... nag me." I scrunch up my nose. "But I'm sure if I focus enough.. I can get some type of location down. And then.. we'll just scour the area until I find what it is I need to go look for."

"I will go with you. Naturally."

I smile lovingly at my man. "I'd appreciate that. I suppose today is the day then. But I'll focus on the voices later.. Right now. I look at him and my expression hardens. "Solas?"

"Mm?"

"That.. plan of yours. To tear down the Veil.. After Corypheus is defeated.." He remains silent, but is looking directly into my eyes. I continue. "The Inquisition... cannot know of this, right?"

"That's right. Hence the reason why I dislike Sarah snooping around so much, asking too many
"They wouldn't agree..." I say it quietly while looking down at the blanket that covers my nude body. I take a sharp intake of breath then. "Hey." I look back up at him. "Sarah.. She knows about you, everything. That's the sole reason she's trying to find stuff on you. So if I tell her... Or let her know that I've somehow persuaded you to give up your goal... She'll stop. Perhaps."

"And how would you let her know? She's not stupid, she'll know it when you try to trick her. Besides, the last time you and her spoke, it didn't end well."

I hurriedly get out of the bed and scramble towards the desk, ignoring the mess that's still laying all around it. When I open the drawer with a tiny key I've kept hidden away underneath a vase that's standing nearby on a bedside table, I pull out my diary. I show it to him triumphantly.

"A..... book." he says in a sarcastic tone of voice.

I groan and roll my eyes. "You're awfully annoying early in the morning. Smartass. It's my diary-" I jump back into bed with him and he quickly covers me with the warm blanket again, pushing me back against his chest as he leans on one elbow. His head is leaning on my left shoulder, peeking with me. ",I've kept a diary ever since I got here... Not daily, mind you... But I've written everything in here. Mostly it wasn't that important. There's some..." I glance over my shoulder into his twinkling eyes. He's already thinking on what I'm about to admit. "Private stuff in here."

"About me? If I had known, I'd've read it sooner." He tries to grab it out of my hands but I quickly move it out his reach.

"Another time." I hum. "What if... I write in here, summon Sarah to ask how her training is going, or give her a new task or whatever... And leave it on my desk. Then... I'll have to be called away for something important or some stuff," I wave my hand around in a swooshing motion as I think out loud, coming up with this plan. ",And... She won't be able to resist. I just have to give her enough time to read it... Especially the latest entry."

He hums. "Clever. But what makes you think she will read it? And if she does, how do you know she'll read the right entry?"

I lick my lips as I try to come up with an answer for that. "I'll mark it. By folding the corner of the paper, at the top. As if it's a reminder to myself where I last left off writing. And to answer your first question.. She was snooping around your desk, but you didn't leave anything noteworthy behind. What makes you think she won't try the same with me?"

He looks directly into my eyes for a long time before speaking up. "And you would really trick your friend like that... For me?"

"Okay one, she's no longer my friend. I think we established this right after our first private conversation here in Skyhold. In these very chambers. And second of all," I turn my head back around again and lower my eyes. Staring down at his necklace. I gently take hold of it and fumble a bit with the cord. "I don't want her to ruin your plan."

I dare not look him into his eyes. His voice trembles slightly when he finally answers. "You do know that people will see me as the enemy, right? If I tear down the Veil.. I know you've said you'll stick with me, vhenan. But I worry that you do not entirely understand the gravity of the situation.. If you help me.. If you remain by my side... They will see us both as enemies. The Inquisition will come after us."
I feel the tears stinging into my eyes. The longlasting friendships I've made in the Inquisition are without a doubt, some of the best memories I ever had. They are my friends. Each and every single one of them. Sera, though she's crazy and insane and nuts like no other. Varric, with his stories, his witty sense of humor and his sarcastic quips. Dorian, with his sassyness, his ability to make me feel better without trying too hard to do so. Iron Bull, with his perverted outtake on everything and everyone. But who's actually a big softie. Cassandra, who once wanted nothing more than me dead. The fearless She-Hulk I was so scared of at first. But whose respect and trust I've earned through many hardships. Yes, even Vivienne with her snarky remarks and comments. Her cockyness and her disliking Solas so much during the entire span of the Inquisition thusfar. Blackwall, who had a murky past but who has always defended me and the others in battle. The troubled Warden, with the fake name, who I still respect like no other. Leliana... My frightening, intimidating spymaster who has a human side to her that she does not often show. Only to the one's she trusts enough. Josephine, the Ambassador who never stops powerwalking around, ensuring our reputation remains high enough all across the lands. No matter what kind of shit I pull. And who never complains about anything. Cullen.. My sleep deprived Commander of the forces, who always stood by my side and believed in me since day one. Who's had to endure a lot of shit from me in the beginning, back at Haven. And even Cole, who's... well... never really around. But.. well, he's just Cole.

"I know." my voice is but a whisper.

He pulls me closer against himself and kisses me on my cheek from behind, wrapping his arms around me. "You'd sacrifice everything... For me?"

"So long as it means I get to remain at your side... Yes. I don't believe you're a bad person, Solas. Even after everything you've told me." He looks surprised at me saying that. And he's obviously disagreeing with me. I shake my head and turn my body sideways, holding his head between my hands, after I drop my diary onto the bed. "No, I am serious. When you created the Veil, you did it to punish the Evanuris for slaying Mythal. Who was the hero in this story, evidently. It may not have worked out quite like you hoped.. But it wasn't an evil decision."

"But-"

"-Hush, I'm talking now." I give him a scolding look. And a faint smile appears on his lips. Those soft, plump, lips... "You wanted to undo the mistake you made, figured Corypheus would die... Like you said, you never could've foreseen he knew the secret power to immortality. And even as your plans crumbled before your very eyes, you joined the Inquisition. To right that wrong, yet again. No matter how you look at it, I believe you're innocent in all of this. And you're just trying to do the right thing for your people."

"But you must know that if I succeed.. All magic will return to the Elves, all across Thedas. Not only that, magic will be everywhere around us. The mages who have been oppressed for so long... the one's from the Circle Towers, they will take this as their chance, their opportunity, to get vengeance on the Templars and people who've shunned them over the years."

"I understand. But... Evidently.. Isn't that what I've been aiming for the entire time I've been in the Inquisition? What I've been asking you to give me counsel for? The Freedom of the Mages, no more Circle Towers, and above all: the Elves will be free again, all of them. No more slavery, no more low class citizens of the slums, where they get beaten and spat on. Your people will be reunited."

He looks emotional. "But you're... human. Are you truly alright with having to witness all of that?"

"When has it ever mattered to you that I'm human? When has it ever bothered me that you were an elf? If anything, your ears are what made me fall in love with you even more." I nuzzle his chest and plant soft, chaste kisses onto the skin of it.
"True enough.." He admits, quietly.

"Perhaps the only problem will be.. that when that time comes, I'll be... Well, I could be... hated on by your people. Because I am human." I honestly hadn't thought of that before. Until now. It worries me slightly. After all.. just remember how some of the Elven servants at the Winter Palace treated me.. How much they hated me, being a shemlen.

"If you stand by me, remain at my side, vhenan. No harm will come to you. I will promise you that. I won't let anyone take you away from me, or let anyone hurt you. Not while I still draw breath." He presses his forehead against my own and closes his eyes. I know he's saying that, knowing he might not survive the wrath of the Evanuris or the Forgotten Ones.

"If you were too weak to unlock your orb after so many decades, who's to say the Evanuris or Forgotten Ones won't be just as weak? Besides, you... your powers.. Must've regenerated by now, right?"

"They have." He takes hold of his necklace then and shows it to me. "I've put a spell on this right before I joined the Inquisition. To ensure my full powers will be blocked. So that no one could find out I am stronger than a regular mage."

"So if you take that off...."

"My powers will all be returned to me." he smiles and his face looks.. A bit mischievous, actually.

"That's kind of hot, you know." I joke wryly.

He chuckles softly. "You are... impossible, sometimes."

I giggle sweetly. "You love it."

"I do." He kisses my cheek. "So... that diary of yours."

"Oh no." I start laughing and quickly take hold of it. "You're not going to read that, mister."

"Is that a challenge? I do love challenges." he's showing me the best sly grin ever, and I laugh even harder, quickly hiding it under my pillow.

"If you want it, you'll need to work for it." I wiggle my eyebrows.

"Ah. That's just my kind of challenge."

(...)

Sarah POV:

"What? You're certain?"

"It's what I heard."

"It has been a while, hasn't it?"

"I think she's finally ready."

I lower my bow and arrow and look into the general direction of the murmurs: two servants of Skyhold, washing clothes out in the Courtyard.
"Oi! Pay attention, will ya?" Sera speaks with her mouth full. The juices from the apple, dribbling unladylike down her chin as she chomps away at it.

"Sssh! I'm trying to hear what they're saying." I scold her.

"We're training! You weren't even able to hit the target once!"

I feel the annoyance bubble back up. Having Sera as my tutor for archery has become.. an ordeal. A trial of my patience and virtues. I draw the bow upwards again, placing the arrow between the bowstring and my middle- and index finger. I close my left eye and breathe out, slowly, not too fast.. Aiming at the bullseye before me and release, gently.

WOOSH.

And with a loud thud, it hit the bullseye.

Sera drops her apple onto the floor in pure shock. "Whut?! You couldn't have done that earlier?! I've been sitting here giving you tips, all afternoon!"

I drop my bow onto the floor and walk over towards the servants. "Excuse me, but I overheard your conversation earlier. I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but can you tell me what that was about?"

One of the servants looks warily at me. But then she recognizes me, probably, at least that's what I am hoping for. "Er.. the Inquisitor, has decided it was time to move. We've just heard rumors around Skyhold's halls, m'lady. But we believe she's planning to strike at Corypheus soon."

I nod curtly. Sera heard it too, she casually joins me at my side. "Finally, yeah? We been sitting here, sprouting roots for the past week. Doing fuck-all." She scoffs. "About bloody time."

I look at her angrily. But before I can even speak up and tell her off about it, I can hear a familiar female voice calling out my name. "Sarah!"

When I turn around, I see Glenna hurriedly rushing towards me, keeping her skirt lifted so that it won't get muddy out here in the Courtyard.

"Glenna. Something the matter?" I ask her worriedly.

She quickly curtsies before Sera and then focuses her attention to me again. "The Lady Inquisitor, has summoned you. You are to meet with her at her chambers. As soon as you're able."

I raise one of my eyebrows up. "What for?"

"No idea. I was just told to relay the message to you."

I look over to Sera, who's shrugging her shoulders indifferently. Her arms crossed. "Go on, then. I think you hitting the target earlier, concludes our lesson for today. I'll go annoy Iron Bull, see what him and that Tevinter tit are up to." she turns around and walks off, not seeming to give a shit about me being summoned.. privately. To Eliana's chambers.

To be fair, I'm a bit scared. The last time I was there, we didn't end the conversation well. But.. perhaps.. She has figured it out. And she wishes to make up for what she said and.. almost did? I try to remain hopeful, at least. "Will you walk with me, Glenna? To the Inquisitor's chambers?"

She looks scared then. "Oh.. I don't think I'm allowed to just enter it freely though. Only her trusted Advisors and companions may enter her room."
I scoff and try to lighten the mood, for her as well as for myself, by nudging her in the side. I continue to wrap my arm around her neck and walk with her towards the Main Hall. "Oh please, she has servants too."

"Y...Ye..Yes, but I'm not one of her servants." she stammers. Truthfully, I get why she's intimidated by Eliana. I can't fault her for that. As I myself am.. a bit intimidated.

"Lighten up, will you? I'm just as terrified as you are." I finally admit.

"You are?" she looks surprised.

"She can be... scary sometimes."

"Scary.. But fair. She's a good leader."

And I know you're right, Glenna. She is... somewhere deep down perhaps. But I'm afraid it's too deep now.

Once we reach her chambers, or well, the door that leads towards her chambers, Glenna halts. "I should be getting back to my duties now, Sarah." She says apologetically.

"Go on then." I say to her with my cheekiest grin. And when she curtsies and leaves me alone, I whisper to myself: "Into the Lion's den, it is."

Once I finally reach the last door, that separates me from her, I knock gently. "Come in."

I take a deep breath then and do as I'm told, slowly and cautiously ascending the steps that lead up to her chambers. Once I'm in there, I can see she's kept her balcony doors and windows closed, and the fire in the hearth is roaring. I can feel the warmth even from the complete other side of the room. She's sitting at her desk, writing in some type of journal. I can't help myself but to peek, but I'm too far away, I couldn't read it even if I wanted to.

"You wanted to see me?"

She holds her left hand up, without looking at me and saying anything, signalling to me that she's about to finish writing. When she finally does, I can see her folding the top corner of the page she was writing on and then she proceeds to close the journal. Then she folds her hands before her, onto her desk and gives me her most clinal look yet. "I did."

"Writing's more important, though." I can't help myself.

Damn it, Sarah. Do try not to anger her, please.

She scoffs and shakes her head.. Smiling faintly. "I apologize. I just had to write these things down for myself, lest I forget."

"Notes?"

"Hmm. Not quite." She gets up from her desk and walks over to the front of it, swiftly hiding the journal behind her, as she casually leans against the front of the desk. She crosses her arms. "I suppose it's like a diary, of sorts. Though I didn't ask for you to discuss writings with me."

"Too bad. Think I picked up some tips and tricks from speaking to Varric.. But as you wish." I remain standing exactly where I am right now. And she notices my stiff posture.

Her eyebrows furrow. "You are allowed to sit down, you know." She gestures at the two chairs that
are standing before her desk. The two chairs that she's standing... very close to.

"I'm alright." I say resolutely.

She sighs. "Sarah, please. Just sit."

Fine.

I casually walk over towards her desk and take a seat on one of the brown leather chairs. To my surprise, they're rather... comfortable. For a world as primitive as Thedas, at least they have good carpenters.

"I asked for you, because I wanted to see how your progress is going. Training and such. I heard you stopped training with Cassandra and started being tutored by Sera, instead. Archery."

I nod. "Aye. Sera said it was the best type of way to approach fighting for a newcomer like myself."

"True enough. Warriors have to get right in the thick of it. Rogues, however.. can attack from a pretty faraway distance and still hit their targets. Especially the archers. Plus, you get to learn how to open locks." She 'jokes'. Though I still have a feeling we're not here to joke.

"Right." I answer just as clinical as she sometimes answers me.

Her facial expression changes then. "Alright, so that's going well. How about the horse riding? Cullen's report said you're learning to gallop now. That's quick. Promising."

"Cullen's report? You didn't speak to him personally about it?"

"I've been busy."

"Right. Well to answer your question; yes. I'm almost certain I can gallop without falling down the horse and breaking my neck. Almost." I wince at the thought of me almost falling from my horse the other day. "Spots has been tricky enough. I picked a stubborn mount, sadly."

"Spots?"

"It's a grey dappled horse. So.. Spots, seemed like the right choice of name." I shrug my shoulders.

She nods and wants to open her mouth to say something, but suddenly, there's a knock at the door down the steps. She groans. "Who's there?"

Without answering her, Solas comes dashing into the room. When I spot him, I immediately want to punch him in the face. He ignores me entirely, however. "Eliana. The Spymaster requests your immediate presence at the war room."

"Can't it wait? I'm right in the middle of-"

Solas cuts her off. "-I'm afraid not." His expression looks serious.

She sighs. And then turns her head towards me. "Stay, please. I'll continue our conversation when I've returned from the war room. In the meantime.. Er, make yourself at home. I'll send for a cup of tea, or something." She says, while hurriedly walking back towards her desk and grabbing a hold of her journal. I can see her quickly shoving it down the top drawer, but I don't see her locking it. I immediately feel my fingers itching.

"Right. Will do. Mind if I use your bed or?" I ask in a sarcastic tone of voice.
"Oh, for the love of- Sarah just... Do whatever." And with that, she and Solas both leave the bedroom.

I wait for the moment I hear the door slam shut behind them, and then decide to wait... patiently... for another five minutes. As I count the minutes inside my mind, I look outside the window. Seeing the height of her bedroom chamber. She sure has got the best view in all of Skyhold, that's for certain.

"Alright... five minutes are up." I quickly get up from the chair and dash over towards her desk, opening her top drawer as fast as I can, and pulling out the journal in which she was writing earlier. I quickly skim through it, flipping the pages quickly. Sometimes my eyes linger on some of the older entries. Part of me wants to read it all, it's personal, private, and part of me hopes to find some of Eliana's old personality in there. But I have no time, I want to know why she was so adamant about finishing the last entry. When I entered her room. When I find the last page, with the folded corner at the top of the page, I read it:

"I am planning to visit the place of which I have nightmares of. Or well, not the exact place that is.. moreso the place that the Voice wants me to visit. I do not know what the words mean, exactly. And though I've asked Solas and we've pondered over the possibilities the last couple of days.. We can't think of the proper reasoning behind it. I wonder how far Sarah is with her training."

Then, a bit of open, unwritten space. Under which she continues writing later on. It would seem this is when she decided to summon me. Quickly I continue reading on.

"I have asked Solas to leave with me, after the final battle. He seemed.. reluctant at first. Though I do not understand why. It took a lot of convincing on my end, to make sure he agreed. He told me he’d need time to think on it. And finally after three days, he answered. He said he’ll leave with me. That he wishes to marry me. In secret. Without the Inquisition knowing about it. He also, apparently knows of a faraway place where we can live out the rest of our days.. Together. Happily. Safe. Away from it all. It almost looked like a weight was lifted from his shoulders. I do not know what made him question it in the first place, but I'm glad I had given him the time to consider it. I'm sure, had I pushed too hard, he may have declined my offer. I will bring my diary with me, once I leave. I wouldn't want people to read the first entries and laugh at what a ridiculous scared little girl I was. It would put me in a bad daylight and-"

I lose my focus to read on. I read the important bits, the rest I don't really care much for. She has convinced him.

And it would seem that she doesn't know the truth about him yet.

I quickly put the journal back into the top drawer and sit back down onto the leather chair then. Thinking about it.

Is it really that easy? Is this... truly.. the proof that all will end up just fine? That Solas will leave, to a faraway place with Eliana and marry her, growing old with her, far beyond the hold of the Inquisition? Was this really all that is needed to save her? To prevent this catastrophe from happening?
I sigh a breath of relief then and visibly relax into the chair, slightly sliding into a relaxed position. Almost sliding out of said chair. That's how relaxed I feel, currently. I knew I could trust her. Even if she, herself, does not know the truth about Solas... I start to laugh, quietly. Out of sheer happiness.

*And I worried so much. And it was all for nothing.*

Suddenly I hear footsteps approaching and I quickly straighten myself a bit more. Making sure I look 'bored out of my mind'. Eliana re-enters the room.

"That was quick."

She sighs. "Nothing real... noteworthy, I'm afraid. I thought it was a damn emergency." She shakes her head. "Right... So, our conversation..." she paces back and forth while I'm eyeing her curiously. Then she stops pacing and snorts wryly. "I forgot. In all the haste and chaos from earlier, I simply forgot what else I wanted to discuss with you." She shrugs her shoulders then. "Well, never you mind. I suppose we covered the most important parts. Your training and horse riding. You'll need it. I plan to head out soon."

"You're gonna take me?"

"I... No. I still have to consider who I'm bringing along with me. But you'll stay here. Along with the others who do not join me, as well. So you'll get to train more. I'll be sure to let Sera stay as well then."

"She won't thank you for it. She's itching for some action." I say, a bit too happy, it would seem.

Eliana cocks her head to the side. "You seem... relaxed. Not at all as serious and grim looking like you did when you first entered my chambers, earlier. Something I should know about?"

I clear my throat. "Oh no. Not at all. Just thinking about dinner. I'm starving." I get up from the chair then and look at her questionably. "So... That was all, right?"

She nods and waves her hand, officially dismissing me. "Yes, you may leave. Enjoy the food."

And I hurriedly leave her room. But, at least I feel more at ease with everything now. Moreso than I did earlier.

**Eliana POV:**

I lean on my desk with my arms before me, glancing down at the top drawer. A smug look appears on my face and I plop down into my own chair again, taking out my diary. I read over the last entry and snort.

"I take it the book is humorous."

I look up and see Solas entering my chambers again. "You, have an impeccable timing." I wave my diary around. "And I was just going over my latest entry."

He moves closer towards my desk, and eventually sits down on the edge of said desk. "I saw Sarah leaving your room, and decided to return. Did she read it?"

I hum and show him the page. "The corner is flattened out. I know her too well.." I shake my head. "She just couldn't help herself. And I knew she was reckless. When she puts her mind to something, she does it, but she forgets the little things.. The details. Such as folding back a corner at the top of a page." Waving around the journal in my hand I smirk, happy with myself.
He chuckles. "That was easier than I expected it would be."

"And she seemed to be happier.. before she left. I'd say my plan worked."

"What did you write down?" I show him the page and watch his eyes glide from left to right, reading the entry I made up earlier today. When he's done he lowers the book. "Oh.. I am to marry you now, Eliana?"

"I only wrote it down to satisfy Sarah." I say in a matter of factly, kind of tone.

He hums and nuzzles my neck, his breath tickles on my skin, so close to my ear. "But is there a truth to what you wrote?"

I huff and nudge him gently. He moves his face away from my neck and shows me a very sexy, confident smile. I roll my eyes at him. "I guess we'll never know." I kiss him on the lips quickly. "I must get going now. While I was at my 'fake meeting' with Leliana in the war room, I did actually tell her to gather everyone for a meeting. I intend to tell them about the location." My face grows dark.

"You've figured it out?" He looks serious now.

I sigh. "Not quite, but I was hoping you could help me." I take hold of his hand then and close my eyes. "I'll try to hone in on the voices, listen.. See if they tell me."

He squeezes my hand softly and I can feel him sharing his mana with me, he's fueling me, just like the very first day we met. When I had to close the rift, after fighting the Pride Demon. I smile knowingly, recollecting the memory and when I briefly open my eyes to look at him, I can see his eyes are closed and that he has a smile on his lips. I hone into the voices, no longer trying to silence them. I try to lower my guard, make sure there's naught but the voices I focus on. And sure enough, they return to me. I clutch my head with my free hand, as the voices whisper almost angrily at me. Suppose I've been ignoring them for too long... Finally I let go of Solas' hand, abruptly and we both open our eyes at the same time, looking at one another.

"And?" He sounds fine, but I can already tell I'm feeling weaker and slightly out of breath.

"How does that not affect you?" I pinch the bridge of my nose, trying to compose myself again.

"I just merely shared my magic with you. You had to actually endure it, vhenan." He rubs my back softly.

"Mythal's Altar." I say finally.

"That's in the Arbor Wilds, again. Close to the Temple of Mythal."

"Another long trip. But at least I'll have you." I pause. "There was something else.. About his Dragon, Corypheus' Dragon. Join me, in the war room. I'm sure the others are ready by now." I get up from my chair and take hold of his hand, gently dragging him with me.

"You don't think they'll find it odd that I'm joining?"

"The Hell with what they think."

(...) When Solas and I enter the war room, all four of them are already discussing things.
"So you think Corypheus is finished?" Josephine asks Leliana.

When they spot me and Solas, they go quiet. "Please, continue." I say smiling kindly at them. "I want to hear what you were speaking of."

Morrigan sneers upon seeing Solas join me at the war room for a second, but answers me regardless. "We were talking about the victory at the Temple of Mythal."

"If he is wise, he will hide and rebuild his strength before he attacks again." Leliana answers Josephine's earlier question.

"He will not hide."

I waver slightly, and Solas catches me before I can make a tumble. All of them are giving me questionable and worried looks. Apart from Morrigan, who's sneering at me now as well.

"Gods.." I say faintly, then I nod at Solas, letting him know I'm alright. He releases me and takes his position right next to me again. "He won't hide."

"You hear it. The Well speaks to you, does it not?" Morrigan asks me, almost sounding in awe of me.

I nod. "It's a lot of voices, whispering to me. I've been keeping them out mostly during the daytime.. But in my dreams they nag me. Earlier, I was trying to let them in.. To find out what would be the right next move. And it would seem they won't leave me be, now. They sound far away, but I can still hear them."

She groans slightly. "If only one who understood such voices had used the Well's power instead."

Solas interjects. "I do believe Eliana understands the voices perfectly well. It's just taking a lot out of her."

Again, Morrigan sneers at him. But Leliana stands by Solas' argument. "I agree. Besides, if Morrigan had drank from the Well instead, we'd have to rely on her interpretation of them and whatever she chose to tell us."

"Have I not been forthcoming enough for you, spymaster?" Morrigan takes a threatening step closer to Leliana, though the war table is what's keeping them safely at a distance from one another. Leliana, seems unimpressed, however.

Suddenly the door flings open and Sarah rushes in, entirely out of breath. "Sorry I'm late. I wasn't notified of the meeting on time. I went back to-" Sarah stops talking when she notices the thick tension hanging in the air around us. "-Nevermind."

Sarah tries to find the right spot to stand, but it seems she's.. unsure of where to stand exactly. When she sees Solas next to me, she seems... surprised. Eventually she places herself between Josephine and Cullen.

Morrigan and the others have completely ignored Sarah's not so subtle interruption. "I told you what the Well could have done, Inquisitor." Morrigan continues while turning to face me. "You should be hearing shouts from the Heavens, not whispers!"

Solas scoffs next to me but I turn my body to face Morrigan as well. Showing that I'm not intimidated by her little temper tantrum. "Listen here, lady Morrigan: I made the decision not to let you drink from the Well because I do not trust you well enough. Secondly, I am hearing enough
things. I found a location we ought to go to next."

"Well? Out with it then." Morrigan seems to give up on our little argument.

"The Arbor Wilds again." When I turn to look at the grim expressions of my Advisors, I continue. "Not the Temple of Mythal this time, however. We need to go to her Altar. Which is close by, but still not in the same area. Besides we've liberated that area from the Red Templars and other enemies. We should be fine." I take one of the Inquisition's pawns from the board and move it over to the location which I think is the Altar's location. At least, it should be it's general location. "Then there's the matter of Corypheus' dragon. It isn't an Archdemon. It's a dragon in which Corypheus has invested part of his power." I turn to look at each and every single one of my Advisors, even at Sarah. "Kill it, and his ability to jump to other bodies is disrupted for a time." A knowing smile creeps onto my face. "We can kill the fucking bastard."

Leliana hums. "That's... no simple task. Corypheus alone is powerful, but with his dragon-"

"Go to the Altar. Mythal will come."

I cut off what Leliana was about to continue saying. "-I need to summon Mythal."

Everyone turns to look at one another. They all look... disconcerted. And none say a single word. It is so quiet, you could almost hear a pin drop. When I look at Solas, his face is unreadable. No doubt because he's doing it deliberately. But I am sure if we have a moment to speak in private later, he'll share his feelings with me on the matter.

Morrigan is the first to break the silence. She scoffs first. "Whatever Mythal was, Goddess or Myth.."

I slam my hand onto the war table in front of me. "There. The pawn I moved earlier. That's the Altar. In the wilderness. That's where I need to go." I am annoyed with Morrigan's reaction from earlier.

If only she knew what I know now.

"I see you are determined. So be it." she walks away from all of us, without saying a single other word and slams the door shut loudly behind her.

"She's pissed." Sarah remarks dryly.

Josephine takes a step closer to the war table and looks at me with worry in her eyes. "Are you certain of this?"

"I am. And even if I weren't, I wouldn't have any other choice. It's what the voices tell me."

"You know sometimes, it sounds like you've gone bananas, Elie." Sarah says in a sarcastic tone of voice. When I snap my head into her direction she shrugs indifferently. "The voices you know." she lifts up her hands into the air and makes a ghostly wailing sound. "Oooooh."

I shake my head and ignore it.

"Well er.. I'll see to Skyhold's defenses in the meantime." Cullen says finally.

"Who will you be bringing with you?" Leliana asks me calmly.

I turn to look at Solas and point at him. "Solas will join me. Morrigan will definitely not. Perhaps I'll bring Blackwall and-"

Suddenly Cole poofs into existance. Sarah shrieks loudly and jumps behind Cullen's back. When I
"I want to come as well." He says in his usual monotone voice.


Cole's head turns into Sarah's direction. "Hello."

She merely points at him. "Haven't... Seen him before."

"Ah, but you know of him." I dip my head. "Very well, Cole. You may join us to the Arbor Wilds as well."

"Nobody else?" Cullen asks me worriedly, while Sarah slowly emerges from behind him. Trying to have a better look at Cole.

"What for? The area's liberated. Some of our forces still remain there. If anything were to happen, which I doubt it will.. We will be fine."

"The last time we went there, you needed all the help you could get." he answers me.

"We will be fine, Cullen." I say resolutely.

Josephine nods. "And what of Sarah? If you think there's no real danger, she could join you already. Use what she's learned thusfar."

Sarah chimes in. "Hey, she's right. Like a warm-up."

The thought of having Sarah so close with Solas and I, for at least a week and a half... worries me slightly. Especially since we're going to the Altar of Mythal. Especially after realizing we both know who Solas is...

They all look at me, waiting for my final decision.

*I was able to fool Sarah with my diary earlier today. If I decline it now, she may start to have doubts again. I can't have that.*

"Very well. If you think you're up for it, Sarah. It won't be a walk in the park, regardless. We still may run into some enemies along the way towards the Altar. And.. You'll be traveling with Cole, as well."

Sarah turns to look at Cole again and swallows down hard. "Well.. There's got to be a first for everything, right?" She says nervously.

"Then she'll need a proper bow." Cullen says finally. "I'll visit Master Harritt. Make sure he has something that suits you. Follow me, Sarah. It's going to be your weapon, after all."

They leave the war room and Leliana and Josephine look at me one last time.

I dip my head. "Alright. Cole, follow us. We'll get Blackwall and have him prepare for the journey. If we're quick, we may be able to leave before sunset."

"Good luck, Eliana." Leliana smiles at me, but I can see the worry still in her eyes.

And so we leave the war room to find Blackwall at the stables. When we get there I see the
horsemaster talking to my friend. "Master Dennet. Ready our horses, if you'd please. We're going out on another trip. Blackwall's horse, Cole's, Solas', Sarah's and my own."

Master Dennet dips his head and immediately starts to run around, gearing up said horses. Blackwall looks to me confusedly, but before he can say something, Morrigan walks up to us and speaks. "My horse as well, Master Dennet."

*Where did she even come from?*

I turn around quickly and give her the side eye. "You were not part of the team I assembled."

"You wish to summon Mythal all by yourself? A bold move. I just want to make sure you don't mess anything up, my dearest Inquisitor."

I huff. "No. It's out of the question. When we went to the Arbor Wilds the first time, you already invited yourself without my full agreement."

"You really think I'll let you do this alone?" She sneers yet again. Her golden eyes burning with anger. "You've decided to drink from the Well, the least you could do is have me join you for this ritual."

I groan.

"Why can't she come with us?" Cole asks me from next to Solas' side. *Because, I don't like her.*

"And I take it, if I don't agree.. you're just going to show up, regardless?" I cross my arms defiantly while tapping my foot.

"You know me so well." She dips her head.

Master Dennet is eyeing me warily, seeming to wait for my reaction. "Very well. Morrigan's horse too, if you'd please, Master Dennet."

"I am so glad to have your permission." she curtsies before me, but she's obviously mocking me. "Your kindness knows no bounds, Inquisitor."

"And I am so utterly delighted to have your presence grace me on this voyage, lady Morrigan." I say in the exact same mocking tone of voice.

With that, I turn back to face Blackwall. "Are you ready, Blackwall? This will be your first outing since the whole... ordeal. Are you up for it?"

He nods, he looks confident about it. "I am. Thank you, Eliana."

I dip my head. "Solas and I will gather our things, we'll be back soon. And if Sarah's not here by then, we'll wait for her before we set out."

Without saying another word, I turn around and walk away with Solas. He takes hold of my hand as we walk back towards my chambers. When we're out of earshot from the others, he whispers to me. "You really wish to summon Mythal, vhenan?"

I bite the inside of my cheek. "I have to. I don't yet know why, but I know I have to do it in order to be able to defeat Corypheus." we reach my bedroom again and I lock the door behind us. Ensuring nobody will enter freely, since I have a feeling we'll be talking about private matters some more
before heading back to the stables. "Besides-" I say, as I'm gathering my armor and night shirt. "-If we want to get your orb back, there's really no other option."

He stops packing his own stuff and looks to me. "I... cannot be present during the time you summon her, vhenan. I think you understand why."

I think on it for a bit. "Do you feel... remorseful for her death, so long ago? Are you scared to face her again?"

"That too. But if Cole is present with us... He may say some things.."

"Shit." I slap myself against the forehead. "I hadn't thought about that. Then I'll make sure all of you will leave me be when I perform the ritual to summon her. How's that sound? If only you were to leave, it would arouse suspicion amongst Sarah, perhaps."

"Indeed, I do agree that's the best option." he smiles faintly. "I didn't think Sarah would agree with Josephine's offer to come along with us."

I snort as I continue to gather my stuff; some of my extra hidden daggers, some lyrium and health poultices and potions and so on. "Neither did I. I think she's grown bold after having read such good news." I sigh. "But it does make me wonder... what problems it could cause. With Morrigan, Cole and Sarah there with us."

"It's never that easy, is it, my heart?"

I stuff down everything into my backpack and walk over to Solas, standing him upright from him packing his own things, and wrap my arms around him. "Whatever comes next, won't be easy. But I am willing to leap, if you are."

He kisses the tip of my nose gently. "I am."

We hug each other, just holding one another for a while, not saying a single word. Then, when our bodies part from one another I smile cheekily. "You know something? When I first joined the Inquisition, I didn't think I'd be screwing an Ancient Elven God."

"Ancient?" One of his eyebrows raises up high. "Are you certain that's the choice of words you want to use, Eliana?" his voice sounds threatening, but in a good way. A way that sets the butterflies inside my stomach afight.

I giggle softly and slowly back up, away from him. I can already see the playful twinkle in his eyes return to him. "Mhmm.." I back up some more, but he follows, moving in the same agonizing slow speed as I am moving.

"I'll give you one last chance to change your answer, da'len." He dashes forwards a little bit. I shriek and laugh loudly, jumping away from him some more. "Old man."

He sighs. "Very well, you leave me no choice." And suddenly he chases after me, and I run, over towards the desk, hiding behind it.

He places his hands onto the desk and leans over it, trying to move closer to me. "You can try to run, but I will catch your scent, da'len."

I snicker. And I continue to repeat what he said in a mocking tone of voice. "Blabla.. I will catch your scent."
He jumps over the desk, completely taking me by surprise and I shriek again, running away from him, towards my balcony. "For an old man, you've got quite the reflexes!" I call out behind me as he chases after me.

When I reach the balcony, I stop right before the balustrade.

He appears before me, using fade step. "And now you're cornered." He smiles wickedly.

I giggle. "I let myself get cornered. I didn't want you to be out of breath, old man."

He sighs deeply, I see his warm expression return to his face. "Your insolence knows no bounds, Eliana." He dips me lowly and kisses me passionately on the mouth.

"Mm!"

When our lips part he turns me around, so that I'm facing the Courtyard from up my balcony and he wraps his arms around me from behind. His head is resting on my right shoulder. "Beautiful."

I hum in agreement. "The view is quite amazing from up here."

"I was talking about you."

I giggle softly. "Oh that? Meh."

We stand there, for a very long time. Just looking out over the Courtyard of Skyhold. Seeing people below us milling about. In the warmth of the sun, in contrast to the cold snowy mountaintops around us. It's lovely, just quietly being next to him like this. And I briefly wonder if this is what it could be like, some day? For him and I, to be high up somewhere, looking down at people, who trust us. In a world where everything will be right, for once. No, I do not think it will be this easy. Things will have to fall, die and crumble before restoration can take place. There will be chaos before peace. And this.. this moment right now, is the calm before the storm.

Chapter End Notes

So, the very first part, the dream, or rather nightmare, Elie has.. Not all of it is from a source I found on Youtube, but some of it is.

Allow me to explain(I do like to be allowed to explain a lot of things, don't I?):

So this video;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?
annotation_id=annotation_3449625287&feature=iv&src_vid=aZ6kedMF0Uw&v=t1IZAbXazRw

^ Be sure to watch it, it's really quite interesting!!

I found it late last night, completely and totally random, while searching for some stuff on the Dragon Age story. Reason why I search these things while writing sometimes, is because I don't want to screw up. And I like to reference theories that people have come up with. So I stumbled upon an article with a video, much like this one, but it referred to another video with clearer audio. Which is the one I posted up here.
To be honest, I always thought that the part with the Whispers in the Well of Sorrows, would return in DA4, but I NEVER would have thought of backmasking. Which is, according to Google: the encoding of audio materials (such as words conveying a secret message) on a recording in such a way that they can only be heard and understood when the recording is played backwards.

WHICH IS BRILLIANT. And I completely believe that Bioware did this on purpose. I mean, whoever found out about this, THANK YOU. You're a genius! I would've literally never thought of that. And I'm sorry if you're reading this and already knew of this, but to me, it's very much new.

I also believe it may refer to something that will happen or be revealed to us in Dragon Age 4. Such as; "Mythal speaks the Calling." Hmmmm *eyeing Bioware from very far away*

One of the commenters on the video said that they put it through a sound filter and they found out even more than the video initially reveals. Which is what I used, because it made even MORE sense to me.

I mean I don't think it's a coincidence because the backmasked audio, the voice/whisper you hear, is SO clear. With some backmasking videos you can barely make it out, but in this one it's too obvious for it to be a coincidence.

Anyhow, I loved loved LOOVED it. And I wanted to be sure to include it in this Chapter. Mainly because it made sense in the way I wanted to write this Chapter, but also because I may be able to use it later on. Or maybe not at all. But we'll see ;) Never hurts to be prepared, right?

In any way, if it doesn't mean anything in the future: at least it's a very interesting thing to add to the story :3

And on a completely different note: I realize Sarah's POV was short in this one, but I kinda want to switch between them two lately. If you hadn't already noticed. And I needed her to read the diary of Eliana, so I could move forwards. I could've waited for another Chapter and have Sarah read it then(since it happened sorta fast in this Chapter), but I didn't want to waste any more time.

THANKS FOR READING XOXO
Eliana, Cole, Blackwall, Morrigan, Sarah and Solas are traveling towards the Arbor Wilds. On the way however, Eliana starts to realize more and more how much flaws the humans have. And that, among a few other things, is driving her mad.

She's in conflict with her very own personality. Why does she feel this way about everyone in her Inner Circle, apart from Cole, Solas and Sera? Why does she have so much disdain and disgust for her friends? - She decides to question Solas about it as soon as they're alone together.

But, Sarah wouldn't be Sarah, without getting into some trouble.. Which in the end, works out well for Eliana, as she discovers there's more power to her than both she and Solas first thought possible...

After some trouble, Morrigan even starts to realize that Elie is not the weakling she thought she was. And is there even admiration for the human from another World? For the mighty powerful Inquisitor she dislikes so?

Chapter Notes

So first things first: I. PASSED. MY. EXAMS.

And should be fine now. As in: no more having to study and learn. So all my free time, should be my own free time again. Not having to spend it on all that pish.

I do still have a job, but at least now I can write whenever I have time again. And I am so stoked for that! I really want to thank you all for being so patient with me. In total the duration of the 'course' I had to take, was six months. And in between I still went on vacation for three weeks. But at least now I'm done.

Expect more regular updates from here on out. Probably mostly on Weekends, and if I have days off in the week, then on those random days as well :3

THANKS SO MUCH everyone and I hope you're up for a longer(than usual) chapter again! 10.513 words to be exact ;)

I do hope to being able to touch on some things I've been meaning to work on for some time now. I am still unsure if I want this all to happen before or after the final mission. But as usual; I'll work on that as I go along with it.

XOXO

I'm leading the group, next to me, rides Solas. Behind us two are Sarah, Blackwall, Cole and
Morrigan. We've all been silent the entire trip thusfar. We've only been riding for about an hour or so, Skyhold's walls are already far behind us. The sun has already set, I don't want to stop and make camp yet. But we probably should soon.

"Sooooo.. What do you guys do for fun while you're riding?" Sarah speaks first.

"Eliana used to play 'I spy' with Varric. Or truth or dare." Blackwall chuckles. "Ah, I remember those days fondly."

A smile appears on my face as I recall those days. Early on in the Inquisition. "That was before I became Inquisitor."

"Just because you became the Inquisitor, doesn't mean you're not allowed to play those games anymore." Blackwall replies.

"Truth or dare is a thing here? And 'I spy' as well?" Sarah sounds curious.

I shake my head. "No. I taught them truth or dare. 'I spy', they knew of already."

"Back then I had questioned Eliana about it, saying I'd never heard of it before. She, Varric, Solas and Cassandra made up this little backstory. That she was originally from Kirkwall and it was a famous game there." He scratches his beard. "Having Varric there to back her up was really smart. I believed it."

"So you lied to them? About where you were from?"

"Back then, the Inner Circle was smaller, Sarah. I just had Leliana, Cullen, Josephine, Cassandra, Solas and Varric. The others.. when they joined.. Well, we weren't sure how'd they react to me being from another world. We decided to keep it quiet."

"And then you came back home." Sarah sounds melancholic.

"That's when they found out, yeah."

"How was your world like?" Cole asks cautiously.

I realize he's not asking me but Sarah, so I keep my mouth shut for now. "Very different. No magic, for one. No people like you who poof in and out of existence."

"He is a spirit." Solas corrects her in a dry tone of voice.

"Right." She says softly. "Anyhow, there's also no Elves, no Qunari, like Iron Bull... And it's very different altogether."

"No magic? Sounds dreadfully boring." Morrigan finally speaks up as well.

I scoff. "We had other ways to entertain ourselves." When I turn my head around and see Blackwall, Cole and Morrigan's curious expressions I shake my head no. "It.. would be very hard to explain it all."

"Truth is.. I never heard you speak much about your world, Eliana. Not even after you returned to us."

I turn my head around to face Blackwall. "It's not my world any longer. And the reason why I didn't speak much about it, is because I didn't have the heart for it."
"Why is that?"

My face grows darker then, and I hide it away from them. Looking back in front of me again. "I left people behind there."

"But one of them is here now." Cole sounds wistful.

"Yes. One of them is here now." I reply in the same tone of voice.

Then... silence again. I try to keep an eye out for a good place where we could make camp, but so far, there's nothing but muddy and snowy, uneven grounds around us. Though I am certain there are no threats here, I don't want to pick a bad spot. I am not sure if I saw correctly, but there may be a road leading to a clearing nearby.

Suddenly Sarah trots up right next to me. When I look at her confusedly, I can see she's still not quite used to riding. She looks.. uneasy in the saddle. Not confident enough. And like she could fall out of the saddle any moment now. "Er... Elie?" She looks to me, with a strange, uncomfortable look on her face. Then her face turns to Solas, who's still riding right next to me. "A... word please? Privately?"

I frown. "That's.. kind of hard, Sarah.. We're riding. Just say whatever you have to say."

"But.." Her eyes dart back over to Solas, who's keeping his face turned stubbornly to the front of the road. She groans. "I have to... you know... go."

"I didn't have to go earlier? Back when we were still at Skyhold?"

"I didn't have to go then. Now I do. Please?"

I shake my head. "Gods, you're like a little kid. Very well, just a moment." I look a bit further ahead of me and see a little path that goes off trail, presumably to a clearing nearby that probably is safe enough for us to stop and rest at. But I'd rather scope it out first before actually settling down there. "Everyone, halt for a moment please." I raise my hand up and then when everyone's stopped, I jump off of Moonlight.

"Do you need my help, vhenan?"

I shake my head. "No need." I unsheathe my daggers from my back and slowly walk towards the dark area. "How about some light." I mumble to myself. I quickly summon a small flame into my right hand, lighting up the area a bit better. Behind me, I can faintly make out a surprised "Woah." Knowing it's Sarah I roll my eyes. But then another voice sounds, scoffing, entirely dismissing what I just did.

"It's just fire." - Clearly Morrigan hasn't decided to not be a bitch, for once.

As I walk, the snow crunches underneath my feet, with every step that I take. It's driving me insane. I just want to be silent. Suddenly I stop, hearing some faint rustling in the bushes closeby. I dim the flame ever so slightly, and close my eyes, making sure I can focus better on the sounds around me. I hear the faint whistling of the leaves above me, and then.. the sound of a teeny tiny twig snapping. Coming from the same direction I heard the rustling earlier: the bushes in front of me. I extinguish the flame entirely then, and let my eyes get adjusted to the darkness. My heart is already starting to beat faster. The others are behind me, not far, but there's trees and bushes seperating us. If I get overwhelmed here, they may not be able to come to my aid in time. I decide to no longer walk further into the clearing, but sliding my feet forwards. So that I won't crunch with every step. As I move further and further, the sound suddenly stops. And then.. some weird small noises. I see the
bush in question and ready myself. I relight the flame suddenly, and raise the dagger in my left hand up high as I jump over the bushes.

....

"She sure is taking her time, isn't she?" Sarah rubs her arms trying to feel some more warmth.

"I haven't heard anything for a little while, either." Morrigan stands up in the stirrups of her horse, trying to see more clearly.

Silence...

"There!" Sarah calls out.

I slowly walk back towards my companions. My face red with shame.

"Vhenan?" Solas asks me worriedly.

"I have good news and more good news."

"Well? Don't keep us in suspense." Sarah looks at me with big eyes.

"The good news is.. There's nobody there. The clearing is safe, we can camp there. The other good news.. is that I found us dinner. Waiting for us back there." I point into the direction I just came from.

"Then why is your face so red?" Sarah asks me confusedly.

I sigh. "I was getting worked up because I heard some noises earlier. Thinking it might've been bandits or wolves.. or whatever. I was already getting prepared for the worst." I shake my head. "The noises I heard came from a bush." The others are looking at me, holding in their breaths, waiting for my 'fearless warrior' story. "It.... Turned out to be two rabbits.... Getting it on with eachother."

Suddenly Sarah bursts out into laughter. The echo of her roaring laughter heard all around us, in between the mountains. Reverberating on the snowy grounds with nothingness. "Oh. Ohhh, that's grand, that is! I... Oh fuck... Fuck me. I'm going to piss myself."

"The heroic Inquisitor, saving us from rabbits in heat." Solas smiles a mischievous half smile.

Blackwall snickers but decides not to comment. Morrigan herself, is actually cracking a smile. Probably the first time I've ever seen her smile. Cole... doesn't seem to get it.

I sigh again. "At least we got dinner now. Anyone up for some rabbit?"

(...) Blackwall throws the logs into the self made firepit and I quickly light it with my magic. Again, Sarah sounds amazed. "When did you learn that?"

"A while ago. This is nothing. I've done greater things with magic." I reply calmly. It is interesting, at first I was just as amazed by seeing magic happen in front of me. But now, it's become the most normal thing to me. I don't get fazed by it anymore. "Sarah. You could probably.. do your business further outside the camp."

She swallows down hard as she looks out into the darkness that surrounds us. "Er.. can't anyone come with me?"
"Are you afraid of the dark? There's no need to be scared. The dark can't hurt you." Cole says as he takes his seat next to Solas and I.

"I'm not afraid of the dark... just... what lurks in the dark."

"There's nothing here, Sarah. I've checked the area before, it's secure. Safe."

"I'd still feel better if someone joined me. They don't have to hold my hand. Just stand close enough so that I'd feel... safer."

Blackwall's already skinning the rabbits I killed earlier and clears his throat uncomfortably. "I don't think it's wise if any of us guys join Sarah. It's not... right."

"Agreed." Solas replies.

I look at Cole, who wouldn't really be the right choice either. He'd probably say something weird. He's been around humans long enough, but he still doesn't quite get us. I turn to look at Morrigan briefly, already knowing where this is going.

"Do not look at me, Inquisitor. I did not join to help frightened little girls relieve themselves. After all.. she is your friend." She says finally, whilst warming up her hands near the fire.

I slap my upper thighs as I get back up from my spot. "Very well... Sarah. Let's go."

She nods and thankfully dips her head as I join her side. We walk, a little ways further. "Thanks, Elie."

"Don't mention it."

"Is this a good spot?"

"Hm.. No. Too close to camp. The smell of urine is a good defense mechanism against looters, but I wouldn't recommend peeing so close to where you eat and sleep. You'd be more prone to disease. And disease can get you killed."

"Right."

We keep walking, the light of the campfire is almost entirely out of range from us. "This is a good spot. I'll just stand right here. You go a little bit further."

"And... just do it? How do I wipe?"

I want to facepalm. "Just.. If you find a leaf, use that. But don't use the leaves from the Rashvine Nettle-" I snort. "-Trust me."

"And.. what's a Rashvine Nettle leaf look like?"

I sigh and look around, trying to find the good kind of leaves. When I finally find a few good one's, I 'wash' them off into the snow and hand them over to her. "Use these."

"You think that's safe to use.. you know, down there?" She eyes me warily.

"Do you have to pee or not?" I say in an impatient tone of voice. "You won't die, that's a promise."

"Geesh. Fine. I'm sorry." she says quietly, as she walks towards the area I just pointed her to.
I stand there, looking around, doing anything really to make sure I don't have to hear Sarah peeing. Or at least, to make sure it's not that obvious to hear.

*I probably shouldn't be so mean to her. I was like her once. When I first got here. But everything she does and says.. just annoy me so entirely much. I can only see her flaws.*

I didn't know how things worked either. I was afraid and uncertain about a lot of things, just like Sarah is now. The only difference is that I got used to it. I still remember clearly the first time I had to squat down in the wilderness and do my thing. Or the first time I saw a chamberpot. Or when I first realized I couldn't shave. I chuckle at recollecting that memory. How much has changed.

"What's so funny?" Sarah emerges from the 'lavatory'.

"Hm? Oh.. Nothing. Just.. thinking of when I first got here. I'm sorry for being so prickly. It's all become normal to me, I forgot for a moment that I was just like you once." We slowly start walking back to camp.

"Once. You say that like it's been ages."

"It's been twelve years for you. So in a way..."

We reach camp again. "Now that you mention it. You're twenty three now, right? It's been well over a year for you, now."

The others look at us as we sit down around the campfire. "I don't think much about it. I haven't seen anyone thusfar celebrate a birthday."

"Twenty three? Oh, what I would give to be that age again." Blackwall says longingly.

"You're.. younger than I thought you were." Morrigan looks surprised.

"She just called you 'old!' " Sarah instigates. I give her the side eye. Then.. I can see the cogwheels turning in her head. And I already don't like that. She smirks wickedly and turns her head towards Solas. "Hey Solas? How old are you, anyway?"

I can see his ears twitch slightly. He doesn't like Sarah at all. And now she's trying to put him on the spot. However, he remains calm. At least, to the others it looks like he is calm. I know better. I am probably the only one who can tell he's irritated. "I am twice Eliana's age."

"Uh-huh." She remarks dryly.

I sigh deeply. "Age doesn't really... work the same here as it does back on Earth, Sarah. Sure, children don't get married off to adults. But being twice the age of someone else doesn't matter that much here."

She shrugs her shoulders. "Doesn't always matter back home, either."

"True. But people do frown upon it, mostly. Here, they don't."

"Doesn't mean a man won't feel extremely lucky if he was able to snatch a girl that young, am I right, Solas?" Blackwall laughs heartily.

Solas genuinely smiles and shakes his head. "I do feel extremely lucky. For several other reasons."

Blackwall finally starts to roast the rabbits from earlier and Sarah is looking rather... displeased. As is Cole. "Did you have to kill them?" Cole asks me.
I frown slightly. "It's food, Cole. It was either these rabbits, or something else out there. We have to eat to survive."

"But they didn't do anything!"

Solas speaks up then. "Cole, unlike you we have to eat. We could eat vegetables and fruits, but it is not always available to us. Especially not when we are on a trip like this one."

"I don't have to eat. Or relieve myself." He turns to look at Sarah then.

She huffs. "I'll ignore that comment, Cole. But I do agree with him about the rabbits. Rabbits... are so cute. I am glad I wasn't around to witness you killing them." Sarah sighs as she watches Blackwall roasting the meat above the fire.

"You're going to have to get used to it, Sarah. If you are to stay here. Inside the walls of Skyhold we eat the same meat. You're just not told what is exactly on your plate. When you're out on trips, like these, you have to kill animals for food."

"I suppose but-"

"-Wasn't it you, who always devoured steaks at restaurants we visited?"

"Well yeah, but-"

"-And that meat came from cows."

She looks down at the ground then. I have made my point. "This is going to be harder than I thought."

I hum. "I did say it wasn't going to be a walk in the park. The first real outing is the first time you get confronted with a lot of new things. Like peeing in the bushes, having to hunt and eat the meat you've hunted. I warned you."

She goes silent entirely now.

"Why don't we all start to pitch our tents, while Blackwall continues on our food?" I say finally, breaking the silence.

"That would be best." Morrigan agrees.

"Could you help explain to Sarah how to pitch a tent, Morrigan? Or is that too much to ask of you?" I ask in a sarcastic tone of voice.

She sighs as she turns to look at Sarah, who, in turn, looks a bit upset. "Very well. Follow me Sarah, we will start on your tent, first."

The both of them get up and walk away, when they are out of earshot and Morrigan starts explaining it to Sarah, Blackwall turns to look at me. His face looking a bit.. sad. "Do you have to be so unkind to her? This is all new to her. It was new to you once, as well."

I scoff. "I didn't want her here with us on this trip, Blackwall. With all due respect, but I don't think she's ready for it yet."

"She was going to have to go sometime. This was bound to happen sooner or later. Just happened to be sooner than we thought."
"She didn't have to join us, but she did. We don't have time to coddle her. She wants to be here? She's going to have to step up her game. I do not think we'll run into much trouble on the way to the Arbor Wilds, but if something were to happen, we cannot afford mistakes. If she's going to cause complications, I will let her know."

Blackwall nods. "True enough... But you could at least try a different tone of voice with her."

"I won't." I get up and gesture for Solas to join me, to help working on our tent. "This is the way it works here in Thedas. She's here now, by her own choice. She'll just have to deal with it. I'm not her mother, I am the Inquisitor." And then we both walk off, to the opposite side of where Morrigan and Sarah are placing their tents.

(...) I lay there for a while, the back of my hand resting on my forehead as I look up at the ceiling of the tent. The book I was reading earlier, lies open, next to me on my bedroll. Solas is still scribbling something but I haven't been paying much attention to it at all. Thousands of thoughts are racing through my mind. The one's that keep coming back are the one's about Sarah, Morrigan and Cole being here at the same time. With Solas and I. Then there's the one where I am battling with my own conscience about how to treat Sarah on this trip. I understand she's new to all this, and Gods know I've been in her exact position. The time Cassandra forced me to kill the Fennec back at the Hinterlands, was awful. And it's not something I'd like for her to feel. But at the same time, I can't have that type of compassion for her. Because in truth, she's older than me. She could very well be my older sister or my aunt or whatever, if we're looking at the age gap between us. It's ridiculous that an adult woman, a grown woman, who's lived so much longer than I have, is having difficulties keeping up with real day-to-day type of stuff. Yeah, even though it's primitive: Having to hunt and kill your own food, having to pee in the open areas outside, even having to deal with silent trips on horseback for hours. Gods, and then the peeing right after we've left. At this rate we won't be getting to the Arbor Wilds within the week. Then there's the constant disdain and almost.. disgust I feel when I look at some of my companions. I know it is not me who thinks these thoughts. It's the effects of the Well of Sorrows' power. It's just driving me insane. I don't want to speak to anyone, except Solas. I don't want to be close with them the way I used to be. Sure, there have been moments where I'd go silent for a while with my friends. When I didn't spend as much time as I used to spend with them, due to.. circumstances. But, now it is an entirely different feeling. Ever since I drank from the Well, I see things differently. I see people differently. When I look at Solas for instance, it's almost as if I see a bright white hue around him. Like he's... perfect. At first I thought it was just his magic. But I figured it was so much more than that. Because when I look at Leliana, as much as I love and respect her, I feel she's unworthy and flawed in a way that annoys me. I feel there's a black darkness that looms over her. And I wonder why that is. It's maddening. Because I don't want to feel that way about my friends. Because I do remember and I do know that they were there for me since the very beginning. They love and cherish me. I know I love them. But yet, I can't love them as much as I used to. I groan softly. Just inwardly annoyed with my own thoughts about myself and Sarah.

Suddenly Solas looks to me and stops his scribbling. "What's wrong? You've been making noises the entire time already, and now you've resorted to downright groaning."

"I've been making noises?"

He puts down his sketchbook, and his charcoal. The one's I've given him, so very long ago. The one's from Val Royeaux. "You have. Little hums. Like an annoyed fly, buzzing around a home, trying to find it's way out through the window."

I scoff. "Well, I do thank you for comparing me to a fly, Solas. You're so very romantic." A smile appears on my face when I see his one eyebrow raise up sarcastically.
"What's the matter, vhenan?"

"Just... Sarah." I sigh. "Ugh. And Morrigan being here too, doesn't help either."

"Why are you so bothered by it? You don't have to speak to them during the duration of this trip."

I get up and prop myself up onto my elbows. "No.. But it would be best to make this trip as easy as possible. Not speaking to one another will only make things more awkward. I don't need more awkwardness. But I just can't help myself. It's.. annoying to see what Sarah's like. And it's even more annoying that I have to be the one teaching her things. This is why I've given Cassandra, Cullen and Josephine these tasks over the past couple of days."

"You're in conflict with yourself."

"Mhm. I am. And it doesn't help that there's millions of other voices inside of my mind speaking the entire goddamn time." I sit up straight and rub my eyes with the palms of my hands then. Really push them into my eyes, until I see nothing but darkness.

"What are they saying?"

"They frown upon Morrigan, Blackwall and Sarah... And the others," I say whilst still keeping my palms pushed into my eyes. "They... dislike them." I move my hands away and look at Solas sadly. "Is it like that for you as well? When you look at humans?"

"Not always," he cocks his head to the side and thinks for a while. "Of course, there are exceptions. Like Madame de Fer." He smiles.

I playfully swat him. "I know she's a real pain in the arse, but for real... Do you.. dislike humans as much as the voices inside my mind do? Do all Elvhen dislike them so?"

"It is.. hard to explain. In the eyes of the true Elvhen, the humans are flawed." He sighs. "I told you once, very long ago, we used to live in harmony with magic. Magic was all around us. We willed it as we went through our very long lives. It was natural for us. We breathed and walked in magic. We commanded powers that are forbidden and impossible to humans. They will never truly knows how freeing magic can be. How amazing a life would be like if one would only accept magic. Would accept the things it can do to one's mind. It isn't only death and destruction, not always possession and danger. It can really be peaceful. And the humans would squander all that, just because they think they know better. Because they believe themselves to be superior to every other race that exists in Thedas. And no matter where they go: war and destruction follows. Everything that is unknown to them, is scary and dangerous, and should be eradicated as quickly as possible." he pauses. "Of course, the Elvhen themselves can war amongst eachother. And as you well know.. destruction will follow after a war. No matter who wages it. But... the humans have a far larger history when it comes to this matter."

"When you first looked at me.. that's what you felt?"

He smiles. "You were the first that made me think."

"And that is... good?"

"You intrigued me. I suppose that distracted me from being disgusted by you." He smiles widely. He does have a lovely smile.

"Yep. Like I said before. So very romantic. Any girl should be lucky to have you, really. You truly know how to make a girl feel special." I say sarcastically.
He kisses my cheek gently. "But I never truly felt the same way about you, as I do with other humans, vhenan. In fact, in the very beginning I can very clearly remember being in conflict with myself about that. I tried so very hard to remind myself you were not one of the People. You were not like me. You could never come close to that. And yet... I kept coming back to you. Kept looking at your beauty. And kept admiring every bit of it. You are human, in every aspect, yes. But you never were quite like the rest. And eventually, I even went back down on my own thoughts. Reflected on them. And I figured that you were more Elvhen, than you were human."

"You're so full of shit." I grin cheekily.

"I am entirely serious, Eliana."

"When was the first time you looked at my ... ahem... beauty?" I say the latter using airquotes.

"When I healed you, after fighting the Pride demon." My face contorts immediately, remembering that fight. True, I've been through worse, such as physically being ripped away from Thedas back in the Raw Fade.. But it still wasn't pleasant. And I remember all the fear like it were only yesterday. He continues then. "I remember looking at you while you were unconscious. And thought to myself: what an odd but beautiful girl she is. Her features are so different from the other females I've seen so far. Yet she is human."

"We'd only just met."

"Indeed. That's how fast I fell for you. Though I didn't fully comprehend it back then."

I lick my lips playfully. "When was the first time you really, really looked at me?"

"When you were ill, after being stabbed by the poisoned arrow in the Hinterlands."

"Geesh, do you only like me when I'm passed out or extremely sick?" I joke wryly.

He snorts slightly and shakes his head. "Truth be told, I did feel a bit excited when I realized I had ripped your top armor to heal you. And that you had nothing to cover yourself with, save for my cloak."

"U-huh. Go on." I drawl out the words as I smile victoriously.

"When I heard you shivering next to me, on that stupid little bedroll of yours-" he inches closer to me and licks his lips before continuing. "-I wanted nothing more than to heat up your body."

"And yet you did nothing."

"Oh? Did I not lay against you, to warm you up, vhenan?"

"That night, I had hoped for more than just that."

"I know you did. I could smell your arousal, even though you were as sick as you were that night."

"You can smell that? Really?"

He snickers against the side of my neck and hums. I can feel the vibrations of his hum going through my entire body almost. And it's sending shivers down my spine. "Your arousal, is the best scent there is."

I gasp and push him away from me. "My arousal? So you've smelt other women's arousals too?"
"I have."

"Uhuh. I bet you had all the Elvhen ladies on your tail, didn't you? Totally pun intended." I wiggle my eyebrows.

"Back then I did not complain, no."

"And all those women could only dream of getting to see what was underneath those shabby looking clothes of yours, that hide all the goodies."

"I'll have you know that my clothes back then were not so... shabby." He smirks. "And why are you bringing up other women?"

I hum as I look away, in a coy and sweet manner. Batting my eyelashes at him, I reply. "Because I now have all of that. And more. And it feels damn good to know that."

He laughs heartily and shakes his head then. "I am pleased you find me so attractive. Because I know I feel the same way about you, my heart."

I sigh contently, then my face darkens again slightly. "Solas?"

"Mm?"

"If I feel this type of way when looking at humans, however.. Don't you think this will be a problem in the future? Whatever happens after.. I am still human."

"You are my mate. And I love you. Whosoever has a problem with you being human, will have to deal with me."

"Is there.." I fall silent for a moment. "Could I.. like.. ever... Maybe... Be Elvhen?"

He frowns slightly. "Well, I suppose but.. Only one person that I know of would be able to do that."

"Who?"

"The All-Mother of the Elvhen."

"Then I suppose I should make a good first impression if I'm going to summon her at the Arbor Wilds."

"Would you truly want that, however? You would be going through changes, Eliana. It's not.. easy."

I think on this for a moment longer. "Depends. What else would change, besides the shape of my ears?"

"Your senses would be heightened. You'd be able to hear someone else's conversation from within another room, for example. Not only that, you'd be smaller and leaner. Though your speed would increase in return for it. Then.. there's the matter of your magic." He looks intently into my eyes. "Especially once I tear down the Veil." I remain quiet. "You'd still look the same way in theory, but you'd have Elvhen features. And... there is no way to go back."

"I'll think on it. At least for a little while longer."

For a little while, neither one of us speak. We are just lost in thoughts, I'm sure. I am, definitely lost in thoughts. Thinking of the possibilities. In theory, I'd still be me. But I'd be Elvhen. It would be easier for Solas and for whatever comes next if I weren't human. Especially when it comes to the
acceptance of the Elves. I never truly had an issue with the way the Elves looked in Thedas. Or any other Elf character I'd seen in movies back at home. I always found they were beautiful and my opinion about them didn't change while I was here. Not in the slightest. Would I change myself, for the one I love?

"You'd also be like me, vhenan."


He nods knowingly. "I meant you'd be... immortal. In a way. You could still... die. In a sense. Sleep the eternal slumber. Wake up decades later, if this should happen."

"Sounds to me you're not entirely against that."

"I am not. In fact... I hadn't thought of it before. It would be..." He falls silent then. "It would be perfect." He shakes his head then. "But also, it is asking the biggest sacrifice from you and I will not do so. Besides, it is not a gift she bestows upon just anyone. It rarely happened back in the days of Elvhenan."

"We have time, yet." I smile lovingly at my man.

He nods. "We do. And we should get some rest. We have a long trip still ahead of us."

"Wait-" I hold up my finger. "-Before we do. What were you scribbling earlier?"

He chuckles softly and shows me his sketchbook. It's another drawing of me. And Fenrian. I drop my finger then. "Oh."

He looks melancholic. "I know. I just had to draw the both of you. Together. Happy."

"I miss him." I can already hear my voice trembling with sadness.

"I do too, vhenan. I do too."

"He never got to see us together. Not truly. He never got his wish."

"He'd be pleased to see us together."

I stare at the drawing a little while longer. Taking it from his hands I sigh deeply. It is not a drawing from a moment that actually happened. It is just a sketch of me and Fenrian, together, next to one another. Solas can pull off big frescoes on the walls of his rotunda back at Skyhold. But he's also very good at making small, detailed portraits of people. If he pays close enough attention to their features and little characteristics, it's almost as if the sketches will spring to life any second. "You're very talented, Solas. You've captured him well. Every detail of his face..." My finger runs over the sketch of his hair. "That one little strand of hair that always stood out from the rest of it." I snort slightly. "He'd hated it and loved it at the same time, if I messed his silvery hair up."

"For all the Dalish did wrong, they did one thing right. They made him."

I hum, agreeing entirely with that statement. "You should draw yourself in the sketch, too."

"I will. Another day. Let us sleep and dream of him, Eliana. He wouldn't want us to be sad."

With a long, loving and deep kiss to say goodnight to one another, we blew out the candle within our tent and slept. Until the next morning.,
Sarah POV:

"Shit!" I yelp out as Spots is being spooked away by the bandits that just appeared out of nowhere. I tightly hold onto the reins and yell at Spots to calm the fuck down, but it doesn't seem to help, at all. I take one quick glance behind me, and see the group getting smaller and smaller as more and more distance is being put between me and them. I look back onto the road before me again and try to manoeuvre Spots into the directions that seem less dangerous to me. And easier for me to remember. But, after a lot of galloping and a few thousand trees later... I've already lost track of where I was and where I am now. I desperately try to tug at his reins, but this damnable horse just won't slow down! "Stop, you fucking knobhead! We're already too far away from them anyhow! You want us to get into more trouble, you shitstain?!" Again, I pull at the reins hard, trying to slow him or halt him entirely. And it seems like my cursing has worked. Because Spots finally slows down to a canter and then... he halts. "Fuck!" I cry out while looking around me. The snowy mountains have made way for greener grasses and lush forests around us, about three days ago. And to be honest, I do not know which I prefer more: snowy nothingness or foresty jungles with no way of telling which way is which. I groan as I start to grow more annoyed by the second. I didn't even have time to whip out my new bow. This fucking horse just bolted. "Well. I hope you're happy. We're lost. Thanks to you." Spots huffs in response. "Oh, don't you dare put this on me, mister! I'm not the one who got spooked by a couple of assholes hiding in the bushes. Did you see Moonlight running away when they jumped out? I don't think so!" Spots whinnies loudly and stamps his hind legs onto the ground. "Now calm down! You're not a fucking bull, alright? Geesh, do horses here in Thedas not know what the hell they are themselves?" I look around a bit more, hoping to spot something familiar in some type of way, but to no avail. "Well, let's at least do something while we're lost. Let's go back... See if I can recognize anything." I steer his reins around and we start to trot back onto the road. Hopefully.. going into the right direction.

Fucking bandits. I thought she said the roads were mostly safe.

"Safe my arse." I grumble to myself as I slouch down into my saddle. "If this is her definition of safe, then I'll wipe my ass with 'safe'. Am I right?" Spots doesn't reply. I huff and scrunch up my nose. "Oh, now you've got nothing to say, huh? I see how it is. Damn stubborn horse, you are."

"Didn't think I'd ever meet someone who'd talk to their mount." a strange voice calls out to me from beside me.

I immediately sit up straight into my saddle again and look into the general direction of the voice: a man wearing nothing but some peasant looking clothes, and a sword sheathed on the side of his hip. A shield strapped to his back.. but no armor. I stop trotting and eye the stranger warily. "And who are you?"

The man laughs. "I'm just an amused stranger." He slowly steps towards me.

"Hold it there." I say threatingly. Though I probably pose no real threat to him. He probably thinks I'm nuts for talking to my horse. "I don't know you. I don't really like it when strangers with weapons approach me for no real reason. I have a bow, you know."

"I can see that you have a bow, my lady. I am armed because there's been sightings of bandits around these parts the last couple of days and I am traveling. I don't want to be attacked by them, so I protect myself with my sword and shield."

"Still no reason to come closer to me."
"I heard you from all the way over there-" he points behind him, nothing but trees and .... well.. trees. "I've made camp there to rest from my journey. I was on my way to the Emerald Graves, and all a sudden I hear a distressed sounding woman, yelling... When I went to go and check, I see her talking to a horse. I just want to make sure you're alright."

"Hmpf. Well, I'm not. I got seperated from my group when bandits attacked us. Stupid horse here ran off like his arse was on fire."

Now that the man is closer to me, I can see his face more clearly. He has bushy brown eyebrows and the same brown kind of hair. Cut in a bowl shape. He looks.. ridiculous, but it could be just the way his hair is that makes him look like that. He has a huge scar running diagonally across his face though. It sends shivers down my spine. 

Must've hurt like a bitch, that one.

The stranger crosses his arms and smiles at me. But I can't tell if it's a nice kind of smile.. or a mocking kind of one. "Then it is good I came prepared with my sword and shield. The name's Trip."

"Trip?" I say, scoffing.

"Not my real name, but.. We don't know eachother that well yet, so I've decided to stick with my nickname."

"How'd you get that scar, Trip?"

"Got it when I was still a young lad. My parents' farm got attacked by Templars. I jumped in front of a blade to save my mother."

"You a mage then?"

"I did not inherit magic, no. My sister did, however. She's now with the Circle in Cumberland. May I approach?"

"No. Why do you want to?" I eye the man suspiciously. Still ready to run off the moment he does something I don't trust.

"I can help you find your friends."

"And why would you do that?"

"Because you don't know these parts. If you had known of them, you wouldn't be yelling at your horse for getting lost." he smirks triumphantly, knowing full well he's right.

"I know how to use my bow, right? Let's make that very clear here. I will use it if you try anything funny."

"No funny business, m'am." He raises his hands up in the air, as a sign of good faith, as he approaches me further. I slowly and cautiously get off of Spots.

When he's finally in front of me, he extends his hand to shake mine. "I didn't quite catch your name, my lady."

"Sarah. The name's Sarah."

(...)
Solas POV:

I watch in awe as I see Eliana finish off the last of the assailants: she jumps from one side to the other, almost in an instant and twirls her daggers around fast. Cutting into their torso's like razor sharp claws, leaving nothing but gaping wounds and slices. The first three she jumped are laying dead in their pools of blood. Morrigan and I mostly worked together, as much as we could, trying to blast them away from us and the horses. Blackwall immediately charged, head first into the fight, bashing the bandits with his shield. Cracking and breaking their bones with said shield, and with the pommel of his sword he broke some noses, too, I am sure of it. Cole poofed around the battlefield, assisting Eliana as he too used his daggers and his skill to make quick work of the foes that surrounded us entirely. She breathes harshly as she finally finishes off the last one, but not before Morrigan sets him ablaze to ensure he won't get up again. "Fucking Sarah!" she looks around the area but both she and her horse have long been gone by now. She looks exhausted. I don't think she can pull off another fight like this for a little while. She'd have to regenerate her energy and strength.

"It would have been easier had she jumped off the beast." Morrigan dusts off her outfit and sniffs indignantly. "Finding a horse alone is much easier than finding a horse with it's rider still attached to the saddle."

"We should probably go after her. Pick up her trail as we go along." Blackwall sighs and jumps onto his own horse.

"She was scared. Just like her horse." Cole sheathes his daggers and points forwards. "There."

"Yes, but picking up her trail is not quite so easy, Warden." Morrigan says in an annoyed tone of voice as she gets onto her own mount as well.

"If we stop bickering and just go, we'll find her faster." Eliana groans and rolls her eyes as she trots up towards me. She lowers her voice to but a whisper then as she adresses me. "Can that nose of yours catch her scent as well?"

Sarah has, to me, one of the most off-putting scents I've ever smelled. I could only compare it to the most pungent smells that exist in this world. Like... Fish that has gone off. Or decaying, gangrenous flesh. Yes. She has an odor so undeniably offensive that other smells equally as putrid have come to be compared to it, such as certain overtly pungent body scents. It certainly won't be hard to catch it. "I can." I say, almost wanting to growl out in frustration myself. This girl is getting more and more tiresome by the day. "Though it is not one of my favorite pastimes."

We follow the road further down it. Eventually going off trail, onto a little dirt road. For a while we gallop on, until eventually I halt, glancing down at the road. "There. More tracks."

"An excellent mage and now you've become an excellent hunter, too." Blackwall remarks in astonishment.

"Like a wolf catching his prey." Cole says quietly behind us.

"Yes, well, are we close or not?" Morrigan asks us impatiently.

"We are. She got off the horse here." I point to the ground, where there's still the faint tracks of hooves and feet... "There was somebody with her. These footprints come from way over there." I point my chin towards the trees that surround the little dirt road. "It would seem she received aid."

"Or got into even more trouble." Eliana growls.

"Are you certain this girl was a friend of yours, Inquisitor? Because even though I dislike you, at
least you're clever enough not to run along with strangers."

"I wonder that myself as well, Morrigan. I wonder as well." She sighs as she gets off of Moonlight. "Well, no use in bringing the horses with us. But someone should stay behind to guard them, in case there's more bandits in these parts. I don't want to walk the rest of the way towards the Arbor Wilds."

"I'd rather go with you, if that's alright with you, Eliana." Blackwall says cautiously. I know he doesn't entirely dislike Morrigan, but the Warden certainly doesn't feel comfortable around her. She has that uninviting aura around her that just.. irks you. And for me that goes double. Her magic alone, rubs me the wrong way. The way she looks at the world and the way she thinks she knows everything there is to know about Elves. When in fact, she knows nothing at all. If there's one mage I'd rather not want their powers to be amplified after the tearing of the Veil, it's her.

"Very well. Cole, can you stay behind with Morrigan and watch the horses for us?"

"I can. You need to help Sarah. She's... there. And she's not safe."

"I know, Cole. I didn't expect anything less from Sarah."

I jump off of Valoril and pet her on the side softly. "Let us not waste any more time then." I say resolute as we all start walking further into the forest.

"A fucking adult woman, talking to strangers. She'd be a terrible mother, I'll tell you that." Eliana remarks, clearly very annoyed, from beside me.

"Perhaps the stranger she encountered wasn't a danger to her. I am sure she would know if there was something amiss." Blackwall tries to lighten the mood.

But Eliana shakes her head. "You really think this stranger she ran into is no threat? I'd expected better from you, Blackwall. We're not even that far away from the place we were ambushed. We could potentially be walking right into the Dragon's lair, so to speak."

"You think we may be meeting the leader of the group?" I ask her.

"Possibly. The sellswords we fought earlier definitely weren't leader material. None of them looked or played the part of one." She shakes her head. "No, they were doing their jobs. I've no doubt we're about to meet the one who issued the orders."

Suddenly she stops, and immediately she ducks low to the ground. We both follow her lead as she continues crouching, further into the forest. Then I hear it too.. Faint sounds of someone speaking. And Sarah's scent has definitely become stronger within the last minutes we've been walking. Eliana is getting better and better with her skills of a fighter. Of a hunter. No... the skills of the one who is truly able to be my mate. No one would be better than her. Anyone else would be less. Not worthy enough. She truly is quite amazing. My mate.

"I don't understand what you want with me." Sarah's voice speaks softly. Frail. She's scared.

"You're with them. We saw you traveling with them. It would be quite amazing, wouldn't it? Having the mighty Inquisitor's companion as my hostage. Imagine the gold I can demand for your pretty little head." A man with a bowl cut hairstyle, glinting steel armor and sharp sword in hand, is threatening the girl, who's tied up with rope. She has been thrown onto the floor like some puppet, and her horse is tied to a tree nearby.

Suddenly, without thinking on it first, Eliana gets up and dashes towards the man. "And what would you think the mighty Inquisitor will do, would she find out?"
Blackwall and myself stay low, hidden between the bushes that surround us. The high grass makes for a perfect cover, as well. Me, barely being able to be noticed in my green tunic and pants. I only hope that Blackwall's armor doesn't reflect the sun's rays. Making the man notice us before we can help Eliana. Though I am certain she can handle herself. She's fought off worse than a mere bandit leader.

But she is still very exhausted... She shouldn't be doing this alone.

The man smirks evilly when he spots Eliana walking towards him at a fast pace. But keeps his sword aimed at Sarah, however. "Ah, there you are. Took you long enough, didn't it? Were my men keeping you occupied?"

"I wouldn't-" Sarah begins but Eliana shuts her up immediately.

"-You stay out of this, Sarah. You're the whole fucking reason I'm having to deal with this twat in the first place."

"Oh-hoh. A little bit of bad blood between your companion and yourself, I see? You sure you'd rather not just pay me for her head?"

"As for you-" she unsheathes her daggers quickly. ":-I have a very important appointment to make and you are causing me to be late. And believe me when I tell you, that I do not appreciate the delay in question. Now I'm giving you two options. Either you let me take her from your hands and we all go our merry little ways. Or.. I can kill you like I did your men and still take her with me either way. The choice is yours."

"I am not scared of you! You never come out of your pretty little tower anymore. I think you're running scared! Pah!" he spat at her feet then. "You think your skills with a dagger can match my sword and shield?"

"The hard way it is, then. Suit yourself. Don't say I didn't give you a choice in the matter." And before we can even blink, Eliana's at the man's throat with her daggers, keeping his neck firmly between her blades.

But the leader doesn't give up so easily, and I do believe Eliana has become too attached to her daggers. Because the leader immediately kicks her in the stomach, making her stumble backwards and reach for the kicked stomach. I want to get up and kill the bastard for even daring to hurt her, but Blackwall holds me back. "I don't think you have to help her, Solas. And I highly doubt she'll thank you for it when you take her kill." He whispers to me, a faint smile on his lips.

I sigh deeply. "And don't I know it." I know he is right. She can and will be able to handle her own. But I just don't want to watch Eliana in even the slightest bit of discomfort. Should I take her kill, she'd be ungrateful, indeed. It would seem the Wolf cannot outmatch the Fox. I smile internally.

The Wolf and the Fox.

He quickly kicks again, this time against her hands holding the daggers firmly and tightly. They fall onto the floor and he pushes them away with his own sword. Laughing happily. "You're really that easy?"

Use your magic, instead, Eliana! You're still too tired to fight him with your daggers.

And for a split second, it's almost as if I can see her own ears twitch from afar. But it could've been just my imagination. She lowers her head and then gets up again. "Give me back my daggers, let's make it a fair fight."
"Nah. I think I like you more when you're unarmed. Makes it even more fair to me." He sneers at her while he readies himself to attack her with his sword. But before he can even make a single move, he freezes up entirely. Not by ice magic. Not by the sheer coldness of her stare. But through a different type of magic. I am glad Morrigan has decided to stay behind with Cole. So she didn't get to see this part, which is clearly not magic that is being taught by 'regular' mages.

Blackwall gasps from beside me. "She didn't even lift up a single finger!" He whispers.

_No_. She _didn't_. She simply... _looked_, at _him_.

The man is frozen in place and opens his mouth as if to say something. Eliana simply walks over to him casually and circles him in a triumphant manner. She has caught her prey. "I did want it to be a fair fight, truly. I wholeheartedly believe it is unfair to use magic on someone with mundane weapons such as these." She taps against the fuller of the sword and continues then. "But, you see.. you're too much of an arrogant bastard. You don't think straight. And now you're frozen in place... Like a rock."

The crackling of her magic: I can feel it in the air hanging around me. And it's something very very familiar to me. I almost start to feel aroused then, but hold myself back when I realize I am not alone. I glance over towards Blackwall who's watching it all with amazement in his eyes.

If _only_ you knew.

The bandit leaders' eyes dart downwards as he notices his own feet, literally turning to stone slowly. He opens his mouth again but nothing but choking sounds come out of his constricted throat. "Oh, I'm sorry. You wanted to say something?" Eliana leans in closer to the man and when he clearly doesn't speak, simply because he's not able to, she shrugs her shoulders indifferently. "No? My bad. Then I don't suppose you have an issue with me taking my companion here?" Still.. No answer. The stone has already reached the man's calves at this point.

I _do_ wonder where she learned that. When did she figure out she had this power. I know I didn't tell her of it.

She casually walks over towards her daggers and then releases Sarah from her bindings. "Come. We've a long way to go, still. And even longer now that you ran off with this twat." She drags Sarah with her, after Sarah picked up her unused bow and quiver with arrows, as she leaves the 'poor' man to his fate.. To be turned into stone, entirely. She didn't even stop it. She must really be furious, inwardly. She walks over towards Spots and leads him away from the bandit camp with Sarah walking quietly beside her.

Blackwall chuckles. Still not realizing the extend of the power she used just now. "Told you. Come, let's return with them."

I follow, but before I do, I take one last glance behind me and see the man eyeing me. Fear written all over his face. A true expression of horror on that pale face of his. I smirk and shake my head.

If _I_ didn't know it already, _I definitely_ knew it now... _I chose_ well.

When we're finally back at the horses, Eliana says nothing and jumps onto Moonlight again. Morrigan eyes her confusedly. "No explanation of what transpired? Really?"

"She sees the errors of her ways. I've no desire to scold her further about the matter." She turns her head around to face Sarah then. Who quietly got onto Spots as well.

"Thank you, Elie. I realize that-"
"-That what you did was extremely stupid? Yes. You better had."

A long silence follows. I cannot contain the smirk on my face as I ride next to my vhenan. "But what you did was extremely awesome, though." Sarah says finally.

She snaps her head into the direction of Sarah then and if eyes could kill... Well.. honestly they could kill. It would seem Eliana wishes to scold her anyways.

"This will officially be the first and final trip you take with me. If you ever decide to go on a trip again, you'll go with someone else. The scouts, perhaps. Or with Leliana's men. Or Cullen's. Frankly, I don't give a flying fuck. You have jeopardized everything by even agreeing to go along with that man. Do you realize what could have happened? Are you truly so naive and stupid? That's not the Sarah I know from Earth."

"I'll have you know that I did distrust him at first. He wasn't even wearing his armor when I first met him. He'd put that on when we entered the camp and after he tied me up! Besides, I had my bow on me the entire time but-"

"-And where was your bow when we arrived? Not on you. Just because someone isn't wearing their armor, initially, doesn't instantly mean they pose no threat. Think before you act, Sarah."

"Eliana.. She didn't do it on purpose."

She turns to look at Blackwall then and sneers at him angrily. "No. She doesn't do a whole lot of things on purpose. What she should be doing is remembering her lessons. And knowing that this is not Earth any longer. She chose to be here. She chose to follow me. And I chose to let her learn and stay with us. I did not, however, decide to be the mother hen. Walking around Thedas having to teach her fuck-all and then still having her get into trouble. First thing she could've done when the bandits attacked, was respond. But even that was too much to ask. Even I, did better when I first got here in Thedas. I didn't get kidnapped by some madman in the woods."

"If I recall correctly, you got into trouble many a time before, as well." Blackwall replies grimly.

"True. But this was when the Inquisition was still in her younger days. Back when we could still afford mistakes to happen. But now we're at a point where we have to be strong. Where we have to know what we're doing. If we fuck up anything, even the smallest or slightest thing, we could end right back at where we started. Corypheus is upon us. I stalled time to get her acquainted with everything she needed to know. At the very least the basics. Because she decided to come after me. Now that we are so close to the end, when I finally decide to act, she just had to tag along."

"You said it was safe!" Sarah all but cries out.

"This is safe. As safe as it's going to get in Thedas. And yet you still got taken by some idiot in the woods. I would've at least expected you to follow the basic rules. Such as the concept of 'Don't get into cars with strangers'."

I can tell neither one of us gets this 'concept' of Eliana's, except for the two women from another World. When I turn to look at Morrigan, I can almost see a hint of admiration for Eliana in her eyes. But when she spots me looking, she turns her head away and pretends to not care about it all.

Oh yes, Morrigan. Eliana is so much stronger in both power and willpower than you thought possible.

And she is realizing it now too, for the very first time perhaps. Again, I want to smile. But the situation demands I keep my face straight.
"I apologize. Truly."

"It's not just your own life anymore, Sarah. You're putting the lives of everyone who travels with you at stake, as well. Now it ended well for you, for all of us. But what if you pull some shit like that if we were to face down Corypheus? Your error could change the lives of many people. You could wipe out everyone with your foolishness. Let this be a very clear lesson to you. One I hope you'll not soon forget."

And with that, the conversation... or rather, the argument, is over. We ride next to one another a little while longer, everyone is silent. Even Cole, when I almost expected him to say something on the matter. But perhaps, he stayed out of it because he could very clearly feel the tension hanging around. Besides, he is a spirit of compassion. He adores Eliana, though the two of them do not speak very often. He may not always agree with the way she handles things, but he respects her. He understands. And he knows. About us. About our plans. He looks up to me and his blue eyes meet my own. He simply nods. Quietly. And none have noticed his little gesture towards me. I smile kindly at him.

Eventually I reach out my hand to hold Eliana's while still riding Valoril with only one hand on the reins. She looks at me when our hands touch and she quickly takes hold of it. I squeeze it lightly. "I am proud of you." I whisper to her. We are riding further ahead than the others. Even though it is quiet all around us, I know for a fact that they cannot hear us. They can probably hear whispering, but cannot make out what we are saying exactly.

"Proud of which part?" she whispers back.

"Both parts." I smile knowingly.

"Ar eolasa." she replies.

*She knows.*

I shake my head then and smile lovingly at she who is my heart. The only one I could ever entrust with my secrets. And I am glad I have done so. I couldn't have asked for a better partner. One who would understand me so well. One who would accept me, even after everything I've told her. After laying my plans bare to her, including my heart. And she, would happily accept it all, just to stay with me. No matter what may come next for this world.

*I have to remind myself to ask her how she came to know of these powers she used earlier, however. It is... Interesting.*
Truth Revealed

Chapter Summary

Elie and the others finally find the Altar and she meets up with Mythal for the first time. Oo-la-laaaa. Well and the bond explained, finally c;

Also Leliana is doing some business behind Elie’s back, trying to figure out some things here and there about Eliana's strange behavior. She's a spymaster for a reason, amirite?

Also, some Fade dreaming, some slight touching on Elie missing Fenrian, and more quality time between Cole-Elie & Dorian-Elie. Since I felt like they hadn't gotten that much moments together lately.

Also, Elie is working on her own little project. Right before the end of it all.

Hmm what is she planning to do?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Leliana POV:

My hands are tightly holding the letter which has arrived hours earlier. I've already read it a few dozen times. Again my eyes dart back over the writing on the parchment. It was hastily scribbled by Blackwall.

I rub my temples in worry, and mostly confusion.

"There's been a bit of a delay. We are currently in between Emprise Du Lion, The Exalted Plains and the Emerald Graves. It may still take a while longer before we reach The Arbor Wilds. We got ambushed whilst traveling. A massive group of bandits attacked. Lady Sarah's horse got spooked and ran off with her still on it. We went after her as soon as we won the fight with the bandit group. Solas was able to track her down and we found her at a mostly abandoned camp. The Leader of the bandits who attacked us had captured Sarah. Wanting to use her as his hostage to demand gold from us. Luckily for us, Eliana made short work of the bandit leader. She used her magic on him, completely turning him to stone. Now we are resting at camp. Eliana still does not know I am writing these letters to you. I hope it arrives on time.

Things are not going well between Sarah and Eliana. She has declared that Sarah will no longer be accompanying her on trips. She’d rather Sarah goes with one of your people. Or Cullen's. She fears Sarah will jeopardize everything by getting into trouble whilst on trips with her. Eliana still prefers the company of Solas and Cole over the rest of us. She barely speaks a word to us. Morrigan seems to have quieted down since the bandits attacked. But she is impatient to make it to the Arbor Wilds. I do believe Eliana and Morrigan see eye to eye about one thing at least: getting there as soon as possible.

Eliana is getting impatient. Whatever's got her so annoyed, I do not know. I suppose we won't find out at all, since she's not opening up to any of us. Cole has sometimes said some interesting things
but mostly I can't make out what he means by the words he's saying. I believe it would be best to question Cole alone when we're back at Skyhold. Maybe you can make out what he means.

Can you tell me, why I have to report on Eliana's state of mind? And on what she's doing? What's the point of it?

- Thom.

No Blackwall. I cannot tell you. This is my own little project, and it's best none know of it.

I sigh. What's going on with Eliana and Solas? Why are they acting so suspicious? What's gotten her so disconnected from all but Cole and Solas? I am troubled. Worried. And Sarah's words keep repeating themselves inside my mind. About Eliana wanting to step down. I know for a fact Eliana wants Sarah to take over. But if that is the case, why is she so impatient with Sarah? She wasn't a natural talent when she first joined us, and I had thought she'd use this knowledge when teaching Sarah.

Then there's the matter of turning one to stone, with magic. I've never heard or seen any such spells, not even amongst the Dalish mages. I get up from my table and walk down the steps, into the library. Past Fiona, who's reading some books. When she spots me however, she calls out to me. "Sister Leliana."

I stop dead in my tracks and turn around to face her then. "Grand Enchanter. Is everything still in order?"

She hums lowly and flips the page she was currently on, a frown etched into her forehead. "All is well, though it did not escape my notice that you've been receiving some private letters as of late. The last two days in fact." her gaze meets my own.

She is a smart woman. A woman who's been through a lot. And probably the only Orlesian person I know of that doesn't scheme and play games. If she wants to play the game, she's good at it, but mostly she holds back from it all. Preferring a life a little more... easygoing. She deserves one, after all she went through. "I have been corresponding with one of my people out in the field." I lie.

She chuckles lowly and shakes her head, closing the book entirely now. "Is that so? Then why do you look so troubled, child? As far as I know, your people are doing exceedingly well out in the field. Everything was under control, was it not?"

I ponder over my next move. What shall I tell her, what explanation shall I give her? Fiona is not stupid. Not in the slightest. "Grand Enchanter, if I may ask you a question?" She beckons me over to sit down with her at the table. Quietly I do so. "My people have encountered a mage out in the field, and allowed her to join the ranks. Fight against the bandits and lingering forces of Corypheus. She is a human, and has not trained with any Circle's as far as we know. However.. the other day, she has apparently.. turned someone to stone." I pause momentarily, looking at the Grand Enchanter's expression. It doesn't change. "I was not aware these were the talents of any regular mage. I myself have never met such a mage, capable of turning one to stone." I pause momentarily, looking at the Grand Enchanter's expression. It doesn't change. "I was not aware these were the talents of any regular mage. I myself have never met such a mage, capable of turning one to stone. Not even while spending time with Dalish mages in the Brecilian Forest. I wish to ask you of it, in case I need to worry about my people's safety."

"Hmm. This is quite..." She pauses and thinks on it for a moment. "In truth, I've never met another of my fellow mages who possesses such powers. I'd have to look it up."
Not even Fiona knows of a mage who can do that? "Where do the limits of most mages lie? Power wise, I mean."

"Well, we mages can do a lot." she smiles weakly. "Of course there's the usual, I am sure you are familiar with these powers. Storm, Ice, Fire and Spirit magic. Then there's some mages who are natural talents at healing, like Solas for instance. Blood magic, I am sure you know of as well. Then there's the specializations each mage can choose. Knight-Enchanter, which is Vivienne's speciality. Necromancy, Dorian's choice of specialization. And lastly, Rift Mage. Which is what Solas chose." She scoffs wryly. "The Inquisition at least has a well balanced team of mages."

"But turning one to stone, is not part of any of these powers."

"Indeed." Fiona dips her head. "These are dark times. I do not know what else lurks in the shadow. But I fear Corypheus isn't the only threat we will have to face." When I give her a questionable look she smiles. "Years of expierence, I'm afraid. I've lost hope to be optimistic, at times like these." She looks down at her tangled fingers onto the table then before speaking up. "If I may be so bold, Sister Leliana? What will happen to the Inquisition if Corypheus were to be defeated?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because, Inquisitor Courseland has taken us 'rebel mages' under her wing. Shielding us from the Wrath of Templars and people alike. I wonder what will happen to us, if the Inquisition no longer needs to be around. You must realize, that even though Empress Celene is now on our side to stand against Corypheus, she would not want a massive force such as the Inquisition to remain after it is done. And that's just speaking of Orlais. Ferelden would likely not approve either. I am.. worried, what may happen to us."

"I don't think you should have to fear for this, Grand Enchanter. You've heard of the Chantry reaching out to Cassandra and I?"

"About who's going to become the next Divine? Yes. I have heard. It's hardly a secret within the walls of Skyhold."

"Indeed. I had heard that Madame de Fer petitioned for Cassandra to be the next Divine. And honestly I believed that was the end of it. I wouldn't stand a chance. However, about three days ago, right after the Inquisitor left for her trip towards the Arbor Wilds... I'd received a letter. From the Chantry."

Fiona's eyes light up visibly.

I continue. "Apparently, Eliana's been petitioning for me to become the next Divine. I had no idea she was doing this behind my back."

"Are you.. unhappy about this? Your tone suggests you do not like it."

I shake my head no. "I am not. I'm just surprised this happened without me knowing. I am to become the new Divine after we defeat Corypheus." Eliana has become too good at doing things without me knowing of it. And this only adds to my worries about her.

"If I may... I am not entirely unhappy about this. I know you would do well for us mages. Cassandra, I trust is fair and reasonable. But she would have Vivienne backing her up. And we all know what Vivienne aims for." her face grows darker then.

I nod but remain silent. "I thank you for your time, Grand Enchanter."
"I will go through my tomes. See if I can find any information about any mages using their magic to turn people into stone. If I find anything, I will certainly let you know. Hopefully before you leave us for your next big task," she smiles warmly at me and dips her head. With that, I get up and walk towards the Main Hall, where everyone else of the Inner Circle is eating.

I sit down at the massive table, and eat in silence, listening to everyone talking about day to day things. But I don't pay much attention to it all, until Dorian's voice brings me back to the present. "She didn't even say goodbye to me." he pouts playfully, but his eyes look sad. I know he's speaking of Eliana.

"Feathers.. has a lot on her mind. A lot to deal with."

"And of course there's Sarah to deal with, as well." Cassandra joins in.

"Do I detect some ill feelings towards her, Seeker?" Vivienne breaks her bread into tiny pieces, delicately and daintily eating it.

"None at all. She just has... a bad timing. Had she joined us months ago, I wouldn't be so opposed to her being here with us. But now.. is not the time to be teaching someone to fight or bring her with on trips."

Josephine nods. "True, but she has helped us tackle some unfinished business. She helped plan with Leliana, Cullen and I, to liberate Emprise du Lion and the Fallow Mire. Her plans, were not bad at all. Given enough time, she may be able to learn develop her fighting skills more. She'll be at the same level as Eliana, by then."

"Maybe even better." Cullen says quietly, probably thinking aloud. All the people around the table turn their heads into his direction. When he realizes he's said this out loud, he looks shocked. "I er... I mean... Well.." He stammers. Trying to find the right words to fix this mistake he's made. None at the table, save for maybe Vivienne, seems to agree with him about this.

"I agree with Cullen." I say, breaking the awkward silence that fills the Main Hall.

Cassandra snaps her head into my direction then. "You can't be serious!"

"I am. I do not mean to imply that Eliana is bad at what she is doing. She has brought us far, and without her, we would never have gotten where we are today."

"Exactly." Varric 'hmphs' audibly and chews off a huge chunk of meat afterwards. Clearly, he's unhappy with me agreeing. When I turn to look at Cullen, however, he looks grateful.

"But-" I continue. "-She has been through a lot. It is normal for people to change after going through so much. For Eliana, this goes double. Everything we went through, she went through, in tenfold. She is the leader of the Inquisition. Everything fell onto her shoulders."

"But we helped carry her burdens." Dorian says then. "Well.. as much as we could."

I nod. "Perhaps. However she is still the one that had to make all the tough decisions. The choices she had to make at the throne." I point at said throne at the end of the Main Hall. "-The people she's had to judge. The decision of Haven. Not to mention the personal trauma she went through..."

"The little one..." Iron Bull whispers.

"That hit her hardest. True, she uses it now to her advantage. Whenever she fights, I am sure she uses this memory as fuel to her fire. However, we know she never got over it fully. She never had the
time to mourn him properly. There was never any time, and there never will be time for it. She had to lead us. She changed long before she drank from the Well of Sorrows."

"Which brings us to the next topic of discussion." Sera says in a sing-song voice.

I nod. "We don't know what was in there. And we never will know. All of this, led me to believe that even though Sarah is new to all this, she may be a better leader in the end. She has a clear mind, not polluted by voices and personal trauma."

"So you'd push her to the side and replace her with Sarah?" Dorian exclaims angrily. I do not think I've ever seen the Tevinter so mad before.

"I know you care for her, a lot, Dorian. However.. This makes you biased. I too, admire Eliana for all she's done, all she went through, for us. We forced her into this since day one, and she has taken the job serious ever since. She has done amazing things for us. But we cannot ignore the damage that's been done to her. We must be reasonable."

"That's easy for you to say. You're our spymaster." Varric remarks bitterly.

A silence follows. None speak anymore. I get up from the table then, haven't eating anything at all yet. "I apologize for my directness. I understand some of you are hurt by what I've said. But please, think on it."

(...) 

Eliana POV: 

I open my eyes slowly and blink a couple of times. When I sit up straight, I can feel tingles all over my body. My skin is humming with magic, and it's more powerful than ever. I look around me, and realize I am dreaming in the Fade once again. It has been a long long while. Around me, are the now familiar walls of the Temple of Mythal. I shudder momentarily, recollecting the fight I had to go through to get here, a while ago.

"Don't worry. You don't have to fight so many red templars." Cole appears next to me. Sitting cross-legged on the floor of the Temple. "This is only a dream within the Fade."

I nod. "I know. The memory came back unwillingly."

"Do you want to forget? It doesn't hurt you, but it makes you uncomfortable."

"No. It's fine. It only makes me uncomfortable because it was an exhausting day. I'll need feelings like these to continue on my path, Cole."

"Even when they make you feel that way?" he seems confused.

"Especially when they make me feel that way. It makes me stronger, Cole. It fuels me. I need it."

"I don't.. Understand. There's so much pain inside of you. Twisted, tangled knots of sorrow and hurt. And yet.. Solas has asked me not to interfere."

"Did he?"

Cole nods. "He said the same thing. You need it."

"Solas was right. I am glad you never interfered."
"You hurt so much." he says in a sad tone of voice. "Asa'ma'lin."

My eyes widen then, and I snap my head into his direction. "What did you say?"

"Asa'ma'lin. That's what he used to call you. You miss him so much." Cole looks down. "I couldn't save him, I should not have let him go with Flissa. My poor little cub. The blade going through his flesh. Sun sets, little one. Your mind wanders, where will you go... Lost to me in sleep."

A tear rolls down my cheek then, and I start to sob involuntarily. "Cole.. Please."

"It's not your fault, Eliana. He never blamed you for any of it. You were his big sister. You loved him when no one else did. You and Solas. He loved you both very much. You always came back for him."

"Can I ever bring him back?" A spark of hope lights within me. There's so many things still unknown to me about Ancient Elven magic. Perhaps there is a way.

But Cole simply shakes his head. "He is gone, but his spirit remains around you. Around you both. He could never leave you. You were his world."

"And I let him die." I say bitterly.

"No. You never stopped looking for him. You were the reason he was always happy. You were the reason he thanked the Gods for being alive. You brought him hope." Then Cole reaches out to me and touches my head softly. Immediately my head fills with happier times, happier memories, the sadness almost entirely disappearing. I sigh, contently. "I will not make you forget. But I will make you remember the good times."

"Thank you, Cole. Truly."

"Why here?" Cole changes the topic, referring to the Temple of Mythal, and why I am dreaming of it.

I shrug my shoulders. Trying to shake off the nasty sadness I felt only moments ago. "Truly, I do not know. Perhaps because we are going towards it again."

"But not actually there. We are going to the Altar. She has come. She speaks the Calling."

I nod, grimly. "Yes."

"You trust Solas."

"I do. More than anything."

"And he trusts you. You are the first he's trusted in centuries. There's no one like her. She's my mate. I never thought I could love someone the way I love her now. I am not alone."

"Why would he think the latter? I've always been there for him. Even when I didn't know."

"His biggest fear, is to die alone."

"I will protect him against that, as much as I can. I won't let him die that easily." I say determined.

"He knows that. Which frightens him as well. He doesn't want to lose you."

"I don't know how powerful the Evanuris are when they return.. But I won't make it easy on them." I
"They are powerful, but so are you." I give him a pressing look. He continues. "You've bonded with Solas. And you drank from the Well of Sorrows."

"Do you.. know what that means, Cole? Can you tell me, please?"

"I don't know. I am sorry."

I smile softly at the Spirit. "Not to worry, Cole. It's fine. Thanks for being here with me."

"You feel lighter." he says softly.

"I do. Thanks to you." a slight pause follows. "Cole? How do you feel about Solas' plan?"

"It's why he didn't want me to become human. It's why he wanted me to remain a spirit. So I could remain after the tearing of the Veil."

"I figured. But what do you really think of his plans?"

"He's trying to restore glory of his People. He regrets. His hurt runs deep. Locked away. You were the first to open him up. But still, he cannot stray from his path. He means well."

"I agree." I hum. "I wonder what the Altar of Mythal has in store for me."

"I will stay behind. You and Solas do not want me there."

"True, but I will want everyone to stay behind. Not just you. You understand though, right?"

He nods. "I do. Don't worry, asa'ma'lin."

I frown slightly. "Cole..."

"-You like being called that. It brings you happiness. It makes you feel better. Doesn't it?"

"It does... But.. It also reminds me of Fenrian."

"Only good memories," again he touches my forehead gently.

I smile. "Thank you, Cole."

I get off from Moonlight and turn to look at Solas. He nods curtly. He feels it too. "It's here. I am sure of it." The voices are whispering furiously. Filling up my head.

Silence! I know, alright? I'm here. Shut up.

The voices hush down. "Are you... certain this is the place, Eliana?" Blackwall seems unsure. Looking at the big stone arch that's before us. I would understand why he has doubts. To anyone else, it just looks like an abandoned clearing in the midst of trees. Miles and miles away from any civilization. But this is the place. I know it.

"I am."

"Good. Then let's get to it." Morrigan jumps off of her own horse. I quickly turn around to meet her gaze.
"Everyone will stay here. This is my burden and my burden alone."

"I agree." Blackwall shifts uncomfortably in his saddle. "I'd rather not... get involved with whatever's coming next. No offense."

"None taken."

"You-" Morrigan starts but I cut her off.

"-Stay. Behind."

Walking into the clearing, surrounded by stone walls, I feel something pulling from deep within me. A strong force. Massive, in fact. The voices have quieted down, but they are there, alright.

At the farthest end of the clearing, I see a statue. It's a torso of a woman, with no arms. And the statue is wearing a helmet, dragon's wings behind her. I stare at it, in awe. The feelings inside of me... Honestly there's nothing quite like it. As I approach the statue further, I notice there's some old coins laying next to it onto the floor.

_People still worship her._

I read the plaque on the statue out loud. _"We few who travel far, call to me and I will come. Without mercy, without fear. Cry havock in the moonlight, let the fire of vengeance burn."_ I sigh. _"Well, let's do this."_ I hone in on the voices inside of my head. _"You know who I am: The last to drink from your Well of Sorrows. Come to me Mythal. Whatever you are, whoever remains, I invoke your name and your power!"

The easy wind that blew through the tree banches earlier, rustling the leaves ever so slightly, seems to pick up right after I finish speaking aloud. The voices quiet down entirely, as if in anticipation of what's to come next. A shiver runs down my spine, and as my front is facing the statue, I can very clearly feel something forming behind me. When I turn around to look, a woman appears, surrounded by white smoke. She's wearing a leather, wine red dress, a pauldron adorned with grey feathers. Her snow-white hair is adorned with a steel, pointy looking headpiece. And her hair itself, she somehow wears it in the shape of two horns at either sides of her head. Her eyes are a golden shade. She smiles when she sees me take her in.

This woman.. is human. "Are you... a servant of Mythal's?" I ask her quietly.

Her sultry voice speaks then. "You would think that, wouldn't you child?" She chuckles lowly. "How fascinating to finally meet the person who drank from the Well of Sorrows. How fascinating that it's a human from another world, entirely." She smiles knowingly. Staring directly into my eyes. She's exuding power, with every fibre of her being, it leaves me in awe of her.

"You know I am of another world?"

She nods. "Of course. Did you not ever wonder why you were sent here in the first place?"

"Excuse me?"

She laughs heartily. "There was no magic in your world, was there? How could you have possibly ended up here."

"It was a miracle yes. The alignment of planets, and me almost dying brought me here however."
"Or perhaps there was another reason."

"If you know something, please enlighten me."

She moves towards me and raises my head by my chin, with her finger. I let her. "Sometimes life works in mysterious ways. You are from another world, I never expected you to take the place of Lavellan. But it turned out to be a blessing in disguise."

"Why is me being here a blessing in disguise?"

"Because you bonded with him. And you would follow him. At first I thought you wouldn't, being merely a human from another world. But you've turned out to be... better than I ever expected. I doubt Lavellan would have been able to bond with him."

"What is the bond, exactly?" I urge her.

She releases my chin and smiles. "Back in our time, very few of our People would enjoy such a bond. It rarely happened, but once it did, it was the strongest bond to exist. It has nothing to do with magic, but it does amplify if there's magic involved. For the Elves, who always possessed magic, it meant that once they found their mate and bonded, their magic would complement one another's. Being torn from each other, meant less powerful magic. Being with one another, meant stronger magic. And that is exactly what we need when looking at what comes next. Wouldn't you agree, child?"

"But I am human." I sound almost disgusted saying it. I hadn't meant for it to come out like that, but...

"Yes, you are. But so am I. And yet Mythal chose me."

"Mother?"

We both turn around and see Morrigan standing there, a gobsmacked expression on her face.

I blink rapidly a few couple of times. "Wait. What? Mother?"

The servant of Mythal, or rather, Morrigan's mother smiles again. "Now. Isn't this a surprise."

Morrigan loses it then. "She is a deceiving witch!" A dark green light surrounds Morrigan's arms, as she casts a spell onto her mother, trying to attack her.

She in turn simply sighs and shakes her head. Turning her attention to me then. "Be a good lass and restrain her."

Immediately all my nerves go on fire, and my body moves without me commanding it to. I quickly use my magic to silence Morrigan's, even though I had no idea I could do that. My eyes open wide, holding Morrigan back with one arm, draining her magic from her with my other hand.


"Fuck if I know!" I yell back at her.

Morrigan's mother speaks up from behind us. "Of course you know. You drank from the Well, did you not?"

"Then... You are Mythal?" Morrigan's voice breaks. And an expression akin to disbelief and sorrow flashes on her face.
She's not a servant. She IS Mythal.

This explains my feeling to in awe of her this entire time. Why the voices have quieted down entirely. How could I have been so stupid. I immediately bend to one knee and dip my head lowly. "Thank you for answering my summons." It would also explain how she knew of the bond and Solas. It explains... a lot. And yet.. Mythal chose her, a human?

Mythal turns her attention to Morrigan then. "You see, girl? Those are manners, as you require a demonstration."

Morrigan shakes her head, entirely dumbfounded. "I do not understand. How can you be Mythal?"

"Once I was but a woman, crying out in the lonely darkness for justice. And she came to me." She looks at the statue, admiration written all over her face. "-A wisp of an Ancient Being, and she granted me all I wanted and more. I have carried Mythal through the ages ever since, seeking the justice denied to her."

"So... Do you carry Mythal inside of you?" I ask her slowly.

"She is a part of me, no more separate than your heart from your chest. What do the voices tell you?"

She cocks her head to the side and eyes me.

I close my eyes and listen.

She speaks the truth.

I look at Morrigan. "It's true. She is Mythal."

"But what was Mythal? A legend given name and called a God, or something more? Truth is not the end, but a beginning." Then, Mythal moves towards us both and looks to me with a warm smile. "You do the People proud. There's more to it than you may think, child. As for me, I have had many names. But you may call me Flemeth."

"So you're... Morrigan's Mother, and Mythal as well?"

Morrigan sneers. "As well as a witch who prolongs her unnatural life by possessing the bodies of her daughters."

"That's what you believe, is it?"

"I found your grimoire, and I am no fool, old woman."

Flemeth chuckles. "If only that were so. My daughter ran from me long ago. I've let her be.. until now, it seems."

"From what I've read.. Flemeth appears in many other legends. Helping heroes for reasons of her own."

She dips her head at me. "I nudge history, when it's required. Other times, a shove is needed." she sounds amused.

I want to ask her so many more things, but I realize Morrigan is still right next to me. I'd have to be careful with my words. "If Mythal is a part of you... Why haven't you helped the Elves?" I look directly into her eyes. Knowing full well what I mean by that. I just hope she gets my meaning as well. If she was here, all along, why hasn't she helped Solas before? Couldn't she have helped him
with his orb. I am sure much could've been prevented had she interfered.

"What was could not be changed." She replies. Giving me the same serious look.

"What about now?"

"You will see. All in time."

"Why did Mythal come to you, exactly?"

"For a reckoning that will shake the very Heavens."

*The reckoning of the Evanuris, perhaps...*

"And you follow her whims? Do you even know what she truly is?" Morrigan exclaims hopelessly.

Flemeth dips her head. "You seek to preserve the Powers that were, but to what end? It is because I taught you, girl, because things happened that were never meant to happen. She was betrayed as I was betrayed- as the World was betrayed!" She raises her voice now. "Mythal clawed and clawed her way through the ages to me, and I will see her avenged!" She pauses and closes her eyes then. "Alas, so long as the music plays, we dance."

"I need your help." I say finally.

"Against the Magister who grasps beyond his reach. Yes, I know. The voices did not lie, child. I can help you." She lifts her arm up and golden lights surround Morrigan's body, I can very clearly feel her absorbing some type of spell. When Flemeth is done she speaks once more. "The Altar's Guardian will come. Master the Dragon, and it will be yours to command against Corypheus. Fail, and die." Then she turns around in one swift motion and walks back to the place where she first appeared.

Morrigan holds up her hand. "Wait!" she cries out.

Flemeth turns around once more, a knowing smile on her lips. "I wished to see who drank from the Well of Sorrows. It has been a very long time. Now I have, and she is free to go."

"But what of us?" Morrigan asks softly.

"A soul is not forced upon the unwilling, Morrigan. You were never in danger from me." Her voice echoes around us, as she finally disappears into grey smoke once more. Leaving only us two behind.

Morrigan breaks the silence that follows then. "All things considered, Inquisitor. I now am rather pleased you drank from the Well."

"It's all worth it in the end. I'm sure of it." I grit my teeth slightly as I say these words. It has to be. And I have a feeling this will not be the last time I'll speak to Mythal.

A loud roar is heard then, as I can see a massive Dragon swooping down on us. It lands right before Morrigan and I with a loud crash, shaking the grounds where we stand. I inhale slowly through my nose, and exhale through my mouth.

*Tame the Dragon.*

From behind the dragon, Solas, Cole, Sarah and Blackwall come running.

"Vhenan!" he looks worried.
Instead I simply shake my head at Solas from afar, holding up my hand. "Everyone, stay out of this!" I yell. The Dragon responds to my call, with a loud hiss. It's mouth opens wide, showing me it's razor sharp teeth. But I feel my magic welling up inside of me, starting from the pools of my stomach, traveling upwards, and making even my fingertips tingle. I slowly approach the Dragon before me, as it stares me down, trying to intimidate me. I can see the smoke leaving it's nostrils, and it's eyes are almost burning with fury. But as I approach, it seems to become unsure of what to do. Instead, it keeps staring me down. I slowly raise up my right hand, and bring it up to it's nose. Then I close my eyes and let the power I felt deep within me take over then. A blue light leaves from my body, towards the Dragon's head. A dark blue, thick fog surrounds us two, and when I open my eyes there's nothing I see except for the Dragon's head and me. It's watching me intently, entirely calmed down by my magic.

"Mighty beast, lend me your strength in the battle to come." I finally touch it's nose, ever so slightly with my fingertips. "After that you shall be free once more. I will not bind you to me, for eternity."

The Dragon huffs, blowing the hair from my face. I can smell the sulphur, then I hear a low rumbling come from deep within the Dragon's throat. It lowers it's head, as I finally place my full hand on it's nose. And again, I close my eyes. Binding myself to the Guardian Dragon. I can feel it's power, it's heartbeat, it's mighty wings that could kill you in an instant should they hit you. I am one, connected, with it. If only for a little while. It's almost beautiful to feel such power, even knowing it's not your own. Being in the presence of such might, leaves anyone in sheer awe. When I re-open my eyes, I can faintly see the markings of Mythal's Vallaslin seeping into the Dragon's head. It's eyes flash white and then it simply walks past me. The smoke around us disappears and when I turn my head to follow the Dragon, I can see my companions and Sarah looking at me in worry. I smile faintly when I see the Dragon take off yet again. As if nothing ever happened.

"Why did it just... fly off? Will it return?" Blackwall stares as the Dragon disappears entirely from our view.

"It will. But only when I summon it. And only once." I say determined. "During the final battle."

"What did you... say to it? I heard you talking but couldn't make out what you were saying." Sarah asks me softly.

"I bound it to me. But only temporarily. There was no need to fight it at all. It's just a big ol' softie." I smirk slightly as I recall the feeling of being one with the Dragon for a little while, earlier.

"So that was the reason we had to come here? For the Dragon?" Blackwall asks me then.

I nod. "Among other things. I bound the Dragon, but only Morrigan can take it's form when I summon it. Turns out I did need you after all, Morrigan." I say in a wry tone of voice.

She hums and crosses her arms. "Despite that, I had wished I stayed at Skyhold. I never thought I'd ever see Flemeth again." she looks sad for a moment again then.

"So you really spoke to this.. Mythal?" Blackwall seems confused.

"I did." My eyes dart over to Solas, and I can instantly see Sarah doing the same thing. I wonder how much we both know at all at this point. "The Well's voices have quieted down entirely now. I really did have to do this last thing, before the final battle." Suddenly I feel a knot inside of my stomach as the realization kicks in. I slowly start walking back towards the horses, as my companions and Sarah follow me quietly.

This was the final piece, before the last mission. The final thing I needed. I am ready now, to start
this battle with Corypheus. And though I have Solas by my side, though I am certain of my decision to stay with him no matter what. Why do I feel so restless? True, I have felt nothing but disdain towards most of my companions as of late. Still, there's that tiny little part within me that feels sorrow for the fact that I'll soon be losing my friends. No matter which way you'll look at it, I'll lose them. Lose them all. Because no matter what I'd say, no matter what I'd tell them, they wouldn't understand my cause. Solas' cause. Our cause. They'd be against it. And this is not merely a hunch, it's truth. They would never support us if we'd even come clean towards them. And the fact that we'll both be turned into the bad guys, makes me sad. But it is a sacrifice I'd be willing to make, regardless, in order to help Solas right the wrong he made so very long ago. It's a necessary evil, to ensure this world will be as it is supposed to be. And now, there is nothing left, save for fighting Corypheus and tearing down the Veil with Solas. As we continue on our road back towards the Fortress in the Frostback Mountains, my companions speak to one another. Morrigan with Sarah and Blackwall. Cole, Solas and I are the only quiet one's. And in truth, I don't care much for talking either, at this point. Now all that remains is returning to Skyhold and ending Corypheus. Then, my task for the Inquisition will be fulfilled. And Sarah will take over from there on out. Whatever she does, or doesn't do at that point, will no longer be my problem. But perhaps... I should make it my problem. I am lost in thoughts at this moment. I am thinking about things that I have thought of briefly before, but never acted upon. After the meeting with Mythal, despite my obvious inner turmoils about the battle to come, my mind is clear. It feels... lighter and I can finally think about something I've never thought of before.

That night we set up camp, Sarah has been avoiding me ever since my outburst when she got taken by the bandit leader. And she's decided to stick closely to Blackwall most the time. Though I can tell it's not because she likes him or anything. It is because Blackwall feels sorry for her, and she knows this as well. So she feels safest around him, I suppose. She barely says a word to Cole or Morrigan either. Being probably still horrified of Cole being a spirit that can poof in and out of existence whenever he feels like it. And disliking Morrigan and her attitude, though I suppose I can agree with Sarah on that part. I cuddle up to Solas in our bedroll, and fall asleep with him. Having agreed we'd talk in the Fade, instead of here. Out of caution, that someone else may hear us.

In the Fade, this time, we are in another Temple. Though it looks decrepit and neglected. "This was my Temple." Solas speaks before I can ask him.

I hum. "It still exists?"

"It does. Though it is not in Ferelden or Orlais. It's far outside of our borders." He walks up to me and kisses my hand softly. "We haven't spoken since the Altar. Care to enlighten me of what happened?"

He takes my by said hand and leads me towards a courtyard outside of the Temple. The night's sky is clear, surrounded by millions of bright burning stars. The moonlight illuminates our faces as we sit down into the soft grasses of the courtyard. "I met Mythal. Or.. Flemeth. Flemeth was approached by Mythal centuries ago and she now resides within her. They are one."

"Mythal was always very smart. She'd never allow anyone to eradicate her entirely from this world. Truthfully, I am not surprised any longer."

"She explained to me our bond, before Morrigan joined us." I look at him.

"She did?" his eyebrows raise up slightly.

"Mmhm. It explains why my magic was so weak and I felt so.. drained and terrible when you and I weren't close to one another. She.. said a lot. Apparently I am a blessing in disguise." I end up telling Solas everything Mythal told me.
"To summarize: you are bound to Mythal. She can make you do things without you wanting to do them. And she knows of me."

"And she approves, apparently. No hard feelings between the two of you. Like I thought."

"Still I could not face her personally." he lowers his head then. "The guilt.. it's too much."

"I understand. Though I have a feeling this wasn't the last time I'd speak with her. I believe there is more yet to come. Also, to answer your previous statement; I am bound to her, yes. But she said I was free to go right before she left."

He hums. "I see. Though, I must ask you Eliana.. That day with the bandit leader. You turned him to stone."

"I did." He gives me a pressing look, curious as to how I did it no doubt. I shrug my shoulders. "Truthfully, I didn't know it either. There's a lot of things I can suddenly do, since drinking from the Well. Turning people to stone, binding a dragon or draining someone's magic for a short period of time are definitely at the top of that list. The voices whispered, and I tried acting on the feelings I felt well up within me. And before I knew it.. He turned to stone."

"Fascinating." He murmurs into my ear. "And also... very hot."

I giggle and swat him playfully. "Don't tell me you were getting turned on. You were with Blackwall, yes?"

He chuckles and his eyes grow darker then. Full of lust. "I was. I did realize the Warden was right there with me. Otherwise, I would have probably taken advantage of that moment and fucked you senseless right then and there."

"How about a delayed taking advantage of that moment and fuck me senseless right here and now?" I bite my lower lip and he growls lowly. Burying his nose into my neck and inhaling my scent hard.

"He wants to rip off your clothes and see your ivory skin shining in the moonlight. Bruising, biting, nipping, licking." We both jump and look at Cole, who's just sitting in front of us, looking at us with a confused expression on his face. "I don't understand. Why does she have to take her clothes off, for you to see her skin? You can see her skin right now." He points to my bare arms.

I snort loudly and start to cackle then, when I notice Solas' expression. He's trying to come up with a proper explanation, bless him. Sometimes Cole is like a child, and this will be the birds and the bees kind of talk.

"It is... ah." Solas shakes his head, as a slight smile appears on his lips.

"Sometimes, when two adults meet, Cole.. and they love one another very much, they get together to have sex." I say in my most posh accent ever. Trying really hard not to burst into laughter again.

"Sex. I don't understand what that is for. And why Solas enjoys that with you so much."

"You haven't felt a very strong connection to any girl you have seen here, Cole?" Solas asks him seriously.

He shakes his head. "I only look for the hurt."

"Well Cole, Solas and I have a very strong connection with one another. And we enjoy... having sex. Because.. it's great." I start to get awkward myself now. It's difficult having to explain it to what
looks like an adult male, who just doesn't understand anything about what we do.

"You're not hurting then." Cole says.

I nod. "Not in the slightest." I stifle my laughter behind my palm. And Solas looks at me with a sly grin on his face.

"Perhaps I can stay and watch? I can learn how to stop the hurting then, without scaring people?"

"Sex is a private activity, Cole. And you shouldn't do it to just anyone. It's only between two people who consent to it. Also, we'd rather you not stay and watch."

I burst out into laughter again and join in. "However, there are some people who do enjoy others watching them."

Solas gives me a scolding look then. Cole shrugs his shoulders. "It is too complicated. I think I will just stick to making people forget their hurting."

"I think that would be best, Cole." Solas dips his head. Then he disappears and he sighs deeply. Pinching the bridge of his nose. "You are.. impossible."

I can't stop giggling then. "I know. It was kind of funny, though, you have to admit."

"Yes. But now the moment is ruined." He smiles wryly at me.

I nod in agreement, and lean my head against his shoulder then. "I suppose not tonight, then. Perhaps it was a sign."

He wraps an arm around me and kisses my forehead. "Perhaps. Vhenan?" I hum. "Have you thought of becoming Elvhen by any chance?"

I look up at him. "I... have. Though I am still unsure of it. It would open a lot more possibilities. But then again, I am not sure if I even made the right impression when meeting with Mythal earlier today. Why, do you want me to change that badly?" I ask him in a joking manner.

Immediately he shakes his head. "You are perfect to me, Eliana. I did not mean it in that sense. However, you'd be able to live as long as me. I wouldn't lose you."

"I'm only kidding, Solas." I kiss his lips and sigh contently. "Besides, as you've said, my appearance would only change slightly." I point towards my ears then. "I'll think on it, a while longer. We have other things to occupy our minds with now. The Final Battle, for instance." my face grows darker then. "I wonder why I feel so uneasy about it. I am more than ready to face Corypheus."

"Perhaps it's you being afraid to leave the Inquisition behind. After all, you have been a part of it since the very beginning. You've helped build it. You played a big part in it."

I nod. "I know. I also made sure Leliana will become the next Divine."

His eyes widen. "Why would you do that?"

"For one reason and one reason only: Leliana would be our biggest problem after we leave the Inquisition. She is a perfect spymaster. I don't want to complicate matters by having her around Sarah. She would likely use Leliana to her advantage. If Leliana is the new Divine, she'd be too busy being just that. She would still have her people, but being a Divine takes up a lot of your time. You have to devote yourself wholly to being the head of Chantries all across Thedas." I smirk softly.
"Also, she would be against Circle Towers for mages."

"That was smart."

"I used up pretty much all my influence as Inquisitor to make that happen."

"Vivienne will hate you."

"Eh. What else is new?" I say sarcastically. "Also.. I have been thinking a lot about some things. And I need your approval on what I'm about to do next." Solas looks confused.

"You need my approval?" He raises up one eyebrow then.

I nod. "What I'm about to ask of you.. Well, of us.. Will not be easy. And it will be a hard task to fulfill. But I think I may have a solution to one of our problems." My lips curl into a sly smile.

He hums. "I must say you have me intrigued, Eliana. Do tell."

"Very well... It's like this-"

(...) Sarah POV:

I am unpacking my things at the camp. I wonder how much longer we will travel. It seems the trip back to Skyhold is taking much longer than it took the trip going to the Altar. But perhaps, I am just seeing things. Thedas is weird. Also I have noticed, not just me, that Eliana and Solas have stopped sleeping together in a tent. About a day and a half ago, Elie all a sudden started on her own tent right after Solas pitched his already. And we all looked in confusion as she went inside her very own tent and slept there throughout the night. They've also stopped spending time together and low and behold, she even talks to Morrigan and Blackwall. She hasn't said a word to me yet, I think she worries about what I think of her or something. But she's closeby all the time now. Like a dog coming back with it's tail between it's legs. I 'hmpf' softly as I think on this. I wonder what happened between the two of them. They were to get married after the final battle right? Perhaps they had a fight. According to what I've heard from the others from time to time, they've had these moments before. Solas sticks close to Cole though, and they always whisper to one another. But even with Solas I am surprised. He doesn't even so much glance Eliana's way anymore. They must've had a really bad fight or something. "Fuck!" I cuss under my breath loudly as I still can't seem to pitch my tent the right way. Though Morrigan's explained it to me briefly at the beginning of this trip, her explanation was.. less than clear. In fact, she was rather vague and very disinterested in actually teaching me. And though Blackwall's been very kind towards me, I dare not ask him or anyone else to help me. I mean, we've been on the road a while now. I should be able to pitch a simple fucking tent.

"Need any help?"

I turn my head around and see Eliana standing there, her hands behind her back. A slightly amused expression on her face.

I snort. "That obvious huh?"

Despite our outbursts, it's like we always end up talking to one another somehow. We've had little moments like these. Like me having to go to the "bathroom" on the very first day of the trip. Granted, that transpired before I got taken by that bandit asshole.. But still.
"Kinda." She shakes her head and gets down onto one knee right next to me, taking the fabric of the tent from my fingers and starting to pitch it herself. Explaining along the way what she's doing. I watch her in awe, she's so fast at it. Then all a sudden she finishes and I give her a few quick blinks. She giggles. "Need me to show you again? I'll do it slower this time."

I nod. "Please do. You're all so quick with it. I can't keep up." Patiently she takes down the tent with me, and then proceeds to show me a second time around. This time step by step, very slowly explaining it to me. Finally I kind of get it and I smile sheepishly at Eliana. "Well thanks, you're a lot more help than Morrigan ever was."

She scratches her head and smiles sheepishly back at me. "I thought Morrigan didn't explain it to you rightly. Your tent always kind of looked shit."

"Ha. Yeah."

We stand there in silence for a while, her eyes darting to the ground, her foot drawing circles into the sandy area beneath our feet. Awkward. Then finally she sighs and wants to turn around to walk away but I somehow, involuntarily hold her back by her upper arm. She turns her body sideways and gives me a questionable look. "Sarah?"

"Wait. I've been noticing you and Solas have stopped spending time together." I make sure my voice is almost a whisper, so as to not let anyone else of the group hear it. She quickly looks around, frantically wanting to make sure no one actually has heard me. "Come, my tent is pitched properly now. We can speak in there. I'm sure it won't collapse on us." I wink playfully.

She nods and enters the tent after me. I hold open the flap of my tent so she can enter more easily and then I turn around to face her. Her back is turned towards me and she wraps her arms around her torso as if wanting to protect herself. I've never seen Eliana like this before in Thedas. She's acting... strangely.

"I am not sure if I should tell you." she finally manages to say aloud.

"Jesus Christ, Elie. What's going on with you? You act very differently from before." I walk towards her and turn her body around to face me. "Did something bad happen between the two of you?"

Her face grows darker then. "I shouldn't talk about this, anyhow." She straightens herself. "We're almost back at Skyhold and there's a lot I need to worry about. This.. thing that's bothering me.." She sighs. "It's at the bottom of my list, of things to give a damn about."

"No." I urge her. "Damn it, Elie. What's going on? You can tell me, you know?"

"Can I?" she looks up at me, tears in her eyes. She looks so vulnerable. So alone. Much like her old self. Everytime I've looked at Elie, since coming here in Thedas, she'd looked ten years older than she actually was. But now, for the very first time, she looks like a twenty three years old young woman. Scared, unsure and at the beginning of her life. Needing guidance, needing help. Actually needing help. Perhaps my help, for once. This is what looks truest to what Elie should look like. Not a tough, hardened bitch that know's everything and has to make hard ass decisions all the time. I somehow sigh a breath of relief. Finally feeling like I can see my old friend emerging from the shell that's been hiding her for so very long.

"You can, you nutjob." I grab her hands and squeeze them softly. "I know we've had... our moments lately. Bad moments. Well.. very bad moments. We've drifted apart a lot. But I can't ever leave you alone. I'm still your friend, Eliana.. Only if you'll let me. I came here especially for you. All I want to do next is because of you."
"I know." She sighs deeply. "I'm just... Gods, Sarah I've been a fool." She starts pacing back and forth, not very far mind you, since my tent is only a small one and she doesn't quite have that much room for pacing. But she still paces nonetheless. "Solas... I.." She stops again. Looking at me with sad eyes.

"What?"

"We... I don't think we're going to last."

My eyes widen. "Wait what? How? All of a sudden? You were so close. Hell, the last couple of weeks I've only seen you with him all the time. You never leave his side and he never leaves yours either."

"I know, alright?" She gives me a scolding look. "You must have noticed we haven't been spending time together anymore."

"Mhm. About a day and a half now."

"Well it started before that. Right before we arrived at the Altar. That's why I didn't want anyone there with me in the first place. I didn't want Solas there with me. We already had a falling out, moments earlier and I just had to stay away from him. I somehow didn't feel right after our argument and to not hurt his feelings, I suppose, I decided everyone should stay behind."

"So you were indirectly telling himself to go fuck off and leave you be?"

"Pretty much, yes." She looks apologetically.

"It wasn't because of Morrigan then?"

"Well partially? I mean, Morrigan had been getting on my nerves long before that. I didn't want her here with us in the first place. But at that moment, at the Altar, it was mostly about Solas."

"So, what happened between the two of you?" I still wonder. I mean, I can't tell her I know about them wanting to get married, or else she'll know I've read her diary. But how did they go from loving one another so, to this?

"He.. He promised me something a while ago." She sits down onto the floor of the tent and sighs. I mimmick her and sit down across from her. "He'd said we'd get married-"

"-Said we'd leave the Inquisition together after the final battle and just... go and be together. Far, far away from everything and everyone."

"Really?" I feign surprise.

She nods. "It took a lot of convincing. I mean, Solas has always had secrets from me. And he still hadn't revealed them to me. I figured, that after everything and after so long, he'd finally share them with me. But I was wrong." Her shoulders start to shake. I feel a sharp pain in my chest. Poor Elie. If only she knew the truth about Solas. "Nonetheless. Our argument was about us. He backed out entirely from his promises made to me. He just.. didn't give me any explanation. He just... Didn't want to continue. He ended it with me."

"So it's true." Her eyes dart up at me immediately. Her tear stained face looking confused. When I realize the mistake I made I shake my head. "It's.. difficult. But I kinda knew this would happen." It
seems the game's story is still the same. Solas would break up with the Inquisitor. I just thought it wasn't so. But it seemed it just took a while longer.

"I'm not even going to ask." Elie sighs.

"You're not?" I can hear the surprise in my own tone of voice.

"No, Sarah. You've repeatedly told me that no matter what, you won't tell me what's about to happen next. I have given up on wanting to find out, and truthfully, right now, this is the least of my concerns."


She nods, sadly. "I am. I really thought we could've... you know? I mean, what will I do now? Why does this have to happen right before the last battle? I had plans with him, I knew what was going to be my next move. I'd leave together, with him, and we'd live... I don't fucking know- Happily ever after? And now what?" She starts to sob.

Quietly I move towards her and wrap my arms around her. I haven't been this close to Eliana in so long. Fortunately, she doesn't pull away. Instead she leans into me more and lets her tears flow freely. I feel so sorry for her. I knew this would happen. Guilt hits me then. I have been so strong all this time, certain I wouldn't tell her. But now I am starting to doubt whether or not it was the right move at all. I could've saved her from this had I told her right after I arrived in Thedas.

"How come you're so nice to me, after everything I've said and.. Almost did to you?" She says between choking sobs.

I shush her quietly. "I thought I'd lost you entirely, Eliana. But it seems I was right all along. You were just in the grasp of this... asshole. He made you this way. He made you forget everything and all else, besides from himself. Love really does make people blind."

I feel her shift in my arms and her eyes meet mine again. "I am so sorry, Sarah. I never should've done or said those things to you. I forgot. How could I forget, you were always the only true friend I had."

"Now now, that's not entirely true. You've got Dorian and Varric, Cassandra, Josephine, Sera, Bull-"

She cuts me off. ",-I've been a bitch to them, too."

"Nah, you haven't. Neglected them a tad bit, perhaps. But they don't blame you. You still have them as your friends, Elie."

"Sarah. What will I do now?"

"You could stay with the Inquisition." I hum and then think on it for a while longer. Would that be a good idea? She'd have to face Solas sooner or later. Though it would still take about two more years. She'd have plenty of time to get over him then. And if he does leave right after the final battle, it'll be like ripping off a bandaid. He won't be there to change her mind. He won't be there to confuse her any longer.

"What are you thinking?"

I snort. "Thinking if that actually is the right thing to do. Stay with the Inquisition, I mean."

"What else can I do? Go back home? It's not an option for me. Maybe for you, once your job here is
finished. But for me, it's out of the question. I cannot convert back to the old days of living a "carefree" life back on Earth. Too much time would have passed and I simply wouldn't be able to pick up my old life anymore."

"You could stay with us. With the Inquisition, until you've found your strength again? I mean I'm sure that the saying that applied back at home, applies here too: there's plenty of fish in the sea. Besides, you've got more flavour here: Qunari, dwarves, other elves. Take your pick." I nudge her gently.

She swats me playfully. "Ugh, you're impossible. I don't think I'd ever go for another elf.."

"You know what I mean, Elie. You can still live your happily ever after. With someone else. Solas isn't the only man that likes you. In my time here, I've seen a lot of men looking at you with a longing stare as you passed them by. Commanders and soldiers alike."

"Ugh, don't even mention Commanders." she rolls her eyes.

"Really though, I know I am making light of the situation. But I am serious, Eliana." I look her straight into her eyes then. She already looks a tad bit happier. Having told me probably did the trick for her.

"I know."

"Besides, I may still need your help. If you still want me to take over from you. There's so many things still unclear to me."

"You're doing a good job, actually. Your fighting skills just aren't up to par yet. And your trusting skills."

"I trust people way too easily. Yeah, I know." I say apologetically. Obviously referring to Trip taking me hostage a few days ago.

"I haven't forgotten about that." She gives me the side eye.

"Neither have I, Elie. Don't you worry about that. I promise I'm working on that. I suppose you're better at telling when someone's bullshitting you."

"I am. I suppose." Then she backs out of the friendly embrace we were in earlier. "Thanks, for everything. For listening to me. For hearing me out. And not... well, pissing me off for once. I missed that."

"You tell me! I've been sick and tired of picking fights with you." I snort and she giggles in response.

"I'll have to think on what I want to do next. But I suppose once we reach Skyhold, I've got some time before the final battle..." She stares off into the distance.

"The battle won't start unless you initiate it." Again I fucked up. She immediately looks at me with confusion.

"Really?"

I sigh. I swear I can knock myself on the head right now. I keep messing up. Telling her tidbits of what may happen. "I mean, it's not like Corypheus will instantly swoop down onto Skyhold the moment we get there."
Her lips press into a thin line then and she nods curtly. "I suppose. Now I wished I had looked online back at home, instead of going through dusty old books in a library."

I laugh softly. "You were so primitive you hadn't even thought of looking online."

She nods. "I'm stupid."

We sit there for a while, either of us not saying a word. But it feels right. Not awkward like it had been before. I finally feel like my old friend has returned to me. Though she's very rattled and unsure about this. I, for one, feel very at peace with this situation.

"The powers of the Well.. Have you figured that out yet?" I ask her quietly.

She shakes her head no. "When I met Mythal and Morrigan followed, I found out that Mythal can control my body and mind. Make me do things I don't want to do. She made me silence Morrigan's magic. Which I'd never thought possible. Other than that, I still haven't figured anything else out. It's complicated."

"But, you're no longer in her service now right? You are free to go?"

She nods slowly. "Yes... Did you know about that as well?"

"I did. I suppose there's no harm in letting you know things you've already went through. But I also don't know exactly what the powers may entail later in life."

"Right. You just had your theories." She hums and stretches her arms up above her body, yawning loudly.

"I do. Hey, what's your stance on a slumber party tonight?" I smirk gleefully at her.

She just raises her eyebrow. "A slumber party?"

"You could stay in my tent and we'll swap stories, and tell eachother horror stories and-"

She cuts me off. "-How old are you, Sarah?" She starts to laugh loudly.

"What? Just because I'm officially older than you, and could be your aunt, doesn't mean I'm not allowed to have a childish slumber party with my friend."

"I don't."

"-Come on, Elie! It'll be fun! We won't have cheap wine from the store, but we could drink... water.. from a.. flask. And pretend it's wine?" I shrug my shoulders indifferently. "We never really needed to get drunk to tell eachother stories."

"Alright, alright. But not a word to the others. If word gets out that the Inquisitor is having slumber parties in a shitty tent whilst on the road, I won't be taken seriously anymore. I have to keep up appearances for at least a little while longer, before throwing in the towel."

**A few days later:**

I am happily conversing with Eliana, as we walk through Skyhold together. Everyone's been notified about what transpired during our trip. And... it seems that word has spread about her and Solas having broken up. Nobody mentions a thing though. Cullen, Leliana and Josephine have wisely kept quiet. Even the servants have not uttered a word about him and Eliana. We finally reach the rotunda and momentarily, Elie pauses, not sure about wanting to go in. But I gently push her through the
archway and then we both notice that Solas is not even there. "He's still gone?" I ask absentmindedly.

"I've heard he hasn't been seen in public that much anymore. Mostly sticking to himself." She mumbles quietly. Her face drops immediately at the mention of him.

"How do you know? Leliana?"

She shakes her head no as we walk up the stairs towards the library. "I have my sources." Her lips curl into a half smile.

"Ohhh?" I urge her but instead we are both interrupted by Dorian, who immediately embraces Eliana tightly.

"Finally! You're here. I'd heard you returned but I hadn't seen you yet." He kisses her full on the mouth and Bull chuckles behind us all. I just stand there in confusion looking at Dorian kissing Eliana. On the lips.

"Wait... I'm confused."

When Dorian moves away he laughs. In that sassy way only he could laugh. "I can't kiss my best friend on the mouth?"

Bull sighs. "He's not opposed to showing Eliana his full naked body, either. I am not surprised by anything anymore."

Eliana snorts. "It's good to see you again too, my dove. And... I have something to say." She immediately looks to the ground.

Dorian takes a step backwards and shakes his head, putting his finger on her lips immediately. "You don't have to say anything, my rose. We all understand."

"No, but-"

"Shush now." Dorian smiles softly. His eyes still looking a bit sad. "We all knew you had a lot on your mind. And it's not over yet. I can't speak for everyone else, but I know they'd agree with me when I say: I'm just happy you're back."

"He wouldn't shut up about you." Bull says from behind Dorian. He's still sitting on the red velvety divan, holding a book upside down, trying to 'read'. It's kind of amusing to see a big ass warrior like him, having trouble reading.

"Shouldn't you be reading that the other way around?" I point at the book he's holding.

Iron Bull blinks a few times. "Argh. Damned if I know. I never liked these things anyways. I'm just doing it for Dorian."

Said person immediately turns around and clicks his tongue. "You never complain when I read stories to you before sleeping."

"When you read them to me, it's fine. But if I have to read them, I get bored." He throws the book over his shoulder. It hits the wall and falls open onto the floor. Behind him, a human servant gasps and quickly picks up the book from the ground.

"You're such a brute, sometimes." Dorian shakes his head.
"I'm sorry." Eliana says quietly to the servant as he passes her by, placing the book back into it's right place on the shelf.

We finally take a seat on the divan opposite of Dorian and Bull, and Dorian crosses his legs as he listens to Eliana telling him all about the trip to the Altar. I watch the two of them talking to one another, and I can't contain my smile. Bull finally catches my eye and he nods knowingly. The same smile on his face. We share a mutual silent agreement with one another as the two of them continue talking like old women. It's good to see Eliana speaking to her old friends. To see her face light up, and look genuinely happy again. Not that she didn't look happy with Solas, but the two of them together.. it's just bad news.

We've already updated the advisors the day before yesterday, about the trip. And now it's just up to Elie to decide when she's ready for the final battle. And God only knows when that will happen. Me, in the meanwhile, have been thinking a lot about my options. I've been internally fighting with my own morals and decisions. Thinking on whether or not it was a right idea to not let Eliana know everything. Everything is as it should be, once more. She's back. She's finally the person I knew she was deep down. And despite my many doubts and worries along the way, it merely seems I was partially right and partially wrong about her. Yes, I was right about Solas having a bad influence on her. But I was wrong about the fact that Elie was no longer 'good'. She just needed to be away from him. And they've been away from one another for at least a week now. It's true, at first I was still skeptical about it. Thinking they'd find eachother soon enough, again. But no, they still hadn't looked one another up. They hadn't even asked about eachother. And the brief and small moments that we passed Solas by, neither one of them looked at eachother either. He also didn't even visit her at her chambers. I'd know, because I now spend more time with Elie during the daytime. Helping her make preparations, and her teaching me more about having to lead the Inquisition. Updating me on smaller matters that I've never even thought of before. She has not once, asked me about the future. She really seems to have given up about wanting to know what I know.

Should I just come out and tell her? If she's going to stay with us, it may be best to let her know. After all, she's not with Solas anymore. What harm will it do now? Things are different from the main storyline. The major events still happened, but very differently. They either happened later in time, or around the same time, but through different choices. Elie's choices. If we both know and decide to fight back, we may be a stronger, more unified team. And if she finds out the truth without me telling her, it may drive a wedge between us again. Because she'd realize that I'd have known everything since the start. She may not forgive me.

After a few hours, the sun has set and the servants are already putting food on the dinner table. "Mm. I smell food." I say longingly as we slowly get up from our spot on the divans and walk towards the Main Hall.

"You're a woman after my own heart." Bull chuckles lowly and slaps me hard on the back as he's walking right next to me.

"Ugh. Elie, are we the only two cultured people here?" Dorian says in his most posh accent ever.

Eliana checks her nails, sniffing loudly, her chin up in the air. Playing along with Dorian. "It would seem so, my dove."

"Honestly. We were talking about poetry and all you two can think of is devouring flesh on a plate." Dorian scolds both me and Bull.

We both chuckle in a sheepish way. Still only thinking of the food that's about to be served to us. We all take our seats at the dinner table. Everyone's in high spirits. Even though we all know that once Elie decides it's time... we'll have to get right back at being serious again. Leliana looks most pleased
out of everyone to see the two of us are spending time together again. But she's still keeping a watchful eye on Eliana.

As we are all eating, joking and talking to one another, Cassandra speaks up. "Where's Solas?"

Everyone got the memo: Do not speak of Solas around Eliana. But it seems Cassandra did not receive this memo. All heads turn into her direction. Including Eliana's. She remains strong however, keeping her facial expression neutral. "I wouldn't know."

"He's eating in his own quarters." Leliana says hurriedly, before sipping the soup from her wooden spoon.

"Since when does the hedge mage have his own quarters?" Vivienne chimes in. Her voice sounding slightly annoyed.

Varric groans audibly. "Here we go.." he mumbles under his breath. But since I'm sitting closest to him, I can hear it clearly.

"Excuse you? I'm merely asking. He's always stayed with the Inquisitor. And now I've not seen either of them together, as of late. And he's got his own quarters?"

Cassandra nods. "That's what I wanted to ask about as well."

Eliana picks at her food, her facial expression no longer neutral. "Alright. I'm just going to come out with it. Solas and I are no longer together. I didn't think I'd have to officially 'announce' it.. But I was wrong about that, it seems." She smiles softly as she eyes each and every companion around the dinner table. "He made the decision to end it. And that's that."

"What about the final battle?" Cassandra asks Eliana then.

"He's still to join us. At least, he said he would be there. I haven't spoken to him since our break-up. But I assume he won't back down on that promise." she puts the emphasis on the word 'that'. And I am the only one at the table that knows what she meant with that. It was a jab at him. For breaking his promises to her.

They're really through then. I do wonder what he's been up to now that he has all the time to himself. Without Eliana there to distract him. I'm sure he's arranging his final matters, as well.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know. I realized something was off, but as you know, I do not like being kept in the dark." Cassandra says, as she smiles apologetically at Eliana.

"It's quite alright, Cass. I had a feeling this wouldn't go entirely unnoticed. I had just hoped I didn't have to say it aloud. It hits hardest when I have to openly admit to it."

"Well, for all that it's worth... You still got us, Feathers." Varric raises his cup into the air. "To Elie! Our strong, amazing leader. You've always been a beacon to us, and we've never stopped respecting you."

Dorian is the second one to raise up his cup into the air and follows in with what Varric's said. "To Elie. My most trusted friend. You've always been a beacon to us, and we've never stopped believing in me, and you've helped me with some very important tasks. I'll never be able to properly thank you for that."

"I agree." Josephine follows then. "You've helped all of us with our own personal tasks. And we'll never forget that. Come what may, we will always be there for you. You have our word."
Everyone joins in, agreeing with what's been said already. Finally I raise my cup last. "And we won't break our promises. To Elie!"

She looks at me with a grateful look in her eyes. And soon a tear rolls over her cheek. "Thank you all. From the bottom of my heart. Whatever comes next, I won't let you down." Then everyone cheers loudly and continues talking. But from the corner of my eyes, I can see Eliana's facial expression change. She looks... sad.

Alright. I know what to do next.

(...)

I quietly knock on her door. Awaiting her response. Nothing yet. So I knock again. This time, a bit louder. After dinner, she hurriedly went to her room. Saying she had to go over some reports. I know better, of course. But decided to let her be for now. I couldn't wait much longer, however. There's some things I need to get off of my chest. After a long while, she finally opens the door herself. I was about to knock a third time. Or bang, rather. She looks sleepy. "Did I disturb you?"

She shakes her head and gestures for me to enter. "I was going over some reports but I dozed off. Had a little nap." She closes the door behind me and walks up the stairs, as I follow her quietly. "So what's up?" She asks me as she takes her seat at the desk.

I take my seat onto the edge of her desk, noticing I'm sitting on top of some papers. She doesn't say anything about it though. "I had to talk to you about something. Something important."

"Alright, Sarah. You have my full attention." She leans her head onto her folded hands, elbows on the desk, whilst looking at me.

"Good. Because I'm going to need your full attention for what I'm about to say." I take a deep breath then. Reminding myself before I start that this is a good thing. "I know I've said, multiple times, that I will not tell you about what's next to come. But I've reconsidered everything."

She keeps her full focus on me, but I notice her shifting a bit in her chair. In anticipation of what I'm about to say next.

"Everything I've read about Thedas, and the main storyline, has already happened. The exact same way it would have happened. Even if you weren't here. There have been small changes, here and there. But for the most part, it's all the way it should be. I know my mum discouraged me from telling you.. But I see no further harm in it any longer. Seeing as we're so close to the end of things and seeing how Thedas is still here."

"Right.." She says cautiously. "But are you certain though? I mean-

I hold up my hand and shake my head. ".-I'm not certain about anything anymore. I traveled through fucking dimensions to get to you and I won't tell you it's been easy having to accept that any of this is actually real. But I'm sure you know all about that." She nods in agreement. "But what I am certain about, is that Thedas will not cease to exist. We're already this close to the end. Well.. the end of the beginning, that is. Because after you've slain Corypheus, Elie... Things will continue. The Inquisition will not disband. If I weren't here and you'd remain, then I think it wouldn't disband either. Because correlating to the main storyline, everything has already happened the way it should've happened."

"It all sounds very vague, Sarah." She admits wryly.

"Tell me about it. It's even weirder for me, saying it all aloud. But in any case.. As the Inquisition goes on, eventually both Ferelden and Orlais will call for an Exalted March. Seeing as how the
Inquisition would officially no longer be needed.. both countries feel like you should disband. Them not wanting such a powerful and big force, neither united with Ferelden or Orlais and having a neutral stance, in between them. Basically all sorts of political shit."

"Alright.. So what's so important about any of this?" She sounds.. almost dissapointed. Having maybe expected more of my explanation.

Don't worry, girlie. I'm about to tell you the real tea.

"What's important about this.. is that we cannot disband the Inquisition. Because after Corypheus.. there will be another enemy to face." I stare her directly into her eyes. "Solas."

She frowns and scoffs, sitting back into her chair. "What in the Maker's holy name are you-"

"-He's not who you think he is, Eliana. He's more than just a hedge mage. Have you never wondered why Leliana was never able to find out any information about him? Those secrets you knew he was keeping from you? He's an Ancient Elven God, Elie. His name is Fen'Harel."

"That is absolutely insane, Sarah. I swear, if you're planning on lying to me about it then I'd rather you not say anything at all. I've already told you I don't have to know. So-"

"-I'm not lying. I am telling you the truth, Elie."

"So Solas is an Ancient Elven God? How come then that nobody, neither Dorian or Vivienne have commented on that fact? And-"

"The Orb you touched at the Temple of Sacred Ashes. The one that gave you your powers to close rifts. That was his Orb. Fen'Harel woke up centuries after he had sealed away the Ancient Forgotten Ones and lost his powers. He was the one that created the Veil so very long ago, since it was the only way to contain the Evanuris. He wanted to tear down the Veil immediately after he saw what he had done, to right his wrongdoings. But he was too weak to unlock his own Orb."

She sputters but I continue nonetheless. "He pointed Corypheus to the Orb, not directly, but he did nonetheless. That's how Corypheus came by an Ancient Elven artifact."

"I remember Solas telling me about that... after Haven was destroyed." She says quietly. "He said he didn't know how he came by it."

"He told you only half of everything." I sigh. "He wants the Orb back. And the only way to get it back is to get it right after the fight with Corypheus."

"He'll get his Orb back, and then what?"

"Not quite. The Orb will break. It will fall from a height and then it's rendered useless to him. So he will not be able to tear down the Veil instantly."

She processes this information, staring at a blank spot on her wall. Finally she speaks up again. "So... there's no danger then?"

"There will be. In the meanwhile, he will build an army. The Agents of Fen'Harel. Mostly Elves, but other races can join as well.. if they want to. He will absorb Mythal's powers and it will damn near make it impossible to defeat him. In truth I am not sure how to defeat him, because like I once told you at the very beginning of me coming here.. The story is not finished yet." I look down at my hands, feeling uneasy about this fact. If only I'd known how to defeat Solas in the end. "Once he absorbs Mythal however, I do not know how that will affect you. My theory is that he could control
you should he wish to. Since Mythal had the power to do the same at the Altar."

"He's not a bad person."

"But he will become the bad person eventually, Elie. We do not know how far gone he'll be once we reach that moment. Though we've still got two whole years to figure that out."

"Why tell me this now? What changed?"

"Because you're no longer with him. And I feel like two women on the same mission will be a better idea than just one. We'll be more unified and stronger. More easily able to stop Solas. Also, I don't think you would've forgiven me had I not told you. You'd find out eventually. And then where would we be? We finally fixed things between us."

She looks sad then. A pang of guilt hits her. "I can't believe this." she shakes her head and processes this information some more. Silence surrounds us and I let her think about everything I've just told her. "Is there more I need to know of?"

"I don't think so? Well.. you may lose your arm after two years. Since the mark will be trying to kill you. It'll become erratic and unpredictable. With Solas not being there to help you."

"Lose my arm!?" she exclaims, while instantly looking down at said arm. The mark in her hand glowing softly, as if slumbering now that there's no rifts about anymore.

"At least you'll not die." I say, trying to lighten the mood. But to no avail.

"I see.. thanks for the heads up." She says in a wry tone of voice.

"You're welcome."

"This.. is a lot to take in."

"Tell me about it."

"Thanks, Sarah. For letting me know though. I'll have much to consider."

"Aye, that you do. Want me to leave you be for now?" She simply nods. "If you'll need me. I'm here for you. You know where to find me."

"I do. Thanks Sarah."

Chapter End Notes

Sarah is just too trusting with people. She was right, Elie is better at telling when people are bullshitting her. Seeing how Sarah just doesn't realize it at all...

Her plan has worked. "Thanks, Sarah."

Hmmm soooo, there ya go (;

Hope y'all liked this long-ass chapter. I actually wanted to continue in Chapter 33, but figured my next content would be better suited for the NEXT chapter. Also, this Chapter is already long as hell.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!