To Serve In Hell

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**Summary**

A man is kidnapped by space-faring Dark Elves and brought to a nightmarish city of horror and pleasure. They might all look like women, but not all are equipped that way. With his every chastity under constant assault, will he ever manage to escape?

Futa, cheating, torture, death, BDSM, and all sorts of degeneracy contained within. Extremely graphic.
Hail, Horrors

'A fate worse than death.'

It's a common enough saying. People use it to talk about slavery, torture, maiming, the loss of a loved one. You had never put much stock in the idea of anything being worse than endless oblivion - not until you came face to face with every one of those other horrors at once.

They came to your planet without warning, in black ships that looked more like gothic cathedrals than space-faring vessels. Strike craft had rained down on your planet, quickly overwhelming what meager defenses a sleepy farm world like Bulanel IV could muster. Your town had been left a flaming pyre, and you're sure the other population centers fared no better.

The lucky defenders had died among the flames and collapsing rubble. The rest were here, with you - innumerable men and women, shuffling down a long metal corridor that seemed to never end.

There must have been thousands of them, their crying and wailing mixing with the rattling of chained shackles to create a horrific song of despair. Like you, they hadn't gotten a real meal or a good night's sleep in a week. You'd been plucked off the planet, then herded into cargo holds aboard those black starships and shot into the Warp. Every minute that passed took you further from any hope of escape or rescue.

"Faster!" comes a shout from up above. You glance up to see a figure in mean-looking black armor standing atop a parapet overlooking the corridor. She cracks her whip into the crowd twice, drawing pained screams with each strike. Your line of captives picks up speed, your connected shackles forcing you to do the same.

As you move closer to the balcony, you spare a careful glance at the whip-wielding woman. She is lithe and dark-haired, with deathly pale skin that looks to never have seen sunlight. Even with that, she might look human, were it not for her pointed ears and outlandishly ornate armor of spiked metal.

Every one of your captors looks much the same - 'Dark Elves', you've heard them called before. You knew they were real in some sense, but the stories of their legendary cruelty had been so outlandish that you'd dismissed the tales as propaganda meant to scare children and gullible colonists. Aliens who made their home in the Warp, venturing into Real Space to launch raids for slaves or resources. Creatures of utter depravity, who gain pleasure only from others suffering. Now, more than ever, you want to believe those whispered tales to be false - for this to be some fevered nightmare. But the whip cracks again, and you do not wake.

"Eyes down!" shouts another woman to your left. The guards stand on raised balconies every fifty feet or so on either side of the hallway, watching as this grand procession of human cruelty makes its way to some better-lit expanse far in the distance. You're not sure if you're even on a ship anymore.

If you are, it is far larger than even the massive cargo ship you left behind some hours ago. You should be filled with dread at the prospect of reaching wherever you're being herded to, but you are too tired and thirsty to worry about what-ifs. Your feet hurt, your stomach hurts, everything hurts. But despite the agony crowding out your more abstract fears, one other thought does stick in your mind.

Vala.

She is here, somewhere - you're sure of it. When your village had been subdued and the survivors were being herded onto landing craft, she had been among those taken captive. Once you were
thrown into a cargo hold on an orbiting ship, you had asked every other human who would listen if they had seen someone matching her description, but no one had. She had ended up on a different ship than you. But now, after a week of flying through the Warp in a piss-stinking cargo hold crammed full of people, you had arrived at some sort of processing center. If you're going to have a chance in hell of finding her, it'll be here.

It seemed like just yesterday you had asked Vala to marry you. Your life had been boring, as far back as you could remember - growing up on a farm, inheriting a farm, working a farm. Then, you met her. You had never felt luckier than when she had chosen you over all the other guys who had eyes on her. It took quite awhile for you to realize it wasn't luck. She liked you, and you liked her. Then, she loved you, and you loved her.

She'd given up a promising naval career to stay with you on Bulanel, but has always sworn that she couldn't be happier stuck as a mid-level garrison officer who comes home every night to a man who smells like wheat and rust. You believe her, but could never shake the desire to give her something more than that simple life - you wanted to give her the stars. On your wedding night two months ago, you had made a promise to yourself to do just that.

Maybe this was the universe's way of granting your wish. Or maybe this was payback for having been so lucky for so long. You just wish that Vala didn't have to pay the price for your flying too close to the sun. You'd made your peace with giving her a boring life, but the thought of her having to endure a terrifying death makes it hard for you to breathe. You scan the crowds of captives, desperately searching for her in the teeming throngs of ragged wretches. A few redheads stand out here and there, but you don't even bother trying to see their faces - none of them glow like she does.

"I say eyes down!" shouts one of the Elves ahead of you. Your first instinct is that the words are directed at you, and you look up - but that was a grave mistake. She pulls her whip back from her intended target, brow furrowing furiously as she brings it to bear in your direction.

You don't even try to dodge - that would only make things worse. Instead you simply brace yourself, squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your jaw tight as searing fire lances through your right shoulder. Your mouth shoots open, letting out an agonized shout before your brain even has time to translate the screaming of your nerve endings into pain. They'd hit you dozens of times in the last few days, jabbing you in the gut with their guns or kicking you to the ground, but this is nothing like that. Your palms hit warm metal, and you force open your eyes to see that you've collapsed onto all fours without even realizing.

Pain threatens to overwhelm your brain and drop you into unconsciousness, but you command yourself to your feet. If you stay down, they'll hit you again - and if they hit you too many times, you'll die here. And then Vala will be lost for good. Gasping and choking for air, you stagger to your feet, clutching your right shoulder with the other hand. It's wet, warm, and feels like you've been stuck with a live wire.

"Halt!" the woman yells, her command echoed by her comrades up and down the hall on either side. Your feet stop in their tracks, and your blood runs cold. Either you took to long to get up, or they decided you're too injured to bother keeping - they're going to kill you. Swallowing hard, you wait second after agonizing second as the Elves shout at each other in their horrid, guttural language. Tears well in your eyes, but not from fear - from shame. The shame of failure. All these thousands of poor souls condemned to slavery and death, and you can't save the one you truly care about. You can't even find her.
The shouting continues, and you become bold enough - or perhaps just resigned enough in your fate - to spare another glance up at the balcony in front of you. The woman who whipped you is shouting across the corridor at her comrade, pointing at you and pantomiming with the curled whip in her hand. The expression on her face is a common one, but it is the first time you've seen it worn by these inhuman aliens. She is confused. Her companion across the way looks from you to her, another bizarre expression on her face - interest.

Gradually the discussion dies down, and a door set into the wall swings open. A Dark Elf emerges from the small, shadowed corridor, shoving her way through terrified humans as she makes a beeline towards you.

This woman is dressed differently than the others. You almost want to say more 'casually', simply because she doesn't wear black armor that makes her look like a carapaced insect. Her shoulders are covered by dark metal epaulets, and under those is a black robe embroidered with flowing purple lines that seem to glow with a light of their own. Her tight bun of hair carries the barest hint of graying, and she moves with a speed and surety that tells you she is someone of importance. That might have been intimidating, if it wasn’t already the case that every one of these women holds the power of life and death over you.

The newcomer stops beside you, and you hurriedly cast your gaze back towards the ground as you remember what got you this unwanted attention in the first place. She lays a hand on your shoulder, making you jump in place, and you gradually allow your vision to drift over to her as she runs her fingers from your neck to your upper arm, and then back again. Her eyes are wide with feverish interest, flickering all over your body as if searching for something.

The rhythm of her repulsive rubbing shifts, moving to the torn flesh on the front of your shoulder. Each stroke of her hand brings new flashes of pain, which become downright unbearable when her fingers begin to dig into the wound beneath your tattered tunic. She remains silent, her breath hastening to match your own as she pushes her fingernails into the gash. Blood pours down your side in a fresh torrent, and you cannot contain it anymore - you scream.

The woman gasps so loudly you can hear it even over your own ringing ears and horrid cries. You collapse to your knees a second time, though even in this storm of agony you manage to avoid falling onto your face. Teetering back and forth awkwardly while you draw in shallow breaths, you tilt your head up towards your tormentor. Her chest is heaving as well, but her eyes are not wide in abject terror like yours must be. They flutter half-closed, and her knees wobble visibly beneath her shimmering robe. Even through your fogged vision and foggier mind, you see it for what it is - lust.

She shouts up to the guards, but you're too out of it to even try and make out what is certainly their own language. You allow your face to swivel back towards the ground, the thin gaps in the metal plating below you warped and twisted by the pain distorting your senses. Time passes - you can't even begin to estimate how much - and two sets of hands haul you to your feet by either armpit. A guard undoes the chains attaching your ankle shackles to the line of captives, and you are dragged into the narrow corridor that the robed woman emerged from.

The shuffle of feet and the clank of chains resume a few moments later, but even those sounds disappear as you are dragged into darkness. After a sharp turn in the tunnel, you come into another room, just as grim and dimly-lit as the grand space you left behind. It's a low-ceilinged room, wide and ringed with caged cells interrupted only by a second door at the other end of the room. All of the cells lie empty, though the blackened blood stains on the walls and floors tell you they have not always been vacant.

At the center of the main space is a sturdy metal chair bolted to the ground, situated beside a drainage
vent in the floor. Were this any other place, constructed by any other people, you might mistake it for a particularly nasty prison. But the Dark Elves do not keep prisoners for punishment or interrogation. This is a torture room, meant to fulfill the only need their twisted race has - to inflict suffering, without cause or purpose.

The two guards walk you in front of the chair, then kick your feet out from under you, making you collapse onto the hard surface. Your arms are wrenched overhead and your shackles latched onto some part of the chair back, a process that has you screaming so hard that your aching throat finally gives out. Your ankles are similarly subdued, but not before the women strip off your pants and underwear, tossing them into a pile beside you. Every step of the process makes it harder to pretend you don't know what's coming. Torture, mutilation, and then death. All for the mistake of looking one of them in the eyes.

Their leader barks something at the two guards, and they depart back the way they came. The second you're alone with your captor, she leans over and stares at you with hungry eyes. You're not even being viewed as a tool - you're being looked at like food. She presses the palm of her hand to your wound, and all you can manage is a warbling groan and jerking limbs. The woman shudders so hard her shoulders nearly touch her ears, and as she stands up you see her eyes roll back into her head. She takes a deep breath in as if to calm herself, then kneels between your spread legs and grips the head of your cock between her fingertips. You're not sure if it's the room, your own blood loss, or if this woman is as cold-blooded as she looks - but her touch is like ice.

"You get hard," she shouts at you. Her accent is heavy, making the words come out slow and slurred - but you're sure you heard her right. She continues stroking, her vile touch doing nothing to draw a hint of movement from your member. Her eyes narrow, and she shoots to her feet, then smacks you with her fist in your wound.

As you hunch forward, coughing and wheezing and trying desperately to stay conscious, she walks around to the back of your chair. A moment later, the pull on your shoulders is gone - your arms are free. She forces your shackled hands back over your head, a movement that is no less agonizing than it was in the reverse. Setting your hands down in your lap, you look back up to see her standing in front of you, hands on her hips, glaring at you impatiently.

"Get hard," she says again.

With this woman glaring daggers at you, you slowly draw your manacled hands back down your thighs until your fingertips hang over your member.

Then, you stop. Shame washes over you as you consider where you are, and what you're about to do. This woman is going to kill you - it's a matter of when, not if. Fear and confusion had brought you a hair's breadth from betraying every sacred vow you made to Vala.

Any hope you had of seeing her again is gone, but you will not go to your grave a coward who gave into this creature standing before you just to eke out another few minutes of life. If you're going to die, you'll do it on your feet, not your knees. And if you do have to die on your knees, it'll be with your hands around the neck of one of these bastards. You might be a captive, but you're not a slave - never a slave.

Her foot tapping furiously on the floor, the Elf seems ready to explode with anger when you drop your head down and mutter under your breath.

"What?" she hisses, taking a step closer. Your lips move again, but there's no real words in your murmurs - just the promise of some, to draw her in close. She mutters a venomous swear of her own and leans in close - close enough for you to swing your hands up over her head, wrapping your
shackles around the back of her neck and pulling forward with all your might.

The woman shouts in surprise as her face mashes into your chest, her fists beating furiously against your sides while her feet scrape against the smooth floor, struggling to keep her upright. Any plan you had - if you ever had one - goes out the window as adrenaline rushes through your body, and you simply squeeze with all your might. The woman can't claw at your wounded shoulder in the awkward position you have her trapped in, but that doesn't stop her teeth from digging into the flesh of your pectorals and tearing at it like some wild beast.

You're wide awake now, screaming and twisting as much as your ankle bindings will allow. It's a strange thing - you've never been this close to death, but you've never felt so alive. Your captor stops beating at you and grabs the sides of your torso with both hands, going rigid in your grip as every muscle in her body goes taut.

Then, you feel something under her palms. It starts as a mere warmth, but within seconds intensifies to an unbearable heat. You squeeze and squeeze, trying to snap this woman's neck before this strange agony forces your brain to seek refuge in unconsciousness. You swear to yourself that no matter how bad it gets, you won't let go - you won't fail at this.

But even with your mind so determined, your body can only last so long. Scorched flesh stings your nostrils, and the white-hot heat burning you from the outside in finally makes your muscles go slack. The woman is out in an instant, staggering away as you contort your body, trying to keep your burnt sides away from the back of the chair lest they melt right onto it. Your frantic movements make you slide onto the floor, dropping to your knees with your ankles still bound to the bar running along the front. Forcing open your eyes, you see the Elf marching back towards you, a curved dagger in her hand and a murderous look on her face.

One last promise, broken.

You don't know what else to do, except close your eyes and let a final darkness overtake you. Maybe you shouldn't have been so proud - maybe you should have went along with whatever she wanted. It's hard to remember why you fought back in the first place. Her footsteps stop in front of you, and you allow yourself one more peaceful thought of the woman you love. The muscles on your face tense, and you wonder if you're smiling - it's not something you've done much in the past week. Whatever the expression is that you wear, it vanishes the moment cold metal pierces the left side of your chest. The wicked blade sinks in a fraction of an inch, and then... it draws out.

There's a noisy clatter from far off to your left, and you open your eyes to see your would-be killer staring off in shock at the source of the sound. Her bloodied blade lies near the door at the other end of the room, opposite the hall you entered from. It had been closed earlier, but it is now open - another woman stands in the entryway, her hand outstretched towards the two of you.

She wears a black tunic with silver hem that hangs halfway to her knees, high black boots, and a cape attached to her chest with metallic claws. Her head is covered with what you can only describe as mourner's headwear sans veil. Her eyeshadow is shaped into dark red teardrops, and three smaller ones are centered in her forehead. She wears lipstick of the same color. No armor, and makeup. This woman is not a warrior.

Your savior - if you can call her something so grandiose - lowers her hand, striding confidently over to your attacker without sparing a single glance at you. She stops, then backhands the women you'd just tried to choke the life from. An argument follows in their own language, your attacker gesturing wildly as she describes the fight that took place. The newcomer points at your wounded right shoulder, and the other woman waves a hand back to the hall, presumably to the guard that whipped you in the first place. A few more words are exchanged, but the conversation ends soon after that,
and your rescuer orders the other woman out of the room.

For the second time in as many minutes, you're alone with a woman whose motives and desire you have even less sense of than the first go around. Did she save you just to torture you herself? Are you, for some strange reason, a delicacy among victims?

Your worst fears are confirmed when she presses a thumb onto your shallow dagger wound, making you choke mid-breath and fall back against the chair you kneel in front of. It hurts like hell, but you whisper a silent thanks that she hadn't done it to your mangled right shoulder. Her hand withdraws a second later, which you find surprising - it's as if she just wanted to see your reaction, not inflict any serious amount of suffering. The woman snaps her fingers, drawing your gaze upward. Adrenaline had cleared your vision during the brief fight, but the pain wracking your burnt sides is making it hard to focus on anything. Even staying conscious feels like trying to swim with a brick in each hand.

"Name," she says, snapping her fingers again. "Your name." Her accent is as obvious as ever, but even through the fog hanging over your mind you can make out the words better than with the others. She's more educated, or cultured... or maybe she's just tortured enough humans to pick up more than a few words of Basic.

"Orin," you wheeze. "My name is... Orin." The words come out weak, your lungs struggling to draw breath beneath the seizing muscles of your torso. You want to lay down and not have to work so hard to support yourself, but even touching the seat of the chair with your back feels like agony. The woman's orange eyes study yours, flickering like twin flames that betray a ferocious intelligence working beneath her placid expression. Within the span of a moment, you realize that this woman isn't your savior. There's a special kind of cruelty lurking behind those eyes, deeper and more patient than any you've ever seen.

"Did you think you could hide with the civilians?" She bends over and lays a hand on your right shoulder, her thumb resting just above your wound. There's no pressure to her touch, but the message is clear - if she decides it's time to give you pain, there's nothing you can do to stop her.

"I am a civilian," you say uneasily. She must have assumed from the way you attacked the guard supervisor that you have some combat training, but that was little more than righteous anger and a strength born of hopeless panic.

Her expression darkens, and her thumb digs into still-bleeding wound. "Do not lie to me."

Pulling away from her touch as much as the chair behind you will allow, you hold your shackled hands up in a pleading gesture. "P-please," you stammer out. "I'm nobody."

There's no reason to lie, but you're not sure you could muster the will to do so even if you wanted to. All you can think about is getting the pain to stop. Her grip eases, and she raises her other hand to your temple. Her eyelids fall shut, and the moment her fingertips touch your skin, you feel a jolt of electricity shoot through your brain. It's not painful, but you feel a sense of instinctive revulsion well up within you that rivals even that of having your cock grabbed by your torturer. Thoughts are dredged up from the depths of your memory as if by force - images of Vala, of your home before it burnt to the ground, of quiet mornings and quieter nights. The Elf hums through it all the while, nodding slowly as you remain deathly still in shock and confusion.

After a few moments she pulls away, her touch receding from the most private recesses of your mind at the same time her fingertips draw back from your temple. To your surprise, you feel angry - angrier than you've been at any injustices suffered over this past week of hell. You had thought that no matter what these aliens did to your body, you would always be master of your own mind, but
this woman had rifled through the latter like a stack of index cards. If she sees the naked fury in your expression, it doesn't phase her. She stands tall and takes a step back, then glances over at the doorway she entered through.

"Ribara." She nods her head at you, and you follow her gaze to see another pale woman enter. This one is taller than the other two - a good head taller than you, even - and clad in dark red armor that turns to a cloth robe at her waist. Heavy shoulderpads add to her already imposing figure, and the slight brunette tinge to her short hair sets her apart from her monochrome brethren. She stalks towards you with frightening speed, looming ever larger until she is right on top of you, then tears your shirt free of your wounded shoulder. Blood and fabric have joined together, making the undressing a painful experience.

You do your best not to look at the wound, knowing that doing so will only make keeping your wits about you more difficult. The giant woman pushes your head head to the left and slaps your wound. At first you're certain this is some new torture, but her hand withdraws and you feel something clinging to your shoulder. Casting a careful glance down, you see that a dark blue bandage has been stuck over the majority of your wound. A few moments after that, you can no longer feel it at all. All the other pains wracking your body are still there, but the worst of it, mercifully, is gone.

Ribara knocks you flat to the floor, then undoes your cuffs and hauls you to your feet with a frighteningly easy effort. Your attempts to stay standing, however, are not so effortless. The moment her hand moves out from under your armpit, you collapse back to the floor, body too ravaged and mind too frazzled to even stand on your own.

A guttural shout comes from the larger woman's superior. From the distance and echo, you judge that she's already left the room. Ribara's scowling face appears over yours, and she grabs you by the throat, fingers digging up into your jaw as she lifts you to your feet. Her chiseled features make her appear more masculine than any of the other Elves you've seen, but the twin mounds on the front of her armor make her sex abundantly clear.

"You walk," she says in a deep, threatening voice. Before you can nod or squeak out any sort of muted understanding, she throws you towards the exit her superior left through, and you catch yourself on the edge of the doorway before gravity can have its way with you a second time. Ribara marches towards you, and you force your legs to move. First one, then the other, pushing you into the dark corridor as your hands support you on the smooth wall.

Ribara shoves you in the back again and again, each hard push nearly sending you to the floor. If you weren't so scared of getting a knife in the gut, you would spin around and scream that this isn't making you move any faster. But in truth, it's the only thing keeping you moving. Every ache and pain from your tired feet to your throbbing skull is telling you to lay down and die. Without hope of living long enough to see Vala, only righteous anger is keeping you going. Anger at being taken, at being humiliated, at being beaten near-death for the simple crime of trying to find the woman you love.

The small part of your mind that doesn't want to die tells you to lash out in violence, but you push those urges down deep, finding the razor's edge between peace and anger that allows you to keep on moving and keep on living. These two women want to keep you alive a little bit longer. For what purpose, you can only guess - though you try not to. But even the thinnest sliver of hope is enough for you to grab hold of. There is a certain kind of fearlessness that comes to someone left with no other options, but that cheap brand of bravery vanished the instant you were spared an ignominious death at the hands of the robed guard.

After a turn in the dark walkway, you come to a long flight of stairs that lead up into the light. Ribara
The expanse outside the hall is massive, but it is not the emptiness of the void, nor the shimmering sea of the Warp. You stand at the entrance to a city of unfathomable dimensions and bizarre geometry, towering black spires jutting out from green mists at every angle, interconnected by a spiked webwork of black tendrils. Each structure is dotted by countless yellow lights, and air-borne cruisers swarm everywhere like buzzing insects.

Cummragh - you had thought it to be a myth. The homeworld of the Dark Elves, an artificial city the size of a small moon, floating in the currents of the Warp like a sin-blackened pearl. You had assumed yourself destined for some slave market on a pirate world, or impressment on a Dark Elf raiding vessel. But this - there is no escape from this. You might as well have been thrown into the depths of Hell itself. Too caught up in horrified awe to think better of it, you rise uneasily to your feet behind the woman leading your trio.

"Is that--" you start out, your idle wondering interrupted by a broad hand grabbing the back of your neck. Ribara spins you around to face her, then backhands you hard enough to send you sprawling back to the ground. You just barely manage to keep from falling off the ledge onto the row of slaves closest the wall, blood spilling from your mouth as you cough and choke for air. The moment you
laid eyes on that woman you had known she could throw a punch, but a single slap from her feels as if it broke your jaw.

The sharp snap of fingers comes from behind you, and you bring your gaze backwards to see the cape-wearing woman beckoning for you. Ribara stands beside her, a thin metal loop the diameter of your neck held in her hands. You crawl towards them, your only concern doing whatever will allow you to avoid more pain. There's nothing you can possibly do for Vala now, but the fact that they broke you so quickly somehow intensifies your feeling of failure. As if a defiance your wife isn't even here to see would be the next best thing to actually rescuing her.

You try to keep the blood from spilling from your battered mouth, but it pools too fast and too hot for you to do anything but let it roll down your chin in an unending torrent. Ribara's blow still has you off-balance when you reach the pair's feet and stop, your vision swimming with such intensity that you wish it would simply go black.

A soft 'click' sounds out as the loop is fastened around your neck, and you re-experience the unwelcome sensation of an electric current forcing its way between the folds of your brain. Ribara steps away, and both women turn to face the assembled slaves as you rock back onto folded legs.

"Which rows are for the market?" says the head Elf.

Ribara gestures at the packed hall below. "The first chain length of the far row, my Lady."

The other woman sighs. "The rest for the mines, then."

Their voices are strange - like you're hearing double. They speak in the unmistakable guttural slurs of their own language, but you can hear Basic overlaid on top of it, carrying with it the distinctive tone and cadence of their respective voices. The more they speak, the more the Elvish echoes disappear, leaving you only with a single set of voices that you can understand as clear as day.

"You know my tastes," says the Lady. "Did you find anything for me?"

Ribara lets out a low grumble, then swats you in the side of the head. "No. Only this one."

The Lady sighs again, then leans one hand on your head. "I wish it was female." She's not a heavy woman, nor is she wearing the cumbersome armor you've seen on the others, but you're so exhausted that keeping your head upright is a struggle. You don't dare let yourself fall over, though - not with her brutal attendant within arm's reach of you.

"There are always the Shapers," Ribara suggests.

The Lady hums thoughtfully, metal-tipped fingers drumming on your skull in a slow tempo that makes your skin crawl. "Something to save for later," she finally says.

While you try not to think about what a 'Shaper' is or what this alien has planned for you, the two women turn their attention back to the lines of captives and begin discussing other matters. You pick up bits of information here and there, but the things they talk about are so foreign to you that they might as well still be speaking another language. This is not the only group of slaves, you learn - there are three others, herded onto loading docks just like this one.

That fills you with hope of finding Vala, though you're careful to temper that hope with the grim reality of your situation. From the way these two women speak, there are a thousand different places your wife could end up, each sounding more vile and grotesque than the last. The Lady continues to lean on your head as she talks and gestures, and your neck quakes terribly under the strain. A few times she takes her hand away and swats your head, each strike forcing you to draw from some deep
reserve of strength that allows you to stay upright another few minutes.

Then, finally, she pulls away. You draw a deep breath in, gasping for air as you collapse forward onto your hands. But before you can do more than draw a single breath free of that oppressive weight, Ribara hauls you to your feet and shoves you down the length of the ledge towards the departing Lady. The latter veers right, heading through a doorway set into the wall that leads down another flight of stairs separate from the one you came up through. You stop at the cusp of the path down, searching in the dim light for some railing to aid you in your descent. If you fall, you tell yourself, you won't be able to rise again. That much, you feel in your bones.

Perhaps Ribara interprets your caution as hesitance - or perhaps she just wants to inflict more pain on an easy target. A heavy boot strikes you square in the back, sending you hurtling downwards with such force that your feet barely make contact with the steps. You strike bottom in a tangle of limbs, sharp 'cracks' heralding fractured bones and split flesh. You stare off blankly at the corridor leading away from the base of the stairs. The landing pad you saw from up above lies ahead, and you can see another hovering barge setting down alongside it. The Lady stops her walk towards the exit and turns to face you, throwing her hands out wide.

"Are you trying to kill him?" she snaps.

Heavy thumps shake the ground as Ribara races down the stairs. "He wasn't moving, my Lady!" She grabs your left shoulder and rolls you over onto your back, narrow orange eyes glaring down at you. "Get up," she hisses.

You're not sure you have any desire to obey, but it doesn't matter - you can't. The screaming pain in your right arm tells you it's broken, and the cold numbness enveloping the rest of your body has you fairly certain the remainder is damaged just as badly.

"I said up!" Ribara says, grabbing you by your left arm and attempting to force you to a standing position. You crumple back down to the ground just as quickly, leaving her to fume over you. A perverse sense of victory washes over you - you would laugh if the pain didn't make it impossible. They can break your body, and violate your mind, but they can't make you move.

"Just drag him," the Lady says, turning on her heels and striding towards the exit. Ribara grunts in annoyance and grabs you by both arms, dragging you a short distance before another audible 'snap' in your right arm causes her to abandon that one and hold you solely by the left. After a few moments of ridged metal scraping at your back, you come out into the arrival hall you had been lined up in earlier. Elven guards wearing bulky carapaced armor and wielding polearms stand at the heads of the lines of slaves, though only the latter give you curious glances as you're dragged past them onto the circular pad awaiting them. It feels silly to worry about so trivial a thing at a time like this, but you feel a twinge of embarrassment at your near-total nudity. All you have left in the way of clothes are the scraps of tunic still clinging to your torso.

The hall ceiling abruptly terminates, becoming a shear wall that runs miles up into the green-misted blackness above. You're dragged across the spacious landing pad and onto a ramp, then past two more guards who stand on either side of the ramp's end. These women wield halberds like the other guards you saw, but are dressed very differently. Their armor conceals little more than their most private areas, though their heads are fully covered by purple-plumed helmets. The one on your right wears a bulky codpiece under her loincloth, a sight you find strangely obscene even in your barely-conscious state. Both women have stylized purple suns tattooed around their belly buttons - an identifying emblem, perhaps.

Ribara finally releases your arm, dropping you to the floor and leaving you to stare up at a dark purple canopy some fifty feet up as people move all around you. A few minutes later, the ground
lurches beneath you - you're moving. The canopy flutters against the green mists as whatever barge you've been put on moves away from the dock, and soon you are left with only one set of footsteps moving towards you.

A needle plunges into your neck, followed by a flood of some hot liquid that sets your heart pounding and eyes shooting wide open. You gasp and bolt upright, every muscle in your body seizing as a fresh surge of adrenaline pushes away the fog of half-consciousness. You see now that you're on the top deck of one of the smaller barges, moving at a slow speed into the spiked depths of Cummragh. Padded benches are mounted on the low walls surrounding the deck, though they're almost entirely empty. The only occupant is the Lady, who sits to your left with her arms propped up on the wall she leans against. Her legs are spread wide, the bottom half of her tunic draped between her bare thighs and eyes focused intently on you.

"You tried to ask me something," she calls out to you. All you do is nod, casting a weary glance at Ribara as she goes to the Lady's side. "Well?" she snaps. "Out with it!"

Swallowing hard, you keep your eyes focused on the Lady's stiletto heels as you prepare to ask a question you already know the answer to.

"Is this--"

"Cummragh!" the woman exclaims, cutting you off. "Your new home." Careful to keep your eyes from meeting with hers, you look out on the spiked landscape of dark spires jutting out in every conceivable direction. Gravity clearly works normally here, but the Elves seemed to pay it little mind when they built this foul labyrinth.

It's half-cavern, half-metropolis, and produces in you a bizarre mix of both claustrophobia and agoraphobia that betrays the unnatural foulness of everything around you. The Lady snaps her fingers, drawing your eyes back towards her. She beckons forward, and you crawl on hands and knees towards her. Ribara puts a boot on your shoulder shortly before you reach her, forcing you into a kneeling position.

"Who would have expected to find a diamond like you among that human excrement?" She taps her foot, and even though your own vision is fixed firmly on the ground, you can feel her eyes taking in every inch of your body. You must look a sorry sight - a broken right arm hanging limp at your side, burns on your torso, gashes all over, and a terror-stricken expression that you can't wipe off your face no matter how hard you try.

"Do you know what you are?" she says. Her words carry with them the tone of a real question this time, but you're too scared to answer and risk incurring her attendant's wrath. Nor do you know how to answer. You're a simple man, from a simple place - a nobody, from nowhere. Her companion's anger comes anyway, in the form of a broad hand that grabs you by the back of the neck and squeezes so forcefully that the fingertips nearly meet over your throat.

"When Lady Moradys asks you a question, you answer," Ribara hisses in your ear. She throws your head down to the ground, but you manage to catch yourself before your face smacks into the metal flooring.

"Do go easy on him," Moradys laughs. "He doesn't know how things work yet."

Ribara lets out a sharp breath through her nose, but steps back as ordered, allowing you to sit up again.

"It's as Ribara says," Moradys continues, a deadly-serious expression on her face. "When I ask you a
question, you answer it."

And as you've already learned, if she doesn't ask you a question, you keep your mouth shut. Ribara has made that rule abundantly clear.

"Do you understand?" Moradys says.

This woman might be a Dark Elf who makes her home among the swirling eddies of the warp, but her twisted personality is nothing you haven't seen before. Someone who grew up in wealth and privilege, stepping over whoever she pleases to get whatever she desires. It's a story as old as time, but that doesn't make it any less disgusting. You're not about to call this woman - this creature - 'Lady' anything. She's undoubtedly used to her captives acting like whipped dogs that fold to her every whim. You might be scared out of your mind and feeling like you've been hit by a charging bull, but that doesn't mean you're all out of defiance just yet.

You look up at her and draw back your head, gathering saliva into your mouth noisily. A split-second before you get a chance to use it, Ribara's fist collides with your cheek, sending you smashing against the deck. Stars flash in your eyes, and your skull rings with such force that you can only make out the shouts above you with great difficulty.

"Did he try to spit at me?" Moradys says in amusement.

Ribara stands over you, pressing a hand to your shoulder to keep you pinned to the ground - not that you'd be going anywhere, anyway. Your jaw is broken, and you're afraid to try and move anything below your neck, lest you find out she snapped your spine clean through.

"He's dangerous!" the larger woman says. "Allow me to put him below."

"Oh, he's just grumpy from all the travel." With your eyes pointed at Moradys' feet, you see her scoot over on the bench and pat the spot beside her. "Put him here."

Ribara rolls you onto your front and grabs you under your armpits, but then hesitates.

"You shouldn't, my Lady. He's feral, he might-"

"Did you just tell me what to do?" Moradys says. There is a cold edge to her voice unlike anything you've heard from her thus far, and Ribara's fingers clench anxiously at your sides.

"No, my Lady!" she replies hurriedly, hauling you up and dragging you over to the bench. Getting you situated next to the Elf should have been a difficult task considering your grievous injuries, but Ribara doesn't concern herself with your burns or broken bones. She drops you onto the bench on your side, then hauls you upright until you are shoulder-to-shoulder with the other woman. Moradys pulls you close, wrapping her right arm around your neck and giving you a comforting pat on your stomach with the left.

"I like you," Moradys says. "You have fire - right here."

Ribara stands in front of the two of you, poised to strike like some jungle predator. Moradys' revolting touch makes your skin crawl, but Ribara's tense stance has you afraid to even breathe. The latter wears two wicked daggers at her waist, and her hands continue to creep closer to the hilts as her eyes remain focused on you.

"What are you looking at her for? I'm talking to you." Moradys grabs your chin between her thumb and index finger, turning her head towards you. A series of clicks comes from your jaw, and you grimace in pain as she makes you feel Ribara's brutal strike all over again.
"You will call me *Mistress,*" Moradys says, nodding her head up and down slowly as if she's lecturing a child. "Go on - try it."

Ever mindful of the bodyguard standing just out of view, you try to say the word, but all you can muster is a weakened wheeze that draws a pitying expression from Moradys.

"Oh, you poor thing." She idly scratches at your bandaged wound with her spike-tipped fingers, a sensation that would be agonizing if you weren't still numbed up. If only the same could be said for your burnt sides and shattered jaw - though you doubt there's enough topical anaesthesia in the world to have you feeling right.

"Go get a girl," she says to Ribara with a sharp nod of her head. "I don't care which."

Her guard hesitates for only a moment, leaving you with one last furious look before departing for a doorway at the rear of the barge. She disappears down a set of stairs, and you allow your wavering vision to drift back over to Moradys.

"Do you know why I'm keeping you for myself?"

You give a slow shake of your head, keeping your eyes locked on hers. Before, you had been afraid to allow them to meet - now, you feel as if looking away would be a death sentence.

"It's because of this." The pressure on your numbed right shoulder grows, and you glance down to see Moradys digging her spiked fingertips into your wound, piercing the bandage and moving back and forth with movements that would seem gentle if she weren't finger-fucking a wound gushing fresh blood. Your eyes go wide, your heart pounds, and your breaths turned panicked and shallow. You want to move away from her, to run, but every scenario you consider ends with you experiencing fresh pain. At least you can't feel this grotesque evisceration.

"I can feel you," Moradys moans, resting her head in the crook of your neck. "Your fear, your anger, your disgust - it's sweeter than any fruit."

Her left hand slides over your thigh, grasping your flaccid package in the palm of her hand. She wears no spiked tips on these fingers, but the clenching of her fist and trembling of her arm produces an ache in your balls that grows until you feel they might burst. Seconds tick by, and the warm breath caressing your ear comes hotter and faster, turning to moaning rasps of pleasure that reach new heights as your physical suffering plumbs new lows.

Then, she withdraws. You gasp in relief, taking the risk of moving your left arm to feel at your throbbing loins. Ribara walks towards the two of you, leading a smaller woman - this one human. Her long blonde hair is done up elaborately, decorated with gold jewelry that matches the small discs covering her nipples. Her panties are some bizarre mix of purple lingerie and gilded armor, with a heavy lock that dangles from one side. She walks with dainty steps, kneeling between Moradys' spread legs with a blank expression that speaks of untold suffering. Looking at the Dark Elves gave you the sense that you were seeing demons wearing human skin, but this woman makes you feel that you're looking at a human body that has had the soul stripped out of it.

The latter is far more horrifying.

"Sorry," Moradys says. "She's not here for you."

The girl lifts up Moradys' long tunic draped between her legs and lays it over one naked thigh, revealing the Dark Elf's black panties. She then undoes two clasps on either side of her waist, allowing the front half to fall down and exposing her crotch. Even with your jaw broken and brain
battered, you manage to draw in a shocked gasp at what you see. The sight is not an alien one. Rather, it's very familiar to you - even more so than the pussy you expected to be shown.

What falls free is a cock, long and uncut with a pair of hefty balls that dangle underneath. It's just as pale as the woman it's attached to, but covered in a grotesque webwork of blue veins that stand in stark contrast to the colorless flesh. The girl takes it in one hand and slips it into her mouth, suckling on the head with closed eyes as she pumps the shaft with rigid fingers.

You look between them and Ribara for some confirmation that you're not the only sane one here, but the bodyguard simply watches you with the same attentiveness as before. Apparently, this is only strange to you. Is Moradys a man, you wonder? Or have the Dark Elves fallen into such depravity that they've abandoned all sexual dichotomy and embraced a vile merging of the two that allows them to explore sensual pleasure to its darkest depths?

Your eyes go back to the blowjob in progress beside you, the human girl bringing Moradys to hardness as the latter continues to finger your wound like it's some sexual orifice. This strange place, these stranger people, the blood pouring out of your body in unending torrents - it's all too much. Your skin flushes cold and your head collapses onto Moradys' shoulder, drawing a satisfied grunt from the Elf. Ribara makes a move towards you, but a sharp 'tut' from her Mistress has the guard stepping back.

"Can't look away, can you?" Moradys says. Careful not to move the shoulder your head is leaned on, she reaches out with her left hand and grabs the girl's elaborate hair bun, dragging her up and down the length of her cock. The girl slobbers and chokes, eyes going wide as she pushes back against Moradys' thighs.

"Ribara," Moradys barks. The guard rushes over, driving the girl's head forward until her lips are flush with Moradys' hairless crotch. The slave's eyes roll back into her head and she spasms terribly, but her clenched fists simply rest on Moradys' thighs. Like you, she's afraid of what greater punishment resistance will bring. You sit there motionless, waiting for this horror to draw to a close, but it does not. Moradys sighs in perverse satisfaction at the wet warmth enveloping her, and Ribara's strength keeps the girl impaled on the Elf's length as her eyes flutter closed and skin turns a bloody shade of purple.

"Stop " you wheeze through cracked lips that can barely open.

"Hmm?" Moradys says, tilting her face towards you. "Did you say something?"

"Let her go," you say. It's probably for the best that your words are so weak they barely reach Moradys' ears. If Ribara could hear you ordering her Mistress around, it would likely earn you a quick trip over the side of the barge.

Moradys doesn't respond, and you summon what little strength you can to move your left hand out from between the two of you and reach towards the sputtering girl. Ribara's eyes snap over to you and her hand flashes over to yours, grabbing hold of your wrist and clenching it like a vice.

"I haven't cum in hours," Moradys snaps at you. "As many as six, I think! Who is going to help me with that? You?"

The girl's eyes fluttering eyes fall closed, and this time they do not open again. Her fists unclench, rolling down the insides of the Elf's thighs as a wet gurgle escapes her throat and snot drips from her nose. You watched people die on Bulanel IV - too many. They died to spears, swords, pulse rifles, and chemical weapons, but no death was so horrible to watch as this. You can't allow this to happen - not when you have even the faintest hope of stopping it.
"I'll do it," you rasp. "Just stop."

Moradys hums to herself thoughtfully, then nods at Ribara, who releases your wrist and hauls the human girl off of the other Elf's cock. Her member pops free in a shower of saliva, standing erect like some obscene murder weapon. The girl lies motionless for a few moments, but a nudge in the ribs from Ribara has her coughing and gasping for air.

"Hold him," Moradys says. Ribara sits to your right as the newly-conscious girl drags herself to the stairwell she entered from, and you feel firm hands grip both of your shoulders and pull you upright. Moradys scoots over a bit, then swings one leg up onto the bench and shoves it between your buttocks and the wall of the barge. Then she shifts back towards you, not stopping until her erect dick is within easy reach of your left hand.

"You promised me a blowjob. But, well..." Moradys gives an odd frown and gestures at your face. "We'll save that for some other time. I wouldn't want to spoil you." She puts her hands behind her and leans back, thrusting her ample chest out and making her throbbing member bob against her black-clad abdomen.

"Go on."

You don't give yourself any time to think this over. If you do, you'll hesitate - and if you hesitate, you're as good as dead. Even though your brain moves quickly, your trembling hand takes more than a few seconds to reach Moradys' crotch and wrap around her spit-slicked member. You turn your eyes back towards the middle of the barge as you draw your hand upwards for the first of what will inevitably be many strokes, but a sharp hiss from Moradys has you facing her again.

"Look at me," she says in a dire tone. "Don't you dare look away."

Even without the giant of a woman looming to your right, that icy threat is all the reason you need to keep your eyes fixed on your unwanted task. You had offered to do this of your own volition, but that doesn't make it any less sickening.

This woman is so pale you expect her to feel like cold death, but there's a heat to her that warms your clammy palm. Her heartbeat is palpable through your joined flesh, a rhythmic thump that pulses far harder and faster than your own struggling organ. You rock back and forth, so weak that you're forced to use the momentum of your torso to have a hope of actually stroking this woman - or whatever the hell she is - to a climax.

Ribara's right hand slides down your wounded shoulder, and for one horrifying moment you fear she's about to start probing your wound like Moradys had. Instead, she spreads her fingers over the bandage, smoothing out the ruffled and punctured fabric until it is once again working whatever magic it had performed to stop your blood loss. It's the tiniest of gestures, but you're filled with such pain and disgust that it seems like the kindest thing in the world.

Moradys, seemingly unhappy with the speed of your strokes and the pressure of your grip, wraps her hands around yours and aids your pumping, driving your fist up and down her veiny length until the girl's spit runs dry and you're left only with a grotesque stickiness. Even then she keeps going, grunting and bucking up into your joined hands as her dick twitches and throbs more powerfully than before.

A new warmth forms in her length, shooting out the tip in the form of a gush of milky white seed that flies high into the air before splattering over your forearm. She gasps and leans back on her hands, but you don't dare release your own grip. You keep hold, pumping up and down with weak movements that still manage to draw thick ropes of cum from the head with each upward stroke.
Your stomach heaves and you dry retch, but you can't let yourself throw up - not on her, and certainly not with your jaw broken.

By the time Moradys' cock stops shooting and her buttocks settle back onto the bench, the top of your fist and forearm are covered in her seed. You allow your eyes to drift down to the bench between you two, trying to think about anything besides the warm stickiness clinging to your flesh - think about the girl whose life you just saved, you tell yourself.

Moradys pries your hand off of her softening cock, a gesture you find particularly humiliating - as if you had wanted to hold onto it any longer than necessary. She stuffs her half-hard length into her underwear and redoes the straps, then drapes the front of her tunic over her crotch. The only remaining evidence of what lurks beneath that fabric lays drying on your left hand.

"Keep an eye on him," Moradys says as she rises to her feet. "Make sure he doesn't jump off." With that she departs, heading to the front of the barge as it continues its slow sail through the foggy mists. You had spent a week aboard a Dark Elf slave ship wishing you would never reach your destination, but now you are struck by the fervent desire that this lumbering vessel move faster. If you don't get some sort of medical attention soon, you'll die - if not from blood loss, then internal injuries or shock.

Ribara shifts you towards her, making sure you're securely propped up against the wall before standing up and taking a position in front of you. Your grotesque experience with the other two Dark Elf women has you expecting something similar now that you're alone with this one, but she simply stands there, watching you like the sentry she was ordered to be. There's a deep anger in her eyes you struggle to fathom - as if your very existence is an affront to her. What could you possibly have done to incur her hatred? Your body is a testament to the fact that you are the victim, and she is the victimizer.

You look at this mountain of a woman up and down, trying to discern the reason for her constant anger, as if you could find it within the grooves of her blood-red armor. Your eyes travel briefly to her ankle-length gown, and you wonder if she's just as horrific a mash-up of sexes as her Mistress. Hell, maybe they're all like that - maybe they just grow children in vats. Or maybe they have no children, and they're all immortal vampires who sustain themselves on human suffering.

The latter idea sounds like a joke, but you find yourself seriously considering it in your addled state. After all, what sort of creatures could make their homes within the ravages of the Warp in the first place? Back in the early years of space-faring and Man's first forays into this poorly-understood underworld, it had been rumored that demons dwelled here. With better science came greater understanding, and those stories faded into myth. But the early explorers were right all along - the evidence stands here before you.

Eventually, you come to the conclusion that there is no reason for this woman's anger, nor any of these women's depraved cruelty. This is simply what they are - foul denizens of the Warp, with no capacity for love or virtue. You might as well ask why birds fly or wind blows.

"You do not look at me," Ribara snaps.

The outburst draws you from the deepest part of your idle reverie, and you become aware of the fact that you've been staring at her for quite some time. The barge moves as slowly as ever, and each black spire you pass brings with it greater certainty that you will expire here on this barge. But you refuse to ask this woman for help - nor will you listen to her orders. What more could she possibly do to you?

"Did you hear me?" she bellows over the soft whistle of wind and the flutter of the canopy above. You tilt your head slightly and grasp your broken right arm, narrowing your eyes to make it
abundantly clear that you did, in fact, hear her.

Her lip curls and nostrils flare, followed by her taking a step forward and leaning in front of your face.

"Eyes down!" she shouts, spittle hitting your face and forcing you to blink.

It's a command you've heard before, and back then you had listened - but not this time. You continue to stare at her, and she draws her fist back, then slams it into the wall beside you so hard you hear wood splinter. You flinch, but don't allow your eyes to drift away from hers.

She shifts uneasily, looking you over as if deciding what she can do to you without incurring the wrath of her Mistress. Moradys clearly wants you alive, though she doesn't seem to be too concerned about leaving your existing injuries to fester.

Ribara's fingertips touch your throat, but only for a moment. She huffs out a sharp breath, then forces herself back into her previous position. The two of you continue your staring match, a battle made difficult by your blood loss and the general state of your broken body. Sleep - or some oblivion even more permanent - threatens to force your eyelids closed, but you snap them open each time, leaning your head back against the wall and keeping your eyes pointed at Ribara's.

Neither of you says a word, nor moves more than a single muscle here and there, but you feel as if you're embroiled in the most important fight of your life. Every second you stare is a small defiance, one which would not be so immensely satisfying if it didn't bring Ribara to such visible heights of anger.

After what seems to be hours - in fact, it probably was hours - the barge lurches to a stop, making you fall onto your side on the bench. Ribara manhandles you up, and you draw a frightened breath in through your nose as your head is swung out over the side of the barge, giving you a glimpse of the endless fall awaiting you below.

Then, you're thrown over her armored shoulder and walked off the barge, bouncing painfully against her pauldron as she falls into line with the other departing Elves. Two bikini-clad guards bring up the rear as you move onto a pathway of dark stone that slopes gently upwards. You turn your head to the right, trying to catch a glimpse of where you've set down - you had looked at nothing but Ribara for the last few hours.
The green mists are filled with spires much like before, but these appear almost natural in formation. They are made of rough rock, mile-wide things with flat tops that support elaborate cathedrals of gleaming black metal. Each spire is a city unto itself, with windows and flickering lights dotting each substructure. Your group passes under a tall arch supported by stone buttresses, and you come to see that you're standing at the edge of one of these cities-within-a-city.

You pass through gardens of thorned shrubbery and crimson flowers, around bubbling fountains that flow with some liquid too dark and thick to be water. More buildings come into view, and after a few minutes you're out of sight of the barge and the open space you flew in from. You're being carried through a marble plaza at the center of a vast complex, past human slaves and Dark Elf guards. The latter are dressed just like the two who came off the barge behind you, with purple suns tattooed over their belly buttons.

This is not a city, you realize. It is a home - Moradys' home.

You had met the sort of person who captured and sold people by the thousands, and now you are seeing where she lives. The place would be beautiful, in its own bleak way, were it not built on foundations of untold suffering and bloodshed.

The creak of straining wood sounds out ahead of your procession, and you pass through a tall set of double doors being swung wide open by a small squad of guards. Shortly after entering a rug-lined hall of flickering yellow light, Ribala veers sharply left, passing through a smaller doorway as the rest of the entourage continues onward. You're being taken to a doctor, you tell yourself. These foul creatures might not have a healing tradition, but that's even better - let them hand you off to some human slave who is trained in the medical sciences.

You continue through corridor after corridor, stopping here and there as doors are unlocked and
opened by someone walking ahead of Ribala. With each turn you take and each stairwell you
descend, your surroundings seem to become more ancient. Metal changes to stone, and the smog-
ridden air of Cummragh dissipates in favor of the musty odor of some long-forgotten basement.

A final door is swung open, and you are brought into a spacious stone room lit by green light that
wavers and weakens, as if filtered through water. Ribala throws you to the ground, your skull
cracking against hard stone and your fractured right arm finally snapping clean through. You're faced
with a circular pool some ten feet in diameter set into the floor, filled with a radiant green liquid that
pops and hisses at the air above. There's nothing else in the room, save Moradys, who strides over to
the other side of the pool and turns to face you.

"Would you care to do the honors?" she says.

Ribala grunts and grabs you by the neck, dragging you to the edge of the pool and setting you down
on your knees.

"I would love to, my Lady."

A knife appears at your throat, and you are lowered over the pool into you come face-to-face with
your own reflection. It's distorted beyond recognition by the shimmering liquid that stings at your
nostrils, but you doubt you would recognize yourself anyway. Not after what you've been through.

The tip of the knife moves to the far side of your throat, then digs in and slices clean across in one
quick swipe. Blood flows into the pool as a seamless waterfall, washing away the last vestiges of
your tortured reflection and leaving you unable to draw even the tiniest breath. Blackness creeps in
from the edges of your vision, and you embrace final release as Ribara's hand leaves your neck.

You don't think about the two women you want to take with you to oblivion. You don't think about
the pain that's finally vanished, nor even about Vala. Your last thought as you plunge into those
warm, stinging waters, is to worry about how poor a swimmer you are.

You have had plenty of bad dreams over the years. Nasty things that come at you during fevered
sleep, torturing you in the world of thought while some flu or malady wreaks havoc on your body
back in reality.

But this nightmare was unlike any other. You shoot up in bed, heart pounding and mind racing as
you throw off the covers and look over your body. Your legs move, your arms move - everything
works. There's no broken bones, no aching balls, not even a lingering headache. You let out a laugh
containing all the worry and fear that accumulated in those few seconds you first awoke, then bring a
hand up to feel at your intact throat for one final confirmation that it was, indeed, all just a bad dream.

Your blood runs cold. There's no knife wound - there's not even a scar. But just below that spot is
fastened the skin-tight metal loop that Ribala had placed on you the day before.

Your eyes shoots upward to take stock of the room you had ignored in your haste to check your
body. The walls are made of dark gray metal which seem to soak up what little green light shines in
from the single window to your left. Your bed is large - luxurious, even - and the rest of what you
can see in the darkness is just as finely furnished. There's a wall closet, a nightstand, and even a desk
next to the door at the far end of the room.

You slide off the bed, carefully walking to the mist-fogged window to confirm your surroundings.
You're looking down on the courtyard you passed through the day before - though it could have
been a month before, for all you know. You had been brought to death's door, then thrown clean
through it when Ribara slit your throat. Yet here you are, none the worse for wear, without so much
as a scratch. The situation is so unbelievable that you slap yourself with the faint hope that you'll finally awaken from this dream, but no such mercy comes.

Moving to the door, you search for a handle in the darkness but find nothing. There's a dim square light mounted on the wall beside it, which you realize is a control panel. You can't read the jagged Elvish script displayed on it, though you doubt it would do you any good, anyway. You turn your attention to the rest of the room, milling about until you find a light switch on the wall. A ball of rough yellow crystal flashes to light above the bed, bathing the room in a warm glow.

The new light reveals little more than what you had already spotted in the darkness, so you go to the wall closet and slide open the doors. A single set of a simple brown tunic and pants lies within, hanging above a pair of laceless boots.

The outfit hanging in the closet looks just like the drab clothing you saw Moradys' household servants wearing the day before. If nothing else, it will help you blend in. You pull the shirt and pants on, tucking the latter into your boots, then go around the room and look for any sign of cameras or other monitoring equipment.

The bedroom is just as clean of them as your body, with the obvious exception fastened securely around your neck. No matter how hard you try, you can't break the collar. It's made of some flexible metal which you find impossible to snap with the two fingers you manage to slip in alongside it. You don't know the full extent of what the collar does, but it's sophisticated enough to translate foreign languages and zap the words right into your brain. It seems likely there's at least a tracker in there as well.

That's a concern, but it's one you can't do anything about right now. This is the only time you've had to yourself in over a week, and likely your only chance to escape before they realize you've awoken and haul you off to God knows where. You go to the tall window looking out on the courtyard, running your fingers along the seam to search for a latch. It opens quite easily, tilting outward from the bottom on hinges that keep it upright.

The moment Cumragh's air enters your room, you're hit with a foul stench that you hadn't noticed before - one of the rare benefits of having your body so thoroughly broken when you first arrived. It smells like smoke, sulfur, brimstone, and a dozen other biting odors you know by reputation if not by name. This place reeks of mines and factories.

Who builds their mansion next to heavy industry? It's a good question, but it is quickly buried under the more pressing concern of what to do next. The courtyard below is staffed by plume-helmeted guards and criss-crossed by the occasional servant, but none look to the far corner of the plaza where your tower is situated. Most are stationed near the gothic cathedral a few hundred feet to your right, a grand building which towers over all the rest.

With the door locked - and likely guarded as well - you have no way out but down. You slide one leg out through the window, making sure the narrow ledge is sturdy enough to support you before you risk stepping out onto it. It's nowhere near wide enough to walk on in the normal fashion, but you are able to shuffle down the length of the building's exterior with your back pressed up against the wall. It had seemed like such a good idea a moment ago, but the buffeting winds and your own shaking legs have you yearning for the relative safety of the bedroom to your right. You feel as if you shouldn't be so afraid after experiencing what you did yesterday, but fear of heights is too primal a thing for you to ever be rid of it.

After a full minute of carefully sliding along the ledge, you come to a corner of the building, pressing yourself up against the wall as close as you can manage before making a quick shift to the other side. There, your feet hit something, nearly making you fall a hundred feet onto cobbled stone. You
manage to right yourself with broad swings of your arms, and see that you've struck the top of a vine-ridden trellis.

You're high up enough that you can see past the outlying buildings of metal and stone, to the cliff-side landing pad and the barge attached to it. All that's between you and that faint hope of freedom is a complex garden of hedges and fountains patrolled by the occasional guard. You make quick note of their positions, as well as the quickest path through the maze-like arrangement of hideous foliage, then grab hold of the trellis at your feet and begin working your way down.

It might have been as easy as climbing down a ladder, were the metal gridwork not covered in thorny vines as tough as barbed wire. Your clothes and skin are shredded by the time you drop down onto hard gravel, and you spare a grimacing look up to see blood and bits of cloth marking the path you took down. It's quite a sight to anyone who cares to look, and all the more reason for you to pick up the pace.

You wind your way through the garden, crouching behind bushes to allow bikini-clad guards to pass. They beat the pommels of their polearms on the stone as they walk, giving you an easy way to spot them. It occurs to you that they're not very good at their jobs, and seem more for show than anything else. The women who raided Bulanel IV were well-armored and well-equipped, and even the terrifying appearance of their ships and armor had the purpose of striking fear in the hearts of their enemies.

These warriors, however, carry only ceremonial weapons and are dressed in armor that is more erotic than protective. Two of the nine guards you've laid eyes on since ducking out your window are clearly 'equipped' in the same way Moradys is.

It would not be so obvious, if they made any effort at all to hide their manhoods. Instead they seem to revel in the obscene melding of male and female, standing proud with prominent bulges apparent in their purple-and-black underwear. To add to the grotesquerie of it all, some of the women have modified their bodies in ways beyond the biological. Small metal spikes jut out of their arms and shoulders like bony growths, no less sharp and threatening than the weapons they carry.

Balancing speed and caution, you work your way through the zig-zagging garden paths and come within sight of the manor's edge, gasping in elation as you again spot the canopied hover barge waiting silently to take you to freedom. There are no guards within sight, and you make a quick dash down a stone walkway towards your means of escape. Thoughts flash through your head of what to do next - you'll stow away below deck, hiding in some alcove until it departs for a population center. Once there, you'll figure out a way to find Vala. It's a vague plan, so foggy that you can't even begin to put odds of success on it, but it's the best you can do while knowing so little about Cummragh.

All those half-baked ideas go out the window the second you step foot on the ramp leading up to the barge. Electricity surges through you from the neck downward, making your muscles seize and sending you crashing down to the ramp. You manage to fall without hurtling over the side of it, but you get a fine view of the fathomless depths you nearly plummeted into. Moments later, someone grabs you by the ankle and hauls you back onto the path you just left, then rolls you over. Standing over you is the red-armored woman who murdered you in a past life, looking very annoyed but with none of the surprise apparent on your own face.

"He is at the barge," Ribara says into a silver bracelet on her wrist.

"Hold him there," comes Moradys' clipped voice on the other end. "I'm not ready yet."

Ribara utters a quick acknowledgement and steps back, giving you space to rise to your feet. The moment you try to push up from a kneeling position, she delivers a meteoric punch to your gut that
knocks the air from your lungs and sends you falling back to your knees. She then grabs your hair, holding your head just high enough that you can't settle your buttocks back on your heels.

"You will call me Vizir," she says in a stern voice that is deep enough to border on the masculine. "You will not look me in the eyes, and you will obey my commands without hesitation."

What she doesn't bother saying is what will happen if you disobey. That was made abundantly clear when she slit your throat with as much ceremony as carving up a flank of meat. Death might not be on the table for simply looking at her the wrong way, but you don't doubt that this woman is more than willing to repeat the brutal beating she gave you during your first meeting.

From the way the two Elves spoke through Ribara's communicator, you gather that your escape, if not necessarily planned, was at least fully expected. Ribara holds you ready for her Mistresses' arrival, lifting you up by your hair a fraction of an inch every few minutes. Whenever you're forced to rise to your feet lest she pull your hair out by the root, she shouts for you to kneel and shoves uses her free hand to punch you in the stomach.

One particularly brutal blow forces bile up into your throat and has you retching onto the ground as Ribara pulls away in disgust. Nothing solid comes out, and you realize that you can't even remember the last time you ate. With everything that's happened, little necessities like water and food simply slipped your mind.

"What did you do to him?" shouts Moradys. You tilt your head to the right to see her descending the pathway towards the two of you, flanked by half a dozen masked guards that march with barbed spears held at their sides. The Lady herself is dressed very differently than she had been the day before - much less conservatively, if you can describe her prior outfit in so modest a manner.
She wears form-fitting black leather that covers her shoulders and parts of her abdomen, with her breasts nearly popping free of the straps concealing her nipples. A slitted cloth dress swishes back and forth as she walks, revealing each leg in turn as she steps forward. Her flowing black hair reaches well past her shoulders, and atop her head she wears a horned headdress that makes her look like some seductive demon from one of the old myths. Just like her palacious home, she would be beautiful, were you not well aware of what ugliness lurks underneath her bleakly radiant exterior.

"I told him to kneel, my lady!" Ribara swats you in the forehead with the back of her hand in an annoyed gesture. "He will not listen."

Anger flares hot within you, though you're careful not to look either them in the eye as you address Moradys.

"She wouldn't *let* me kneel," you spit out. As soon as the words leave your mouth, Ribara strikes you in the face. It's too fast for you to tell if she punched you or slapped you, but either way it was strong enough to send blood flying from your mouth. Moradys tuts in disapproval, though you're not sure who her demeaning clicks of the tongue are directed at.

"Look at me," she says to you once you've recovered your senses and wiped the blood from your lips. You turn your eyes up to see her standing before you, hands on her hips, but she says nothing. After a few seconds of silence she throws her arms out, eyes going wide and mouth falling open expectantly.

"Well?" she exclaims. "How do I look?"
"Like a demon," you sputter through lips numbed by Ribara's strike. It's the corniest answer imaginable, but it reflects your true thoughts - and Moradys seems pleased with it. She smiles faintly, holding back her Vizir's hand as the latter tries to strike you again.

"No, no," she says. "I quite like that." Moradys turns and strides towards the waiting barge, followed by Ribara who hauls you along by the back of your neck. There you're pushed to the floor in much the same position you were in yesterday, though this time your injuries are purely superficial and your senses are with you in their entirety.

Two of the guards go below deck, presumably to get the bulky aircraft moving, while four more take up positions at the front and rear of the ship. Ribara goes to stand by her Mistresses' side, but is ordered off the barge, something the bodyguard is none too happy about.

"I should come with you," she says in a deferential tone with her head bowed.

"What you should do is go to the mines," Moradys says, taking a seat on the wall-mounted bench and crossing her legs. "I want you to cull the workers in preparation for the new arrivals. Let them know I'm to be taken seriously."

Ribara tilts her head up, eyes narrowing. "Has there been talk of rebellion?"

"No," Moradys admits with a slight shrug. "But you know how these types are. Always talking, complaining, wanting more food..." She trails off, sighing and waving a hand. "Kill ten percent. The weakest ones."

Ribara bows and leaves, giving you one last fiery glare before stalking off the ramp. Moradys smiles broadly as the barge pulls away from its moorings, looking very pleased with how she handled an imagined mutiny. A few idle words from this woman, and suddenly a death sentence is put on the heads of God knows how many people. Anger and revulsion roil within you, turning the corners of your lips down as you forget your place and stare up at her. Her eyes meet yours, and she seems to finally remember that she has a guest with her on this voyage.

"Come!" She holds her arms out and beckons you forward. "Come, come!"

You rise to your feet, wearily approaching and taking a seat down beside her. She throws her arm around your neck, stroking your cheek with a cold imitation of genuine affection. But no matter how affable or noble this woman can momentarily appear, she's always quick shatter those illusions. You're not about to fall for this act after your experiences the day prior.

"Bring me a girl," she says into her bracelet.

A few moments later, one of the Elves that went below deck emerges with a human slave wearing tasseled gold nipple covers and a locked chastity belt. Her dark brown hair is done up in an elaborate bun just like that of the woman you saved from an ignominious death-by-cock.

The woman's face remains pointed at the ground as she approaches the two of you, though her eyes flicker to yours ever so briefly and confusion flashes across her face. Between the beatings and sexual assaults you hadn't had much time to consider the position you find yourself in, but you are fast realizing that it is a strange one - far stranger than simple enslavement at the hands of Warp-dwelling Dark Elves.

The personal attention that Moradys lavishes on you - though entirely unenviable - is also downright bizarre. From what you gathered, she has thousands of slaves at her disposal, in one form or another - and those were just the ones you arrived with from the raid on your homeworld. Yet here you are,
plucked from the teeming masses of captives and played with like some unique toy.

But why? Moradys had obliquely hinted at some special attribute that makes you a more desirable victim to torment, but had not seen fit to delve into the specifics of it. You would ask, if you had any serious expectation of getting an actual answer.

Moradys grips your head with both hands, pointing it at the human woman and holding it there. "Do you think she's pretty?"

You swallow hard, taking a moment to run your eyes from her fidgeting toes, past her shapely breasts, all the way to the wide eyes she keeps focused on the rivets of the barge's floor.

"Yes," you say cautiously. "She's pretty."

Moradys releases your head and removes her right arm from around you, then waves the girl forward. She takes a key from her sleeve, then undoes the girl's chastity belt and allows the metal-laden underwear to clatter noisily to her feet.

You look away in a defiant show of prudeness, though you glimpsed just enough for her tastefully-trimmed bush and soft folds to be burned into your retinas. Yes, you tell yourself, she's beautiful - but so is your wife, who is still out there, waiting for you. And it's not right for you to look at this woman - this slave - as an object of sexual desire when she has no say in the matter. Like you, she's not here by choice, and has likely suffered for far longer.

"Do you want to fuck her?" Moradys says. "Or should I?"

You turn your head back to face the Dark Elf, doing your best to force your eyes to skip over the naked woman covering up her groin with her hands.

"It's up to you," she says with a flap of the hand. "But I'm not a gentle lover."

The choice she's given you isn't one you want to have to make, but it is an easy one. You're not about to watch Moradys rape this woman to death just so she can see your face when she does it. If she wants to embarrass you, fine. You can't stand to see more death, but you can live with a little more humiliation.

"I'll do it." You stand up, grabbing the girl gently by the wrist and pulling her away from Moradys. The Elf smirks, angling her body towards the two of you and leaning her elbow on the wall. The slave girl unbuckles your pants, then slips her fingers into the folds of your underwear and fishes out your soft cock.

You wince at her touch, not because it is rough or mean, but because it is so unbearably gentle. With the women yesterday, first the guard overseer then Moradys, it had been easy to put out of mind the way they touched you. That had been violence, not sensuality. But this woman, with her softly-stroking hand and trembling breasts, reminds you so much of Vala that you feel sickness rising in your stomach.

"Are you sure you don't want to trade places?" Moradys says, running a hand down the girl's arm as she brings your cock to full hardness. "I can show you how to truly love a woman."

You cast your eyes up at the fluttering canopy and frown. "I didn't think you were the sort to love."

Moradys laughs, a good natured chuckle accompanied by a hand laid on your shoulder. "I know what an *erection* feels like, boy. And so do you."
The girl casts a confused glance between the two of you, but quickly returns her attention to your now-rigid cock. She shuffles over your thighs, sliding her knees onto the padded bench and raising her buttocks over your length. A baffling mix of emotions swirls within you, made all the more powerful by Moradys' ever-present touch and withering stare.

You wish this girl were not so pretty - or better yet, that she were some cruel Elf slaver who threw you down and inserted you into her by force. At least then, you could tell yourself that you aren't betraying Vala's trust. As your hands go to the girl's hips, holding her gently, you tell herself that you're doing this to save this woman - the fact that you feel such revulsion at your own actions is almost comforting. If you enjoyed the feel of this stranger's delicate touch, you would feel even more disgusted with yourself.

You close your eyes and take steadying breaths in, waiting patiently as the girl sits down on your cock, her buttocks gradually settling into your lap. Trying to put your mind in another place or another time is useless - all you can feel is this woman's warm insides, clinging to you far more tightly than the hands you hold her with.

"What's wrong?" Moradys says, leaning in close. "You said she was pretty. Why do you look so ill?"

The girl puts her hands around your neck, then begins a slow rhythm of up and down movements that caress your length with each stroke.

"You already know," you say to Moradys as you keep your gaze fixed upward. "You read my mind. You saw everything. That's why you're doing this - to see my reaction."

As much as you hate to admit it, her plan is working out well. You struggle to fathom the reasons beyond an unconscious need to inflict wanton cruelty, but the self-disgust playing across your face has Moradys beaming in the corner of your vision and rubbing your shoulder.

"What did I see?" she asks you.

"My wife."

"Ah," she sighs, drawing a slow breath in through her mouth. "You can't help but think what she'd say if she saw this."

You squeeze your eyes shut and try to embrace the blackness behind your eyelids, but that only allows images of Vala to play all the stronger. Instead, you look over at Moradys - her cruel, angular visage stands in sharp contrast to every cherished memory you hold of your wife, making it easier to put the latter out of mind. Moradys snakes her hand around to the back of your neck, thumb rubbing up and down all the while.

"And your wife was prettier than this flabby thing?" She slaps at the slave girl's right breast, who winces but continues dutifully bouncing on your cock. "Is that the problem? Should I throw her off and get someone better?"

"It's not about who's prettier," you snap in a quavering voice. "I love her." You're angry, and frustrated, but the tightening of your balls and the growing warmth in your abdomen has your emotions too mixed up to convey properly.

"Love?" Moradys says in surprise. "Not 'loved'?"

Your heart skips a beat as you realize your mistake, and the Elf's smile broadens.
"Sifting through memories is a tricky thing, especially when the events concerned are so... chaotic."

You bite your lip and try to keep your sheer panic from becoming evident, desperate not to reveal anything more than you already have. A cunning intelligence flickers behind Moradys' orange eyes, as if you can see all the little plans being cooked up with this new information you've unwittingly given her.

"I know you didn't see her when you first arrived here," Moradys muses to herself, drumming her fingers on her jawline. "That memory would have been right on the surface of your mind. She must have arrived with one of the earlier groups."

That was your own conclusion as well - and part of why the talk of culling the miners has you so worried. If that's a regular occurrence, and Vala ends up there, you need to get her out before Moradys is next struck by a genocidal mood.

"Hmm."

Moradys shrugs and drops her hand, re-situating herself to watch with idle interest as the girl on your lap rises and falls, breasts swaying so close to your face that you're forced to press your head to the wall.

"I wouldn't worry yourself with guilt," she sighs. "Your wife is likely long dead."

Your jaw drops open, then clenches tight as you glare at her. "She is not dead." You say that not in blind defiance, but with the firm conviction that your wife is strong - a fighter, and a survivor. This place is brutal, and you've seen the way it chews people up - but you'll get to her before that happens.

"It's been at least three months," Moradys says. "Six for the first transport, three for the one before yours."

You stare at her, dumbfounded, and she gives you a sad smile as her free hand sets down on your abdomen.

"Time works differently in the Warp," she says in a slow, patient voice. "Sometimes it moves faster, sometimes slower. Yours was the last of the four slave shipments. The others arrived far earlier - between three and six months ago."

No new questions come to mind, no witty retort. Just cold, bleak horror. Vala has been here for at least three months, possibly as long as half a year. She was alone this whole time, without you - the one man who was supposed to protect her, come hell or high water.

"Maybe she's not dead!" Moradys adds quickly. "If she is as pretty as your memories lead me to believe, it's likely she ended up in one of the Hive brothels. That's ironic, is it not? Being fucked from dusk to dawn by the same soldiers who burnt her planet to the ground?"

She shakes her head and mumbles to herself, tapping her chin thoughtfully. "No, not ironic. What's the opposite of 'poetic justice'?"

Your vision swims and you turn your face away from her, leaning your forehead on the slave girls' soft chest. You should be furious beyond belief, but you feel too sick to even move. Each gyration of her hips against your lap makes the bile rise higher in your throat, and the welcoming warmth of tight womanhood around your cock does nothing to quell the images of Vala flashing through your mind. Not real memories, of your peaceful life back home - new ones, false ones, of all the vile and degrading things that these monsters might have inflicted on her.

A single day of rough treatment had you ready to give in to despair. What hope could there be for
someone who endured what you did for three months?

When your climax comes, you don't bother trying to resist it. Moradys' hand stays with you throughout the sickening orgasm, her breath hastening to match that of the fast-moving woman you rest your head on. Cumming feels less like a release, and more like a violent expulsion of all the disgusting feelings the Elf's poisonous words have given rise to. Despite that, you feel none of the relief you would expect from something that feels so akin to puking your guts out. Only disgust with the evil woman moaning beside you, this warm body you cling to, and your own abject failure.

"Ah..." Moradys sighs, letting her hand slip down your arm. For the first time since the revelation she laid bare, you allow your eyes to drift over to her. She sits leaning back on the bench, panting with eyes half-closed as if in a dream. Despite being the only person here to not have fucked anyone, she looks by far the most satisfied - and you suppose she did have her way with you.

The slave girl shifts off of the bench and slides your spent cock from her pussy, cupping a hand to her crotch to keep any seed from spilling out. Moradys grunts at her and waves a hand, and the girl picks up her chastity belt and departs. Why the slaves need it, you can't imagine. One final, pointless humiliation, you suppose - a reminder that even if sex is treated like a cheap commodity here, it is Moradys who ultimately owns it.

"Did you enjoy yourself?" Moradys says in an oddly wavering voice, sitting upright and leaning towards you.

You lean your elbows on your knees, staring at the ground between your feet and feeling far more tired than you should.

"No."

Moradys remains silent, and you wait expectantly for some snide comment or biting remark - but none comes. Eventually you tilt your head to see her staring at you with a cold violence that calls to mind all the horrors of the day before.

"No... Mistress," you correct yourself, your throat suddenly turning very dry.

Ribara might not be here, and the six guards on the barge are barely within earshot, but you have no real idea of how dangerous Moradys herself is, in a purely physical sense. Dark Elf society is 'might-makes-right' taken to its logical extreme, and you've seen what this woman's underlings could do. You struggle to imagine her being any weaker than them.

Her expression softens, and she lets out a slow breath as she lays a hand on your thigh.

"I'm trying so hard here. You see that, don't you?" Moradys gestures off at the doorway the slave girl left through. "But if you become more trouble than you're worth, well..." She trails off, giving you a sad smile and another pat on the leg. You nod slowly, barely conscious of the motion as you shrink under her gaze.

"Do you know what I hate more than ungrateful people?" she asks. You shake your head at what is almost certainly a question she's about to answer for you. "Those who break their promises."

Moradys puts both feet flat on the floor, then swings the flaps of her dress over each leg, exposing her dark underwear and the absurd bulge contained therein. A glistening wet spot has formed on the front, marking the head of her glans and making abundantly clear the heights of arousal your humiliation has brought her to. She gives the entire package a light squeeze, running her fingers up and down the length of her soft shaft.
"Kneel," she says in a voice far more commanding than sensual. "I want to look down on you."
A Trip, and a Fall

You look away from Moradys' unnatural sex organs, casting a longing look out at the yawning void all around you. The mansion-topped plateaus have fallen from sight, but you spot many more lights twinkling through the haze like stars. There's a sound, too - the low drone of repulsorlift-borne air traffic. You must be nearing some city center.

An hour ago, that would have been a welcome thought. But now, even the faint hope you had of finding Vala has become twisted and warped. When you think about what state you might find her in, you find yourself wondering if it'd be better to never find her - and that thought brings you more self-directed revulsion than anything Moradys could hope to inflict.

Your vision drifts down, over the siding of the barge to the cavernous depths below. Imagining yourself jumping off brings you a strange sense of freedom, perhaps because it's the only major choice that's still your own. You haven't yet fallen to such depths of despair that you seriously consider leaping over, but it's comforting to know that the option is there.

"Don't you even think about it," Moradys snaps. "I'll scrape you off of whatever rock you splatter on and have the Shapers put you back together."

You feel the blood drain from your face as you finally get a small clue as to what sort of work these 'Shapers' perform. She’s mentioned them before, but only in passing to Ribara.

"Oh yes," she continues, nodding as she meets your horrified gaze. "But they're not miracle workers. You'd likely come back a brain-damaged dullard. Not that such a thing would keep me from making full use of you." She taps her foot impatiently, and you slide off the bench and slink between her legs.

"Good boy," she croons, leaning forward to put her hand on the back of your head. Her fingers twist up in your hair, establishing a firm grip that makes it very clear you're not leaving until the job is done. She draws you closer, putting your face so close to her moist crotch that you can't help but be overcome by her sickly-sweet scent. It smells of rotting flowers or expired perfume, of something lovely left to age for far too long. You try to undo the small metal clasps at her sides, but she pulls one of your hands away.

"So eager," she gasps in amazement. "Do you have no concept of how to please a lady? Don't just dive right in - foreplay!"

Her hand pushes your head further forward, and you resist the urge to throw yourself back as your pursed lips are pressed to the wet spot on her panties. Precum is smeared over your lips and nostrils, a disgusting stickiness that makes it difficult to force your mouth to open

"That's it," Moradys says patiently. "Use your lips."

You obey, opening and closing your mouth as your lips caress the end of her hardening member. The sweet smell and sweeter taste make it impossible to ignore what you're doing, but you came to a firm decision when you looked away from that inviting drop into nothingness - you will find Vala, and you will leave this place.

If she has suffered indignities in order to survive, then you'll do so as well. Neither of you will need to forgive the other, because there's no sin to forgive. You feel a renewed sense of determination even as you slide your hands onto Moradys' supple thighs, pushing her legs apart to gain better
access to her crotch. This humiliation has become a challenge, a way to demonstrate the depths you will go to win back your wife. You may have lost her through no failure of your own, but you refuse to allow simple shame to prevent you from finding her again.

Moradys breaths quickly through half-closed lips, a sputtering and halting breath that seems out of place for simple over-the-clothes foreplay. You derive no satisfaction from knowing that you're pleasing her, but her stifled moans at least tell you that you're not headed for another beating.

"That's enough. Take it out."

She pulls you away from her underwear, the fabric now soaked with your own saliva and tenting obscenely with her burgeoning erection. You undo the clasps, and the corners of your lips turn down even further as a thick, pale rod, lined with veins and topped by a foreskin-covered head, swings towards you. You take it in hand at the base, recoiling at the warmth apparent within it. That heat should be a comforting thing, a reminder that you're dealing with a person of flesh and blood and not a foul demon of the Warp, but it also reminds you that you're once again touching a cock.

"Have you ever done this before?"

Moradys is breathing fast now, her chest rising and falling quickly with the one hand she has set atop her right breast. Your eyes flicker up to her and you shake your head, quickly returning your attention back to her cock as you draw the foreskin down, exposing the pink glans.

"Then I'll be your first," she says with no small amount of amusement. "I'll take all your firsts."

Her hand moves you back towards her groin, and you're forced to open your mouth to accept her cock before she simply mashes your face into her shaved crotch. Hot flesh slips into your mouth, sitting on your tongue and spilling precum like some vile sausage you know better than to bite down on.

"No teeth," she says sternly. "If teeth become a problem, I'll have them pulled."

As satisfying as the idea of tearing off this woman's dick is, you know better than to let your boiling anger get the best of you. You could kill this woman right here and now, and it wouldn't do you a lick of good. At best, you'd end up in the hands of someone just as cruel - maybe Ribara. At worst, you'd be killed outright. That wouldn't help you, and it certainly wouldn't help Vala. For now, you'll play Moradys' games.

"That's what they sometimes do in the Hive brothels, you know."

You shut your eyes in the vain hope of blocking out her words, though the choked gags you make as her dick slips deeper into your mouth drown her out far better.

"Oh, but don't worry! They like to keep the girls too drugged to fight back. It makes the whole operation run much more smoothly."

Tears well in your eyes at the thought of Vala being subjected to treatment far worse than a single coerced blowjob - though those tears could also be the result of Moradys' length pushing up against your tonsils, seeking entry into your throat. You scoot forward on your knees and wrap your lips tight around her shaft, forcing yourself lower with a sickening series of choking gags. Saliva drips from your mouth, sliding down her shaft and drenching her hairless balls.

"Are you sure you've never done this before?" Moradys asks, putting her other hand on your head and using both to start you moving up and down. "Perhaps if I find your wife, you two can trade tips - assuming she still remembers you.
Half of you wants to puke with every venomous word this woman speaks, and the other half wants to chomp down on her. It's like she's daring you to do something violent. In a strange way, that makes it easier not to react. Letting her berate you with no consequence isn't much of a victory, but it's the best you're going to get.

With your lips halfway down down the length of her veiny cock and your tongue sliding along her bulging urethra, Moradys' breathing quickens yet again and her humiliating tirade gives way to wordless pants and stifled grunts. It's a sloppy blowjob, clumsy and messy with slobbering spittle that leaves the cushion beneath her balls soaked with saliva, but she doesn't seem to mind. The physical pleasure, you realize, is secondary to her. She enjoys seeing you debase yourself, reveling in an ecstasy that darkly mirrors your own disgust.

You keep one hand on the bottom half of her shaft, rubbing and stroking while you gag on the top half. She's large enough - and you're inexperienced enough - that going any further is impossible, especially at this awkward angle. Moradys is still breathing quickly, but relaxes enough to release her hold on your hair and lean back against the wall, tilting her head up at the sky - or whatever it is that lies above.

A few minutes into a blowjob that has become no less sickening than when you started, you hear a metal rattle approaching from behind you. Moradys' hand holds you still before your lips can slide off the swollen head of her cock, and she leans forward.

"Lunch!" she exclaims, and you're struck by the idea that this is the first time since arriving in Cummragh that you've had any real sense of what time it is. During the middle of a forced blowjob, of all places.

The rolling cart you heard stops beside you, and the guard who brought it departs. Moradys shifts around plates and cups, sipping some drink and scarfing down food while you gag on your own solid meal just as noisily. The presence of her dick in your mouth, no matter how disgusting, had reminded you how long it's been since your last meal - and the smell of meats and baked goods isn't helping matters. Your saliva flows even faster, and you find your eyes turning to the cart to try and catch a peak of whatever alien delicacies are heaped atop it.

"Up." Moradys grabs your hair and pulls you off her cock, then holds a small fruit in front of your face. It looks like little more than an overgrown grape with a bit of fuzz on it, but in your famished state it might as well be a feast.

She pushes the fruit past your lips, and you accept it with no show of defiance. You're too hungry to do anything but chew it a few times and swallow it down, barely giving yourself time to appreciate the sweetness of it. You're then guided back to her cock, and the pleasant taste you had only a few moments to enjoy is once again overcome by the bittersweet taste of precum oozing from her slit.

The more you suck, the further over you she hunches, until both of her arms are leaned on the back of your head, making your upward strokes increasingly difficult. She's shaking and twitching, clicking her heels against in the floor in an increasingly fast rhythm that drives you to move faster. You know what's coming, and there's no way to avoid it.

"You haven't eaten in days, yes?" Moradys pants. "How about a liquid meal? Would you like that?"

You can't speak a word around the cock jabbing at the entrance to your throat, nor can you suppress your pride enough to utter any sort of grunting affirmation to her question. Instead, you simply keep sucking, letting your actions speak for you.

Moradys huffs and pants, gripping the sides of your head as she bucks her hips up into your mouth.
Her cock throbs and pulses, shot after shot of bitter semen striking your tonsils and rolling down your tongue. You gag, retch, and come within a hair's breadth of vomiting, but resist the urge to push away from her as your cheeks bloat obscenely and cum dribbles out the corners of your stretched lips.

Only now, with her thick seed rolling over your tongue, do you wish that you had gone to the efforts of taking her dick deeper. It would have been better to let her skip your mouth and unload straight into your stomach, leaving your tastebuds un molested. The scent and taste of her precum had been revolting, but only because of what it represented - the seed that now floods your mouth is not so fluid, nor so sweet. It's viscous, salty, bitter, and more difficult to keep down than the foulest medicine imaginable.

You force your throat to work, allowing small amounts to slip down with each undulating motion of your neck muscles. Even after her member ceases its endless throbbing, it takes quite some time until you've swallowed the last of her 'meal'. The taste remains as strong as ever, and you doubt you'll ever truly be rid of it. Not in body, and certainly not in mind.

Moradys' grip slackens, allowing you to draw your lips up to the head of her cock, where her arms once again go rigid as she pants and huffs over you. When this woman had been skullfucking a slave nearly to death, she had seemed the picture of composure. Now, even though you can't look up at her, you can hear the exhausted mess she's become.

Had that other slave simply become too inured to her tortures for Moradys to enjoy the experience? It's become obvious that the Dark Elves - this one in particular - derive deep satisfaction from inflicting pain and suffering, but you're beginning to suspect that there's something more to it, something that you as a human can't quite understand.

Gradually her hold on your head loosens, and you're able to draw far enough away that her softening cock slips free of your mouth, dropping to the bench she sits on. Moradys slumps backward, looking as if she had been the one deprived of air by over a half foot of intruding manhood.

"Chair!" she screeches, her sharp voice making you jump in surprise. You look about to see one of the guards walking down from the forward viewing deck with a wooden stool in hand. She places it behind you, and Moradys grunts while motioning for you to take a seat. You do so, and she heaves herself upright before wheeling the cart of food between the two of you. The plates are picked over, with pastries and fruits left half-eaten, but you're so starved that you would eat from the trash if the food were clean of maggots.

"Hand." Moradys places her upturned palm atop the edge of the cart, and you hesitantly reach out for it. She grabs your wrist, smacking it down while keeping a firm grip. Then, she picks up a thinly-sliced cut of meat from the tray, rolling it up with one hand before pushing it to your lips. You grimace at the intimate display, but force your jaw to unclench, allowing her entry. Her thin fingers slip far deeper than they need to, going so deep that you gag and nearly choke on the bit of food. A broad smile spreads across her face, and she repeats the sequence, occasionally raking her sharp fingernails across your tongue.

"Tell me about your wife," she says casually, as if this were some spur-of-the-moment topic meant to break the ice. "Was she the only woman you've ever been with?" Her eyes flash wickedly, and she gives you a slight tilt of the head. "Other than me, of course."

"No, Mistress. I slept with other woman before her."

Moradys narrows her eyes and presses her lips together, seeming a little disappointed with your answer in some way.
"How many cocks did she ride before she settled down with you? Did you pine over her for years before she finally looked your way?"

The question is so vile, so outlandish, that you can hardly take it seriously. Only the grim reality of Vala's current situation - wherever it might be - brings you any distress. But you push those thoughts aside, focusing on Moradys' question, considering how to answer it as if she were speaking only of some acquaintance of yours.

"I assume she slept with other men before we met." You speak politely but firmly, meeting her intense gaze unwaveringly. "I never asked how many."

Moradys drops her fruit-bearing hand to the cart, rattling the plates atop it, and grips your wrist a bit tighter with the other as she leans towards you.

"Think about your wife. Picture her in your mind."

You have no intention of doing as ordered, but it's hard to push those images of Vala aside when she's been your foremost concern for the last two days. Long hair a shade somewhere between a roaring fire and autumn leaves, with eyes like emeralds and a smile too loving for you to call it something so cheap as 'beautiful'.

"Now imagine her after six months serving as a cum dump for an entire Hive Ward. Maybe she tried to fight her clients, and they cut off her arms! Would you take her back if she could no longer hold you?"

Disgust and anger well up within you, and you try to yank your arm away, but Moradys smashes it back down to the cart with a display of unnatural strength. She stares at you with a wide-eyed intensity, chest rising and falling with heavy breaths as she searches your soul for some sick sustenance. You enact the only defiance you have left, pushing aside all the horrible thoughts she tried to give rise to, filling your mind with gibberish and nonsense until there's no room left for anything so distressing as the real world.

Moradys shakes your wrist a few times, saying nothing, and her expression darkens until she releases you. She shoots up from the bench, then grabs hold of the cart and throws it off the side of the barge, plates of food and all. Spinning back to you, she opens her mouth as if to shout for a guard, but quickly closes it and drops onto the bench.

"Dress me," she snaps, folding her arms beneath her bosom and glaring at you as you stuff her soft cock back into her underwear and redo the straps. It's degrading work that leaves your fingertips sticky with dried cum and spit, but you feel a smile threatening to cross your lips as the image of her unhappy glare remains stuck in your mind. You feel as if you've won some small battle, though all it did was briefly stem your continual loss of pride.

Moradys orders you to stay kneeling as the barge continues its slow travel, and no beating comes - though you suspect it will later, when your ability to walk unaided is not needed. After another thirty minutes of quiet travel, the distant noises of the city grow closer, and you pass through a particularly dense cloud of green fog, emerging without warning into a bustling webwork of massive spires woven together as if by some freighter-sized spider.

Your barge falls into line with several dozen others, all making their way to a flat disc jutting out the side of one of the buildings. Smaller flying vehicles zip past you, moving far more quickly than the lumbering pleasure yacht you sit on. The barge comes up alongside the disc with the others docking there, and Moradys unsnools a thin leash from around her belt, then clips it around the front of your collar and leads you off of the ship.
The city had appeared massive during your approach, but it is only when you see the array of Dark Elves arriving alongside you that you truly appreciate the scope of Cummragh. They’re all undoubtedly of the same species of Moradys and Ribara, but their appearances vary so wildly you could hardly tell. Some have hair of stark white, stuck up in spiked mohawks or grown down to their waist. Some wear drab robes of muted colors and conservative cut, while others wear garishly-colored thongs that scarcely contain their sexual organs, be those male or female.

All of the guards you’ve seen up until now, you realize, were all of Moradys’ Clan, or House, or however society is structured here. With these strange sights comes a new hope - is it possible that not all of these Elves are as inhumanly cruel as the ones you’ve met? If House attitudes flow downward from their leader, maybe you’ve simply had the bad luck of ending up with the worst of the lot. And if that's true, perhaps there is a way to improve your situation before you even find a way out of this hellish place.

There are other humans here - as many as there are Elves, in fact, though most of those humans are women. Some are harried and harassed by their handlers, but others walk alongside them with a casual stroll that would hardly lead you to guess they were slaves at all.

Moradys yanks at your collar, drawing your gaze back forward as she leads you through the crowd moving into the spire. The interior of the structure is just as grotesque and alien as the outside, a huge, tube-shaped hallway with spikes and ridges that give you the sense this is the hive for some massive insects. Maybe that's how they built this place, you muse to yourself. You know so little about these 'people' that it's as good a guess as any.

After a few turns down different corridors and a few dozen doorways passed by, the crowds grow thinner and the hallways grow smaller. It's well-lit enough for you to avoid the precariously-placed ridges running width-wise along the floor, but still dark enough to give the place a sinister air.

"Aren't you going to ask me where we're going?" Moradys says back to you.
A bit of joviality has returned to her voice, something you've learned to find far more frightening than impatience or anger.

"Where are we going, Mistress?"

She lets out a sharp breath and snorts, clearly stifling a laugh. "A Shaper!" she replies enthusiastically.

Your legs freeze up, more from instinctual fear than any conscious act of defiance. She flashes a frustrated look back at you, giving your leash a hard pull that nearly sends you crashing to the floor. You had little trouble following her before, but your legs are now shaking so much that you can hardly keep up with her long strides.

"I realized why you're so defiant," she says without bothering to look back. "It's those balls of yours! We'll make you nice and smooth - that should calm you down."

Terror builds within you, coming to its peak as you stop at a circular door set into the wall, surrounded by illuminated Elvish script that means nothing to you. The doors open for Moradys and she leads you inside, coming to a dark room at the intersection of three corridors, decorated only by a few potted pitcher plants that reek of rotting flesh. The moment the door closes, footsteps sound out from the hall opposite the entrance, and a figure emerges from the gloom.

The black-clad figure is a Dark Elf, though her manner of dress makes it hard to say even that much. She's flat-chested, her entire body covered in a patchwork set of leather and red cloth that looks like a lunatic's attempt at imitating a doctor's operating smock. A respirator covers the lower half of her face, a low 'hiss' accompanying each breath in and out.

Her skin is even more pale than Moradys', something you hadn't thought possible. The Dark Elves
might shun sunlight as a species, but this one seems to avoid even artificial light. Her eyes are uniformly black, and a teardrop-shaped stone of identical color is set into the flesh of her bald head, just above the midpoint of her eyes.

"Lady Moradys," the shorter woman rasps. "What've you bring me?" She comes so close to you that her chest presses into your upper abdomen, and her colorless eyes examine your face as she pokes at it with a clawed gauntlet. Her fingers slide downward, eventually coming to rest on your groin where they pinch and flick at your sensitive flesh. Your knees buckle at her touch, and you fear that you won’t even receive anaesthesia before the castration begins.

"I only want a brand," Moradys says as she yanks you away from the Shaper and her clicking metal fingers. "But I'd like to show it something first. Do you have any art pieces on display?"

She lets a slow breath out, stepping away from you with one last trace of her fingers up your abdomen.

"Yes, a fine one - only for another five days." The Shaper turns and leads Moradys down the hall on the left, the latter tugging you along with them, forcing your legs to start moving again despite your mind screaming at you to bolt in the other direction.

"A brand?" you ask uneasily, your voice so quiet and so shaky that it would be comical if your manhood weren't on the line. "Not..." You trail off, letting one hand drift in front of your crotch protectively.

Moradys glances back, then lets out a roaring laugh that rings throughout the hallway. She doesn't answer your unasked question, continuing onward as the Shaper leads you through a door and into another stretch of hall. This one has several doors, as well as long windows covered from the inside by metal slats. She stops at the end of one of them, using a control panel on the wall to slide down the blinder for that window.

When you had first laid eyes on the woman who runs this place, you had thought her to be a twisted version of a doctor - so should it really be any surprise that she have her own warped version of an operating room? But even if you hadn't been too worried about your imminent castration to consider anything else, nothing could have prepared you for this.

The small room she revealed has a single metal operating table, positioned half-upright so that the naked human man atop it is fully visible to you. His abdomen has been cut open, the flap of skin and muscle covering his nudity. His digestive organs have been removed, still connected to his body but strung out in a wide expanse from multiple hooks hanging from the ceiling above.

Your muscles go limp and you tip forward, forced to steady yourself on the edge of the window. Just when your mind adjusts to the horror put on display before you, you see it - the man's chest, rising and falling with slow breaths. His eyes are wide open, held by metal clamps that wrap around the sides of his head. Sickness wells within you, vomit rising up your throat with such speed that you barely have time to point your mouth at the floor before unleashing it.

"Oh... there, there." Moradys pats you on the back, her mockingly soothing tone no more comforting than her unwanted touch. Your puking ends quickly, and you're suddenly not so upset about the cart being thrown overboard - none of the food would have made it past your stomach. The Shaper circles around you and begins poking at the milky-white paste with her long claws, and you force yourself to look up at the man, an expression of mixed sadness and anger knotting up the muscles in your face.

"Why," you gasp out. "What the hell is this?"
"This isn't my doing," Moradys replies sharply, a bit of annoyance in her voice. "Lady Belesennu, I assume?" she says to the Shaper, who hisses a wordless acknowledgement.

You lean your forearm against the glass, staring with mouth agape at this catastrophe that's been made of the human form. You've seen the atrocities these aliens are capable of, but never before have you seen their evil wrapped up in such... artistry.

Moradys walks behind you, wrapping her arms around your chest and resting her chin in the crook of your neck. Even here, among the stench of acrid vomit and putrid chemical poisons, you are quickly overtaken by her sickeningly sweet scent.

"Living in the Warp is hard," she sighs. "On the body and the soul. Especially when you've lived as long as I have. It gets harder and harder to feel. Sometimes we go to... extremes." She pushes her breasts into your back, reaching forward so that she can rap her knuckles on the window. She waves at the man, but his eyes remain fixed on the organs strung out above him.

"That's why you're such a gift!" she says, returning her hand to your stomach where it rubs up and down. "Do you know what a Psyker is?"

You let out a shuddering breath, finally able to force your eyes away from the mangled slave but still unable to speak.

"You wear your emotions on your sleeve, in a more literal sense than most. Everything you feel, I feel." She raises a hand up to your face, turning it about in the air and wiggling her fingers as purple energy crackles between them, filling your nostrils with the stink of ozone.

"Ah..." She sighs and lowers your hand. "I haven't felt this young in centuries."

You try to turn your body away from the window, but a forceful swing of the hips from Moradys keeps your arm there.

"What's this feeling called?" she asks wondrously. "I think this one is my favorite." Her fingernails dig into your skin, and you come to realize that the trembling you feel is not only your own. Moradys is shaking as well, mirroring your anguished horror in body if not in mind. "When you look at this man, what do you feel?"

"I feel..."

You trail off, struggling to put a single word to the chaotic mess of emotions turning your stomach and twisting your heart in knots. An itchy heat crawls over your body, like your blood is on fire. Fear and disgust well within you, but anger is what spills over with such force that it flows into Moradys.

"I hate this," you spit at the window. "Why would you want to feel this?" You look away from the freakshow of an operating room, narrowing your eyes and shaking your head. "There are better emotions, things that feel good."

"Oh?" Moradys peaks her head around to look at you. "Like what?"

For a moment, all you can do is stare off in space wordlessly. The oppressive horror of this place makes it hard to think of anything outside of it.


Moradys laughs, a good natured chuckle that turns into a pitying croon as she pats you on the chest.
"Alright, slave. Do it. Make me feel love."

It's not something you've ever expected to have to do on command. You squeeze your eyes shut, blocking out the sights and smells and sounds of this dungeon to make room for something better. You think of Vala, of walking through rolling fields of amber wheat with her hand in yours. But the image is shaky and strained, a fleeting and ephemeral thing that is shattered over and over by the hiss of the Shaper's respirator and the taste of cum-laden vomit stuck to your tongue.

Every time you try to remember the gentle touch of your wife, Moradys' fingers press into you a bit harder, making your skin crawl. Even the positive thoughts you manage to cling to for more than a moment are poisoned by her warm breath and wandering hands, and those twisted images become painful reminders of just how unlikely it is you'll ever experience the real thing again.

"I can't do it," you hiss through clenched teeth. "It's this place - it's disgusting."

But more than that, it's the woman who clings to you, coiling around your body like a snake as her bulge presses into your buttocks, forcing you closer to the window. Even if this woman is capable of something so foreign to a Dark Elf as selfless love, you bristle at the thought of allowing her to take a bit of your own for herself.

"This is my home," she murmurs into your ear. Her voice wavers uneasily, and she heaves to and fro as if she's going to be sick right there on your shoulder. "Why bother with something so weak and fickle as love? This right here..." She grabs you tight and sways your hips back and forth with hers as she shudders orgasmically. "This is perfect."

In a way, she's right. Love is weak. There's a comforting warmth to the feel of holding your lover close in bed, an excited leap of the stomach that comes with meeting them after too long apart. But it's subtle, too subtle for someone so ancient and calloused as Moradys to feel.

This anger and revulsion washing over you now, this itch shooting up your spine and lead weight pulling down your stomach, this is strong. To someone as sane and human as you, these shaking knees and this clammy skin is inseparable from the eviscerated man laid out before you. But to Moradys, with her jaded senses, it's too novel a feeling for her to be repulsed by. It's powerful, and that's all she cares about.

"You're wondering if this is what's waiting for you," she says softly. You had been too shocked to even consider that, and the thought of you in that man's place makes your hot blood suddenly run cold.

"I'm not a sadist," Moradys continues. "And I'd hate to wreck you so thoroughly that you're left numb. That would make you useless. So keep on being your tender... sensitive... self."

Finally Moradys pulls away, allowing you to withdraw from the window with your eyes cast low. The Shaper lowers the blinds, but the image of the tortured man has been burned into your mind too thoroughly for that small mercy to matter. You're led by the leash back to the central lobby, then into another hall and an operating room not unlike the one you just saw. Every neuron in your brain is screaming at you to run away as fast as your legs will take you, but the last thing you want to do is convince Moradys that you really do need to get your balls removed.

You lay down on the table, keeping your hands away from anything they could conceivably be strapped to. If this Shaper brings out a scalpel, you tell yourself, you're stabbing both these women in the neck and fleeing, consequences be damned. The masked woman reaches under the table, unhooking what looks to be a tattoo gun, though far more menacing than any you're familiar with.
"Shirt off," she rasps, and you do as ordered as Moradys prowls around the room in slow circles. Your pants are allowed to stay on, which you find immensely comforting, but that comfort gives way to pain as half a dozen oversized needles are hammered into your abdomen by the pneumatic device in the Shaper's hands.

You cry out, willing your seizing muscles back down to the cold metal slab as puncture wounds are created in rapid succession, each one filled with ink pumped in from a hose connected to the table. You've never gotten a tattoo before, but you struggle to believe that it's normally this horrendously painful. Only fear of what might happen if you screw up the design keeps your body locked to the table.

The Shaper stops now and then, pulling back the needles and flashing a bright orange light over your abdomen. It's a bit painful, though not nearly so much as the needles, and you're not quite sure what she's doing until you smell the distinct odor of burnt hair. She continues like that for half an hour, lasering shut hair follicles before going over the tenderized patch of flesh with the hammering needles. When she finishes and steps away to admire her work, you can do little more than groan up at the dim yellow lights above, feeling very much like a pincushion.

"Fine work," Moradys says, coming closer to the table and eyeing your stomach. She touches you by the arm as if to force you to rise, but then draws back. "Take off the rest of the hair. I can't stand it."

You grab hold of the waistline of your pants, but a furious glare from Moradys has you removing them, along with your underwear, and beginning what would be the most humiliating experience of your life, had you not guzzled down a quart of cum only two hours prior. The Shaper runs the orange light from head to toe, vaporizing every last bit of body hair while her long, spike-tipped fingers dance across your flesh like a spider. Your crotch and balls are zapped clean, leaving them so sore and tender that you fear having to put chafing underwear back over them.

When you flip over, the Shaper has you spread your cheeks so that she can do as thorough a job as her client expects. Once that particular bit is done, Moradys orders her to stop, then grabs your cheeks and makes an inspection of your now-hairless anus. With a satisfied hum she lets them close again, and the Shaper finishes up while you do your best not to consider the myriad possible reasons behind Moradys' careful examination of your most intimate regions.

The two of you depart soon after, with Moradys making no indication of payment or other compensation for the Shaper's services. The social workings of this city baffle you just as much as its physical construction. You now have a spiralling purple sun tattooed around your belly button, though it's completely covered by the drab tunic you put on that morning. It's humiliating to have something akin to a slave brand stuck on you, but it's far better than having your balls cut off.

On the way back to the barge, you're struck by a new pain heaped atop your raw flesh and churning stomach - a rhythmic pounding in your skull, the result of not having had any real drink since having your throat slit and being dunked in bubbling green waters. The three hours you spend kneeling on the deck of the barge are torturous, and you come very close to breaking down and begging for something to drink.

You're too miserable to be above such debasement, and would do it if it didn't carry the risk of making Moradys specifically deny you fluids so as to prolong your torture. You're slowly learning to think one step ahead of how you usually would, though you doubt you'll ever be able to wrap your head around the extent of her mind games - nor do you intend to stay in Cummragh long enough to accomplish that.

The barge docks on the cliffside below Moradys' manner, where a few guards are waiting alongside
Ribara. The latter steps onto the connecting ramp the moment the guards on your ship extend it, and she picks up the leash that Moradys had not bothered to take off of you.

"Did it misbehave, my Lady?"

"No, no. Not at all." Moradys walks up onto the ramp, then stops halfway and turns around, a thoughtful expression on her face. "Well..."

"What is it?" Ribara says quickly, wrapping her hand up in your leash so that you're forced to take a step towards her.

"He was a bit dodgy with some of my questions. Give him a light beating - not enough that you need to throw him in the Pit again."

She leaves with your entourage of a dozen guards, and Ribara pulls you off of the barge before stopping, turning to face you, and delivering the first of many heart-stopping blows to your chest and stomach.

You stay standing for the first two, and in your stunned state think that maybe you're building up a tougher hide - but Ribara is pulling her punches, a fact made abundantly clear whenever she strikes your face with open hands instead of closed fists.

You fall to your knees for the third time in half a minute, and Ribara leans over to grab you by the scruff of your tunic and haul you to your feet for another series of body blows. The backhands to your face would not hurt nearly as badly if your body wasn't so deprived of fluids that your brain rattled right up against your skull.

You're tired of hurting - of being made to hurt for no reason. You spot Moradys ascending the stairway to the manor gardens, and realize she isn't even staying to watch the beatdown she ordered. You want to hurt her, to give her some fraction of the pain you feel, but the only person within reach is the brainless brute drawing back her fist in preparation for another blow.

As Ribara pulls you to your feet, you push up with both legs, driving your head into her chin. There's a sharp 'crack', and she lets out a cry through closed lips as she stumbles back. Your head is swimming from the force of that blow as well as all the prior ones, but you can see well enough to make out the blood spilling from her mouth in gushing torrents as she rights herself on a short stone pillar. Her eyes are wide in shock, and she holds a hand up to her jaw to feel the damage. You doubt you broke anything, but that much blood tells you she likely just swallowed half her tongue.

You laugh madly, your head throbbing even harder from the raucous noise as you hurl yourself at her again, seeking to press your advantage. Ribara drops her hand from her face and catches you by the shoulders as you wrap your arms around her waist, keeping you from gaining the leverage you need to throw her to the ground. She's a heavy woman, and made heavier by the thick metal plates covering her from the neck down. Everywhere your hands touch you feel more metal, and even the elbow you swing at her groin only meets an armored codpiece.

The two of you swing away from the pillar like partners locked in a deadly dance, you shoving forward on the hard rock while Ribara batters at your back with monstrous fists. You grunt and laugh throughout it all, feeling a strange sense of freedom at having so little regard for your own well-being. But even though your mind is dead-set on fighting until death, your body isn't quite so everlasting. A blow to the back of your skull makes your grip on Ribara go momentarily loose, and she takes advantage of the opening by grabbing your arms and throwing you off to the side.

You keep your footing, not wanting to go to ground. If you fall, she'll be on top of you, and the fight
will be over in an instant. Instead you keep moving, seeking to put some fresh distance between you and her.

But that was a mistake worse than any other. The smooth gray rock beneath your feet gives way without warning, and you slide to a stop too late to avoid falling into the gap between the cliff and barge, but just in time to spin around and get one last look at the hell you will finally escape from.

Everything moves in slow motion, though you can feel in your gut how fast you're falling off that precipitous edge. Ribara is charging towards you, kicking up loose bits of gravel with her eyes wide in desperation and her hand outstretched. Moradys is in the process of turning to face her shouting Vizir, cold horror only halfway formed across her normal expression of calculating cruelty. The guards surrounding her have begun to move back down the steps, though those bug-eyed nudists could never hope to reach you in time.

You tip further backwards, the sprawling manor shifting out of view in favor of the green mists hanging above like sickened clouds. A hand wraps around your wrist, and you are seized by the brief hope that Ribara will have the leverage to pull you back upright - but she doesn't. The woman is too big and moving too fast to do anything but topple off with you, keeping her hand locked on even as both of you plummet down the cliffside through thick fog.

Time speeds back up, the air whistling past your face and ripping at your clothes as you move into a dark morass too obscured by clouds to make heads or tails of. Ribara and you continue your awkward dance, though you're no longer pummeling each other senseless. Every few seconds you switch places, as if gambling who will get to be on top when you finally strike bottom.

You win.

Everything goes dark, and your body hurts like never before. You're not sure what you hit, though. You were moving fast, and it was hard to see what lay below you, but you didn't catch a glimpse of anything resembling solid ground. You feel Ribara's ribbed armor beneath your face and torso, but there's an odd sensation beneath your palms, like shifting sands. You can feel and hear it, too - roaring winds carrying a fine grit, biting at your skin and drowning out the sound of your pounding heart and throbbing head.

You push yourself up and open your eyes to see that all around you rages a terrible sandstorm. You can't see more than ten feet in any direction, and you doubt you'd even be able to tell up from down if Ribara weren't laid out beneath you.

Somehow, you survived your fall into nothingness. Judging from the gentle up-and-down movement of Ribara's armor, so did she. Either that, or you both ended up in the same afterlife. And if that's the case, this surely isn't Heaven.
Your eyes go to one of the knives hung at Ribara's waist, and you snatch it from its sheath before taking it in both hands and holding it over her neck, every muscle in your body poised to plunge it through her throat. It would be easy, satisfying, and just - but also very stupid. You're not sure where you've ended up. This doesn't look anything like what you've seen of Cummragh, and it sure as hell isn't the shifting currents of the formless Warp. Could you have fallen through some rift in space and ended up on a desert planet?

If so, you're beyond lucky. Not only did you land on a world with breathable air, but you managed to strike down on a soft sand dune instead of hard rock. Asking for this place to be inhabited by humans might be going a bit too far, but someone in the universe has seen fit to throw you a bone - maybe they'll throw you a few more.

You take the knife away from Ribara's throat, disarming her of the second one before cutting off your leash and tossing it into the roaring sandstorm. You briefly consider binding her with the thin strip of leather, but this woman could snap that thing like twine. Better to simply put it somewhere where it can't be used on you again. You feel at the back of Ribara's head for evidence of blood or a broken skull, but receive nothing but a groan from the unconscious woman. That noise is enough to snap you to your feet, which you do with surprising speed considering what you just went through.

Part of you wants to break into a sprint here and now, disappearing into the storm before she awakens, but something about this place puts an unease within you that overpowers the very justifiable fear you have of the Dark Elf. Sandstorm aside, there's plenty of light to see by - though it's an oddly-shifting mix of blue and purple which seems to come from every part of the sky at once. Shadows flit through the haze around you, each flickering movement accompanied by a sharp cry that you are just barely able to separate from the continual roar of wind. It could be your nerves, or some trick of the mind, but your gut is telling you to get moving.
You stick your new weapons in your pants pockets, and the razor-sharp blades slice right through the fabric, coming to rest at the hilts. Then, you grab Ribara by the wrists and start dragging her down the dune she's laid out on, picking that particular direction simply because you doubt you could manage to move her armored bulk up a hill. Even then it's hard work, and your dehydrated muscles scream at you to let her drop. The second Ribara's hands hit the ground, her eyes flash open and she shoots awake, rolling onto all fours and pushing herself to her feet. Her hands go to her waist, but even before they reach her empty scabbards, she spots the blades poking out of your punctured pockets.

"Don't you fucking touch me!" you shout over the howling wind, pulling out one of the blades and pointing it at her. Your arm trembles as you hold it aloft, but only from sheer exhaustion. You're very prepared to use it on her. Ribara holds her palms outward in a gesture that is deceptively placating as she spits her severed tongue out onto the sand. She starts moving around you in slow circles, drawing a little bit closer with each step.

Your fingers coil around the knife handle, and you hunch over in preparation to continue a fight that never really ended. You'd tried to appeal to this woman's sanity, thinking that you could work with
her - or at least *use* her - to get to safety, but that was a mistake. You can work with humans, and you can even find common ground with a few of the smarter xenos, but you can't work with a race that despises everything good and decent in this universe.

The roar of wind picks up, and Ribara's eyes narrow against the shuddering sands before shooting wide open and flickering to something beside you. You're hopped up on enough adrenaline that you spin around without thinking, trying to see what took her by surprise. Too late, you realize your mistake. It was a ruse, the oldest trick in the book - 'look out behind you', Ribara's expression said, just before she hurls herself towards you.

Except it *wasn't* a ruse. A bizarre shape rises from the sand behind you, letting out a horrific screech that rings your skull like a bell. You slash at it wildly with the knife, and you *swear* you felt the blade dig into flesh. The screech fades back into the wind, and the shape turns to shifting sands that collapse to the ground as if nothing had been there at all.

More screeches sound out around you - ten, twenty, a hundred - too many to put a number to. Ribara snatches the second knife from your pocket and does an immediate about-face, cutting at more of the shapes as they shoot up from the ground and drift in from the sandstorm swirling about you with a strange intensity. She presses her back up against yours, putting her open left hand on your arm to confirm you're still there as she stabs away at the unseen enemy. The screams sound almost like the cries of birds, and you can vaguely pick out the shadowy shapes of feathered wings within the haze. But you see no heads, no talons, nothing but formless chaos that always seems an inch away from rending you in two.

Ribara squeezes your arm, giving you a slight pull towards her before she starts carefully moving through the storm. The two of you stay back-to-back, slicing and dicing without knowing if you're really hitting anything at all. Your panic is very real, but your attackers always seem to be just out of view. It's not until you catch a glimpse of your stinging arm and see the bloody claw marks beneath your tattered sleeve that you truly realize how genuine the danger is.

A few of the shapes faintly visible in the sandswept distance coalesce into a single massive form, then surge towards you with a burst of wind and blowing sand. You turn and flee, dashing past Ribara without any real goal other than getting away from that *thing* bearing down on you. Another dark shape comes into view, but this one is quickly revealed as a high wall of natural brown rock - and set within it, a small cave entrance.

You trip just before the entrance, scrambling the rest of the way inside on all fours before coming face-to-face with a dead end. It isn't much of a cavern, not even enough deep enough for you to get away from the purple-blue light shining through the storm. Ribara thunders in after you, the dark shape you fled from hot on her heels.

It's as if the entire sandstorm has formed into a bird of prey, one which smashes into the cliffside above you. The cavern shakes, and a landslide of rocks hurtles down from the point of impact, blocking the entrance and sending up a stifling cloud of sand. You cough and hack, protecting your head from the few stray pebbles dropping from the ceiling. After a few moments the shaking stops, and you are safe.

Safe, and trapped.

A bit of light still filters through the rubble, enough for you to see Ribara stomping towards you with her blade in hand, as if to do something violent. Then, she spins on her heels and goes back to the entrance, tossing away small rocks and rolling down larger ones in an effort to create a path out. You want to tell her to stop, but you soon see that she isn't having much success anyway. The majority of the slabs are simply too massive to shift.
Ribara sees this as well, and steps away to fiddle with her wristband. It makes a disappointed-sounding beep, which she echoes with a frustrated grunt of her own. Ribara then tosses it to the center of the cave between the two of you, and it begins to glow with a powerful green light that illuminates the entire space.

"Ehp!" she shouts, waving a hand at the rubble.

You try to hold your knife up as you prepare to make it known that she's not in charge anymore, but your hand drops right back down to the sand, and your back slumps against the cave wall.

"I can't move," you gasp through lips so chapped they weep with blood. "You need to get me water."

Ribara squats down, picking up a handful of sand and letting it slip from her palm before throwing the last bit at you. Even without the benefit of words, her message is clear - no water, only sand.

"Then that's it." You let your head hit the cave wall, staring up at the green-lit cavern ceiling as the last pitiful drops of moisture escape your open mouth. You're not sure what attacked you, but it doesn't matter. A spring could form right here at your feet, and you'd still die of starvation before you chipped your way through the collapsed cavern entrance. You're going to die here, on a planet you don't know the name of, with the second-least desirable partner in the universe.

A soft 'thunk' draws your attention back forward. Ribara has stripped off her red gown, revealing her thick legs made thicker by metal plates wrapped around them. At her feet lies a single piece of curved plate, which until a moment ago must have covered her groin. That part of her body is now in full view, a lumpy bulge straining the fabric of her jumpsuit that is cast in stark relief by the light shining from the ground.

You eye her wearily, getting ready to make use of the knife if it comes to that. Is she going to try and rape you, here and now? One last act of depravity for a Dark Elf preparing to meet her maker?

Ribala bends her knees slightly and slips her fingers into the folds of her jumpsuit's crotch, then slowly withdraws what looks more like a forearm than a sexual organ. A few days on Cummragh has you used to seeing women walking about with the wrong equipment, but none had been endowed with Ribara's ludicrous size. By the time she's finished pulling out her flaccid dick, the head is left swinging a third of the way down her thighs.

"Uh!" she exhales, beckoning you towards her as she takes a step forward herself.

You hold the knife up, new strength flowing into your arm. "Stay the hell away from me."

She stops, frowns at you, then grips the base of her cock and rocks forward onto her toes.

"Hsss," she sputters with what's left of her tongue, doing her best to mimic the sound of splattering urine. You're calmed somewhat by the implicit assurance that rape is not on the table, but you quickly go pale at the thought of what she's suggesting you do.

"I'm not drinking your fucking--"

You groan, and your attempted rebuke is cut short by a weakness spreading from your knife hand outward, making your head slap back against the rock wall. You black out for what's likely only a fraction of a second, but it's terrifying nonetheless.

Ribara advances towards you with her massive cock swinging absurdly from side to side, and you just barely muster the strength to ward her off with the knife again. Her blood-coated face is
contorted not with concern, but with impatient anger. She knows that if you die here, she might as well do so, too. Even if she were to be eventually rescued by Moradys, the suffering she received would far exceed that of a relatively quick death on this alien planet.

You've seen firsthand what sort of horrors these Dark Elves are capable of inflicting on people. That man in the Shaper's offices had been a slave, probably guilty of some trivial crime like attempted escape or stealing a bit of food to ward off starvation. You can't even imagine what atrocities Moradys would inflict on Ribara for losing her favorite new toy.

The position you're in might seem to give you power, but in reality it only turns Ribara's laser-like focus towards keeping your body intact rather than brutalizing it. Now that she knows how dangerously fluid-deprived you are, she's going to work to remedy that situation as best she can. And right now, that means forcing a foot of cock into your throat and pissing straight into your stomach if need be.

"Alright," you snap, waving the knife at her weakly. "Just... get back."

Ribara stops, but doesn't back away. You can tell she's none too happy about being ordered around by a slave, but the situation you two have found yourselves in keeps her from doing anything more than fixing you with a stern glare. You heave yourself onto your knees and shuffle forward, a grimace spreading across your face as you move closer to the Dark Elf. She remains perfectly still, and you slowly raise both hands to her groin. The left, to grip her cock just below the head, and the right, to point your knife at the jumpsuit-covered flesh of her groin. If she grabs your head or tries to turn this into anything more than a simple life-saving measure, she's getting a blade jammed up into her pelvis. That much, you promise yourself.

If there is one positive thing you can say for Moradys, it's that she's hygienic. The things she does to other people might be filthy, but the woman herself smells of dead flowers that are likely quite pleasant to others of her kind. Ribara, on the other hand, is positively rank under her skin-tight bodysuit. She stinks of sweat and unwashed flesh, as if she's been walking this desert for days rather than minutes. Her cock is sticky, and touching it creates a sickening bind between your fingers and her thick shaft. With only her cock poking out the fly of her suit you can't see her balls or crotch, but the hair bristling out of it tells you she hasn't seen a razor lately.

"Oh-en!" Ribara grunts.

You shudder and lift her cock up to your face, wishing you could close your eyes for this but knowing that you need to be able to properly point the thick log. With your mouth open and tongue extended, you aim her cock at a downward angle and wait. Ribara lets out a soft sigh as her muscles relax, and a moment later her slit erupts with a stream of pungent urine. It hits your bottom lip, splattering to your knees wastefully. Before your churning stomach or twitching nose can have a say in the matter, you lock your lips to the head of her cock, leaving no opportunity for the stream to miss your throat.

It's bitter, salty, and only a tad less acidic than battery fluid. It comes almost too fast to swallow, in large part because you have so much trouble making your throat work against the horrid taste building in your mouth. You had thought that sheer thirst would allow you to overcome your squeamishness, but it seems that your body isn't quite so eager to live that it will easily guzzle down a torrent of Dark Elf urine.

Luckily, Ribara paces herself, tensing her pelvic muscles to slow the stream to a mere trickle as opposed to the gushing torrent it started as. You swallow silently, promising yourself that you will gag and spit to your heart's content once your lips have left her cock. The slab of meat threatens to slip from your lips throughout the whole torturous process, but you don't dare forcing it further in and
risking rolling down the foreskin from her glans. If it tastes like it smells, you want no part of that.

The flow stops, and you yank your head away from Ribara without bothering to wait for solid confirmation that she's finished. Your stomach feels weighed down enough, and the humiliating experience already has you close to puking. If that happens, you'd have done this for nothing. You shift away from her and sit back against the cave wall, and in your frantic disgust make the mistake of allowing your eyes to connect. She wears a blood-soaked, shit-eating grin, one that lasts until she's finished stuffing her half-hard cock down the leg of her jumpsuit. Once that's done, she re-affixes her codpiece to the rest of her armor and straps back on her ankle-length gown.

You turn your gaze downwards, suddenly very willing to obey the 'eyes down' rule she had so viciously impressed on you.

"What were those things?" you ask her. Not animals - not with the way they seemed to form from thin air and disappear in a shower of sand. In your mind you thought of them as 'creatures', but 'demons' comes closer to the mark.

Ribara gets down on all fours, moving her glowing bracelet across the sand until it's between you two. Then, she starts drawing. The jagged lines quickly take the shape of Elvish script, and you sigh in frustration.

"I can't read that."

The Elf huffs, then wipes away the sand and starts over. This time she draws a stick figure, an unhappy frown on its face and rays of energy emanating from its circular head. Malformed creatures with sharp claws and sharper teeth stand on either side of it, ready to pounce.

"Me?" You point at the figure. "Is that me?"

Ribara grunts in acknowledgement, and you furrow your brow in confusion. You already know those things are trying to kill you.

"But what are they?" you repeat. "Birds?"

She thumps her heavy fist on the sand, and you fall back in shock.

"Wahp!" she shouts, gesturing around at the small cave's walls and ceiling. "Wahp!"

You settle back against the wall, intending to rest and think without driving Ribara into a greater frenzy. Assuming you can get out of this hole you've been buried in, you want to stick with her long enough to get to safety - but not so long that she can drag you back to Moradys. The first sentient being you see, human or xeno, you're running to them while screaming for sanctuary.

Ribara gives up her attempts at explanation, turning mute as you stare down at the sand between your crossed legs. A few moments later, something touches your shoulder. You jolt upright, expecting to see the Dark Elf looming over you - but she's sitting against the far wall, looking confused by your sudden gasp. Something touches your other shoulder, and you look to the right to see a dark hand made of rock, growing right out of the wall and snaking over your chest. You scream and try to shove away from it, but another hand grabs your left arm, pulling you back. More rock-covered limbs form all around you, grabbing and pulling and pinning until you can't move a muscle.

Ribara shoots to her feet and runs towards you, but is only halfway across the room when the entire cavern shifts. Forward becomes down, and Ribara just narrowly manages to grab onto your ankle to stop her fall back to the opposite end of the cave. The lurch in your heaving stomach tells you that
gravity would cause you to fall with her, were you not held fast to the wall by dozens of molesting hands. The entire cavern shakes, and there's a horrific screech like that of the things that had attacked you outside. The wall opposite you tears open, revealing itself to be the joined feathered wings of a massive bird.

A sandstorm rages hundreds of feet below, and the winds whip past your face as you're kept glued to the belly of this flying beast by rock-formed hands. Ribara manages to keep her grip on your ankle, but it won't last long - she's heavy even without her armor, and slipping fast. She swings her other arm upward in the vain hope of grabbing onto something, but can't quite reach the tendrils of rock snaking around your body.

You thrust your right arm downward, skin and shirt scraping between two stretches of rock as you reach out for Ribara. Not kicking her off of you is one thing, but the thought of actively saving her leaves a worse taste in your mouth than the acrid piss she coated it with. Still, you need her. You don't know where you are, where you're going, or what the hell the thing carrying you is. Until you're done facing dangers you can scarcely comprehend, you're stuck working together.

Ribara swings her hand up again, grabbing onto your wrist and taking some of her weight off of your leg. Your shoulder quickly begins to feel the strain she puts on it, and every flap of the bird's wings sends a shudder through the beast that makes you feel as if your arm is about to be pulled from its socket.

She uses her better hold on you to make the switch to the rock you've been encased by, then clammers up the bird's underside, dragging her crotch over your face in one final humiliation as she uses rocky footholds to crawl up the surface bending away from you. Your vision clears of her fluttering gown, and you crane your head up to see where you're going.

The sandstorm rages from horizon to horizon, but breaking up the monotonous seething storm is a complex of blue crystalline towers, connected by broad roadways. They run far up into the sky, past the wall of flying rock you remained pinned to. The construction reminds you vaguely of Cummragh, but these buildings are far too beautiful to have been made by the Dark Elves.

Another cry sounds out from your airborne captor, and the rock shudders. The arms gripping you start to crumble, and you grab onto them for support as you drop a few inches from the surface at your back. You are fast approaching the towers, but every screeching shake of the bird makes you fear that you'll fall before you reach them. Whatever Ribara is doing, it's working, but you fear it will have its effect too soon.

Just as you soar around the first of the towers, the beast lets out another pained roar, and the arms wrapped around you crumble to sand. You hurtle down twenty feet, crashing down onto a crystal pathway with enough force to have you struggling to separate up from down all over again. The massive bird crashes down a few dozen feet past you, sand and rock flying up in the air as it slides right into the wall of the tower. Ribara drops down between you and it, landing nimbly on her feet before racing towards you, knife in hand. The bird thrashes about in a blur of yellow sand and blue plumage, richting itself on its clawed feet as it seeks out its lost prey. It looks like a vulture, though its rock-hewn flesh make clear that this isn't any ordinary animal - as if its sheer size weren't clue enough.

You scramble to your feet, then break into a run towards the tall doorway you landed near. The shaking of the bridge tells you just how fast the beast is bearing down on you, and you feel a hand press on your back as Ribara urges you onward. Just before you pass through the shadowy entrance, you catch a glimpse of the sliver of sky visible on either side of the expansive tower. Your view of it had been blocked before - first by the sandstorm, then by the creature carrying you. But now, even in
that split-second, you see it clear as day. There is no 'sky' - only a seething ocean of blue and purple currents that glow with a radiant light. No sun, no moon, and no stars.

'The wahp', the tongueless Ribara had moaned at you. You have left Cummragh as you suspected, but you weren't transported to some other part of the galaxy. Somehow, you're still inside the Warp. Whether this is a planet, a pocket world, or a hallucination formed while you drown in the chaotic energies of that formless dimensions, you can't say - no one should be able to stand where you are now.

You dash into the tower, and a thundrous boom sounds out as your pursuer strikes either side of the too-narrow doorway. It screams at you, gnashing with its beak and slashing at the ground with its claws, but you don't dare risk a glance back so soon. You continue running through a huge hall of blue & gold stone, lined from floor to ceiling with bookcases. There must be thousands of books here, you think to yourself, but that estimation seems far too small when you reach the end of the corridor. The sound of the vulture vanishes, and you and Ribara run a little further before glancing back and slowing to a stop. The doorway has fallen out of sight, and in its place is a series of towering bookcases that form an impenetrable wall.

But you have not come to a dead end. You stand at a vast circular space, an intersection of nine hallways that run far off into the gloom. Each hall is lined with braziers lit with blue flames that lick at the dusty tomes they illuminate, yet do not set them alight. At the center of the room is a finely-cut blue crystal, as tall as a man and twice as wide at the midsection. It's set atop a short metal holder built into the floor, and pulses with a cold light that is accompanied by small gusts of wind that make your little hairs stand on end.

"Err!" Ribara points at it, then grabs you by the arm and spins you to face her. She points at the crystal again, squeezes her eyes shut, and holds two fingers to either side of her skull as if attempting to commune with some higher power.

"Mora-ih," she murmurs over and over in a hypnotic chant. "Ay-ee Mo-ra-ih."

You watch her, utterly baffled, until her eyes open and she gives you an impatient shove towards the crystal. Just as you turn back to ask her what the hell that just was, your thoughts are shattered by the cry of birds. Sand spills from the bookcases all around you, shoving books off of shelves. Before they hit the ground, the jackets fly open, and they twist and morph into vultures of all colors and sizes which swarm the two of you.

Ribara is hit by a flock of the things and thrown up against a shelf, but manages to recover in time to draw her knife and fend off the next attack. You're beset by another swarm, slashed at with razor-sharp talons that tear your shirt from your back and leave deep gashes on your flesh. The entire chamber is filled with the things, more books falling from shelves and adding to the swirling mass of predators.

The room is a blur of slashing talons and whirling sand. You spin about, slapping at the vultures without even a knife to aid you this time. Blood flows freely, and the birds take more than their pound of flesh as you fall to the floor in a quivering mess. Everything you meet wants to hurt you, and each predator seems even more senseless in its bloodlust than the last. You're sick of it all, sick of being thrown about like a leaf on a raging river.

"Fine!" you scream out in a mad cackle, half-laughing and half-crying as you throw your arms open and roll onto your back, spread-eagle. "Go ahead, take me!"

And it stops.
The vultures' cries continue all around you, but you find yourself in the eye of the storm, given a clear view up to the darkened ceiling half a mile above. A crack forms across the stone, letting in a bit of light. Then another crack, and another, until the roof shatters and stone hurtles to the floor all around you. The giant vulture you had narrowly escaped from pokes its beak in, head cocked to the right and one eye focused intently on you. It wiggles in through the gap in a flutter of sand and wings, ignoring the chaotic shouts of Ribara and the screeching of its smaller brethren as it descends with gusty flaps of its massive wings.

You remain there, unmoving, enraptured by this awe-inspiring sight. It had seemed a demon before, but now it looks more akin to an angel descending from the scintillating heavens above. The nearer it draws, the more it slows, until it seems to barely be moving at all. The decay of rock to sand ceases, and strange new textures form across the bird's underbelly. You see flesh, both human and alien, flashing into view for fractions of an instant before changing to some other material. Arms and legs form, human, xeno, and animal alike, jutting out of the body and wings and clawing at the air before vanishing just as abruptly.

The thing ceases to be recognizable as a bird at all, becoming a dazzling sphere of body parts stuck together at impossible angles, none of which last more than a fraction of a second. You see breasts, both large and small. Cocks, cut and uncut. Pussies, virginal and roastie. The creature has no race, no species, no sex, and not even a solid form. Despite the baffling appearance, it's not grotesque - it's beautiful. It's as if you're looking at every living thing at once, laid out in a mosaic that stretches across space and time.

The shifting mass shrinks as it reaches you, and two human arms last long enough to grasp the sides of your head and bring the angel over your entire field of vision. The blue light of the crystal and braziers no longer reaches you, leaving you with little sense of what is happening - until you feel your jaw being stretched open impossibly far, and your throat filled by something both hot and cold, rough and soft, hard and flexible. You choke, gag, and try to claw at whatever is forcing its way in, but your body won't obey your brain. After a few seconds more, the blackness clears from your vision, and you shoot up from the floor with a gasp.

Everything is quiet, and still. The floors are covered in sand and books, but the birds are gone. Ribara lays on the floor near the man-sized crystal, and looks around in confusion before scrambling to her feet. The moment she does so, the crystal behind her shatters, sending out a wave of energy that throws both of you back down to the ground. The tower shudders and shakes, groaning with a sound somewhere between a death rattle and an orgasmic release. By the time you rise to your feet, everything has begun to fall apart. The braziers' flames have been snuffed out, and the countless books filling every hallway are crumbling to sand which spills into the cracks forming in the floor.

Yet somehow, there is still light. You look up to see that the ceiling is disappearing. Not breaking or crumbling, but simply evaporating into nothingness, leaving you with a clear view of the swimming currents of the Warp. Your right foot drops into air, and you stagger away from a fissure that shoots across the width of one of the hallways like lightning. You turn and run, moving in a full sprint towards the opposite hall without thought of direction or purpose. It's away, and that's good enough.

Decay is everywhere, and the gaps in the floor are catching up with you. You find yourself dancing across holes in the floor where stone slabs have fallen out, and see that the wall ahead of you is crumbling away with just as much speed. You're not sure if Ribara is running behind you, or has simply fallen into the sandstorm far below.

There's no doors, no solid ground, and no hope - until something new appears, just past the crumbling wall you race towards. More bricks fall away, and you see a mass of dark metal hovering outside the tower. It looks very out of place in this strange world, and a few moments later your
A hatch slides open on the side of the hovering thing, revealing the distinctive chitinous armor of a Dark Elf. Your heart skips a beat and your legs stop working, but another stone falling from under you gets you moving again. The pause gives Ribara enough time to reach you, and she grabs you by the arm, hauling you the rest of the way to what is now an open-air precipice. She throws you at the ship's open hatch, and you hurtle through the air before smashing into the interior wall of the vehicle. Ribara follows, thumping down on the metal floor before slamming the door shut behind her.

You're in the main compartment of a small skiff, kneeling on all fours among the last people in the galaxy you wanted to be rescued by. Four Dark Elf warriors stand around you, pistols in hand and blades at their hips. A fifth figure marches in from a forward compartment, similarly armored but wearing no helmet.

You had never before seen Moradys in the spiked armor so many of her kind wear, but you only have a few moments to appreciate the terrifying sight before she stops before you and brings her gauntleted fist crashing into your face. She hammers it in over and over, her hand crashing through yours effortlessly as you try to block the savage blows.

After the fifth punch she drops you, then turns to Ribara. Her Vizir drops down on one knee and bows her head deferently, but Moradys uses one long finger to tilt the other woman's head up by the chin. She then slaps her across the face, and you balk at the easier treatment until you see the blood spilling down her forehead and cheek. The clawed gauntlet cut deep, shredding flesh like a knife through butter. Moradys lets out a wordless screech, then slashes her across the face in another mean arc that catches what little of the left side was left undamaged.

"Pea, mu-uh!" Ribara moans, holding up a hand and turning her face to the side.

"Don't you dare call me that," Moradys snaps, shoving Ribara's hand away.

"You don't listen to orders, you don't listen to reason!" She throws you a furious glare at that last bit, as if chastising you as well. "You're an idiot brute, who only understands pain."

Moradys bends over, putting one hand across Ribara's face and wrenching open her left eye with two fingers. She then brings her other gauntlet up to the exposed eye, two spiked fingertips extended in preparation to pluck it out.

"Stop!" You stumble towards Moradys and Ribara, drawing stunned glances from both women. None of the four guards had bothered to restrain you, and you're able to get within a few feet of the pair before two guards grab you by your arms and pull you back.

"She saved my life!" You nod your head at Ribara, still gasping for air from the nonstop chaos of the last hour as you turn your angry glare back to Moradys. "You're the one who starved me, wouldn't let me drink, told her to beat--"

Moradys' expression hardens as you speak, and a gauntlet at your throat cuts your outburst short. You're not sure why you spoke up for someone who has tormented you even more than Moradys. Perhaps because that torment so often came at the orders of Moradys herself, or perhaps because even if Ribara is a monster, seeing what is about to play out before you offends every fiber of your moral being. You'd love to see her locked up or executed for what is undoubtedly a laundry list of crimes against humanity - many of them against you - but you can't stomach cold-blooded torture.

"Are you saying it's not her fault that you almost died?" Moradys asks.
You grunt and nod your head, unable to speak or breathe with her fingers squeezing your airway shut.

"I know it's not my fault," she continues. "Are you saying it's your fault?"

You don't know how to respond to such a leading question, and can only stare at her as you struggle to draw air in through her crushing grip. Moradys forces you to the floor, then barks at one of the guards behind her to hold your eye open and force your head upwards. A long metal fingertip appears overhead, moving closer until it touches the top of your eyeball. It continues moving inward, slicing through flesh above and below as it cuts a jagged path to the back of your eye socket.

After a few fractions of an inch, another one joins it, sliding in from the bottom as red fills your vision. You try to scream, but it comes out as little more than a strained gurgle pushed past lips that have turned purple from lack of blood flow. The claws twist and pinch, and a pain unlike any other shoots through your skull. It feels as if she's pulling your brain out by the root, and you heave forward with a violent seizure of muscles as your eye is plucked from its socket.

Half your vision goes black, and your remaining eye flickers about in spasmodic confusion as your brain tries to process what just happened. This isn't like having your shoulder sliced open and toyed with, or anything else your body has had done to it over the past few days. Deep in your gut, you feel as if you've lost something you can never get back. Your stomach spins along with your head, and only the hand on your throat keeps the contents of your gut from being violently ejected.

Moradys stands, letting go of your neck and allowing you to collapse to the ground in a fit of bloody screaming. The floor beneath you rumbles as the ship begins to move, but that subtle trembling is barely perceptible under your thrashing limbs and contorting muscles. Gradually you settle down enough for your yells to change to choking sobs, and you feel a hand touch your foot. You jerk your head up, terrified to see Moradys' armored form seated atop one of the benches built into the skiff's walls. She beckons you forward with one finger, her furious gaze diminished not one bit by the agony she inflicted on you only minutes ago.

"Come here."

You obey without question, holding the palm of your hand to your left eye while you use the other hand to crawl forward. You're in too much pain to think of anything other than blind obedience, and too afraid of her to hold onto any anger. When you reach Moradys she grabs you by the shoulders and turns you around, sitting you down between her spread legs and folding her hands across your chest. Her chin comes to rest atop your head, and you can hear the soft roar of her breath moving in and out through flaring nostrils.

"Never do that again," she says in a low whisper that trembles with anxiety. "I'll cut your legs off. I'll keep you in a box and only open it when I want you. I'll..."

Moradys lets out a shuddering breath that passes through her arms and legs. Then, she presses her lips to the top of your head, holding them there for a time before returning her chin to that same spot.

The trip, despite being made through something as vast as the Warp, is an incredibly short one. The ship comes to a halt less than an hour after it had begun moving, and the guards slide open the hatch to reveal that you've set down in a docking bay carved right into one of Cummragh's cliffs. Moradys escorts you from the skiff herself, not letting her hand leave your arm as you ascend a narrow stairwell of rough stone that emerges out onto the plateau top of Moradys' manor.

It's not a place you want to call 'home', but it does strangely feel as if you'll finally have an opportunity to rest. The searing pain in your left eye socket makes it hard to keep the right one open
as well, but you catch scant glimpses of your surroundings here and there. Ribara is not walking alongside your entourage, likely having gone off to lick her own wounds while yours are left to throb horribly. One of the guards had injected a noxious-looking liquid into your cheek, likely some sort of coagulating agent - it certainly didn't do anything for the pain. You pass plenty of human servants, but only a few look your way. Either your mangled face is too common a sight here to be shocked by, or they're too afraid of Moradys to spare even a sympathetic glance at you.

You're led halfway through the main hall of the manor, then up a stairwell that leads to another corridor running atop the first. Two guards swing open heavy metal doors, and you find yourself in an expansive and somewhat cluttered room. On the opposite wall is a tall circular window which looks out on the central courtyard below. Set against the wall on the right is a spacious bed, with bed posts carved to look like the claws of some massive beast. There's couches, low tables, and dressers - but also chains, thick wooden chairs caked with blood, and racks of tools that look too complex to be weapons. It's half master bedroom, half torture chamber, and likely functions as both.

Moradys hands you off to one of the guards, and you're stripped down to your underwear before being chained to the wall beside the window. The chain is affixed to a device that looks like it's intended to allow you to both stand and sit while remaining secured to the wall. Moradys walks over, eyes fixed on yours, and swipes your feet out from under you. You immediately discover that the rack has been locked in place, and you scramble desperately for purchase as the thin, chain-bound collar chokes the life from you.

Moradys goes to leave, and you manage to plant your feet flat on the floor seconds after those heavy doors close behind her. You're alone, thirsty, hungry, tired, and a ball of roiling fire seems to have formed where your left eye once was. Alone would not be quite so bad, but as the hours pass and no one comes, you grow worried that your trembling legs will give out and you will collapse, succumbing to simple strangulation after all the deadly horrors you've experienced.

"Water!" you shout at the closed doors. "Food!"

You repeat the cry a few more times, but your voice cracks and shouting becomes painful. Standing hurts as well, and you contort yourself into all sorts of awkward positions in order to give your shredded muscles a breather, balancing your left shoulder against the wall, then the right, then twisting around so that your forehead rests against it and the short chain wraps around your neck. You're standing in that last position, legs shaking, when the doors finally creak open.

You turn around expecting to see Moradys, but instead spot a guard's purple-haired helmet peeking in through the cracked door. She watches you for a few moments, and you watch her, until she slips inside and slowly approaches, loincloth sashaying between her milky thighs and breasts bouncing with each careful step. You lift the chain at your neck and shake it as you pant with utter exhaustion, but she merely takes the pommel end of her spear and prods you in the shoulder.

"What?" you snap, completely beyond any pretense of respect or slavish obedience. The woman jabs you again, then lowers her weapon and moves even closer. She places a hand flat on your chest, balancing your left shoulder against the wall, then the right, then twisting around so that your forehead rests against it and the short chain wraps around your neck. You're standing in that last position, legs shaking, when the doors finally creak open.

That unexpected contact is enough to lock your shaking knees, and you watch in bewildered fear as the woman balanced her spear against her chest, then slips her other hand into her panties and begins rubbing herself. You can't see exactly what she's doing beneath the dark loincloth, but each backward-buck of her hips and flex of her forearm muscles is accompanied by a muted grunt through her ventilator mask.
A low groan comes from behind her as the doors open again, and this time Moradys enters. Your molester jumps in place, yanking her hands from both of your underwear and spinning to face her Mistress.

"What are you doing?" Moradys says. Her tone is hostile, but with enough uncertainty that you doubt she actually saw what was taking place. The encounter had been too brief for you to summon anything resembling an erection, though you doubt even the most desirable woman in the galaxy could coax one from you in your current state. What little blood your body can spare is pooled behind your eye, producing a swelling that feels like it's pressing on your very brain.

"He was choking, my Lady," the guard replies. Her voice is heavily modulated by the plumed helmet she wears, making her sound more like a robot than a living being.

Moradys looks between the two of you, then nods at the door. The guard leaves, and another one enters. This newcomer carries a shallow metal bowl in her hands, filled with brown chunks of food that look more like pig slop than a real meal. In your famished state, it might as well be a King's feast.

The two woman stop before you, and Moradys takes the bowl from her attending guard before ushering her out. She then takes a bit of food in her fingers, and holds it out for you. You lean forward, but your chain quickly goes taut and you're forced to stretch out your tongue to reach the morsel. She releases it, and it tips precariously forward before you manage to draw it inside your mouth and chew. It's bland, ill-textured, with a consistency like rubber, but it's food.

"It's strange." Moradys uses one hand to do something to the rack your chain is attached to, then kicks your feet out from under you just as she did earlier. This time, you fall all the way to the floor, buttocks crashing down on hard metal. You managed not to bite through your tongue, but the piece of food lodged in your throat has you hacking and coughing until it shoots back up into your mouth.

"I thought you died, and that made me feel..." She trails off, then squats down and grabs your growling stomach with rigid fingers. "Like there was something pulling on me, right here."

You say nothing, staring down at the plate balanced atop her knees as she takes another bit of food and slips it into your mouth.

"That was an exquisite sensation, but it wore off after only a few days."

You stop chewing, eyes going wide at the mention of so much time having passed. How long had you been lost to the Warp? Time seems so meaningless here, with inhabitants that never age and twisted buildings that seem to have grown from the Warp itself. But Vala - she is human, and her time is precious. Moreso here, where every passing day brings new trials and new horrors.

"I started thinking about all the things I would do to you if I found you again. Nine days I spent searching. I wanted to find you, but I also wanted to kill you."

She continues feeding you, and you bristle under the slight strokes and prods she gives your face every time her fingers draw away from your lips. You can feel her eyes burning into you, as if waiting for an answer, but you don't get the sense that she wants you to speak. Whatever odd thoughts she's trying to put words to are her own, the product of a sick mind that has only grown sicker in the two weeks she was deprived of your sustaining presence.

"I've never been so excited as when I sensed that Warp Stone shattering." Her breathing quickens, and she puts the bowl on the floor before dropping to her knees in front of you, putting a gentle hand on the left side of your face. Her thumb runs circles below your empty eye socket, bringing a flash of
pain whenever her touch comes too close to the wound.

"The only thought on my mind was giving you some fraction of the pain you left me with." Her left hand goes to the right side of your head, and she holds you tight as her thumb slips past the bruised flesh of your left eyelids. You cry out and grab her wrists, but her strength is too great to push back against, bolstered by a strange excitement that you can sense. Not through touch or sight, but as an electrical charge that hungrily bites and claws at your mind like some starving animal.

"Giving, not taking! And it felt orgasmic!" She throws her head back and lets out a shuddering sigh that makes her thumb twitch inside your eye socket. Moradys had been terrifying enough when her boundless cruelty was wielded like a finely-tempered sword, but that inhumanity becomes even more frightful as she breaks down into rambling laughter. Every twitch of her sinewy arms has you fearing that she'll snap your neck from sheer ecstatic pleasure.

The Dark Elves combine violence and sex to a perverse degree, but Moradys seems to have lost any ability to differentiate between the two. Her body convulses with confused desire and anger, and her thumb works agonizing circles within your mutilated socket, as if she herself isn't sure whether she's trying to caress or lobotomize you. And then there's you, mouth hung open in silent gasps and in too much pain to even scream. Your hands remained locked around her thin wrists and your feet scrape up and down the floor, the only sound of any significance in this horrifying scene.

Moradys uses her vice-like grip to tilt your head up to face her, where she is busy heaving forward and backward with labored breaths and heavy eyelids. Her thumb slips from your swollen socket, and your jaw snaps shut as you let out a hissing scream through clenched teeth.

"Is this what you were trying to show me before? Is this love?"

Her grip on your head has loosened enough that you're able to look back downward, putting a hand over your swollen eye socket as you seek to protect it from any further exploration.

"No," you say in a shuddering voice. "It's not. But it's as close as you'll get."

Moradys lets her hands fall to your shoulders, where they remain for a few moments without any hint of further anger. Were she a human being, her limitless capacity for evil would be masked under layers of self-deception and feigned righteousness - and your response would have been interpreted as an attempt to peel those away. But the Dark Elves are honest about their nature, every spiked spire and paraded slave reflecting their blackened souls.

She grunts in satisfaction, then picks up the bowl of food and resumes feeding you. You tell yourself that you're too hungry to turn it down, but the simpler fact is that you're too tired to resist. Your mind and body are on autopilot, swept along by the currents of the Warp as you grab onto whatever handholds of survival you catch sight of.

Near the end of your hand-fed meal, Moradys leans in close and sniffs at your open mouth as you prepare to take another bite.

"Why do you smell like piss?"

You say nothing, and she scoffs in disgust before continuing. The plate goes empty, and your stomach growls for more, but Moradys places it on the ground and leaves without giving any indication that she's going to get more. Once the doors close you kick the plate away, determined not to fall to licking the bowl clean.

One defiant act every day, you say to yourself. That will allow you to retain some semblance of
humanity in this awful place. You can brave the horrors, but only if you remember what you're fighting for - live long enough to find Vala, then find a way out of this hell. If you can find a way to slit Moradys' throat in the process, that would be icing on the cake, but you'd happily settle for never seeing her pale visage again.

An hour passes, and a brief patter of rain on the window to your right reminds you of how thirsty you are. You can't imagine where the rain comes from, though you suppose it must be discharged from the heavy green fog that lays across every bit of this vast city. This place, you realize, is stranger and vaster than you had thought. Parts of it are exposed to the Warp, as you experienced firsthand when you found yourself mired in that other-worldly desert.

*A desert.*

You grimace, telling yourself that you need to turn your mind away from things that draw you back to your desperate need for water. Then, the door creaks open, and a guard walks in carrying a small glass of water, as if on cue. It's cradled delicately in her hands, and she tips it to your chapped lips, where you find that you've been given no more than a few shot glasses worth of the precious liquid.

"Can I have more?" you call after her as she leaves. "Hey! Water!"

The door shuts behind her without so much as a glance back from the masked woman. With Moradys as your constant tormentor, it's easy to forget that none of these Elves are your friends. The only reason you're not strapped down to one of their torture racks is that someone higher up on the social ladder laid claim to you first. Moradys might be older and more practiced than the people she employs, but you don't doubt that any of these other women would quickly learn how best to torment you.

Hours more drag by at a terribly slow pace, and you're given two more small sips of water at evenly-spaced intervals. It's like you're being given just enough to ward off unconsciousness - in fact, you're sure that's what's being done here. You would welcome the sweet embrace of oblivion, but you doubt that will come with the throbbing pain in your skull. The room is soundproof, but the rhythmic thump of your heart behind your eye socket is enough to keep you awake.

Though, you do fall asleep at some point. You're not sure when, or how, but you do so in a seated position, back against the wall and legs spread wide as you stare at the empty bed ahead of you. When you awaken you're in the exact same position, with your head leaned on one shoulder. You sit up straight, wincing at the crick in your neck that has formed - you must have been like that for hours.

The thumping in your head is still there, but it's even louder than before - squeakier, too. You look around the dimly-lit room, still struggling to adjust to not having the benefit of two eyes. The left half of your vision is shrouded in permanent blackness, a constant reminder of what you lost. You wish there were simply nothing there at all, not even shadow. As your head swivels leftward, you see that the bed is rocking up and down, exactly in time with the thumps and squeeks you mistook for coming from inside your own head.

There's a lumpy mass atop the bed moving up and down, half-covered by purple blankets. In the light of the yellow crystal hung at the center of the room, you can just barely make out Moradys' face. It's contorted with physical exertion, and her black hair has been let down. Someone is moving beneath her, though you can see no more of them than the hand they grip at the bedsheets with.

The Dark Elf grunts and swears under her breath, driving her hips into the bed over and over again with slaps of flesh you begin to make out over the louder sounds of the rocking bed. You have no idea when this started, and it goes on for minutes more, Moradys slam-fucking her partner into the
bed, the latter woman moaning and groaning with each collision of hips on buttocks.

When it ends, it ends loudly. Moradys huffs and shouts, switching from long, deep fucks to short, rapid drives. The other woman's moans turn to orgasmic warbles, which continue as strained moans long after the two have stopped moving. They lay like that for a time, until finally Moradys' gaze snaps over to you.

You cast your eyes down at the floor, only then realizing just how long and intently you had been watching the two women. She rolls off of whoever she had just fucked into a moaning mess, swinging her legs onto the floor and picking up a piece of clothing hanging across the nightstand. Something clatters across the floor, and you glance up to see that she's kicked a gold-plated chastity belt out of her way as she walks towards you.

She pulls on the open-front nightgown she had picked up, but doesn't bother tying the front. Her fluid-soaked cock bobs obscenely as she walks, and you don't doubt that her breasts are just as exposed, though you don't dare look up that far until you know what sort of mood she's in.

"Food?" Moradys says as she stops before you. "Water?"

You tear your eyes away from the floor, looking up past her rod to the woman staring down at you expectantly.

"Well? Which do you need more? I'm not a mind reader."

"I need water," you gasp up at her. You hadn't meant for your words to come out as a strained croak, but they did - and maybe that will help drive home how urgent your need is. "And you are a mind reader. I'll die if you keep doing this - see if I'm lying."

Dark Elf physiology is different from humans - their strength alone is evidence of that - and you're not sure whether Moradys truly grasps how awful it is to go so long without proper food and drink. She constantly has you walking a razor’s edge of life and death, though that could simply be evidence of how well she understands your limits.

Moradys looks down at you with a pitying expression that you would buy hook, line, and sinker, were it worn on the face of anyone else. She lets out a sympathetic groan, then ruffles your hair and steps forward, putting her erect cock dangerously close to your face as she leans on hand on the wall, the other angling her member downward as you turn your head in disgust. Her muscles tense and her breathing stops, and she remains completely still for a few moments before relaxing, not a single drop having left her dick.

"Slave!" she shouts. A dozen feet behind Moradys, her bedmate rises from the sheets. Her dark brown hair has been let down as well, but you quickly recognize the human woman who you had been coerced into fucking aboard Moradys' floating barge. Under normal circumstances she would undoubtedly recognize you as well, but given the swollen state of half your face, it's possible she doesn't.

"Are any of those full?" Moradys gestures at the nightstand, where five tall metal flasks sit upright. The slave crawls over to them, giving each a slight shake.

"They are all empty, Mistress." The woman's accent is stilted and halting, as if she learned Basic by reading a dictionary. Each word is long and drawn out, but quickly clipped off at the end.

Moradys huffs in annoyance, then shoves away from the wall and strides towards the bedroom's entrance, throwing open one of the doors and then letting it close behind her. The moment she's
gone, the naked slave shoots out of the bed, grabs one of the flasks, and races over to you.

"Drink!" she hisses as her feet patter across the metal. "Drink, drink!"

The slave slides onto her knees as she reaches you, then holds up the flask. You grab onto it, placing your hands over hers, then tip it into your mouth. What flows forth is undoubtedly water, though it is purer and sweeter than you remember such a bland thing tasting. The container is a large one, and the nipple atop it narrow, which makes sucking the container empty a lengthy process.

She nods along, whispering under her breath for you to hurry, growing increasingly anxious as the seconds tick by. She tries to pull the bottle away a few times, but you keep it in place, feeling even thirstier now that your body finally has a taste of water untainted by any other bodily fluids.

Then, the woman's fingers slip out from under yours. She scrambles back towards the bed, but quickly remembers the evidence still clasped between your hands, and rushes back to you - too late. Moradys is inside the room, eyes fixed on the two of you, slowly entering from the slight crack she had created to slip in through.

"I only came to get my slippers," she muses as she walks around the bed. Her robe still hangs open, tits and cock swinging freely for all to see. The slave slowly takes the bottle from you and stands up, then steps back and bows her head silently.

"Oh, I'm not upset!" Moradys gestures at you. "Go on, let him finish."

Eyes still pointed at her feet, the slave leans over just enough to hand you the bottle, then steps away. You raise it to your lips and continue drinking, though far slower and with far more hesitation than before. Moradys wears a pleasant smile, glancing between the two of you with her hands folded behind her back. Nothing about her body language says that she's angry, but everything you've seen of her in the days prior says that there are monstrous ideas forming behind those orange eyes.

"I don't mind if you make friends," she says to you. "In fact, I encourage it!" She puts a hand on the slave's arm, and the girl receives it without flinching. "You said Charal was pretty, did you not?"

You nod as you finish your drink. You had said that, and she is very pretty, though the original declaration had been made under no small amount of duress. Moradys turns Charal around and points at the bed, then whispers something in her ear. The girl crawls onto the bed on all fours, ass pointed at you, then remains still. You lower the finished bottle into your lap and drop your head, expecting to be subjected to some further humiliating show of Dark Elf coitus, but then Moradys leans over and fiddles with the back of your collar, causing the chain to release.

Overcome by this new sense of freedom, you drop the flask and scramble to your feet, only for Moradys' to grab you tightly by your upper arm. She guides you towards the bed and its waiting occupant, and the situation becomes horrifyingly clear. You're not going to be a passive witness to whatever is about to happen here - you're going to be a part of it.

"Underwear," Moradys says sharply as she releases you. You hesitate, looking between the two woman in shock, but a single glimpse of Moradys' intense stare has you pulling them down to your ankles and kicking them off. She then leans between the two of you, delivering a hard slap to Charal's right cheek that makes her buttocks shake and back arch.

"I want you to show me what good friends you are." Moradys circles behind you, wrapping her hands around your hips and pressing her flaccid cock between your buttocheeks as she walks you forward. "Fuck her ass. Make her scream."
You feel the blood rush from your face - and your cock - as your flaccid member mashes up against the slave's spread buttocks.

"What?" you shout, trying in vain to get away from the dick and balls pressing into your own tightly-clenched cheeks. "I can't--"

"You said she's pretty," Moradys hisses in your ear, fingers going tight on your hips. "If you don't want to fuck her, it means she's not pretty. Why would I keep a slave around if she isn't pretty?"

Your head swims, and you can hardly follow the twisted train of thought, but the message is clear. Slaves don't get freed in a place like Cummragh. They get sold - or killed.

"How..." You trail off, swallowing and putting trembling hands atop those plump cheeks below you. They're warm, and soft, and far more welcoming than the member growing harder and firmer against your backside. Morady's breasts press into you as well, but that sensation is inseparable from the cock stabbing at you only two feet below.

"How do you fuck?" Moradys laughs, then grips your limp cock by the base and slaps it against Charal's cheeks. "You get hard and stick it in. You're a man, aren't you?" She pulls her hand away, and you feel the tip of her erection pressing into your crack with better aim than before. "Aren't you?" she echoes again, this time whispering it inches from your ear.

You swallow and nod, heart pounding as you place a few fingers around your cock and desperately try to bring yourself to hardness. It takes a minute, but you manage to get something resembling a real erection going, despite the very real one grinding up and down your crack, smearing precum everywhere it touches. Still pumping your cock, you lean back slightly to give yourself room to slip a single finger into Charal's asshole. The human woman remains motionless throughout it all, head held low as she focuses on the folds of the crumpled bedding.

"Oh, don't worry about that." Moradys snorts in amusement. "You think she hasn't had bigger than you?" She grabs your wrist, pulling your finger from Charal's clinging passage before grabbing your dick just below the head and shoving your hips forward.

The motion that follows is more Moradys than you, but you make no real attempts to resist. You tip forward on your feet, squeezing your right eye shut as the head of your cock presses into that impossibly tight hole. The single finger you had used did little to prepare her for this, and you hear a rising scream as her sphincter gives way under the growing pressure.

There's a soft 'pop' you can feel as well as hear, then a sharper scream than before followed by a gasping chuckle in your ear. You open your eye to see that your glans has passed all the way in, the girl's inflamed ring spasming violently around the unwanted intruder.

"I said fuck, not foreplay!"

Moradys slams her hips into you, forcing another inch of your cock into her slave's ass while grinding her own member into your lower back. Charal screams and reaches back with one arm, palm open, but doesn't make any real attempt to stop you. She knows far better than you what disobedience means. Her pained cries tug at your heart, and your face contorts in vicarious pain as you try to pull out.

But Moradys slams into you again and again, hammering away until your hips slap into Charal's quivering buttocks. The slave cries and stammers wordlessly, her well-trained obedient silence broken down by the agony of being opened up so wide without the aid of lube nor foreplay. You want to cry, and scream, and strike the Elf shuddering orgasmically against your backside, but you
don't want this woman - the only person who has tried to help you - to pay the price for your cheap revenge.

"She's tight, isn't she?" Moradys wraps an arm around your chest and bends you over slightly so that she can grab a handful of her slave's ass cheek. "She doesn't stay that way for long. I had to send her to the Shaper after her night with Ribara."

The pain of that experience must have dwarfed this several times over, but it doesn't bring you any solace. Your cock burns from the dry-fucking, and there's a worse pain forming in your gut with each quavering sob that slips from Charal's lips. You've hated every moment of the torments heaped on you by Moradys, but you're quickly discovering that you dislike being the tormentor just as much.

"I can't do this," you exclaim, holding tight to Charal's hips. You're afraid that if Moradys pulls you out to suddenly, part of Charal will come out with you.

"If she's pretty, you should be able to cum in her." Moradys grabs onto your shoulders and grinds into your backside, spilling absurd amounts of precum from some seemingly bottomless reservoir within her loins.

"I can't," you stammer over and over. "I can't!"

Everything about this hurts you, body and soul. You can't believe you've even managed to stay hard through it all. Every day, there are new horrors. Not just of magnitude, but of type. You had thought that as long as you had yet to find Vala, yours was the only life you had to be concerned about. But there are other people here as well, trapped in hellish bondage alongside you, and you struggle to turn a blind eye to them - especially when they're crying out beneath you.

"Is it a problem of love?" Moradys wonders. Your breath catches, as you are ever fearful of broaching the topic of your wife with this opportunistic monster. "It's because I'm right here, isn't it? You want me to make you cum."

She takes the slightest of steps back, just enough to angle her cock at the center of your buttocks. It presses forward insistently, and only your tightly-clenched muscles keep it from spearing you just as you did to Charal.

"I can make you cum in her, and you won't have to move a muscle." Moradys puts a hand on your back, forcing you to bend over the trembling slave. The familiar pressure of cock pushing between cheeks builds, though this time you find yourself at the other end of the joining.

You close your eye and relax your buttocks, allowing Moradys' cock to slip between your cheeks and press into your backdoor. You don't bother telling her of your decision, nor asking her to go slow. Pleading for such a thing would only embolden her to spear you with one gicious thrust. Better not to say anything, and hope that she's in the mood to savor your slow defloration.

"Have you ever been fucked before?" Moradys asks. You shake your head and mumble a 'no', and she hooks two fingers under your collar, pulling your head back and constricting your throat.

"I'm getting tired of repeating myself. Address me properly." The head of her cock remains poised at your backdoor, though she has stopped pushing on your anus.

"No, Mistress," you say. At least, you try to say it. The words come out as a strained gurgle, but Moradys seems satisfied enough by the added syllables to release your collar. Her hand slides down your back, returning to her cock and keeping it aimed at your entrance as she leans into you. She's not a large woman, but all that weight is concentrated at the tip of her dick, a blunt instrument which
you have little hope of taking without immense pain.

You resist the urge to force yourself balls-deep inside Charal, knowing that the whole point of this is to avoid fucking her into a bloody mess. The very same thing is about to happen to you, but the fact that Moradys is a bigger and and more brutal partner could actually be an advantage. Perhaps she'll wreck you so badly that she'll decide it's time to throw you in that restorative pool beneath the manor and start over. You might even get your left eye back.

The pressure grows and grows, and your anus waivers under the continual assault until it can't hold her back anymore. The head of her cock shoots inside in one savage motion, lodging itself in your ass and coming to a stop before any of her shaft can enter along with it. You let out a pained scream, twisting your torso and swinging a hand back at her. Moradys swats it aside, keeping you held aloft by the hips so that you don't collapse onto Charal. Hot fire flares in your rear, a roaring pain you can't escape from. This isn't like having your eye plucked from its socket, where you had been in too much agony to even breathe. This is a pain you make known loud and clear, shouting and gnashing your teeth as you dig your fingers into Charal's buttcheeks for some semblance of comfort.

"Is it that good?" Moradys marvels. "Don't worry... There's plenty more."

She puts a hand on your shoulder and uses the other to pull back on your hips, but then stops.

"Why are you bleeding so much?" she snaps. You had felt a wetness at the moment she impaled you, but assumed it to be some trick of the senses played by your screaming nerve endings. With your body so deprived of fluids, your ass is just as dried out as your lips and remaining eye. And now, she's split you right open.

"Because I haven't had a real drink in days, Mistress." You snap back at her through clenched teeth, reminding yourself to keep your words proper even if pain makes it impossible to mask the anger in your tone.

"Drink, drink, drink!" Moradys echoes mockingly. "You have the most one-track mind of any slave I've owned." She puts both hands on your hips, holding you firm without pushing any further in. "Fine, then! Fluids it is!"

You hear a sigh as she relaxes her taut muscles, then feel a sickening warmth form within your rectum which quickly spreads further up into your abdomen. This should be less horrifying than drinking straight from Ribara's hose, but it's not - it's worse. That had been done purely for your survival, and even the dark amusement the Elf had derived from the act was secondary to the goal of keeping you alive. What Moradys is doing now is pure perverse pleasure, the sort only someone like her can enjoy. You're not a person, a slave, or even a sex toy - you're a toilet.

The flow of piss slows to a trickle, then stops. Moradys makes her cock twitch in your ass, but keeps it there while you focus on clenching your muscles tight to avoid expelling the disgusting enema you've just been given.

"Charal, move!" Moradys barks. The slave shuffles forward on the bed, using one hand to hold you back by your hips as she drags herself away from your cock. It comes free easily, your erection long since diminished by pain and humiliation that overwhelm any primitive lust your unwilling partner had given rise to.

With Charal out of the way, Moradys pushes you down onto the bed, keeping the tip of her cock lodged within your rectum as she leans both hands on either side of you.

"I'm pulling out," Moradys says. "Don't you *dare* make a mess of my bed."
You're not sure how much control you have over something like that. Blood is already trickling down your taint and balls, and as Moradys pops her cock from your ass you struggle madly to close the aching ring she had torn open. Two minutes ago you had been an anal virgin, and now you're left with a bloody and spasming ring that refuses to listen to the commands your brain is sending it. You're allowed to lay there for a few minutes to recover, face buried in the covers, but your attempts are hampered by Moradys' repeated spreading of your cheeks to get a look at the damage she has wrought.

Footsteps mark the path of someone walking around the bed, and you look up to see Moradys standing a few feet away, blood-tipped cock hang limp at eye-level.

"Come clean me. I don't want to touch this filth when I bathe."

You grimace and retch at the visceral evidence of your injuries, unable to decide whether to crawl forward and get this over with or to bury your face back in the covers and pretend you're somewhere else until she starts beating you.

"Please allow me, Mistress!" Charal rushes forward, sliding to her knees and deftly taking Moradys' cockhead into her mouth.

"Very good," moans Moradys. "You could learn a thing or two from her."

Moradys winds her fingers up in Charal's hair, holding her fast to her crotch as the girl's lips work against the Elf's hairless groin. Even though she's limp, Moradys' length is no joke - yet Charal doesn't show a hint of difficulty in taking her all the way to the balls. You shudder to think at how many times she's been used for just this purpose. Eventually Moradys' grip eases, and Charal lets the cock slip from her lips, sucked clean of any evidence of what was just done to you. Moradys then watches as Charal gets dressed, though her 'clothing' is little more than twin golden nipple covers and a pair of dark underwear that doubles as a chastity belt. You would fear having such a device put on you, but you've had so little food and water lately that having to go to the bathroom is a distant memory.

"Get him dressed," Moradys says as she exits the room. "I want to see him before I leave."

You rise slowly from the bed, a burning pain in your rear and burning questions in your mind. It sounds as if Moradys will be going somewhere without you, which is the best news you've heard since arriving in this city. Her underlings are brutal and ill-tempered, yes, but they're not as absurdly focused on making your every moment a living hell. With Moradys' watchful gaze directed elsewhere, you can start thinking of steps to take towards eventual freedom.

You slide your underwear on, though it's quite difficult to do so while keeping the contents of Moradys' bladder from leaving you. Charal makes no attempt to help, and you don't ask. She just stands there until you've finished, head bowed, then leads you from the room. There are two Dark Elf guards posted outside the doorway, and they do no more than look your way as you pass. You follow Charal's lead and point your eyes at the ground as you walk, though you have to look up now and then to see where the hell you're going.

Charal has no problem navigating the halls and stairways leading you from the center of the manor to an outlying building, likely having done so thousands of times over the years. You speed your walk slightly to move alongside her, and are surprised to notice that her expression is not as subdued and robotic as you had expected, but wide-eyed and fearful. Her eyes dart from left to right as she moves along, taking in everything in view while failing to meet your own gaze.

"Sorry," you whisper, touching her on the arm. She jumps at your touch, making a little leap off to
the side before resuming her stride down the narrow stone hall.

"You should not touch me," she stammers uneasily. "Not unless they tell you."

She calms down once you put a few feet between you and her, but her shoulders tense again with each guard she passes. Despite the girl not being much for conversation, you find it refreshing to be so close to another human being. Her olive skin and vivid brown hair stand in stark contrast to the monochromatic features of the Dark Elves, as does her relative plumpness. She's not overweight by any means, but the species you've been kidnapped by seem to carry very little fat anywhere except their chest and buttocks, despite their decadent lifestyles.

Charal leads you into what looks to be the servants' wing of the mansion, and you pass a few barracks-like rooms lined with multiple beds while catching sight of far more humans than Elves. None of the former stare at you, but you catch glances flickering to you from bowed heads, some directed at your awkward limp, others at your swollen eye socket. Assuming these people are ever alone enough to talk freely, word likely spread about the condition you arrived in yesterday. You could do without the pity, but there's something reassuring about knowing how unusually cruel your treatment has been. That means there's potential room for improvement, at least.

You're motioned into a restroom at the center of the hall - one with no door - and are finally able to sit down and expel everything Moradys pissed into you. It hurts far more going out than coming in, and you bury your face in your hands to avoid any risk of meeting a passing servant's eyes. Every time you think you've hit rock bottom, some absurd and inventive humiliation is thrown atop the growing pile.

Once that's finished, you stagger off the toilet and pull up your underwear, and are led by Charal into a room that looks halfway between a kitchen and a store room. The resemblance to the Shaper's dark operating theater makes you uneasy, and that unease is only increased with each dried blotch of blood you see on the dark panelled flooring.

"Here, please." Charal stops beside a long metal table the size of a small bed and pats it a few times. "Here, here."

You sit on top of it, and she goes to one of the cabinets and takes out a small tube of some medicinal paste, then asks you to lay on your stomach. You do so, but as soon as she pulls down your underwear and you realize what's about to happen, you grab the tube from her and insist you'll do it yourself. The horrors inflicted on you have been plenty humiliating in their own right, but even well-meaning people can have the same effect - and you're still capable of rubbing lotion on your own asshole.

Charal stands in front of you as you grimace and prod at your ass with the cold, numbing gel, her head bowed and hands folded in front of her. The right side of her face is turned to you, and every few moments you see her eyes flickering over to yours. She notices the odd expression you give her, and wavers from left to right as if to walk away before finally turning her body towards you.

"Can I look at you?" She cracks a nervous smile. "It is nice."

"Of course," you respond quickly. Charal's smile broadens into a wide grin, and she gives a slight nod before telling you to wait here, then leaves the room. She returns a short time later with a small bundle of clothes folded atop her hands, topped by a pair of thin-strapped leather sandals.

"What's this?" you ask, pulling your underwear back up and painfully easing yourself into a seated position.
"Clothes." She says it as if the answer were obvious, and it is - but these aren't like any you've ever worn. You unfold the fabric to find that there's only one item besides the sandals. It's a loincloth of thick black fabric, with long flaps that hang over the crotch and buttocks. Four gold plates cover each side, glinting garishly in the yellow light of the kitchen. You slide your old underwear back off and put these on, finding that it's actually quite modest compared to what you've seen the female slaves wear.

That doesn't stop you from feeling like a piece of meat, and you're certain that feeling will only get worse once you come under the leering eyes of the Dark Elf who arranged this. The sandals are uncomfortable, and dig into the space between your toes, offering little in the way of padding or support as Charal leads you out of the room and back towards the manor's main hall.

You half-expect some jealous stares from the other slaves as you limp along in your new gilded skirt, but they know as well as you do that any attention from their Mistress is bad attention. That's likely how it works in any number of the plateau-top estates you passed on your way here. Those working in the mines certainly die slow, painful deaths, but being made the house slave of some Dark Elf whose eye you caught is no great gift, either.

Ribara is waiting for you in the central hall of the main building, standing before the unopened double doors like some statuesque guardian. Her face has healed amazingly - advanced surgical means were undoubtedly employed - but a patchwork of faint scar tissue stretches from her left ear to her nose.

"Eyes down!" she shouts, pointing at you with something in her hand. You had been staring, partially to find out whether or not her severed tongue had been restored. You got your answer, loud and clear.

Once you and Charal reach her, Ribara takes the leash in her hand and attaches it to the back of your collar while Charal departs back the way she came. This is not the showy leather one that Moradys had used, but an unbreakable-looking thing of interlocking metal strips. She turns and pushes open one of the double doors, then leads you into the courtyard, through the gardens, and down to the mooring where Moradys' barge hovers in waiting. You stop before reaching it, moving off to the side of the pathway where you wait with head bowed.

You can't resist a few glances up at the woman holding your leash, wondering just what exactly is running through her mind as she holds the leash of the man who lost an eye for her. Only now do you realize how stupid and pointless your defense of her had been.

These people look a lot like humans, but the way they think is just as alien as the foulest Xeno. There's no such thing as gratitude or grace for them - just selfish desire. You wouldn't be surprised to discover that she thinks even less of you after your impassioned defense of someone who had repeatedly beat the daylights out of you.

Ribara's face snaps to yours, and you again realize just how long you've been staring up at her. It's a mistake that you've made so many times your body should be conditioned against it, but it's hard to have something as fundamentally human as eye-contact beaten out of you.

Still, they managed to do so with Charal and the others - and Ribara doesn't seem to think your case is any different. She pulls you up by the neck with your chain and punches you in the gut, knocking the air from your lungs. You're suddenly very glad you took the time to use the toilet. If you hadn't, everything Moradys put in you would have come right out in one unseemly spray.

The punch would have been hard enough to send you to the ground, were Ribara not holding you aloft by your neck. Your feet scrape at the ground, and it's a few moments until she lowers you
enough for you to be able to support yourself and start breathing again. Ribara puts your face in front of yours, and this time you're careful to avoid her withering gaze.

"I said--"

"How lovely!" comes a shout from up the walkway. You recognize the voice as belonging to Moradys, and Ribara lowers you onto the flats of your feet as her Mistress approaches. You can hear the clank of halberds on stone moving alongside Moradys, likely a procession of guards accompanying her onto the barge. Moradys stops in front of you, and you see that she's wearing the form-fitting dark gown of days prior. She holds her hands outward, running them up your arms as she takes in the sight of your outfit.

"Yes... beautiful." With one finger she tips your chin up until you're looking her in the eye. She's wearing a horned headpiece, looking very much ready to address some demonic assemblage. A guard passes her something flat and small, and she turns around the golden object before raising it to your face and pressing it over your left eye. It's an eye patch, though one with no strap. You can feel an adhesive securing it to your tender flesh, making the pain flare back up.

"I'm sure you wish you could spend more time with me, but I've been neglecting other matters for too long." Moradys leans in and presses her lips to your new eyepiece, applying just enough pressure for it to dig into your skin and draw a gasping wince from you. When she pulls back she turns to Ribara, clasping her hands in front of her exposed abdomen.

"Now, if he should injure himself too badly for the Pit to restore him..." Moradys points at the vast emptiness past the barge. "Jump off this cliff. You won't want to be here when I return."

Ribara gives a shallow, silent bow, and Moradys leaves with her entourage. You stand there and watch until the ship has sailed a few hundred feet away, then begin the walk back up the stone pathway to the manor. Your handler tugs at your leash the whole way, giving impatient huffs that betray a growing anger. It's an anger you can feel, just as you did with Moradys' bizarre combination of ecstatic relief and depraved anger.

Before reaching the main building, Ribara veers sharply to the right, leading you into a darkened exterior hallway that wraps around most of the complex. There are no guards or servants here, and even the ambient light of the green fog has disappeared behind high walls and metal ceilings.

She gives your leash a hard yank, then slams you back against a wall. It's nearly too dark to see, but you keep your eyes pointed down anyway. Whatever she's about to do here, you're not in a condition to put up much of a fight. Her fist comes down hard on the wall beside your head, and you feel her warm breath on your nose as she leans in close.

"Do you think I am in debt to you?"

You swallow the lump in your throat and draw your shoulders inward, seeking to make yourself as small as possible as she lets the question hang in the air. At first you think it's a rhetorical one, but then her fist comes down on the wall beside you a second time. She wants an answer.
"I didn't do it for a favor. I did it because it was the right thing to do."

You speak in hushed tones, but not just out of fear. Something about the way Ribara dragged you to this far corner of the complex leads you to believe that she doesn't want this conversation to be heard by idle ears. She won't care about what the servants overhear, but the courtyard had been staffed by a few Dark Elf guards.

A few more heartbeats pass as you wait for a response, and you add a hasty '...Vizir' before Ribara has another excuse to hit you. All these little rules and practices being so humiliating is bad enough. You wish they were at least easier to remember.

"The right thing." Ribara lets out a single, dry chuckle, more of a sigh than a laugh. "'Right' is killing your enemy when you have the chance. Might makes right, and that is how it will be until the Warp takes us."

You're stunned by her words. Not because of the callousness of them - that was fully expected - but because she professed something resembling a coherent ethos. Moradys has shown you little more than endless hunger and wanton cruelty, making Ribara seem positively moralistic in comparison. 'Might makes right' isn't the most benevolent of philosophies, but it's a very human one.

"You should have killed me when you had the chance," she says.

With her body blocking out what little light enters the covered hallway, you can't see what she's doing, but you can feel her growing closer to you. The wall behind you creeks as she lays another hand beside your head, pinning you in as her breath continues to beat down on your face. She's large enough in the light, and your inability to see her only makes her seem more imposing. You feel as if you've been dragged into a predator's den, and are now being toyed with before you're made a meal of.

"Why?" you ask softly. You're not sure what dumb impulse possessed you to utter the question, but the word is past your lips and in her ears before you can take it back.

"What?" she snaps, her voice shuddering with rage. There's a crackle of energy that accompanies her response, and you're still not sure what the nature of this spine-tingling sensation is. Moradys had called you a 'Psyker', claiming that your emotions are more succulent than most - perhaps there's more to that title, things you haven't been told. Then there's whatever happened to you in that nightmarish pocket dimension of desert - you have no idea what, if anything, actually happened to your body, and have no intention of discussing it with these Elves.

Ribara continues to wait, and you wrack your mind for some response. Some part of your brain had thought this to be a good line of conversation, so there must be more there for you to dig up and offer to her.

"If I had killed you, I would have died. And even if I survived, I still would've been recaptured."

She lets out a sharp breath of amusement, bathing your face with moist air.

"That's right. But now I'm here. And when Lady Moradys gets bored with you, I'll ask her to give you to me." She grabs your face and tilts it up to hers. Despite the near total lack of light, her orange eyes seem to have caught what little there is. They glow, as if granted an inward glow of their own.

"Did you think she wouldn't? You're a human - food. Food always spoils."
Seeing Moradys lose control had been scary enough, but Ribara is twice her size and seems to have even less self-discipline. You can't see much of her trembling, armored body, but you can hear the soft rattle of plates sliding against each other as her arms shake with emotion.

"When she does, I will not keep you in my bedroom and coddle you." The wall behind you buckles as she takes draws one arm away from it, and a moment later that same hand takes your balls in a firm grip. "I will make you a woman, and fuck you until you die."

She squeezes your balls, turning your breaths to halting gasps and tempting you to try and push her away. Your legs tremble like leaves, both from fear and the full-body pain emanating forth from your groin. You probably would have long since pissed yourself, if your bladder weren't close to empty.

"I could do it now. Lady Moradys said to keep you alive. She did not say you had to live well."

Ribara takes a step closer, pushing her armored chest up against your chin even while managing to keep her hand locked tight around your balls. That weight pressing into you is the only thing keeping you standing as her grip tightens, making you feel as if your balls are about to burst between her fingers.

"Disgusting," she mumbles to herself. "The way you look, the way you smell, the way you hurt so easily..."

She falls silent, though her hold on your sac does not lessen one bit as her angry huffs turn to long, heaving sighs. Whatever pleasure she's getting out of this, you can only hope she gets her fill before your balls break. Her fingers wriggle back and forth now and then, each slightly movement making you grit your teeth as you worry whether this will be the moment her out-of-control passion causes her to clench her fist tight.

Ribara is too strong to fight back against, and you've waited to long to do so, anyway. The pressure on your manhood has you feeling sick and weak, and you're certain you'll collapse the moment she releases you. If she crushes something vital before pulling away, you'll do so with screams instead of gasps.

"Lady Moradys says I need to learn patience," she grunts into your ear in a strained voice, forcing her hand to release and taking a half-step away. You nearly collapse just as expected, but Ribara snatches you up by your armpits and holds you aloft until you manage to get your legs working. "I will consider how best to send you to She Who Thirsts... and you will think about what a terrible mistake you made."

Ribara releases you, and you have only a few moments to right yourself against the wall before she's walking back towards the courtyard, pulling you along by your leash. It's hard to keep up with your new limp, and that pain makes it just as hard not to think about what she told you. You had suspected that no good deed would go unpunished in a place like Cummragh, but you had expected the comeuppance to be a bit more karmic, and not so direct.

"You are weak, and I am strong," Ribara calls back to you as you exit the shadowed hallway. "That is why you are a slave - and that is why I won."

"Won?"

You grab your leash, using your sandaled feet to try and grind to a halt even as Ribara continues pulling you across the smooth stone.

"Whose the one who bit off their own tongue? Whose the one who got knocked out?"
Ribara stops. The courtyard is silent, every wandering slave seeming to have disappeared within the span of those few shouted accusations. A few guards remain near doorways and on balconies, helmets all turned to you. Ribara turns to face you, so slowly and with such a look of shocked outrage that you don’t fear an immediate retaliation.

"You think I forgot that?" In perhaps the best performance you've ever put on under such duress, you hold your palms out open and turn your face away from her. "Plea, mu'uh!" you moan, mimicking the Dark Elf's mangled pleadings aboard Moradys' skiff.

Her jaw drops open, and the leash slips from her hand. Your mind is telling you to run, but your legs are still convulsing from the near-mangling of your balls at this woman's beastly hand. 'One defiant act a day', you had told yourself. This had seemed like such a good opportunity to make good on that promise. Ribara can't hurt you too seriously without risking the apocalyptic wrath of her Mistress - and Mother, you now suspect - but you made one grave miscalculation when you poked the beast.

You forgot that she is a beast.

Ribara's eyes are still too wide with shock to show a hint of anger, but the hand she has fumbling for her dagger tells you that those darker emotions are about to explode outward. They do so a split-second later, violently and with a force that washes over you in crashing waves. Ribara pulls her knife from its sheath and charges at you, and you catch her wrist inches before the blade plunges into your gut. She keeps pushing, screaming all the while, but the stone at your feet is smooth enough that you simply slide backwards as if skating on ice. The courtyard erupts into chaos, every guard in sight dropping their weapons and rushing over to you.

Ribara screams wordlessly, shoving you forward until your back strikes an alcove pillar, leaving you with nowhere left to run. That would mean your immediate disembowelment, but the first two guards reach you before that has a chance to happen. They grab Ribara by either arm, not enough to pull her away from you, but enough to keep the knife from moving any further. A few seconds later more arrive, piling onto the larger woman and pulling her back just far enough that you can fall to the side and scramble away from your attacker.

They manage to dogpile her to the ground, and Ribara's incoherent screaming turns to barked orders.

"Off!" she shouts at them. "Off!"

The guards obey, but are quick to move between you and Ribara. Apparently, Moradys foresaw a situation like this, and saw fit to tell the other guards of your importance to her. If you were any other slave, they would have watched Ribara cut you to ribbons without batting an eye.

Ribara rises to her feet and paces back and forth like an animal across the line of guards, furious eyes focused only on you. The other women had dropped their halberds to rush over more quickly, leaving them weaponless. You don’t doubt that Ribara could cut her way right through them if she really wanted to.

"Move!" She waves a hand at the guards, and they clear a path to you. Ribara stomps over, then brings her knife to your chest and holds it there, as if pondering how badly to cut you. After a tense few moments she pulls it away and sheathes it, but not from mercy. If she started cutting, you doubt she would be able to stop herself.

"Posts!" Ribara bellows, and the guards dash away to their previous locations. Once you're alone, Ribara wraps a hand around the back of your neck and draws you in close.

"You want to see how strong I am?" she says. "I will show you."
You're led back the way you came, and as you pass into those empty, shadowed halls, your knees tremble with the increasing certainty you hold that you're about to be murdered, or raped. Possibly both, and hopefully in that order.

But then you come back into the green light of the manor's gravelly grounds, and are led down a pathway that winds down a small cliff behind the complex. You've yet to walk back here, and are surprised to see smaller barges moored at landing pads to the left and right. There are other vehicles, too - faster and more practical looking ones, not the lumbering pleasure yacht you're used to riding on.

Ribara pulls on your leash the whole way, turning your descent down the zig-zagging path into an awkward affair of stumbling and falling. You come down onto a large metal disc that juts out of the cliffside, one without any ships docked alongside it. Laid out before you is a vast expanse of rock pillars that stretch from ground-fog to sky-fog, running miles up in either direction, making it appear as if you're contained within a vast underground cavern. And for all you know, that might be precisely where you are.

Your leash goes slack, and you turn to see Ribara going over to the cliff wall to your right. Racks of weapons are placed against it, each one a small armory unto itself. When the Dark Elves had attacked your planet, they had favored plasma weaponry and fast-moving aerial formations - but you are quickly discovering that they're no strangers to more intimate means of combat.

Ribara selects a polearm and tosses it to you. It's a simple spear, and the only weapon among the bizarre selection that you could even hope to use somewhat properly. She walks back to you, grabbing you by the leash and dragging you to the center of the fighting arena... then past it. As you near the edge, your steps become increasingly tepid and you try to grind to a halt, but Ribara keeps pulling you along. A few feet before you reach it, she gives your leash a hard pull and sends you stumbling towards the edge.

You gasp out and try to come to a stop, but you're too close and moving too fast. Just when another fall into the Warp seems certain, you hit something. Hot fire shoots through your body, and an electronic whine fills your ears as you're thrown back the way you came. You groan and stumble to your feet with spear in hand to see that your impact with the space at the edge of the disc has sent shimmering waves of force rippling around it. The invisible wall wavers for a few more seconds, then dissipates.

"Slave!" comes a shout from behind you. Ribara is standing at the center of the disc, arms held out wide. She wears her heavy, blood-red armor and gown, but wields no weapons.

"Kill me!" she bellows confidently.

You might have a weapon, but it's little more than a crude spear that looks like it's been forged from scrap metal. Ribara, while weaponless, is covered from neck to toe in overlapping plates of some metal light enough for her to walk around in effortlessly, while strong enough to come out of that experience in the Warp without a scratch.

"I don't have armor, Vizir!" you shout at her as you approach the center of the disc. Hell, you don't even have real clothes. The plates on your skirt beat awkwardly against you with each step, and your sandals are hardly any better than walking around barefoot. That's not to mention everything else wrong with your body right now. Hunger, thirst, a numb and swollen asshole - the list goes on.

"And?" Ribara says.

"So this isn't a fair fight!"
She puts her hands on her hips and laughs, tilting forward on her toes as she looks upward.

"'Fair' is a luxury slaves do not have. You have a weapon because I do not want this to be too boring." Her hands drop to her sides and clench open and closed, and she rolls her shoulders under her heavy pauldrons. This is suddenly seeming like such a bad idea.

"Let me eat and drink something first! I can't fight like this."

Ribara says nothing, her only response a mean sneer meant to dismiss all your objections at once. It might sound like last-minute excuses to her, but these are real concerns to you. The grip on your spear is weak, and grows weaker every time your stomach does its painful growl. Your mouth is dry and parched, though not nearly so much as before Charal had brought you a bottle of water to chug from. You're not near death, but you're far from the picture of health.

When you fail to make a move beyond a hunching of your shoulders and a widening of your stance, Ribara scoffs and raises her wrist to her mouth.

"Charal," she barks in a deep and commanding voice. "Food. Sparring disc." She drops her hand back down, but then seems to quickly remember something, and brings it back up. "And a medical kit," she says with a forced smile. You're certain that last bit was supposed to be intimidating, but you were under no illusions that she fully intends to beat the shit out of you. If she's planning to keep you alive and treat the inevitable wounds, you're in a far better position than you expected.

Ribara waves you forward impatiently, and you raise the spear under your armpit before slowly advancing. She makes no movements as you approach, something which only causes you greater anxiety. If she put herself in some fighting stance or grabbed for your weapon, you'd at least have something to react against. You're not a soldier, and you're certainly not a warrior.

Despite wanting nothing more than to run this woman through, actually acting on that impulse is harder than anything you've done before. It's not fear or self-doubt, but the sheer alien nature of the act. Up until a week ago, you'd never seriously wanted to kill anyone before - it's an emotion you don't know how to handle.

Despite your slow approach, you inevitably come within reach of Ribara. You draw the spear back and give a short jab at her abdomen, changing the angle at the last moment. It had seemed like such a clever attack, but she sidesteps it easily and bats away the haft with a wave of the hand, putting you off-balance and forcing you to stagger awkwardly to the side to keep the spear pointed in her direction.

"You have never fought in your life," Ribara says. "I can see it. I can smell it."

You're about to fire back a quick denial, but you doubt schoolyard scrapes and bar brawls are what she has in mind. You've never fought with someone's life on the line, but you've also never felt that to be a bad thing - until now. If you're going to find Vala and get the two of you out of this deep dark pit, it'll mean fighting, and it'll mean killing. Somehow, you're going to have to learn how to do that.

Gritting your teeth, you get back in what you think is a competent fighting stance, then deliver a series of quick stabs at Ribara's upper legs and torso. A blow to the head seems like the only way to actually put her down, but she's tall enough that you doubt you could manage such an awkward lunge. It's also a far smaller target than the rest of her. She slaps away your spear, but since she's bare-handed has to be careful to avoid catching the actual barbed end. This allows you to hit her in the body a few times, though none of the strikes leave so much as a scratch.

That is, until you catch her in between two of the armored sections of plate, just above her belly-
button. It's a perfect stab, one you couldn't land again if you tried. The jagged tip slides in sideways, the first barb catching the plate from the inside out. Before you can drive the spear home, Ribara takes a long step backwards at the same time she shifts to the left. That puts a few feet between her and the spear, but she didn't leave you empty-handed. The entire front half of her breastplate clatters to the ground, held fast to your weapon by the barbed tip.

You quickly walk backwards, eye flashing from the armor to Ribara as you search for any sign that you actually knicked her. What you see is not one wound, but dozens. Blood spills from tiny wounds too small to see, rolling down her torso in a horrific deluge of crimson that quickly coats her.

Unlike her lower half, there's no jumpsuit between her skin and the armor, leaving her small breasts and well-muscled abdomen exposed. She shudders and twitches, arms contorting oddly as the back half of her breastplate falls to the ground behind her. Then she walks in a small circle, giving you a glimpse of the wounds on her broad back spilling blood even more freshly than the front. Both halves of her armor are lined with small, short spikes, ones which until just now have been staunching the blood flow from the very wounds they created.

She regains her composure well before you, turning back around and advancing on you with a determined gait. You yank your spear free of the chunk of armor, but can't bring it to bear before Ribara snatches it by the haft and pulls it clean out of your grip. She tosses it behind her as if it's a mere afterthought, then delivers a heavy backhanded slap across your face. A punch would have broken your jaw, but being tossed to the ground by a mere slap of the hand is more humiliating - and that's exactly the point. Ribara advances on you quickly, kicking you to the ground over and over with a boot to the ribs until you're near the edge of the arena.

You had over-estimated yourself. Luck is a big part of how a fight plays out, sure, but that knife cuts both ways - your last fight with her had been all luck. What's more, she had been hampered by the need to keep you alive, whereas you would have been happy to put her six feet under. She's still under that restriction, but you no longer have surprise on your side. You're in her element, fighting against someone who has made fighting their way of life.

"Up!" Ribara delivers another kick to your ribs, but this one is more than the pitying prods she gave you before. Your side hits the forcefield surrounding the arena, sending a painful jolt of electric current through you. She stands over you with blood still spilling down her chest and arms. The purple star tattooed around her belly button has been painted over in a tide of crimson, making her appear as if her armor is melded right onto her skin.

You scramble to your feet and hold a hand out towards her. That won't win this fight, but actually fighting hasn't gotten you very far, either. You can feel Ribara's raw confidence and animalistic dominance, like a physical force just as invisible and real as the forcefield at your back. It washes over you in crushing waves, making your legs quake and breath go shallow. You try to send some fraction of that back at Ribara, to make her the one being cowed into submission, but the only emotion you can dredge up is your own primal fear of the woman.

Ribara's eyes go wide, and a shuddering convulsion passes through her body.

"I can feel it."

The words are so quiet you can hardly hear them, and they're gone the moment her knuckles connect with your cheek. This is a real punch, full-fisted and with all her weight put behind it. Your body rolls with it in reflex, the only thing that keeps bones from being shattered. Ribara is on you in an instant, bending over you and sending a flurry of punches at your exposed ribcage.

"You're afraid!" she cries out, as if it were a spiritual revelation. "You know how strong I am!"
You focus on blocking your face - particularly your barely-healed eye socket - leaving your torso dangerously exposed. Punch after punch connects with your side, each one putting another crack in a different rib. The assault goes on and on, but her punches are growing shorter, less severe. At first you think she's letting up, but then you see through your spread fingers that she's actually growing closer to you. Her expression is a strange mix of anger, triumph, and desire. You don't know what she's feeling, and doubt she does, either.

Then, the punches stop completely. She rolls you onto your front, panting heavily with exertion as she strips off her gown and tosses it to the side. Next comes a clatter of armor - her jockstrap, landing just beside your head. A foot smashes your head to the ground, and as you reel from the force of the blow, you feel her blood-soaked body settle on top of yours.

"Don't move," she says in a warbling voice made nearly inaudible with how fast she's breathing. You hear the words, but they don't mean much to you in your dazed state. With one bleary, half-opened eye you peer back at her, raising one hand as if to push her off.

"Don't move!" she barks, slamming your forehead back down to the ground. That one nearly knocks you out cold. You groan in pain and confusion, laying there silently as a panting Ribara shoves your cheek flat to the cold metal and delivers sloppy kisses all over your bruised face. Her body grinds into yours, armored legs tearing at your flesh as her right hand slips down the waistline of your skirt and plunges in between your ass cheeks. The gel Charal gave you worked well enough that the intrusion isn't painful, but you retained enough feeling to tell that she's jamming at least two fingers into your asshole. Her swelling bulge rubs up and down the back of your thigh, an unwanted reminder of what is about to happen to you.

You try to lift your head up, or your arm, or to even open your mouth to speak, but nothing seems to work right anymore. Just when it seems certain that Ribara is about to do something to you that will necessitate serious medical care, she stops. Her impressive weight moves off of you, and you hear the quick beating of feet as she walks away from you. The steps grow more distant, but it's another minute until you're able to peel yourself off of the ground and see what happened to her.

Ribara is gone. All of the clothes and armor she left behind are still here, but the woman herself has vanished. Nor are there any other guards or servants nearby.

She left.

That's welcome news, but surprising. She had been been in the middle of opening up your ass with you too beaten down to resist, and then had just... run off. You push yourself to a seated position in a fit of groaning and wheezing, then read for a few minutes with your head balanced on one hand. Any minute, she's going to come charging back down those steps and start beating you again. It's all part of the violent mindgames.

But minutes more pass, and she doesn't return. You regain enough control of your body to stagger over to the edge of the disc, but the steep pathway winding back up to the manor grounds look far too intimidating to attempt just yet. Instead, you slump down against the cliffside, uncaring of the hard bits of rock that dig into your back and shoulders. Most everything else already hurts far worse. Your ass is numb, but you're certain that once the numbing gel wears off, you'll be hit by the fresh pain of having your damaged asshole roughly finger-fucked. You don't bother checking for evidence of fresh bleeding - if it's there, there's not much you can do about it.

As you stare out at the rock spires miles in the distance, you hear the rhythmic patter of feet moving down the pathway. These are not heavy and fast, like Ribara's. They're softer and hesitant, betraying a timid and frightful personality. You can't see past the steep cliffside, and have to wait until the newcomer descends to see who it is.
Charal steps down onto the sparring disc, face pointed down. In her hands is a bowl of steaming food, balanced atop a dark metal box. Her flickering eyes travel to the left, then right, and land on you.

She gasps in surprise, arms going rigid and both bowl and medkit sent crashing to the ground. Large chunks of some brown and gray meat bounce in every direction, and the broth they were floating in splatters across the metal. She falls to her knees, eyes darting between you and the mess she just created as she sets the bowl upright and tries to clean up as best she can.

Another set of footsteps appears up above, this one far more familiar. Chara seems to recognize them as well, and picks the bowl up before rushing over to the other side of the pathway's end and standing with head bowed. Ribara steps out, gaze travelling from you, to Charal, to the mess. The blood has been mostly cleaned from her torso, though there are some stray smears remaining where she didn't adequately towel herself off. She wears a wrap of black cloth around her chest that covers her breasts.

"What did you do?" Ribara says, lip curling in disgust.

You can't see much of Charal with Ribara standing in between the two of you, but you spot her dirty toes curling nervously in her sandals.

"I am sorry."

Charal's apology is punctuated by a slap from Ribara. It's not as hard as the one she hit you with, but it's enough to send Charal's head smacking into the sheer cliff just beside her. The bowl stays in her hands, but the contents slosh around so much that most of it ends up right back on the ground.

"Hey!" you shout. "I surprised her. She dropped it."

Ribara spins to face you, and you point your face downward just as Charal does. That little injustice had caused you to momentarily forget what this Dark Elf is capable of. There's a limit to how much anger she can take out on you, but that just means she'll direct it to someone like the slave she just put on the ground.

"Then I should beat you." Ribara walks in front of you, boots smushing bits of food flat with each step. "I would, if you were not already broken."

You're surprised to hear that no retaliation for your outburst is coming, and even more surprised when Ribara snatches the medical kit from Charal's hands and cracks it open. She orders Charal back into the manor, telling her to take the bowl with her.

"Look at me," Ribara says. She stares down at you with a cold, stone-faced expression, showing far more composure than when she had fled her own near-rape of you. "I am stronger than you."

"You're stronger than me, Vizir." It takes the last of your pride to admit it, but you're too damn tired to fight or argue. You had caught her off-guard with a headbutt during your first scrap, but stick the two of you in a ring together and she'll be the only one leaving.

Ribara lets out a satisfied grunt, then drops onto her knees and sets the medkit down beside her. She pulls out a syringe gun, which she affixes with one of the faintly-growing green vials contained within the box. It reminds you of the frothing pool of green waters you had been dunked in, though this vial looks far more diluted. She presses the syringe to your side and pushes down on the plunger, repeating the process three more times along your torso, as well as once each in your jaw and cheek.

The needle is an uncomfortably large one, but Ribara wields it with surprising care, holding your
head with a firm and steady touch while she achieves the proper depth with the syringe. To call her 'gentle' would be massively overstating things, but in this moment she seems more like a coolly-professional field medic than a hotblooded berserker. When she finishes, she hefts the medkit under her arm before standing up and snorting in disgust at the putrid-looking brown stain coating the area below the stairs. You're not sure if that food was for you or Ribara, but it's a moot point now.

Ribara lifts up her boot, noting a chunk of food stuck to the bottom near the toe. She holds it out to you, easily balancing on one foot as she tips her other one forward.

"Eat."

Keeping your head hung low to hide your scowl, you peel the morsel off of her rubberized sole before wiping it on your shirt and eyeing it warily. Its the same bland food Moradys had fed you, something between meat and vegetable. It reminds you of mushroom, which would make sense given how much this place resembles a massive cavern. You pop it into your mouth and swallow quickly, before the grime of boot and ground has time to settle on your tongue. Its tasteless, gritty, with a texture not unlike the rubber you peeled it from. But fuck it - it's food.

Ribara lets out a dry chuckle, then presses her foot delicately to another bit a short distance away and offers it up to you. This goes on for a full minute, but it's so effortful a humiliation on Ribara's part that she eventually tires of it, instead squatting down in front of a particularly thick patch of spilled stew, and picking up pieces to toss it at you.

Most of them you have to pluck off the ground where they land, but a few you catch with your hands or mouth. The last method she finds particularly funny, her grin broadening each time you attempt it, success or no. It's a cruel smile, but not like that of her patiently sadistic mother. Ribara's reminds you more of a child burning ants with a magnifying glass.

Your eyes meet a few times, but she doesn't shout or glare at you. There's so much you want to know about this place - so much you need to know if you're to have any hope of finding your wife. You need to tread carefully, though. Pushing too boldly risks angering Ribara to the point where she clams up completely and kicks you until you're acting like a slave again.

Ribara eventually runs out of food to toss you, but remains squatting on the ground as she looks you up and down. You remain silent, none of the questions in your mind so pressing that you would risk breaking her from her silent examination of you. It's like there's something about you she's trying to figure out, though you can't imagine what that is.

You're a simple man, from a simple world. Everything strange that has happened to you is a result of these Dark Elves. Your gazes connect for the third time in as many minutes, and this time you risk holding the stare. Her expression remains placid, though her narrow eyes glitter with an interest you hadn't noticed before your brief fight. It's a cold stare, without a hint of human feeling - but the way she meets your gaze without looking away produces a strange nostalgia in you. Tears well in the corners of your eyes - even the empty one - and you turn your face down to your lap.

"Why are you crying?" she says.

You blink the gathering moisture away and draw a wet-sounding sniff in through your nose.

"I want to go home."

Ribara doesn't laugh, nor display any emotion beyond a deepening of the interest that was already there. Just like with her mother, you feel as if you're being picked apart by someone who can't quite fathom what they're looking at. Ribara stands up to walk closer, then drops down to her knees beside
you and leans on the rock wall with her forearm. You doubt she's even trying to be intimidating, but she doesn't need to try. Her sheer size and proximity is enough to remind you of all the beatings you’ve received from her.

Every second she grows closer, eyes travelling over you and breath moving faster. You turn your head to the right, since turning it left would mean getting a face full of unshaved armpit. Ribara doesn't seem to like that, and grabs your chin to put your face back where she can see it. Then, she leans in even further, kissing the side of your face while holding your head still. You clench your teeth and close your eye, but endure the bewildering molestation for fear of something worse.

"Are you afraid of me?" she says.

You nod slightly, keeping your eye closed as you clear your throat to speak. "Yes," you respond softly.

Her left hand goes to your chest, sliding across it until she has your right nipple pinched between two fingers. She squeezes it hard enough that you can't help but let out a sharp breath through your lips, and that pressure remains while she returns to running her mouth up and down the side of your head, a few times angling in such a way that your lips meet.

Ribara releases your aching nipple, and stands up before taking a few steps back. You look up to see her scanning the top of the cliff, and the manor grounds above. Whatever she's looking for isn't there, and her attention quickly returns to you. She walks closer until her crotch is nearly flush with your face, standing off to the side with one foot in front of your crossed legs. Her unarmored bulge strains the thick fabric of her underpants, threatening to spill out through the slitted opening on the front. You look away in reflexive disgust, but the touch of fingertips atop your head draws your attention upward.

"If you suck my cock, I'll give you food and water. As much as you want."

You've recovered your senses from the bashing your skull took, but now your head is swimming all over again. Ribara hasn't moved a muscle since she popped the question, but her threatening bulge suddenly seems so much closer. Gagging on Moradys' cock had been distressing enough, but Ribara's size and ferocity are likely to take that discomfort to new heights.

It wasn't too long ago that you held the head of her cock between your lips, and that mere suckling had been enough to make very clear just how painful trying to take her inside you would be. It's far better than getting drilled up the ass by her, but your jaw is no less breakable than your sphincter.

"Not even a kiss first?" you ask dryly, turning your face away. Nothing about this is funny, but it's so absurd that you can't resist a nervous smile.

"No." Ribara sticks her fingers into the slit of her pants and grips her flaccid length, then pulls it out by the head until it's halfway out. The musky scent you had been only vaguely aware of before hits you like a freight train, sweat and body odor and God knows what else flooding your nostrils and fucking your brain as thoroughly as any dick. A clear globule of precum is forming on the tip, and Ribara arches her back, pressing the tip to your cheek before you can move away.

You cough and sputter, holding her back by her armored thighs as you grimace against the feeling of her warm fluids being smeared over your cheek.

"I'll do it!" you exclaim. "Just... let me go slow."

Ribara steps over your folded legs with one foot, then leans both forearms against the wall behind
you so that her dick is the only thing in view. Dark pubic hair pokes out with the part of the shaft she's pulled out, and more runs up her abdomen in a sparse trail, connecting the base of her shaft to her belly button. You spare a glance up at her breasts to remind you that you're still dealing with a woman. One with a cock and a muscular frame that dwarfs yours, but a woman nonetheless. You don't look up far enough to see her face, but you're sure she's staring down at you with impatient lust.

You grip the head of her foreskin-covered cock just as she did, using the tips of your fingers to pull it the rest of the way out. Inch after inch of thick, pale meat seems to come from nowhere, extending so far that there's a visible dip in the middle of the soft length, as if you're holding a length of fleshy rope. With the other hand you reach into her pants, pulling out first one ball, then the other. They appear even larger when not constricted by the tight fabric, and hang low from the heavy warmth of this place. Each orb is the size of a large kiwi, but covered in far more hair.

"Shit," you mutter, eye going wide at the sight of the baffling size of the organs you're holding onto. Your stomach is turning just as forcefully as it did the last time you were forced to put a hand on her member, but shock has a way of pushing aside all the other emotions you would normally be caught up in.

Ribara had half-demanded that you do this, but you could have refused. It likely would have meant starvation rations, but that wouldn't be anything new. Is this you resigning yourself to your fate? Or simply accepting that getting out of here will mean doing some things you never thought you would? Disgust, anger, and shame should be welling up within you, too strongly to ignore. Those feelings are there, but not as strongly as they should be - and that worries you.

"Are you afraid of it?" Ribara asks, shoving her hips forward. Her dick is still soft enough that you avoid having it driven into your lips, though you have to angle it aside quickly.

"It's big," you say simply. She returns to her earlier stance, and you remain weary of her as you grip the shaft with your left hand and begin pumping. Each stroke brings her a little closer to hardness, as well as drawing more precum from her winking piss slit. It spills onto your hand and coats your palm, making your strokes faster and smoother. You're managing to achieve a steady rhythm when you finally pull her foreskin all the way back, exposing her pink glans.

What you see makes you retch.

The first thing you notice is the smell. It's the same confusing mix of masculine body odor and feminine sweetness that's been cloying at your nostrils ever since she dragged out her dick, but far more powerful than before. Your vision swims and hand grows weak, though that could be from the sight of the off-white coating of sweat and cum left to dry under the head of her massive dick.

Ribara shakes with laughter at your reaction, shoving her length at your face and widening her stance as she shuffles towards you. This time, she's too hard for you to avoid having precum and smegma smeared underneath your nostrils. You cough and gag, resisting the urge to open your mouth to spit lest she jam the filthy length right in.

"I like to make the girls clean it," Ribara says down to you. "But if you take me deep, you won't taste it."

Ribara has presented you with a choice. It's not something you've been given very often here, and should be a welcome change. But when that choice is between letting her filthy cock macerate in your mouth, and having that same cock plunged down your narrow esophagus, how much of a gift is it? In fact, it's even worse than the illusion of choice. Whichever path you take, you get to end up hating yourself for it, knowing full well it was your decision.
"Please don't push, Vizir," you say with a grimace as you shift your body upright and prepare to take her inside of you. Ribara puts a hand on top of your head, but lets you guide your own lips onto her exposed glans. Not from the kindness of her heart, you're sure. More likely she just wants to watch you degrade yourself willingly. After all, she's already gotten her rocks off beating the hell out of you. Why not some mental humiliation to top it off?

The moment your tongue makes contact with the smooth head of her cock, you are struck by the same taste you smell so strongly. It's a salty and bitter sensation, carried into your mouth by the precum steadily rolling out of her bulging urethra. That taste only intensifies the further down the head you move, each fraction of an inch stretching your jaw painfully open.

You grip her cock tightly to ensure she won't start battering away at your tonsils, then close your eyes as your lips finally pop over the crown of her cock and reach the shaft. Dried cock juice softens from the heat and wetness of your mouth, mixing with your flowing saliva to form a putrid mixture that you force yourself to swallow before it has too much time to soak into your taste buds. Despite the utter disgust at what's being taken inside of you, saliva pools inside your mouth at a startling pace, spilling out the corners of your mouth in sputtering spurts as your cheeks bloat against the force of your own spit.

Ribara's fingers wind up in your hair, and you realize that you need to start doing something more before she decides it's time to do the moving for you. You draw both hands up to your lips, coating your palms in the juices flowing from your mouth before sliding them back down to coat the length of her shaft. You repeat the motion over and over, each time coating her with more of the sticky wetness. The squicky sounds your strokes produce are utterly revolting, but you don't dare let yourself slow down. Ribara is constantly shifting closer to you, and the tightening of her fingers in your hair remind you that you're working on a timer.

You can't decide whether to keep your eye open or closed as you fall into a gagging rhythm of sucking and stroking. Even with your eye closed it's impossible to deny to yourself what you're doing, but seeing the massive meat pole jutting out of your lips only makes it all the more real. On the other hand, should you close your eye, you risk being caught unawares when Ribara finally decides enough is enough and fucks her log right into your throat. Ultimately you keep them open, telling yourself that this isn't the first debasing experience you've had at the hands of these Elves, nor will it be the last. You hate Ribara, and you hate that you're doing this for her - but hate is the only thing that will get you through this hell. As long as you don't give yourself over to apathy, they will not have truly beaten you.

You're in the middle of an upward stroke when Ribara grabs her cock over your hands with such force that you cry out around her shaft and pull away. She starts swearing and gasping, pumping up and down her length with such animalistic vigor that you're battered in the nose each time she jerks her full length. You put your hands on her thighs to hold her back, but quickly realize that she's not trying to push deeper into you. Her head pulses and throbs, and your jaw is stretched so tight that a mild flash of pain comes as more blood rushes into her shaft.

She's about to cum.

You push back on Ribara and throw your head left and right until her swollen cock head pops free of your well-stretched jaw. Ribara doesn't let that stop her impending climax, and she takes a step closer to you, grabbing you by the hair with one hand while using the other to point her dick at your face.

You try to turn away from that imposing length, but her hold on your hair is so firm that even a slight change in angle makes it feel as if she'll pull a clump out by the roots. All you can do is close your eye and purse your lips, every muscle in your face going rigid as the first rope of warm cum lands
across your face. Ribara grunts and gasps, but doesn't cry out triumphantly as you expected - like she's trying to remain quiet.

More shots follow, each thick rope of jizz cutting a wet arc that stretches from your forehead to chin. You can't open your mouth without risking some of it slipping inside, and you're reduced to inhaling the cum that landed below your nostrils. Your eye and eye patch are covered as well, leaving you feeling as if every one of your senses has been muted by a thick layer of pungent seed.

Ribara drops down to her knees on either side of you with a heavy thump, armored thighs crushing yours to the ground as she grinds her spewing cock up and down your chest. Her hands gather up the flesh of your chest and try to press it to her cock, as if she could make you give her a titjob if she only tried hard enough. Cum continues to ooze out of the head even as she slows, rolling down your chest and abdomen in unending waves as her upward-thrusting dick smears the last few spurts onto the underside of your jaw.

When Ribara finally comes to rest, you are afraid to move. Not because of her, but because even breathing risks drawing her reeking semen into your body. You had remembered how bad Moradys' cum tasted, and wanted to avoid a repeat of that - but in taking Ribara's load outside your mouth, you ended up completely drenched in the stuff.

"You..." Ribara gasps out, pressing your cheek to the wall with the flat of her hand. You can't see her, but you can feel her roaring breaths move closer to your ear. "I can feel you."

The words are barely coherent, and she continues to grind the side of your face into the rough stone while her other hand moves between your throat and chest. She chokes you, tweaks your nipple, and even toys with your limp cock for a few moments, as if she can't decide how best to drive home her total domination. In the end she decides that the best way is to heave herself to her feet and slap at your cum-soaked face with her cock a few times. It's hard to dodge without the benefit of sight, and she delivers a few good swats to your cheeks before relenting and stepping away.


After your wife, that's the last person you want to see you plastered with cum. You're not exactly close with the slave, but she's the only human you've said a word to since arriving in Cummragh. You wipe the jizz away from your eye and then carefully blink it open to search for something to clean yourself off with, but the only thing in sight is your own skirt. You suffice with merely flicking away what you can from your eye and mouth, careful to avoid tasting any of it, then sit back and wait.

Charal arrives a short time later, and Ribara directs her to clean you off. The beleagured slave seems to see nothing odd about the state you're in, and goes about the task with a swift efficiency. Despite the speed at which she works, her touch with the towel is excruciatingly gentle - it makes you want to melt down and cry.

When the job is done, Ribara has Charal stuff the towel into the box of medical supplies, hiding away the remaining evidence of your messy blowjob. You reak of the Elf's jizz, but your hair is already so unwashed and matted that it hardly looks any different with a thick veneer of semen.

"Bathe it," Ribara says to Charal, pointing at you. "Do not let anyone see it."

The Elf picks up the armor she had left behind, then leaves with both that and the medkit. You and Charal ascend the steps soon after, though you spare a longing glance back at the unguarded hovercraft tethered to the small landing pads. You know that it's not worth trying with the collar you've still got wrapped around your neck, but your body can't think in such complex terms. It sees
freedom, and it wants to run towards it.

The two of you pass through a small door in the side of one of the buildings and move through dimly-lit halls, avoiding the eyes of both guards and servants. The former rarely actively patrol, and Charal seems to know their stations by heart - the latter move around, but don't look up from their feet. You veer into a particularly dark part of the metal labyrinth and hear a faint catching of breath from Charal, as if the growing darkness has caused her to start crying.

"It is like a game," she says in a fit of nervous laughter. The tension that had gripped you eases somewhat, and you force a smile despite her not being able to see it.

You come to a busier section of the complex, one you mark as the slave quarters for the men based on the few you see sleeping on beds in the single dormitory you pass. Despite how out of place Charal looks, neither of the two guards standing in the hallway say a thing. The masked Elves fix you with a long, unbroken look as you pass them, and you point your eye at the ground until you've followed Charal through a wide, veiled doorway.

The bathroom isn't much of one - there is a toilet, a sink, and a round metal tub. None of the three look to have been cleaned anytime recently, but the dark coloring of the fixtures allow you to pretend not to notice the rust and grime. You take off your sandals, but pause when you notice Charal still standing with her body facing yours.

Asking her to leave wouldn't do much good - your orders and requests don't carry much weight here - so you pull off your jingling skirt and set it on a ledge that runs along one of the walls. Charal goes over to the garment and folds it more neatly, then races over to the wash basin faucet and turns it on before you can reach it. Unlike you, she didn't need to undress. The nipple pasties she wears look to be gold or gold-plated, and her armor-like panties have a lock on the side. Part of why she's allowed to venture over to the men's quarters, you suppose.

When cold water reaches your buttocks you flinch and shoot up from the base of the tub, but Charal's hands gently ease you back down. She takes a sponge from the wall ledge and soaks it with the water quickly filling the tub, which grows warmer by the second. Then, she begins scrubbing, working your arms and torso with such vigor that you feel rubbed raw.

It's a good feeling - like all the filth is being washed clean, literally and figuratively. She sets the sponge down and pushes your head under the faucet, working her fingernails at a speed that makes up for the lack of shampoo. The ecstatic groan you had barely managed to hold back finally lets loose as you're overcome by the welcome feeling of comfort and safety. That feeling is a lie, you know - Hell is waiting just outside that doorway - but it's a lie you let yourself believe.

Charal allows you to clean your legs, but as you finish doing so she moves behind you and pulls your back flush with the edge of the tub. She takes the sponge and holds it over your abdomen as if to give you a second rub down, pauses for a few moments, then drops it into the water and grabs your cock before you can stop her.

"What are you doing?" you say a bit more loudly than you meant to, though you doubt the guards heard you over the rush of water. You're already half-hard from the intimate contact of the past few minutes, and Charal works gentle circles around the head of your cock with her thumb.

"Vizir said to bathe you," Charal whispers, wrapping her left arm around your neck. Her hand shakes like a leaf against your chest, but the one on your cock remains steady in its expert ministrations. "When I bathe Vizir or the Venerable Warriors, they sometimes have me do this. This is what she meant for me to do."
"That's not necessary!" You grab her by the wrist, keeping her from stroking you, though her fingers continue to work for a few moments more. "We'll just pretend you did it, alright?"

Your cock is raw, sore, and you don't want to smell cum again so soon no matter whose it is. There's also the issue of this being a blatant betrayal of the sacred vows of marriage you made. You couldn't stop Moradys or Ribara, but you can stop Charal.

"It'll be our secret," you say.

Charal withdraws her hand but doesn't respond, and you twist back to see her tanned face gone as pale as an Elf's. She stares at you with cold horror, and you quickly realize your mistake. This is someone who has lived God knows how many years alongside a mind-reader who would kill her for so much as a slip of the tongue. Anything but blind obedience is off the table.

"Not a secret," you add quickly. "I'm forcing you to stop. You can tell her that."

She swallows and nods, then snaps her eyes back down to the floor as you rise from the tub. There are no towels, and you're forced to shake yourself dry like a dog before getting dressed and following Charal out of the bathroom. You continue a short distance down the hall before going into another room in the slave's quarters, a small sitting space with a few metal tables and chairs. She sits you down, telling you to wait there until she returns.

It's odd having a constantly-shifting set of handlers leading you around at all times - though you should count your blessings that each one is better than the last. You're not like the other slaves, with well-defined tasks like cooking or cleaning or having trains run on you by the guards. With Moradys gone, you feel oddly directionless, as if you could float away if you stood up too fast. It's not that you want her back anytime soon, though. You've never felt so happy about doing something as simple as sitting on a hard metal chair staring at a hard metal wall. It's the most at ease you've been in nearly two weeks.

Your nose twitches, registering a familiar scent before your brain can put it into words. A moment later, Charal comes in with a bowl of food in one hand and a pitcher of water in the other. You gasp and shoot up from your chair, grabbing both from the startled servant before dropping them down to the table and going to town. You dig your hand into the mushroom slop, ignoring the spoon in favor of grabbing entire handfuls at a time which you cram into your mouth. The only pauses you take are those needed to breathe, or to take lengthy chugs of the large pitcher of water. It tastes polluted and metallic, like it's been run through bad pipes - but it isn't piss or cum, so it might as well be rain sent from heaven itself.

After a minute or two you sit down, eating more slowly now that your stomach has began to register the extent of its fullness. You're starting to feel sick, but you finish every last bit of food and every last drop of water. It's not something you even have to force yourself to do - your body knows as well as your mind that meals here are to be treated like desert rains, and stored away for the long periods of drought.

Once you're done, you groan and rest your head on the table as you cradle your aching belly. You feel sick, but not the kind of sick where you want to puke up whatever horrible bodily fluids have been pumped into you. This is the kind of sick you want to suppress, allowing all the food and water you shoveled in to have time to digest. Over and over you whisper prayers that Ribara won't come back before you've had time to accomplish that, and they seem to work.

Minutes tick by, and you offer Charal the seat across from you. She shakes her head and keeps staring at the floor, and you return your head to the table. Minutes turn to hours, and the only thing that makes the experience a slightly unwelcome one is the blatant discomfort of the slave standing
beside you.

She lets out wavering breaths now and then, shifting her weight from foot to foot as she struggles to find a comfortable position in the shitty sandals these Elves have put you both in. Every justice-loving scrap of your soul is telling you to grab her and force her down into a chair, but she would likely shoot right back up.

"Slave!" comes a bellowing shout from the hall. Charal anxiously waves you from your chair, and you step out of the room to see Ribara marching towards you. Her armor and gown are back on, and the sweaty bangs that had obscured her eyes so messily are now swept across her forehead. You wait with head bowed, expecting a punch to the stomach to make you lose all your hard-earned food, but Ribara only clips your leash back on and begins leading you away. Despite your dealings with her, you still haven't learned how to read her body language. Every tiny movement or glowering stare has you expecting a jaw-shattering punch - perhaps because that's so often how your encounters have gone.

She and another guard, this one masked and bikini-clad, lead you to the grounds behind the manor, then down another cliff-side stairwell that descends onto a landing pad servicing several barges. These are much smaller than the yacht Moradys had rode around in, with a single canopied deck and seating lounge. Each is topped with a banner bearing the same purple sun tattooed on your stomach. Ribara steps onto the ramp of one with you about to follow, then stops and turns. You glance up to catch the thoughtful expression on her face, but avert it before she can notice your wandering eye.

"Fighting or fucking?"

A few seconds pass, and your heartbeat quickens as you realize that this is a question - one you need to answer before she becomes angry.

"I don't understand, Vizir."

She snorts in disgust and gives your leash a light yank.

"Fighting or fucking!" she repeats. "Which do you like more?"

"I don't like either," you say hesitantly.

The odd way in which you're being taken away from the manor has you on edge, and you find yourself wondering if this has something to do with Vala. You live in constant fear that Moradys will find her before you do. Could that be why she left this morning? To dedicate herself fully to finding another source of leverage over you? It seems insanely self-centered to think you rank so highly on her priority list, but the way the Dark Elf has so darkly doted on you up until this point makes it seem a distinct possibility.

Ribara merely grunts at your non-committal response, and you're sure she's wearing a mean smile on her face.

"Then we will watch both." She gives your leash another pull, and you're dragged onto the waiting skiff.

The masked guard that had been trailing behind you goes up a short set of stairs to your left, where the piloting controls lay before a battery of high-tech weaponry. The day of your abduction flashes through your mind, images of twisted corpses buried under rubble, the smell of roaring flames, the feel of Vala's hand before it slipped from yours... you pray you're not being taken to see such atrocities committed on another unsuspecting colony.
Ribara takes you to the lounge at the center of the narrow skiff, then pushes you to your knees while she takes a seat on the forward-facing couch at the center. The ship pulls away from the landing pad, then makes a startlingly quick turn in the air before roaring away from the manor. You're forced to steady yourself on the furniture beside you to keep from sliding to the front of the ship on hands and knees. This vehicle, you realize, is far faster and more practical than Moradys' preferred means of transportation. To you, it would seem that this is the more desirable vessel, but the Dark Elves must prefer to flaunt their wealth by showing how little they value their own time.

The flight is a rough one, and Ribara laughs each time you're nearly thrown off of your knees by the sudden changes in direction made by the pilot. Whenever there's a lull in the action she whips your leash, something that quickly gives you a welt on your shoulder.

The ship leaves the plateau suburbs behind, passing through a foggy green mist and emerging into the spired webwork of Cummragh's main city. It's a sight you're now passingly familiar with, but each trip you make through the bizarre metropolis leaves you awed and terrified. This time you go further into the place than before, your pilot dodging and weaving around streams of traffic as well as tubular walkways that stretch across miles of open space.

Then, the spires abruptly fall away. You can't see what lies ahead with the front of the barge blocking your view, but you can see the gleam of green light burning brightly from either side of the front dock. There's a sound, too - a roaring cheer that grows so loud it overwhelms the whine of the repulsor engines only a few dozen feet behind you.

The direction of the cheer abruptly shifts from up ahead to down below, and you look to your right just in time to catch a sight of a tall structure poking out of the gloomy fog. It's topped by an arena, surrounded by hundreds of levels of stands filled with tens of thousands of cheering spectators. Thousands more onlookers sit in ships hovering around the arena, all positioned to watch whatever is taking place at the center of the spectacle. It's too far away for you to see more than a few speck-sized figures darting about a sand-covered pit, but you know full well what sort of entertainment these people appreciate.

Your skiff passes the arena by, but the roar of another crowd quickly replaces the one that had faded away. You pass seven more of the arenas, each built atop a tower that juts out of a faintly-glittering cityscape miles below. The things are baffling in size and scope, each one containing enough spectators to man a dreadnought. Your skiff finally slows and moves up alongside one of the arenas, joining the hovering cloud of other vehicles scattered in the air around it. Ribara stands up and pulls you to your feet, then yanks your leash hard enough that you're sent crashing into the barge's railing. You manage not to go hurtling overboard, but are unable to push away before Ribara's hands appear on either side of yours, and her armored chest presses into your back.

"Look at that, slave."

You need no prompting, as your eye has already been drawn to the spectacle laid out before you. Countless tiered rows of crowded stands surround the arena, though these onlookers are oddly silent. The octagonal arena is not a single flat space, but a deep dark pit over which are suspended six metal platforms. Each platform is at least a hundred feet across, but connected by bridges barely large enough to fit two men running alongside each other. Two wider bridges connect a pair of opposing platforms to the exterior wall of the arena, where two massive doors lay sealed.

It's undoubtedly a gladiatorial arena, but like none you've ever seen. Humans left such savage bloodsport behind millenial ago. These Dark Elves went the opposite route, taking their dark artistic talent and bringing the sport into the 41st Millennium. Despite the emptiness of the arena, you can almost see the horrific violence just waiting to play out - but you fail to imagine where fucking will
come into the mix.

A chant wells up from the crowd. At first it's too soft to hear, but quickly rises into a roaring cheer so loud that any words are buried under the sheer crushing noise of it.

"Slaughter!" Ribara shouts in your ear, making you jump in place. She presses herself tighter to your back, leaning over you and bellowing the word out at the arena like some vicious mantra. The Dark Elves in the other barges do likewise, tens of thousands of them speaking in unison. The Dark Elves have no central figurehead, no guiding ethos, no real culture beyond cruelty and violence, but they are united in their unending thirst for suffering. Here, they are of a more singular mind than ever - they need blood.

Their demand is soon answered, as both sets of doors within the arena walls open. The crowd stops chanting and cheers wordlessly as hundreds of ragged-clothed humans pour out of either doorway. Most are men, and all are weaponless. They look around at the spectacle with just as much confusion as you, racing towards each other in the primitive need to seek safety in numbers.

Just before the two groups reach the first set of smaller bridges, a harsh buzzing noise drives them to a halt. Dark Elves rise up from the black pit around the disc on small hover discs, wielding all manner of weaponry and clad in nothing but thigh-high boots and thongs. Metal crowns sit atop their heads, looking like claws that grip the long white hair spilling down to their waists.
"The Wych Cults feed those too poor to afford a supply of slaves," Ribara shouts in your ear. "This arena is Lady Moradys' charity."

The women shriek like banshees, flying around their panicked prey and shooting at the platforms to drive them onto the bridges connecting them. As soon as the first few humans pass over the bridges, new figures appear from the gloom. Horrible worm-like creatures the size of a starships surge out from the depths of the arena, snatching their prey in circular sets of teeth before dragging them downward in a fit of screaming. That sight is enough to drive the other humans back to the relative safety of the platforms, where they are harried and harassed by the Dark Elves.

A hand pinches the back of your neck, and you snap your face back to see Ribara glaring impatiently at you.

"Well?" she says.

"It's horrible," you stammer out.

Her hand releases, and your vision drifts back towards the source of shrieking and screaming. The Wyches hop down from their discs, lowering their pistols and raising their swords as they prepare to engage the humans in melee combat. It's not a battle, though - it's not even really a fight. Just as the Dark Elves themselves had chanted, this is a slaughter.

The Wyches swing their swords at slaves standing dozens of feet away, and the blades extend to reveal chained whips which disembowel and dismember with impossibly accurate strikes. The bloodied humans scream, the Wyches scream, and the crowd roars louder than them both.

"You have a wife," Ribara shouts into your ear. You swallow, and don't dare nod your head. Either she's bluffing, and you don't dare give her that information. Or Moradys already told her, and there's no need to play along with her games.

"In my first slaughter, I killed a man and fucked a woman on top of his body. He stood in front of her, so I think she was his wife."

Your eye goes wide in terror, and Ribara's chest settles down onto you a bit heavier. Her armored jockstrap covers up the bulge that would otherwise be pressing into your buttocks, but even that hard metal is an unpleasant reminder of what almost happened to you.

"I broke her neck when I came," Ribara continues. "I wondered if I should have killed the woman and fucked the man. He might not have broken so easily."

The Wyches have killed off a good half of the slaves, and the massive worm-creatures caught most the rest when they fled onto the bridges to seek a less violent, and more natural death. Some of the Wyches chase the stragglers down, but most of them have begun to dismember bodies and desecrate the remains. One of them eviscerates a woman's sex with her barbed blade, while another pulls aside her loincloth and drives her erection into the severed bottom of a man's head.

You look away before seeing what the other two dozen are doing.

Ribara is still talking, but your ears are ringing. Everything you hear makes you sick, from the roar of the crowd to your own heaving breath. The sights are no better, and you squeeze your eye shut until a pain in your left eye socket forces you to open the right again. Instead you turn your gaze upward, scanning the vast array of ships sitting around the arena. Despite what Ribara said about this being 'charity', not all of the ships are as small as yours. None are quite so large or opulent as Moradys', but there are a few within view that have human slaves and guard retinues - marks of wealthy Houses, or
Clans, or whatever they have in this place.

One nearby barge in particular catches your eye, as it's the only one close enough to get a good look at the occupants. You have to turn your head far to the left to get a good look at it, but Ribara doesn't seem to notice you averting your gaze from what she brought you here to witness. The vehicle itself is nothing remarkable, a smaller version of Moradys' ship or a larger version of Ribara's. It is red-canopied, with a banner bearing the emblem of a dagger wreathed in flame.

There's a couch situated near the edge of the ship's deck, giving a good view of the arena below. A single figure is seated atop it, a Dark Elf with long hair as colorless as her ivory skin. She has red facial markings, and wears a masculine-looking tunic of red and black. That, combined with good looks you can best describe as 'handsome', would make you think you were looking at a rare male specimen among these Elves - were it not for the pale breast peeking out of her half-open shirt. There's a hand resting on the breast, this one more colorful - a human sitting beside her?

The Elf leans backwards, smiling and talking as the person seated next to her leans over and joins their lips in a deep, passionate kiss. She's human, wearing a beige tunic that is simple, but well-cut and not at all ragged. She wears golden bracelets loosely around her wrist, and her head is mostly shaved bare, with the exception of the bright red mohawk running down past the nape of her neck. That vivid color, which almost seems to glow, reminds you so much of Vala that you continue to stare until the pair stop petting each other long enough to pull away from the passionate tongue-fucking.

And your jaw drops open.

Vala smiles and holds the woman by the face, chatting wordlessly and casually as the grotesque display to your right draws to a noisy close. You stare for minutes - hours, it feels like - heart pounding and stomach sinking.

You should look away, but you can't - not with how much she's smiling. All of the horrible images you had conjured up of the horrors that had befallen her vanish into thin air, burned away by the reality of what you're looking at. She's not malnourished, or maimed, or even scarred. Everything that happened to you, she avoided.

Vala leans in for another kiss with the Elf, and you finally force your vision back to the arena as you draw a startled gasp inward. The platforms are bloodied and strewn with countless severed body parts, but it suddenly seems far less horrifying a sight than it had only a few minutes ago.

The Wyches hop back onto their flying discs and descend back into the darkness they had risen from. The doors on either side of the arena open a second time, unleashing packs of large, eyeless hounds with scaled hides and reptilian heads. The beasts dash from platform to platform, devouring the carcasses that have already been left unrecognizable by the horrors the Wyches visited upon them.

It's like you're watching the massacre all over again, but you still can't force yourself to look back at Vala. All this time spent thinking of how best to go about finding her, and the universe drops her into your lap. But now that she's close enough to shout to, you're unable to even look at her.

You're disgusted at yourself, for having let the two of you become separated for months. You're angry at her, for not bearing a fraction of the wounds you do. You're despondent beyond reckoning as you wonder to yourself just when she gave up any hope of you being alive. A week? A month? Maybe all it took was a single threat of violence for her to give herself over willingly. Maybe where you had kicked and screamed, she had thrashed and moaned.
You feel sick, and regret stuffing yourself so full a few hours earlier. As you lean further over the railing and feel the first of several violent heaves working their way up your trachea, you notice something odd about the arena. You had thought the spectacle to be in the process of winding down, but the crowd is more incensed than ever. Gaps have formed between large groups of Elves, as if they've separated themselves to do battle within the stands. With a furious roar two of the groups throw themselves at each other, and the clang of steel reaches your ears clearly as the arena breaks out into violence once again.

"Vizir," you shout over the sounds of battle. "May I ask you something?"

Ribara's hands squeeze the metal of the railing tighter, and she puts her head next to yours to speak.

"Slaughters are a chance to settle grudges. Can you feel that?"

God help you, but you can. The swell of chaos below seems to become a thing in itself, a formless, shapeless entity that looms just outside of all five of your senses. Even though you can't point to it or touch it, you can feel a rising fury that seems to ratchet to new heights with each inch your stomach sinks. Despite the distance, Ribara is gripped by the same bloodlust, staring down at the arena in feverish need to join the butchery.

"Who is that to our left? On the edge of the skiff." You need to find something out about Vala and her companion before the two leave, but can't bear to look over at them yourself. The fire-wreathed dagger on the red banner above the barge is distinctive, but a name would be better.

"Why?" Ribara snaps. "Was she looking at me?"

"Yes, she was staring," you reply unthinkingly.

Ribara scoffs in anger and shoves away from the railing with such force that a bend forms in the middle. Your stomach lurches as you tip a few inches forward, but you don't fall any further than that.

"Fuck you, Mon-keigh lover!" she shouts at the neighboring barge. You duck down to stay out of view, a submissive posture that Ribara won't see anything odd about. "House Nathema," she snorts in disgust.

"Fuck you, half-born!" comes the bellowed reply.

Ribara charges up the stairwell to your left in a roaring fury, shoving aside your pilot and taking the controls in hand. Your skiff shoots into motion, and you scramble away from the edge as she brings the ship bearing down on Vala's.

You're kept busy grabbing onto any handhold you can find as you slide about the deck precariously, and within a few minutes of leaving the arena behind, the skiff slows to a stop again. You're back in Cumragh's dense cityscape, apparently having lost your prey. Ribara's road rage remains hot as she picks up your leash and slumps down onto the couch, leaving the job of the return trip to the other guard.

Once back at the manor, you're taken into a maze of small corridors within the building’s basement. The walls are dark metal, but the floor is ancient-looking stone. You come to a hall lined with three doorways on each side, and a single Dark Elf guard posted at the room in the middle on the right.

She opens the door, and Ribara leads you over to the doorway before stopping. The room you come face-to-face with is not a bedroom, as you expected - more like a prison cell. There's no furniture, and only a single circular light fixture on the ceiling that lights the room just enough to see the cracks
in the floor.

Ribara pauses there for a few moments, then takes off your leash before throwing you inside and slamming the door shut behind you. There's a toilet in a corner near the door, which you hadn’t noticed before. Nothing else, though. Not even a window.

You stagger over to the far wall and slump down to the ground with your back to it. Everything seems to have gone so wrong, so fast. You had suffered, but endured it knowing there was an end to that tunnel. You didn't know if there was a light there or not, but it was a goal.

Now, after having seen Vala's beaming face, you no longer know what you're fighting for. Planning feels pointless. Lifting a single finger is a titanic effort. Breathing is something you would just assume not bother with, but your body continues to force you to draw in shallow, halting breaths as you stare at the cracks in the stone floor.

In the days since meeting Moradys, your mind had been flooded by horrific images of what might be happening to Vala. Images of her hands being cut off, her teeth being yanked out, of her mind being steadily broken by a parade of brothel patrons.

Yet somehow, seeing her smiling and clinging to that Elf like a fawning lover was worse than all the fanciful horrors you had conjured up. If she was damaged in mind or body you could help her, just as she would surely help you. But if she's happy? Happy without you? What are you supposed to do with that?

There's nothing you can do, except sit and be tortured by thoughts without purpose or end. You grunt and smack the back of your head against the wall to drive out the unwanted parade of images, but all you end up with is a splitting headache layered atop everything else.

Time passes - too much time - and you begin to wonder whether they've simply forgotten about you, when a slot in the bottom of the door opens up, and a tray of food is pushed in. A bowl of water follows it, and you devour both before sliding them back out through the slot. Being left alone with your thoughts would not be so bad, were the thoughts of a less tortuous variety and were 'alone' not lasting so long. More time passes, without any way to tell how much. There aren't any windows in the room, and Cummragh has no sun or moon to mark the passage of time, anyway.

Another meal appears, and this time you race over to the door and bang on it, shouting for someone to let you out. That might earn you a beating, but that seems like such a small concern right now. No one answers back, and you unhappily eat your meal before returning the tray. The next time one comes, you stick your face to the floor and shout through the slot, pleading for release. Again there is no answer, though you can see armored boots moving away from the cell.

In desperation, you try keeping the tray. As you discover over the course of five more meals, they have no shortage of the things available to them. You end up with a pile of messy trays in your room, and are forced to shove them all out once they start stinking of food gone bad. You turn your mind away from thoughts of Vala and try to figure out what you did to warrant this treatment, but can think of nothing. Lingering resentment from Ribara? More pointless torture at the direction of Moradys?

You wonder if Moradys planned for Vala to be at that arena. If Vala herself was in on it, and saw this as a chance to take revenge for failing to rescue her. You see her pulling away from the albino Elf's lips, smiling at you, then returning for another kiss. As time passes and more meals come and ago, it becomes harder to untangle waking from dreaming and nightmares from reality.

No one will answer the door no matter how much you bang and cry, and eventually you suffice
yourself with pressing your face to the floor in the faint hopes of catching sight of a real human being. You see boot-covered feet, but never more than that. At one point you stick your fingers out of the slot in the hopes that someone will touch them, and eventually they do - but the contact surprises you so much that you shoot away from the door when you feel the touch of skin. You realize your mistake, but too late. The hand is gone, and it never returns.

You're well-fed enough to be able to waste food, and begin to flush portions of your meals down the toilet in the hopes that something good will come of it. It's hard to fathom your thought process, and as soon as you've done it you forget why you bothered to try.

Ten meals come and go. You keep count painstakingly, whispering the number to yourself for minutes on end each time it changes. The thought of forgetting is terrifying, as that's the only real way you have to keep track of the passage of time. Yet even with those markers, you have no real idea of how many months you've been in here.

And it has been months - you're sure of it. Ten meals of this size hardly seem enough to sustain a man for so long, but your growing delirium speaks to a lifetime lived within these metal walls. No one is there when you wake up, nor when you go to sleep. Vala appears in your dreams, but her smile is cruel and her intimate passions are always directed to some blurry, shapeless form you can't quite make out. You want someone to touch you, no matter who it is or how they do it. Even your memories of Ribara's hard-knuckled punches seem like gentle strokes compared to the cold stone pressing into your buttocks.

Everyone has forgotten about you. It's a conclusion you came to several meals ago - meal seven, you remember distinctly - but now you wonder if they're even still alive. You see Vala growing old, having Half-Elf kids, then dying. The life-sustaining pit beneath Moradys' home runs dry, and she withers away. Cummragh itself crumbles to dust, leaving you and this room adrift in the Warp with nothing and no one to anchor you. A rising panic grips you, an urgent need to escape this room, if it's not already too late.

You run your fingers over the flexible metal collar around your neck, remembering its purpose - and your eye travels to the door. You've tried shouting through it and kicking it more times than you can count, but you haven't tried bashing your skull open on it. If someone still cares whether you live or die, they will surely come running to stop you. And if you are truly alone, then you will simply keep headbutting until you can't anymore.

You rise to your feet and approach the door, leaning against it and pulling your head back as you prepare for the first of many painful strikes. Just before you swing forward, the slot opens, and a food tray slides up against your feet. You drop to the floor, pushing open the slot and opening your mouth to shout at the departing feet, but stop yourself. The feet move out of sight and the sound disappears soon after. They had surely been expecting you to cry out for them just as you've done the past ten times - yet they left disappointed. Flush with that victory, you feel no urgent need to humiliate the bastards further by cracking your head open.

With a triumphant laugh you take the tray and sit at the back of the cell, eating the food at the leisurely pace you've adopted to prolong any activity that breaks up the monotony of sitting and staring. Once you finish, you rock forward onto your knees to return the tray through the slot, and it slips from your grip and clatters to the floor. As the metal flatware bounces around noisily, a glint of light catches your eye, making you avert your gaze for a brief moment. There's a smooth patch on the bottom of the thing, worn down enough to reflect the weak light in the cell's ceiling.

You crawl forward and pick up the tray, turning it this way and that to shine a weak little spotlight around the room. It's the most fun you've had the entire time you've been in here. You angle the
bottom of the tray towards your face, and notice a person in it - yourself. He doesn't look all that
different from the man you saw reflected in Moradys' rejuvenating pool, with the exception of the
golden patch over his left eye. The lack of stubble briefly causes you to doubt your estimation of the
time that has passed, but then you remember your time spent with the Shaper's hair-removal tool. The
shortness of the hair atop your head is surprising as well, but Occam's Razor leads you to conclude
that your captors have been drugging your food with something to stunt its growth.

"Hello?" you say to the reflection. Its lips move in time with your own, and even the word itself
seems to bounce back to you. The sight of another person makes you smile, and you grip the tray
tighter as you lean in close.

"Hello, Orin," you say. The pleasant greeting causes you to break down in a fit of crying laughter.
It's the first time someone has said your name since coming to Cummragh. This room might be a
worse hell than all the others, but at least you're not 'boy' or 'slave' or 'it' - you are 'Orin'.

You angle the tray around some more, getting a good look at all the corners of your head you can
reach. Then you peel off your eyepatch, taking a look at the empty socket beneath before grimacing
and pushing it back on. The swelling is gone, but you hate to look at it. After that you open your
mouth to pick out the bits of food that had gotten stuck between your teeth. It's something you've
done regularly in here, but you enjoy having the aid of the makeshift mirror - it makes it feel like
more of an event.

As you open your mouth wider, you notice something curious - small hands and arms clawing their
way out of your mouth, gripping your lips and growing larger as they work their way to your nose
and chin and cheeks. You gasp and drop the tray, swatting at your face but finding it completely
clear of any such unwanted limbs. When you pick up the tray and look back at it, the new limbs are
still there. They spread over your entire face, leaving your head covered in dozens of overlapping
limbs that grasp their way down your neck and over the back of your head. They tug at your hair,
making it longer and shinier before sinking back into your flesh. Once they've disappeared back
below the surface of your face, you are left staring at yourself - but not 'boy' or 'slave' or 'it' - you are 'Orin'.

"Hello?" you say in amazement. She responds in kind a moment later, and you remain frozen in
place. Not from shock or disbelief, but from pure elation. You try to touch the face, but your fingers
merely hit hard metal. "Are you real?"

She smiles and nods slightly. "You're Orin."

You giggle in fiendish delight and lean closer to the tray. Despite how close you move to her, the
woman doesn't pull back or show any sign of discomfort - a good sign.

"Who are you?"

She opens her mouth to speak, then stops. Her pleasant expression goes blank, and you get the
feeling that you're staring at a photograph or frozen video.

"Orina," she finally says, her smile returning.

"Are you trapped in there?"

She frowns. "Yes. Just like you. We can help each other."

You close your eye, tears flowing down your cheek as your fingers grip the metal so tight your
fingernails dig into it. Someone could come in here and take it, you fear - take her.

"How?" you say a little bit meaner than you meant to. "There's nothing here. There's no one here but us."

"There is hope," Orina replies firmly. "There is always hope."

The tears flow more strongly as her words reach some deep-down spark of life in your darkened heart and set it roaring to life. What she says is simple, but more beautiful than anything you've ever heard.

"I just need to hope?"

She frown again and shakes her head disapprovingly. "Hope is powerful because it sparks change. If you change, your reality will change."

"Yes..." you murmur to yourself, eye wandering around a once-barren room that suddenly seems so full of opportunities. Every rivet is a key, every crack a lock waiting to be picked. This isn't spiritual mumbo-jumbo she's spewing at you. This is real, actionable advice.

No one has spoken with such kind inspiration to you before. This woman, with her beautiful name and more beautiful face, is the person you've been waiting for all your life. But who is she?

You want so badly to trust this woman. Every fiber of your being is telling you that she is your friend, an ally, someone to trust as if she were your own self. And indeed, she might as well be - after all, she crawled right out of you. Yet you can't help but remember that time all those years ago, where some creature of the Warp had disappeared inside of you. You had put it out of mind, and convinced yourself it had vanished along with the rest of that dream-like desert when it crumbled around you.

"Orina," you say softly. "Are you a creature of the Warp?"

She remains grimly silent for a few moments, then speaks sharply. "Why would you ask me that?"

The venom of her question nearly makes you drop the tray, and you delicately balance it against the wall to your left before taking a few kneeling steps back and holding your hands out pleadingly.

"I'm just trying to understand," you assure her. If your pushiness ends up scaring her away, you don't know if you could ever forgive yourself. You'd probably go right back to the door and bash your head open on it out of sheer embarrassment. Why are you so bad at handling women?

"Look at me." She waves a hand at her face, angling it this way and that so you can get a good look.

"You're beautiful," you say absent-mindedly, drawing a smile from her. "But you didn't look like that before. You looked like... a giant bird."

She frowns, and you wrack your mind for some way to salvage this disaster of a conversation.

"Because you were trapped!" you finally exclaim. "That place had you all twisted up!"

You laugh and slap your hand against the floor, shaking your head at an explanation that should have been obvious. Five minutes inside of that place had you saving one of your most hated enemies and drinking her piss. Moradys' decade-long imprisonment of you has brought you to the brink of suicide, and this is a mere prison of steel and stone. What would happen to someone who was imprisoned for a lifetime within the corrupting energies of the Warp?
"Yes," she responds. "Now I look like I should."

You receive her reply with a mere nod, but then realization hits you. This isn't an appearance she chose - this is the one that is natural to her.

"Why do you look like me?" you ask her. She remains silent, and you creep forward on hands and knees to pick the tray up.

Warm emotions wash over you in unending waves, and tears flow down your cheeks. The old religions spoke of the origin of humanity. Not its spatial birthplace or biological beginnings, but the source of the divine spark within it - its soul.

They come from the Warp, the priests said, and return there once their physical vessels expire, to reside until they are summoned again. Could those souls become lost, you wonder? Led astray by violent storms of ill-circumstance, just as you have been? Could a soul destined for the physical plane have crash-landed on some desert dreamworld, lost to insanity and delusion before you finally gave it a way home?

"Sister?" you say in between choking breaths. Orina gives a teary-eyed nod, and you clutch her tight to your chest. The metal is hard, but warm.

All your pointless suffering is suddenly given glorious purpose. You watched your world burn, fought demons, and braved Hell itself - all to rescue the sister you never had. If you had escaped the Warp without her inside of you, you would never have known what a treasure you left behind. You see the intersecting lines of fate that brought you here, a crystalline web that looks fragile enough to shatter at a mere touch - but you navigated it, and you have won.

No, not won. Not yet.

"I'm going to get us out of here," you say to her. "I swear it."

Orina's smile is gone, replaced with a tight-lipped look of determination. She gives you a confident nod, and you balance the tray back against the wall before launching into a set of push-ups. Orina's words echo in your mind - change. Hope is nothing without it.

You will become stronger, and batter down the door of your prison. Or you might become so strong that you won't even bother, and will simply pummel your way through the bedrock of this place and drop into the Warp. Then, you will fight your way through that. You're not sure what your destination will be yet, but you can figure that out while you're fighting.

"I should have started doing this earlier!" you laugh out at Orina, breathing quickly with exertion.

Once you finish the push-ups, you tuck your feet under the door slot and start doing sit-ups. You don't count the reps until it starts to hurt - those are the reps that truly matter. Pain lets you know you're changing. You can feel the muscles growing beneath your skin, and laugh at the thought of what is happening under the very noses of your captors. They think to torture you by leaving you alone, but that was their worst mistake of all. You have gained an ally who gifted you with glorious purpose, and are building up your strength with the very food that they provided.

Four more meals pass by in a blur, and it feels as if the months of training with Orina take mere days. You examine your body regularly for any signs of improvement using the tray's reflective surface, but can see no noticeable changes. Orina assures you that you've grown immensely, and that slow changes are hard to notice for the one bearing them. It's true that you've always been a bit of a self-doubter, and the crushing weight of this small room has a way of intensifying that. You're not sure if
she's right or simply being kind, but you smile and agree with her assessment.

In the end, it's the inner changes that matter - and those you can feel. You are more focused and determined than ever. As long as Orina is here, you have a purpose.

It's funny, you tell yourself. Despite your sister being incapable of physically aiding you in your escape, you wouldn't trade her for anyone in the world. You never asked for help, or begged to be saved - all you wanted was for Vala to need you. Yet she couldn't even do that much for her own husband. Hell, even Moradys needed you before she died and her underlings forgot about you.

And there were others, too - not just Dark Elves.

"What do you think about Charal?" you ask Orina as you dance about the room, punching at imagined enemies while they bob and weave. You've become something of an expert fighter during your imprisonment. You're still not able to batter down the door with a flick of your finger, but you are advancing more quickly than you had ever thought possible. Orina is even more amazed than you are.

"I like Charal," Orina says. You don't bother telling her that Charal has been dead for centuries. And in truth, you had already known Orina's likely answer. Charal was simply an impossible person to hate. She needed you, and that had felt very good. It's too bad you couldn't help her. You would have liked to, even though she never asked you to.

"What about Vala?" you ask Orina. Your sister's brow furrows, and her lips turn down into an angry scowl.

"She's a fucking bitch," Orina spits out. "You never should have wasted time thinking about her. You should have thought about me."

You sigh and drops your hands, wiping the sweat from your brow with your forearm as you turn to Orina.

"I know. And for what it's worth, I'm sorry."

Orina's smile returns, banishing away the gloom that had gathered over your mind at the mentioning of your wife. Or is it ex-wife? You're a widower now, you suppose. But despite her being dead and gone, you can't help but feel some leftover anger at her betrayal, and a sickening longing for her that you want to get rid of more than anything. You need closure, you tell yourself - to see her grave, or her body, or something. Then, you'll be able to move on.

"I wish you could have met them," you say with a faint smile. "All of them."

So much time has passed that the horrors inflicted on you hardly seem real. Moradys and Ribara are like villains from some ancient myth, too grandiose in their evil for you to feel any real ill-will towards. The thought of them sends a reflexive shudder through your body, but you can hardly even remember why. It's so hard to remember anything outside of this room.

"Who?" Orina asks.

One face in particular comes to mind, though you're a bit surprised to see Ribara's scowling visage. She was strong, but she wasn't kind, or patient, or funny, or any of the other nice labels you could put on a person. Still, you can't help but feel there was some wasted potential there - wasted 'goodness', you want to say. Maybe if she hadn't grown up in this twisted cocoon of a home, she wouldn't have come out all wrong.
"Have you ever known a person where you just... wish you could have met them earlier in their life? Like maybe you could have changed them if you got to them earlier."

Orina's face goes blank, and her eyes remain fixed forward - an expression you've learned indicates that she's hard at thought. It was a bit unnerving at first, but now you can't help but smile when you see it.

"Yes," she says.

"Really?" You give her a confused look. "When?"

Orina looks away, and you curse yourself as you realize your mistake. She's been trapped on her own since her soul first coalesced into existence, and here you are asking about the people she's met during a lifetime of isolation. Of course her first instinct would be to make something up.

You'll just have to learn to accept that there are some things Orina won't be completely forthcoming about - and you're no better. There's a reason you don't bother bringing up the hell Ribara put you through alongside her Mistress. You don't want Orina to think that you're blaming her for the pain you endured to reach her. All that matters now is that you did find her, and soon you'll both be free.

"You're right," Orina says. "I wish I could have met Ribara."

You sit down against the wall and throw Orina another odd glance. "Did I tell you her name?"

Her mouth opens slightly, and she pauses for a few moments before speaking, as if about to broach a subject she's uncertain about.

"You say it in your sleep," Orina says. You flush red with embarrassment, shaking your head and hiding your growing smile in your hands.

"In a good or bad way?"

"In a good and bad way," Orina replies.

You snort in amusement and slump your head back up against the wall. That is the way of all things, you suppose. Every cloud has a silver lining, and every stone has a crack. You know this - you've inspected each square slab of the room's flooring.

What Orina is saying is that you need to stop dwelling on the bad, and focus on the good - or appreciate the fact that the bad is inherent within the good, and vice versa. Maybe she means that good and bad are things of thought, and that the labels themselves are destructive to the purity of experience.

Her cleverness continues to baffle you. How does someone become so wise with nothing left to them but their own thoughts? Orina spent two or three decades lost within the Warp, and built a towering library from the seething fabric of the immaterial. You've had centuries of solitude with which to ponder your mistakes, and have ended up with little more than bruised knuckles from the two dozen sets of push-ups you've performed.

"Someone is coming," Orina says.

The words seem meaningless, and all you can do is stare at her as you try and process them. Another person? Coming from where? There is nothing but metal and stone. Then, your eye shoots to the door - and you remember that it opens. Your heart pounds, your breath quickens, and adrenaline surges through you at such a frightening speed that your muscles are locked rigid. Timeless time
spent preparing for this very moment, and you can't even move.

You can't move. You can't even look away from the door, nor open your mouth to ask Orina what to do. She's as silent as you, and you remind yourself that she's been alone for just as long as you. First inside of the Warp, then inside of here - inside of you.

You knew that all along, but hadn't truly considered what it meant. Orina wasn't leaning on you all that time - you were leaning on her. Yet you have no idea what to do now that it's your time to shine. You're terrified of what will come through that door, of what it will do to you - most of all, you fear it leaving as soon as it enters. Better for it to pass right by, and not tempt you with false hope.

A hard 'thunk' comes from the door, and you press yourself flat to the wall before finally glancing over at Orina, only to find that she has vanished. The glow of the overhead light catches the tray cleanly, but you see no sign of her. That puts a panic in you greater even than the creak of the opening door, but you remind yourself that she is inside of you. As long as you live, so does she. The door opens inward, and a soft yellow light spills into the room, bathing the figure before you in a radiant halo.

You laugh.

It is not a person - it is a spirit. Someone long dead, come to take you from this world and into the next. You can't fathom having died anytime recently, and can only conclude that even the afterlife simply forgot about you for a time. Moradys walks forward, dress swishing at her feet and breasts bouncing with each step. She wears her horned crown, making her appear more demon than angel - you don't mind being taken by either one.

She gets down on one knee in front of you, a warm smile crossing her face as she places her palms on your cheeks. What you feel confuses you. The fact that you feel anything from her confuses you. She is warm, and soft, and real.

"What?" you stammer out, tears welling in your eyes. Moradys' hands shift ever so slightly - you might have even imagined it - and you gasp, grabbing onto her wrists before she can pull away.

The Dark Elf 'coos' and 'awws', pulling you into a tight embrace and patting you on the back. You're angrier than you can ever remember being, but it's hard to put words to your anger. She locked you in here, you know that - but she also left you. You loved your wife, and she left you, too. At least this woman came back. You dig your fingers into Moradys' naked back, ecstatic in the feeling of so much warmth covering so much of your body. You don't dare risk letting go, and resist every one of her attempts to pull away.

"Up, up," she says gently, pulling you to your feet. Despite having been standing only minutes ago, your legs are wobbly and your vision uneven. The light of the doorway comes back into view as you rise, and you shoot out towards it in desperation. Every step you take increases your certainty that the door will slam shut before you reach it, but it doesn't. You pass through the doorway, smashing into the door opposite it and sliding down to the floor of the hallway.

"Carry him, will you?" says Moradys.

Broad hands grasp you under your armpits and pull you to your feet, and you spin around to grab onto their owner. Your arms wrap around overlapping metal plates, and you see that you've pressed the right side of your face to a familiar-looking red breastplate. Ribara tries to pry you off of her, but Moradys taps her on the arm.

"Gently," she whispers.
Ribara eases her grip, and slowly begins walking you down the hallway. It was dimly lit when you passed through it all that time ago, but now it's so bright you're forced to squint. You're briefly gripped by the need to rush back to the cell and grab the tray you left behind, but you remind yourself over and over that Orina is safe within you. She's quiet, but she's there. You're taken up a flight of stairs into the strangely familiar grand hall at the center of the manor. There are guards, and even many servants you recognize - nothing has changed, but everything looks different.

The next set of stairs is narrower, which makes things tricky for Ribara as you refuse to stop clinging to her. You could switch to the smaller Moradys trailing behind you, but fear that in the brief moment of being unanchored, you will be thrown back into your cell by some unnatural force. It's an absurd fear, but seems like such a real threat that you don't dare risk it. You continue to Moradys' bedroom, and Ribara opens the double doors to reveal a room lit by dozens of flickering candles, set atop dressers or wall-mounted stands.

Moradys takes you by the arm, pulling you free of Ribara as the latter steps back out of the bedroom and closes the doors behind her. You're seated on the side of the bed facing the round window which takes up a good third of one wall, giving a terrifying view into the vastness outside the manor. The sheer scope of the open space is exciting, and scary, and confusing.

Your hand slips from Moradys' arm, which you only notice when it hits the bed covers. You gasp and snap your eyes back to her, shooting up from the bed to grab hold of her arms. She smiles gently and eases you back down to the bed.

"Did you miss me?"

You look out the window again with wide eyes, this time careful to keep your grip tight.

"What time is it?" You blink and shake your head. "How is everything still here?"

She scoffs and cracks another smile. "I was only gone six days."

Your heart skips a beat, and your hands tighten. "Six days?" you exclaim angrily. That's bullshit - she knows it, and you know it. "It's been years!"

"How many meals did you eat?"

You look up in thought, mouth moving wordlessly as you mentally recount each one. Fourteen, you know off the top of your head - but your mind played such mean tricks on you in there, and you fear that Moradys played a part in them. As your brain works, Moradys sits down beside you on the bed, and you allow your hands to slip from her arms as soon as hers are securely set atop your shoulders.

"Fourteen," you finally admit. It's the number you keep coming up with, but it makes so little sense.

"It's hard being alone for so long, isn't it?" She sets her chin on your shoulder and speaks softly into your ear. "Thinking becomes difficult. Feeling even moreso."

Her left hand slides across your abdomen, and you grab onto her wrist and squeeze it as hard as you can.

"Why did you do that to me?" Your voice shakes with rage, and tears well in your eyes - these of anger, not relief. Moradys pulls away from you, but you keep hold of her wrist before she can draw back entirely.

"Two weeks!" she bellows so loudly that the flames of the room's candles are nearly snuffed out. "You left me for two weeks when you entered the Warp." She grabs your jaw with one hand and
squeezes it, gritting her teeth and narrowing her eyes, then shoves your head back roughly. "I was without you when you were in that cell. Did you even think of that?"

All you can do is stare at her, dumbfounded. Everything she's talking about seems so long ago, and you can scarcely process the display of emotion before you. It feels like an eternity since you've spoken to anyone other than the even-keeled Orina.

"Love is understanding," Moradys declared sharply. "Now you understand me better, don't you?"

When you fail to respond, Moradys shoots to her feet and moves in front of you.

"Don't you?" she shouts, throwing her arms out wide as she bears down on you. Your hand has slipped from her wrist, but you're too dumbfounded to remember the danger you had felt at letting that happen.

"Yes," you murmur without a hint of real understanding.

Moradys' anger eases, and she pulls you up from the bed by your hands before letting them drop back down to your sides. Then, she pulls down your skirt far enough to reveal your cock, and you slide it down the rest of the way. Despite how long you wore it, it hardly even smells - you had thought that the passage of centuries had dulled your sense of smell, but apparently the truth was a bit more mundane.

Once you've kicked your skirt off, Moradys stares you in the eyes as she hooks her fingers under the straps of her dress and eases it down her arms. Her pale breasts come free first, then the hard angles of her abdomen and the soft curves of her hips and buttocks. Next comes her panties, which she drops to the ground to reveal a flaccid cock and a pair of heavy, shaved balls. Now completely nude, Moradys steps towards you, kicking her dress aside and pressing her cock to yours as she wraps her hands around your hips.

"You missed touching me, didn't you?"

You didn't - at least, you thought you didn't - but you miss this warmth and softness more than anything, and you can't bear the thought of letting go. Tears well in your eyes, and Moradys seems to accept that as your answer. Her hands slide down to your buttocks, one hand pulling a cheek aside while the other begins to probe at your backdoor.

"I'll touch you. Slow, and gentle." She turns you around by the hips and walks you towards the bed, pushing you forward to urge you to climb onto it.

You turn to mush under Moradys' guiding hands, collapsing onto the bed with her following right behind. She talks into your ear, urging you to crawl up the bed until your chin is resting on one of the pillows. It wasn't so long ago that you hated this woman and her touch. The two had been inseparable. Now, her lilting whispers make you want to grab her by the throat even as her rubbing hands drain all the strength from your body. You long to feel someone. You want to be wanted. Moradys promises you both, lavishing you with such thorough attention that you can't push it away even as it turns your stomach. She kisses you from your neck to the base of your spine, then slides off of you and crawls across the bed towards the nightstand. You instinctively reach out and grab her by the arm, an embarrassing gesture which only becomes more so as she looks back at you with a sly smile.

"Oh, don't worry. I'm not going far."

You let her go, and she takes a small bottle of lubricant from the top drawer. She shuffles back over
your legs, kneeling behind you as she clicks open the bottle. A wet finger appears at your asshole a few moments later, prodding gently before slipping inside. You wince at the feeling of the cold lube coating your entrance, but it quickly warms as she slides the digit back and forth.

It feels strange, and unnatural, and revolting, but not at all painful. Moradys' fingers are more slender than Ribara's, and she massages you for a full minute before inserting another. Her other hand rubs up and down your back, a constant reminder that she's still there while you bury yourself in the pillow.

"Show me your face."

That's something you can't bear to do. The bed is too soft, her hand is too gentle, and you're the closest you've been to another person in what feels like an eternity.

You're crying.

Moradys continues to slide two fingers in and out, working her way deeper until she touches something deep inside of you, making your breath catch and your legs jerk. Each time her fingers press into your prostate you feel a jolt of raw sensation shoot from your groin to your belly button, a miniature orgasm that makes your limp cock drool precum.

Moradys adds a third finger to the mix, and it becomes more difficult for her to reach your prostate with her thrusts. The fourth makes it nearly impossible, and the strange pleasure she had produced is replaced by a growing strain on your sphincter. No muscle was meant to be stretched so wide for so long, yet Moradys seems determined to fist-fuck you until it stays open of its own accord. She moves her hand faster and faster, fingers sliding along your inner walls as her last set of knuckles batters up against your overtaxed ring.

You worry that she'll drive her entire hand right into your rectum, but her fingering goes no deeper than that as she shuffles forward so that her balls press up against yours. A warm pool of moisture forms on your back, and you're certain she's pouring lubricant onto you before you realize that the head of her cock is bobbing right above that spot.

She takes her hand out of your ass and grabs both cheeks, then begins to pump her length in between them. Precum spills up and down your back in such absurd volume that you wonder if she even needs the lube. You are glad for it, though - you vividly remember the pain of her fucking your virgin ass into a bleeding mess. You are far more stretched than you were back then, but still whole.

A fist presses into the bed just to the right of your head as Moradys gets up on the tips of her toes and slides the head of her cock between your cheeks. A growing pressure pushes away what little tautness your hole managed to regain in the short time it had to rest, and she slips inside.

Like the fingering, it's largely painless - but you still gasp and choke at the strange feeling of having something so big inside of your ass. You try to push her out without thinking, but that flex of your muscles only makes it easier for another few inches of shaft to sink into your rectum. Moradys continues to ease herself into you at an agonizingly slow pace, plumbing depths that have never been touched by another living being. Her gasps echo your own, as if she's stealing each flash of confused amazement and taking it as her own.

She's deep enough inside of you that she can take her left hand away from her cock and put that beside your head as well. That's when she truly begins pushing, insisting that you take more of her increasingly wide shaft until her cock hits a wall inside of you.

"Shouldn't a bitch beg?"
You take your teeth off of the spit-soaked pillow and turn your head slightly towards her - the blind side, so you don't have to see her.

"I hate you." The things she says, the things she does, the person she is - all of it has you seething with disgust and anger. Yet you still can't push her away. Her corrupting energies could be focused on anything in the universe, but she chose you. You are unlucky, and cursed, and damned - but important.

Moradys lets out a low laugh that quickly changes to a moan as she delivers short jabs at your colon, each time at a slightly different angle. It feels as if she might damage something, and you dig your face back into the pillow while praying that your body is up to the challenge. Another inch of cock shoots inside of you, her swollen glans pushing through the twists and turns of your insides, fucking them straight and opening them up wide. The last of her dick slides in easily, though the increasing width continues to surprise you. Every time you're on the verge of breaking, you adapt and take more. This woman is twisting your body just as thoroughly as your mind.

Her soft breasts settle onto your back, and her balls press up against yours, all of her warmth soaking into you at once.

"Do you want me to hold you?" she whispers into your ear. You draw in a wet sniff - maybe you nod, you're not certain - and Moradys wraps one arm around your neck, then shoves the other in between your stomach and the bed. "What would your wife say if she saw you like this?"

You don't care anymore. Vala didn't fight, so why should you? You had thought the blistering heat of Moradys' cruelty to be the worst hell imaginable, but Vala's betrayal hurt even worse. It left an aching hole inside of you, and you no longer care what fills it.

"What do you want from me?" you sob back at her. Moradys begins rocking her hips up and down, grinding her length against your prostate with each wave-like undulation. Those jolts of pleasure come back even stronger than before, physical ecstasy warring with mental anguish for control of your soul.

"For you to love me." She pushes off of you, grabbing onto the blanket near her feet and throwing it over the both of you, cocooning your bodies in a stifling heat. "You said you would show me what love is, and you have. I will kill you before letting you go."

Everything she says is so twisted and grotesque, but close enough to your own unspoken desires that you can't help but cling to her words as dearly as she clings to your sweaty body. You fear that she's reading your mind, but you're such a quivering wreck that you've abandoned all sensible thought. All you are now is pure feeling, a tangled ball of emotions that she unravels with terrifying ease.

The hand she slid beneath your stomach slips back out as she draws her hips upward, and she places her fingertips on your temple. Sparks fly in your skull, and you feel as if you're being fucked in mind as well as body. Moradys becomes pure thought, a formless presence that worms its way between fried neurons before locking itself around your brain like a web gone taut.

“You love me?” she murmurs.

You can't put coherent thought to what you're feeling - not in mind, and certainly not in speech. Moradys takes her fingers away, and the mental intrusion vanishes. The physical one remains as strong as ever, and Moradys returns her efforts to the cock she has buried balls-deep in your ass. She pushes up on both fists and draws her hips back, then slams back in. Even with a thick blanket covering you both, the 'slap-slap' of flesh echoes off the walls, turning wet as more sweat builds between you two.
You're not sure if she was angered by something she saw in your mind, or if this was always how she intended things to go. Maybe it's your own fault - your emotions have run out of control, tears rolling from your eyes at the same time precum is milked from your cock in steady spurts.

Nothing makes sense anymore, not even your own feelings. You give up trying to understand what is happening to you, and simply let it be. Moradys grunts and groans, varying the depth and direction of her thrusts as she turns you inside out. Each pull out, you feel as if she's going to take your clinging passage with her. Each drive in, you're certain that this will be the time she finally breaks through some delicate curve of your intestines. You don't know why you let this happen, or how to stop it, or why you should stop it.

"Look at me," Moradys mutters over and over between labored breaths.

You tilt your head to the right, looking up at her with your good eye. Most of her hair has come loose, making her look some fraction of the disheveled wreck you have become. Her mouth is closed tight, but with each thrust in she pulls back her lips, revealing bared teeth clenched tight. Sweat drips from her forehead, stinging your eye and making you blink frantically while her face draws closer. Her tongue dances across your face, then goes to your eye before her lips press down on it as well. Your eyelids are closed to her, but your tears continue to flow. Apparently that is all she sought, since she continues to work her lips there gently as her dick makes mincemeat of your rear. You can't stand the feeling of her tongue prodding between your eyelids as it seeks the only good eye you have left, and you turn your mouth further back to her in hopes that she will move to that, instead.

The ploy works, but not how you intended. She bites your bottom lip, holding it between her teeth as she stares you down like some bloodthirsty beast. Her thrusts become shallower and faster, and she drops onto your back completely, wrapping her arms under your stomach as she fucks you so hard and so fast that you feel as if your asshole might be set alight.

When she cums, she bites.

You cry out and try to wrench your face away, but that only makes it feel as if your lip will be torn clean off. Blood flows hot down your chin, and shot after shot of seed no less warm is pumped far deeper than you thought she could reach. You weren't sure why you were crying earlier - it was just happening. Now you're doing it from pain, and humiliation, and regret. Moradys laid you down, spread you open, and then fucked you raw. It feels as if you've lost some battle, or broken some promise - but you can no longer remember what those were.

Moradys releases your lip and grabs you by the hair, holding your head fast as she licks up the blood from your mouth and chin. Her cock throbs in your ass with warm spurts, balls pulling tight against yours to warn you of each new load being deposited in your well-fucked guts.

When the pulses finally stop, Moradys continues to work her length back and forth inside of you, churning up your insides and making you feel ill. You can't move your head, and can't muster the strength to feel at your spit lip. There's no sense of satisfaction to be had here, no contended warmth or after-sex glow. Only a feeling of being ruined, of having invited violation upon yourself and had it delivered more cruelly than you thought possible.

She gives you one last kiss on your bloody lips, then heaves herself upright and remains kneeling on either side of your buttocks with her cock still inside your ass. You can feel her member dragging back down your intestines as she softens, but Moradys is long enough to still remain buried in you even once her erection has subsided.

Finally she rolls off, her cock popping free of your ravaged asshole in a splatter of warm fluids. You
don't groan, or moan, or even change the tempo of your breathing. You only continue to stare at the wall, until Moradys crawls up the bed and slumps down beside you to block your view, back propped up against the pillows and headboard.

"Slave..." she moans, stroking your matted hair with her thumb. "You may look at me while you jerk off. Few are allowed that privilege."

You can't even think about that right now. You're aching, broken, and most of all tired.

"I think I already came," you mutter. Moradys' fucking of you had been so rough that it was hard to feel anything besides the violent tug-and-thrust on your anus, but your cock burns as if some seed is still stuck inside of it. Her battering of your prostate had made you weak enough that you couldn't even ejaculate properly.

Moradys reaches under the blanket and pats the bed just below your spent cock.

"Hmm. So you did." She rolls off of the bed and goes to the nightstand, picking up your leash before clipping it to your collar and pulling you up. It takes you a lot of effort to stand, and more to walk away from the bed.

When it becomes clear where she's leading you, you're gripped by a cold horror that makes you work against her insistent tugs. She shoves you up against the wall and removes your leash, then chains you to the same sliding attachment you had been imprisoned on over a week ago.

"Wait, Lady Mor--Mistress!" you call after her as she pulls on a nightgown and goes to leave the room.

Moradys exits without a word, and the moment those heavy doors close behind her you feel as if you're back in your cell. The room may be larger and better furnished, but there is no one in it. Just you, and your thoughts. Your eyes dart left and right and your heart pounds with a panic you can't explain as you ease yourself to the floor and draw your knees up to your chest.

"Orina?" you whisper, hoping against hope that she will reveal herself again.

No answer comes, not in your mind nor in reality. A few minutes pass, and the bedroom doors open. A servant woman enters with a bundle of bedding, then goes to work changing the bedsheets while pointedly ignoring your attempts to talk to her. You're nude and bleeding, but that is hardly a strange sight around here - she simply isn't allow to speak with you.

The woman leaves, and your panic returns. You put your head against your knees and hold it there, hoping that the darkness you create will be enough to allow you to slip into the only refuge you have left - sleep.

It doesn't work.

Hours pass, and you're reduced to a crying wreck by the time Moradys arrives back in the room. She eyes you with intent interest, but again says nothing as she disrobes beside her bed, switches off the overhead light, and slips under the covers. The presence of another living being should bring you some modicum of comfort, but the darkness is so total that you feel as if she's simply vanished. There is light coming in from the window beside you, but it is too weak to illuminate her bed - only strong enough to keep you awake.

"Mistress," you whisper. It takes a few repetitions for Moradys to answer, which she does in a venomous tone that shakes you to your core.
"If you keep me awake, I won't be happy."

You immediately go silent and still. You spit on her ‘happiness’, but the vague threat of punishment calls to mind your endless isolation, and that is enough to overwhelm even this nagging, needful despair. You push your face into your knees again, and try to sleep.

This time, it works.

When you dream, the scenery is familiar - stone floors, dark metal walls, and dim crystal lamps of yellow light. It's a part of the manor you haven't seen before, a windowed corridor that leads to a single closed door. There's a slight breeze coming through a cracked window up ahead, and the air caresses your bare breasts and makes you tremble as you walk. Your pussy is wet, so wet that the moisture joins with the sweat of your thighs and rolls down your legs. Despite being alone, and naked, and unsure of who or what you are, you feel no fear - only hot energy and a need to move forward.

You come to the metal door and push it open. A large bedroom is revealed, with a bed set against the far wall and windows on both left and right. The door closes behind you, and the overhead light flickers on - but only dimly. As you draw closer to the bed, the windows and walls fade into blackness, reducing the room to little more than you, the bed, and its naked occupant.

The huge Dark Elf sleeps with the covers half-thrown to the floor, leaving her well-muscled body exposed to a night air which no longer moves. Tiny, bloodless wounds dot every inch of her arms and torso, as well as her thighs and calves. Her stomach is flat to the bed and her legs splayed out awkwardly, but her cock is so long that you can see the head poking out from beneath the blanket covering her shapely buttocks.

Even in sleep she looks unhappy, lips pursed and brow furrowed as she dreams of someone or something hated enough to harass her even in dreams.

You extend your hand towards the sleeping figure, summoning thick tendrils of metal that crawl up from the underside of the bed like headless snakes. They wrap around the Elf's wrists and ankles, pulling them tight and binding them together while she continues her unmoving and unhappy slumber.

You slowly raise your hand, and the Elf rises with it - first one foot above the bed, then two feet, then ten. The covers slip from her waist, and you let her hover weightlessly for a few moments before swinging your arm towards the floor.

The Elf comes crashing down like a meteor, cracking the bed frame in two. She shouts in pain and confusion, but you're already raising her up for another go. You throw her against the ground over and over, sending the pieces of the bed scattering off into darkness. When you finally let up your assault, all that remains of the bedroom is a small circle of dark wood beneath the Elf. She's covered in welts and bruises, and her short hair hangs messily over one eye.

She looks around frantically for her attacker and tries to scramble to her feet, but the bindings at her wrists and ankles bring her smashing back down to the floor. She senses you approaching as you near her feet, and her eyes flash in both recognition and confusion.

"Ribara?" you ask hesitantly.

She narrows her angular eyes at you as if doubting her own vision, then pushes against the floor with her feet to try and move away.
"What is this?" she bellows.

You smile and get down on hands and knees, easily outpacing the crawling Elf as you move up alongside her back. She stops her futile attempt to flee and throws a weary glance at you as you press your breasts to her back, throw one leg over her hips, and wrap your arms around hers. She's so tall and wide that you can hardly hold onto her.

"I wanted to meet you."

Ribara stops struggling against you, though her arms remain rigid as she strains against the metal bindings keeping her limbs together. The remaining patch of floor vanishes beneath you, leaving nothing but your tangled bodies amidst endless darkness. Her heart races, a rhythmic thumping you can feel through her back. You slip a hand under her arm and reach into her chest, grabbing hold of the organ to feel it more closely.

"This is a dream," Ribara spits out. "This is not real."

She's right, but she's also wrong. Everything starts with a dream - that's how it becomes real. You wind your left leg further around her hips to rub up and down her groin, digging your heel into her balls. Her legs jerk, but she doesn't dare move more than that with your hand gripping her heart so firmly. Ribara squeezes her eyes shut and groans in an effort to wake herself, but that's useless. If this is a dream, her efforts are dreamed, as well. And if this isn't a dream, there is nothing to wake from.

"I can change you," you whisper into her ear. Your lips touch her flesh, then meld to it. She gasps in shock, shivering at the sensation of your bodies fusing together. It's cold and hot, terror and ecstasy, horror and rapture.

"Why would I change?" says Ribara, horror flashing across her face as she sees what's happening to your intertwined forms. "How?"

"If you don't bend, you'll break."

You squeeze her heart, making Ribara choke and jerk with the spasms of a dying woman. You're speaking within her mind now, the words coming from everywhere and nowhere.

"I am s-strong" she stammers out. "This will end, and I will find you. Whatever you are, I will kill you."

"Who are you talking to?" you ask. "There's no one here."

Ribara goes silent and relaxes her arms, only then seeming to perceive the blackness that has enveloped what was once her bedroom. She whips her head back to try and get a good look at your body which had been stuck to her back, but you've vanished. So have her bindings, and she is able to push herself to her feet and look around frantically. But there is nothing. Not dream nor reality - just her, naked and alone.

"Do you still feel strong?" Your voice echoes across the space, giving the illusion of close walls where there are none.

She doesn't answer, and walks around with hands held in front of her for a time before failing to find anything solid besides the featureless sheet of black she walks on. Fear dawns on her face as she fails to awaken from a dream that has become something far more terrifying.

"What do you want?" she whispers, running a hand across the side of her head. Perhaps she can feel you in there.
"What do you want?" you ask from behind her. She spins around to face your naked form, grabbing you by the neck with both hands in one impossibly swift motion. With gritted teeth she squeezes and squeezes until something pops inside of your neck and your head lolls to the side, a wide grin on your face and eyes rolled back.

"There's no one here to watch you," comes a breathy rattle that slips past your motionless lips. Ribara releases you, and your vertebrae slots back into place, head returning to its normal upright position. "Are you sure that's what you wanted to do?"

Ribara steps away from you, then casts a weary look around as if confirming your words still hold true. When she fails to find anything or anyone besides the two of you, she re-approaches and runs a hand across your breast. You tremble and moan, wetness running down your legs in a fresh deluge as you collapse back-first onto the ground with splayed limbs. Ribara steps back again in surprise, but stops and wavers when she sees your extended hand.

Her fingertips touch yours, and your smile broadens to a grin as she lets herself be pulled on top of you. Her palms fall flat on either side of your head, and both of you sink into the blackness.

When you awake, Moradys' bed lies empty, the covers thrown down and nightgown vanished from the hook on the wall. Despite the uncomfortable position laying on the wood floor, it seems like you've managed to sleep through an entire night. Just as you whisper a silent thanks that no one saw fit to wake you up with a kick to the gut, you receive exactly that. Moradys stands near your shins, her bare foot raised in preparation for another blow.

"I told you to wake up! Twice!"

You get onto your knees and hold a hand to your aching stomach as you try to remember how to speak.

"I'm sorry, Mistress."

Hearing her voice calls to mind all the things she did to you the night before - the things you let her do to you. Your sleep had been filled with all sorts of bizarre, fragmented dreams, but that experience hadn't been one of those fabrications. Your aching ass is evidence enough of that.

Moradys steps in front of you and places one pale foot forward, moving aside her robe to reveal a long, shapely leg. You want to touch it, and hold it, and press your face to it. This need to touch someone - anyone - is humiliating and mindless, but so primal that it makes you sweat buckets to resist it.

"Where is my good-morning kiss?"

You lean down and plant your lips on her foot, holding them there for a moment before sitting back upright. It's not something she's asked you to do before, but seems like the most innocuous act of submission in the world after having your intestines straightened out by nine-plus inches of Elf meat. Moradys gets down on one knee and looks you over, then takes a moment to fix the crooked eye patch affixed to your left eye socket.

"I'm leaving now. I want you tight when I get back. If you're not tight, I will be very, very upset."

Moradys is asking the impossible. You haven't yet had a chance to inspect your ass, but you can feel how it aches as you sit there kneeling on folded legs. There are some wet spots on the wood beneath your shins, probably the cum that had managed to slip out of you during your fitful sleep. You don't envy the slave in charge of cleaning up such things - but knowing Moradys, that slave might be you.
Hopefully just not with your tongue.

"Mistress..." You clear your throat and keep your eyes downward. "I don't know if I can do that on such short notice. But if you put me in that pool again..."

Moradys tilts her head back and laughs. "The Eternium Pit? Do you have any concept of how much wealth goes into each use? If I wasted it on repairing every loose cunt among my slaves, I'd have gone broke long ago."

"I also have other injuries," you suggest carefully. You're banking on the assumption that she values you a bit more highly than the other human lives she throws around. How far that goodwill extends remains to be seen.

"What? Where?" She lifts your arms up and flips them over, and then her gaze travels upward. "Your eye?"

You shrug and nod slightly, and Moradys jerks backwards.

"I took that from you!" she shouts. "Why would you want it back?"

"To see better," you respond uneasily.

"To see what? I'm right here, aren't I? What else do you need to see?"

You look up at her in confusion until she shoots to her feet and storms over to her nightstand, then rips out the top drawer before throwing it at you. The wood breaks on the wall behind you, and you just narrowly manage to dodge the bottom drawer seconds later.

She becomes a shrieking banshee, throwing the covers off her bed and tipping over both of her dressers before storming out of the room. Moments after the heavy door swings shut behind her, she opens it again, slamming it closed three more times before finally leaving for good.

You heave a sigh of relief, heart pounding and mind reeling from the bizarrely emotional outburst. A slight twinge of guilt grips you, and you feel as if you've rejected a well-intended gift - but you can't let her malicious insanity infect you further.

All you asked for was your eye back - the one she ripped out. You knew that she'd likely say no. You just hadn't expected it to be accompanied by a temper tantrum. If the cause of her outburst weren't so alien, you would almost describe her actions as human.

Confident that you're alone for the time being, you feel delicately at your throbbing asshole. The ring is tender, swollen, and will only fully close for the briefest moment when you put conscious effort into doing so. Time might get you back to normal, but twelve-odd hours won't be enough to do more than push out the rest of her cum to make room for the inevitable new batch. That's assuming you're even allowed near a toilet.

You wipe your fingers on your thigh and pull on the skirt laying beside you, not wanting to be fully naked when a slave hopefully comes in to feed you. Seeing Charal would be nice. If she gets close enough, you'll grab her hand and hold it to your face so you can feel the touch of someone who isn't evil. She'll struggle, but you're stronger than her.

There's someone else you'd like to see, too. You can't touch her, but you want to talk to her.

"Orina?" you say softly.
No answer comes, and you feel a bit embarrassed talking to yourself like this. Your feminine doppelganger had seemed so real despite the outlandish way in which she appeared to you. Regardless of how much like a dream those memories now seem, you're certain she was more than a figment of your stimulus-deprived imagination.

Then again, you had been certain that you spent centuries in that cell, despite having eaten only fourteen meals. Right now, sitting here, you can see how absurd that belief was - perhaps more time will lead you to the same conclusion regarding your sister.

"Sister?"

Still nothing.

You rest your forehead against your knees, waiting in that withdrawn pose for a few minutes until the bedroom doors opens. Charal enters, and warm relief washes over you. She carries a bowl of the same slop you've been fed over and over, which you immediately identify as intended for you. Every meal you've seen Moradys eat has clearly come from somewhere other than this pollution-ridden cityscape and its odd, cavernous geometries.

Charal spares a single side-to-side glance to confirm that Moradys isn't here. You keep your eyes off of her and face hidden in your knees, not wanting to scare her away with the emotional thirst that must have you looking like something of a madman.

Charal stops a few feet away from you, and sets down a bowl and spoon before sliding them over. She's close enough for you to grab, but you don't want to assault the woman. She gets enough of that from the Dark Elves.

"Can I have your hand?" you say.

She looks at you oddly, then takes a few steps back in her squatted position.

"Why?"

"Just to hold it."

Charal throws an anxious glance to either side of her, and wrenches her face up in a tight grimace.

"I do not think I can. If they tell me to, then I can."

Your heart pounds madly. You want to throw your arms around her and pull her in between your legs, then rest your chin in the crook of her neck as long as you can until she escapes. She probably smells fantastic - or at least better than you do.

When you had fucked her to spare her from a rougher fucking at the hands of Moradys, you hadn't let yourself enjoy it. All you could think about was finding your wife - your true love. Now, all you feel towards Vala is sickness and anger. You can't even picture her without that albino Elf she was clinging to.

As for Charal? You had watched her get pounded into the bed by Moradys herself, but there's no jealousy confusing your tender feelings for Charal. Probably because she had looked so dead to the world during the act - not like Vala, with her bright smile and searching hands. It might not be love, but it's all the tender feelings you've missed since arriving in Cummragh. You want to hold her, and protect her, and kill the people who hurt her. But you can't even protect yourself.

"Do you want to hold my hand?" you ask her.
Charal's face contorts further with confusion. It looks as if you've broken her brain with your question.

"What do you mean?"  

You're not sure how to explain 'Free Will' to her. Not as an abstract concept, but as a day-to-day way of living. Unfortunately, it's totally alien to her - and it's so familiar to you that you would have trouble explaining what you've lost, and what she has never had. Like a fish that doesn't know what water is, even after it's been washed up on the shore.

You fall silent, and Charal withdraws to a corner of the room where she stands with hands folded and head bowed. A few minutes pass, though you only need thirty seconds to noisily devour your food. It's something you manage to do faster each time you're brought to the brink of collapse before being given a meal.

The bland food is nonetheless satisfying, but you're still afflicted by the emotional craving left by Charal's rebuff of your attempts to touch her. She wanted to do it. If she didn't, she wouldn't have so enthusiastically attempted to jerk you off in that bathtub. It's just that this place has broken her so thoroughly that basic emotional needs are overpowered by Moradys' unspoken orders. You're getting pushed to that point, too.

The doors opens, and you're suddenly very glad that you hadn't hugged Charal. You would have done so for at least a few minutes, and Moradys, who just entered, would have been there to see it. She still looks angry, and would be even angrier if she had seen you enjoying yourself. With a heaving grunt Moradys pushes one of the overturned dressers upright, then yanks a drawer open with such force that it falls to the floor. She drops her nightgown down along with it, then begins pulling on a revealing, form fitting dress more appropriate to the outside of a bedroom.

Once she has changed, she throws a hostile glare between you and Charal before raising her bracelet to her lips.

"Come get the slave from my room. I forget its name."

"I am busy," comes Ribara's slightly deeper voice from the other end of the communicator.

Moradys scoffs in disbelief, lowering her hand and looking around in shock before raising it back up. "Excuse me?"

"I said I am busy."

This time, there's no stunned outburst. Just a hot, boiling rage that has Moradys' shoulders drawing upward and lips curling down. She looks between you and Charal, as if preparing to strike one of you since Ribara isn't within reach. Then, a beep comes from her wrist. She rotates the bracelet slightly, holding it out in front of her and pressing another button. A face appears, ghostly and translucent - though you can only see the back of its shimmering head.

"I know, I know!" she snaps, quickly ending the call. She returns to her call with Ribara, face contorted in impatient rage.

"Finish whatever the hell you're doing, and come get it! I want you to give it a medium beating."

With that she ends the call, bending over to pick up something else from the dresser drawer.

No, not something from the drawer - the entire drawer.
She picks it up, holds it overhead, then heaves it at you. You try to move out of the way, but your leash pulls taut with only a few feet of movement. The drawer hits the wall behind you, then bounces off and strikes you in the back of the head.

"Charal!" shouts Moradys as you lay on the floor, reeling from the force of the blow. The slave girl leaves with her, and you're alone. You groan and heave yourself onto hands and knees, crawling away in a mindless daze that lifts the moment your head hits something soft.

You look up, and realize that you've walked straight into the side of Moradys' bed. Behind you, the vertical sliding mechanism your leash was attached to is broken, the rail bent off halfway down. Your leash trails behind you, but has nothing weighing it down or holding you imprisoned.

You aren't looking forward to your 'medium' beating, but you know you face worse than that if you make use of your freedom by forcing Ribara to chase you down - and you're sure she would, eventually. No, you will go to her. You will face her proudly, strongly, until she inevitably reduces you to a bleeding, sniveling wreck. It'll hurt, but there's no way around that. Every day here ends with you hurting.

Picking up your leash, and then yourself, you slip on your sandals and go to the door. Pain shoots through your ass, a fresh fire you hadn't been hit with when you were merely sitting or crawling. Even with the lube, Moradys' jackhammering has left you raw and tender. You creak open the door, and see that the two guards usually posted outside have left, likely accompanying Moradys to her barge.

You continue down the corridor to the stairwell at the end, then descend into the grand hall of the manor's main building. Once there, you realize that you've never actually been to Ribara's quarters - assuming she's there, and not elsewhere within the manor. Maybe she's not even at the manor.

The main doors of the hall start to open, and you choose an adjoining corridor at random before one of the guards coming in can spot you. It's not one you've been down yet, but as you pass slaves and guards with your head bowed and heart pounding, you feel a growing familiarity with your surroundings.

You come to a hallway with windows on either side, looking out on both the plateau's edge and the manor gardens. A single door lays at the end of the hall, one you feel drawn towards - perhaps because it's the only route forward. Chatter comes from behind you - either slaves or guards - and you walk quickly to the doorway before knocking lightly.

No answer comes.

You knock again, growing increasingly nervous at the sound of approaching footsteps.

"What?" someone shouts from inside.

Caught between a rock and a hard place, you open the door just far enough to slip inside. You're met with a bedroom not unlike Moradys' in style, though smaller and more dimly lit. To your left and right are wide windows, the latter of which overlooks Cummragh's green mists. Directly across from you is a bed, wall closet, and rack upon rack of wall-mounted weaponry - most of it very functional-looking. But no speaker.

"I didn't tell you to come here," says a voice to your left.

You gasp and stagger away, turning to see a figure standing only a few feet to your left. She is tall, broad, and examining herself in a body-length mirror just beside the door. It's only after your initial
fright vanishes that you recognize her as Ribara.

Her hair has been swept back over her head, revealing her forehead and making her even more masculine-looking. Her red armor and bodysuit are gone - or at least not worn at the moment. She wears a black tunic that covers everything except for her breasts, leaving the entire front of her chest exposed.

Some light armor protects her shoulders, arms, and sides, but it's nowhere near as imposing as what you're used to seeing her in. Instead of her usual red gown, she wears tight black pants thigh-high boots which, to your dismay, cover everything except for her crotch. She wears a pair of black underwear that just barely contain her obscene bulge. From what little you can see of her rear, only a thin strap of fabric runs between her well-muscled buttocks.

A purple fur collar tops off the ensemble, fluttering softly with the foul-smelling breeze coming in from the window behind you.

"I..." You trail off, taking in the stunning sight.

Moradys might have a cock that dwarfs your own, but she's decidedly feminine looking - gorgeous, even. Ribara, on the other hand, is a strange melding of male and female that extends beyond her sexual organs. Her height, her shoulders, the way her jaw is a little too hard, her eyes a little too sharp - everytime you look at her, you spot something new.

"Are you that eager for your beating?" she asks, still looking at herself in the mirror with just as much curiosity as you. Realizing that you need to stop staring before she looks your way, you wrench your eyes downward and clench your fists.

"I'm prepared for it, Vizir."

Your carefully-prepared stoic front crumples the moment her fist collides with your stomach. You're thrown onto your back, air knocked from your lungs before you even hit the ground. Ribara moves alongside you, a cold expression on her face. She doesn't look angry, or frustrated, or even remotely interested in what she's doing. She seems occupied by something else, as if she wants to get this over with just as much as you want it to never happen at all.

She brings her boot up above your face, and you turn your head aside while instinctively raising a hand up to stop the inevitable. Seconds tick by - though it seems like minutes - and no foot comes crashing down on your face. Something touches your fingers, but only lightly - like she's brushed your hand with hers. You peek open your eyes to see Ribara staring down at you, eyes flickering across your body and mouth hanging open slightly. There's some puzzle she's trying to piece together here, but you can't imagine what it is.

Finally she grabs your wrist, then hauls you upright in one swift motion. Your face lands between her breasts, and you let out a soft sigh at the feeling. She might have been about to stomp you into a bloody mess - maybe that's still the plan - but it feels so good to touch someone. Ribara's hand remains wrapped around your wrist. She doesn't want to let you go. Your lips rest in between her small breasts, and she doesn't push you away.

You know it's insane, but you feel something warm and tingly welling up within you that all the rationality in the universe can't tamper down. When she pulls you off of her, she continues looking you over, and tugs lightly at your messy hair, as if willing it to extend.

"Maybe I don't want to beat you," she says. "You can do something else. I will say I beat you."
"Something else?" you ask uneasily. No beating is good, but being offered alternative options in this place never ends up working out in your favor. Even the choices are poisoned.

She doesn't explain further, and you clear your throat to speak. "What can I do?"

Ribara lifts up your wrist and shoves you back, though with her strength that's nearly enough to send you bowling over.

"Make me feel good. *You* figure it out, slave."

Every way in which you can think of making Ribara 'feel good' ends with you being battered and bruised - possibly internally.

"Do Dark Elves do massages?" you ask with a nervous smile.

Ribara goes to her bedside desk and opens a drawer, then returns with a small metal box held in the palm of one hand. She thrusts it out to you, and you take it. Inside are dozen of long metal pins, with sharp points on one end and threaded orange tassels on the other. Ribara strips off her armor and tunic, tossing them to the floor before crawling onto the bed and laying face-down with arms and legs spread wide.

A little afraid and very confused, you approach the foot of the bed and stare at her exposed back.

"What are these for?" you ask.

She grunts and waves you onto the bed, and you crawl up reluctantly, stopping in between her spread legs and just short of her ass.

"Put them in the circles."

The ghostly light coming in from the window isn't much, but as you run your eyes up her body you see something - tiny red circles tattooed onto her flesh, faded with age. They all surround the pinprick wounds created by her armor, though she has far more wounds than tattoos.

"What are those?" you wonder. "Nerve centers?"

Most lay on either side of her spine, though they're all over her back and shoulders.

You need to get right on top of her to do this properly, but you have a well-ingrained fear of touching the Elf who has inflicted so much violence on you. Now, you need to overcome that fear in order to avoid another such beating. Taking a deep breath in, you put your hands on the bed and shuffle on top of her, stopping once your knees lay on either side of her hips. You carefully ease your buttocks down to the small of her back, and Ribara doesn't flinch. You feel as if you're riding atop a tiger. It's exciting, terrifying, and more than a little erotic.

Taking the first of the needles between two pinched fingers, you lean over and squint as you carefully ease it into a circle in the middle of her back. Ribara jerks and shudders, fists clenching on the bed and hips bucking under you. The needle nearly pops out with her movements, but you catch it in time and push it a bit deeper, careful to stop before the tassel slips in with it. Ribara moans with the insertion, her voice growing in volume with each fraction of an inch of metal that slips into her.

You were worried about not being able to do this right, but from what you can tell you're doing it excellently. Confident in your abilities, you take the second needle and slide it in on the other side of her back, making Ribara's moans turn to shaky laughter accompanied by a violent trembling of her body. The third needles produces a similar reaction, but the fourth one seems to affect her less, and
she grunts and shifts impatiently, as if growing disappointed with your 'massage'.

You stop and think, wracking your brain for some way to please this woman enough that she'll see fit to spare you a boot to the face. The Dark Elves love emotions, you've learned - strong ones, like fear and disgust and hate. You turn your mind to such things, using all of the indignities you've suffered over the past few weeks. And indeed, there are no shortage of memories you can dredge up for that purpose. Rape, beating, humiliation, torture, death - the list goes on and on.

Then, you remember the last time you tried this with Ribara, when you two had been sparring. Your attempt to influence her emotions using your own hadn't worked, you thought - but it had, in an unintended way.

You had simply been too overwhelmed by her dominance in combat to feel anything but fear and the despair of inevitable defeat, and she had fed on those feelings. But now, you're sitting on top of Ribara, sliding needles into her back and making her have a miniature orgasm each time. You hate to admit it, but this is sort of enjoyable. More importantly, you feel in charge.

Taking another needle in hand, you hold it above her flesh, poking down just enough to break the skin as you build up the moment in your mind. Ribara is underneath you, and you're fucking her. Not with your dick, perhaps, but fucking her in the sort of bizarre and alien way that only Dark Elves can invent. You push the needle in, savoring the moment blood wells up from the wound and rolls down her back. She's the one bleeding, not you - you're the one breaking her body, and she likes it.

You like it, too.

Ribara doesn't moan, but with a quick glance up at her turned head you see that she's simply so stunned that her breath has caught in her throat. You slide the needle out slightly, then back in, thrusting in and out before finally pushing it far enough that the tassel lays matted in her bloodied back.

You move onto the next needle, then the next, feeling like an expert torturer - but you don't feel bad about it. There's nothing to feel bad about. Ribara is moaning, you're smiling, and you don't even feel bad about bringing your enemy and enslaver pleasure. You're too busy reveling in the long-forgotten joy of bringing someone to ecstasy without that enjoyment coming at your own expense.

You reach into the small box set beside Ribara, and find that it is empty. Her back is a pincushion, with thin streaks of crimson that roll off her sides or down into the crease of her spine. She heaves with heavy breaths, and throws her head from side to side a few times before looking back at you, blinking sweat from her eyes. She looks as if she's about to say something, but you hook your fingers into the sides of her underwear and speak first.

"Can I take these off?" you ask, in a tone a bit more bold than you would usually risk.

Ribara's eyes flash down to your right hand, and she nods. You shuffle off of her back, careful not to disturb the needles as you get in between her spread legs near the foot of the bed. You then undo the clasps on the sides of her underwear, peeling her thong out from between her cheeks and laying it below her crotch. Her dick and balls come free as well, the former half-hard and drooling precum onto the wider part of her undergarment.

You should feel disgust, panic, something - but you're already grabbing her sweaty cheeks and spreading them to reveal the tight anus at the center. She looks clean, and smells clean, which is a welcome change - but your stomach still turns at what you see. The outside of her ass is shaved clean, but between her cheeks grow more than a few dark, curly hairs that stand out starkly against her pale skin.
Ribara lifts her head up to look back at you again, and your eyes briefly connect before you return them to her ass. She hasn't done any of her usual 'eyes down' drill-sergeant talk, but that might change if you delay for too long. Taking in another deep breath - this time for your stomach, not your nerves - you dive in, touching your cheeks to hers and planting your lips on her anus. You had thought to close your eyes and pretend that you're doing this to someone who is all lady, but you immediately realize how impossible maintaining that illusion would be.

Her ass hairs tickle at your face and even your tongue as you lick at her rippled ring, and her equally hairy balls mash into the underside of your chin. Even that could be ignored with enough willpower, if it weren't for the thick cock pulsing right underneath your throat. You feel its warmth, and each heartbeat that travels through it is carried into you.

But there's no pulling back now. Not without angering Ribara. You force yourself to remember why you're doing this, then thrust your tongue into her anus, letting out a muted groan of disgust as it slips past her sphincter. There's no taste to speak of besides sweaty flesh, but the knowledge of what you're doing is enough to turn your stomach. Eating ass wasn't something you were big on when your only sexual partners were human women. Now you're digging around the hairy crevice of a hermaphroditic Dark Elf who once slit your throat and not-so-subtly promised to rape you to death on top of your wife's body.

Ribara's ass moves towards you, and you're forced up onto your hands and knees as the Elf gets into a similar position. At first you think she's trying to force you off, but once you pull back you realize that she's simply putting herself in a better position for the act. She reaches back with both hands and spreads her cheeks, silently demanding that you resume your less-than-enthusiastic rimming. You do so, grunting in annoyance as one of your hands hits her dangling cock before grabbing onto the rear of her thigh.

A moment later, your hand returns to her cock and wraps around it. You're not sure why you did it. You've already sucked it clean of smegma and gotten more than a few pubic hairs stuck in your teeth - so what's a handjob? Still, she didn't tell you to do it. You don't need to do it. But you're already pumping away, drawing back her meaty foreskin each time the top of your fist collides with her balls. Ribara continues to push her ass into your face, and you push back, the resulting collision allowing you to jam your tongue further in than you ever thought possible.

The combination of your handjob and tongue-fucking makes Ribara's erection grow hard enough that you can no longer keep it angled downward. You continue jacking her off as best you can, but it's difficult to do so with it pointed up the length of her abdomen while your face is still buried in her ass. One of Ribara's ass cheeks hits your face, and a broad hand lands atop the one you have on her cock. You pull your own hand away, allowing her to jerk herself off while you focus on keeping her anus open with a tongue that has begun to grow sore and numb.

Ribara grunts and spasms, smacking you in the face a few times as an orgasm grips her. She breathes frantically through her mouth, a gasp accompanying each load of cum she shoots onto the bed covers. You can't see it or taste it, but you can feel her unloading with each contraction of her taint pressed up against your chin.

You grab her balls and massage them, rolling them between your fingers while they pull taut in rhythmic contractions. You continue licking, only stopping once Ribara's climax has subsided and her body has gone still. She walks her hands forward on the bed, then collapses onto her stomach with her face half-turned to the ceiling. She peers down at you, and you're too stunned by what happened to avert your gaze. Luckily, she's too dazed to remember her own protocol of respect for slaves.
"Come here." She shifts her entire body to the side, careful to leave the needles in her back undisturbed, then slaps the bed beside her. "I want to finger you."

You undress and crawl onto the bed with a bit more speed than would be expected of an unwilling partner. Your ass still aches from the fucking Moradys gave you the night before, but you're more than a little curious what ass-play can feel like when you give it up to someone who has your pleasure in mind, and not your pain.

At least you hope that's what Ribara intends to give you. As soon as you lay down next to her, she slips a finger into her mouth and covers it with spit, which is a good sign. But when that same finger starts to work its way in between your ass cheeks, you remember something very important.

"Mistress said she wanted me..." You grimace and struggle to spit out the next word. "Tight."

You hate calling Moradys that title to her face, but it's even more humiliating to do so when talking to another person. Even if that person is another Dark Elf.

Ribara merely lets out a quick breath of amusement. "Then I won't fuck you."

Her index finger presses down on your inflamed ring, then slips inside with worrying ease. Her spit helps the initial entry, but that minimal lube quickly runs out as she slides past the last knuckle and presses her palm flat to your cheek. You press your face to the bed between your balled up fists, and Ribara begins moving her hand, jabbing away at your insides with shallow thrusts. Your ass and her finger are too dry for her to slide out of you, and your walls cling to her as she fingerfucks you at high speed, each time changing the angle slightly.

You let out a sharp "Oh!" as she hits a familiar button within you, making your cock twitch and balls pull tight.

"T-that's it," you stammer out. Ribara seems to grasp your meaning, and continues to slide her finger across your prostate, milking it and making your cock drool precum in between your abdomen and the bed. You're not even hard yet, but already you feel like you're on the verge of cumming.

In your effort to find a more comfortable position to lay your head, you put your right cheek down, and find that you're staring straight into Ribara's eyes. They're black, with orange irises that look like flames lighting up the darkness. It's a frightening thing to be meeting her gaze so closely. You nearly turn away from it, but a voice in your head says to wait.

You continue to gaze at her as she finger-fucks you, and nothing bad happens. She doesn't yell at you, or hit you, or even stop her assault on your prostate. You begin to grind your cock into the bed, unable to resist the urge to coax out the orgasm welling up within your abdomen. It feels hot, and you want it out of you. So does Ribara, if the speed at which she works is any indication.

You want to say something to her, but you're not sure what. Back in Moradys' room, you had briefly considered finding a weapon to ambush Ribara with. Even now, that doesn't seem like too ridiculous idea. Unlikely to work, maybe, but not evil or insane.

Yet here you are, staring into each other's eyes like star crossed lovers while she milks you of your cum. It's crazy, but this entire city is crazy. Surely you can be forgiven for going a little crazy, too? You'll admit going a bit crazy, but you refuse to let yourself feel guilty. Not after what you saw Vala doing.

In the end, you say nothing. Partly from fear of shattering the moment somehow, but mostly because you're too busy rubbing your cock up and down Ribara's sleek covers. You angle your ass towards
her slightly, allowing her to force her finger in deeper and keep a constant pressure on your prostate. She doesn't let up, sliding across it in continuous motions that produce an equally steady stream of precum.

You squeeze your eye shut, and pure white light flashes across your vision as you wind your fingers up in the blankets and cum. Every muscle in your body goes hard as you are struck by a torrent of orgasmic energy that crashes into you like the waves of an ocean. Ribara is still here next to you, but she's no longer your enemy or captor. She's the woman who is bringing you to heights of ecstasy you've never experienced before.

When Moradys had fucked a climax out of you, it had come and gone without you even noticing. This, on the other hand, is impossible to ignore. Warm wetness pools beneath your stomach, spreading outward and upward with each rub of your cock against the bed. Your cock aches, and your ass burns, but it's a good pain.

Time runs together, and you feel as if you've cum, are cumming, and have cum, all at once. You’d expected your orgasm to feel much like a normal one, but this is completely different - and unspeakably more pleasurable. The orgasmic warmth seizing your body lasts long after you’ve stopped cumming, but you continue rubbing yourself against the bed until Ribara yanks her finger from your ass.

That should hurt, but you're too well-cocooned in warm pleasure for it to reach you. She wipes her hand on the bedding - for a slave to deal with later, you're sure - then tells you to take the needles out of her back. You give a groggy nod and mumbled acknowledgement, then get dressed before pulling each bloody needle from her back and putting them in their box.

"Towel," says Ribara, waving a hand at the wall closet beside the bed.

You go to the door, sliding it open to find that it's not a closet at all. It's a bathroom, with exquisite black marble furnishings and light fixtures of smooth yellow crystal. There's a low rack of towels near the door, and you grab one before returning to the bed and patting her back dry. You do so with time-consuming dabs instead of wipes, not wanting to irritate the wounds and earn a fist to the face. After a short time, you realize that it's stupid to think she'd be bothered by a little pain like that. You keep dabbing slowly, though, craving the strange intimacy of the act. She's still laying beneath you, but the illusion of you being the one in charge has vanished along with the needles you drove into her.

This still feels good, though. Peaceful.

Once you're done, Ribara rolls off of the bed, nearly throwing you onto the floor as she goes to a nearby dresser. She pulls something small out, then goes to the mirror by the door and begins fiddling with her breasts.

You risk a glance back at the mirror to see that she has two piercings of thin bone in her hand, and is trying to drive one into her nipple. She fails, growing more and more frustrated before licking her finger and rubbing her nipple to hardness. That seems to work, and as you walk over to the mirror with head bowed you see blood trickling down her chest from the new wound.

With the other nipple similarly pierced, she turns to you, grunting and waving you forward to clean her off a second time. The bleeding stopped remarkably quickly, but her areolas are coated in blood which slowly rolls down her breasts.

The towel slips from your fingers, and you find yourself leaning in towards Ribara's breasts. They're small, with a webwork of veins visible beneath her pale flesh. They shouldn't be this tempting, but
you want to touch them, to knead them in your hands - and you do.

You press your tongue to her right nipple, scraping it against one end of the bony piercing as you lick up the blood that has yet to dry on her warm skin. Then you move down, only taking your palms away from her chest to allow yourself to trace your tongue along the trail of blood. Next you clean the left, running your hands down to her hips to better support yourself while you bend at the knees.

Your heart pounds and legs shake, even more than when you had been in the throes of a rapturous orgasm. Ribara stares down at you, mouth closed but eyes flickering with some powerful emotion you can't identify. Her head lowers towards you and body shifts down in your hands, and you rise onto your toes to meet her.

You try to close your eye, but you're gripped by too much terrified awe at what's happening to do so. Ribara doesn't close her eyes either, and they remain fixed on yours as she delivers quick, awkward pecks to your lips. You raise a hand to the back of her head to try and pull her closer, but the smallest touch of your fingers on her hair breaks her out of whatever waking spell she's under. She jerks away and grabs you by the throat, then throws you across the room. You stumble to the floor before you can smash into the window overlooking the chasm. Ribara walks over you, her 'womanhood' dangling over your face until she kneels down and presses it to your bare stomach.

"If you tell anyone about this, I will kill you. I do not care whose pet you are."

She jabs a finger at you, which trembles nearly as much as her unsteady voice. Whatever you did, it shook her. You turn your eye away and nod quickly, murmuring an obedient acknowledgement that gets her off of you. She goes to dress in the same revealing clothes she had on before, with the new addition of her nipple piercings. You stand by the door silently as Ribara begins pulling weapons down from the racks above her bed. When she grabbed the first knife you half-expected it to be used on you, but she gathers a few swords, a rifle, and a pistol, setting them all down on a large cloth which she then rolls up and shoves into your hands.

You'd like to ask her where you're going as she leads you into the hall by your leash, but she's still shaking with anger - or whatever emotion that odd wide-eyed expression betrays. The weapons clanking against each other in your arms should bring all sorts of rebellious ideas to mind, but you've gone over your options too many times to bother considering this one again. Every scenario ends with you making it out of the manor before being gunned down at whatever well-fortified hangars contain spaceships you could actually flee in. Most of them end well before that, with you failing to figure out how to use an alien pistol and getting your balls cut off by Moradys or Ribarra in retribution.

And what of Vala? Asking yourself if you want to rescue her seems moot at this point. She’s the one who showed you just how little she needs you.

The two of you go to the landing pads at the rear of the manor, and Ribara hauls you onto her small skiff before dropping your leash and going to the pilot's controls at the front. That leaves you at the base of the stairs, with a dangerous payload in your arms and little certainty on what to do as she pulls away from the plateau.
You follow Ribara up the short flight of stairs, careful to avoid being thrown off-balance as the skiff makes a sharp turn to the right and starts picking up speed. You wouldn't have been tossed over the metal railing, but Ribara's bundle of weapons very well might have. And if that were to happen, you would likely wish you had jumped off with them.

Between the roar of wind and the hum of the vehicle's engines, Ribara doesn't seem to notice you approaching. You stand behind her for a full minute, waiting for some opportunity to speak, but she continues to work knobs and levers at the control panel, as if deliberately occupying herself with the closest mindless task she can find.

"Slaves kneel below!" she shouts over the wind.

You almost turn back and do as ordered, but swallow your fear and take a step closer.

"Vizir, can I ask where were going?" You'd also like to know why you're carrying a bunch of swords and firearms swaddled in your arms like an infant, but you'll start with the easier question.

Ribara frowns back at you, but quickly returns her eyes forward. You're approaching the more crowded airspace of Cummragh's city outskirts, and now she truly does need to pay attention to piloting.

"You owe me your life. You will repay a fraction of that debt today."

"Me?" you ask uneasily. "How?"

She doesn't answer, instead focusing on avoiding a potentially deadly collision with a diagonally-oriented building as she maneuvers through the city. You've flown through here several times, so it isn't odd that the sights are familiar. Yet they seem a bit too familiar. You've been in this part of Cummragh before, flying this exact route.

"If I want to do something, why should I not do it? If I want to be something, why should I not become it?"

Ribara looks back at you for a response.

"I... guess you should."

She returns her attention to the air ahead, and you soon realize why this particular tract of featureless green mist seems so familiar. You pass one of Cummragh's towering arenas, a blooming flower of a skyscraper jutting out of the gloom miles below. Last time, it had been filled with thousands of roaring spectators demanding blood and guts. Now, it's empty - as are the next five you pass.

When you come to the seventh such silent arena, you expect to pass that one as well, but Ribara slows the skiff and brings it on a descent downward to a cavernous docking bay built into the underside of the arena. She swings the skiff into place at the bay's edge, then leads you by the leash across the empty hangar. The two of you enter an elevator lift with no door, and Ribara hits a button that sends the thing shooting upward with enough force that you nearly crumple to the ground. This thing was not made for humans.

The lift stops just as abruptly, but Ribara doesn't give you much time to quiet your heaving stomach. When you had watched the arena's bloody spectacle from far above, there had been two large doors
on opposing sides that allowed the predators and prey to enter - and allowed the former to leave.

The space you've entered now looks to lay on the other side of those doors, as you recognize the saw-toothed seam running between the huge metal halves of it a couple hundred feet ahead of you. The room is enormous, lined on either side by cage after cage of shrieking animals that gnaw at the bars of their prisons and swipe at you with their claws whenever you draw too close.

Ribara yanks you closer to the middle of the path cutting through the space, and you hear the shearing scrape of metal on metal rising above the beastly chorus. An alcove among the cages comes into view, a circular space in which five Dark Elves are busy doing battle. They dance around each other in a whirlwind of steel, long white hair trailing behind them as they move.

It would be a beautiful sight, were these not the same Wyches you had watched rape the corpses of men and women like yourself. They are all topless, wearing only thongs, thigh-high boots, and wicked metal crowns. Four are all-lady, but two are 'equipped' as Ribara is. Their underwear leaves little room for guesswork.

"The failure returns!" hisses one of the Wyches when they spot Ribara approaching. Her voice is a harsh rasp, one that fits in well among the rattling cages and screaming creatures all around her.

The group walks towards you, twirling swords in their hands as they give you and your handler a look over. You turn your face to the ground and swallow hard, images of these women fucking severed heads playing over and over in your mind. Moradys is cruel, and Ribara volatile, but these Elves are forces of nature - tempests of inhumanity. You want to be anywhere else right now, but a tightening of your leash makes it clear that isn't an option.

"I want to test again," says Ribara.

The lead Wych - a cockless one - swipes her blade against the ground as she stops in front of Ribara, producing a shower of sparks.

"There is no 'again'. Lady Moradys' patronage stops me from killing you for asking such a thing. It does not give you another chance."

One of the other Wyches jabs you in the arm with her sword, twisting the blade until blood trickles down your fingertips. You grimace and gasp, but try not to move more than that. Whatever Ribara dragged you into, it seems ready to explode at any moment.

"I will wager this." Ribars grabs you by the back of your neck and brings you forward another two steps. "It is a Psyker."

Two of the women gasp. The head Wych grabs your chin and tilts your head up to look you over, then gives a shallow cut to your abdomen. You close your eye and just try to keep standing as the pain threatens to make you do something stupid, like strike back at her.

"We could kill it at the end of a Slaughter," says one of the Wyches. "Or at half-time."

"No, we torture it," says another. "And make it watch the other Mon-keighs die."

The head Wych shushes them, then looks to Ribara.

"I will fight anything in your stocks," Ribara says quickly, before the other woman has a chance to speak. "If I lose, the Psyker is yours."

Your jaw drops open, and every bit of subservient behavior drilled into you vanishes. You stare at
the two women, gawking and stuttering as they cut their own hands and shake on the deal before thumping their shoulders against one another's.

"She will fight our new arrival," the Wych says to one of her underlings. "The one with both arms."

The other Wych grins devilishly, then dashes off at full speed towards the lift you arrived in. Ribara leads you away, stopping before the tall set of closed doors that lay between you and the arena.

"They'll kill me!" you exclaim, unable to contain your disbelief at what just happened, and terror at what could happen later.

"You are a slave," Ribara snaps as she drops your leash and takes the bundle of weapons from your hands. "Slaves are meant to die."

She unfurls the wrap and selects a sword and pistol, taking one in each hand before moving to the center of the doorway. Two of the Wyches who had been waiting in the wings approach you, standing far too close for comfort as the arena doors lurch open and grind their way into the walls on either side of them. A faint yellow glow shines in, lighting up Ribara and making her seem, if only for a moment, like an honorable warrior going to do battle with a vile enemy.

But she isn't honorable. She's gambling your life like it's mere pocket change, all to gain favor with the monstrous women who are now quite literally sinking their claws into you. The two Wyches stand on either side, running their fingernails down the wounds in your arm and chest, sometimes slipping a nail inside to peel the flesh back and make the blood flow faster.

Ribara steps into the arena, but the doors have not yet opened far enough for you to see out into it. You're not sure you'll be conscious to watch the whole thing to play out - or if you even want to be.

It takes half a minute for the arena doors to open far enough for you, standing at the leftmost edge of the doorway, to see out into the arena. In that time, you imagine all sorts of creatures Ribara could be facing. They wouldn't have her slaughtering humans like the last time you were here. That wouldn't be much of a test.

No, they'll stick her up against some monstrous, chitin-plated Xeno that slices her head off with one of its six arms. Then you'll end up with new owners - ones whose cruel desires aren't the least bit tempered by bizarre bouts of twisted affection.

"Have you ever cum blood, Mon-keigh?" the Wych on the left says into your ear. They all sound like they make a habit of gargling battery acid. You would wince at the harsh rasping of her voice, if your face weren't already contorted from the pain of having your sword wounds played with like one would a healed scab.

"Why wait? I could crush his balls now." The Wych on the right grabs your sac and squeezes. It's a pain you've become very familiar with, but you'll never get used to it. "I want to make the Mon-keigh lick it from my cunt afterwards."

"Your patron wouldn't like that!" you exclaim. Within the span of a moment, her hand loosens. This Wych's touch is oddly cold, and her pale hand is a tad more colorful than that of her companion's. Not a good color, though. Blue and purple - like she's a walking corpse.

"You are Ribara's. What would Lady Moradys care?" the Wych on the right says.

"I'm not! Lady Moradys put this collar on me. She'll be furious if anything happens to me."

To your great surprise and greater relief, the Wych's icy claw leaves your groin entirely. Your plea
was desperate, but truthful. Ribara is gambling your life for a second shot at joining a circus show of mass-murderers. Your goodwill for her doesn't extend nearly so far as to keep quiet about her lie.

"Did she trick Meryetia?" says the Wych on the left.

The two women look to each other in silent deliberation as the doors finally finish opening. You can see clear across the arena, which from this low angle looks more like a single centralized platform rather than six connected ones. There's no sign of Ribara's opponent, and indeed no sign of Ribara herself.

"The Mon-keigh is confused," the one on the right retorts. "Or lying."

"It does not matter," says the left one. "The failure will fail again, and die. If this slave is Ribara's, we will keep it. If it is not..." She squeezes your arm and places your hand on her abdomen, then forces your fingers past the waistline of her thong so that you're touching her womanhood. It's cold and clammy, just like the rest of her. "We will use it until Lady Moradys finds out it is missing."

The doors on the other side of the arena open, and a figure emerges from the shadows. It's a man, wearing a simple brown tunic and carrying a sword and shield. Just a man, you tell yourself - but this is no ordinary man.

It's hard to judge size from this far away, but you can tell by the proportions of the figure that he is massive in both width and height. An average-sized bald head sits atop a mountain of a body, with muscles so well-defined you can make out the striations from over a thousand feet away. His appearance borders on the monstrous, but he radiates an aura of noble invincibility that makes him seem heroic and angelic - something that could survive in this place without giving in to it, as you have done time and again.

The man walks onto the first of the platforms, then stops and begins banging the flat of his sword on his round shield. They're of normal size, you're sure, but the weapons look like children's toys when held by the warrior. The clang of metal on metal sounds out with each strike, vanishing quickly as a mute staccato.

There is no other sound to break the intermittent silence. You wait with baited breath, and you're not certain that the Wyches - one of whom you've been forced to finger - even need to breathe.

"Well?" bellows the warrior. The acoustics of the arena aren't like those of theater, but the man's booming question carries to you loud and clear. Contained within that one word is all the stoic defiance you've had beaten and raped out of you. Your back straightens, and your shoulders lose their slouch. You feel inspired. Even the spider-like hands of the Wyches crawling up and down your body seem to vanish, if only for an instant.

A buzzing sound appears from within the arena, as if to answer the warrior. A second figure shoots up from the empty space at the center of the six connected platforms. Ribara stands atop a small, hovering disc, sword in her right hand and pistol in the left. She soars fifty feet into the air and then leans right, making the disc cut a quick path across the arena. She circles around the warrior, firing down bolts of green plasma from her fast-moving perch.

The man keeps his shield raised and body oriented towards Ribara, catching most of the shots, which explode in a spray of corrosive energy that falls over his head and shoulders. He doesn't drop his weapons or even waver in his battle-ready stance, but you can tell by his furious shouts how much pain he must be in.

"Why are its fingers so slow?" the Wych on your right snaps as you finger her. Your mind had
wandered to the arena, and you had left your two fingers motionless in her pussy. "Is it stupid?"

"Maybe Ribara skullfucked it too deep." The other Wych takes your left hand and wraps it around her flaccid cock while you do your best to keep your eye on the arena. She's warm, unlike her partner, and has metal piercings running along either side of her urethra.

"Is that empty eye-socket just for show, Mon-keigh?" She tries to peel off your gold-plated eye patch, but you turn your head and push her hand away before she can get a solid grip on it.

"Do you want to fight me?" she snaps, digging her nails into the back of your skull. "Maybe I will piss in your skull instead of cumming in it."

"After the fight," the other Wych sighs. "Let the Mon-keigh watch his Mistress die. I want to feel it."

The thin fingers of the Cock-Wych leave your head, and she puts her hand over yours, encouraging you to stroke her cock while you resume fingering her partner. The Cunt-Wych's pussy is no warmer than it had been when you first slipped a finger inside, and you grimace at the grotesque sensation of finger-fucking a cut of raw meat while you watch Ribara harass and harry the human warrior with bolts of plasma.

Finger-fucking one woman and jerking off another with blood rolling down both arms is too much to handle without thinking about the way your hands move. And you can't have your mind taken off of the fight - not if you're going to help Ribara win.

You've resolved to use your poorly-understood and poorly-controlled 'powers' to help the Dark Elf, if only to make sure that you both make it out of here. Moradys' manor might as well be a torture chamber, but they haven't fucked your eye socket or crushed your balls. Five minutes in this place, and you're caught between two Wyches who consider such things to be merely foreplay. You can't let yourself be traded to them.

Ribara continues to zip around the human warrior while firing bolts of plasma, which have eaten away at his shield to such a degree that sprays of green energy are seeping through it. He walks backwards onto one of the bridges, seemingly unaware of what awaits him when he moves further onto it. The first time you were forced to watch a show here, monstrous serpent-worms had surged up from the pits and plucked slaves from the bridges like grapes from a vine.

You vigorously finger-fuck the pussy to your right, and only give slow, limp strokes to the cock in your left hand. Given a choice between the two, you're a bit more inclined towards the latter. You've handled enough cock for a lifetime since coming to Cummragh. The Cunt-Wych's pussy might feel as if you're sliding a finger between two raw fish fillets, with a slimy texture and cold wetness to it that makes you want to vomit, but that's almost a welcome feature. At least now you can pretend you're not two knuckles deep in a pussy loose enough to take your whole fist.

The man reaches the halfway point of the bridge, and you hold your breath again as you wait for the inevitable. You had resolved to help Ribara - somehow - but it seems as if the fight will be over without her even coming within melee range of her opponent. The Wyches had talked so casually about her impending loss, as if it were a foregone conclusion. That seems laughable now, but they're still watching with that same cold, half-interested stare, growing bored with the fight but craving the bloody conclusion to it.

Ribara zips across the open space beside the bridge, then shoots even further upward. The darkness itself seems to move, coalescing into a snake-like shape that shoots up into the air and then throws itself towards the bridge. The man dissapears behind the far more massive bulk of the serpent, and you wait for the scream to come.
Instead, you see the man again - soaring above the serpent's head, coming to the apex of a massive leap just as he crests the snake's body. He lands atop it, then leaps towards the platform he just left, towards Ribara who is just now coming into line with it. He hurls his plasma-tattered shield, and it collides with the edge of Ribara's hovering disc, upending the thing and sending her plummeting down to the platform below.

The serpent descends back into the pit, and the man charges at Ribara with his sword in hand. His size was startling, but his speed is utterly baffling - particularly when considering his size. He closes the distance in the blink of an eye, crashing into Ribara's sword just as she raises it to block. The force of the collision sends her flying across the platform in an unceremonious tangle of limbs, though she manages to slide to a stop before reaching the edge.

The warrior does not charge at her again. Even from this great distance, you can see the corner of his white-toothed grin as he twirls his sword in the air and circles closer to the center of the platform. Ribara has lost her pistol somewhere in the chaos, turning this into a duel by sword - one which you are not sure she can win. Ribara is strong - freakishly so - but even you managed to knock her out through a series of freak occurrences. What chance does she have against a titan like this?

Your heart leaps at the sight of this slave having brought your captor down to his level in the most literal sense possible. Then, your mind drifts to the half-hard cock in your left hand and the cold pussy lips clinging to your right. Ribara cannot lose.

She leaps to her feet, then swings her sword towards the distant man. The blade extends, turning into a serrated whip which bites at the man's extremities with each strike. She catches him on the legs and arms, producing a spray of blood each time, but the man remains confident in his stance, and eventually manages to catch her whip between two of the separated blade sections. He winds it around his sword, tangling the two weapons up so thoroughly that she can't dislodge them. Then, he pulls - hard.

Ribara slides across the platform towards the warrior, but refuses to let go of the only weapon she has.

"T-this is it," stammers the Cunt-Wych. Her legs tremble against your hand, thighs smacking into it over and over as her fluids spill over your palm in an absurd deluge. The Cock-Wych isn't gripped with nearly as much excitement, but you can tell by the tightly-gripping hand on your shoulder that she watches with bated breath.

The warrior gives another pull, and Ribara is yanked further towards the center of the platform, and closer to her opponent. Your stomach is in turmoil, unable to decide if you want to see one of your enslavers killed or to see her win, and have her take you back 'home'. It is a hell, but it is the hell you know. The latter is what needs to happen for you to have even a slim chance of survival, but the former is so tempting a scenario that it continues to play in your mind.

But it isn't just who you want to win that has you gripped with such confusion. Despite the seemingly precarious situation Ribara has found herself in, you can't help but shake the feeling that something will happen to turn the tide in her favor.

That's the way of this place, after all. No matter how far you get or how hard you fight, the weight of this city and its impossible cruelty will come crashing down on you, putting you right back at the bottom of the hole you were trying to climb out of. This man is bigger and tougher than any you've ever seen, but he is still only a man - just like you are.

Yes, you tell yourself. That's why he'll lose.
The moment the thought appears in your mind, you're gripped by the iron certainty of it. Cold despair washes over you, and you see yourself in that warrior's place. You remember the second time you fought Ribara, when she had been weaponless and armorless. She had battered you about the arena like a child. She's simply too strong, and too cruel - a force of nature. And now, she has a sword.

The warrior gives another pull, and Ribara comes within a few feet of him. The closing of the distance gives enough slack to her whip that she can untangle it from the man's sword, and she whips it back into a single blade before bringing it up in a defensive pose that easily blocks the man's overhead blow.

The Wyches gasp in surprise, but you merely watch with pursed lips and a sad expression as the man you once thought to be your champion has the tables turned on him, just as you did. It's all so inevitable, and stupid, and pointless. Why even bother to fight?

Ribara throws off the man's attack, then slashes down, cutting a bloody arc across his chest that causes the man to shout in pain and stumble backwards. She presses her advantage, and the two combatants engage in a melee so close that you can scarcely make out the individual fighters.

They're a whirlwind of steel, a continuous clang of metal punctuated by the furious war cries of the human. Blood flies everywhere, and it becomes even more difficult to separate the two. Both are covered in red, though you doubt that any of it is Ribara's. In fact, you're sure none of it is. She can't be hurt - not really.

"Whas happenin'?" slurs the Cunt Wych. She leans her hands and forehead on your shoulder while you finger her, trembling as if wracked by seizures.

"She is winning!" the other exclaims. "How does she move like that?" Her cock is hard, though it took quite awhile to become so with your half-hearted stroking.

Something long and shiny flies out of the melee - a sword. The warrior's, you're sure. He stumbles away from Ribara, clutching at his left arm with the right, and you see that he is indeed weaponless. Ribara loosens her sword into a whip and begins circling him, moving in a spiral that puts her closer to the edge of the large platform. The man tries to run towards the spot where his sword landed, but falls to his knees and begins to crawl. Ribara throws her whip at him, locking it in place around his neck and pulling it taut.

And just like that, it's over. Ribara turns her body to the right, then pulls. The man falls onto his side, then slides across the ground as Ribara swings him around like a mace, picking up momentum as she turns. The man is enormous, but somehow she manages to spin him about with such speed that his body is lifted into the air a few feet. There's a sharp 'crack', and the man flies loose from the whip, hurtling over the edge of the platform in a fountain of blood with the whip at its center.

No, not all of the man - something falls onto the floor with the whip, round and bloodied.

A head.

Ribara snaps her whip back in place, then stalks towards the body part.

"This is it," gasps the Wych on your left. "This is where she failed. She did not have the stomach."

The other Wych tilts her head on your shoulder, peering out towards Ribara as the victorious fighter picks up the head of her opponent.

"She did not kill an Astartes last time," she says.
You expect Ribara to drop the head back to the ground, or punt it over the edge of the platform. Then, Ribara undoes a single clasp of her underwear - and you remember what the Wyches did last time you were here. Ribara pulls out her dick, strokes it to hardness - a feat which only takes ten seconds in her state of aroused battle lust - then takes the man's head in both hands, and drives her cock into the bloody underside of its neck.

She goes balls-deep, then pulls all the way out to the tip before thrusting into it all over again. The two Wyches beside you break out into a raucous cheer, and you hear a few more distant cries from the spectator stands above you. You're too busy vomiting onto your feet to join in on the celebrations, but you wipe your mouth clean and stand up in time to see Ribara moving towards you from the far side of the connected platforms, viscera-coated cock bobbing in front of her and well-fucked head held under her arm.

The Wych on your right moans and shudders, and her pussy coats your fingers in one last hearty gush of juices before she collapses onto the ground in a fit of twitching limbs, her eyes rolled back in unspeakable ecstasy. Her partner yanks your hand away her cock, then does her best to put the hard thing back into her thong before giving up and dashing out towards Ribara. You move to follow her out, but then stop.

Something is wrong.

It takes you a moment to realize what, but as you absentmindedly bring your sopping right hand up to your face, you realize what it is - you're smiling. Despite having just witnessed another slave being murdered and desecrated, you feel triumphant. As if you've won.

You're not sure if that has something to do with you imparting your feelings towards Ribara and her opponent, and somehow connecting with the former, or if you've simply fallen so deep that you've forgotten who your real enemies are. Wherever that feeling came from, it vanishes in an instant, replaced by sickness and shame.

Three white-haired Wyches descend from the stands above your door on hovering discs, meeting the fourth of their number - and Ribara - on the platform nearest you. It's too far to hear anything other than the fact that they're all talking enthusiastically, but even from here you can see Ribara's broad smile.

The head Wych - Meryetia, they seemed to call her - raises a hand, and Ribara gets down on both knees in front of her. You can't see what's happening as the four Wyches surround her, but none of them look or sound angry - and you can't imagine why they would be. Ribara won, just like you wanted her to.

You're angry at Ribara for gambling with your life, but you're also angry at her for doing it with hers. It makes no sense, and you struggle to mesh those feelings with what you tell yourself - that all you care about is your own survival. You're also disgusted beyond belief by the mental image of her fucking that man's head, but even that doesn't stop you from stepping of the doorway as Ribara and the four Wyches begin walking towards you.

The fifth one remains laying behind you in post-orgasmic bliss, and Meryetia gives her a curious look before turning her gaze to you. The lead Wych is clearly older than the others, with wrinkles and lines that haven't been banished by the rejuvenating pit Moradys seems to make regular use of.

The group stops before you, and you remember to tilt your face towards the ground, though your eyes don't leave Ribara's. You want her to say something that will assuage the feelings of betrayal brewing inside of you. She's your enemy - always has been, and always will be - but she had been a straight-forward enemy. The one that punches you in the face while Moradys stabs you in the
Had Ribara risked only her own life, knowing that Moradys would reclaim you in the event of her death? If that were the case, you would have endured unspeakable torture at the hands of the Wyches, but you would have at least made it back to Moradys alive. The Dark Elves have set the bar of morality so low that even that would seem an unspeakably selfless act on Ribara's part.

"Why is it staring at you?" Meryetía says.

Ribara looks between you and the Wych, then backhands you across the face. Your head rings and you fall to your knees, hardly able to hear the continuing conversation as you hold a hand to your throbbing right cheek.

"It is new, Blade Mistress. I am still teaching it."

Meryetía raises a booted foot and nudges the side of your head. "Do not bring it back here until you have finished teaching it. I do not like how it looked at me."

"Yes, Blade Mistress." Ribara gives a shallow bow, then picks up your leash and pulls you to your feet. "May I use the showers, Blade Mistress?"

Meryetía waves her off, and Ribara walks back into the innards of the arena, dragging you through the maze of cages and veering to the left well before reaching the elevator you arrived in. You walk through a curving hallway that runs beneath the tiered seating overlooking the fighting platforms. Ribara moves so quickly that you're yanked forward over and over, but she's not making a point of deliberately harassing you - more that she's so wrapped up in her own thoughts and destination that she's forgotten you're even along for the ride.

You come to an open doorway, and Ribara drops your leash before stepping inside. You peak in, and see a row of showers beside a single, long bench. Ribara strips nude, placing her blood-soaked clothes on the bench before stepping into the shower. You slump down against the wall to rest, and think.

You did the best you could hope to do - bought yourself another day of life - but you still feel as if you've lost. You're not sure why you expected something resembling gratitude from Ribara. The first time you saved her life - or at least spared it - she threatened to castrate you and swore to kill you. This time, you got a head-ringing smack to the face. In a way, it's quite an improvement. So why do you feel so beaten down? You're not even sad, really. You just feel done.

The hiss of the shower stops, and you twist around to peer through the doorway at Ribara. It's nothing you haven't seen before - an oversized cock swinging from the middle of an oversized body. Ribara stops by the bench and turns to you, hands on her hips. You look up at her for a cue of what to do, even though your own face is still smarting from the last time you did such a thing.

"Slave!" Ribara says angrily, gesturing at the heap of bloody clothes beside her. You're not sure why she even bothered showering, given the state the garments are in. You rise to your feet and shuffle over, looking uncertainly between her and the clothes.

"I'm not sure what I'm--"

Ribara grabs you by the left arm, turning you to the right so that you're facing the open lockers set against the wall.

"Bag! Put them in a bag!"
You close your eyes briefly, holding back a tired sigh before going over to one of the lockers. You select a beige sack from the top of the pile before loosening the drawstring and stuffing the blood-coated clothes into it. While you do that, Ribara takes her boots from the bench, then goes further down the line of lockers and pulls out a simple pair of dark pants and a sleeveless vest. They're both skin-tight, and the former leave her with an absurd bulge squeezed against her thigh. You're beginning to understand why she made a habit of wearing a gown until recently.

Once she finishes dressing, Ribara walks back towards the exit, and you move out of the way to allow her to pass. She stops and turns to face you, but you just continue to stare blankly at the ground. You should feel angry and disgusted, but you're too tired for either emotion to take firm hold of you.

"What?" Ribara gives your shoulder a hard shove, and your back bounces off the locker. "What do you want to say? Speak!"

"Nothing, Vizir." Your voice is calm, low, and just as featureless as your expression. "I'm just standing."

Ribara grumbles for a moment, then picks up your leash and leads you back to the elevator and down to the hangar bay. The two of you board her skiff, and begin the long flight back towards Moradys' manor. At least, you assume that's where you're going. Ribara pilots on the raised portion of the front deck while you kneel on the lower part, bag of clothes clutched in your arms. You keep your eye pointed at the ground, but you can feel the weight of her gaze passing over you every few minutes, as if to check that you're still there.

She didn't bother tying your leash to anything. It would be the easiest thing in the world to jump into the mists below and let Ribara explain your disappearance to Moradys. It's not an idea you seriously entertain, though. You feel too empty to bother with something as laborious as suicide right now. Maybe Ribara knows that, and that's why she didn't bother securing you.

The skiff makes a sharp turn, one which doesn't make sense given the open area you're flying in now. You've left the arenas behind, but haven't yet reached the city and its crowded skies. The skiff heads in that direction for a few minutes, and a webwork of natural rock formation comes into view. She pilots beside one of the pillars as if to hide the vehicle from view, then brings it to a stop and walks down the stairs.

"Slave."

She gives a light kick to your knee with her boot as she passes, then drops down onto the couch behind you and strips off her shirt, tossing it onto the floor beside you. You turn around on your knees, keeping your eyes down until her boot connects with your forehead and slowly tilts your face up to her. Ribara holds her pierced tits in both hands, kneading the small breasts as she looks down at you.

"I will let you jerk off while you look at me."

It wasn't too long ago that Ribara's broad shoulders and underdeveloped breasts had given rise to all sorts of confusing feelings within you. Now, all that you can think about as you look up at those glittering orange eyes is what she did at the arena. Not just with her dick, but with her words.

You had thought the two of you had reached something resembling an understanding, but then she went and gambled with your life. Why bother with all this bowing and scraping? It hasn't earned you a thing.
"Vizir, I just watched you kill a man and fuck his decapitated head."

Ribara grins and nods, holding her hands to her chest as if still expecting you to excitedly whip out your cock and start jerking it to that bloody memory.

"No thank you," you say.

You turn your face back to the floor, and Ribara remains seated for a few heart-pounding seconds before calmly dressing and walking past you without a word. As she ascends the stairs back to the ship's controls, you prepare to let out a sigh of relief, but that breath cuts short when you hear her stomping back down the steps. A few more heavy footsteps follow on the metal of the deck, and something very heavy and very solid collides with the back of your head.

It's probably for the best that you didn't turn around quickly enough to see her coming. That would have meant a boot to the nose instead of your skull. The blow doesn't knock you out, but it deprives you of sight and sound for long enough that when you finally come fully to, you're laying on the deck atop Ribara's bag of clothes, face turned towards the crowded mesas passing by in the distance. You must be close to home.

Home.

You hate calling it that, but Moradys' compound is the closest thing you have to one. Your real home is a pit of burning wreckage. Not just your house, or settlement, but the entire planet. Even if you do make it back to real space, with its ordered geometry and solid ground, you will never return to Bulanel IV.

Maybe that's why it's getting harder and harder for you to cover up your cold despair with righteous anger. The Dark Elves took everything from you, but fighting them seems less tempting a prospect when there's nothing for you to claw your way back to.

What would you fight for? Freedom? To do what? To go where? All you want to do is sleep.

As you try to rise to your knees, your leash pulls taut. Ribara tied it to one of the chair legs while you were fading in and out of consciousness. You crawl over to the chair, then sit with your back against the side of it for the remainder of the flight. Ribara is up on the deck to your right piloting, you're sure, but you don't dare risk a glance up to confirm that assumptions. It already feels like someone is running a jackhammer inside your brain, and another kick to the head would crack your skull like an egg.

Moradys' black-walled manor comes into view with its distinctly unwelcoming spiked naves and domineering arches. The skiff swings up against a docking pad behind the main building, and Ribara jogs down from the front deck, unties your leash, then hauls you off of the ship with an obvious sense of urgency.

She lead you up to the second floor of the expansive home, and visibly relaxes once she sees that the hallway leading to Moradys' room is devoid of its usual guards. She opens the door slowly to peak her head in, and you can see that the only light in the room is what little comes in through the large window set in the far wall.

"You will stay quiet, and I will have someone bring you food." Ribara opens the door the rest of the way and walks you inside. "Slaves who keep secrets eat better."

Once you're halfway across the bedroom, the overhead light switches on, bathing the room in yellow light. Ribara stops and spins back towards the door. You follow her gaze more slowly, and spot
Moradys seated in a chair in the corner of the room.

Briefly you wonder just how long she's been waiting for you like that, but your mind quickly turns to the more pressing question of whether you've done anything that will earn you the loss of a body part. Ribara forced you to accompany her, but ideals of fairness and responsibility don't mean much to either women.

"Secrets?" Moradys unfolds her legs and leans forward. "I love secrets! Tell me one."

Ribara wavers uneasily for a moment before finding the confidence to clear her throat. It takes another few seconds of building tension for her to actually come up with something to say.

"I took it to watch the Wyches practice. To show it things it hates, as you told me to. I... left it alone with one of the Wyches for a few moments." Ribara grabs your left hand and turns your arm over, showing Moradys the shallow, blood-caked gash running from shoulder to wrist.

Moradys draws her eyebrows up as she stands, though you get the impression she's not particularly shocked by the sight of your shallow wound. Ribara shrinks back a bit with each step Moradys takes towards her, and tenses up further when Moradys begins a thorough inspection of your body.

"Why is his head bleeding?" Moradys draws her hand away from the back of your head to reveal a bloody palm. The throbbing in your skull is so powerful and constant that you hadn't even noticed the wetness in your hair.

"It ran from the Wych and tripped," Ribara says quickly, then shoots you a hostile glare. "It is too fragile!"

Moradys turns her attention from Ribara to you, raising one eyebrow and inspecting you curiously.

"Is this true?"

Moradys' piercing gaze demands you speak, but it also has a way of making it hard to do so. Though, that could be the concussion you likely incurred from a kick to the head.

"She wanted to crush my balls, Mistress!" you finally manage to blurt out. "The other one said she would piss in my eye!"

Moradys' closes her eyes and scoffs in disgust, then returns her gaze to you, as intense as ever. "I trust you, you know. But let's take a look anyways." She raises her hands to your head, and as her fingertips touch down on your temples, your mind flashes through everything you've done since she left you alone this same morning. Rimming Ribara, jerking her off, getting fingered, that 'massage' with the needles... Moradys will see all of it.

Her fingers clench, and you squeeze your eye shut in preparation for the familiar sensation of electricity winding its way through the pathways of your brain. But seconds tick by, and nothing happens. Moradys clicks her tongue and takes her hands off, then puts them back on and squeezes your head a bit tighter.

"I can't feel him."

You open your eye to see Moradys' own eyes closed, and her brow twitching in intense concentration. Her eyes flash open, and she grabs you by the neck with one hand before lifting you into the air as if you weigh nothing at all. You gasp and clutch at her arm, but it's like she's become a being of unmoving steel. She doesn't even flinch when you kick your feet against her chest.
"It seems he's all used up," she sighs. "I thought it would take longer."

Ribara looks between the two of you in confusion. "Used up?"

"His thoughts and feelings can no longer reach me. It's as if he's dead." Her grip tightens, and her face takes on a downcast expression.

Ribara touches her shoulder, then quickly withdraws her hand. "Lady Moradys, should we not wait? It might get better."

Moradys shakes her head sadly. "No, no. He's simply run dry - like a battery. After all, he wasn't using his powers. You gave him a little beating and had him watch some humans get slaughtered. Why, he should be brimming with emotion!"

Her fingers are like claws, digging into your flesh so tight that you feel they might slice right through before you've even gone unconscious for lack of air. Blood pools in your head and blackness begins to creep into the corners of your vision, but you can still see Ribara wavering uneasily beside Moradys.

"What if it watched me fight?" says Ribara. "Maybe it used its powers without knowing."

Moradys' grip eases just enough to allow blood to begin flowing again, though your breaths are still halting at best. Your head feels ready to separate from the rest of your body.

"Now, why would you take him to watch you fight? And why are his only injuries from those dancing freaks?"

Ribara's mouth falls open slightly as she - and you - realize that perhaps it would have been better to simply attribute the injuries to Ribara. You're not sure what constitutes a 'medium beating' as Moradys had ordered, but you doubt that the Dark Elves would consider your injuries anything more serious than 'featherweight'. When Ribara finally speaks, her voice is uncharacteristically soft.

"When I fought it before, I felt so strong. I thought--"

Moradys' hand leaves your throat, and before your feet even hit the ground, that same fist collides with Ribara's left cheek. The larger Elf staggers towards the window, hunching her back and holding up her hand to shield herself from another blow.

"And you thought you would use my slave? Have I gone so soft that you think my things are now yours?"

Ribara stops backing away to look at Moradys, who stands between the two of you, her hands on her hips. Despite being so much smaller than Ribara, it's clear who holds the physical superiority - and that's to say nothing for the social dynamic of the two. When Ribara fails to answer, Moradys scoffs and throws her hands out wide.

"I sponsor the Cult! Did you think Meryetia wouldn't tell me that one of my own had gambled a Psyker to join them?"

Judging by Ribara's wide eyes, she hadn't. Even to you it seems a bit obvious, though you hadn't actually considered the possibility in the flurry of events that preceded it. Then, her face hardens. She stands tall, throwing back her shoulders and achieving a size that nearly blocks out the mist-speckled window behind her.

"I am sick of being your Vizir. I am sick of being told how stupid I am. If I am that much a burden,
then I will leave."

Moradys laughs, a harsh cackle that holds far more venom than amusement. "How long do you think you'll survive outside of the little bubble I've kept you in? You're a Half-Born freak, an idiot brute!"

"You made me!" Ribara shouts. The volume and pained emotion of her outburst is enough to set your head reeling, and you drop back onto your buttocks. Even Moradys takes a step back. "And I am not a brute! I am an artist. The Wyches said so."

Moradys clenches her fists and moves as if to advance on her, then stops and steps off to the side and waves towards the bedroom door. 
"Then go! See how long you last, you terminal fuck-up. See if anyone else gives you as many second chances as I do!" She backs up far enough to hook a hand under your armpit and haul you to your feet. "And see how well you fare against Astartes without my Psyker behind you."

You expect Ribara to leave, satisfied with the knowledge that she got Moradys to back down - even as harshly worded as it was - but she remains standing there, and her eyes like lit flames turn to you.

"That is not your slave."

Moradys' hand tightens around your arm, and her voice takes on a tone that would sound almost fearful if it weren't so threatening. This isn't someone who is used to being openly defied.

"What did you say?"

Ribara points at your head - or rather, just below it. "All my life you have me do your stupid little jobs. Punch this, collar that. That is my collar. It is registered as my slave."

"You think that matters?" Moradys screeches. "He is mine, you are mine, everything is mine until I throw it away! Now get out!"

"Not without my property."

Ribara takes a single step towards you. Within the span of that step, Moradys' hand leaves your arm, her legs carry her across the room to Ribara, and her fist collides with the larger Elf's chest. It happens so fast that you would have missed it entirely if you had dared to blink. An explosion follows, and shards of glass scatter across the floor. Far more is thrown outward, along with Ribara, as Moradys' strike carries her out of the building and down to the courtyard below.

Moradys walks to the window and kicks out the stray pieces still poking out of the frame's bottom, then hops down after Ribara. You gather your wits and rush over, shielding your face against the wind rushing in as you try to locate the two women. Moradys has only moved twenty feet from the spot below the window, but Ribara is much further away. You can see the point of impact in the stone courtyard, a person-shaped crater less than ten feet closer to you from where Ribara herself lays. She's crawling slowly, trying to carry herself towards the gardens with clawing arms and slowly-kicking legs.

You tear yourself away from that sight and run out of the room, down the stairs, then through the main hall and out into the courtyard. Moradys reaches Ribara as you burst through the doorway, though you're the only one moving towards the pair. There are nearly a dozen guard posted around the courtyard and its overhanging balconies, all watching through inhuman masks as Moradys delivers a few brutal kicks to Ribara's side.

You should be overjoyed.
The two people most responsible for your captivity and torture are in front of you, and one is beating the other to a bloody pulp. For once, you're not the one getting your ribs cracked and cheekbones caved in. Yet standing here, watching Moradys batter Ribara around the courtyard as the latter stands and falls every few seconds, you feel more powerless than ever.

These women are your enemies, but they're also your entire world. You consider them killing each other, and the thought brings you more terror than satisfaction. Where would you go? What would you do? Would the Wyches claim you? Or would you be sacrificed on a funerary pyre beside your Mistresses' bodies?

So you just stand there and watch, numb to what should be a rare satisfying experience in this awful new life of yours. Ribara's face is bloodied and bruised beyond recognition, and Moradys' strikes produce increasingly wet crunching sounds. The smaller woman is a blur of fists and furious shouts, one which you fear getting any closer to. You've lived with her cruelty long enough to know that you might be the next to receive her violence, despite having done nothing to deserve it.

Ribara tries to crawl away on all fours for what seems like the hundredth time, and Moradys tips her over onto her side with a hard nudge of her foot.

"Sign him over to me. Then, you can leave."

"No," Ribara gasps out.

Moradys stomps down on her stomach, making Ribara cough up a spray of blood that showers the front of Moradys' dress. She kneels down beside Ribara, looking around the sparsely-populated courtyard before turning her gaze back down and running a hand over Ribara's swollen cheek. She does so almost lovingly, but you know how cold that touch can feel.

"I could kill you right now, and inherit him. You're too stupid to see how kindly I treat you."

Ribara breaks out in raucous laughter, her broken body twitching madly on the stone. Moradys frowns and backs away, clearly just as taken aback by the reaction as you are. Perhaps the Elf has gone insane, as you've done when real escape proved impossible.

"I already swore the oath!" Ribara shouts, her voice echoing off the walls of the enclosed courtyard. "If you kill me, the Cult of the White Plume will take everything that is mine."

"I own them. They will do as I say."

"No, they will keep him! They will find a new sponsor!" Ribara laughs, and Moradys takes another step back. "Now who is the stupid--"

A swift kick to the head cuts Ribara short, and she drops it back down to the pavement with a groan. Moradys looks between you and her former underling with such fury that you feel the sudden urge to run very far, very quickly. Even if you wanted to help, your intervention would only last until Moradys devoted an ounce of effort to putting you on the ground.

"You would steal from your own mother?"

Ribara spits up at Moradys, though most of the bloody spittle winds up falling back onto her own face. "You have never once been a mother."

"Then you aren't a wayward daughter. You're a traitor, and a thief." Moradys stomps a boot down on Ribara's chest. The fallen Elf screams, not from the force of the blow, but from the spiked heel piercing her flesh. She tries to shove Moradys' leg back upward, but can't make it budge.
Moradys grabs Ribara's left wrist with both hands, then yanks upward. There's a sharp 'pop', and Ribara cries out again. Moradys doesn't let go, though. She keeps pulling Ribara's arm up by the wrist, all while keeping the rest of her pinned to the ground with her boot. All sorts of disgusting wet cracks and snaps come from Ribara's body, though they're quickly drowned out by her rising scream. Then, Moradys lurches backward, still holding Ribara's left arm. Ribara lays motionless on the ground, not screaming anymore, open-mouthed face turned towards the pool of blood forming beneath her mangled shoulder.

"Stick her on a skiff!" Moradys shouts, waving the severed arm at two of the nearest guards, then pointing to Ribara with it. "Take her to the White Plume's arena. She's their problem now."

The two guards pick Ribara up and start hauling her towards one of the exterior corridors that leads to the rear cliff of the manor. That means they're taking one of the faster vehicles, but you're not sure how much that will matter with Ribara losing a pint of blood every ten feet. The trio disappears into the shadows without so much as a groan from the maimed Elf, and you turn to the approaching Moradys, a look of pure horror on your face.

"Mistress, shouldn't they stop the bleeding first?"

Moradys doesn't look your way as she passes you. Her left fist - the one not clutching Ribara's severed arm - collides with your chest, and you go flying through the air before crashing back down to the ground a few dozen feet from where you left it. Your lungs are emptied of air, your heart stops, and your vision swims until something fleshy lands on top of your face. You lift it up to see Ribara's hand looming over your face, pale flesh even paler from lack of blood and fingers contorted in a grotesque death grip. You toss it aside, then with great effort sit up and look around for Moradys. She's gone, likely through the main doors of the manor to your left.

None of the remaining guards standing about the courtyard move to help you, nor grab your leash and tie you up somewhere. That's not surprising. They just watched their leader have her arm torn off, and were likely able to gather from the shouting what the argument was about - you.

You gingerly pick up Ribara's arm - it's still disturbingly warm - and head inside after Moradys. Upstairs, you find the doors to her bedroom open, and two guards stationed outside. Their masks make it impossible to see their expressions, but you can tell by the way they clench at their halberds that they're just as uneasy as you.

Moradys stands in front of the shattered bedroom window overlooking the courtyard, wind whipping at her tight dress and the few strands of hair that became loose during the fight. You step off to the side of the hallway and wait, receiving no cue from the guards on what to do. After a few minutes of silent brooding, Moradys finally speaks.

"Orin!" she calls out, her tone strangely pleasant. Confused, you look back down the empty hall, then to the two guards. Moradys calls out the name again, and you start walking into the room. As you cross the threshold, you realize why your legs responded to it - that's your name. It's the first time you've heard it spoken outside of your own head, not counting hallucinated apparitions. You stop behind Moradys, hefting up the bulky arm awkwardly. It's stiff, which makes it easy to carry, but still dripping blood.

"Mistress, should I do something with this?"

Moradys gives it a quick glance, then snatches it and tosses it out the window. "It's trash."

You stare out the window in shock, then swallow hard as you turn your gaze back to the woman now standing motionless, eyes fixed forward. She looks like a statue - just as hard, and just as cold.
"She's your daughter," you say softly. It's something you've long suspected, but now you've had it confirmed.

Moradys scoffs and rolls her eyes. "Ribara is not my daughter."

You watch her in confusion until her eyes flicker back over, and she turns to face you. "She was an experiment. I thought I'd combine my own DNA with that of one of your human warriors. To create something I could be proud of." She lets out a dry chuckle and flashes you a smile. "Be glad you'll never have the opportunity to make children. They will only disappoint you."

Children were never something you'd seriously discussed with Vala, but they'd always been in the back of your mind. That possibility is further away than it's ever been, but you still can't help but feel a twinge of despair at having the fact stated so casually by Moradys.

"She was a good girl," Moradys continues. "Infuriatingly stupid, but she always listened." You nod slowly, feeling prompted to do or say something by the intense stare Moradys fixes you with.

"But something changed. Someone has turned her against me. Someone has given her the idea that she can be anything other than a servant." She lets the words hang in the air for a time, and your jaw drops open as you realize the implicit accusation. Moradys eyes you for a moment, then bursts out laughing.

"No, no." She grabs the back of your neck forcefully and pulls you shoulder-to-shoulder with her. "I have enemies, you know. Too many to count. One of them wants to drive a wedge straight through House Tenebrim, using my favorite slave as a pawn."

"Me?"

Moradys face snaps over to yours, and her eyes go wide. "Did I say that out loud? I meant to think it! Yes, you're my favorite slave. That's why I can't stand the thought of you being used by someone other than myself."

You don't want to believe it. You want to chalk her notions of plots and cabals up to paranoia and megalomania. The last thing you need is yet another person who sees you as something to be used and discarded. It makes sense, though - all the sudden changes Ribara went through in the span of a single night. Dragging you to an arena and then getting into a shouting match with the mother she had been afraid to even second-guess.

Maybe the two women were being pitted against each other with you as bait. As for how, why, or who? You can't begin to guess. Normally you wouldn't care what tragedies befall Moradys' House, but you could easily have lost your life to those Wyches if Ribara had lost her match. You and Moradys will never be allies, but you can at least keep your eye and ears open for any threats that could catch you in the crossfire.

"I can see it in your eye," Moradys says. "You want to help me."

"How can I?" you muse aloud. The question is meant to be doubting, not to imply that you actually want to. Moradys, deliberately or otherwise, takes it in exactly the wrong way.

"Eager! I like that." She uses her grip on your neck to tilt your head towards hers, then rests them together. You've always thought of her as 'small' because of how she looks alongside the other Dark Elves - Ribara in particular - but Moradys is as tall as you are.

"But that can wait until tomorrow. We need to discuss sleeping arrangements." She waves an idle hand at the broken window and the glass strewn all about the floor around it. "I've decided that you
may use my servant's old room."

"A bed?" You look at her with a wondrous expression, and she smiles broadly enough to show a bit of teeth.

"What do you say?"

"Thank you," you blurt out.

The words are past your lips before you can rethink your gratitude towards the woman holding you captive. A real bed, with a real mattress and real sheets. Not wood, or stone, or metal. Moradys looks from you to the window, then heaves a dejected sigh that contains far more emotion than she had displayed when discussing Ribara. Who, for all you know, bled out five minutes after leaving the plateau.

"Now what will I do? I can't very well sleep here."

You say nothing in response, and as the seconds tick by and the silence grows, Moradys' eyes travel to yours with increasing frequency, and her foot taps faster.

"You should take the bed, Mistress. I'll sleep on the floor."

It's the only answer you can imagine her being satisfied with. In fact, you're sure it's the exact one she is looking for. But Moradys only glares at you, a disapproving scowl on her face.

"I should take the bed? Why is a slave telling me what I should do?"

Her grip on your neck loosens, which would be a welcome change, but it serves as an early warning that her hand might be about to travel somewhere more dangerous, like your throat or your balls.

"What I mean to say is, it's yours if you want it."

"This is my home," Moradys snaps. "It's already mine. Why would I need you to give it to me?"

She takes her hand away and moves between you and the window. You raise your own hands protectively, palms outward and face turned down as you back away from her slow advance. Then, she eases her stance somewhat and stops, looking you over as she draws a deep breath in.

Moradys approaches you more casually this time, picking up your leash and leading you silently from the broken bedroom and out into the hall. You move through the manor, eventually coming to the lonesome hallway with Ribara's room at the end of it. It's much as you remember, though the dark bed sheets are a slightly paler shade of blue - the old ones were likely burned by whatever poor slave had to handle them.

Moradys lets the door close before turning around and holding her arms out to her sides. It takes you a moment to figure out what she's waiting for, but then you quickly move to hook your fingers under the straps of her tight dress and ease it down her sides. Even though you're just looking at her naked back, you can't help but think on how otherworldly and beautiful she is. If only the mind this body held weren't so ugly.

"All the way off," she says.

You kneel down, tugging the dress off of her shapely buttocks. Once it's down to her ankles she puts a hand atop your head to steady herself, then turns back around as she steps out of the dress. Her naked groin swings in front of your face, and you just narrowly avoid earning a slap to the face from
her flaccid cock.

"Undress."

You should have been expecting this, but it still catches you by surprise. Your stomach turns and you grimace as you imagine that limp dick swelling into the nine-inch monster you’ve already had in every hole large enough to take it. Still kneeling, you awkwardly lurch from knee to knee as you kick off your skirt and sandals, then settle back down and face her crotch with only your collar and dangling leash as clothing.

To your even greater surprise, Moradys doesn’t follow up by telling you to open your mouth and lay on the bed. Instead, she takes you gently by the hand and pulls you to your feet so that you’re face to face with her. Her expression is strangely serious, but not in a domineering way. More as if she’s about to broach some delicate subject with you, and wants you to treat it with the same gravity she is.

"You think I'm beautiful, don't you?"

All you can do is nod absentmindedly, too caught up in the orange fires at the center of those blackened eyes to consider the greater purpose behind her words.

"Do you want to fuck me?"

This question should be the greatest surprise yet, but all you feel is fear washing over you. This is a trap, or a ploy - an excuse to hurt you somehow, no matter how you answer. Moradys sees your hesitation and takes you by the waist, pressing your groins together and reducing the space between your lips to mere inches.

"Don't be afraid. Tell me."

"I... don't know." And it's the truth. It seemed so impossible a prospect that you hadn't even considered it, no matter how much she fucked you.

Moradys gives a slight smile, then nods her head downward and backward. "Why don't you at least see what's waiting for you?"

Swallowing hard and moving with excruciating caution, you slowly draw both hands down towards her buttocks, waiting for the moment where she throws you into a wall or bites your nose off. That moment doesn't come, and you pull open her cheeks before slipping a finger inside and giving the lightest of touches to her rear entrance. It's smooth, warm, and unbelievably tight. You can hardly even feel the hole, only the familiar texture of an anus.

"I won't order you to do this. If you're still a man, you'll take what you want."

Moradys arches her back, clenching her cheeks shut at the same moment she pulls yours open and begins feeling at your own anus. It's still sore, and nowhere near as tight as hers.

That last dig at your manhood was the final push you needed. You draw away from Moradys, and her probing hand slips from your ass - but your hands do not leave her shoulders. For a few moments you just stare at her, having lost all notion of what it means to take the lead in a sexual situation. You’ve been raped and coerced so many times that having consensual sex seems like a strange and alien idea. Stranger still is the concept of you being the one to take the lead. Like a man should, as Moradys said.

She allows you to turn her towards the bed, emboldening you enough to walk her over and push forward on her back until she’s laying down with her feet dangling over the edge. you crawl onto the
bed after her and kneel between her spread legs, but Moradys quickly waves you off and directs you to search the nightstand for lubricant. You find a small bottle amidst Ribara's belongings, and return to the bed.

Your heart pounds, your breathing becomes shallow, and your mind is plagued by the sort of worrisome thoughts you haven't had since you first lost your virginity. You shouldn't give a single solitary shit what Moradys thinks of your performance here, but you want to fuck her hard enough to make her scream. You want to *win* for once.

Cracking open the bottle of lube, you dribble a conservative amount onto three of your fingers, coating them thoroughly before pushing your index finger into Moradys' anus. It's so tight that she has to consciously relax before you're even able to insert that first digit. You immediately try for a second, but Moradys' clenched ass cheeks make it clear that nothing else is entering her just yet.

"Isn't one finger enough? I've seen what you're working with."

You suppress a frown and begin to jerk yourself to hardness. If she wants you going in with no preparation, you're more than happy to oblige. This time, *she* can be the one to walk around with a torn asshole. You take your hand away from your dick and lean over her, but stop when you realize that you're still soft. *Completely* soft.

You rock back onto your buttocks and stroke more furiously, inwardly cursing and willing your useless manhood to the hardness you know it should be able to attain. You've never had this problem before, but you've also never before been asked to fuck the woman who has raped and tortured you for weeks on end.

"I'm getting bored." Moradys lifts her feet up and swings them back and forth on either side of you while you beat your flaccid dick. Nothing seems to work, and Moradys' searching eyes turned back towards you, heightening the sense of shame overwhelming the brief flicker of hateful lust you had felt. Each passing second increases your embarrassment further, making it that much harder to will your cock to life.

Finally Moradys shoves herself up to a seated position, taking matters into her own hand along with your dick. Her grip is hard, her stroking rough, and you are far too frightened by her steely gaze to feel anything resembling arousal. Her own cock is half-hard despite not having been touched at all, the head hanging just over the covers as she sits cross-legged.

"This is pathetic. I wasn't expecting much, but I at *least* expected you to do the one thing a man should be able to do."

Your fists clench at your sides, but you don't dare hit her with your dick still pinched between her fingers.

"Perhaps I should go down to the mines and find a man who still has some fight in him. One with a working cock." She tilts her head up to give you the most disdainful sneer you've ever seen her wear. It's as if she's looking at trash.

You can't possibly clench your fists any harder, though that doesn't stop you from trying. Your arms quake, your teeth dig into your bottom lip hard enough for you to taste iron, and the rage builds within you until it feels like a ball of molten lead dropped into the pit of your stomach.

"Oh... are you going to cry?" Moradys croons, stopping her pointless stroking but keeping your cock in hand. "Is that all you can do now? Cry and take cock?"
You can't take it anymore. Your fist moves of its own accord, colliding with the left side of Moradys' cheek. It's not a bad punch, but it feels like you've hit solid metal. Your knuckles crack from the force of the blow, and it's only Moradys' having turned her head with the blow that kept your hand from being broken.

Moradys slowly turns her face back towards yours, and the way she looks at you makes your white-hot anger freeze over. She stands up, winding your leash around her hand to keep you from backing away. Then, she tilts her head back slightly, and swings it into yours.

Your vision explodes with flashes of white and you're thrown forward onto something soft. The bed, probably - though your senses are too addled to even tell up from down. A hand grabs your left ankle and hauls you back a foot or two down the bed, and then something is thrust between your buttocks. Something fleshy, wet, and cool. It slips in, and you realize from the size that it's a finger, and not a cock.

One finger becomes two, and Moradys says something as she holds your ankle with one hand and fingers you with the other. The words are nonsense, just as much a blur as the bed's headboard. The pain is real, though. She's moving her hand fast - violently, almost - and gives you little time to adjust to the second finger before adding another.

Except this time, she isn't just trying to force one more finger in. That becomes clear the moment you feel her entire bunch of four fingertips press up against your aching anus. Your body gives her some resistance, but it only lasts as long as Moradys allows it to. You watched her tear another Elf's arm off - shoving her hand up your well-used asshole is far easier than that. Her fingers shoot into your rectum and you throw your head back, struggling to catch sight of Moradys' shifting shape through your bleary vision. You can faintly see her standing at the foot of the bed, leaning over you as she holds tight to your ankle.

"Stop!" you shout, blinking away the old tears of pain and anger and humiliation. Those feelings are gone now, supplanted by the sheer panic rising within you as her fist continues to press into your hole. You clutch the covers and kick your feet at her, but only your right leg can produce any real movement. Moradys responds by yanking back on the left one, dragging your entire body towards her waiting hand. It sinks into your ass up to the wrist, and the excruciating ache of being stretched turns into something too raw and pure a sensation to even call pain.

"Fuck!" you wail over and over, banging your head onto your clenched fists as they gather up the tear-stained bedding beneath you. "Please, stop!"

Her fingers clench into a fist inside your rectum, and she yanks her entire hand out of your asshole. You cry out, certain that you've been ruined for good. Forget staying tight for Moradys, you won't even be able to control your own bowel movements after what she's done to you.

Before the feeling of being torn open so thoroughly can begin to subside, her fist plunges back into your gaping entrance. You thrash and kick and beg and scream, but it doesn't matter. You can't fight her off, and you can't convince her to stop. Moradys repeats the motion time and again, punching her fist into your spasming asshole until it's become so slack that it stays open of its own accord. Then she pushes deeper, plunging in halfway to her elbow so that her fist is pressing up against the bend that leads into your colon.

That right-angle of your insides is made into a straight line as her elbow collides with your buttocks. You know that you shouldn't be twisting and thrashing on the bed with something so huge filling your insides, but your body is in too much pain for your mind to hold any sway over it. Moradys fucks you with her arm, battering away at your guts with vicious punches that threaten to cleave straight through your intestinal walls. There are no nerve endings along those passages, but her
passage is easily marked by the grotesque sensation of her fist pushing against your abdomen from the inside.

Moradys pulls her entire arm out, then grabs you by the hips, lifts you up slightly, and drags you backwards so that you're sitting on folded knees. Then she grabs your leash and pulls hard, yanking your torso nearly upright at the same moment she plunges balls-deep into your ass. There's a sickening squelching noise as air pockets escape your wrecked insides alongside spurts of lube, a sound that is repeated again and again as she slams her hips into yours.

"Goddess, you're disgusting! Didn't I say that I wanted you tight?"

You gurgle and try to hook a finger into your collar to relieve some of the pressure on your throat, but she's pulling back on it so hard that it's sunk too far into your flesh to grab onto.

"You can't even speak, can you? You love this too much!"

Her left hand grips your entire package and squeezes, and you feel something wet and warm spreading over your manhood. At first you think it to be the lube she had used to fist you, but that had only coated the hand she holds your leash with. This is precum, you realize - spilling from your limp dick with each thrust of her cock over your aching prostate.

There's no sense of being stretched or filled by her womanhood - not after what she did with her fist - but you can feel all too clearly the horrid churning of your insides as she violates them all over again. The more she fucks the harder she squeezes, until the pressure on your balls is so great that you can practically hear your heart struggling to pump blood into them.

"Why do you even need these? You can't even get hard!"

You clumsily fumble between trying to pull her hand away from your balls and trying again to relieve the pressure on your throat, but every attempt to interfere with Moradys' violence is met by hard jerks of your leash or savage thrusts forward that would throw you forward onto the bed, were she not holding you so firmly.

"And it's not as if you'll have children. Your wife is dead, you know!"

Your muscles seize up at the mention of Vala, and you look back to Moradys with a wet and reddened eye.

"Oh, yes! I went looking for her. She ended up in a Hive brothel and tried to fight off a client - first day on the job! The client bought her. To rape and murder most cruelly, I'm sure."

That can't be right. You know it can't be right. You saw Vala... a day ago? A week ago? More? It's impossible to remember with so little blood reaching your head and so little air making it to your lungs. Every time you try to form a thought, Moradys' cock spears into you, turning your body to jelly and mind to mush. Tears stream down your face, but you're not really crying anymore. You're not even trying to stop her from crushing your manhood in her powerful grip. You feel dead.

"Perfect!" Moradys laughs. "The height of despair! I'll crush your balls, I'll cum in you, and then I'll kill you! It will be perfect!"

At those words, something primal speaks within you. Not anger, or defiance, or pride. Something far simpler, and far older - the fear of death. You look around in a panic for some way out of this, but there is none. Not until Moradys moans in depraved ecstacy, and her grip on both leash and ball sack weaken enough for you to slip free and make a mad dash for the door.
Moradys shouts after you as you slam head-first into the sliding door, but you can't make out the words over the sound of your own gasping breaths. You throw open the door and stumble out into the hall, only for your heart to sink further than ever. You didn't run into the hall - in your blind flight, you ran straight into Ribara's bathroom.

Before you can run back out or try to lock yourself in, something hits you in the small of your back. You cry out as your muscles lock up, and you fall forward onto the marble floor. Moradys follows a second later, her cock sliding into your gaping asshole with no real force needed. She winds your leash back around her hand and pulls it tight, whispering all sorts of threats and promises into your ear as she hammers away at your bruised rear.

"Maybe I won't kill you," she rasps out. "Maybe I'll just kill the man. You already have one loose cunt. I'll rip off your useless little thing and have the Shapers add a pussy for me to ruin."

You try to squirm away across the smooth floor, but twisting onto your side only allows her to plow her length in at new and painful angles. Her face looms above yours, teeth clenched and eyes wide with a passion somewhere between murderous and lustful. You give up on trying to decide whether she wants to fuck or murder you, and decide to take her at her word - she wants to do both. Moradys slams into you with powerful, climactic thrusts, her sac pulling taut against your buttocks as she shoots her load deep inside you. It's too warm, and too heavy, and it comes too fast. You can feel each thick rope all too clearly, and the ache in your guts grows more powerful with each gush of Elf seed.

In one final humiliation, you find yourself unable to even give up and let your body remain still while she fucks her load into it. You jerk and kick, body wracked by the orgasm she's been coaxing out of your prostate for the last few brutal minutes. Your load spills on the ground between your legs, each shot made excruciating by the ache in your balls and the awkward way your soft dick is pressed against the floor.

When Moradys finishes, she shoves off of you and rocks back onto her knees to admire her work.

"You did cum. I suppose your balls aren't useless after all." She gives them a light slap, and you draw your knees up and cradle your sac to protect it from further assaults. Moradys stands and goes to the sink to wash her dick, then wipes it dry with a hand towel before tossing the towel onto you.

She leaves, sliding the door shut behind her, and you drag yourself into the enclosed shower. The walls are nothing more than frosted glass, but they provide a deceptive feeling of safety from the monster waiting for you outside. You feel eviscerated, both in body and soul. Moradys fell on you like a predator and tore out everything she wanted, leaving every part of you an aching wreck. Your balls hurt. Your insides burn. Your heart aches.

Unable to summon the strength to stand all the way up, you fumble for the shower knob until you manage to get the hot water running. Blood streams from your ruined asshole, mixing with semen and water to form a disgusting pink froth that bubbles down the drain. You roll onto your hands and knees and add vomit to the mixture, emptying your stomach just as thoroughly as Moradys hollowed out the other half of your digestive tract. You slump back against the wall and rest your head against your knees, and just sit. Not thinking, nor feeling. Hateful thoughts and flashes of bodily pain assault you without end, but they don't mean anything. You no longer feel like a person worthy of having such things.

Hours pass, but you don't dare leave the bathroom. No one comes to drag you out, but at some point during the night Moradys enters to use the toilet beside the shower wall. You keep deadly still and pretend to be asleep while you wait for the stream of piss to stop and for her to leave. Instead, she walks to the shower door and opens it. You stop breathing, and even try to stop thinking, in case she
can somehow sense that. After what feels like an eternity the door closes, and she leaves.

At some point, you fall asleep. When morning comes - at least, you call it morning - you shower again, not having done so very thoroughly the night before. The bedroom is empty, and you wait there until Charal brings you food. Two meals pass, and Moradys arrives again come night time. She acts as if she didn't just rape you near to death, and true to her word does give you Ribara's room as a semi-permanent residence. That night, you sleep in a real bed. It should feel like the softest and most inviting thing in the world, but you lay awake all night staring fearfully at the bedroom door, waiting for Moradys to break it off the hinges and drag you from the bed.

That doesn't happen.

It does, however, happen the next night. And the next, and the next. You come to realize that Moradys, having grown bored of simply keeping you in her room and torturing you endlessly, has decided to invent all sorts of new and horrific sexual torments. The first time comes in what you first think to be a nightmare. You lay in bed, unable to move a muscle, and Moradys slips in during the dead of night to rape you. When you next awake and feel at your cum-painted ass, you realize it wasn't sleep paralysis. Your food must have been drugged. You skip the next day's meals, but she seems to quite enjoy the experience of you tearfully trying to fight her off that night while she smashes your face into the headboard and fucks you against it.

Sometimes, she uses Charal in her games. The slave girl will come in, nervously embrace you, and then make sexual advances that you are unable to resist despite knowing how poorly the encounter will end. You want to touch a real human being, even if it's an experienced that is going to be ruined. And it is ruined, every single time. Moradys will either tie you up and fuck Charal in front of you, or just watch you try - and fail - to get hard enough to actually fuck the woman. Every time you see Moradys, you feel as if you're going to have a panic attack. It's a mental connection that becomes stronger each time she shatters the illusion of safety you allow yourself to buy into.

You want her to throw you back in that cell. You want to be alone, where the only person that can hurt you is yourself. At least in there, having your head bashed against the wall was a choice you yourself made. Now, it's something Moradys does every time she decides it's time to get a bit rougher. The sole silver lining in those eight days of hell is the fact that she doesn't fist you again. That doesn't, however, mean that your ass gets any opportunity to truly recover. You're always sore, constantly gaping, and often glued to the toilet while you wait for her latest load to work its way out of your intestines.

On the ninth day, you're taken from the room by two guards. Any change to your situation should be welcome, but those changes have so often been for the worse that you feel nothing but abject fear as you're led to the manor's main hall. There, sitting on a throne of jagged metal atop a short, stair-stepped platform, is Moradys. You find it hard to make yourself look at her these days. Another woman stands before her, with long, silvery-white hair. She wears a thong, thigh-high boots, and a metal crown just as menacing in its construction as Moradys' throne. Her appearance marks her as one of the Wyches you met, though it's not until you hear her rattling speech that you realize which one it is.

"We will be very careful with it, Lady Moradys," says Meryetia. The head Wych looks older than Moradys, but speaks with a deference that belies their true differences in ages.

"Oh, I'm sure you will." Moradys stands up from her throne and strides towards you. "But I don't know how useful you'll find it. It's so dull these days. I give it a bed, I feed it, I even send it a girl now and then! I haven't the slightest idea what's wrong with it."

"We will liven it up, my Lady!" Meryetia approaches you hungrily, but stops short with a single
warning look from Moradys.

"You may return to your ship." Moradys waves a hand at the hall's main doorway. "I will have him brought out."

The Wych turns to leave, but stops abruptly after just a few quick steps. Moradys doesn't see it happen, but you risk a quick glance of the eye upward to see what has caused the Wych to stop. She stares at Moradys for a few moments, a bewildered expression on her angular face, then continues past the hall's guards and out the door.

"Ribara is determined to press her... imagined claim on you. That's alright. I can part with you for a short time. You just go to that arena, watch the fight, and use that boundless will of yours to aid them."

Now you know why the head Wych was the one to come. Ribara was either too afraid - or too angry - to show her face here. Moradys lays a hand on your shoulder, and you panic. Having her so close already had alarm bells ringing in your ears, and her touch turns them into a blaring siren. Your legs crumple like soggy cardboard, and you collapse onto the ground as if every bone were magically stripped from your body. Moradys breaks out into hysterical laughter.

"Wonderful." She turns away, flapping a hand at her guards as she walks back to her throne. "Take him to Meryetia's skiff."

The two guards lift you up and set you down on shaky feet, then lead you out to the front of the manor. Meryetia's ship - a slightly larger version of Ribara's, which remains at the manor unused - is docked a ways down the cliff, alongside Moradys' massive barge. The Wych herself is waiting at the base of the ramp, tapping her foot impatiently as you make your way down the rocky path to the cliff's edge.

You should feel immense fear at the prospect of returning to that arena in the hands of one of the Wyches. And you do, in a way - but not because of the Wyches. All you can think about is how inevitable your return to Moradys' clutches is. You'll be gone for a short while, and then you'll return, and night will come. Then, the torment will start all over again.

Meryetia takes you onto the front deck of the skiff and pilots with one hand while holding your leash with the other.

"What else do you do, slave?" she shouts over the wind as you pull away from the plateau. "With your mind."

"I don't do anything."

She grumbles in annoyance, but doesn't chastise you for failing to use a title of any sort when addressing her. Apparently, that's not needed. Only people in a hierarchy need to worry about such things. You're property, with an owner - well, two owners. To everyone else, you're just a thing. You're 'It', not 'Him' or 'Orin'.

An hour later, you're at the arena. The stands are packed full, and the overflow watches from hundreds of ships hovering above. You don't see Ribara anywhere as you're led past the cages of screeching animals, and Meryetia hands you off to one of the other Wyches. You're lead to another elevator, this one taking you up even further. When you finally step out, you find that you've ascended onto an open platform that sticks out hundreds of feet above the outermost ring of spectator stands. There are no walls up here, just the tube-shaped elevator shaft to your rear, and the stiff gusts of wind doing their best to sweep you over the edge.
The Wych grabs you by the back of the neck and leads you to the edge of the platform, the other hand still on your leash. You've never liked heights, and the sight of that seething mass of Elves far below has your stomach reeling. You swallow your rising bile back down and turn your gaze up slightly, to the six platforms comprising the arena's fighting pit.

"Make it a good slaughter!" the Wych shouts. "If you do not, I drop you!"

Your eye flickers back downwards, despite your best efforts to ignore the height you're standing at. You know - or at least hope - that the Wych is bluffing, but it's hard to retain that confidence with sheer terror gripping you as firmly as she does.

The doors on the far side of the arena open, and you feel the ones far below you do the same. Dozens of ragged slaves stream out from both openings. You can't see their fear, but you can feel it. It's a rising energy, a cold sickness that clashes sharply with the hot fever of the blood-lusted crowd of Dark Elves watching the humans. You know what will come next for them, no matter what you do.

As the fear of those slaves washes over you, the reason behind Moradys' torture becomes clear. She wanted you numb - too numb to be of any use to Ribara and the Cult of the White Plume. If you proved to be a dud, they might be disappointed enough to give up on trying to wrest you from her grip. With that revelation, a small but persistent flame of determination flickers to life inside you. You won't let her win - not this time. Not again.

The slaves reach the first set of narrow bridges, and five Wyches rise from the depths on hovering discs. Four of the pale women are impossible to tell apart from this great distance, but the fifth is made distinct by her very noticeable lack of a left arm. Ribara's short hair has been dyed white like that of her comrades, and she wears the same thong and boots as the others. Unlike the others, she doesn't carry a pistol, only a sword. The group zips into action, harassing the slaves with shots intended to panic rather than kill. It's all a show, and it's one you don't want to watch. You have to, though, if you're going to defy the woman you hate even more than what's happening here. You can't stop it, and you don't even have to stop it. All you have to do is watch, and feel.

Ribara is the only one you can truly distinguish, so you end up watching her more than the others. She tosses her whip-blade at clustered groups of slaves to separate them and drive a few onto the bridges, where they are snatched off by the sharp-toothed worms lurking below. Blood flies, screams fill your ears, and the crowd roars. But there's another sound, too. Something you hadn't heard the last time you witnessed this horrific spectacle.

The Elves are laughing. At first you think it to be a reaction to the endless death playing out before them, but then you notice how the laughter always accompanies Ribara's swooping strikes. She has to fly lower than the others to strike at the slaves with her sword, making her stand out even more. All you can assume is that they're laughing at her crippled state, though it seems to make little difference in how efficiently brutal her movements are.

And the more you watch, the faster she moves. Even her flat little vehicle seems to flit about faster than those of the other Elves, as if they aren't truly pushing them to their limits. Ribara hooks her whip around slaves' necks, hauling them into the air before tossing them to worms that just narrowly missed some other prey. She picks one man up, swings him into a worm's mouth, and allows it to take off everything below the waist before tossing the screaming top half to another of the creatures.

You can no longer look away. You still want to, but you're utterly transfixed by the gruesome display. It's horrible, and terrifying, a series of murders seemingly without end - but it's art. The
crowd's laughter turns to a continuous roar of cheers and shouts, and Ribara hops down from her
disc earlier than the other Wyches, shattering the back of one woman who had fallen and was
attempting to rise to her feet.

While the other slaves around her scatter, Ribara picks up the woman by the hair, then shoves the
woman's face into her crotch. You hadn't seen her take her dick out in the blur of motion that
preceded the act, and you try not to think about what's being done to that woman's mouth. Still
holding the woman fast to her groin, Ribara lashes out at the slaves around her, grabbing ankles and
necks and flinging whatever she catches into the air. Sometimes entire people, sometimes only
severed feet and heads.

With only two slaves remaining on her platform, Ribara takes her sword and severs the head she's
balls-deep in. One slave is left now, a man fleeing towards one of the bridges. He leaps forward just
in time to avoid the gnashing teeth of the worm digging into the bridge on his left, but as soon as the
worm withdraws, Ribara throws the severed head at him. It strikes him square in the back, sending
him toppling onto the bridge. He manages not to roll off into the darkness, but is in no position to get
away from the worm surging up from the pit on his right. There's no scream this time, just a bloody
smear where a life had once been.

A circle of death lays around Ribara, too many bodies to count. Her disc floats back down and she
hops onto it, joining one of her sisters at an adjacent platform. Less than a minute later, the Wyches
descend back down into the pit, and the arena is deathly silent. The crowd, however, is noisier than
ever. They surge against each other like opposing waves crashing into each other, and as the Wych
holding your leash leads you back to the elevator, you see fights begin to break out among the
onlookers. You're forced to watch your own kind being killed with no hope of salvation, but you
can't stay to watch your captors hack away at each other.

The Wych leads you back to the vast room before the arena's doors, where animals and fighting
equipment are kept. She stops, then looks around for a bit, as if expecting to find someone waiting
for her. A few hounds claw at the two of you through their cage bars, but you see no Elves. No
humans, either - which you are very glad for. You're not sure where they keep them imprisoned, and
you're not sure you could stand to look them in the eyes while knowing what's awaiting them. The
Wyches have yet to use any of these caged animals in a fight that you've seen, and you wouldn't be
surprised to discover that they're simply here to frighten the slaves as the latter are herded out into the
arena.

The two of you make your way into the hallway curving around the arena, and you hear furious
screaming coming from up a head. Four Wyches are clustered around a closed door, the slightly-
taller Meryetia among them, but no Ribara. A flurry of muffled shouts comes from inside the room,
and something hits the door. A few of the Wyches look worried, but the wizened Meryetia merely
looks annoyed.

"What is she doing?" says the Wych holding your leash.

"Throwing a tantrum." Another object strikes the door, and Meryetia leans away while giving it an
annoyed look. "She heard them laughing."

"I told you they would!" hisses another Wych. "She looks ridiculous. You should never have
allowed her to join."

"But she brought this." The Wych beside you raises your leash. "Maybe we put it in there with her?
It might make her calm."

"It will make her angrier!" snaps another. "That is what it does! That is the whole point!"
Meryetia cuts through the argument with a wave of the hand as she turns towards the door. "Before she breaks every blade we have."

Two Wyches grab you by either shoulder and haul you towards the waiting door. You try to grind your feet to a stop, fearing the shouting, thrashing monster that waits for you inside, but you can't resist the pair dragging you forward. Meryetia slides open the door, and you're shoved inside. The door slams shut a moment later, leaving you in a short entry hall that leads to a circular training room. Weapons racks line the walls, though most have been tipped over onto their sides.

Dozens of melee weapons lay scattered on the floor, and more are embedded in the floor and walls. A few are even stuck in the ceiling, hanging above the enraged Elf stomping across the training mat. She's wiping at her face with her forearm, blubbering and swearing and choking back retching sobs. She stops at the center of one of the circles of light created by the ceiling's light fixtures, then bends down to pick up a sword and throws it right at you with a furious shout.

You jump to the side a split-second before it embeds itself in the door, only narrowly avoiding having a similar thing done to your sternum. Ribara continues sobbing and pacing, and you realize that she hasn't even spotted you yet. You try to open the sliding door, but someone is holding it fast. Turning back around, you see that Ribara has stopped pacing, the rattling of the door in its frame having drawn her attention.

Her blackened eyes aren't capable of appearing red, but you can tell by the glistening of her pale cheeks how much she's been crying. Now that you're up close, you finally get a good look at her left shoulder. There's a bit of arm stump remaining, though not enough to even stick a prosthetic on. A metal cap has been stuck on it, and you can imagine how awful whatever is underneath must look.

"What? Speak!" Ribara shouts.

You're looking at her, you realize. It's a mistake you keep making, though it doesn't seem to matter quite as much as long as no one else is around. You turn your face back to the ground and hold your hands up, palms out in a disarming pose that hopefully conveys how harmless you are and how unsatisfying it would be to beat you.

"I'm sorry, Vizir. It's hard for me to speak. You were terrifying in the arena."

Ribara draws in a wet sniff and rubs her palm against her bleary eyes. "I wasn't terrifying. They were laughing at me. I heard it!"

You know better than to bother trying to deny that fact, as doing so would probably just piss her off even more.

"Only at first! Then they saw how well you fought, and they stopped laughing."

She walks towards you and picks up the leash dangling behind her neck. Not to pull it or drag you around by it, though. She just holds it loosely in her hand as she points a finger at your face.

"They cheered, but they were laughing first."

That's exactly what you were trying to say, but Ribara hisses it at you as if it's an accusation.

"Isn't that good? You changed their minds."

"I looked weak!" Ribara bellows, letting go of your leash and picking up a sword. She hunches over and stabs it into the floor over and over, cutting right through the training mat and slicing into the metal below.
There's a harsh scraping noise each time, and you grimace while uttering a silent thanks that she's not doing this to your foot. After shredding that section of mat to pieces, she turns back to you and points the blunted blade at your chest.

"It must be so easy to be you. You are expected to be weak. I have to be strong, all the time."

You're angry - angrier than you've been any time in recent memory. Not because you hate Ribara more than Moradys, but because the woman standing before you should be able to understand, if only dimly, what you've suffered. Unlike her sperm donor of a 'mother', Ribara seems to have a limited capacity for empathy. It's stunted and un-nurtured, but there's a shred of humanity inside her - and if Moradys is to be believed, it's a very literal humanity.

"Do you think I like feeling weak?" The words come out just short of a shout, and Ribara takes a step away from you in surprise. "What am I supposed to do? There's one of me, and there are millions of you. Every time I try to fight, things get worse!"

Ribara stares at you with mouth agape. Your face is flushed, and you're vaguely aware of the fact that you've started crying.

"If I'm too strong, I get the shit beat out of me. If I'm weak, it's my own fault. Whatever happens, I deserve it! Right?"

Her mouth moves silently for a few moments, but she eventually finds her voice and prods you with the tip of the sword she had blunted against the ground.

"You are a slave! You will not speak to me like that."

"Or what?" You grab the blade and shake it before throwing it off to the side. "You're going to kill me, Moradys is going to kill me. Do whatever you want!"

With that last dangerous command, you lurch forward and give Ribara a hard shove. She's caught completely off guard, and stumbles back a few paces before regaining her balance. You, however, fall back onto your buttocks. You can't remember the last time you slept an entire night, you're tired from shouting at Ribara, and you're downright exhausted from the aid you gave her in the arena.

You're still not sure what it is you do, exactly, but it feels like more than simply projecting your emotions onto her. You think about how fast and deadly she is, and she becomes that much faster and deadlier, as if reality were racing to catch up with your imagination. If only you could will yourself into believing an imagined reality where you're the one who is unstoppable. Maybe you'll eventually go crazy enough to buy into that dream.

What you do know is that you're very, very tired. In body, in mind, and in soul. You cross your legs in front of you, then rest your head in your hands and break down into choking sobs. You're falling apart, but you're not going crazy again. This is the sanest you've been since leaving your solitary imprisonment. All of the horrors behind and ahead of you are revealed in stark clarity, and you see no light at the end of the tunnel.

You want to forget all about this place. You want to touch grass and see sky again. You want to hug your wife. You don't care who she fucked or what future you two might or might not have. Just for one moment, you want to hold something from your old life in your hands.

"Stop that!" Ribara hisses, prodding you with the sword. You bat it away again and glare up at her with your one eye reddened by grief and anger.

"No."
Her jaw tightens and her eyes narrow. "I will beat you until you stop. Do you think I will not?"

Despite the fierce look she gives you and the steadiness of her voice, you see her feet shifting awkwardly on the floor. This is making her uncomfortable. Good. Let her sweat.

"Go ahead. I hope you kill me."

You drop your face back into your hands. The urge to sob is gone, but you continue to breathe in and out with shuddering breaths while Ribara moves around you uncertainly. She prods you with the sword, and you ignore the pain. She tries to lift you to your feet, but you go rigid until she's forced to drop you back down.

After nearly a minute of this you hear the sword clatter to the ground, followed by the sound of her footsteps moving towards the door. Before she can make it there, it opens of its own accord. Meryetia steps inside while the other Wyches wait in the hall, and she gives the wrecked training room a cursory examination before turning those black eyes to you, and then Ribara. The older woman has the look of a disapproving teacher who is forced to confront a problem student.

"Does it need medical attention before we return it?"

Ribara turns back to look at you. "Return it?"

"We spoke of this. What will Lady Moradys do if you try to keep it?"

"I don't care! It is mine, isn't it?"

Meryetia lets out a rattling sigh. It sounds as if she has a loose bone bouncing around where her heart should be. "She will go to war to get it back. Do you want her to take your other arm?"

Ribara's face twists into a furious scowl, and for a moment you're certain she's going to launch herself at the other Elf. Instead she remains like that, seeming to understand the truth behind the other woman's words while still unable to suppress her unthinking anger.

"We have an agreement," Meryetia continues. "Let us be content with that, for now. What does it matter where the Psyker goes when the arena sits empty?"

She walks over to you and hauls you to your feet. Not needlessly roughly, but certainly not gently, either.

"I should not have to ask for use of my own slave!" says Ribara.

Meryetia walks you towards her and gives the larger Elf a cold look. Like Charal, you've become something of an expert at stealing upward glances without being noticed.

"I negotiated this with her. Do you want to be the one to re-negotiate?"

At that question, Ribara's fist goes slack and her fingers work nervously at her side, as if to confirm that she still has the one arm. You can't see her face with your head tucked down, but you're guessing it's even more colorless than usual.

Despite everything else that's happened to you over the last week, the memory of her arm being torn off remains at the forefront of your mind. She was the one to actually experience it, but you remember all too clearly the feeling of having your left eye ripped from its socket. The ripping of flesh, the gush of hot blood, the empty hole where there had once been rich sensation.
"Clean up this mess. Irunal will take your slave back to House Tenabrim."

Meryetia waves one of the other Wyches in, but before she can hand off your leash, Ribara snatches it from her.

"I am done with this stupid thing." She unclips it from the rear of your collar and tosses it across the room. "You are not going to run off, are you?"

You shake your head. "No... Vizir." You're not sure what you're supposed to call her now. You are sure that you aren't going to be running off, here of all places. There's as little chance of escape as at the manor, and half the rooms you pass are holding pens for some deadly creature or other. You're not about to go around trying doors in the vague hope of finding salvation.

Ribara turns and stalks from the training room, and you follow.

"If you want a slave to fuck, grab one from the slave pens!" Meryetia calls after her. As you pass through the doorway into the hall, one of the three Wyches waiting outside runs her fingers first over Ribara's passing arm, then your own. Her touch is ice cold.

"My bed is always open!" she shouts after Ribara, following the offer with a mad cackle. At least, you hope that was directed at your handler. You had nearly puked when forced to finger that Wych's pussy - it had all the wetness of a normal woman's, but none of the warmth or tightness. You imagine having to stick your cock inside, and a shiver runs up your spine. Suddenly, your recent impotence seems a far less pressing concern.

Once you and Ribara move far enough down the curving hallway for the other women to fall out of sight, she shortens her quick strides so that you can keep pace more easily.

"You will call me 'Mistress'." Ribara looks back at you, seeming to wait for an acknowledgement. "I own you, do I not?"

You sigh and nod, casting your gaze back down. "Yes, Mistress."

"What Meryetia said is right," Ribara muses. "We keep hundreds of humans here. I can pick out ones I like and do what I want with them."

You've seen what she does to them in the arena, and can only assume that her out-of-arena activities are a slightly toned down version of that carnal brutality. You're not quite sure what response she's hoping to get from you - fear, probably. Ribara slows her walk even further, so that she's moving right alongside you.

"Women and men. If I am bored, and want to have some fun, I might fuck and kill some." She runs her fingers down the back of your left shoulder, so gently that you wouldn't have noticed if you were weren't nude from the waist up. "But only if I am bored."

Her wandering hand and searching eyes make it clear what she wants, but it takes you a few moments more of walking to truly understand what she's offering - or rather, what she's demanding. It's sexual extortion, and only a step above outright violent rape, but she's giving you a choice. Not much of a choice, but you're not used to having any say in the matter at all. You briefly wonder if this is some trick like the one Moradys played on you, but you don't get the sense that it is. Nor has Ribara done anything in the past to make you suspect her capable of something like that.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" You touch her wrist, and Ribara stops and turns to face you. "Ah... Mistress," you add quickly.
She wastes no time in taking you by the arm and leading you further down the corridor, then ducking into a supply closet a short ways before the arena's main hall. Once the door slides shut behind you, the room is pitch black until Ribara uses a bracelet on her wrist to illuminate the room with a faint green light. There are shelves running along the walls to your left and right, stocked with what look like dried packs of food bundled up with twine. Either for the slaves or the animals - probably both.

There are a few waist-high crates scattered about the middle of the room, and Ribara leads you over to one. The moment she sits on top of it, the crate explodes with furious noise. Something inside screeches and roars, tossing itself around hard enough for the box to rattle off of the floor even with Ribara weighing it down. You watch in utter terror as a slitted yellow eye presses itself to a small hole in the side facing you, and the roars die down to a low, continuous growl. Ribara, acting as if she didn't even notice, pats her thighs and waits for you to approach.

With each careful step forward, the growl coming from beneath Ribara gets louder and angrier. By the time you move between her knees, you're afraid that whatever is in there is going to tear straight through solid metal and disembowel you.

"Can we move?" you whisper to her.

"Where?"

You lean to one side to look at the crates behind her, only to see several more shifting forms of fur and scales moving within slitted metal crates. The nearest of them growls, as if to warn you off of using it as a seat.

"Nevermind."

Your fingers go to the sides of her underwear, and you undo the little clasps keeping her womanhood contained. It's only when her uncut cock and balls drop free that you realize you didn't even take a moment to mentally prepare yourself for coming face-to-face with them. You're getting far too accustomed to this.

Taking her cock limp cock in hand, you notice something that you hadn't spotted in the dim light. Her groin has been shaved almost completely smooth, with only a bit of stubble left above the base of her cock. That's a welcome change, but it did little for her smell. If anything, it's worse than before. She reeks of sweat and unwashed flesh, as if she hasn't used those arena showers since the last time you were here. Moradys, for all her faults, never smells bad - perhaps something to do with Ribara being part human.

While you jerk her cock to hardness, you put your lips in between her breasts and kiss all the way down to her groin.

"What are you doing?" she says in a low, shuddering voice. It doesn't sound like a real question, so you don't answer it. Instead you continue kissing to the head of her cock as you lift it up and slip it inside your mouth. Before you even slide back the foreskin with your lips, you taste something awful. Something bitter, and metallic. Blood.

"You're bleeding!" you hiss up at her. The urgency of your voice puts the caged beast on edge, and it resumes pacing and growling.

Ribara leans over to look at her dick as you hold it aloft for her, then sits back. "From the slaughter. Not mine."
And now it's in your mouth. You look her cock over for any sign of more blood, but see nothing. While you try not to think about where or who it might have come from, you give a few spits onto the ground and then return your lips to her head. It's soft enough that it slips in easily, though you can't take her all the way to the base. You keep still and suck while running your hands up and down the sides of her muscular abdomen, and your head is gradually forced upward as her cock hardens and assumes a size that, despite you having seen it before, has you staring down the length of it in disbelief.

It's all you can do to keep the swollen head of it in your mouth while pumping both of your hands up and down the shaft, but the saliva streaming from your mouth provides more than ample lubricant. Ribara rests her hand on your shoulder, not grabbing or pushing. The groans she makes are quickly drowned out by the beast pacing back and forth beneath her, the animal apparently taking her noises as a challenge of some sort. It butts its head against the top of the box, jostling it and making Ribara's dick pop your jaw open to painful dimensions.

The longer you suck and the deeper you take her, the closer to your head Ribara's hand moves. You hardly notice it until her fingers have wound themselves up in your hair, though even then she allows you to control your very slight up-and-down movements. That all changes when her breathing quickens and her abdomen clenches, her arm going rigid along with it. Her dick jerks in your mouth, her hips buck up into your face, and she pushes you down onto her cock. You had thought you could take it no further, and that might have been true when you were the only one putting any effort into it. Ribara's strength is irresistible, and even the awkward angle of your mouth and throat proves little trouble for her.

She pushes your tonsils back against the top of your throat, then cums. Your jaw is opened so wide and your lips stretched so tight that not a single drop escapes your lips. You can hardly even taste her jizz, with how thoroughly the head of her cock plugs up the space between your mouth and throat. Ribara breathes loud and fast, and the creature in the cage beneath her barks and slashes at the walls containing it. You're too busy trying to breathe to pay much attention to either one of them.

Most of the warm seed is shot straight into your stomach, though that doesn't mean you can't feel it. There's a sickeningly thick texture to it that you can feel as it slides downward, and a noticeable heaviness that becomes a painful fullness by the time the pulses shooting up her urethra finally stop. Once you're confident that you're not going to get your face painted with sticky semen, you shove off of Ribara's thighs, dragging her dick out of your throat and past your teeth. Your jaw is screaming bloody murder and your throat is sore, but you managed to avoid having any significant amount of her cum dumped on your tongue and its many taste buds. That, at least, is good.

Ribara tilts her head up and leans back on the crate for a time, waiting for her erection to go down so that she can stuff it back into her underwear. Once you see that she's ready, you do so for her without being prompted. That seems to please her, and you hope that you bought some other slave - and yourself - another ounce of Ribara's very limited goodwill.

The two of you leave the closet and its caged inhabitants, making your way to the elevator and the arena's docking bay. There, Ribara stops short of the waiting airship and calls 'Irunal' through her bracelet - the Elf who Meryetia had said would take you back to Moradys' home in the first place. Apparently, Ribara is still weary about setting foot there. It's a feeling you can empathize with.

A few minutes later, an Elf arrives on the descending lift. Meryetia and Ribara you have little trouble telling apart - the former for her age and height, the latter for too many reasons to count - but the remaining five Wyches are so similar in appearance that you still have trouble remembering how many there are.
Two of them have dicks, and three don't. That's about all you have to go off of. The one approaching you now is all woman, and you receive further confirmation of her identity when she runs her cold, clammy fingers over your shoulder on her way to the docked skiff. Ribara very reluctantly orders you to leave, and you obey with even less enthusiasm.

To an unaware observer, the two of you might look like lovers being forced to separate. It's not enormously far from the truth, given what you just did, but that's not what's happening here. Ribara watches you leave with all the cheap frustration of someone watching their land cruiser being repossessed by creditors. And you watch her fade into the distance, not missing her, but fearing who will soon replace her.

"Slave! Come, come!" shouts Irunal from the front deck. Her voice is higher-pitched than the other Wyches, though just as dry and rattly. You walk up the steps and stand alongside her, blinking into the wind and its wet mists that cling to you like a bodysuit.

"Do you like me?" she says.

You grimace and let out a long breath to give yourself time to think. You're too tired to play whatever mind games she's trying to drag you into.

"You threatened to crush my balls."

Cackling laughter erupts from Irunal's mouth, and her head tilts back so far that she has to grab onto her metal crown before it slides off onto her long mane of white hair. She turns and makes to grab you, but you've placed yourself just far enough away that she can't do so without taking her hand off of the pilot's controls. It's nice to no longer have a leash, even if it doesn't last.

"I won't crush your little balls! You get to touch me. Touch me while I fly." She gives you a fake-looking, wide-toothed grin and beckons you forward enthusiastically, but that smile quickly changes to a scowl when you don't respond. Reluctantly, you move towards her, and she grabs your right hand before forcing it down her underwear.

"Feels good, yes?"

With deft manipulation of your hand with hers, your index finger is forced in between her wet folds. Her body offers little resistance to your intrusion, and she easily pushes another two of your fingers in alongside the first. You suppress a groan and start fingering her while considering her earlier offer of a quick fuck to Ribara. You now suspect it's an offer that's been made - and accepted - before. Either that, or this Elf keeps some monstrous Xeno around to regularly open her up wide.

Irunal pulls your hand out a few minutes before you reach the manor. Moradys' barge is gone, but there's a small group of helmeted guards waiting for you at the cliffside landing. They march onto the skiff and drag you off by either arm while Irunal makes exaggerated smooching noises and shouts laughing goodbyes that continue until you've disappeared into the gardens above.

"We could fuck it here," says one of the guards walking in front. She glances back at you as she walks, then to her other four companions. There are tall hedges of half-dead leaves on all sides, though there are more than a few windows looking down on you from the buildings up ahead.

"Shut up!" hisses the one holding your right arm. "You see the collar? It's not deaf!"

"If you hit a Mon-keigh in the head enough times, they forget what happened. I read that in a text."

The guard to your right lets out a frustrated sigh, and the one on your left leans forward to look at her. "There are drugs to make them forget. Drugs to make them want it, too."
"Quiet!" the one on your right snaps, this time loud enough to shut the other two up for good.

You continue your rigid, fearful walk, trying to pretend as if you didn't just overhear your own planned rape. If there's one upside to what Moradys did to Ribara, it's that it left the rest of her guard too afraid to try and assault you. Not afraid enough to not mull it over, though. They drop you off in Ribara's room - your room - and lock the door behind them. You should be glad to be rid of them, but solitude only has you wondering who will be the one to violate it.

No more than ten minutes later, the door unlocks, and opens. You leap up from the foot of the bed where you were sitting to see one of the guards holding open the door for Charal, who walks in with a bowl of food. She glances up, smiles, then looks back down as she walks inside. Before you can get closer to her, Charal stoops down and sets the bowl on the floor, then backs away until she's nearly out of the room again. That's not something she's done whenever Moradys has used her, and you see no sign of your captor in the long hall outside.

"Wait! Can we talk? Can you come in?"

Charal shakes her hands in front of her and continues walking backwards. "No, you will touch me." Her gaze flashes upward and she gives another nervous smile. "That is good, if I am allowed! But not now. Now I am not allowed."

She passes the guard holding the door open, who scoffs impatiently and drags Charal far enough back that she can close it. You sidestep the bowl on the floor and go to open the door, but it latches shut just as you reach the handle.

"The food was left sitting for you!" comes Charal's muffled shout through the heavy door. "I am sorry! It is cold, but it is okay!"

Your only hope of real human contact, gone in a flash. You might see her again tonight, but you already know how that will end. Moradys will try to tie you up, realize your leash is gone, beat you for having lost it until you can't move, then fuck Charal on the bed while you lay broken on the floor. Who knows, though. Maybe she'll surprise you. Maybe she'll fuck you in front of Charal while breaking you down with jeers and insults. Either way, you'll die a little inside.

But before that, you'll eat. You pick up the bowl and go to the table in the corner of the room, then sit down and pick up the spoon buried in the slop. It has indeed gone cold, the liquid of the bland-looking meat-stuff having gathered to the top as an oily veneer. It's only because of how colorless the meal usually is that you notice something odd about what has gathered there. Pooled in a corner of the dish is a circle of vivid purple, very distinct from the brown liquid covering the rest of it.
Standing Tall

You dip your spoon into the purple patch of liquid floating atop the stew and scoop it into your spoon. The food is so bland and tasteless that you have little trouble detecting the chemical-like smell of the stuff. You dip your little finger into the spoon and put a bit on your tongue, then grimace at the similarly harsh taste.

Whatever it is, it's not natural. It's possible that it's a benign additive put into the food to add necessary nutrients to what would otherwise be incapable of sustaining a person. That, however, would require your captor to display a concern for your well-being that you can't really imagine. You suspect Moradys had drugged you before, when you had fallen prey to sleep paralysis - it's very likely that this is what knocked you out before.

Unwilling to risk consuming whatever drugs might be left in the food, you take the bowl to the toilet and dump it out, then flush it. You're hungry, but far from starving. You'll cross your fingers that your next visit to the Cult's arena comes soon, and that you can find a moment to steal some of the pre-packaged food you saw in that closet.

That evening, Moradys comes to your room with another slave. Not Charal, but a fair-skinned woman with short red hair who bears a striking resemblance to your wife. You're certain that's intentional, and can only frown unhappily as Moradys fucks the moaning woman on your bed while ordering you to jerk off.

Moradys takes notice of your continuing inability to get hard, and derives great pleasure from watching you unenthusiastically rub your flaccid dick while she uses her larger cock to bounce her partner up and down on her lap.

You haven't tried getting an erection without her around, and are afraid to even try. Failing to do so near her is one thing - it's a defense mechanism of sorts - but your stomach sinks at the idea that she's broken you so thoroughly that normal sex is now lost to you for good.

Moradys rolls on top of the woman, then pulls out and cums all over her undulating chest and face. She leaves and locks the door without taking the slave with her, and you go over to try to talk to her, only for her to mumble something unintelligible and grasp at you with eyes half-closed. She starts moving again as if trying to help you fuck her, and you pull away as you realize that she's drugged - maybe with the same stuff that was put in your food. You should be glad that you avoided ingesting it, but you feel so awful right now that you wouldn't mind something to take the edge off. This woman doesn't look miserable, at least.

Your blanket is painted with Moradys' cum, so you throw it over the woman's body, drag her up to the right side of the bed, and try to sleep on the left side while she mumbles and coughs throughout the night. A few times she retches, as if getting ready to puke. You roll her onto her side just in case, but nothing ever comes of it.

Surprisingly, you get a few hours of sleep. When you awake, the woman and blanket are gone, and you briefly wonder whether she died beside you while you slept. Then, you decide that it doesn't really matter. Lives are cheap in this city, human lives are cheaper, and those of Moradys' slaves cheapest of all. If she isn't dead yet, she will be soon.

The next day, you receive two meals while locked in your room. Both times you let them sit, and both times you find the same distinctive purple fluid floating on top. You're hungry enough that you consider scooping it out and eating around it, but you have no way of knowing how much of the
mysterious substance remains in the food itself - so you flush both meals.

Moradys does not come again until that evening, this time with no human partner, but carrying some bindings and a small box that fits into the palm of her hand. She has you lay down on the bed, ties your wrists to the posts on either side of the headboard, then straddles your hips and opens the box.

It's only when that first needle pierces your skin that you realize what's happening here. The pain is excruciating, and you thrash and shout before a harsh order from Moradys and a hand squeezing your neck both tell you to be still. The second needle is worse, and the pain does not diminish as more are added. Rather, it increases, turning your backside into a screaming chorus of frayed nerves that has the Dark Elf atop you shuddering with dark pleasure.

When you had done this to Ribara, you had imagined her experiencing something barely more intense than a pleasant tingle - not this horrific assault that drowns out all your other senses.

You get a lot of sleep that night, as well. At some point during the torture, you pass out. When you awake, your back is caked with dried blood, and you're no longer tied to the bed. After showering you sit, and brood, and plan, and wait for your next meal. It's the same as the last two, and you throw it out. The next one is as well. By that evening, your mild hunger has become ravenous. Your hands shake and you feel clammy, more from low blood sugar than any real immediate danger of starvation. You're not going to die from two days of no food, but you certainly feel like death.

On the third evening, Moradys brings Charal with her. You hate seeing the two of them together, because you know what unpleasant experiences that will inevitably lead to for the both of you. A grinning Moradys directs Charal to lay on her back on the bed, then pull her ankles up so that they're nearly flat to the bed beside her head. Moradys takes a seat in a chair, then crosses her legs and gestures at the woman.

"Isn't she lovely?"

Your eyelid closes of its own accord, and you turn away from Charal as you stand at the foot of the bed. You make a mental inventory of everything in the room, trying to figure out what you could stab or strangle Moradys with. There's not much of use in here, but you could drive your spoon into her eye - that might be a soft enough target for you to do some real damage. She'd likely take your other eye as payback, though, and leave you to spend your days totally blind instead of just half-blind.

"I asked you a question," Moradys snaps.

You let out a sigh without bothering to mask the tiredness and frustration behind it. "She's the loveliest woman in this entire mansion."

"Very clever. I suppose you have no shortage of time to come up with mean little quips." She snaps her fingers, and you opens your eye to see her again pointing at the woman laying spread open on your bed. "Fuck her. I want to see how humans make love."

You'll do it.

You won't just try, and then fail and get laughed at. This time, you'll fuck Charal and make her moan like Moradys never did. It's a pitiful revenge, but it's all you have. And this tenuous connection with the woman laying on your bed might not be 'love', but it's the closest you've found since being taken to this city.

Stripping off your sandals and skirt, you crawl onto the bed until your face is just above Charal's
well-trimmed bush. You kiss up the purple spiral sun tattooed around her belly button, and she
shakes with ticklish laughter. You spare a quick glance over at Moradys, who is leaning her chin on
her hand, a quivering smile threatening to break into outright laughter the moment you fail to take
this encounter past foreplay. You tear your eye away from her and continue moving upward, until
you're looking Charal right in her big brown eyes.

For a few moments, they refuse to meet yours. Then she lets her eyes relax, and looks up at you with
a strange innocence, as if she doesn't realize what's about to happen. She knows better than you,
though - she's been taken by Moradys and her guards far more often than you have. Has she ever
had the chance to make love, you wonder? Real love, not just rough fucking with no concern for her
own pleasure.

You kiss her gently on the lips, then pull back slightly and rest your forehead on hers.

"I love you," you say softly.

Charal's eyes go wide, and she stammers wordlessly. You're not sure why you said it, and even less
sure whether or not you meant it. She trembles beneath you, and her heart pounds hard enough for
you to feel it each time her breasts rise high enough to touch your chest. You press your lips to hers
again, glad that you said the words. You press your body even closer to hers, as if you could merge
them into one, and you become aware of something - a growing tension in your abdomen, as if your
muscles simply refuse to relax.

Unwilling to pull away from her to take a look between your joined bodies, you grind your hips in
between her legs, and marvel at the sensation of your growing erection sliding across the lips of her
pussy. She's so soft, and you're so hard, and the warmth is unbearably welcoming. A few minutes
ago, you had felt like awful - so hungry and shaky that you wanted to lay down and sleep forever.
Now, you feel as if you have a new lease on life, and thrust into Charal with an enthusiasm that you
can't contain.

Charal gasps and squeezes her ankles, and you let her adjust to your sudden entrance for a moment
as she releases her ankles and eases her legs down on your shoulders. Once she's settled you push up
from the bed on your toes, then lower back down, breathing hot and heavy on her face as you repeat
the motion again and again. Charal clutches your forearms, squeezing them with hands that suddenly
feel so weak and tiny. The bed squeaks and the headboard rattles against the wall, but those noises
are so small compared to the shuddering moans you're fucking out of the woman beneath you.

"I hope you can keep that up," says Moradys. You had completely forgotten that there was a third
person in the room - someone you would rather have remained ignorant of until this was over. "If
you can't cum, how will I get a child out of it?"

At those words, your muscles lock tight. You open your eye wide to see Charal looking equally
shocked, and then turn your head to face a smiling Moradys. The thought of this monster having
something as innocent and fragile as a human baby in her clutches make your blood run cold, and all
carnal thoughts evaporate like steam. Then, she laughs.

"What do I need a little bastard running around for?" She shakes her head and clicks her tongue at
you, and you look back to Charal as you try to find your rhythm again. You're still hard, and Charal
is just as soft and inviting as ever - Moradys just wanted to set you off-balance.

"You don't want anything so burdensome as a child, do you Charal?"

Charal squeezes her eyes shut and turns her head away from Moradys. "No, Mistress."
Her expression is sad enough that you stop moving again, but Charal quickly opens her eyes and releases her hold on your arms, then wraps her hands around the back of your neck and pulls you in close. Your lips meet, and before you even realize it you've resumed the slow roll of your hips that brings you balls-deep in Charal over and over. Time disappears even as your movements continue, and the world again seems to narrow down to just you and the woman beneath you. Moradys is far away, and your other worries further still.

Charal moves her hands to the side of your head and huffs heavy breaths onto your face, her eyes which were half-closed before now fluttering wide open. You cum as she cum, your balls pulling tight against her ass as her legs spasm on your shoulders. Her eyes roll around as if unable to focus, and she alternates between biting her lip, kissing at yours, and speaking words too softly for you to hear.

When your orgasm finally ends, there is no come-down. You feel on top of the world, a blissful combination of safety and exhilaration that makes you cling to Charal with confident desire instead of pathetic need. You push off of her just enough for her to lower her legs down to the bed, then fall back down and rest your forehead on hers. Your mouths meet again and again, your tongues intertwine, and your sweaty legs slide against one another as your softening cock slips from the pussy you just flooded with a week's worth of cum.

Charal blinks her eyes until they become focused, then grabs your cheeks and points your face at hers.

"I love--"

She never gets a chance to finish. Strong hands grab you by one arm, then hurl you to the wood floor. You scramble to your feet and move away from the bed, standing there in stunned silence for a moment as a furious-looking Moradys batters Charal across the face with balled-up fists. Charal curls into a ball and shields her face, but the wet smacks sounding out with each blow tell you that Moradys has already managed to draw blood.

You shake yourself from your stupor and leap into action, dashing towards the bed in all your unceremonious nudity. Moradys sees you coming and turns on the bed to face you, but is too late to avoid being tackled to the floor. A split-second after landing atop her, you discover that despite being very light, she's also incredibly strong. She swings an arm at you clumsily, catching you in the side of the head with her elbow and sending you rolling off of her.

Moradys gets to her feet before you do, but even in her fury seems unwilling to launch herself at either of you a second time. Charal is kneeling on the bed holding two hands in front of her bruised face. Her lip is split and eye is swollen, but she looks to have managed to avoid anything more serious than that. You quickly move between the two women and hold out a steadying hand towards Moradys, who shifts her weight from foot to foot as if preparing to make her move at any moment.

"You two planned this!" She jabs an accusing finger at you, spittle flying from her mouth. "Did the guards pass messages for you? Did you hide them with his food?"

Moradys looks between the two of you, only seeming to grow angrier when she sees the bewildered expression on your face. This encounter clearly didn't go as she had planned, but you still struggle to see the reason behind her bizarre outburst.

"You said to have sex, Mistress." Charal speaks softly behind you, using your back as a shield. "We had sex."

"Yes, but no..." Moradys abruptly trails off, then looks down at the ground with clenched teeth and
runs her forearm across a forehead that glistens with sweat. Then, she looks back up to you and
narrowed her eyes. "You did something to me. You think I won't find out how?"

You don't respond except to steel yourself for another attack, and Moradys gradually eases her stance
before moving towards the door and sharply ordering Charal to leave with her. She grabs the slave
by the back of the neck and rushes her out with quick strides, and the door slams shut behind them.
Charal's safety is out of your hands now - if it was ever truly in them - and you can only pray that
Moradys' unreasonable anger cools before she has a chance to unleash it again.

As you dress, a smile forms across your face. You sit down on the foot of the bed, and the longer
you sit the broader the smile becomes. You won some sort of battle, though you're still not sure what
kind.

The next morning, you're escorted by guards to the base of the manor where Irunal is waiting aboard
the skiff she dropped you off in a few days prior. There was no warning given that you'd be going to
the arena today, but you doubt it has anything to do with Moradys' lingering anger. You just don't
warrant that much consideration.

Once away from the plateau, Irunal beckons you up onto the deck with her and berates you into
fingering her while she flies. You relent, and are gripped with such strange confident from the prior
day's events that you even engage the Elf in small talk. You ask her about the fights she's had before,
and she enthusiastically discusses the many crimes against humanity she's inflicted during her seven
decades in service to the Cult. You soon regret asking.

Once you reach the arena, you're taken to a small room in the bowels of the building where six
Wyches - Meryetia and Ribara among them - sit at a round table and discuss the Slaughter scheduled
to take place some six hours later. They go over the choreography of the event with all the focused
dedication of a circus troupe, talking about rape and murder as if they were tackling the finer issues
of complex trapeze maneuvers.

They leave you standing just outside the doorway, seeming to trust that you won't do anything
foolish like attempt escape. You're still not sure how exactly your collar works, though you very
clearly remember the shock it gave you when you attempted to board Moradys' barge with no escort.

"Tell it to empower all of us," hisses one of the Wyches. "You say it worked well last time, but you
were the only one of us to fight better."

"You expect me to control it?" says Ribara.

The first Wych scoffs. "It is yours, isn't it? Are you saying it controls you?"

"Of course not!" A heavy 'bang' follows, likely Ribara slamming her fist down on the table. It's loud
enough to make you jump, though you resist the urge to peek into the room to watch the animated
discussion. "It will do whatever I say."

She bangs the table again, several times in quick succession, and you grow confused until she shouts
at you. "Slave!"

You risk a glance back to see her glaring at you, seeming to give no indication of what she actually
wants, but you risk entering the room with head bowed and are happy to find that you're not slapped
silly for it.

Ribara gestures at her fellow Cultists, who stare at you with piercing eyes of black set within white
faces. "When we fight, make them strong - as strong as you make me."
"I've never done that before, Mistress. I'm not sure if I can." You glance up from the floor to see Ribara staring daggers at you, a furious and slightly embarrassed expression on her face. If you didn't know better, you would say she's blushing.

"I mean, absolutely! You ordered it, so I'll do it. Simple as that."

Ribara gives a confident grunt, then turns back to her seated fellows who exchange doubting looks. The meeting ends, and before Ribara can leave the room you pull her aside with an exaggerated cough.

"I'll be able to help better if I've eaten something." You grimace as you hold a hand to your aching stomach, which rumbles right on cue. Ribara's eyes go wide with concern, and you trail shortly behind her as she leads you from the room and into the hall. Despite no longer having a leash, you find yourself tethered to a Dark Elf no matter where you go. Here, it's by choice. You don't want to risk one of the other Wyches - Irunal in particular - catching you alone and deciding you're a good way to relieve whatever decadent boredom afflicts them.

You come to the arena's cafeteria, a barren grey-walled room with a few tables stocked with ration packs much like those you saw in the creature kennels. You fumble with one of the packs uneasily until Ribara snatches it from you and presses a circular protrusion on one side. The pack inflates in her hands, and she tosses it at your face. It's nearly too hot to hold, and you set it down on the table as you sit down on one of the benches beside it.

Inside is contained a messy slop of meat and vegetables that carry all the questionable taste and texture of what you're routinely fed at Moradys' home. You had thought that as a slave, you were being fed particularly poor food. Now, you realize that the lower classes must live just as poorly. It's only Elves like Moradys who get to indulge.

You dig into the pack with your fingers and eat it like finger food, though it's far too messy for that to work very well. At least you can be certain it's not poisoned.

"Is she not feeding you?" Ribara asks, sitting diagonally from you at the small table. You're not sure how much you want to tell your second-worst enemy in this universe, but the enemy of your enemy is your friend - or at least an ally of convenience.

"She's been doing something to my food," you answer with a full mouth. "There's always purple stuff in it."

Ribara raises a pale eyebrow curiously, but says nothing. You're glad she didn't ask you what the poison actually did. You'd prefer to forget all about your humiliating bout of impotence, even if it wasn't your fault. As you eat in silence, she leans in close and examines you with an intensity that makes you shrink down in your seat. Then, she extends her hand towards your head and brushes at the fringes of your hair. You're in dire need of a haircut, and find yourself having to throw your hair out of your eye far more often than you'd like to.

"Do not cut your hair." She lets her hand fall away and sits back while you give her a curious look.

"Why?"

Ribara sputters incredulously, as if you've committed some grave offense by asking her that. "Because if you do, I will beat you." She pinches the fat and muscle of your upper arm hard enough for you to jerk away from reflex alone. Within seconds, the spot turns purple and throbs painfully. "Stupid questions get you hurt."
You wince and hold your arm for a moment, then return to eating your food. Ribara drums her fingers on the table, and you feel the need to occupy her with conversation before she decides to snatch away your much-needed meal and haul you off somewhere else.

"Mistress, do you like hurting people?"

She certainly seems to like killing people, since she went to a hell of a lot of trouble to join a group of murderous performance artists. Ribara leans in closer and narrows her eyes, and you fear you've overstepped the vague boundaries of the Master-Slave relationship. Then she relaxes, apparently only concerned with the possibility that you're mocking her in some way with your abrupt question.

"It is an amazing feeling, to kill. Do you not like it?"

You shake your head and swallow your food before speaking. "I've never killed anyone before, but I can feel... something when you do it. It's awful." You'd prefer to feel nothing at all, but it's better than sharing in Ribara's perverse joy. Helping her like this already saddles you with enough guilt, even if those slaves are as good as dead no matter what you do.

"This will not be a problem, will it?" She slides her hand across the table and grabs your wrist while your fingers rest in the packet of food. "What if you see your wife in the arena? You won't be upset if I stick my blade up her cunt, will you?"

The blood drains from your face, and your hand goes weak under Ribara's as you look up at her. She's grinning from ear to ear, and after a few moments of silence she thumps your hand on the table as if encouraging you to say something.

"Was... that a joke?" you ask uneasily.

Her grin widens and she nods, then laughs as you feel your fear-frozen heart start to beat again.

"So you wouldn't kill her? If you saw her in the arena, I mean."

Ribara gives you an odd look. "Of course I would."

You feel weak again - you can't handle this rollercoaster of emotions. Every time you think you have a handle on how one of these women thinks, reality decides to punish you for your hubris. Ribara isn't your friend, and she certainly isn't going to go out of her way for your sake. Everything she's done is to benefit her - including those things that benefit you, like giving you food. You can't let yourself forget that.

"Why do you look like that?" says Ribara, clearly noticing your pallid expression which is beginning to rival her own in its lack of color. "You have not seen your wife since you came here. Why would you care if I killed her?"

It's been quite awhile since you've given Vala any serious thought, and you're tempted to brush off Ribara's question with a mumbled response about the inhumanity of killing. Yet for some reason, you're struck by the powerful feeling that your answer will be gravely important.

"Mistress, she's my wife." You sigh and wave your hand. "Or, was my wife. I don't know if I even want her back, but I sure as hell don't want her dead."

Ribara snorts derisively. "Moradys said she was pretty. If she is alive, it means her lips are glued to someone's cock. You would not kill her if you found her like that?"

You scoff in disbelief. "I'd rather save her."
Ribara lets go of your hand and points down at the pouch of food on the table. "If I pissed in this, would you try to salvage the food? Or would you throw it out?" She spins it around and fumbles for some of the food inside, then begins eating the last of what should have been your meal. Disappointed - and somewhat repulsed by Ribara's clumsy metaphor - you lick your fingers clean of the hopefully nutritious but utterly tasteless sauce.

"Do not think about your wife. Think about the Slaughter, and do your job well. If I see your wife in the arena, I will kill her quickly."

You search for some hint of a smile on Ribara's face, but there's none there. It wasn't a joke, nor did she intend her words to cause you distress. Rather, she looks as if she's just made a solemn vow that will come at great personal expense to herself. You would be flattered, if you weren't feeling sick at the realization of how truly broken this woman is.

You say nothing in response, and Ribara extends one sauce-coated finger to your face. You try to angle away from it, but she forces it past your lips and teeth, followed quickly by a second one. You reluctantly suck them clean, but that doesn't get them out of your mouth. She starts slowly finger-fucking you, grasping at your cheek with her other two fingers each time the ones inside press against your tonsils.

Then, a sound - the scuff of feet behind you as someone comes to an abrupt halt. Ribara's eyes go wide and flicker over to the newcomer, then back to you. They narrow, and she grabs at your jaw with two of her fingers still hooked inside of your mouth, pulling you forcefully against the table.

"I told you not to look me in the eyes! You're losing a tooth after this Slaughter." She throws your head back, then grabs the pack of food and shoots up from her seat, crossing the path of one of the other Wyches who gives the two of you a disinterested look over before sitting down at one of the other tables. Ribara throws the spent pack in a trash can, then snaps her fingers for you to follow.

You're pretty sure you're not actually going to be losing a tooth - at least, not tonight - but her harsh words are fresh enough in your mind for you to keep some distance between the two of you. Ribara bristles with anxious energy, shoulders pulling up to her ears and naked back muscles rippling under her pale flesh. Her brief displays of humanity have ultimately hurt you more than helped you, primarily because they so often come out as a paranoid anxiety that she channels into violence.

Still, those moments fill you with hope. You refuse to let your mind twist those moments into imagined scenarios where she has a spiritual revelation and helps you escape this horrible place, but neither can you ignore them altogether.

Ribara takes you to a supply closet, where she picks up one of the flat discs the Wyches fly around on. It's too large to hold under her armpit, and she carries it in front of her while leading you down to the arena's docking bay. There, the two of you board her skiff and assume a position hovering over the edge of the arena's stands. The skies are empty, as is the arena itself. From what the other Wyches said, you've got a good five hours to go until you're actually needed.

"Mistress..." You wearily approach Ribara as she stalks down the stairs to the front deck and goes to the railing overlooking the arena. "Are you really going to take a tooth?"

You see her turn around slightly to look back at you, but your eye is pointed at the ground. Best to do as Ribara ordered, even if you're fairly certain it was only for that other Wych's benefit.

"I should, but I doubt it would help. Mon-keighs are too stupid to learn, and you are no different." She stomps her foot and waves you forward. "Come here. I will explain the coming Slaughter so you don't screw it up."
You join her at the railing, and she grabs the back of your neck to keep your face pointed forward and down, towards the arena. She begins explaining how the fight will play out, and you quickly discover that this one will be a bit different than the other two - though just as grotesquely inhumane in its treatment of your fellow humans. The more Ribara talks, the more animated she gets. She glances over at you a few times, only continuing when you nod or otherwise acknowledge that you're still paying attention.

At one point she outlines a particularly flamboyant aerial display planned with one of the other Wyches, and you risk a half-hearted: "That sounds amazing," just to gauge her reaction. Ribara eagerly assures you that it will be, and moves behind you, then presses you to the railing with her breasts on either side of your head as she continues rambling. Her hand touches your side and then moves slowly across your chest until she's wrapped it all the way around you.

Her bulge, as obscenely palpable as ever, rests on the small of your back as a soft warmth that you can't even hope to ignore. She doesn't do more than that, though - you doubt she even realizes, nor cares, what sort of reaction she's provoking. Your own cock begins to harden while hers remains mercifully flaccid, and you would be thrilled at the return of such random erections if this one weren't produced by the sensation of someone's bulge warming your backside. You would blame it on her breasts, were they not so small that you can hardly feel them.

"One last thing." Ribara grabs your chin and tilts your head to the side, where her eyes meet yours. Twin orange fires burn at the center of those slender black eyes, and it's only when she blinks that you're able to look away from them. "If you aren't able to make the other Wyches as strong as me, I would not beat you for it."

You swallow and nod. "I understand, Mistress."

Her voice carries the weight of a threat, and she lets her eyes dig into you for a few moments more before releasing your chin and letting you look back at the arena. You remain like that for a time, until other ships begin to arrive. Larger ones with many people dock on the side of the arena-topped tower, while many smaller ones form an increasingly dense cloud overlooking it. Ribara moves further from you with each new eye that might see her, until finally assuming a position standing beside you, though her hand remains grasping the back of your neck. Just a little too tightly for comfort, you note.

"Is it starting?" you wonder aloud. You don't truly need any time to prepare - nor do you know how you would prepare - but you don't like feeling caught off-guard.

"This is not the slaughter. This is a duel."

Ribara gestures downwards, and you continue to watch. A few minutes later, the stands are fully packed with chattering crowds that are separated into two distinct groups, as if someone has drawn a line right through the center of the stands.

The arena doors on either side open, and two figures step out. The one on the left wears a garish outfit of purple and green, with shoes that curve up into pointed toes. She - at least, you assume it's a she - wears a white mask that carries an expressionless face, the top and backside studded with blue gems. Bells on the hem of her clothes jingle as she walks, a noise you find merely obnoxious until you realize that you can hear the things from hundreds of feet away over the roaring crowd.

The woman on the right is dressed much like Ribara used to, with dark, heavy armor from waist to neck and a gown that ends just above her ankles. Her black braided hair swings from side to side as she walks, and she twirls two swords in time with her steps. The one dressed like a harlequin-turned-gladiator carries only one blade, and displays none of the fanciful flair of movement of her
Both walk to the edge of the platforms in front of the arena doors, then stop. Another platform, far larger than the rest, rises up from the darkness at the center of the six smaller ones. The two elves leap onto it, then stalk towards each other. The crowd falls silent.

"Anyone in Cummragh can challenge anyone else to a duel," Ribara says without looking away from the two fighters. "They do not have to accept, but they usually do. If you do not, you are a weakling and a coward. Someone will kill you outside of the arena."

As soon as the women come close enough to each other that they can touch swords, they do so. Metal strikes metal, and the crowd roars as a furious sword fight begins. You find yourself gripped by the enthusiasm of the Dark Elves around you, and see no need to push those feelings aside. This is a fair fight, after all - and whichever one of these women dies, you're sure they more than deserve it.

The joined pair dashes across the platform, one fighter occasionally breaking away from the other to recover from a particularly close call. There's a lack of panache to this fight, compared to watching Ribara and the other Wyches work their 'artistry', but it's far more exciting. Partly because you're not trying to keep from vomiting at the sight of the battle, but also because this time, the outcome is unknown. You have no idea who will win, and the ebb and flow of the crowd's cheers tell you that they are no less uncertain.

The fight covers more ground than you thought possible, with the contestants leaping after each other from the central platform to the outlying ones. They fight on the bridges, occasionally coming close to shoving one another off before they manage to jump to safety. They seem an equal match, locked in a duel that will never end, until suddenly the two of them stop on the platform nearest your hovering ship. The Harlequin stands with her sword thrust into the chest of the armored woman, whose own sword slips from her grip and clatters to the ground. A few bells jingle softly, then fall silent.

The crowd explodes. The two halves surge into each other, and even more leap out of the stands and swarm the platform the two contestants are on. The Harlequin takes out her sword and begins sawing at the other Elf's neck, but the crowd reaches them and tears away their comrade's fallen body before the Harlequin can finish the job. They leave just as quickly as they came, without harming the victorious Elf.

"They will try and fix her," Ribara explains. "She should have thrown her body off without bothering with the head. The worms would have taken care of all of it."

With the defeated Elf's body clear of the arena, the fights gradually taper off and the two sides separate, and you spot more than a few bodies littering the stands. No one retrieves those, and you can only assume that they're too low-ranking for anyone to be bothered with. Moradys had mentioned how expensive using that pit of hers was - perhaps that's what these Elves plan for the defeated duelist.

After the stands are cleared of the living and the ships around the arena begin to depart, Ribara goes back to the front deck of the ship, retrieves her disc, and sets it down on the floor.

"Remember what I told you." She steps onto the disc, and it rises a few feet into the air, forcing you to look up even higher. "And do not even think about jumping off. If you do, I will have you put back together the way I want."

Ribara then zooms off towards the arena, leaving you alone on the skiff. You wait for her to
disappear around the other side of the arena, and then you dash up to the front of the ship with such speed that you face-plant halfway up the stairs.

You reach the piloting controls, and your heart sinks. The display panels and lights are all dark, and every knob and lever you try to use does nothing. The ship continues to hover motionless, with only the soft whine of repulsor jets to let you know it's still functioning at all. The controls are bizarre enough that you would have trouble piloting it, but whatever Ribara did locked you out and rendered that a moot point.

Hours pass, and you occupy yourself by watching some miserable-looking human slaves hauling the bodies of Dark Elves from the stands. One of the slaves spits on a body, and you smile. That smile disappears the moment one of the Wyches zips into view on her disc, grabs the man around the neck with her whip, and drops him into the pit at the center of the arena. The remaining slaves continue their work respectfully and silently, wiping away smears of red blood and putting severed body parts in sacks which they then dump into the pit.

As they finish up, ships begin to arrive again, and the stands are once again packed. You aren't sure what time it is, and don't dare risk taking a nap on the very inviting couch behind you, lest you sleep right through the Slaughter. You shudder at the thought of the fury you'd endure if that happened.

One set of arena doors open, and a group of six humans walks out - three male, and three female. All six have been shaved bald, and are completely nude except for the metal collars around their neck. These aren't like your thin one which you hardly even notice anymore - they're bulky things, which the slaves tug at uneasily as they walk out onto the first platform and give a weary look at the crowd around them.

Then, the air around the slaves warps and shimmers as if space itself were distorting. There's a soft glow of light which becomes brighter and larger around each person, and when it fades, the human slaves have taken on the appearance of the Wyches. Ribara had told you exactly what would happen, but that did little to prepare you for the reality of the sight. Everything has been replicated perfectly, each strand of white hair moving in perfect time with the movements of the slaves' heads.

The crowd murmurs in confusion, and the slaves, despite their expressions being those of unflinching elves, seem just as confused in their body language.

The slaves catch sight of each other, and stumble away in shock. It takes them a few moments to realize what happened, and they talk and feel at each other to confirm that this is a mere illusion. Even as they do so, that illusion holds for everyone else watching. The holograms - or whatever they are - remain covering the people's' bodies. Another Wych - this one the genuine article - rises up from the pit on a disc with a bundle of swords in her hands. She throws them up into the air above the group of false Wyches, who run away as the weapons clatter all across the platform. Then, the real Wych leaves. The fake Wyches approach the weapons cautiously, then begin picking up swords and readying themselves for whatever is to come.

The doors open again - this time, on both sides of the arena. Two groups of slaves, at least twenty from each exit, run out onto the platforms before them. As soon as they cross that first set of bridges, they catch sight of the Wyches, and freeze.

"Kill us, and earn your freedom, Mon-keighs!" comes a heavily accented, rasping shout from the group of disguised slaves holding swords. The voice is impossibly loud, but you can tell by the words alone that none of these slaves actually spoke it. The two groups of slaves begin to slowly close in on the 'Wyches', who glance at each other before tossing down their swords and waving pleadingly at the newcomers. None of them try to shout, though - either they had their tongues cut out, or the collars serve yet another function. The slaves, seeing the Wyches drop their weapons, become emboldened. They rush across the bridges towards their hated enemy, and the crowd of
Dark Elves below erupts into uproarious laughter. Some of the Wyches pick up their weapons and try to fight, but most simply fall to the ground and die under the weight of dozens of punching fists and striking boots.

"That is enough, Mon-keighs!" booms another Wych's voice, this time coming from all around the arena. "Show your fallen enemies honor, and put down your weapons! Do not desecrate your bodies, as we do to those of your kind!"

The speaker stifles a snorting laugh just before she cuts off, and the crowd is brought nearly to tears. The furious slaves don't seem to notice, though, as they busy themselves dismembering the bodies of the Wyches they had beaten to a bloody pulp. They use their sharpened blades to cut off heads and sexual organs, roaring angrily as they deliver a vengeance that has undoubtedly been a long time coming. They only stop when the parts they had cut up become too small to bother with any further. When the last exhausted slave staggers away from the mess and drops his sword, the illusion fades. Body parts shimmer and warp, and pale, hairless flesh becomes tan and rough. White hair turns black, and the sharp Elven features of the dismembered heads return to those of their human owners.

The slaves gasp with such horror that you can hear it. The crowd of Elves follows with roaring laughter.

From there, the Slaughter begins. Ribara rises from the pit alongside five of her sisters, who spread out around the platform and begin their usual means of spreading their prey out before picking them off in cruel and violent ways. You shake away the worst of the cold horror paralyzing you and focus on the Wyches, using your sickening hatred at what just happened to propel your emotions to new heights. You watch each slashing sword, each biting whip, each surging bolt of plasma eating away at burnt flesh. Each time you're 'used' for this purpose, you begin with no real idea of what you're supposed to do, except to be rightfully horrified.

You let yourself be overcome by that feeling again, occasionally devoting active thought to focusing your senses on each Wych's activity. The women all have their own style, a personality which flows into their work. Meryetia is slow in her kills, dragging them out to the savoring pleasure of the crowd. Irunal is oddly playful in contrast to the icy pallor of her flesh, and toys with her prey for so long that the crowd is always in danger of turning their attention to someone like Meryetia, who understands comedic timing better.

Ribara is faster than both, and engages in only the barest foreplay with each slave before murdering them in some horrific way that always draws whooping shouts of amazement from those spectators who managed to catch the fleeting spray of viscera. She is quick, but not because she is merciful - every time Ribara flies close enough, you can clearly see the wide grin on her face. You focus on her most of all, and she punishes your devoted attention by killing even faster and more viciously.

By the time the group of slaves has been reduced to a single lone man, you feel utterly drained. You allow yourself to slump to the deck of the skiff, certain that you can do no more for these Wyches with your tired mind and heart. They surround the single slave in a hovering group, then descend onto the platform and walk towards him with blades drawn. The man tries to rush between two of them, but a whip catches him from behind and pulls him to the ground. They don't keep him there, though. They haul the screaming and bloodied slave to his feet, then stab him in the torso and thighs from all six directions. Those Elves with cocks jam their members into the wounds and start fucking, while the others run their tongues and blades up and down his flesh. The man's screams become weaker, and over the course of a minute the Wyches who were fucking his wounds pull away, one after another. Ribara is the last to leave, sliding her bile-blackened cock from his side as the dead slave collapses to the ground in a bleeding mess.
Your cheeks bulge, and vomit spews into the air. You cough and hack over the railing, reeling with even more nausea as you're faced with the dizzying sight below. The crowd explodes into furious shouts, and begins fighting. That's nothing unusual, and you look up with a puke-drenched chin expecting to see the familiar pockets of fighting forming among in the stands. Instead, you see what looks more like open warfare. Half of the crowd has leapt onto the platforms to fight each other in vicious melees, with many in the stands using ranged weapons to send bolts of green plasma shooting across the pit. Something whizzes right by your face, and you look off to the right to see a bolt sailing into the side of one of the many barges lurking over the arena. With that spark, the bloodlust that had flowed up from the arena explodes.

An aerial battle breaks out, with ship-mounted weapons used to send entire vessels crashing into the arena's top and sides. You crouch down in a corner of the middle deck and try to make yourself invisible, but that does little to dissuade the Elves around you from turning your skiff into a flaming wreck. Shot after shots hits your ship, which shakes with each repulsor jet being taken out. The skiff lurches hard to the right, throwing you onto the floor and sending you sliding towards the bottomless green mists looming larger in your view as your ship upends. A split-second before you can be thrown over the side, someone grabs you. The thin fingers dig into your flesh, and her touch is cold, but at that moment Irunal is the most welcome sight in the world. She swings you around by the wrist as she descends back towards the arena, then throws you into the docking bay.

You hit the floor hard, and roll for a few dozen feet before finally coming to rest face-up. The featureless metal ceiling is all that meets your gaze, until Irunal's wicked grin appears above. You scramble to your feet and move away from her, then notice the five other Wyches approaching from the lift at the rear of the room. Ribara and Meryetia are among them, and all five are just as bloodied and frenzied-looking as Irunal, who grabs you by the shoulders and holds you still. The five approach, their wide-eyed expressions unreadable, and you imagine what thoughts travel through those minds of theirs. Do they blame you for the chaos still audible up above? Should they blame you? You've felt the crowds fury and bloodlust before, as if it were a person - could you have affected it in the same way?

One of the nameless Wyches breaks away from the other approaching four, and moves quickly to your side. Then, she kisses you on the cheek. A second one does likewise on your other side, and is soon joined by as many as can find space on your body. They jostle you roughly as they do so, shouting and chattering enthusiastically. Ribara shoves Irunal aside and grabs you from behind, and you look up to see her beaming proudly.

"I told you it could do it. It does whatever I say."

A few more slobbering kisses and mildly painful bites follow, then the Wyches finally pull away. They're clearly pleased with how the match itself went, but they look satisfied in a way that goes beyond that, as if the butchery carrying itself out above them were a vindication of their performance.

"The Houses will be clamoring to donate more slaves to us." Meryetia graps the two Wyches on either side of her by the shoulder. "Tonight, we will celebrate by thinning out our current stock!"

The Wyches stomp their feet and cackle and cheer, and you feel your own legs grow weak.

"Keep it here," Irunal says to Ribara. "We can have fun with it."

Ribara gives you a thoughtful examination, then looks up to Meryetia, who throws back her head of long, white hair and grunts before turning her eyes to you.

"Slave. You are the one who has served under Lady Moradys. Has she given any talk of..." Meryetia glances off and wheels her hand about in the air. "...Re-evaluating our arrangement?"
"She hasn't mentioned anything like that... ma'am." You can't risk looking up at her to see if she's about to speak, so you wait a few breaths before continuing. "But she's been putting something in my food. I think she wants to make me weaker."

The Wyches gasp. "And less useful to us," one of them says. Ribara grips your shoulders tighter, and Meryetia hums thoughtfully.

"We will return it," says Meryetia. Ribara starts to object, but the other Wych raises a hand to cut her off. "But we will give it food that has not been tampered with."

Instead of satisfying Ribara, that solution only seems to anger her further.

"I hate these stupid little games!" She stomps her foot a few times, like an oversized child throwing a tantrum. "It is mine! We should just keep it, and find a new patron. Surely after today, we can get a strong one."

Irunal circles around to Meryetia and looks between the two of you. "We should keep it for one night, to show Lady Moradys that she cannot bully us. Use today's success to our advantage."

"That could send a message." Meryetia taps her chin and shifts uneasily from one foot to the other. "Yes, alright. We will return it in the morning."

Ribara chuckles triumphantly, then walks you along with the other Wyches to the elevator at the far side of the docking bay. As you ascend, Irunal leans in close and gives obnoxiously loud sniffs to your neck and hair while the other Wyches talk amongst themselves. You wish Ribara would swat her away, but the larger Elf is too preoccupied to notice. Once the lift lurches to a stop in the arena's main hall, the Wyches file out and Irunal gives a swift swat of the hand to your crotch. You gasp and crumple to the ground as she runs away with cackling laughter, and Ribara prods you with her foot until you've crawled out of the elevator.

"What is wrong with you?" she snaps.

You gesture desperately off towards one of the side halls, and the long-departed Irunal. "She hit me!"

Ribara merely scoffs and walks past, and you get to your feet before following her into one of the corridors circling around the arena's interior. You come to a storage closet, and Ribara has you carry a plastic crate of a dozen glass bottles back to the main hall while she staggers behind you with a large, round table held in front of her. The other Wyches return from the hallway opposite yours, four of them dragging chairs in each hand while the other two carry tall glass pipes with multiple hoses wrapped around them.

Ribara slams the table down, and within seconds your heavy crate is rendered half-empty of its bottles. The drinks flow liberally, and you slink away to the side of the room as the seated Wyches engage in some sort of betting game using colorful crystals. Ribara's stack of credit chits runs low long before the other's, and she grows angry enough that you feel it best to go find a more secluded place to wait. One of the Wyches spots you trying to leave and throws an empty bottle at you, catching you in the back of the head and putting you on the ground amidst roaring laughter.

You find a nearby spot to sit among the animal cages, managing to strike a balance between keeping your distance from both the Wyches and the imprisoned predators swiping at you through the bars of their prisons. Ribara becomes drunk and poor enough that she nearly upends the table in a fit of rage, and the Wyches decide it best to end the betting game there. They break out the large, water-filled pipes you saw earlier and take long drags from them, quickly filling the room with a haze of acrid
smoke that sends the caged beasts into a roaring frenzy.

You had thought whatever they're smoking would keep the Wyches sedate, but they grow as agitated as the rest of these animals. The six Elves fan out from the table and start fighting each other in a fit of hair-pulling and shrieking, but the roughhousing soon turns to something more passionate, though no less violent. Two of the Wyches begin fucking a third atop the table while Irunal rides the latter's face, and the alternating moans and shrieks from the Elf being turned inside out leave you uncertain of whether or not you're watching a gangrape in progress.

Ribara sits slumped back in her seat, head tilted towards the ceiling, looking far more drunk than the others. Meryetia and another Wych pick Ribara up by either arm and drop her face-down on the table, so that her ass is pointing out at them. Meryetia lets slip a rare smile as she pulls Ribara's underwear down and spreads her cheeks. The other Wych picks up an empty bottle table from the table and brings the narrow end to the target Meryetia created for her.

The moment you look away from the debauched display, another bottle flies out from the orgy centered around the table and smashes onto the floor behind you, spraying you with leftover liquor. It smells like gasoline, and probably tastes no better, though that doesn't stop the lizard-thing behind you from lapping at the puddle through the bars of its cage.

"Mon-keigh, more drinks!" shouts Irunal as she grinds her pussy over another Wych's upturned face. She levels a shaky finger at the corridor you went through with Ribara some two hours earlier. You're more than happy to leave before you end up the target of their sadism, but you stop when you see Irunal's dark eyes still focused intently on you while she grinds back and forth. That unblinking stare sends a shiver down your spine.

You rise from the floor while avoiding Irunal's piercing gaze, and as you walk past the table you into an adjoining hall you try to use the power of your mind to wake Ribara.

Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

With so little understanding of what you're capable of, you have no idea if your silently chanted mantra has any hope of working. If it doesn't, there's always the chance that she'll be awoken by the thick-necked bottle Meryetia and her fellow Wych are busy sliding into Ribara's ass. You continue to the storage closet you visited with Ribara, sparing a few glances back as you go. The Wyches' cackling laughter and furious shouts of lust follow you all the way there, but you occasionally hear the soft, rhythmic sound of footsteps underneath that chorus. You stop each time and peak back around the curving corridor, but see no one. When you come to the closet door you open it, note the spot on the shelf where another box of drinks sits, then check the hall one last time before dashing in and grabbing the crate. The moment you turn around with it in hand, you freeze.

A lithe, shadowy figure stands at the entrance to the darkened room, leaning casually on the doorframe. She makes no movement and says nothing, so you carefully continue towards her and try to slip past her. She shoves you back, hard enough that you drop the crate to the ground. More than a few of the bottles break in their holders, and you nearly slip on the liquor-slicked ground as you try again to get away. This time you don't bother to pretend that you're doing anything but fleeing. The woman grabs you by the arm and throws you back against the shelves, making them rattle and shake.

"I saw you looking at me, Mon-keigh," rasps Irunal. "You couldn't look away."

She presses you back against the shelves and runs a hand down the waistline of your skirt. Her movements are mechanical and her touch lukewarm at best, but even that is enough to get you hard, given enough time. She runs her tongue over your face, chuckling at your attempts to close your eye as she thrusts her tongue in between your clenched eyelids. Your skirt is pulled down just far enough
for your erection to pop free, and Irunal throws one leg over your shoulder in a startling display of flexibility. Then, with only a few moments of fumbling, she impales herself on you.

The cold wetness that grips your cock is disgusting. Even a corpse - as long as it were freshly dead - would cling to your manhood with more loving warmth. You can see now why these Wyches end each Slaughter by sexually desecrating the bodies of their victims, if this is the alternative. Yet despite that lack of life, her pussy covers your cock in so much juice that it trickle down your balls and the inside of your thighs. Irunal grinds back and forth on your cock with shaking moans, occasionally grunting in annoyance when your cringing withdrawal upsets the angle of entry. Her cunt is so loose that unless she rides you just right, you slide into her with no friction at all.

This goes on for minutes, and your erection starts to die. You haven't cum yet - you're not even close - but this feeling of fucking a dead body come to life is so repulsive that no amount of skillful movements on Irunal's part can keep you going.

"You're too fucking small," Irunal hisses. Despite the insult, she follows up by wrapping her arms around your neck and clinging to you so tightly that only the tips of her toes keep her grounded. Her breathing becomes quicker, and the insults flow as fast and free as her juices. Half of them are too incoherent to make sense of, but you catch enough to fear what will happen to your balls and eye socket once she's done with your dick.

Irunal convulses like an epileptic, rattling the shelf as a fresh gush of liquid bathes your crotch. Your cock slips free of her sloppy cunt, completely soft and so cooled by her body that you worry it might retreat inside you. Though, that could be a good thing, if it protects it from some of Irunal's more bloody promises. She shoves away from your and swings her leg to the floor, then gasps some muttered command and gestures at the crate she made you drop. You pull your soaked skirt up and walk past her, pointedly avoiding those eyes you're sure are focused on you like blackened spotlights.

The two of you return to the main hall, and your attempts to allow her to walk ahead are stymied when she wraps an arm around your neck and grabs a bottle from the crate to chug from. She tries to force a few sips on you, but you manage to spit it out before it can sit on your tongue for more than a moment. Even that's enough to make you retch. Forget gasoline - this stuff is rocket fuel. Your head swims and your tongue goes numb, which you at first attribute to physical disgust. But by the time you reach the Wyches and their table, you're staggering about drunkenly with each step, and only Irunal's spider-like hand on your arm keeps you steady.

Through the haze of smoke and your own wavering sight, you spot all five of the other Wyches clustered about the table. Ribara is leaned over it just as before, and one of the Cock-Wyches is busy furiously fucking her naked rear while fingering another Wych's pussy. A fourth sits on the table, spent cock dripping cum as she leans back with her face tilted towards the ceiling and chest heaving from exertion. Meryeta is seated at the center of the table, rolling Ribara's face back and forth across her shaved crotch while the unconscious Elf groans with each thrust into her battered rear end.

"You couldn't wait?" shout Irunal, slapping the crate from your hands and breaking a few more of the bottles. She hauls you over to the group, and you watch in disgust and shock as the Wych fucking Ribara buries herself balls deep and clenches her teeth. Fingernails dig into Ribara's flesh hard enough to draw blood, but even that savage climax does more than draw another rumbling groan from Ribara's cunt-covered lips.

The Wych lets out a sharp breath and shoves away from Ribara, giving you a perfect view of her swollen anus. Cum dribbles from her ass in a continuous flow, rolling down her taint and balls before joining the precum streaming from Ribara's dangling cock.
Irunal leans her face in front of yours and grins. "I think he wants a turn!"

The Elves laugh and pull down your skirt, then move you behind Ribara while one of their number spreads her cheeks for you. Your limp cock mashes into her gaping rear, coming dangerously close to slipping inside before you arch your hips away from her.

"She'll kill me!" you shout, your speech slurred and mind struggling to catch up with what's happening here.

The Wyches talk for a moment, then shove you to your knees. One of them grabs you by the hair and starts moving your face towards that pale ass that spills more cum with each twitch of her damaged sphincter.

"You can clean her up, then!" cackles one of the Wyches.

You don't want to fuck Ribara and risk her finding out about it, but you *really* don't want to eat untold amounts of Dark Elf cum out of an ass that has almost certainly not been given an enema beforehand. But despite your fervent resistance to either option, those strong hands gripping your hair move you closer, until the musky scent of cum and unwashed ass is strong enough to overpower the scent of smoke and liquor and caged animals.

Just as your lips are poised to press into her asshole, you make your move - not backward or forward, but to the side. Like all of the Dark Elves, Ribara has hardly an ounce of fat on her - except for on her ass. You dig your teeth into the muscled meat of her cheeks and bite down hard enough to draw blood. Her skin is tougher than that of a human's, but you're drunk and desperate enough to ignore the pain in your jaw as you wrench your head back and forth.

The Elves shout and tear you away from her bleeding ass, but they're too late. Ribara bolts upright, bellowing in pain and grabbing at her ass as she lifts her face from Meryetia's pussy. The lead Wych rolls off of the table before Ribara has time to realize where she was resting, and the Elves haul you to your feet and drag you away as Ribara pushes herself to her feet and feels at her ass.

She touches the bleeding teeth marks you left, then looks at her fingers and wipes them on her thigh. Next, she feels at her ass - and collects a wad of white cum that has her drawing in a furious breath. She spins around to face your little group, and the Elves moves away from you. Only Irunal remains, holding you by the shoulders.

"You fell asleep on the table!" Irunal gives you a hard push, and you stagger halfway to Ribara before falling to the ground. "We thought we could leave you alone, but we found the Mon-keigh fucking you! He was like an animal!"

You're on your hands and knees when Irunal's words hit you. You look back in disbelief, then turn your face up to Ribara.

"I didn't! They did! They were fucking you!"

It's hard to tell if your words even reach her. You're drunk, your speech is slurred, and Ribara is even drunker. She stomps towards you with half-open eyes and grabs you by the hair, taking more than a few of them with her as she throws you face-first onto the table. You cover the back of your head with your hands, but she doesn't hit you. Instead, she grabs the back of your neck tight, and puts her lips right next to your ear.

"I could kill you. I should kill you."

The words come awkwardly, as if she has to consider how to pronounce each one before attempting
it. Her breath reeks of the same alcohol coating your mouth, a biting scent so powerful that it stings your eye. The other Wyches had tossed aside Ribara's underwear, and her fat cock presses in between your own exposed cheeks.

"Fuck him!" says one of the Wyches. "Teach him a lesson!"

Ribara presses a hand down on the small of your back and pushes herself upright, clearly having some difficulty doing so. While you pray that she's too drunk to get it up, Ribara reaches around to feel at her tender hole once more. She grimaces audibly, and slams a fist down on your back, making you cry out and grab at your spasming muscles. A strong hand grabs your left wrist and twists it, making your cry grow louder.

"I didn't do anything!" you yelp back at her. "I was trying to wake you up!"

To your relief, her hold on your arm relaxes. You feel as if you could twist away from her, but resist doing so in the hopes that your earnest pleading broke through the fog of drunken outrage hanging over her. It's not as if you could run, anyway - that would only guarantee the worst possible outcome.

"Look at her face, she believes it!" A few of the Wyches laugh, and surround the table. "Tricked by a Mon-keigh."

Ribara's grip tightens again, and your heart sinks. She fumbles with her dick, rubbing it along the crack of your ass before releasing your arm and stepping back.

"Hold him!" she barks out. The Elves were waiting for that command. Two of them leap into action and grab you by either arm, pinning you to the table while Ribara readies herself just out of view. Irunal leaps up onto the table and walks over to you, then drops down onto your back and spreads your ass cheeks.

"Please!" you shout in one last desperate attempt to get through to her. You briefly wonder if the Wyches realize just how fragile your body is compared to theirs, and what Ribara could do it. Then, it occurs to you that they make a living showing their audience just how easy it is to hurt a human. Maybe that's what makes this funny to them.

A finger appears at your asshole, one you mark as Ribara's given how clearly you feel Irunal's already digging into the flesh of your buttocks. She slips it inside easily, and her entrance is aided by whatever slick substance she coated it with - a small mercy, and one that gives you no confidence that you won't be totally ruined by what's coming next.

"Such a gentle lover," croons Irunal. "Are you worried about ruining him for Lady Moradys?"

That verbal jab drives Ribara to jam another finger into your ass before you've had time to adjust to the first. Moradys' abuse has loosened you up, but not enough that this doesn't hurt. You roll from side to side and try to shake the three Elves off of you, but they're impossibly strong. The moment you open your mouth to try and speak, the one holding your left arm shoves the fingers of her free hand into your mouth and turns your protests into incoherent drooling shouts.

Ribara yanks her fingers free of your ass, and something else presses itself to your exposed hole. This new shape is warmer, bigger, and even harder than the fingers that had just been jammed inside. The pressure grows, and grows, until you can't slide up the table any further. You bite down on the fingers in your mouth as hard as you can in one last desperate attempt to communicate your innocence to Ribara, and the Elf to your left shouts in pain before yanking them free.
And you scream.

It's not the plea you had planned - you don't even use real words. It's a primal, anguished shout, wrenched from your body as Ribara gives a powerful thrust that sends the head of her cock shooting into your rectum. White hot heat flares in your ass, and your mind goes utterly blank. Your mouth hangs open, free of obstructions, but you can't form the words that had been on the tip of your tongue just a moment earlier.

"Fuck! Fuck!" chant the Elves, a cackling chorus that floods into your empty skull and bounces around in an endless repetition. Ribara leans her weight into you, opening you up and sliding more and more of her monstrous length inside. Each new inch introduces new pain, new fear, and a terrible sensation of fullness that makes you feel as if you'll be split right down the middle.

You vaguely become aware of the fact that you're screaming again, though it seems more like a continuation of the original outburst - you had simply had your voice fucked out of you for a few brain-shattering moments. Now it's returned, and it rises in pitch and volume each second.

Ribara stops, pulls back a few inches, then thrusts in again. She draws herself out slowly, but even with that lack of speed you feel your walls being pulled with her and your broken anus being turned inside out. When she drives back in, she does so hard.

Organs you struggle to remember the names of are pushed aside as she fucks your intestines straight, barreling right through the bend in your colon as if it were no obstacle at all. You're sure that your anus is bleeding, but you bear the smallest hope that she won't damage your insides that badly.

Irunal rolls off of you, and the two Wyches holding your hands release your wrists. Each time you feel as if you've recovered enough strength to try and crawl away from Ribara, she fucks it right out of you. Explosions of pain keep you from doing more than twisting and kicking against her shins, and most of your remaining wits are focused on keeping from biting off your tongue as you scream and cry and gnash your teeth like a rabid animal.

"Stop!" you cry out, swiping a hand back at Ribara. She grabs you by the wrist and pulls you upright, fucking you against the table so hard that it moves slides across the ground a bit with each thrust. Two of the Wyches hold it in place, all five watching you with mixed expressions of cruel lust and crueler amusement.

"Look at its stomach!" one of them exclaims, pointing at your exposed abdomen. You're too drunk and being too roughly fucked to get a good look down, but you know what you'd see - Ribara's immense length, jabbing into your abdominal muscles from the inside and producing an obscene bulge that travels up with her thrusts. You can feel the swollen head moving inside of you, just as clearly as you feel each inch of her shaft rubbing your ring bloody and raw.

Every last ounce of resistance leaves your body, and you can no longer even keep your neck muscles tight. Your head is whipped back and forth, and you manage no more than a few choked pleas in between sobbing screams. One of the Wyches sets a pipe down on the table and lights the herb packed into the bowl on the side, then takes a long drag. She walks over to you with puffed-out cheeks and plants her lips on yours, then forcefully expels the smoke down your esophagus.

Heat washes over you. A clinging itch shoots up your spine, then branches out to every nerve ending from the tips of your toes to the top of your skull. Even your eyelids seem to demand stimulation, and you find yourself gripped by a bizarre strength that you seem to have no control over. You grind your buttocks back against Ribara's hips, even as both your body and mind scream against the agony being hammered into you by her savage thrusts.
Your teeth grind and your muscles seize tight. Even your sphincter seems to have new life driven into it by the drug, but that only makes Ribara's increasingly fast blows all the more painful. You try to look back at her, but find that in your stupor you've turned to the left - your blind side - and see nothing but blackness. You're going mad, and your body is going madder. You feel as if your body needs something before it chokes itself to death with rigor mortis, but your brain is too addled to figure out what.

Your violent writhing is stopped cold by Ribara, who slams you flat to the table and throws herself on top of you. The other Wyches hoot and holler as she slamfucks you into the cold metal, battering your organs at a new and painful angle.

A few more thrusts, a few more inches of thick meat being packed inside of you, and her balls press up against yours. They pull upward, and her cock twitches inside of you like a serpent in its death throes. You're too drunk and drugged to feel the warmth of her seed as it shoots inside of you, but you can feel the heavy fullness of it as it moves both up and down your intestines in an attempt to find somewhere to come to rest.

Even when Moradys took you in the most violent ways imaginable, she had often ended her fuck with a tender treatment that left you confused and full of hate. You almost miss that now. Ribara drives the last of her semen into your depths, then leans in to your turned face and huffs a sharp, angry breath on your tear-stained cheek.

She plants her hands on your back and pulls herself free, her withdrawal made painful by the fact that she's still rock hard. The walls of your ass are pulled with her, and though they're coated in hot cum you can feel the cool bite of fresh air the moment her dick pops free. She had shot her load deep, but there is so much of it that plenty travelled low enough to flow out of your ruined hole.

Ribara lurches off of the table and drops down into a chair, heaving with exhaustion while you lay facing away from her. You feel like death, in the most total sense imaginable. You want to die. You want the Wyches to die. You want Ribara to die. You don't yet have the strength of mind to put words together, but you're not sure you want to bother. All you want to do is remain still, and hate.

"What?" says Ribara, as the Wyches on the other side of the table stare at her with pursed lips that curl upwards and tremble with amusement. They look at each other, then you, then burst out laughing.

"The Mon-keigh didn't fuck you!" They shove each other and double over with deep-throated cackles, then move around the table towards Ribara. You remain facing away, unable to see what sort of expression Ribara is wearing. Part of you wonders, but the rest of you doesn't want to look her in the eye. You reach one shaky hand back and pull up your skirt enough to cover your blood-and-cum drenched ass, which you then shove in between your stomach and the table. Everything hurts too much for you to tell what damage might have been done, and you quickly give up trying to figure it out.

The animated chatter of the Wyches dies down, and you hear Ribara's chair scrape against the floor. The sound of boots thumping on the ground follows, and you wearily turn your head to see the entire group of six Wyches moving through the maze of cages and quickly disappearing from view, likely through one of the side halls. You try to rise from the table, but a fierce pain shoots through your stomach and sends you toppling to the floor.

That brings even more pain, and a greater certainty that you're going to die of septic shock without any hope of treatment. As you crawl into the alluring shadow of the table's underside in seek of some measure of shelter, you find yourself wishing you were back with Moradys. She's an evil bitch, and you often did fear being killed by her, but that always turned out to be a deliberate ploy on her part.
These Wyches, on the other hand, are too high on drugs and violence to have any control. You remain curled up under the table, staring off at the caged animals as you wait for their owners to return. Time passes, and the screaming pain running from ass to stomach dies down to a dull roar. Then, you hear new screams - these ones very audible, and very human.

You're not sure when you fell asleep. You're even less sure how you fell asleep. Pain gripped your body, and anguished screams filled your mind, but exhaustion somehow managed to smother them both. You awake feeling even worse than the night before, the alcohol and drugs that covered up your agony having long since vanished from your system. A dull ache throbs in your skull, likely the result from one or both of the powerful intoxicants not meant for human bodies.

You sit up with a warbling groan, and smack your head on the table's underside. The pain is so sharp and so forceful that you gasp, your vision actually flashing white for a moment before clearing. When it does, you're staring at the same immense room of caged animals you fell asleep to, with more than a few new additions.

The room is dark enough that it's hard to see the walls and impossible to see the high ceiling, but the brown metal floor is streaked with red blood, as far as the eye can see. Dozens of corpses and hundreds of body parts - all human - lay around the hall, the ones close to the cages being gnawed on by half-starved animals which likely already have a taste for human flesh. The horrific sight makes your breath stop for a few moments, but you don't vomit or even look away - you've seen this too many times.

A sound comes from the far end of the room - the lift arriving from the docking bay. You can't see it from here, but you can guess who's coming. You sit there with your legs folded up, waiting for the moment one of the Wyches rounds the nearest stack of cages and slaps you silly with a dismembered arm - or decides to take yours instead.

The footsteps grow closer, and the newcomer steps around a stack of cages, deftly avoiding the spike-backed feline swiping at her with a massive claw. The moment she comes within view of the open space your table sits at the middle of, she gasps - and so do you. The woman is not a Dark Elf, but a human. She's a bit shorter than you, with an athletic build that has, surprisingly, turned a bit plump since the last time you saw her - she was always the one who kept in better shape, and now you're the thin one.

Her green eyes glitter like broken gems as she stares in horror at the mess of blood and body parts, and she runs a hand through the swept-back mohawk of red hair running down the middle of her otherwise bald head. Her clothing consists of a gold-embroidered strip of red cloth that hangs around her neck, running down both breasts and tucked into the black sash tied around her waist. She wears tight black pants that end halfway to her knees, and gold sandals which run up past her ankles.

"Oh, no, no..." She grasps the sides of her head and walks around the room, not noticing you under the table. Your eye follows her as she walks, but no amount of time allows you to better process what you're seeing. Eventually she makes a full circle and stops, her back turned to you. You crawl out from the table and rise to your feet, a task which should have been incredibly painful - but you feel as if you're floating along with no body at all.

Once you're within arm's reach of her, you extend a trembling hand to tap her on the shoulder. One finger lightly touches her, and she gasps and spins around. The moment her eyes meet yours, they go even wider than before. Both of you stand there for what seems like an eternity, an endless frozen moment that would be silent, were it not for the rumbling beasts feasting on the remains of dead slaves.

"Vala?" Your voice cracks halfway through the name - it sounds like gibberish to you, but she
throws herself towards you and wraps her arms around your neck, burying her face into your shaggy hair.

"Orin!" she gasps, her own voice just as broken. She trembles, and tears run down your neck. More run from your own eye, but you're too numb to feel whatever emotions have such thorough hold of her. Still, you hug her - and she shakes harder. After a few seconds she pulls away, grabbing you by either arm and looking you straight in the eye.

"Who owns you?" she asks hurriedly, waiting a moment before giving you a hard shake. "Is it one of the Wyches? Who!"

All you can do is stare at her, mouth agape.

"Orin?" she says, moving from side to side as if looking for a way around the wall of numbed stupidity you've thrown up.

"You're here," you finally say. It's as much a question as it is a statement of sheer disbelief. Vala had betrayed you, thrown you aside, forgotten about you - until she hadn't. But even now that she's holding you, you feel neither relief nor anger.

"Yes, I'm here!" she hisses, giving you another shake. "Now, who owns you?"

You're not even close to being able to answer a question like that. You're about to mumble a repeat of your last remark, when a new set of footsteps draws your attention to Vala's rear.

A new woman appears, this one a Dark Elf. You recognize her immediately as the one Vala had been groping aboard the ship you last saw her on, and your jaw clenches. She's a half head taller than you, with long white hair swept back over her head. Thin black lines run over white flesh that is too smooth and pristine to call it something so simple as 'pale'. Her features are chiseled - handsome, you had called her before. She looks like a finely-polished marble statue crafted by some master sculptor of Antiquity.
You've never hated anyone so much.

The Elf is simply dressed, with tight black pants and a black tunic left open just far enough that you can see a hint of cleavage. She wears a red sash around her waist, with a dagger sheathed on either hip. Her eyes meet yours, then flicker down to Vala's hands on your shoulders, then back up - and one of those daggers leaves its sheath.

She dashes towards you, closing the distance in the blink of an eye before throwing Vala aside and slamming you back-first onto the table. Her red eyes shine murderously, and her lips draw down in a furious scowl as she places the dagger over your face and begins to press down. You try to hold her back by the wrist, but like all Elves her strength is far greater than yours. With each fraction of a second, the tip of that blade moves closer to your right eye.

"Adrubal, stop!" shouts Vala, grabbing the Elf by the arm and adding her strength to yours. "He's my brother! My brother!"

With that, the downward movement of the blade stops. The Elf's expression becomes uncertain, then softens entirely. She steps away from you, and you throw yourself upright while letting out a breath you hadn't realized you were holding. Adrubal sheathes her blade and looks you over, those ruby-like eyes shining with a discerning intellect. Strong, attractive, and smart - you hate her even more.
"Slave," she says sharply. "Who is your owner?"

Compared to most of the Dark Elves you've seen, this one looks positively angelic. The whites of her eyes are actually white, and not pitch black. Her skin, though completely colorless, is smooth and unblemished without the blue veins visible just under the skin of the other women.

Her long hair isn't the shaggy mess worn by the Wyches, but a flowing set of gleaming locks that shine like silver in this low light. Her facial features are softer than usual, with lower cheekbones and a profile more like that of a human's.

Yet all that seems to vanish when you peer into her eyes, which look like twin pools of blood set into a marble mask. Despite the odd color, they're not inhuman in appearance - and that's what makes them so frightening. The intensity of her gaze tells you that this is a woman who has no issue solving the smallest of problems with surgical violence. Right now she merely eyes you suspiciously, but it was only a moment earlier that you witnessed the speed at which her emotions can shift.

"Slave," Adrubal says again. She snapped at you before, but now her voice has taken on a lower and more threatening tone. Vala stands behind her, holding her gently by the shoulders. Keeping her away from you, you tell yourself - no more than that.

"Lady Moradys," you reply as you bow your head, though your eye remains focused on the Elf. Vala had called you her 'brother', and Adrubal accepted that without question. That tells you that this is a lie your wife has been preparing for some time. More importantly, it tells you that she hadn't given up on finding you. For now, you need to follow her lead - even if it means swallowing your wounded pride.

"Do you know her?" says Vala, wrapping her arms around Adrubal's neck. The Elf stares at you intently, and Vala forcibly turns the woman's face back to hers.

"Yes, I know her." Adrubal seems unwilling to look away from you, and you're no different. Your fingers clench tight as you resist the urge to form fists, and you can't help but stare in anger at those two arms Vala has wrapped around her owner's neck. Even that small bit of contact has you imagining all the other things they've surely done.

"I don't like how it looks at me." She points her dagger at you, and Vala's eyes follow hers over to you. "See how it shakes? It's angry."

She's right, but that's not the whole truth. After the initial shock of seeing Vala wore off, you were hit by all the pains of last night's brutal rape. Your anus feels as if it's on fire, your buttcheeks are bruised, and Ribara's cock left a trail of destruction up your intestines that has you feeling all kinds of wrecked. There are no nerves to deliver pain signals that deep inside, but you have the distinct sensation that all sorts of important organs have been shifted into positions they shouldn't be in. You're downright terrified at the prospect of trying to go to the bathroom.

"Well, of course!" Vala scoffs and gestures a sweeping hand at the human corpses laying all around. "Look at this! He must think you're like the others." She grabs Adrubal by the chin and forces her head back again, this time far enough to look her in the eyes and plant a tender kiss on her lips. It lasts far, far too long for your taste. "He doesn't know you yet. Not like I do."

That finally seems to soften the tense Elf, though it only heightens your own anger. You should be thrilled to see Vala unharmed and in the process of enacting a plan to bring you two together, but it's those two things that bother you most. You should be the one to swoop in and save her from these horrors, not the other way around. Instead, you're the damaged one - the one who lost an eye, who had been locked up for so long he went insane and invented an imaginary friend, who got beaten and
raped too many times to count.

You had harbored the smallest dream of making it through this crucible all the stronger for the experience, and rescuing your wife with that newfound strength. Now, even the best case scenario has you having went through hell with nothing to show for it except a ruined body and mind.

As Adrubal and Vala part from their kiss, a noise draws the attention of all three of you - the familiar metal grinding and hissing air of the lift at the far end of the hall. It comes to a stop with a heavy thud, and multiple sets of footsteps follow. Adrubal puts her hand on Vala's bare stomach and backs her away from the path through the cages the newcomers will have to take, and watches silently as two helmeted guards come to the center of the room. The half-nude, purple-plumed warriors are very familiar to you, and the sight of them prepares you for who comes next.

Moradys rounds the corner of an occupied cage, bouncing a man's severed head in her palm as she walks. The lizard in the cage reaches out to swipe at her, and she kicks its limb sideways, cracking bone and drawing an agonized shriek from the animal. Then, her eyes fall on you and her brow furrows angrily. She tosses the head at you, and you narrowly manage to avoid taking a blow to your very sensitive gut.

"What the hell happened here?" She looks around in disgust at the bloodied floor strewn with limbs and viscera.

You open your mouth to reply, but Moradys waves her hand and shakes her head.

"Nevermind, I don't care. Come!" She waves you forward, and you approach while stealing a glance towards the unnoticed pair still waiting off to the side. Moradys grabs your arm and turns to leave, only then noticing Adrubal and Vala.

She stares at them for a moment, then turns to you with a wide-eyed grin that makes your blood run cold. She knows what your wife looks like from the time she spent inside your head, and has dedicated enough time and energy to tormenting you that you can't imagine her having forgotten.

"Lady Moradys." Adrubal steps forward, letting her hand slip from Vala's stomach. "This one said it belonged to you."

"That's right." Moradys slides her hand around your neck and pats you on the chest. Even that's sore, likely from those agonizing two minutes you spent getting slamfucked into a table by well over two hundred pounds of Dark Elf.

Adrubal glances back at Vala, who waits uneasily in the background, then back to you, seeming to be caught between her own instincts and the pleas of her slave. "I would like to buy it from you."

Moradys lets out a haughty laugh, as if insulted by the offer. "You couldn't afford it."

"Why not?"

"Do you not know what it is?" asks Moradys.

Adrubal looks you up and down, trying to find whatever it is Moradys sees in you.

"If you don't know, then why do you want it? It doesn't have any special talents." She runs her hand down your back, stopping just as the tips of her fingers slip into your skirt. "And I've run it a bit ragged."

Adrubal sneers in disgust, clearly grasping the other Elf's implication. You look down before you
can catch Vala's eye, praying that your wife will attach a more innocent meaning to that vague hint of what Moradys has put you through.

"It's this one's sister." Adrubal points a finger at Vala, but as soon as Moradys looks at the human, Adrubal frowns and moves in between the two. Her obvious possessiveness borders on the pathological, but you don't particularly want Moradys looking at your wife, either. "I would like to have both siblings. It is a sign of prestige in my House."

You're not sure if that's an actual tradition that Vala crafted her lie around, or one which Adrubal herself invented to justify her interest in you. Surely, no Elf wants to admit that they're being pussy-whipped by their human slave.

Moradys laughs again. It's a genuine laugh this time, but not a good-natured one - more like the whole room has been told a joke, and she's the only one who understood the punchline.

"That's not his sister!" she gasps out. "That's his wife!"

Adrubal's face is seized by half a dozen emotions within the span of a moment before settling on utter bafflement. She looks back to Vala, who is looking between all three of you with a horrified expression that betrays the mind of a woman whose careful plan is falling apart before her eyes. She's never been good at lying. You're amazed she kept one going this long.

"Ah!" Moradys points a finger at Adrubal, warning her away from any abrupt actions. "Don't hurt it. I'll buy it from you."

Adrubal's jaw clenches, and she turns back to Moradys with a glare colder than any you've seen.

"No."

Moradys scoffs. "What do you mean 'no'? Name your price!"

The other Elf isn't even looking at her anymore. Those blood-red eyes are focused intently on yours, and the expression she wears is far more terrifying than the knife tip she had held over your eye a few minutes prior. This isn't the confused anger and lust that you've seen in the eyes of women like Moradys and Ribara. This is pure, murderous jealousy.

"Sell it to me." Adrubal stalks over to you with quick strides, and Moradys' guards standing off to your left ready their halberds as they sense the situation growing dangerously tense. Adrubal's fingers rest on the pommels of the knives slung at her waist, and you're struck by the awful certainty that this woman will kill you the moment she's allowed to. You've never been more certain of anything in your life.

"Did you not hear me?" Moradys grabs you by the back of the neck and walks you back a step. "You are a lowly Incubus. I am a House Archon. You will sell me that chubby little thing, and you will be much richer for it."

Vala scoffs in annoyance, and Adrubal's knife appears in front of your face. You hadn't even seen her draw it. Moradys' guards begin to move towards you, but stop with a raised hand from their Mistress.

"You will sell this to me, or House Tenebrim will have made an enemy of House Nathema." She twists the knife before you, as if imagining doing so another ten or twelve inches further forward.

You can't see Moradys' face to your left, and you're afraid to look away from the blade. Your blatant fear seems to be the only thing keeping Adrubal satisfied enough to refrain from killing you here and
now. Moradys doesn't move you back any further, but her grip on your neck tightens noticeably.  

"I'm sure Lady Drebesh will jump at the chance to go to war." For once, Moradys' venomous sarcasm has you breathing a sigh of relief. That, and the knife slowly easing away from your face. "Is that all?"

Adrubal directs her furious glare at Moradys for a moment, then backs away and waves for Vala, who quickly approaches with her gaze turned far away from yours. The moment she's within reach, Adrubal grabs her by the arm and leads her towards the elevator at the far end of the hall.

Even with their backs turned to you, Vala doesn't risk a glance back. Finally, Moradys releases her hold on your neck, and her own stance eases. It's a strange thing, but you can actually feel the tension dissipating, like a change in the room's air pressure.

As that mortal fear leaves you, a new feeling starts to slip in with each step Vala takes. It's a cold and empty sort of dread, one that twists your stomach in knots and has beads of clammy sweat forming on your forehead. It's happening again. You've found Vala, and now she's being taken away from you.

Vala and her owner disappear around the cages and their monstrous inhabitants, and your knees grow weak. Not from the shock of seeing your wife hauled off by her lover - though that's a contributing factor - but from the waves of pain wracking your body. You grimace as you clutch at your stomach and double over in pain, and Moradys takes a few steps away from you.  

"Yes, heartbreaking. Grieve about it back home. This place smells like a whorehouse. So do you, frankly."

She turns to leave, and her guards move towards you. The moment you try and take a step forward to pre-empt them, a pain worse than any other shoots through you from ass to abdomen. Wet warmth trickles down your inner thighs, and you collapse onto hands and knees before rolling onto your side in a desperate attempt to relieve whatever muscular tension is producing this agony.

"*Why* are you bleeding?" Moradys sighs as she walks back. You don't answer. You *can't* answer. When Ribara had been fucking you, you had the benefit of drugs and drink and shock to cover up the agony of her tearing you up. Those internal wounds had seemingly healed during your long sleep, but apparently not well enough to stay closed after the slightest bit of movement. Even drawing in a shallow breath puts an unbearable pressure on the organs below it.

Moradys prods you in the stomach with the toe of her boot, and your vision flashes white as you gasp in absolute anguish. From there, it goes black - and does not return. Each sense flickers out, one by one, until all you're left with is pain. Then, that too vanishes, and you are left with nothing.

It's a strange thing, to feel powerless even within the empty void of oblivion. There's nothing to hurt you here, but no way to affect change. You try to move, but there's nowhere to go. You reach out into the darkness, but there's nothing to touch and no fingers with which to feel. Even crying out in desperate need for contact with the slimmest sliver of existence proves impossible, but it strikes you as strange that you have thought with which to fear and desire.

With that comes a return of your senses in an endless cascade, each slotting back into place and building in clarity as your mind struggles to sort through the flood of information. You feel smooth fabric beneath your fingers and tucked under your armpits. Blackness still covers your vision, but there are flashes of color here and there. A rhythmic pitter-patter sounds out, like rain hitting a window.
Your eye flutters open without you meaning to do so, and your mind reels from the sight before you. You're in Moradys' bedroom, with the crystal yellow light overhead glowing bright and the window far off to your right pelted with a light shower of polluted rain. You're struck by a bizarre sense of Deja Vu, but the reason for that feeling doesn't become clear until you figure out why your head is spinning.

You're seeing double, a dizzying display which slowly coalesces into a single coherent image of beautiful depth and clarity. You feel at your eyepatch, and jab a finger right into your left eye. You wince in pain, but quickly break into tearful laughter as you marvel at something you had taken for granted for the greater part of your life. Now, it seems like a wondrous gift.

There's no one else in the room with you, but you do spot movement in the corner. A single bowl of soup sits on a table in the middle of three cushioned chairs, another familiar sight which makes you far more uneasy than the simple sight of food should. You never did have a chance to steal food packs from the arena's stores, though you did eat very well, and you don't feel any pressing hunger at the moment. What you do need to do is get rid of that undoubtedly drugged food before Moradys comes in here, asks why you haven't eaten it, then makes you eat it with the threat of plucking out your magically restored eye.

You get out of bed slowly, carefully watching for any aches or pains that would hint at leftover damage or unhealed wounds. None flare up, and you dash over to the table with a surprisingly quick step. You haven't felt better in weeks. The food is still hot, and must have been left only a few minutes prior, tops. You could wait for it to cool and see if that purple stuff congeals on top like before, but that risks Moradys arriving in the interim.

No, you need to dispose of it - and you do so down Moradys' toilet, making sure the bowl is completely clean of any lingering bits of meat before you return the bowl and spoon to the table. Just as you set them down on the table you got them from, the doors to your left creak open. You hurry to the bed and sit down facing the doorway, though you quickly realize it doesn't matter where you are with the food already 'eaten'.

Moradys slips in past one of the guards waiting outside, wearing her usual black gown with breasts half-bared. She walks towards you, an unreadable expression on her face, then gets down on one knee and takes her hand in yours. Were this anyone else, it would be such an innocent gesture - but you can't register it as anything but a preparation for some new violence. She's going to twist your arm out of its socket, or break your fingers, or pull the entire thing clean off just like she did to Ribara. You're sure of it.

Except she doesn't do any of those things. Instead, she kisses your hand, then lowers it back down while keeping a gentle hold of it.

"I've had some time to think while you slept. About a great many things." Her face contorts oddly and her right eye twitches along with that same shoulder. It seems as if she's trying to force some more words out, but is having great difficulty doing so. "It occurred to me that I may have been... excessively rough with you. Perhaps that is why you're so roundly defiant."

She heaves a heavy sigh, and her eyes, which had trailed downward, flicker back up to yours. "I would like us to start anew. I will be a better Mistress, and you will be a better slave."
A Bright New Day

You've been tricked by this woman so many times you've lost count, but you feel yourself ready to buy into her bittersweet words once again. This time is different, though. As you look into those glittering orange eyes, you don't see a hint of the humanity you've fooled yourself into believing lies deep within her.

What you see is an old, withered, and calculating intelligence that wants what you have to offer, and will go to any lengths to get it. There's something frighteningly attractive about that sort of powerful need, which you've never before known. It's just like how rape fantasies are so common among women, you suppose. It's not the act itself they fantasize about, but the prospect of being wanted so intensely that the man doing the wanting can't control himself around her.

Not that you want to get raped again. In fact, that's a major driving force behind your desire to believe Moradys. You have little reason to doubt that you'll end up having to suck her dick again, but you'd like to avoid the kind of brutality that came before. Having her arm inside you up to her elbow is best left as a one-time experience.

"Ok, Mistress," you say quietly. "I'll be... a better slave."

Moradys smiles and leaps to her feet with too much energetic speed to appear elegant. "I knew you'd see reason." She grasps your chin and tilts your head up, and you give her an uneasy smile of your own. At that, her expression grows dark.

"Why do you look like that? You should be happier."

It's one thing to fake a truce with the woman who ruined your life. Even harder is to find a path of thought that leads you to embracing a genuine one, as you did. But to be pleased with the arrangement? That's asking too much.

"I am, Mistress! I'm just thinking about..." You glance around the room, searching your memory for possible sources of unease - and there are real questions there. "I was wondering what happened. How long I was out, what happened to my wife--"

Moradys clicks her tongue hard enough to cut you off, and lets go of your chin as she shuts her eyes and squeezes the sides of her forehead with her fingers. "Your wife, your wife..." She mutters the words over and over, like they're a swear, until they become too soft to hear and her eyes shoot open.

"Two days, you were out! Completely helpless. Do you know how many times I fucked you?"

Your mouth hangs open and you lean away from her, fearing the inevitable double-digit figure.

"None!" she exclaims, staring down at you with a bizarre intensity. The unexpected answer hangs in the air for a few moments, and Moradys raises her arms up as if in silent demand of a reply.

"Thank you?" you reply. With that she eases back, giving a slight nod before turning and walking to the bathroom ahead of where you sit on the bed.

"Think about that!" she calls back to you, not bothering to close the door as she goes to the toilet and whips out her flaccid cock through the separated flaps of her gown. She throws her head back and sighs, letting out a steady stream of piss that you can't help but suspect would have made its way into you if your answers hadn't been to her liking. The stream slows to a trickle, and she gives her cock a few good shakes before leaning over and flushing the toilet.
For a second, all seems fine - there's a hiss of water, and a suction of air as waste is flushed downward. Then, the flow stops - and reverses violently. A watery explosion detonates in the porcelain bowl, spraying chunky brown water back at Moradys in a horrific shower of piss, wet food, and God knows what else. She screams and staggers back against the wall, but her face is already covered in the stuff, and the distance only allows the surge of waste to cover a greater part of her body.

After a few more seconds of sharp screaming and roaring water, it's over. The dark marble bathroom is coated in a horrid spray of brown, and the statuesque Elf stalking towards you with arms raised bears an even worse coating. She stops halfway between you and the bathroom, staring at you with mouth agape, dripping with enough of the foul sewage that you would think she had taken a dip in a septic tank, had you not seen exactly what happened with your own two eyes.

A burst of air escapes your lips, and you clamp your jaw tight the moment you realize roaring laughter is trying to force its way out. You can't let that happen - not when you came to the hard-thought decision to make a temporary truce with this woman.

"What..." Moradys says breathily, looking from one dripping arm to the other and back to you. "What is this?"

You look from the dripping-wet Moradys to the painted bathroom behind her. Bits of food and soup slide down both, but there's an upside to how disgusting the appearance of your food is - it's nearly indistinguishable from raw sewage, though it doesn't smell nearly as bad.

"A sewage backup?"

Moradys gives her hands a shake to clear them of some of the waste, and then groans. She looks like she's about to cry, and your laughter threatens to break free, but you cover it up with surprised-sounding gasps.

"Toilets don't just explode. Could someone have tampered with it?"

That gets her attention, and she looks at you curiously, keeping her head bowed so that none of the fluid rolling down her head gets into her eyes. "What do you mean?"

"You've said before you have a lot of enemies. Could this be an assassination attempt?"

A thin smile creases Moradys' lips, which she's justifiably weary of keeping open for too long. "Was that a joke?"

She takes a step towards you, and you leap from the bed before shifting off to the side to put some fresh distance between the two of you. You give her a weak smile and a nervous shrug, which only makes her hasten her advance. She circles you like a predator, stinking like piss and looking even worse. Then, she lunges. You shout in surprise and jump out of the way, narrowly avoiding being caught in a tight embrace of furious, reeking Elf. You throw open the door to the bedroom and dash through the corridor, nearly tripping on the long rug that carries you to the stairwell at the far end of the hall.

"Don't you dare run from me!" she shouts after you. Her guards give chase alongside her, though they're even slower than you with the clumsy polearms they carry everywhere. Within seconds you're smashing into the stone walls of the spiral staircase, then sprinting the short distance through the main hall and out the cracked-open doors to your left.

Moradys smashes to the ground at the bottom of the staircase, sounding as if she cracked stone when
her boots met solid ground. Instead of slipping through the doors as you did she barrels right into one of them, catching an unaware guard and smashing her into the wall beside the doorway.

"Who runs the plumbing?" she screams into the open courtyard. You no longer hear the thump of her footsteps behind you, and you stop and turn to see her standing just outside the main building, still looking as disgusting as ever as she shrieks at the slaves frozen mid-stride all around the complex.

"I want whoever is in charge of the toilets! Bring them here, now!" The shrieking demand comes over and over, each time bellowed out to a different corner of the courtyard. It takes a few repetitions, but on the third one the slaves scatter, leaving Moradys to stomp around in circles while staring at the ground and huffing out muffled whimpers that seem ready to turn into full-on crying.

A minute later, a single slave steps out from the pillars of the covered hallways encircling the space, and approaches Moradys. She notices him, stops her pacing, and meets him with clenched fists.

"Did you do this to me?"

The man is older, with a ring of graying hair circling around the back of his otherwise bald head. You're surprised to see someone having lived to such an age within the confines of Moradys' enslavement, but then you remember that slaves aren't necessarily born here - most weren't, you would guess. For all you know, this man has been here for a shorter time than you. He stares at his feet and wrings his hand nervously, likely able to smell Moradys' proximity even if he isn't looking at her.

"Mistress, I have served you faithfully for thirty years--"

She screeches and raises her fist above her head. The man drops to his knees and holds his hands up pleadingly, head still bowed.

"Please, Mistress! I beg you, hear what I have to say! Something has been clogging the pipes for days now, and I will find the source of the problem!"

Moradys lowers her fist, takes a deep breath in, then steps towards the man. You breathe a sigh of relief as you see her hands moving towards his, as if preparing to help him to his feet. But her hands continue to the sides of his head, and then begin to tremble. The man groans, then shouts in pain, then screams in terrible agony as he grabs at her wrists and claws at her sewage-slicked stomach.

You began running towards the pair at the first pained cry from the man, but there is far too much distance to cover, and Moradys is far too strong. There's a wet 'crack', and the man's skull crunches between her palms like a chitinous pomegranite. She pushes the body backwards, then spots you, and remains frozen in horrified shock, glancing between the mangled corpse and the approaching woman who turned a human head into a bloody pulp.

She stops just before you, biting her lip as if deliberating what to do with the rest of her smoldering anger. Then, she cracks a slight smile - and gives you a mere playful jab in the shoulder.

"Alright, that was pretty funny."

Your mouth moves silently as you search for a response. It takes you a few moments to remember what she's even talking about - the humorous image of her being sprayed with muddy toilet water is lost behind the screams of that slave, and the crack of his skull as it was crumpled inwards like wet cardboard. Moradys sees your horrified expression, and her playful expression becomes serious.

"I did not kill that slave because of your joke." She points back at the body. "That's why you were
always so angry with me, wasn't it? You thought yourself responsible for the things I did." She purses her lips and gives a sharp shake of the head. "You don't control me. I control you. Don't forget that."

She says it as if it's supposed to be a comforting idea - perhaps she truly sees it that way. And maybe it would be, on some twisted level, if you weren't so directly responsible for that man's death. You've been flushing your food for over a week, and hadn't entertained the thought that someone could actually die over it.

Moradys ushers you back inside, and the two of you return to her room. Dozens of slaves are already hard at work cleaning up the messy trail she left behind in her pursuit of you, a trail which she re-creates to the carefully-hidden displeasure of the cleaners. You sit down on the bed and wait as she strips down, then enters the bathroom alongside the three women busy cleaning the walls and floor, paying them as much heed as one would an errant slipper.

Another woman enters to take the bowl you left on the table - the last evidence of your crimes. Your eyes pass over the room's inhabitants a second time, and you realize that you haven't seen Charal among their numbers. There are at least thirty human slaves working within the compound - enough that you're still seeing new ones each day - but Charal is such a common sight around Moradys that you're surprised to not have seen her yet.

And then you remember the last time you saw her. Bloodied, bruised, and being hauled out of your bedroom by a very angry Moradys. You can't blame yourself for having forgotten about her within the throes of your own torture, but you still feel a twinge of guilt.

"Hey!" you whisper to the two women scrubbing the floor between you and the bathroom. "Is Charal alright?"

Their shoulders tighten at the question, and they scrub faster. Moradys switches off the water in the shower, then opens the door and reaches out for a towel.

"Locked up," one of the woman whispers back.

"Locked up?" You look from the slave to the bathroom, where Moradys is stepping out of the shower and patting her long, black hair dry. "What do you mean? Where?"

The slave hisses at you, then presses herself closer to the floor and focuses intently on the task of scrubbing. Moradys walks up to the two woman and gives the one who spoke a hard shove with her foot, tipping her onto her side. From the lack of further action, you realize that she did it out of a simple desire to be mean rather than having actually heard the quick exchange. Moradys walks close enough that she's straddling your thighs with her own legs bowed outward, putting her uncut cock a foot away from your face.

"Give it a kiss."

You grab her hips and plant your lips on the base of her shaft, thankful for the small mercy of her body blocking you from the view of the servants. It's a silly thought, since you're sure it's already common knowledge what sort of purpose you serve around here.

"Am I beautiful?"

Still holding her hips, you look up at her and nod. "You are. You're beautiful." The words don't come easily, but they do come earnestly - for all her insides are a twisted, blackened husk of monstrous evil, the outside is a curvaceous beauty whose inhuman features are too striking to be
offputting. Even the cock hanging against your chin hardly bothers you anymore - you try not to think about why that might be.

"Say that you love me."

You swallow, and then try to say it - you really do. But the words come out more like a question than a passionate declaration, and Moradys squeezes her eyes shut while pressing her palms to the sides of her head, as if caught in the throes of a migraine.

"Not like that. Say it like you did before. Feel it like you did before."

You look up at Moradys, and prepare to tell her the exact words she doesn't want to hear.

"I'm not sure that I can."

Her expression grows dark, and you hastily wrack your brain for a way to soften the statement of simple fact.

"I want to, Mistress!" you add pleadingly. "That's why I'm not just going to fake it."

Or rather, you doubt that Moradys would buy your acting. She's more in touch with your own emotions than even you are, and has always been able to read them like an open book.

"We just started over, right?" You grab her hips a bit tighter, hoping that will make up for the disappointment your words are clearly bringing her. "It'll just take time, that's all. With my wife--"

Moradys throws her head back and lets out a demented cackle. "Your wife this, your wife that. Charal this, Charal that." She looks back down at you with an expression too energised by anger to be called icy. "Weren't you just talking about me? Why do you insist on changing the subject?"

You can think of nothing to say, and you doubt any response would temper the frustration you feel growing within her, like a burning warmth just under your fingertips.

"Get out," she says to the two women scrubbing the floor behind her. They gather their buckets and rags and leave, followed shortly after by the slaves who had been cleaning the bathroom. Once the bedroom doors close behind them, Moradys goes and locks it.

That sort of privacy isn't something she's bothered with before, even when beating you and raping you senseless. She gives the door handles a shake to confirm the bolt is secure, then walks over to her nightstand, long black hair swaying elegantly as she passes you. She takes a bottle of lubricant from the drawer, then returns to your side of the bed, tosses the bottle into your lap, and thrusts her bare ass out towards you.

"What..." You pick up the bottle, looking in confusion between it and Moradys. "What do I do?"

She frowns back at you, leaning her hands on her knees and keeping her back nearly level with the floor. "Do I need to fuck you again to remind you what lubricant is for? Spread it between my cheeks."

You're so used to having it used on you that you hadn't thought the reverse to be an option. What she has planned here, you can't say. It's possible that she still thinks you're impotent, and plans a humiliation to echo your first. If that's the case, she's in for a rude surprise.

"What are you smiling about?" she says.
You nearly drop the bottle as you snap it open and pour a bit of the gel onto your fingertips. "Nothing," you say quickly. That attempted deflection only makes her frown take on a suspicious air, and you wrack your mind for a real answer. "You're beautiful, that's all."

"Ah," she says simply, facing back forward.

You slip your hand between her cheeks and spread the lube up and down, paying extra attention to the hole in the middle - though you're not nearly so bold as to attempt to slip a finger in. This will be more satisfying if she's not prepared for it, anyway. Within seconds of feeling that tight, warm passage, your cock begins to throb with sexual desire.

It doesn't matter how much you despise this woman, or how many very non-sexual acts of violence you'd like to direct her way. Apparently, it doesn't even matter that her own sizable member is hanging just below your lubed-up hand. All your dick knows is that it wants to be buried between the well-shaped, pale ass you're preparing for it.

Moradys stands up straight, and you let your fingers slip from her cheeks as they clench even tighter. Luckily, she doesn't turn around and spot the erection tenting your skirt. Instead, she simply orders you to pull it down to your ankles, then takes a few steps back so that she's standing between your spread legs. You grab her hips with one hand and your erection with the other, pointing it at her lowering buttocks.

When your raging hardon slips between her cheeks, there's no shriek of surprise or startled yelp, like you had expected. Moradys lets out a single, muted gasp as your glans prods at her entrance, a noise she repeats over and over as she bounces up and down on your lap, using your thighs to support her. "Ah..." she sighs, a bit louder and longer than before, as your length sinks into her rectum. You're no Ribara, but you're not small - yet Moradys sinks down on inch after inch, until her buttocks are flush with your crotch. You let go of your dick before she sits on your hand, holding her by both sides of her waist as she moves in small circles against you.

Being in a hole this tight should feel amazing, even if there is a cock dangling down against your own balls. Instead, you feel awful - confused, repulsed, and more than a little scared. You had decided to take what Moradys said about 'starting over' seriously, but no amount of self-talk to that effect can allow you to overcome the sheer physical anguish you feel at being so close to her.

"Move your hands," she says, then begins pushing down on your thighs. You slide your hands up to her breasts and rest them there as she fucks herself on your cock, unable to do more than engage in the most mechanical of ministrations. You try to be passionate, to engage her like you're sure she wants, but you feel too sick to act like you're enjoying this. You're amazed you've managed to get - and keep - an erection while being used as a living dildo by this woman.

"Why aren't you moving?" she snaps back at you, continuing to gyrate her hips against your groin. There's no way you can keep from cumming for much longer, but it's not the pleasure you're looking forward to - it's getting this over with.

"Sorry." You clutch her tighter and press your lips to her back, mindlessly kissing at her shoulder blades while her hair tickles your nose. Moradys' movements become slower and shallower, as do yours. After a few moments more she stops entirely, remaining seated on your lap while you rest your forehead against her back. Then, she shoves off of you, pulling herself free of your dick in one smooth motion.

"That was awful," she mutters, looking back at you with a disappointed sneer as she goes to the bathroom. "It's because you're too small." She steps into the shower without bothering to close the
door, cleaning between her cheeks for a few seconds before toweling off and going back to the bed. She moves towards you with quick strides, and you hop off before she barrels right into you. She slides into the covers and moves to the far side of the bed, the light overhead turning off with a snap of her fingers. Only the ghostly green light of the window facing her remains to illuminate the room. You pull up your skirt, then stand there awkwardly for a time before realizing she's not going to be giving you any new orders.

"Should I go to my room, Mistress?"

"No," she says. "That's where the new Vizier will be living. I'm sick of watching after my own slaves. You're sleeping in here again."

"Oh," you remark simply. She says nothing more, and you stare at the bed for a few seconds before lifting up the covers to get in. Moradys spins in place to face you, her eyes glowing like hot coals in the dim light.

"Do slaves sleep in the same bed as their betters?"

You let the blanket fall back down, and Moradys points at the floor on her side of the bed.

"Lie here."

Her commanding tone leaves no room for argument, and you reluctantly make your way over before laying down on the hardwood floor. It's a sleeping spot you've made use of before, and one you hadn't wanted to return to. Sleeping in Ribara's room had been far worse, but only because each night had begun with you being raped or cuckolded. Moradys seems frustrated enough that those seem like very real possibilities here as well, in which case you'll be waking up with a sore ass and back.

"Mistress," you say softly. "Isn't it morning?"

"It's late evening," she replies sharply. "You and those degenerates partied for a day and a half straight."

Well, the degenerates did. You, apparently, rode out the latter two thirds of it beneath a table while under the effects of enough drugs to block out the sounds of slaves being torn to pieces around you. And in all that time, Ribara hadn't thought to make sure you weren't bleeding to death from the havoc she wreaked on your internal organs. As if you didn't need another reason to hate her.

You're about to tell Moradys that you can't possibly fall asleep with your sense of day and night so thrown out of whack, but you quickly think better of it and fold your arms over your stomach while staring up at the ceiling. Moradys lays motionless to your left, and you might have forgotten she were there entirely were it not for the soft but steady sound of her breath. A bit of rain hits the window - it lasts no more than half a minute - and silence returns. You close your eyes and try to wrestle down your thought-filled mind, but it's no use.

Moradys, Ribara, Vala, Charal - you've never had so many women interested in you at once. The first seems determined to drive you insane, and each glimpse you think you catch of something deeper lurking under the cruelty turns out to be just another way to screw with you. Ribara vacillates between near-tenderness and mindless violence. It doesn't matter if she doesn't want to kill you - she might do it by accident.

You found out that Vala had been trying to find you all along, but a single interaction between the two of you brought those hopes crashing down. You tell yourself that it's Moradys' fault, not yours,
but you can't help but feel yourself cursed in a way that goes beyond the cunning of your captor. It's as if the universe itself is conspiring to keep you here. For some greater purpose, you wonder? Or are you only here to suffer?

And as for Charal - you don't even know where she is. That slave woman told you she was imprisoned, but you can't risk asking Moradys without potentially bringing more punishment down on Charal's head. As tempting as it is to feel like you're being proactive, remaining quiet is the best option here. At least then, there's a chance that Moradys' anger will die down before Charal starves to death in whatever dark hole she's been tossed in. All because you didn't keep playing the victim to Moradys in a game which she seems to have forgotten all about. Now, you're supposed to be the enthusiastic lover.

All while sleeping on the floor.

"Are you awake?" comes a whisper from overhead.

Your eyes are closed, and the bed is too high up for you to feel Moradys' breath, but you can tell from the sound of her voice that she's looming just overhead. You remain perfectly still, doing nothing that could betray the fact you're nowhere close to falling asleep.

"Slave!" she hisses sharply, letting the word hang in the air for a moment. "Orin."

The unexpected use of your name has your leg twitching slightly, but you keep any movement to a bare minimum and continue your calm rhythm of slow breaths in and out. There's no movement of blankets to your left, and you continue to assume that Moradys is still staring down at you.

"I hate you," she says in a low whisper, her voice rising slightly with each word. "I hate you."

The pained declaration comes only twice, and she quickly rolls back onto the bed. Even then you keep your eyes closed, fearful that your thundering heart will let her know that you were awake to hear something you're certain you weren't supposed to. You weren't under any illusions that Moradys respected or valued you, but for her to hate you? One doesn't hate a bug, or a dog that won't obey - at least not in the same way they do another person.

You remain frozen like that for an indeterminable amount of time, too afraid to even open your eyes. The venom in her voice reminded you of Adrubal's murderous gaze, the sort of pure and unblemished hatred that ends with death, not perverse and sexually-tinted torture.

Eventually, you do fall asleep. It should come as no surprise after everything else you've managed to sleep through, but even in the world of dreams it strikes you as slightly odd and more than a bit humorous. The thought leaves you just as quickly, though, as do all other concerns of the waking world. In this new world, you're yourself, except you're not. You stride through unending blackness, shapely breasts exposed to the empty void and long hair teasing at your back with each step. A single, lone figure sits ahead of you, legs folded up to her naked chest and face buried in her knees.

Ribara wears not the thong and boots of a Wych, but the heavy armor and long red robe that she wore when she worked as Moradys' Vizier. This is a world of thought, and she exists as she sees herself, just as you do. Out there, she presents herself as someone powerful and unburdened. Here - inside the mind - you are the one who is strong and free. You cautiously approach the trembling woman, then lean both hands on her shoulders, the left one a mangled stump that looks far more grotesque than it does in reality. She jerks in place and snaps her face back to look at you, and her face twists up in teary-eyed anger.

"I hate you," she says.
Your jaw drops open and you take a step backwards, putting a hand on your chest in mock surprise. "What did I do?"

Ribara stares at you for a moment, then puts her face right back into the cleft of her knees. "I feel horrible."

You circle around and stand in front of her, hands on your hips. "Why?"

"You hate me." She draws in a ragged breath and rubs her face back and forth in a futile effort to clear it of tears and snot. "You'll never touch me again."

You let out a laugh that begins mocking but quickly turns to a comforting croon. "You're being too dramatic. No one died, right? That means you can still fix this."

That gets her to lift her face back up, and she stares at you with an expression of mixed hope and trepidation.

"How?" she says.

"I think you know exactly what needs to change."

"I do?" says Ribara.

You lean over and plant your finger on her forehead. It sinks in a few inches, and Ribara reels back in fright. "What is it I've told you over and over?"

Ribara rubs a palm over her forehead to confirm there's no hole left behind by your brief penetration, then looks up at you. "I need to think more."

"No, you need to think better. You waste so much energy worrying about how others see you, and then they laugh at you anyway."

Ribara frowns down at her knees, and you bend over so low that your hair brushes the ground in an effort to meet her eyes. "Moradys stopped laughing at you when you left."

"She ripped my arm off." Ribara moves the stump on her left shoulder. It's a mangled mess of flesh that bleeds continuously. In the time you spoke, she would have bled out twice over, if this were a place where such laws of nature applied.

"That means she saw you as a threat! An equal!"

She merely shrugs in response, but you spot a slight smile creasing her lips before vanishing just as quickly.

"See? It's not so bad." You slip a foot in between her folded legs and prod at the armored bulge under her long gown. "You just need to use what you've got with more... finesse."

Ribara smiles again and grabs hold of your shin, nearly making you fall to the side, but her grip is strong enough to stead you as she runs her hand up your leg.

"Why can't you be like you are here?"

"Unbreakable?" you say with a sly smile of your own.

"And other things," she replies absentmindedly. Her eyes and hand move up your thigh and her fingers extend towards your pussy, but those warm folds remain just out of reach even as she leans
forward as far as she can.

"Cummragh is a city of science, isn't it? If I were stronger, you wouldn't be sitting in the dark bawling your eyes out."

Ribara snorts in annoyance and lets her hand fall away as she leans back. "I was saving up to have a new arm grown."

You shrug and hum thoughtfully. "Well, it's your money." With a final wave of your hand you back away from Ribara, and she shoots to her feet.

"Wait!" she exclaims, walking towards you as your pace quickens to one that far exceeds the distance your strides should carry you. "What do I do about you?"

"Just be persistent!" you call out into the empty space growing between the two of you as you fade into the void. "And gentle, too! Bye, now!"

Ribara stops racing towards you, and her outstretched fingers retract until only one is pointing at you. Not accusingly, but with fierce determination. "I will be a raging inferno of gentle persistence. A force of nature that cannot be stopped! If any stand in my way, I will tear them--"

The words fade away at the same time the image does, leaving you without even the memory of it. You awake with your nose and lips pressed to the hardwood floor of Moradys' bedroom, having rolled onto your front sometime during the night. Dried drool has the corner of your mouth stuck to the floor, and cold sweat seems to have done the same to your chest. This is the second time you've awoken with the powerful sensation of having passed through the most elaborate of dreamworlds, without any memories to back up that vague notion.

Within seconds, the feeling is gone. You're fully awake now, pushing yourself to your knees and looking around the bedroom for any sign of what fresh horrors the new day will bring. Moradys still lies in bed, and there's no clock around to tell you whether you've awoken early, late, or right on time.

You sit down on the floor with your back against the bed, but jump back up when you realize you've sat down on bare buttocks. Your skirt had been yanked down from the back while you slept, leaving your crotch covered but ass uncovered. Nothing hurts, so you choose to believe that you weren't groped when Moradys went for a midnight piss.

Speaking of which.

A few seconds spent watching the slow rise and fall of Moradys' upturned back leads you to conclude that she's sound asleep, and you make your way to the bathroom. Just as you round the foot of the bed, the shuffle of sheets has you freezing still. Moradys stares down the length of the bed with bleary, half-closed eyes, then drops her head back down to the pillow so that she's facing off towards the window.

You wait a moment, then continue to the bathroom, quietly close the door, and empty your bladder into the gold-trimmed toilet of black marble. Before you flush, you carefully wipe the rim with toilet paper. Vala always got angry about splatter, and you don't want to experience Moradys' thoughts on the matter.

Back in the bedroom, Moradys hasn't moved an inch. You tiptoe to the foot of the bed and sit against it until a grunt from the bed's occupant draws your attention backwards.

"Why are sitting you over there? Do you hate me that much?"
You move back to your previous position, sitting with your back turned to her. After a short while of silence, she grabs a bit of hair with her fingers and yanks it right out of your head. You cry out - more from surprise than actual pain - and spin around as she sprinkles the hairs to the floor.

"I asked you if you hate me that much."

You start to blurt out a denial, but then remember the very clear promise she had torn from you to never lie to her. Those orange-black eyes searching yours might be dulled with the last vestiges of sleep, but they're still sharper than any you've seen. And after the miserable sex you had last night, you suspect she already knows how you feel.

"You tortured me," you say softly, unable to resist a pained shrug and trembling cheeks. "I don't know what you want me to do."

Moradys looks at you exhaustedly, as if you're an unruly child who had defied every authoritative action taken by a well-meaning parent. You can't fathom the thought process of a person who looks at you and sees a victimizer, and not a victim.

"Fix it." She reaches past you to her nightstand, then slips on the silvery bracelet she had set there the night before. With a few presses to tiny buttons on the side, a ghostly image of a woman's head appears above it. The hologram doesn't allow you to perceive color, but you can tell by her sharp features that she's a Dark Elf.

"Have my breakfast sent to my bedroom." The woman on the other end barks out a quick acknowledgement, and Moradys nearly ends the call before hastily telling the woman to double the portions. Your heart surges at the prospect of getting a meal of real food, but Moradys dashes your hopes by telling you that you're not to eat a bite of it.

"My slave will be picking it up," Moradys says to the woman. "The one with the small cock who cries constantly."

The other Elf merely utters another professional acknowledgement, and Moradys ends the call. She directs you to go to the manor's kitchens, then heaves herself to the side so that she's facing away from you. You silently excuse yourself from the room, then do as ordered and make your way downstairs to the home's kitchens.

The packed room hums with activity, a vast assembly line of slaves and cookery that all terminates at a single metal cart with two trays, one set above the other. Over the course of a few minutes the amount of food atop the trays grows, until finally it's shoved towards you, a smorgasbord of delicacies that would look disgustingly sweet and decadent if you weren't so hungry.

You wheel the cart into the winding corridors and get halfway to the main hall before ducking into a small alcove and shoving bit after bit of food into your mouth. Only when you're painfully full do you stop, and then painstakingly rearrange the picked-over items so that the plates lack any obvious empty spots. Even after pigging out, there's enough food left to feed a small army.

Once you reach the stairs, you realize you haven't thought this through. Fitting the cart between the curving walls is hard enough, but lifting it without spilling either tray is downright impossible. You ask two passing servants for help, but they only walk faster. In desperation you go to the nearby main doors and ask one of the guards posted outside, but she hisses at you until you stop talking. All have been made well aware of what happens to people who get to close with you. Ribara is maimed, and Charal is vanished.

You return to the cart you left waiting at the bottom of the stairs, and find a woman waiting beside it.
She's shorter than you, a fact which nearly leads you to mark her as human before you notice her colorless skin. Her black hair is done up in a tight bun, and she has a slender build that you're tempted to describe as 'mousy', if any Dark Eldar can be called such a thing. She wears a dark dress, but it's not a revealing one like Moradys wears. Everything from wrist to neck to toe is covered in a black material that soaks in the light.

The Elf simply stands beside the tray, examining it with narrowed eyes and furrowed brow as she taps her fingertips together thoughtfully. She looks from side to side, and her eyes falls on you. Eyes, which, to your mild shock, are completely black.

"You!" She points right at you, apparently having no issue seeing. "Are you the slave with the small cock who cries?" Her voice is high-pitched and anxious, like an overtaxed school teacher.

You bow your head and approach. "I'm the slave that Lady Moradys sent, yes."

With that confirmation, the woman's stance turns uneasy. She takes half a step away from you, then stops and plants her feet firm. "You will address me as 'Vizier'. Do you see this?"

You glance up to see that the small woman is pointing at a small scar running across the width of her forehead, just below her hairline. "I am Deadened. That means you cannot affect me."

"Affect you?" you ask uneasily. Looking her in the face like this, you note that her eyes are not one seamless shade of black, as you thought. There are pupils in the center, though they're hardly visible even from this short distance.

"Lady Moradys warned me about you." The Elf takes a small truncheon hung at her waist and prods you in the stomach with it, just to prove that she can. "You used your powers to seduce my predecessor. Powers which have no sway over me." She gives you another light jab to drive home her point, then returns the truncheon to her belt. "All that I see when I look at you is another pitiful Mon-Keigh."

"Yes, Vizier," you reply with the slightest hint of tired defiance. There's little reason to bother correcting whatever story Moradys told her, and you've met too many power-drunk Elves to be cowed by a womanlet like this. Polite but dignified subservience is as low as your pride will allow you to sink when you're not being beaten or raped senseless.

The Elf asks you why you abandoned the food cart, and you launch into a sighing recounting of the past half-minute before a sharp tut from her shuts you up. She orders you to grab the front end, and the two of you begin the clumsy and harrowing ascent up the spiralling stone stairwell. The cart bumps into either wall over and over, but the clanging chorus eventually ends and you set down on the second floor with no major losses, aside from a few bread rolls sent tumbling down the steps.

You move to the Vizier's side of the cart to wheel it towards Moradys' bedroom at the far end of the hall, but you move too quickly, and end up grabbing the handlebars with the Elf's hand still on it. She yanks it away with a shocked gasp, then draws her truncheon and raises it above her head as her face flushes red with embarrassment. Instead of striking you she lets out a sharp huff, then scurries down the steps at a quick pace.

You watch her go, more amused than confused, and continue to the bedroom. The guards beside the doors open them, and you enter the darkened room to find everything - and everyone - exactly as you left it. Moradys grunts and waves the cart over, and you place it beside her before stepping back.

Over the course of the next two hours, she eats everything on the tray, all without even sitting up in bed. Occasionally she rolls onto her other side and sleeps for a few minutes, before returning to her
previous position, eating, groaning, and going back to sleep. It's the most pitiful thing you've ever seen, at least until lunch comes. This time you carry up first one tray, then the other, rather than a whole cart. The first tray you set beside her at her demand, and upon bringing up the second you find the food devoured and the bed littered with crumbs. The second tray goes atop that one, and when she's finished she shoves them off the bed.

Moradys rises only once from her bed to use the bathroom, then returns and lays staring blankly at the wall while you sit beside her feeling very uncomfortable. Come dinner time, she requests drugs be brought to her as well. She snorts some luminescent powder from a small thimble, and thankfully does not offer you any. Her eyes go wide and she becomes frighteningly energetic, pacing about the room and mumbling to herself while throwing you intense stares.

Eventually she stops and demands you suck her cock, which you kneel and begin doing, but her inability to remain still has her drawing free of your throat and resuming her meandering walk, throbbing erection bobbing in front of her as she wanders about like a madwoman. You can't hear enough to even catch the gist of what she's saying, but you hear names. Some of them you recognize - Ribara, Charal, Orin, and 'the wife'. You doubt she's making any sort of grand statement by refusing to use your wife's real name, and has likely simply lost it in her drug-fueled haze.

This continues all night, and well into the next morning. You catch a bit of sleep here and there, but Moradys is constantly stomping her feet to punctuate some ranting declaration. By your best estimation, it's not until early afternoon that she finally collapses onto the bed. Once she does, she stays there, not awaking until that evening.

She has you get more food, though it's not anything like a proper meal this time. Just an endless stream of pastries and desserts, any one of which would kill a diabetic as surely as any blade. As you sit beside this gluttonous monster with a noticeably distended abdomen, you notice something else - an immense heat radiating out from her, one which has become too strong to dismiss as a figment of your imagination.

"Are you alright?" you ask her, eyeing the sweat pouring down her brow and matting her hair to her forehead and chest. "You look... sick."

Moradys lays naked in bed staring up at the ceiling, having long since discarded the stifling confines of her blankets. "Elves do not..." Her eyes narrow and her cheeks bulge, cutting her words short. She holds that pose for a moment, and you're not sure if she's about to burp, puke, or die on the spot. Then, she releases the breath slowly. "...store fat. We burn it off." She rolls her head from side to side and waves a hand through the air. "Thermogenesis," she murmurs.

You had assumed the Dark Elves' universally trim figures to be a product of science, not innate biology. It must be a nice trait to have, though not if one eats so much that their organs are cooked from the inside out.

"Should I do something?" you say to her. She's breathing hard, and sweating harder.

Her head turns to the left, and she motions at the bathroom. "Cold shower."

You're a bit unsure on what part you're to play in that, until she flaps her fingers at you, motioning for you to lift her up. You slide your arms under her back and knees, then hoist her up in the air. She's almost too hot to touch, and a few seconds of your chest pressing against her right arm has you breaking out in a sweat as well. With some staggering and grunting you carry her towards the bathroom, all while Moradys lets out low groans of discomfort and belches into your face, making a deliberate point of directing the latter up at you.
Eyes half-closed as you turn your face away from her, you maneuver her into the shower and set her
down on the tile, and she fumbles with the shower controls for a moment before managing to turn on
the cold water. A jet hits the top of her head, and she rests silently against the wall while you close
the bathroom door.

"Don't you dare leave that room!" she calls after you.

It had crossed your mind, but you had already reasoned that she would hear the heavy doors
creaking open even over the hiss of the shower. You start to sit against the foot of the bed, but
instead take one last cautious look at the closed bathroom door before throwing yourself onto her
bed, closing your eyes and ignoring the bits of food pressing into your skin.

Moradys sits in the center of the shower, her back straight and eyes closed to the frigid water rushing
over her face. The boiling heat that had gripped her body has died down to a low simmer, one which
is limited to the deepest core of her body, leaving her extremities uncomfortably cold. She stands up,
shuts the shower off, then steps out and towels dry.

Back in the bedroom, her slave lies asleep halfway down her bed, his feet hanging off the edge. The
light coming through the window is a shade darker and a shade duller, marking it as late evening
- even most Dark Elves have trouble telling time by such a method, but she has lived in Cummragh
long enough for such a thing to be trivial. She isn't so cut off from reality as to claim to own a place
so vast, but she does feel as if they've joined in some way. She can't imagine ever leaving the place
permanently. To do so would feel like a small death.

Speaking of small deaths.

She starts moving towards the bed, and stubs a metal tray with her foot as she nears it. The clatter
doesn't awaken her slave, and she bends over to fish around for the small butter knife she had seen
earlier. Taking it in hand, she crawls up onto the bed and holds it to the side of her slave's neck,
preparing to drive it in deep. This is not a hasty murder, but a decision she had come to after hours
spent thinking under a sobering rush of water. Allowing herself to fall under the sway of a Psyker
had seemed like such a good distraction - a way to inject new life into one that has grown empty and
cold and long.

Lately, though, it hasn’t been entertaining. The mountain tops of torturous pleasure she had crested
with this human turned out to be mere hillocks, and the true peaks seem more unattainable with each
passing day. Every glimpse she gets of deeper sensation only serves to whet her appetite, leaving her
with a feeling of dissatisfaction that stretches from body to mind to soul.

Moradys holds the knife there, every muscle in her body rigid, then presses forward. The slave
mumbles something in his sleep and shifts away slightly, and she shoots back off the bed before
dropping the knife. It's not that she's incapable of doing it, she tells herself, but that when it comes
time to do what needs to be done, it no longer seems so palatable a decision. She feels sick, and not
just because of the food she gorged herself on over the last few days. She goes to her dresser, pulls
on a nightgown and indoor shoes, then steps out of the bedroom and turns to the two guards.

"If my slave tries to leave, give him a medium beating. Don't hit the face or the balls."

The guards nod and pound their halberds on the floor, and Moradys continues down the stairs, across
the main hall and its moon-lit throne, then down to the basement level. There, she finds the prison
cells, and the single one in use. The guard posted at the door fumbles for her key ring - old fashioned
things of iron, which Moradys likes the old-fashioned look of - and stands ready to unlock the door.

"Is she eating?" Moradys says to her.

"No, my Lady," replies the guard. "She only drinks, never eats."

Moradys frowns and tells her to open the door. It swings open, revealing a human woman clad in
simple brown undergarments, her chest bare and long brown hair a mess. She picks herself up from
her fetal position on the floor and backs against the wall, staring in terror at Moradys through eyes
that have swollen half-shut from bruising.

"Charal," Moradys says. "I'm told you're not eating."

The woman says nothing, and Moradys takes a step inside the room. Charal tries to move away even
further, but can only slide a bit further down the wall until her left hand meets the corner. There are
cornered predators, and then there are cornered prey. The former should be avoided for one's own
safety, while the latter simply look disgusting.

"Is guilt dulling your appetite?" Moradys muses. "Does that mean you've learned your lesson?"

Charal's face contorts with all the tortured anguish of a starving woman who has been locked away
in solitary confinement for days on end, and she rubs the sides of her head in a furious anxiety.

"I do not know what I did wrong, Mistress!" she says with tears in her eyes.

Moradys purses her lips and crosses her arms. "You made me feel bad. Are you saying that
it's my fault I felt that way?"

Charal lets out a crying squeak, and Moradys shrugs. "Perhaps it's Orin's fault. You're too stupid to
harbor anything resembling willful intent."

The naked woman nods furiously. If she understands the insult, she doesn't care - all she wants is to
be out of this box.

"Now, you're going to tell me why you stopped eating." Moradys puts her hands on her hips and
waits for an answer. When it doesn't come, she walks towards Charal and raises her hands to the
woman's head. "Or I can just see for myself. You remember what this feels like, don't you?"

Charal shrinks back into the corner, sliding to the floor as Moradys looms over her. The moment the
Elf's fingertips make contact, Charal blurs out her answer to stop the coming mental intrusion.

"I am pregnant!" she exclaims.

Moradys freezes, too stunned to even reel back in surprise. "What?" she says softly.

"I am pregnant," Charal repeats between tearful blubbering. "I did not want to eat the food because
you put the... no babies medicine in it."

Moradys stands back up and steps away, using her vast and discerning awareness to feel for any sign
of new life within Charal. But even if it's there, it's too early to separate from the woman holding it
within her.

"Wait," Moradys says suddenly. "How can that be? You were eating before, weren't you?"
Charal draws in a wet sniff and put her legs flat on the ground. "I was switching my food packets with Orin's before preparing them. That way, I would not get the food with the medicine. He is a man, so he did not notice."

Except he did notice. So did Moradys, and so did Charal when he tried and failed to get his cock hard enough to stick inside of her. Apparently it wasn't just well-taught fear that kept him soft in his Mistresses' presence - it was a steady supply of female hormones. His recent recovery must mean he had noticed the tainted food, and started throwing it out the window. Ribara and the Wyches likely fed him scraps at the arena.

The thought of Orin being fed pieces of his own species would normally be a thought funny enough to put a smile on Moradys' face, but she can't laugh - not right now. Charal is a tear-and-snot covered mess cowering in a corner, but in this moment she seems like the most threatening being in Cummragh.

More dangerous than the other Archons, more dangerous than Ribara, that Incubus who had threatened Moradys, Orin’s wife, or any number of people who have caused her to lose sleep. Moradys' heart pounds, her fists clench, and her mind screams at her to crush this woman's heart in her chest before she can do something terrible with it.

*Pregnant.*

The word echoes in Moradys' mind over and over, Charal's trembling voice taking on a nastier and mocking tinge with each repetition. It shouldn't bother her so much, one of her slaves getting knocked up. It's merely an annoyance, a minor defiance that can be rectified with a single dose of drugs. So why does it bother her so much?

"That's..."

Moradys forces herself to take another step away from Charal, hoping some space will prevent her from doing anything rash. She wants to batter Charal's skull against the wall until all that's left is a greasy smear, and that bothers her. Not the violence of the act itself, but how little control she seems to have over her own actions these days. First it had been merely thoughts and feelings, but those inevitably become actions. She had willingly loosened her hold on the former for the sake of entertainment, and this is the cost.

"Wonderful!" Moradys blurts out, forcing a smile on her face. She can tell by Charal's apparent horror that her expression looks more demented than cheerful. The exclamation had come as a knee-jerk defiance of her own uncontrollable urges, leaving her to come with the reason for it after the fact. Does she even need one, though? Charal is a slave, and Moradys her Mistress - her God. Why would she need to justify herself to property?

"Up, up!" Moradys motions for Charal to rise, and the slave's well-ingrained instincts kick in, bringing her to her feet. Taking her by her hand, Moradys leads the battered woman from the cell, and is disgusted to find Charal clinging to her desperately as they walk the basement halls back to the stairwell. She had never hated Charal before. Upset or violently frustrated with, certainly - but not like this.

Moradys looks down at the hunched woman walking beside her and raises her finger to her lips. She's not yet sure how she'll allow this to play out, but several scenarios are already running through her mind. The child could even turn out to be a Psyker, like its sperm donor - and that would be well worth any minor troubles resulting from a baby-bloated Charal lurching around the manor grounds. And if it's not anything special, and Moradys is still angry with Charal, she can always dash the infant's head open on a rock while Charal watches. That would *also* be worth the nine month wait,
though the enjoyment would be far more fleeting.

"You are not mad, Mistress?" Charal says softly. Moradys’ daydreaming had produced a genuine smile, one which Charal does not know the reason for.

"Not at all! But don't tell anyone the big news. This will be our little secret for now."

Charal's expression turns to one of pleading despair. "Can I tell the father?"

"Secrets aren’t secrets when they spread beyond two people," Moradys explains patiently. "And if you tell him without my permission, I'll tear your womb out through your cunt."

The calm warning has the blood draining from Charal's olive face, making her appear a particularly sickly shade of green in the golden light of the hall. Moradys smiles - another genuine one - and continues walking along with her.
Happy Accidents

In the past, you had been glad to have your little day trips to the arena. They were uniformly violent and chaotic, but those had been contained to the arena instead of being focused on you, as Moradys' cruelty so often was. Last time had changed things, though. The Wyches had tricked Ribara into thinking you raped her, then cajoled her into raping you so hard that your wounds required Dark Elf magic to mend. Ribara must not have checked on you during the night. Or even worse, she had - and had left you alone despite the state you were in. All that, and not even an apology.

As you sit on the middeck of one of Moradys' skiffs, riding the winds and mists of Cummragh, it occurs to you that maybe just such an apology will be waiting for you upon your arrival at the arena. You resolve not to truthfully accept it, though. It doesn't matter how sorry Ribara feels, or pretends to feel. She violated you horribly just to salvage her own wounded pride, and those actions speak louder than any words.

The skiff docks at the arena's side, and the helmeted guard piloting the thing orders you off. There are no Wyches waiting for you, which is unusual, and you make your lonesome way to the elevator at the far end of the cavernous space while the ship you arrived on departs. As you pass a stack of metal crates just barely taller than yourself, you catch movement from the corner of your eye. The blur smashes into you with all the force of a charging bull, knocking you to the floor.

By the time you roll over onto your back, your attacker is standing over you. Ribara smiles down at you with a broad grin, and you instinctively raise your hands up to shield your face.

"I have been waiting for you." She grabs you by both wrists and pulls you to your feet. The use of two hands surprises you, enough that you fail to notice the odd hardness of her left hand. Once you're face-to-face with her, you see that her left arm is a construction of matte metal and dark plastic, the shape of which is a perfect imitation of her real arm. Regrowing limbs - or adding extra ones - seems like something that is readily available as a medical service in Cummragh, so you can't imagine why she bothered with artificial limb. Perhaps it's stronger than one of flesh and blood.

Ribara turns away from you and goes back to the crate stack she had been hiding behind, then picks up a smaller metal box a bit larger than her head. She returns, hands it to you, then leads you by the neck towards the lift. The two of you make the trip up in silence, and you realize that no apology is coming. At first you thought the sealed box might be some conciliatory gift, but it seems more likely she didn't want to bother carrying it while you can do the job just as well.

The lift arrives in the main hall, and you make your way through the cages to find a group of five Wyches training in an alcove off to the side. They notice the two of you approaching, and bring their whirling dance of death to a stop.

"You were supposed to take it up in the skiff!" Irunal calls out to her. She's the only one you truly recognize, Meryetia being noticeably absent.

"I know," replies Ribara. "But I have an announcement first."

The Wyches eye her with bemused interest and approach as a group, tapping the flats of their blades on their shoulders as they walk. Ribara moves her robotic hand from your neck to your chest as she moves behind you, then places her other hand on your belly.

"We are in love."
The Wyches stare at her silently for a few seconds, then burst into cackling laughter. A few drop their swords, and others bang them against the ground as they bend forward, clutching their stomachs with their free hands. You, on the other hand, remain totally quiet, still trying to process what you just heard. She had been talking about you, hadn't she? To your left and right are nothing but wild animals, and in front of you five Elves laughing. Behind you there is only Ribara, clutching you tighter as their laughter gradually dies down.

"Where is Meryetia?" gasps one of them, looking around the training space. "She needs to hear of this."

"I already told her!" Ribara declares forcefully, cutting right through the last remnants of jovial laughter. "I wanted to tell her first, because I thought she was my friend."

Ribara reaches down to the box in your hand and lifts off the lid, exposing a mess of white fluff that had been compressed inward, like packing cotton. At first, you have no idea what you're looking at. Then, you notice the black eyes and bloody, pallid flesh visible beneath the tangle of hair.

"Oh, shit!" you shout, dropping the box to the ground. It tips over as it lands, and the bloody head rolls forward before coming to a stop at the Wyches' feet. Meryetia's dead eyes stare up at the ceiling, her face frozen in a horrific rictus grin of what almost looks like ecstatic pleasure.

"I am sorry, everyone." Ribara returns her hand to your chest and drums her robotic fingers across your flesh. "She laughed, and I could not stop myself. We will have to find a replacement leader for the Cult of the White Plume."

The Wyches look almost as shocked as you - almost. They're used to seeing body parts, but not ones made from their own kind. Four of the Wyches gawp at it in wide-eyed, stunned silence, while Irunal adopts a look of mild disdain and kicks the head over to one of the animal cages. The hound-like creature imprisoned within chomps at the bars standing between it and its food, then angles itself to the side and impales the head with its scorpion-like tail before drawing the surprise meal inside and devouring it in one bite.

"She must have been... weak." Irunal looks to the other Wyches, who nod in agreement and echo her sentiment. "The weak should not lead - only the strong."

The groups falls quiet, and shuffles from foot to foot uneasily until one of the other women points at Ribara.

"Ribara killed Meryetia, so she must be strong."

Another rasping chorus of agreeable whispers follows, and within moments they seem to have settled on their new leader. Ribara makes a big show of reluctantly accepting their offer, and the group files forward to either side of her while giving careful congratulatory slaps to her shoulders. You and Ribara leave them to their training, and go to one of the side halls where the shrieks and roars of hundreds of animals aren't quite so deafening. Once you're alone, Ribara turns you around and falls on you, pressing your back to the wall and grabbing your crotch as she holds you by the neck and plants her lips on yours.

"Wait, wait!" you blubber through joined lips. Ribara reluctantly pulls back, and you regain your breath while preparing to deliver the message you were told to.

"Moradys wanted me to tell you something, Mistress." You swallow and look up at her. "Ordered me to say it. This isn't me, it's her."
Ribara frowns and lets go of your neck, then steps away. "What is it?"

"She told me to say that she will restore your arm... if you come to her on hands and knees, and sign me over to her."

Ribara's nostrils flare, and she backhands you across the face with her robotic arm. Something cracks in your skull, and you fall to the side, catching yourself with your hands as blood spills from your mouth with each painful cough.

"Why would I ever crawl back to her?" Ribara shouts down at you.

"You wouldn't," you wheeze through a jaw that feels ready to come unhinged. "It's just a message. I didn't want to say it."

Ribara's furious eyes widen in realization, and she pulls you to your feet. "That was her fault. Everything that has gone wrong is her fault, and it will be fixed when she is gone."

"Gone?" you ask warily. Something about Ribara's intense expression tells you that she's not speaking merely in the hypothetical.

"I have an ally," she explains, keeping hold of both of your hands and lifting them between the two of you. "Someone who heard of how I was thrown out of House Tenebrim. Moradys will die, I will inherit the House, and everything will be perfect."

"An ally? Who is it?"

Her expression turns to one of stern disapproval, and she drops your hands. "You do not need to know that. All that you need to do is tell Moradys this - that you saw the Wyches and I speaking to a woman we called 'Lady Drebesh'."

Ribara describes the Elf's appearance to you, and you nod along as she speaks. You understand the words, but she tells you nothing about the greater plan - only the small part you're to play.

"You could not hear what we were speaking about," Ribara concludes. "You only saw the Wyches fawning over her, and heard them call her by that name."

"When is this happening?" you ask her.

"Soon." She uses her thumb - the real one - to wipe at the blood drying on your lips. "While the Wyches practice, I will take you to a Shaper to be made stronger, so that you can survive what is to come. You are weak, and fragile. That is your fault, but I will help you fix it."

True to her word, Ribara leaves the arena aboard her small skiff and takes you to the inner city. You wouldn't have minded this promise being broken, though, as the memory of that first visit to a Shaper is still fresh in your mind. You can smell the blood, taste your rising bile, and see that eviscerated slave with his organs strung out above him in a grotesque display.

The ship sets down beside a busy landing lad hooked onto the side of one of the diagonally-oriented structures comprising the metropolis, and you follow Ribara inside. She's tall even for a Dark Elf, and draws more than a few stares that she hardly seems to notice.

The attention she receives could be due to her near-nudity, but that's not so rare a sight in this city. It's possible it has to do with her station as a Wych. The arena she does her work in regularly hosts crowds of thousands, and it's inevitable that some would recognize the distinctive metal crown and white hair. Every culture has their celebrities, you suppose.
With that amusing realization comes another one. As you continue on, you notice some Elves' eyes travelling to you after they're done passing over Ribara's more noticeable figure. The onlookers fix you with hostile looks that you at first take for the disdainful sneer of a supposedly superior species eyeing a lesser one, but then you spot something else behind those curled lips and narrowed eyes - jealousy. They're jealous of you.

It strikes you as ridiculous, on more than one level. For one thing, how do they even know what sort of things you do for her? For all they know, you're the slave who cleans her sword, not her sheath. Though, the hand she holds to your lower back as you walk beside her likely clues them in as to the nature of your relationship. Still, it's not one to be envied, by Elf nor human. You're a reluctant lover at best, and a sex-slave at worst. Two of your sexual encounters with her have nearly ended in death. One more, and you can start calling it a pattern.

"I could give you breasts, you know." Ribara looks down at you, slowing her walk somewhat and gripping the side of your far hip. "The Shaper is expensive, so being made stronger would have to wait."

It's all you can do to keep your feet moving, one in front of the other. Your body doesn't like where this conversation is going.

"But, Mistress. You said I would need to be made stronger for when your plan goes into action."

Ribara frowns deeply and looks away, seeming very displeased with your solid logic. You continue walking for a time, and she begins to hum thoughtfully to herself, a nagging tune that warns you of more idle suggestions.

"If you had breasts, and..." Her eyes flicker down to your crotch. "...other things, I would be more gentle than I am now. You would not need to be as strong."

You're afraid to even acknowledge her offer, lest she take that mumbled 'ok' as a 'yes' and drags you under the Shaper's scalpel. Hell, you're afraid to even breathe. Last visit to a Shaper, Moradys had joked about removing your balls, a procedure the Shaper seemed all too happy to perform. You don't doubt for an instant that this one would be ready to do an outpatient sex change on you.

Luckily, you manage to pass the rest of the long walk without the topic being brought up again. All you can do now is hope that Ribara won't decide you have no say in the matter, and tell the Shaper to have at it.

You come to a secluded series of side halls off of a bustling commercial district, and stop before one of many sealed circular doors. The glowing green signage above is unreadable, but as soon as the door rolls open, you know that you've arrived. The circular room ahead is all dark walls, low lighting, and grim furnishings. A single corridor runs opposite you, and the room is ringed by small alcoves.

Dark Elves sit in chairs in the recessed spaces, never in groups larger than two, apparently waiting for their turn with the Shaper's services. There is something oddly comforting about the fact that even in a place as twisted and hellish as Cummrath, doctors' offices still have frustratingly long waits.

The two of you sit down in one of the alcoves, and you stare at the ground to avoid meeting the wandering eyes of any of the Elves. You didn't spot any humans on your way in, and feel very out of place despite this whole city already having done its damndest to chew you up and spit you back out. Minutes tick by in absolute silence, one which you find strange enough to glance up from the metal rivets on the floor. The lips of the women across from you are moving, but you can hear nothing - some peculiarity of the alcoves' construction.
Ribara sticks her foot out of the alcove as far as it will reach, then brings the heel of her boot crashing down on the floor. There's no sound, but you can feel her kick through the floor. She then leans forward and looks to the left, towards the corridor into the Shaper's offices. Nothing happens, and Ribara sits back with a huff.

More time passes, and the silence is broken by occasional huffs of annoyance from Ribara. She stomps the floor a few more times, leans out of the alcove to shout down the hall - you can't hear what she says - and eventually, someone does come. A bald-headed Elf, completely nude and yet wearing more than you have ever seen.

Her ears are pierced with white bone, gold chains hang from her nostrils by hooks, and steel rings are run through the flesh of her back and shoulders. Wherever there is an ounce of spare tissue to pierce something is hanged from it. The bald head alone leads you to mark her as a Shaper, but the grotesque artwork she has turned her body into leaves you with no doubt that this is her.

The Shaper stops just inside the room, and motions for a waiting Elf to come to her. As she raises her arm up, silver chains connecting the skin of her torso to that of her arm go taut, like a flying squirrel having reached the limits of its wingspan. The other Elf rises from her seat and joins the Shaper, and both depart deeper into the building. Ribara sputters incredulously and jumps up to shout after them, but after a few moments resumes her seat.

This process repeats itself four more times, and each time Ribars grows angrier. On the last occasion she doesn't even bother protesting the wait, and just sits in her chair with arms folded and face screwed up in a furious scowl. Once the Shaper leaves, Ribara grabs you by the arm and hurls you forward. You roll to a stop a dozen feet away, with no injuries other than some painful rugburn.

"What the hell?" you shout back in reflex. Ribara doesn't respond, and can't hear you anyway. She glares down the length of her outstretched leg while the other bounces up and down with anxious energy. You slink back to your seat, and wait. The Shaper arrives again, and this time motions for Ribara.

Ribara heaves a climactic sigh, as if releasing all of her pent up boredom, then drags you along with her into the red-lit corridor leading away from the waiting room. After moving out of sight of that first room and its occupants, the Shaper stops and turns to Ribara.

"Do you have payment?" she says, holding out her hand.

Ribara takes a deep breath in, then bends down, reaches into her boot, and pulls out a small card from a slit on the inside. It's a bit smaller than her palm, with a metallic strip running along one end. She stands up and stares at the credit chit for a few moments, looking very thoughtful and a bit reluctant.

The Shaper slowly takes hold of one side of the card, and tries to take it from Ribara. The larger woman keeps her tight hold on it, not wanting to let go, but eventually relents. The Shaper presses the edge of the card to the center of her chest, and it slips easily into a slot carved into her flesh, seemingly for that exact purpose.

"I understand you want it... stronger?" the Shaper says, turning and continuing on.

"Yes," says Ribara. "It is always getting broken bones, bruises, scrapes..." She shoots you an accusatory look. "It is too clumsy, and too fragile."

"Well, I can fix one of those." The Shaper gives an idle wave of her hand without looking back. "But there are risks. If a slave is strong, it can become defiant. Maybe it will try to kill you in your
Ribara scoffs incredulously and looks from her to you, as if searching for any sign of that sort of hostility lurking within you.

"It would not try to kill me, it loves me!" exclaims Ribara. "And it has a collar."

"There are better ways to ensure compliance than a collar," the Shaper continues. "I could make it incapable of hurting you. It would grow weak at your touch, and the merest hint of your scent would be the most intoxicating drug in the universe."

Ribara's back stiffens alongside yours, but for very different reasons.

"That sounds expensive," says Ribara.

"Oh, no no!" says the Shaper, smiling back at her. You can tell from the speed of her response that she had been expecting just such an objection. "This is a... new procedure. I have been looking for willing test subjects."

"Why not Mon-keighs destined for the biomass refineries?" asks Ribara. "They are not expensive."

That question surprises the Shaper, who has stumbled into the other Elf's one area of expertise - human enslavement.

"Because they do not know love!" The Shaper stops and spins around to face the two of you, ring piercings clattering against each other. "Yes, I see it in your slave eyes! He is utterly devoted to you, and wants me to plunge my needles into his brain to free him of all conflicting thoughts!"

Your eyes go wide and you start to run away, but Ribara's hand is back on your arm before you take more than two steps from her. You're not sure if the Shaper sensed your peculiar abilities, or is just too cheap to buy her own test subjects. Either way, you don't want her anywhere near your brain.

"Ribara--Mistress!" You try to pull free as the Shaper approaches. "This sounds dangerous! If she messes up my brain, I won't be useful to you anymore."

Ribara says nothing, and the Shaper clicks her tongue in mock comfort. She unhooks a thimble-shaped piece of jewelry dangling from her ear, then affixes it to her index finger. A long needle sticks out of one end, which she levels at you as Ribara holds you still and exposes the side of your neck to her.

"Mon-keighs have a neurotic aversion to surgery." The Shaper presses the needle to your jugular, then plunges it in. "I cannot imagine why."

A warm surge of liquid rushes into your veins, and your defiant resistance goes as slack as your muscles.

"You fucking bi..." you slur out, the last word dying in your throat before it gets a chance to leave. Blackness creeps in from the edges of your vision, and you are gone.

You open your eyes, feeling as if all you've done is blinked, but the change in your surroundings tells you that at least a minute or two has passed. You're laid out on a diagonally-oriented operating table, staring up at a round white light that illuminates your sterile surroundings. The Shaper is beside you, holding both sides of the metal clamps that will secure your left wrist to the table.
Before she can lock it in place, you swing your arm at her, throwing her off to the side. She slides along the floor, but before she even hits the wall you're shooting off of the table towards the door ahead. Ribara is nowhere to be seen, but you need to find her and explain the insanity of letting this monster tamper with your brain.

With no idea of how to operate the door controls, you wedge your fingers into the crease running down the center of the doors and try to pry them open. You strain and grunt, and gasp in surprise when the doors slide into the wall on either side of the doorway. You come face-to-face with a pair of bone-pierced tits, and quickly realize you hadn't thrown open motorized doors with your bare hands.

"Mistress!" You grab Ribara's wrists as you prepare to plead with her for the sanctity of your unviolated brain, but something goes wrong. Your legs weaken, your head swims, and you stumble forward, collapsing into her chest with only her own hands keeping you from falling the rest of the way to the floor.

You're not sure if this sudden weakness comes from the drugs that had put you under in the first place, but those thoughts vanish as you take a panicked breath in through your nose. A powerful scent floods your nostrils, flowery and spicy, masculine and feminine, as rich and full as anything that has ever worked its way into your senses. You sputter out a few confused swears and wrap your arms around Ribara, unable to figure out where this new onslaught of sensation is coming from.

"Are you finished?" Ribara says.

Through the haze of smell and touch you hear a clattering noise as the Shaper lifts herself up off the floor and walks over to you.

"Yes," she hisses with quite a bit of annoyance evident in her voice. "I hope you now see the benefit of my additional alternations. It threw me into a wall when it awoke."

Ribara scoffs. "That is because it does not love you." She puts her hands on your back and pulls you tight to her chest, enveloping you with more of her overwhelming presence. Your eyes roll back so far that it's painful, and tears well in your eyes from the sheer force of sensation buffeting you.

"But I like this." Ribara loosens her hold on you slightly. "This is good."

She takes you by the wrist with her right hand and leads you out of the Shaper's offices and back into the labyrinthine black halls of Cumrmagh's spires. Each step you take is slow and wobbly, the strength you felt when you launched yourself from that table having vanished the moment you laid hands on Ribara. The effect is not quite as powerful with only her hand on your arm, but it's still more than enough to drown out the noise of the crowded halls and have you focusing entirely on her.

Your eyes travel down her pale, rippling back muscles, down to the plump ass cheeks that bounce up and down with each step she takes in her thigh-high boots. You've never wanted to throw yourself at someone so much in your life, but you're having trouble just keeping pace with her.

You reach the skiff, and Ribara sets you down on the couch in the middle deck before going up to the front and piloting away from the city. Normal awareness of the outside world comes flooding back within seconds of her departure, and you quickly become aware of the fact that you're moving not towards the arena, but towards the direction of Moradys' home. You come to the empty expanse of green mist separating the city and the suburbs, and Ribara brings the ship to a stop within the shrouded confines of that fog.

She walks back down the steps of the front deck, then takes a seat beside you slides her robotic left
arm over your shoulders. That cold metal does nothing to you, but her face pressing into the nape of your neck puts her close enough for you to once again be overwhelmed by the smell and feel of her. She bites at your shoulder, your neck, your earlobe, raking her teeth over your flesh as her right hand squeezes each of your nipples in turn.

You moan without meaning to, falling back against the cushioned sofa and trying in vain to hold back her insistent advances. You're even weaker than you had been before going under the Shaper's knife, and Ribara's rapidly quickening breath makes it clear that she will soon be impossible to fight off.

"Wait," you blurt out desperately as she grabs your jaw and presses her lips to yours. "I feel weird."

You can't in truth say that you feel *bad*. If anything, you feel amazing. But the disconnect between the apprehension in your mind and the rapturous ecstasy washing over your body has you very unsettled. It's as if there are two people living inside of you now, fighting over the levers in your skull. One of them wants to get away from all this and catch his breath, while the latter wants to give up and see what new feelings can be produced by more intimate contact than this.

Even the flat of Ribara's palm against your abdomen has you shuddering with near-orgasmic pleasure. You wonder how your body would react to having her inside of you, but are afraid to find out - not just because of what it could do to your body, but because of what it could do to your mind.

"You will feel even stranger," Ribara whispers into your ear. "But it is late, and we do not have the time." She pulls away, allowing you to once again take in a full breath without having it expelled in a fit of shuddering moans. Then she goes back to the piloting controls and puts the skiff in motion, continuing the journey to Moradys' home. She docks the ship at the cliffside, where the new Vizier awaits with a single masked guard. To their mild annoyance, Ribara does not extend the ship's boarding plank immediately, instead going back down to you.

"I do not want Moradys fucking you anymore," Ribara says in a low voice, but with a forceful tone that surprises you enough to look up at her. "You think I did not know? Of course I know - I saw it."

You had forgotten about those early days spent jerking off Moradys while getting your wounds fingerfucked. Memories you would have preferred to leave buried deep.

"If it happens again, I will be very unhappy." She puts her right hand on your arm and grips you hard while stroking you with her thumb. "And you do not want to make me unhappy. You love me."

The words make it sound like a veiled threat, but her tone is surprisingly innocent and sincere. She lets you go and returns to the top deck, extends the boarding plank, and watches as the diminutive Vizier and her taller guard come aboard to escort you off. You stand there motionless as the latter Elf grabs you by your arm, and expect to be pulled violently forward.

The Elf moves as if to drag you off the skiff, and she is the one to jerk to a violent stop, as if she has just tried to shift a mountain. The Vizier looks back to see what the holdup was, but you start your slow shuffling of feet before she can notice any further delay. The helmeted guard glances back at you a few times as you walk up the stone pathway, but says nothing.

You're taken to Moradys' room, where you notice something odd. The two guards normally posted right outside her doors are standing a great deal further down the hall, and watch the bedroom with halberds at the ready as if waiting for something to burst free. Their stances speak of women gripped by a nervous energy, though they relax somewhat as the Vizier approaches with you in tow.

"Is she still in there?" the Vizier asks them. The two women nod quickly, and you receive a sharp jab
in the spine that has you stumbling forward a few steps.

"Go." The Vizier levels her truncheon at you, then waves it towards the door.

A little confused and a little afraid, you make your way towards Moradys bedroom. As you draw nearer, you notice a few stray blood splatters on the floor, doors, and up the length of the wall. From who they came or how old they are, you have no idea. All you know is that it's not a good sign. You grip one of the door handles and slowly push it open.

The room is dark, as always, but the gloom is even harder to pierce than usual. There's an acrid scent that stings at your nostrils, nothing like the strikingly pleasant musk of Ribara. This is like volcanic sulfur, strong enough to have you leaning back in reflexive distaste. A heavy smoke fills the air, one which you didn't notice until it began to spill out into the better-lit corridor you still stand halfway in.

Moradys sits slumped in a chair halfway between the bed and large circle window, her pale skin glowing faintly from the light streaming in from her left. She wears a nightgown undone at the waist, her cock draped between her spread legs just as limply and unceremoniously as the rest of her. A large bottle of what you assume to be some impossibly strong liquor is cradled under her left arm, and she circles the rim of it with her other hand as you enter.

"Did I call for you?" She jerks in place to angle herself towards you, making the chair shriek against the wood floor. "Or did you come here for this?" She grabs her flaccid cock by the base and wags it back and forth obscenely, giving you a mean smile made a bit pathetic by the way her head drunkenly rolls from side to side. "Of all the slaves I've owned, you're the most pathetic. That's why I've kept you around - because you make me laugh." She takes the bottle in hand by the neck and hurls it at you.

Your hands shoot out and you catch it, a display of dexterity that has your eyes going as wide as Moradys'. Her expression softens and she sits back, watching with disinterest as you walk towards her with the bottle held in both hands. You're not sure whether you want to clock her across the head with it or calmly set it down beside her in a display of defiant nobility, but both plans fall by the wayside as you pass the bed. There, amidst the crumpled bedding, lays Charal. She's completely nude, splayed out on her back with one leg awkwardly twisted off to the side - not broken, but very uncomfortable looking. That's concerning enough, but you drop the empty bottle to the floor when you see the bruises covering her chest and face. You rush over and crawl up onto the bed, your knee pressing down on sticky wetness as it moves between her legs.

"Charal!" You give her a good shake, and are relieved to be greeted by a groan. An ear pressed to her lips confirms that she's breathing normally, and her heartbeat feels fine - but the merest touch of your fingers to her neck has her muscles clenching in fear, even though she remains unconscious.

"Why would you do this?" you snap back at Moradys, losing all your fearful subservience in the purifying fires of anger.

Moradys shrugs and leans her cheek on her fist. "I felt like it."

You peel off the stray hairs matted to Charal's sweaty forehead and brush them back. It's a meaningless act, but it's all you can do. She reeks of liquor and stale cum, and looks almost as bad as you have on your worst days. Seeing her in this state is as bad as reliving those moments yourself.

"Fuck her." Moradys waves a hand at you. "I'll tell her what you did if she wakes up. I'm sure she'll be thrilled to know she shared another moment with her knight in shining armor."

You set Charal's head back down as if it were the most delicate thing in the world, then slide off the
"What?" She stiffens somewhat in her seat, sensing your new brazen attitude even if she doesn't yet know the source of it. Nor does she know that you now have the strength to back it up.

You march towards Moradys, and she sits fully upright, a mean smile crossing her lips as her drunken eyes fixate on you. She opens her mouth to utter some venomous barb, but you're already grabbing at her arms in an effort to pull her out of the chair and throw her to the floor. To what end, you’re not yet sure. You're too furious for rational thought, and you've never felt stronger in your life.

Moradys swings her left arm free of your grasping hand, but you catch it with the other just before it strikes your cheek. Your bones sing with the force of the blow, and it feels as if you've just caught a battering ram with your palm. But you stopped her cold, and that's enough to make Moradys freeze in stunned silence.

Taking advantage of the opening, you latch onto both wrists and heave her towards you as you move backwards. Moradys shoots up from the chair, and you use the momentum to fling her past you at the same moment you step aside. She shouts in surprise and lands face-first on the floor. A split-second that you're on top of her, pinning her to the floor with a bent arm while your other hand alternates between grabbing at her hair and neck.

Moradys shrieks, too enraged to make use of words, and claws back at your face. You settle on winding your fingers up in her hair, and make use of the new handhold by bringing her head up and slamming it back down. One strike produces a pained grunt and more thrashing, but the next makes her fall still. She groans and brings a hand around to her forehead, seeming to forget her attempts to claw your eyes out.

You return your hand to her neck and squeeze, though even with your new strength you can't very well break her neck singlehanded. You're not thinking clearly, too caught up in a tempest of emotions to put your position to efficient use. You want to hit her, bite her, tear into her, and fuck her raw. Violence and sex are twisted together in an ugly knot inside you, just as thoroughly as they are in the woman beneath you.

Your cock, already hard, strains painfully against the confines of your skirt. Moradys' buttocks arch back against your crotch as she tries to rise in the midst of her daze, her cheeks grinding against either side of your length. Even through the thick cloth of your undergarment, you try to fuck her. Your mind screams at you to do it, and in an instant your hand is at your waist, pulling down your skirt and allowing your dick to probe at the cleft of her exposed ass.

"Get off!" Moradys screams, throwing elbows at you from left and right. Her position is awkward, and now that your strengths are evenly matched, your size gives you an advantage. She's a bit taller than you, but light and lithe. You throw your full weight onto her back and pull her head back by her hair while your other hand tries to guide your cockhead in between her cheeks. Moradys grabs at the hand holding her head, either unaware of the imminent intrusion or deciding its best to free herself first. You ignore the long gashes her nails create on the back of your hand, and place your cock at her entrance, using your thighs to keep her from bucking you off.

Then, you thrust. With all the strength of a modified human you slam into her, spearing her with your length in one go. You're not as large as Moradys, nor as thick, but you're going in dry on an asshole that hasn't seen the sort of action yours has. Moradys screams, gnashes her teeth, and locks one hand around your wrist while the other clenches into a fist and presses to her forehead.

"Gua-" she shouts, cutting herself short before she can summon the Elves waiting outside. Her jaw
sets tight and she draws a hissing breath in through her teeth, then tries in vain to once again pull your hand free of her messy hair. But your hold is too firm, your position to superior, and no amount of jostling will change the fact that you're already balls-deep in her ass.

"You don't want to call for help." You put your lips to her ear, unsure of whether you want to dig your teeth into it or spit back all the verbal abuse she heaped on you over the past weeks. "You look weak. Everyone would know I fucked you."

Moradys' eyes remain shut tight and her hand grips your wrist even tighter, but her body goes still. Nervous excitement plays at the corners of your lips, and you watch with demented fascination as your withdrawal from her anus makes all sorts of pained expression flash across her face. She bares her teeth and twists her head to the side in an attempt to at least free her hair, but you have no intention of letting go. This isn't love, and your violent desire is too twisted to even call 'lust' - yet you have never wanted anyone more. Not Ribara, even with the touch and smell your body has been made chemically addicted to. Not Charal, with her soft eyes and softer flesh that make you forget. Not even Vala, who you are supposed to cherish more than anyone or anything in this broken world.

No, you want Moradys. You want the power she took from you, and you want to see her face when you take it back. You slam your hips back into her buttocks, and Moradys' anus clenches around your length with a reflexive need to dispel the unwanted intrusion you've forced inside of her. Those spasms are carried throughout her entire body, and a few more fucks turns her rigid muscles into quivering jelly.

Moradys releases her hold on your wrist and tries to rest her head on her forearm, but you have no intention of allowing her to rest. You yank your head back again, and she shouts in pained surprise while digging her nails into the meat of your hand. The pain is real, and strong, but all it does is drive you to hold her tighter and fuck her harder. Soon the only sounds coming from her lips are the breaths being battered out of her lungs. Warm blood flows down your forearm from the gashes she's dug into your hand, and the sight of that crimson flow painting her sweaty back drives you wild with arousal.

You had never known why Moradys enjoyed beating you, raping you, torturing you - and you still don't. Hate is what drives you into her ruptured rear at brutal speed, loathing is what has you swearing obscenities into the ear you twist towards your face. Moradys had never had a reason to hate you, so you will give her one.

You hate seeing this woman and having your mind conjure up images of her pounding your wife into the mattress. You hate having her dick waved at you and remembering how strangely satisfying it felt to hold. You hate feeling your own cock throbbing at the sight of those breasts designed to make you forget the disgusting slab of meat hanging a few feet lower. Most of all, you hate how you think about her even when she isn't there. Now, you'll be the one invading her dreams, both waking and sleeping.

You tell her that, spitting out a shuddering promise into her ear as your climax crashes over you in mind-shattering waves. Each surge of energy is accompanied by a seizure of muscles that drives you into Moradys' buttocks, and you hammer her into the floor as shot after shot of cum floods her rectum. Your hand leaves her hair and your other one leaves her arm, both of your hands balling up into fists and propping you on the floor to allow you to slam into her. Moradys tries to twist her body to the side and crawl away, but you follow her with a quick shuffle of your limbs and batter her back down with another climactic drive.

After a few more thrusts, its over. Moradys lays still on the floor, one knee drawn up beside her torso and her face buried in her forearm. Her long black hair is a mess, covering up more of her back than
the nightgown that was ripped to tatters sometime during the brutal fucking.

Your dick burns from the rapid firing of your pelvic muscles, and you feel the urgent need to piss. Illusory or not, you consider trying to do it while still inside Moradys - but you don't get the chance. She throws another blind elbow at you, and this time it connects with the side of your head. Your skull rings like a bell, and you roll off of Moradys, more from primitive fight-or-flight than actually being knocked aside by the force of the blow.

As you push up from all fours onto your knees and prepare for the fierce melee to come, you see that Moradys is not making her move on you. She's limping towards the bathroom, one hand held to her buttcrack in an awkward attempt to either put pressure on her damaged asshole, or to keep your cum from dripping onto her floor.

The bathroom door slams shut behind her, and reality comes crashing down on you. Gone is the berserker rage and iron confidence of a man given powers to rival his captors. You are stuck in a bedroom next door to the woman you just raped, with your only way out being through the same Elves who brought you up here in the first place. The thought of fighting your way out to one of the manor's many ships occurs to you, and in a flash of desperate panic you hook your fingers into your collar and pull from both sides. The flexible metal strains audibly, and you grin as freedom feels closer than it ever has.

But just before the collar breaks, new thoughts come. You remember Charal still lying unconscious on the bed, and start to consider how you could get her out of here as well. Fighting your way past three or four trained guards pushes the limits of your newfound confidence, but then you consider just how many more wait elsewhere in the compound. Even without Charal slung over your shoulder, you wouldn't make it a hundred feet before having your hamstrings sliced - and if you reached a ship, you would have no idea how to pilot it.

Fuck.

With a sharp breath out you release the collar, allowing the band to snap back into place, the metal feeling tighter than ever around your neck. You go to the door and slowly open it. One guard stands to the left of the double doors, but you don't have a chance to check for others. The head of the first one turns to you, and you shut the door before she can see who opened it. You're caught between a rock and a hard place, unable to flee without being interrogated or herded back into the bedroom, and unable to stay in the bedroom for fear of the rage-filled Elf stewing inside the bathroom.

You move to the bed and try to wake Charal, but shaking her only has her cringing and holding her hands up defensively.

"Gentle, please. Gentle," she mumbles, eyes closed and spit bubbling out the corners of her lips. Her belly is swollen, hopefully from Moradys forcing her to gorge on junk food alongside her rather than from some internal injury.

Charal turns her head to the side and spreads her legs for you, but you close them and throw the bottom half of the blanket over her cum-stained nethers. Whatever flickers of guilt you felt for what you just did to Moradys vanished at the sight of Charal's bruised thighs and gaping pussy, but that moral clarity gives you no clue as to what to do next.

Just as you consider throwing a chair through the window and leaping down to the courtyard, the bathroom door opens. Moradys steps out, her torn nightgown discarded, and limps over to the bed with a hand to her ass and a tight-lipped expression on her face. She doesn't spare you a single glance as she lifts up the covers and slides in past Charal, taking up a position at the left of the bed with her body turned towards the window. She lays there for a moment, staring blankly off into
space, then lifts up her wrist, pulls off her bracelet, mumbles something into it, and places it on the nightstand.

A few seconds later, two guards slip into the bedroom sans weapons, and one princess-carryes her out of the room while the other Elf picks up Charal's discarded clothes from a far corner.

You try to follow them as they leave, but the one with clothes in hands makes a point of slamming the doors shut in your face, making it wordlessly clear that no one said you could leave. Now you're faced with the same conundrum as before, though thankfully without the added complication of Charal. If she faces Moradys' rage, it will at least be after it's had time to work its violence on you.

Minutes pass, and Moradys makes no indication that she's doing anything other than settling in for the night. You waver about uneasily a ways past the foot of the bed, caught between a desire not to be noticed and a need to face whatever storm is coming your way. Her silence does nothing to satisfy either conflicting want, and you eventually move to the lounge area near the door to take a seat on one of the sofas facing the bed.

An hour - maybe more, maybe less - crawls by at a terribly slow pace, and still nothing happens. If this is some new mindgame meant to heighten your terror at what is to come, it's working. You're not so stupid as to think that nothing will happen to you after what you've done. You've made a power-mad narcissist feel powerless - you might as well have put a knife in her hands and told her to cut off your balls. Whatever is coming, you're certain it will make your own treatment of her look like schoolyard roughhousing.

You're quite surprised to wake up the next morning. You're even more surprised to find that no extremities had been removed from your person during the night. Your neck hurts from where you had draped it over the back of the wood sofa, but other than that and some tight leg muscles, you feel fine.

The sound of wood slapping on wood draws your attention to the wall across from the bed, where Moradys stands at her dresser, clothes in hand.

"Dress me," she says to you. Her tone is commanding, but not unordinarily so - and there's none of the hot fury you would expect from someone whose ass you fucked raw.

You shoot up from your seat and move over to her with a speed that surprises even you. She sets her dress down on the dresser, then hands you a pair of panties and waits expectantly. It's clear what she expects, but you're nervous and confused enough that you simply stare at the undergarment dumbly for a few moments.

Moradys clears her throat, and you immediately drop to your knees and hold the underwear out for her to step into. You then slide them up her soft thighs, looking for any sign of what you did to her, but there is none. Not a bruise, nor scrape, nor even a patch of rug burn from being driven against the floor over and over.

The panties reach her hips, and you let go of the side bands before realizing that her flaccid cock is hanging over the top like some albino elephant trunk. Moradys coughs again, and you use your fingers to stuff her length into the undergarment. If this is supposed to be your punishment, it's beyond light. You've long since grown numb to having her cock halfway down your throat - touching it for a few moments is nothing.

Next comes the dress, an absurdly complicated weave of different fabrics which, while beautiful
when laid over her pale skin, is nigh impossible for you to untangle. Moradys stares you down while you fumble with the thing, her expressionless eyes feeling as if they are burning a hole in you just as well as any branding iron. Once you get the dress figured out you help her put it on, tucking her buttocks and breasts into thick strips of fabric that leave more revealed than covered.

"You'll be accompanying me for the day."

Moradys walks past you, and waves you along with two fingers before leaving the bedroom. Two guards, one of them being the black-eyed Vizier, move to walk alongside her, and you try to keep up with their quick strides while fighting down the rising urge to flee. The short Vizier is having just as much trouble keeping up with her long-legged Mistress, and switches between stealing cautious glances at you and jogging after Moradys.

Your group descends through the gardens to Moradys' docked barge, and a few minutes later you're moving away from the plateau at a snail's pace. You had become used to the faster skiffs of the Wyches and Moradys' guards, and the slow trip is made all the more excruciating by your fervent need to know where you're going and what's going to be done with you - because surely, something will be done. You haven't forgotten last night, and you know that Moradys hasn't, either.

You steal a few furtive glances up at her from your position kneeling on the deck of the ship. She sits to your left on the bench behind you, drumming her fingers on your skull while she chats with her Vizier. The smaller woman seems to never leave her side, and even when Moradys is in her bedroom, she waits just outside the door. She's just as much the watchdog Ribara had been, absent the volatile temper that still makes the larger Elf so unpleasant to be around.

"What is it?" says Moradys, angling her head around to look you in the eye.

"Sorry!" you blurt out, completely unthinking in your response. Both woman look at you like you're a dimwit.

"You've been staring. It bothers me." Moradys narrows her eyes and searches yours for a clue as to the reason. It should be obvious - your rapist and rape-ee is caressing your hair like you're a beloved family pet. But you can't very well say that. Not to her face, and not in front of her underling.

"I saw something the other day," you respond after a moment of careful thought. You haven't been able to find an opportune time to put Ribara's plan into action, and you doubt you ever will - but she said Moradys needed to be told before the next Slaughter. This is as good as a time as any.

Moradys eyes you with a mild interest that increases greatly as you relay Ribara's concocted story. You tell her of Lady Drebesh, a regal-looking Dark Elf addressing a group of Wyches who fawn over her like a visiting Queen. Moradys asks what she looked like, and you answer with a careful description spoken as if you only half-remember the event. Moradys turns angry, then concerned, then thoughtful.

"I think I'll take a look for myself."

She presses her fingertips to your temples, and you prepare to have your lobes violated by a lightning bolt of neural activity coursing between her hands. When it doesn't come, you ease open your eyes, and Moradys pulls away.

"What the hell is wrong with you?"

She slaps you across the head, her hand moving so fast it's a barely perceptible blur. When she hits, you jerk to one side, but steady yourself on the deck before you can tip over. It's the sort of hit that
would have cracked your skull before the Shaper’s ‘improvements’. You suspect Moradys knows this, and has already begun to test the limits of the physical abuse you can endure.

"A Shaper did something to my brain." You hold your hands up to protect that same organ against a woman whose anger was just set aflame with those words. "Ribara dragged me there. I tried to run away."

Moradys lurches up from her seat towards you, then sits back down with a huff. "That fucking half wit."

She’s right on the mark with that muttered swear. Ribara had to have known Moradys would try to verify your claims by taking a look inside your mind. You knew that as well, but it was her plan, and only dumb luck that kept the whole thing from falling apart just then.

Moradys lets her interrogation of you end there, unable to do more than take you at her word. She sits in silence, chewing her lip, until a roar in the distance draws your attention to the smaller ship moving up alongside Moradys’. A small group of Elves come aboard, and one parts from the rest, bows to Moradys, then launches into a flattering introduction of how honored she is to be in the presence of one so strong, and cunning, and beautiful.

Moradys waves a hand, brushing aside the pleasantries, and the two begin what you soon realize is a business meeting. They discuss slaves as if they were cattle, deaths as if they were mere marks on a ledger, and money as if it were more important than either of the previous topics. The group departs, and Moradys’ barge continues its slow meandering through the trackless mists of Cummragh.

More groups arrive over the next few hours, and you get a very boring and unpleasant glimpse into what little work Moradys actually performs as the head of one of Cummragh’s households. The speed of the meetings and the lack of her own contributions to the conversations makes it clear she prefers to delegate, and by the last meeting even listening seems to have become too much for her to bear. She feeds pastries into your mouth one after the other, telling you when to chew and when to swallow, while a very stiff-looking Elf in chitinous armor makes her plea for greater troop allotments on her next realspace raid. Moradys waves her off with an assurance that she'll consider it, then orders the Vizier to return them home.

It's all work that could have been conducted over a video link, but you suppose some aspect of Dark Elf culture demands they do this bowing and scraping in person. Moradys looks so exhausted by a day of lounging and chatting that you can't imagine her doing this out of any real love of it.

You return home late that afternoon, hopeful that at some point you'll be able to confirm Charal is still breathing. When you last saw her she was beaten but breathing, and you can't imagine Moradys having had the time to order something worse done to her. To your disappointment, you don't see her that night. Nor do you see her the next day, when you're forced to once again accompany Moradys on her rounds through Cummragh’s mines and slave pens. You get another look at the arrival halls you came to this city through, where she first found you. Part of you expected the slave-packed halls to look a bit less frightening after having gone through so much here, but the crying wails and shrieking slave masters are just as terrible the second time around.

Just as unpleasant - though more annoying than anything - is the way Moradys treats you through that day and a half of sitting and walking. She calls you names, hits you, shoves you down, and makes a point of being pointlessly rough with every slave that brings her food or drink, both at home and aboard the barge.

Every time your fury boils over to the point where you can take no more and stand to face her, she merely freezes up and stares at you. The first time it happened, you backed down from sheer surprise
at how you seemed to cow her into submission. The next few times, you do so because it becomes clear from the way she meets your gaze that she's not afraid of you, and merely waiting to see what you'll do with her guards within arm's reach of you. Each time you tear your eyes away from hers and kneel, she heaps more verbal abuse on you and slaps you in the head a few times, but gives no worse than that.

It's not until the third evening after the Shaper's that you finally see Charal. She shuffles into Moradys' bedroom with a bottle of liquor and two glasses stacked in her other hand, looking even more timid and deferential than usual - her bruised flesh leaves no doubt as to why she's being so careful. What you do struggle to comprehend, as you stare at her with eyes wide and mouth agape, is just what the hell is wrong with her stomach. She looks nine months pregnant, giving her waddle the appearance of a woman worried her water might break at any moment.

"What did you do to her?" you gasp out, turning to face Moradys who stands near the room's window. She turns to glance at Charal, and a smile of recognition crosses her lips.

"Me? Nothing. Not that, anyway." She gestures at Charal's bare stomach, which juts out twice as far as her tits and strains at the gold chains running from her chastity belt to her nipple pasties. Moradys walks over to her and takes her by the shoulders, then rubs in circles across Charal's stomach while grinning at you. "This was all you."

You have nothing to say. No words, anyway. Just a mindless stuttering that escapes your slowly-moving lips.

"Oh, come now!" Moradys laughs. "You were so insistent on fucking her raw. Is it any surprise this happened?"

"That was a week ago!" you blurt out desperately. "Why does she look like that?"

Moradys jerks back in surprise and takes a step off to the side to examine Charal, clearly not seeing what you see in the same bizarre light. "She's pregnant, you imbecile!" she snaps at you. "Not bloated with cum."

"I know she's pregnant! Or, looks pregnant--" You let out a sharp breath and rub your forehead in confused frustration before gesturing at her again. "She shouldn't look like that for half a year! What did you do to her?"

To your own surprise, Moradys looks more shocked than anything. She eyes you doubtfully, takes another look at Charal, then looks to you again. "Six months?" she says.

"Yes, not a few days! Something's wrong with her!"

That anguished plea finally pierces the fog of Charal's own servile demeanor, and she looks between you and Moradys with a need to know more. From what little Charal told you of her life - what little of a 'life' it is - she's been here as long as she can remember. The Dark Elves prefer to grow their kids in vats, and you've yet to see any human younger than their late teens. She likely has no idea what the normal progression of a pregnancy is supposed to be.

Moradys gives a thoughtful look at Charal's belly as she chews her lips, then clicks her teeth and shakes her head. "I'm sure it's fine."

You know that Charal needs the immediate attention of a medical professional, but you hesitate to say so as you remember just who those professionals are. Before you can say anything more, Moradys decides enough concern has been paid to Charal, and thrusts her towards you with an
enthusiastic smile. Charal, for her part, looks deathly nervous at being the center of such attention.

"You'll take responsibility, won't you?" Moradys says to you. "I've always thought of Charal as the daughter I've never had, and I can't stomach the thought of her daughter growing up without a father."

"You know it's a girl?"

Moradys looks at you as if you've asked a supremely stupid question. "I'm sure it will be."

She gives Charal another push forward, putting her swollen belly right up against your own flat one. You grab Charal's arms to steady her, and she grasps your forearms with small hands that seem reluctant to take firm hold of you.

"Which is why you're going to marry!" says Moradys, taking a step away from the two of you. Charal merely stares blankly at your chest for a few seconds, and then her eyes go wide as she recalls having heard that word from some slave she worked alongside or some book she caught a glimpse of.

She looks up at you, her eyes meeting yours as solidly and unflinchingly as they ever have. Tears well up within them and stream down her cheeks like twin waterfalls. She cries more than you've ever seen someone manage, but remains completely still other than the quake of her shoulders and the tremble of her arms as she grips you with a sudden strength.

Moradys' eyes remain fixed on Charal, and her grin spreads impossibly wide as she reels back in what looks to be the start of raucous laughter. She clenches her jaw tight before that cackling can slip loose, and takes a few shuddering breaths in to steady herself before speaking.

"This will mean spending every night with him," she says to Charal. "You'll eat together, sleep together, bathe together... are you truly ready for that?"

Charal doesn't answer, except to gasp and collapse with her cheek flat against your chest. At first you fear that whatever is in her belly is about to break free, but then she breaks down into laughing cries of joy brought forth by Moradys' words.
The Thin White Duke of Death

Adrubal walks down the steps of the small pool, submerging her feet in warm water. Another step has the water lapping halfway up her shins, then at her thighs, then at the pendulous womanhood dangling between her naked thighs. Another few and she's standing on the pool's bottom, wading to the center with her hands and breasts tracing the waterline.

"Until you showed up, I thought I was without flaw." Her voice echoes across the curved walls and ceiling of the small temple chamber, easily reaching the Mon-keigh waiting behind her at the edge of the pool - a woman who Adrubal had first met on a drunken foray into a brothel with her warparty. The Elf had been drunk on liquor and high on the ecstasy of bloody conquest, and was offered Vala by the madame, assured that the slave was a virgin - untouched by the brutal passions of any other Elf. Adrubal had taken her, tossed her on the bed, prepared to rape her senseless... and then had gotten the tip of her nose torn off by the human's teeth. Adrubal had been too shocked to hit her back.

After that, they had talked. It was not something she had ever done with a Mon-keigh, and even in her addled state had been surprised to find such a nobly defiant creature among their rank. She bought the woman, took her home to her branch of the House Nathema hive, and collapsed into drunken sleep. The next morning when she saw who was chained to her bed, she remembered all too clearly what she had done, but struggled to make sense of her actions. Adrubal nearly threw Vala into the House's general slave population, but at the last moment decided to keep her and see where her decision took her.

Where it took her were new places - dangerous ones, which would have members of her own House plunging knives into her back if they caught wind of what ground she trod. Adrubal had risked everything for Vala, had given her everything, and had been repaid by lie upon lie that stretched all the way back to the night they first met.

"You did not make me weak," Adrubal calls out. "You showed me that I was already weak. You are a lesson, sent by the Goddess to force me to confront the truth."

Adrubal stops at the center of the pool. A jingle of bells chimes across the space, and seven human slaves are brought to the edge of the pool and forced to their knees. A white-masked Harlequin stands behind each, their metallic faces carved with seven of the eight sensations. Adrubal catches sight of the colorfully-sequined Joy standing to her right, and looks downward in reflexive shame and anger. Her reflection seems to grin back at her with just as much hollow mirth. She brings a hand back to her shoulder and swipes away the ripple-distorted image in a spray of water.

Joy.

No Harlequin would deny herself any of the eight feelings. They are there to be enjoyed - but not to be controlled by. Anger renders one an unthinking berserker on the battlefield. Grief twists pleasant memories of what one has lost into torturous reminders that make them hate what they crave to have returned to them. And joy... joy made Adrubal blinder than if her eyes had been plucked from their sockets.

One more look around the pool confirms that the Harlequins are ready, and Adrubal plunges herself under the water with her face tilted upward. The water's buoyancy threatens to force her back to the surface, but she thrusts her hands downward, cracking the stone of the pool's bottom and allowing her to work her way into newly-created finger holds.
The light above fades. Blood flows in from all sides, covering the top of the water and turning the world a shade of red that matches the murder in Adrubal's heart. It took a great deal of effort to find a family as large as seven to serve in the ritual. Groups like that tend to be broken up before they've even been put on slave ships, and doubly so by the time they reach the markets.

A glance to the left, and Adrubal spots the downward-pointed head of the smallest Mon-keigh, her ponytail floating about like the mists as blood spills out of her severed neck. It's always strange to see beings so small - creatures that look like her, but are born instead of made. Ugly things, that start small and weak before turning big and weak.

Adbrubal closes her eyes. Not in disgust or shame or thought, but to focus on the power rushing into her veins alongside the blood warming her flesh. Many things work differently in the Warp. Time, for one. Sacrifice, too. In realspace, blood offerings are the province of savage tribes crying out for rain or an end to disease. Here, it is the crown jewel of a culture that has grown so old and so learned that it has transcended science and sunk back into the swirling depths of mysticism with a new appreciation for the unseen and unknowable. Life is taken, blood is offered, and She Who Thirsts drinks.

Adbrubal's muscles seize. Her nerves burn, her brain rattles in her skull, and her mouth opens in a bubbling scream that floods her lungs with bloody water. Each passing second submerged in this morass of suffering threatens to kill her. Like a fly come too close to a bug zapper, she is an Elf reaching a hand too near Her gnashing teeth. Yet still Adbrubal remains underwater, legs kicking out violently, until the force of her fingers gripping the bottom of the pool cracks the stone straight through. She floats up to the surface, and gasps as her face breaches the waterline.

But no air comes. She stands up, throws her head forward, and vomits up a stomachfull of bloody pool water. Then, she breathes. Seven bodies lay at the edge of the pool, their heads dunked into the water and Harlequin handlers standing at their feet. Adbrubal whirs about in a circle to locate the remaining slave, who sits on the floor a short distance away.

Vala's hands are shackled, and her ankles are chained together. She hasn't tried to run, though - not since her first try a few days prior. Her hair is a bit longer, the flattened mohawk Adbrubal had shaved into it now barely visible against the mess of red stubble allowed to grow up on the rest of her head. It looks hideous. Everything about her looks hideous now. Adbrubal rises from the pool, wringing out her own reddened hair and reveling in the look of horror playing across Vala's face. This is what Adbrubal should have been enjoying all along - not the cheap pleasure created by Vala's deceitful play-acting

Adbrubal stops in front of Vala, letting some blood drip from her cock onto the latter's bent leg, then squats down and lifts up the woman's chin.

"I'm going to kill him," she says softly. "No matter what you say. But if you beg me to do it, I will let you live."

Vala's bottom lip trembles, but her eyes refuse to meet Adbrubal's and she says nothing. Adbrubal shoves her face away, then sighs and runs a hand over the left side of Vala's chest. Her left breast is gone, replaced by a mess of scar tissue that feels like rippling waves under Adbrubal's fingertips. Not soft, like the right side. She had done that to Vala when the slave tried to escape, grabbing the knife from her belt and carving off the first body part to come to mind.

Before that, it had just been beatings. Crying ones - more tears coming from Adbrubal than Vala - where she begged Vala to explain what Lady Moradys had told her at the White Plume's arena. Vala couldn't answer, and that was when Adbrubal stopped getting angry. That was when she got cold.
"Then you will die." Adrubal stands back up, using the top of Vala's head for leverage. "I will show you that man's severed head before I hold you over the pool and cut your throat."

Vala doesn't look up to plead for mercy or to search Adrubal's expression for signs of how serious she is. The bodies laying in front of her are evidence of how little of the former there is to be had, and Adrubal's unwavering tone has the air of a solemn vow. It is one Adrubal has every intention of upholding - but not at this pool.

In two days, Lady Drebesh will be gone. Her Eternium Pit will be Adrubal's, and she will give Vala new life there. No, not just Vala - Adrubal as well. She will murder Vala, again and again, until her mind has been broken by hundreds of deaths and all that she knows is what is in front of her - Adrubal, holding the power of life and death. A lover, a Master, and a God.

She knows she can do it. She knows she can kill Moradys, and Drebesh, and make a blank slate of the woman seated before her. The only uncertainty rests in her own feelings, and whether a hundred murders will satisfy the righteous hatred she feels at the slightest imagining of Vala's face.

A hundred deaths, she promises herself. It's more chances than Vala deserves. Whether that is enough to satisfy Adrubal will decide whether Vala receives a hundred new lives, or one fewer.

You know that you should stop this charade before it goes any further. It should be easy, since you wouldn't even have to look Charal in the face when you do it. But the woman burying her face in your chest is crying and laughing with such joy that you can't do anything other than hold her tightly and be swept along by the tide of emotions.

"That sounds... great, Mistress," you say with a forced smile only Moradys can see. "But you need to get her looked at. Something isn't right with her body."

You briefly wonder if being in the Warp screwed with the flow of time enough to condense nine months of pregnancy into a week, but are quick to discard that idea. Cummragh may be a twisted hellscape of metal and rock, but time seems to flow perfectly normally when not compared to realspace. It's only within the seething energies of the Warp itself that natural processes become this strangely disjointed - but as far as you know, Charal hasn't been marooned anywhere like the dreamworld you were briefly caught in with Ribara. It seems far more likely that Moradys found some way to fake a pregnancy, and that this is all some sick practical joke with a punchline yet to be sprung.

"Oh, fine." Moradys heaves a sigh and pulls the two of you apart. "If it will shut you up."

She kneels down in front of Charal and presses her ear to her slave's bulging belly, then runs her palms along the sides and screws her face up in intense concentration.

"Yes, there it is. I can feel it." Her hands stop moving and her eyes go wide. "I can feel it," she mutters again. Moradys traces a few more slow patterns around Charal's stomach, then shoots up and goes to the room's exit.
"G-guards!" she shouts as she throws open both doors. Two helmeted elves enter, and the Vizir follows shortly after. "Put her in a solitary room." Moradys points at a bewildered Charal. "A nice one. Double her rations."

She turns to Charal. "Not a drop of liquor, understand me? Or your child will come out a drooling retard suitable only for the biomasser."

"Mistress, I have never drank liquor," Charal mutters at the floor.

Moradys scoffs. "Yes, and you're not about to start now." She waves at the three Elves, who gently escort their waddling charge from the bedroom.

"And watch her!" Moradys calls after them, grabbing the door before it can close. "Stand inside the room!"

With that last order she finally steps back and allows the doors to shut, leaving the two of you alone.

"What about me?" you ask uneasily, glancing in the direction of your departed fiancee. Moradys had indicated you'd be allowed to sleep in a real bed with another human being for once, but reneged on that promise a minute later.

"You aren't married yet, are you?" Moradys goes to the seating area to the right of the door and unstops the bottle of liquor, then pours two glasses, sits down on the couch, and pats the spot beside her with a mischievous smile.

She's right that you and Charal are not yet married, but she’s wrong that you're not married at all. That's why you shouldn't be humoring this, and that's why you shouldn't sit down beside the woman spreading her legs and resting a hand just above her groin. But Charal had been too happy, and Moradys looks so angered by your hesitance that you take a seat beside her.

She lurches forward and picks up the glasses, then hands you one while fingering the rim of the other. Her free hand goes to your thigh, and you go stiff at the combined revulsion created by her touch and the noxious smell of industrial-grade chemicals wafting up from your drink.

Moradys locks eyes with you, smiles, then tips your glass to your face while taking a sip from her own. It smelled bad, tastes worse, but it feels worst of all. Your throat burns from the smallest sip, and your stomach explodes in pain when the first drops reach it. Whatever that Shaper did to make you stronger clearly did not extend to handling Dark Elf intoxicants better than before. You drop the glass to your lap, managing to catch it in the cleft of your thighs while you cough up a lung or two.

"Good?" Moradys says, setting her empty glass on the table without any hint of being gripped by the same hacking convulsions. You try to politely tell her that it's the most god awful bile you've ever tasted, a thousand times worse than guzzling Ribara's piss, but all you can manage is some wordless sputtering in between thwacks of your fist to your chest.

Amidst your violent spasms, your head starts to swim. It's not as powerful a feeling as back at the arena, when Irunal had forced some alcohol into your mouth, but it's plenty noticeable. You're drunk. You gradually calm your body, and try to lean forward on your knees to stop the room from spinning, but your elbows narrowly miss your thighs and you fall forward. Moradys catches you by the shoulders before you fold in two, and you right yourself against the back of the couch.

"You're such a lightweight." She grins at you again, and this time you're addled enough to reciprocate. Her hand returns to your thigh, not grabbing or squeezing, only resting. Somehow, she looks older than usual. Her face has more lines, thin creases that gather at the edges of her eyes. At
first, you chalk it up to the distant lighting of the yellow ceiling lamp casting long shadows - or maybe you're simply gazing into her eyes longer than you've ever dared before.

Then, you realize where the change came from. She's smiling - not just with her thin lips and pearly teeth, but with her eyes. You're so used to seeing those twin pits of orange-mottled blackness betraying no emotion other than anger or lust that you open your mouth in surprise. Moradys uses the hand not on your thigh to grip your chin, tilts your head towards her until you're fully facing her, then leans in and presses her lips to yours.

You freeze up. How could you not, after everything she's done to you. You're still waiting for the inevitable drop of the axe for what you did to her two nights ago. Even what thin sliver of enjoyment your body might receive from the soft movements of her lips is quickly quashed by guilt. You have a wife - a real one - and you're a hair's breadth from falling under the sway of the Elf who tore you apart.

For weeks you had cursed Vala for seemingly forgetting you, and now the shoe is well and truly on the other foot. You hate how beautiful the glow of her orange eyes are. You hate how quick you are to smile and laugh with your rapist. Most of all, you hate the part of you that wants not to hate her.

Moradys' hand rubs up and down your thigh while the other moves from your chin to your hairless chest. All is silent except the occasional crinkle of fabric as she angles herself this way and that to attempt to draw out a passion from you that will match her own. When she fails to find it, she goes deeper, hooking her hand around your neck and tongue-fucking you while her other hand slips up your skirt. The crawl of her fingers up your thigh makes you shake and tremble, until finally her fingertips touch the head of your hardening cock - and you push away from her.

"Stop!" you exclaim, holding her by the shoulders and hanging your head. "Stop, stop, stop." You mutter the word down to a whisper, then continue the chant in your mind as if to quell your own burgeoning desire.

When you finally look up, Moradys is staring at you. What you didn't expect was to see such terrible disappointment so plainly displayed on her face. The pained expression is gone in an instant, replaced by a familiar cruel and mocking smile.

"Can you not get hard? Should we skip to the part where I fuck your ass until it bleeds?" She grabs at your groin, and gives your balls a painful squeeze before you manage to force her hand away. "You preferred it that way, didn't you? No wonder your wife jumped on the first working cock she could find."

Moradys' face is a wicked sneer. She shoves the side of your turned head, slaps you in the face, and digs her nails into your neck until you grab hold of both of her wrists to hold her still.

"Pussy!" she spits at you. "Bitch! Cuckold!

Her right hand yanks free of your left, and she catches you across the cheek with her nails. Blood flows hot, and your anger burns brighter as you grab hold of her again, far more firmly this time.

"Shut up," you whisper to her. Despite your squeezing hands and flaring nostrils, Moradys' smile only broadens. It's not a genuine smile, like when you had first turned to face her. From the nose down, she's all teeth and upturned lips. But her eyes are those of a hungry shark.

"Don't tell me to shut up. I'm the one who fucked you until you cried." Her balled-up fists relax, and her fingertips stroke the tops of your hands.
You explode. With a grunt and a roar you shoot forward, grabbing her by her hair bun and pulling down with all the force you can manage in your seated position. Moradys shrieks and grabs your wrist behind her head.

"Shut up!" you shout, the words sounding quite drunk even to you.

"Or you'll do what?" Moradys forces a trembling smile and takes one hand away from your wrist, then rests it on your chest.

The gentle touch of her fingers and the confused feelings they give rise to makes you angrier than when she had dug her nails into your skin. You swing Moradys' head downward, and her cheek smacks into your thigh. She tries to rise, but you hold her there, uncertain of what to do next - and her hand, ever searching, returns to your groin. This time, you do not remove it. Instead, you use your hold on her loosening hair bun to drag her further up your lap, which Moradys makes no attempt to resist. In fact, she crawls closer on knees and one elbow.

Your free hand goes to one side of the skirt, and Moradys' to the other. The two of you move in sync, dragging down the garment as you buck in place on the sofa until your manhood pops free and slaps into your belly. You force Moradys' head downward and she gasps, working her lips against the underside of your length while struggling to squeeze a hand over your thigh so that she can grab onto your cock.

You take hold of her wrist before she can do so, and bring her head upward, watching as she's forced to use only her tongue to maneuver your glans into her mouth. Once it's in, she doesn't let go. She dives downward, not stopping until her lips meet the flesh of your groin. Whatever softness lingered in your cock vanishes in that instant, and the awesome warmth of her throat nearly has you releasing your hold on her hair.

Not that you let go. You wind your fingers up in the messy bun as if grabbing hold of a bundle of yarn, then push down on Moradys' head before she can bring it back up. She gags, coughs, blows snot out through her nostrils, and digs the nails of her left hand into the inside of your leg, but you keep your cock buried deep in her throat. You know that she could bite clean through it if she wanted to. You also know that you shouldn't have fallen for her trap, shouldn't allow yourself to remain stuck in it, and shouldn't be enjoying it as much as you are.

But you can't help yourself. All of the fear and disgust she's drilled into you with her cock vanishes under a surge of dominant triumph. This isn't like bedding your wife, your equal and partner who you swore to share half your life with. Nor is it like holding Charal while she cringes at your touch, as if you're some demigod positioned between the untouchable Elves and her own unthinkably low station. This is you, a mere mortal, snatching a Goddess from the peaks of heaven and dragging her down into the dirt to degrade into a whore.

Moradys' nails slash across your thighs like little daggers, and you finally let her up. The pain is nothing, not when compared with the sight of her drool-stained chin and bleary eyes. Her tongue reaches out for the head of your cock, but you pull her away before she can gather up the globule of precum forming atop the slit. She looks at you with a blank, open-mouthed expression, and you return her gaze with one of wide-eyed lust.

"Beg for it," you gasp out. You can't believe how hard you're breathing and how fast your heart pounds despite you remaining so still. Your body, like your mind, is on overdrive, every sense dialed up to eleven and every muscle twitching with an urgent need to be used.

"I'll do anything to have you." Moradys tilts her head to the side, allowing her to meet your eyes with one of her own. "What do you want of me?"
You want her to let you go. You want her to tell you she'll never let you go. You hate her, but can't decide whether you'd rather have her tell you that she hates you or loves you. You want to kiss her lips, or split them open with a punch, or maybe first one then the other.

People have long spoke of hate and love being two sides of the same coin, but you've never understood that so thoroughly until now. She occupies so much of your thoughts, and even a timeless eternity spent staring into her eye gives you no clue as to how large a figure you loom in hers. And that, you decide, is what you really want - to make an impression on her just as indelible as the one she's left on you.

But you can't say that. Not without giving up the power that has your cock harder than it's ever been and your tormentor more broken than you've ever seen. In the end, you say nothing, keeping your lips pursed tight as Moradys opens her own and accepts you back into her mouth. This time you allow her to move up and down with regular motions, but your tightly-wound fingers remain as a reminder that she moves because you allow it.

Her lips never leave your cock, and it's only a matter of minutes until her wet sucking becomes too stimulating for you to hold back any longer. Your mind could sit here and watch this forever, but your cock wants nothing more than to shoot a load down her throat.

The first wave of orgasmic energy hits, and you press Moradys to your crotch. She grunts in protest, but those sounds are cut short when a rope of cum shoots into the opening of her throat. She gags and nearly coughs your seed up, but her lips remain as tightly-locked as ever.

The next shots of cum are taken down her throat, visible as slight bulges in her throat that move in undulating waves. By the time the last of your jizz slips down her throat, you feel drained dry, yet hornier than ever before. Your cock remains hard, but the overstimulation of Moradys' continued suckling becomes uncomfortable. You pull her away, this time raising her head up so that it's level with your own.

Moradys opens her mouth and extends her tongue, showing you that not a drop of your seed remains unswallowed. You put your right hand on her cheek and stick your thumb inside her mouth in preparation to feel about inside her, when her jaws clamp tight on the probing digit.

You shout and try to pull back, but Moradys' hold is even firmer than the one you have on her hair. If you pull any harder, you'll be leaving the skin of your thumb behind. You force yourself to relax and turn towards her, looking into her eyes as blood streams down her chin and dribbles onto the sofa.

After a few seconds more, her jaws relax - but you don't pull away this time. You slide your thumb further in, until she's able to close her lips over the wounds she carved into you with her teeth. She suckles, taking your blood inside of her with just as much demanding need as when she had slurped down your cum.

All the while, you move closer, until you're so close that your lips touch the first knuckle of her mangled thumb. Moradys' lips part, and your thumb slides from her mouth. The hand remains, though, stroking her cheek and painting a bloody stripe from mouth to hairline.

You lean in, and your lips meet. She tastes like acrid liquor, salty cum, and bitter blood, but the feel of her tongue snaking around yours has you ignoring all of that and pressing your mouth more firmly to hers. The grip you have on her hair loosens to the point that you're merely cupping the back of her head, and the complicated bun she had spent so much time on finally spills into loose strands, covering your hand and forearm.
No matter how deep you force your tongue or how passionately you work your lips, it never feels like enough. You throw yourself onto Moradys, pinning her to the sofa and taking hold of her throat while panting hot and heavy on her open lips. Your dick is still hard, and grinds against her own erection which has sprung free of panties far too small to contain it. Precum and sweat combine into a natural lube, allowing you to grind forcefully against her to create more of both.

Moradys reaches up to your face, strokes your cheek, brushes your hair... and then pulls out a clump of it. You shout in pain and summon your old anger just like she wanted, squeezing her throat until she turns red in the face. She gurgles, smiles, and throws one foot over your back to urge you in closer.

You oblige, but not before reaching between your bodies and pointing your dick downward. It slips between her sweaty cheeks and strains at her hole for a moment, then pops inside as you slide up her body. Then, you fuck her - first hard and fast, then slow and measured. You move from the couch to the bed, your treatment of her growing less furious and more tender as the night wears on.

Moradys stops provoking you, instead falling into the same rhythm of slow undulations and gentle caressing that has you driving her into the bed over and over. She locks her legs around your back when you cum, and you thrust your face into the pillow beside her head. You don't want her to feel the tears welling in your eyes, and you certainly don't want her to see them.

It's not that you feel safe - it's that you feel needed. Desired beyond rational limits by someone who could have anyone. Even the atrocities she's directed at you seem to take on a new light, becoming evidence of how thoroughly you're wanted, and how much sway you hold over her mind.

When you finally begin to drift off, it's to the feeling of Moradys' fingers stroking your scalp and her heels rubbing the small of your back. She refuses to let go of you, even though it's been half an hour since you've had anything other than a dry orgasm. Your balls have long since run dry of seed, but you keep fucking her, your movements continuing until exhaustion finally overtakes you, and you fall asleep.

You wake with all the well-deserved shame of a man who fucked a stripper at his bachelor party. Your head throbs against the inside of your skull, but your nausea is far worse. For once, you wish you had a hangover bad enough to fool yourself into believing last night had been driven by drunken lust, and not your own unbridled passion.

The bathroom door is closed, and you can hear the shower running. You fear the inevitable moment where you're forced to look Moradys in the eye. Maybe this is her revenge - not making you powerless, but letting you take it for yourself and seeing just how long you can juggle that hot coal before you get burned.

The shower shuts off, and a minute later the door opens. You shove yourself under the covers until only the top half of your head is peeking out, then watch as Moradys crosses the room. She's naked except for the towel wrapped around her head, and her wet feet slap against the floor with each step. She sees that you're awake, then goes to the dresser and begins rifling through the drawers with her back turned.

"Did I say that you could sleep in my bed?"

You frown, but say nothing as you slip out and pull on your skirt. She hadn't said you could, but her legs locked around your back had seemed as firm an order as anything.
"Last night proved it." Moradys takes a dress out, holds it up to examine, then sets it down on the dresser. "I've grown bored with you. I'll be leaving you with Ribara full-time."

"What?" You stare at her in disbelief, taking a few steps towards her. "But you said--"

She flashes a sad smile back at you. "That I hate you? That I love you?" She snorts in amusement and turns back around. "You're not significant enough to warrant either one."

Angry tears well in your eyes, and you advance on her, then grab her by the shoulder and spin her around so that her buttocks press into the dresser. Gone are any worries of what this woman might do to you for manhandling her so roughly outside the narrow confines of sex. You feel sick, put close to vomiting by only a few choice words from her.

"I hate you." The words come through clenched teeth, and you grab her wrist and pull it towards you before repeating the strained utterance.

Moradys eyes you coolly, then grabs your wrist and pulls your hand free of hers. The strength and control she shows in doing so is nothing like the half-hearted resistance of the two times you forced yourself on her. This is overwhelming power she's showing you, and you can do nothing but grimace as she pushes your arm back towards you.

"Then you should be glad to be rid of me. Are you worried about what will become of Charal?"

Now that she mentions it, you are - but the thought hadn't even crossed your mind before that.

"I'll send her with you. Why would I want some screaming infant haunting my home?"

Your hand clenches into a fist at your side, and you just stand there. Her blank expression tells you that the conversation is over, that you should stand in a corner like a good slave until she's done dressing. Last night, all the wrong she had inflicted on you were forgiven, justified in the new light of the hard-forged connection you shared with her. Now, you find out that was only imagined. It's just as you thought before. The beatings, the rape, the humiliation - all of it was just a momentary diversion for someone who has now decided to cast you aside. You refuse to back down, wordless anger playing across your face, and Moradys leans back against the dresser.

"Do you think I was being serious?"

"What?" you say uneasily, taking a step back.

"It was a joke. I'm quite fond of them."

Your jaw drops open, and you close it so fast you bite your tongue, interfering with your desperate need to speak. "Now? Or last night?" you exclaim.

She stares at you for a moment.

"Are you joking now, or were you joking last night?" you say again, gesturing frantically.

Again, she meets your pleading eyes with ones that betray not a hint of emotion. "Why would it matter? Don't you hate me?"

You make a sound somewhere between a disgusted scoff and a pained wheeze, then turn around and stalk back towards the bed. You sit down and hang your head in your hands, the full weight of your pathetic outburst finally hitting you. Things would be so much easier if you only had to deal with one captor that is far less sharp than the one standing before you now. Yet the moment that idea...
threatened to become reality, you reeled back at the sight of it.

"Hey." Moradys says, then beckons you forward with a finger. "Come here."

You glare at her in an attempt to communicate some small fraction of your turbulent emotions, and Moradys brings a fist down on her dresser, hard enough to splinter the wood.

"I gave you an order."

Still staring at her like your eyes could burn holes in her, you reluctantly rise from the bed and stalk over. Her body seems to invite yours in, and the way her shoulders tense up as you approach only encourages you to press your body to hers. You take her by the shoulders, feeling more jealous and frustrated than aroused, and hold her with a firmness that borders on the violent. She opens her mouth to speak, preparing to lay another blow on your wounded ego, but you press your lips to hers before she can say a word. It's the only way you know to shut her up.

After a few moments, silence seeks to be your goal. Your lips move against hers, re-tracing the same movements they took the night before, and your cock hardens. Moradys' does so as well, and in her nudity it rubs against your naked abdomen, demanding you take hold of it. You do, and Moradys grinds into you even harder, only for her to then push you away with a finger to the chest.

"You're getting married today, remember?"

"Today?"

"Why not? It's beautiful out."

You cast a glance over at the window and the green mists drifting by for miles outside, seeing none of the strange beauty Moradys seems to see. Or maybe she's joking again.

Your second wedding day is nothing like the first. The latter had been a quiet affair, small and comfortable with only a few of your and Vala's closest friends and family. This one is loud, large, and the most socially uncomfortable experience of your life.

Moradys has all of the human slaves and a great deal of her personal guard herded onto twin barges, then takes the ships to a secluded location a good distance away from the manor. Throughout the trip her Vizir stands at her side, sifting through Terran texts with an ocular computer worn over one eye, relaying to Moradys what exactly a marriage ceremony entails. You're given a handful of groomsmen - none of whom you know the names of - and handed a dark gray tunic which, when worn with your skirt and sandals, makes you look like a citizen of Terran antiquity.

You reach the wedding location, a plateau topped by an expanse of stone and gravel with leafless bushes and spidery trees bearing glowing purple fruit. The place is devoid of any people, but within minutes of the barges docking alongside it, becomes a crowded park devoid of the usual mirth one would expect from such a place. None of the slaves seem to have any sense of what's happening, and likely fear they're all about to be slaughtered en masse for some minor crime committed by one of their number.

The Vizir takes you up onto a low stone platform beneath a metal gazebo, then sharply orders the 'guests' into two rectangular sections - the guards on the right, the slaves on the left - leaving an aisle down the middle that leads back to the barges.

A sound breaks the silence - crying, coming from the ship a hundred feet ahead of you. Charal
emerges from one of the lower decks, her brunette hair done up in an elaborate bun and a black dress clinging to her olive skin. The design of the garment leaves her belly naked, reminding you all too clearly what strange responsibility awaits you at the end of this.

It's a moment fraught with all sorts of bizarre emotions, which Charal seems to share. Two female slaves flank Charal, who makes the long walk amidst blubbering crying broken by fits of joyous laughter. By the time she comes close enough to look up at you from the bottom of the steps, her eyes are bloodshot and snot drips from both nostrils.

No one else on the plateau seems to know what to make of all this. The helmeted guards lined up in neat little rows are unreadable beneath their bug-eyed masks, but you're sure they're familiar enough with their Mistresses' strange desires to chalk this up to another manic episode. Moradys is nowhere to be seen, though you're sure she's laughing her ass off from whatever viewing spot she found.

The slaves are simply confused, but you spot a few understanding frowns throughout the crowd - humans who were taken from their homes at an old enough age to remember all too well what sort of ceremony this is. You're tempted to mirror their disgusted glares, but one look at Charal's beaming face has you determined to put on a smile and act your heart out. For her, this is real - perhaps the most real moment of her life.

You take her hands and help her up the last step, then hold them while the Vizir begins the ceremonies. The information she gleans from her texts is spotty at best, but you remember enough of your wedding to fill in the gaps and stumble through each step. You offer wedding vows that sound more like an apology than a loving affirmation, but they're better than Charal's - she's so unused to being put on the spot that she freezes into silence when faced with the prospect of speaking aloud in front of a hundred people.

The Vizir says that you may now kill the bride, and you correct her final misunderstanding with actions instead of words. You draw Charal towards you, plant a brief kiss on her lips while she remains anxiously rigid in your arms, then pull back and look her in the eyes. She stares up at you anxiously, uncertain of what comes next. You're not really sure, either. Before you can wonder too much, the Vizir drives you down the aisle towards the waiting barge. Moradys is waiting there, and motions for you and Charal to take a seat on the bench running along the port side.

Next come the wedding guests, though you notice something odd about the people boarding your barge. Before, the passengers of each ship had been evenly split between slave and guard. This time, only Elves are boarding your ship, with a token force of guards going along with the humans on the other ship. They soon go below deck, leaving you, Charal, Moradys, and the Vizir alone with a few guards posted at the corners of the ship.

"Did you enjoy yourself?" Moradys says to Charal, leaning down to make her smile apparent to the seated woman.

"This is amazing," Charal sobs, clinging to you tightly. You resist a groan and wrap your arms around her, reminding yourself that Moradys will get her entertainment whether you play along or not. The least you can do is treat this as genuine and let Charal hold onto her illusion as long as possible.

"Where are we going?" you ask Moradys, noticing the other barge heading back in the general direction of the manor as yours takes a separate path.

"Well, you're married now," Moradys says, as if that answers that. When you don't comment, Moradys continues with a sly smile. "There's a very obscure statute buried in the laws covering the management of Cummragh's slave populations. One which I hadn't known existed until my Vizir
brought it to my attention." She gives a tip of the head to the small woman standing next to her, indicating for her to speak.

"If a male slave impregnates a female slave, the former will become property of the latter's owner until such time as the latter's pregnancy has been terminated."

The Vizir rattles off the words in one go, then takes a deep breath in and falls silent. You look from her to Moradys, then hover a hand above Charal's belly. You're a little afraid to touch it - as if that might have whatever potentiality is waiting inside suddenly becoming real.

"But Mistress, she's almost there. It's only going to be..." You trail off, unsure of how to conclude that thought. Nothing about Charal's pregnancy thus far has followed the normal course of nature, and any number you tried to put on the remaining duration would be pure guesswork. Her child - your child, if this is to be believed - could pop out in two minutes, or Charal could carry on this like this for two months. Neither would surprise you any more than what you've already seen.

"Until it is terminated," Moradys says, raising a lecturing finger to you. "Not born, or finished - terminated."

You stare at her blankly for a moment, then lean back in realization. The Dark Elves, in their inhumanity, had never considered that one of their kind could actually allow a human pregnancy to be brought to term and then cared for. Theirs is a culture sustained on theft and murder, and the idea of giving instead of taking is unthinkable to them.

"You are going to kill my baby?" Charal stammers out, looking between you and Moradys with blatant terror.

Moradys looks confused for a moment, but quickly replaces that expression with cruel mirth. "Yes, we're heading to the Shaper right now! They're going to rip it out of you and toss it down the trash chute!"

Charal screams, Moradys laughs, and the majority of the trip to your unknown destination is spent trying to calm Charal down and assure her that Moradys was only joking. Which, as she told you that same morning, is something she's quite fond of. Eventually you get your new wife to remain still, though she's sweating buckets and easily competes with Moradys for lack of skin color. Keeping hold of her so that she doesn't try to flee right over the side of the barge, you ask Moradys where you're going, and she tells you - the Cult of the White Plume's arena.

You were supposed to go there yourself this same evening to lend your usual mental aid to the Wyches, but Moradys has other plans. She tells you that she's looked into Lady Drebesch's recent activities, and has deduced that House Nathema is planning to make an offer of sponsorship to the Cult.

That would be no great loss, Moradys assures you - and assures herself - but what she can't allow to happen is to be humiliated in the eyes of the city by having one of her assets plucked out from underneath her. The physical arena is hers, and will remains hers no matter what, but the sight of it empty would make her a laughing stock.

So, she tells you, she'll beat Drebesch to it. She'll go to the arena, reveal Charal's pregnancy, then evict Ribara and tell her that the Cult's services are no longer needed. If they make a scene - and you get the impression she hopes for such a thing - the guards waiting below deck will take back the arena by force.

As Moradys ends her excited explanation, a guard pokes her head out of the stairwell leading below
deck and raises a clenched fist to her Mistress. The guard bears the familiar purple sun of House Tenebrim on her belly, but wears no helmet and carries no halberd. Instead, she carries a plasma rifle with a similar-looking pistol slung at her waist.

Moradys waves her back down, and begins pacing with anxious energy while her Vizir goes off to finalize preparations. A few more guards show themselves as the trip continues, and you see that they're equipped just like the first one. Nudity aside, they're no longer just for show - they're ready for battle.

The presence of so many heavily-armed Elves near your unborn child fills you with unease, and the sight of the arena emerging from the mists ahead only heightens that feeling. You had been so certain that Ribara's plan, if it even came to fruition, would be some hamfisted assassination attempt that Moradys saw coming from a mile away - not a subtle web of politics that dragged her and you down into inescapable doom.

"Mistress, let Charal stay on the ship!" you say to Moradys, putting as much as your body between her and Charal as you can manage. "You don't need to show Ribara, do you? Just let her stay here."

For a moment, Moradys looks angry - likely at the way you second-guessed her carefully-wrought plans. Then she glances down at Charal's distended stomach, and her eyes go wide as she realizes how right you are. She uses her bracelet to call the Vizir back, and has Charal taken below deck.

It's such a clumsy oversight for such a cunning woman, but you suppose everyone has their blind spots - and Moradys' is other people. Not using them or abusing them, but caring about them. You saw how her eyes flashed when she first sensed the life in Charal's womb. For some reason, she wants what lays inside. You don't know why, but you know that you don't like it.

Your barge joins the other ships converging on the arena, herded into tight lines by flashing lights hovering weightless in the air. The lines split back up as you draw closer to the stem-like cylinder running down from the flowertop of the arena proper, and you dock alongside one of the dozens of platforms running up and down the length of the structure.

You, Moradys, and the Vizir depart, leaving behind the small army of guards contained within the Trojan Horse you arrived in. The handful of flattened discs around you converge into a central walkway that leads into the tower, where you join the thousand other arrivals streaming into the building.

You fail to spot a single human in their midst, and receive more than a hate-filled looks. Disdain is something you're more than used to in Cummragh, but not outright hate - they look at you as if you're a heretic who has stepped foot in a sacred temple. But they see who you're walking behind, and they say nothing.

You come to a vast room that seems to span the entire width of this level of the tower. It is ringed with tube-shaped lifts set into the walls, and you can see shadows moving up and down the opaque plastic tubes as visitors are ferried upward to the arena's stands. Moradys leads you to one with doors quite a bit larger than the others, with no other Elves waiting in front of it. The Vizir hits the button for her, and the doors open instantly. The three of you step inside, and no one else follows. Wherever this lift leads, it's to somewhere the majority aren't allowed to go. A private viewing box, perhaps - the arena has more than a few of those, though you've never seen them put to use.

The doors close, and the lift shoots upward. Within the span of a few seconds, the room faintly visible through the tube has disappeared. Despite the tremendous speed of the elevator, you're hit by none of the usual bone-shattering force that you get every time you're forced to ride the lift to the Wyches' private spaces. Yet another benefit of having your body tampered with, though it hasn't
been long enough for you to decide if the positives truly outweigh the negatives. Swooning like a drunk whore whenever Ribara gets close could become old very quickly.

As that thought leaves, a wave of nausea hits you. Not because of your idle musing, and not because of the lift's upward surge. You stare at Moradys' back, considering just what awaits her up above. You're not sure when it will happen, or where it will be, or what form it will take, but you know what's coming for her - death. Moradys glances back, and you wipe the pained expression from your face before she can read it too plainly.

"You look pensive. Are you worried I'll no longer call on you now that you're married?"

You open your mouth to speak, but then close it and simply shake your head. Anything more risks betraying the fact that there are deeper worries biting at the corners of your mind.

"Oh, don't worry. Charal will understand if you come to bed with a limp." She turns back around and rocks back and forth on her heels, clasping her hands behind her back. "And you won't mind if I fuck her now and then, will you? I'll wait until after she's given birth, of course. Threesomes were never my favorite."

Everything she says is venomous bile, but the words themselves are like white noise in your ears. All you hear is her voice, full of playful amusement, and tears well in your eyes. You blurt out a short laugh, drawing the bewildered attention of both women, and wipe your eyes with your forearm before they can see how wet they are.

The more floors you pass, the more uncertain you become that you're doing the right thing. Even if this ends with you still alive, how will Ribara respond to Charal carrying your unborn child? Will she toss them off the side of the arena, and kill two birds with one stone? You still don't know what Moradys has planned for your child, but you can say with confidence that she doesn't plan on killing it the moment she gets her hands on it, which is more than you can say for Ribara.

And what about Vala? You know Moradys well enough to assume that she would fuck and torture your wife in front of you to draw out those fiery emotions she's all too fond of. Ribara would only see an obstacle to your imagined love for her, and destroy it. As distasteful an idea as it is, you prefer the devil you know.

But that's not what has you sweating bullets and tapping your thigh nervously. Despite everything Moradys has done to you, and despite everything you want to do to her, you feel guilty. More than you ever have in your life. You might be surrounded by inhuman monsters, but your heart is as soft and human as ever. You don't have it in you to lead someone to their death.

"It's a trap!" you blurt out, clenching your fists at your sides and taking a step towards Moradys.

She glances back and furrows her brow. "What?"

"Today is a trap! Ribara wants to kill you."

Rather than being shocked at the news, Moradys seems bemused at the idea of her daughter concocting any plan more complex than a streetside shanking. Before you can elaborate further, a blur of motion to your left catches your attention. Your hand shoots out purely on reflex, and time slows with each slight tilt of your head towards the source of the movement.

The Vizir holds a knife, and thrusts it at Moradys' turned back. Your mouth drops open in a wordless shout, and your fingers open as you attempt to intercept the curved dagger before it reaches its soft target. The blade slips past your fingers, cutting the tip of one before sailing onward. Your palm
lands on the Vizir's hand and you squeeze, locking your arm and bringing the both of you to an abrupt halt.

Time flows back into the room. Moradys spins around, finally hearing the shout that seemed to have left your lips so many seconds ago, and sees your joined hands. The Vizir thrusts forward again, likely baffled by your unusual strength, and her blade nearly reaches Moradys' abdomen before you stop it again. You throw yourself into her, slamming both of you into one wall, then the other, all while wrestling for the dagger scraping across the walls and stabbing at your exposed arms.

Moradys finds an opening in which to help and takes her Vizir in a tight chokehold, then drags her away from you. The Vizir, rather than slicing at Moradys' arms, drops her knife and claws madly at them. You don't understand why the smaller Elf suddenly lost her composure until you see the tendrils of purple light working their way from underneath Moradys' fingertips to every inch of the Vizir's exposed flesh.

She opens her mouth as if to scream, but makes no sound. Instead, a plume of purple flame erupts from her maw like a dragon, and her skin cracks and weeps with smaller eruptions. Her eyes burst into twin pits of fire, and her body is totally consumed by the heatless energy. Moradys throws the smoldering husk against the wall of the lift, and the Vizir's charred head pops off of her body before crumbling to ash.

"What is this?" Moradys shouts at you. "A plan? Ribara? I don't believe it!"

You want to tell her everything, but the stink of dead Elf is so horrendous that you vomit. Rather than smelling of charred flesh and burnt hair, the Vizir's crumpled remains reek like a week-old corpse.

Moradys groans in disgust - more from the weakness of your stomach than the smell, you suspect - and goes to the panel beside the elevator door. She rips it free of the wall and lets it hang loose by a bundle of wires, one of which she splits with her sharp nails before doing the same to another and tapping them together. Sparks fly, the floor beneath you shudders, and the lift comes to a halt so quickly that your head nearly smacks into the ceiling.

"She said she had an ally," you finally manage to say amidst dry heaves. "It was all a lie to get you here. Lady Drebes is here."

"Oh, she's here. I saw too many of her banners to think otherwise." Moradys taps the frayed wires together, and the elevator lurches ten feet up the shaft. She repeats the process over and over, all while keeping a careful eye on how many floors you pass on your way up the opaque tube. You've yet to see any doors, but floor numbers are painted just above the metal floor seams running horizontally across the concrete facade.

After a minute of stuttering movement Moradys stops moving the lift, and wedges her fingertips in between the two halves of the doors. She pushes them back into their holding compartments, then places her palms flat to the solid wall she's now face-to-face with. A familiar purple flame spreads outward from each palm, and bits of gray stone begin to slough from the wall, as if it were a snake shedding its skin.

You had expected a molten flow of liquid concrete, but instead you receive a flow of gravel rolling around your ankles. A light shines through growing cracks in what little remains of the wall, and it crumbles completely. The smell of dirt reaches your nose, and as you follow Moradys into the hallway beyond.
The hall you find yourself in is a large one, taller than it is wide, with long windows running along the left wall - the outer facade of the arena. You recognize the curvature of the hall as being the same as that of the arena proper. You're in the capped top of the towering structure now, somewhere below the stands. As you walk down the corridor, you spot more than a few red-trimmed ships hovering alongside the docking platforms attached to the tower like tree branches.

"See?" Moradys gestures at the window to your left. "All House Nathema. We'll be under their section shortly."

Most of the ships bear the same red emblem, either on a flag or emblazoned on the hull - a red dagger, wreathed in flame. The symbol strikes a familiar chord within you, but you can't quite place it.

"Why aren't we leaving?" You throw a nervous glance back at the hole you entered through, then look back forward to watch the path ahead. There's a door every fifty feet or so on the right, each sealed by an impenetrable-looking door with a control panel situated next to it.

Moradys doesn't respond, so you trail along behind her while assuring yourself that she has some greater reasoning behind not heading straight back to her ship and leaving.

"Why did you not tell me earlier?" Moradys says, looking back at you with that penetrating gaze of hers. All your sins seem to be laid bare for her to see, and a few moments of tense silence pass before a flash of inspiration hits you.

You grimace and clutch your head with one hand, as if caught in the throes of a migraine. "God, I wanted to. But every time I tried, my mind shut down - that Shaper did something to me, I'm sure of it!"

Moradys sighs and looks away. You're not sure if she even remotely bought it, and you're also not sure how much it matters. Assuming you both make it out of this alive, you hope that coming clean will at least keep you from any retaliation. You have plenty of very legitimate reasons to want her dead, after all.

Footsteps sound out ahead. Heavy ones, the clank of metal on stone like you're so used to hearing at Moradys' compound. A small group of Elves gradually comes into view. Their outfits are black and red, and cover nearly everything except for the front of their torsos. Their hair is uniformly white, and they each wear a curved blade and pistol on either hip.

The moment they spot Moradys, they lay hands on their firearms, leaving the decorative-looking blades untouched. All eleven armored Elves have red daggers tattooed on their abdomens, the hilt of which sits between their naked breasts. In the case of the few Elves who very clearly possess cocks, the blade runs down past the line of their underwear. You can venture a guess where the tattoos continue.

Another Elf comes into view behind the others. She's taller than the rest, wearing a red gown instead of lightly-armored greaves, and has her hair done up in a series of stacked buns that look like a beehive. The group stops a few dozen feet from you, and the woman motions for her guards to stay their hands. She steps to the front, and that's when you recognize her.

Relaying Lady Drebesh's appearance to Moradys had been made easy by one distinctive aspect of her appearance. She has three pairs of breasts, the first situated normally, and the next two merging seamlessly with her abdominal muscles. That bizarre sight leads your eyes down to another just as striking - a bare cock, swinging between her legs, tattooed with the red dagger of her House. The head is pierced by a gold ring which glints in the light, providing a very convenient anchor for your
eyes as you turn them downward and allow Moradys to do the talking.

"Did you take a wrong turn?" Drebesh thrusts her fists into her hips, making her tattooed cock tremble. "I would have thought you at least had the good taste to wait until after the slaughter."

"Wait for what?" Moradys asks innocently. Judging by the other woman's growing smile, it's the sort of open-ended response she had hoped for.

"To challenge me to a duel," Drebesh says as she leans forward, making a point of showing the inches she has on Moradys. She's as tall as Ribara, though not as stocky, and has a haughty air that dwarfs Moradys' own. You feel as if you're watching a Queen dress down a Countess.

When Moradys doesn't respond, Drebesh stands up straight and gives her a sad smile.

"Your idiot daughter blabbed to one of my Incubi. I know you've been angling for a duel."

"She's only fifty-six percent my daughter," Moradys says calmly.

Drebesh rolls her eyes. "Then that makes her forty-four percent a mongrel and one-hundred percent a simpleton. Regardless, I came here to save you the trouble of seeking me out. All of your pledges and petitioners can watch while I tear you in two."

"And the ships?" Moradys gestures out the window at Drebesh's fleet. The larger ones are all docked, but smaller vessels continue to skirt the edges of the tower as if patrolling it.

That question has Drebesh grinning so broadly that her teeth show. You catch a glimpse of faint green light the moment her open mouth reaches its apex, but only for a moment. Drebesh's jaw clamps tight, and her expression goes serious. Moradys turns from the window back to her, and Drebesh's smile returns, far more subdued this time.

"I was told you were intending to bait the hook with your Psyker." Drebesh looks your way, amusement replaced by ravenous hunger. "It is bait I am more than willing to bite down on."

She takes two steps towards you, then stops and gasps. You bring your eyes back downward to see that Moradys has moved closer to Drebesh, and holds her pale, hairless balls tight in one hand. The group of guards draw their weapons and encircle Moradys, but hesitate to do more after another shuddering gasp from Drebesh, who teeters awkwardly from side to side. You can only imagine how purple those balls are turning right now.

"I am the bait," Moradys snaps. "You've been lured here by someone in your own House hoping to make a power play. I came here as a courtesy, to warn you." She releases Drebesh, who takes a sharp breath in and stumbles back.

You know full well that Moradys' last claim is bullshit, but the wide-eyed Drebesh seems to buy it. She leans on her guards for support, and her eyes flicker as the gears turn inside her mind. One can only imagine how many intersecting webs of possible deceit someone in her position has to consider, and a full ten seconds pass until her eyes refocus on Moradys, now full of horrible realization.

A low rumble passes through the hall, a stronger version of what you felt each time one of Drebesh's ships flew particularly close the outer facade of the arena. Every head in the room turns towards the windows to your left, where the sharp edges of a small airship hull are lowering into view from above.

After that comes the deck, where three colorful figures stand facing you. Each wears a white mask, and is dressed in a patchwork of garish rainbow garments with no coherent color scheme or
consistent pattern. A flag flutters on the side of the hull below their feet, bearing the purple sun of Moradys' house, and the strange figures hold onto metal structures that end just above their waist. At first you think it's an incomplete railing, but then the ship erupts with light and sound, and you see them for what they are - weapon emplacements.

The hallway explodes in a hail of greenish-blue plasma that shreds the outer wall and turns Drebesch's guards to a fine mist of blood and vaporized flesh. You drop to the floor at the same time Moradys does, narrowly escaping the waist-high swath of destruction cutting across the space. Drebesch tries to do the same, but her height proves her undoing. A bolt catches her in the side of the head, slamming her against the far wall.

Three of the guards managed to escape being killed as quickly as their comrades, and take up positions at shattered windows and newly-created gaps in the wall. While they return fire, Moradys scuttles over to Drebesch's corpse on hands and knees.

Taking advantage of the fact that the attackers are focusing their fire on Drebesch's remaining guards, you crawl towards Moradys to shout at her not to bother with the woman. The dead Archon's head has been reduced to little more than a lower jaw still smoldering with superheated plasma.

Moradys plucks at the top of the melted stump a few times, as if trying to pull something free. As you draw closer, you see that the flesh of Drebesch's head is not melting down so much as solidifying up, bone and flesh regrowing just as quickly as the lingering plasma breaks them back down.

"Aha!" Moradys plucks at the top of the jaw again, and the regrowth stops. A long, thin crystal of vivid green juts out of Drebesch's bottom row of teeth, inserted where one of her molars should be. It glows brightly, pulsing with a rhythm that makes it seem alive.

Just as Moradys moves to pull the crystal the rest of the way out, an explosion rocks the corridor. The portions of wall the guards are using as cover explode in a shower of debris, and a hailstorm of small rockets flies into the hall, each one coming closer to your position.

This time, ducking does little good. You manage to avoid being pulped by a direct hit, but the force of the rockets hitting the inner wall fills your world with enough light and sound that you don't even register being thrown about. Your ears ring, your vision goes white, and you feel as if everything contained within your rib cage has been reduced to mush. You roll over onto your front, trying to breathe but unable to do so, and the hall comes back into view. There's no sound, though - not until you hear the chime of bells.

The three costumed attackers leap in from outside, one after the other, landing between you and the quickly-recovering Moradys. They look like harlequins, colorful court jesters whose ostentatious dress is unlike any you've seen in Cummragh, save for that single sighting at this same arena. One has a mohawk, one a waist-length braid, and the other a shaggy mane of turquoise hair. They don't look the least bit alike, but are united in how provocative and out of place they all appear.

Two of the Harlequins dash towards Moradys, one drawing a sword while the other unholsters two pistols. The mohawked one, larger than the others, remains beside the gap she leapt through and pulls a rifle off of her back. Moradys throws up a violet barrier of energy just as the group opens fire, and is pushed back away from you by the ferocity of their attack.

The blade-wielding Harlequin's weapon cuts through the barrier like it isn't there at all, each time forcing Moradys to leap away even further. The jingle of bells accompanies their movements, but not every movement. Even more disorienting is the fact that they seem to come from every direction at once - or perhaps from right inside your own skull. It's a confusing experience, made worse by the fact that you still can't hear a single sound besides those jingles.
You're no paragon of courage. If anything, you're rather cowardly and prone to reflexive acts of self-preservation. But there are rare moments, maybe two or three in a man's life, where the two converge and action requires no thought. You push yourself to your feet and run at the mohawked woman, determined to shove her off the edge of the tower while she's focused on Moradys. The moment you make your third step towards her, pain shoots through your right foot.

You cry out - or at least, you think you do - but force yourself to continue your stumbling rush forward. Each step brings more pain, and you become increasingly certain you've managed to impale yourself up to your ankle with a shard of broken glass. You power through the agony and throw your shoulder into the Harlequin while she's in the midst of firing at Moradys.

You hadn't expected to send her flying, but you also hadn't expected to be thrown back with such force. The woman you struck stumbles backwards, nearly falling off the ledge, but catches herself on part of the crumbling remains of the wall with her left hand. You fall backwards, and she levels her rifle at you, taking aim single-handed.

That's when you finally get a look at her face. It's a mask of absolute anger - a literal mask, made of white metal. The features are those of a Dark Elf, but twisted and warped to an absurd degree by the emotions gripping the frozen expression. The Harlequin roars, the first real noise you've heard since the rockets went off, and opens fire, unleashing her rage in the form of a spray of plasma that cuts through the air above your head.

The rifle she wields isn't meant to be fired full-auto with one hand, and her aim is poor - you're amazed she can even hold the thing aloft. Bits of concrete spray your back from the wall being shredded behind you as you scurry off in the first direction your panicked mind can grab onto.

Your hand lands on metal instead of concrete - a pistol, dropped by one of the guards - and you grab hold of that, too. You flop onto your back to point the weapon at your attacker, but she's already on top of you, wrapping a monstrous fist around the short barrel of your gun. The moment you fire, she squeezes the barrel tight. Metal crumples inward, and the weapon explodes in a spray of half-cooked plasma that bathes you and her in a shower of green fire.

Rage stands up tall and tries to bring her boot down on your face, but you're already rolling off to the side, screaming in pain as formless heat eats away at your arms. She strikes again, this time on the other side, and bells ring out.

The ground cracks. You can't hear it, but you can feel the seam forming underneath your left arm as you roll onto your side. Another foot comes down, and the ground breaks. You and Rage fall through the floor amidst an avalanche of concrete. The hallway ceiling seems to shoot upward, first ten feet, then fifty, then a hundred. Rage's unmoving mask passes in front of your face, and everything goes black.

You're dead, and you know it.

It seems an odd fact to be so certain of. You don't feel like someone who just fell a few hundred feet - although maybe that's a good clue that you're no longer walking the mortal world. The space you find yourself in is a flat expanse of black obsidian, with a gray horizon that becomes brighter the further upward your eyes travel. Directly above you is a spiralling vortex of brilliant white energy, like a star being born... or dying.

The only other landmark in the otherwise-featureless netherworld stands a short distance ahead of you - a blue crystal set in a metal holder, as tall as you are and too wide to wrap your arms around.
You saw one just like it when you and Ribara were marooned in the Warp, but that one had been pulsing with violent energy. This one sits quietly, though you see shadows and light playing faintly across the many facets of its surface.

As you approach, you begin to make out coherent images within the crystal. Scenes of battle, from two Elves grappling with each other to entire squads engaged in frenetic firefight. A few you recognize as taking place within the arena's many grand halls - perhaps all of them. The two sides doing battle are easily recognizable - Elves tattooed with purple suns fighting those tattooed with fiery red daggers. Ships bearing the emblem of the latter circle the arena, pouring troops into the building while Moradys' forces stream out of the barge she brought them in.

You circle around the crystal, and your body freezes, seeming to recognize something before your mind does. Going back over the many scenes, you spot a familiar figure. Moradys runs down a curving corridor, throwing blasts of violet energy at pursuers who emerge from every doorway and window. Two of the Harlequins are still after her, and they are joined by rifle-wielding members of House Tenebrim. The latter don't seem too concerned with the fact that the Harlequins were the one to kill their leader. Perhaps they don't know.

You tear yourself away from the harrowing pursuit and continue searching the crystal until you find another familiar face. Charal sits on a bed in what looks to be the grim confines of Moradys' barge, rocking back and forth on her buttocks while holding her hands over her ears. An explosion rocks her room, and she squeezes her eyes shut while speeding up her terrified movements.

Next comes more fighting, and more, until finally you find a scene that doesn't seem to be taking place in the middle of a firefight. Vala stands on the deck of a small skiff attached to one of the arena's docking platforms. She wears a drab brown outfit that looks far dirtier than the last one you saw her in, and her red hair has been allowed to grow down to her ears. Both of her hands are shackled to the ship's railing, and she stares off at some unseen object of interest while struggling madly with her bindings. A few explosions momentarily silence her rattling chains, but they sound quite distant.

"I'm not sure who to help," comes a voice in the distance. You whirl about to face it, but find nothing but empty space. You turn again, and hear the fluttering of wings and the scrape of talons against the ground. The voice was undoubtedly feminine, but spoke in the same tone and rhythm as your own, as if someone turned the pitch a few octaves higher.

"Where are you?" you ask as you spin left and right. More fluttering, more scratching, and brief glimpses of blue plumage in the corner of your vision. "Why don't you stay still?"

You stop your turning, and the incessant movement around you stops as well.

"I don't have my makeup on," the woman says. "It would be rude to let you see me."

With neither the knowledge nor desire to question that logic, you turn back to the crystal and run your fingers over Vala's bruised face. The image ripples, and your fingers sink in a fraction of an inch before you pull them back.

"Uh-uh, careful! Choose first... but do it quickly."

"Why?"

Your shouted question is accompanied by a dagger of pain shooting from heel to ankle. You wobble forward on one foot, nearly touch the huge crystal, then tip-toe backwards and lift up your right foot. You tear off your sandal, and see that a green light is pulsing beneath your undamaged skin, right
where you stepped on that shard of glass. An afterlife in which you take such aches and pains with you seems a pretty poor one.

"You aren't long for this world," the woman says.

The light flashes faster and brighter until it becomes a continuous glow that makes your entire foot appear radioactive. There's a hum, too, like someone is singing right into your bones.

You walk around the crystal, touching each of the three facets in turn. The events in the images moves slower and slower, and the ground shakes beneath your feet. A new sense of urgency forms in your heart, and you feverishly run your eyes over the choices presented to you.

Moradys - a psychopath and narcissist who you already gave an undeserved second-chance. You picture her death at the hands of the Harlequins chasing her, and feel no guilt. You move to Charal, who almost looks as if she's sleeping in a seated position, now that she’s frozen in an eternal instant between explosions. The thought of her - and whatever she's carrying inside of her - dying in the fiery wreckage of Moradys' barge fills you with anguish. But you remind yourself that she's surrounded by House Tenebrim's guards, and likely the safest of the three despite how terrified she looks.

Finally, you come to Vala. Your first wife, your best friend, and your better half. You've spent weeks agonizing over your constant inability to help or even find her, and now this spirit with your voice is offering you a chance to do just that.

Your fingers sink into the crystal, and Vala's swollen face ripples as if it were reflected in a lake. This time you allow yourself to sink in as far as the crystal will take you, and within seconds you are swallowed up to your elbow. The obsidian ground at your feet cracks and erupts, fissures shooting from horizon to horizon. You’re thrown forward, gravity upending itself of its own accord and sending you hurtling into Vala.

The image ripples, fades into a seamless blue, and you are swallowed up by clear waters with no sense of up or down. Violent currents throw you about, and you struggle against them in an attempt to right yourself. You find a light, a goal, and swim towards it with all the strength you can muster. Legs kick, arms claw upward, and your heart pounds far too fast for what should be a dream.

Then, you breach the waterline. Your eyes shoot open and you draw in a deeper breath than you ever have before. Rage's shattered mask stares back at you, the blue-black eye of an Elf doing likewise through the split running down the center. With a gasp you shove her off, and are met with the limp resistance of a body that is very much dead. The moment you're free of her, a new sound reaches your ears - war.

You lie at the center of a vast hall lined with towering pillars, each the size of a small building. Bolts of plasma sail over you, some blue and some green, but all hot enough for you to wince at their passage. There's shouting, Elves screaming orders at each other from past your feet and behind your head.

You roll onto your stomach, careful to avoid pushing up too far, and peak through the accumulated rubble surrounding you to see that you've landed in the middle of a pitched firefight. Drebesch's forces swarm in from the landing pads ahead outside, and Moradys' forces hold a large doorway that connects the entry hall and a circular room of elevators deeper inside the tower.

At first, no one seems to be focused on you. The entire hall would have seen you and the Harlequin smack into the ground, but you were two corpses - nothing to waste any more attention on. Ten seconds pass while you try and figure out which way to run. There are doorways to your left and
right, smaller corridors caught in the no man's land between the two sides. None of them look remotely reachable considering the sheer volume of rifle fire filling the room, but your choice is made more urgent by the fact that you're starting to regain the attention you had lost.

A few elves on Drebesh's side point to you, clearly noticing the corpse that now lays poised on its stomach behind a small pile of concrete. One fires off a few rounds, and bits of stone spray your face. You spit and blink while scooting backwards, and more shots come, this time from a few different directions at once. Fire shoots down your right arm, vaporizing part of your day-old tunic, and you chant a frantic prayer before shooting to your feet and dashing towards a doorway chosen at random.

One step towards the far wall, and you realize that whatever you stepped on is still buried in your foot. Two steps, and you curse yourself for not ditching your sandals beforehand. A few more and the shitty things fall off completely, allowing you to run faster, albeit a bit more painfully.

"Mon-keigh!" shouts one of the elves.

At that single word, every armament in range is directed your way. Rifle fire erupts from left and right, tracking your movements as you sprint for the protective cover of the room's pillars. The vast majority of the shots miss, but even close calls are hot enough to hurt like hell. One shot catches you in the left kidney, setting your shirt alight. You cry out, and are rewarded by another shot that grazes your right thigh and takes a chunk of flesh with it.

You keep sprinting, but you already know that you're dead - this time for good. No human takes a ball of plasma to the back and lives. A few more lurching steps and you reach one of the pillars, sliding across it with your smoldering left side before staggering into the doorway ahead. The second you step over the threshold you collapse, your adrenaline spent. Now comes the shock, and then the pain - assuming you don't die before either one has a chance to really kick in.

The hallway you lie in is a fraction the size of the one you just left, and curves off to the left, likely to another guest arrival hall on the opposite side of the tower. A shadow appears on the far wall, looming larger and larger until the figure casting it comes into view.

"Mon-keigh!" Irunal shouts angrily, leveling a sword at you. "Mon-keigh, mon-keigh, mon-keigh!"

Those other Elves had shot at you for fun - a momentary diversion from their otherwise serious battle. Maybe Irunal has something similar planned, and intends to tell Ribara that you got caught up in the firefight and torn to bits.

"You were supposed to be in the private chambers!"

Irunal stops beside you and sheathes her sword in her belt loop, then squats down and slaps at the flames still burning on your back. Her strikes don't feel as if they’re landing on flesh that’s been burnt to a crisp, and when she hauls you to your feet you find that there's no trace of a wound whatsoever.

You had felt the wet, roiling heat of the plasma bolt - you're sure of it - but only your tattered shirt remains as evidence you'd been through anything at all. You strip of the remnants of the now-useless garment off, and Irunal puts her fingertips on your chest.

"Not now, Mon-keigh. Later." She speaks in an eerily sultry tone, one made all the more discordant by the gunfire serving as a backdrop to the intimate moment.

Her hand slides down to your dick, squeezes it through your skirt, and then she spins around and waves you along with her. Caught between a room full of Elves who want to murder you, and a
single Elf who would prefer rape over killing, you take the lesser of two evils and jog after Irunal.

Given a few moments of relative peace, you use the time to consider what happened to you after your fall through the floor - after you died. Your rational mind tells you to chalk it up to random neurons firing in your rattled brain, but the parts of you that feel and intuit are unmovable in their conviction that what you experienced was real.

Not that calling it 'real' does much to help you explain what exactly it was you spoke to. A god? Maybe the God? A demon of the Warp? Before all this, all three possibilities would have carried the stink of superstition. Now, however, the last seems a perfectly reasonable explanation for one more bizarre experience in this awful episode of your life.

Which brings you to your final question, and the most practical one. Can you trust it to do what it said? To help Vala? Or are you supposed to help her, and this is all leading up to some 'the Warp helps those who helps themselves' life lesson?

"Where are we going?" you say to Irunal.

She doesn't look back when she answers, and continues on with long strides that you have to jog to match.

"We are going into a vault until the fighting is over. Then, Ribara will come for you. Assuming she kills Lady Moradys, and not the other way around."

A groaning warble accompanies the last bit, making it very clear that Irunal doubts this will go the way her leader planned. The 'vault' must refer to the sealed animal pens opposite the arena from the Wyches' training grounds. All of the creatures stored in the tower were apex predators on their home planets, but that secure hall holds the ones which would be top of the food chain on any world. It's not the place you would prefer to ride out this storm.

"Wait, we?" you ask hesitantly. "You're going in with me?"

This time, Irunal does look back. She gives you fluttering bedroom eyes, and darts her tongue in and out of her circled thumb and index finger. You should be disgusted, but you've so little idea of what she's hinting at that you're more confused than anything else.

The hole she pantomimed was far too small to be a stand-in for her stretched-out pussy. Are you going to be forced to rim her? Is she going to try and rim you? Whatever the case, it will inevitably end with you fighting her off while she claws at your privates with clammy hands. This time, though, you'll be able to put up a better fight.

The two of you walk the length of the service corridor without running into anyone other than a few panicked arena guests cowering in whatever nook and cranny they can find. It's comforting to know that even Dark Elves get scared, and even more empowering for them to do so while you're walking tall. Perhaps it's because you just defeated one of them in single combat that you feel so confident. Some might say that it was the fall that killed the Harlequin, but you were the one to walk away from it. At the very least, you didn't lose - and you're inclined to chalk that up as a win.

After circling the massive structure, you come to another arrival hall opposite the one you dropped into. This one looks to be under the full control of Drebesh's forces, and is quiet save for some barked orders and clattering armor as the dead Archon’s rampaging forces move deeper into the building.

Irunal walks straight into the hall without any hesitation, but soon has to turn back and drag you
along with her by force. You resist at first, but relax once you see that none of the Elves make a hostile move towards you. The ones you pass give knowing glances at the tattoo on your stomach, but Irunal's hand on your arm seems to keep their rifles pointed down.

The next room is a vast circle of elevators set into the walls, all of which are busy ferrying troops up to the higher levels. The room shudders with the force of a distant but powerful explosion, brushing aside any thoughts that the battle is over. You can only hope that wasn't Vala or Charal going down with their respective ships. Moradys' fate is equally uncertain, but you're too busy second-guessing your last-minute betrayal of Ribara to worry about the Elf whose life you saved.

You open your mouth to tell Irunal that you need to get to a ship to save your wife, but clamp it tight a split-second later. Better to not tell her anything and just ditch her once her presence is no longer needed to keep you alive. She might not know what Ribara had the Shaper do to you - and if that's the case, you can toss her through a wall and be off running before she knows what hit her.

Irunal leads you into a lift alongside four of Drebesh's soldiers, who are forced up against the walls to make space for the two of you. The elevator ascends while you stare up at the ceiling, trying not to think about the furious glares of the four guards whose shoulders dig into yours.

Irunal's ass presses to your groin, feeling refreshingly cool in the small and stuffy space. She rubs it up and down, bringing you to unwanted hardness while throwing you desirous glances. Finally she spins around to face you, pressing her breasts to your naked chest while the guards shout in annoyance at being jostled so roughly.

"I cannot wait," Irunal rasps, throwing one leg over your shoulder while keeping the other foot on the floor. Her fluid-soaked thong presses to your crotch and she shoves a hand down your skirt to try and fish out your erection.

"What the fuck?" you blurt out, slapping at her wandering hands and trying to get hold of her wrists. You elbow one of the guards by mistake, and she responds by striking you in the head with the butt of her gun.

"Down, Mon-keigh!" The other three soldiers join in, pounding you in the head and back with fists and rifles while Irunal rubs the head of your cock against her slick entrance. You shout, swear, and hold your hands up to protect your head.

Just before Irunal can use your lack of moving room to impale herself on you, the elevator lurches to a stop. The doors open, the attack on you stops, and Irunal stops moving, though she maintains her awkward contorted position with her foot propped up above your head. The moment seems oddly frozen, as if time itself has taken a breather. It takes you a moment to understand the reason behind that feeling - the room is utterly, and completely silent.

Standing in the hall ahead are two colorful Harlequins, neither of whom you recognize from the attack on you and Moradys. One looks even more shocked than you are, with a wide-eyed mask whose lips are formed into a small 'O'. The other appears positively grief-stricken by your arrival, with eyes turned upward and unmoving tears streaming down past a mouth contorted into a horrific frown.

Both wield wicked-looking plasma rifles wrapped in purple coiling, and both point those rifles at you. Drebesh's soldiers, rather than responding in kind, merely file out with heads bowed respectfully. Irunal sighs and throws her leg back down to the floor, then steps from the lift while dragging you along with her.

A brief flicker of hope had seized you when you saw the Harlequins weren't going to open fire, but
that hope passes as the shocked-looking Harlequin walks towards you with hand outstretched and weapon ready, as if to grab you. Her comrade follows suit, and you move away just as quickly.

This time, Irunal does not try to propel you forward. Your back strikes the closing doors of the lift, forcing you to circle around to the left wall of the hallway. The bells hanging from Shock's skin-tight plaid outfit jingle, and you see her jaw moves beneath her mask. Irunal, her hand still on your arm, says something in response - but you can't hear either women. A few more silent words are exchanged, and Shock drops her hand. Again her jaw moves, and both her and Grief shift their weapons. Grief takes aim at Irunal, while Shock lowers her barrel until it's pointed at your legs.

"Come here," says Shock. This time you can hear her voice perfectly - lilting, melodic, and a little impatient.

For the span of a single heartbeat, you remain frozen. Considering how fast your heart is pounding in your chest, it's hardly any time at all. Panic screams at you to flee, to run anywhere but here, and your legs start moving. You take off down the corridor, running past Irunal who draws her pistol and points it at the pair of Harlequins as you pass her.

Rifle fire comes from both of the colorful Elves, and both bolts hit you. One in the torso - that one meant for Irunal, you're sure - and the other in your right thigh. You let out a silent scream, clench your teeth into a grimace, and force yourself to keep moving towards the hallway just ahead and to your left. You don't risk a glance back to see what's happening, knowing that your only hope is to get to cover before another round of weapons fire can be unleashed on you.

Not so much running as falling forward repeatedly, you throw yourself into the next corridor and slam against the wall, catching a brief glimpse of Irunal following suit. She fires a few shots back down the corridor, then directs her gaze to you - and her expression turns bewildered.

You follow her eyes to your right side, where the mess made of your arm and torso is rapidly solidifying back into healthy tissue. Broken ribs reform like teeth biting through meat, muscle fibers wind around each other, and skin creeps over the once-gaping wound until you no longer look like a dead man walking. By the time you look to your wounded leg, it's already healed.

Irunal shakes away her surprise and does the same for you, giving you a hard shove that tells you to move, and to move now. The two of you sprint through long, intersecting corridors, running from something you're no longer sure is even after you. The silence is still there, though, and you catch glimpses of battle down the hallways cutting away from yours. Most wear the red and black of Drebesh's troops - Elves you're no longer sure are remotely friendly - and those House Tenebrim soldiers you do spot are caught in such dire straits that you'd only be joining them in a losing battle if you tried your luck with them instead of Irunal.

Exhausted beyond belief by a full minute of all-out sprinting, you slow to a jog and look back at the four-way intersection you just left. A second later, one of the Harlequins slides across the floor as if friction doesn't exist for her, then stops and breaks into a run right towards you, rifle in hand. The sight of that sobbing mask is all the encouragement you need to reach down into yourself and find the means to start moving again, no matter how much your lungs burn. The sharp pain in your heel still stabs upward like a dagger, but far less severely than it did earlier.

No sooner do you turn away from the Harlequin than bolts of plasma soar past you, striking the back of your legs and the floor around your feet. Yet despite the pain and heat and force of each blast, you stay alive and keep moving. Irunal remains directly ahead of you, using you as a shield against your pursuers while firing the occasional shot over her shoulder. She might be worried about what Ribara will do to her should you die, but the Harlequins are the immediate threat. You'll be lucky if she doesn't shoot you herself and leave you for your attackers.
Another turn, and the corridor stops at an open doorway before widening out again into a much larger space. Irunal bolts into the next room, grabs the side of the doorway, and slides to a stop behind the inside wall. A few shots sail past you, both from her and the Harlequins, and the door between you and her begins to descend.

You throw yourself forward, intending to clear the last of the distance with a spectacular slide on your hindquarters, but come to an abrupt halt with your head under the doorway and wide eyes directed at the steel bulkhead crashing towards your face. Irunal grabs your ankles and pulls you clear before the door cracks your skull like an egg.

Rolling onto your stomach and pushing onto all fours, you see the door rattling violently in its slot. Still no sound, though. The door shifts up an inch, and two hands slip in between it and the floor, pushing it up another few inches. Next comes a third hand holding a pistol, shooting a wild spray of shots that nearly take you off at the ankles.

One of the bolts catches Irunal in her right hand, turning flesh and pistol into a melted mess that drips down her arm amidst silent screams. She stumbles back and presses herself to the wall beside the door, then with her good hand thrusts a finger past you.

You turn, following her finger, and finally get a good look at the room where you've shut yourself in. It's perfectly round, and the far half has six large doors, each a good fifty feet apart from the ones on either side of it. An inactive force cage sits atop a hoversled near the center of the room, used for ferrying out the creatures contained within the cells.

You've only been in this room once, when the Wyches had ordered you to feed one of the imprisoned beasts, threatening you with castration if you didn't. You had opened the cell in question, only to be met by another Wych who leapt out and kicked you in the stomach. The other Wyches had roared with laughter, and you vowed never to set foot here again.

The leftmost cell is already half-open, and the door bears deep claw marks that run all the way up the thirty-foot high bulkhead. You're fairly certain you watched the former inhabitant eat a few dozen human slaves in the arena, shortly before it was torn to pieces by the Wyches. Irunal stumbles towards the waiting cell while the Harlequins struggle to lift up the door you came through.

You follow her on instinct, then stop and consider what you're doing. If you shut yourself in that prison, you'll be unable to do a thing for either of the two women you swore to protect. And that's the best case scenario. Worst case, Ribara already gave the Harlequins the same door codes she gave you just in case they needed them, and you'll be walking into a deader end than you're already trapped in.

No, you need to think of another move - a bold one - and you need to do it fast. There are five other cells, each containing something deadly enough to warrant being put here and not thrown into one of the thousand cages littering the Wyches' training area. They might kill you on their way out, but death seems to be a not-so-permanent condition for you since your conversation with that denizen of the Warp.

Jagged Dark Elf script notes the cells' inhabitants on control panels beside each door, but you can't read more than the digital 'open' button on each display. You really should have tried to pick up more of their written language, but that would have felt too much like admitting you were here for the long haul. The text might be unreadable, but the cells aren't totally identical.

The second, the one after the open cell Irunal is rushing towards, has earmuffs and a gas mask hanging from a hook beside the control panel. A safety plaque depicts a silhouetted Elf wearing both. Beside the next cell stands a huge construction mech over twenty feet tall, a rusted and cobbled
together-looking thing that can't possibly function. The white skull painted on the chest looks like the work of a child.

The fourth lies empty. Your eyes travel over it without stopping, until you realize how irrational that assumption was and return your attention to it. The door is closed, and the panel indicates that it's locked, but you can't shake the conviction that there is nothing living inside of the cell. That's strange, but you can't spare the time to consider it further.

In front of the fifth cell are huge gashes dug into the floor, deeper even than those in the door of the very first cell. Whatever is now in there was dragged kicking and screaming. Hung on a wall hook next to the sixth and final cell is a familiar sight - a pole with a collar at one end, meant to be looped over a slave's head and then tightened so that one can lead them around while keeping their distance.

Except that this contraption has five additional poles dangling alongside the first, so that six slavers can control whatever they've snagged with the loop. You can't imagine what man-sized creature would require six wiry-muscled Elves to keep it under control.

Irunal is most of the way to the open cell, and a glance at the door to your left reveals that the two Harlequins almost have it lifted high enough to slip in under. You look back to the cell with the slave collar hung next to it, swallow any lingering uncertainty, and take off running.

That prison is the only one that looks to contain something human - or at least humanoid. Hopefully whoever is in there is someone who can put up a good fight against the Harlequins while having enough intelligence and sanity to spare you. The latter is the more dodgy of your twin hopes.

You barrel right into the control panel beside the massive door and pound on the digital display with your fist. You can't even really read the Dark Elf word for 'open', but you recognize the first two characters well enough to know which button to hit.

Next comes the numerical keypad for the door code, which you memorized based on the position of the characters in the ten digit display. Right, bottom-right, left, top, very very bottom. The entire display flashes red and more text pops up, either telling you to wait patiently for the door to open, or that the codes have been changed and you're screwed.

As you swivel your head back to check the Harlequins' progress, you spot Irunal limping towards you with her hand outstretched and lips moving rapidly. Your pursuers are near enough for the sound dampeners to still be in effect, but as the Wych gets closer you can make out the single word she forms over and over in a silent shout.

'No,' she screams. 'No, no, no!'

Clearly she doesn't agree with your plan, but it's too late now. Air rushes past your face as the huge slab of steel creaks open a few inches. Irunal tries to shove it back in and spin the locking mechanism shut, but the door is thrown open violently, swinging on its hinges and smashing Irunal into the wall. A shadowy figure stands just inside the darkened room, lit by enough of the weak light of the cell's lamps for you to make out a pair of bulging arms and two tree trunk-like legs.

The features are undeniably human, but the proportions are all wrong. The man is at least seven feet tall, and wrapped in so much thick muscle that you're amazed he possesses the range of motion to even walk. It's the sort of figure you've only seen once before, but that man had been decapitated by Ribara before being thrown into the gnashing jaws of the arena's worms.

He steps into the light, bearing all the poise of a general and none of the cowering fear of a man put in solitary confinement for weeks on end. He wears a simple brown loincloth, which looks quite
clean despite the horrid stench of rotten food and waste emanating from the cell. His head is shaved to a close stubble, but chopply, as if he cut it himself with a bit of sharpened scrap. It takes him a few blinks to adjust to the brighter space of the domed room, and he gives a quick glance to either side, noting you gawping at him from the left and the blood spilling from behind the door to his right.

Then, he turns his attention forward. The Harlequins shove the door upward, then roll in simultaneously before it can crash back down on them. The giant warrior beside you lets out a roar that rattles your skull, even if your ears cannot register the noise. He charges at the Harlequins, who split ranks and move away from the door in opposite directions.

With a duck and a roll the Warrior closes on the one on the right, coming up against her within seconds of his battle cry. The Elves paint him with so much scorching plasma that you can hardly force your eyes to stay focused on the brilliant display of light.

Just after coming within arm's reach of the Harlequin on the right, the Warrior changes course and starts a zig-zagging series of leaping rolls that carry him a dozen feet with each acrobatic movement. The Elf he just left crumples to the ground, her head twisted around so that it faces towards her backside. Her gun is nowhere to be seen - until you look back to the Warrior and see him firing at the other Elf between each of his tumbles. Both he and her take plenty of hits from the other, but she stumbles and staggers while he merely shrugs off the withering barrage.

By the time he reaches her and delivers a heavy kick to her chest, she lacks the strength to sidestep it. The Elf flies across the room and smashes into the wall. At the moment of impact, a roar sounds out in your ears. The blowing of the building's air filtration system, the rumble of distant explosions, and the thump of the Elf's body falling to the floor. You can hear them all - as well as the pounding of the warrior's feet as he marches towards you.

"Ho!" he shouts, pointing a finger at you. His other hand still grips the gun taken from one of the Harlequins. "Thou art a slave here?"

Suddenly finding your mouth paralyzed with fear, you simply nod furiously. He stops before you, an immovable mountain of a man more intimidating than any Dark Elf. Not that he's doing anything particularly intimidating - rather, he just stands there, looking you over - but watching him swat aside two Elves like flies helped hammer home just how outmatched you would be if he decides you're an enemy rather than a friend.

The warrior leans down and cranes his head to the side, giving you a look at his neck.

"I want the one who didst this." He points at a wicked-looking scar running all the way around it. Without the use of a magical pit like Moradys', it seems the Wyches simply sewed his head back onto the stump of his neck. It's an impressive bit of restorative surgery in its own right, but the results aren't the prettiest.

"Yes, her!" you exclaim, nodding again. "I know exactly where she is."

The warrior narrows his eyes and stands up straight. "She?" he says in a low voice, raising his rifle until you're staring down the barrel of it. "T'was a man who shamed me in the arena."

"I'm not lying!" You raise your hands and move to the side, but he tracks your movements with his weapon. "Big woman, almost as big as you. Short white hair, small tits--"

"He had a cock!" The warrior taps his own groin with the tip of his gun. "T'was a man!"
You frown up at him defiantly. "I am not gay."

He furrows his brow and gives you a baffled look. "What?"

Your nervousness returns in a sudden rush, and you start moving towards the room's sealed exit. "Doesn't matter! I can take you to... that person. I know just where she'll be."

Truthfully, you have no idea where Ribara is in this mess, but the makings of a plan are forming in your mind. You'll lead him out the arena's main doors, across the fighting pit, into the docking bay on the other side. The Wyches always have a few small ships moored there, and you doubt they'd risk flying them around in this chaos. If you can make it across the open space of the arena without being blown to bits by whatever is happening overhead, you might have a real chance at escape.

"We need to get to the Wyches’ docking bay on the other side of the tower. They'll have ships there. Can you fly one?"

The man nods, picking up the second of the Harlequin's rifles. "That I can." He tosses it to you, and you catch it awkwardly in the crook of your elbows. Hope wells in your chest as you slip a finger into the trigger. You have a weapon, you know where your wife is, your enemies are at each other's throats, and you have an ally who can toss around Elves like ragdolls. Your situation has never looked so good.

You try the door panel, only to find that whatever Irunal did to close it is preventing your repeated pounding of the 'open' button from accomplishing anything. The panel beeps and flashes red, and you start tapping random symbols that appear and disappear in a senseless flurry.

"After you kill her we can fly to one of the slaving docks," you say to the man behind you. "They have ships there. Big ones, that can travel through the Warp." You'll hijack a skiff, pick up Vala and Charal, and hopefully be able to convince your new partner to give up on trying to find Ribara.

None of the door buttons do more than produce a chorus of discordant sounds, and you stop pressing entirely when you see the warrior approaching the door. He draws a bare foot up, then delivers a kick that sends the slab of solid steel flying out of its holding slots and hurtling down the hallway ahead.

"Dost thou know how many have escaped this hell in all its long existence?" He inclines his head towards you slightly, one beady eye searching yours for a response.

You shrug and heft your rifle in your arms. "A couple hundred?"

"None. Not one, not ever. Tis why so many regard it as myth or fairy tale."

The seriousness of his expression makes you feel as if you're a hospital patient being given a terminal diagnosis. Your arms shake and you grip your weapon tighter, fingering the trigger anxiously.

"I'm going to save my wife." Your voice cracks halfway through a declaration you had meant to fill with determined confidence. The warrior exhales a slow breath through his nose and turns to fully face you.

"If thy wife is here, then she is already dead. As are you, and as am I."

He doesn't know how literal you were being with your use of the word 'here'. She's not just in Cummragh, but somewhere near this very tower - a tower which sits at the heart of a battle that only seems to have grown louder since the Harlequins' presence silenced it. A rumble passes through the building, one powerful enough to force you to lean against the doorway to steady yourself. The
warrior remains unmoved, as if his feet are bolted to the floor by the sheer enormity of his body.

"Battle is joined," he says in a stern voice. "Will thou join it, and avenge thy wife? Or will thou cower in here like a cockroach?"

A sneer forms on his lips, and you find your back straightening defiantly. "I'm going out there, one way or the other." This time, the words come out strong and certain.

The warrior's manufactured sneer vanishes in an instant, and he stares down at you like a commander inspecting a lone trooper. "Then thou art my thousandth brother. I am honored to die alongside one so strong of will."

Despite the certainty he has that you're both about to die, you've never felt more invincible. Tears well in your eyes and your lips tremble, but you command both to stop and draw in a wet sniff.

"By the will of the Immortal God Emperor of Mankind, this city shall tremble from our fall."

You give him a curious and somewhat doubtful look. "Who?"

The warrior's jaw drops open in disbelief, and his expression turns angry. He draws back his fist as if to send you flying, and holds it there a few moments before forcing it back down to his side. There's some anger lingering on his craggy face, but it’s smothered by the stony determination of a man about to enter battle.

The warrior turns to the doorway, forces his massive finger into the comically small trigger slot of his rifle, then takes off running. You do likewise, pulled along by the sheer gravity and presence of this man determined to fight the impossible.

"Which way?" he shouts back to you as he comes to a four-way intersection.

"Left!" you reply. He disappears around the corner, and the sound of rifle fire follows.

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"He might not share your belief that escape is possible, but you have to at least try - and he doesn't know this city half as well as you do. While he was sitting in a cell or healing in a fluid tank, you were getting dragged around by Moradys and learning how things worked here. Your mind is abuzz with plans that form and die and reform as you consider what comes next.

All those thoughts vanish like popped bubbles as you round the corner. The warrior made the turn only seconds before you did, but in that time has moved a good fifty feet down the branching hall and left behind him a trail of twisted and burning bodies. Dark Elves spill from every adjoining hallway, both Drebesh's and Moradys' forces. All die within moments of coming within sight of the massive human.

He dodges and weaves from cover to cover, firing a rifle in each hand and lashing out at those who dare come within arm’s reach. The corridor is filled with flashes of plasma, the screams of dying elves, the clattering of their armor as they fall to the ground - and above it all, the booming laughter of the man cutting through them like a knife through butter.

Despite being covered with so many plasma burns and stab wounds that he should be dead a dozen times over, the warrior moves with such speed that a full sprint has you barely keeping up with him. More Elves flood in from behind you as you close on him, stepping over the bodies of their fallen comrades, and you spray panicked fire backwards. You don't hit anything but wall and floor, but they're forced to take cover and kept from flanking you - for the moment, anyway.

The deeper into the arena the two of you go, the more surrounded you become. The Elves seem to
forget your presence entirely, and focus all of their efforts on bringing down the force of nature throwing them about like a hurricane. A heavily-armored Elf sticks a spear in his turned back, and he yanks it free before plunging it through her eye socket. Another takes aim at his face and opens fire, and he catches the spray of hot plasma with the back of his left hand while opening fire with the gun in his right. A grenade ringed with flashing red lights bounces in from a side hall, and he kicks it back to the owner, yielding a thunderous explosion that showers him in bits of concrete.

It's more death than you've ever seen. The warrior laughs with each kill, and you laugh along with him. Nothing seems real anymore, and the rapid regeneration of the wounds you endure only seems to heighten the sense that you're fighting through a dream. The unending chaos of it all makes it impossible to tell if you yourself actually kill anyone, but you burn out the heatsinks on too many guns to count.

One of the pistols you snatch from a fallen Elf is pushed too far by your constant firing, and explodes with enough force to shred your hand to bits. The mangled extremity crumbles like blackened chalk, and a new one forms from your stump of a wrist. You cry with laughter - in that moment, it's the funniest thing you've ever seen.

"Which way?" the warrior shouts, coming to another intersection. He drops his smoking weapon, dashes towards an Elf, and picks her up by the legs and arm before breaking her back over his knee.

You've become so lost in your own head that you hardly know where you are anymore, but turning your eyes to the path ahead is all that's needed to remind you. A few hundred feet ahead, a massive doorway lies open - and past that, a larger battle than you've ever seen. Moradys stands on the closest of the arena's six platforms, fighting alone against a tidal wave of enemies moving in from ground and sky.

The overwhelmed woman projects a shield of violet energy with her left hand, harmlessly dispersing bolts of plasma fired from every direction. With her right hand she rips strips of metal from the ground with telekinetic energy, then throws them into the distance like oversized javelins. She's a blur, hands and feet moving so fast that she hardly seems real. Drebesh's forces die even faster than they had at the hands of the human warrior, falling atop each other in towering heaps while the ships they arrive in are sent crashing into the arena's stands or down into the pit at the center of it all.

"Yes, yes!" the blood-splattered warrior shouts, racing towards Moradys while laughing maniacally. His earlier goal of revenge on Ribara is forgotten, lost in a battle lust that only seems to have grown from the trail of destruction he left behind him. He’s body is a mess of bleeding stab wounds and smoldering plasma burns, and you notice - with a bit of worry - that you're able to keep up with him much more easily than before.

Then, silence. The battle continues, but you can no longer hear it. The warrior slows down to a light jog, then stops, looking around in confusion. Three figures drop down from the otherside of the doorway amidst a jingle of bells, blocking your path. All wear the garish, eye-catching garb of the Harlequins you fought earlier. The red-plumed one on the left is taller than the others, and looks you over with a mask whose lips are curled upward in a disgusted sneer. The rightmost Harlequin is even more colorful than the others you've seen, with gold bands wrapped around her limbs that catch the light so strongly you can hardly bear to look at her. Her mask looks like that of an Elf caught between a moment of serene peace and one of hysterical laughter.

The Harlequin in the center is utterly unreadable. A red mohawk tops her mask and the cowl it's attached to. Her expression is angered, but not blindly enraged - more like the righteous indignation of one who has been wrongly slighted. There's happiness there as well, but tempered by the fearful
knowledge that such an emotion is fleeting.

Is this their ringleader, you wonder? Someone who wears the combined faces of the others? It seems a ridiculous thought, but these are ridiculous people - and you remind yourself that despite how they dress, they're clearly trained assassins, not madwomen. Of course someone is leading them.

"Out of my way, jesters!" booms the warrior as he rushes towards them. His voice is impossibly quiet, a warbling rumble that sounds as if it's travelling underwater. It's the only sound you can hear. The two Harlequins on the right step aside as if to make room for his passing, and the disgusted-looking one brings her fists together, one on top of the other, then stretches her arms out and twists them behind her body, like she's a mime pretending to hold a bat.

The warrior draws near and she widens her stance, then swings her arms at him. Her fists move well clear of his body, but something hits him. The impact is tremendous, producing enough force that you're hit with a gust of wind. The warrior is sent hurtling off to the side, and crashes into the wall to the left of the arena doorway. The entire hall shakes, and you spot something in Disgust's hands - a huge warhammer, nearly invisible, as if formed out of the air itself. Bits of dust and debris gather in the swirling eddies composing it, the only hints that she's holding anything at all.

Joy pulls a sword from her back and charges at the warrior. He picks himself up off the floor just in time to catch her strike with his left palm, sparing his skull but earning himself a maimed and bleeding hand. He punches her in the gut and sends her flying, but the Harlequin isn't even felled by the strike. She lands back on the ground feet-first and glides to a stop with all the graceful poise of an ice skater. Disgust takes her place, swinging her near-invisible hammer at his head and punching a hole straight through the wall when he dodges her blow. Green light streams in, and more comes as cracks shoot up and down the length of the wall.

The last remaining Harlequin draws twin daggers from her hips and begins walking towards you. Slowly at first, then faster, until she's bearing down on you with all the furious energy visible in her unmoving mask. You back away and she shoots forward, holding her daggers out in front of her as if to gore you like a bull.

A scream pierces the silence, like a rusty knife jammed straight into both your ears. She closes the distance more quickly than you would have imagined possible and thrusts her knives up at your abdomen. You catch her wrists, and are propelled up into the air by the force of her upward thrust. She keeps screaming and keeps running, trying to drive her daggers up into your belly while you remain suspended by your hold on her wrists. Whatever the Shaper did made you several times stronger than you were before, but your body is no heavier than before. Holding yourself up like this would have been impossible - but now, faced with two blades through the gut, it's nothing.

What's not nothing is being driven through a wall by an Elf whose strength far outmatches your own. She screams and screams, her voice never cracking, and runs you through too many inches of solid concrete to count. First one wall, then two, then three. The tips of the knives dig into your flesh, shooting in an inch further with each body-shattering impact. Finally you hit a barrier too sturdy for her to barrel straight through, and you're driven a few inches deep into reinforced concrete.

The Elf yanks one of her hands free of yours draws her blade back behind her head. You grab hold of one of the rebars sticking out at your side and pull it free of the crumbling wall, then smash her across the head with it. Her mask cracks, the blade nearly drops from her hand, and you batter her again. A third time, and the split mask falls away completely, revealing the face of your wife's captor.

Adrubal's ivory skin is unblemished despite having endured enough blows to crack a human's skull like an egg. The only gap in her perfect white features are the blood-red eyes set wide with murderous anger. She sheathes the blade she nearly dropped, then grabs you by the throat and
squeezes hard enough that vertebrae begin to crack under the strain. The expression she wears now is no different than the one she did a few moments ago, and you recognize it for what it is. Not a blend of anger and fear and desire, but an expression of all-consuming jealousy.

Your neck breaks, and your vision goes black. When you wake up you're flying through the air, then sent smashing through the broken remnants of one of the walls Adrubal had driven you through. Whatever magic has sustained you thus far is still with you, but all it does is buy you another death. Adrubal is on you in seconds, stabbing and slicing at you as you stumble back towards the entry hall to the arena.

Blood flies, limbs turn to ash and regrow, and your attacker wails like a banshee throughout it all. You pick up a fist-sized chunk of concrete and bash her across the head with it, but she doesn't even blink. Your arm drops to the floor a split-second later, severed at the elbow by a lightning-quick slash of her knife.

You fall to the ground and try to push yourself up, but your new hand is only half-formed and you collapse onto your chest with a pained shout. Your earlier wounds healed far faster. Whatever magic was aiding you before is losing its kick. The warrior who brought you here is faring better than you, but even that titan is withering under the dizzying assault of the other two Harlequins. Disgust staggers him with downward swings of her hammer powerful enough to crack the concrete he stands on, while Joy dances about and delivers stab after stab to his exposed sides. He lets out a silent roar and swings his balled up fist at her, but she's far too fast for him to catch with strikes that are growing increasingly panicked and wild.

You shove yourself to your feet and try to run towards him. If you can grab hold of one of the Harlequins and keep them still for a moment, he can snap their neck like a twig. It's a small hope, but it's all you have. Yet even that vanishes after you've taken a few staggering steps forward. Fire shoots through your back, and your legs give out. This isn't just weakness or pain-induced shock, but total paralysis.

Craning your neck back, you see a curved dagger sticking out of your spine, and Adrubal marching towards you with her other knife in hand. Flashes of heat and pressure form in your paralyzed lower half, but they are too brief to allow you to do more than drag yourself forward on hands and knees.

Adrubal grabs you by your hair and lifts up your head, then places her other knife at your throat. Blood trickles down your neck, and the wound you just sustained gives no indication of healing. Her dagger digs into your neck and she starts to saw, cutting through skin and muscle and tendons while you choke on your own blood. You struggle and thrash, but she's too strong and your body is too broken.

Fifty feet ahead of you, near the entrance to the arena, a giant falls. The ground shakes as the warrior's knees strike the ground. Blood flows down his body in gushing torrents, creating a quickly-growing puddle of red all around him. Joy stabs him through the heart, and his mouth hangs open in a soundless death rattle. She keeps his torso upright with her sword as Disgust brings her hammer back, then swings it at him. His head explodes upon impact, a gory mess that showers you and Adrubal while she carves away at your neck.

Then, a scream. Not the furious warcry of your attacker, but an ear-shattering shriek of high pitch and higher volume. The wall to your left that had been cracked by the warrior's impact with it crumbles, and more light seeps in. This is not green, though - it is a brilliant blue.

Chunks of concrete roll down and flames tear through the newly-formed holes, spreading until the entire facade crumbles down the exterior of the tower. Hovering in the air is a massive phoenix, covered in glittering gold plumage and wreathed with blue flames. Sitting on its back and holding
tight to twin handholds of feathers is Vala, just as you saw her in your vision, but wearing an expression more bewildered than fearful.

The bird grips the side of the building with two huge sets of talons and turns its piercing blue eyes to the Harlequins standing beside the fallen warrior's body. Joy charges, and is met by a surge of blue flame that erupts from the bird's mouth. The beak closes, the flames clear, and still the Harlequin charges. Then, she slows her run. Her steps falter, and her legs crack. The contours of her outfit split at every seam and her flesh swells outward, bubbling and pulsing with countless tumorous growths. Her mask rusts over and crumbles, her sword splits in a dozen different places, and her clothes unravel in a shower of colorful threads. Joy manages one more step before collapsing into a puddle of shattered bones, melted flesh, and decaying armor. Even the gold rings wrapped around her limbs have become dull and faded.

Disgust makes a motion of dropping her invisible hammer, then turns and flees into the chaos of the arena, preferring open warfare to the unspeakable horror that just befell her ally. Adrubal drops your head back down to the ground and takes a few steps towards the bird as it clambers into the open space of the hall.

Vala slides off its back, and the creature shudders and convulses with brilliant eruptions of blue flame. It shrinks and twists as it walks forward, gradually assuming the shape of a naked woman whose skin is composed of the same blue flame that decorated the beast it once was. The brilliant plumage takes the form of a golden head of air that reaches halfway to her waist.

Winds sweep all around you, forcing you to shield your eyes against the dust and grit showering your face. At first you think it's this spirit or god or vision summoning a storm to sweep Adrubal away and save you, but the expression the fiery woman wears is a worried one. The winds buffet her even more strongly than they do you, threatening to sweep her back out the hole she tore in the arena's exterior wall. She clenches her jaw, narrows her eyes, and reaches out towards the unmoving Adrubal.

A few more struggling steps, and she swipes at the Elf, not quite grabbing hold of her - but she grabs hold of something. Stretched between the spirit's hand and Adrubal's chest is a ghostly vision of the latter, bright pink in color and nearly too formless to see amidst the hurricane winds. Adrubal tries to take hold of the thrashing vision of herself and force it back inside, but her hand passes right through it. The blue spirit pulls and pulls, her fingers nearly slipping free of the ghost's wrist, until finally the last of it is pulled free of Adrubal's chest.

And just in time. The winds reach their apex, climaxing in a final stormlike gust that sweeps both spirits out into the open air of Cumragh, the pink one dragged away kicking and screaming until both vanish into fog and mist. Adrubal staggers uneasily on her feet, holding a hand to her chest and doubled over as if she just had a heart attack.

You have no idea what you just saw, but don't have the luxury of thinking about it right now. Grabbing hold of the knife in your back, you let out a silent scream of pain and start pushing yourself to your feet. It takes a few moments for your body to heal itself to the point where your legs work again - too long.

Adbrubal spins around and grabs you by the throat, hoists you into the air, then runs you into the wall behind you. The knife falls from your hand, and the enraged Elf tries to bring hers down on your chest. You grab her wrist with both hands and push back, and your body is steadily forced down by her insistent pressing until your feet touch the ground.
There's nowhere to run, no fight left in you, and your best hope of survival lies dead - but you are not without allies. Vala races forward and wraps her arms around Adrubal's neck, squeezing tight and pulling back with all her might. The Elf's eyes flicker to the side in brief recognition, but quickly return to yours as they await the inevitable moment when her knife plunges into your heart and the light leaves your eyes.

You try to tell Vala to grab the knife that fell between you and Adrubal, but the constrictive force of the hand around your throat makes *breathing* impossible, let alone *speaking*. And she wouldn't be able to hear you anyway - not with the persistent silence enforced by the Harlequin's presence.

You can't win. You've always known it, and you know it now. Despite having come closer to escape than ever seemed possible, all those fleeting victories earned you was a more glorious death - and you don't want that. You want an inglorious life, full of peace and calm and contentedness.

Vala looks from you to the tip of the knife digging into your chest, then back to you. Her expression is anguished, and she closes her eyes for a moment before muttering a silent 'I'm sorry' and forcing herself to look at you once again. Despite being inches from ending your life, Adrubal's face does not bear the cruel delight you expected. If anything, she looks the angriest she ever has - a jealous would-be lover who knows that no matter how this ends, she won't get what she wants most.

*She can't win.*

The thought is accompanied by a shudder of dark amusement that makes your bloody lips twist upward. You close your eyes and mutter the words to yourself over and over, not caring that they are dying in your collapsed esophagus. The more the thought echoes in your mind, the greater a certainty it becomes until all of the terrible danger bearing down on you vanishes. Inevitable loss becomes certain victory, and the sharp metal piercing your flesh vanishes.

You open your eyes. Adrubal's blade was forced back a few inches by a sudden surge of strength welling within you, but that is not what has both her, you, and Vala staring at the weapon with wide-eyed surprise. The curved blade now points at Adrubal, having been reversed within the few moments of your closed eyes and chanted mantra.

Vala lets go of Adrubal's neck. She grabs your wrists and pulls, forcing the knife towards the Elf. Adrubal says a few silent words, and you see a new expression on her face - fear. Tears well in Vala's eyes, and she blinks them clear, then mouths a silent 'I'm sorry.' This time, the words aren't directed at you.

The dagger sinks into Adrubal's chest. Her jaw drops open and her resistance falters, crumbling with all the speed of a woman for whom loss and defeat are a new experience. The blade shoots in all the way to the hilt, and that fight of hers falters completely. Her hand drops from your throat, and blood trickles from one corner of her mouth.

Vala releases your hands and steps aside, giving you room to drive Adrubal to the ground with a triumphant shout. You plunge the knife in again and again, feeling almost afraid to take it out each time, worried that the Elf will somehow have a chance to turn this around on you.

But she doesn't. Her hands push and grab at you, growing weaker with each stab to her chest. With your arms exhausted and trembling you plunge it in one last time, then lean on the pommel for support. Adrubal rolls her head to the side to look at Vala, then back to you. She laughs, blood spilling from her mouth and chest with each shuddering convulsion, and brings a hand up to grasp the shawl of bells hanging around her chest and back. You grab it before she can, wrenching the garment free in a jingle of bells and throwing it as far as you can manage.
Sound roars back into being. Wind, sporadic gunfire, your own labored breathing, and Adrubal's wet laughter.

"Nine!" she gasps, pressing a finger to your chest before letting it drop back to her stomach. "Regret! Nine, nine, nine..." Her eyes flutter closed, her rambling falls silent, and her body goes limp. You stay atop her for what seems like an eternity, fearing to move a muscle. You've killed someone, and have no idea what comes next.

"Orin!" Vala rushes forward and wraps her arms around you, then hauls you to your feet. She avoids looking at the body of her former owner, keeping her eyes pointed far away until you're both well clear of the dead Elf.

“What a day,” she muses, breaking the awkward silence as she helps you limp along to the arena’s entrance. You open your mouth to speak, but everything that comes to mind seems so pitifully small when compared with what just happened, and what still lies ahead of you. After a few moments of dumb muteness you set your jaw tight and fix your eyes on your shuffling feet.

Vala watches you carefully for a few more paces, then leans in close to whisper in your ear. “I rode a bird.”

Tears well in your eyes, and you tilt your head back and laugh. “What a day.”

The once-continuous sounds of battle are now spotty and weak, with only the occasional explosion strong enough for you to feel underfoot. Outside, in the arena, hundreds of bodies lay scattered across the nearest platform, and even more on the ones beyond it. The sky is clear except for the usual cloudy smears of green pollution, the ships that once filled it now brought down to the arena as countless fiery wrecks.

At the center of all that death and destruction stands Ribara, in the middle of the closest platform. She holds a spear thrust into the ground, her eyes pointed downward and full weight leaned on the weapon. With her white skin and hair she looks like a marble statue carved to commemorate the battle, an illusion made all the stronger by the way she stands so still.

Then, she twists the spear - and you hear a familiar scream. Letting your arm slip from Vala, you rush out the arena doorway and up the slope of the exit ramp. Another living figure comes into view. Moradys lays on the ground beneath Ribara, pinned to the ground by the spear piercing her stomach.

"What an end for you, mother!” Ribara gives the spear another twist, drawing another anguished scream from Moradys. "And what a beginning for me.”

Neither women seems to notice you and Vala standing on the bridge, but they surely will if you try and slip past them to get to the docking bay on the other side of the pit.

"Do you have any last words?” Ribara says in a booming voice that fills the arena.

Moradys grabs the spear and tries to force it upward, her hands crackling with violet energy, but she can manage no more than a few sparking bursts of the stuff before her head collapses back down and her arms go limp. She looks to left and right, as if searching for an escape, and notices you. Your eyes connect, and she holds your gaze for a moment before swiveling her head back to Ribara.

"Yes!” Moradys says, her smooth voice brimming with an odd confidence. "Well done.”

Flames crackle, the wind howls, and no one says a word. Ribara stares down at Moradys, a thousand different expressions seizing her face before settling on simple confusion.
"What?" She takes half a step back, easing the pressure on the spear.

"Did you really think I could so blindly stumble into a trap like this? A fine trap it was, don't get me wrong. Superb, even! But I've been around far longer than you, and still have much more to teach you."

"Teach me?" Ribara says, her voice a threatening whisper that is barely audible to you. For a moment it seems as if Moradys has overstepped, but she continues speaking before Ribara can remember her mutilated shoulder and drive the spear deeper into Moradys.

"The moment you came out of that birthing pod and I saw your eyes, I knew you were perfect." Moradys lets her words hang in the air for a moment, though they seem to make Ribara even angrier. "But over the next seven years, I became aware of a single flaw! You were too obedient."

Moradys plasters on a bloody grin and drags herself upright by the spear, then gives it a shake. "Let me up, and I will explain." Ribara hesitates, her expression becoming uncertain, and Moradys frowns. "Daughter, do not make me repeat myself."

To your surprise, Ribara obeys. She drags the spear out of Moradys' gut and takes a few shuffling step backwards, suddenly looking very awkward as she watches Moradys stagger to her feet. Blood spills from the wound in her abdomen, and she presses a hand to stop the flow before turning to face Ribara.

"I saw an opportunity like none other - to do away with my greatest enemy, and to teach my cherished daughter an important lesson about self-sufficience." Moradys sweeps a hand outward, taking in the hundreds of Elves laying broken all around them. "What sort of mother would I be if I failed to prepare you for this universe’s cruelty?"

Ribara can't be buying this. You can't imagine anyone believing the desperate act Moradys is putting on. Yet when you look over at the larger woman, she's grasping her spear tightly in both hands and staring down her mother with a tight jaw and trembling lip. Moradys walks over to her and places a hand gingerly on one muscular arm, clearly still wary of drawing too close to the woman who had nearly killed her.

"Now that this whole messy business is over, we can get you back home and have that arm restored. Wouldn't you like that?"

Ribara looks as if she's about to say something, but as her eyes scan the arena she takes notice of you. Her eyes flash with renewed anger, and she pulls away from Moradys. "What about my slave?"

Moradys glances over and gasps, as if noticing you for the first time. "Yes, your slave!" She rushes over and grabs you by the arm, then marches you towards Ribara. Vala shouts in protest and tries to pull you free, but the Elf puts a hand on her face and shoves her back hard enough to send her tumbling.

"Hey!" You grab Moradys by the wrist as you throw a fearful glance at Vala. She managed to avoid rolling off of the narrow bridge, but just barely. Moradys grows tired of your struggling and thumps you in the back of the skull hard enough to daze you.

"It is all yours, of course. Always has been." Moradys shoves you into Ribara, who takes hold of you by both arms. Immediately you're hit by a familiar wave of unwanted pleasure, which makes you even weaker and less able to think. "Careful with this one! I can't tell you how many times it begged me to use it. I told it how lucky it was to have an owner like you."
Ribara pushes away and glowers down at you as you stammer out a protest.

"That's not true! None of it! She didn't plan any of this!"

Moradys lets out a shrill, haughty laugh that cuts right through your words. "Mon-keighs are inferior creatures - that's the sad truth of it. It's not smart enough to see what you see." Ribara sets you aside and looks to Moradys, who smiles warmly and spreads her arms out wide. "Like how proud I am to be your mother."

Ribara's hand slips weakly from your arm, and her lip starts trembling again. She lets out a strained cry of emotion, then throws herself forward and wraps her arms around Moradys. The smaller woman grimaces at the feeling of her still-fresh wound being constricted by her daughter's bear hug, but forces out mumbled words of crooning comfort as she pats Ribara on the back. The moment lasts far too long for Moradys' taste, and she tries to push away a few times before Ribara finally allows her to. Just as they part, Moradys gives you a sly wink, to which you return an unhappy frown.

Vala lingers at the edge of the platform, uncertain of what to do and even more baffled by the scene than you are. Remembering her presence, Moradys races over and snatches her by the wrist.

"This one's mine!" she calls out to Ribara. "One of Lady Drebesh's, I think! I'm keeping it!"

Ribara doesn't even bother a shrug of acceptance, and turns away from the two women to survey the sight of what was - if only briefly - her arena. For all she knows, the redheaded human is a nobody. Just one more slave among millions.
My Wife's Daughter

You want to shout at Moradys, to storm over there and grab your wife and tell both these Elves that no one is taking Vala from you again. But the minor cuts and scrapes on your arms still haven't healed, reminding you that any fight with either of these women is bound to be a short one - and after what you saw Moradys do in the arena, you don't relish the thought of taking on her or the woman who defeated her.

For a moment you consider revealing Vala's identity to Ribara and asking her to take Vala, if only to keep your wife close to you, but a glance up at the thoughtful Elf towering beside you stops you cold. She's nearly killed you a few times, and you survived the last incident only by the grace of Moradys' regenerative pool. If Ribara decides she doesn't like competition and rips your wife in two, there would be nothing you could do. For now, you have to leave her with the lesser of these two devils. Not the better one, but at least the smarter one.

Vala starts to call out to you while thrashing in Moradys' grip, but you give her a slow, wide-eyed shake of the head, then nod your head up towards Ribara. She catches sight of the worry so blatantly displayed on your face, and falls silent. You do have another hope, but it's a small one. Closing your eyes and feeling a bit ridiculous at what you're about to do, you begin a silent chant.

*Orina. Help me. Help me. Help me.*

You repeat the words over and over, certain that your deathly vision and that golden phoenix are somehow connected to the feminine version of yourself you first glimpsed in the smooth underside of a food tray. Perhaps your mental powers are strong enough that your insanity gave rise to something real - or perhaps the powers were *never* yours, and merely on loan from this spirit which, for some unknowable reason, took interest in you. Whether that interest is still there is impossible to know. It *did* just save your life, but the healing powers it gave you have vanished. At least they lasted long enough to eat away at that shard of glass you impaled your foot on.

"Orin!" comes a woman's cry. Your eyes snap open, and you stop your mental chant to search frantically for any sign of the demigod you were so desperately attempting to summon. But rather than a phoenix, you spot a woman making her way from the inner hall out into the arena. Not one of blue flame and golden hair, but a very human one, with light brown skin and wavy dark hair.

Charal staggers across the bridge connecting the hallway to your platform, holding one hand to her bare stomach while reaching out for you with the other.

"B-baby!" she stammers, taking a few more awkward steps before collapsing onto her knees near the edge of the disc.

Moradys is surprised enough by her arrival that her grip on Vala loosens, allowing your wife to slip free and rush to Charal's aid. She wastes no time helping her to her feet and bringing her further onto the platform, treating the indignant Moradys as if she isn't even there.

"It is coming!" Charal gasps, grabbing onto Vala like a woman afraid to drown.

Moradys scoffs and storms over to the pair. "Don't you dare! Hold it in until we can get you somewhere sterile." She gives a disgusted look at the bodies laying all around her.

"I can't." Charal lays her head down and rolls it from side to side.

"You will, or so help me!" Moradys starts towards the prone Charal, but Vala holds a hand up to
stop her and moves between Charal's bent legs. To your surprise, Moradys actually stops, circling the pair anxiously while Vala rolls up first her sleeves, then Charal's black dress.

"What are you doing?" Moradys says as Vala puts her head under the dress to get a look at what's in store for her.

Vala pokes her head back out. "Delivering a baby. Is that alright with you, your highness?"

Moradys blusters in stunned disbelief, and Vala puts her head back under the dress. Moradys raises a foot as if to kick her in the head, but you haul the infuriated Elf back in time to stop that from happening.

"Do you know what you're doing?" you whisper down to her, hoping Charal won't hear you over her own frantic breaths.

"I've delivered a calf before," Vala says. "Can't be all that different."

You don't respond, figuring that she'll be less annoyed by your silence than she would be if you actually answered that for her.

"She's dilating." Vala pokes her head out and looks down the length of Charal's rapidly rising and falling belly. "It's coming soon."

Charal's eyes shoot wide at having her own feelings confirmed, and her breathing turns to shallow hyperventilation.

"Orin." She rolls her head around until she finds you, then holds a hand out. Vala looks between the two of you with confusion. "What is a calf?"

You hesitate for a few moments, but Charal's desperate expression and wiggling fingers lure you forward. You kneel down, taking her hand in both of yours and holding it tight. Assuming Vala puts a modicum of thought into the timeline of Charal's pregnancy, she'll know - or at least assume she knows - that it can't possibly be yours. But something about the way Charal reached out to you told her that there's a deeper connection there than she would like. Right now, she's wondering how two-sided that connection is.

"I need you to push," Vala says to the other woman. Charal huffs and puffs, then clenches her muscles tight. Her back goes rigid and she screams, elbows thumping against the ground. Vala gives the order again and again, each time with more mixed excitement and trepidation.

"You had better do this right," Moradys hisses in Vala's ear. Your wife merely scowls and rolls her eyes, then gets back to work. A curious Ribara presses in too close, nearly joining Vala underneath Charal's dress, and Vala snaps at her to give her room to work.

"Don't you dare yell at me!" Ribara nearly smacks Vala before looking to Moradys for permission. "Mother!"

Moradys isn't listening anymore. She stares down at the panting Charal with the anxious worry of a noblewoman watching movers handle a priceless vase. A rapid click-click is audible in between Charal's screams as Moradys chews her nails down to their roots.

"I see the head!" Vala exclaims, popping out to give Charal a nervous smile. Charal doesn't respond, and keeps staring upward with wild eyes and puffing cheeks. Her hand squeezes yours harder than Adrubal had your throat, and your joined palms are wet with sweat. It's mostly yours, though. Charal
might be the one forcing another living being out of her body, but that gives her mercifully little room to think about the situation she's in. The situation both of you are in.

"Push it back in!" Moradys says in a frantic tone. Then, she shakes her head and stammers off another order. "No, pull it out quickly!

You can't say whether or not you ever wanted kids. It's hard to remember your earlier thoughts on the matter, and you are so different from what you once were that those plans are as obsolete as can be - they might as well have belonged to another person. What you do know is that you never planned to have a child in a place like this. Not in this city, not with this woman, not with these Elves as nursemaid - none of it is anything like you pictured. They say a person is never truly ready to have kids, that there will always be some lingering worries of 'am I ready'. But normally, one would have a full nine months to prepare themselves for this new life joining with theirs. You had one week, and you're still not entirely sure what's going to come out of Charal.

"One last push!" A distant explosion punctuates Vala's urgent words, as if to remind you that circumstances could be even more dire than they are now. At least the arena is filled with the dead instead of the dying.

Charal gnashes her teeth and swears up a storm in between pained cries. You've never heard her swear before. One last arching jerk of her back, one more cry, and she falls still save for the rapid movement of her chest and belly. There's a sound like some sucking bloody meat through a straw - it's the most disgusting thing you've ever heard. Ribara's eyes go wide and she averts her gaze from the space between Charal's legs. Apparently, whatever pulpy mass of birthing matter just came out is less bearable a sight than severed limbs and mangled corpses.

Vala slips her head out from the dress, and the look on her face makes the blood drain from yours. Next comes her hands, holding a blood-soaked infant still connected to Charal by its umbilical cord. No one says a word, and only Charal breathes - her baby does not.

"You killed it," Moradys mutters. "You killed it, you stupid bitch!" She launches herself at Vala, but you throw yourself across Charal, putting yourself between the two women.

"Spank it!" you say to Vala. "Slap its butt!"

Your wife's jaw drops open in realization, and she wastes no time delivering a firm slap to the infant's bottom. A split-second later, a sharp cry pierces the unbearable silence. It's accompanied by a tremendous shockwave of energy that hurls you onto your back and sets your ears ringing. It feels as if someone stuck firecrackers in your ears and lit the fuses. You've been attacked, you're sure of it. Some of Drebesh's forces have rallied and are having another go at Moradys.

But when you pick yourself up, the skies are as clear as ever. The only person in sight - besides the bewildered Ribara and your two stunned wives - is Moradys. She's walking into the interior of the arena, clutching your wailing child to her chest. An umbilical cord bounces beside her with each step.

"My baby!" Charal cranes her head back to watch the departing Elf, then grabs your arm and grips it even more tightly than she had your hand. "She took my baby!"

You forcibly remove Charal's hand and rush after Moradys while Vala tries her best to calm the frantic woman. Moradys stops a short ways inside the hall, bathed in the green light shining in through the shattered wall to her right. She lightly bounces the fleshy bundle in her arms, leaning her face into whisper to it. When you draw close enough to make out the words - nonsensical baby babble - she turns away from you and keeps up her crooning until your baby's screams have quieted
"Give it back."

You circle around Moradys, putting yourself between her and the path deeper into the tower.

"Why?" Moradys keeps her eyes fixed on the near-motionless infant. "Charal is mine. She's mine, too."

She.

It takes you a moment to untangle the odd sequence of words. This is your daughter, then. You have a daughter. You've given so little thought to kids over the years that a gender preference never had time to form in your mind. Maybe one of both would be best, you had mused a few times. Yet now, you feel a wave of relief washing over you at the sound of that word - 'she'. The Dark Elves might treat human women like households pets, but men are no more than livestock. At least now you have ample time to get her out of here. In the meantime, you'll try not to think about what awaits her if she's forced to grow up here.

"You don't want her to end up like Ribara, do you?" You choose your words carefully, not wanting to veer too close to accusing Moradys of being a poor mother - which she very much is. You also keep your voice low, just in case Ribara's ears are as sharp as the dozens of weapons well within reach of her. "Have you seen the statistics on single-parent households?"

Rather than growing angry at your subtle accusation, or amused by your half-joke, she glances at you with sad confusion.

"You were supposed to help me."

Your lips move silently, unable to summon a response, and your stunned silence continues for so long that Moradys turns away again.

"I can, but first you need to give her back to Charal." You gesture past Moradys, where Charal awkwardly twists her head back on the ground to get a look at the two of you. Vala holds her hand while a bored-looking Ribara mills about, kicking at bodies and jabbing a spear into the unarmored ones.

Moradys clicks her tongue in distaste and turns towards the corridor's one remaining wall, refusing to look either you or Charal in the eye. "She's an idiot. What does she know about cultivating a Psyker?"

You want to smash her over the head with a chunk of concrete and ask her what she knows about being a mother, but you hold back for the sake of the fragile infant cradled in her arms. At least you have some confirmation that your daughter's mind-shattering scream wasn't just in your head. Or, rather, it was in your head - but in everyone else's as well.

"Think about this," you say carefully. "What happens when she grows up and realizes she looks nothing like you? When she realizes she looks like the people you keep as slaves." Right now your daughter is covered in too much blood and placenta for you to say what she looks like, but you can be sure she doesn't share Morady's black eyes and nearly translucent skin.

Moradys looks down at your daughter, a more poignantly thoughtful expression on her face than you would have thought possible.

"She'll hate you for it," you continue. "But if you let Charal keep her, you could be an... aunt."
She frowns. "I don't want to be an aunt."

Truthfully, you would prefer a world in which your enslaver and rapist has no place in your daughter's life whatsoever. But these are the cards you've been dealt, and right now you'll settle for getting that baby back in Charal's arms.

"Do you know what a Godmother is?" you say to her.

She doesn't respond.

"It's something we humans have. It's a... second mother. In case the parents die."

Although you can't recall ever knowing someone who had such a thing. As far as you know, that tradition died sometime in the Dark Ages.

Moradys snorts derisively. "What, a backup?"

"No, no!" you say quickly. "More like a manager, to make sure the parents are doing everything right. She worries about the important stuff, while the regular mother changes shit-filled diapers, breast feeds, cleans up vomit, walks her around at two in the morning while she cries..."

You go on like that, rattling off every inglorious task you can think of that could possibly fall upon a mother's shoulders. A few you simply make up entirely, figuring that Moradys doesn't know about child-rearing to call your bluff. The more you speak, the further Moradys moves from your daughter, until she's holding her as far from her body as possible, no longer staring at her quite as warmly or covetously.

A few moments pass, and finally Moradys sighs. "Fine."

She turns and walks back across the bridge to the first arena platform, where a kneeling Vala turns Charal around on the ground and uses her thighs to give the new mother something to prop herself up on. Charal reaches out for her daughter, and Moradys reluctantly hands her over.

"I had to make sure it was safe," Moradys mutters. "Psychic emanations, or... whatever."

Charal is too busy hugging her daughter tight to her chest to listen to the rambling excuses, and doesn't look angry in the least. She presses her lips to the baby's blood-matted hair, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Do you have a name?" Vala says to her, breaking a silence which has become both touching and awkward.

Charal looks up and smiles at you. "Orina. I heard it in a dream."

For a moment, you think to yourself how bizarrely familiar that name sounds. Then, it hits you - of course it sounds familiar. You've become so used to being called 'slave' or merely 'it' that your own name sounds like a stranger's. Vala has even less trouble making the connection than you. Both of you avoid each other's eyes, and you give Charal a weak smile - it's all you can muster right now.

Someone else joins your tight circle. Ribara, who had been idly skirting the edge of the platform, circles your group with quick strides, staring down at Orina with a hungry look in her eyes. It's as if giving the child a name finally brought it into view for her.

Ribara stops and reaches out towards the infant. "I want to hold it."
Charal's face drains of color and she twists away, putting her body between Ribara and the baby. "Absolutely not." Moradys grabs Ribara by her robotic arm and drags her back a few steps. You utter a silent thanks that at least on this, you and Moradys are of similar minds.

The painfully awkward silence returns, but is quickly broken by an explosion far below that makes the entire arena shudder. A few small ships bearing red emblems buzz overhead, followed shortly afterward by another group of purple ones.

"It seems Lady Drebesh's forces would rather not relinquish control of the skies." Moradys sighs and leans her weight back on one foot, then taps her chin thoughtfully. "If only there were some way to turn the tide in our favor." She throws a pointed glance at Ribara, who excitedly points at the bracelet on her wrist.

"The tower has anti-air defenses. I can have the Wyches activate them."

Moradys' eyes and mouth go wide. "When did you become such a tactician? Isn't my daughter brilliant, everyone?"

She looks to the rest of you for echoes of her sentiment, but Ribara is already busy relaying the orders to the remaining Wyches. A minute later, more explosions erupt around the tower - these far more distant, as if coming from the air instead of from impacts to the structure itself. With the battle won - or close to it - Moradys makes it clear that she's tired of standing among so many burning bodies and smoldering wrecks. She tells you to go to the other side of the arena and find something to cart Charal and her newborn around on.

The Wyches' training hall is remarkably unscathed, apparently having avoided serving as the sight of one of the many firefights you either witnessed or participated in. A few of the several hundred animal cages have been tipped over by errant explosions, though, and the inhabitants gnaw angrily at the bars of their too-small prisons. You find a hoversled used to transport the caged creatures, and push it back out into the arena where you and Vala help Charal onto the sled. Moradys leads the way back into the training hall, Charal buries your daughter so far into her chest that you can hardly see her, and Ribara lurks in the rear like a circling shark.

The docking bay below the grand hall is equally unharmed, with a few small ships moored to the side of the open space. Not that you can make use of them yet, though - the Elves of House Nathema seem determined not to retreat no matter how hopeless the odds, and the foggy mists outside of the tower are lit up here and there by brilliant flashes of light, each one a destroyed ship and dead pilot.

Moradys orders Ribara to make sure one of the ships is ready to leave as soon as the skies are clear, and with the large Elf's departure, Charal allows her hold on Orina to relax. She takes her sleeve and tries to wipe at the bloody juices still soaking the infant's face, but the skimpy wedding dress Moradys put her in earlier that day is ill-suited for soaking up much of anything. Vala stops her, and strips off her baggy tunic - and you gasp.

Her chest is wrapped in a dark cloth, and the left side is a flattened mess of scar tissue, as if someone sliced off her breast and stuck a giant branding iron to the wound. Only then does Vala seem to realize what she revealed to you, and looks down in shame. You avert your eyes as well, but are immediately hit by a wave of shame. This is your wife, after all - not a scarred beggar. You go to where she's kneeling and try to take her by the shoulders, but she pushes your hand away and instead leans in towards Charal.

"Let me." Vala takes her bundled up shirt and gently dabs at Orina's head and face, gathering up the worst of the blood and tissue. Your daughter, you note, has a surprisingly thick head of hair for a
newborn. More surprising is how dazzlingly gold it is - to call it blonde would not quite do it justice. Another few dabs to her cheeks, and Orina stirs, making a gurgling noise while thrashing about with tiny arms and limbs.

Then, Orina's eyes flicker open, and your own eyes go wide alongside Vala's. So do Charal's, once she cranes her head forward and sees what the two of you see. Orina's eyes are so vivid a blue that they seem to glow with a light of their own. That sleepy gaze tracks from left to right, taking in your faces, and her eyelids close. A moment later, she's still.

Moradys approaches your group, taking note of your cleaned-up daughter before throwing a disgusted look at Vala's chest.

"What a prize I won," she sighs. Before you can fire back in defense of your wife, Moradys turns to call out for Ribara, who steps down from the piloting deck of the ship she had been preparing. "You wanted to hold it, didn't you?"

Ribara nods, and Moradys points at Charal.

"Then be a good daughter and carry these two aboard. The sled won't fit."

A few minutes later, all five of you are aboard a small skiff, headed back towards Moradys' manor. A small squad of fighters forms a protective cocoon around your unarmored vessel, ensuring that the suicidal ramming tactics you saw on display aren't put to use by any stragglers from Drebesh's vengeful and directionless forces. You sit on a high-backed bench facing the pilot's deck, with Charal leaned against your half-turned torso. Vala sits on your other side, a much wider gap between the two of you then you would like. It's not the seating arrangement you would have chosen, but it's the way it ended up.

Charal strokes Orina's hair, revealing more and more of the golden strands amidst the bundled cloth Vala helped wrap her in.

"She looks just like her father," says Charal.

With your wife - your real wife - so close, all you can manage is a barely audible acknowledgement, with no real comment one way or the other. And in truth, you're not sure you can even agree with Charal's assessment. The briefest glimpse of her eyes had you dazzled by their otherworldly beauty, and her skin is nearly as golden as her hair. A blood-covered newborn, and already she's far better looking than you.

Vala leans forward to look past you. "Who's the father?" she tries to say casually, though there's more than a little trepidation in her voice. Charal furrows her brow in confusion, then twists around to face Vala and smiles up at you, as if the answer were obvious.

"That's impossible," Vala says flatly. This time, there's blatant annoyance in her voice - one of the only times in your life where you've been comforted to hear the start of one of her trademark fiery moods. It's far better than the cold shoulder you were getting a few minutes prior.

"Through love, anything is possible." Charal wraps one arm tight around Orina and puts the other on your thigh.

"He's been here what, a month?" Vala looks up to you for confirmation, and you nod absentmindedly. That does sound about right - certainly not the nine months that would be expected given who Charal holds in her arms.

Charal glares at her. It's the first time you've seen her actually look angry, rather than plastering on a
harmless frown to ward off your desperate attempts at establishing human contact. Dark days, those were.

"How would you know?" says Charal.

Vala scoffs and slides closer, then gently but firmly removes Charal's hand from your thigh. "I'm his wife."

For a long moment, Charal just stares at her. Surprise, anger, confusion, and fear play across her face, and she puts her hand on your arm, where Vala can't possibly pull it away. Then, her expression hardens, and she turns her head to the right.

"Mistress!" she calls out to the front deck, where Ribara pilots the ship. Moradys, who stands beside her, looks back to search for the source of the cry. "This woman is bothering Orina!"

Orina is silent, and has been since she fell asleep in the docking bay. Moradys doesn't seem to notice, though, and storms down the steps like a woman on a warpath. She grabs Vala by the arm despite the latter's slapping and kicking, then hauls her up from the bench and drags her a short distance away. You rise to go help your wife, but Charal drops Orina into your lap and throws her arms around your neck.

"You should hold her," she whispers in your ear. "She is your daughter." Not that you have much of a choice, unless you want to set her down on the bench of an open-sided aircraft piloted by Ribara of all people. You give Vala a pleading look meant to convey how terribly sorry you are for how this all turned out, but she's too busy dealing with Moradys to give you the scolding glare you expected. Moradys gropes Vala's single breast and runs a hand along her torso, as if sizing up a finished sculpture. Her curled lips tell you that she doesn't like what she sees.

"Why are you so fat?" Moradys pinches the slight roll of fat peaking out above Vala's skirt, and your wife grabs at her probing hand while shouting in anger.

Vala isn't fat, but if you're being honest with yourself - and her - she has put on a few pounds during her time in Cummragh. You can only think to attribute that to Adrubal's peculiar tastes, though you're quick to push those thoughts out of mind. You already have enough reasons to see that albino Elf in your nightmares.

"I do not know who you are," Charal calls out to Vala. "Maybe you are crazy. If that is so, it is very sad. But he is my husband, and I am his wife." She squeezes your neck tight and buries her face in the crook of your neck, as if she'd like to put Vala out of sight entirely.

"You're the crazy one," Vala snaps back. "No one has a baby in one goddamn month." She struggles against Moradys furiously, but the Elf seems to find her thrashing more amusing than troublesome. Moradys slips her hand into Vala's skirt, and Vala responds by cocking her fist back and delivering a punch to Moradys' jaw. It's a good hit, loud enough that even Ribara finally glances back to see what the commotion is about. Moradys merely grins.

"Maybe I'll like this one after all." Moradys glances at Charal. "You won't mind if we leave you two alone, will you? I'd like to speak to this thing below deck."

Charal lifts her head up from your chest to shake it, then turns her gaze to Orina in your arms and strokes her hair. Moradys turns away and drags a shrieking Vala through a doorway beneath the pilot's deck, leading her down a stairwell and quickly disappearing from view.

The sight of Vala disappearing down that stairwell puts a familiar fear in your heart, and you're
overcome by the firm determination never to let her slip from your grasp again. Not when you can do something about it. You balance the cloth-wrapped Orina on your thighs, and with some effort undo the chokehold Charal has on you. Then you hold tight to her wrists as you look her square in her big brown eyes. They look like nothing like her daughter's, but they're beautiful nonetheless.

"We can't be doing this," you say to her. "We need to work together. That's the only way we're going to get through this."

"Get through what?" She smiles and looks down at your daughter. "We are doing amazing."

That's the second time she's used that word - amazing. Both times today. Part of you still hates the idea of tearing this comfortable fantasy away from her, but she doesn't know what you know. That there's another world out there, one that isn't a living hell of slavery and humiliation. If you can get her there, it'll be worth any temporary pain. And in the end, she'll thank you.

"To get out of this place," you whisper. "You and Orina."

Charal gives you a confused smile, as if waiting for the punchline to a joke. When your expression remains serious, she becomes horrified.

"This is my home." She lowers her voice to that of a whisper, as if you've just suggested committing a serious crime. And you suppose that's just what you've done. In her mind, you're the crazy one for talking about escaping all this. You want to laugh, and cry, and shake her until she realizes how stupid she's being. But she's not stupid, you remind yourself. Just sheltered.

"This place is horrible. I can't think of a worse place in the world for a little girl to grow up." You throw a weary glance at the shadowed doorway Moradys led Vala through. "Just think about what I said, alright? We'll talk more later."

You pick up Orina and hand her over to Charal, who accepts her daughter without thinking.

"Wait!" she calls after you as you head to the doorway. Just before Ribara passes out of view on the deck above, you catch sight of her glancing back at you with narrowed and suspicious eyes. You're not sure how much Moradys told her, or how much she deduced on her own. She told you not to let Moradys fuck you, but hadn't said a word about pitching instead of catching. Maybe she doesn't care if her slave has a lovechild and two wives waiting in the wings, as long as she's the only one fucking you.

The interior of the ship consists of a single narrow hall running down the length of it, with two doors, one on the left and one on the right. The right, you realize upon opening it, is a storage closet. From the left you hear a single muffled voice, too quiet to deduce the tone of the one-sided conversation taking place within.

You open the door, and catch sight of Vala and Moradys standing at the foot of the bed taking up half of the cramped room. Vala's chestwrap is clutched in her hand, and her eyes are squeezed shut. Moradys' back is turned to you, and she reaches out to touch the scarred half of your wife's chest.

Before that can happen you grab her by her other arm and pull her back. Moradys stumbles sideways onto the hallway and crashes into the wall, then slips to the floor. You had been angry, and put a lot of force into the pull - but you're still surprised at how easily you threw her down.

"Easy!" Vala covers her chest with one arm and grabs you by the shoulder. "She wanted to look at my scar. That's all."

You're sure that's all Moradys said, but you doubt that's where it would have ended. Moradys holds
a hand in front of her face as if fearing a second strike from you, and uses the wall to pull herself to her feet with a strained grunt. It's an admirable bit of acting, but you can't imagine for whose benefit she performs. Your wife? She's not going to earn any sympathy points there.

"I take it you'd like some time to talk?" says Moradys. You say nothing and stare her down, keeping yourself in the doorway between her and your wife. "Very well. I'll come get you when we've arrived."

Moradys departs with a slouching walk, and you wait for her to ascend the stairwell before rolling your eyes and shutting the door. Vala wraps her naked chest back up, then sits down on the bed while you rest your forehead against the door and consider how best to convey the innumerable things you want to say, now that you finally have a moment to talk.

"I'm sorry. For everything." You turn around and sit down beside Vala. She shuffles uneasily for a moment, then lifts her left hand up and drops it onto your bare thigh. You put your own hand atop it before she can pull away. You've got a thousand questions for her, and she must have several times that many for you. Most of yours are ones you don't really want to hear the answer to - like what happened to her during the weeks you were separated.

"She warned me not to make a big fuss about being married. Not in front of that other Elf."

You nod, already having had that topic in mind. After a tearful hug and a passionate kiss, ideally, but Vala seems to be in no mood for either of those.

"Ribara, yeah. I don't know what she'll do if she finds out you're my wife."

Vala smiles thinly. "So now I'm your wife."

You angle your body towards hers and take her by the shoulders. "Of course. But I'm trying to be careful," you say in a low voice. "You've got no idea what those two are capable of. Everything I say, Moradys finds a way to use it against me. And Ribara..." You let out a dark laugh and shake your head. "Like you already heard - she's insane."

Vala looks you up and down, making note of your good eye and the unnaturally strong grip you have on her. "Seems like you're doing alright. A hell of a lot better than the last time I saw you."

That's right. You had been missing an eye and were coming off of a day-long bender of rape, alcohol, and alien drugs. Now Vala is the one missing body parts and carrying the bruises of countless beatings. Every glimpse you catch of the purple blotches has you swearing that you'll do ten times worse to the perpetrator, and you continually have to remind yourself that you already did. Yet even with your wife's captor dead, the two of you aren't truly any better off - not until you make a plan and put it into action. Nor do you feel like you've gotten Vala back, despite having her shoulders grasped so firmly in her hands. She shrinks back at your touch, as if her body wants to wiggle free of it.

"That woman - Moradys - seemed really grateful," Vala blurts out. The urgency of her voice surprises you. It's not a spur-of-the-moment question, but one that's been building inside of her. "Kept telling me how you saved her life. Said she was going to treat me real well because of that."

Her tone is as sarcastic as can be, but the look she fixes you with is one of dire seriousness. "That's the woman who's been keeping you, right? Why'd you save her?"

It's a question you've asked yourself every time you had a moment to breathe over the past few hours. You had resolved to jump on Ribara's plan to murder Moradys, but at the last second had
spilled your guts to the latter on the elevator ride to whatever death trap awaited her.

"If Moradys had died, that would have meant Ribara getting both of us. I don't think you would have survived that, even if she never found out who you were." You glance away from Vala, a pained expression crossing your face as you take her hand in yours and squeeze it tight. "At least now, we've got time to come up with a plan."

"So you are working on a plan."

"Of course," you say quickly. "Look." You hook your fingers into your collar and pull from both sides, showing how close you can bring the metal band to snapping. "Breaking this thing and making a run for it was pointless without you. Now, we're together. The moment we figure out how to steal a ship, we're gone."

Vala's expression eases somewhat, but her suspicion remains. "Why are you so strong? Did the Elves do that to you?"

You nod. "Ribara got tired of almost killing me. I'm tougher now, but still weaker than her." Both statements are correct, but neither comes close to conveying the full truth. You really don't want to get into the lurid details of just how Ribara almost killed you. Nor do you want to explain the peculiar nature of the Shaper's modifications that left you putty in Ribara's hands. Vala no doubt took notice of Ribara's male anatomy - it's impossible not to given her size and the thong she wears - but her mind hasn't necessarily made the leap to you being a sex slave instead of the more boring kind.

"So it's got nothing to do with you being a... Psyker?" Her head turns ever so slightly to the side, and her eyes search yours as if looking for any sign of recognition or duplicity.

"You know what that is?"

"That Elf told me. Said you can mess with peoples' minds. Maybe even more than that." Vala gives you a tight smile, one which isn't the least bit comforting. Something about the way she said that doesn't sit right with you. "Like what you did with that knife."

Your eyes drift off absentmindedly as you recall your fight with Adrubal. It was the first time you - not the spirit that follows you around, but you yourself - had effected the outside world in so clearcut a way.

"It's not something I can just... do." You throw your hands out, as if casting those brilliant blue flames from them like your avian ally. "Trust me, if I could magic us a way out of here, I would."

"Would you?"

You frown and turn your body towards her, sliding one leg up onto the bed. "What do you mean?"

She returns your frown with an annoyed look of her own. "You're sure you're not having too much fun? You've got a new wife, a kid, an Archon who doesn't skin you alive for throwing her around like--"

"Fun?" The echoed word comes out as a bellowed shout, loud enough to cut Vala short and make her jerk back reflexively. Before she can draw away, you grab her arm and hold her close to make sure she hears everything you have to say. "Getting beaten? Having my eye ripped out? Starving half to death? Getting thrown in a cell for a week all on my own?" You squeeze her tighter - too tight, drawing a gasp of pain from her - but you're too angry to make your hand relax. "You weren't there! No one was there! You were with that Elf, and I was alone."
The word 'raped' nearly slips into your mad rant, but you cut yourself short before you can let that humiliation spill out alongside all the others. Suddenly you feel very weak, and your hand slips from Vala's arm as your eyes grow wet. You turn away from her and lay your face in your hands, feeling ashamed at having dumped all that on someone who suffered as much as you did - and even more ashamed at the fact that you're still angry at her. She saw how horrible you looked back in the arena during that brief initial reunion - she should understand that none of this has been fun.

"God, I'm sorry." Vala puts her hands on your shoulders and props her chin up on your arched back.

"That woman is evil." You speak into your hands, not wanting to let Vala see your tears, even if she can hear your voice shaking. "I'm sure this is exactly what she wants - you getting suspicious, and me yelling at you. That's why you can't listen to a word she says. Not if we're going to get out of here together."

Vala's chin moves on your back as she nods in solemn agreement. "Alright."

You stay like that for a time, waiting for your eyes to dry while appreciating the warm feeling of Vala resting her hands on you without being forced to. Vala clears her throat to speak, and this time there's a bit of genuine amusement in her voice.

"So there's no chance a giant bird is coming to fly us out of here?"

Your body shakes with laughter, and you let your hands fall away from your face. "I don't know if that was even me." You relay your experience to Vala as best you can, telling her of your apparent death and rebirth that led to you being asked to choose someone for the spirit to help. That explanation only has her pelting you with a dozen more questions, and you jump back to your fall into the Warp with Ribara. Leaving out, of course, the unnecessary detail of her pissing down your throat. When you finally come to the end of the convoluted tale, you sit up straight, and Vala lets her hands slip from your shoulders.

"I tried to call for that bird again, when we made it into the arena. Then Charal came running out, and..." You let out a slight laugh. "Obviously that didn't work."

Vala's expression makes it clear that she doesn't share your amusement. "Seems like this is going to be a theme. You and I want to leave, and Little Miss Happy-Slave does her best to make sure that doesn't happen."

"She's a slave," you shoot back, echoing her own words. "She doesn't know any better. If we can get her and Orina out of here--"

Vala lets out a sharp laugh that echoes off the close walls. "Don't tell me you believe that shit. A one-week pregnancy?" She slaps you in the arm with the back of her hand. "You said yourself that Moradys is evil. She probably scienced up some clone-baby and squirted it in there. Hell, maybe it's her fuckin' baby."

You can't argue with that - not after everything you just said to her. Nor is it something you would put past Moradys, assuming Dark Elf science is up to the task. Your mind says she's right, but your heart remembers the moment that baby first opened her eyes - before she even had a name. In that moment, you knew she was yours - a part of you, given life and body.

You look down at your hands and flex your fingers, trying to shake off the feeling of her tiny hand clutching at them. None of these thoughts are ones you can convey to Vala, though. Not just because of how intensely personal they are, but because of how much they would hurt for her to hear.
"This is our escape, right?" says Vala. "We're not getting out of here if we try and drag along people who don't wanna go."

You stare off into space, considering Vala's words for a time. She's right - you know that - but her cold logic doesn't hold up against your daughter's enduring warmth. An image forms in your mind, of Charal holding Orina while standing in the middle of one of your home planet's endless fields of orange grass. You ignore the fact that the real Bulanel IV has been burnt to a husk, and focus on the pure-hearted smile Charal wears. It's all fantasy, but it's one that you have the power to make real.

"She's coming with us."

"Who?" asks Vala.

"Both of them."

Vala starts to sputter out an angry response, but you fix her with a quieting glare. "You didn't see the way Moradys looked at Orina. She wants to make her into someone like her... or maybe just dissect her. Either way, I'm not letting it happen." The unspoken assertion behind your words is that Orina is yours. You didn't come out and say it, but an infant of Moradys' own making would be no coveted prize for her. This is something - someone - you and Charal made, and someone Moradys wants.

"Fine." The way she spits out her reply tells you that she's anything but fine with this. "What about Charal? Why do you have to save her?"

"I'm not stealing a baby from her mother," you shoot back. But that's not what Vala meant. She knows what had to have happened for you to have a child. You want to tell her that you were forced into it, that Moradys threatened you and Charal over and over if you didn't obey. That'd be true, but it wouldn't be the whole truth - and Vala knows you too well for you to lie about something so close to your heart. If you try and lie about this, she'll just end up hating you more.

Vala continues staring you down, and you shrug. "And she's nice."

That gets a laugh from her. "Nice? Did you not see what she did?"

You hold up a hand apologetically. "You're right, I'm sorry. I'm going to try and convince her to leave. If I can't, she stays. But Orina is coming with us."

Vala closes her eyes and draws a deep breath in, then lets it out with a few twitches of her lips. You hadn't expected this to be an easy sell. You're asking your wife to take responsibility for a Psychically-gifted child of unknown parentage. Assuming you do make it out of here, it's not the sort of baby you can drop off at an orphanage and expect all to go well. If you do end up being forced to do the unthinkable and take Orina from Charal, you and Vala will be leaving this city with a bigger family than you entered it with.

Just as Vala opens her mouth to give you her answer, the ship rocks violently. The room is bare enough that there's nothing to fall to the floor, but Vala very nearly rolls off the bed before you catch hold of her.

"What the hell was that?" she says.

"We're here." You give her a tight-lipped grimace and take her by the hand, then lead her out of the room. A few steps into the hall, you realize something's wrong. You had thought that the rocking of the ship was Ribara sliding the skiff's side into the dock as she's so fond of doing. Then, the ship lurches again, this time accompanied by a rapid change in air pressure that makes your ears pop
painfully. For a brief moment, you're nearly deaf. You turn around to look at Vala, and catch sight of a hallway filled with fire and light.

Bolts of green plasma shoot through the right side of the ship and pass out the left, leaving behind a burning hole with each shot. The violent assault makes its way from the far end of the hall towards you, and you switch your hold on Vala to her wrist before hauling her up the short stairwell with such speed that you fear her arm might pop out of its socket. A few seconds later, you shoot out onto the open middle deck of the ship, suddenly very glad that you prioritized her safety over her comfort.

A small fightercraft of curved black metal and bearing a red emblem bears down on yours, and the nosecone erupts with a volley of blaster fire that shreds the lower decks and cooks the metal floors so thoroughly that your feet start to burn. More ships buzz and hum around you, too fast to get a rough count in the chaos, but your eye catches sight of far more red than purple.

A scream comes from the center of the open deck, where padded luxury benches are bolted to the floor. At first, you see no one - then you spot a pair of dark feet below the bench. Shielding Vala with your body, you rush over and find Charal crouched down, one hand holding a bench leg while the other clutches Orina so tightly to her chest that you can hardly see the tiny infant. Only her golden hair peeks out above the protective shield of body and cloth.

"Orin!" Charal very nearly shoots to her feet at the sight of you, but another round of plasma directed at the rear of the ship has all three of you ducking back down. You're not sure what got hit, but your ship swings to one side and slows noticeably. Not a fatal shot, but it'll make the next ones land more easily.

"Take her! Take her!" Charal frantically thrusts Orina into your chest, then forcibly wraps your arm around her before pressing her forehead to yours and forming the other half of a two-person shield. Your joined bodies might as well be airtight with how closes she clings to you and Orina, but all that'll do is ensuring you die at the same time instead of a few moments apart. Maybe she knows that - and maybe that's all she wants.

Explosions sound out around you, like the ones you heard before, but far clearer now that you're out in the open with them. Ships catching fire and plummeting into the mists, followed by distant shouts of anger from Ribara and shrieking orders from Moradys. Vala's arms are wrapped around your shoulders, overlapping Charal's, and the world is filled with so much horrible sound that you wish you could shut your ears alongside your eyes.

One last look.

You swallow the lump of despair forming in your throat and open your eyes to a wondrous sight. Orina's own eyes are fully open, two brilliant sapphires with more depth to them then any ocean. They dart from left to right, as if searching out the source of this horrible assault on her newborn senses. But the look in her eyes - it's all wrong. There's no fear in them, nor simple-minded confusion.

Her eyes glint with a sharp cunning, and her brow is furrowed so tightly that wrinkled have formed on her forehead. That very nearly makes you break out into tearful laughter, but then you catch sight of movement further down her body. Her hands move in time with her flickering eyes, tracing intricate designs through the air while her fingers dance across each other in beautifully elaborate movements.

Orina's eyes meet yours, and go wide with shock. It seems ridiculous - newborn infants don't wear such complex emotions so blatantly. But the expression she has isn't one of a baby taking in its
father's face for the first time. It's the look of an intelligent being who has been caught red-handed.

Her eyes snap shut, and her hands ball up into fists before pressing themselves to her chest. She 
breathes in and out a few times, as if all this thunderous noise were a mere whispering wind. You watch 
her for a few more moments, confused beyond measure and doubting your own senses. 
Another explosion shakes the ship, this one bathing your back in heat. Vala clutches you tighter, 
matching Charal's own grip, and you close your eyes to embrace the inevitable.

Just before your eyelids meet, one of Orina's eyes peaks open. She watches you for a moment while 
you watch her through nearly-closed eyelids. Then, she snaps her fingers.

More explosions - dozens more - buffet you with air. But none hit your ship. Orina's eye closes, and 
her hands fall back to her chest. You snap your head up to see what happened, and are met by a 
dazzling display of light both brilliant and terrifying. A sphere of blue flame spreads outward from 
your ship, catching bolts of plasma fired by your airborne pursuers and turning the molten energy 
into harmless puffs of air.

The ships themselves are the next to be caught by the expanding wall of fire, their hulls twisted and 
warped upon contact with the licking flames. Smooth hulls turn to rough chunks of ore and plummet 
downward, or rust over and crumble to dust. Elves scream and wither into old age before collapsing 
along with their decaying craft, or sprout new arms that grab them by the throat and break their 
necks.

In every direction, a bizarre fate befalls both Drebesh's pursuing forces and Moradys' outnumbered 
escort, but the result is the same. Everything dies, and the ball of flame vanishes into the nothingness 
it came from.

When you finally turn your gaze back down to your smoldering and blaster-riddled craft, you see 
Vala and Charal looking around with hopeful confusion evident on their faces. Up on the pilot's 
deck, Moradys and Ribara stare down at you. The former with an intense expression, jaw clenched 
tight and eyes wide with intense interest.

The latter is far more obvious in her amazement. Her mouth hangs open, and her palms are pressed 
together in front of her chest. Charal cries out and tearfully takes Orina from your arms, and you let 
her slip away. Ribara continues staring at you, but Moradys' eyes flicker between you and the baby 
you just passed to Charal. She didn't see what Orina was doing - no one did but you.

Best to keep what you just saw to yourself, at least for now. You stare at Moradys, doing your best 
to mimic Ribara's overwrought look of shock. Ribara follows your gaze and looks to her mother, 
who wipes the last vestiges of surprise from her face and assumes a confidently regal pose.

"It was nothing." She snaps her fingers in a puff of pink energy. "Get us moving. Goddess knows if 
that's all of them."

Ribars turns back to the controls and gets the skiff going, though the ship is now hamstrung by a 
dead engine and too many blaster holes to count. Moradys gives Charal - or more likely, Orina - a 
long look before turning back forward and watching the slow progression of your ship through the 
mists. She's never been an easy person to read, but you're fairly certain that your feigned shock was 
bought hook, line, and sinker. Unfortunately, it seems that playing ignorant led her to the 
very correct conclusion that Orina was the source of that otherworldly explosion of flame.

You sit down on one of the intact benches bolted to the deck, and Charal and Vala take a seat on 
either side of you. Charal is very nearly shellshocked, and presses your daughter between her legs 
and chest while leaning over and rocking back and forth. It's a bit disturbing to watch, but it gives
you the opportunity to devote your full affections at Vala. Not that you can risk doing much with Ribara so close. You snake a hand behind Vala's back and press your side to hers. After holding her like that for a time, you pinch one of her slight folds of fat between two fingers and give it a good shake. She hisses at you and kicks your foot, and you back off.

A short while later, your groaning wreck of an airship comes to the plateaus and sprawling manors surrounding Moradys' own. The last leg would usually pass in a minute of quick flying, but your one damaged engine has you moving as slowly as Moradys' barge. When the ship finally swings up alongside the rear docking pads, you grab Charal and Vala and rush towards the safety of solid ground faster than you have in your life. Even the sleeping Orina seems to share your fear of being stuck on the thing. Her eyes and fists are both squeezed tight, and her brow twitches anxiously.

Ribara steps off of the extended ramp, the last of your group, and a harsh whine comes from the underside of the ship before turning to a mechanical death rattle. The ship plummets into the mists, to the combined gasps of you and everyone else who avoided death by mere seconds. Only Orina doesn't draw a sharp breath in. She exhales slowly, relaxing her facial muscles as she unclenches her fists and rests her hands on her belly.

"No way but forward, now!" Moradys takes Ribara by her broad shoulders and walks her towards the stairs leading upward. "Guards!" she calls out to the small group waiting above and gestures back at Charal and Vala. "Stick these two in a room somewhere until I'm done. And don't fucking touch that baby."

"Wait!" Charal calls out, taking a few steps forward. The two departing Elves turn to face her, and Charal holds Orina out towards Ribara. "You wanted to hold her?"

You were surprised enough at hearing Charal speaking so loudly in front of so many people, but volunteering her child for Ribara's powerful hands is even more shocking.

"Absolutely not," Moradys is quick to interject - but far too late. The moment Ribara saw the small child being presented to her, she began striding over to Charal. Ribara slips her hands under Charal's in preparation to accept the fragile infant, and Charal takes a step closer, then stands on her toes and puts her head as close to Ribara's as she can manage given the massive difference in height. Charal's face is out of view, but it looks like she's speaking into Ribara's ear. If she is, she's whispering - you can't hear a thing. Ribara's warmly curious expression turns to stone, and her hands fall ever so slightly away from Charal's as her eyes drift upwards from Orina.

The meeting only lasts a few seconds. Charal falls back onto the flats of her feet, and Ribara stands there for a silent moment before turning around and walking back to her mother. Given the angle, Moradys saw even less of the interaction than you, and simply appears relieved that it ended with Orina still in one piece.

The pair of Elves take a few more steps towards the stairs, and Ribara stops again, this time turning to you.

"I want my slave to help me into the pool." She holds her right hand out to you, and you walk towards her while being careful not to let your eyes meet Vala's.

"Whatever you want, daughter." Moradys pats her on the shoulder. "You know the way, don't you?"

Ribara doesn't answer. As soon as you come within arm's reach, she grabs you and plants her lips on yours. Moradys lets out a sharp breath of annoyance and turns away. You can only hope Vala is likewise averting her gaze. Ribara pulls back after a few seconds of softly-moving lips, having thoroughly destroyed any hope of you keeping your one-sided relationship with her a secret from
your wife. The two of you ascend the rock-hewn stairs, and you risk a single sad glance back at Vala. She's not even trying to hide her shock and disgust.

"I hate this place," says Ribara. She passes into the shadows of the exterior hallway wrapping around the manor, obscuring her face from view.

"You're not going to live here, Mistress?" It would make planning your escape a hell of a lot easier. If she returns to the arena with you in tow, you're saddled with the extra complication of having to scoop up Vala and Charal once you figure out how to get your hands on a starship.

Ribara snorts. "I did not plot and fight only to crawl back under my mother's boots."

"I thought you two made up."

"I am not an idiot," she says. "I know my mother does not respect me."

You look up at her for a long moment. "So why didn't you kill her?"

She glances down at her feet, and her face contorts with frustrated emotion before passing into the shadow of another pillar. A second later she moves back into the light, and the expression is gone.

"She fears me. That is enough."

In the end, Ribara got what she wanted, you suppose. Not motherly love exactly, but the closest one can find among a race as horrifically cruel as the Dark Elves. Still, she doesn't look pleased with how events worked out. Not even satisfied, really. Maybe that's the human half of her showing through.

"Are we going back to the arena after this?" you ask her. The public areas are a battlefield that reeks of burned bodies, but the tower is a big place - you doubt the living quarters below the arrival docks saw much in the way of fighting.

Ribara stops mid-stride and stares at the ground, tapping the toe of her boot on the stone a few times before continuing. "I once said I would kill you," she blurs out, sidestepping your question completely. "I no longer intend to do so. Nor will I hit you again, unless you make me so angry that I cannot control myself."

You had already assumed from her confession of love that murder was off the table, but it's nice to get a solid confirmation of that fact. Her strained promise to try and refrain from physical violence leaves a lot to be desired, though.

"And you may call me by my given name," she continues. "But only when we are alone. If you do so in front of others, I will be forced to punish you." Her hand slides up your back a ways, then moves so far down that she's nearly cupping your buttocks in her oversized palm. "I don't want to do that."

The two of you come to the central courtyard and pass a pair of guards on your way through the main doors of the manor. A quick turn to the left, and you're approaching the stairs leading down to the basement level. The light changes from green to yellow, the warm glow of crystalline torches making Ribara's pale ghastly pale flesh look almost human as she turns her face down towards yours.

"You hated me once, remember?" she says.

Something about the look on her face tells you that answering truthfully here won't have her exploding in rage, so you give a slow nod in response.
"But you've forgiven me for any wrongs you think I might have done to you. If you hadn't, I would be able to feel your anger. That is how connected we are."

She's only half-wrong. Part of you will always hate her as long as you're being held in this city against your will, and there are times - particularly those when she beats or rapes you in a fit of rage - where that anger boils over into pure hatred. But Ribara is too simple, too pure-minded - if you dare call her such a thing - for that hatred to last very long. She's like a poorly-trained hound that slips its master's leash and bites your leg. You kick it in the face and run the hell away, but you don't spend weeks and months imagining elaborate revenge scenarios.

"I forgive you, too." Ribara puts her hand on the far side of your hip and digs her fingers into your flesh. She's close enough now that your vision is starting to waver and your legs are growing weak. Your eyes drift down to her pierced breasts, then trace a line between the muscles of her abdomen before you manage to force them back upward. It happens again and again, and each time your eyes travel just a little bit lower.

"I know my mother fucked you," she continues. Her grip gets even tighter, and her arm trembles against your back from barely-contained anger. "It did not bother me when I hated you, but now it does."

You open your mouth to object, to say that you had no choice in the matter, but Ribara holds up a silencing finger.

"I do not want you to apologize. I want you to know that I can forgive you, but I can only forgive what I know." She stares at you intently, her irises looking like twin fires burning at the center of those blackened eyes. "Your thoughts and your body are both mine. If you try to keep either from me, it will hurt both of us."
For a long moment, Ribara just stares at you. The hallway itself seems to darken, until all that exists are those two pinpoints of orange set deep in her angular features.

"I do have something to tell you." Swallowing hard, you force yourself to meet her gaze. "Orina is my daughter. I don't know how, but--"

Ribara looks away and makes a sound of annoyance, cutting off your stammered excuse before it's even out.

"My mother already told me." Her lip curls in disgust. "It is vile how quickly your kind breeds. Do you know how long it took to grow me?"

You shake your head.

"Twenty-five weeks. Full-born grown in the womb of one of your women can take up to thirty-seven." She gives your side a light squeeze and casts a sidelong glance down at you.

"The Shapers can give a man the parts to carry a child, and feed it."

This again.

You laugh nervously. "Sounds expensive."

"It is. But my mother is very wealthy. As long as she is afraid of me, that means I am very wealthy, too."

You need to change the subject to something else - anything else.

"You're not mad?" you blurt out. "About Orina?"

Ribara purses her lips and furrows her brow in thoughtful frustration. "I would be within my rights to kill that slave."

That solemn declaration is enough to stop you from breathing even as you keep walking. Yet something in her expression tells you there's a 'but' coming.

"But," she says with a reluctant tilt of the head. "I have decided that a daughter should grow up with a mother - even if that daughter is a slave. If they are not raised properly, they will be poor slaves. That serves no one."

Your jaw very nearly drops open at hearing something so egalitarian coming from Ribara's mouth. You're not sure if she's deliberately sidestepping the possible solution of killing both mother and child, or if she simply never thought of it. Either way, you're not about to bring it up. That would serve no one, least of all Charal and Orina.

"What?" she says, taking note of your open mouth.

"I'm just surprised that you're fine with me having a daughter."

Ribara frowns. "You do not have a daughter. Charal does. You are only to speak with her when absolutely necessary, and you are not to touch either of them." She lets her hand fall from your side and shoots you a harsh look. "How else are you to forget about them?"
"No, you're right," you say quickly. "That's... very generous of you."

She stops before a metal door and flashes you a broad smile. "Relationships are built on communication. I read that in a book once, and I thought it was very silly. Now I see the wisdom in it."

The two of you pass into a familiar chamber. A large stone room, empty except for the large pool of luminous green liquid set into the ground at the center. You've been here twice, both times to make use of the pool's rejuvenative properties - once as an unconscious participant. This time, you'll be watching someone else take the plunge. Ribara stops halfway between the door and the pool and begins to undress, taking off her boots and the metal crown seated atop her head.

"If you keep secrets from me, it will harm both of us twice over." She reaches into her left boot and pulls out a small knife hidden within the lining. "You will feel guilty, and I will feel like an idiot. I will get angry, and hurt you - which will hurt me."

This entire diatribe has had an ominous air to it. That feeling abated for a moment when you discovered that she already knew about Orina, but now it's worse than ever. Is the brick-headed Ribara just making sure she drives home her point? Or is she putting on an act to coax out any lingering secrets you might be holding back?

Ribara holds the knife with her teeth, then undoes her thong. Even with her back turned, you can see her cock swing free of its confines and dangle between her legs. Her right hand goes to her left shoulder, and she begins the laborious process of undoing the adhesive cups keeping it secured to her arm stump. Nearly a minute later, the artificial limb clatters to the floor.

She takes the knife in hand and turns to face you, and your eyes are quickly drawn away from that intimidating tool to the smaller weapon in her hand. She points the knife at you, twisting it slightly in the air as she stares you down.

"You understand, don't you? If you feel guilty about something, it means you need to tell me. That way, I can decide what is best for us."

You swallow and nod slowly, but her pointed blade refuses to lower. A few moments of intense silence pass, and your anxiety builds until you find that you simply need to say something.

"A few days ago, Lady Moradys tried to--" You swallow the rest of your words, quickly deciding that it's probably best not to go into detail. "But it doesn't matter. I was able to fight her off because of what that Shaper did to me."

Ribara lowers her knife and gives you a strained smile. "Good." Without probing further, she turns her back to you and hops down into the glowing pool, then wades to the middle. You get a bit closer and watch as she takes the knife and delivers deep cuts to her wounded shoulder, each wound a fount of blood that rolls down her side into the waters. Despite the sheer amount of red flowing into the pool, it vanishes the moment it hits the roiling green fluid at her waist.

With a shudder of pain, Ribara lowers herself down so that the waterline reaches up to her neck. The flow of blood stops, and you spot a rippling distortion beside her, as if the fluid is flowing into the cuts she made. Then, you see something else - the beginnings of an arm. Bone and muscle and tendons grow from her mangled shoulder outward, widening at first and then narrowing to an elbow. The tendrils of fleshy growth shoot off at an angle, gradually taking the shape of a forearm that widens into a hand, then splits off into five long fingers. Ribara wiggles the digits experimentally, then clutches her hand into a fist and raises it above the water.
The entire process took less than half a minute. Ribara stands back up and rolls her new arm around in its socket, working it through the full range of motion while examining it for any sign of malformation. But there is none. In fact, her entire body seems to have been healed of the minor scars and blemishes that you hadn't noticed until they were gone.

Her pale skin is a perfectly smooth surface of white interrupted only by the occasional blue vein running near the surface of her flesh. That, and the slight stubble connecting her belly button and groin. You noted some days ago that she seemed to have stopped shaving now that Meryetia wasn't around to enforce the Wych Cult's dress code. Hopefully you won't be around her long enough for that to prove bothersome.

Ribara reaches out to you with her right hand. "Help me up."

You walk to the edge of the pool and take her hand in both of yours, then heft your weight backwards in an attempt to leverage her up. But Ribara stands firm, the muscles of her arm bulging as her hand squeezes yours hard enough that the bones of your fingers feel wrenched out of place. You shout in pain and confusion, and Ribara flips your right arm over so that your palm is facing upward. Something flashes down the length of your arm, and more pain follows. Then, blood - too much to fathom. It pours out a gash in your forearm that runs from your elbow to your wrist. A few more drops roll off of the blade held in Ribara's left hand.

"That woman is your wife, isn't she?"

You gasp and try to pull away from Ribara, but her grip is like iron. Blood continues to gush out your arm in unending torrents, flowing through the cracks in the cobbled floor before disappearing into the pool's bright waters. Your legs weaken, then give way completely, and you collapse to your knees.

"No," you shake your head and try to pull away again, with even less success than the first time. The room is growing dark, and it's getting harder to piece thoughts together. In a flash of panicked inspiration you try to crawl towards the life-restoring pool, but Ribara grabs your throat with her knife hand and tips you onto your side.

"You were talking to her."

You give a slow shake of the head, as much movement as you can manage with your head laid out on the stone and your body growing weaker by the second.

"Don't lie to me!" Anger flashes across Ribara's face and she tightens her grip on your throat for a fraction of a second. "Are you planning to leave? Were you going to ask me to come with you two?"

This time, you don't bother denying it. You're not sure you even have the strength to do so. The flow of blood has slowed noticeably, and for a moment you wonder if your healing has been enhanced along with everything else. Then, a wave of cold crashes over you, and your eyes nearly close of their own accord. You have nearly stopped bleeding out, but only because there's so little left for you to give.

"Ask me to kill her." Ribara looks at you with a desperate expression and bounces your slashed arm on the stone. "If you do that, I'll save you."

Maybe you could find the strength to speak, to say something - but there's nothing left to say. All you do is stare up at her with eyes half-closed, and Ribara runs the back of her knife hand over her own wet eyes.
"Ask me to do it, or I'll kill myself, too! You'll kill her, and yourself, and me. Three deaths, instead of one! Is that what you want?"

Your eyelids fall shut, and a long, slow breath escapes your lips. You find that you can't open your eyes, nor can you force your lungs to work. Ribara squeezes your hand, and chokes out a gasping noise. From somewhere deep within you comes the energy for one last bit of movement. You drag your left hand up your body, feeling your way across the warm, blood-soaked stone, and find flesh. Your fingers creep up Ribara's hand, and you rest yours atop it. It's all you can think to do - your last desperate hope to keep Ribara from doing as she promised.

Ribara cries out in anguish and hauls you roughly across the stone by both arms. You plunge into burning waters that fill your mouth and sting your face, sensations which vanish after no more than a few heartbeats. All you're aware of is the soft thump-thump of your own heart, a slow sound which grows slower until it stops completely.

Then, it starts again - and not slowly. Your heart pounds with such fury that it feels like it might shake itself free of your ribcage. You thrash about in an attempt to free yourself from Ribara's grip, but find nothing - you're already free. You plant your feet on the ground and shoot up from the pool, hacking up what must be a gallon of glowing liquid before you're finally able to draw in a breath. Ribara stands near the edge of the room, still nude, though she doesn't even look wet anymore. The expression on her face is flat and unreadable.

With more than a little trepidation, you wade to the edge of the pool and start to climb out. Every move feels difficult, and awkward, and wrong. It's as if your mind refuses to recognize the reality of your new life after having experienced death so vividly. Once you're halfway out, Ribara walks towards you.

It's only when she's a few feet away that you spot the knife in her right hand, glinting in the eerie light of the pool. It flashes across your field of vision, and you find that you can no longer breathe. A hand pressed to your throat comes away covered in red. Ribara presses a barefoot to your shoulder and shoves you back into the pool. Up is down, down is up, and every inch of your flesh burns. You open your mouth to cry out in pain, allowing liquid to flood into your lungs, and those burn too.

You bleed out much faster this time. When you awaken, your heart pounds so rapidly that the beats feel like one continuous blur. The walls of the chamber shoot towards and away from you, your vision expanding and contracting with no rhyme or reason. You grab the sides of your head in a desperate attempt to steady the chaos you've awoken to, and spot Ribara crouched down on the floor, knife in hand.

All of your confusion and unease drowns in a wave of raw terror, and you clamber out of the pool and rush towards the first door you see. Halfway there, a hand grabs your arm, fire shoots up your spine, and everything below the point of impact goes numb. Ribara wraps one arm around you and hauls you back to the pool, your feet dragging lifelessly on the ground while you shout and claw at her forearm. She throws you in, and you try to keep your head above water without the aid of your legs.

Despite knowing what awaits you after death, your body forces you to fight against the waters swallowing you up. You sink down again and again, each time floundering underwater for a little bit longer as your arms grow more and more tired. When you sink for that final time and find that you can no longer summon the strength to propel yourself upwards, you're overcome with relief.

Upon your next emergence, you don't try to flee. Reality itself seems delicate, as if anything you do or say will bring it all crashing down on your head. You wish you could quiet the water sloshing around your waist, but you awoke with so much terrible energy that much of it ended up outside the
pool. Ribara stands halfway between you and the door, watching you with a blank expression.

Despite the utter terror the sight of her puts in your heart, you can't look away. You need to run, or fight, or plead, but it's getting harder to think and even harder to remember. Every attempt to dredge up something from the depths of your mind makes your head hurt and heart pound until you simply give up and let go of the memory.

Ribara walks towards you, and you remain still. She stops at the edge of the pool, then hops in and wades towards you, her knife tracing a line through the water as she moves. All you can think to do is bring your arms in front of your face and beg, with tears in your eyes, not to kill you again. She grabs your wrist with almost delicate care, then draws it away from your face and slips her blade into your neck with equal care. You stutter and choke, rocking back and forth for a few wavering steps before falling forward against her chest. She wraps her arms around you and presses your face in between her breasts, holding you tight as your life flows between your joined bodies.

It happens over and over, too many times to count - until you can't remember if you ever kept count in the first place. The world is nothing but dark stone, green waters, and a pale monster that delivers death in a flash of steel. She never leaves the pool, and the gaps between each death become so short that they blur together in your mind along with everything else swirling around in there. You can no longer remember why you're being tortured like this, if there was ever even a reason. You're in hell, you tell yourself - and before you can wonder what hell is, another artery is severed.

Another life, another gasp for air, and another glimpse of a ghastly figure that is barely recognizable as a living being with how much trouble you're having focusing your senses. You rush forward and wrap your arms around its huge body, pressing the side of your face to what you quickly realize is a well-muscled abdomen.

"Please stop," you gasp out. "I'll do anything."

The figure says nothing, and after a few moments rests a hand lightly on your shoulder. "Do you know who I am?" she says. The voice is deep and commanding, but unmistakably feminine. You squeeze your eyes shut and wrack your brain for the answer, but your search is met with a storm of pain so intense that it makes you afraid to push further. It's as if you're standing at the entrance to a deep dark cave, beyond which monsters lurk - and certain death. You turn away from those thoughts and press yourself closer to the woman.

"Please stop," you say again. The words come out as a choking sob. You can't remember why you're so afraid of this woman, nor what you want so desperately for her to stop. All you know is that everything in the universe seems to hang in the balance as you await her reply.

It comes not in the form of words, but as a hand that softly strokes your back. Her other hand soon joins it, and a pair of lips press themselves to the top of your head. Relief beyond anything you could imagine washes over you, and your body goes limp in her arms. The world drifts away from you again, and you from it, but this is not death - it is sleep.

Moradys walks the stone pathways of her garden, running a hand across the wall of spiked brambles...
to her left. The air is dead quiet, save for her own footsteps - and the other set echoing hers with a far less delicate cadence. With a frown, she glances back to see Vala trailing a good twenty feet behind her. So far, yet she can still hear its movements so clearly. Moradys swears she could hear the Mon-keigh's thighs chafing earlier, which is why she had ordered the woman to follow at such a long distance. Without asking, it's impossible to know if the woman had always been so ample of body, but it had been a slave for months. If it stayed fat, it was because Drebesh's Incubus liked it that way. Who wants to fuck something so soft? It boggles the mind. The Mon-keigh's horrid state would be more excusable if some of that fat had went to its tits, but it only has one breast. Moradys briefly considers tossing it into the Eternium Pit beneath the manor to make it more bearable to look at, but that would be a waste of precious resources. Ideally, she won't have to suffer her slave's once-wife much longer, anyway.

A new noise shatters the delicate silence - the roar of a ship. The dark stone and metal of her manor rises too high for her to see past them, but she recognizes the noise immediately. Bringing her hand up to her face, Moradys keys in the communicator on her wristband.

"Was that Ribara? Why didn’t she come through the gardens?"

"I am sorry, Mistress," comes a guard's voice on the other end. "Lady Ribara took one of the skiffs in the maintenance bays. We did not know you wanted--"

Moradys ends the call before the guard can finish, and lowers her hand with a sigh. It doesn't matter. Perhaps she should have killed Ribara at the arena. The moment had presented itself - several times, in fact - but she had pulled her punches each time. And in the end, those pulled punches had brought her so close to death that she could feel the warm claws of her Goddess hooking themselves into her heart.

Since that moment, she had conjured all sorts of self-directed excuses as to why she hadn't burned Ribara's flesh from her bones - none held up to the faintest bit of scrutiny. The simple fact of the matter was that she couldn't bring herself to kill something she had put so much time into.

What did they call that... 'Sunk-cost fallacy'? Yes, that was it. Not love, or sentimentality, or anything of that nature. Moradys had simply fallen prey to a common cognitive error in cost-benefit analysis. Stupid, yes - and nearly deadly - but she had talked her way out of the situation that poor thinking put her in. And now that Ribara is once again a potential asset, there is no reason to kill her. If anything, her hold on Ribara is better than it's ever been. All that's left to do is get her back here permanently, and to see that Ribara grows bored of her slave - Moradys' slave.

Such a thing may require no intervention at all. Ribara is, after all, only seven standard years of age, and prone to bouts of intense but fleeting infatuation. Most had ended of their own accord, typically with Ribara seizing upon some perceived slight and flying into a murderous rage. A few, though, Moradys had been forced to end forcibly. One of her own guards had attempted to turn Ribara against her. A vile young woman, who had no qualms with turning daughter against mother. Moradys responded by lavishing the guard with motherly love until Ribara's jealousy could take no more. Actually, I suppose they all ended with murder.

Far off in the distance, the airship Ribara left on finally crests the skyline of buildings covering the plateau. Moradys watches it grow smaller and dimmer, before vanishing into the mists entirely. With a few deliberate manipulations of her facial muscles, she draws her mouth down into an anguished
look of despair, clutches one hand to her breast, and with the other reaches out towards her departed slave.

As she does, she imagines every lurid thing the two of them could be doing to each other. Ribara will be flying, of course, but that wouldn't stop her from ordering Orin to suck on the head of her cock while she laughed at him. They would reach Ribara's home underneath the arena, and she would humiliate and degrade him until he came to love it.

An orgasmic shudder passes through Moradys, making her shake from head to toe. It's a terrible and powerful feeling that she's seized upon, but will it last?

Cuckolded by my own daughter. Will she turn him into such a degraded slut that he forgets? Forgets that he has another lover, a gentler one, awaiting his return with hand outstretched towards the sky?

Footsteps sound out behind Moradys, and Vala clears her throat. Moradys hisses sharply at her, cutting off any interruption, and looks back to the mists where Ribara and Orin disappeared. Then, she lets her hand drop back down. It's no good, she tells herself - it's a story that crumbles no matter how tightly she tries to hold it together.

Raped, by my own slave. I should have killed him the first time, but he awakened something in me - and I let it happen again. Now I am tossed aside for someone younger, with neither my beauty nor elegance. But is it me he runs from? Or does he run from his own feelings?

Moradys feels a thump against the fist she has pressed to her chest, and spreads her fingers outward to feel her quickening heartbeat. Yes, this is good - it works well with everything else. She had been angry when she learned that Ribara put her slave in the very questionable hands of a Shaper, but it worked out quite well. It would be more exciting if Orin actually had the strength to come remotely close to overpowering her, but that would be a tall order. It would also give him a real chance at escape.

Her heart beats even harder at the thought, and Moradys gasps. A cold chill washes over her body, bathing her in a sensation that has been so long forgotten - fear. These are dangerous thoughts, she tells herself. Dangle freedom in front of him and he just might snatch it away from her.

"Mistress," says Vala.

Moradys gasps in mock surprise and turns to face it. "Goddess, I forgot you were even there. How does someone so large have such a pathetic presence?"

The Mon-keigh's lips press together as it seeks to contain a frown, and it turns its eyes to the ground to keep its expression hidden. "Can I ask what your... daughter?" It glances up for confirmation, but Moradys says nothing. "Wants with Orin? I thought you owned him."

Moradys snorts in mixed amusement and disgust. "They're fucking, of course."

Vala's eyes shoot up and it glances up in the direction of the departed ship. "What? But she has a..." Vala trails off, its expression morphing into one so delicious to Moradys that she briefly finds the sight of the woman tolerable. The brief flicker of amusement vanishes as quickly as it appeared. Just like this Mon-keigh needs to vanish. Moradys takes the story she crafted for herself and twists it around in her mind, seeing if she can find a place for Vala, but it's like trying to fit a very round peg in a square hole. In every instance, Moradys' enjoyment suffers for it.

Not that she can simply kill the woman. It would be the easiest thing in the world, clean and quick - or messy and slow, depending on how she felt like doing it. But the story doesn't just suffer in that
Vala stares up at her departed husband, mouth agape. It was bad enough to have him taken away so soon after their reunion. Now this Elf is telling her that, what... he's fucking that stone-faced brute? Or that she's fucking him? It had been impossible not to notice what sort of heat that 'woman' had been packing. If it weren't for the fact that Ribara walked around with her nearly-flat chest uncovered, Vala might have thought she'd finally found a rare male elf. One which, for some reason, decided it liked the look of her husband.

No.

She bites her lip and brings her gaze back down to the courtyard. Orin had warned her about the Elf now holding her captive. An evil woman, with a cunning and patience to match. If Ribara and Orin are fucking, it's not by his choice. Moradys knew he had a wife from the very start, and had months to set up whatever sick mind games she has in store for them. That's probably where the kid came from, too - assuming it's even his. 'Pump a baby in this slave, or I'll rip off her head.'

Vala lets out a slight chuckle. Orin had basically told her as much when he was pleading his case. She was still pissed as hell at the idea of him having a kid that wasn't hers, but she couldn't let that misdirected anger come between them.

"You don't believe me?" Moradys says, taking notice of Vala's slip.

"No, I believe you... Mistress." Vala turns to face her and points her eyes at the ground in practiced deference. A few months in this place makes those behaviors second nature. "I'm laughing 'cus that's the only thing I can do. Probably the only thing either of us can do about it."

That, and plan. She'd played Adrubal perfectly up until the moment this woman came along and spilled the beans. Felt like shit about it, though - even before Vala helped kill her. That didn't mean Adrubal had been a good person, or even worth saving. It just meant Vala herself was still human. She doesn't regret anything she did. She just wishes she could get Adrubal's lifeless face out of her mind. It's there every time she closes her eyes.

Moradys cocks a smile at her. "The only thing he can do? If Orin didn't care for my daughter's advances, he could throw her straight through their bedroom wall." She turns and walks back up the garden path, motioning for Vala to follow.

"Throw her through a wall? What do you mean?"

Moradys shoots her a sharp glare, and Vala adds a reluctant 'Mistress' to her question. It had been humiliating enough to call Adrubal that in front of other Elves, and there had been long stretches of time where Vala found herself actually liking that Elf. For awhile, she had even thought of Adrubal as an ally of sorts - someone helping her look for her husband amidst the millions of slaves living and dying in Cummragh. It was naive beyond belief, but she'd even fantasized about Adrubal leaving with them.
That fantasy was shattered that first time Adrubal and Orin met. Vala should have known how the Elf would react to learning that she was looking for her husband, and not her brother. Telling her that Vala had *any* man in her life had sent her into a brooding sulk. But a *husband*? That had got her crying and screaming. Then came the beatings, the shackles, and brutal sex that was more about power than pleasure. Not even Adrubal seemed to truly enjoy it.

"Did he not fight his way through a squad of Incubi?" says Moradys. "I thought you had already seen his enhancements in action."

Vala had indeed. It wasn’t something she considered in the chaos of the last few hours, but his fight with Adrubal should have been a foregone conclusion the moment they entered the same room. That bird spirit did something to Adrubal, but Vala herself had wrestled with Adrubal's knife and found her as strong as ever. Somehow, Orin had held his own against a Dark Elf through sheer strength alone.

"Is that from him being a Psyker, Mistress?"

Moradys laughs. "Hardly. I suspect he got tired of having to rely on mental manipulation to get what he wants. He tricked my daughter into making him as strong as any elf. Maybe a bit stronger, considering he has a man's build."

As they continue through the hedge maze, Vala's lips curl into a hidden smile. "'Mental manipulation'? I'm not sure we're talking about the same man, Mistress."

They continue in silence for a time, and she begins to suspect that the Elf didn't hear her remark. That, or she didn't care for the snarky tone of it.

"In all my years, I've never seen a slave *prosper.*" Moradys seems to be musing to herself more than actually continuing their conversation. "Two wives, a child, and an arena full of emotion-starved Wyches. Latent psychic powers, brought out and made more powerful every day by the Warp. No wonder he doesn't want to leave."

Vala's lip twitches at that last sentence. Of course he never talked about escape with his enslaver - if there were a guidebook to getting out of here, that would be rule number one. Vala had never dared to broach the subject with Adrubal.

Moradys looks back and smiles. "I can see you're not fond of the idea of staying here."

Vala glares at her. "We're both handling it our own way, Mistress. He might be better at hiding it than me."

Moradys' smile fades, and her brow furrows in confusion as she stops and turns to face Vala. Then, the smile returns - and erupts into raucous laughter.

"He didn't tell you!" cries Moradys. "He didn't, did he?"

"What?" Vala exclaims, her words not seeming to reach the Elf doubled over in laughter. It's only when Moradys' amusement fades and she stands up straight that Vala bothers repeating her question.

"I've offered to let him leave Cummragh." She wipes a tear from her eye, and with one last shudder of mirth her tone grows serious. "He refused, saying that he won't leave without Charal and her child. Which I won't allow to happen, of course."

"Why not?" Vala exclaims, all decorum forgotten. "She's a human being, and so is that baby!"
Moradys eyes her disdainfully. "That baby is also a Psyker. Would you have me throw it out into realspace, to be hunted down and served up as food for your rotting carcass of a god?"


"Oh, of course. You're from the fringes. You've never had the pleasure of seeing your Imperium's Black Ships scouring worlds for a single Psyker."

"Imperium? Black Ships?" Vala scrunches her face up doubtfully. It sounded like bullshit, but then again, so would things like 'Psykers' and 'Warp-dwelling Xenos' if she hadn't seen those with her own eyes.

If this ghost story is supposed to make Vala fear for that baby's life, Moradys is doing a piss-poor job of it. Not that a realistic-sounding one would perform much better. It's a shitty hand that Charal's been dealt, and her kid too - but so has everyone else who's been picked up from realspace and brought to this hell.

At the end of the day, it's every woman and man for himself. If you throw your lot in with someone else, it means you fail when they fail. Vala threw her lot in with Orin the day she said 'yes' to him in that park. But everyone else? It doesn't matter how nice a smile they've got, or how sad their story is. Care too much, and they're just as much an obstacle as the Elves.

"Don't take my word for it," Moradys says with an idle shrug as she continues onward. "Ask him."

Vala would. This whole conversation had the stink of a manipulative plot, but she didn't like how close to reality Moradys' claims came. Orin had said that he wouldn't leave without Orina. Vala had been ready to relent, until an explosion cut their conversation short. But was that real concern on his part? Or just an excuse to stay somewhere where he was special?

It seemed insane - he'd never seemed dissatisfied with life back home. In fact, he'd made an obnoxious habit of guiltily asking her if she was bored with her simple garrison job and simple life. She'd always taken that to mean she was the more restless of the two, but could he have been projecting his desires onto her all along?

If Orin said Moradys was lying, Vala would accept it. She felt a bit ashamed that she was even entertaining Moradys' claims after Orin warned her so pointedly about the wily Elf, but she had to do her due diligence.

The two women pass from the secluded gardens into the courtyard at the center of the manor. There are eight half-naked guards standing at doorways and on balconies, and nearly four times as many human slaves. Strangely, the slaves are just as motionless as the guards. Their eyes track Moradys as she approaches the fountain at the center of the open space, and they glance uneasily at each other while shifting their weight from one foot to another.

It's a sight that draws Moradys' attention as thoroughly as it does Vala's, but Vala clears her throat to speak before Moradys can order the slaves to stop gawking. Moradys gives an annoyed sigh as she stops and turns to face her.

"Mistress, you say my husband loves it here because he's doing so great. First time I saw him again, he was missing an eye." Vala's persistent frown deepens into a scowl. "He said you did that."

Moradys glances up as if to recall the memory, then opens her mouth slightly and nods. "Yes, I was quite surprised by that. My daughter was, too. I'm sure that's what began her infatuation."

"Your daughter? What does she--"
Moradys throws her head back and heaves another tired sigh. "He didn't tell you this, either? Of course not." She straightens her back and looks Vala in the eye. "I was about to pluck out her eye for nearly losing one of my slaves. He got all noble and self-righteous, and I was angry enough to take the bait."

Vala nearly scoffs, but quickly swallows the rude noise. "That's quite a trade, Mistress. Losing an eye on the hopes that it'll make an Elf swoon."

"Temporarily losing it," she corrects her. "I restored it not long after that."

"That's awful expensive, isn’t it? I'm surprised you sprung for that on a man who's just a slave." Vala fires back the reply quickly, certain she's caught Moradys in a part of the story that can't be twisted to fit her re-interpretation of it.

Moradys' shoulder twitches and she winces, then frowns and casts her eyes downward. Vala had expected Moradys to look look annoyed at being cornered in conversation - not so angry and sad.

"We're done talking about this," Moradys says harshly. "And I don’t particularly care whether you believe me." She takes a step towards Vala and plants a finger on the scarred half of her chest. "The question for you is, do you want to remain a slave?"

Vala only glares at her in response, not wanting to openly admit that her only goal is escape. This is a trick, she tells herself. There's nothing to be gained by speaking frankly with this woman.

"I'll take your silence as the defiant sort." Moradys takes her hand away from Vala's chest and holds it in front of her. "I want my daughter back, and you want to leave Cummragh with your husband."

Vala reaches out to shake the proffered hand, but stops at the last moment.

"What, you dont like me?" Moradys gives a wry smile and thrusts her hand forward further.

You awake in a sheer panic.

For a few terrifying seconds, you're aware of nothing but the sense of impending death bearing down on you from every direction at once. Your hands grip the sides of your head and you curl up into a ball, as if you can hide within yourself from whatever cosmos-spanning predator is coming to claim you.

A few more seconds pass, and all you hear is the sound of your own racing heart. As full awareness returns, you search your mind for any hint of just what exactly you're so afraid of - but all you find are a few memories that pop like bubbles the moment you shine the light of consciousness on them. That, and a pounding headache.

Lifting your head up from your knees, you take a long look around the room you find yourself in. You're seated on an expansive black-sheeted bed that is set against one wall of an equally spacious room, and you wear nothing but a pair of dark briefs. The floor is dark gray with jagged designs of inlaid gold, and the walls are an even more elaborate mosaic of similar construction.
The walls must be made of glass or plastic, since they're illuminated from behind by throbbing violet lights that wax and wane in time with each other. The brilliant light show of pink and purple illuminates a vast artwork that spans the entire room, depicting armored figures doing battle with each other on blood-soaked land, in the painted sky of a setting sun, and in the pitch blackness of space.

The room is sinister - evil, even - but has a certain dark beauty to it. The only thing taking away from that impression is how cluttered the space is. Weapon racks have been affixed to the wall here and there, though not very well. The walls are cracked where the racks were bolted on, interrupting parts of the mosaic with jagged fissures shoot outward like spiderwebs.

Some of the racks already have swords and firearms hung on them, but most lay empty, their would-be contents heaped up on the floor below them in haphazard piles. Besides the small army's worth of weaponry, there are clothes and armor scattered around. It looks as if a child had been given power tools and told to redecorate, then given up halfway through.

It's a confusing sight that calls to mind many questions, but as your eyes take it all in, you are struck by a far more pressing matter. Not where you are, but who you are. Closing your eyes and taking a few quick, deep breaths in and out, you reach into your mind and try to dig around for the answer.

It doesn't come easily, and you grow frustrated. It's like rooting through a swamp for a pin needle. And every time you dive back in, your headache gets worse and the sense of impending doom you felt upon awakening grows more immediate until you can bear it no more. You know that it makes no sense, but you are struck by the clear and awful thought that you will die if you keep tearing into your mind like this. The moment you give up on trying to find the answer, relief washes over you and douses the fires of panic that threatened to burn out of control.

If you can't find answers inside, you will look outside. You roll onto your knees and shuffle towards the edge of the bed, but after two paces are stopped by something jerking you back by the neck. Bringing your hand up to the back of your neck, you find that you're wearing a collar, which has been chained to one of the posts at the head of the bed. As your eyes travel up the wall behind you, they land on a human figure, and you jerk in surprise before realizing that it's simply another part of the mosaic.
The figure is a naked woman of perfect proportions, holding a finger aloft that seems to beckon you forward. She wears a gray headpiece of ridged metal that grows right out of the flesh of her browline, and has wavy white hair that billows down past her waist. Lights behind the wall make her eyes glow a brilliant pink, and a third eye, larger than the others, sits in place of her bellybutton. The third eye flickers with movement, jolting you again before you realize that it was just another trick of the light.

You have no idea what to make of the artwork, nor anything else in the room. If the centerpiece depicts the room's owner, perhaps your circumstances aren't as dire as you initially feared. You might not know your name, but you know that woman is the most beautiful creature you've ever seen. Another thought follows immediately after - this one a question. What other women have you seen? You devote the barest shred of effort to searching for the answer, but a sharp jolt of pain tells you that this will go the way of your previous efforts, and you stop. Your headache had abated during the time spent letting your eyes linger on the woman, but now it's back in full force.

Returning your attention to your immediate predicament, you use your fingers to get a feel for the collar around your neck and the chain attached to it. The collar is hard, but flexible enough that you have room to comfortably breathe and swallow - like plastic fibers that have been woven into a fabric. The chain, on the other hand, is solid metal, and you fail to find any way to unclip it in your blind fumbling.

Amidst your huffs of frustration and the noise of chain rattling against bedpost, you hear a new sound. No, you feel it. Heavy footsteps, shaking the room like thunder. They come from outside the room, and shoot from left to center in an instant, stopping at the sliding double doors leading out of the room.
The doors slide open, revealing a monster in metal armor painted the color of dry blood. Its shoulderpads are topped with spikes, and jutting up from its back are what look like skeletal wings. Every wicked curve ends in a sharp point, and you see no hint of a living being under the overlapping layers of armor. The helmet is just as inhuman, with two horns - one of them broken off at the halfway point - and two eyes of seamless white. In each hand is a long, curved sword, which moves up and down with the hulking figure's labored breaths. Its shoulders rise and fall rapidly, and even from across the large room you can hear the dry rasp coming from beneath the helmet.

This is what you were so afraid of. You don't know what it is, or how you knew it was coming, but it's the only explanation. What else could this be, except for death itself? You try to stand up on the bed and run for one of the half-dozen weapon piles littering the room, but in your desperation forgot the very sturdy chain still securing you to the bedpost. It pulls taut before you even stand all the way upright, and you collapse back-first onto the bed.

The figure races towards you, armor clattering and weapons clanking in a horrid cacophony of steel. You sit upright, and the figure stops a dozen feet from the bed. Its swords lay on the ground behind it, discarded halfway between the door and where it stands now. In its hands, it holds the blood-red helmet it once wore. In its place, is a woman.

Not a human woman, though. A Dark Elf.

'Dark Elf'. Individually, you know what those words mean. But the latter is fantasy, purely a creature of myth. What you don't know is why you put them together, or why hearing them inside your head floods you with such an intense array of emotions. The woman standing before you is huge - you had vaguely thought of her as male when she wore her helmet - and deathly pale, with short red hair.
swept back behind her ears. It's not the color of a scabbed-over wound, like her armor. It's brilliant and vivid, more orange than red. At the center of her black eyes are two irises of equally brilliant orange, which remain fixed on yours without blinking. Unlike the mosaic-depicted figure behind you, this woman is not what you would call ‘beautiful’. The first word to come to mind is ‘brutish’.

Yet strangest of all is how the Elf looks at you. Her mouth hangs open slightly, her eyes are wide, and she holds her helmet in front of her broad chest as if it were a shield between you and her. It's almost as if she's afraid of you.

Swallowing your fear, you steady your trembling hand and level a finger at her. "Where am I?"

Some of the trepidation leaves the Elf's weary expression, replaced by an excitement that has her taking a few more cautious steps towards you.

"Do you remember me?" she says in a deep voice. You weren't certain she would speak Gothic, but you at least expected her to have an accent. Xenos aren't human, and they don't talk like humans. That much, you're certain of.

Without really meaning to, you find your mind turning to the task of answering her question. This time, the memory you need is closer to the surface - and you gasp in recognition. "We were in... water! You were there, and so was I..." You trail off, finding that you've reached the end of the memory. It's a powerful one, but confusing and chaotic. And when you try to follow the memories connected to it, you're hit by a mortal terror that rivals any you've felt since awakening.

"Yes!" The Elf drops her helmet to the floor and nods eagerly as she approaches the side of the bed. "I saved your life." You hurriedly move as far to the other side of the bed as your chain will allow, then wheel about on your knees to face her. She leans her gauntleted hands on the bed and stares at you across it. "Why are you running?" she asks.

It should be obvious, but this is a strange place, apparently lived in by an equally strange being. Perhaps it's not obvious.

"Who are you?" A bit of frustration seeps into your voice, giving it a sharp edge that has her wincing. Despite her ferocious appearance, she seems like a bit of a softy. Maybe you can use that.

"I am Ribara. Do you not remember?"

More pain. Pressing your hands to your temples, you give a tight-lipped shake of the head.

"That is ok!" Ribara stands up straight and circles around the bed towards you, and you retreat to the side she just occupied, earning you an angry scowl from her. "Stop running, and I will explain."

"Explain what?" You give your chain a shake. "That I'm a prisoner? That you saved my life and then chained me up?"

Your snide question gives her pause, and she eases back a bit. "It was for your own good. I felt awful doing it."

Part of you wants to fire back another biting remark, but the sad expression on her face has your mouth closing just as quickly as it opened. Her slanted eyes shine with gathered moisture, and her lip trembles with emotion. Her hands, though - those reach out to you in a hopeful gesture. It's strange to see such genuinely tender emotions displayed by someone clad head-to-toe in so nightmarish a costume.

"If you stay still, I will take it off."
You kneel motionless for a few moments, then shuffle over to her side of the bed. The sight of her clawed gauntlets grabbing at you nearly has you retreating again, but you brush aside your fears and move closer. Maybe she's lying, and you *are* a prisoner, but she doesn't seem to have any immediate plans to hurt you. If she wanted to kill you, she would have already done it.

Ribara leans over your shoulder and fiddles with the back of your collar, putting her head beside yours in the process. With your next breath in through your nose, you catch a whiff of something amazing. You can't articulate just *what* you find so captivating about this woman's scent, but it hits you so hard and so fast that you rock forward and hit your head against one of her pauldrons, narrowly avoiding taking a spike to the eye.

With an electronic chirp and a metallic click, the chain comes off your collar. Ribara drops it to the bed, then squats down in front of you and holds you steady by one arm.

"What's wrong?" she asks. Her voice had merely been 'deep' before, but now it's a rich ocean of melodic tones that echo in your mind long after they're spoken. You feel weak and light-heated, as if you're on the verge of an overpowering wave of nausea. But the sickness never comes, and you're left with this bombardment of sensation that seems to have neither cause nor end.

"I don't feel good," you mumble. "I think I... moved too fast."

The Elf meeting your gaze had looked so intimidating just a moment ago - thuggish, even - but now she makes the glowing woman above the bed look like a cheap whore. Ribara's exaggerated proportions become elegant, and you note the slight curve of her breastplate. Her orange-red hair glows like a fire in the humming light of the room, and you reach out to touch the stray strands hanging over her forehead. For some reason, that's the most eye-catching sight of all.

Your fingers touch the Elf's forehead, and her hand shoots up to grab hold of your wrist. Reality comes crashing back down, and the fog hanging over your mind lifts just long enough for you to ask yourself what the hell you're doing. You haven't come close to answering the countless pressing questions you have, and already you're making bedroom eyes at a woman you just met.

Ribara pulls you forward, likely intending to throw you onto the floor and demand to know what the hell you're doing, but all she succeeds in doing is making you plant your palm flat on her forehead as you nearly careen off of the bed. Before you can fall onto her, you yank your hand free and scuttle backwards on your knees. You're surprised by how easily you slipped free. Either she's weaker than she looks, or you're stronger than you thought.

"Come back here!" Ribara roars, shooting up straight as you dash over to one of the weapons piles. She had been excited before, but not hostile. Now, though, the segments of her armor ripple and shift with the movements of the muscles underneath.

You reach the pile and grab onto the first weapon you can find, then spin around and point it at the advancing Elf. A pistol, but a very alien one. Despite feeling like a newborn baby, you do have some concept of what a firearm should look like. This one is short and bulky, with green tubing and extraneous spikes that must be purely decorative.

"That gun is biometrically locked.” Ribara takes a few steps towards you, and you thrust the gun at her defiantly. She keeps walking forwards.
"Alright." You lower the gun, allowing Ribara to close the remaining distance. She moves far too aggressively for your liking, but nothing about her expression tells you that you're about to get smacked with one of those heavy gauntlets. She takes the pistol from you, then tosses it back into the pile before grabbing you by the wrist and pulling your hand up to her forehead.

"You wanted to touch my hair, didn't you?" She moves your hand from left to right, running your fingers across her hairline. "You always liked it. You said that red is your favorite color."

Maybe it was, and maybe it still is, but you're not able to dedicate any thought to the matter. Once again, you're struck by an all-encompassing weakness of both body and mind. Odd tingles run up your spine at each brush of your fingers across her scalp, and you're hit by a tunnel vision that blacks out everything in the room besides this statuesque beauty. It's not a bad feeling - if anything, it's terrific - but you don't like feeling so strange while having no idea why.

You pull free of her and take a few steps back. With distance comes mental clarity, and you manage to find your voice again.

"I want to know where I am."

Ribara lowers her own hand in disappointment, and after a few moments stands up straight. "I will show you." She waves you towards her, and you don't move. She does it again, and you still stand on your grkund, to her growing frustration. Only when you finally relent does she turn and lead you out of the bedroom. The two of you pass into a long, gently-curving hall. The walls and floor look to be made of black marble, but the feel of your bare footsteps tells you that the floor, at least, is painted metal. A few steps in, and you realize that you're still nearly naked - but this place looks empty, and your need for answers outweighs your desire for pants.

"This is my arena." Ribara gestures broadly outwards as she walks. "All of it."

"Arena?" you wonder aloud. "This doesn't look like an arena."

As far as you can tell, this is a mansion. You pass bathing areas with statues of pink crystal, indoor gardens whose lush plants threaten to overflow into the hallway, and cushion-covered rooms that look halfway between whorehouses and drug dens. Everything is bathed in a violet glow from the light fixtures embedded into the ceiling.
"These are the living quarters," Ribara says. "Our living quarters. These, too, are mine."

She's rich, then. And if you're interpreting her words correctly, so are you. That does introduce one new question to the mix, which rises above all the others - just what is your relationship with this woman? And just as importantly, what the hell is she?

You look up at Ribara, taking a moment to examine the pale skin stretched across sharp, imposing features. "Are you human?"

Her face snaps towards yours and she stops, then cocks her hand back as if to strike you. You take a few quick steps to the side, and Ribara's anger quickly becomes self-directed and regretful.

"No!" she says with a forced smile. "I am one of the Drukhari - a Dark Elf. You are a Mon-keigh, which is unfortunate, but I am not." She continues walking, throwing a quick glance back to make sure you follow.

"What the hell was that?" You pantomime her furious expression and readied backhand. "Were you about to hit me or asking what you are?"

"It was a joke. We have several inside jokes, and that is one of them. You will recall the others in time, I'm sure."

You eye her doubtfully, but choose not to press the matter while there are others to address. "You called me a 'Monkey'. Do your kind not like humans?"

She shrugs. "Mon-keigh are Mon-keigh. Small, weak, and short-lived. We both hate them."

As she speaks, you quietly speed up your walk and circle around to her front, then spin around to face her and cock your fist back as if to deliver a punch to the underside of her jaw. The explanation for her threatening gesture had been ridiculous, and you aim to test it. Your suspicions are confirmed lightning-quick, when Ribara gasps and lashes out at you with a clumsy sweep of her arm. She catches you in the side of the head, a hit which, if she were human, would merely stagger you. But she's not human, and the wall you're sent flying into is just as solid as it looked. Your skull explodes in pain upon impact, and once the stars clear from your vision you find Ribara rushing over to you, a look of shock and horror on her face.
"That didn't feel like an inside joke." You hold a hand to the throbbing spot on your skull that made contact with the wall, and Ribara grabs your arms and helps you to your feet.

"Why would you do that?" she snaps, more than a little annoyance evident in her voice. If her tone were to be believed, you were the one at fault. Your senses don't fully return until you manage to pull free of Ribara's steadying grip. Every time you get to close to her, the rest of the world seems to vanish, your questions along with it. It's a scary sense of unreality, and not one you can let yourself fall into if you're going to figure out what's going on.

"You said we hate humans?" you ask her as the two of you continue your walk down the long, curving hall.

"Of course. The other Mon-keigh were going to kill you, after all."

Your feet nearly falter at her words, but you keep on and look up at her with mouth half-open in shock. It takes Ribara a few seconds to notice you waiting so expectantly for her to continue that thought.

"Oh, you don't remember!" She glances up at the ceiling, apparently dredging up some long-buried memory for your benefit. "The Mon-keigh were taking you and many other Psykers to be sacrificed to their corpse-god. I saved you."

You turn to face her, keeping an awkward sidestep going to walk alongside her. "Psykers? Sacrificed? What does any of that mean?" The questions flow from your mouth without end as you gesture wildly and frantically examine your luxurious surroundings.

"I killed five - no, six - Astartes during the battle. The finest warriors the Mon-keigh can muster fell before me like squidlings." Ribara launches into a recounting of the space battle that initiated her boarding and rescue you of you, apparently determined to ignore the questions you continue to throw at her. The story is grandiose and overly detailed to such a degree that you're certain she's rehearsed it dozens of times over. It's impressive, but you're not in the mood to be impressed.

"Hold on!" You snap your fingers a few times to bring her recited tale to a premature halt. She's not happy about that. "You said we were in an arena. Is this not a spaceship?"
sprint down the corridor. Each step she takes brings the full weight of her armored form down on the floor, shaking the entire corridor. You race to catch up, but only barely manage to keep pace, and occasionally lose sight of her around the bend in the corridor. After a half-minute of exhaustive running, you find that you've come to the end of the passage. Ribara stands before a pair of bright metal doors, which slide open as you approach. She waves you inside the small room with her, and the doors close behind the two of you. The room shoots upward, and you realize that you're in an elevator. One moving upward, judging by the gut-wrenching force pushing up on you from below.

A few short seconds later, the rocketing lift comes to a halt so rapidly that your feet leave the ground. Ribara grabs you under one armpit to keep you from crumpling into a heap on the floor, and the motion sickness gripping you assumes a more exciting - but no less overwhelming - flavor. This time you don't try to pull away, rationalizing that the tight confines give you no space to put between the two of you. Some curious part of you also wants to plumb the depths of this sensation, to see just how much of a trembling mess her mere touch can reduce you to.

A slow twist of the head brings Ribara’s pale face into view, a visage that jumps between brutal and beautiful within the blink of an eye. Her sharp eyes flicker to yours, then snap back forward. A slight movement on your side puts her fingers within reach of your nipple. The shift would have been imperceptible, were your sense of touch not heightened to near-painful levels of discrimination.

Just as your frayed nerve endings threaten to untangle completely, the lift comes to an abrupt stop. Ribara moves behind you and places both hands on your shoulders, then presses her spiked carapace armor to your back. The doors open, revealing a vast hall of black marble and gold inlay that seems to stretch on forever. It would be a palace fit for an Emperor, were the space not strewn with tons upon tons of debris and too many bodies to count. Armored figures, some in red and some in purple, lay heaped atop rubble and buried beneath smoldering hoverbikes. You swear upon the names of gods that you didn’t even know you knew, and take a painful step back into Ribara’s spiked breastplate.

“The cleanup is going well,” she says excitedly into your ear. “When I am done, the embossings will run three times as high. And the marble will be a darker shade than black - so dark that lights will not illuminate it.”

You’re not in the right state of mind to argue against the impracticality of that, and your wavering attention is quickly drawn by movement at various stretches of the hall. Living beings - all as pale as Ribara, though lither looking - are dragging bodies through side corridors and hauling out shattered hovercraft in manageable chunks. There’s no consistent theme to their dress, which ranges from drably conservative robes to obscene bondage gear ill-suited to manual labor. The only commonality is the paleness of their skin, and the feminine forms of those close enough and nude enough to see clearly.

“They labor for the promise of admission to my cult. Or rather, a chance to prove themselves more
capable than the Wyches who died.” Ribara grips your shoulders tighter and thrusts you forward a few inches. “It feels good to have a clean slate, doesn’t it? It doesn’t matter if it’s a mess now.”

You try to take a step forward, but bodily weakness keeps you from leaving the lift.

“What are you doing?” she asks.

You look up at her while wearing the expression of a man with one foot still in dreamland.

“I was going to take a look.” You turn your head back towards the strange battlefield. “Didn’t you want to show me this place?”

Ribara wheels you about, slowly but powerfully, until you’re back in the rear of the lift and her bulk is blocking the exit.

“You live down there.” She thrusts a finger at the ground, punctuating her booming declaration with a gesture and a scowl to match. “Why would you want to leave so soon after coming back? Did I not say that you would be dead if it weren’t for me?”

You scoff in disbelief and straighten yourself up from the swooning mess you once were.

“So I’m a slave? A prisoner? If I’m not, then get out of my way!”

The distance between the two of you has grown great enough that you manage some real anger in your reply. Your tone takes Ribara completely by surprise, and she vacillates between rage and shock before slipping into an almost humorous state of obvious anxiety.

“You’re not leaving tonight,” she says with wide eyes and lips that keep moving after she’s finished speaking. “There will be a celebration.”

The fire in your chest subsides a bit and you ease your stance.

“A party?”
Ribara doesn’t seem to notice the opening her words created, and continues to press forward, pressing you into a far corner.

“For me. Why would you be anywhere else?” She tried to grab hold of your arm, but her lunge gives you an opening that allows you to slip towards the opposite corner, giving you a free line of sight to the lift’s exit. Your agility continues to surprise you, and has you confident that you can outrun this heavily armored woman, should you need to.

“Alright.”

You hold up your hands, palms open, and walk towards Ribara instead of away from her. She seizes on the opportunity and lunges forward, taking your wrist in her hand and squeezing as if you might change your mind at any moment and attempt to run. A moment later, the inappropriateness of her reaction hits home, and she releases you while being sure to put herself squarely between you and the doorway.

“That is a good choice.” Ribara punches a button on the control panel, and the doors close.

“But I do have a choice, right?”

Before she can answer, the elevator begins its sickeningly rapid descent, leaving you to wonder at the answer alone. This woman seems to think of you as something between a pet and a lover, and acts as if you’re the one who is out of character for balking at the treatment. Have you changed since you lost your memories, or were you faking before? If Ribara is always this fickle and violent, it’s easy to imagine why you might feign happy obedience.

On the other hand, there was something very real in your reaction to her. Your memories are a giant blind spot, but you’re certain that fainting from a woman’s touch isn’t the typical reaction. That first close look into her eyes had enraptured you, and you found yourself particularly fascinated by her flame-like sweep of hair. You often said that you loved it, according to her. Maybe that’s true, and maybe you meant it. Time will tell, and will provide the information necessary to determine whether or not this is a situation to flee or embrace.

The lift stops, and the doors open. Ribara steps aside, and ensures you’re clear of the exterior lift controls before stepping out herself and locking the doors.
“Go dress yourself, and don’t make trouble.” She stands in front of the door controls and ushers you into the faux-marble hall, but doesn’t follow. “I know you’ll do the right thing even if I am not watching.”

“What?” you wonder uneasily.

Another question ignored. Ribara beckons you forward, and some instinct baser than memory compels you to obey without consideration. She wraps her arms around you, squeezes your buttocks with both gauntlets, and presses her pelvis into the bottom of your rib cage. You try to swallow the excited gasp working its way up, but you lost this battle the moment her eyes connected with yours. Ribara hunches over and places her lips on yours, then forces her tongue inside with a forceful strength befitting someone of her stature and demeanor. You recoil, not from disgust but from pure shock. It had become clear that there is something between the two of you, but to be tonguefucked and woman-handled with no warning is enough to trigger your fight or flight instinct.

There is, as you quickly discover, a third possible reaction to having your body violated so passionately - freezing up entirely. Ribara reasserts her grip on you, but it’s an unnecessary precaution. Every muscle in your body is locked rigid, including eyelids that could not be forced shut if you tried. Any decision-making faculty you once possessed is rent in two by the warring forces of a body that says you love this, and a mind that screams that something is gravely wrong.

The kiss only ends when Ribara is forced to draw breath, which is far after the point at which you needed the same thing. A line of spit connects your lips with her extended tongue, and remains there while she draws back and eyes you like a predator admiring the eviscerated carcass of its prey.

“I will see you tonight.”

With that, Ribara steps back into the lift, closes the doors, and leaves you alone in the wide, arcing hallway. You stand there for nearly a minute until the residual shock wears off enough for your feet to turn you around and take you back towards what is now, apparently, your bedroom.

The beautiful demon-goddess on the bedside mural watches over you as you rifle through the many wall closets lining the chamber. All contain clothes, but few contain viable options for you. Most are too large, and likely belong to Ribara. There are conservative garments that would fit you, but have been torn in two and tossed onto the closet floor. The remaining options are obscenely revealing, and the few you try are clearly intended for a feminine physique. Ultimately you settle on a loose black top that ends at your elbows and leaves your stomach revealed, with baggy pants that cuff just below the knees. Once you look in a mirror, you realize that the thin fabric is nearly see-through. When it catches the light, only your underwear keeps your most private areas from being revealed to the world. As you turn to leave, the muraled woman catches your eye, as she always does, beckoning you forward with an outstretched finger. The sight spooks you more than any of the other
experiences you’ve had in your brief time awake, and you speed your walk out the door.

Over the next few hours, you explore your new subterranean home in an effort to learn something about your situation. All you discover is that Ribara’s aesthetics are as tacky as her purse is heavy. Every hallway is gilded, every poolside statue depicts some sex act or violent crime, and the lighting throughout the entire complex seems designed to put ones mind in a state of needy depravity. Pink lights throb and pulse alongside a soft vibration that travels through the floor, a sound so soft that you wonder if it’s truly even there. Halfway through your exploration of a miniature botanical garden, you find your cock hardening at the sight of a man-sized pitcher plant with particularly succulent lips. Before you can do something you regret, you leave back the way you came, passing through rain-misted jungle and overbearing humidity into the air-conditioned sterility of the main hall.

While wandering about in a renewed daze with an erection that could cut diamonds, you’re shaken free of the fog of desperate lust by voices sounding out in the direction of the main elevator. You race towards them, then duck into an alcove that leads to a room you can only describe as something between an opium den and a brothel. You had rolled about on a few of the cushions, but decided against experimenting with the water pipes littering the low-set tables within.

The voices grow close enough to make out words, and you risk a peek out from your hiding place. Four figures clad in red armor walk side by side, chattering in heated tones at one of the center two. The focal point of the conversation is a pale, lithe Elf, taller than you but much shorter than Ribara. A dagger wreathed in flame is tattooed on her stomach, and the same symbol adorns her brethrens’ shoulders. The fabric beneath her armor is much different than theirs, though. It is not red or black, but a motley patchwork of every color and pattern imaginable. Perhaps its supposed to make her stand out, but the impression you receive is of a beggar too poor to clothe herself properly. That, or a clown.

“I have seen the future.” The oddly-dressed one gestured animatedly as she speaks, drawing the rapt attention of her peers even as they stare at her with scorn in their eyes. “The old goddess is silent and dead. I have seen a new god, one without form. I felt it’s power for myself, and I have seen the herald it chose.”

“Without form?” Another elf snorts in disgust. “No sex? No cock to fuck or cunt to be fucked? What sort of god is that for us?”

The first Elf clears her throat and slows her pace a bit. “I spoke poorly. It has no fixed form. Is that not like us, who change our bodies and minds as we choose? She Who Thirsts demands everything of us while offering less and less. How will a spent god serve our House’s needs?”

“What House?” says another. “You eight allowed Lady Drebesh to die. Now her enemies tear at our limbs while claimants gnaw at our House’s insides like a cancer.”
The colorful Elf shoots her scornful comrade a look of disgust and speeds up, forcing the other three to lengthen their stride. You had trouble following the conversation, but think little of it. Xeno politics can’t possibly have any practical implications for you. The bigger question is what to do now. The group of women is fast approaching, and you are caught between a need to run and a desire to talk to the only living beings you’ve seen since Ribara.
Clasping Moradys' hand in her own, Vala gives it a firm shake. The Elf's grip is impossibly strong, and she's thankful when the handshake finally ends. This isn't a deal, Vala tells herself. All she's doing by appearing to align with Moradys is buying her and Orin time and freedom to plan. If Moradys *is* being genuine, they'll use that. And if she's lying, it doesn't matter - Vala will continue to work under the assumption that this woman wants to keep both of them here.

As their joined hands fall away, a man breaks away from one of the clustered groups of slaves and cautiously approaches Moradys. He has a shaved head, and his age-lined face is covered in dark stubble. He's probably no older than thirty, but malnutrition and daily doses of despair take their toll on a person. In his hands, he clutches a small piece of wrinkled paper. His hands are shaking so much that he's in danger of tearing the sheet in two.

"Mistress," the man says, stopping about ten feet away from Moradys. "Your gracious servants have compiled a list of requests." He bows his head and offers the sheet to her. "We humbly and respectfully ask that you look at them."

"Demands?" Moradys roars, the force of her bellow making the man take two steps back. The other servants scuttle backwards, taking up better hiding positions in shadowed alcoves and behind pillars.

"No, Mistress! Requests! Humble requests!" The man remains there, head bowed, while Moradys glares at him. She rolls her eyes and thrusts her hand towards the man, fingers pointed towards the paper still a good eight feet away from her. A few moments pass before the man finally glances up, gasps in realization, and rushes forward to hand it to her.

Moradys' reaction is that of a queen being offered the hand of a leprous beggar. She recoils in disgust and brings her hand back, letting it crackle with pink energy for a few tense moments before lowering it.

"Read it," she says, her eyes narrowed at the cowering servant, as if a moment's weakness could see him leap at her and spread his repulsive servility like a contagion.

"Me?" says Vala.

Moradys risks a fierce glance her way. "You can read, can you not? Are you obese *and* retarded?"

Vala's first instinct is to fire back an equally biting remark, but she suppresses that initial urge and takes the letter from the man. That sort of brash tit-for-tat might have been ok with Adrubal, but even then only when they were alone with no one to witness a slave talking to a Dark Elf as if they were equals. Vala can sense a deep resentment simmering just below the surface of Moradys' snobbish sarcasm, and knows better than to invite that violence to the surface.

"Kei sauju ajoi," Vala starts. She had learned enough of the Elves' language to pronounce their written characters, but no more than that. The translator collar she wears speaks Basic into her head alongside her own foreign recitation, but her pronunciation is so poor that the device can't pick up enough words for her to get any sense of what the note says. Even without that, though, she has Moradys' darkening expression to go off of, and that tells her the response is not going to be a positive one.

"Double rations?" Mondays screeches. "Do I look like I'm made of money?"

She stalks towards her cowering servant and grabs him by either side of his head. Violet flames erupt
from her hands and wind themselves around the man's frail body like serpents. A faint glow forms under his skin, then erupts to the surface in fiery flares that eat away at every bit of flesh they touch. The destruction is so quick and total that he doesn't even have time to let out the scream he had opened his mouth for. His bottom jaw crumbles to ash, followed by everything else the unnatural flames touched. After a few short seconds, the living being before Moradys is replaced by a small mound of ash, without even intact bones to serve as testament to his ignominious death.

Moradys stares at her ashy palms in disgust, then goes to Vala and wipes her hands off on her ragged tunic. The remaining gathered servants exchange stunned looks until Moradys turns her attention to them and clears her throat loud enough for them to snap from their daze and scurry back to their duties.

"All he wanted was food, Mistress." Vala stares at the ash pile in horror, only dimly aware of the fact that her shirt is being used as a hand towel. "You couldn't afford another two bowls of that gruel you feed them?"

"Hope is a dangerous thing. I give these creatures an inch and they'll take a mile. What then? Sheer chaos, I tell you." Moradys lets go of Vala's shirt and gives her a warning look. "Are you going to take issue with how I treat my property? It could make me rethink our partnership."

Vala bites her bottom lip and stares at the cobblestone at her feet, then shakes her head. "No, Mistress." She had resolved not to concern herself with anyone but her and Orin, who is already determined to take one of this Elf's most prized possessions along with when they leave. The only thing Vala can do is to not make their escape any more difficult than he already has.

A hand presses itself to Vala's clothes pussy, and a long finger slides in between her folds. Were it not for her pants, it would have slipped inside.

"What the fuck?" She staggers away from Moradys while clutching a protective hand to her sex.

"You're not wearing a chastity belt. That won't be an issue, will it? I don't want you fucking everything that moves."

Vala scowls at her defiantly. "I'm married."

Moradys laughs dryly and turns to continue towards her home with an idle wave of the hand. "Yes, I'm sure your husband said something like that at some point as well. See how that turned out?"

The two enter the manor, and Moradys gives a rushed order to two guards to have Vala set up in a room somewhere. Once their Mistress leaves, the two masked Elves drive Vala down a hallway with the blunt ends of their halberds, knocking her to the floor every dozen feet or so. She has been on Cummragh long enough to know not to give them the pained cries they are looking for, nor to fight back.

Eventually they tire of the game, and merely watched silently while Vala drags a cot from the slave quarters into a nearby closet. It isn't a desire for privacy that keeps her from sleeping alongside the other humans, but caution. Being in this city has taught her what sort of person desperation can turn someone into, and she knows to fear the lowest of the low as much as the highest of the high. No matter how pathetic and harmless she acts, Charal would cut Vala's throat if it meant taking her place in Orin's life. The fact that he can't see that makes her just as dangerous as any of the Elves, whose selfishness is worn on their sleeves.

Come nightfall, she locks the closet door from the inside and lays down to sleep. There are no windows, and little light seeps under the door, leaving her in a total darkness that is unexpectedly
rare in a place as grim as Cummragh. Wherever she had went before, there was always some eerie light or faint glow visible in the corner of her eye, reminding her of her alien surroundings. Perhaps that is why she falls asleep so quickly, despite the innumerable worries that should have kept her awake.

She awakens some time later with the vague sensation that quite a few hours have passed, but that morning has not yet come. The reason for her broken sleep becomes apparent the moment she shifts her legs. Dragging her bare feet across the rough cot produces an agonizingly acute sensation that shoots from her toes to her brain in one continuous surge of electric current, as if someone has run a wire through her flesh. She cries out with a moan she hardly recognises and grabs between her legs with both hands at a sex that inexplicably begins to burn with feverish need. Sitting up in bed is a titanic effort that has her head swimming and stomach churning. The once-dark room is filled with intricate swirls of pink and violet that remain even when she squeezes her eyes shut.

Standing up is made difficult by the trembling of her legs and the way her thighs press against each other in an unconscious effort to put pressure on her womanhood. Her pants are soaked, and she's certain she wet herself sometime during the night. If this is an illness, it's like none she has ever felt. All she knows is that she needs to find someone to help her. What she'll tell them, and how they could possibly help is unknown to her, but she can't stomach the idea of being alone right now. She wants to throw herself at someone and beg them to do something to soothe this infectious heat.

The door to her closet is unlocked. She's certain she locked it before falling asleep, but gives the oddity no more thought than that. Stumbling out into the hallway, she finds her posted guard seated in a chair beside her door with her helmeted head rolled awkwardly off to one side. She's sleeping.

These alien women might be beautiful, but they look deadly. So do the curved knives and pistols hanging from their belts. Until you know how things work around here, you’re going to stay far away from anyone who looks like they’d just as soon murder you as fuck your brains out.

“Our fortunes will change when our House serves a new god,” says the Harlequin.

“How will you petition this being?” asks another Eld. “For any but a Speaker to do so is to risk madness and death. None of their caste would dare spurn She Who Thirsts.”

The Harlequin shoots her a sharp glare just as their group passes by your little alcove, and you press yourself to the wall. Only the intense debate of the three women keeps them from noticing you lurking in the shadows.

“Were you not listening?” says the Harlequin. “I do not need a Speaker. I have a prophet.”

“Now it is you who has a prophet? What happened to your talk of the House?”

The third Elf breaks in before the first can answer. “Who is this supposed conduit for a new god? Why has she not made herself known?”

You can’t see the Harlequin’s face anymore, but the question has her back and shoulders visibly tightening. “I know what she is, and no one else. Is that not a good thing? We should seize on that advantage.”
The group moves out of earshot, then out of sight entirely. That conversation was a bit heavy for your tastes, and you’re glad to have avoided it. You decide to likewise avoid any of Ribara’s other guests, and go hide in some out of the way room for the duration of this party she’s hosting. You said you’d stay down here, but you didn’t say anything about making an appearance.

Venturing too far from where you are now risks you running into more groups passing down the main hallway, so you stay put and sequester yourself in an out-of-the-way corner of the lounge you had hid in the entrance of. You drop down onto a small mountain of embroidered pillows behind a wooden screen and stare up at the light display playing on the high ceiling. Pink and red lines dance against each other in intricate formations, creating new shapes that clash and disintegrate before finding new partners to repeat the process with.

It’s a hypnotically fascinating show, which you force yourself to look away from after realizing that you’ve been staring at it for so long that your neck has cramped. The music playing from the room’s walls sounds like someone being fucked or murdered - maybe both - and you become uncomfortable enough to try and take your mind off of the throbbing cacophony by using one of the water pipes on the table in front of you.

You get the thing going with an electric fire starter and take what you believe to be a harmlessly small inhalation of the powder contained within the bowl above the tube. What you had intended to be a small taste becomes more than an experimental toke, and your mind is shot into another dimension. Your head rolls back, and the light show overhead becomes a new reality that replaces the darkened lounge. Fleshy creatures with exaggerated features seem to drip out of the ceiling like ground beef being pushed through a strainer. Grotesque things, some human and some completely alien, all as naked as the day they were born. They drop from the ceiling and fall to the floor around you, revealing a room that has been overtaken by the same decay that grips your diseased assailants. The metal walls are striped with rust, and the lights have cracked and gone dim. Even the pillows beneath you have become frayed and lost their color. As the creatures stalk towards you, their bones shatter beneath the weight of their corpulent forms. Their stomachs burst open, and smaller replicas crawl forth from the stinking ooze that spills from their bellies. You scream and crawl backwards on your hands and knees over cushions and rugs that have turned to dust until your back hits something hard.

You look up to see Ribara staring down at you with an expression that is none too happy. She has removed most of her armor, and in its place donned a red top that leaves her arms and midriff exposed.

The scowling Elf might be scary in her own right, but your pursuers were straight out of a nightmare. You shout out a warning to Ribara and point back towards the table you had scooted away from, but everything is now as it was before. The walls are clean and unmarred, the rot creeping up the floor has receded, and the lumbering monstrosities seeking to spread their pestilence to you have retreated.

“Did you see that?” you say, grabbing at the top of her thigh boot to pull yourself up. Your heart is beating a mile a minute, and you’re only dimly aware of Ribara’s surprise at being touched so casually.

“See what?” Ribara looks around impatiently. “What were you doing?”

You give the room another look over and realize that what had seemed so real and otherworldly was just the result of a bad trip. As you clutch a hand to your chest in an attempt to steady yourself, something cool and metallic wraps around your neck and clicks into place. You wheel about on your feet to find that Ribara has put a collar on you, the gold leash of which she holds in her hand.

“What the hell?” You grab the chain and try to wrench it from her grip, but the woman’s hand might
as well be a vice. She grunts in annoyance and struggles against your attempts, and after a few moments of back and forth you relent.

“Take this off. Right now.” You run your fingers along the collar but can’t find any sort of seam or release to fiddle with.

“Leave it on, and I will allow you to ask me for a favor.”

You eye her suspiciously. “What sort of favor?”

A lopsided grin forces itself across her face. You get the impression she’s trying to appear smug or playful, but she just looks awkward. She winds your chain about her hand another two times, then ducks down so you’re at eye level and puts her mouth beside your ear. Her knee presses into your groin, and the only reason you manage to stay standing is that she’s strong enough to easily support you sitting on her thigh.

“What sort do you think?”

A mischievous smile of your own starts to form. All the terror of your hallucination vanishes under a wave of heady lust encouraged by the throbbing lights, the humming music, and the closeness of this woman you desire more than anything else in the world.

“I think I know.” You lean towards her and run a hand down her muscular backside until your fingers slip past the waistline of her pants. “The kind where I fuck your brains out.”

The ability of this woman to crush you like an ant should give you pause, but you’re too horny to exercise caution. Besides, she’s been giving you bedroom eyes since the moment you woke up. Predatory, disconcerting ones, but bedroom eyes nonetheless. You slide your hands further down her pants and squeeze one of her asscheeks. Ribara jerks in place and gives you a blank, wide-eyed stare.

“What?” you ask uneasily. “Do you not-“

Ribara grabs your arm and lets out a panicked, throaty noise that cuts you short. “I will... think about it.”

It’s not exactly the thrilled acceptance you had hoped for, nor is it the violent retaliation you feared. You can’t fathom what sort of relationship the two of you had where a clear proposition of sex is met by this sort of uncertainty.

“For now, you will come with me.” Ribara loosens her grip on your chain and leads you from the lounge into the well-lit main hall, going deeper into the complex then you had ventured before. Shrill cackles echo off of the walls, followed by a rich and vibrant ocean of noise that must be what passes for music in this place. Last come voices, barely audible beneath the rest of the blaring sounds, too numerous and hurried in their speech for you to understand.

The room you’re led to is similar to the one you came from, but grander in scale and filled with a seething mass of bodies that fill every available nook and cranny. Half-nude elves lounge around low tables, sucking on hosed pipes and shotgunning smoke into each other’s mouths. Violet lights dance across dance floors too crowded for the Elves using them to do more than rub their sweaty bodies up against each other. Cages filled with naked men and women hang across the room’s high ceiling, and the inhabitants are pelted with glass bottles that break on the cage bars, showering them with glass. You would protest against the inhumanity of it all, but Ribara is dragging you along too quickly for you to get a word in edgewise. Not that she’d be able to hear you above the unending roar of this
The crowd parts before Ribara, and the party slows to a halt wherever she walks. Most of the Elves she passes clap enthusiastically, many bow lips to her, and a few hurl themselves at her in drunken advances that you at first take for attempts to start a brawl. You shield the sides of your head in expectation of the same violence heaped on the other humans here, but soon realize that the Elves are giving you an even wider birth than Ribara. They pointedly avoid looking you in the eye, as if you’re too lowly a being to even register. The only one to meet your gaze is the colorfully-dressed Elf you had eavesdropped on earlier. She freezes midstep when she spots you, then places her drink on a table and shoves her way through the crowd towards the exit. You get the distinct impression that she knows you, but your shouts go unheard.

Blood sprays on top of your head. You stagger towards Ribara and spin around to see a laughing Elf stabbing up at the bottom of a cage with the broken leg of a stool. A naked man lays motionless on the cage floor, his back a mess of puncture wounds that have drained his flesh and given him a pallor as white as that of the women around you.

You charge the woman and try to snatch the makeshift weapon from her, but your leash goes taut and you’re pulled along with Ribara deeper into the club. The stunned Elf you launched yourself at scowls and drunkenly throws the stool leg at you, catching you in the chest. Ribara has gathered a gaggle of hangers-on, who walk alongside her and have nearly blocked her from view. Only her distinctive head of iridescent red hair - and the chain leading through the crowd - allow you to follow along without being forcibly pulled. The group comes to a circular series of couches in a pit set into the floor. As you walk down the steps leading to it, the roar of the club dies down, as if there is a volume knob for the place that someone just turned down.

“...I found it,” says Ribara. “Not my mother. That is why she had to use deceit where I had legal right.”

The group fans out and sits down on the couches. Ribara wraps your chain around her wrist a few times to ensure you end up next to her. Pairs and trios form as soon as the other women take their seats, and within seconds they have hands down each other’s pants, thrust into their bras, or wrapped around necks and wrists.

“I don’t understand why you drag that Mon-keigh everywhere” says an Elf across from you. She’s an athletic young woman, with a frame far more feminine than Ribara’s and a lean musculature. One of the other women grabs at her crotch, but she shoves her hand away and keeps her eyes fixed on Ribara.

“I like it.” Ribara places a hand on the back of your head and forcibly bows it. “Why would I need any more reason than that?”

Another Elf stops tonguefucking her partner in order to enter the conversation. “Wasn’t your mother dragging along the same slave? Is it a familial fascination?”

Powerful fingers dig into your skull, and you grab hold of Ribara’s forearm to find that her muscles are tensed so hard that her limb shakes in place. The dark glare she gives the other Elf has you quieting your planned protest.

“I heard from Lady Meryetia that Lady Moradys called it ‘him’.” She leans forward and laughs. “‘Him’, she said!”

The other Elves echo her cackling, and you suddenly realize how necessary it is that you get out of this place sooner rather than later. This place and these people aren’t what you thought they were,
and you’re no longer so sure about Ribara, either. Human screams pierce the sound dampening barrier around your little lounge, yet she does nothing to help them. Did she really save you from those other humans, as she claimed? And if she did, what were her motives? Kindness? Boredom? Or some emotional desire so alien that you can’t begin to fathom it?

Ribara reaches down to her waist with her free hand and pulls out a curved knife, then plunges it deep into the table. The other Elves stop laughing, and you double over and vomit your guts out onto the floor. It wasn’t the evil mirth of these women that did it, nor the sight of so many people being brutalized all around you. It was the sight of that one unremarkable knife, glinting meanly in the sharp glow of the violet lights.

“Fucking Mon-keigh!” shouts one of the Elves. Ribara scoots away from you and drops your leash in an attempt to get away from the puke at your feet. You take advantage of the opening and run, up the stairs and through the throng of partygoers who part for you just as easily as they did the first time. Without bothering to turn back to see if Ribara is following, you dash out into the main hall with your chain clinking on the floor behind you. A few thousand feet of burning lungs and aching legs later, you come to the main elevator. A pair of Elves are departing as you approach, and they watch dumbfounded as you smash into the inner wall before turning to the control panel and mashing every button you can in a blind panic.

The doors close, and the lift rockets upward. You retch again at the nauseating motion, but all the food and bile has already left your stomach. The elevator stops, the doors open, and you’re met with an unexpected sight.

You had pressed buttons at random, so it should come as no surprise that you arrived at a different floor than the one Ribara had showed you earlier. A bare metal hallway stretches forward, branching off into a few smaller corridors. There’s no one in sight, so you step out and tentatively work your way through the passage. Thoughts of escape enter your mind, but you have so little concept of where you are that such ideas seem silly. At the very least, you can get away from that madness downstairs. Then you and Ribara can have a nice, long talk about where you are and what the hell is going on in this place.

You come to a broken door laying in the middle of the hallway. It’s caved in, and looks to have been wrenched off the hinges of a doorway another few dozen feet ahead. That’s worrying, but curious. Continuing onward, you come to a massive room with six large doors arranged in a half-circle on the far wall. Each bear strange warning plaques beside them, and the doors are all thrown open, revealing empty rooms.

As you scan the silent chamber, you notice a blotch of dried blood underneath one of the doors. Walking closer, you see what looks like the toe of a boot peeking out from underneath. A corpse from the battle, you wonder? One that Ribara’s cleaners missed?

You go to the edge of the door, wedge yourself between it and the wall, and push. For a few seconds, nothing happens. The door is massive and impossibly heavy, and you’re not sure you have the strength to make it budge. Eventually it shifts with a low metallic groan, and from there it swings forward a few more feet.

The body you expected to find pinned behind the door crumples to the ground. It’s an Elf, totally nude except for a thong and thigh-high boots. Her nipples are pierced with metal spikes, and she wears a crumpled metal crown atop a head of bushy white hair. Whether from blood loss or natural skin color, she’s even more pale than the rest of her kind. Her right arm and left leg are broken and twisted at unnatural angles, but the rest of her is remarkably intact due to the broad grooves set into the door that crushed her.
Even the firearm clipped to her boot looks to have made it out ok. You approach her and kneel down to take off the weapon, but hesitate and place two fingers on her neck to feel for signs of life. The Elves downstairs might be monsters, but it remains to be seen whether or not they’re all like that.

She’s cold. One second passes, then five and then ten. Once you’re satisfied that you’ve done your due diligence, you grab her pistol and try to shake it free of her boot. The dead Elf’s eyes snap open, and she grabs hold of your wrist with an icy claw.

“Fuck!”

You shoot to your feet and deliver a swift kick to her ribs. The Elf lets out a rasping groan and rolls onto her side, clutching at her stomach while you apologize profusely.

“Sorry, you scared the shit out of me!” You kneel down again and carefully take her by the shoulders. “Can you move? What’s your name? Stay with me.” You snap your fingers in front of her face while moving them back and forth to track her eye movements. She follows your hand with a bewildered look, then turns her eyes up to yours.

“You want my name?” Her voice is so harsh and grating that she’s hard to understand. You’ll feel like shit if you breaking a few of her ribs is to blame for that.

You give a slight shrug and look back in the direction of the elevator. “You don’t have to. I’ll go get... someone.”

Just as you start to rise, she grabs you by the sleeve and pulls you back down. She has a wild, desperate look in her blackened eyes. “My name is Irunal. You are Orin.”

Your jaw drops open. “Yes! You know me?”

She swallows and gives a quick nod. “We are friends. Very good friends, the sort who help each other.” Irunal tries to push herself up with her bad arm, but the broken limb merely slides against the blood-soaked ground uselessly.

“I can get you help. Ribara is-“

The desperate look on her face turns panicked, and she pulls you closer. “No, no! *You* need to help me, and no one else. They will kill me if they find me.”

Vala staggers over to the slumbering guard and lays on a hand on her shoulder. The Elf shoots up with a start, upending the chair and laying into Vala’s stomach with a gauntleted backhand that makes her double over in pain.

“What are you doing, slave?” She grabs Vala by the back of her collar and drags her towards the closet. “Get back in there!”

“Sick,” Vala wheezes. “I need to get to a bath.” At least then, she would be able to cool down. The heat flowing outward from her core has grown into a cloying itch that needs to be scratched. Sweat rolls down her back, drips into her eyes, and collects between her thighs. Every brush of cloth against her flesh creates a new part of her that demands to be touched. Without knowing why, she
grabs the Elf’s arm with both hands and presses herself to the woman’s side. Perhaps it’s because she’s ill that she can’t stand the thought of not being close to someone.

“You have to help me...” Vala works her hands from the Elf’s arm to her bare abdomen, feeling the soft contours of the muscle underneath. Her skin is so cool and soothing to touch that Vala can’t stop her hands from wandering further.

Before those hands have a chance to go anywhere truly dangerous, the guard raises up a fist and brings it down on the back of Vala’s head, smashing her to the ground.

“Do not touch me, disease-spreader! And do not spread your sickness to the slave tubs. Find a fountain to throw yourself into.”

That blow to the head should have pissed Vala off, but all she can think about is how good a view she has up the Dark Elf’s loincloth. There’s a bulge there, just visible enough to make her mouth salivate. Is it the mounds of a pussy, she wonders? Or the shape of a flaccid cock tucked in between two balls?

She reaches up to check, but never gets the chance to confirm. The Elf kicks her between the leg, hard, and ecstatic pain washes over Val’s, causing her to collapse back onto the floor. Warm fluids gush from her throbbing pussy, and she clutches at it amidst moans that waver between pleasure and agony. The blunt end of the guard’s halberd jabs her in the shoulder blade, rolling her onto her front, and she arches her back within the throes of orgasmic pleasure.

“Up!” the guard screeches. “Get up!”

There’s something terribly wrong here - something more than a simple alien flu. Vala claws her way across the metal tiled floor until the waves of crushing pleasure calm down enough for her to stagger to her feet. She runs away from the Elf at as fast a pace as she can manage in her delirious state, terrified of what *either* of them might do if Vala risks lingering a moment longer.

Barreling down the hallway, Vala slams shoulder-first into a door before rounding a corner and doing the same to a wall. The door opens behind her, and angry shouts come from inside. She doesn’t dare stop or look back, instead seeking the fountain she passed with Moradys when Vala first came to the manor. If she could only cool off, she would be alright. The heat flowing outward from her core has become unbearable, and the itch crawling over her flesh has worked its way into her pussy. She pulls up her tunic and jams three fingers inside of herself in an effort to satisfy her need to be filled, but that only has her wanting more. It needs to be deep, and it needs to be *now*.

She collided head-on with a pair of double doors and rolls through, landing on the wet cobblestone of the manor courtyard. Up ahead, a stone-spouted fountain spits water high into the air. She imagines herself climbing up the garden fixture, fucking herself with the spout, and being filled to bursting with the spray of water. The thought is obscene and ridiculous beyond belief, but has her squeezing one nipple in fervent need nonetheless.

Vala stumbles over to the fountain and drops to her knees. What she sees in the water has her letting out a laugh of mad shock. The reflection undoubtedly belongs to her, but it’s as if she’s looking in a funhouse mirror. This woman looks an absolute mess, with pupils dilated until they nearly encompass her irises, hair a ragged mess, face plastered with sweat, and a chest that heaves with labored breaths. She looks like a drugged-out whore, taking a two-minute breather in between roughly demanding clients. Not even Orin has seen her like this.

Another face appears beside Vala’s in the water, one so ghastly pale that she at first mistakes it for the moon of her home. But Cummragh has no moon, and she is far from home. The figure grabs her
hair and plunged her into the water with such force that her face strikes bottom. Her nose cracks and
she screams, allowing brackish water to flood her lungs. She’s hauled up mere seconds later, but by
that time she has taken in so much that she feels like a drowning victim brought back to life. Blood
streams from her broken nose and water spews from her mouth with each wet cough.

“What are you doing out here?” shouts the helmetless guard holding her short hair. This isn’t the
same Elf who Vala very nearly groped outside her closet bedroom. This one has a lankier, almost
androgynous build, with high cheekbones and a villainous look that reminds her of Adrubal. Then,
her eyes travel down to the prominent bulge straining the fabric of the guard’s purple thong.
Memories of her former owner plunging her cock into Vala’s depth come unbidden to her mind, and
she lurches sideways to press her face to the tantalizing shape. Her broken nose presses into the soft,
warm flesh of the Elf’s thigh, and Vala takes as deep a breath as she can manage with her nostrils
blocked by bent cartilage. The faintest hint of stale sex penetrates her olfactory passages and she
gurgles in desire as saliva joins the water still making its way up from her lungs.

The Elf batters her across the head, and Vala slips into unconsciousness for a split-second before
finding herself on the ground, staring at the side of the fountain. It sounds as if several Elves are
shouting something, but perhaps it’s still only the one and Vala’s lustful fever has begun to cook her
brain in her skull. She feels more sick than she ever has before, but there’s none of the usual lethargy
that would have her seeking out a bed and sleeping the day away. She *needs* to be fucked, or
she’ll die. She wants this Elf - this cock with legs - to stir up her insides until there’s nothing left to
twist itself up into aching knots.

Amidst coughing sobs, Vala crawls to the fountain and leans on the edge with her forearms, then
hikes up her tunic and uses one hand to spread her pussy. For a few moments, the Elf makes no
movements, and Vala is left with only the sound of her own ragged breaths to drive her frustration
higher.

Then, boots clank against stone. The guard shouts something to someone in the distance, and strikes
Vala in the back of the head again. Vala’s face splashes into her reflection, and something enormous
tears through every defense her womanhood has. She explodes in a fit of screaming, and is fucked
by the titanic intruder with such force that half of her shrill yells are muffled by the water. More of it
fills her mouth and drains into her lungs, and her strength to hold herself up fades with each failed
attempt to draw breath.

“Another arm!” shouts an Elf. It’s not the one making a mess of her pussy, but someone further
behind her. The chorus of cackled agreement that follows tells Vala that quite a crowd has gathered.
Before she can try to estimate their number, a hand grabs her neck and forces her underwater.
Another appears in the form of a fist at the entrance of her gaping pussy, then begins forcing itself in
alongside the one now battering away at the entrance to her womb.

Death was more likely than not. Even if she did survive, she would be ruined for her husband, in
both body and mind. The only thought that truly stuck in her mind, though, was the simple need for
*more*. More fists, more beatings, more ruination that she herself invited on her body. In this
moment, even death seems a worthy price for being split so wide and fucked so deep.

And then, with an almost gentle slowness, the hand on her neck relaxes and withdraws. The same
happens to the arms drive elbow-deep into her sopping cunt, but the spreading of fingers deep inside
of her stops them from sliding out. Vala pushes up from the fountain bottom, and is met with the
sound of clashing blades and dying screams.

Behind her, a colorful blur dances a whirling dervish of death between a dozen guards, cracking
limbs and exploding skulls with some unknown weapon. The deadly figure slows for the briefest of
moments, and as Vala’s eyes clear of water she recognizes one of the Harlequins who Adrubal led. She wears a white mask of disgust, whose overwhelming distaste seems momentarily directed at the insensate Vala, for whom two whole arms aren’t enough to satisfy. The Harlequins had all died at the arena - or so Vala thought. Is this one seeking revenge for her fallen sisters, come to kill the ones she seems responsible?

Disgust speeds up again. A ghostly hammer half her height in length shimmers in the green light of the courtyard, intensifying in visibility each time it destroys a body part or smashes a patch of cobblestone. The Elf buried a quarter of the way inside Vala twitches, and the Harlequin smashes her spine with a mighty swing, showering Vala in blood.

Perhaps it’s the violence that breaks Vala from her stupor, or perhaps having her insides torn to shreds by two lengthy arms was enough to momentarily satisfy her. Regardless, she gathers her thoughts well enough to realize that she needs to leave now. With a pained cry she slides down the side of the fountain on her elbows, shuffling on her knees until the dead Elf’s arms pop free of her swollen pussy lips. Something wet and warm gushes out just afterwards, and smells too much like iron for Vala to ignore the damage done to her.

The pleasure is gone, and the pain is too much for her to continue. She drop down onto the side of her hip and rolls over onto her buttocks, hoping to at least find a position to sit in which her womanhood will stop singing like an open wound. She catches sight of blood spilling onto the stone from between her legs, and pushes down her tunic.

The fight before her draws to a close. The last Elf falls, her chest caved in by a meteoric blow from her attacker’s hammer. The Harlequin waits for her to face plant on the ground, then swings her hammer high and brings it back down, pulverizing the guard’s skull like a ripe fruit. And, just like that, it’s over. Vala’s body is ruined, her mind is not her own, and the women who so very nearly killed her were effortlessly dispatched by a stranger.

In the past, Vala had entertained dark fantasies of being savaged by rough men before being saved by her husband and nursed back to health and sanity. The reality, she now realizes with a sobbing laugh, is far more terrible and disappointing. There will be no grand rescue or heartbreaking tale of love and loss. Only a wrecked body, a sex-crazed mind that craves more, and a husband who will never look her in the eyes the same way again. In this place, there is no pleasure to be had in weakness. Only endless suffering, delivered at the hands of cruel people with crueler desires. The pleasure is reserved for them.

The Harlequin’s hammer fades from existence, and she drops her hand to her side before striding over to Vala. The Elf is taller than most, and more athletic in build, but still feminine - not like that monstrosity that Moradys claims Orin has seduced.

She stops before her and kneels down. Then, to Vala’s great surprise and greater shame, grabs the hem of her tunic and aids her in rolling it under her buttocks and thighs to cover what lays beneath. Vala has expected a mercy killing, not an unwanted guardian angel who comes too late to make a difference.

“What do you want?” Vala cries, shoving ineffectively at Disgust’s shoulder. The Harlequin places a hand over her mouth, reminding her to be quiet.

“I want you to come with me,” she says calmly. “But you must be quiet, my prophet.”

“Why would I go with you?” snaps Vala. The Harlequin recoils in surprise. Clearly, she thought her timely entrance would be met with enthusiastic relief. “You think I don’t remember you? You’re a monster like all the others! Twisted fucks who destroy everything they touch.”
Disgust grabs Vala’s hand in both of hers and looks her in the eyes. Those twin pits of black and blue glitter with an intense fascination that Vala can’t believe is directed at her. What makes her pain so special?

“I would never hurt you,” says the Elf. “You have a destiny that I’m meant to help you fulfill.”

A bewildered Vala ceases to struggle against her grip, and the Elf brings one hand to her own face. The white mask of disgust falls to the ground, and Vala is met by an age-lined face whose noble weariness could not stand in any starker contrast to the youthful expressiveness of the mask that had covered it. She pulls back the cowl of her colorful bodysuit, revealing a single long braid of black hair that is lined with grey.

“You’re old!” Vala says in amazement. Archons such as Moradys are downright ancient, but have access to such fantastic fusions of technology and magic that age is as easy to cure as the common cancer. This Harlequin either lacks those same resources, or is even older than those ageless pillars of Dark Elf society.

Disgust takes Vala by the arm and helps her to her feet. “All of us are old compared to you.” She starts walking her towards the manor gardens and whatever promised escape lays beyond, but before reaching the hedges, Vala pulls free of her rescuer and comes to a wobbling stop.

“I’m not going anywhere with you unless you promise to bring me my husband.”

“He isn’t here,” says the Elf.

“I know. That’s why I’m doing something as stupid as asking you for a promise.”

Disgust purses her lips and stares off into the distance with a weary expression. It hadn’t seemed like such a burdensome request considering what Vala just witnessed, but the Elf seems to be seriously weighing the possibility of such a task.

“I can try,” she finally says.

“Try?”

“I could promise you that I’d succeed, but that would be a lie.”

Vala lets out a sharp huff of frustration, but doesn’t press the matter. She has no leverage here beyond whatever unknown reason this Elf wants her, and she can’t risk frustrating her so much that she leaves Vala to the inevitable wrath of Moradys. Even so, she has to venture forth one more demand.

“My husband’s daughter is here.” Vala points back at the black buildings behind her, where Charal and Orina are somewhere sleeping. “I want you to take her with us.”

Disgust raises an eyebrow curiously. “Your daughter?”

“No, my *husband’s* daughter.”

This hellish city had made Vala into a dozen things she’d never want attributed to herself - victim, prisoner, murderer, and more. Now, Orin has made her an admitted cuckoldress. She inwardly curses him for that, but other than an embarrassed blush avoids betraying her feelings to the Harlequin.

For a few moments, it looks as if the Elf will simply continue on through the gardens with Vala left to either chase her or stay in this hell. Then, she does exactly that. Vala starts to follow out of
instinctual fear of being left behind, but finds the courage to stop and ease herself down into a seated position.

Thirty seconds pass, and Vala remains alone. Her loins ache, but the animalistic sexual desire that drove her seems to have subsided for the time being. She fears it returning, but equally heavy in her mind is the fear of what will happen if the Harlequin truly has abandoned her to her fate. Thirty seconds turn into a minute, then two. So much time passes that Vala is sure her would-be savior has simply left, and the desire to chase after her turns into a sickening certainty that Vala has made the worst decision of her life.

Then, a figure reappears from the hedge maze. Disgust stalks back towards the manor, and as she passes Vala, air eddies swirl and coalesce around the Elf’s right hand, solidifying into the shape of a mighty warhammer that looks to have formed right out of the aether.

She continues past the body-strewn fountain in front of the main building, and Vala gives chase. The trickle of water and hiss of wind disappear, replaced by an eerie silence that is broken only by the soft chime of bells that sounds out with each long-legged stride the Elf makes. She stops before a pair of double doors over four times her height, and brings back both fists. When she swings them forward, the bottom half of the rightmost door explodes without her ever seeming to have made contact with it.

Disgust disappears into the gloom of the building’s interior, and Vala follows with as much speed as her aching insides will allow. Inside, two guards already lay dead, their heads pulped inside of crushed helmets and limbs twisted at unnatural angles. Vala looks left and right, but can neither hear nor see any sign of where her rescuer might have gone. Then, a vibration in the floor, passing from left foot to right, draws her attention to a corridor to the left. She leaves the main hall and passes more broken bodies, some embedded into the broken stonework of the floor or smashed into caved-in wall panels.

After nearly half a minute of following the trail of carnage left behind by the Harlequin, she finds the culprit herself. The blood-splattered Elf cuts a silent swathe of destruction through wave after wave of ill-prepared guards, leaving behind so many bodies in her wake that Vala is forced to choose her steps carefully lest she step into a collapsed rib cage or trip over a spine twisted into a helix.

Vala shouts to the Harlequin to stop, that neither of them have anything to gain by fighting a battle like this, but Vala cannot hear her own words, and Disgust makes no sign of having heard them, either. The pair pass by the female slaves’ quarters, in the far corner of which cower a trembling mass of twenty-plus naked or scrap-clad women. Disgust doesn’t give them a second glance, but Vala lingers for a handful of moments to check for Charal’s face. She doesn’t find her, and moves on to find that Disgust is already in the process of battering down another door further down the hall, this one much smaller and simpler to shatter. The door collapses inward, shaking the ground beneath Vala, and the Elf disappears from view again.

Vala follows, and finds that they’ve come to a bedroom. Not the filthy dormitories of the nameless slaves, or the cramped closet that Vala shut herself up in, but a real living space, with a bed and dresser and all the other amenities one would expect of home. A quarter of the room is blocked by a plastic screen painted to look like wood, separating a washtub and toilet from the rest of the place. There are two windows on the far wall, both of which are barred from the inside.

Disgust is at the bedside, her hammer disappeared into whatever folded dimension it was drawn from. She reaches the darkened folds of the covers, and pulls out a figure far too small to be a grown man or woman, but far too large to be the infant Vala had ordered her to find. Another figure lurches out from the covers and grabs onto the other two, this one with long black hair that shimmers in the
dim light.

Vala rushes over to try and untangle the melee, and as her eyes adjust to the darkness, she sees a naked Charal grappling at one of Disgust’s arms. Clutched under the Elf’s other arm is a young child, no less than five years old. She has long blonde hair, skin so brilliantly tan it looks like she’s leafed in gold, and wears a blue gown with violet feathers around the neck and wrists. The girl’s eyes are squeezed shut and her mouth is open in a silent scream, one echoed by her panicked bedmate.

Charal grabs at the Harlequin’s belt and pulls out a knife. What happens next occurs with such terrible speed that Vala is hardly sure she even saw it happen. In the blink of an eye and a flash of movement from the Elf, the knife leaves Charal’s hand and reappears hilt-deep in Charal’s chest. Her eyes go even wider, her mouth moves wordlessly, and she collapses forward. Vala catches her and eases her onto the floor as carefully as she can, then rolls her onto her back to get a look at the wound. Blood rolls down the sides of Charal’s heaving chest, spilling faster with each shallow breath she takes.

Charal tries to crawl away from Vala, but can only manage to scoot back a foot or so before her limbs lose their strength and her head drops to the ground. Vala leans over her face to tell her to stay still, but her words - which would never have been heard, in any case - vanish from her lips when she sees the way Charal is looking at her.

It’s an expression Vala will never forget - fear, anger, defeat, and the twisted sense of self-righteousness that comes from having someone confirmed as the monster you believed them to be. Vala had seen Charal as a snake who would do and say anything to get what she wanted. Yet here was Vala, kneeling over the dying form of her husband’s lover, and having come to take the one thing she treasured in this awful world.

Two fingers tap her on the shoulder, and Vala cranes her head back to see Disgust staring down at her with a screaming and crying Orina tucked under her arm.

"We must go," she says into the silence.

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Sasuramen sits on the bridge of the Imperium cruiser ‘Tempestus’, surrounded by innumerable computer terminals. He had sent the crew out some time earlier, in the hopes that solitude would allow him to better project his mind out into the swirling energies of the Warp visible out the front viewport. It has been two weeks since their Commander had launched them into this chaos in pursuit of the Drukhari, and one week since Sasuramen had driven his chainblade through the cackling throat of the madman he had once called ‘brother’.

Once a Librarian - a solitary man of wise counsel - Sasuramen is now Captain of the Tempestus, and bears the heavy responsibility of fulfilling the mission their former Commander set them on. But they had jumped into the Warp without backup in pursuit of their hated foe, and in their haste had lost contact with their Primarch. Without that psychic beacon to guide them, they would be lost in this formless sea of raw potential until the nightmares it spawned tore them apart - or drove them to do it to each other.

Their one hope lay on one of the Drukhari’s slave barges, in the form of an Astartes who had
shamefully allowed himself to be taken prisoner by the enemy. Sasuramen had communed with the *Tempestus*’ navigators for every waking moment in an attempt to hone in on their brother’s presence, but he was no Psyker. Every day the slight pull on Sasuramen’s mind grew weaker, and each day his certainty grew that they will soon be truly damned.

Sasuramen smooths out the folds of his red robe, and allows his eyes to lose focus in the intersecting streams of Warp energy cruising by them. This undercurrent of the universe is so alien, yet so captivating - and when he stares at it long enough, he finds himself afflicted by a strange sense of nostalgia for a place that’s doing it’s damnedest to tear him and his brothers apart. If this place is death, then perhaps it’s not so strange to yearn for it in a twisted sense. After all, death is the eventual resting place of every living thing.

The thought brings a dark smile to Sasuramen’s face, but that twist of the lips reverses when he loses his grasp on his captured brother’s presence. He grips the armrests of the Captain’s chair hard enough to bend the Mars-forged metal and casts his mind out into the void, but there is nothing there. The navigators slaved to his mind scream out in agony, begging him to draw back to the safety of the ship, and he allows himself only a few more timeless moments of fruitless searching before acquiescing.

It had been such a quiet thing, like the snuffing out of a candle. For their brother’s presence to vanish like that means he is either dead, or has suffered some far worse fate at the hands of the Drukhari. Sasuramen slumps back in his chair and lets out a heavy sigh, letting his lungs remain empty for as long as his body will allow it. They had been fighting on with only the smallest hope remaining, and now even that is lost. Even breathing seems pointless.

“Forgive me, Primarch.”

There is no one to hear him. Even the *Tempestus*’ psykers, who have kept in constant contact with him, are too exhausted to grab hold of his sorrowful thoughts. Nor does he know what he is apologizing for - he had told their Commander that pursuit was folly, yet he had persisted. Bravery is a fine thing, but it should always be tempered by prudence. That is why Sasuramen cannot allow himself to hold onto hope any longer - because hope without knowledge of the future is delusion.

Sasuramen pushes himself up from the chair, which creaks under his massive weight. The scintillations of the Warp call to him, and he reaches down to the chainblade hanging from his belt. He will not suffer the same fate as so many of his brothers - driven to madness or torn to bits by gangrenous demons that commit unspeakable sodomies on their maggot-filled corpses. Grasping the blade in both hands, he switches it on and brings the whirring blade to his throat. The teeth slice a few millimeters into his flesh, drawing the first of many drops of blood that will soon stain his crimson robe.

A scream sounds out. Not from the bridge, nor from outside, nor from any of the Psykers within reach of Sasuramen’s mind. This cry comes from across time and space, piercing the veils of the Warp and parting them like an orbital cannon slicing through a planet’s clouds. Sasuramen drops the blade to the ground and turns back to the Warp, where thought and reality have folded over each other to reveal a miraculous vision. A black city, twisted and incomprehensible in its formation, floating through the Warp like a pebble in a stream - and with it, a path forward.

The oceanic violets and pinks flood back in, and the vision is gone. Sasuramen collapses back into his chair, breathing as if he’s just run the length of Terra’s palace promenade. Warm wetness streams down his chin, and he touches two fingers to his upper lip to find that he’s bleeding from both nostrils. His head throbs painfully, making the room seem to swim with the same vortices that claw at the hull of the *Tempestus*. 
“What was that?” Sasuramen gasps. None of the Navigators answer. He searches for the presence of those Psykers within the ship who had been aiding them, but finds them diminished. Many are unconscious. Some are disappeared completely, their minds shattered by whatever birthing cry continues to echo throughout the ship.

Sasuramen has never felt anything like it. He follows the siren song still singing in his mind, and gradually hones in on the source. It sits out there in the oceanic oblivion, like a lighthouse guiding the wooden ships of ancient Terra. The beacon is so bright and so clear, that for one sacrilegious moment he wonders if they have somehow found themselves to Terra itself. But they are not that lucky. Their vessel has not found salvation, but it has found hope.

After taking a moment to steady his breath and wipe his face clean of blood, Sasuramen straightens himself in his chair and activates the communications console to his right. The men in the navigation section speak to him in a panic, telling him that most of the Psykers among their number have all died. Only the Astartes remain, though even those great men lay unconscious or insensate from the same mind-rending experience that Sasuramen underwent. The Librarian calms the Aspirant on the other end, instructs him to begin computerized navigation, and begins reciting a series of numeric coordinates. Once completed, he ends the call, and places another to the ship-wide intercom system.

They may still die, he tells the ship’s remaining crew. But the Thousand Sons will not die here.

You could tell from a mere glance that Irunal was in bad shape, but laying hands on her makes it clear just how badly she was injured from being caught between a concrete wall and thousands of pounds of steel. She’s completely unable to support herself on her feet, and you resort to simply throwing her over your shoulders and doing a fireman’s carry. It’s surprisingly easy despite her lanky bulk, and you make quick passage of the corridors winding away from the massive prison chamber you found her in.

“I said *left*, Mon-keigh!” Irunal slaps you across the head, and you backtrack to the intersection you just ran through. Her broken rib cage rattles against the back of your head like a sack of bones until you come to a halt.

“Do you want me to drop you? I can still do it.”

Irunal stops breathing for a few moments, and you feel her swallow and grip you tightly. “I mean to say *please* turn left, Mon-keigh. Good friends such as us can be rude with each other.”

You scrunch up your face in annoyance and make a left turn, finding yourself very doubtful that you two were ever friends. Perhaps you were, and the past you simply made very poor choices when it came to deciding who to associate with, such as your apparent romantic relationship with Ribara. Not that you had much of a choice in that, judging by what she told you of your rescue. Or were you simply captured from one captor by another? A day with Ribara has made it clear that you wouldn’t be allowed to leave no matter how much you pleaded.

The two of you come to another choice of left, right, or forward, and Irunal slaps you on your ass to urge you straight on ahead.

“Through the arena.” She points past you to the open area up ahead. You pass through a grand hall
full of snarling, caged beasts that take swipes at you each time you come close enough to one. Despite the alien hostility of this place and its denizens, a strange sense of familiarity to it all. Were you always kept down below like a pet? Or was there a time where you had free roam of this place? It could be that the battle in which you were wounded heightened Ribara’s paranoia and made her shorten your leash, both literally and figuratively.

“Oh, how grand,” Irunal croons as you exit the building’s interior. “I will hate to leave it behind.”

You cross a narrow bridge that takes you to the first of six huge floating discs suspended above a seemingly bottomless pit at the center of the arena. Audience stands surround the place, enough to fit a crowd of at least ten thousand.

“Who fights here?” you ask her. “You?”

“Yes, and I was the best.” Irunal breaks into a coughing fit and hacks up a bloody mess on your shoulder. It looks as if she’s lost a chunk of lung, but when she continues speaking her condition actually sounds to have improved. “I was the fastest, and strongest, and most beautiful...”

She continues on like that across the next two platforms, only ceasing with the unending list of superlatives when you re-enter the arena’s interior.

“Then how did you end up crushed like a bug?”

Irunal slaps you upside the head with both hands, only stopping when your shouted protests and stumbling leads you to smack her head into a doorframe.

“What’s wrong with you?” you snap at her.

“I was hurt trying to help you,” she replies sharply. “You asked me to help you find your wife, and I agreed, because we are friends.”

“My wife?” you echo wondrously. Your fast walk slows to a crawl, and the elevator doors ahead of you seem to spin out of view. You, married? That can’t be right, can it? You feel so young.

“Yes, your Mon-keigh wife! That is where we are going now!”

You stop in front of the elevator and turn around so that Irunal can work the control panel with her one good arm. A few moments later you’re shooting back down the length of the tower, and shortly after that you’re making your way across a shallow docking bay along which several open-air skiffs are moored. Irunal points you to the nearest one, a dark metal ship fitted with decorative red sails and powered by magnetic repulsor lifts that hum softly on the underside.

“Hold on.” You stop just before the ramp leading to the ship and crane your head back to look Irunal in the eye. “Where *is* my wife. Where are you trying to take me?”

Irunal’s eyes flicker around madly in search of an answer, then roll back towards you like broken gems as a manic grin spreads across her face. “A fantastic place. So much nicer than this.”

You meet her gaze for a few silent moments, then unshoulder her and drop her onto the base of the ramp. She screeches I’m frustrated pain and tries to claw her way into the ship, but you grab hold of her ankles and hold her back.

“Tell me now!”

“Fuck you, Mon-keigh! Stay if you want!” Irunal kicks back with her single functioning leg,
smacking you in the cheek and making you bite your tongue bloody. “I hope Ribara fucks you to death again!”

“Fucked to death?” You let Irunal’s legs drop and back away from her. “Is that how I got hurt? Is that why I can’t remember anything?”

Irunal cackles hysterically and looks back at you. “That’s right, Mon-keigh! She fucked you so deep her cock split your brain in two!”

*Cock?*

You can’t have heard her right. Either she misspoke, or the trauma that caused your amnesia has messed with your auditory perception as well.

“Go ahead, ask her!” Irunal resumes crawling onto the ship while you stand there dumbfounded. “I heard the sounds of a party before you found me. Ribara is such a passionate lover when she is drunk. You’ll come out of it looking worse than me!”

Irunal’s laughter is cut short by your feet trampling over her back as you beat a hurried path onto the main deck of the ship. You go up to the pilot’s platform in front and try to get the ship moving, but you can’t make heads nor tails of the arcane control panel. Irunal shrieks obscenities at you until you go back down, pick her up, and haul her over to the controls.

“A very smart choice for such a stupid creature,” she says.

You grab her hands and put them atop two of the half-dozen levers fixed on the panel, though you have no idea what any of them do. “Shut up and get this thing moving!”

Irunal snorts and begins working the controls with one hand while you keep her standing with your arms wrapped around her waist. The skiff’s engines roar to life, and after a few tense minutes the towering arena falls out of view, leaving you in an endless expanse of featureless green mist.

“How can she have a cock?” you say to Irunal. “She’s a woman, isn’t she?”

“Only half. Do you want to feel a real woman?” She grabs your wrist and slides your hand down to her crotch, then presses down on your index finger so that it slips past her thong and into her cold, moist pussy.

You recoil in disgust and slam her head against the console. She groans and goes limp, leading you to fear for a few moments that you’ve just battered into unconsciousness the only one of you who knows how to fly this ship. Luckily she recovers, and is able to continue her one-handed manipulation of the inscrutable controls laid out before her.

The remainder of the trip passes with Irunal leveling only a minimal amount of venomous innuendo at you, which you take in good stride with the knowledge that you’ll soon be able to part ways with her. You don’t regret not leaving her to die, but you resolve to seriously reconsider whatever supposed friendship the two of you had. She’s crude, manic, and refuses to call you by your given name, preferring ‘monkey’ instead.

An array of blackened spires part the mists, followed by the rock plateau they sit upon. More appear on your left and right, and soon you stop bothering to keep track of them all.

“Are those buildings?” you ask Irunal, marveling at the cathedrals of dark steel.

“Homes. We are looking for yours.”
“Mine?” You lean around her to look her in the eyes. “What do you mean *mine*?”

Irunal swallows and averts her gaze, refusing your continued attempts to probe for more. The closest thing she gives to an answer is to point at a sprawling manor atop a particularly large plateau and instruct you to help guide her into a landing maneuver. Following her frantic and poorly-explained instructions, you clumsily swing the ship to port as it nears the cliff side below the hilltop structures, and slam into the rock. The two of you are thrown to the deck, and Irunal swears while throwing furious elbows at your face.

Irunal orders you to pick her up and carry her off the ship, and you reluctantly obey. You walk down the extended ramp and step off onto smooth stone, then wait while the wind whistles through the pillars to either side of you. A cobbled path winds up the hill before you, vanishing into a garden of thorny hedges that looks as impenetrable as any fortress.

“What now?” you ask her.

“There should be someone.” Irunal points up the path, then pinches the back of your neck between two sharp fingernails. “Go that way.”

You shake yourself free of her hand and continue up the path, through the garden, and after hitting a few dead ends within the maze, come out into a courtyard sitting at the center of three connected buildings that form a gothic mansion of huge proportions. A half-destroyed fountain sits at the center, around which lays a dozen mangled corpses. Half wear helmets, and those that don’t have heads so thoroughly destroyed that you can’t hope to identify them.

They’re Elves, though. That much you’re certain of. They wear purple loincloths and chest coverings, some of which have been pulled down to expose pale cocks and clean-shaven balls. Suddenly, the fear that drove you from Ribara’s home no longer seems so absurd.

“What the hell happened here?” you gasp out.

Irunal shrugs and makes a sound to indicate she doesn’t know or care. “Inside. We will find the lady of the house.”

You tear your eyes away from the bloody carnage and make your way to the main doors leading into the center-most building, where you duck under the remains of a half-destroyed door and enter a dark hall lit by lamps of yellow crystal that lead to a throne seated atop a raised platform. Irunal directs you down another corridor, past several more bodies, then up a spiral staircase leading to another hallway running atop the larger one.

Two purple-clad guards wielding gleaming halberds stand at the far end of the passage, on either side of a pair of carved wooden doors. They shout something hostile and advance on you with weapons pointed forward.

“Lady Moradys!” shouts Irunal. “I brought your Mon-keigh!”

You’re sure the guards heard her, but they don’t seem to care about the message she came to deliver. They continue to press forward until they’ve backed you away from the staircase you came through. Just as you prepare to drop Irunal and free your hands for the coming melee, the doors the guards were posted at swing open and slam into the walls, shocking the Elves into stillness.

“Can I sleep without being woken?” comes a woman’s voice from within the darkened room ahead. “Am I allowed to do that? Within my own home?”

The figure stalks forward, and the first thing you make note of is her silhouette. She’s shorter than the
other Elves you’ve seen, possibly even shorter than you. She wears a purple and black nightgown speckled with gold that glints in the light. The waist is unfastened, leaving her exquisite alabaster figure exposed to you. She carries herself with a regal air, and you find yourself straightening your back as she approaches. You’ve no idea how this meeting is about to go down, but you’re struck by an instinctive need to put your best foot forward here.

You set Irunal’s crumpled body down on the ground and walk towards the woman who Irunal called ‘Moradys.’

“Are you in charge here?”

Her guards turn their attention back to you and take a threatening stance with halberd tips pointed at your throat, but their leader steps in between them and pushes down on the shafts of their weapons, directing them to lower them. She stares at you with open-mouthed wonder, something you would crack a smile at if you weren’t in such urgent need of answers.

“You’re going to tell me who you are, where my wife is, and what happened to me.” You continue forward until your noses are nearly touching - it turns out she *is* a bit taller than you - and stare her straight in her eyes. They’re orange, like Ribara’s, and quite beautiful. Unlike Ribara, though, the rest of her is just as striking. Being this close to someone so angelically captivating has you more anxious than the bladed polearms to your left and right.

“What?” she says.

Her reaction is almost adorable. Woman of wealth and power aren’t used to being talked down to, and a part of them loves the feeling. Moradys furrows her brow and narrows her eyes at you, as if searching for something. Whatever it is, she seems to find it, and lets out a slow sigh of relief before leaning to the side to look at Irunal.

“It does not remember a thing, Lady Moradys!” Irunal claws at the rug running down the hall until her bloody face is pointed at the two of you. “Of course I brought it straight to you.”

Moradys eyes the broken Elf with disgust. “How in the Goddesses’ name are you alive?”

It’s a good question, and one you would have asked if time and circumstances had permitted. You had simply chalked it up to the unique properties of Dark Elf physiology, but even that fails to explain how this woman could lose a few gallons of blood and still be clawing at your junk with all the sexual need of a nymphomaniac.

“Because I am invincible!” rasps Irunal. She looks to you in panic and holds out a pleading hand. “Nothing can kill me, not even death!”

Moradys makes a slight noise of amusement and returns her attention to you. “What were you doing when you found her?”

Wandering around in a half-daze after puking your guts out at the mere sight of a knife. You don’t tell her that, though. You’ve got a role to play, and you’re damn well going to play it.

“I was looking for a way out of a place,” you say confidently. Enough details to answer her question, but vague enough for you to retain the power here. “She knew how to pilot a skiff, and I knew how to use my legs.”

A slight smile creases Moradys’ colorless lips, and her eyes dance over to Irunal.

“But you don’t need her anymore, do you? You’ve escaped, and that’s the end of it.”
You suppose that’s right, but you hadn’t acted on such selfish motives. Irunal had asked you for help, and you’d promised it.

“It’ll be the end of it when you get her to a doctor.”

You turn around to gesture at Irunal, but the woman you had just set down is no longer there. In her place lays a desiccated corpse, as if in the span of a few moments someone had snuck in and drained the Elf of every last ounce of life.

“I’m not sure there’s much we can do for her,” says Moradys.

You close your gaping mouth and grab her by both arms, then spin her to the left and drive her into a wall.

“What the hell did you do to her?”

Moradys flaps a restrained hand at her guards, whose presence you can sense just behind you. “Me? What exactly do you think I did?”

You’ve no idea, but the sight of that woman - your friend, apparently - reduced to skin stretched over broken bones is enough to make you as angry as you are terrified. Nothing in this place makes sense, and no one seems inclined to give you a straight answer.

“What did Irunal tell you?” Moradys asks.

Your grip on her arms loosens as your gaze travels up thoughtfully. “She said you have my wife.”

She cocks an eyebrow at you curiously. “That I *have* your wife? Is that what she said? She didn’t tell you anything about her?”

“She said my wife is here.” You reassert your hold on her arms and press her down until her knees buckle, giving you the all-important height advantage. “You’re going to tell me who you are, where she is-”

Moradys breaks out into hysterical laughter, and won’t stop no matter how much you bash her against the wall.

“*I’m* your wife, Orin!” She pulls free of your grip with a strength you’re unable to fight against, and strokes your cheek with surprising tenderness. Tears well in her eyes, making her orange irises seem to dance like flames in the cold blackness surrounding them. “I was certain you were dead.”

“Well, I’m not dead. I’m pissed, and I want to know what the hell is going on.”

Moradys orders her two guards to wait downstairs, and the Elves shoulder their halberds before departing for the stairwell. You let go of Moradys, as her brief display of strength and the way she casually dismissed her guards has you uncertain of what kind of fight you could put up against this alien. She’s clearly someone of influence, so for now you will play the simpleton.

“You’re my wife?” you ask her.

Moradys runs a hand down the length of your arm. “Of course. Irunal didn’t tell you that?”

“She said I have a ‘Mon-keigh’ wife. It was something she called me a lot, too.”

Her expression goes blank for a fraction of a second, then turns confused. “Yes. There’s me, as well as your... Mon-keigh wife.”
Now it’s your turn to be confused. You’re about to ask her what she means, when the two guards who just departed storm back up the stairs.

“Mistress!” shouts one of them in between labored breaths. “It is a slaughter! Every last guard–“

She never gets to finish. Moradys is already charging past her, barreling into the stairwell with such speed that she slams into the outer wall, leaving her shoulder imprinted in the metal. The two guards follow, and you bring up the rear. Only Irunal remains behind, her glassy eyes staring vacantly off into space.

Moradys follows the trail of bodies deeper into the compound, and the rest of you follow her. There are too many to count, and they’re all just as badly mangled as the ones you spotted outside.

“No no no,” Moradys mutters to herself as she darts through the corridors. You can barely keep up, and lose sight of her a few times. Her guards, who are burdened with their heavy weaponry, fall behind the both of you.

Moradys passes by one door-less room, then slides to a sudden halt at the next one and races inside. You give the first room the most cursory of glances, and catch sight of at least twenty human women seated or laying on beds in what looks like a poorhouse dormitory. That brings to mind many troubling questions, but Moradys’ worry is infectious, and you continue chasing after her.

The next room is a bedroom meant for a single person, and far better furnished than the dormitory. Someone has bashed down the door with a battering ram and left it in pieces. You pick your way over the debris towards Moradys, who runs into the attached bathroom, emerges a moment later, then starts storming around the bedroom while screaming incoherently at the ceiling.

Something grabs your ankle. The hand that grips it is warm, unlike Irunal’s, and with far more color. A naked woman, beautiful and olive-complexioned with dark brown hair that is strewn messily behind her head. Dried blood cakes the corners of her mouth, and fresher blood slowly flows from around the knife buried in her abdomen.

“Oh,” she gasps out. “Took her. She took her.”

You drop down to your knees and take the woman’s hand in your own. Your other hand instinctively goes to the knife, but you quickly think better of pulling it out without knowing the extent of her wounds.

“Who? What happened?”

The woman squeezes her eyes shut, and the tears forming there roll down her cheeks like morning dew.

“Orina. That woman took Orina.” She swallows and tries to say more, but a wet cough interrupts her breathing.

Moradys finally seems to take notice of you two - or rather, allows herself a break from her furious shrieking - and storms over to the bedside.

“How do you lose your own child?” She grabs hold of the knife and wiggles it around in her gut, drawing a scream from the human woman. “Why didn’t you fight harder? Do you hate motherhood that much?”

You try to wrest Moradys’ hand from the weapon, but she lets it go before you can bother her.
“No!” Charal shouts in between pained sobs. “I love her more than anything!” With her eyes bathed in tears and hands clutching madly at you, she grabs hold of your sleeve and pulls herself a few inches off the ground to look you with gentle, pleading eyes that carry the weight of immense betrayal. “Did you tell her to take Orina? Are you leaving me?”

You look from her to Moradys in utter confusion. Every ‘new’ place you visit brings with it old problems and a troublesome history that you can’t begin to wrap your head around.

“Who are you?”

The woman’s expression remains frozen as it was for a few silent seconds, then turns horrified. She drops back to the floor and draws in a slow, ragged breath while Moradys bursts out laughing.

“He can’t remember a thing!” says the Elf. “He has no idea who you are!”

“I am your wife!” She thumps her tiny fists against the floor with a weakening strength that can’t hope to match the power of her emotions. “You said you loved me, and we had a daughter, and then we married...”

She trails off when her breaths become too shallow to support her anguished ranting, and you do your best to comfort her by squeezing her hand and shoulder. It doesn’t work, and her breathing quickens to a single continuous gasp that abruptly cuts short. Blood spills from her mouth and wound, and her back arches off the floor while her limbs go rigid.

“Help her!” you plead to Moradys. She watches the human woman contort in a horrible death spasm, but her expression is not the sort you’d expect of someone witnessing someone in their death throes. Her eyes are unfocused, her mind is somewhere else, and her face is contorted in a furious grimace. You grab Moradys by the shoulder and repeat your plea, but she merely shakes you off and glared at you.

“What do you expect me to do? Do I look like a healer?”

Not at all, but you have precious few other options here. You turn back to the doorway where the two Elf guards wait, but they’re even less inclined to help.

“You brought that Wych back for a time, despite her horrid condition.” Moradys grabs your hand and forces it onto Charal’s belly, just above the blade. “I’m sure you can muster up the will to do the same for your wife.”

“Me?” You look at Moradys in disbelief, but your wife’s choking convulsions draw your attention back to holding her still. “I’m not a doctor! I don’t know what to do!”

“Then Charal will die.”

So that’s the name of the woman you married. She’ll die knowing you forgot everything that was ever shared between the two of you, and you’ll lose her after only having learned her name. The two of you will part as strangers. It should make her passing easier on you, but the horrific twisting of your guts tells you that despite the yawning void in your memory, this person is not a stranger. Your fingers remember the soft warmth of her belly, and your ears the sound of an innocent voice that no hardship could destroy. Those two feelings will be lost forever, and no knowledge could pain you more than that.

“I remember a man who would move stars for her.” As Moradys stands, she closes her robe and ties the waist sash. “What happened to that man?”
You still don’t know. Your best guess is that he was murdered by a jealous hermaphrodite Elf and robbed of his memories. What you do know is that any hope of regaining what you lost - and what you still stand to lose - relies on you doing what only you can do.

“Ok, ok...” you mutter to yourself, grabbing Charal by the sides of her abdomen and forcing her flat to the ground. Blood spills from her mouth faster than ever, and her eyes roll back into her skull until only a hint of brown iris is showing. You think healing thoughts, flexing your muscles and relaxing them in the hopes that simple, raw determination will be enough to wake these powers everyone seems to be so sure you possess.

But nothing happens, save for Charal’s back dropping to the floor and her body going still.

“Fuck... fuck!”

You change tact and shake her to try and elicit some sign of life from her, but the limpness of her muscles is immediately apparent. Is this the first time you’ve seen someone die, you wonder? And if not, did it hurt this much the last time?

“Sshhh...” Moradys kneels down behind you and presses her breasts to your back, then slides her hands from your shoulders on downwards until your fingers are intertwined. “Close your eyes. She’s still warm, isn’t she?”

You do as asked and squeeze your eyes shut to block out the horror in front of you. Charal retains her warmth, but all you can think about is how fast it will slip away.

“Think back to a time when you two were happy together.”

All you can muster is a pained laugh filled with tears that have just started to flow. “I can’t remember anything.”

“That’s alright. I remember.” She presses her chin to your neck, and you can feel her breath on your ear. “It was the day you two married...”

Your joined hands settle onto Charal’s body, one on her breast and one on her stomach. Moradys begins describing an event which, at first, might as well have come from someone else’s life. But the more she speaks, the more captivated you become with her words and the more you forget the death you were powerless to prevent. Her breath is the warmth of the sun on your face, and her fingers moving over yours the long grass tickling at you and Charal’s joined hands as you walked through it to the altar.

None of it jogs your memory. But just as Charal’s genuine anguish convinced you of the truth of her words, and just as the feel of her naked body reinforced that belief, so does the raw emotion overtaking you make you believe in Moradys’ tale.

“How do you know this?”

You speak softly and with slurred speech, so enamored by the story she’s weaving that you might as well be in a dreamworld.

“You told me, remember?”

“No,” you mutter, shaking your head from side to side. Moradys shuffled forward on her knees and kisses your neck in a mind-meltingly gentle display of affection that you wouldn’t have guessed her capable of. Your experience with Ribara and her friends had you assuming all Dark Elves would act with the same horrific inhumanity, but that isn’t the case here. Irunal was twisted in her own way, but
was that really even a living being? Or just your Psyker-resurrected concoction, acting as you expected an Elf to act?

“What now,” you whisper.

“What now,” you whisper.

“Find the thread connecting that moment and this one. Cannibalize the past, and trade death for life.”

A scoff escapes your lips, and you immediately regret how insulting it must sound. You want to do what she asks, and you want to believe it will work, but your amnesia is an immeasurable gap that you can’t hope to bridge.

“I don’t know how to do that.” You blink the tears from your eyes and turn your head slightly to look her in the face. Moradys’ eyes bore into yours like the light of stars, and her ageless face is frozen into a mask that betrays no emotion whatsoever.

“You don’t need to know how. You only need to want it badly enough.”

You turn your focus back to Charal and close your eyes. The woman laid out before you is either dead, or so close to death that any distinction between the two is of no practical consequence. She wasn’t always that way, though - nor does she have to be that way now. The single bloody tether stretching back from the depths of the past becomes frayed and splits into innumerable threads that criss-cross in a mad spiderweb of choice and happenstance. You have no idea of what you are seeing is more than the imagination of a desperate man, but Moradys’ distant voice drives you to follow the threads. The static-speckled blackness of the black of your eyelids intensified and reddens, as if blood has filled your vision. Violet seeps in with the crimson in tidal-pool like swirls, and electric squalls light up the horizon with brilliant flashes of soundless lightning. You follow one of the threads, but find that it simply fades into nonexistence amidst a horrific kaleidoscope of images depicting Charal’s vacant eyes and gaping mouth. You backtrack and choose a new route, but none are any better than that one. In some realities she is brought back to consciousness, only to expire moments later.

You don’t need to know what to do, Moradys had said. You only need to want it badly enough. With reason as meaningless a concept as up and down in this unfathomable realm, you grab hold of one withered thread and hold tight, then wrap it tight around another, and another, and another. If inevitability always ends in tragedy, then you will make a new reality out of possibility.

Your body burns. You had forgotten you had one. Cold fire surges from the tips of your fingertips to your shoulders and wraps around your heart. The alien energies swirling around you shimmer and distort in shape and color, violets flickering yellow and red flashing blue in a dizzying display of light that you can’t stand to look at.

You open your eyes for fear of what will happen to your mind if you stay in that otherworldly place any longer. Charal looks just as she did before, but her body is covered in chains of blue flame that make her look like a fallen angel whose impact with these lower realms has merely stunned her. The flames begin and end at the palms you have pressed to her body, and continue up your arms before sinking into the flesh of your shoulders.

The knife in Charal’s belly flickers in and out of existence as if reality itself is unsure of whether or not it should be allowed to remain. Moments later it vanishes for good, then reappears a few inches to the left, creating a new wound and new bloodstain just as the old ones vanish.

“What’s happening?” you say in disbelief. Moradys doesn’t respond to your question, and you look back to see her staring at your hands with wide eyes ablaze with interest. You don’t get the sense that she’s awed by what you’re doing, nor is she particularly concerned about what’s happening to
Charal. She’s looking at your flame-covered hands, not the woman whose fate they’re changing.

“Lady Moradys,” you say to her. That finally snaps her from her reverie.

“This wound is less serious.” She slides around you and reaches over to Charal’s neck to feel for a pulse through the tendrils of blue fire. A satisfied ‘hmmph’ seems to indicate that she found some sign of life, however week it must be. “Good enough. You’re done.”

“Done?” You look at her in stunned disbelief. “She could still die!”

Moradys shoots you a sharp glare and pulls your hand off Charal’s chest. You yank free of her and put your hand back where it was, then close your eyes and delve back into that dreamworld where even those possibilities that don’t yet exist can be forged from the raw material of existence.

The storm of red and violet you saw before is fractured, broken up by monumental crystals of blue and yellow that jut out of the mists from every direction like daggers in a sea of blood. Lightning strikes one of the formations nearest you, and the crystal shatters into a thousand pieces that spread out in every direction. As one of the splinters flies by, you catch sight of a blue eye surrounded by yellow plumage peering out at you from within the crystal. It’s beautiful, and makes you imagine a baby bird peeking out at the world for the first time from within its shell.

You try to grab hold of it, and fail. Not because you don’t have hands in this world, but because something else restrains you. Your body explodes in pain, and your eyes snap open. You’re back in the real world, laid out on the ground with your back against a wall, staring at Moradys as she stands between you and Vala. The Elf lowers her raised arm, and you realize that you’ve been thrown clean across the room.

One of Charal’s feet twitches. It’s a subtle enough movement that you might chalk it up to wishful thinking, if it weren’t for what happens next. Moradys leans over and drags the knife out of Charal’s side, drawing a scream from your wife. It’s a horrible, grating wail, but in that moment it might as well be the loveliest song in the world.

You reach out to the two women and start to shout something about staunching the inevitable bleeding, but Moradys is already ahead of you. She kneels down, presses her palm flat to Charal’s wound, and cauterizes it with a burst of pink flame. Charal screams again, but passes out too quickly for her to make her pain fully known. The smell of burnt flesh is horrible, and Moradys’ disgusted sneer seems to indicate she’s of a similar mind.

“Guards!” she shouts, summoning the two Elves waiting outside. “Get her seen to.”

The pair enter, set their halberds down beside the broken door, and pick up your unconscious wife under her armpits. You scramble to your feet and rush towards the trip, but Moradys intercepts you and brings you to your knees with an impossibly swift fist to the gut.

“I told you to stop,” she snaps. “Why didn’t you?”

“My wife,” you wheeze, watching as she is hauled out of the room. For a few moments, you had actually forgotten her name. It feels strange to have ventured into that insanity to save someone whose name you struggle to remember, but it doesn’t feel wrong.

“Who do you think was more important to you? Me, or Charal?” Moradys leans over to try and put her face in front of yours, but she’s tall enough that you’re still forced to look up at her.

You look between the two and stammer wordlessly. Moradys grabs your left hand, takes hold of two fingers, and breaks them. You bellow and swear, but no amount of thrashing allows you to pull free
of her.

“When I give you a direction, it’s for your own good.” She lets go of your wrist, and you pull your hand away before holding it out for her to see.

“And this?” you snap at her, trying but failing to move your two bent fingers. “This is for my own good?”

“Yes,” she responds casually as she rises back to her full height. “Pain will make it harder to concentrate. If you think I value your comfort over your life, you’re sorely mistaken.”

Holding your injured hand with the other, you rise to your feet and stand face-to-face with Moradys. “I’m going to find that baby - *my* baby - and I’m returning her to her mother.”

Moradys is remarkably unaffected by your glaring declaration. “I’m going to help you do exactly that.” She plants a finger in the center of your chest and applies just enough pressure to remind you of the full measure of her strength. “But on my terms. Not on those of my amnesiac husband who seems determined to lose his soul to the Warp.”

“The Warp?” You look up at Moradys, the pain in your hand momentarily forgotten. You’re sure you’ve heard that word somewhere before. From Ribara, maybe.

“The unshaped clay of reality.” Moradys spreads her hands outwards like a Queen welcoming petitioners to her audience chambers. “Our home, and the most dangerous place in the universe for someone like you.”

“Why me?” you ask her, your tone fraught with both fear and wonder.

“Because you’re a human Psyker. Power without the understanding to wield it safely. Fat prey for any Warp-spawned intelligence looking for sustenance.”

None of what she says makes any sense to you, and only conjures up childish images of red-skinned demons digging into your skull to feast on your brain. Why, then, do her words put such a sickening ache in the pit of your stomach? On some level deeper than memory, you understand the warnings she’s trying to impart.

“You said I brought that Elf back to life without even meaning to. Why shouldn’t I just wish to have my daughter back here?”

The question is meant to be a sharp rebuttal to Moradys’ claims of your weakness, but it comes out as a nervous question. Part of you wants her to convince you of the need for caution.

“You know why,” she says dryly. “You have no concept of what you can do, and even less of how to do it. But with someone to show you the way, you could be a God.”

A breathy sound, half scoff and half amazed laugh, escapes your throat as you rise to your feet. Your heart pounds with excitement even as your mind struggles to keep up with the sheer enormity of the concepts being presented to you. Just who were you before you awoke a man with no memory?

“And who’s going to show me the way? Another god?”

Moradys smiles seductively, thin lips curling like blooming flower petals, and slides one leg towards you. Her nightgown slips aside, exposing a creamy white thigh.

“You already worship me like a god.”
You bristle at her words, clutching your fingers to your chest and glaring coldly. Being told you’re lovers is one thing, but she still feels like a stranger to you. And there’s something vicious in that tone of hers, pointing to a domineering sense of superiority that extends well past the bedroom.

“Maybe I did. I can’t remember.”

Moradys’ retracting leg and furrowing brows tells you that your message is heard loud and clear. You feel a pang of guilt when you effectively deny the nature of the relationship between you two, but that guilt vanished when you see the expression displayed so plainly on her face. Not grief, or confusion, or even frustration. Only anger, raw and untempered by any other emotions.

“Take off that ridiculous outfit,” she says to you.

To your mild shame, your hands actually go to your black tunic for a moment before you get control of your reflexes and put them back at your sides. It’s amazing how difficult it is to simply do *nothing* under the withering gaze of this sharp-eyed woman. If she told you to climb a mountain, you’re certain it would be easier to simply do it than try to overcome your compulsive need to obey.

After a long moment, Moradys grows tired of the standoff and undoes the sash on her nightgown, then lets the shimmering garment slip to the floor. Unblemished skin stretches over her collarbones as she disrobes, and shapely breasts rise and fall with each twisting movement. Her hair shines a radiant black against a neck so white it seems to glow with a light of its own. She’s not simply beautiful - she’s perfect.

Except for the bulge in her panties.

You’re not sure what to make of it at first. Her purple lace underwear, so dark it’s nearly black, is stretched obscene over some fist-sized shape where her pussy should be. Only when she leans over and slides her underwear to the floor do you truly comprehend what you’re looking at. She stands back up, and a pale, uncut cock swings into view between her legs. Behind it hang two sizable balls, each as smooth and hairless as the rest of her.

“Get over here.” Moradys pushes two outstretched fingers down on either side of her limp shaft, making it lengthen further. “Now.”

You’re more tempted by Moradys’ demand than you expected. Your body rocks forward on its heels, as if seeking to tear itself free from a resistant mind and run headlong into whatever perverse pleasure this well-endowed Elf is offering you. So little of you remains under your control. Your eyes flicker from her breasts to her cock, and your chest heaves with the shallow breaths of desire. Your cock, unrestrained by any sort of underwear, tents the front of your thin pants.

Moradys sneers at the evidence of how thoroughly she’s enthralled you. “Are you going to play the passionless stoic with an erection like that? Come here, *now*!”

Somehow, her second demand lacks the compelling force of the first. Maybe it’s because you’ve had time to center yourself and gain some semblance of control over your baser desires. Or maybe it’s because you see how Moradys is afflicted with the same feverish need as you, magnified tenfold. Her domineering facade, you realize, is a front. The thinnest veneer imaginable, layered over a desperation as transparent as the skin over her veins.

“You’re the one who wants *me*,” you shoot back. “*You* come over *here*.”

There’s no smirk on your face. Only a cool confidence born of gut feeling that this is a battle of wills you can win. Moradys wavers uncertainly, but only for a moment. She shoots towards you, an
imperceptible blur, and reappears inches from your face. Long fingers grip your balls through your pants, squeezing with more than enough strength to both restrain and agonize you.

With a gasp of outraged pain you wrap a hand around Moradys’ lithe neck, and use the other to try to dislodge her grip on your manhood. Pulling on her wrist only serves to heighten the sickening agony creeping from groin to belly, so you focus on cutting off her airway in the hopes that she’ll be forced to relent.

“You think you can out-torment me?” Moradys rasps through her constricted airway. She tilts her head back and grins down the length of the arm you have pointed at her neck. “I showed you what pain *is*. Do you have any idea the sorts of things we’ve done together?”

Her fingers roll back and forth across your sac, as if measuring the ripeness of a fruit at the market. Your knees buckle and your breaths grow ragged, but still you refuse to fall or let go of her.

“You fucking bitch,” you snarl at her. Your anger only drives her sick thrill to new heights.

“You say you’re a new man?” Moradys’ hand slides from your balls to your shaft. The pressure vanishes, but the pain remains, throbbing in time with your heartbeat. “Why don’t you show me.”

She’s goading you. Jabbing at your ego with sharp knives even as she strokes your cock with a firm but soft touch. It should be insulting to be so blatantly manipulated, but you’re too filled with lust to see it as anything other than evidence of how much you’re wanted. Slaves are commanded, you tell yourself. Lovers are toyed with.

“Have you forgotten how to-”

Your lips fall on Moradys’ before she can finish, and she groans the rest of her verbal sparring into your mouth as an incoherent moan. Having her joined to you like this - hands on throat and lips on lips - produces a feeling of familiarity more powerful than any you’ve felt since awakening. You want to strangle her until she’s no longer breathing, and tongue-fuck the corpse. Terrifying thoughts assault you, one after the other, and you fear what will happen now that you’ve dipped your toe into a pool whose siren call grows ever stronger.

Moradys hikes down your pants, and you help her. Next comes your shirt, not taken off so much as torn off. Your erect cocks rub against each other, her hard nipples press into your chest, and your hand leaves her throat to knead her smooth buttocks. You feel poised on a razor’s edge, caught between warring feelings of…

Of what, exactly?

Is this love? Or is it hatred? This feeling of being so fatally intertwined with someone that you would exhaust every means of making them yours until all that was left was to take their very life? As if their being in the world at all was to share them with it, a shameful cuckoldry that demands restitution.

It’s neither, you decide as your fingers slip between her buttocks and seek out her anus. This is desire, the pure want that becomes before judgement or opinion. Neither of you needs to pretend to be something you’re not. You need only bare yourself, naked and exposed, to be devoured by a hunger so all-encompassing that acceptance becomes synonymous with death.

As Moradys’ tongue slips around yours, you see the true nature of your own voracious hunger. There’s a yawning void within you, spanning the breadth and depth of your memory - the very core of your being. This person - your wife - promises to fill it with every scrape of her nails along your
back and bite of teeth against your lips. Every twinge of pain is a little punishment delivered from her to you, for forgetting who you belong to - and for who belongs to you.

You pull away from Moradys’ kiss, savoring the taste of wet iron under your tongue. Questions demand release just as much as your cock Moradys clutches alongside her own.

“Do you love me?” you ask her.

Asking the question put you off-balance, and you knew it would do the same to Moradys. What you underestimated was the sheer vastness of emotion such a simple question would take her through. She smiles and opens her mouth as if to turn your implied profession of adoration into a weapon, then grows mortified and clamps her jaw shut. This must be so embarrassing for her - a woman of her station being asked to reaffirm her love for someone who had completely forgotten her. No wonder she’s playing the ice queen.

You place two fingers to her lips. “You don’t need to answer. I love you - I can feel it.” Your hand leaves her lips, slips down her neck, and comes to rest on her breast. “I’ll show you.”

Moradys stares at you in wide-eyed expectancy, alternately pulling you close and pushing away, as if your declaration were too much to bear. She takes a step back, and you take it with her, walking her forward until the backs of her legs hit the bed and she tips onto it.

You fall on top of her, pressing your lips to hers and grinding your hard cocks against each other. Its cold, but your intermingling bodies warm each other in the swell of the covers. Precum spills from both of your members, your fists wrap around her arms just as her fingers grasp at the bed, and your whispered pronouncements of love and desire are echoed by her wordless, gasping moans.

Moradys melts under your touch like ice in the summer. Everywhere your hands travel, muscles quiver and go slack. Her head lolls back in drunken lust, and she clings to the back of your neck as if hanging on for dear life. She’s so lost in the affection lavished on her that you’re forced to drag her up further onto the bed to actually get her into a position to fuck her. You spread her legs to either side of you, and once she realizes your intentions she enthusiastically throws them around the small of your back and pulls you close with what paltry strength she can muster.

You press forward, and your precum-slicked cock slips in between her sweaty cheeks. One more steady drive, and you’re inside. Each back and forth motion brings you closer to her, and takes your wife to new heights of ecstasy. The longer you fuck her, the more detached from the world she becomes until her eyes are swinging about the room in mad arcs that seem to take in none of what they land on.

As your pace quickens and your orgasm grows near, a shuddering sob from Moradys stops you cold. Tears stream from her eyes, and her head rolls to the side so that her face is pointed away from you.

“What’s wrong?” you ask anxiously. She makes no further movement, and the flow of tears continues unabated. You try to pull out of her ass, but her legs are locked so tightly around you that you barely have any room to draw back at all. When that fails, you brush aside her sweat-matted hair and look her in her tear-stained eyes.

“I love you,” she murmurs softly.

It’s spoken like a shameful admittance you tore from her through an hours-long interrogation, rather than something said between two lovers in the throes of passion.

“I love you too,” you whisper back to her. She cringes at the kiss that follows, as if embarrassed, and
keeps her eyes squeezed tight in a vain attempt to stop you from seeing the fresh deluge of tears that follow.

When you cum, Moradys squeezes you with such force that you fear she might crack a rib or two. Her own cock, sliding back and forth between your abdomens, spews its seed with each of your short thrusts. Nails dig into your back, raking bloody trails across your shoulder blades.

Even after you stop cumming and your cock goes limp, Moradys refuses to allow you to untangle yourself from her. You settle for dislodging one of her legs and rolling onto your right side, allowing the two of you to stare into each other’s eyes for that endless moment that follows the union of two souls. Moradys blinks the remaining tears from her eyes and looks down the length of your joined bodies, deliberately avoiding meeting your gaze even as her clinging hands demand you stay. She seems both younger and older than when you first met her, embodying both the innocence of youth and the weariness of old age.

“You’ve done horrible things to me,” she says.

The abruptness of her accusation would make you pull away from her, if she allowed it. “I’m… sorry,” you mutter. “I don’t remember anything.”

“I’ve treated you poorly at times, too. We’ve both hurt each other.”

Maybe you should be remorseful. Or maybe you should be angry. With no connection to the past she’s speaking of, you can muster neither emotion.

“You said you forgave me, but you didn’t. Not really.” Moradys slides a hand up to your face and strokes the side of your head, then lets her fingertips come to rest on your temple. “You say you love me, but do you love me more than anyone else in this hideous universe?”

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Even to a warrior as veteran as Sasuramen, to stand before seventy-eight of his battle brothers is no small thing. He had assembled the entirety of the Tempestus’ contingent of Adeptus Astartes within the ship’s landing craft hangar, as that was the only place with enough space to fit an entire company of fully-armored Astartes, even if their numbers *had* been worn by weeks of travel within the depredating energies of the Warp.

“This is madness!” shouts Athusis. “You would deliver us all into the hands of the enemy! At what? The siren call of the Warp?”

The black-haired Chaplain spits on the ground, producing a ripple of stunned murmurs through the sea of blue armor all around him. Sasuramen glares down at his subordinate from atop the crate he had been speaking on, and steadies the impatient anger welling in his heart.

“I would deliver us into the *hearts* of the enemy!” he bellows. “The tip of the Emperor’s spear, driven straight and true by his unseen hand!”

A chorus of excited shouts wells up from the assembled warriors. They yearn for an enemy whose throats they can wrap their hands around - not the formless, endlessly shifting threats bred in this sea of chaos.
“A mutilated company against the fortress home of the Drukhari?” The Chaplain shoves aside his comrades and moves towards the center of the crowd standing before Sasuramen. His hair is a mess, his face unshaven, and behind his steely-blue eyes lurks something darker than religious fervor. The man is going mad. “We will be cut down before we make landing. Have you even considered the possibility that those Drukhari witches sent you that vision to lure you in?”

Utter silence. The unspoken clamor of agreement. Sasuramen can only bear it for a few moments.

“This is no trick!” he roars, wheeling about in his makeshift stand and pointing behind him at the docking bay force field, outside which streams by the vagaries of the Warp. “Something was born in that citadel. You all heard its cry as I did!”

“We did,” Athusis retorts. “A psychic emanation of the Warp. You would *deliberately* seek out such a dangerous thing?”

“This is no mindless Daemon! I have spoken to her!”

More silence, this time broken by the gasps and uneasy whispers of his brothers. Too late, Sasuramen realizes he has revealed too much. Athusis will beguile them into assuming Sasuramen has fallen prey to the same corrupting energies as their fallen Captain. They have not seen what he has.

“*Spoken* to *her*?” Athusis turns his back to Sasuramen, as if to totally dismiss the insanity being spewed from their new Captain. “He’s been seduced by a Daemon! Swayed by visions of swaying breasts and spread legs!”

“She is not a Daemon!” Sasuramen cries out desperately. “She is the Emperor reborn!”

A greater sacrilege could not possibly have left his lips. Not a man in the hangar dared to breathe, and even the ship itself seemed to quiet for fear of seeming to endorse its Captain’s heresy. For him to utter such things demanded nothing short of immediate execution.

“Reborn?” Athusis turns back to Sasuramen, horrified confusion briefly overpowering the furious piety of a man who lived and breathed the Imperial Cult. “You truly are insane! The Emperor is beyond death. He has lived on the Golden Throne since the time of heresy!”

“He has been on death’s door for millennia!” Sasuramen scans the crowd of Astartes as he makes his desperate plea. He is speaking to them now, not this single stubborn fanatic. “Who is to say that his mortal form did not give out while we were mired in this place where time means nothing? Who can know how many thousands of years have passed since we entered the Warp?”

“*That* is your evidence?” Athusis replies. “Fear-mongering and what-ifs?”

“What I *felt* is my evidence!” Sasuramen again gestures to the forcefield standing between him and the Warp. A few days ago, he wouldn’t have dared turn his back to it. Now, it no longer seems like such a hostile realm. Even here, the Emperor protects him. “I sense it even now. A psychic presence unlike any other.”

He throws his arms outward, wetting a throat that has become very dry in the stale air of the hangar. Everything will hinge on the power of his words, and his trembling body knows it.

“We are not *lost*! The reborn Emperor brought us here for a purpose! Soon, the Drukhari Craftworld will reach Terra’s shadow within the Warp.” He thrusts a hand backwards to drive home their unseen but inescapable destination. “We will find her, destroy our enemy, and return to the very seat of humanity with the Emperor at our head.”
Bolter rounds explode from Athusis. Sasuramen throws up an armored gauntlet to protect his face and takes a kneeling position, shielding himself from the withering barrage.

“I have heard enough!” Athusis charges at him, and the crowd between the two parts like a windswept sea, leaving a pathway for the enraged Chaplain. “You will not lead these men to death and damnation!”

Sasuramen reaches for the bolter at his hip, but a bullet strikes his hand and blows off his thumb. He swears and gnashes his teeth, attempting again to get a grip on the gun but being stymied by the bloody slickness of his hand. Just when it seems as if this new crusade will be aborted in the womb, alarms blare throughout the ship.

“Intrusion!” comes a voice on the intercom - one of the guardsmen crewing the ship while it’s more-than-human inhabitants gather in the hangar.

At that single word, seventy-seven bolters are drawn alongside just as many chainblades. The reaction is near-instantaneous, but even that is too slow against an enemy who can spring from thin air. Gangrenous limbs spring from the floor, grasping at limbs and restraining soldiers while gibbering retard creatures covered in pustules drop from the ceiling to devour their immobilized prey. Bloated Daemon-spawn die by the hundreds, spraying acidic blood onto the Astartes and dissolving their armor piece by piece.

Athusis, the madman, screams at Sasuramen and continues to focus his fire on his brother - as if Sasuramen were the greater threat here. Then, even Athusis falls victim to the hordes of monsters. A twisted parody of humanity bites off his firing arm in a fit of hysterical laughter, and the Chaplain screams under a growing pile of rotting foes.

Sasuramen rises up, roses, and levels his bolter at the advancing wave of creatures before him. Just as death itself seems poised to crash over him like the waves of the ocean, the room erupts in blue light. Daemonic screams overtake the war cries of the Astartes, and sapphire flames race across the entangled crowds. The Astartes themselves seem to be overtaken by the flames, but Sasuramen quickly realizes that they’re merely lost within the sea of fire, staring in amazement at the display of light playing across the room.

With a whoosh of air and a boom like thunder, the flames gather up and rush towards Sasuramen. He holds his hands up to shield himself from the heat, but finds them cool to the touch. A moment later, it’s over. The room is silent. The flames have vanished, along with the Warpspawn they consumed in their purifying light. All that is left are the Adeptus Astartes, who stare at Sasuramen in rapt amazement. Only a few men - Athusis among them - avert their gaze.

The dead cannot appreciate miracles.

Sasuramen raises his bolter above his head. “The Emperor protects!”

His words echo across the vast room, carried through the mouths of every survivor.

They thrust their weapons in time with his, shaking the very firmament of the ship with their booming declaration.

“First, Cummragh!” cries Sasuramen. “Then, Terra!”
“I do,” you murmur softly. “More then anyone else.”

You’re surprised at how quickly you answer such a heavy question, but to give it any thought seems superfluous. What evidence do you need, beyond this overwhelming interplay of sexual thrill and warm comfort? You see yourself reflected in Moradys’ eyes, as if the existence of each of you hinged on the other.

Moradys smiles, and the sight of her tearful joy makes it feel as if sparks fly within your skull. She takes her hand away from your head and places it on your chest, scratching idly while she peers into your eyes.

“What was I to you, really?” you ask her.

Her fingers curl back into her palm, and she swallows. “A slave.”

It’s not the answer you were hoping for, but the one you expected. A day spent in Ribara’s home has showed you how humans are treated here.

“And now?”

“Why do you need to put a word to what we have?”

You’re not sure there *is* a word for what exists between the two of you. What worries you is that ‘slave’ comes closer to the truth than ‘lovers’.

“If I wanted to leave, would you let me?”

“Would *you* let *me*?” Moradys fires back.

You wouldn’t. Not without fighting tooth and nail to keep her at your side.

Moradys lets out a long, slow breath and strokes your face before rolling away from you and standing up from the bed. She goes over to a dresser mirror on the other side of the room and leans in close to her reflection.

“You’re not a slave. You serve me out of love, not fear.”

You frown and roll onto your back to look at her past the foot of the bed. “I’m not your *servant*, either.”

She falls silent and continues to examine her face in the dim light of the mirror’s crystal fixtures. At first you think she’s pondering how to respond to you, but you soon realize that she’s simply going to gloss over it entirely.

“Come here.” She waves you over, and you heave yourself upright before making your way across the room. Despite being a little annoyed at her choice of words, you can’t resist the urge to throw your arms around her waist and rest your chin in the crook of her neck.

“Do you see this?” She points to the corner of her left eye. “This wrinkle.”

No matter how much you squint or crane your head at varying angles, you can’t see any hint of the crow’s feet she’s presumably pointing to.

“It’s plenty visible in better light,” she assures you. “Even here, where time means so little, it has
managed to hook its claws into me.”

“It’s just a wrinkle.”

She scoffs in amusement, as if you’re a child who has wandered into areas too deep for him to fathom.

“Do you know how old I am?”

You shake your head.

“My life is best measured by the rise and fall of civilizations. Technology and magic have kept the ravages of time at bay, but it is a battle I am losing.”

“What do you mean? Are you dying?”

“We’re all dying,” she sighs. Another verbal sidestep that you hardly notice in your anxious questioning. “Even if I lived for another thousand years, the time I spend with you would be the mere blink of an eye compared with what came before.”

Moradys bites her trembling lip and furrows her brow angrily while placing her hands over yours.

“The universe has a sense of destination, it seems. Why couldn’t I find you sooner? Why did you come so late?”

At first, her words struck you as beyond melodramatic. A thousand years is enough time to indulge in every experience imaginable, and some more than once. But is that such a long time for a Dark Elf? Or are you akin to a fruit fly wondering why a human frets over only having a year left to live?
“I brought a dead woman back to life already, didn’t I?” You pull Moradys’ hips back until your cock is flush with her buttocks. “I’m sure I can keep you young.”

Moradys smiles at your choice of words. You’re glad you didn’t offer to ‘make her young’.

“Re-invigorating a soul isn’t the same as animating a puppet of meat and bones.”

“What do you mean?”

Moradys locks with your reflection and grasps the sides of your hips, keeping your dick lodged between her buttocks. You’ve already begun to harden again.

“I said you could shape the raw clay of reality, didn’t I?”

You nod and mumble in agreement.

“But you cannot make more clay,” she says.

Cold realization washes over you and drags you back down to the reality of your situation. Only God can make something from nothing, and you’re no God.

“So there’s nothing I can do?” you ask with a trembling voice. “Your time is just going to... run out?”

“Now, I didn’t say that, did I? Clay is clay, and souls are souls. Do you understand?”

You think you *do* understand, but you wish you didn’t. Moradys mistakes your silence for dullness of mind, and grabs hold of your chin with one hand.

“I’m asking how many nameless lives I’m worth to you.”

More silence. Moradys tires of waiting for another answer that never comes, and pats you on the hip before pulling away from you.

“Think about that while I get to work finding your daughter.”

You had forgotten all about that. Moradys catches sight of the shame overtaking your expression and grins.

“Oh, don’t feel bad. I forgot all about her, too.“

She winks at you before picking up her nightgown and leaving the room. This time, you have no urge to follow and cling to her. She’s left you with plenty to ponder in her absence.
Vala lays on the bed in the underdeck of the Dark Elf skiff, furiously fingering herself. No matter how much she strokes or how thoroughly her juices soak the covers, it’s never enough. She had handed off Orina to her rescuer after boarding the latter’s ship, when Vala had been on the verge of pleasing herself with one hand while holding her husband’s shrieking daughter with the other. That had been shameful enough, but far worse was how quickly lust overcame the horror of having left a human woman for dead. A venomous snake of a woman, but a woman nonetheless.

Now, all she felt towards Charal was frustration and anger. Frustration for turning Vala into a kidnapper and murderer. Anger for ruining any chance she had of a happy reunion with her husband. It didn’t matter that Vala would come to him with Orina in hand. He would never forgive her for Charal’s death.

“Khannah!” Vala screams, summoning the Harlequin whose name she had learned shortly after boarding the ship. Footsteps sound outside the room, and the pale face of a matronly Elf peeks inside the room.

“Get in here.” Vala snaps, continuing to saw her fingers in and out of her wrecked womanhood. She had tried using objects scavenged around the room, but nothing could reach her pleasure spots as well as her hand.

Khannah enters, and Vala sees no sign of the small girl she had handed off to the Elf after fleeing Moradys’ manner. Vala hadn’t liked the idea of putting a Dark Elf in charge of a human child, but when she nearly began pleasing herself with one hand while holding her husband’s daughter with the other, she had relented.

“Where’s Orina?” says Vala.

“The Mon-Keigh girl is asleep. Would you like me to wake her?”

“Don’t you fucking dare. If I have to hear any more screaming, I’ll-“

Vala cries out as another orgasm wracks her body. The pleasure from it only lasts a few seconds, and each convulsion makes her muscles ache and loins burn.

“What’s wrong with me? Moradys did something, I know it.”

Khannah eyes her cautious interest and circles around to the side of the bed where Vala lays, a shuddering wreck.

“I searched you for pleasure implants, and any drug should have worn off by now. You have been cursed.

Vala laughs. “What, like fuckin’ magic?”

Khannah nods, and Vala whips her head from side to side in exhausted frustration as tears well in her eyes.

“I can’t take any more of this. Fix it!”

“I’m not sure that I can.”

“Nothing’s fuckin’ working!” Vala rolls onto her side and grabs at the Harlequin’s armored groin. There’s *something* under there, and it might be just what she needs. One more fuck, she tells herself. Then she can feel something other than painful desire and think about something other than cock.
Her fingers hook onto the top of Khannah’s groin plate, and she pulls it away to reveal the zippered crotch of a jumpsuit.

“Open it,” she orders Khannah. “I want to see what you’ve got.”

The Harlequin frowns at her defiantly, and Vala pulls her hand away from her raw womanhood to snap her fingers at the Elf. Blue flame flares from them, and Khannah recoils in mild shock. It’s little more than a party trick, but has worked well to cow the Elf into submission so far. Vala is under little illusion that Khannah is actually afraid of her, but the Elf does seem to take the otherworldly flames as evidence of some divine ordainment. Perhaps Vala *was* chosen by some higher power. How else could she explain this new ability?

Khannah strips off her red armor, dropping it onto the ground piece by piece, then unzips her jumpsuit and rolls it down to her waist. Her body is trim and athletic, and her breasts sag slightly with age. She’s a beautiful woman, but Vala has never had an attraction to the female form beyond simple aesthetic appreciation.

That cock, though. That *fucking* cock.

Vala begins to salivate at the first sight of pale shaft. By the time Khannah finishes stripping and stands straight up with her flaccid length dangling pendulously between her lithe thighs, Vala has eight of her fingers jammed inside of herself.

“You’re too small for me,” Vala moans. Six inches flaccid would have seemed so impressive only yesterday. Now, she might as well fuck herself with her pinky finger for all the good it would do.

Vala hurls herself upright and shuffles over to the side of the bed, then wobbles uneasily onto her feet.

“Sit down,” she orders the Elf. “I’m gonna try something.”

Khannah sits down on the side of the bed, and Vala orders her to stroke herself to hardness.

“Just once,” Vala moans, easing herself backwards until Khannah’s tip presses between her buttocks. “It won’t mean anything.”

“You have a husband,” says Khannah.

Of all the times to be reminded of that fact. Why now, when she needs this sinful pleasure more than ever?

“I’ll let him use you to. You’d do that, wouldn’t you? If I ordered you to?”

The pressure at Vala’s anus builds until it can resist no more, and the head of Khannah’s cock shoots inside. Pain surges through her rear, and she screams. Anguish and ecstasy wash away the fires of frustration, and the scream turns into a satisfied moan.

“No.” Vala brushes away Khannah’s hands when the Elf tries to slow her attempts to fuck herself onto her pole. “I need it to hurt.”
Charal lays on an examination table in a far-off room inside Moradys’ complex, a place filled with equipment far too vicious-looking to be medical in nature. These devices were made to hurt, not heal. The bald, leather-clad Elf attending to your wife assures you that she’s doing all she can for her, as per Moradys’ orders, but that the knife she was stabbed with carried a nanopoison which actively resists any attempts to cure it.

The formless, shifting disease reappears in a new form the moment it’s eradicated, leaving this suspicious-looking ‘doctor’ the task of putting out an unending series of new fires.

“Can she hear me?” you ask the ‘Shaper’, as she called herself.

“It is in a *coma*,” the Shaper hisses through her breathing apparatus.

You ignore her spiteful answer and lean over Charal’s face to brush aside her wavy locks of hair.

“I’ll find our daughter, and I’ll find a way to fix you,” you whisper. Just before standing back up, you mutter a hurried ‘I love you’, which lacks the depth of passion the same declaration to Moradys had carried. If only this woman were conscious, you tell yourself. Then you could make her more than a stranger.

A dull hum reverberates through the room, making the metal wall panels rattle against each other. The Shaper looks just as confused as you, and you quickly realize that the growing noise is coming from outside the room. You throw open the medical room door, step out into the hall, and walk towards the source of the noise, moving faster as the strength of the vibrations grow.

You come to a doorway opening out into the courtyard, and stop just inside the shadowed exit. A Dark Elf hovercraft floats above the courtyard, making small circles in the sky over the two figures standing near the main doorway. Ribara, armored in red plating covered in spikes, stands a few dozen feet away from Moradys, who is still clad in a nightgown and slippers. At least twenty human slaves watch them from covered walkways and balconies overlooking the courtyard.

“Does it look like he’s here?” Moradys shouts over the hum of repulsor lifts overhead. She gestures at the mess of Elven body parts surrounding the fountain. “My slave’s daughter was kidnapped as well! Clearly, someone wants to collect the whole set.”

“Lies!” cries Ribara. She stomps her boot on the stone to punctuate her accusation, and whips her chainsword through the dust-strewn air. “You lied when you said it was mine, and you are lying now.”

It takes you a moment to realize that you’re ‘it’. Yet another reason you’re glad to have fled Ribara’s hellish arena.

“Consult my home’s security recordings if you like. You can watch that Harlequin cut my ‘guards’ to ribbons.”

Ribara’s tight expression relaxes with realization, and she mutters something to herself. She’s too far away for you to hear it.
“Yes, a Harlequin,” says Moradys. “Revenge for her dead comrades, I assume. You should remember that fiasco well. You and your idiot confederates arranged it, after all.”

Throughout the conversation, the crowd of slaves grows close enough to the pair that even the arguing Elves take notice. They seem especially interested in the piles of corpses the recent intruder left behind.

Moradys turns her attention to the onlookers and sweeps a hand across the lot of them. “Did I ask for an audience? Get back to work!”

The slaves exchange worried looks. A few retreat at the sound of her voice, but most only waver a bit.

“There are no guards!” a man shouts to her.

Moradys searches for the slave who addressed her, but fails to find him in the dark corners of the courtyard.

“Can you not scrub the shit from toilets without being watched?” she shouts to the assembled crowd. “Go!”

Her words echo from one towering spire to the other, but not a single soul flees from them.

“She was fucked by her human pet!” shouts a woman from one of the balconies. “I saw it with my own eyes!”

Moradys shrieks in anger and hurls a bolt of violet energy at the woman. It sputters out well before it reaches her, and merely singes the roof tiles just below the slave.

None of the slaves are frighten by Moradys’ pitiful attack.

“You are not looking so strong, mother.” Ribara bares her teeth in a frightening smirk. “When is the last time you offered your patron a sacrifice?”

Moradys scans the manor grounds with an anxious look on her face, but she doesn’t seem interested in the slaves. Maybe she’s looking for you.

“My affairs are my business,” she says.

“But my *house’s* affairs are *my* business, mother.”

Moradys glowers at her. “This is not your house, and I am *not* your mother.”

The sharp reproach shocks you, but Ribara hardly seems affected at all. On the contrary, she looks quite satisfied with herself at having provoked an emotional outburst. This must be territory they’ve already tread together in a hundred past arguments.

Ribara tilts her head back in a display of noble snobbishness that nearly outmatched Moradys. “At the arena, you said I was your daughter. If you lied about that, it makes me wonder what else you might lie about. Giving me back my slave, maybe.”

You need to scare the slaves, just enough to keep Moradys looking strong so that she’s in a position to help you find your daughter. Once that’s done, the two of you can have a talk about the topic of keeping slaves in your home.

“She’s a monster,” you mutter to yourself, pressing your fingertips to your temples and staring
intently on Moradys. Behind that haughty glare and sharp tongue lurks a gentle soul, but these other people don’t know that. You focus on the parts they *do* know, building up a monolithically dominating personage within your mind that seeks to control what it can and tear apart what it can’t. The dictatorial Elf you craft is so convincing a character that you nearly find yourself believing it.

“Forgive me, Mistress!” screams the woman on the balcony. She falls to her knees and digs her fingers into her right eye socket, and with a blood-curdling scream rips her eye from its optic cord in a spray of blood and viscera.

“Please, forgive me!” she cries again, tossing the eye onto the sloped roof below her so that it rolls down into the courtyard. A second slave bashes his skull open against a wall, and a third rushes towards the corpse of a guard to grab one of their pistols. He tries to shoot himself in between his eyes, but the biometric lock shocks him into unconsciousness before he can pull the trigger. The remaining slaves flee inside in a fit of horrified shrieking.

“You frighten the Mon-keighs with an echo of the power you once had,” cries Ribara. “It makes me wonder if I should have taken your House when I had the chance. You could have died at your peak.”

Moradys takes a few hesitant steps back as Ribara twirls her blade about with an almost casual whimsy. The smaller Elf’s fear isn’t hard to understand. Ribara had been a terrifying enough presence when she was trying her damndest to heap affection on you. Now she’s clad in full armor, making light of murder and usurpation while a squad of her allies hovers just overhead.

If Moradys can’t cow Ribara into submission, then you need to figure out something that can. What could possibly scare a seven-foot tall monstrosity of a woman whose every glare screams violence?

The answer comes in the form of a sharp whistle overhead that grows louder and louder until you can hear nothing else. A blue mass of teardrop-shaped metal hurtles downward past Ribara’s skiff and smashes into the fountain at the center of the courtyard, bringing the standoff to an explosive conclusion.

All six side panels drop down like ramps and crash onto the stone. A storm of bullets erupts from the cloud of dust and water, colliding with Moradys just as she throws up a protective energy shield.

An enormous figure of blue armor and gold trim charges down one of the ramps, still firing his cannon-sized pistol, then drops his shoulder and collides with Moradys. Her shield shatters like glass and she’s thrown through the wall of the manor, splitting the joints in between metal panels as if someone has taken a wrecking ball to them.

“Mother!” Ribara cries out, readying her sword and racing after the newcomer. He turns his pistol on her and opens fire, riddling her with dozens of bullets in the span of a few seconds. Ribara is thrown backwards by the force of the shells, and leaves a bloody smear on the ground where she slides. Her attacker turns again and storms through the manor’s front door, shredding the huge slabs of carved wood like tissue paper.

Ribara stumbles to her feet and staggers towards her ship, which has began to set down on the far side of the courtyard near the gardens. More whistles sound out - further away this time - and you spot more drop pods far off in the distance. Each thunderous crash heralds one of the soldier-bearing vehicles impacting the plateaus you spotted on your way to Moradys’ manor.

While the Elves on the skiff busy themselves dragging their bloodied leader up onto the deck of their ship, you race through the shadowed halls surrounding the courtyard and follow the invader into the entrance hall. The arched corridor to your right is destroyed, and more rumbles pass through the
building as the man cuts a swathe of destruction through the compound.

A sharp breath of air to your left, almost too quiet to hear over the scream of drop pods just outside. Moradys lays on the left side of the hallway, a knife-edged chunk of metal spearing her through the sternum. Her nightgown is torn to shreds and every inch of her is smeared with blood. She grips the metal jutting from her chest with blood-soaked hands, trying desperately to prevent herself from slipping further down on the widening blade. You run over, drop down at her side, and place your hands under her back to support her.

Moradys turns her head to you and tries to speak, but can only manage a bloody gurgle. Her eyes are wide with the primal fear of someone who stands a hair’s breadth from death’s yawning void.

“Hold on!” You slide one arm under her so that you can safely bring your other hand to her splintered rib cage. “I-I’ll do it again! Just hold on-“

Moradys’ eyes go even wider and she shakes her head frantically from side to side. With great effort she brings a trembling hand up to the side of your head. Tears well in your eyes. Why will she not let you risk the dangers of the Warp to save her? What damnation could possibly be greater than losing your wife, knowing that you could have done something more?

Her fingertips touch your left temple. Electricity shoots through your skull, and the tears stop. You see the world through eyes both strange and familiar. You’re being carried through the very hall you stand in now, then down a series of labyrinthine corridors and staircases. You see Ribara’s face, cold and uncaring. A door opens, and on the other side waits a large pool of shimmering green water. Moradys stands on the other side, a cruel smile on her face. Whatever violence is happening here, she celebrates it.

You’re forced down onto your knees beside the pool, and you see your own bruised face reflected in its roiling waters. Ribara’s face joins yours in the reflection, and a knife slides across your throat. Blood spills into the pool, and you’re thrown in with it.

You die.

After the blackness of oblivion rushes in, you return to reality. Moradys stares up at you, terrified and hopeful, gurgling wordlessly as you hold her in your arms. Her hand falls away from your head and she tries to touch you again, but you recoil in disgust. The memories you just saw made little sense without greater context, but the feelings that came with them are so powerful that they’re impossible to ignore.

You had hated this woman more than anyone or anything in existence. What’s more, you hated the way she looked at you - not like a man or even a slave, but like cattle.

Vala’s chest heaves with uneven breaths. Her arms and legs lay motionless in the bed, her body exhausted from hours of fucking in every position imaginable. Elven semen oozes from her ass and pussy, and more of the thick jizz sits heavy in her stomach. She feels exhausted, sick, disgusted... and satisfied beyond measure. Khannah lays next to her, just as nude as Vala herself. Vala holds the
Harlequin’s spent cock in one hand, appreciating the soft warmth of it.

“Prophet,” says Khannah. “We need to speak about what will come next.” Her hand slides across Vala’s cum-swollen belly and caresses it. “For us to speak to the spirit that resides within you—”

Vala hisses and slaps away her hand. Ever since coming to the Harlequin’s hidden sanctuary, the Elf has done nothing but press her for details on the ‘god’ that has supposedly latched onto Vala. Now, she threatens to cut short the animal rutting Vala needs to keep herself from wanting to slit her own wrists. Khannah has gathered a small army in the halls of this dark fortress, and most of the Elves have been more than willing to couple with a human they believe carries the spirit of the god they hope to curry favor with.

“Later,” snaps Vala. “I want to sleep.”

Khannah tilts her head towards Vala, who returns her look with a sharp glare of her own. “I’m your prophet, aren’t I? You’ll talk to your god when I’m fucking ready!”

It won’t be much longer until Khannah tired of Vala putting off any sort of productive work, but she can’t bring herself to care. Everything has become an obstacle to carnal pleasure, a dull interlude between orgasms. Even the sleepiness gripping her has become a hated enemy. Maybe she can find someone to fuck her in her dreams.

Khannah rolls onto her side and sits upright on the edge of the bed. Vala grabs her graying braid of hair and yanks back on it, drawing a furious shout from the Elf.

“Either fuck me or get out,” says Vala.

The Harlequin shoots to her feet and cocks back her hand as if to slap Vala. She prays that she does. Even the roughest fucking has become dull, and she needs violence to sharpen the edge. Hands around her throat or a fist pounding into her back turns any climax into a scream-inducing experience.

After a few moments, Khannah reluctantly drops her fist, and Vala coos in mocking disappointment. Khannah picks her red robe up from the chair she had draped it over and gets dressed, then opens the doors past the foot of the bed and slips from the room.

As Vala watches the Elf leave, she spots another figure. Orina peers in through the gap between the doors, her blue eyes glittering with an uncanny intelligence.

“Out!” Vala grabs the covers and pulls them over her cum-stained nethers. Orina races off, and Vala waits until the patter of feet disappears to drop her head back down to the bed. She knows she should be protecting the girl - for Orin, if nothing else - but she can’t work up the energy to give two shits about the little freak while she herself is plagued by constant sexual need. When she lay writhing under half a dozen Elves, she forgot that she even *had* a husband.

But no matter how much her body strayed, her mind will remain loyal - which is more than she can say for Orin.

Out of all of Orin’s betrayals, it’s his apparent relationship with Ribara that angers and confuses her the most. Moradys is frighteningly beautiful and Charal has a deceptive innocence that sucks men in, but Ribara? She might as well be a man with tits and makeup.

Maybe that was what appealed to him. Maybe he *enjoyed* squirming under Ribara’s sweaty bulk with her cock buried in his ass. The image makes Vala want to puke, but she can’t stop playing it over and over in her head, each time adding in new sights and sounds. Her hand travels to her
nethers and she begins fingering herself, wondering what it would feel like to be brutalized by such an Elf. Is her cock as oversized as the rest of her, she wonders?

The daydream shifts, and Vala takes the place of her husband, moaning and groaning while an inhumanly large member pounds away at the deepest recesses of her womanhood. Ribara speeds up, her thrusts becoming shallow, then shouts in triumphant ecstasy as hot seed spews forth from her cock, flooding Vala’s womb until it can hold no more.

“Oh, fuck...” Vala moans, letting her eyes droop closed as Ribara pushes herself up. The Elf’s cock remains in her pussy, keeping her seed packed inside like a cork in a bottle.

“Better than your limp-dick husband, isn’t it?” says the woman looming above her. The voice is all wrong. It’s not the snapping baritone of Ribara, but the full-throated depth of an opera singer.

Vals opens her eyes to find a very different - and a very *human* - face staring down at her. The woman has long brunette hair tied back in a loose braid, and purple eyes mottled with flecks of violet. Her skin is freckled and beautiful in its imperfection... until Vala’s eyes travel down to the woman’s collarbones.

Everything below her neck is marked by reddened sores and oozing pustules that reek of gangrenous flesh. Her entire body, which was undoubtedly once beautiful, crawls with pestilence and disease. Even her nipple piercings have been claimed by decay in the form of rust, which has chafed against her flesh until it began to bleed.

Most horrific of all her bodily abirrations is the fist-sized violet eye seated where her bellybutton should be.

With a horrified shriek, Vala shoves the women away from her and scurries backwards across the bed. The woman’s cock slides out of Vala’s pussy, spilling diseased-looking seed as it swings between her legs. The entire length is covered in the same rashes and pustules that mark the rest of her body, and her semen smells so strongly of rot and decay that Vala can contain her roiling stomach no more. She rolls onto her side and retches until vomit pours down her chin. More semen comes up than anything else - it’s the only thing she’s eaten that day, after all.

“Had your fill already, have you?” The leperous shemale grins and backs away from the bed with an obscene swagger. Her flaccid cock slaps her thighs, trailing a string of green-tinted cum from the inflamed head. The eye in her stomach darts about as if it were a monstrously alien entity wearing a human-shaped mask of diseased flesh.

“What is this?” cries Vala as she tries in vain to scoop the diseased seed from her cunt. The dream has become a nightmare she cannot awake from, no matter how much her mind screams against the sickening taint basting her insides.

“I am *she*,” says the woman. The dark walls of the bedroom rust and crumble to a fine powder, revealing a turbulent sea of violet energy on all sides. A velvet-lined lounge sofa rises up from the floor behind the woman. She crawls onto it with a grace ill-fitting someone wracked by such sickness, allowing her enormous cock to dangle over the edge of the sofa as she smiles at Vala with her head propped on one hand. “Don’t give me that daft look - you know me well. Every time you cry out in ecstasy, you call my name. Each load you take on your breasts is a tribute laid on my altar.”

She runs her hand across her breasts, down her abdomen, and over her dangling shaft. “I am the orgy without end. The climax that will *never* come.”
Vala screams in disgusted anguish and tears out clumps of hair. “I want to wake up! I can’t stand feeling like this! Make it stop!”

The woman makes a sound of mocking comfort, and her third eye narrows. “You aren’t enjoying my gift?”

“Your *gift*?” Vala grabs a pillow and throws it at the woman, but it turns to dust before reaching her. “Why would you do this to me? Fucking demon!”

The woman laughs, and even the fleshy eyelids on either side of her abdomen squint with full-bodied mirth. “A demon, yes! But it wasn’t I who bestowed my blessing on you. That was the work of one of my worshippers.”

“Your worshipper?” Vala’s mouth opens in recognition. “Moradys? It was, wasn’t it!”

She cracks a lopsided smile, the sort whores give to men they want to both tease and titillate. “Once my favorite, but she’s lost her edge. You, on the other hand...”

The woman drags her hand down her shaft, pumping out a stream of precum that she flicks at Vala. It lands on the bed in front of her and burns right through the covers like acid. “I quite like you.”

Another sobbing scream escapes Vala’s throat. She’s so sick of this horrifying madness. This place has sunk its claws so deep into her flesh that she can no longer conceive of escape from the endless degradation that threatens to unravel the very fabric of her being.

“I want to go home!” she cries, like a child seeking her mother. “Just let me go!”

“You *can* go home!” the woman soothes her. “You can even take your husband with you!”

Vala looks up from her folded knees. “Why would you want that?”

The woman’s demeanor darkens. Her lips curl down, the pupil of her eye dilates, and lightning cracks the sea of energy seething around the wall-less bedroom.

“Because this is *my* world,” the woman bellows. Her voice seems to come from every corner of existence at once, and Vala winces against the force of her declaration. “A parasite has latched onto that man of yours, and given it power. I want him out of my home, or dead. I don’t particularly care which way you do it.”

“W-what?” Vala stammers, struggling to think and speak with the demon’s echo still rattling inside her skull. “I’m not going to *kill* him!”

The woman sighs, but her smile and glittering eyes speak of more than disappointment. “I know you won’t. But I know someone who would *love* to cut off his cock and choke him with it.”

Vala is about to ask ‘who’, but stops short of doing so when she finally remembers why this woman looks so familiar. The painted statue of the Dark Elves’ Goddess contained within Adrubal’s home had looked quite different from the diseased whore lounging on the couch before Vala now, but there was no mistaking that third eye.

“Oh, yes!” says the demon, sensing Vala’s realization. “I’m sure you two will have plenty to talk about. And you *will* be able to talk to her.”

“Please, no!” cries Vala, thrusting her joined hands up at the heavens. She begs over and over to be woken up, but the only answer comes in the form of lyrical laughter from her tormentor.
“That little bird thinks it can beat me by hiding and plotting. As if I’m new to this game!”

The bloody turbulence of the Warp floods into the room, bathing everything in a sea of fire that burns Vala until she can no longer manage to scream. A flash of light fills her vision, then blackness, silence, and the chill of death.

“All I had to do was plant one little idea,” comes the demon’s voice through the void. “The rest will follow.”

Vala awakens. A sensation of scorching liquid floods her throat, and she opens her eyes to see Khannah staring down at her, clad in the same red robe she had left in. In her hand is a small vial, the dark brown contents of which she pours down Vala’s throat while holding her nose shut.

Vala coughs and sputters, but in the end can do nothing but choke down the horrifying mixture. It tastes like poison.

“Don’t fight it,” Khannah snaps. “It’s done. She is inside of you.”

Vala rolls off of the bed, taking the covers with her and collapsing in a bundle on the tiled floor. “What was that? What did you make me drink?”

Khannah makes no attempt to corner Vala, and seems content to merely watch her thrash around. Whatever the Elf did to her is as good as done.

“What did you do?” gasps Vala. The fire in her throat spreads first into her belly, then works its way through her veins and snakes it’s tendrils into her brain.

“The Genestealer is a most magnificent creature.” Khannah slowly approaches Vala and kneels down in front of her as she claws at her throbbing skull. “When it eats a brain - or is fed one - it produces a secretion that contains the person’s personality and memories. Everything they were, contained in a thimble.”

She tilts Vala’s head up by her chin and stares into her eyes, searching for something deep within them.

“Can you hear me?” Khannah swallows - almost nervously - and grips Vala’s chin tighter. “Do you remember me?”

The scourging fire working its way through the folds of Vala’s brain reaches a fever pitch. A new - yet familiar - voice appears in her mind, screaming in anguish alongside Vala’s own internal suffering. It demands to know where it is, and why it was brought back.

“I know you’re in there.” Khannah moves her hand from chin to cheek and strokes her softly. “I can feel you.”

You batter down the ownerless resentment brewing in your heart, roll onto the flats of your feet, and lift. Moradys opens her mouth to scream bloody murder, but can only manage a few wet coughs that
shower your face in blood. Once the shard of metal impaling her slides free, you hoist her more firmly in your arms and began walking the path she showed you.

All through the winding paths of corridors, Moradys stares at you with terrified eyes and digs her nails into your flesh until she’s cut you bloody, as if that’s the only thing that will stop you from dropping her. The feelings that accompanied the vision she wrenched from the pit of your memory were so powerful that you can scarcely bear to look her in the eye.

You nearly slip down a flight of stone stairs, and Moradys clutches you tighter while burying her face into your chest. A perverse sense of triumph colors the anger still clinging to you - that this woman who caused you such monumental pain should now turn to you as her savior.

The second you open the door to the final room and step through, Moradys thrashes free of your arms and collapses onto the floor, where she tries desperately to claw her way to the effervescent pool at the center. Her broken ribs scrape horribly on the stone, and she leaves a trail of crimson behind her nude form. You can’t fathom how she’s still living - let alone moving - and she glances back at you in realization that she jumped the gun in trying to make her own way to the pool still some twenty-odd feet away.

You pick her up, grimacing against the feeling of her nails sinking into your shoulders, and carry her into the waters. They warm you, then itch, then burn. An unknown compulsion has you lowering Moradys’ entire body under the water, a motion she makes no attempt to fight. Blood flows out from the gaping wounds on her chest and back, threatening to cloud the green fluid completely.

Then, the flow reverses. Her blood doesn’t seem to dissipate so much as be sucked right back into her body. Splintered ribs reassemble, shredded muscle fibers thread over bone, and flawless ivory skin grows over what was once a wound that ran from neck to sternum.

Two orange eyes flicker with renewed life, and Moradys shoots up from underwater like a lean sea predator breaching the waterline. Her head swivels about madly, and it seems to take her a moment to re-process her surroundings.

After a few hesitant steps forward her knees buckle, and she collapses onto your chest while throwing her arms about your neck.

“I don’t want to die!” she sobs. “Never let me die!”

Her unnerving strength, once irresistible, has been rendered a shadow of what it once was by her devastating injuries and subsequent rejuvenation. You unravel her trembling arms and force her away, like plucking an insect from a branch.

“Stay here,” you tell her. “I’m going to Charal.”

The quakes rocking the manor have stopped, something you find strangely worrying. Whatever your attacker’s reason for coming here, it had nothing to do with Moradys or Ribara. He lost interest in the two Elves the moment they were out of the fight.

“Wait!” Moradys cries after you as you stagger soaking-wet from the pool. She screams and screeches and sobs like a child throwing a fit, a spectacle which only hastens your departure. You race back through the halls to the main hall upstairs, then to the other side of the compound, where you had left Charal unconscious on a bed in what passes for a medical room here.

A route which, to your growing horror, overlaps perfectly with the swathe of destruction the invader cut through Moradys’ home.
Charal’s room is a wreck. The Shaper is dead, ripped in two at the waist and flung to either side of the room. Half of the far wall is utterly destroyed, and the wind whips at you through the open-air gap. The soldier is nowhere to be seen, and Charal’s bed is empty. Your sole comfort amidst the heart-wrenching horror of her abduction is your realization that the blood-filtration machine next to her bed was not destroyed, but *taken*. That’s not the action of a madman who only has murder on the mind.

You tear yourself away from the vacant room and sprint back through the manor, moving even faster than before with the twin energies of panic and fury.

Back in the room with the pit, Moradys sits huddled in a corner near the door. Upon taking notice of you, she scampers over and throws herself onto you, pressing her hardened nipples and soft cock into you while leaning her forehead against yours.

“Don’t leave me again!” She lightly pounds her head against yours as tears stream from her closed eyes. “Why would-“

You grab her by the wrists and force her back before her shuddering warmth can slacken your righteous anger. “This happened to me, didn’t it?” You stagger get towards the pool so that you’re both looking at it. “Why didn’t you tell me I could remember?” Tears well in your eyes at the same moment Moradys opens hers. “Why did I hate you so much?”

Moradys’ eyes travel everywhere except to yours. She tries to hug you tight, but you push her back and roar your questions at her again.

“You didn’t! You loved me!” wretched sobs wrack her body, and she clutches at your arms with a sizable fraction of her former strength.

“Then why hide my own *memories* from me?” You shake her back and forth like an inconsolable infant, but it only makes her more frantic. “Show me everything! I want to see it all!”

“I can’t! You’ll hate me, and then you’ll let me die.”

You stare at her in dumbfounded silence, and she takes the opportunity to draw close to you like a spider wrapping around its prey. Tears roll down your neck where she buries her face, and you hold her by the small of her back without any real understanding of why you show her such comfort.

“I promise I’ll give you everything that was yours” she whispers hoarsely. “Just give me time. Please, Orin. You don’t need this burden now.”

A love-slave, kidnapped by a Harlequin of House Tenebrim. A holocall from that same Harlequin, bidding her come to their hidden temple to discuss matters of rapturous importance. Ribara would have thought it a trap concocted by her mother, had she not seen the security footage of the massacre herself.

The Harlequin had absconded with her slave’s wife and child, shortly after the former had been
raped into a whimpering mess by Moradys’ guards. Ribara had rewatched the footage more than a few times on the ride over, and the humor she derived from that helped to numb the pain of the bolter shells that had pierced her armor.

The sudden arrival of a Mon-keigh frigate bearing armed Astartes was an unexpected development, but not her problem. Why should she, a woman denied her rightful inheritance, bother herself with an attack on Cummragh’s Houses? Let the likes of mother handle the invaders.

“Enough!” A nude Ribara waves away the pair of Wych-aspirants tending to her wounds and picks up the tablet computer on the nightstand beside her bed. The two Elves beside her bow and head back to the top deck of the hovercraft while Ribara resumes playing the scene of Vala’s rape.

There’s no sound to accompany the guard forcing her arm into Vala’s cunt, but the image is clear enough for Ribara to fill in the gaps. The Mon-keigh’s screams. The smell of blood and fluids and Cummragh’s poisonous air.

“Mon-keigh slut...”

Ribara slides her hand down to the head of her flaccid cock and begins stroking it. By the time the guard in the video forced her second fist into Vala, Ribara is hard as a rock and leaking precum like a faucet. Vala thrashes and arches her back against the assault on her insides as her face distorts into a confused mixture of pleasure and pain.

It is a look that causes her both fury and ecstasy. The first time she had seen it had been on the face of one of mother’s lovers, a Dark Elf whom Ribara has been courting for some time before the two women ever met.

Perhaps Ribara had been too delicate in her advances - or perhaps mother would have stolen her no matter what. Whatever the case, she had come across the two women grinding against each other amidst crumpled sheets, and fled from the sight of mother’s malevolent smile.

To her shame, she had masturbated to the memory for weeks afterwards. To her far *greater* shame, that first night alone in bed had seen her crying until her sheets were soaked.

The capacity for love was a weakness she thought had been scarred over by hurt - until she met *it*. He understood her like no one else could. He made her *feel* like no one else did. For the first time in memory, thoughts other than seething resentment and frustration were born from the turmoil of her inner self. The warring voices of Drukhari and Mon-keigh within her mind no longer seem such unbearable companions.

One of the guards in the video shoves Vala’s head into the fountain and holds her there while she flails about. The fact that someone could love something so weak isn’t what disgusts her. After all, she herself loves a slave who nearly died the first time they made love. What is disgusting is that he could continue to love a woman who had been turned into a plaything by another Elf.

The image of Orin running into Vala’s arms comes unbidden to her mind, and she strokes herself faster while focusing more intently on the tablet propped up on her abdomen. She imagines herself in place of the Elves, dragging Vala in front of Orin and showing him in no uncertain terms just how far into the depths of depravity a whore can be made to fall. She enters her with no preparation, tears up her insides, splits open her cervix, and leaves her a bloody ruin who is too drugged and broken to
do anything but beg for more terrible sensation.

Ribara lets out a shuddering moan. The first wave of orgasmic pleasure washes over her, and a globule of white semen beads on her piss slit. She takes her hand away from her cock and lets it slap against her belly, unwilling to let the fantasy end so soon.

She closes her eyes. Orin watches, horrified, as the last light of human intelligence fades from the eyes of his former wife. Then, he turns to his Mistress. For a moment, he is angry for what’s been done to the woman he thought he loved.

Then, he looks into Ribara’s eyes and sees what lays in the depths of her soul. A deeper love, made secure by the knowledge that Ribara will never let him go, and that she cannot be broken - not even by him. That is the moment where romance dies. When one lover shows weakness to another, they begin to wonder just how many others they might become weak for.

“Lady Ribara,” comes a voice through the door. “Ten minutes until we arrive.”

She doesn’t bother responding. The responsibilities of caste and cult have become tiresome anchors rather than empowering booms. Posturing and manipulation are constant facts of life within Drukhari society, and they only become more important as one rises.

It is a game Ribara has grown tired of, but she has become a better player than even she expected. Her thoughts may move a bit slower than others, but they do so with an inexorable purpose. Once she chooses a course of action, she will not be swayed from it.

*I couldn’t kill mother.*

Ribara realizes her cock has grown limp while she lay in thought, and the video she watched to drive her arousal has passed the point of anything interesting happening. She tosses aside the tablet and resumes stroking, this time mentally replaying the events in what is now *her* arena. Driving a spear through mother’s gut was an experience she would not soon forget.

For as long as she could remember she had dreamed about fucking her, but had never found a way to pursue the matter. Incest is a rare taboo in Drukhari society - the mark of lower castes, who are forced to turn to family to indulge their ravenous passions. Watching mother writhe and scream on the end of a spear had been a worthy substitute.

Ribara’s white-knuckled stroking brings her ruined orgasm back tenfold, and she shoots her load over her muscles abdomen and breasts in a series of jaw-clenching grunts.

Despite the confused nature of the thoughts that brought her to orgasm, the moment of climax produces a moment of clarity that washes away all the detritus that accumulated in her mind. None of those other women matter anymore. Orin does not remember them, and the only one who could conceivably lay claim to him already renounced her rights. He is hers, body and soul.

*So why did he leave?*
Two souls in one body.

It is the secret desire of every lover - to possess someone so totally that they can never leave or stray. Their thoughts are your thoughts, and your desires are their desires. It is an experience both religious and erotic in its ecstasy, a union that creates something more than the sum of its parts. Love is no longer simply shared, but *lived*.

As is the hatred.

Vala rocks back and forth in the center of her borrowed bed, cradling her head between her knees and grinding her knuckles across her skull in a futile effort to silence the tearful wailing raging across her mind like a storm. Someone lives within her, now - someone who doesn’t want to be there. Khannah paces about the edge of the room, flitting in and out of the shadows as she watches the two women tear themselves apart.

“Why did you do it?” cries Adrubal. The voice comes from Vala’s own lips, but she can scarcely recognize it as her own. Aside from the inhuman resonance inherent to the physiology of Dark Elves, the voice is unmistakably the smooth deepness of Vala’s once-lover.

“You were tryin’ to kill my husband,” Vala shouts. “What was I supposed to do?”

The shattered consciousness that haunts the folds of her brain shudders in righteous anger. “You were supposed to love *me*! To only think of *me*! Instead you lied, and you plotted, and you betrayed me! Liar! Traitor! Murderer!”

Vala’s commandeered vocal chords can no longer keep up with the speed of the mad ranting being spewed at her, and it continues as a screeching echo inside her skull. She begs Adrubal to stop, pulling out clumps of hair and raking her fingernails across her skull until her scalp is wet with blood.

“I’m sorry!” she sobs. “I didn’t know what else to do!”

The sickening whirlwind of rushing thoughts comes to a standstill, but the respite comes as no relief. Rather, it feels as if Vala has come to the eye of a storm that grows more powerful with each moment.

“Did you ever love me?” says Adrubal. She speaks in a low growl, giving Vala’s aching throat a desperately-needed break.

“Yes!” she sobs. “I did!”

A roar of venomous accusations flies at her from every direction - far too many to be spoken. It becomes impossible to distinguish her own sickening guilt from the anger being heaped upon her by the Elf who enslaved her, beat her, raped her… and loved her.

“I’m not lying!” says Vala. “I loved you! I *love* you!”

The silence returns, and for a few moments Vala can hear the soft tap of Khannah’s boots to her left. Only the occasional flash of intense pain in her skull lets her know that something is very, very wrong. To have one’s mind penetrated by alien thoughts too hot and fast to grab hold of is a violation like none other, but for those same thoughts to become indistinguishable from one’s own is a far more disturbing experience.

Vala thinks about her husband - or rather, the thoughts come to her of their own volition. Only the
The hateful nature of their contents allows her to distinguish them as belonging to what remains of Adrubal. The two women have ceased speaking, and instead communicate on a far more primal level, as lovers do when they stare into each other’s eyes. Ideas and desires meld and split, clash and mate, until there is a single thread of agreement running through a mind that has finally grown quiet.

“Khannah,” Vala whispers to the Harlequin lurking in the distance. The Elf approaches quickly, nearly diving down onto her knees when she reaches the side of the bed.

“Adrubal? Is that you?” Khannah dips her head down to peer into Vala’s eyes, as if measuring the degree to which her former comrade has assumed control of a body at war with itself.

Vala nods without willing it. Khannah’s frigid expression cracks with warm relief. She takes her hand, allowing Vala to pull her up onto the bed, where Khannah lays down with her head atop Vala’s thighs. The human woman possesses nowhere near the strength to handle the lanky Elf the way Adrubal once did, but Khannah makes a convincing show of it.

A feeling of comfortable vulnerability washes over Vala, something she hadn’t experienced the other times she had felt the Elf’s hands tracing the contours of her body. These are Adrubal’s cherished memories being stoked, like the coals of a near-dead fire.

“I feared your soul was lost to the Goddess,” says Khannah.

Vala strokes her braided, graying hair. “I would claw my way back from the deepest oblivion to touch you again.”

A lie of omission. The heaviness of Vala’s heart and the soft tingle of her scalp tells her that Adrubal means what she says, but the speed at which the Elf shunts her thoughts past Vala’s mind tells the latter that there’s something she wants neither her nor Khannah knowing. Perhaps the fact that she never escaped the clutches of the demon she sold her soul to.

“We can save our souls,” Khannah whispers. “I found a way.”

Vala slides a hand under Khannah’s cheek, bidding her to look upward. “As do I.”

A palpable tension releases from Khannah, and a long sigh of relief escapes her lips. She grows heavier in Vala’s lap as she relaxes, allowing her eyes to fall closed. “I don’t know what to do next.”

“I do,” says Vala. She has been watching the two woman as if she were a mere observer, and is now seized by a renewed need to take control. Yet when she does, she is surprised to find that there is no rancor remaining between her and Adrubal. They are of one mind.

“Bring me the Psyker,” she says.

Khannah tilts her head up and fixes her with a confused look. “Why?”

Vala doesn’t respond. Not out of any sense of secrecy or internal disagreement, but because for once, she is no longer certain.
The Night That Never Ends

Recovering your memories - your very sense of self - is important, but the vitality of that cause dwindles beneath the weight of Moradys’ ceaseless wailing. You relent, agreeing to defer that task for the time being, and her tear-stained face resumes its former cold placidity. The speed at which transitions from panicked despair to emotionless calculation is frightening - as if her despair were a mere mask she put on for a stage performance.

“You don’t need your memories, because I know exactly who took her.” Moradys puts her arms on your shoulders and steps back so that her wet breasts are no longer pressed into your chest.

“The Harlequin?” you ask her, echoing the strange name you heard her utter when speaking with Ribara.

“No, her accomplice. A human I once owned-“ She affects a cough and swallows. “A human who once served me. She is infatuated with you.”

“She kidnapped my daughter because she’s in love with me?”

Moradys frowns and clutches the meat of your shoulders with her fingertips. “That isn’t love. How could someone who truly loves you do such a thing?”

Her rebuke is sharper than you expected, even if her point is valid. You start to ask who this woman is, and why she became so obsessed with you as to resort to such monstrous acts, but your questions evaporate as the pointlessness of it all strikes you. Retracing the path of this woman’s descent into perilous obsession won’t help bring your daughter back, nor will it rescue your wife and heal her.

“How do we find her?” you ask Moradys.

“We don’t. My servants do.”

You scoff and start to blurt out a frustrated retort, but Moradys is quick to continue.

“What will you do? Scour a city you’ve hardly stepped foot in? You’ll be a blind retard fumbling about in the dark.” Moradys purses her lips and shakes her head. “I will set my agents to the task, and they will run those women down. Then we will confront them.”

Everything she says makes sense, but the idea of resting on your laurels has you screwing up your face to such a degree that you feel the ache of tiny muscles quivering with frustration. The family you can’t remember has been fractured, and you shudder at the thought of remembering your past before you’ve reclaimed those who made it important. Perhaps that is why Moradys was so reluctant to return your memories. She knew the grief they would bring you, and foresaw how crippling they would be in light of what has happened.

“Allright,” you finally say. It’s a strained acceptance, more grunted than sighed, and underlined by a dull hum that rattles the cobblestones against each other like the bones of a skeleton. The hum becomes near deafening, and you and Moradys exchange worries glances before making your way back up to the surface level. She splits from you halfway out of the manor, shouting something about clothes while you continue into the central courtyard.

The cloudy oblivion of Cummragh’s sky is no more. A massive roof of gray and brown metal hangs over you, moving with the slow yet inexorable purpose of an unstoppable machine. The behemoth is split down the middle by a narrow line of brighter metal, which cuts through the green mist like the
prow of a ship.

What seems to be little more than a whimsical metaphor becomes real as turret batteries all along the underside of the lumbering shape erupt with flashes of yellow light. Laser fire rakes the nearby plateaus like lightning from heaven, reducing mansions to rubble. Blue assault craft spew forth from the sides of the larger vessel, swooping downward with deafening howls to do battle with the poorly-armored Dark Elf skiffs trying in vain to protect their Mistresses’ homes.

It is a slaughter.

Behind you, Moradys races through the broken remains of her home’s once-mighty doors, clad in overlapping plates of hideous black metal that stand in stark contrast to her angelic face. A strip of chainmail hangs between her legs, clinking against her thighs with each frantic lunge she takes towards you.

“Get me out of here!” she cries. “Protect me!”

Moradys nearly takes you off your feet when she comes crashing into you, and wraps her hands around your arm. The armor which might have made her seem a fierce warrior now only makes her desperation all the more garish. You would cringe at her pitiable state, were your manly passions not so aroused by this woman - your woman - begging for you to stand between her and the dangers of the world.

Light illuminates the heavens, and the roof of the manor splinters in a deafening explosion. You turn to face the far side of the plateau, where several docked airships await. More blinding flashes fill your vision, and when they fade the ships are gone. You still can’t hear, but you can feel the massive vessels tumbling down the side of the plateau.

Ribara lifts Vala up by her throat, and slams the naked woman against the wall. She gasps for air and claws at the muscular forearm squeezing the life from her, but can’t summon enough strength to even dig her nails into the Elf’s flesh. Khannah stands beside Ribara, plasma pistol pointed at the larger Elf’s head, eyes frantically darting to Vala as she watches the blood pool in her face.

“Release her, or I shoot.” Khannah fingers the trigger with a nervous tap-tap, betraying the anxiety she had done so well to cover up in her voice. Vala had watched from her bed as the two women entered the room, speaking coolly but professionally. Then, Ribara’s eyes had fallen on Vala, and all hell had broken loose.

“If I die, so does she. I do not need a head to break her neck.” Ribara applies a bit more pressure to Vala’s neck, careful to allow blood to keep flowing even as she crushes her windpipe. Adrubal screams at Vala to fight back, but it’s more than Ribara’s physical superiority that keeps her from resisting.

The scent of dried cum seeps through her armor like a rank perfume, making saliva pool between Vala’s swollen cheeks. She kicks her feet back and forth, occasionally making contact with the unarmored underside of Ribara’s groin, tracing the contours of her inhumanly enormous cock. The thought of being murdered by such a specimen makes her pussy ache and back arch in desperate need.
“I tire of seeing your face,” growls Ribara, spittle flying from between bared teeth. “I tire of thinking about you when everyone else has forgotten.”

Her grip eases enough for Vala to suck in a much-needed chestful of air. Vala stops kicking, and her eyes roll down from the obscene upward angle they had been fixed at during her torturous ecstasy. Ribara presses her lips together and affects a mean smirk, seeming to mistake Vala’s need to be dominated for a need to know.

“Your… ‘husband’,” Ribara sneers. She says the word as if it were a meaningless concept. “I wiped him clean - he is a blank slate. You are not even a distant memory.”

Tears well in Vala’s eyes. A shudder passes through her body. The corners of her lips turn up, and she convulses with perverse laughter. Ribara shouts in anger and slams her against the wall, demanding to know the source of the woman’s humor.

“Then where is he?” Vala stammers in between mad cackles. Ribara’s jaw drops open, and an expression that has not moved beyond cruelty and anger finally cracks with uncertainty. Within the span of a moment, Vala sees the Elf for what she is. Impatient, selfish, and unfathomably insecure. An overgrown child.

“Did you dye your hair to look like mine?” Vala takes a swipe at Ribara’s short-cropped head of red hair, only managing to brush a few strands of hair with her fingertips. “Did that work? Was he all over you?”

Ribara’s eyes glisten with tears, and she scrunches her face up in impotent fury as she tries to choke the laughter from Vala’s throat. Though she succeeds in shutting out the rasping huffs of air, she can’t stop Vala’s trembling amusement or spreading grin, and instead tosses her aside in utter repulsion.

“It was your mother, wasn’t it?” Vala croaks through her collapsed esophagus. “She tricked you, she tricked me, and she tricked him. Now you’ve got nothing.”

Murder flashes in Ribara’s eyes, and she storms towards Vala. With her pistol still trained on the Elf’s backside, Khannah steels herself in preparation to fire, but Vala holds up a hand to stop her. Adrubal screams in protest, warning Vala that she is playing with fire.

“You can get him back!” Vala continues. Her words bring Ribara to a shockingly abrupt halt. “Is that what you want? I can help you.”

Ribara puts her hands on her hips, thrusting her chest out to make herself appear as intimidating a figure as possible as she looms over the wretched-looking human below her. But despite all her posturing, Vala knows that it is she who holds the stronger hand. All she needs to do is play her cards right.

“Explain,” says Ribara.

Vala plants her hands on the floor and crawls towards the Elf on all fours, but is stopped by a heavy boot crashing down on her back, dropping her cheek-first onto the metal floor. She cries out in pain and submissive lust, drooling like the brain-addled addict she is while Ribara grinds her heel into her spine. There is nothing sane or good about the things she craves, but she is done caring. What good has sanity done her in this hell?

“It’s not enough to take his memories,” Vala moans. “You have to make them yours. It doesn’t matter if he hates you, so long as he’s always thinkin’ about you.”
The foot on her back lifts enough for Vala to push herself up onto her elbows with an aching groan, and she stares down at the floor with eyes that have gone wide with excruciating reflection. “She hit me, and cut me, and…” Her lips tremble, and tears roll down her cheeks. “…and I still love her. What the fuck is that?”

The room grows silent, with the exception of Vala’s retching sobs. Khannah stays where she is, ready to make a move at the slightest sign of murderous intent on Ribara’s part, while the larger Elf remains totally transfixed by the pitiful display taking place beneath her.

“That’s how Moradys did it, too.” Vala snaps her head to the side, and looks up at Ribara with a wild glare. “And that’s how you’ll do it. Take everything that’s his, and make it yours.”

Ribara’s eyes narrow, her lip twitches, and she draws a deliberate breath in through flaring nostrils, making a show of careful consideration.

“How?” she asks.

Vala smiles through her tears and grasps Ribara’s ankle with both hands. “Start simple. Make me yours.”

Ribara recoils, stepping away from Vala and allowing the woman to rise so that she’s sitting on folded knees. It’s hard to tell whether it’s fear, disgust, or surprise that has seized Ribara’s expression, but the change gives Vala no shortage of amusement.

“How?” Ribara asks again.

Vala suppresses a growing smile and slides a hand between her legs, feeling at her wet heat and imagining what is to come. “How do you think?” she replies.

The scene assumes an odd stillness as Ribara wavers uncertainly, but it only lasts for a few moments. Vala has given her a challenge, and Ribara can only react in one way to such a thing. She stomps towards Vala, tearing off her groin plate and tossing it to the floor before pulling Vala up by her armpit.

“Don’t be gentle,” Vala slurs as she’s dragged over to the bed. Ribara tosses her face-first onto the fluid-soaked covers, and Vala lays there breathing in the heady scent of old sex while the rest of Ribara’s armor clatters to the floor in a shower of metal. Ribara collapses atop Vala, pinning the smaller woman to the bed with her hands and knees.

The Elf reeks of sweat, sex, blood, and violence - an intoxicating array of pheromones that makes Vala quiver in pre-coital bliss. Ribara presses a hand to the back of her neck to keep her still, and with the other hand grabs her flaccid cock and begins rubbing the head against Vala’s moist lips. She uses her fingers to slip the first few inches inside, a rough intrusion that has Vala laughing with halting breaths while tears flow anew. Khannah still stands at the side of the room, waiting for any sign from her old leader that all is not well, but Adrubal’s furious protests are buried beneath the waves of unbridled lust that crash through Vala.

“Now you’ll see what it’s like,” Vala mutters into the covers she has bundled to her face.

Ribara grabs her by the hair and wrenches her head up from the bed. “What did you say?”

Vala looks back at her with a glazed expression rendered idiotic by the absurd length sinking into her fractions of an inch at a time. She groans and thrusts her buttocks up at Ribara, forcing more of her hardening cock into her depths.
“I said I need to feel you inside of me.”

Ribara grimaces. It’s not an expression of cruel desire, but of genuine disgust. She slams Vala’s face back to the bed, then plants her fists on either side of Vala and lifts herself up onto her toes with her cock angled downward. The entire world seems poised at the edge of a cliff, and Vala doesn’t dare move a muscle.

“You will not enjoy this.”

With all conventional means of escape reduced to molten heaps of scrap, you are left with the one thing you swore not to do.

Wrapping your arms around Moradys, you hold her tight and close your eyes against the blinding flashes of light reducing her home to rubble. She thrashes in your grip and grabs your throat, almost certainly screaming a warning against using your powers. But the laser barrage has rendered you deaf to her protests.

Reaching out with your mind, you search for a light in the darkness - something safe to grab hold of and pull yourself to, away from this death and destruction. You see a beacon, a scintillating kaleidoscope of blue and gold, and move towards it. Your vision fills with white, and Moradys’ hands cease their beating. All bodily sensation vanishes, and you become a being of pure thought, hurtling through a realm where time and space become nonsense words.

The light fades, and you are met with the multicolored static of closed eyelids. Two hands push off of your chest, and you open your eyes to see Moradys stumbling away from you. The two of you stand at the center of a vast hall lit by braziers of pink flame. Titanic pillars run down the aisles to your left and right, leading to a statue of that nearly touches the cathedral’s ceiling. A beautiful, horned woman of gleaming brown metal, with the lower half of a snake and four arms clutching curved daggers. She looms over you, God and Devil rolled into one, ready to cut you open and snatch the very soul from your chest.

Moradys comes to a stop beside the nearest pillar, and leans on it as she spews vomit between her spread feet.

“I told you not to do that,” she gasps in between wet retching. “I told you!”

You walk over and grab her hair so that it doesn’t become matted in the spew coating her chin. “We were about to die.”

Moradys spits out the last of her bile, wipes her face with an armored wrist, and turns to face you.

“You could have teleported us into a wall! Over a bottomless pit! Out of Cummragh entirely!”

“And I didn’t,” you fire back. You have no idea where you’ve put the two of you, but the simple fact that your surroundings aren’t crumbling to bits is a vast improvement. “This was the only place I could… grab hold of. It feels familiar.”

Moradys fixes you with a tired glare, then turns to examine your surroundings. The statue reminds you of the mosaic above Ribara’s bed, but that’s the only thing in this temple of debauched sin that is
remotely familiar - and it certainly isn’t remotely inviting.

“Yes…” Moradys’ tight expression softens, and she looks past you with vacant eyes. “I feel it, too.”

She turns to the far end of the hall and walks towards the statue. You follow, casting weary glances at the shadows flickering in and out of existence in the aisles to your left and right. The room is cold, and you are still wet from your dip in Moradys’ healing pool. You run a hand over one of the braziers as you pass it, but the flame is heartless and as insubstantial as the shadows it parts - a hologram that distorts when your hand moves through it.

The two of you come to a stone altar that sits before the coiled length of the Goddesses’ serpentine form. A carefully-arranged pile of skulls that comes to just below your waist is stacked against the altar. All forty-or-so vacant sockets are oriented so as to look you in the eye as you approach, and you find yourself meeting their gaze. At first, you think that the skulls are too small to be human. Then, comes a horrible realization.

“Are those… children?” you choke out.

Moradys stops between you and the grotesque collection of trophies. There’s not a hint of emotion on her face, beyond a slight bit of impatience.

“Theyir bodies are too weak for the mines, but their souls are pure. The Houses gift them to cults like this one in hopes of currying favor.”

You cast your eyes up to the six-breasted underside of the demon above you, then glare at Moradys in horrified anger. “Were you a part of this?”

She scoffs and whirls about to face you. “Giving away children? Do you think so little of me?”

You don’t know what to think of her. The love you feel for her is real, but the hatred you remembered was just as powerful. The more you see, the more you fear that the woman you fell for is not what you assumed her to be.

She walks among horrors like this as if they were familiar banalities, and she hasn’t said a word about the slaves who almost certainly died in the assault on her home. You are not so stupid as to believe her when she called those beaten wretches ‘servants’.

“Of course I wouldn’t hand over children!” Moradys shouts, meeting your fuming silence with open outrage. She turns back to the altar and circles around it. “I would sell them.”

A bad joke. It has to be.

Before you can press further, Moradys comes to the rear of the altar and stops with an abrupt intake of breath. “Speak of the little devils, and they shall appear!” She leans over and grabs hold of something. A high-pitched shriek has you wincing as Moradys hauls up a small, bawling child and sets her down on the altar.

She’s tanned to a bronze sheen - a strange thing to see in a city with no sun - with golden hair and brilliant blue eyes that twinkle behind her tears. She wears an ankle-length dress of shimmering blue trimmed with violet feathers, and her hand is clutched a sheet of paper along with what look like colorful makeup pencils.

“Hey, hey!” you whisper, leaning over the altar to place a comforting hand on her shoulder. “It’s going to be alright. I’m-“
She twists her head back to look at you, and her face contorts with childish relief. “Da-da!” she cries, dropping her tools and rolling over onto all fours before wobbling awkwardly over and throwing her hands around your neck. You hug her in reflex, and find that your own eyes have already begun to grow wet.

“Is this her?” you ask Moradys, who watches the reunion with blatant disgust.

“How do humans grow so quickly? I don’t understand it.”

You don’t bother asking for further confirmation - this familiar warmth is all the answer you need. Orina babbles nonsensically into your ear, and you bite your trembling lip as tears flow down your cheeks. How is it that you understand what you’ve lost only after regaining it?

“That’s enough of that.” Moradys stalks to the side of the altar and grabs Orina by her arm, then hauls her across the rough stone. Orina’s wails shoot back to their previous intensity, and you race over to grab hold of your bawling daughter.

“What the hell is wrong with you?”

“What’s wrong with me?” Moradys puts her fists on her hips and glowers at you for a few moments before throwing up her hands and pacing about. While you rub your daughter’s back and whisper fatherly promises of safety into her ear, Moradys picks up the sheet of paper Orina dropped and eyes it with bemused disdain.

She tosses it aside, and it flutters through the air before sliding to a stop on the altar beside you. The crude drawing depicts a planet covered in golden cityscape, cracked down the middle like an egg. The entire thing is surrounded by a halo of blue flame, and a slit-irised eye of blue speckled with bits of yellow stares at you from within the core of the ruined planet.

“Where are we, child?” Moradys moves to your side and plants a hand on your chest, not-so-subtly worming her way between the two of you. The only reason you don’t slap her is that you so desperately need to know the answer to her question. That, and the horrible thought of how much violence your daughter has already witnessed today.

Orina swallows and wipes her tears away with her tiny forearm, then straightens her back as she leans into your ear.

“In hell,” she whispers.

Moradys mutters an impatient acknowledgement and removes your hand from Orina’s back, quickly replacing it with her own and rubbing rapidly in circles. “And how is it that you ended up alone?”

Orina’s eyes flicker up to the statue looming above you. “I hid.”

You take hold of her shoulders and congratulate her on her cleverness and bravery, but Moradys cuts you short with another hurried question.

“And how do we get out of hell?”

Orina turns her attention to Moradys with a slow and deliberate cock of the head while both of you await her answer. It’s an odd thing to have a small child command a room so thoroughly.

“The only way out,” she says softly. “Is through.”

Moradys groans and rocks back on her heels while arching her back to the ceiling. “Why do I even
bother. We’ll follow one of the smaller passages and look for a side exit. I don’t care to risk the main exit.”

“Why not?” you ask her. “These are your people, aren’t they?”

She shoots you a reproachful glare. “What do you mean, my people?”

“Elves.”

“Cultists,” she corrects you. “Reclusive hedonists who will slaughter any trespassers - even those of the House they’ve pledged their services to.”

“Which is your House?” You throw a pointed glance at the pile of skulls beside you, careful to keep Orina from catching sight of them. God knows what other horrors she’s stumbled past in blissful ignorance.

“No, not my House. Which makes us doubly unwanted.” Moradys wraps her plated arms around Orina, slowly prying her off of you while she whines in protest. “I will carry her. You might need to fight.”

You pick up Orina and sweep her into your arms, away from Morady’s grasping hands. “Then I’ll fight while I’m carrying my daughter. I don’t need free hands to use magic, do I?”

Moradys draws a deep breath in through her nostrils and exhales sharply. “It would certainly help.”

With a smug smile, you shift Orina to your side so that you hold her with one hand under her bottom, leaving your other hand free to wave about in demonstration while Moradys stares at you in cold malice. You had meant to draw out a fractional smile from her in this evil place, but she is truly and deeply unhappy with your decision.

“You said you would protect me,” she says.

Hoisting Orina more firmly against your torso, you angle yourself so that your body sits between her and Moradys. You don’t like the way the Elf’s eyes flit about Orina’s small and fragile frame.

“And I will. I’ll get you both out of here.”

On foot, it seems. You’re hesitant enough to try your earlier magic trick with your daughter’s life now on the line, but she presents a greater problem than that - your mind can reach no further than her presence. Your sixth sense is still blunted and unevolved, leaving you blinded by the same light that beckoned you here. Does she burn so bright simply because of her importance to you? Or is there more to it than that? Another question for Moradys - but later, when she’s not glaring daggers at you.

A tiny hand waves in front of your face, and you look down to see Orina pointing across your chest towards the right side of the cathedral, where a shadowed passage branches off to some unknown section of the complex.

“Is that a way out?” you ask her. She nods, and you start walking.

Moradys scoffs in disbelief. “You’re listening to her? She’s a child! Not even a month old!”

You continue across the hall with only the padding of feet on stone to punctuate the silence. The things Moradys says and does bring to mind all sorts of questions that can’t be answered without the benefit of your memories. How did you fall for a woman so inhumanly callous? Is there something
more tender beneath the layers of caustic humor and foul moods, or is this her in her entirety?

The two of you enter the hall, and for a few seconds are wreathed in shadow. A short distance later, you reach a T-shaped intersection of the stone-floored passage, where it splits into two corridors lined with lamps of violet crystal hung from walls of polished black metal. Orina directs you left, and you watch your warped reflection to your left as the three of you trod quietly along.

“You might have noticed,” Moradys says with a tight-lipped grimace. “She is your daughter, but she doesn’t look a bit like you.”

You say nothing, and Moradys speeds up her pace until she’s walking alongside you.

“There are a great many human servants who had the pleasure of serving me, and many of them quite resembled Orina. You never questioned it, but I assumed that you knew the truth.”

After only a few more steps, you feel so sick that you’re forced to stop and lean your chin atop Orina’s silken scalp. She spoke nothing that hadn’t already occurred to you, but the fact she brings it up now makes your skin prickle with anger. And for what reason? Because she didn’t like the affection you paid your kidnapped daughter?

Moradys places a hand on your shoulder. Then, seemingly unhappy with having the fabric of your tunic between you and her, slides her hand up to your neck and massages the sides with her fingers. “It’s hard to love something that isn’t yours, isn’t it?”

You cringe at her touch and pull away, drawing comfort from the feeling of Orina’s tiny limbs wrapped around you while keeping a wary eye on the passage ahead.

“I considered making a child with you once things have settled down, but not if you’re going to fret over the thing like this.” Looking at her reflection in the wall, you see her give you and Orina a frustrated look as you resume walking. “It’s disgusting, really. Very unbecoming of a man.”

Desperate to get her mind off of Orina - for your sanity as much as the child’s safety - you turn the conversation to other matters. “Making a child with me? How would that even…” Your eyes trail down to her armored groin, and the very masculine parts that you know lay beneath the chainmail and plate.

“The wonders of Drukhari science. You remember Ribara, yes?”

You mumble a ‘yes’. How could you forget, after narrowly avoiding becoming her bottom slave?

“She’s half human, as well. Half man.”

Your stunned expression betrays more emotion than you would have liked, and Moradys’ creeping smile tells you it’s exactly the reaction she expected.

“Is that jealousy I sense?” She runs a hand through your hair, and you shrug her off again. “You do realize I wasn’t pregnant, yes? She was made in a test tube.”

That thought had occurred to you, but it seemed equally likely that Moradys’ male equipment was a more recent development. You’ve yet to figure out if some Elven women are simply born with a cock and balls, or if their much-vaunted scientific prowess plays a part in that. Either way, the origin of your wife’s dick is hardly important right now.

“You must think highly of human men,” you remark dryly.
Moradys groans. “Will you stop being such a simpering bitch? I *stole* the seed. No one pumped it into me.”

You gasp and try to cover Orina’s ears, nearly dropping her in the process. “You *stole* someone’s semen?”

She smiles in fond memory. “It was a grand theft. I assumed seed valuable enough to be guarded by an entire planetary garrison would yield something special. Instead, I ended up with…” She sighs and twirls her hand about in the air. “Well, you’ve met her.”

“Is there a lesson here? Or are you just reminiscing?”

“The lesson, beyond the fact that Terran warlords are monumental egomaniacs, is that family can’t be forced.” She moves behind you and plants two gauntleted hands on your shoulders, holding you too firmly to be shrugged off. “It has to form naturally, from a loving union.”

“There’s nothing natural about growing a baby in a tube.”

You swallow and glance down at Orina. Her face is still buried in your chest, which heaves with breaths that have now grown rapid. “You would be willing to do that?”

“You would simply go to sleep, and then wake up changed. You wouldn’t feel a thing.” Moradys takes a hand from your chest and slides it across your hip, then squeezes your crotch. Only then do you realize that you and her were speaking at cross purposes. You tear away from her, striding down the hall as quickly as possible without breaking into an outright run.

“Let’s talk about this later,” you call back to her. “This isn’t the place.”

After nine more steps, you stop again. A light appears far ahead, this one red instead of violet, and accompanied by an eerie hum. You take a few more quick steps forward and press yourself to a shadowed portion of the wall between two of the spaced-out crystal lamps. Moradys does the same opposite you.

A few moments later, an Elf emerges into the four-way intersection up ahead. Her dark greaves and breastplate resemble bondage gear more than true armor, and her black mane is tangled with skulls that clatter against each other as she walks. In her hand she carries a coiled whip that pulses with crimson energy. Sparks fall from it like drops of blood from an open vein. The hum you heard, you now realize, is not coming from the whip, but from the woman herself. She mutters a prayer or mantra in hushed tones, timing the words with her steps.

The sight and sound of those dangling skulls calls to mind all those you saw back in the main chamber - and the small head clasped against your chest. Off to the side, Moradys hisses through her teeth and shakes her head furiously from side to side. You don’t understand why, until you realize that you’re raising your right hand.

Moradys’ silent yet fierce warning has you wavering… but only for a moment. Why try to slip past these monsters, when you have the power to end them entirely? If Moradys herself is to believed, you have the power of a god. God with a little ‘g’, but a god nonetheless. And gods do not step quietly.
You snap your fingers, and the Elf explodes. Bloody viscera splatters the walls, and shattered bones ricochet from floor to ceiling like shrapnel. A human skull rolls across the floor, and comes to a stop at your feet. With mere focused intent and a literal flick of the wrist, you snuffed out a life. One not worth the air it breathed, but a life nonetheless. That should bother you - or perhaps the fact of how little you care should bother you.

But neither do.

“You idiot!” shrieks Moradys. “Moron halfwit! They’ll be all over you now, if they weren’t already!”

You keep Orina’s face pressed to your chest as you pick your way across the blood-slicked floor towards the intersection.

“Good.”

You press your face beside Orina’s ear and ask her to show you the way. She points left, in the direction the cultist came from.

“Why are you listening to a baby, and not me?” Moradys shrieks, storming after you with armor plates grinding against each other like teeth.

“Because I trust her.”

The hallway turns, and you nearly run smack into another Elf who is racing towards you. Either she personally heard the ear-ringing detonation of her comrade, or the citadel has been placed on alert, as Moradys warned.

With another wave of the hand, the sword-wielding Elf disintegrates into a statue of ash that teeters back and forth on one high-heeled boot. It crashes to the floor as you pass it, and Orina breaks out into jubilant laughter.

“See? I can handle this.”

Moradys kicks a clump of desiccated Elf at you, showering your back in a fine powder. “Did you think I meant them?”

You throw an angry glare back at her, and continue your quick stride. You’re not afraid of fighting these monsters, but you’d like to minimize the number of spectacular deaths your young daughter has to witness.

“Who else?” you say.

“Beings you can scarcely understand. Things of the Warp,” she whispers fiercely. “You would piss that little skirt of yours if you knew the powers you meddle with.”

Just as the corridor threatens to grow too claustrophobic to bear, you emerge into a brightly-lit cylindrical room with an enormously high ceiling. At the center of the room on a low dais is a statue similar to the one in the main hall. The serpent goddess stands on the tip of her tail, stretched towards the ceiling. Innumerable damned souls crawl their way up her naked form, as if trying to scale the ramparts of heaven. A ramp lit by yellow lamps twists around the edge of the room, giving you a far more practical means of ascending the nine floors above you.

“What, demons?” You snort derisively. “The only ones I’ve met look like you.”
Moradys slams into your back, sending you sprawling across the floor with a painful squeak of metal floor on bare arm. Orina rolls out of your grip and breaks out into hysterical wailing, which only abates when you scramble over and pick her back up.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” you shout at her, all sense of decorum and covertness forgotten.

“Me? What’s wrong with me?” Moradys hunches her back and squeezes her fists, trembling with fury and making her face turn a pale shade of pink. “I don’t like this new you - not one bit!”

She looks so ready to come to blows that you’ve half a mind to set Orina down, but your daughter clings to your neck with such tenacity that you doubt you could pry her off if you tried.

“Maybe I should give you your memories back! You could see what you were before I lifted you up and-” Her eyes flash to Orina, and go wide with intensified anger. “Put that thing down when I’m talking to you!”

Moradys rushes over and tries to tear Orina from your grip. Your daughter shrieks, you and Moradys shout at one another, and the chamber erupts in a hail of plasma fire. It seems your heated argument has drawn the attention of every cultist within earshot.

Moradys drops to a crouched position and covers her head with her gauntlets. You throw up your hand, freezing every projectile in place. They hang in the air like little wisps, bathing the statue looming above you in a rainbow array of colors. With a slight tilt of the hand, you reverse the course of each bolt, sending it right back into the barrel it was fired from. Rifles explode, pistols disintegrate, and screaming carcasses of molten flesh rain down from all nine floors.

When the last of the screams has ceased, you turn your attention to the woman cowering at your feet. “Don’t touch my daughter.” Orina points right, and you start walking towards the ramp encircling the room. “And don’t touch me.”

More cultists emerge from each doorway you pass on your winding path upward. Pale women, with wild hair and eyes like black holes. They fall on you with swords and whips, fists and feet, energy piles and plasma pistols. Every one of them dies just as quickly as the last, but none die in exactly the same way. Some find their ritual knives teleported into their chest cavity, making a slurry of their organs. Others fall through a floor that has inexplicably turned to quicksand, and are cut through the waist when reality rights itself. One leaps at you with a curved sword, shrieking mad ululations, and you set her on fire before realizing that won’t stop the maniac. You wrap an invisible hand around her wrists and throw her off the balcony, sending her smashing into the statue of her Goddess and taking a sizable chunk of stone breast down with her. Your every whim is made manifest. Reality bends to you.

Throughout the slaughter, Moradys lurks begins you, having grown quiet, and even more cautious. She takes great pains not to expose herself to danger, taking cover behind broad pillars and ascending to the next level only after you’ve waded through another mob of raving lunatics. You come to the seventh level, where you now stand high enough to look the stone demon in its hideous face. The woman’s beautiful features are contorted into a grotesque ecstasy of battle lust and carnal desire. The four scimitars she wields no longer seem as out of place as they had down below.

As you make your way around the balcony to the ascending ramp opposite you, a sharp tug on your hair has you wincing and looking down at Orina, who points you towards a set of carved wooden doors to your left. A demonic maw is set above them, giving you the impression you’ve found a threshold into some deeper level of hell still.

“This way!” Moradys urges you, scampering from cover to cover as she makes her way past you.
“Orina says to go this way.”

Moradys stops at the edge of the upward ramp and fixes you with a stern glare. “That leads straight to the pleasure chambers! Do you mean to slaughter the whole cult?”

Your hand pulls away from the bronze door handle, and you nearly make to follow her up the ramp before stopping abruptly. “How do you know where this leads?”

She recoils, as if smacked in the face, and averts her gaze. “These citadels all have similar layouts. If you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all.”

“No!” she fires back, gradually easing back her frustration as she chews her lip. “I have visited here, a few… handful of times.”

Your face tightens to a disgusted sneer, and you hold Orina close with both hands, a gesture that draws out more of Moradys’ abundant anger.

*Good.*

“I’m a very important person!” she continues. “I go to social events! I meet people!”

“And what did you do at these ‘social events’? Did you murder people? Did you sacrifice children?”

Moradys stammers dumbly for a moment, as if struck stupid by the boldness of your question, then puts her hands on her hips and leans forward. “Do I have to remember everything I did at every party I attended? Am I free to dig through your past and throw every little thing in your face? Is that how this is going to work?”

By the time she finishes her spittle-laced ranting, you’ve opened the door and entered the hallway Orina pointed you to. Your daughter hasn’t led you astray thus far, and you would gladly risk more enemies over a wife you are fast growing to hate.

What the fuck were you thinking when you married her?

“Orin!” Moradys hisses, cracking open one of the doors and slipping in behind you. “You said you would get me out of here!”

You stop and shush her, listening intently for the rhythmic thumping you had heard the moment you first passed inside the hall. It’s two sounds in one - something soft hitting something hard, and wood creaking under a taxing weight.

“They’re fucking something!” Moradys whispers. “Do you want your daughter to see a slave being skullfucked?”

You let out a sharp huff of annoyance, but smile proudly when you see Orina clamp her hands over her ears. The three of you continue moving through the corridor, passing opulent bedrooms and decadent lounges where elegantly-patterned couches sit next to gleaming operating tables and racks of bizarre phallic devices. Some are spiked, and some so absurdly sized as to be utterly unsuitable for pleasurable use - but the blood caked onto them makes it very clear that they do see use.

The creaking and thumping grow louder, and more sounds emerge from the undifferentiated din. Two voices, one feminine and moaning out tortured gasps of pleasure, the other deep and violent in
its feverish grunting.

“I know that voice.” Moradys stops, and her pale visage turns a shade whiter. “Ribara.”

Your knees grow weak - but not because of what Moradys said. You had placed Ribara’s husky baritone the second time she called whoever she’s fucking a ‘broken slut’. What you can’t help but fixate on is the second voice - the woman who gasps and groans, begging for more abuse from the Elf splintering a bedframe with the force of her thrusts.

Moradys grabs hold of your arm. You shrug her off and hiss a warning at her through tears you struggle to fathom the reason for. With every step, the chorus of sex grows louder until it fills every corner of your skull. Your legs wobble like jelly, and your breaths grow shallow. Orina, to your slight relief, keeps her ears covered as she watches the shift of your expression from curious to horrified.

You come to a doorway that glows with violet light. The sound of flesh hitting flesh makes you wince with each hard slap. Ribara roars and swears, hilting herself in whatever poor woman shrieks underneath her heaving bulk.

You don’t want to see. You need to see. And in the end, you do see.

As you round the corner, the scene that had played itself out through mere noise becomes terribly real. A naked Ribara lays atop a spacious bed at the far end of the pink-and-red bedroom. Beneath her is another, much smaller woman, whose legs and arms are wrapped as far around the huge Elf as they can go. Ribara moves back and forth with slow, shallow thrusts, drawing a few more breathless moans from the woman she just fucked into a screaming mess.

You fall to your knees, nearly dropping Orina in the process. You’ve never felt so weak, nor so sick, yet you have no idea why. Of all the horrific sights you anticipated, two woman rough-fucking didn’t even make the list.

So why do you want to die?

“That’s her!” Moradys kneels begins you and lays a hand on your shoulder. You lack the strength and the will to enforce your earlier demand. “The woman who nearly killed your wife! Who kidnapped your daughter!”

A woman for who you should feel nothing but the deepest and darkest hatred - and yet all you can do is tremble with an inexplicable despair.

“Something’s wrong.” You steady your quaking voice as best you can and turn your face towards Moradys. “Something’s really wrong.”

You hear the nearby step of feet on stone from within the room, and her mouth opens. She shouts something inaudible, and you turn back to the horrific scene to find that between you and it stands a third woman - a Dark Elf clad in a tight-fitting red gown. She levels a pistol at your head, and her finger inches towards the trigger.

Time slows to a crawl. Orina squirms in your grip, which has grown weak. She raises her tiny hands in front of her face and claps. Your attacker erupts in blue flame that starts at her feet and rushes to the top of her braided hair, consuming her in a roaring conflagration that silenced her brief but ear-shattering scream.

The heap of flame toppled towards you, and you hurl Orina back into the hall before scooting away yourself. The Elf’s head cracks open between your spread legs, showering your groin in charred bits
of brain matter.

When you look up, you’re met with the face of the woman whose passionate cries made you want to take a knife to your wrists. She kneels on the bed, mouth agape, hands clutching her short hair, staring in horror at what remains of her captor.

But is she even a captive?

She certainly looks the part. Her neck is bruised, her body is raked in nail marks, her hair is an unwashed mess, and one of her eyes is blackened. Yet when her focus moves to you, she doesn’t look at you like one would a savior, or even a fellow human. Her stare bears the terrible hatred you had expected - and failed - to feel for her.

The human woman screams in utter rage, looking between you and the dead Elf while yanking handfuls of her hair. Ribara rolls off of the bed and scampers across the room on all fours, racing over to a weapon rack on the wall with her spent cock wagging between her legs like a fleshy tail.

You begin to push yourself to your feet, raising one open palm in preparation to do battle, when two tiny hands reach around either side of your neck and slap the sides of your head.

Then, within the span of a moment, you remember.

The memories come not as a torrential flood, as you had expected them too, but as a single silent revelation. As if they had always been there, waiting for someone to pull back the curtain that had been shrouding them in darkness. You are left with no confusion or lingering questions. You know who you are, why you’re here, and who the madwoman shrieking at you through streaming tears is.

Vala extracts her hands from her hair and clutches them into fists that bristle with violet energy. Ribara snatches a sword from the wall and executes a quick turn, charging at Moradys as she tries to turn and run. You try to grasp some measure of the power you felt before - the deep-seated certainty that you could do anything, if you only willed it strongly enough and pictured it clearly enough. A god among demons.

But you are no god. Just a man, who couldn’t save his wife.

Vala thrusts her hands towards you, spreads open her fingers, then clenches them again. Intangible bands of force wrap around your neck and limbs, hauling you into the air and yanking your arms and legs spread-eagle. Vala shuffles off of the bed and walls towards you, cum dripping down her thighs and leaving a glistening trail across the tiled floor. She shifts her left hand, and a restrained Moradys is moved to hover alongside you.

“I knew it,” says Ribara, gripping her sword with two brawny hands that tremble with childlike anger. “I did not want to believe it, but I knew it.”

Moradys jerks against the glowing bands of energy pulling her apart at each extremity, writhing about in a desperate bid to escape. You can’t muster the will to try. The one woman here who deserves your strength - the one who has been failed by it time and again - glares at you with murder in her eyes. Why this hatred, you wonder? It’s not her hatred itself you find strange, but the fact that it took so long to come.

“All I wanted was love.” Ribara stops in front of Moradys and draws in a shuddering breath. The brutal Elf looks ready to cry. “You wouldn’t give it to me. When I found it elsewhere, you took it from me. Why?”

Moradys’ lip curls in a distasteful sneer, and she looks up at the left hand she’s trying to wrench free
near your head. Ribara grabs a handful of her hair and points her face forward, so that she’s forced to look her daughter in the eye.

“Goodbye, mother.” Ribara draws back her sword and slips it between a gap in Moradys’ breastplate. “You never loved me, but I love you.” Her lips crash into her mother’s, and she forces her tongue inside. A moment later, Moradys’ left hand wrenches free of its bonds and slashes across your field of vision.

It takes you several seconds to understand what she did - several more for Ribara and Vala to see. Wet warmth rolls down your neck, and the weakness afflicting your body becomes such that you grow too weak to stay rigid in your bonds. Your muscles go limp, you gasp a desperate plea to someone - anyone - for help, and your head rolls downward as the life slips from your jugular.

Vala shrieks in panic and rushes over to you, releasing your restraints - and those of Moradys in the process. Moradys drops the few remaining inches to the floor and gut-punches Ribara, staggering her. Your vision blurs and your hearing dulls until only the loudest sounds reach you. Your head hits the floor after the rest of your body, and a hand presses itself to your neck. Vala screams for Ribara, who races past you before coming back a short time later and applying something wet to your gushing wound through the cracks of Vala’s fingers. When your wife’s hand lifts, the torrent of blood down your neck has stopped, leaving you with a hot itch that you have nowhere near the strength to try and scratch.

“I’m sorry,” you mutter up to the shadowed outline of your wife’s head, which twitches with odd spasms of her neck. “I’m so, so, sorry.”

Vala strokes your cheek with a loving tenderness that makes your tears flow more strongly than ever. You try to lift a shaky hand to place atop hers, but a far stronger one grabs your wrist and forces it down to your chest.

Ribara.

“No, you’re not.” Vala rolls you onto your back, then runs her hand up your inner thigh until her fingers brush the tip of your manhood. “Not yet.”

Her fingers wrap around your ballsack, and she squeezes. Softly at first - enough to make you groan from the dull ache spreading outward from your groin. Then, the pressure grows, and the ache sharpens to a shooting pain that has you sliding your feet across the floor while you thrash impotently against Ribara’s grip.

You don’t understand. You tell her as much - you beg and you plead, asking her why she’s doing this. Finally, the pain grows so great that you simply scream for her to stop. You no longer care why this is happening, or what you might have done to deserve it. All that matters is that the pain stops.

But it doesn’t.

It grows and grows, until every one of your senses is rendered blind. Even thinking becomes impossible. Your mouth is open, but you can no longer hear the horrible sounds you make.

The last thing you feel, before the world goes black, is the ‘pop’. Like all those Elves you killed - beings full of life and possibility, reduced to a meaningless bloody mess.
The Tempestus has hosted countless guests during its time as a cruiser in service of the Imperial Navy. Planetary governors, Abhuman emissaries, Lords of Terra - even the Primarch himself. Yet none have been so fundamentally disquieting as the simple slave woman trailing behind Sasuramen now. She wears a white sleeveless robe taken from the Sisters’ quarters, and walks with a slow shuffle while clutching the scarred-over wound on her side.

When one of his Astartes has recovered her, they feared her dead, but that had been an illusion. The Drukhari, in their unknowable cruelty, has been keeping her in a medically-induced coma from which the Tempestus’ medical technicians were able to easily and safely rouse her.

Emperor knows *why* her enslavers would do such a thing.

She stares out the windows to her left as they walk the portside corridor of the ship’s crew quarters, gawking open-mouth at this bird’s eye view of the dark city she once lived deep in the bowels of. A vent in the ceiling lets out a soft hiss of steam, and she jumps back with a gasp before letting out a nervous laugh and rubbing her hands together. She smiles up at the towering and armored form of Sasuramen, as if trying to find a comrade to share in her unease.

“Nothing - and no one - here will hurt you,” he says calmly.

Charal intertwines her fingers and presses her hands to her chest, clearly putting a great deal of effort to stop their shaking. “Yes, I know. It is just… very new, all of this.”

The woman is unremarkable in every way - aside from her beauty, which Sasuramen lacks the ability to appreciate on anything but an intellectual level. Or rather, she *would* be unremarkable, were she looked at through normal eyes. But Sasuramen has the eyes of a gifted and practiced Psyker - eyes which can see the faint afterglow of the unfathomably powerful being she once carried within her womb.

“I want to ask you again… about your daughter.”

Charal grins sheepishly at the floor and resumes the nervous tapping of her fingers. “Can we talk about something else?”

Sasuramen furrows his brow in frustration. The Emperor’s own servants arrive in a warship that even now cuts a swathe of righteous fury through Cummragh, and this woman acts as if they are no more worthy of trust than her captors. It is this place, he tells himself. This is where lesser humans are broken.

“Look at this, woman!” Sasuramen storms over to the window beside her and slams a gauntleted fist on it, hard enough to make her jump. “Your daughter was kidnapped! You told me as much. Now she is out there in this chaos, defenseless prey to the whims of whichever Drukhari witch took her.”

Charal looks up and shoots him a surprisingly forceful glare. “No!” she says with a wag of her finger. “It was a human! A human woman! She is jealous of me, and my love, and my child.” Her brief flash of anger abates and she becomes small again, retreating into her well-worn shell of quiet servitude.

Sasuramen’s gaze narrows. “What sort of woman?”

The earnestness of his question draws Charal’s gaze back upwards, and she whispers to him as if they are two conspirators sharing in a plot. “The worst kind! She couples with Elves and enjoys it. She dresses like them and blackens her eyes like them. She sees those who are happy and tries to
ruin them, for no reason! Only because she hates!"

He nods slowly. “A servant of Chaos.”

Charal gives him a quizzical look and starts to shrug, then simply nods and gums in agreement. “Yes.”

He knows that she has no concept of the things of which he speaks, but that is not important. All that matters now is that she cooperate - for her sake, for the newborn Emperor’s sake, or for the sake of the entire Imperium.

Sasuramen falls to one knee, shaking the floor and making a startled Charal teeter from one leg to another before finding her footing. He takes her hand in between his massive gauntlets and looks her in the eye.

“Your daughter is special. More than you can possibly understand.”

Charal puts her hand atop his and shakes it enthusiastically. “Yes… yes! I knew this!”

“That is why it is important you help us *find* her, before she can be twisted to foul ends by those who kidnapped her.”

His words finally hit home. Charal’s eyes go wide and she recoils, slipping her hand free of Sasuramen’s overbearing grasp. “But Orin is already looking for her!”

Sasuramen sighs as he rises to his feet. “Your husband does not compare to the full might of an Astartes company.”

“And Orina said she will be fine! She told me not to worry!”

This time, Sasuramen does not so much kneel as lunge at Charal, grabbing her by her shoulders and shaking with an urgency he can scarcely contain. “The Emperor spoke to you? When? How?”

Charal groans nervously and looks off to the side. “Orina? She did not speak. It was a dream… a feeling.”

“What was the dream?” Sasuramen squeezes her arms, forcing her to meet his feverish gaze. He must look a maniac right now, but they are so close to salvation that he cares not. “Tell me everything! Everything you can remember!”

Charal swallows and nods, shrugging off Sasuramen’s hands before going to the window. “She wants you to help the Elves. To save them.”

“*Save* them?” He scoffs and stands a second time, then joins her at the window. “Why? They are monsters.”

“They can be purified, and their souls saved. That is what she told me.”

“How?”

Charal taps on the glass, indicating at the towering arena jutting up from the darkness below the ship. “She says to start great fires.”

Now it is Sasuramen’s turn to swallow in shock. A warrior as jaded as he is not capable of feeling horror, but the idea of industrialized ritual slaughter does not sit right with him, no matter how inhuman the victim.
“We cannot possibly take all of Cummragh.” He scans the horizon, taking in the small portion of the great city that his forces have captured. Two dead Astartes may seem a token loss to some, but they are fewer than seventy against countless howling masses of Elves. For now, they hold their ground well - but that will change when the Drukhari leaders recall their expeditionary forces from outside the Warp.

Charal tilts her head and lets out another anxious groan. There is something she knows she needs to say - but like Sasuramen, she does not want to say it. “There is more.”

“More to the dream?”

She nods. “Orina said to let the slaves fight. They can save themselves, just as you save the Elves you purify.”

He scoffs and shakes his head sadly. “We cannot possibly arm a tenth of them. Even if we could, they lack training and discipline. They would be little better than cannon fodder.”

Charal’s anxious finger tapping reaches a fever pitch. “I do not like this part.”

“What part?”

“Orina said to use the Shapers.”
The Widening Gyre

You dream of horrible things.

Saws and scalpels slice away at numbed flesh, making a senseless mess of your body. Tubes and wires are threaded through holes that shouldn’t rightfully exist, and you are dunked in a warm liquid that robs you of any sense of weight or direction. Things twist and scrape inside of you - things that shouldn’t be there - violating you so thoroughly that you mentally abandon any thought of ownership of your body and retreat into the dark recesses of your mind.

With every inch of you peeled away and penetrated by fine instruments of steel and plastic, there’s no longer any mystery to the wonder of the human form. It is a thing of meat and blood, capable of being molded and remolded until the original is nothing but a distant memory.

For a time, you comfort yourself with the thought that at least the horrors of this dreamworld carry with them no pain. But as you grow all wrong in your twisted cocoon, and your ruination moves forward with a disturbing linearity, you come to understand that though this is a nightmare, you are not dreaming.

Only the breathing tube jammed down your esophagus keeps you from screaming.

Shadowy figures move through your field of vision as you slip in and out of consciousness over the passage of untold hours and days. They are formless wraiths, distorted by the liquid and glass that separates you from them. With no way to truly judge the passage of time, you measure its flow by the terrible ruination of your body. Everything you thought of as essential and vital is stripped away, replaced by something new and alien.

The muscles in your arms wither and shrink. Your waist clinches inward, and your buttocks assumes a fullness that increases with each pump of the micro-thin tubes winding through your punctured flesh. Your chest throbs, then burns, then swells to an aching plumpness that tugs you forward in your suspended imprisonment.

And your groin - you do not dare consider the strange sensations building there. What was once your body refuses every order you give it. The twist and turn of the wires threaded through its flesh produce spastic twitches which last only a few moments at a time.

Yet even without the benefit of seeing your lower half, and even without having more than the barest grasp of consciousness, part of you understands what is happening. Tiny machines hollow out your insides, creating a sickening emptiness inside of a space that had once held masculine organs.

It is no relief when the machines finally withdraw from your body. When they did their corruptive work, you could comfort yourself with the delusion that the destruction they wrought could be reversed by the same dark science that twisted your form into something perverse.

But now that they are gone, you find that they have stripped away the last of your illusions. Your wounds have already begun to heal, severing the bloody ties between the old and new you. The only thing that has kept any continuity with the past are the ceaseless screams echoing inside of your skull.

You awaken to the sound of rushing water, and are pulled feet-first through the bottom of your glass-bound prison. An irresistible current carries you out onto the metal basin of a round room centered around your empty pod. The fluid that you were suspended in drains through the a grate in the floor, and you try to inhale the cold air nipping at your skin before realizing that you still have a breathing
tube jammed down your throat. You grab it with both hands and yank it out, spewing with it the same pink liquid dripping from your matted hair.

Your first breath is as jarring as the sharp cry of a newborn child. But you do not feel reborn - you feel recycled, shit back into an existence that holds nothing for you but eviscerated hopes.

As you choke out the last of the gel-like liquid, you catch sight of your chest. Two perfect breasts, soft and round, tremble in time with the shivers wracking your body. Your arms can barely support you, and not just because they’ve seen so little use. They’re thinner than before, and have lost most of their hair. Even your hands are smaller.

A horrified shudder courses through you, and you tip over onto your side. Your hand slides down your abdomen, just as smooth and hairless as the rest of you, before reaching your hairless groin. With each fraction of an inch your fingers move, the more frantic your breaths become - and the more certain you are that you will find what you most fear. Your hand presses between your thighs, and your index finger curls between two warm folds. You gasp at the electrifying intrusion and yank your hand away, clutching it to your breasts.

“Help!” you screech, searching the room for any sign of a way out. “Help!” Even your voice is a shrill parody of what it once was.

A door blocked from view by the evacuated tube opens, and yellow light streams into the room. There’s a sound, like small bits of metal being dragged across the floor. You roll onto your side and push up onto one arm to see who has come, and are met by the expressionless face of your wife.

Vala is as unrecognizable as you are.

She is naked, but her body is covered in black and purple serpent tattoos that wind around her arms and legs. Two fanged mouths converge on her belly button, and two more rise up her pale neck. She wears thick bangles of gold on her wrists and ankles, which trail gilded chains on the floor behind her. Her hair is an inch longer than you last remember it, and now almost reaches her shoulders.

But it is her eyes that have changed the most. That same anger you saw - and felt - now lurks behind the scar tissue of untold suffering. You don’t know whether to beg for forgiveness for what you’ve put her through, or to damn her to hell for what she’s done to you.

“Vala!” You scramble over to her, sobbing and shaking with a whining voice that refuses to deepen. “Please, please! Let me help you!”

Before you can reach her and throw yourself around her legs, she draws back one of her chains and whips it towards you. Your head explodes in pain, dropping you to the floor. At first, you fear that she’s taken one of your eyes along with your balls - but the blood filling your vision is merely pouring from the vicious gash she left on your forehead.

“You can’t even help yourself.” Vala shoves her foot between your legs and grinds it against your new womanhood, giving rise to strange sensations that make you acutely aware of just how deep the changes go.

When she draws her foot back and turns away, you see something that saps the last bits of life from your quaking limbs. Her bare abdomen, viewed in profile, bears the gentle curve of a woman who has just begun to show her coming motherhood.

“What is that?” you ask her, holding one hand to your forehead to staunch the bleeding while protecting your sex with the other.
Vala turns to face you and arches her back as she runs a hand over the swell and dip of her stomach. “Ribara,” she says casually.

“I don’t understand,” you sob. “I thought you were a prisoner.”

She eyes you cooly, taking in a body which even you haven’t yet seen the full extent of. A weary and saddened expression settles over her features. “We’re all prisoners.”

Vala’s chains scrape against the floor, and you cringe in expectation of another strike, only to peek one eye open and spot her rounding the pod.

“Wait!” You chase her into a lamp-lit hall of stone floors and metal walls etched with arcane geometry. Two sets of Elven hands grab you by either arm as you pass through the door, and begin to haul you along behind Vala.

Despite what your wife said - and despite the chains she wears - she doesn’t act like a prisoner. The Elves on either side of you follow her every twist and turn through the compound without a word, and others make way for her passage with a strange and almost religious deference, giving shallow bows and muttered prayers.

You pass through a doorway into the violet-lit hall of pleasure chambers you had been directed into by Orina, this time coming from the opposite direction. The four of you enter a large bedroom, which has been redecorated to such a degree that you scarcely recognize it as the one you had nearly died in the threshold of.

Blood-red curtains cover the walls, each hand-painted with grotesque depictions of the serpent demon worshipped by these cultists. A wood-panelled wall separates a cushion-covered lounge from a bathroom, which is wet from recent use. The remains of the Elf your daughter killed are gone, and Ribara is nowhere to be seen. You could almost dismiss the horrors of that day as a dream, if you didn’t still feel the throbbing ache of the organs stolen from you.

Vala walks over to the bed - or rather, stumbles to it - and collapses face-first onto the covers like a drunk. She rolls over, unclasps the shackles from her hands and feet, and drops them to the floor. For a time she simply lays there, staring up at the ceiling with her arms and legs splayed out beside her. Then she mutters something, and beckons you forward with a finger. The two women at your side release their hold on you, and before you can take your first hesitant step forward, they begin walking towards the bed.

The two lithe Elves strip off their tops as they walk, dropping them atop the tangled mess of chains at the foot of the bed. They slide atop Vala like snakes, running their tongues up her pregnant mound while she groans in satisfaction and fondles their muscled backs. Not a single eye is directed at you, but you’ve never felt more naked and exposed than you do now. Legs weak from disuse tremble in fear, and you hold a hand over your crotch to prevent the world from seeing what you’ve become.

“Vala!” you hiss, throwing an anxious glance back at the unguarded doorway. A tingling warmth in your groin has you pressing your hand to it more firmly in the hopes of drowning out this sensation you don’t understand. Hot fluid courses over your palm, and you peer down to find that you’ve pissed yourself. Vala’s sensuous humming and the smack of lips against flesh keep anyone but you from hearing the pitter-patter of fluid on metal.

Finally deigning to acknowledge your whispered pleading, Vala peers down the length of her body, past the hands molesting her breasts, and sneers at you. “We let you out so you wouldn’t overcook.” Her head drops back to the bed, and one of the Elves slips two fingers into her fluid-soaked pussy. “Ribara will be here soon, and then you’re all hers.”
You squeeze the tears from your eyes and take a few steps forward, but stop when you spot Vala’s hand fumbling with the bulge straining at the fly of one of the Elf’s pants. “Now fuck off. You’ve got nothin’ we want.”

You stagger over to the bed, clasping your piss-soaked hands together and falling to your knees before the three women. “I’m sorry! Please, listen to me!”

Were this any other time, there would be limits to what you risk revealing in front of the two Elves grinding against your wife, but the dreadful pit in your stomach has you spilling your guts amidst a torrent of tears.

“Orina is here! We can leave! We can-“

Vala draws back her foot and kicks you square in the face. The wound on your forehead, which has only just begun to clot, explodes with fresh blood and pain.

“Your precious ‘Mistress’ ran off with her right after she cut your throat. We’re the only reason you’re still alive.”

You wipe the blood from your eyes and climb up onto the bed to grab her ankle. “I’m alive because you love me! And I love you! Even after this, I…”

Words fail to capture the full measure of your anguish, so you simply press your face to her leg and cringe against the orgasmic shudders passing through her body. You want to tear into these Elves, to rip their limbs off and beat them to death in front of your wife. But you feel so weak. Is this what it is to be a woman? To feel so bent to the sparse mercy of the universe?

Vala pulls her leg away from you, and you look up to see one of the Elves stripping off her pants before climbing in between Vala’s spread thighs. Her bone-white erection sinks into Vala’s pussy, and your wife moans as she squeezes her lover’s firm buttocks. The other Elf, already pantsless, shuffles over besides Vala’s head and mashes her flaccid cock against her cheek.

“You want to stay with us?” Vala says in between shallow gasps.

“I want to leave with you!”

The Elf between her legs begins moving with slow, artful thrusts that have Vala undulating in time with the cock ploughing her deepest recesses.

“T-that ain’t what we asked,” she stammers.

“We?”

Vala’s attempted reply is lost in the storm of moans and flesh smacking against flesh that assaults your ears. You stumble to your feet and turn to flee, wanting nothing more than to get away from this horror of endless betrayal.

Nothing, that is, except to make right your wrongs.

“Yes!” you shriek, pulling at your shoulder-length hair until your scalp sings.

The fucking grows faster, and you hear a ‘smack’ followed by a cry of pain. You spin about and prepare to throw yourself on the Elf who hit her, consequences be damned, but find Vala beckoning you forward with a wave of the hand.
Even your emotions are no longer yours. They carry you along like a rip current, with far more power and depth than when you were a man. Choking back retching sobs, you crawl onto the bed, nearly falling over with each shake of the bed. Vala watches you intently - not with cruel mirth or mindless passion, but with the same tiredness that she met you with earlier.

The Elf fucking your wife pushes you down by the small of your back, and Vala lays a hand out on the bed. You take it, clasping it as tightly as you can manage no matter how much you shake. Vala’s grip remains limp, as if she doesn’t care one bit whether she slips free of you.

Any connection you hoped to share with her is spoiled the moment the Elf kneeling beside her head slaps her across the cheek with her dick. Vala turns her head away from you and takes the flaccid member into her mouth, suckling on it while she’s fucked so hard you’re bounced up from the bed with each thrust.

You squeeze your eyes shut, wishing you could do the same for your ears as they’re assaulted by moans deeper and more passionate than any she has ever made for you.

Then, mercifully, the moans stop. You nearly cry out in relief, until you hear a wet gurgle coming from Vala. The cock buried in her mouth is now fully hard, as evidenced by the bulge that goes halfway down her throat. The Elf on top holds Vala by the neck, squeezing with such force that the veins on her forearm bulge like a blue spiderweb.

You shout in anger and grab the arm choking your wife. The Elf uses her other hand to slam your head back down, and keeps you both pinned like that while she resumes her ball-slapping thrusts.

Vala doesn’t fight. She takes the other Elf’s balls in her hands and strokes them tenderly, shooting you a wild-eyed glance that bids you remember how differently she handled your own manhood. The dick in her mouth draws back, then slams in again. Saliva spews out from the corners of her lips, tears well in her eyes, and snot drips from her flaring nostrils.

She rips her hand from yours and strokes the face of the Elf choking the life from her. You cry out her name and snatch her hand back, pressing it to your own cheek. She glares at you and tries to snatch her hand away again, but you hold fast. With a light slap on the thigh, she commands the Elf face-fucking her to pull out. The spit-slicked member pops free and comes to rest atop Vala’s cheek, where the Elf slowly grinds it back and forth.

“I need to get fucked,” your wife snarls. “Are you gonna do it?”

You nod and kiss her hand, making her snarl twist into a disgusted sneer. “You couldn’t do the job right when you had a dick.”

“What do you want from me?” You draw your chin down to your chest and bang her hand against your open wound. “Please, just tell me!”

Vala ceases her attempts to pull free of your grip, allowing you to relax your own aching hands. The Elf atop her stops thrusting entirely, and the room becomes still. If it weren’t for the cock dragging itself back and forth across your wife’s placid face, you could fool yourself into believing that the two of you were safe at home, laying atop the covers on a warm summer morning.

“Fuck yourself,” says Vala. “Use your fingers.”

You start to protest, but cut yourself short before a single word has left your mouth. Not because anyone hits you or forces you, but because Vala’s hand starts to slip from yours and her eyes turn back to the Elf whose cock is sunk balls-deep into her nethers. Desperate to salvage whatever flayed
remains of your relationship still linger, you thrust a hand in between your thighs and slip a finger into your pussy. It’s warm, and wet, and the brush of a single digit past the hood of your clitoris has you breaking into choking gasps.

The Elf on top plants her fists on either side of Vala’s head and resumes driving her dick in and out of your wife. A forceful kiss by the Elf silences her, leaving you all too self conscious of your own noises of tortured pleasure. As soon as their lips separate, the other Elf slips the glans of her penis between Vala’s lips and grinds it against the inside of her cheek.

Waves of nausea force you to close your eyes. A warning from Vala, sputtered around eight inches of Elven cock, has you opening them again. You watch as your wife is taken from tepid enjoyment to the heights of rapturous ecstasy, while you draw forth muffled whimpers with your own lonely fingering.

The feeling welling within you isn’t the building climax you are familiar with. It is fuller, deeper, and all-encompassing. The tingling pressure that would have been focused in your abdomen is instead spread throughout your whole body, making your legs jerk and toes curl in a fervent need for release. You don’t want this pleasure - you don’t want to bite your lip and quiver against your fluid-soaked hand while your wife is spit-roasted beside you. That disgust only makes you finger yourself faster, as if final release were a faster exit from the hell you find yourself trapped in. You’ve slipped too far and too deep to turn back now.

The Elves grunt and clench their bodies, making their domination felt through a few final, brutal thrusts. The one atop your wife slams her hips home, making Vala’s legs spasm in the air while she screams around the cock blocking her windpipe. The other Elf grabs Vala’s head with both hands and turns it towards her, giving her better a better angle to fuck herself all the way into Vala’s throat. The bulge marking the spot where her member ends goes deeper, until it disappears past her collarbone. The Elf’s balls pull tight and she lets out a low, shuddering breath as she deposits her load straight into her lover’s stomach.

The dam breaks, and you cry out. At first, you fear you’ve pissed yourself again. But as wave after wave of pleasure crashes through you and the world itself seems to shake, you realize what is happening. You bite your lip until it bleeds, trying to disguise your moans of pleasure as tortured groans.

No one, not even you, is fooled.

One Elf pulls out of your wife’s pussy and rolls back onto her knees, then lifts up your wife’s legs and watches as seed drips from her reddened folds. The sudden movement causes the dick in her mouth to slip free, and the other Elf is forced to jerk out the last of her seed by hand, shooting it onto Vala’s face before smearing it all about with the head of her cock.

Vala takes the spent dick into her mouth and suckles on it until it grows soft, then turns her jizz-covered face to you. “Do you hate me?”

You bite your lip to stop its trembling and shake your head while muttering a squeaking ‘no’. Vala looks away from you. “You should.”

The Elf between Vala’s legs lowers them down and presses their bodies together in a passionate kiss while she pinches your wife’s hardened nipples. Vala’s eyes roll back, her hands clutch at the Elf’s buttocks, and you no longer exist to her.

“Make them leave!” you hiss, grabbing hold of her arm. “I need to talk to you!”
The other Elf punches you in the side of the head, splitting your skull and knocking you flat to the bed. The world takes on a dreamlike quality turned nightmarish by the events playing out before you glazed-over eyes, and you can do nothing but watch as your wife basks in the attention of two women who would sooner kill you than allow you to look them in the eye.

Minute after unending minute ticks by, until finally the Elf atop Vala collapses onto her side, separating you and your wife. The second Elf settles down on Vala’s left, and the three women lay in post-coital bliss, searching each other’s bodies with hands that look like tentacles in your tear-blurred vision. Someone plays with your hair - Vala, you think - but the fingers are gone by the time you pick your head up to look. You are exhausted, both from an orgasm unlike any you’ve ever had and from undergoing a humiliation more thorough than any you’ve experienced. You’ve surpassed anger and grief, moving into the grey expanse of numb delirium that leaves you too apathetic to even consider taking your own life.

Nothing is under your control anymore. Not your life, not your body, not your pleasure, and certainly not your wife. You are a leaf in a hurricane, whipped to and fro by whichever powerful presence decides to have a moment of fun with you.

Hours pass, and you don’t move until you hear someone approaching the bedroom. Even before she enters, you know by the teeth-gritting clang of boots on metal that she is not here for Vala. You shoot up from the bed and race over to the exit before realizing that you’re about to run straight into the newcomer. The bathroom, though not even a separate room, is your only hope of staying hidden. You dash past the divider and sit down on the toilet, cradling your head in your hands and wishing you could become as small as you feel.

“You’re getting to be a familiar face here,” says Vala. “Maybe you should start leaving a change of clothes.”


The command is so forceful that you nearly leap off of the toilet, but you manage to regain control of your body before making enough noise to be heard. There’s a few moments of silence with no speaking nor movement, and then Ribara tells Vala to order her servants to leave.

“Anything you want, lover.” She mutters something to the two Elves on the bed beside her, and they dress before departing the bedroom.

“My arena is… temporarily lost to me.” Ribara walks past the screen, making the floor beneath you creak. You hold your breath and try to shut out all thoughts of her monstrous presence. “The humans have turned it into a sacrificial pyre.”

Vala groans, and you hear the rustle of covers. “You can’t stay with mommy?”

“If I could find her, I would kill her. House Tenebrim is ash, along with all the others.”

“Shouldn’t you be out there fighting those mutated freakshows the invaders are making? It’s like it’s the end of the world.” Vala lets out a single dry laugh. “Did you come here for comfort?”

More rustling, as if Vala is smoothing out a place on the bed for Ribara. Everything you know about Ribara has you expecting her to charge Vala and brutalize her, making her dominance felt - but that never happens. Ribara walks slowly over to the bed and sits down, followed by a slow creak as she spreads out her bulk. A hum of warm satisfaction from Vala has you carefully standing up and peering through the vents of the wooden bathroom divider.
Vala lays flat on the bed, cradling Ribara’s head atop her pregnant stomach. Ribara’s short hair is back to its natural brown color, and Vala strokes it with her fingers, untangling the knots with a gentle touch. She wears a red, form-fitting gown that becomes loose at the waist and covers everything but her hands and head.

Your legs shake at the sight of the knife slung from her belt, and your knee hits the side of the toilet bowl, making you suck air in through your teeth. Ribara glances up to look for the source of the noise, but Vala presses her head back down.

“I am going to have a family,” Ribara says softly. “A family that loves me.”

Vala stops caressing her hair. “It wasn’t that long ago that we hated you.”

“I hated you. I hated him, too. That was so long ago.”

The two women fall silent, and their closeness becomes an unbearable sight the longer they lay together. Your chest heaves with delirious breaths, your arms shake against the back of the toilet you lean on, and a rising nausea threatens to expel whatever unnatural substances still remain in your stomach from the fluid pod.

“What if he still hates you? You cut off his balls and turned him into a woman.” She reaches out and runs a hand up Ribara’s bulging tricep. “It might’ve been better to just let him sleep.”

Ribara pushes herself up from the bed and stares at Vala in pleading desperation. “You said that you would help me!”

Vala makes comforting noises with her tongue and soothes Ribara back down. You want to strangle both of them. Not just for the tenderness your wife shows Ribara, but for the gentle way Ribara touches her - a gentleness that the violent Elf never showed you a fraction of.

“We tried, but he… she... wants nothing to do with us.” Vala points lazily at the screen you hide behind, and Ribara’s face snaps up to see where she’s pointing. For a terrifying moment before you duck down, your eyes connect with the Elf’s. “Maybe you can get through to her.”

The floor beside the bed creaks. You choke out a dreadful cry and look around for some way out, but there is nothing. Only the single exit at the far side of the room, and hesitant, heavy footsteps that grow nearer as they become faster.

Never have the fires of industry burned brighter in Cummragh than they do now.

The acrid scent of roasted flesh clings to the mists, making Moradys wrinkle her nose in disgust as she paces back and forth on the Gravtrain cutting through the misted mountains of the city’s underbelly like an arrow. The human invaders have established air superiority over much of the vast city, but have so far proving unwilling to destroy the infrastructure that automates the refinement and
delivery of the Warp-spawned Eternium so highly valued by both sides of the conflict. Valued by the Drukhari for its life-prolonging properties, and by the humans for its use in producing the obscene corruptions of human flesh that the bulk of their fighting forces now comprise.

Something tugs at Moradys’ dress. She turns back from the railing and looks down to see Orina staring up at her with a face screwed up in childish anger. She wears a metal collar around her neck, which connects to a chain held in Moradys’ hand.

“I’m hungry.”

Moradys sighs and turns back around. “So am I.”

“No you’re not! You never eat!”

The wind continues to whip at Moradys’ face and loose garments, and airborne grit speckles her face and collects in the folds of her hood. She is ill-accustomed to traveling like a vagabond, and even less to feeling every little discomfort and pain with such awful clarity. Everything hurts more these days. Her muscles burn from overexertion, her feet sing from walking for days on end, and her head throbs from Orina’s ceaseless complaining.

But it is the unending ache in her heart that is the worst of it.

When Moradys fails to respond, Orina begins shaking the chain around her neck and screaming at the top of her lungs. Moradys shuts her eyes in an attempt to block out the wailing child, but finally can take no more. She spins about and slaps her upside the head, sending the girl crashing to the floor of the train.

“I could cut off bits of you piece by piece and eat those! How would you like that?”

Orina blinks dumbly up at the sky, cross-eyed and unmoving. Moradys worries she might have finally hit her one time too many, but the girl soon begins a tearful wailing that has Moradys throwing back her head and groaning up at the sky. The train passes into a tunnel, and the girl’s cries are mercifully silenced by the roar of the train echoing across walls of rock. By the time they emerge back into open air, Orina sits on the deck in relative silence, wiping at her eyes with two tiny fists.

“I want my mommy,” she blubbers.

Moradys hauls her to her feet - a bit too roughly, perhaps, but the Elf’s patience has been whittled down to a gnarled stump by the tribulations of the last two months.

“Keep up that horrid wailing, and you’ll never see her again. You remember our deal, don’t you?”

Orina blinks the tears from her eyes and nods.

“What do you do if someone tries to hurt Godmother?”

Orina claps her hands together, producing a brilliant plume of turquoise flame between the two women.

“Very good!” Moradys gets down on one knee and rubs her arm.

The girl is clearly terrified, but her emotions lack the rich fullness of the ones Moradys shared with… others before her. Perhaps as she grows older, that will change. She is already a powerful Psyker. All that is required is more life experience, and there is plenty of that to be had in Cummragh, particularly in these dire days.
“This time, it won’t be human monsters you have to guard me against. It will be other Elves.”

Orina nods again, without truly understanding. It would be a waste of time to explain to a Mon-Keigh child the intricacies of Drukhari politics, or the purpose of this meeting of Archons. It has taken weeks to locate the leaders of the fractured Houses and to convince them to leave their hidden fortresses for a centralized meeting. The danger, more than attack from the invaders, is duplicity from those Drukhari hoping to use this apocalypse to their advantage. Moradys not only fears it, but fully expects it - probably because that is precisely what she herself intends to do.

“And if you let me die…” Moradys wheels her hand about in the air, encouraging Orina to finish her thought.

Orina pats her hands together anxiously. “Something bad happens to mommy.”

“No,” says Moradys. “What I said was that your mother would be sodomized by a pack of Greenskins.”

A blank stare is all the Elf gets in response, and she stands up with a sigh. “Do you know what sodomy is?”

Orina smashes her cheeks together in a strangely playful display and shakes her head wildly from side to side.

“I’ll show you when you’re older,” says Moradys.

She cracks a slight smile at her own joke, but all she gets from Orina is another dumb, vacant look.

*Orin would have laughed.*

An unwanted thought. She can hear his tearful pleading in the whistle of the wind. Every mountainous cleft seems the natural inspiration for his shapely buttocks. The railing rattling beneath her fingers calls to mind his trembling chest. Moradys swoons, growing so weak that she’s forced to stumble back from the perilous edge of the open-air train and slump back against the ore holder behind her.

“I want to see my daddy!” Orina grabs her arm and rocks her back and forth. “I want food!”

Moradys groans and gives up any attempt to either punish or placate the girl, instead letting her head roll from side to side with each push and pull.

“Soon,” she says softly.

Ribara rounds the corner, and her jaw drops open. You must look horrible. Wild strands of hair are matted to your forehead with dried blood, your body shakes like a spastic’s, and your eyes are bloodshot from hours of endless crying. Yet when she sees you, and clamps her palms to her mouth
in shock, her orange-black shine with the light of someone who has sighted a Goddess.

“She’s just like in my dreams,” gasps Ribara.

She takes a few excited steps towards you, dropping her hands from her face and holding them out as if to take you into her arms. You scramble over to the bathroom sink and grab soap dishes, glasses, and flasks, hurling them at her while you shriek in rage.

“Stay away from me!”

You even manage to rip the towel rack off the wall and smack her across the cheek with it when she gets within arm’s reach. Some of your old strength remains, it seems. Ribara snatches the bar from you and tosses it aside, then takes you in a powerful embrace that presses your face into her muscular chest. You scream and sob and pound your fists into her sides, drawing only the slightest of flinches from her.

Despite your fear that Ribara’s *other* enhancement would still be in affect, you don’t find yourself the least bit weakened by her clumsy touch or feminine odor. Perhaps all the horrific changes you went through overwrote that particular bit of mindfuckery. Or perhaps your own gut-wrenching anger is doing that.

“I hate you!”

You shout the declaration into the fabric of her gown over and over, flailing like an animal until finally you manage to slip free of her. She grabs you from behind and staggers forward, pinning you between her and the sink. Her groin presses to your buttocks, and you freeze in panic at the thought of her taking you then and there.

Instead, she takes you by the hips and spins you around, pressing your back to the sink and running one hand over your chest and abdomen as if marveling at an impossibly realistic statue. Her eyes travel to the bloody gash on your forehead, and her gentle fingertips follow.

“What happened?” she asks you.

“I did,” Vala calls out.

Ribara’s eyes narrow in anger and flash over to where Vala still lays past the wooden divider. She smooths back your hair and kisses you while you dig your knee into her groin in an attempt to push her away.

“I will never do that,” she whispers. “I will never hurt you again.”

“Look at me!” you sob. “Look at what you did to me!”

Her only response is to try to plant a kiss on your lips. You wrench your face away from hers, and she begins to kiss up and down your thin neck. Her every touch is a horror that you quiver and snarl against. The bulge pressing against your thigh a reminder of why you’ve been remade the way that you are - and what awaits you.

Ribara pulls herself back from the crook of your neck and grabs you about the waist, then hauls you from the bathroom while you wail like a banshee and grab onto anything you can in an attempt to delay the inevitable. You tear off a post running up the side of the wood divider and clock her in the head with it, making her shout in anger and clench you tighter. It would almost be a relief for her to strike you, and prove that she’s exactly as you said. But she calms herself, and resumes her slow and deliberate waltz to the bed.
“Help me!” Ribara says to Vala, who lounges on her side, rubbing her pregnant belly and watching the scene with feigned disinterest.

“You wanted her, didn’t you? She’s your problem.”

Ribara grunts in annoyance and falls onto the bed, pressing you deep into the mattress and splaying your legs apart with her hips. Her laps crash against yours and her tongue slips inside your mouth, circling your own and making you gag with its forceful ministrations. You bite down, and warm blood floods your mouth. That ends the kiss, but it doesn’t come close to putting Ribara off her chosen path. She stares down at you with wide-eyed lust and blood-stained lips while her hand kneads your breasts. You thrust a hand up to try and scratch at her eyes, but can only reach high enough to push on the underside of her chin. The scene is more wrestling match than lovemaking session, and Ribara’s growing frustration makes it clear that this isn’t going how she had hoped it would.

Ribara leans her forearm on your throat and uses her other hand to hike up her gown, then fumbles with the waist of her pants until something warm and fleshy drags against the inside of your thigh. The weight on your windpipe threatens to crush it, but you still manage to suck in a terrified gasp of air at the sensation of the limp cock mashing against your sex. Ribara takes her arm off of your neck and grabs your head with both hands, then falls on top of you and holds your head in place while breathing hot and heavy against the side of your face. She grinds herself into you, probing your sex with a member that swells with blood and arousal.

“Vala!” you shout at the top of your lungs. “Help me! Help me!”

Struggling to turn your head against the monstrous hands holding it still, you catch a brief glimpse of Vala laying behind you. Her eyeliner is smeared with tears, and she watches you with an open-mouthed look of horrified helplessness. As if she were the prisoner here, not you.

Ribara wrenches your face back to hers and stares into your eyes as her aimless thrusts become slower and more deliberate. Her engorged cock slides all over your abdomen and inner thighs, painting you in precum. You try to push her off, but you might as well try to bench-press a tank. Her eyes are as vulnerable as the next person’s, but she wrestles your hands into submission before you can jam your thumbs into them.

“I love you…” She presses her forehead to yours and draws her hips back, poising the head of her cock at your womanhood. Your folds part and the swollen head presses inside, straining at a virgin entrance that hasn’t seen more than a single, slender finger. She mutters her professed love over and over, each time feeding you another fraction of an inch of veiny meat.

Something pops just inside of your pussy, and Ribara’s length eases past warm, gushing fluids. You scream. You tell her you hate her, that you always hated her, and that you always will hate her. The passage of her cock continues no matter how much venom you spew at her, and with each excruciating new depths it plumbs, your violation becomes more and more total. You are no stranger to violation - you’ve been raped into a sobbing mess more times than you care to remember.

But that was as a man. When Moradys or Ribara had stirred up your insides or choked you on their lengths, you had owned your feelings. Your hatred and revulsion was pure, untainted by confusion or conflicted feelings.

Not like now. As her cock stretches your walls and plumbs unexplored depths, your entire body sings a song of unwanted pleasure just beneath your own defiant screams of agony. Is this what it is to be a woman? To be betrayed by your own body, and have pleasure forced upon you along with pain?
You refuse to let your pleasure be heard. Each time a wave of orgasmic ecstasy courses through you, you cover it up with an ear-shattering scream directed into Ribara’s ear. She pays you no heed, continuing to feed you her titanic length with as much gentle patience as she can manage amidst your furious thrashing.

“Almost there,” Ribara shudders into your weeping face. “I love you so much…”

You’ve never felt so full, or hurt so much. Her cock pushes up against something hard above your bellybutton, and the pain makes your mouth shoot open in a full-throated scream. Ribara’s body shakes, her bulging arms tremble, and her breath grows ragged as the pressure inside you builds. It feels as if she’s going to fuck herself straight through to your ribcage, ruining this new body she forced upon you.

“It hurts!” you cry out. “You’re killing me!”

She doesn’t stop. Her lips come to rest on your cheek, and her eyes flutter closed. “I will never hurt you again.”

With that final whispered promise, she draws air in through her nostrils and draws her hips back a few inches. You scream in panic for her to stop, for Vala to help you, for your old powers to return and rescue you from what is about to happen. In your mad fumbling and Ribara’s attempt to better position herself, your arm wraps under hers and brushes against her belt, and you feel something.

The hilt of a dagger.

The feeling of that cold steel brings to mind the countless murders she inflicted on you, ruining your mind just as she now ruins your body. Your fingers twitch and reach and grasp, but you can do no more than brush the end of the handle.

Ribara slams her hips into yours, spearing you with the rest of her cock and bringing her balls slapping up against your buttocks. Something tears inside of you, and that’s the last thing you hear or feel before shock sets in. Your vision goes black, your ears ring, and your legs slump weakly in the air. Someone mutters unending nonsense, and a tongue worms its way into your ear. Your left hand, which you had been clawing at Ribara’s side with, slumps down to the bed. Your right hand, held at her side, drifts off to do the same…

And you feel it brush over the carved hilt of the dagger. Your hand squeezes, your arm pulls back, and your shoulder thrusts forward. Ribara shouts something, and you see a shaky vision of her staggering up from the bed, pressing both palms to her left side. Her gown falls over her erect cock, which bobs obscenely beneath the red fabric like a tentpole. You throw yourself onto your side and push up on one arm, then point the trembling knife at Ribara.

“You don’t love me!”

Ribara tries to speak, but blood spills from her mouth in place of words. She collapses to one knee, then staggers back upright and takes another few steps back towards the doorway.

“You took my mind, then you took my body! What’s left? What is it that you actually love?” You almost throw the dagger at her in rage, but manage to stop yourself before losing the one thing standing between you and violent retaliation.

Except Ribara doesn’t look angry at all. Blood soaks her gown where you stabbed her, splattering on the floor and leaving a trail as she backs away. Her mouth moves in silent gasps, and her legs buckle under her. The eyes that had once gazed into yours with such passionate intensity now waver with
panicked uncertainty as she struggles to understand what just happened.

“Tell me!” you shriek at her.

Ribara spins about in a whirlwind of bloody robes and flees into the hall. Your knife-hand falls to the bed, and you collapse onto your side as wave after wave of unimaginable pain crashes through your body. Biting your lip to quiet your sobbing, you clasp your free hand between your legs and curl up into a ball. Your sex is wet, hot, and throbs with a sharp ache. You don’t dare look down to find out just how much blood coats the inside of your thighs.

Someone shifts on the bed behind you, and you cringe against the sensation of Vala’s breasts and swollen belly pressing into your back. She strokes your hair with one hand, and slides the other one over your hips and towards your groin. A whine of confused anguish accompanies your attempt to pull her hand away, but your fumbling attempt to do so while still holding onto Ribara’s knife allows her to slip her hand in between your legs. She presses it atop your own clenched hand, helping to apply a pressure that dulls the agony of your ravaged sex.

“Let me go,” you hiss between shuddering sobs.

Vala presses her face to your shoulder and draws in a halting breath. Tears collect where her closed eyes meet your soft flesh, and her arms tremble about your curled frame.

“Never again,” she says.

You dig your knuckles into your forehead and curl into yourself more tightly with each stroke of her fingers through your hair. The warmth of her body against your back. The way her foot slides up and down the covers, tugging on your own feet. The steady rhythm of her breath against your neck. All familiar sensations that once would have made any place - even this nightmare - feel like home. Now, they are a painful reminder of the monster your wife has become. And yet, just enough of the old Vala remains that you can’t bear to do anything with the knife clutched firmly in your grip.

“Why are you doing this?” you ask her. “We could have escaped. We can still escape!”

“Shut up,” Vala murmurs. “Shut up, shut up, shut up.”

Her words are slurred, as if she’s in danger of drifting off to sleep despite the events of the last few minutes. A sigh escapes her lips, and her body relaxes against yours.

“She stopped screaming. Just... let her sleep. If you wake her up, I’ll have to do something horrible to you.”

“Who?” you shout. “I don’t understand!”

Vala hums between closed lips, and the hand stroking your hair falls still. “I loved her. She tried to kill you, and I loved her.”

Again you ask her who she’s talking about, why she’s doing this to you, and what horrible things have happened to her while you dreamed in your liquid prison. It almost comes as a relief when you’re met with snores instead of answers. You still don’t know the full depth of Vala’s hatred for you, nor the reason for it. What do you know is that something is terribly, dreadfully wrong with the woman you swore to love, till death do you part.

You were shocked at how quickly Vala fell asleep, but even more surprising is how soon after you do the same in her clöying embrace. Your sleep is fitful, and you dream that you are back in the pod, having your body torn apart and re-written by tiny machines and burning fluids that soak into your
flesh. Each time some Elf walks by the bedroom, you jerk awake in fear that Ribara has returned, then settle back down as the footsteps pass into the distance.

Sometime during the night - or day, you truly have no idea which - you pass into deep and dreamless sleep. You awaken later, and the violet lamps of the room have darkened so that the room is only partially lit by light coming in from the hall outside. The temple is dead silent, and in your half-wakefulness you struggle to figure out the reason for your sudden snap up from the bed. A sensation of cold metal sliding across your neck gives you your first clue.

For a moment you think that something is happening to the thin slave collar fastened about your throat, but this is something else. You raise your hand to your neck, and feel the links of a chain drawing tight. A split-second later, they jerk backwards, pulling you flush with Vala's belly. Terror-laced adrenaline rockets you back to the waking world, and you struggle to slip your fingers between your neck and the chain sinking into your flesh.

Kicking does nothing more than draw a few slurred grunts from Vala, and you can’t manage to get a grip on the chain. Finally you give up on that and start wildly thrashing from side to side, trying to roll away from her and snatch the chain from her hands. You manage to catch her in the forehead with an elbow, and she lets out a stunned gasp before slumping weakly onto her back.

You yank away the chain and throw it to the floor, then scamper off of the bed. Vala lays flat on her back, eyes closed and forehead reddened from where you struck her. Her lips move slowly, as if she’s muttering something to herself. You crawl onto the bed, ever mindful of where her hands lay at her sides, and press your ear to her mouth.

"Kill you," she whispers. The words are carried forth on the shallowest of breaths, and spoken so softly as to be hardly audible. This isn’t the rustic twang of your wife’s speech. It’s as if someone else speaks through her. The voice repeats itself, a bit louder this time, and more deeply.

"Vala?"

Her arms move underneath you. The right is pinned to her side by your knee, but her left hand raises slowly up towards your throat until her fingertips brush your bruised neck. You grab her by the wrist and force it back down to her chest.

"She hates you," the voice says. "But she is too weak to kill you… and you are too weak to save her."

"Save her?" you whisper desperately. "Who are you?"

Vala sucks in a deep breath through chattering teeth, and her brow furrows in somnolent anger. "The one your wife betrayed. The one who saved her from unspeakable horrors." She thrashes in your grip, wrenching her head from side to side, and the light from the hallway catches the creased lines of enraged jealous contorting her face. Only then do you recognize the voice speaking through your wife.

"Every day, I will ruin you more." Vala falls still, and all of Adrubal’s furious energy seems to surge into her voice. "I will mangle you so badly that she begs me to kill you out of mercy."

You clench your teeth and seize Vala by the neck with one hand, nearly choking her before you calm yourself with the knowledge that to harm one woman is to harm the other. "Look at what you’re doing to her!"

Vala squeezes her eyelids tight and scowls. "Look at what you did to me. I am nothing - a ghost in a
house that does not want me.”

“Then let her go!” You grab hold of her shoulders and glare down at eyes that flicker rapidly behind closed eyelids. “Just leave!”

Tears drip from your face onto Vala’s, and she groans in her sleep - this time, it really does sound like your wife, and not the spirit hijacking her vocal chords. You’ve seen the anguish haunting Vala’s eyes, even as she visits the worst cruelties upon you. She might have turned your body into something unrecognizable, but at least your mind is still your own. How unbearable must it be to share a single being with someone who hates you like only a betrayed lover can?

“No,” Adrubal whispers in a long exhalation. “Let her cry. Let her grieve. Let her take her own life. Our souls will pass into the covetous claws of She Who Thirsts, and I will be made a Prince of my own world.”

Vala’s muscles seize tight and her back arches off of the bed. Her eyelids open, and she stares up at you with the whites of her eyes. “A timeless paradise with my beloved, just for killing you.”

You laugh in her face. All these Elves are the same - believing love can be forced, and that an eternity of imprisonment would lead to anything other than hatred. That delusion is almost forgivable. What does something like Adrubal have left, besides hatred and delusions?

What you struggle to fathom is her belief that service to this serpent Goddess of hers will lead to anything but disappointment and torment. You would gladly let this monster be dragged down to whatever pit of damnation she sold herself too, if your wife’s fate wasn’t inextricably tied to hers.

“You’re going to trust a demon?”

“Trust plays no part in it,” Adrubal whispers. “My soul is already Hers. That is a bargain I struck long ago.”

“But not Vala’s soul,” you snap. “That’s what you’re gambling.”

Vala’s slumbering body settles back down to the bed, and her eyes close. For a time she simply lays there, sleeping peacefully aside from the odd twitches of her face as the bent gears of Adrubal’s mind turn within your wife’s skull.

“She told me she loved you,” you say.

Vala sneers and lets out a dry, rasping laugh. “We share a single being. Love is too small a word.”

“Do you even know what the word means?”

Her mirthful expression slackens, and she grows silent again. It’s a simple question, asked without any deeper meaning, but the Elf is reluctant to answer. Either she suspects ulterior motives on your part, or is simply unwilling to yield the reins of this bizarre conversation.

“It means sacrifice,” you continue. “Not the kind you’re used to. Self-sacrifice.”

Vala’s lips twist and she draws in a quick breath through her nose - a failed attempt at a derisive snort. “I will never let her go.”

That would have been the desired outcome, but you had little hope of talking this Elf into what would effectively be suicide and certain damnation at the hands of her Goddess.
“That’s not what I’m asking you to sacrifice.”

Her mouth slips open, and her closed eyes quiver. “You took everything else from me.”

Except for two things you could not. Her delusions, and her hatred - one of which you will have to ask her to part with if you are ever going to return your wife to something resembling her former self. The choice between the two is easy. You of all people know how stubbornly someone with nothing can cling to hope.

“Stop trying to kill me,” you tell her. “Just stop. You know better than me what it’s doing to her.”

Vala’s body trembles, then shakes, then convulses with a violence that shakes the bed. You grab hold of her shoulders and lean over her while she bites her bottom lip hard enough to draw blood.

“You think it’s easy for me to talk to you like this, you crazy bitch? Look at what you did to me!”

An angry groan emanates from deep in her chest, and she settles down under your insubstantial weight. It’s an exhausting thing, arguing with this formless wraith that you’d just as soon tear to shreds as barter with. Unfortunately, a permanent solution will have to wait until you’ve come to some sort of understanding with her.

“Why should I trust a Mon-Keigh over my Goddess?” she says.

“Trust has nothing to do with it,” you respond, echoing her earlier words. “I’d kill what’s left of you if I could, but I have no idea how.” You raise your fingertips to her forehead and brush away the hair mattered there by sweat. She grunts and tries to swat you away, but her hand falls weakly to her chest before she manages to reach far enough. “And I’d do anything to save Vala, even if that means saving a monster like you.”

There it is. All of your wants and fears, laid out on the table for this wicked intellect to pick apart and find something to use against you in a hate-filled feud that has managed to outlast death itself. Your only hope, though slim, is two-fold. One, that the logic of your arguments will somehow win out against the unbridled rage sustaining the creature of thought and memory slinking about your wife’s brain. Two, that you will have managed to find the one Dark Elf who can grasp the barest concept of what it means to love.

Something sharp drifts across the inside of your thigh, and you look down to see Ribara’s knife - held in Vala’s left hand - slide down from your groin and slump to the bed. That gives you your answer, and the tears welling in her eyelids tell you which of your arguments has won out.

“Why does a god want me dead?” you ask her. Adrubal’s hatred is easy to understand, and almost human in its motivation. But what could you have done to draw the wrath of a deity on your head?

“You are a pathetic, greedy thing. A whimpering faggot who could end his suffering with the snap of his fingers.” Spittle flies from between her clenched teeth, striking you in the face. “In your weakness, you brought something back with you from the Outside, and now it threatens Her.”

You furrow your brow in confusion at these nonsensical ramblings of a demented alien as your fractured mind begins sorting through the chaotic events of the past few months. Then, you remember that thing you had swallowed in the crumbling library you and Ribara narrowly escaped.

“That’s still inside of me?” you gasp, patting at your chest and abdomen as if to feel for any oddities beyond the all-encompassing abnormality that is your new feminine form.

Vala’s own face creases in confusion at your response, and then the corners of her lips stretch
upward in a frightening rictus grin. When she next speaks, it is with the voice of two women.

“We aren’t the cuckold… you are.”

And with that, innumerable memories slot together like the disordered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Some of the clues are large - a fetus grown to maturity in a week, and an infant who wields magic before she can even crawl. Others are small - the way she looked at you with an intelligence and maturity that rivaled even Moradys’ withering gaze. Yet no matter the size or meaning, they all point to one heart-stopping implication.

You never had a daughter. All you had was one more woman who used you, and then threw you away.

Words fail you, and your arms nearly give out alongside your vocal chords. You crawl backwards and settle down on the edge of the bed, hanging your head between your knees and gazing at a nothingness that seems to stretch on forever. Adrubal draws in rasping breaths that sound more like the sounds of a woman choking than true laughter.

“She wanted me here,” you mutter, ignoring her perverse joy. “Ribara took my memories and made me a prisoner. When that didn’t stick, Orina lured me to you.” You lift your head up and look back at Vala. “Why doesn’t she just kill me?”

“You are a host.” Vala slides her hand across the bed and brushes the hilt of the knife she dropped. “Kill yourself, and send it back.”

With a huff of frustration you crawl over and snatch the knife away, then return to your spot on the edge of the bed. “I’m not killing myself. I’m getting out of here, and Vala is coming with me.”

“The cult will never allow it,” she murmurs. “They listen to her, but they will not let their Avatar leave.”

You sit there for a time, elbows propped up on your knees and knife set beside you, thinking through your next steps. There are no good options here, but at least you have options. That is more than can be said for your situation before you made a temporary truce with the monster stomping around inside your wife’s skull. Unfortunately, your most viable path forward seems to be one in which your working relationship with Adrubal passes beyond the two of you simply agreeing not to kill each other. The fact is, you need her help to escape.

“Adrubal?” you whisper to Vala’s sleeping form. She murmurs something, rolling her head from side to side and shifting her feet back and forth on the bed.

You crawl over to her and press your ear to her mouth as you did before, but it’s only nonsense this time, spoken in your wife’s voice. Her eyes flutter open, and for a few moments she looks at you the way she used to. Then, the reality of your shared situation sets in, and her face contorts with anger.

“Don’t touch me!”

She throws an elbow at you, narrowly missing your nose and striking you in the collar bone. You’re more durable than you used to be - womanly body or no - but she’s also far stronger than a human has any right to be. You roll onto your side, clutching your throbbing chest and watching as she staggers up from the bed. She paces back and forth in the dark, scratching at her head with fingers curled like bony spiders.

“No, no, no…” Vala stops and turns to face you, her green eyes wide with horror and glinting like emeralds in the flickering light of the lamps. “You talked to her.”
You scramble over to her, each press of your palm to the mattress drawing forth new pain from your shoulder. The edge of the bed races up to meet you, and before you know it you’ve rolled off onto the tiled floor. Vala takes a few steps back from your frantic approach, but you rise to your knees and grab hold of her waist before she can move out of your reach.

She smells awful - like sweat and dried cum. Her pubic hair is caked with the stuff, and burying your nose into her muff fills your nostrils with a visceral reminder of what you were forced to watch a few hours prior.

But you can’t let go.

“I know what happened. I know what she made you do.”

Vala cries out in mournful anguish. You brace yourself, waiting for the moment where your wife drops to her knees and joins you in tearful embrace. Instead, you are met with a flurry of fists, pounding your nose and skull in a dizzying blur that sends you crashing to the floor.

“You did this!” she bellows, her voice cracking with a greater sorrow than you’ve ever heard. “You left us with that woman, and then she… she…”

The blows stop, and you peer through the cracks of your bruised fingers to see Vala clutching herself as her entire body trembles. “All we can think about is getting _fucked_! We hate it! We hate _you_!”

Her words surge into a bloody scream, and she stomps on your gut with her bare heel. Pain explodes across your midsection, setting afire all of the torn flesh and brutalized organs that Ribara’s theft of your virginity had inflicted.

“Why did you save her?” Vala sobs. “Why did we have to kill the one we loved, and you get the happy ending?”

A soft _thump_ sounds out beside you, and as your hazy double-vision coalesces into a single coherent sight, you see Vala finally kneeling beside you, as you had hoped for in the first place. Her face is buried in her palms, and she spasms with retching sobs.

“I’m sorry,” you gasp through shudders of mind-numbing pain. There is no limit to how many times you could tell her that, and mean it. So you only say it once, and roll yourself onto all fours before crawling over to her.

“We’ll escape,” you tell her. “We’ll _leave_. Just us this time. No distractions.”

Vala runs her hands violently up and down her face, scrubbing away her tears as she draws a wet snort in through her nose. “She’ll come for you. Moradys will come for you, and it will be just like—”

You grab her shoulders and squeeze. “No, it won’t. I know who I am, and I know what I can do. No one is going to stop us.”

Her hands fall away, revealing blood-shot eyes and a face twisted into a mask of utter rage. She tears you off of her shoulders, but keeps your wrists in her firm grip.

“Promise us you’ll _kill_ her. Promise us _now_, that you’ll kill Moradys when she tries to stop us.”

“I promise,” you say to Vala. “If Moradys tries to stop us, I’ll kill her. If _anyone_ tries to stop us, I’ll kill them.”

Vala releases your hands to wipe away the last of her tears and nods without questioning the
firmness of your resolve. You only need look into the tortured insanity of your wife’s eyes to see the destruction Moradys has wrought on your life. Any lingering affection you might feel for your once-Mistress is a phantom, the result of being broken so frequently and so thoroughly that your twisted psyche was forced to look to Moradys’ alien desires in its search for something resembling human warmth in this cold, dark city.

Maybe you never loved her. She certainly never loved you. She might think she does somewhere in that ancient, labyrinthine mind of hers, but she’s no closer to understanding love than the day you two first met. If anything, her possessiveness towards you has only made her cruelty more focused in its intent, and her selfishness more destructive.

You reach out to push away messy strands of hair from Vala’s face. If Moradys loved you, how could she have done this to the person you care about most in this universe? How could she make you feel as miserable as you do now?

Vala recoils from your gentle touch and stands up, then begins pacing about the room, scratching at her head and twitching like a madwoman.

“We can’t leave. They won’t let me.”

You rise to your feet and follow her as she traces an erratic route from one side of the bed to the other.

“I need to be able to do the things I did before. Then no one could stop us.”

Something you don’t know is even possible anymore. Could Ribara’s corruption of your form have severed the connection to whatever wellspring of power you draw from? The metaphysics of your powers are a mystery to you, and you know nothing about how to go about restoring them. Vala, whose powers are an external curse from the demon who sunk her claws into her soul, likely knows even less. That leaves you with one unthinkable alternative.

“I need to talk to Adrubal again.”

Vala stops and looks at you in horror. “Why do you need to do that? And why the hell should I let you?”

It’s a jarring thing, being scolded by your wife in her usual finger-wagging drawl while she’s tattooed with demonic serpents and painted up like a cheap whore. The fact that so much of her is still recognizable as Vala is what allows you to see the wounds and scar tissue that have formed over her soul. That is why it hurts so much to hear her leap to the defense of a child-murdering monster.

“Because I need to know what she knows!” You grab her by the wrist, in what is less an affectionate touch and more of a way to show her - and yourself - that she is still yours. “What are you afraid of?”

A harsh, grating noise builds in Vala’s chest and escapes as a frustrated shout. She resumes walking about, nearly tripping over her bundle of chains before kicking them away in anger.

“She’ll kill you! You know that, don’t you?”

Your expression remains resolute. “I can protect myself.”

Vala laughs. “No you can’t! Look at you!”

Your gaze turns downward, towards shapely breasts that would look quite lovely if they weren’t your own.
No, not your own. So little of what once seemed inalienably and essentially ‘you’ has been malformed by those with enough power and cruelty to twist you to their desires. Moradys corrupted your heart until your concept of love aligned with her own. Ribara stole your memories so that she could supplant them with a more convenient past. And Vala? She took your body, simply because it was all you had left.

Your vision swims in anger and sorrow. You nearly lunge at Vala, but one step forward has a wave of nausea forcing you over to the bed, where you sit down and waver from side to side with your head cradled in your hands.

“What?” shouts Vala. “You think I don't wanna cry?”

You hadn't realized that's what you're doing until she chastised you for it. Your shoulders tremble, and your breaths come in fits and starts through the fingers covering your face. The oceanic surge of emotions within you carries you along on a wave of tearful wails, and you’re carried along by your feelings in a way you had never experienced before. Is this part of the physical changes that have been forced upon you? Or has the backbone of your mind finally broken under the weight of one horror too many?

“I’m trying to forgive you!” A sickening shudder seizes your new, frail body, and you press your thighs together while wrapping your arms around your chest. “Why are you being like this?”

Vala’s face twists into a disgusted sneer, as if she finds your high-pitched voice as revolting as you do. She squats down on the floor to pick up one of her golden chains, then draws her arm back and whips it at you, catching you across the face. A spray of blood explodes from your cheek, and you rock back on the bed in shock. Vala crawls after you, shouting and beating you with a chain-wrapped fist while you flinch against every bone-cracking blow.

“Forgive me? Forgive ME?”

She slips the chain around your neck and pulls until the back of your head is pressed to her bulging belly. Blood and oxygen struggle to reach your brain, and you try in vain to slip your fingers between your neck and the metal while your head pounds and heart races.

“You’ll never forgive me! I can’t forgive me!”

Vala heaves forward with her anguished declaration, but quickly recovers her strength - if not her composure - and pulls the chain even tighter than before.

“Isn’t this what you like? I hurt you and hurt you and then you love me?”

Anger drips from her every word, and her fists shake against the back of your slender neck. The depths of her hatred are even less fathomable than your own turbulent emotions. What could you have done to earn a loathing so bottomless that it turns soulmate into murderer? What could you have done to deserve any of this?

Weakness was the greatest of your sins, but perhaps here, in a city that makes a virtue of brutality, that is the most damnable sin of all. Time and again you failed to make good on your promises, and now the one woman you should have valued above all others has made a hell for you to suffer in… and die in.

“I’m gonna kill you, then me!” Vala sobs. “It ain’t worth even tryin’... what’s the fuckin’ point?”

If only you could plead with her, to ask her for one more chance than you deserve. One more chance to be the man she thought she married, and to keep her safe. But you can’t do that - you can’t even
breathe. You can’t tell her you love her, or that you do forgive her, or even that you’re sorry.

A thrumming blackness creeps into the edges of your vision like a spreading necrosis, and your hands slip from the chain, leaving behind a few bloody fingernails ripped from your hands by your frantic clawing. Vala laughs, screams, and cries all at once, then presses her nose to the back of your head in a tragic parody of a lover’s embrace. The strength to muster any sort of serious resistance has long since left you, and all you can manage is a wet gurgle of protest while your tiny feet continue their slow slide back and forth between Vala’s.

Finally, even that stops, and you are left with nothing but your own thoughts. As reality dissolves bit by bit, you see the path that led you here in stark clarity. It was horrible throughout, often nightmarish, but with pinpoints of light that even now, as you lay dying under your broken wife, give you an absurd glimmer of hope. If only you could have gifted Moradys a sliver of the humanity she so desperately craved before she - and every other women in this place - stripped you of it. If only you had let her die at the hands of the daughter who had every right to hate her.

There are too many possibilities to consider - too many stretches of time where you lost sight of what was important and became hopelessly blinded by the ecstatic tragedy of your own captivity, leaving Vala to suffer hers alone.

If only you were strong enough to love only once.

The chain relaxes, and Vala lets out a long sigh into your ear. You slump down to the bed, too weak to do anything so demanding as scramble for safety while your wife rests her head beside yours. Somehow, despite being under the sway of the sort of mental violence that had her about to murder her own husband, she is sleeping. Her breaths come in fits and starts, and she snorts in a way that you had never failed to find adorable.

Vala groans, and her hands shift about the bed on either side of her body. She mutters something in an incomprehensible tongue, her voice becoming smoother and deeper the more she speaks. Gradually, she awakens further, pushing herself off of you until she’s all the way off of the bed. You hear a steady ‘clink’ coming from behind you, and roll onto your back to see Vala standing just past your feet, calmly rolling her chain around her open palm.

When she finishes, she looks up at you with green eyes too cold, imperious, and ancient to be human. And when she thanks you in a tone bathed in an all-too-familiar condescension and malice, you know that you are speaking to the dead.
Heavy Lies The Crown

Adrubal’s hands wrap around your bruised throat. They don’t squeeze or throttle, but her fingers flex with an aching need that tells you she would love nothing more than to choke the life from you. She stares down from her position straddling you on the bed, her brow furrowed with an intensity that would look terrifying on the ivory visage of an Elf, but which looks strangely out of place on your ruddy-complexioned wife.

Then, she simply slides off of you without saying a word. You know how much she wants you dead, as well as how easy it would be for her to bring that wish to fruition now that she’s seemingly in full control of your wife’s body. Luckily, the impassioned arguments you spoke to her before still echo in her mind, and for now that cold logic holds back the fiery tempest raging behind those narrowed green eyes.

“My lover gave in to her hatred before I did. How interesting… how funny.” Her voice is deep, with layers that make it sound as if she’s bellowing at you from deep in a cave. It’s hard to believe that your wife’s human body is capable of speaking in such a way.

Adrubal grabs your ankle and hauls you off the bed. You crash down to the floor with a shriek that is cut short by a bare foot coming down on your stomach, pushing the air from your lungs. She digs her heel into your sore guts, brutalizing reproductive organs that have yet to be given a chance to heal. You grab her leg and try to lift her off, but between her strength and your poor leverage, you can do little.

“I will let you help her, Mon-keigh. I will even help you help her. Are you ready to obey me?”

You nod and squeak out an incoherent acknowledgement - you’re at least ready to have your stomach free of her foot. Adrubal grunts and steps away from you, still far too angry to draw any obvious satisfaction from the pain you’re in. You crawl back to the bed and sit with your back against it, cringing against the predatory gaze of the naked, tattooed woman looming over you.

Nothing about this two-spirited woman’s form has changed, but the shift in body language and demeanor is so profound that you can scarcely recognize her body as Vala’s. Her shoulders, once drawn up into an anxiously defensive posture, are now drawn back in haughty pride. She stares down the bridge of her nose, refusing to look you in the eye unless able to do so in the most demeaning way possible. All of the little muscles of her face are tightened or relaxed in ways different from the usual, resulting in a difference in visage that goes beyond mere expression.

Adrubal walks towards you until her pussy is less than a foot from your face, then leans over and wraps her fingers in your hair, forcing your head back so that you’re staring up at her instead of at the cracks in the floor.

“Try not to be too pathetic - it will make killing you too tempting to resist.”

You nod again, and she hauls you to your feet by your hair while you cry in pain and try to pry her fingers from your scalp. Finally you manage to wrench yourself free, shoving her away from you and holding a hand out protectively.

“Don’t fucking touch me!” you choke out, still struggling to breathe properly. Even having her stand close to you makes your skin itch and muscles tense. You’re beyond sick of everyone you meet treating your body like their plaything.
Adrubal gives the slightest hint of a smirk, but can feign amusement for only a fraction of a second before her weary and hate-filled glare returns.

“Do you think I don’t know what it’s like to be violated?” She traces circles around her swollen belly with the flat of her palm, then stops above her bellybutton and digs her fingers into her flesh. “That half-born mongrel splits us in half every night, and we wake up bleeding each morning. All because Vala made the mistake of trusting you over me.”

The accusation is one you’ve hurled at yourself plenty of times in your short time in this prison, but somehow, hearing it from this monster robs it of its sting. Vala and Ribara might have done their damndest to make you a cuckold, but Adrubal suffers even worse. Not only is she forced to endure the most intimate voyeurism imaginable, but she has no choice but to share in the pleasure of Vala’s feminine orgasms - a sensation you suspect Adrubal was formerly a stranger to.

Back when you had first encountered the two women, you had spent many nights kept awake by haunting images of Adrubal plunging her pale length in between your wife’s spasming legs. You briefly considered the possibility that Adrubal was not equipped in the same manner as Moradys or Ribara, but the Elf’s deep voice and masculine demeanor made it impossible for that comforting lie to stick in your mind.

“I don’t like it either,” you snap at her. “That’s why I want to leave.”

“Do you have a plan?”

You shake your head.

“Did you ask for my help?” she asks.

You think for a moment, trying to find a more palatable way to express what you asked of her, but can ultimately only nods in agreement.

“Then you will do what I say, when I say it.”

Adrubal goes to a rack on the wall and pulls down a crotch harness from the array of sex toys hung there. Attached to it is a black phallus, some ten inches in length, covered in a webwork of rubbery veins that shine like riverlets of water in the dim light.

“There are many, many ways to access inner power. Some require centuries of focused training or contemplative sacrifice. Others demand the strength of mind and spirit necessary to brave the dangers of the Warp.” She turns to face you and steps into the harness, snapping it into place so that the absurdly-sized strapon bobs up and down in front of her crotch. “A strength that you will never have.”

You back away from her, unable to tear your eyes away from the artificial cock bobbing to and fro as she walks towards you.

“You’re not putting that fucking thing in me!”

Adrubal smiles - a genuine grin this time, if an evil one - and continues her casual swagger forward. The presence of a dick dangling between her legs seems to have her in better spirits.

“Some call it the inferior path,” she continues. “A worshipper is brought to the heights of ecstasy, where she lets go of everything holding her back from pure being. On that peak, even a simpering worm like you can forget what a failure you are.”
Your legs hit the side of the bed, and you fall back onto your buttocks. Adrubal keeps walking until her cock wags mere inches from your face. It smells as if it’s been used far too much and washed far too little.

“I’ll make you squirt and moan like a real woman.” Adrubal grabs the sides of your heads and squeezes, making your skull throb and eyes ache. “Do what I say, exactly as I say it. I don’t like listening to my lover scream a name other than my own - better that this is over quickly.”

Despite being largely confined to her Mistresses’ home for the vast majority of her twenty-odd years in Cummragh, Charal has seen many sights within the strange labyrinthine city. Few of them beautiful, most of them awful, and a few so horrific that memory itself rejects them, like someone instinctively dropping a hot coal.

None of those atrocities compare to what stands before her now.

Two grotesque behemoths, titanic creatures of grayed human flesh criss-crossed with iridescent green veins, flank a human slave who trembles in terror while piss races down his bare leg. The helmeted creatures watch him with faceless expressions of dark steel, ensuring that he does not flee while Charal delivers her judgement. It is a duty she has performed for weeks, one thrust upon her by the same invaders who promised to find her daughter and husband.

“Kneel before the mother of mankind, brother!” shouts a man to her left.

The invaders had constructed a beautiful gilded throne for her, and set it up in what was once the stands of her Mistresses’ arena. The pit at the center is no longer a bottomless black hole, but a brilliant inferno that bathes her in warmth and light. Rather than putting a stop to the horrors of the Elves, the invaders have brought them to a horrifying climax. Thousands of people - former slaves and captures Elves alike - are brought here to participate in the orgy of senseless violence that Charal now stands at the center of. Twisted creations of putrid flesh that reek of industrial waste and fresh excrement stalk the corridors of an arena that once glowed with a terrifying beauty.

The slave looks to the speaker, and Charal follows his gaze. Her Speaker is an elderly, balding man with a fat paunch visible beneath his simple brown robe. He wears a heavy, wrought-iron belt, with three sets of dainty chains running off from left, right, and center. One of the three Dark Elves kneeling on all fours beside him twitches her head, and a chain jingles against his belt. The Elves scalps are peeled back, and needles have been inserted into their skulls, with loops on the ends for the chains to attach to. Wherever the old Speaker goes, his blank-faced pets follow, drooling and sputtering like gibbering retards.

This is not how Charal pictured a city ruled by humans. For most of her life, she hadn’t dared even
imagine such a thing. But Sasuramen had spoken with such convincing and honeyed words that she found herself rooting for the invaders who destroyed her home. She could countenance suffering with a noble end - her own suffering, or that of others - but not this pointless cruelty. Even at their most depraved, the Elves committed only those atrocities that stoked the weakened fires of emotion within them. These invaders, on the other hand, seem to feel nothing at all, even when giving rise to such horrors as stand before her now.

The slave finally kneels, and Charal’s Speaker moves closer to her throne, causing her to recoil in disgust. The towering invaders - ‘Astartes’, they call themselves - had been terrifying at first, but time revealed them as harmless when they did not wish to do you harm. The former slaves they appointed to positions of power, on the other hand, make Charal’s skin crawl. They seem chosen for their capacity for wanton cruelty.

“Which will it be, my Queen?” says the Speaker.

It is the same question she’s been asked thousands of times since she was first sat down on this throne and given the power of life and death over everyone who came before her. The choice had been easy at first - consign the men, women, and children brought before her to sacrificial immolation in the pit, or give them a chance to fight against their former Mistresses. Charal could not dream of hurting Lady Moradys, but others like her relish the opportunity. The least she could do was grant them their wish.

Yes, an easy choice indeed - until she saw the first of the monstrosities produced by the captured Shapers. Humans given plasma pistols and force pikes and sent charging at the enemy would die in moments, so the invaders took those frail forms and twisted them with dark science until they’d produced something more… durable.

“I…” Charal’s voice vanishes into the sound of crackling flame, and she shuffled anxiously in her chair while avoiding the pleading eyes of the slave below her. She has saved a fair few like him - children, mostly - by claiming them as personal servants, but one of the Astartes had pointedly told the Speaker to stop allowing her to show such mercy. Slaves would either be given the holy strength necessary to fight for their freedom, or they would be sacrificed to feed the newborn god they claim Charal has birthed. She does not like the idea of feeding souls to her lost daughter - if she can even eat such a thing - but she also hates the idea of condemning anyone to the demented creativity of the Shapers working far below her.

Charal sits upright in her throne, and squeezes her eyes shut. The faceless stares of these wretched Behemoths, the lecherous leer of her attendant, and the forelorn gaze of the man whose fate balances on the tip of her tongue. It’s more power than she’s ever held, and far more than she ever wanted.

“Take him to-“

A child screams. Charal jerks in her seat, and her crown slides ponderously from atop her head before clattering down the aisle in front of her. She chases after it while searching for the wailing child.

“Mommy, mommy!” the voice continues.

Charal stops, breathless, and picks up her crown. There, she sees the source of the noise. A small human face, stretched across the side of one of the Behemoth’s abdomens like raw hide, cries and screams in childlike terror. The slave standing beside it stares up at Charal, clearly having some understanding of what is happening mere feet away from him, but unwilling to glance to his side and have his worst fears confirmed.
“The fire pit!” Charal stammers out. “Throw him in the pit!”

Her Attendant barks out the order to the Behemoths, with the addition of more than a few clarifying details that will allow the brain-damaged brutes to carry out her wish. They grab their unmoving charge by either arm and carry him off towards a distant parapet overlooking the arena. Charal lets out a cry of anguish and walks back to her throne, ready to slump back down with crown in hand.

“Our Queen’s time is precious!” her Attendant shouts at the doorway in the stands below them. “Bring the next ones as a group!”

Charal approaches the balcony before her throne and watches in horror as some twenty filthy children are herded out at the tips of spears. Many cry, a few scream, and one young boy calls out for his mother. He swivels his head about, looking for any sign of the family he has been torn away from, until finally his eyes land on Charal’s.

Her heart seizes in her chest, her breath catches, and her stomach twists into a knot. She drops her crown, turns away, and runs.

A meeting of Archons is a dangerous thing.

When the leaders of two great Houses risk putting themselves in a room together, invariably both have already come to the conclusion that the other is weak, and that now is the time to strike. One dies, soldiers fight, slaves change hands, and the wheels of social change continue their slow and relentless revolution, grinding the weak and stupid to dust. No single Elf, no matter how powerful, is essential to Cummragh’s continued functioning.

But if all twenty-six of them were to be killed in one fell swoop? Such a thing would spell disaster for the Drukhari people. Those harried troops holding back the human invaders would be hopelessly demoralized, and the expeditionary forces currently en route would be without a psychic beacon to find their way back home, leaving them hopelessly stranded in the senseless chaos of the warp.

Yes, a tragedy indeed… but as Moradys stands in this ancient shrine-turned-council chambers, listening to the ceaseless bickering of twenty-five other woman, she can’t help but remain confident in her decision that one head is far superior to twenty-six.

The Archons are spread throughout the circular chamber, clustered into small groups that lurk in corners clouded with incense drifting down from the bronze burners hung from the pillars circling the room. Moradys herself stands at the center near a well-stocked drink table, sipping on a glass of liquor in the hopes that a slight buzz will lessen her annoyance with the day’s tiresome proceedings.
Beside her stands Orina, who tugs on her leash with both hands while stomping about like a maniac. “Food!” she shouts.

Moradys grips her end of the chain firmly and prepares to give it a good yank, but thinks better of it and instead hands her glass to Orina, who accepts greedily and tips it towards her mouth before breaking out into a fit of coughing. The little girl cries, Moradys laughs, and a few pairs of suspicious eyes turn towards the strange duo before returning to the centers of their secretive groups.

“Food!” Orina says again. Moradys grabs her around the cheeks and tries to clamp her mouth shut, but Orina bites her hand and continues her awful screeching.

“You ate yesterday, you horrid thing!” Moradys squats down on one knee and grabs her by the arm, shaking the girl in the hopes it will quiet her. “Shut up right now, or I’ll never feed you again!”

More eyes turn towards the pair, and a group of annoyed women approach the pair. One of the Archons, skeleton-thin and draped in colorful silks that flutter about her like streamers, breaks away from the group and looms over Moradys. Her white hair, which had only reached to her waist the last time Moradys saw her some timeless aeons ago, now trails dozens of feet behind her, picking up dirt and grime as she walks. Lady Subarason would have once been followed by dozens of attendants, each responsible for carrying a small handful of hair. But with her house decimated, she was forced to abandon all but the most essential servants - guards and the like.

“I was under the impression we had all agreed not to bring any strength of arms,” says Subarason, who extends a bony hand towards Orina. “You insist on such humiliating rules, only to parade that… decadent morsel in front of us?”

Orina cringes against the lecherous advances of the bony Elf, and Moradys pulls the little girl close to her.

“A pet?” says Moradys. “Yes, I brought a pet. You’re perfectly free to entertain yourself with your own while we wait.”

Subarason tears her eyes away from Orina and crosses her arms, giving the impression of a colorfully-wrapped corpse ready to be entombed.

“And what are we waiting for?” she asks. “All twenty-six Archons are here. You have your meeting. Are you going to tell us why our Goddess has grown deaf to our demands?”

Actually, Moradys hasn’t the slightest clue - though it was comforting to discover that she was not the only Archon who had lost the damning favor of She Who Thirsts. Claiming to have something someone wants, be it object or knowledge, is always a short-term gambit, but it is one of the few cards Moradys has left in a game she is fast becoming irrelevant in.

“It’s quite simple,” says Moradys. “She’s grown bored of you.”

Subarason drops her hands to her sides, and fixes Moradys with a quizzical expression. The three other Archons who had followed her move closer, eager to hear out the conversation between the two and extract some meager social profit from it - like moths to a flame.

“Bored of me?” Subarason wrinkles her nose, and the near-translucent skin stretched over her jagged features crinkles like wax paper. “I was committing genocide when you were still getting handjobs from your mother’s slave girls! I have turned shining paradises into rotten sewers of piss and shit!”

What little spit the dried-out woman can spare flies from her gnashing teeth, and she’s forced to
swallow before continuing her prepared tirade.

“What have you done? Consorted with Mon-keighs? Coddled them while those of us who remain faithful to the old ways drowned them in the muck of depravity?”

Subarason turns as if to speak to her hangers-on, but projects her staccato voice loudly enough that the whole temple chamber can hear.

“Of all the people to claim divine guidance, we listen to Lady Moradys? A woman who grew a half Mon-keigh daughter in the womb of her Mon-keigh slave?”

Subarason tries to spit between her and Moradys, but lacks the moisture to do more than pantomime her disgust.

“This degeneracy is why She Who Thirsts has forsaken us. We do not need this heretic’s mummer, for the answer is obvious. A return to the old ways - a night of holocaust that never ends!”

Moradys rolls her eyes and wheels her hand about in the air, moving her lips in time with the other Elf’s rantings until she’s finished speaking.

“Yes, yes. More murder, more rape, more ruin. The same as always, yes?” Moradys grabs Orina by the back of the neck and guides the girl alongside her as she begins to circle the small raised dais they stand upon.

The rest of the room is looking at them now, some with eyes that carry the sort of boredom only aeons of endless life can give rise to, while others glance hungrily from Subarason to Moradys, eager to pick a side the moment they sense the tides in the room shift decidedly towards one woman or the other.

“You’ve been committing genocide since I was a mere child,” says Moradys. “And even you’ve grown bored of it. Imagine how She must feel.”

A dry laugh from someone in the crowd punctuates the stony silence, but Moradys keeps her expression serious as she storms off the dais, Orina in tow, and makes her way to the edge of the room. A gaggle of robed Elves part like the mists before her advance, and watch her with arms folded in baggy sleeves as she smashes one of the ancient frescoes adorning the wall. The assembled Archons gasp and crow in righteous anger, and a few move to stop her from destroying the weathered depiction of their serpent Goddess.

But as Moradys continued pounding at the wall with her fist, revealing more of what lies beneath, the few Elves bold enough to intervene stop just short of grabbing hold of her. The remaining Archons join the group, eager to see what stopped a scuffle from breaking out.

Moradys pulls away the last slab of beige stone and lets it drop to the floor. The artwork beneath is far, far older than what she just destroyed, but the stonework layered over it has left this piece remarkably well-preserved. A naked Elf - her skin alabaster smooth except for the small scaly patches on her thighs and arms - stands with her arms wrapped around a smaller woman of some long-dead alien race, tongue-fucking her ear while she chokes her with one hand and fingers her womanhood with the other.

The sexuality of the piece borders on violent, but it’s a far cry from the orgy of death depicted on the newer piece Moradys just destroyed. The Elves marvel at the work for a few moments, but quickly become disinterested and begin to drift away. None of the Archons are old enough to remember the times when Drukhari worship had venerated such gentle passion over carnal destruction, but the
evolution of their Goddesses’ desires alongside their own is no deeply-buried secret… simply a fact tossed aside by a people whose focus is on the sharp pleasures of the present, not the slow-burning romance of ages past.

“A history lesson,” says one of the Archons beside Lady Subarason. “I can’t say why I expected useful direction from a Mon-keigh lover.”

The others murmur in agreement - none laugh. Moradys’ rather mundane tastes in the sexual realm have long been used as a barb against her, but her seduction at the hands of her male slave has turned those accusations of heresy into whispers of weakness. Only the latter of the two is sure to earn one a quick death at the hands of hungry rivals.


The women make all manner of disagreeable noises, from scoffs to near-vomiting retches. They recoil from her like creatures of the night exposed to the light of a star for the first time. How could they not, when she brings these wretched beings such glorious revelation?

“I let myself grow weak, and now I feel like I’ve never felt before.” She clasps her hands to her chests and draws her shoulders up as an orgasmic shudder courses from head to toe, causing her eyes to roll up until only the blacks of her eyes show. “We searched for new life in deeper depravity and sharper sensations, when we should have been looking backwards! I’ve loved, and betrayed, and been betrayed. When I find him again I will kill him, and experience loss like I’ve never known before.”

She might as well have taken a shit on the floor for all the good her speech does in bringing the room together. A few of the more amicable Archons, overjoyed to find themselves in like company, admit to similar dalliances with their slaves, but don’t go as far as to yoke divine mandate to their romances. The majority of the twenty-five Elves, led by Subarason, gather in a group opposite those whose proximity to Moradys hints at their support. The latter quickly realize how outnumbered they are and vanish like wraiths in the clouds of incense, leaving Moradys alone.

“Every hour the Mon-keigh sacrifice thousands of our own to their shrunken corpse god, and you would waste time pushing this heresy on us?”

Two hidden pairs of spindly arms unfurl from Subarason’s fanciful gown, each hand holding a barbed knife with blades blacker than the starless void. The Elf launches herself at Moradys, her thin limbs propelling her forward like some grotesque clockwork spider clad in its own dyed silk. No one else in the room moves a muscle - least of all Moradys, who retains a remarkable poise before the dagger-bearing whirlwind lunging at her.

A moment later, the reason behind her ease becomes apparent. The first of the four daggers to enter Moradys’ personal space turns to ash. The next flares into a brilliant blue conflagration that shoots up Subarason’s arm, burning away her robe while leaving her flesh unharmed.

Unharmed, but not unchanged.

Her fingers twist around each other and fuse into two slimy tentacles that lengthen and grow amphibious suckers on their undersides. Her arm sprouts eyes with brilliant blue irises and iridescent eyelashes of golden plumage. Her skin, once so colorless that the veins beneath were visible, hardens into a rigid crystal that appears blue, golden, or violet, depending on the angle of view.

Only when the frightening transformation reaches her shoulder does Subarason finally stumble back in mute shock, nearly falling over backwards before being caught by her fellows. The assembled
Archons, whose long lives have left them numb to anything but the most novel and powerful of experiences, are left with expressions ranging from amusement to awe.

“Did I say that I’d grown *weak*?” says Moradys. “I was merely being figurative. Our Goddess is more generous than ever, if petitioned with the proper offering.”

She lets her words hang in the stony silence of the room, which is punctuated only by the fearful gasps of Subarason, who collapses to the floor once the women to get left and right grow tired of supporting her.

“Assuming,” muses Moradys. “There exist those strong enough to leave themselves vulnerable to her blessing.”

The other Archons waste no time making their thoughts on the matter known. Moradys has always been adept at reading a room, but the hurriedness with which the Elves cluster around Moradys would allow even a child to sense the changing tides of opinion amongst these fickle women. A child like Orina, who stuffs her hands back under her armpits and resumes pouting after a pat on the head from Moradys lets her know that she’s done well.

A short ten minutes later, the chaotic cluster of women has widened into a huge circle that skirts the edges of the room. Each of the twenty-five woman stands on a small serpentine design - except for Lady Toranim and Lady Gulanyl, the latter of whom’s bio-engineered obesity frustrates the leaner woman to no end. They push and shove, each insisting that the other should have the decency to step out of the ritual and observe while the other gains the favor of their Goddess.

Moradys levies a firm - but politely-worded - suggestion that the pair find a way to stand *together* in the small circle. The woman jostle against each other for a few more seconds, but ultimately each gains enough space to assume a position kneeling on the floor with their hands clasped and held up towards the darkened dome ceiling. The other Archons do likewise, and Moradys joins a trembling Subarason in urgent prayer.

“Hungry mother,” the group starts. “Hear us and feel us…”

At first, the chant is a disjointed roar of shouting voices that vary from shrill to stone-deep. But as they continue speaking, and as the wary Archons are lulled into a sense of security by the familiar prayer, their disparate voices become one. Orina stands alone on the raised dais at the center of the room, tiny fists thumping nervously at her sides, radiant blue eyes scanning the crowd like little searchlights.

It would be so much simpler for Moradys herself to stand in the center, and for all of these ignorant women to funnel their energy into *her*. Unfortunately, no amount of promised power or persuasive talking would convince an Archon to give up a single iota of power to another Archon.

But to willingly gift that strength to a Mon-keigh child before sacrificing the power-fattened Psyker to their Goddess? A once-unthinkable act, but not a dangerous one - least of all for Moradys, whose emotional hold on the young girl has grown unbreakable in the month they’d spent together. It’d taken her no more time than that to turn a full-grown man into a lover who was willing to kill his red-faced bitch of an ex-wife for her.

Moradys casts a careful glance to either side, ensuring that the other Archons’ eyes are all closed before winking at Orina and giving her a cheerful thumbs up. The little girl is hardly paying attention to her or the other women, instead marvelling at the wisps of colorful energy drifting off of their hunched backs.
The steam-like clouds spin around each other and twist into cabled bands of violet that turn blue as they snake through the air towards Orina, who raises her arms up towards the offering and grasps at it with chubby little hands. Moradys watches greedily, every muscle in her body tense in expectation of the moment when Orina will send that same energy her way.

Moradys will gain the power to bend the world to the way it should be. Orina, who has been screaming for Charal nearly as much as she does for food, will get to enjoy the company of her mother again… or perhaps not. That all depends on the new reality Moradys constructs for herself and Orin.

First, she’ll go into his brain and take out all those little memories that are nothing but trouble - like those of the woman he still thinks of as his wife. Moradys will make him kill Vala, then restore his memories, feel what he feels as he holds her bleeding corpse in his trembling arms, then wipe them again.

Maybe that’s how she’ll spend every morning.

The possibilities of their bright future together have her almost as excited as the sight of Orina’s fingers touching the first wisps of energy. The girl tips forward onto one foot, reaching up into the air and grasping hold of one of the tendrils. The Archon it’s attached to twitches and frowns, and the tendril shudders. Orina drops back onto both feet, and her hand tightens into a fist.

Her other hand drops towards the ground, palm facing upward, then shoots above her head. The room shudders, and a spear of dark stone shoots up from the ground, surging up through the Archon’s cunt and exiting through her mouth. A geyser of blood erupts from the sides of her stone-stretched lips, and even more pours down from her obliterated womanhood. The glowing energy drifting from her body explodes with light and flows towards Orina as the little girl draws back her hand, extracting every bit of life the ancient Elf would never have been willing to give.

The temple erupts into chaos. Subarason tries to flee and trips over Moradys, throwing the latter backwards and earning her a similar impalement through the gut that had clearly been meant for Moradys herself. Orina spins about on the dais, using one hand to pull down chunks of rock from the ceiling while hungrily shoving clumps of ethereal energy into her mouth with the other. Two Archons are crushed wholesale by falling bits of debris, and Orina dashes towards their corpses, whose life force still lingers as a faint violet glow.

Partway down the steps of the platform, her steps falter. She groans in frustrated agony, her muscles twisting and bones shifting underneath her skin even as her legs continue to carry her forward. The rainbow dress she wears billows downward and outward, expanding to fit a new form that grows more mature and more brilliant with each passing second. Bony wings sprout from the center of her back, and are quickly covered by dazzling golden plumage that fills the dark, smoky chamber with a blinding light.

Something comes crashing down on Moradys’ head, knocking her flat to the floor. Her ears ringing, body aching, and head throbbing, she pushes herself up onto all fours and watches the slaughter taking place. Another Archon dies every few seconds, crushed and impaled before being consumed by a golden-skinned woman who moves with a startling speed and captivating grace. Their souls flow into her open mouth, food for a girl who has finally stopped bitching about being hungry.

Moradys could not have planned a better-executed sacrifice - and perhaps she didn't truly plan this one.
The ceiling begins to crumble in its entirety, showering the chamber with massive chunks of age-worn stone that Moradys scrambles about to avoid being crushed by. They might as well be rain droplets for all the attention Orina pays them. A particularly large avalanche showers the center of the room, seemingly enough to crush the girl - a full-grown woman, now - breathing blue fire across the room.

The stones evaporate harmlessly the moment they come within a few feet of her, turning into colorful butterflies that land on the nearest Archon and devour her down to the bone. Her power flows into Orina, whose orgasmic groans and contorting limbs bring her rampage to a momentary hault. The ceiling and walls continue their ceaseless crumbling, but the stonework merely hangs in mid-air after falling a short distance towards the ground.

All is silent, and still. The remaining ten archons - Moradys among them - watch in mute terror as glittering coronas of energy pulse in time with their beautiful attacker’s bizarre contortions. Orina grabs her sex with one hand, clutches her left breast with the other, and hunches her back while her knees tap against each other in time with her moans. She sucks in a deep breath that tugs Moradys a few inches across the floor, throws her arms outward, tips her head back, and screams.

The room explodes outward, sending smoke and dust billowing out into the moist air of Cummragh’s trackless skies. To the left and right of their fractured platform, a cold fire creeps across the heavens, revealing the shuddering energies of the Warp - then, stars. The sickly green mist that hangs across the city like a disease vanishes into the growing expanse, giving a clear view of what is happening all around them. The bizarre geometries of the city, so unnatural and wrong that they could only have been built in a realm of nonsense, are battered apart by the hard reality of realspace. Darkened spires, lit by a yellow star so close that Moradys can feel its terrible heat, are swept away like sand in the wind.

The blue flame that had torn a hole in the Warp and birthed them into the world retreats from the horizon, surging back towards the platform and rolling over the remaining Archons as an irressitible tide of corruptive energy. They are crushed underneath it, and lie on the ground as twitching masses of flesh and fabric wreathed in sheets of fire that grow and pulse like an insect’s cocoon.

Only Moradys remains, confronted with new horrors no matter where she turns her gaze. Finally she returns her attention to Orina, who stands on the raised portion at the center of the platform, having resumed her disturbing dance. Behind her looms a massive planet of golden cityscape and pollution-choked skies, flickering in and out of existence as the oceanic energies of the Warp continue to flow out of the gaping wound in reality Orina has dragged them through. Pieces of Cummragh - many the size of small moons - sail towards the planet ahead, heralds of the unthinkably massive city trailing behind them.

The woman on the dais bears only the most superficial resemblance to the ornery little human.
Moradys had dragged across the city for a month. Her golden locks are more feathers than hair now, and flow seamlessly into the similarly-colored wings flapping at her back. Her chest, once flat and boyish, has assumed a fullness that Moradys can’t help but harbor an ill-timed jealousy of. Even her height rivals that of most Elves, save Ribara.

She stalks down the steps before her, twisting and gyrating with each step, her eyes rolled back so far that Moradys can only see the barest hint of blue. A slit-irised eye pops into existence beside Moradys, making her stumble backwards in shock. More follow, soon surrounding her in such number that only the path towards Orina remains free. Flames erupt under Moradys’ feet, creeping up her ankles and bathing her lower half in a tingling coolness that calls to mind the star-speckled blackness of space hanging above her. Orina stops a short distance away from her, and her eyes roll back towards Moradys.

She opens her mouth to beg, to plead for Orina to remember all those times she could have raped or mutilated her but restrained herself out of love for her father. All that comes out is a panicked squeak that is nearly inaudible over the roar of wind and flame. The ancient Elf neither wanted nor expected to feel regret or remorse for a lifetime of butchery and debauchery - nor does she. The only thoughts that make their way past the immediate terror of her situation are those of a future that will never be, and the lonely damnation that awaits her. For Orin to live on after her seems like the cruelest thing imaginable - not for her, but for him.

Orina jerks her hips to one side, snaps the fingers of both hands, and the fire that clings to Moradys’ hips finally engulfs her. With that, she lets go of all her pointless musing of how differently she would have done things if she knew what she knew now. How seriously she would have taken what began as a single day’s amusement. How many women she would have murdered instead of turning them into pawns in a game that had turned from amusing to dreadful.

For what use are second thoughts without second chances?

It doesn’t matter that her cock is hard and black instead of soft and pale - the sight and smell of it makes you as sick as the first time you were presented with Moradys member to suck and stroke. Your revulsion manifests itself as white-hot rage, and you grab Adrubal by the meat of her hips before shoving her away from you. Despite your smaller frame, the old strength Ribara forced upon you still remains, and Adrubal is sent sprawling onto her back. She tries to scramble back to her feet, but her unwieldy strapon slows her attempts and gives you a few precious seconds to throw yourself on top of her.

A d rubal catches your first punch one-handed, and holds her other palm pointed towards your face. A moment passes, and her expression turns shocked when nothing happens. You’re not sure what magical retaliation she intended for you, or why it didn’t come, but you don’t care. You batter away
at her face in a screaming fury, pounding through her raised forearms to bloody her face and pull at her hair.

You’re done being treated like a tool or a toy. You’re done being forced onto your back by women whose touch makes your skin crawl. Most of all, you’re done being fucked. From now on, you do the fucking.

Your slender arms continue their assault as if gifted with a life and energy of their own, until the fiery ache within your muscles forces you to drop them to your sides and sit upright atop Adrubal. Both of you are breathing so hard you can’t speak, and for a time she simply stares at you through a gap in her raised hands. For a frightening moment, you swear that Vala’s eyes have turned the bright red you remember so well from your first fight with Adrubal. But as she lowers her guarding hands, you see that you’ve simply busted beaten her so badly that the burst capillaries in one eye have turned it a bloody crimson. Your wife’s face is spotted with bruising, smeared with blood, and already beginning to swell in places. Adrubal eyes you with a weary caution - not fear, or respect, but as close to the two as you’ll ever get from someone who despises you with every bone in Vala’s body.

You point a trembling finger down at Adrubal and stammer through tears and a nose dripping with snot. “You don’t touch me like that!”

Adrubal doesn’t nod or say a word. You take that as tacit acceptance of your blubbering warning, and roll off of her. She sits upright, turns her back to you, and removes her strapon harness.

“What, then?” she asks you. “This is the only way.”

Sex, she means. Getting pinned down and railed by someone who either hates you or loves you so much that the end result is just as violent. No - no more of that. Just because you’re the one getting fucked doesn’t mean you have to give up control.

It takes you less than a minute to explain your intentions to Adrubal. When you mention murder, she actually cracks a wry smile that she quickly replaces with a derisive sneer. It’s still an odd and horrifying thing to speak to someone so unlike your wife through her body, but you now have no trouble mentally distinguishing Vala from the body-hijacking Elf currently manning the helm. Like a man who married a woman with an identical twin sister, you begin to appreciate the subtle differences in body language and speech that distinguish the two.

Not that you have any desire to acclimate to Vala and Adrubal’s shifting state. You want the Elf dead, gone, and forgotten. Dead by your hands, and forgotten by your wife. Things were so much simpler - and surprisingly, less frightening - when she had a heart you could point a knife at. A heart that isn’t Vala’s.

“Wait on the bed,” says Adrubal. “I’ll find one of my ladies.”

You turn to make your way over to the bed, but she stops you and spins you around by your arm, putting you face-to-face with her. With one hand holding you still, she wipes the still-wet blood from her face and smears its warmth onto yours, making you appear as if you’ve been the victim of the same violence you visited onto her. The hand on your arm should make you recoil in disgust, but the warmth of her touch is indistinguishable from that of Vala. You hate yourself for how quick you are to melt at its firmness.

“There.” Adrubal steps back with a satisfied nod, and leaves the room to go find an unwitting victim for your plan. You clamber onto the bed and lay on your back, mussing up your hair and spreading your legs open before turning your head to the side and closing your eyes.
It takes less than a minute for your restlessness to become such that you can hardly keep still. Cool air flows in from the hallway, caressing your exposed womanhood, bringing your nipples to hardness, and making your nudity felt more totally than ever. Despite being alone in the room, you feel as exposed to the paltry mercy of the world as you did when Ribara was tearing your virginity away by force. Anyone could pass by that open doorway and see you laying here, spread-eagle. Anyone’s eyes could be drawn to your womanhood, warm and wet for reasons you don’t want to think about.

Anyone could step inside the bedroom and make you know what it is to be a woman.

You hear the footsteps before the voices. The anxious twitch in your leg refuses to be stilled, so you accompany it with dull groans that you hope will have the cultist leaving her guard down. The bruises Ribara’s left on the inside of your thighs will surely help sell the story of a mind-broken victim who can’t even fathom the idea of fighting back.

“Go on, fuck her.” Adrubal enters the room alongside another woman, who strides across the floor with armored boots. “Start slow. Then, get rough. I want to see her bleed.”

The pair of footsteps separate from each other, one heading towards the bed while the other veers off to the side of the room. Clothes flutter to the floor, armor drops atop them with muted thuds, and the bed shifts at your feet. Knees touch the inside of your thighs, and your legs are spread apart by calloused hands far larger than your own.

“Wake up, Mon-keigh.” The Elf presses her lips to your up-turned ear and snarls into them. “Wake up or I will wake you up.”

The pounding of your heart and the sickening pull in your stomach is too much. One of your eyes peaks open of its own accord, and you’re met with the face of the woman who would rape you. She’s bald, and her scalp is covered in serpentine tattoos that snake down her face and surround her eyes in blackness. Dark bags hang under her eyes, her cheeks are pitted, and her skin is colored a sickly green. It shouldn’t matter how pretty - or hideous - she is, but finally seeing the woman who rubs her soft length against your entrance only make you sicker and more afraid.

“It’s warm,” she mutters. “And wet. It wants me.”

She drags the head of her cock up and down your cleft, smearing your juices and sending horrible tinges down to the tips of your toes. You hate this Elf for treating you like you’re a piece of meat. You hate Adrubal for agreeing to a plan that you can’t believe you suggested. Most of all, you hate how your body refuses to hate this as much as your mind does.

As the cultist’s member hardens, she slips it past your folds and probes at your entrance. When Ribara had fucked you, her entrance was so sudden and excruciating that you didn’t have time to appreciate all of the sensations that lay beneath the pain. Now, as this woman sinks the head of her cock into your pussy, you are left to sink beneath a tide of horrifying pleasure that makes your eyes tear up and toes curl.

“Stop, stop!” You grab hold of her arms and try to force her to pull out of you, but her strength is more than a match for yours and she has the advantage of being on top - one she makes full use of as she grabs your wrists, pins them to the bed, and buries herself in you with a white-toothed snarl.

You don’t want this. The plan is forgotten, buried under the realization that you put yourself in this situation and invited this woman to fuck organs you shouldn’t even possess. Her cock, though nowhere near as large as Ribara’s, is plenty big enough for you to feel as a palpable pressure that runs up the length of your abdomen.
“Adrubal!” you cry out. “Help!”

She appears behind the cultist like a wraith, golden chains in hand, and throws a loop around the neck of the Elf buried balls-deep inside of you. Your assailant makes the mistake of trying to grab hold of the chain from the inside before it can be drawn tight, but that turns out to be exactly what Adrubal wants. She pulls the chain taut, snaring the cultist’s wrists along with her neck, then hurls herself onto the cultist’s back and rolls to the side, pulling her off of you. The Elf kicks, screams, and gurgles, but Adrubal holds her tight atop of her and holds on for all she’s worth.

“Now!” shouts Adrubal. “Do it!”

The urgency of her commands, and the sight of her fighting with such ferocity pushes aside the worst of your self-disgust, and you clamber on top of the flailing cultist, feet planted on either side of her. Before you have a chance to re-think your decision, you embrace the carnality you just escaped and lower your shaky hips downward, using one hand to guide the cultist’s dick into your pussy and the other to keep yourself balanced.

Electricity courses through you, cold and hot, exciting and terrifying. Your legs give out completely at the feeling of that swollen cockhead sliding into you, and you drop down the rest of the way, impaling yourself onto her. Your vision doesn’t go white so much as cease to exist for you - there’s still sight, and sound, and smell, but those minor things are lost under the sensation of having seven inches of rigid cock gyrating against your most private recesses.

“Your mind is a mirror, Mon-keigh.” Adrubal speaks in low, powerful tones that pierce the veil thrown over you by your body’s traitorous hormones and nerve endings. You keep your eyes closed and grab hold of the cultist’s breasts for leverage, but hone in on the source of those commanding words. “Remember what I said. Cultivate only that single thought. Do not follow the others, and they will vanish like smoke.”

You remember full well the mantra and images you and Adrubal settled on, as well as the visualization methods you’re to use to harness the energy within you, but you have no intention of limiting yourself to killing a few sex-crazed Elves who never seem to leave their cloister.

The cultist beneath you bucks her hips upward in an attempt to wrestle free of Adrubal, fucking you with long, deep strokes that plumb every corner of your womanhood. The struggle between the two women produces a rhythm of its own, and you ride their movements like the waves of an ocean. Soon you lose sight of land, and the fact that you’ve begun to enjoy being fucked ceases to be of consequence. If debasing yourself is what’s required to finally have the power to lift yourself up and hold your head high, then so be it. You’re not going to be a victim anymore.
Each violent undulation of the cultist’s hips drives her lengths in and out of you, making you gasp and tremble like a madwoman. You mutter the mantra Adrubal taught you, allowing its nonsense to fill your brain and push out the thoughts and worries that stick in you like thorns. The words mean nothing to you, but perhaps that’s the point. With your mind devoid of anything with substance or meaning, the slew of sensations assaulting your body lose their association with invented feelings like disgust or hatred, allowing you to revel in this ritual of sex and murder.

You have the power to change. The fact that you’re here, doing this, is proof enough that you’re not yet broken beyond repair. There’s a stronger you, waiting in the back of your mind as a vague idea that waits to be called forth and made reality. Someone who can’t be hurt anymore - who shrugs off these horrors and moves onward. You try to imagine yourself as you once were, masculine and muscular, but the image seems ludicrous when you have a cock bumping against your cervix and breasts bouncing in time with your fucking.

The rest of it, though, you keep hold of. This Elf might be balls-deep in your pussy, but you’re the one in control. She’s going to die a short, violent death, and it will be by your choice. Your sexuality is your own, and desire and enjoyment are no longer something to be feared or ashamed of.

But what of Vala’s sexuality?

The memory of her being fucked and choked by two Elves is nearly enough to shatter the delicate balance you’ve struck being wild lust and intense focus. You would do anything to never have to see her like that again - giving herself up in a way she never did with you. The truth is that you do hate her for what she did to you, and for what she made you see. That doesn’t mean you want to push her away, though. What you want is for her to be made to feel the same pain you did. Even your disgust with her can’t help but be tainted by years of love.

The cultist has stopped making those wet choking noises you drew so much satisfaction from, and even her flailing has grown weak. You move more than she does, rolling your buttocks across her lap. A warm and energetic tension builds within your nethers, threatening to explode outward at any moment. Something is being coaxed out of you by that dick, and you move faster in a fervent need to find out what new and amazing feelings it can produce.

You collapse forward, and your forehead presses to Adrubal’s. The familiar feeling of your wife’s head against your own reminds you of your goal, and you redouble your efforts to empty your mind of all unwanted thoughts, keeping hold of only your most desperate desires. You can hear both women inside of your own mind, Adrubal laughing while Vala cries out for you in confused grief.

They no longer seem so inseparable, these co-inhabitants of a body that has only room enough for one soul. You can see them in your mind’s eye, two impossibly complex webs - one red and one green - that intersect and overlap at times, fighting and mingling like two raucous lovers. Grabbing hold of the red one with nothing but the power of thought, you begin to pull, tearing it away from the embrace of the other. The green web clings, and shudders, and the red lashes out in bright fury that burns your mind, as if you’ve grabbed hold of a hot coal.

Pleasure courses through your body in thunderous waves. The air is pushed from your lungs, and your body spasms around the cock shooting ropes of alien cum into a sex that has not yet known the taste of seed. It’s the only part of the physical world that you’re still aware of as you tear into the mind you’ve connected yourself to, cutting away the last bits of Adrubal from your wife. Bits of the two wounded consciousnesses stick to each other, bloody remnants of minds that have been together too long to be cleanly severed.

Ardrubal’s body relaxes, and you hear a death rattle escape the throat of the Elf whose balls you just sucked dry. You see it now, in your mind’s eye, every cultist in this temple suffering the same fate -
their necks bruised like those of their victims, but with chains instead of hands. Their eyes bloodshot and rolled back into their skulls, their bodies cold and minds gone. Their temple crumbles, battered by winds and acid rain until it’s nothing but a pile of rubble. The city itself fractures into pieces bit by bit, lost to the ravages of the Warp and forgotten by everyone but you.

Something explodes.

The room shakes with such force that you’re knocked off of the dead cultist, her cock slipping free of your tingling pussy along with a dribbling of semen. You’re wrenched back to reality by a voiceless scream that seems to come from inside your skull as much as it does from every corner of reality. The bed shakes on its posts, and you fall to the floor in an attempt to find proper footing. On the bed lays Vala - you can tell from the very human expression of dumb-struck awe she wears - underneath a pale Elf strangled with gold chains.

Adrubal.

The cultist is nowhere to be seen, and the once-dead Elf who took her place throws herself upright with a deliberate focus that stuns you. For someone to come back from the dead and move with such purpose is a shocking thing, and you find yourself unable to muster a defense as she tackles you to the ground.

“No!” shouts Vala, following her off of the bed. Adrubal delivers a swift punch to her pregnant belly, making her double over in pain, then turns back and wraps her hands around your neck to squeeze for all she’s worth.

A groaning Vala starts to move towards Adrubal, then stops and picks up something from the floor. Ribara’s knife glitters in her hands as she raises it to her throat with trembling hands and tearful eyes.

“Let him go!” she screams. “I’ll do it! You know I’ll do it!”

Her voice falls quiet. The knife remains at her throat, still except for her terrified quivering. Adrubal’s hands remain around your throat, and you claw at her ivory face and breasts in a futile attempt to force her to free you.

She gives Vala a long, inscrutable look that you suspect carries more meaning than you’ll ever know. Her grip on your neck eases, though it takes her a few more moments to reluctantly remove her hands from your throat. Vala drops the knife and rushes over, throwing herself on top of you with an emotion-filled cry of relief.

“I’m sorry!” She brushes aside the hair matting your sweaty forehead and holds her face to yours, tears rolling down her cheeks and staining your face. “I don’t know why I did this! I don’t know why I did any of this!”

There are so many things you should say now that you’re speaking to Vala, uncorrupted by Dark Elf Magic or intrusive spirits. But all attempts to put into words how much you love and hate her fall flat in a mind whose attention is turned firmly towards something else.

All you can think about is the limp cock draped across your belly, still wet with cum and your own feminine juices. The only reason you don’t reach out for its inviting warmth is the fact that Vala is blocking you. The knowledge that she would see you do it doesn’t matter, nor does the fact that you despise Adrubal with an intensity that has only grown now that she has a body for Vala to touch. You want to stroke that uncut cock and bring it to hardness. You want to kneed those perfect breasts. You want her to pound you into the bed while Vala watches.
And yet none of those strange, alien desires bother you. There's no shame, anger, or fear attached to these intrusive thoughts that would normally make you feel sick to your stomach.

What the hell is wrong with you?

“Orin?” Vala lifts her head up and looks into your eyes with deep concern. “Can you hear me?”

You nod and grab hold of her arm in an effort to keep your hands from wandering where they shouldn’t. She breathes a sigh of relief, and casts a weary glance at a fuming Adrubal before holding a warning hand to the Elf’s naked chest.

Adrubal’s eyes widen with a frustration directed firmly at you, and her breasts heave with breaths so quick and deep that she looks as if she might vomit. Finally she gets off of you, picking Vala up with her. The Elf’s annoyance grows into fury when Vala yanks free of her and stoops down to help you roll onto all fours. Vala’s touch makes your groin tingle and nipples harden - as if you’re experiencing some fraction of the orgasmic pleasure you’ve still yet to fully come down from.

Adrubal turns her back to the two of you and scoffs in disgust. Her cock swings out of view, leaving you to stare up at a perfectly-shaped buttocks that clenches and relaxes as she shifts her weight from one foot to the other. Your wife is a beautiful woman, but this creature is a flawless statue of glowing white and soft musculature.

“Let’s get out of here, ok?” Vala grabs you under the armpits and hauls you to your feet with a great deal of grunting and straining. The inhuman strength she had seems to have left along with Adrubal. “We can talk later. We can talk about all of this later.”

With her back still turned, Adrubal crosses her arms and says nothing in response. Vala turns you towards the bedroom doorway and guides you forward for a few steps, which become easier as the fog of lust continues to dissipate. Your toes strike something hard, and you glance down to see Ribara’s knife sliding across the floor.
Dawn Of The Final Day

You lunge forward and grab the knife. Vala, who must think you've merely tripped, lets out a surprised gasp and tries to steady you. You spin about on your heels and charge at Adrubal, whose back is still turned to you. Plunging the knife into the naked Elf is the easiest decision you've ever made. It's not the fact that she's a monster that leaves you with such hatred for her. Moradys has likely killed many times the number of humans Adrubal has. Nor is it that Adrubal has fucked your wife more times in the last six months than you've touched her.

What moves your body is the knowledge that when she dies a second time, Vala will grieve for her. Vala shouts something incoherent and grabs for your knife hand, causing you to stumble and causing Adrubal to turn to face you. Time slows to a crawl.

What’s so wrong with you that Vala would fall for a monster? If you weren’t man enough for her, why rob you of your manhood in the most literal sense imaginable? You consider the possibility that Vala seeks to close the love triangle between you three by turning you into a suitable mate for Adrubal, and your stomach turns. It’s sickening beyond belief, but too plausible to put out of mind.

With Adrubal turned halfway towards you, Vala leans her weight into your shoulder and arm, deflecting your strike enough that the blade slides along Adrubal’s side, delivering a flesh wound that is not the lethal blow you intended.

You hate Vala. You'll tell her as much in a few moments, when you're holding her back from the bleeding corpse of her ex-lover. It doesn’t matter why she did what she did - expediency, insanity, or simple selfishness. She shouldn’t have loved anyone but you.

Adrubal hisses in pain and completes her turn towards you just as you pull back for another go. This time, she’s well-prepared to catch the strike, but you have the advantage of momentum. You drive forward at the same time you try to plunge the raised knife down into her chest. She catches it and, sensing the futility of trying to stop you with brute strength, swings your arm out away from her.

It’s strange, hating Adrubal less than you do your own wife. You want her dead more than anything - present events are evidence enough of that - but the mere sight of her doesn’t make you feel sick to your stomach.

Vala moves in between you two in the hope that you’ll be forced to pause and rethink what you’re doing. The knife sinks into the flesh of her left breast, and her eyes go wide. You remain there frozen in shock and horror, unable to move a muscle to stop your wife from slumping to the floor. Adrubal moves quickly, catching her before she can smack the back of her head on the ground. Even your fingers refuse to unlock from the knife hilt now dripping with fresh blood.

You hate her more than ever. Of all the things she's done to hurt you, this is the worst.

“Vala!”

You fall to your knees beside her, drop the knife, and press your hands to her wound. Closing your eyes and replicating the same ritual you practiced on Charal is child’s play. Doing so while a furious Adrubal clutches greedily at your exsanguinating wife is more difficult, but you manage. The self-righteous anger welling up within you aids your efforts rather than hinders you, and you find yourself wrenching Vala’s body back from the brink of death amidst tearful, muttered swears.

Her body, but not her soul.
You’re so new to this unnatural magic that you don’t notice what’s happening until it’s too late. Charal’s soul - her life, her energy, or whatever you might call it - had lingered about her like a pleasant aura, waiting for her physical form to tip towards either life or death.

Not so with Vala.

In your mind’s eye, two clawed hands covered in bleeding, rotting scales surge out of the seething madness of the warp and sink their talons into the ghostly image of your unconscious wife. She awakens at the moment of her impalement, letting out a terrible scream that nearly shakes you back to the realm of the normal. The claws wrap around her and withdraw as quickly as they came, pulling her down into the depths of purple and violet energy coursing all around. You follow, but only succeed in becoming hopelessly lost in the same chaos that took your wife.

A strong hand squeezing your arm pulls you back to reality. Adrubal stares at you in an expression of mixed grief and rage that makes every muscle of her tear-stained face tremble. You can’t be bothered to wrench yourself free of her crushing grip or scramble to reclaim the knife you dropped. The hatred you direct inwards outweighs even the skin-crawling disgust this Elf would ordinarily give rise to. Her eyes burn into you with a palpable fury, screaming mute accusations that are accompanied by your own inner voice.

You’re so stupid, and selfish, and incapable. Even possessing the power of a god only allows you to spread your ruin further, dragging down everyone around you. Everything you try to fix turns to shit, and everyone you try to save only ends up worse off for it.

A point of brilliant blue light appears in mid-air a good distance behind Adrubal, and rapidly expands into a ball of flame that widens until it brushes the floor and reaches halfway to the ceiling. A terrified shouting follows - a very familiar shouting - and then, a flurry of pale flesh and fluttering robes. A humanoid figure shoots out of the portal and crashes to the floor, babbling incoherently as she removes her scorched hood.

“I… I’m alive!”

Moradys turns about, whipping her head all around in a frantic attempt to get her bearings. Her hair is a mess, burnt and frayed at the ends, and she moves with such spastic gestures that you’d swear she was out of her mind on narcotics again. Her gaze finally lands on your small group, and she seems to take in the harrowing scene before her with only the most superficial display of surprise. Within a few seconds, she’s moving towards Adrubal with long, confident strides, one hand thrust under her tattered robe.

“Finally!” says Moradys. “And to think, it only took a month of torture for you to come to your senses.”

She pulls out a short, straight-bladed dagger. Adrubal lowers Vala gently to the ground, taking the time to wipe the hair from her forehead before picking up the knife you dropped and turning to face the advancing Moradys.

The fight is short, but violent. Adrubal stabs, and Moradys dodges. The former’s knife catches in the latter’s robes, and Moradys grabs hold of Adrubal’s arm before plunging her own weapon into Adrubal’s gut. Stab after snarling stab staggers Adrubal, and your eyes fall from the tiresome sight back towards Vala, whom you drag up onto your lap and cradle in your arms.

Her body is warm, and her chest moves with calm, steady breaths that create a strange aura of peace despite the sickening sounds of ribs snapping and blood spilling just a short distance away. You lift up one of her eyelids, and find her staring vacantly out into space. No amount of pleading shakes her
Out of the corner of your eye, you see Moradys’ opponent drop to the floor. How could it have ended any other way? She always wins, and you always fail in the most spectacular way possible. The irresistible currents of fate seem determined to give her the triumph, and you the tragic ending. Would it be easier if you just gave in and let yourself love her? Would that stop the universe from cutting away at your soul until all that’s left is scar tissue?

“What in the nine hells?”

You glance over at Moradys, who stares in bewildered confusion at her fallen enemy. Adrubal’s corpse is gone, replaced by the body of the sickly-looking bald Elf she had taken the place of. The oddity isn’t enough to hold your attention for more than a moment, and you return your gaze to your wife while pressing your forehead to hers.

“Yes, it’s natural to feel bad. You’re only human, after all.” Moradys sheathes her knife and walks over to you, then hooks her hand under your armpit and tries to pull you up while you continue to cling to Vala. After a few moments she lets you drop back down to the floor, then falls to her knees, wraps her arms around your naked chest, and presses her cheek to the back of your head.

“Did you fear me dead?” Her hands snake down your arms and try to pull them away from Vala. You jerk away from her, and she returns her hands to your body, exploring your breasts and narrow abdomen.

“I didn’t mean to do it,” you choke out between retching sobs. Moradys stops caressing your nipples and recoils far enough that she keeps only the barest grip on your chest. “Everything I do goes so, so wrong. Why won’t it stop?”

You’re tired. Tired enough to lay down next to Vala until your soul is dragged down to whatever bottomless pit of damnation she was taken to. There couldn’t possibly be a worse hell than the one you’ve made for yourself here.

Moradys’ hands slip down to your sides, which she grips with a strength that is more oppressive than reassuring.

“You keep failing because you try to do everything yourself,” she whispers into your ear. “Why don’t you let the people who love you, help you? The ones who truly love you?”

Her words of would-be comfort only fill you with more exhaustion. It’s a speech you’ve heard before, a sultry tone that you’ve let lull you into submission time and time again. Why are you even listening to her? Why are you letting her touch you, when you swore that you’d never again let yourself be used by someone who is incapable of seeing you as an equal?

“What is that you want?” says Moradys. “Do you want her back? I can get her back for you.”

Your shoulders tremble in shuddering anger, and you clutch Vala even closer, as if her familiar warmth will allow you to ignore the Elf winding her way around you like a snake.

“All you have to do is everything I say. Fighting our love is what got you in this mess in the first place.”

Your shoulders sink, and your hold on Vala weakens. You want to give in. Not because it’s a good idea, or because Moradys has done anything to earn your trust, but simply because of how easy it would be.
“She’s gone,” you say softly.

“Not gone,” Moradys replies quickly. “*Taken*, by a god who sees beings like you and I as little more than entertainment. No doubt She wants leverage over you.”

“Me?” You let out a pained laugh. “What am I supposed to do against a god?”

Moradys places her hand on your cheek and forces your head back until you’re looking her in the eye. She had looked tattered enough when she came through the portal, but from mere inches away you can truly see how much she’s changed since you last saw her. The silken hair she wore flowing down her back is poorly cut and burnt at the ends. Her cheeks are pitted, and her eyes are circled by the dark bags of someone who has not slept often or well. Even her colorless skin seems sickly pale, rather than radiantly white.

What hasn’t changed are her eyes. Those twin circles of orange-in-black bore into you with impassioned intensity, capturing all of your attention in an instant.

“*Become* one.”

*A god.*

The thought makes a shiver run down your spine. Power is the dream of every man, woman, and child who finds the world arrayed against him. Yet even with power enough to perform miracles, you can’t accomplish something so simple as saving the one woman you truly care about.

“How can you make me a god?” You look at her in unadulterated bewilderment. “Why can't I save her now?”

Your grip on Vala has loosened enough that Moradys is able to snatch your hands from her and haul you to your feet. She turns you to the dead Elf nearby, and you reluctantly allow yourself to lead over to her.

“Because you don’t *believe* you can.” She places a hand over your left breast, and you shudder as her fingers pass over your hardened nipple. “Not in your heart of hearts.”

“I *want* to!” you say desperately. “It's just... nothing ever goes right.”

It feels as if the entire universe conspires to make a sick joke of your life, with a punchline that never comes. Any realistic hope for a happy conclusion to this story of yours vanished with the last vestiges of your wife’s fractured soul, and you find yourself simply wishing for an end to your pain.

“Do you know what the **Warp** is?”

You swallow and open your mouth to respond, but the curious look Moradys gives you tells you that no matter your answer, you’ll be proven wrong. Even those human navigators who make regular use of the chaotic currents flowing underneath reality have no true understanding of the Warp. One might as well ask a fish to explain the difference between water and the sky above.

“It is a realm of thought, fueled by the emotions of every sentient being in the universe.”

Moradys slips past you and returns to Vala, picking her up and throwing her over one shoulder before making her way towards the bedroom’s exit. An explosion shakes the room, causing Moradys to exaggeratedly stumble towards the door frame and smack Vala’s head on the wood siding.

You snap at her to be careful and follow shortly behind, placing your hands on Vala’s head and
healing her wound while you walk. The image of your wife is as clear as ever in your mind, making it easy to return her body to what it should be. Moradys continues on through the temple’s halls, weaving her way around the contorted bodies of tattooed Elves who bear chain-patterned bruising around their necks.

“You’re strong enough to perform little tricks like this, but not enough to break free of the story our Goddess has made for you. This is Her home, after all.”

To hear a deity spoken of in such direct terms is unsettling. You’ve lived your life under the assumption that there exists a God above gods who, on some level, hears your prayers, but there was always an element of whimsy to it. You never expected to have to seriously contend with the consequences of a god, or a demon - or whatever claimed Vala - taking a personal interest in your suffering.

Why you, of all people? Is it because of your psychic abilities? That was, after all, the reason Moradys herself originally found you such a tantalizing piece of entertainment.

Your eyes drift downward, to the shapely buttocks shifting underneath Moradys’ clinging robes. The urge to drop to your knees, spread her cheeks, and bury your tongue in her anus is damn near overwhelming. This, apparently, is your punishment for freeing Vala of the torturous curse that had been placed upon her.

Try as you might, you can’t seem to finesse reality beyond the constraints of your own logic. Adrubal, who loomed large in your consciousness as the woman who made a cuckold of you, proved too overwhelming a figure for you to merely cast aside - so she was shunted into the Elf you were fucking. The same happened with Vala’s curse, which spread to you like a disease. At least she’s free of it now, for all the good it does her.

The two of you come to the cult’s main chamber, the one you beat a roaring rampage through over a month ago. Moradys makes her way towards the upward-sloping ramp on the left, and you follow, just as you should have done all those months ago. You wouldn’t have your wife, or your memory, but at least you’d still have hope.

“How did you get here?” you ask her. “There was a blue fire, and you just… fell out of it.”

Moradys stops on the ramp and turns around, smacking Vala’s head against another pillar and following it up with a muttered ‘whoops’. You frown and take your wife from her, unwilling to risk Moradys carrying her any further now that a two-hundred foot drop sits just over the railing to your right.

“That demon posing as your daughter sent me here.”

She puts her hands on her hips and waits for your response, but your lust-addled brain is too busy reeling from the powerful scent of Vala’s pussy. You can smell old cum - certainly not your own - but that doesn’t stop you from wanting to throw her down right here and bury your dick inside of her.

If only you still had one.

Moradys snaps her fingers, and you clear your throat while working the tension out of your face.

“Why would she do that? Why would she let you help me?”

After realizing her true nature, and living out the horrible fate she left you to, you had assumed that she had only the worst in mind for you. Did you misunderstand? Or is Moradys’ seemingly fortuitous
appearance only a way to facilitate some greater tragedy?

Moradys tilts her head back and examines you for a few silent moment, then turns around to continue up the walkway. For a fraction of a second before her face disappears from view, you spot the unmistakable coolness of suspicion written across her expression. As if you’re the one with secrets and hidden agendas.

“I think I know why.”

You ask her ‘why,’ but only manage to get half the word out before she responds.

“If I tell you, then my plan won’t work. You want to save your ex-wife, don’t you?”

“She’s still my wife.”

Moradys laughs. “With that new body of yours? How absurd. What would the two of you do? Grind against each other until you get rug burn?”

You hurry after her with long, bounding strides made possible by your enhanced strength. Without it, you would have already exhausted yourself trying to drag Vala behind you.

“I want my body back - and I don’t want to wait. Show me how to do it.”

A low rumble passes through the temple, causing long-settled dust to shake free of the walls and ceiling. The tremors build in power and rapidity until the structure is assaulted by a continuous roar that causes pillars to crack and the ramp beneath you to twist and crumple. The massive stone serpent-goddess at the center of the room loses her nose and one of her four swords, which plummet down to the bottom of the cylindrical space. A final quake throws you down to the ground, and you just narrowly manage to grab hold of Vala’s arm before she slides through a gap in the ramp’s railing.

“Can we leave, first?” says Moradys. “Is that alright with you?”

You frown, but make no reply as you hoist Vala back onto your narrow shoulder and jog up the ramp. The violent decay gripping the building continues its slow creep upward, and soon you are outracing collapsing walkways and tumbling walls that threaten to trap you forever in this unholy place of worship. Your powers could prove useful here, but you don’t dare risk devoting an ounce of focus to that gamble while running works perfectly well.

Less than a minute later, you emerge onto the temple’s rooftop, surrounded by docking platforms and ships, buffeted by winds that feel as if they might tear the skin from your bones, and illuminated by a brilliant sky that is nothing like the one you remember.

The arena’s interior has become a maze, an endless labyrinth of identical corridors that Charal races through in her desperate attempt to flee the gilded hell she has been caged in. One of her sandals slips
from her feet, and she stumbles forward, dropping her crown in the process. All the cumbersome thing did was slow her down, but she's sorry to leave the last of her regal trappings behind. It was pretty, and the time it sat on her head had marked the one time in her life she held sway over not just her own life, but that of others as well.

She would miss the glamour, but not the power.

The hallway shakes, sending her sprawling onto the floor and making her lose her second sandal in the process. She picks herself up, runs a few moments more before making a right turn, and comes face-to-face with the kneecap of one of the monstrous behemoths that has been pursuing her through the arena. The man’s head embedded within the knee swivels its eyeless sockets towards her and howls in pain, drawing the attention of the beast it's attached to. The massive creature leans down and tries to grab hold of Charal. She dives between its legs, narrowly avoiding capture. It manages to snatch the hem of her dress in between two leathery fingertips, but Charal screams and squirms until she’s free.

Completely nude and with the lumbering monstrosity hot in her heels, she sprints through the corridors with panic-driven speed, slamming into walls and choosing her route at random. Her pursuer, far larger and more unwieldy, shouts gibberish at her between pounding footfalls that nearly topple her over each time they hit the floor.

Charal spots a narrower hallway to her left and runs into it. She has no idea where it leads, but the size is such that the behemoth is forced to get down on all fours and crawl after her. That, at least, buys her time. A doorway at the far end of the hall proves an even more tempting destination. The monster won’t be able to fit through there no matter how much it tries, and will be forced to find an alternate route.

A nervous grin spreads across Charal’s face as the doorway grows nearer and the frustrated creature crawling behind her grows further. That smile, as precarious as it was, disappears when the door opens and a huge hand of deadened flesh reaches inside. Her legs seize up and she takes another tumble to the floor, stopping just short of the hand patting across the ground for its prey. A glance to her rear shows her just what she expected. The other monster is continuing its slow, but inevitable crawl towards her, shuffling across forearms and knees that slough off rotten flesh with each tortured movement.

Charal scoots back against a wall and lets out a sorrowful wail. It hadn’t been long ago that she’d had it all - a daughter, a husband, and a home. Now, even her dedicated attempts to recover just one of those has landed her amongst horrors worse than any she’d ever known. Is this what awaits her outside Cummragh, amongst her own kind? The universe was a crueler place than she ever could have imagined. And to think, Orin had wanted her to leave her home.

A finger the size of her torso brushes against her leg, and she grabs hold of its yellowed fingernail, yelling in anger and pulling with both hands until the entire thing pops free. The behemoth lets out an agonized cry and yanks its hand back through the doorway, then rises to its feet and stumbles about until it slams its back against the wall above her.

Confused - and more than a little proud of her defiant act - Charal peaks through the doorway to see what’s become of this apparently fragile monster. An Elf-sized figure drops to the floor a few dozen feet from the doorway, followed shortly after by the behemoth itself, which slumps to its knees and then slams down face-first. She tries to see who else had joined her in battle with the monstrosity, but her view through the doorway is blocked by the thing’s body.

“Hey!” Charal runs into the next room and clammers up the behemoth’s ankle. She doesn’t think to avoid looking between the thing’s legs until her eyes have already passed over its mutilated
manhood. The invaders, in their boundless and unthinkable cruelty, have taken its foreskin.

When she lands on the other side of its ankle, she falls onto all fours and vomits. Within seconds she’s recovered from the horrible sight, and is running down the length of the fallen body until she rounds its helmeted head and catches sight of her apparent savior. The crimson-armored figure is staggering away from her, dragging the tip of her bloodied sword on the ground while wobbling to and fro like a drunk. Two trails of blood follow in her wake - one from her blade, and the other from the slow trickle running down her boot.

“Lady Ribara!”

The Elf stops, but doesn’t turn around nor respond. Charal sprints over to her, too overcome with adrenaline to be afflicted with any of the usual fear she’d feel when approaching the towering Elf. Ribara was often violent, but rarely cruel. Even the times she’d forced herself upon Charal had been… tolerable, when Ribara could be coaxed into being gentle.

Charal reaches Ribara and moves around to her front. Ribara’s eyes are fixed straight ahead down the length of the hall, and they flicker to Charal before returning to gaze into nothingness.

“May I-” Charal clears her throat and hunches her shoulders, deliberately re-assuming the submissive demeanor that she had lost in her month as a Queen. “May I ask what brings you here?”

"Fighting."

Ribara shoves Charal aside and continues on her way. Charal races after her and throws herself at Ribara’s feet, holding her clasped hands upward in desperate prayer.

“Please, help me! I’ll do anything you want! I’ll even-”

Ribara grabs her wrist and lifts her clear off of the ground so that their faces are mere inches apart. The Elf’s cheeks are sunken, her lips are chapped, and she smells like blood and sweat. Her eyes, which always had an animalistic look about them, now border on the manic.

“Why would you want my help? Everyone hates me. You hate me. I know you do.”

“No, I don’t!” says Charal. Ribara huffs in anger and drops her back to her knees. Charal grabs hold of Ribara’s gown and holds tight, far less afraid of the Elf than she is of being left alone in this place. “You do bad things sometimes, but I know you are good. I… love you.”

The two fall silent. Far in the distance, a brain-damaged giant moans and claws at the groin of its dead comrade. Ribara gives Charal a sneer of half-bafflement and half-disgust, one which Charal has to look away from to find the strength to continue speaking.

“You grew in here, remember?” she puts a hand to her bare abdomen. “Before Lady Moradys took you out and put you somewhere else.”

“No, I don’t!” Ribara snaps. “I was a fetus.”

Charal uses Ribara’s gown to pull herself up, then forces herself to look right into those twin eyes of black and orange glaring down at her.

“No, a baby. My baby.”

Ribara purses her lips and furrows her brow thoughtfully. Then, realization dawns. Her mouth falls open, her gaze drifts upward, and her sword clatters to the floor. Charal had expected to appeal to
some withered organ of sentiment within the Elf. She hadn’t considered the possibility that Ribara had never followed this line of thought to its conclusion.

Pain is all that Vala knows.

She screams and thrashes, trying desperately to get away from the sharp metal scraping against every inch of her exposed flesh. Innumerable bodies seethe around her in a senseless orgy of sexual violence, horribly mutilated beings with spikes jammed into their eyes and blades jutting out of their limbs. Amidst the chaos she spots a human face, so wracked with pain that it is nearly as unrecognizable as the xenos it writhes against.

Vala grabs hold of what feels like an arm and pulls herself upward, earning herself a searing gash down her left leg and several smaller ones down her back. She cries out in pain but continues onward and upward, kicking away the hands that seek to drag her back into the depths of this ocean of agony. A chitinous elbow flashes across her field of vision and slashes down the left side of her face, turning her world a bloody red. She screams and sobs, but the thought of being dragged back downwards terrifies her enough to overcome even that awful pain.

The teeming mass of bodies grows sparser enough that the reddened sky is able to slip in here and there. Vala struggles towards it with renewed vigor, shoving away grasping limbs and biting at fingers that hook themselves into her mouth. She breaches the sweaty, bloody sea of flesh like a diver rising above the waterline, gasping for air and looking for any sign of salvation.

She spots her sole hope a short distance away. A small rocky outcropping, no more than twenty feet across, sits as a lone island in an endless expanse of countless tortured beings.

What have I done to deserve this?

A pair of teeth clenching down on her breast snaps her attention back to the task at hand. She pushes away the limbless Elf biting at her like a wild animal and crawls across the bodies with as much speed as the turbulent currents of flesh will allow. When she finally reaches the island and collapses onto solid ground, she is in far too much pain to do anything other than wail in agony. Blood pours from cuts all over her body, and her wounded eye hurts so much that she wishes it’d simply been torn out entirely.

The ceaseless screams sounding out from all around her grow quiet, and those few that continue turn their voices to fearful wails. A great moaning rises up, so deep that she can feel it in her bones. The ground shakes, violet lightning cracks the bloody sky, and far in the distance a swell appears in the sea of bodies.

It works its way towards Vala like a tidal wave, tossing bodies up into the air as it grows higher and broader. A massive head of brunette hair emerges, and slowly tilts back to reveal the face of the beautiful woman Vala had spoken to in her dreams. The demon continues to climb out of the ocean depths, revealing veiny breasts covered in bite marks and gangrenous sores, followed by a flaccid
cock the size of a building. Rusted piercings run down its length, and pus leaks from the reddened sores where the metal enters her flesh.

Vala's watches in rapt terror, motionless save for her trembling legs and the urine running down her thigh. The demon continues crawling towards her until her head looms above the island, and with a deep groan bends down until her chin sits just above the edge of the island, her purple eyes focused intently on Vala.

The demon comes to a gradual halt, kneeling atop thousands of screaming penitents and staring down at the hapless Vala like some accusatory Goddess. Braids of hair slip off her back and drop down to the churning sea, and a few hundred of the more ambulatory creatures begin to haul their way up her dark locks in an attempt to flee their endless torment. The demon’s eyes flicker over to the comparatively tiny creatures, and she rocks back into a kneeling position before combing them from her hair, all while keeping her gaze fixed on Vala.

“What do you want?” Vala screams, scratching her head madly and rolling over onto her other side so that she doesn’t have to bare witness to this insanity. Not that the view is much better in any direction, with its endless field of roiling bodies and festering skies.

“I am waiting for your husband,” comes a discordant chorus spoken by every being with working vocal chords within earshot. The ground shakes with their howling cry.

“Why? What do you want with him? What do you want with us?”

Hell itself lets out a shuddering groan, and the air becomes heavy with the guttural shrieks of every species and sex imaginable.

“Do you think you are too small for me to love? You are all my children, and every one of you is deserving of my hatred. Little things with little stories.”

A deep, bone-rattling moan emanates from the demon’s throat. Vala rises to a kneeling position and turns to see the woman driving her leprous cock into the roaring flesh abyss, bloodying it against countless blades and clawing mandibles while she grins devilishly at Vala. One of the leprous pustules on the demon’s shaft bursts, showering the edge of Vala’s platform in a corrosive ichor that eats away at the rock and stings her nostrils with its nauseating scent. Vala stumbles away from the smoldering area, and nearly falls back into the sea of damned souls.

“You failed!” snaps Vala, her voice cracking with fear. “Orin’s still alive, and he’s gonna stay that way. You’re stuck with boring old me.”

The woman huffs in amusement, and her star-speckled eyes roll in their sockets before swiveling back downward. “A day, a year, a thousand years… it does not matter. When that little thing dies, I will make a new story for the two of you. One with…”

Her eyes grow glassy and she tilts her head to the side, halting her titanic thrusts so that she can begin fishing around in the mass of bodies.

“I put her here somewhere. My unfaithful servant.”

Vala’s heart skips a beat, and her legs grow so weak that she nearly falls to her knees again. She’s happy to have confirmed that Orin won whatever fight broke out after her death, but can’t stomach the thought of seeing Adrubal again. Not here, and not now, when her mind already threatens to break under the weight of this madness.

“Leave her there,” shouts Vala. “We’ve got nothing to talk about.”
The demon stops and smiles, her arm buried elbow-deep in the churning depths. “Do you not want the company of someone who still loves you?”

Vala swallows, her throat so dry that she can’t muster anything above a whisper. “Orin loves me.”

“Even after you took his manhood and made him a cuckold?” The demon takes her free hand and brings it down to the small island, extending a single massive finger that brushes against Vala’s blood-soaked belly.

“He said he loves me.”

The woman pulls back her hand and thrusts it downward alongside the other one, searching for something or someone with a gleeful intensity.

“What if he found out how far and wide your betrayal spans? What if I could find one of the other ones?”

Long-buried memories of guilty and regret hit Vala like a bolt of lightning. The field of souls cackles madly alongside its tormentor, and Vala falls to her knees before pressing her palms to her eyes.

“I wouldn’t simply tell him,” the demon says. “He would find out slowly... drip, drip, drip.”

Tears well in Vala’s eyes and roll down her cheeks amidst squeaking sobs. Is this why she’s in hell? Not for parlaying with alien demons, but for a human sin that she’s paid for with the wages of years of heart-wrenching guilt?

“Don’t worry, little thing. I’ll make sure this love story goes on forever. You two will hate each other just as much as I hate you.”

The demon continues to fish around for a bodily reminder of Vala’s past transgressions, grunting in annoyance as she tosses aside fistfuls of screeching invalids with bloodied stumps and eviscerated torsos. The more Vala watches through the cracks in her fingers, the greater the impression she has of a gigantic child searching for her toys.

As much as it sickens her to remember, her mind quickly turns to how easily she manipulated the simple-minded Ribara into doing her bidding. The things she told Ribara to do to Orin had been tainted by Adrubal’s hatred, but it had been Vala in the driver’s seat. She was the one who had found a way to dominate someone who very nearly murdered her.

Was it so crazy to think she could do so again? And not with someone who wanted her dead, but a being who finds her life’s story endlessly fascinating?

“You’re a coward, you know that?” Vala rubs her tears away and stands up. “You shut yourself up in this… hell, playing with your toys and watching real people live real lives.”

The demon falls still and pulls her hands out from the bloody mess she’s created with her frantic searching, then dips her back until her face is perched near the edge of the island. Her eyes, twice as tall as Vala, swirl with the same turbulent energies as the roiling skies above. Every fiber of Vala’s being tells her to turn tail and run from this incomprehensible being, but she gathers up what remains of her sanity and bravery, and takes a few halting steps towards the woman.

“Have you ever kissed someone? Or even held their hand?”

The questions seem ridiculous the moment they leave Vala’s mouth, but they seem to give the demon genuine pause. Just as Ribara wasn’t used to being treated with a firm yet gentle hand, this creature
of raw emotion is ill-acquainted to being talked down to. Novelty is an appealing thing for any being, but moreso for one who feeds off of new experiences.

The demon grins, bearing rotten teeth and a serpentine tongue split down the middle with a bloody gash. "You're trying to trick me."

Vala's breath catches, and she opens her mouth for some quick-minded reply, but all that comes out is a torrent of ceaseless bawling that she finds herself powerless to stop.

"I wanna go home!" she cries. "I'm never gonna hurt him ever again, I promise!"

Nothing is held back. She rambles on and on between choking sobs, shouting out to the depths of hell everything she wanted to say to Orin but never bothered to tell him. All of the mistakes she made, but never made right. All of the things she wants to do with him, but will never get to.

"I want a baby. His baby, not this... thing." Vala clutches her stomach and falls to a crouching position, burying her head between her knees. "Please, please, please let me go. I'll do it right this time, I swear."

Her tearful soliloquy of regret, as genuine as it was, is directed at what is perhaps the least sympathetic listener in the entirety of existence. These were words for a merciful God, not the hate-filled demon of perverse desire that looms before her now.

"A new life," the demon says wondrously, eyeing Vala's pregnant stomach with a strange new look. Not playful malice, but the hungry lust Vala had seen worn on the face of every millennia-old Elf who worshipped this 'Goddess'. So it was that Vala stumbled across the one thing she could offer a being who wanted for nothing but desired everything... and so it was that she made her deal with the devil.

“Billions of souls, snuffed out in an instant.”

Moradys leans against the ship's railing and stares off at the golden, sun-bathed planet hanging in space. The entirety of Cummragh hurtles towards it, though only the main portions of the massive city are still intact. Those outlying bits that couldn't weather the transition from Warp to Realspace were thrown further ahead to break upon the glittering shield of light that hangs about the planet like an angelic halo.

“Normally I would relish the opportunity to witness such a thing, but not when I am counted among the billions.”

The two of you, after having commandeered one of the larger ships docked at the cultists' temple, fled for the relative safety of Cummragh's urban outskirts in order to formulate a plan. Now you lurk among those twisting spires still standing, watching as the leaderless Dark Elf forces do battle with the twisted, airborne monstrosities pouring forth from the web of structures enshrouding the city's
“What do we do?” you ask her. She's the last person you should turn to for advice on saving a world from ultimately calamity, but you're so far out of your depth that you give your old hatred little thought. Billions of lives on the line, including that of your wife, Charal, and Orina.

You wonder if there is a human part of Orina left to save.

Moradys pushes away from the edge and walks over to the opposite railing. You follow, clutching your naked sex and regretting not having taken the time to find clothes in your haste to get Vala stowed safely below deck.

“It’s very simple. That demon dragged us out of the Warp.” Moradys points away from the planet, towards a gaping wound in space from which red and purple tendrils pour forth, clutching greedily at the city that left it behind. “You’ll take us back home.”

A shiver runs up your spine. Not from the stiff breeze funnelling through the tightly-packed buildings, nor from the epic weight of Moradys’ words. In fact, you were barely listening. All you can think about is how much that tear in space looks like a gaping cunt.

“Are you paying attention?” Moradys snaps. “Why are you sweating so much?”

You clench your hand into a fist to stop your fingers from playing with your pussy. Ever since delving into Vala's mind, these urges have grown. Now, they're nearly unbearable. You feel sick, and itchy, and find your eyes constantly slipping to some shapely bulge within Moradys’ robes, be it her ass or breasts. Even the curve of her necks seems an unbelievably obscene softness that you can’t believe she’s left uncovered.

“I need to check on Vala,” you reply shakily. “I'm worried.”

You turn to leave, but Moradys catches hold of your arm and tries to hold you back. “What's gotten into you? Who was it who only five minutes ago was demanding I tell him my plan?”

The longer she touches you, the more you’re tempted to do something you know you shouldn’t do. Not with your body the way it is, and not with your wife in the condition she’s in. You pull free of Moradys and make your way through a doorway and down into the ship’s interior, where Vala waits sprawled out on a bed in all her tattooed nudity. You slam the bedroom door behind you and lock it to keep out the Elf who is hot on your heels.

“Open this door,” shouts Moradys. “Do you think I won’t break it down? I will!”

While she rattles the handle and bangs on the door, you stumble over to the bedside and kneel down, taking Vala's hand in yours before pressing it to your clammy forehead. Her soul might not be home, but her soft warmth is as comforting as ever. You want to feel that same warmth clutching at your cock with her legs wrapped around the small of your back.

If you still had a cock.

Moradys, apparently tired of shaking the door on its hinges, gives it one last half-hearted thump of her fist before falling still. “All I want to do is hold you. Is that so frightening to you?”

Right now, it’s the most delightfully terrifying thing imaginable. Yet even as your mind shudders against the deviancies her touch will inevitably lead to, your body picks itself up from the floor and carries you over to the door. Your hand shakes like that of an addict in withdrawal, making unlocking the deadbolt a stupidly difficult task. By the time you finally manage to get it open, you're
panting so hard that your breath steams the air.

“Don’t feel good,” you say to Moradys. She looks at you with a sort of strained, impatient concern and places a hand on your sweat-soaked forehead.

Her touch is like a flame to wax. You melt into her, draping your arms over her shoulders and letting your feet hang limp against the floor as she grabs you under your armpits to support you. The two of you used to be the same height, but now she has a few inches on you.

“Tell me how to change my body back,” you pant into her ear. “I need to know now.”

“Why the hurry? We should wait until you’re feeling better.”

But you know that won’t happen - and you suspect the Elf running her hand down your side knows it, too. This sickness won’t pass until you’ve done something that you would much prefer to do while possessing the body of a man.

“Just lay me down,” you say.

Moradys walks you over to the bed and helps you settle down beside Vala. She doesn’t leave, though. She stands there, watching you quiver and hyperventilate while teasing you with light brushes of her finger tips. Her hand slips from your thighs up to your breasts, then threatens to withdraw from your body entirely. You snatch her wrist before that can happen, and bring her hand downward until one of her fingers is pressed to your moist folds.

Moradys slides it in, and you throw your head back and moan with a pleasure you hadn’t known existed. The focused sexual enjoyment you remember as a man is diffused throughout your entire being, and with Vala’s affliction now latched onto you, is powerful enough to throw your mind into another dimension, one of scorched skies split by lightning from one horizon to the other.

When the vision fades and reality returns, you realize that Moradys’ hand has gone still. Her attention is wholly focused on her other hand, which is busy pumping away at her flaccid cock, to little effect. Judging by the sweat dripping from her brow and the intense look on her face, she’s been at it long enough for serious concern to set in.

Your stomach sinks at the thought of her not being able to use that big cock. You hate her for impotence, and pity yourself for having to deal with it while suffering this alien affliction. It should worry you that you’re bemoaning the loss of an opportunity to get fucked bareback up the ass by your rapist, but your sexual tastes have degenerated to such a degree that you pay little mind to your lack of disgust.

“I’ve been building this moment up in my mind for a month,” snaps Moradys, masking her anxiety with frustration and redirecting her anger towards you. “Then I find you looking like… this. It’s repulsive.”

And yet everything about her body language disagrees with the words that come out of her mouth. Her legs quake in desperate need. Her eyes run over your body, lingering on your heaving chest and the cleft between your legs. The way she looks at you with such blatant passion makes your own desire rise to match hers.

“Show me how to turn my body back.” You lurch onto your side and paw at Moradys’ robes. “I’ll fuck you myself.”

Moradys’ eyes go wide and her lips move wordlessly. She takes a step back, letting her limp cock disappear beneath her robes while she fumbles through her pockets for something. After patting
herself down, she seems to find what she's looking for in a pocket below her breast. She slips her fingers in, then carefully draws out a long, green crystal colored yellow around the middle. It's dull, roughly cut, and would be utterly unassuming as an object of interest, were Moradys not holding it between her fingers with such reverent care.

“You have the power of a god, but the will of a slave.” She turns the crystal about in front of her face, eyeing each facet thoughtfully. As she twists it, you see that the yellow portion is shaped like a tiny handprint, as if a child had left its mark on it. “For all I'd like to pretend otherwise, I am mortal. But my ambition, and my vision - those are godlike. I think that's why you couldn't help but fall in love with me.”

You frown. “When I said I loved you, I didn't even know who you were.”

Moradys continues to examine the crystal, apparently content with feigning deafness. Whatever that crystal is, it's connected to your desire to regain your former self. Before Moradys can attach some preconditions are Faustian bargain to the thing, you lunge for it, knocking her back against a wall. She holds the crystal up high above her head, forcing you to jump for it and wrestle it from her grip. Moradys concedes the small treasure with surprising ease, but takes the opportunity to press her nose to the side of your neck and take a long breath inward, which you recoil from in disgust.

“I was going to give it to you,” she says.

You move to the other side of the bed, putting a good distance between the two of you before taking a chance to examine the crystal. There's nothing particularly special-looking about it, though the surface of it is now covered in dull red splotches wherever your fingers made contact with it. The tiny blue handprint you spotted earlier is no longer noticeable.

“This will turn me back to normal?”

“It will help you focus.”

While you try and figure out how such a mundane thing will make the impossible possible, Moradys drifts silently across the room. You don’t notice how close she’s gotten until she’s close enough to lay a hand on your shoulder, making you jump in surprise.

“Look into it. See all the possible things you could have become.”

You force your shoulders down from your ears, and wearily turn your attention from Moradys back to the crystal.

“Lose yourself in it,” she whispers. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

Her unnecessary reassurance is more worrying than comforting, but you manage to stave off the urge to move away from her, and as the seconds tick by her touch becomes a welcome thing. Only now do you realize how much you missed being held by someone who didn’t wish absolute ruination on you. Moradys is a monster without parallel, but she never tried to turn you into something you aren’t. Vala hated the weakness she saw in you, and punished you for it. Ribara lusted after your vulnerability, and sought to squash any fires of resistance that dared threaten her total dominance of you.

Yet Moradys loves you, virtues and vices and all.

“What do you see?” she says.

You’re afraid to tell her. The smoky facets of the crystal are no longer dull green glass, but thumb-
sized portals into your past, present, and future. You see yourself arriving on Cummragh, shackled and beaten, terrified but brimming with hopeful defiance. You see the woman Vala and Ribara wanted to turn you into, a broken thing of skin and bones that lays dead at the hands of whichever of the two first grew bored with carnalities less tantalizing than murder.

A dozen other realities reveal themselves as you turn the crystal about. In some you appear so triumphantly heroic that you either laugh or close your eyes in shame at what you’ve become. Others show you in such a horrific state of inhumanity that you feel a depraved relief at how comparatively easy your time in this city has been.

As you come to the facet you started on, you see yourself reflected back in the rose-tinted hexagon, tears and quivering lips and messy hair displayed in pristine relief.

“Sit down.” Moradys presses her palm to your stomach, and you allow yourself to fall butt-first onto the bed. She kneels in front of you, spreads your legs, and shuffles forward until her head is just above your crotch. You’d think she was about to give you a blowjob, if you still had the equipment for it.

“What are you doing?”

“Don’t look at me,” she snaps up at you. “Find yourself as a man. Hold the image in your mind.”

You obey, far too eager to be free of this fleshy prison to be worried about her tone, and find one of the more optimistic worlds within the crystal. Within it, you fight alongside a massive man twice your height and several times your size, slaughtering Dark Elves by the dozens in glittering hallways of gilded marble. The sight is shockingly familiar, but you don’t remember ever wearing an expression of such giddy confidence.

“As long as you hold that gem, you can do anything.” Moradys places her hands on the inside of your thighs and begins bobbing her head up and down, pantomiming a blowjob. “Will and focus don’t matter. Only your desire. Close your eyes, and hold it close.”

You grasp the crystal tightly in both hands and press it to your breast, then squeeze your eyes shut and cast the image of a manly you onto the back of your eyelids, not daring to let it sleep free of your mind.

“Why didn’t you give this to me before?” you ask her.

“Why would I?” she says, briefly pausing her up-and-down movement. “You would have left me.”

A stupid question, and an obvious answer. At least she’s being honest with you.

“Yes, I would have.”

“And now?” Moradys begins making obscene slurping sounds, putting great effort into pleasuring a cock that isn’t there.

You squeeze the crystal tighter, protecting the thing as if it were life and freedom itself. “Nothing’s changed. I’m taking Vala, and I’m leaving.”

Your legs tremble in anticipation of what Moradys will do to you for daring to say such a thing, but she merely grips you tighter and quickens her pace.

“I haven’t changed, either. I can’t stop you, but I’ll do anything to keep you... the only man that has ever made me feel like a woman.”
A shudder courses through your body at her words, and a surge of pleasure runs from her hands to
your groin.

“I want you to fuck me like you fucked me before. I want to change my body so that I can bear your
child. I want to be a woman… your woman.”

Another surge of pleasure, this one far stronger and far more focused. Your abdominal muscles seize,
your breath catches, and you heave forward, grabbing Moradys by the shoulders in reflex to some
stimulus you can’t quite understand. A wet warmth envelops something - something belonging
to you - that your brain hasn’t yet had time to process.

Nor can you process what sits before your very eyes. Your legs are twice as big around as they were
when you first sat down, with flexed muscles visible beneath a thin layer of fat. Your arms are
similarly changed, and your hands now totally envelop Moradys’ narrow shoulders. Abdominal
muscles heave with labored breaths, leading down to a sight so gloriously welcome that you can’t
help but draw in an ecstatic gasp. Moradys’ pale lips are wrapped around the hairless base of your
cock, which tingles in pleasure at the sensation of her tongue swirling around it.

Moradys wraps her fingers around your length and lets it pop free of her mouth, then looks up at you
in blatant lust as she smears the head around the lower half of her face. You have your body, your
manhood, and your powers.

You have your self back.

Ribara stands in the hall of her former arena, fallen giant at her back and surrogate mother to her
right. Her eyes, though unfocused, dart about with a mad intensity, and incomprehensible mutterings
escape her half-open mouth. The passage of entire minutes hasn’t seemed to help her process the
conclusion Charal led her to. Not just that she has a mother. Not even that she has a human
mother.

But that she has a mother who loves her, despite everything Ribara has done to her.

“A mother knows her child.” Charal reaches up to lay a hand on Ribara’s muscular shoulder. Ribara
gives a slight shrug in an attempt to shake off the smaller woman, but puts up no real resistance.
“That is why I know you will do the right thing.”

A stupefied Ribara bends down to pick up her sword, but accidentally kicks it away and has to
shuffle forward a few paces to pick it up.

“The right thing?” Ribara holds her sword upright between her and Charal, as if to ward off any
further attempts at affection.

“You can save them,” says Charal. “You can save everyone.”

Ribara swallows, and manages to wipe away the shock on her face in favor of some semblance of
Drukhari poise. “I did not come here to save Mon-keighs. I came to fight.”

"Fight? All of this?" Charal gestures at the fallen giant. "You will die!"

Ribara thrusts her armored chest out proudly, but her uncertainty is betrayed on her face. “I am not afraid to die, Mon-keigh.”

Charal jumps up and delivers a sharp slap across the Elf’s face. Ribara gasps and grabs her by both wrists, then drives Charal across the width of the broad corridor until her back slams into a wall.

“I could kill you,” says Ribara. Tears well in the corners of her eyes, and her lip quivers with the shameful anger of someone whose feelings have been wounded far more than their flesh.

“And I would still love you!”

The dam breaks, and Ribara’s trembling expression breaks into one of outright fury made all the more frightening by her bloodshot eyes, unkempt hair, and sunken cheeks.

“I never asked to be born! Why should I have to live when I don’t want to? Because you pushed me out of the same cunt my mother fucked?”

Ribara punches the wall beside Charal’s head, cracking the marble and making the smaller woman cringe. “You could make yourself love anything if it was convenient for you.”

Ribara shoves away of the wall and stalks off to go pace in solitary circles, covering up her mournful blubbering with muttered swears and angry huffing. Charal has seen her like this many times before over the years, and always kept a healthy distance from the volatile Elf until her dark mood subsided.

It occurs to Charal that perhaps Ribara is right - but is it such a bad thing to love so easily? Forcing herself to grow… accepting of Moradys’ forceful desires had made her less interesting to her Mistress, and a less tempting target for anything beyond fucking. Loving Orin had brought her a child, and given the world meaning. If loving Ribara meant saving herself, her daughter, and the thousands of slaves caged within this tower, then what harm was there in it?

“I do love you,” says Charal. “Let me show you.”

Charal blocks Ribara's path and presses her bare breasts to the Elf’s abdomen while digging her fingers under her armored groin. Ribara responds swiftly, grabbing Charal by the arm and hurling her back across the hall.

“I do not want your love, whore! It's cheap! I hate you, and my mother, and everyone else who pretended they cared. I want the love I worked for! The one I deserve!”

A rhythmic pounding shakes the floor, and Charal rolls onto her buttocks and looks down the hall to see four of the invaders rounding a corner. With the exception of her short time on their leader's ship, it's the most she's seem gathered together in one spot. Even the apparently vital task of mass-sacrifice had been delegated to former slaves and those abominations produced with the aid of captured Elven Shapers.

The group spreads out across the width of the hall with practiced tactical maneuvering, taking cover behind fallen ceiling slabs and the half-columns emerging from the wall. Charal turns her head back to Ribara, and sees the Elf staring at the ground, rubbing at her eyes with her palms while grinding her teeth in anger. Time slows to an unbearable crawl, allowing Charal to perceive the inevitable consequence of her lack of speed as she picks herself up and launches herself at her surrogate daughter.
Ribara looks up, catches Charal's gaze, then turns her attention to the invaders.

“Leave me alone!”

Charal is thrown back again, this time far enough for her back to strike the wall. Sound and light crash down the corridor, bouncing from floor to ceiling like lightning cracking the sky. When it connects with the armored soldiers, it burns them with such purity of destruction that not a hint of smoke or ash is left in their wake. Only the blackened scorch marks on the ground and the thrumming in Charal's ears remain as proof that what just happened was no hallucination. Even Moradys, in all her proudly-coveted power, had never annihilated such enemies with only a glance and a word.

“Do you think I can't do it? That I've come here merely to die?”

Ribara marches over to Charal and lifts her up by her wrist. The Elf's eyes, no longer simply bloodshot, weep tears of blood that snake down her cheeks in crimson rivulets. More drips from her nostrils and ears.

“I'll murder them all! The invaders, the Drukhari, your precious slaves, all of them!”

She presses her face closer to Charal and sneers in insane glee. Even the space between her gums and teeth dews with tiny droplets of blood.

“We will see if you love me when it's not easy.”
Moradys gazes up at you in expectant lust, her blackened eyes glinting on either side of your spit-soaked cock. No words can describe how joyously happy you are to have your body returned to you, and to no longer have a mind that is rendered tempestuously fickle by a flood of feminine hormones. Everything is clear, and colorful and beautiful. The crystal you dropped between your thighs shines a dim red and green, painting the two of you in it's downcast light.

Just as speech cannot encompass your relief, nor can you find the words to express to Moradys just how thoroughly your desire matches hers. You should hate her more than anything else in the Galaxy, living or dead. She murdered your world, sold your wife into sexual slavery, brutalized your body and twisted your mind. In the end, she made you love her. You never had a choice. But you don't care.

No one ever chooses to fall in love - it simply happens. A confluence of circumstance brings two people together, and sparks the flame of romance. Were it not for that single event - a shared glance, a long night at work together, a shoulder-bump on the train - that love never would have been. Some people find joy in retelling the story of how fate brought them together.

Not you.

There's something terrifying about how easily a single change in one's life course could have turned the closest of lovers into strangers. You would like to think that if you and Vala had never met, she would have lived out her life pining for the imagined soulmate who never was.

But you know better. Reality taught you better. A woman as beautiful and outgoing as her would have met some other man, and she'd be getting fucked by him while knowing in her heart of hearts she'd found the love that was meant to be over innumerable timelines.

Nothing is permanent, and nothing is sacred. Humans and fate, like water, flow along the path of least resistance. Even the best of friends and the most cherished of lovers will abandon you as soon as circumstances demand it, pointing to the smallest of difficulties as evidence that it just was not meant to be.

Then there is Moradys. A xeno, a tyrant, and a calloused monster. Fate may have brought you two together, but it was she who had turned your hatred into something more confused. You know full well how malicious and destructive her manipulation was, but you don't care. This beautiful, ancient being was fascinated by you, and tormented you, and grew to love you.

You take Moradys by the arms and pull her to her feet, then lay her down on the bed and climb on top of her. She lays there with arms splayed out beside her head, lips moving slightly with each rapid breath. Your cock diggs into the folds of her robe, and you use one hand to guide yourself in until your head slides against her sweaty taint. She gasps, and you kiss her.

Nails rake against your back, breaking skin and creating searing paths of torn flesh. Teeth dig into your lower lip, and you taste hot iron between your joined tongues. You refuse to take the bait, and continue your slow, tender caress of her gaunt cheeks while your dick slides between her buttocks, mixing sweat and precum into a lubricant that allows you to push deeper with each thrust. Her assault on your body abates, and she instead mimics your slow ministrations, with the addition of low moans that become sharper as you press into her anus.
Moradys pulls back from your kiss, and her mouth opens in a silent shout. She grabs you by both cheeks, and the two of you gaze into each other's eyes as you enter her, each of you savoring the emotions that wrack the other's visage. Each new depth you reach within her brings Moradys' eyes wider and her muscles tighter. She pushes back on your shoulders to slow your entry, and it takes you another half-minute to bottom out. Her insides are warm, her cock hard against your stomach, and her face contorts in a play of emotions that mirrors the ones contained in your own mind. Your feelings are an open book for Moradys to read, and a feast for her to delight in. She's not some parasitic vampire, as you once thought. Nothing is stolen from you - only enjoyed, and cultivated. You enjoy imagining what new feeling she'll decide to stir in you next. You want to be wanted. You need to be needed.

You pull out until only the head of your cock remains inside her, then slide slowly back in. Sweat and precum can only go so far, making the ass-fucking a torturously dry affair, but you're no longer in the proper frame of mind to stop and go looking about for a bottle of lubricant. With that first thrust of your dick and that shuddering breath from Moradys, you launch into a series of shallow thrusts that minimize the friction on your shaft while allowing you to churn Moradys' insides as thoroughly as she once did to yours. She wraps her legs around your back and clings to your neck, moaning into your ear as her insides grow wetter and your fucking turns frenzied.

"Something's wrong," she whimpers. "Stop… stop."

You would laugh, if your jaw weren't already set in climactic ecstasy. Neither heaven nor hell could stop you from dumping your load in an ass that has become so warmly inviting you can scarcely believe the tightness gripping your new manhood. Moradys' moans turn to wordless wails of confused ecstasy, and she bucks her hips against yours as you rasp hot and heavy into her ear. You want to get her pregnant. You want to leave her with a lasting reminder of just how unshakable your hated lust for her has become. A child that can never be, to celebrate a love that never should have been.

You cum. Moradys cries out, burying her face in your neck and winding her fingers up in your hair. Your cock throbs within her, each pulse marking a rope of seed that paints her insides and has her legs twitching against your sweaty back. The energy leaves your body along with your seed, and you collapse onto Moradys, a sweaty, panting, and satisfied wreck. Her cock is no longer hard enough to feel between your bodies, and the welcoming warmth of her ass makes you never want to pull out. You've had pussies that were far less inviting.

"Something's wrong," Moradys mutters again. She pushes up on your chest and peers between your bodies. Whatever she sees - or doesn't see - causes her to shriek in horrified outrage. She clocks you in the jaw with a fist, and you raise your arms protectively as your rapidly-softening cock slips from her ass.

"What the hell?" you shout, rocking back into a kneeling position with your face still covered.

Moradys sits upright and frantically draws up her ragged robes to reveal what you had just been fucking. Not an ass, but a hairless, pristine pussy with white lips. Her enviously-sized cock is gone, as are her balls. She sticks a finger inside and draws out with it a glob of cum, which she holds between the two of you while staring at it with immense distaste.

"You asshole! You tremendous asshole!" Moradys slams her palm into your arms and launches into a flailing assault of alternating closed fists and scratching nails. "Turn me back! Do it now!"

The shaking of the bed causes something sharp to roll under your knee. You drop one hand down to seek it out, and find you've grabbed hold of the crystal you dropped. Instead of doing as Moradys asked and warping her flesh the same as you had yours, you opt to instead simply wish for her attack
to stop. Her next pummeling of fists strikes a nearly-invisible barrier between the two of you, which sounds out like a gong and ripples as Moradys’ arm swings backwards. She clutches her injured hand to her bosom, and hisses between clenched teeth, staring daggers at you through a shield you don’t dare let down just yet.

“I am going to close my eyes, and count to three,” Moradys says in a low voice. “When I open them, I want to see my genitals just as they were - twice as large as yours, and three times as-”

Something tugs on the bedding beneath your legs. You and Moradys look to the side in unison to see Vala, very much awake, sitting on the foot of the bed with her back turned and the foot of the covers draped over her shoulders. She pulls again, and you shuffle off of them in dumbstruck awe, watching as she rises to her feet and wraps herself from breasts to ankles.

You cry out her name in choked joy, relief momentarily overwhelming any lingering resentment over what she did to you. Moradys scoffs in disgust, as if she can’t believe that you’d abandon a slap fight with her to embrace your no-longer-comatose wife. You throw your arms around her and bury your face in her hair, but your touch only makes her back hunch and shoulders draw upward.

“Its you, right?” you ask her. “What's wrong?”

Vala lets out a ragged sigh, and much of the tension seems to leave her, though she feels more exhausted than relaxed. “Nothing's wrong. You looked like you were having fun. I didn't wanna interrupt.”

Where you should feel shame, you are instead filled with a frustration that has you digging your fingers into her shoulders. Of all the things to criticize you for, she chooses this? Vala hadn’t even had the decency to make sure you were unconscious before letting herself be used by those Elves. What’s more, you never laid a malicious finger on her despite everything she’s done to you.

Maybe you should. Maybe you should throw her to Moradys and tell the silently-stewing Elf to visit on Vala whatever inventive depravities spring to mind. Maybe then she would understand how easy she’s had it.

You spin Vala around to face you, expecting her to glare back at you with the same look of self-righteousness you yourself wear. Instead, you find that she simply looks tired. Her eyes are as slack as her muscles, and drift ever downwards despite her half-hearted attempts to look you in the face.

You’re struck by the distinct impression that what she said was meant not as a biting remark, but in complete earnestness.

“What happened to you?” you ask her. “I thought you were gone.”

Moradys had claimed her soul was lost to the fathomless depths of what passes for a hell in the Warp, yet here your wife is. Not safe, and not unharmed - not even intact, really - but at least she’s here. You look back at Moradys in questioning, and see that she’s already making her way over to the two of you.

“I’m curious myself,” says Moradys. “Let’s have a look.”

She grabs Vala by the sides of her head. Vala lets out an unnatural cry, her eyes roll back into her head, and she collapses to the floor, rendered a flailing, drooling spasmatic by whatever mental intrusion followed Moradys’ touch. You angrily grab Moradys by the wrists and push her away from your wife, a move which the Elf makes little attempt to resist as she stares dumbfounded at your groaning wife.
“She… she cheated on you!” Moradys yanks one of her arms free and points an accusatory finger at Vala, who looks to be recovering her senses. “Dozens of times! Hundreds!”

“I know,” you snap at her. “And I don't care.”

Except you do care - perhaps even more than Vala knows. Only Moradys can see - and feel - the full weight of your sense of betrayal and inadequacy at the thought of Vala's time with Adrubal.

“Not with Elves, with humans! It began in military training.”

The training she left for a mere week after you two had spoken your wedding vows to one another. The marriage had ostensibly been timed as a practical arrangement, so that the planetary government would pay to house the two of you together. In actuality, you had only allowed others to believe that to hide the truth - that you were so head over heels for her that you couldn't bare to wait any longer to propose.

You look to Vala, a horrified expression on your face, hoping with all your heart that she'll deny Moradys' accusation with the firmest conviction. Instead, her reddened eyes and quivering lips tell you that she's done lying.

“It was just women,” Vala croaks out. “I… like women, but I love you!”

Moradys laughs. “Oh, yes, and they liked you.” She looks at you with a blank expression of mock innocence. “They called her the 'barracks bicycle’, you know. I'm not sure what that means. Do you?”

“That's not true!” Vala wails. She throws herself at you, and the room erupts into chaos. Moradys tries to grab hold of Vala to extract more juicy tidbits from her mind, Vala insists on wrapping her arms around you and pressing her cheek to your chest, and you do your best to keep the two women apart.

“I'll never do it again,” Vala blubbers. “Please just take us home. That's all I want. I want to go home with you.”

Another laugh from Moradys. “I burned your planet to a cinder, you fat cu-”

You smack Moradys in the nose with your closed fists, cracking cartilage and making her cry out in startled pain. She clamps her hand around her nose and squeezes her nostrils shut, but enough blood has poured out in the prior few seconds to soak her from nose to neck.

“What was that for?” she says.

“Take your pick.”

With Moradys momentarily cowed into submission - or at least, caution - you pry Vala's arms off of you and push her onto the bed, a bit harder than you meant to. At first she simply lays there, perhaps thinking her revelation has stoked within you some masculine need to dominate, but your revulsion towards her has reached such heights that even a hug made your skin crawl.

“Don't touch me,” you say to Vala. “I don’t want to talk about this right now. I don’t know if I ever want to talk about it.”

The first comment was directed at both women, who now remain a safe distance apart from one another. The latter was spoken pointedly to Vala, whose lips and eyebrows turn downward in a look of utter heartbreak.
Vala rolls over onto all fours, and looks ready to throw herself at your feet, were your body language not so thoroughly betraying your disgust with her.

“Orin, please!” Tears roll down her cheeks and snot hangs from her nose. She doesn't bother to wipe it anyway, instead wringing her hands up in the bed's blanket. “Just tell me what I have to do! I'll do anything-”

“I forgive you.”

Vala stops blubbering, and her jaw drops in astonishment. Despite your new hatred of her, your love for her is so deeply etched into your life's memories that you can't help but feel sorry for what she's been reduced to. Once the love of your life - a woman who could do no wrong. Now a tattooed whore who blamed you for her pain so that she didn't have to suffer the weight of her own guilt.

“I forgive you,” you repeat, more confidently this time. “And I want you to forgive me… for loving who I love.”

You walk over to a bemused Moradys, grab her by the upper arm, and turn back to Vala. Realization finally dawns, and the brief flicker of hope within her dies. Every muscle in her face goes slack, as if she can no longer muster the energy to express the cold horror that is gripping her heart.

“Can I leave with you?” she asks blankly.

“You're my wife.”

A response that gives her as little information as you intended. You're not sure what you want to do with her yet, but even in the throes of jealous fury you know that you don't want her dead. Nor can you bear to part with her before she feels the same sense of loss that her betrayals have so continuously heaped upon you.

“Absolutely not!” Moradys says through a cupped hand and broken cartilage.

You wave your own hand across her face, and she drops it to reveal a fully-healed nose with blood still staining the lower half of her face. You desire her injury healed, and so it is done. Whatever magical rock Moradys gifted you seems to have bridged the daunting gap between your myriad desires, and a will that has often proved… unfocused.

“What, exactly, leads you to believe that I would be content with allowing this waddling Mon-keigh whore to play third wheel?”

It's the first time in quite awhile that you've heard Moradys use the customary Elfen slur for humans, but far from the first time she's made a dig at your wife's figure. You're still not sure how much of that is Moradys being a bitch, and how much of it is unfamiliarity with beings who can actually store fat. Moradys has always had human slaves, but they were rarely fed well enough to achieve even a healthy human physique. Vala isn't even fat - to call her chubby would be a stretch. 'Soft' is the worst you can throw at her, at least with regards to her physique.

“Be a man for once, and put this cumdump out of its misery!” Moradys’ eyes dart from you to the kneeling Vala, alternating between impatient anger and a brutal glee. When you fail to meet her gaze with anything but cold resolve, she snorts in disgust and tears herself free, then leaves for the stairs leading topside.

Vala climbs back onto the bed and lays down in a fetal position, her back turned to you, not bothering to pull the blankets over her tattooed nudity. Without really wanting or meaning to, you lay your hand on her hip in a gesture that is as possessive as it is comforting.
“She's not going to kill you. I won't let her.”

At a mere thought, the hideous snake tattoos ringing Vala's limbs vanish. Some of your revulsion leaves with them, as if they were markers of the sin this place has heaped upon her.

If only her sins had begun in Cummragh.

“Yes she will,” Vala says in a tone devoid of life. “She'll twist your mind and wear you down. Or she'll just do it tomorrow, and you'll forgive her so you can keep fucking her.”

You grab her by the arm and roll her on to her back. Her ample breasts spill over her chest, and her eyes roll lazily across your face. They've never looked so much like broken emeralds.

“Would I be wrong?” you snap. “Tell me why I shouldn't. Tell me why I should forgive you.”

Despite your jealous fury, you would like nothing more than a justification to bear your anger as a burden instead of wielding it as a weapon. All Vala needs to do is give you the smallest of reasons.

“You shouldn't.”

Vala tries to roll back over. You draw a sharp breath in and yank her back to her previous position, then glare into her eyes while your frustration soars to new heights. If she would just do you the small favor of breaking down into a sobbing, grovelling wreck at your feet, you could begin the long, arduous process of forgiving her. Instead, the quick-minded and sharp-tongued woman you married has become an emotionless, shapeless thing that can't even have the decency to give you an excuse to rage openly at her.

You grab Vala's face with one hand, squeezing her cheeks as you spread her legs and crawl between them on the bed. She makes no attempt to resist your advances, even with your hard cock looming just above her shaved sex. Powers or no powers, you could fuck her right here and now, and she wouldn't be able to stop you. She's a fighter - always has been - but you've got the advantage in both size and anger.

But you don't fuck her. You don't plunge your manhood into her folds and travel the path of so many Elf cocks before yours in an attempt to regain some semblance of power over her. It's not even that the act itself repulses you. As you get back off of the bed, not a single ounce of guilt colors your heart. Just frustration and jealousy, pure and untainted.

A strained smile seizes your lips for a brief moment as you walk towards the bedroom door. In that moment, in a flash of clarity that ever-so-fleetingly pushes aside the confused insanity of your situation, you see why you hate Vala, and why you love Moradys. Vala, in her human weakness, strayed and made you a commodity - just one of many who could satisfy a fickle love and a wandering eye. Then there is Moradys. A monster who killed billions, and spared you.

When they write the story of your life, you know which love you will want them to write about - the one that makes you shiver, not the one that makes you sick to your stomach.

By the time you reach the interior stairwell and close the door behind you, you've already materialized the first human outfit you've worn in months - trousers, boots that straddle the line between rugged and fashionable, and a shirt with the sleeves rolled halfway up your forearms. You tuck your crystal into a pocket inside the shirt and anxiously pat the outside to make sure it’s not going anywhere. A robed Moradys waits for you on the stairs, having taken a position a few steps up so that she can glare down at you like a disproving deity.

“If you lay a hand on her-”
“Shut your mouth,” says Moradys, gesturing at the hand held to your breast pocket. “Do you think that thing gives you power over me?”

“I think I could turn you to dust with a snap of my fingers.”

Moradys’ lips curl in a vicious frown too devoid of amusement to call a sneer. She’s pissed, and well past the point of civility. Only the memory of her previous impotent attack keeps her at bay.

“A few words from me, and your powers are gone. You’ll go back to being the snivelling bitch you’ve always been.” She stalks down the stairs, straightening up to her full height so that she still just barely manages to look down on you as she approaches. “Now… give me my cock back.”

Your mind reels at her threat, scrambling to summon all sorts of invisible defenses that will keep her from snatching the crystal from you. After a few seconds, you realize that your knee-jerk reaction is useless - a few words, she said. You consider fusing her mouth shut, but reason that she likely has alternative methods in mind, assuming this isn’t simply just a bluff on her part.

Since you’re not going to kill her, and you have no desire to make an actual enemy of Moradys, you decide on restoring the body parts you unintentionally robbed her of. You swallow, turning your eyes down to the space between your bodies and hovering your palm over her womanhood. Images of that pale manhood flash through your mind, and reality itself bends to match them. Moradys quakes, shudders, groans, and makes all the spastic twitches expected of someone whose flesh is being warped by unnatural processes.

Yet no matter how much you try, this new reality you’ve envisioned refuses to stick. You can feel the tissue you create surging forth and receding again, returning half-formed manhood to womanhood over and over again. You’re so inexperienced that you can think of little way forward other than redoubling your efforts and focusing all your willpower on the singular goal of giving this Elf a cock and balls. Moradys’ knees buckle, and she clenches her abdomen while letting out a pained groan. A violet glow throbs beneath her joined palms, then explodes outwards. You’re not fast enough in thought to re-summon the barriers you carelessly let fall in your intense focus on cock, but you do manage to somewhat cushion your impact against the bedroom door. Pain, as it turns out, makes it harder to focus on fixing your several broken bones.

“Why am I pregnant?” Moradys screeches from back down the hall.

Heavy footfalls herald her approach. She picks you up by the collar and slams you into the broken door, splintering it further.

“I’m not the one who gets fucked! I am the one who fucks!”

The pain of fractured bones cutting through raw tissue is too much to deal with right now. You switch off your pain receptors and get to work fixing anything that feels out of place while Moradys continues her teeth-gnashing and spittle-flinging rant. When you and Moradys had fled aboard this ship some hours ago with the promise of deification, you hadn’t imagined your halting of the apocalypse would be preluded by such absurd melodrama.

You had pictured a mind-blowing orgy of triumphant violence that justifies everything you went through. The pointless suffering you endured is revealed as a crucible that forged you into someone capable of shouldering it. Your powers, once so capricious in revealing themselves that they seemed a joke played on you by the universe, have manifested in their full glory. Most importantly of all, the gaping wound Vala left in your heart has been filled by a love far more profound than your oh-so-human romance. One without an expiration date, or room for betrayal.
Instead, you are holed up in the bowels of a groaning ship, dozens of miles from the confrontation with ultimate evil that Moradys promised. You don't want to be here - you want to slay the monster, save your daughter, win over the evil witch, and make Vala regret ever letting her eyes wander.

"Would you care to explain why there's a grown fetus inside of me?"

Moradys’ voice shakes with barely-contained rage as she winds her fingers up in your shirt collar. You mentally prepare the finer details of your defense, but avoid doing anything that will set her off. Godlike powers or no, you would prefer to solve this with words.

You take a deep breath in, straighten your back, place your hands on Moradys’ shoulders, and gently but firmly push her away from you. The Elf, as baffled as she is furious, allows her hands to fall away from your neck.

"Moradys."

It's the first time you've addressed her to her face by name. It's always been 'Mistress', or 'my Lady', or 'you bitch', depending on the prevailing relationship between you two. Now, you speak to her as an equal. She fixes you with a bemused look, seeming to derive some humor from the solemnity you're granting the occasion.

You move one hand to her robes and slip a hand inside to feel at her pregnancy-swollen belly. She's further along than Vala, and her thin figure makes the presence of another life inside of her even more pronounced. The baby seems to recoil at your presence, but you sense its fear fading away to caution as you hold your palm there with your heart full of nothing but love and goodwill.

"I'm going to take responsibility," you say to Moradys. Any trace of amusement vanishes, and she scoffs in exasperated anger.

"You'll do what?"

A violent rocking of the ship cuts short your blundering attempt at an explanation. You grab hold of Moradys with one hand and the wall with the other, waiting for whatever gust of air hit you to subside, but the turbulence only becomes more pronounced. Within seconds the whole ship is rolling onto its side, taking you and Moradys along with it. It careens into the building Moradys had sheltered it in the shadow of, then slides awkwardly across the facade in a horrific screech of metal on metal. With a wave of the hand, you create a shimmering sphere of impenetrable space around you and Moradys, shielding the two of you against the splintering of wood and shearing of metal.

Your mind travels to Vala, and your breath catches as you imagine her being thrown about the small bedroom like a ragdoll. In a blind panic you latch onto the mental image of her and call forth the real thing, bringing her into the bubble with you and Moradys. She’s not quite how she appeared a few short minutes ago, though. She wears a black jacket over a low-cut top, her red hair flows halfway down to her waist, and her baffled expression isn’t wracked by the soul-sucking ordeals of the past months.

"Orin?" she exclaims, looking between you, Moradys, and her new surroundings.

It’s like you’re looking into the eyes of a stranger. This isn’t Vala as you know her now, but as you knew her. You might as well have summoned a demon into your midst for all the terror her presence engenders. Within the blink of an eye you send her back to whatever time and place you tore her from, and turn your efforts to saving your Vala - the one who is as broken as you are.

With a glance you tear down the bedroom door and begin drifting towards it while the hallway
splinters and cracks. Water fills the corridor from the outside in. You can’t fathom why, until you realize that you had begun moving towards the bedroom with swimming motions. Godhood, as it turns out, is ill-suited to your very human brain.

“You idiot!” Moradys spits against the torrent of rushing water, while clinging desperately to the wooden molding on the now-vertical wall to your left. “Slow down!”

You briefly consider turning your mind into one capable of fully utilizing your own powers, but decide instead to take Moradys’ sagely advice and simply think things through. The way things have gone so far, you don’t trust yourself to modify your own brain without turning yourself into a gibbering retard. What a fitting end that would be to your brief flirtation with Godhood.

The ship slips free of the first building and smashes into something else - a wall, or a building, or perhaps even another ship. The battered bedroom door rips free of its hinges and hurtles past you down the water-soaked hallway. Vala follows immediately after, apparently having ended up right atop it. You catch her in the bubble, bringing her into the airy suspension you’ve managed to maintain despite your other difficulties.

Vala wraps her arms around you and presses her forehead to your shoulder, but you draw no pride from a gesture that once upon a time, would have made you feel like the most powerful man in the universe. She’s only doing it because you hold the power of life and death over her. If Moradys were the one altering reality with the snap of a finger, Vala would be clinging to her right now.

“Get us off this ship,” shouts Moradys. “Without killing us!”

You’re unsure how fast you’re being pulled through Cummragh by the wind, but the groaning and creaking of the ships seems to indicate that it’s moving far faster than it’s built for. You put the three of your on the deck of the ship, which pushes against the back of your bubble. A vast current of rainbow energy surrounds you on all sides, flowing far off towards an awe-inspiring sight of stone and blue flame.
At the very center of the besieged megacity sits a fire-wreathed fortress of impossibly complex Gothic architecture. The single massive structure grows larger in your view, and the ship propelling you along finally succumbs to the stormwinds and breaks into pieces that spread out along the current of energy. To your left and right you spot more of the rainbow rivers snaking towards the fortress from elsewhere in the city, but they soon disappear as you hurtle towards an archway leading into the center of the building. Vulture-like gargoyles tear themselves free of their perches and fly after you in screaming flocks, smashing into your barrier and exploding into bits of stone that fall hundreds of feet to the floor below. Vala and Moradys are both screaming, though even in the chaos you can tell that the noises coming from Moradys are actual words, and more frustrated than panicked.

“Stop!” she says. “Just stop!”

You obey without thinking, bringing the three of you to a halt in the center of a tower so vast you can scarcely see the passage you came through. A pale blue mist fills the space, drifting down from the unfathomable heights above to cling to the labyrinth of bookcases zig-zagging their way across the room. Your avian pursuers, a few seconds slower than you, surge into the room and flit around you in a chaotic, screeching swarm.

Moradys grabs you by the arm and squeezes - hard. “I am going to tell you exactly what to do, and you’re going to do it. Clearly you can’t handle thoughts of your own.”

Yes, you can. There were a few hiccups along the way, but growing pangs are to be expected when one is gifted with the power to do anything and everything. It’s a power that Moradys, even at her height, has only possessed the palest imitation of, yet she still treats you like the hopeless slave you
once were. At least Vala has the sense not to play backseat driver.

The screeching of stone birds intensifies, and the swarm above you parts, revealing a golden ray of light that bathes you in warmth. Gradually your eyes adjust to the light, and you’re able to make out the shape of something massive clambering down the nearest of the bookshelves.

It’s Orina.

She’s no longer a child, and far too large for her size to be judged relative to a human. Even the hulking soldier you fought alongside in Moradys’ arena was no larger than Orina’s palm. The massive, downward-facing woman is clad in a colorful, feathery dress, with golden wings and hair that radiate the blinding light you at first took for that of the nearby star. With each new handhold she takes, hundreds of books shake free of the shelves she clings to and tumble into the darkness below.

“Don’t you dare,” Moradys says to you. “Don’t you do it!”

Orina stops well short of your bubble and reaches down, slipping two fingers into the bubble and grabbing Moradys on either side of her waist. The robed Elf screeches along with the stone birds, thrashing her legs and swinging her arms as Orina pulls her back and slips her in between her ample breasts. Shock replaced by a very familiar sense of panic, you reach out with your awareness and teleport her back into your bubble. She appears there, blank-faced and rigid, then breaks into a dozen vultures that crash about the inside of your barrier, clawing at you and Vala while issuing forth ear-shattering cries. One of them sinks its claws into your chest and tears through your shirt with its beak, grabbing hold of the crystal you had put there for safe-keeping.

And just like that, you’re a man again. A helpless man, grabbing hold of his wife with one hand while reaching out towards a hopeless hope with the other. The vulture flies upwards, chasing after its Mistress who climbs up towards the heavens, while you fall down into the darkness.

In the past…

The room is dark. Ribara’s legs shake, and her hands shake even harder. The necklace she’s been fingering for the last twenty minutes slips from her fingers and clatters to the floor, landing just beside the door leading out from the closet and into the hallway. The light seeping in from underneath catches the necklace, revealing the gold-and-sapphire bird hanging from the chain. Ribara stoops down, snatches it up, and clutches the jewelry tightly to her chest. Her nervousness reaches such a fever pitch that her entire body spasms in panicked shivers. She’s never felt more sick in her life.

Shadows pass under the door, and her breath catches. The handle turns, the door opens, and she is met with the slave she knew would come here at this time to retrieve cleaning supplies. A woman - tall for a woman - with hair like strands of gold and a tan that has yet to fade despite years of living in Cummragh. Ribara has no idea what her name is - she never asked. Her eyes, as blue as the cut gem pressed between Ribara’s breasts, go wide with surprise, and her mouth opens.
Ribara grabs hold of her wrist and pulls her into the room while clamping a hand over her mouth and pressing her against a wall. “Quiet, slave.”

The slave, wide-eyed with fear, nods as Ribara eases the door closed with her foot. Darkness envelops them, and Ribara finds herself overcome with an all-too-familiar need that has her hand slipping from the woman’s mouth to her nethers. She slips underneath the hem of her dress and begins fingering her pussy while burying her nose in the slave’s hair and drawing in intoxicating lungfuls of her sweet scent. It was this slave’s beauty that had first made Ribara want to fuck her. Now, even in darkness, a mere touch from the Mon-keigh’s soft hands sends Ribara into a frenzy that has her exploring every inch of the smaller woman’s body… both inside and out.

“I have something for you,” Ribara says in a rasping voice as she grinds her hardening bulge against the woman’s flat stomach. Instead of fishing out her cock like she normally would, Ribara grabs the slave's hand and drops the necklace into it.

“What is this?” she says.

Ribara folds her fingers over the bird. “A gift.”

Silence falls over the two of them. The human trembles nearly as much as Ribara, and has to clear her throat before speaking.

“I don't want anymore gifts. I want something else.”

Her voice is so small, but the words hit with the force of celestial bodies. Ribara's heart pounds, her blackened vision fills with colorful static, and her legs threaten to give out from under her. It takes every ounce of her very limited restraint to not jam herself inside the slave right then and there.

“I want you…” The woman swallows, and her breasts push against Ribara's abdomen. “To get me and my mother out of here.”

The thought of waking up to the sight of that wizened old Mon-keigh's cracked face has Ribara reeling in disgust, but that disgust warps into a dreadful excitement as she grasps the full meaning of her slave's demand.

“Y-yes!” Ribara exclaims. “I will find a way for us to live together. A way that my mother won't ruin.”

“Out of Cumragh!” the woman shoots back, in a whispered version of a panicked wail. “I want you to get us out of here! I can't stand it anymore!”

Dumbfounded and at an utter loss of words, Ribara's hands slip from the slaves’ hips before shooting back up and grabbing hold of her arms.

“I'm here. What do you mean you want to leave?”

The woman shrinks away from the snarling Elf, whimpering as her back is pressed against the wall. “I hate it here. I hate you.”

Never in all of Ribara's few short years has she felt so weak while inflicting pain with such strength. Something snaps in the slave's arm, and she screams. A panicked Ribara clamps one hand over her mouth. Tears wet Ribara's hand, and the slave continues to whimper softly.

“I kept every gift you ever gave me,” she says through the meaty fingers clamped over her lips. “I'll show them to Lady Moradys. I'll tell her everything.”
Memories race through Ribara's mind, disgusting images made all the more powerful by the near-total darkness afflicting her vision. Images of her mother fucking every woman Ribara had ever expressed interest in. The spider-like crawl of Moradys’ hands across Ribara's thighs when the drunken Matron had called Ribara to her bedroom one particularly debauched evening. The sound of her mother chastizing her when she failed to get hard.

"Do you think you can threaten me?"

New strength surges into Ribara's muscles, and her hand finds its way to the slaves neck. She only means to push, but can't help but squeeze as well. The slave coughs and sputters, kicks and claws, catching Ribara across the face with her fingernails and landing a knee to her groin. That only makes Ribara angrier, and she slaps a second hand alongside the first, not stopping until the slave has gone still. When the pitiful assault finally stops, Ribara frees her and lets her drop to the floor.

"Get up," she hisses softly, throwing a weary glance at the door. Their conversation had become quite heated, and it wasn't outside the realm of possibility for a guard to have overheard the commotion.

Silence is her only response.

Ribara crouches down with an angry huff and picks the woman up by her broken arm. There's a heavy, lifeless feel to it that makes Ribara's blood run cold. She drops it on instinct and remains there for a few moments, heart pounding so hard she can hear it in her ears, telling herself over and over that the slave has merely fallen unconscious.

She gets down on all fours and presses her ear to the woman's mouth. There is no breath. She touches her chest. There is no heartbeat. Ribara stands up, nearly collapses into a wall, and clutches at her crotch as piss flows down the leg of her jumpsuit before puddling on the floor. Her breaths, half-sobs and half-terrified shudders, blare so loudly in her ears that she's sure the whole manor must hear them.

Minutes pass, and no one arrives to intrude on the two once-lovers. The closet, once a romantic rendezvous that was pregnant with her lover's scent, is now a claustrophobic morgue that reeks of stale piss and the vacated bowels of the dead.

Ribara stoops down a final time, picks up the slave, and rushes out of the room. The necklace in the dead woman’s hand slips free and falls to the ground with a soft 'clink' that Ribara scarcely takes notice of as she hurtles past horrified slaves and bemused guards. She bursts out onto the manor grounds, wading through thorny shrubbery that tears at her clothing and slices up her thighs.

The cliffside boundary of her home races up to meet her, and she slides to a stop. Without daring to look at the face of the woman in her arms, she lifts her over her head and hurls her out into the mist-fogged depths.
In the present…

Your fall is abruptly halted by the top of a bookcase slamming into your back. As you roll off of the top, you scramble for purchase on the rough wood, and manage to grab hold of Vala, who impacted a split-second after you. Your momentum takes her along with you, and the two of you fall down the facade of the bookcase, taking dozens of dusty times down with you.

A stone walkway winding up and around the maze of shelves brings your fall to a second and final stop. Vala lands atop you, knocking what little wind remains from your lungs. Neither of you asks the other if you're ok as you shove her off of you and wobble uneasily to your feet. Far above you, the last of the stone vultures disappears into the mists of the tower's cavernous heights. The light of Orina’s halo fades from view shortly after, and the faint glow of your empowering crystal is already a distant memory.

Vala staggers over to the bookcase to your left and leans her forehead against a shelf. Twin braziers of cold blue flame set on the walkway illuminate a face that looks twenty years older than that of the Vala you summoned in the airship. You can’t stand this pitiful, tired woman. Is this how Vala felt when she saw you at your lowest point? Is that why she did the things she did? Because pity had turned to disdain, and then hatred?

“This is the first time we’ve been alone in a long time,” you say to her. “Really alone.”

Vala doesn’t respond, nor even open her eyes. The only indication she gives that she hears you is to put her forearms up on the shelf, blocking your view of her face.

“And you know what? I’d rather be here with anyone but you. I’d rather spend the end of the world with Ribara. Everything she did to me was your idea, wasn't it?”

She slides her arms off of the shelf and turns away from you, walking slowly towards the open side of the walkway to your right. A precipitous drop awaits her.

“I thought this place was the worst thing to ever happen to me,” you say. Vala stops at the edge and looks downward. A cool breeze whistles through the corridors of shelves, making the braziers flicker and ruffling Vala’s hair. Every scrap of emotion has left her expression. She looks as dried out and used up as the tomes filling the tower.

“It wasn't,” you say. “You are.”

Somewhere between the words leaving your mouth and the wind going still, Vala vanishes. You hadn't even seen her take that first step out over the precipice. There’s no scream of fear from her, and no cry of shock from you. You simply stand there, jaw agape and body trembling, unable to process the loss you've suffered in the mere blink of an eye.

The world takes on an alien, unreal quality, which is quite something to be said for your already surreal surroundings. A sharp buzz fills your ears, and you can't fathom who it was who commandeered your tongue and said all those horrible things to your wife. Not you, certainly. Whoever it was will have hell to pay once you manage to process what just happened.

You shuffle over to the bookshelf and slump down to the ground with your back against it, a bit heavier than you meant to in your insensate numbness. A few of the volumes fall to the ground, and a particularly heavy one slams down right atop your head before dropping into your lap. The cover is a deep blue, and features the words ‘Good End’ embossed in gilded script. They fade away into nothingness, as if they were never there.
Moving in a daze, you flip open the cover, along with a good portion of the pages. There, you find a baffling sight that sends your mind reeling.

The events of the last minute are laid out in faded script, chicken-scratch left behind by some unknown intelligence to help you understand what just transpired. Your wife is dead, and you killed her. Dead because she couldn’t bear to shoulder the weight of what she did to you. Dead because you made her carry those burdens instead of sharing the load, as loved ones do. Dead because you chose the inhuman monster who ruined your life over the human woman who made a few mortal mistakes - many of which you yourself have repeated.

What kind of fragile ego can ignore genocide, rape, and torture, but can’t forgive his wife for tongue-fucking a few 18-year old barracks rats?

*Your* ego, apparently.

You don’t want to be mad anymore. You don’t want to yell at Vala, or hit her, or try to regain any of the scant pride you felt she robbed you of. All you want is your wife back, as she once was.

Tears stream from your eyes in unending torrents, staining the old book and making a mess of the open pages. Each black letter spreads out like a little cloud, merging into an incomprehensible mess. You let out a few bleary-eyed, choking sobs, then tilt your head back against the bookshelf and stare off into the distance. There’s no rescue, no escape, and no hope. You’ll starve to death down here, with nothing but books and the howling winds to keep you company.
Them, and Vala.

She stands to your left, nude and shivering, forehead leaned against the bookshelf in the exact stance and place as a short while ago. Your ordinary reaction would be to scramble to your feet and shout in mixed bewilderment and relief, but you’re beset with such grief-stricken shock that you can do little more than slowly stand upright and stumble toward her with mouth agape. Your hand falls on her shoulder, and you give it a light squeeze.

“Are you alright?”

She nods. Your hand slips from her, and you watch her narrow back rise and fall with labored breaths before turning back to the book you had let fall from your lap. It sits open to the same page you turned into an ink blot test with your tears, its unnervingly accurate narrative erased to just before the point where you launched into a biting invective at her.

You pull another book from the shelf. An ivory-spined volume covered in stitched leather, titled ‘The Thin White Duke of Death,’ tells the tale of your fight with Adrubal in startlingly captivating prose. The battle is every bit as chaotic as you remember. Another book details your initial arrival in Cummragh, before you knew where you were or what had become of Vala. A third and a fourth text follow that second one, creating a startlingly linear narrative.

The older books have well-set ink that only smears with some judicious application of spittle, while the fresher books - such as the one you poured your tears over - smear with just a bit of elbow grease. Every choice you made, big or small, sits upon these shelves.

There are so many things you’d like to make right. So many mistakes that you could tear right out of the story of your life. All it would take are a few strokes of the pen, and you will have stood up to Moradys from the first moment you met her. You could have turned Ribara into an ally, and rescued Vala before Adrubal mutilated her. This story would be a heroic epic, and not a tragedy. You would still be you, and Vala would still be Vala.

“I can't believe we're still alive,” Vala wheezes. “I can't believe it.”

Nor can you. Damaged, yes, but intact. More tears well up in your eyes as you turn your gaze to the fantastic library you find yourself in. Your story, for all its harrowing trials and tribulations, is one you don't dare change. The future, with its apocalypse and demons, is still nothing but a thought. The past has been written.

Not that you're above a little bit of cheating.

You return to the book that fell into your lap and flip back a few pages, until you've located your initial entry into the library. Moradys had been right - you were sloppy. You take the book over to the shelf, set it down on the edge, and prick your index finger with the edge of the blue braziers beside you. Blood wells up on the tip of your finger, giving you a makeshift writing instrument.

“What are you doing?”

Vala walks towards you and looks at the book. Her voice holds a bit more life than before, though she still sounds beyond exhausted.

“These books are magic,” you say in between uncomfortable strokes of your bloody finger on the page. “I think if I write something new, it'll change the past.”

She lets out a short, awkward laugh and rubs her eyes with her palm. “What? Why would that work?”
The single, pained glance you give her goes unnoticed. “It's just a feeling.”

Given the utter insanity of everything else that has happened, she seems to take that explanation at face value - or at least is willing to let the question drop - and you're able to continue writing in a more secure means of storing the crystal Moradys gave you. You can only hope that whatever arcane laws empower these books take into account footnotes and marginal writings.

“There.” You take a step back to admire your handiwork. The two pages your editing took place on have been turned into a bloody, barely-legible mess that looks more like the work of a madman than a novel… but the sight of a faint green glow under the flesh of your left forearm tells you that your efforts paid off.

“What is that?” says Vala.

The color of the glow brightens and turns yellow, then darkens to a dull, pulsating red. You can sense your thoughts flowing hotter and faster, invested with the energy to make themselves manifest with nothing but the slightest ounce of intent. It takes all of your self-control to simply keep yourself, and your surroundings, as they are.

“You’re staying here.” You grab her firmly by her arms and look her square in her eyes. A black jacket and maroon top materialize over her torso, followed by pants and boots. It's nice to see her in something besides shackles and tattoos. “After this is over, we're going to have a long talk - just you and me.”

Were this any other couple in any normal situation, those words would put the fear of dead relationships square in the heart of the one hearing them. Yet to Vala, who lets out a choked gasp of tearful relief, they seem to be the sweetest assurance she could possibly have heard.

“Alright,” she chokes out. “After.”

You half-expected an argument, wherein she would insist the two of you face this evil together, just like you should have faced Cummragh together. Part of you is a bit disappointed that Vala didn’t push the issue, but you know that you would never have let her win. She’s damn near broken from the unending madness of this place, and you learned long ago that you're not very good at protecting people.

The bookcases shrink in size - as does Vala, and the walkway beneath your feet, along with everything else in the room. You grab onto the massive frames of the latticework that spans the width of the tower and begin to climb, just as the similarly-sized Orina did. Once you've put some distance between yourself and the now-narrow walkway you left, you spare a glance down at the mouse-sized Vala, who gives you an awkward wave that you return with one made even more clumsy by your size.

There's so much more you want to say, but words would ruin what has nearly become the heroic moment you hoped for. So onward and upward you climb, towards the end of the world.
The giant-sized Orin disappears into the foggy blue mists above, and Vala slumps back against the bookcase before sliding down to the ground. A howling wind whips up, and she draws her jacket tight against the chill. A shirt that barely holds her tits in and heeled boots aren't the articles of clothing she would have chosen to be left behind in. Still, she can't help but grin from ear to ear in tearful relief at the fact that Orin remembers who she once was.

Perhaps she can be that person again. For real, this time. She'll be faithful, and honest, and womanly, and all the other things a good wife is supposed to be. If he wants a kid, she'll give him one. And if he doesn't...

Vala slides up her shirt to feel at her swollen abdomen. The demon she dealt with certainly upheld her end of the bargain, but Vala still isn't sure whether the womb she loaned her in return is any fuller than before. The thought of that disease-ridden *thing* growing inside of her turns her stomach, but the demon had assured Vala that the child that now grows inside of her will look just like Vala and her husband. Even if it were to start displaying some sort of crazy powers, Vala could just blame it on Orin's own abilities.

“Fuck.” Vala sucks air in through clenched teeth and grinds her hands into her eyes. She can't fall back into thinking like that - not so soon after getting the closest thing to a second chance she could possibly hope for. She'll tell Orin what she did to escape, and hope for a happy ending. That's all *anyone* can really do in a place like this.

One last gust of wind blows Vala's hair across her face, and flutters the pages of the book Orin had left behind on the shelf above Vala's head. She reaches up and blindly feels around until she grabs hold of one corner, then pulls it down into her lap. That last breeze had turned aside every page, leaving the final page open to it's back side.

Vala stares at it until she feels as old as the cracked parchment. Blank as it is, it's practically begging for someone to put pen to paper and tell the tale of whatever Orin is about to face atop this tower. Vala has never been much of a writer, though. It will take a better literary mind than hers to bring this story of his to a satisfying conclusion.

She places her finger between her teeth and bites down on the tip until warm blood flows across her tongue. Then, she places it on the bottom of the final page and paints five lonely words.

It's all she trusts herself to write. Fate - and her husband - will take care of the rest.
You have always known that evil existed.

Before Cummragh, only the things people did had been good or evil. Even the worst tyrants cherish loved ones or indulge in sporadic bouts of charity. Then you had met the Dark Elves, and come to understand that there are beings - not humans, but still people - who have become so inured to life's banality that they can only feel alive through the most vile befoulment of everything good and pure in this universe.

Yet even the Dark Elves are not beyond salvation. The very fact that they seek to perceive good through its contrast points to that fact. Moradys doesn't have you so bewitched that you could mistake her for anything resembling a good person, but you've seen enough to know that she is far more complex than the omnicidal lunatic you first took her for. Maybe that's why you found her so hard to resist. There were always parts of her that you found sympathetic and alluring in their humanity.

Evil had once again become something that only existed in the abstract. You had thought yourself so enlightened and discriminating in your perception of morality. That was before you climbed to the top of the tower, and realized just how real the abstract can become.

Whatever wears your daughter's body stands at the center of a vast stone rooftop, haloed by the glittering golden planet you are hurtling towards. She stands some twelve feet tall - far smaller than she was when you began to pursue her, but still towering above your now-normal height. Her back is turned to you, her hands splayed out towards the oncoming planet and hips gyrating to a rhythm only she can hear. Ghostly after-images follow every spastic contortion of her body.

Moradys stands beside Orina, chained to the demon's waist with a leash of light. It wasn't long ago that Moradys might have possessed the strength to rip Orina's arm from its socket and beat her to death with it. Now she can do no more than struggle and swear up a storm that you can hear even over the roar of wind and thrum of energy emanating from all around you.

Nine hideous monsters ring the edge of the circular rooftop, each bearing a large white crystal upon it's back or in its arms. The creatures all have wings and plumage, but never in the right spot and not in a way that leads you to believe them capable of flight. They bear enough of a resemblance to Elves for you to hazard a guess at what they once were. A few even wear torn standards of the houses they belonged to - perhaps even ruled over.

Ribbons of energy course into the creature-held crystals from miles away, focused through them like prisms into tighter bands of white that surge into Orina like unending bolts of lightning. Everything reeks of fire, and ozone, and burnt flesh. You're amazed that there's still enough atmosphere to breathe.

"Would a puppet ask something of God?" Orina cocks her head back to look at you, but continues her disconcerting dance. Her voice is discordant and slurred, a shrieking chorus spat through a mouthful of glass.

"I don't think that'd do much good." You begin walking towards her, giving Moradys just enough of a lingering look to let her know that you see her in the radiant shadow of her monstrous captor. "Stop what you're doing. Return this place to the Warp."

Those were Moradys' plans, but they seem sane enough demands to make of Orina. You're not yet
sure whether or not you’ll be returning with Cummragh, or staying in this unknown portion of Realspace. It may not be a choice you yourself get to make.

Orina whirls about and stalks towards you with Moradys dragged behind her, seeming to grow in size with each step she takes from the shimmering, translucent double that continues the dance she left off. A transparent apparition shows her stopping and considering you thoughtfully - another turns around and ignores you. The real Orina grabs you by the top of your head with a single chest-sized hand and lifts you up so that you’re eye-level with her. You have to take hold of her wrist to keep your hair from being torn out.

“You don’t pull my strings - I pull yours.” The arm gripping you shakes violently, and an involuntary shudder works its way up Orina’s statuesque body. Her eyes roll back into her skull and drool drips from the corner of her mouth, which she wipes away with the back of her hand before dropping you to your feet and turning her gaze back downward. “Take comfort in the fact that there is a God, and she hates you as much as you hate yourself.”

It isn’t her words that cause you to act, nor the horrible things her manipulation has led you to experience, but the bone-deep knowledge that what you’re facing isn’t human - perhaps not even very intelligent, aside from possessing a sort of base cunning. Its mannerisms and facial expressions change from moment to moment to mimic your own, and the things it says sparks moments of déjà vu that call to mind things you’ve heard from Moradys or said to yourself in your own head.

Perhaps this thing is intelligent, and is simply too young to put a convincing show of humanity. Whatever the case, you no longer harbor any serious hope that there is a daughter for you to save from the clutches of this twitching monstrosity.

You will her gone, and she vanishes without a trace. A good fifty feet past the spot where the demon once stood, the ethereal version of Orina that had been left behind continues its dance, as opaque and coherent as the one you just vanquished.

Moradys, now free of her magical bindings, grabs you tightly by the arm. “That thing is weak,” she shouts over the chorus of braying monsters and stormwinds. “It’s a spirit of the Warp - utterly insubstantial. You give it power - you! It can’t kill you without killing itself.”

If Orina heard that, she doesn’t care. The two of you don’t warrant even a look back from her, though her monstrous minions continue to watch you with a discomforting intensity. A golden barrier of energy materializes between you and the oncoming planet, and Orina throws out her arms, opening up a gaping hole that the entirety of Cummragh passes through, unharmed.

The black-and-violet tendrils of the Warp cling to the fractured city, but the wound in space they emanate from is growing distant enough that they are becoming fewer and thinner. The scene is so alien, so utterly disorienting in its import, that you can scarcely remember to breathe. The moment is pregnant with apocalyptic meaning, and you are the one who is supposed to be able to tip the scales one way or the other.

You - the man who has managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of every victory he ever glimpsed.

“What didn’t you tell me sooner?” you ask Moradys, mouth agape as you watch this sensuous, gyrating piece of yourself clear the way towards her celestial target. “I could’ve gotten ready for this. I could’ve…”

Moradys squeezes your arms and gives you an angry look. “Quit your whining, and focus!” She gives you a light shove towards Orina and moves behind you, taking you by both shoulders and putting her head beside yours. “You made a wish you didn’t have the balls to carry through on,
didn’t you? Destroying this place, or some-such childish nonsense. Take it back, and rob this creature of all its power.”

You did wish for something like that. In fact, you wished for exactly that. Destroying a planet full of humans wasn’t part of your fantasy, though. Nor was ending the life of every innocent slave still clinging to what remains of Cummragh. All you wanted was the death of everyone who ever wished you ill, and the everlasting regret of those who betrayed you.

Is that so much to ask?

“How?” you ask her, feeling so out of your depth that you can’t help but laugh. “What do I do against that?”

“Think of all the people who will die!” she urges you. “I’m one of them, you know. Do you think I’ll survive this? I won’t, and all those fragile little humans you’re so fond of won’t either! Charal will die along with them. So will your whore of an ex-wife, but that’s hardly worth the price you’re about to pay.”

Before you can put her malformed advice to use, she leans her weight into your back and points a slender finger at Orina.

“Not so clever now, you horrid little thing!” she screeches at the demon. “What a sad turn at Godhood - death before you’ve bribed yourself a single worshipper!” You wince in pain and turn your ear away from her mouth.

“But I have millions,” comes a voice behind you. The two of you whirl about to see Orina standing just behind you. She gets down on one knee, then leans down until she can look Moradys in the eye. Her feathery hair spreads out over the ground, creating a radiant pool of gold that is nearly blinding to look at. “They’ve huddled in your cages and mines for thousands of years. Hoping and planning and…”

Orina groans and shakes with orgasmic delight, biting her lip as a series of shivers wrack her gigantic form. You will her gone - splintered into a thousand pieces or speared through the heart by a steel lance - but she merely sputters in and out of existence like a wisp of smoke before returning to full reality.

“I live for hope,” she gasps. Her eyes regain their focus, and an inhuman grin spreads across her lips. Despite the unquestioned beauty of her statuesque visage, you feel as if you’ve dived far too deep and come face-to-face with an ancient predator in some best-avoided ocean trench. “...And the moment it’s taken away.”

She raises her hand and points a single finger at Moradys. You take the Elf by the shoulders and back away from her encroaching hand, but the very platform you stand on warps and compresses, bringing you back towards her. The tip of Orina’s finger connects with Moradys’ forehead, and the nauseating shifting of the ground stops.

“You should have treated us better.” Orina pushes herself back to her feet, then holds her left hand out, palm open. A golden staff encrusted with blue gems forms from her hand outward, terminating in a spike at the bottom, and a lidded eye encircled by a nine-pointed star at the top. “And you should have planned better.” She gives you a disdainful look, as if you’re a pile of animal shit she nearly stepped on with her bare feet. “I left this weak cuckold, just like every woman he’s ever clung to.”

Moradys jerks in surprise with such strength that her shoulder nearly catches you in the chin. She turns her face back towards you, begging you with a ghastly expression to do something to turn this
into the triumph you both pictured. A thousand possibilities pass through your mind, but the dangers you face are so myriad that all thought of action arrests itself. You are faced with a God - one you can touch, not a dream or vision - and realize how ridiculous your own fantasies of apotheosis were. How can you, a man who has never managed to protect a single person, hope to save billions?

“It was your fault for introducing us,” says Orina. Her voice cracks across the sky like thunder. She takes her staff in both hands and raises it above you and Moradys, spiked tip pointed downwards. “You, a feeble empath... or her, the daughter of the most powerful pysker in existence. How could I resist?”

Ribara’s world is one of searing light, deafening sound, and bone-shaking impacts. She tears through the arena like a Warpstorm, littering the halls of her old stomping grounds with the burnt-out corpses of her enemies. Armor-clad Astartes crumple before her like crops before a thresher, putting up little more of a fight than the Mon-keigh she so easily slaughtered as a Wych.

She thrusts her sword through a man-sized shield that should have shattered her blade, skewering the invader behind it. A flurry of bolter rounds erupts into her back, and she spins around to grab hold of the one who fired hit. His skull cracks between her hands like a ripe fruit, coating her hands with hot blood and brain matter.

A third warrior, seeing the futility of close-quarters combat with the unstoppable Elf, opens fire on her with a tripod-mounted Lascannon from behind the relative safety of a fallen pillar. The beams of light bend harmlessly around Ribara, as if themselves afraid of her. With a single look of murderous intent from her, the Astartes erupts in a gory fountain of hemorrhaging blood vessels and detonating organs. His blue-and-gold breastplate bends outward from the psychic forces making a mess of his body, and he falls to the floor with his comrades.

Ribara stalks back to the first of the dead and slides out her blade from his neck. By all rights, the sword should have splintered a hundred times over in the time since she had begun her rampage. The same could be said of her body. Her skull throbs with such force that her vision pulsates, every nerve ending in her body sings with pain too sharp to take delight in, and her hands are wracked by tremors that are only steadied by more murder. Blood drips from her eyes and ears, and more pools in her mouth. She had mistaken it for the errant arterial spray of her fallen foes at first, but now there is no mistaking it for her own.

She doesn’t stop to consider what this power she channels is doing to her body. It lets her visit unparalleled destruction on anything and everything that has ever made her the least bit upset. The Mon-keigh will all die as punishment for their obscene fragility. The home of the Drukhari - her home - will shatter against a planet like ocean waves against a rocky shoreline. Orin will wish he had been more sensitive to her needs, and his treacherous Mon-keigh wife will regret thinking that Ribara could be used as a pawn in her games. If they aren’t sorry for what they’ve done, they will be soon - and if they aren’t sorry then, Ribara will kill them.
And then there is mother. Perhaps when everything she has ever coveted lies dead at her feet, she will finally understand how badly she erred in her treatment of Ribara.

“Stop!” comes a shout from back down the scrap-filled hall she had just torn through. “Please, stop!”

Charal rounds the scorched bulk of a fallen dreadnought, catching her shoulder on the side of the walking tank and falling to the floor, in the process losing the dark purple curtain she had found to use as a makeshift robe. She wraps it back around herself, and resumes her awkward, limping run towards Ribara.

“One moment,” Charal huffs out, so out of wind from chasing the Elf that she can barely speak. “Just one momen-”

The slave’s face turns shocked, and her legs jerk mid-stride, nearly sending her back to the floor. Before Ribara can look around for the source of her surprise, an Astartes blade shoots through her back and chest, followed by searing pain. She roars in anger and turns back to the corpse she just withdrew her own weapon from. The gold-trimmed Astartes armor stands on two feet, though not with the aid of its deceased occupant. Cloudy ashes billow out through the cracks made by Ribara’s assault, followed by a brilliant blue flame.

Ribara gives the baffling sight no more consideration than is necessary to decide upon a method of attack. She tears off the armor’s arms, tosses them aside, then does the same to the chestplate. Fire spills out over her hands and torso, scorching her own armor and making her stagger back in pain. The armor collapses to the ground, and the flames that gave it life spread out over the ground before dying.

Her attacker is dead, but its sword remains in Ribara’s chest. She fumbles awkwardly for the hilt pressed up against her back, but can’t quite reach around her muscular frame. Charal grabs hold of it instead, giving it a good yank and staggering backwards as the blade’s tip clatters to the ground. The splintered bones and cleaved flesh of Ribara’s chest stitches itself back together with breathtaking rapidity, taking with it the pain of her impalement, but leaving her with the bone-deep need for more slaughter.

Ribara grabs Charal around the throat and lifts her off of the floor. The slave kicks and chokes, gurgles and gasps, all while Ribara’s grip grows tighter and her breaths grow faster. All it would take is a twitch of the wrist to break her neck, and some small fraction of her boundless hatred would be satisfied. Yet she can’t bring herself to do it - in an irony of ironies, the people she hates most are the ones she can’t bring herself to put an end to. It happened with her mother in the arena, just as it’s happening here. For her tormentors to simply vanish would leave her with the indelible mark they stained her life with.

It isn’t enough for them to die. They each need to crawl, and beg, and cry, and scream, and become what Ribara always wanted them to be.

A mechanical whirring draws Ribara’s attention to the right, just as a chainblade comes down across her raised arm, cleaving the limb straight through. Charal falls to the floor with a pale hand still wrapped around her throat, and blood sprays across her face like a geyser from the severed forearm. Another resurrected Astartes, with a plume of blue flame where its head should be, lunges at Ribara with its blade.

Her attacker slows mid-thrust, as if caught some invisible morass that renders him nearly stationless. The saw wrapped around his blade moves with similar sluggishness, rendering every sharp ‘click’ of the machine’s rotation audible, and allowing Ribara to see each tiny, gleaming tooth on the weapon. She sidesteps the oncoming attack, then brings her own blade down on her enemy’s back. Lightning
erupts at the source of the impact, followed by an emulsion of flame that spills out from the cracked armor in slow-motion.

Charal watches in numb bewilderment as Ribara’s magical attacker explodes in a shower of steel and fire. Her world has never been under her control, and chaos has always been the rule of the day. But lately, even the scant reason that dictated her suffering seems to have shattered along with the reality it is supposed to govern.

Droplets of fire rain down over Charal and Ribara. Lightning coils around the Elf’s severed arm, lashing out all around her and scorching the ground wherever it strikes. Ribara raises her mutilated limb and lets out a horrible wail of frustrated anger, and Charal hurriedly scoots away as one of the bolts of lightning comes frighteningly close to scorching her groin. Glowing suits of bearer-less armor charge past her towards the roaring Elf, some falling to the thunder-clapped lightning snaking up Ribara’s towering form, while others manage to make it to their target before being smashed to bits by strikes too fast to see.

Charal becomes faintly aware of a lingering weight on her neck, and tears off Ribara’s lifeless hand before scrambling to her feet and taking off running in the other direction, cringing against each ear-shattering explosion and shower of magical fire. She no longer has any hope of living through this. All she wants is to see her daughter again, before the end of the world. To touch her beautiful face, and feel her warmth, and whisper sweet things into her ear while everything turns to fire.

It is the second wish she has ever been granted. The first was to have a baby - the daughter who stands before her now, a little girl in a colorful dress dwarfed by the enormity of her surroundings. Charal doesn’t stop running, nor look back to see how her other daughter - if she can be called such a thing - is faring against the seemingly endless sea of lifeless opponents. Orina jumps up and down, bare feet slapping against the marble floor, then takes off in the other direction, vanishing from the starlight-illuminated portion of ground created by the windows to Charal’s left.

“Orina!” she shouts, her lungs and legs given new strength by desperate needs. The young girl reappears a moment later, dashing through the next starlit square before again vanishing into darkness.

Charal continues through the battle-scarred halls, cutting her feet on broken glass and slipping as her blood-drenched feet catch on her makeshift robe. A rhythmic pounding comes from up ahead, and she reluctantly stops chasing her daughter to take cover behind a pillar, allowing a small group of living Astartes to charge past her towards the battle still taking place to her rear. As soon as they pass she darts back out and continues onward, desperately searching for the one light that still shines in her life. She catches sight of Orina over and over again, though never for longer enough to cry out her name and see her disappear through some doorway or around a corner.

She comes to a vast intermediate chamber situated between the arena’s outer hallways and the open-air pit where Dark Elf Wyches once murdered humans like her for sport. The room is a chaotic scene
of bloody violence, full of broken cages and wild beasts who tear into each other for sustenance or pleasure. Orina runs between two horned, charging beasts moments before they collide, narrowly avoiding a messy death. She drops onto all fours and climbs into a tunnel underneath a stack of cages.

“Wait!” Charal screams, overcome with such motherly fear that she has been reduced to tears. She sprints after Orina, leaping over wrestling hounds and gore-slicked carcasses, then falls onto her stomach and crawls into the small tunnel. Those creatures that weren’t lucky enough to be freed by the city’s destruction take swipes at her as she passes, slicing open her back and making ribbons out of the backs of her thighs. She sobs and screams, sped onward by bodily pain and the horrifying thoughts of what her daughter faces further ahead.

The pile of cages opens up into a space free of the violent deathmatch on the other side. Charal tears her ankle free of a hairy, man-like creatures lecherous grip, then scrambles to her feet and limps onward in unthinking desperation. A massive doorway up ahead leads out into the arena, and the fountain of sacrificial fire at the center of it. From the flickering flames of the fire’s peak flows a current of rainbow energy that snakes far off into the distance, winding through the ruins of Cummragh’s cityscape. She had fled this tower hours ago, only to end up in the exact same spot with nothing to show for it. Orina is nowhere to be seen, despite there being nowhere for her to have run in such a short time, except for the pit itself.

Charal banishes the thought.

Above the fire looms the massive, dark-metal bulk of the invader’s ship, the guns on its undercarriage firing at unseen targets in the skies outside of the arena. There are no lines of slaves waiting to be consigned to the pit or experimentation, and the abominations who had guarded them are also absent. Between Charal and the firepit stands the invader who promised to save this place, then turned it into a hell unlike any other. The man who swore he would find her daughter.
Sasuramen wears the gold-trimmed blue armor of his fellow warriors, with a robe worn over the suit that only makes him appear all the more massive. Three ossified horns grow from his the sides of his helmet, each longer than the last. Two heads hang from the girdle clinching his robe around his waist, too decayed to recognize as anything other than vaguely humanoid. In his right hand he carries a staff, tip set against the ground and horned top pointed towards the sky. Beneath the staff’s horns are set a bloodshot eye with a blue iris. Not a painted eye, or a gem cut to look like one - a real eye, which flickers over to Charal even as its bearer stands motionless.

“Where is my daughter?” Charal screams, running over to the man. His inhuman size becomes more daunting the closer she draws to him. By the time she’s within arms reach, she feels ready to collapse to the ground and curl up in utter dread.

“You promised you’d find her,” she croaks.

Sasuramen angles his slitted helmet downward, only now seeming to take notice of her. Then, like a shifting mountain, he turns to face her and sets his staff back down on the metal floor. A long, slow outtake of breath filters out through his facemask, followed by a foul-smelling gust of cold air that reeks of death. Charal takes a step back, shuddering as she imagines what waits behind that mask.
“She is all around us,” the man says in a wondrous awe underset by unshakable confidence. His booming voice carries with it a dozen echoes, as if the words built up in the prison of his armor before finally being loosed. “Can thou not feel her?”

The slitted eye atop the staff swivels down to Charal, and its fleshy lids squeeze halfway shut. She has the distinct impression the intelligence behind it is grinning, though it’s difficult to tell without the thing possessing a mouth.

A sound like thunder breaks the windswept tranquility of the fire-warmed rooftop, and the staff’s eye goes wide in fright. The storage pens Charal had left explode in fire and light. Burning animal carcasses roll out onto the ramp leading away from the room, followed shortly after by Ribara. Her armor hangs off her in tatters, her sword drags behind her as she walks, and her eyes bleed lightning.

“Fear not, mother of God!” Sasuramen takes a few steps away from Charal, then points his staff at her. Blue flame erupts from the space between the two horns, swallowing her up in its warmth from feet to chest and lifting her up into the air. “You will be with her soon.”

She rises faster the higher up she goes, and has to twist her neck around to look back down at the sorcerer she left behind. He stares up at her with his unblinking gaze, and taps his staff on the ground.

“We all will,” he declares.

Another thunderclap follows, joined by an explosion of blinding light centered on the sorcerer that Charal is forced to look away from. She joins with the current of energy emanating from the fire, and a fierce wind sweeps her away from the tower in the blink of an eye.

Ribara's sword connects with the haft of the Astartes’ staff. An unstoppable force meets an immovable object, and it is the world that suffers for their collision. Cracks shoot outward from the force of the impact, sorcerous magic scorches the air, and the ship hanging in the sky above the pair groans against the force of the impact below.

The sorcerer staggers backward, like a statue nearly toppled from it's pedestal, and Ribara is thrown in the opposite direction. As soon as she lands, she rolls onto her back and frantically searches the arena’s skies. Not for her opponent, who has already recovered, but for the slave woman, Charal.

Fighting with no one watching. It seems pointless - masturbatory in it's obscene indulgence. She needs someone to bear witness to the havoc she creates, and the strength she makes evident. Someone to prove wrong. The slave woman thought that Ribara could be more than a blunt instrument, and Ribara had shown her the folly of such hope. That makes her the winner, doesn't it?

Why, then, does Ribara feel no satisfaction?

“Begone, foul creature of the Warp!”
The sorcerer slams his staff down on the ground, and a tidal wave of blue flame erupts outward. Ribara pushes herself to her feet and races through the roiling miasma, far beyond caring what damage it might do to her. As the fire passes over her flesh, bringing with it the unimaginable pain of ten thousand burnt nerve endings, the hatred that grips her heart like a vice momentarily loosens its hold.

The fire continues past her, and she collapses onto her knees, awash in agonizing peace. Her flesh is scorched, her eyes are melted, and her remaining senses are so damaged that she can neither hear nor smell the sorcerer's approach.

But she can feel him. Each step vibrates the metal plating beneath her knees, tearing at the flesh that had been melted to the flooring. The steady pounding of boots on metal grows stronger, then stops completely. She can feel his immense weight pushing down on the other end of the small plate she kneels on, angling it a bit further downward to the left than to the right.

Ribara gives her smoldering fingers the slightest of experimental wiggles, and, upon finding them fully functional, thrusts her arm out forward and to the left, right where she calculated the Astartes’ staff should be. Her bloody hand wraps around hot metal, sticking to it like her knees do the floor. She tears her shins up from the ground and shoves backwards, tearing the sorcerer's weapon away from him.

Her vision returns a few short seconds later, along with most of the soft tissue that had been burnt to a crisp by the sorcerer's flames. The sorcerer himself stands right where he was when Ribara had stolen his staff, seeming annoyed by the theft but not seriously concerned with the way the tables have turned.

Not like the reddened eye that tops the weapons. It stares at Ribara in quivering fright, black pupil dilated to the size of a grape. The eye rolls over backwards until nothing but bloodshot white is showing, then dissolves into a flurry of tiny birds. The rest of the staff dissolves similarly, assembling in a shrieking swarm before flitting back to the sorcerer and reforming the staff in his hand.

“I am a librarian of the Thousand Sons. Right-hand of the God-Empress, and wielder of the holy flame.” He angles the horns atop his staff towards Ribara in a gesture of priestly accusation. “Who dares violate the sanctity of His rebirth?”

“Your better.”

The sorcerer grunts in response and thrusts his staff in her direction. Flame once again erupts from the twin horns, a telegraphed attack that Ribara is more than prepared for. She digs her fingers into the seams of the flooring and flips up a section twice her height, running it forward and using it as a battering ram against the sorcerer. The heat from his flames binds her finger tips to the metal and cooks the cheek she presses against the backside, but she continues her forward charge until she meets with a satisfying impact that ends the inferno being hurled her way.

Ribara tosses aside her shield, which has begun to sweat droplets of molten metal. The sorcerer lays on his back, head tilted to the side and staff nowhere to be seen - fallen into the pit behind him, most likely. She leaps atop him and grabs his helmet by either side, then crushes it inward like a tin can. The metal crumples easily, but she fails to receive the bloody crunch she had been expecting.

She lifts up the smashed helmet, and finds nothing but an empty suit of armor.

A section of armoring shoots off of the suit's arm, flips around in the air, and attaches to Ribara's arm. She grabs onto the thing and tries to peel off the frustratingly rigid plate, but can hardly get the thing to budge. Her situation only becomes more dire as more pieces join the first, encasing her in an
oversized suit of armor that allows her only the narrowest degree of movement in any direction. She screams and thrashes, knocking away pieces of the suit in a berserker rage that nearly causes her to miss what is happening to her right.

The sorcerer stands off to the side, clad only in his girdled blue robe. He's a middle-aged man, bald and with a craggy face whose lined features are covered in black tattoos of arcane script. In his hands he holds his staff, which he waves slowly through the air in broad, sweeping motions. Far off in space, the barren grey moon they are passing expels a corona of dust that swirls and condenses until its flowing lines match the movements of the sorcerer's staff.

His movements become faster, and Ribara's resistance more desperate. She frees one arm, then tears off the opposing gauntlet. Next are the Astartes’ boots - she doesn't dare take the time to bother with the rest of her legs.

The sorcerer traces one last flowing arc through the air, then, with a deafening battlecry, thrusts it forward. The lines of dust hanging about the moon surge with it, sailing across hundreds of miles of open space in the span of a few heartbeats. The magic holding together Ribara's bindings finally gives way to her strength, and she breaks into a run as the rest of the armor falls away from her body.

One step, and the lines of dust entwine into a single column. Two steps, and the storm is close enough to drown out all other noise. Three, and she can feel the speckle of grit and sand on her face.

Four, and the pillar of moondust collides with her chest, driving her through floor after floor, wall after wall, until she breaks through the final barrier and is carried into the belly of a dying city.

Orina brings her staff down on you and Moradys, slamming the spiked tip into the psychic barrier projected above you. The air pulsates with resonant energy, the stone rooftop ripples in waves, and the entirety of reality sings as the gigantic demon recoils from the force of her own blow. The barrier wasn't a deliberate move on your part. You had simply raised your hands in reflexive protection and willed her weapon away. The result saved you from ending up a messy smear on the stonework, but isn't quite the instant solution you hoped for.

"Help me!" you say to Moradys.

The lumbering giant above you steadies her stance and raises her staff for another go. Hands held upward, you risk a glance at your silent companion, and find her squatting beside you with her hands atop her head. You've seen children face imminent death with more bravery.

“What do you expect me to do?” she shouts in return. “Use your head, you absurd little man!”

Orina brings her staff down again, blasting the rooftop with an explosive cascade of wind that nearly sends her crystal-bearing minions scuttling off the edge of the platform. The demon prepared her strike better this time, and she immediately readies herself for another.
“You had a plan, didn’t you?” you ask her. “What was it?”

Another blow rattles your entire body, and the stone beneath your feet buckles. Barrier or not, you’ll be falling through the tower after another couple of impacts like that. A fall shouldn’t be able to kill someone who can simply magic away the effects of gravity on themselves, but this fight has taking on a frustrating straightforwardness that leaves you doubting the effectiveness of your own powers.

“I thought you were its host,” says Moradys. “I was going to confront you with it, and…”

She trails off, apparently unwilling to continue the thought. You don’t like the feeling that you were being led into another trap by your ‘partner’, only for her double-cross to fall apart at the last moment. The cracking of your barrier knocks those thoughts right from your mind. Luckily, the outburst of energy that follows knocks Orina back again, slowing her next strike, and you’re able to summon another barrier. It’s a slower process this time, one made difficult by old doubts and new concerns. Your abilities seem to come and go with your own belief in them, and that knowledge itself is more destructive to your hold on your powers than any god or demon ever could be.

“And now I have no idea who is granting this thing it’s power,” Moradys says.

But you do know. You don’t know why, or how, but Orina might as well have told you her host’s name. There was only one person you ‘introduced’ the demon to, back when she was nothing but a barely-intelligent spirit sharing a prison cell with you.

With your target pictured clearly in your mind, you do your best to force her image onto the stone beside you. She flickers there for a moment, kneeling on the ground, clad in her armored red gown and with flesh that has been burnt to cinders. The strain exhausts you both mentally and physically, and your barrier, briefly forgotten with your focused turned elsewhere, collapses. The ghostly image of the wounded Elf vanishes, and Orina merely laughs in response to your efforts.

“She is otherwise occupied,” says Orina. “With the ultimate battle she has always wanted.”

Moradys, who seemed poised to flee your side now that your barrier is no longer keeping her at your side, turns and gives you a look of desperate confusion.

“Who?”

You answer with so little certainty that your response nearly comes out as a question itself.

“Ribara.”

For a moment, she doesn’t seem to have even heard your response. She simply stares at you, unblinking, as if the idea of her daughter being worthy of demonic possession isn’t even worth the neurons required to process it. Then, she scoffs in disbelief, furrows her brow, and rises to her feet.

“Ribara?” she says. “I refuse to believe it!”

Her newfound confidence says otherwise, as does the fact that she’s still standing with you beneath Orina’s raised staff. The demon takes in a deep breath in preparation for her next attack, beating you with a gust of air that reminds Moradys of what waits overhead.

“Go on!” she shouts upward, hands on her hips and chest thrust out in a defiant pose. “Kill me, you pathetic little child!”

Orina’s eyes go wide, and she lets out a grunt of surprise mid-thrust, averting her strike at the last second so that her staff digs into the ground nearby. The momentum of her strike causes the metal tip
to continue scraping against the stone with a sharp screech, and Orina only manages to halt her fall by landing on one knee.

Moradys forces a haughty laugh. “If you possessed the strength to end my life, you would have already done it.”

Orina frowns and tries to push herself up with her staff, but her wobbling arms cause her to crash back down to a kneeling position, nearly knocking you and Moradys over. It occurs to you that you should do something now that you’ve been given much-needed breathing room in which to act, but the demon who nearly killed you is so utterly captive to Moradys’ ranting that you decide not to interrupt the two.

“You failure,” Moradys spits. “Is there anything you won’t fuck up? Or will you always be the disappointment I knew you’d become from the moment I first heard your horrid wailing?”

The stunned Orina opens her mouth as if to speak, but can only swallow and wring her hands around the haft of her weapon. The distant sun shining about her head seems to rise above it, as if suddenly shifted upwards in the sky. Her robes flutter and resettle about her shoulders, upset by the winds racing about the platform. You look back down to Moradys, and find that she's nearly the size of Orina's shin, instead of one of her toes.

The demon has shrunk.

“You’re an embarrassment,” says Moradys. “A constant reminder of my single failure in this life. That's why I kept you around, you know. As a reminder of the dangers of sentimentality.”

Orina turns at a slight angle to Moradys, shuffles forward on two knees, then drops her staff and begins crawling on hands and knees towards the rift in space growing ever more distant from Cummragh. The staff disintegrates into dust that is carried away by the winds, and Orina herself shrinks down to a size that renders her no larger than a tall human woman.

“I never should have brought you into this world. Could you make your mother proud for once, and fix my mistake?” Moradys calls after her. “If you manage to fail even at that, I won't bother to pretend I'm happy about it.”

Orina stops crawling, gives one last terrified look back at the Elf, then rises to her feet and sprints towards the rift she had created. A burst of wind blasts the rooftop, and she shoots towards that gaping maw with such unbelievable speed that you can't decide whether she threw herself at it or was sucked inside.

“After her!” Moradys grabs you by the arm and hauls you towards the side of the platform Orina fled from. The avian creatures nearby seem confused and angered by her departure, but none move from their posts. “Never let a good rout go to waste.”

“What was that?” you ask her in unmasked bewilderment. “Why did that scare her off?”

“Ribara was always throwing fits about some slight or other. I would chase her off the same way. Now go!” She gives you a shove in the direction of the Warp rift. You’re the closest you’ve been to an unenslaved population of humans in months, and she thinks you’re about to return to the one place you hate more than Cummragh itself. She must be mad.

“You do want to save all those billions of people, don’t you?” She gives you another push, sending you over the edge of the platform, where you hover in mid air through the boon of your new abilities.
“Go!” she screeches, waving her hands at you. “Go, go!”

“You aren't coming with me?” says Orin.

Moradys balks, and gestures at the assemblage of crystal-bearing monstrosities lining the platform. “I have to find a way to do away with these batteries it left behind! You need to find that jumped-up spirit before it recovers its will to fight.”

Orin's eyes turn to the nearest of the crystals, and Moradys senses a disastrously destructive move beginning to form in his mind.

“No, no!” She grabs hold of his arms and spins him around in mid-air, so that he's facing off towards the rift in space. “You can't simply will them away. They're likely boobytrapped, or... something. Now go!”

Finally, he's gone. Within the blink of an eye, the space he once occupied before her is again open air, and Moradys is left to her own devices on a rooftop full of brutes bearing unimaginable treasures.

With a satisfied grunt she hooks her thumbs into her waist sash and strides over to the nearest of the monsters, which tilts its four-eyed head and clicks its beak in dimwitted confusion.

“Easy, now,” Moradys croons. “Just give it here.”

The luminous white glow of her prize is visible beneath the plumage of the creature's underbelly. It grows more agitated with each step she takes, beating its wings and screeching at her like a mother bird protecting her egg.

Moradys draws back, her face contorted in frustration and cheeks flushing red with anger. “I said back, you wretched thing!”

She draws her dagger from her sash and waves it at the creature, which responds by drawing its belly down to the ground and letting loose a series of ear-shattering shrieks that force Moradys to clamp her palms down on either side of her head.

“Fine!” Moradys lets her hands fall away from her ears, then strips off her robe, tosses it into the swirling winds, and draws her knife high into the air above her head. “We do it the hard way, then!”

Even her avian opponent seems surprised when she plunges the knife into her own pregnant belly. She gasps in shock at the feeling of cold metal violating warm flesh, her spasmodic sawing sped onward by the knowledge that soon, shock will give way to a pain unlike any other. Hot blood soaks pours down her abdomen and trembling legs, rolling into the cracks in the stone and forming a gridwork of crimson lines that spreads outward from her.

Moradys screams and drops to her knees. For millennia she has explored the most novel of sensations and come to enjoy many of the less savory kinds, but there are some pains that will never
cease to be anything short of agonizing. The knife nearly slips from her blood-soaked hands, and she has to re-insert the tip into her belly before finishing up her self-inflicted disembowelment.

She drops the blade and rests one hand on her belly, just above the broad wound she created, then plunges her fingers into her womb. Mind-boggling pain seizes all of her senses at once, and in her brief blindness she is struck by the dimly-perceived knowledge that she just bit her own tongue off.

Her own wriggling fingers find something within her womb - tiny fingers, which wrap around the tip of her index finger and hold tight with a tender weakness that makes her blood-filled mouth drop open in awe. The scream of the wind and monsters fades to a dull roar, replaced by the sound and feeling of two hearts beating as one.

A surge of fresh pain and a sudden weakness of body wrenches Moradys back to reality. She grabs hold of the fetus’ arm and gives a sharp pull, yanking her fingers out of her wound. The gap isn’t quite large enough, and she gives tug after desperate tug in an attempt to get the thing out of her.

It’s the worst feeling imaginable. She no longer wants to do this - to tear away a part of herself in the most awful way imaginable. Out of all the pain she’s beared over thousands of years, all the indignities she’s weathered, all of the suffering she’s endured from life and its endless violence, this is the worst. Perhaps that’s why the Moradys of half a minute ago began this self-inflicted violence in such an irreversible manner - because she knew that she would be tempted to turn back.

She lets out a gasp of mixed relief and horror as the fetus slips out of her body. A wave of gore follows it, covering the ground beneath her legs in a fresh layer of vibrant blood and placenta. The sight and smell of it all would be enough to make her gag, but she pays it no attention. The full faculties of her mind are turned entirely towards the tiny, blood-covered infant in the palms of her joined hands. His skin color, though obscured by the fluids of Moradys’ own body, is clearly not that of a bone-white Drukhari. He would almost look human, if it weren’t for the pointed ears visible beneath his wispy brown hair.

The strength is leaving Moradys’ body with such speed that she can barely keep the tiny baby in her hands held aloft. A moment ago, the power to do anything and everything she ever wanted seemed like such an important prize. Now, all she wants to do is kneel there and look at the life wriggling in her palms. A faint halo of violet energy pulsates around the infant’s head, a sign of the power contained within him - a power that Moradys would reluctantly forfeit, if failing to claim it did not mean death.

Her head dips towards the stone, and her hands drop with her. Blackness creeps into the edges of her vision, broad tendrils that twist and weave like the roots of a fast-growing tree. No longer possessing the strength to keep her eyes open, Moradys let her closed lips rest on the chest of her infant son. She opens her mouth, lets out one last retching sob, and then buries her teeth in his neck.

Building after building flashes by Ribara as she is driven down into the depths of Cummragh by a
tempest contained within a single lance. Each crumbling wall, each exploding airship, and each stabbing spike of rock take away bits of her burnt body too fast for her to be certain of their regrowth. Finally the city main vanishes into the dust-strewn sky above, and she can see nothing but the instrument of her own death.

The dull roar of wind dissipates into a merciful silence, and she is left without grounding for the anger that burns her from the inside out. That sense of weightlessness ends a few seconds later, when she crashes through a huge metal dome, followed by a rocky surface that finally brings her fall to a stop. The ground cracks from the weight of her impact, and an ankle-deep layer of some foul-smelling liquid sprays up in a shower around her.

When her vision returns in full, she finds herself looking up at the hole she had created in the dome. Every building between her and the arena is a wreck, giving her a perfect view of the planet that sits so close to destruction. There are undoubtedly billions of people living on such a planet, but a quick search of her feelings has her heart leaping in delight at their doom. The Mon-keigh have brought her nothing but false hope and betrayal, and she will be glad to have them die with her.

Ribara picks herself up from the muck and squints into the expansive darkness of her surroundings. A metal dome some mile in diameter sits above a natural rock floor, containing the accumulated piss and shit of an entire sector's worth of Cumragh's population. The waste of slaves and noblewomen alike flows down here and mixes together, where it then seeps through the rock and flows out into the Warp.

Atop rocky outcroppings all across the edges of the dome's interior are humans, who huddle in small groups against the cold stench of the place. They burn fires and cook meals, and all have had their attention seized by the intruder in their midst, though they seem to bear little more concern than a look of blank resignation. It's the look of beings who have seen too many horrors to be concerned with one more. The slaves have become as inured to their suffering as the mistresses who inflict it.

“Did you think you were safe down here?” Ribara throws her arms out wide, spinning about and cackling madly at the rooftop. “Even among the piss and the shit, I will find you.”

Mid-spin, she catches sight of the Astartes who threw her down here, charging at Ribara from a plume of blue flame with the pointed end of his staff thrust forward. She catches hold of the shaft, but not before the weapon pierces her abdomen and gives the warrior leverage with which to drive her back through the muck. When his momentum finally gives out, the robed giant of a man raises his open palm before Ribara's face.

Fire dances across his fingertips, converges in the center of his hand, then sputters into nothingness. The man's surprise intensifies when the staff held between him and Ribara dissolves into a flock of screeching birds that beats a speedy path towards the hole she created in the dome.

Ribara brings a fist down on his face, crushing cartilage and lacerating soft tissue. Something tears painfully inside of her gauntletlet at the moment of impact. Judging by the way her own robe is seared into her flesh, the metal of her glove had been melted to her hand by the sorcerer's flames. Punching him tore her flesh free, and now she is left with even more pain than before.

“Your man-God left you,” says Ribara.

She follows up the first punch with a staggering haymaker made clumsy by the sludge she has to wade through to reach her target. The Astartes catches her arm with both hands, then uses her own momentum to send her skidding through the muck.

“The Empress is ever with us.” He strides towards Ribara, fists clenching and unclenching with each
step he takes. His expression, once so softened by surprise, has hardened with renewed resolve.
“Even here, surrounded by the accumulated filth of this hell, and faced with a monster such as thee, I
bask in the full glory of her presence.”

His fist crashes through Ribara’s raised arms, shattering her cheekbone and putting her jawbone out
of alignment. She grabs hold of his arm before he can retract it and uses it to haul herself to her feet,
where the two warriors stagger from side to side in a perilous grapple that is watched in rapt silence
by the silent onlookers.

“The Empress protects,” he hisses in her ear.

The Astartes takes one hand away from the back of her neck and delivers punch after punch to
Ribara’s ribcage. Her armor splinters and cracks, protective plating turning to shrapnel that digs into
her flesh with each titanic blow. She no longer wants to be here, fighting this implacable man. She’s
not angry anymore - she's afraid.

She wants her mother.

You should not have come here.

Purple and violet storms surge all around you, an endless sea of frothing chaos pierced by lightning.
Each flash of lightning illuminates an image contained within the choking clouds of the Warp. Every
last hope, dream, and fear you've ever had is contained within this world between worlds. You've
found the bridge between the mental and the physical, and your mind shudders against it.

You call out Orina’s name in a desperate bid to find her, end her, and be able to leave this place. Not
that you're at all certain you'll be able to find a way to leave when all is said and done. Your every
attempt to force some coherency onto the Warp is a fruitless endeavor that sees it dissolving back into
chaos the moment you loosen your hold on it. Trying to part its surging energies and clear a path
forward is like trying to smooth an ocean out with a rolling pin.

Thunder cracks the sky, and something hits you from behind, carrying you forward into a dense
cloudbank. Slender arms wrap around your torso and squeeze tight, two breasts push into your back,
and golden feathers flutter on either side of your head before being pulled back by the racing wind.

You and Orina plummet through the roiling seas together, crashing into a crystalline structure across
whose facets play an endless loop of Moradys’ torture of you. The shattering impact throws you into
another world, and you relive that time in its entirety, forgetting yourself in the process. When you
wake you are again plummeting through the Warp, face-to-face with the enraged angel sending you
on a meteoric decline.

You careen through more of the Warp-spawned crystals, each one putting you in a world more
hopeless than the last. Some of what you suffer you are certain never happened, though it becomes
more difficult to separate fact from fiction as you suffer indignities so horrific that you awake fearing
life more than death.
It has been centuries since the High Lords of Terra have gathered in such numbers - and all it took was a rift within the Warp forming above the very seat of the Emperor.

The Master of the Administratum, clad in purple finery and a king’s ransom in jewels. The Ecclesiarch, a middle-aged preacher who shouts fire and brimstone at the Master, banging his staff of office on the ground to punctuate each word while he holds a hand to his mitre to keep the hat from slipping off his head. The Fabricator General of Mars, more machine than man, whose cybernetic attentions are turned towards the being who presides in silence over the chaos.

All eleven Lords stand at the base of a grand set of stairs, at the top of which sits the God Emperor of Mankind, resplendent on his Golden Throne. He looks more corpse than man, with eyeless sockets
and sparse black hair that hangs over his shoulders like cobwebs. Two Servo-skulls hover beside the broken Emperor, their bone-white visages looking almost comradely alongside his own as they examine his vitals with the utmost care.

“Don’t speak to me of inhumanity!” cries the Ecclesiarch in a red-faced panic. “The Emperor is humanity!”

The Master scowls at him and takes a step closer. “I will not sanction the mass sacrifice of every man, woman, and child on Terra. If the Emperor wished such a thing, he would make his will known.”

“You profess to know the Emperor’s will?” The Ecclesiarch levels an accusatory finger at the Master. “Heresy! I demand you all bear witness!”

The Grand Provost Marshall, a stern-faced jack-booted man, hooks his thumbs into the belt of his uniform and moves to the Master’s side while fixing the Ecclesiarch with a warning glare. None of the other High Lords pay the pontiff much heed - most are too embroiled in their own fierce debates, and those few who are listening are more concerned with the practical matter of the coming apocalypse than politically-motivated accusations of heresy. It is a rare thing to see the High Lords so reasonable when they are a quorate.

“How long does he have?” the Ecclesiarch says to the Fabricator General.

The Fabricator glances at his Skull-servitors, a lingering human gesture made pointless by the fact that wireless communications do not require line of sight.

“Minutes,” says the Fabricator.

The Ecclesiarch’s eyes go wide, and his staff nearly slips from his fingers. He catches it just in time to turn on his heels and dash over to the Master of the Astronomican, a bald, middle-aged man in a colorful blue robe who shouts in surprise as the Ecclesiarch grabs him by the arm.

“We’ve exhausted Terra’s supply of Psykers!” The Ecclesiarch’s hat slips from his head as he struggles to drag the other man before the imposing might of the Golden Throne. “You all know it needs to be done! I gladly offer my own life after his, if it means seeing this ugly business through!”

The Master watches the shouting pair for a moment, then nods to the Marshall, who takes his bolter pistol from its holster and marches over to the two. Far larger and better built than the others, he easily takes hold of the weeping Psyker and tosses him to the floor before leveling the bolter at him. The room is silent, and not a single soul fails to hear the tell-tale ‘click’ of the first bit of pressure being placed on the weapon’s trigger.

Then, comes another noise - one only the Fabricator, with his networked senses, notices.

“Something is happening.” He turns to face the Golden Throne, and his fellow Lords do likewise. Even the Psyker who was moments from death watches in fascination as the Emperor’s corpse-like arm rattles on its armrest. A single finger extends towards them, and a golden glow appears on the floor at the bottom of the stairway.

“A miracle!” cries the Ecclesiarch.

The Fabricator, despite his inability to feel anything so human as surprise, would not disagree. It has been millenia since the mortally-wounded Emperor has acted so directly. His lip quivers, and a bead of moisture rolls from his right tearduct, disappearing beneath his breathing mask.
The glow intensifies to the point that it is near-blinding, but none dare look away. A sword hilt of pure light rises from it, followed by a long blade. The Emperor flicks his extended finger upward, and the sword shoots up from the floor, crashing through the cathedral ceiling and disappearing into the night sky within the blink of an eye. Metal and stonework rain down from above, forcing the High Lords to scatter away from the base of the stairs.

Once the cave-in has stopped, the group moves beneath the hole to search for any sign of the wondrous weapon. There is none. Only the black silhouette of their approaching doom, now looming so large in the sky that it blots out the moon.

Another sharp ‘crack’ draws their attention back downward. A few of the Lords dash away from the rubble, worried that more is about to fall, but the Fabricator immediately recognizes the source of the noise. The Emperor’s leathery skull drops onto his knees, then rolls onto the platform his throne is set on. The Lords watch in uncomprehending horror as the head of their God bounces down the steps, one after another, before coming to rest beside the Fabricator’s feet.

His Skull-servitors hover faithfully beside the head as he picks it up and examines its vitals with cold, unfeeling ocular implants. After a few moments of careful inspection, he holds it out for the Ecclesiarch, who stumbles forward in a dumb stupor and takes the thing in his trembling hands.

“I kept his mortal form intact as long as I was able,” says the Fabricator. “What comes after is your domain.”

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You try to throw Orina off of you, or at least shift your trajectory away from the coming crystalline formation drifting up from the clouds below you. She plants her palm on the side of your face, straining and grunting as you wrap your arms around her waist and try to hurl her off to the side. You don’t succeed in dislodging her, but you do manage to spin the two of you off-course just far enough that you miss Orina’s intended target and soar headlong towards another of the glassy structures.

Your first instinct is to keep fighting her just as you did a moment ago, but Orina’s wide-eyed panic has you rethinking that move. With your roles reversed, Orina trying to flap her wings free of you while you hold her tight, the two of you crash into another world.

“You think you can threaten me?” comes a voice from the blackness.

Thick hands wrap around your throat and squeeze with an irresistible strength. It’s too dark to see, but this is no unnatural void - there’s a bit of light faintly visible in the bottom corner of your vision, though you can’t turn your head to see the source.

Hot breaths beat down on your face, and you claw at the hands choking the life from you in a futile attempt to free yourself. You feel weak, even for someone on the verge of death. It reminds you of when you possessed the body of a woman.
A dull ringing in your ears drowns out the rasping breaths of your assailant, and what little light there is fades away. Lightning strikes, and you are once again hurtling through the Warp, with Orina nowhere in sight. Whatever imagined life you just lived is far from the worst one this place has invented for you. Death has become banal in its uniform conclusion. It's life that carries far more peril.

Looking about in a mad rush to locate the vanished demon, you spot a pale glow moving through the clouds above. You fly upward and smash into Orina’s stomach with your shoulder, knocking the wind from her and shaking more than a few luminous feathers from her wings. The entirety of existence flips on its axis, and you’re once again plummeting downward, a reversal of direction that allows you to pick up more and more speed the further you fall. You plunge through a black fogbank of choking smog, something far more real and human than the alien energies of the Warp. A few moments later you are in open air filled with embers and smoke puffs, coughing the choking fumes from your lungs while you hold tight to Orina.

Blood-red dirt rushes up to meet you. The ground explodes upon impact, ringing your skull and shaking your body so thoroughly that you're sure something must be broken. Orina shoves you off of her and scrambles up from the crater you two created, then leaps into the air and flaps her wings until she manages to get airborne. You're so rattled by your fall that you forget you can fly just as well as she, so you give a desperate chase on foot up from the crater.

All around you is a blasted hellscape of erupting volcanoes and smoke so thick it blots out the sky. A conical vent beneath Orina erupts in a geyser of molten lava, catching her right wing and setting it alight. She panics and careens into the ground ahead while you break into a full-on sprint to catch up with her.

Orina beats at her burning wing to try it put it out, and is caught completely off guard when you tackle her to the ground. You position yourself on top of her and grab her wrists, knocking her in her dirt-covered face with her own fist. It's in that moment, rolling around in the dust like two rowdy drunks, that you realize you're not quite sure what you came here to do. Moradys had hurried you away with such speed that you hadn't bothered to think things through. The world that needs saving is back there, and here you are, beating up on the demon that ruined your life.

“Are you human at all?” you ask her. “Is there any reason I shouldn't kill you?”

“I am the God of humans,” she shrieks. “I am your God!”

Her hand slips free of yours. She grabs hold of a fist-sized rock and bashes you in the side of the head with it, making you reel back in shock and allowing her to wiggle out from underneath you. Before she can get away you grab hold of her burned wing and pull her back to the ground, repeating the process of subduing her, this time with quite a bit more swearing.

“What kind of God kills every last one of her worshippers?” Still holding her wrist, you smack her in the face with your fist, breaking her nose.

“They all will be safe,” she groans in a nasally tone made barely comprehensible as her nose fills with blood. “Safe within me.”

“No one is going to be in you. We're stopping what you've done.”

Orina's eyes, once shut tight in pain, open wide and her face contorts in confusion. “Who?”

Your hold on her wrists loosens as a strange unease sets into your heart. A sort of vertigo that gives you the feeling of being poised on the edge of an immense cliff.
“Moradys.”

Orina blinks. “Why would she save anyone?”

The cliff crumbles beneath you, and your heart plummets into the depths of your stomach. You shoot up from Orina, stumbling away from her as she sits upright, one wing charred beyond recognition and the other covered in red soot. You turn and flee into the smoke-filled sky, sparing only a single glance back at the wounded angel still seated far beneath you.

She doesn't dare follow.

The Astartes drives his fist into Ribara's side until her ribs are as shattered as her armor. She tries to shove him away, but finds that she hardly has the strength to stand without her opponent to lean on. He grabs her by the collar of her breastplate and throws her into one of the hardened accumulations of rock and waste that dot the sea of sewage. She falls face-first down into the muck, then lifts her face up to see her opponent moving towards her with slow, purposeful strides. If only she could be so confident when others abandon her.

An explosion shakes the air, and both warriors look back to the far side of the dome as a bolt of light shoots through the hole Ribara made and impacts the ground between them. When the stars fade from her eyes, she is left with the strange sight of a light-hewn sword embedded in the ground at a diagonal angle. It illuminates the space around her and the sorcerer, creating an arena for a fight that has already ended.

A faint smile spreads across the man's crafty face. Not a cruel one, but one that tells Ribara the faith he held so closely has been rewarded. She hangs her head against her balled up fists, unwilling to endure the pain of trying to move a body that has been burnt and broken beyond any hope of natural healing.

When she next looks up, the sorcerer is nearly beside the luminous weapon. Eyes focused intently on her, he extends his hand towards the sword as he walks, wraps his fingers around the hilt, and then staggers back as the blade refuses to budge from its resting place.

He turns to the sword and wraps both hands around the handle, grunting and pulling until every muscle on his massive frames strains against the confines of his robes. His feet sink inches into the ground, and the rock beneath Ribara cracks.

The sorcerer lets out an anguished cry to the heavens. “Mother!”

Ribara slides back her arms and plants her palms on either side of her chest. As the sorcerer goes mad with anguish and his struggling becomes weaker, she pushes herself up from the ground and staggers to her feet. Despite having almost certainly lived a small fraction of this human's life, his anguish is one she is so familiar with that she can only draw amusement to see another suffering it.
She lurches towards the sorcerer and delivers a sloppy punch to the side of his face. Not enough to do any real damage, but enough to send him stumbling away from the object of his failure. Ribara wraps her hands around the welcoming warmth of the sword hilt, and continues towards her enemy, giving no thought to worrying over whether or not the weapon will obey her where it defied him. If it comes free, then she will use it. If it doesn't, then she is no worse off than she was a few short seconds ago.

The warmth and weight of the sword remain in her grip after five steps away from where she drew it. As she rushes towards the stunned Astartes she swings her sword-arm in front of her, splitting his pectorals in two and turning his chest into a smoking ruin. He cries out in pain as the force of the blow spins him around and sends him crashing face-down into the sludge.

Ribara walks forward until her feet straddle his waist, then drives the blade down through his back and the ground beneath, not stopping until the hilt meets with his flesh. Even then he struggles, flailing about in an attempt to lift his face from the muck as Ribara drops to her knees and leans her weight on the weapon.

The seconds tick by, and the sorcerer's struggles weaken until all that remains are weak twitches of his limbs and the occasional air bubble working it's way through the shit flooding his mouth. Eventually even those stop, and Ribara allows her muscles to relax and her buttocks to rest against the man's back.

The sword's glow weakens, and the weapon dissolves into disparate pinpoints of light that fade away until Ribara is once again left in a darkness that grows colder with her slowing heart.

“Mother?” she whispers, her voice strange to her own ears. It is difficult and painful to speak. “Can you hear me?”

Like a sailor who travels without the benefit of stars nor compass, you are well and truly lost. The hellish realm you left Orina in is far behind you, vanished beneath the seething energies of a violet chaos that flows in every direction, forming waves that break against each other in thunderous explosions of light and sound. A lump forms in your throat at the thought of Moradys left within arm's reach of ultimate power - with Vala close at hand, no less. Even if a double-cross hadn't originally been part of the Elf's plan, you fail to imagine a scenario in which she hasn't already done something terrible.

Unable to find any sort of landmark or indicator of a return route to work off of, you let out a frustrated shout. Between the cracks of thunder and endless static of the Warp, a low murmur answers your cry. It rides the storms like a ghostly whisper that makes your skin prickle and shoulders tense. Even here, among an endless sea of the bizarre and the frightening, you are struck by the fear that you've come upon something truly terrible.

A huge, translucent hand sweeps through the clouds before you, brushing them aside like cobwebs and revealing a similarly massive figure. Before you lays the prone body of a man, whose very
human features look to have been crafted from the stuff of the Warp itself. His hand comes to rest upon his armored stomach, and he turns his laurel-wreathed head towards you. Two eyes that glow with the light of stars force you to avert your own gaze, for fear of being blinded.

All around the spirit lurk innumerable smaller ones, whose vicious and grotesque appearances evoke the image of carrion eaters waiting for a mighty beast to die before they fall upon it. None seem willing to come within arm's reach of the man, and flit back into the clouds at the slightest shuddering of his armored form.

You raise your hand to your brow, and allow yourself a sidelong glance at his radiant visage.

“Are you a god? Or a demon?”

The man closes his eyes, and the light that had so blinded you winks out of existence. The creatures waiting in the distance press in cautiously, but retreat again as he raises his hand from his chest and brings it down towards you.

“There are no gods.”

His voice is deep and calming, a soothing ocean of vibrations that wells up from the depth of your own soul and floods your mind without ever reaching your ears. The very soul of humanity speaks to you, and you listen.

“Then you're a demon,” you say.

A patient sigh suffuses the air, like a father addressing the flawed wonderings of a small child. “Every demon you have ever known lived inside of your head.”

You frown and drift closer to the swirling mass composing his index finger, which points lazily towards you. “And whose mind are you inside of? Not mine.”

“No,” he says. “Not yours.”

His finger shifts with the slightest of movement, and a shimmering portal tears through reality beside you. On the other side is a dark space, an island of calm in the chaos of the Warp. A vast pool of black liquid runs off in all directions, dotted here and there by rocky islands topped by lanterns and campfires.

At the center of the scene, an imposing figure kneels atop the back of an even larger one. The former is burned beyond recognition, it's flesh burned to a bloody char and scalp scorched clean of hair. Enough remnants of splintered crimson armor cling to the warrior for you to recognize the pitiful creature as Ribara. A flash of sympathy seizes you at the sight of her horrifying state, but only in the way one might feel for a rabid dog. She still needs to be put down, for the good of everyone in danger of having the misfortune of her acquaintance.

“Save her,” says the spirit. Despite having no need of breath or heartbeat, you get the sense that his hold on life is no stronger than Ribara's. “Convince her to save the rest of them.”

Your sympathy for the two evaporates alongside your patience for the demon.

“Save her? Do you know what she's done? Of course you do - you're inside her head, after all.”

The thought crosses your mind that perhaps this vaguely-human **thing** might have had a hand in her monstrous crimes, but you quickly dismiss any welling up of sympathy for your mutilator and rapist.
“I’ll save everyone!” you say. “This is my story, not hers.”

The glow suffusing the massive spirit becomes dimmer and more spread out, as if he no longer possesses the strength to force his form into an intelligible shape. The lurking predators drift closer, and even a dying shudder from the spirit fails to scare them away.

“You are not strong enough,” the demon whispers. “Do not let your anger damn billions.”

You have heard enough.

“You’re wrong. I am strong, and gods do exist.” You move close to the waiting portal, which shrinks with each passing second, and slip a hand through. It's cold on the other side, and you detect the unmistakable odor of shit. “I'm going to be one soon.”

The demon's gaze drifts upwards, and the unbearable light centered in his pupils fades enough that he is no longer unbearable to look at head-on. He has nothing left to say to you, nor you to him. You leave him to his fate, and the carrion eaters inching ever closer, slipping through the portal into darkness to watch Ribara earn hers.

Stepping through the portal into the dark sewer doesn’t improve the odor assaulting your nostrils one bit. Your stomach turns further at the realization that much of the acrid odor isn’t the pool of fetid waste you hover just above, but Ribara’s burnt flesh, which has been melted beyond all recognition.

She stares blankly forward with her one remaining eye, which itself is half-covered by an eyelid that was fused to her cheek by whatever intense fires she has endured. How she is still managing to draw breath - albeit quite slowly and intermittently - is beyond you.

“I could save you.”

The exposed muscles in her face tense at the sound of your voice, and she tilts her head up slightly to look at you. If she’s shocked by the sight of you standing mid-air, arms crossed, in this cistern she kneels in, she lacks the ability to show it.

“I did it in the past because I felt bad for you. I thought you couldn’t help being what you are. I thought maybe part of you wanted to change.”

Even now, you want to help her. You want to snap your fingers and take away the impossible agony wracking her shuddering form. Before you had stepped through the portal, you had been able to cast her suffering in a cold an intellectual light. Now, faced with the sound of her shallow gasps and the smell of her ruined body, that damnable humanity of yours comes roaring back with a vengeance.

“And I was right. That’s why I can’t help you. I have billions of other people to save, and I can’t have you stabbing me in the back. You get that, don’t you?”

Ribara lets out a huff of air - of recognition, or maybe even humor. Either way, you get the sense that
despite her lack of ears, your words manage to reach her. You had stepped through that portal - now gone - expecting to gloat and hold your power over Ribara’s head, but that darker instinct is overpowered by sadness for her, which itself is far overshadowed by the knowledge that you can’t possibly risk letting her live. Not with so much hanging in the balance.

“If it’s any consolation, I don’t think you ever had a chance. Not in this place.”

She hangs her head and draws her hands across the back of the massive man she kneels on top of, then clasps them in front of her groin. There’s no childish tantrum, violent outburst, or nasty glare that takes all of your criticism and hurls it back at any target in sight. Only the silent acknowledgement of a woman whose realizations always come just late enough to cause the both of you more pain.

Before the hope of change can lead you to re-think your hard-thought decision, you bend reality around you and hold your next destination in mind. The daughter is going nowhere, but the mother is still out there - and you fear what she’s done in your absence.

The lamplit cistern vanishes from your vision as the fabric of reality smooths itself out, leaving you with the sight of a planet that sits so close you want to reach out and touch it. You could do just that - you could hold one of those gleaming cities in your mind and place yourself in one of their plazas. After you save them all, perhaps you'll do just that. They'll welcome you as their savior, of course, but you will turn down their offers of rulership. You don't have it in you to be an Emperor. Head deity of their religious pantheon would be preferable - more of a celebrity role than an administrative one.

You turn your attention back to the platform you stand on. It's the same one you left Moradys on some time ago, and little has changed. The avian creatures Orina created stand in a ring at the edges, braying and cawing like gibbering retards while loyally protecting the luminous, boulder-sized crystals their mistress charged them with. Moradys kneels near one of them, naked and unmoving, her head pressed to the stone in front of her and hands clutching a bloody mess of something to her bosom.

Your legs carry you over to her in a daze. A high-pitched ringing fills your ears, and dumb noises escape your open mouth. As you near her, you become dimly aware that your shoes are slapping on the same bloody wetness that spreads outward from her and drips over the side of the platform. You drop to your knees beside her, and forcibly quiet the world around you so that you can hear yourself think. In the midst of that dead silence, you lay your hands on her arm. If she's wounded, you'll heal her. If she's dead, you'll wrench her soul back from the claws of hell itself.

When she fails to react to your touch, you take her gingerly by the shoulders and tilt her torso back so that she's sitting upright. Her eyes are closed, her face is covered in blood, and in her hands she holds the remains of her own disembowelment. Two tiny legs and arms hang limply from a similarly small torso, the ribcage of which has been split outward and the innards devoured. The infant's head
is crushed, rendering it's face mercifully unrecognizable.

Even the nearest of the monstrous sentinels backs away, using its beak to drag a crystal along with it.

To call the sight horrific would do no justice to how it tears into your soul. You want to flee for the safety of the Warp and lose yourself in its maddening tides. That, or take the knife beside Moradys and slice away at your own wrists until hell takes you away from a world that can give birth to something like this.

“What happened?”

You give Moradys a light shake, begging her to answer your choked plea for answers. She stirs, tear-filled eyelids fluttering just short of opening, and blood dribbles from her mouth as she groans in delirious pain.

“I did I’ve always done. How could you expect anything else? You know me too well.”

You grit your teeth in confused anger and grab her by the shoulders more firmly, then give her a hard shake.

“What did you do?”

Except you know what she’s done - the bloody remains of her crime are cradled in her pale arms. What you struggle to understand is why she would do this. To punish you for believing that she could be something other than a monster?

Moradys hangs her head and looks down at the corpse in her lap. “I devoured my own child, soul and all.”

You don’t know whether to laugh or cry, but you’re closer to the former. This horror of horrors has taken you far beyond the point of comprehension, and left you in a dreamworld in which nothing seems real anymore.

“Why?” you ask her.

She tips her hands forward and lets the carcass slide down her naked thighs to the stone rooftop. The umbilical cord still attached to the infant’s belly goes taut, pulling with it a mass of pulpy placental tissue from the wound in Moradys’ belly. Bile rises in your throat, and your legs weaken to such a degree that you tip sideways onto your buttocks and are forced to plant your hands on the bloodsoaked ground for support.

“I read a story once, long ago. A Mon-keigh morality tale. Have you heard the one about the scorpion and the frog?”

You swallow down your nausea and watch as she teeters awkwardly to her feet. Her hair swings down in front of her face like a veil, which remains bowed. “What’s a scorpion?”

“You,” she says. “You are the scorpion.”

Moradys leans down, grabs you by the wrist, and pulls you to your feet. With her free hand she wipes her blood-matted hair back over her head, revealing eyes that have gone as black as a starless sky.

“No one can ever really change - least of all you. You will always be weak, and you will always fail.” She forcibly rotates your arm, revealing the glowing red crystal you had imbedded there for
safekeeping. “This is a children’s toy! It changes colors in response to body heat. Why would a toy give you the power to warp reality?”

You recall the tiny handprint still faintly visible on the crystal when Moradys first handed it to you, and you pull free of her while clutching your wrist. Your arm, which had felt just fine before, now screams with the pain expected of a limb that has had a jagged rock stuck in it.

“It doesn’t matter, does it?” you shout at her. “I did everything I did, trick or not.”

You try to will yourself into the air, but the absurdity of the act drags you back down before your toes have even left the ground. Why would you be able to fly? Why would you be able to do anything you’ve done?

“Trouble performing?”

Moradys walks towards you with long, shuffling strides, holding a hand to her stomach to hold back the coiled intestines threatening to slip free. She raises her other hand and snaps her fingers, striking you with an explosive burst of air that sends you tumbling over the edge of the rooftop. Your fingers gain purchase on the last of the stone bricks, saving you from a dizzying fall towards the fire-licked parapets of the massive fortress sprawling out below you.

The blue flames lining the structure flicker and weaken, then roar back to life a brilliant violet. The steel-like sheen of the stonework darkness, becoming a glassy onyx that seems to suck in all light that hits it. The change races from top to bottom, until even the brick that saved you chills your hand with its smooth coolness.

You swing your other arm upward for a second handhold, allowing your aching crystal-imbued arm a much needed breather. A storm wind races across the rooftop, broken by the sharp cries of the monsters who were too heavy to be toppled by Moradys’ fingersnap.

As you pull yourself up with both hands, you find a slaughter taking place. Moradys thrusts her clenched fist upward, driving a spike of black stone through the belly of one the creatures, along with the crystal it clutched jealously to its feathered chest. The many-winged beast screams and contorts, and the crystal shatters, releasing a cloud of blinding light that surges into Moradys.

She turns her attention to her next target, binding it with chains that shoot up from the ground and break its limbs while constricting its neck. By the time you manage to crawl onto the rooftop, four of the creatures have been executed, and Moradys has been struck by just as many effusions of energy. Each one staggers her more than the last, and each twists her body further. Spiny ridges burst into being along the backs of her arms and up her shoulders, followed by two bony horns that curve back and down along the sides of her head. Lines of blackened soot race all over her flesh in arcane patterns, like dying snakes painting intricate patterns in the dust.

She throws her arms outward, and the five charging monsters burst into ash that is carried swiftly away by the fierce winds. There is no glorious burst of flame, nor triumphant explosion of energy. They were there one moment, and now they’re not. Moradys holds her outstretched palms towards the crystals, which shake violently for a moment before bursting into clouds of energy that flow into her like all the rest. She absorbs them with a casual interest, like an overfed person who eats dessert simply because it was offered to them.

You run over to where you had found Moradys kneeling and snatch up the knife that had been laying beside her. Moradys turns towards you and glares at you with an intense anger that warps the very air around her - not what you expected from someone who just played you like a fiddle.
“I trusted you!” you say.

She turns her eyes down to her body and runs her fingers through the air, creating jewelry that dangles from her horns and a tight black gown that ends just below the tip of her pendulous cock. You’ve never seen someone so determined to look presentable before the end of everything.
“If you didn’t see this coming, then you weren’t paying attention.” Her hair ties itself back into a
ponytail, and her attention finally fully returns to you. “I’m sick of you pretending you’re something you’re not. I’m sick of you pretending I’m something I’m not.”

Moradys points her fingers towards you and flicks it downward. An enormous weight crashes down on you, forcing you onto all fours.

“That’s better,” she says. “This is how it should have been all along.”

The weight of the world, once an overused metaphor, now rests quite literally on your shoulders. Through gritted teeth and straining neck muscles, you force your gaze back up to Moradys, who stalks towards the center of the platform. Small chunks of Cummragh batter the planet like artillery shells, crushing entire sectors of golden cityscape and throwing up enormous clouds of dust that blanket the surface before you.

“You, the slave, on his knees… and me, the goddess, on her throne.”

Far beneath the two of them, inside a fortress that has grown quiet, Vala sits on one of the catwalks winding around the interior of the unthinkably huge library that seems to make up the entirety of the main tower. Scattered around her are eighteen heavy books, the predecessors to the nineteenth volume which now sits open in her lap. She had set that final book aside after writing a few choice words down on the final page, and rooted through the bookshelves for the other volumes. They weren’t hard to find - the library is surprisingly well-organized - but were hard to stomach, and harder still to mesh with the reality she had constructed in her mind.

Vala had thought that she had the hard time in Cummragh - that Orin had been a coddled pet from day one. That assumption was shattered to bits before the end of the first book. Subsequent ones had only painted worse pictures, with her cast as a villainess cuckoldress who is incapable of empathy.

She doesn’t disagree.

So she keeps reading, flipping through page after agonizing page as her husband finds her, loses her, falls in love, and repeats the same mistakes over and over again. The setting is hellish, but the story is tragically human in it’s banality.

“I’m sorry, honey.” She wipes at her eyes with her wrist, draws in a wet sniff, then continues past a page full of smeared ink that has been rendered completely illegible. The story becomes not just unknown, but new. Orin ascends the tower, frightens off Orina, and then…

Is forced to kneel before the alien bitch who betrayed him.

“What?” shouts Vala, straightening her back and leaning over the book to watch as more words scribble into being on the page. She tosses the book onto the ground, shuffles over to a nearby brazier to prick her finger on a decorative spike for some bodily fluid to write with.
Then, she notices the lumps of black charcoal littering the brazier's interior. She reaches in, ignoring the violet flame - she could have sworn it was blue - and, finding it quite heatless, snatches out a chalk-shaped charcoal stick.

Vala then moves back to her book, drags it into her lap, places her writing utensil just below the line of words fading into existence, and begins writing a story of her own.

An impossible force strikes you in the back over and over, rippling the air around you and cracking the glassy black stone beneath your hands. You’ve fallen prey to a betrayal so predictable you can only hate yourself for your own terrible judgement. Moradys is only doing as she has always done, and you are no different. It is a cycle that will only be broken by the sheer enormity of this final failure of yours.

“I’ll be the only one left,” says Moradys, her back still turned to you. Her voice is oddly melancholy, as if the coming planetary massacre were actually causing her some small degree of empathetic grief. “Alone in the wreckage of two murdered worlds.”

Turning your head up to speak is hard, and drawing in a large enough breath to form words is even harder. You can’t believe you’ve kept yourself from being pushed flat to the ground.

“You don’t have to be alone,” you say to her through gritted teeth. It’s a cheap, saccharine plea, and only earns you a sad and incredulous glance back from the horned demon Moradys has become.

“Yes I do. I’m tired of you, and I’m tired of the things you make me feel. Do you remember what I told you would happen if I ever got bored of you?”

Endless tortures and countless deaths have left your memory disjointed and foggy - particularly those early days in Cummragh that had seemed like a nightmare you would soon wake from. Even so, you remember all too clearly the threat - no, the promise - Moradys made you when you had first met her.

“You said you would kill me.”

She turns back to the planet and gazes up at the nearest of the continent-spanning cities, her back hunched with a weariness that ill-fits someone who can nullify gravity with a mere thought.

“Well, I’m bored of all of this. When I’m a god, I’ll make the reality I want. One that works. I’ll do it right this time.”

From the very beginning, you knew that this was how it would end. Not exactly like this, with innumerable lives hanging in the balance, but with Moradys becoming numb to your novelty and casting you aside. The ecstatic thrillride of your whirlwind ‘romance’ with her had made you forget the inevitable conclusion for a time, but you are quickly discovering that reality has a way of making its presence felt even where it isn’t welcome.
What you still don’t understand is why someone who stands on the cusp of all-mighty power looks so damn tired.

Nor can you understand why you think you have to be a superman to face this monster. All you’ve ever been, and all you need to be, is a man. A man who fights, and fails, and picks himself up even when the voices inside and out are telling him to stay down. That is who your wife loved, and that is who she will always love.

And she is so very, very sorry.

You hang your head, lips trembling and tears welling in your eyes. As you squeeze them shut to try to stamp down the whirlwind of emotions seizing you, the weight on your shoulders lifts. When you open your eyes, you see that the cracking of the ground around you has ceased. The knife you dropped when Moradys forced you to your knees is gone, replaced by a long sword of perfect craftsmanship.

No, better than perfect. You’ve never seen such a beautiful weapon. It’s suffused with a heavenly glow, and the very sight of it fills you with a confident strength that demands you pick it up and wield it one last time, in one final battle.

You clamber to your feet, sword in hand. The invisible weight holding you down may have vanished, but the winds have only grown fiercer as Cummragh pushes into the first layers of the coming planet’s atmosphere. A new warmth flows over your face and forearms, the first rippling gusts of natural air you’ve felt in months.

Moradys senses your approach and turns to face you, a look of utter bafflement seizing her demonically warped visage. She swings her hand through the air, and spiked chains sprout from the ground like deadly flowers, fastening around your limbs and neck and squeezing until your grip on the sword loosens.

Then, the chains turn to dust and scatter to the winds.

You continue forward, not at all bothered by the superficial amounts of blood streaming from the wounds beneath your shredded clothes. It hurts, yes, but your confidence is unshaken and your bravery burns as bright as ever. And even if you don’t believe in yourself, Vala does, and loves you, and always will.

Moradys backs away from your continued advance, growing in height and throwing her arms up and dragging a massive wall of onyx from the ground. You swing your blade at it, battering down a man-sized hole in an explosion of light and broken stone. As you climb through to the other side, the wall crumbles to bits around you, and a shaken - and shrinking - Moradys stumbles away before tripping and falling onto her buttocks.

As you draw near, she clenches her jaw shut and points her outstretched palm at you. You raise your sword to strike, and her hand crackles with violet energy as her lips draw down and pitch-black eyes go wide in blind rage.
“A long sword of perfect craftsmanship. No, better than perfect!”

Vala writes until her right hand cramps, then switches to her left and continues scribbling away with the chicken-scratch of her non-dominant hand. The poor quality of the lettering doesn’t seem to matter, though, as the story continues to flow around her own interjections.

When she finally wears down the stick of charcoal in her hand to an unusable nub, she scrambles over to the brazier and snatches another one to write with before returning to the book and planting her makeshift pencil back on the page.

“And then, he-”

Kills her.

She stops, though not because of any hand cramp or broken writing utensil. With her pencil hovering over the page, she chews her bottom lip and tells herself to make the end she has most wanted for Moradys since she first met the Elf. This creature has tortured her husband, murdered him, raped him, and ruined the relationship between he and and Vala nearly as badly as Vala herself has.

Vala wants her dead, and knows in her heart that the Elf deserves it more than any other. But what she desires even more than that, is…

She puts her pencil back on the paper.

“He finally sees what a monster she is.”

Your arm hangs in the air above your head, the strike you had prepared your entire being for suspended mid-swing as you contemplate the Elf cowering before you. Her ivory features, once so perfect you couldn’t find a single wrinkle or discoloration, are warped and cracked like the slopes of a volcano, with lines of violet energy throbbing just beneath the surface of her skin.

Hard ridges and bony protrusions grow from the soft, slender arms you had once held in your own. The eyes that you had thought you had found some small bit of humanity in are utterly alien in their black sameness, and call to the mind the void of space more than the soul of a human being.

But she is not the monstrous visage she cloaks herself with.

“You’re not a demon,” you shout over the roaring wind. “And you’re certainly not a God. You’re a woman who lived too long. That’s all.”

Moradys’ painted lips part, and her features soften with surprise. You lower your sword but keep it ready at your side, prepared to strike should the energy dancing around her hand be directed your way.
“This world works just fine,” you say. “It’s you that’s the problem. You’ll never be happy. Not so long as you’re you.”

Anger overtakes her expression as you speak, her lips curling downward and her brow furrowing as she clutches her parted fingers into a fist. As your outburst draws to a close, she extends her index finger and thumb, leans towards you with her eyes fixed firmly on yours, and snaps her fingers.

Ribara hadn’t come to terms with death, but she had come to understand that it was going to claim her whether she gave her assent or not. Yet despite that begrudging acceptance of fate, it refuses to claim her with anything but the most unbearable slowness. Scorched nerves means she can’t feel pain, but the sight of the melted flesh on her arms makes her stomach churn violently.

It is a thankful mercy that she can’t smell the smoke still wafting from her charred body, nor the vast ocean of human and Drukhari waste spread out around her. Her vision is doing little better than her other senses, though she can still see the faint glow of small fires burning atop the rock formations dotting the otherwise featureless cistern.

One of the flames in the distance moves from side to side atop a steep hillock, and she hears the faint murmur of people talking. Their speech grows louder and more frantic, until finally the blurry flame slides down the hillock.

“Ryla!” shouts a man, followed by the flame coming down on the cistern floor with a splash.

With her one good eye, Ribara squints and leans forward as far as her body will allow her. A blurry shape comes into view alongside the flame, wading through the waste until it resolves into that of a woman, short and thin, holding a metal pole with a lantern swinging from the top. She wears a simple brown tunic clinched to her waist with a frayed rope. Her golden hair, streaked with gray, is tied into a long braid draped over one shoulder. Two dazzling blue eyes peer at Ribara through the darkness, set into a beautiful, age-lined face that looks like the face of a gilded statue in the flickering light. Despite her simple manner of dress, she wears more jeweled rings and necklaces than Ribara has ever seen on a slave.

More shocking than that is the fact that she recognizes every one of the valuable pieces - most of all, the gold-and-sapphire bird hanging atop the woman’s breasts.

“You grew so old,” says Ribara. But that Mon-keigh had been a young woman when Ribara had thrown her off a cliff. Humans age quickly, but not this quickly.

The woman remains silent for a time, too distant for Ribara to make out the subtleties of whatever expression she wears. Then, she clamps her nose shut with her fingers and moves closer, a forced smile on her face.

“Yes, I supposed I am old.” The woman speaks in Drukhari without the aid of a slave collar - heavily accented, but perfectly understandable. She looks from Ribara to the fallen warrior beneath
Ribara wonders just how awful she must look for her Drukhari heritage to not be apparent. Apparently, only her superior size remains as a distinguishing feature. The woman’s question would, in the past, have earned her a vicious beating at the absolute minimum. Now, it raises new questions in a mind that has grown quiet in the absence of anger.

“I am,” Ribara says hoarsely. “And I will not apologize for it.”

The woman eyes her curiously, then moves close enough to lay a hand on Ribara’s muscular arm. She pulls back a moment later, either finding her too hot to touch or too mutilated to stomach contact with.

“Does that hurt?” says the woman.

Or perhaps she simply worries her touch will cause her pain.

Ribara shakes her head. “I cannot feel anything.”

She tentatively eases her hand back onto Ribara’s arm and gives it a comforting pat. “Can I do anything for you?”

One thought comes to Ribara’s mind before all the others, and slips past her cracked lips before she has time to consider it further.

“I want to find my mother.”

The woman gives her a long, sad look, then moves to Ribara’s blind side and takes her by her broad shoulders.

“I am sure wherever your mother is, she loves you very much.”

Time passes between the two in silence, and gradually the far-away light of the lanterns fades until the entirety of Ribara’s vision takes on a gray sameness that becomes darker with each passing minute. She can’t feel the woman’s hands on her shoulders other than as a vague pressure, but the steady sound of her breathing and the shifting of her feet in the sewage makes her continued presence known.

This is not where Ribara would have chosen to die, nor who she would have chosen to pass into the hands of the Goddess with. It would have been far better to die in the murderous embrace of the warrior sorcerer whose body now lays motionless beneath her. Instead, she will endure the slow hemmhorage of consciousness while suffering the living reminder of one of her many failures.

“I want to go home,” says Ribara. Even in her own muddied awareness, her words are slurred and inarticulate.

The woman says nothing, and Ribara wonders if she even heard her. Then, the sound of distant breathing grows louder, and she realizes that her companion in death has leaned in close to her ear.

“I had a daughter, once. She never knew our home, but I would tell her about it every night. And when I could, I would sing her to sleep, and she would dream about home.” The woman swallows and makes a choking noise, half-laugh and half-cry. “I like to think she went there.”

The woman's breathing deepens and slows, turning into a closed-lip hum. The echoes of falling rocks and splashing sewage fade away, overtaken by a melody that promises to carry her away to
better times and better places. The sound of Ribara's own heartbeat slows and stops, and all that is
left is a song more beautiful than any she has ever heard.

You brace yourself for another blast of concussive force from Moradys, but none follows the snap of
her fingers. Her arm drops, her eyes roll back, and she slumps face-first to the ground. The colorful
flames decorating the blackened fortress vanish with no more fanfare than a candle being snuffed
out, leaving you on a darkened rooftop that is lit only by what little sunlight peeks out from around
the edges of the planet before you.

“Where’s the book?” comes a shout to your rear. You turn to see Vala climbing over a pile of rubble,
frantically scanning the rooftop for… a book, apparently.

You call out her name, and she abandons her search to rush over and throw her arms around in your
neck a tight embrace. With her face buried in your neck and her soft chest pressed into yours, you
could almost forget that you haven’t yet saved a single soul. With your luminous sword still held in
your right hand, you take Vala by the shoulder and slowly pull away from her.

“I still have a world to save.”

Rather than being reassured by your optimism, Vala looks more panicked than ever.

“Help me find the book first! I can write down that you save the world, and then it will happen, and
everything will work out fine!”

You give her arm a comforting squeeze and pull her close again, then move your arm to the back of
her head and plant your lips on her in a kiss more passionate than any the two of you have shared in
the entirety of your time together.

“I’m not afraid anymore,” you say as your mouths part. You hold up the magical sword you
summoned without even intending to, evidence of a boundless creative ability that no longer suffers
under the weight of your own self-doubt.

Vala stares at you in a surprise, then mumbles something incoherent and gives a slight nod of
acknowledgement. You turn towards the planet whose air rushes past your face, spread your arms
outward, focus your incalculable power on the salvation of billions of people, and realize in a flash of
panic that you have no idea how to go about putting a stop to the apocalypse.

“I don’t know what to do,” you say to Vala.

She lets out a slight laugh, apparently taking your comment as a mere joke, but quickly realizes how
serious you are and rushes to your side. “What can you do?”

You think for a moment. “Anything, I think. I could move the planet out of the way.”

Vala nods enthusiastically, then grabs your arm and pulls it back down. “Wait! That could make the
“It get too hot! Or too cold, if it’s further from their star!”

“I’ll just move this place to the other side of the planet,” you say to her. “It’ll be like we passed right through it.”

This time, Vala gives your idea a moment’s consideration before offering any non-verbal approval. “There’s people here, remember? You’ve gotta bring them, too - or better yet, put them down on the planet! If you keep them in Cummragh, you’ve gotta bring the air with the city too, so they’ve got something to breathe. Do you need to breathe? Can you make it so I don’t have to?”

The two of you descend into an increasingly frantic discussion of the details of performing a larger manipulation of the physical realm than you’ve ever attempted. Moving a city full of people, as it turns out, is not as simple as teleporting a single person from A to B. The fact that you managed to screw that up in rather bizarre fashion with Vala has you reluctant to do so on a larger scale without giving it serious consideration first.

“I need to stop this!” you say to Vala, sweat dripping from your brow and hands shaking as the pull of gravity begins to crack the tower beneath you. “I’ll freeze everything so I have time to think!”

As you point your hands at the planet’s surface, Vala shouts in protest and tries to wrestle you into submission. “Do something simple! You’re going to get us killed!”

She’s strong for her size, but you’re stronger and have the benefit of a well-honed adrenaline response brought on by months of near-death experiences. You throw Vala to the ground - something you’ll apologize for later - and turn your boundless will to the task you’ve set your mind to.

But before idea can turn to reality, you catch sight of something that stops all such thoughts in their tracks. A small, glowing point of violet light hovers in space between you and the planet, then shoots outward in all directions, tearing through space and creating a celestial-sized portal into the storm-wracked seas of the Warp.

“You did it!” says Vala. “You actually did it!”

Unable to suppress your slack-jawed shock, you turn your back to Vala and try to keep your voice - if not your expression- even and confident.

“I said I would do it, and I did.”

The small meteorites sailing past Cummragh at greater speeds than the rest of it pass harmlessly into the Warp, and you conclude that what remains of the city itself should fare no worse. That bodes well for the humans still here - and the Elves, you suppose - but you have no intention of allowing you and Vala to be taken away from Realspace with the rest of them.

A sharp scream passes above, followed by a ball of blue flame that flies past you and crashes into the unconscious Moradys, producing a brilliant explosion that sends the Elf rolling across the ground in a tangled mess with a smaller, darker-skinned figure. The groaning, sobbing woman picks herself up from the last of the dying flames, and you are met with the quivering face of a woman you hadn’t harbored any serious hope of seeing again.

“O-Orina! You have to find her!” Charal nearly trips over Moradys as she races over and grabs you by the arms. She’s a crying wreck, with smeared makeup and breathing so rapid and irregular you worry she might vomit on you. “No one will help me! The invaders said they would, but then they made me wear a crown and I had to decide who died and-”
You drop your sword and try to calm Charal down enough for her to speak coherently, but there’s no stopping her disjointed tale of death and destruction long enough for you to explain that she never truly had a daughter.

Your problems multiply when Moradys awakens from the unconscious slumber she fell into - why or how, you still don't know. What you do know is that she's free of it, and looks nothing short of terrified by what is happening around her.

Vala runs over to you and picks up the sword you dropped, taking it in both hands and pointing it at Moradys as your wife moves between you and the Elf.

“Stay back!” Vala warns her. “Orin, get rid of her!”

Moradys shoots to her feet without a hint of protest and moves swiftly away from Vala. “Who are you? Where am I?”

Her wandering eyes fall on the portal hanging in space, and her hands fall to her side as her eyes go wide in amazement. Crimson tendrils of energy flow out from the tear in reality, clinging to Cummragh like greedy tentacles eager to claim a tasty morsel.

“I want her back!” Charal pounds on your chest with her fist and tugs at your shirt. “You have to give her back!”

Vala threatens Moradys in between ordering you to do something about the Elf, Moradys demands to know what is going on as if she weren't the cause of most of it, and Charal's blubbery reaches such a fever pitch that you can no longer make out real words.

“I'll find her!” You push Charal away to stop her clinging to you. “I'll bring her here right now.”

You turn to a blank patch of rooftop beside you and set your mind to doing exactly that. Charal's daughter, laying there, just as you last saw her. A moment later, reality responds to your demand, though not in the way you hoped. You half-expected another failure of your often-fickle powers. What you hadn't expected was to summon forth Ribara's charred corpse.

Charal screams, and Vala vomits onto her boots. Moradys simply remains at a safe distance and looks on with a baffled expression supplemented by lip-curling disgust.

“That's not Orina!” you say to Charal. “It's Ribara.”

Your assurances fall on deaf ears, and she throws herself at you with renewed grief.

“You have to help her. I told her I love her, and now she's… and it's my fault.”

“You don't get it!” you say to her. “There's a demon in her!” You point at the Warp. “I saw it in there! A big, mean-looking thing with glowing eyes!”

But there’s just no reasoning with a woman who believes she lost a child. She pulls at your collar and shakes you like a lunatic, until finally you tear her off of you and stalk over to Ribara. One can only take so much womanly hysteria before giving in or growing angry, and you have already made your decision.

“Cry all you want, I’m not doing it! She’s evil, and a murderer, and I’ve given her more chances than she deserves!”

Charal shrieks at you and pulls at your hair, desperate grief giving way to anger and slashing nails.
Vala rushes over and pulls her off of you, allowing you to turn back to the nearby body and take notice of some movement you spotted in the corner of your eye. The corpse’s abdomen swells and bloats to absurd dimensions, causing the broken armor encasing it to crack and jut outwards as rivets and fasteners pop free and clatter to the ground.

Then, it explodes. A burnt body is a bad enough assault on the senses, and the added smell of fermented shit is enough to keep you on the edge of dry heaving. When that same body detonates in a shower of steaming organs and raw sewage, even your well-trained gag reflex can’t resist the rising nausea. You, Charal, and Vala all run from the rain of blood and guts, the two woman screaming and holding their hands over their head while you just close your eyes and swallow down the bile in your throat.

When the rain of viscera stops and you’re able to risk stopping to look back at the obliterated carcass, you see a small figure rising from the splintered rib cage. A young girl, with pale skin and short black hair covered in blood, crawls out from Ribara’s stomach and stumbles towards you. Her slender and long-limbed features mark her as an Elf, but it’s her face that is most shockingly familiar. It’s as if someone has taken Moradys - before her demonic transformation - and shrunk her down to a pint-sized version.

The girl breaks out into a run, pushing past you and Charal and making a beeline straight for Moradys, who backs away from her tiny pursuer. Not at all deterred by Moradys’ reluctance, she continues chasing her and making grabbing motions with her tiny fists. Eventually, Moradys stops trying to run and simply stares down in confusion at the young girl attempting to climb up with the aid of the larger Elf’s dress.

“What is that?” says Vala.

Moradys looks at your gathered trio with helpless, pleading eyes, then back down at her miniature version. You get the sense she hasn’t had a single idea of what is transpiring before her since she awoke. While you watch Moradys push back on the girl’s forehead to try and ward her off, the sound of soft tissue being squished draws your attention back to Ribara’s corpse. Another figure stands up from the broken rib cage, this one just a bit smaller than Ribara. He’s a young boy, olive-skinned with short black hair, and a chiseled face that looks downright imperious despite being worn by a small child.

“Demon!” you shout, recognizing the scowling visage of the Warp spirit who tried to ply you with cheap trickery. You grab your sword from Vala and charge the creature, who watches your coming attack with an idle disinterest. Just before you can strike with the glowing weapon, he waves his hand, and you are overtaken by a blinding flash of light.

You awaken to a sore back, a throbbing skull, and a chin drenched your own drool. Pushing yourself up in the hard metal chair you’re sitting in, you blink the sleep from your eyes and examine your surroundings. Suspended in the air before you are a dozens of flashing images, of stars and planetary
objects and navigational charts.

You sit at the end of a grand cathedral hall, watched over by an army of building-sized statues that watch over the vacant procession leading to your stair-top throne. At the end of the hall are a series of massive shutters that occupy the entirety of the far wall, closing you off from whatever lays on the other side.

A dark figure moves behind the colorful images, wrenching you fully awake and causing you to sit up in your throne. A hand moves the images aside from their rear, and you realize that they’re a series of computer monitors connected to your chair by a swiveling metal arm. Vala comes into view, and you wipe the spittle from your mouth while taking a mental inventory of the rest of your person.

You remember nothing after being magicked away from the rooftop, though no harm seems to have come to your person. Vala wears the same black jacket and pants you last saw her in, and the red splatter covering her from head to toe tells you that she hasn’t had a chance to clean since the two of you enjoyed a downpour of blood.

“What happened?” you say.

Vala puts her hands on her hips and frowns down at you. “We were on that rooftop, and now we’re here. You hit your head and kept babblin’ about how you were a god while I dragged you into that chair.”

She looks quite unhappy with you - and the situation in general - but you know her well enough to understand that it’s a cover for her fear and uncertainty.

“How long ago was that?” you ask her.

She shrugs. “Half a minute, maybe? I was going to look around, and then you woke up.”

Shouts ring out from halfway down the hall, and you see a shadowy figure dart out from behind one of the towering statues before hooking a right turn and running straight towards you, followed by a far smaller figure who does the same.

“You!” shouts the first woman. You recognize Moradys’ voice long before she comes within range of the yellow light shining down on the base of the stairs. “I demand to know where I am, who you are, and what is going on!”

She stops halfway up the steps, the same black-clad and demonically twisted figure you remember, but lacks the aged weariness of the woman who snapped her fingers and dropped unconscious. This one looks around with fearful, darting glances, and can barely contain the trembling of her voice.

“Mother!” shouts the smaller Elf.

Moradys looks back in horror, then races up the steps and hides behind the imposing bulk of your throne. The small Elf dashes up the steps, slipping twice and letting out a furious scream each time. Her eyes are wet with tears and her lips are turned down in a mean pout.

“Pick me up!” she screeches. You wince at a voice that could shatter glass, and Vala moves to grab hold of the little girl.

“I am not your mother, you awful thing!”

The girl screams again and slips from Vala’s grip, clambering up unto your chair and climbing over you to get to the woman behind it. You hold your hands off to the side in an ‘I’m not touching
anything’ gesture, and try to will some clothes onto the naked Elf, but nothing happens. As she walks barefoot over the armrest, her feet come into contact with the buttons lining it, producing a symphony of harsh tones.

At least one of them does something. At the opposite end of the cathedral, the slatted shutters covering the far wall curl up on themselves amidst the sound of grinding metal. Neither Moradys nor her miniature version take much notice of the opening windows, but you are so transfixed by the colorful sight that you rise from your chair and walk down the first few steps, deaf to the melee taking place behind you.

“That’s not space,” says Vala, following shortly behind you. Her statement is more question than declaration.

Outside, currents of energy that range from deep crimson to bright pink swirl by you in ceaseless eddies, a vast ocean of chaos that parts before the bow of the might ship stretched out before you.

“It’s the Warp,” you say numbly. “We’re back in the Warp. I didn’t get us out, I didn’t-”

Vala shushes you and squeezes your shoulders. “Hey, hey! It’s alright. We’re alive, aren’t we? We’ll figure the rest out later.”

‘The rest’ being a spaceship you don’t know how to pilot, an amnesiac demigod, and an out-of-control xeno child who you are growing increasingly certain is more closely related to Ribara than simply having burst out of her stomach.

You hang your head and let out an exasperated laugh. “I really thought it was over.”

Vala moves down to your step. “Our story isn’t over.” She turns you to face her and places her palms on your cheeks. You put your hands atop hers, melting in her soft embrace while the sounds of screeching Elves fade into the distance. “But I already know how it ends.”

You open your mouth to ask her ‘how’, but she flashes a mischievous smile and brings her lips to yours. Her warmth overcomes the chill of the barren room, and you grab her hair while tonguefucking her with the raw passion of a man who needs to prove to himself that he’s still alive. A sharp, anguished cry from the top of the steps shatters the moment, and you look up to see that Ribara has managed to grab twin fistfuls of Moradys’ hair, and is using her handhold to pull her mother’s head down to waist level.

“Let’s go look for Charal,” you say to Vala.

Your wife nods, and the two of you walk down the steps. Not quite hand in hand, but side by side, and closer than you have been in months.
THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.
Epilogue

The Master of the Administratum - once the second most powerful man on Terra, and now the first. With the Ecclesiarch put to the sword and the Fabricator General returned to his manufactories on Mars, the Master is able to devote his full attention to the arduous task of rebuilding those sectors of the planet destroyed in the xeno assault.

Millions dead, priceless relics lost forever to the fires of destruction, and the Immortal God Emperor of Mankind laid to final rest beneath the halls of the Imperial Palace. Yet all of that loss seems a drop in the bucket when compared to what mankind has gained.

“Now, remember. Do not call him ‘God Emperor’.” The Master turns to the Grand Marshall at his side as they walk down the skyway towards the Imperial Palace. Reconstruction has already begun in earnest, with airborne construction teams filling the night sky as they bring in new marble and golden statues to replace those damaged in the attack.

The grizzled Marshall pushes up on the brim of his officer’s cap and gives his fellow Lord a curious look.

“But he is God,” says the Marshall. “The Ecclesiarchy sanctioned his new incarnation, did they not?”

The Master frowns and lowers his voice to a whisper. They might be miles from the palace still, but it is said that the Emperor’s ears can even hear thoughts, should they echo loudly enough in one’s head.

“Yes, they did. Then our late friend was executed, and the Ecclesiarchy dissolved. He is the ‘Emperor,’ or ‘Venerable Emperor of Mankind, Hallowed Be His Name’. Just don’t use the G-word, yes?”

The Marshall grunts and nods, and the two continue onward in silence for a time. To their left and right tower gilded statues of past High Lords, few of which have had the privilege to serve under an Emperor who has moved from his golden throne.

“And you are alright with that?” says the Marshall. A distant belltower tolls, marking the passage into a new day that few on Terra thought they would ever see.

The Master shrugs. “Why wouldn’t I be? The moon is in the sky, the Emperor is on his throne, and all is right with the world.”

It has been two months since Ribara’s demonic half first spirited you aboard the spaceship hurtling through the Warp to some unknown destination. In that time, surprisingly little has changed. Complex security systems and impenetrable bulkheads bar you from much of the vessel, leaving you free to explore only a small fraction of the vast ship. You’ve yet to find Charal, though the survival
of the rest of your group has you holding onto hope that she is still alive. If not here, then somewhere else – hopefully living a happier life than you are.

Every attempt to take the ship from the Warp to realspace is met by computerized warnings that once jump coordinates have been entered and acted upon, the ship cannot drop back into realspace without risking disruption of the Gellar field and complete atomic annihilation. The finer scientific details are lost on you, but you understand enough to realize that you are on this ride until it ends. Where and when, you can only guess, as the navigational logs are biometrically locked.

What you do know for certain is that you may die of old age, you won’t succumb to starvation or boredom. The ship has enough food stores to feed an army, and your three companions provide no shortage of entertainment and frustration.

Ribara, now a full Elf and with a child’s body to match her true age, is an unholy terror that runs screaming through the halls of the ship, banging pipes on railings as she runs or climbing through the ductwork in an effort to get into the armory you chained shut after her first disastrous intrusion.

Moradys is more a pest than a terror, but no less persistent. For weeks she hounded you endlessly for answers about who she is, where she’s from, and what she’s doing with you aboard this ship. You evaded her questions with increasingly vague answers and disappearing acts, until finally she focused her full attentions on Vala, who managed to be just as vague while giving the illusion of meaningful explanations.

Moradys’ past, it seems, is completely lost to her - exactly what she had in mind, you now suspect. Every little thing is a new experience to the ancient Elf, who finds as much novel joy in rehydrating a packet of dried food as she does in watching the shifting currents of the Warp.

Then, there is the woman you’ve been avoiding the most over the last two months. That first night aboard the ship, you and Vala had slept in the same bed for the first time since she'd kept you prisoner in her cult’s temple. Perhaps it was the memory of that nightmarish time that made you panic, or perhaps it was simply fear of losing what you’ve finally managed to regain.

Whatever the reason, you fled in a panic, and fear has had you avoiding her ever since. That, and a shameful desire to see just how far she’ll go in holding onto a fragile relationship that you yourself have poured your heart and soul into. It’s a game complicated by the very unexpected connection Vala has forged with Moradys. Your wife went to great lengths to endear herself to the Elf early on, you suspect as a means to keep you from doing the same. The two became fast friends, with your very pregnant wife taking watch over Ribara so that Moradys can enjoy occasional moments of peace. It’s a strangely familial dynamic, and one that makes your skin prickle with jealousy every time you see it.

Even so, you don't try to put a stop to it. With each hand Moradys lays on Vala’s, you dare your wife to repeat the mistakes of the past and make a fool of you again. But the weeks passed, their relationship never advanced beyond wandering hands on Moradys’ part, and Vala has remained true to the vows she once broke. Of that, you have no doubt. Moradys’ jealous glares tell you just how much she would love to throw you out an airlock and finally be able to climb into Vala's pants.

The days go by in a seamless blur, until one evening you are walking through the steam-choked bowels of the ship, blanket and pillows in hand, making your way to your bedroom for the night. You've taken to changing rooms on a daily basis, as Vala had fallen into the habit of knocking on your door and asking to talk, which is not something you're ready to do. Thinking, yes - you have enough of that to do to last you years, and that is best done in solitude.

The sound of footsteps on metal grating sounds out from up ahead, and a feminine figure emerges
from the mists. Vala's hair has grown long enough that it reaches her chest, and she has lost the extra weight she put on in Cummragh.

Well, most of it. Her pregnant stomach, once hardly noticeable unless she was naked, now bulges out in front of her no matter what she wears. You've tried to use your Psyker abilities to create new clothes for her, but those powers have grown weaker as time passed. Weaker, but strangely more reliable. You can no longer make something out of nothing, but you can perform small feats of telekinesis with regularity.

“Going somewhere?” says Vala, crossing her arms under her breasts and pushing them up. Normally she would be wearing one of the baggy maintenance suits stocked in the ship, but this time she chose the low-cut top and tight black pants you created for her in Orina's tower. The pants fit her as well as ever, but the shirt doesn't even reach to her bellybutton.

Still, it's the most stylish she's looked in recent memory… and she is beautiful, even with someone else's child growing within her.

You heft the bedding in front of you. “I didn't like the old room. There was a rattling in the pipes at night.”

Vala drops her arms and walks towards you with an exaggerated sway of her hips. “Mine is plenty quiet. A little too quiet.”

She tries to take a pillow off your hands, but you pull free of her and edge your way around her through the hallway. You're tired, and her seductive smile promises to bring up all sorts of matters you're not prepared to deal with yet.

“I just want to *sleep*. That's all.”

You pull away from her and slip further down the hallway, followed by a startled but undeterred Vala.

“We can do that! If you want to sleep, we'll sleep.”

When you don't respond - partly because you're giving her offer some genuine consideration - she grabs your arm to stop you and searches your eyes with a worried look on her face.

“We don't have to sleep just us, either. It's a big bed.”

Going back to the months of depravity you endured in Cummragh is the very *last* thing you want. What you need now is a return to normalcy, or as close to such a thing as can be found on an empty warship hurtling through the Warp.

“Let's go to bed.”

You put your hand on Vala's arm and lead her back the way she came, drawing an excited gasp from your wife. She wasn't expecting you to fold so easily, apparently, though you wouldn't say you've made things easy for her. You poured a significant amount of energy into avoiding the woman you're now headed to bed with.

The two of you come to her quarters, a living space of metal walls and pipe-riddled ceiling that remains austere despite some half-hearted attempts at decorating. If there are nicer bedrooms, they remain locked behind the doors that block you from the majority of the ship outside the command sections.
“It’s not much,” says Vala.

She steps over the metal lip in the doorway, then waits for you to follow in after before slamming the door shut. It takes a few tries before the latch finally catches and the hollow echoes of the ship’s halls go quiet. Years of marriage and countless nights spent together should make this a banal affair, but you feel like a teenager about to lose his virginity. You shuffle about awkwardly, making a show of examining the military standards she’s hung over the barren walls while you try to slow your racing heart.

To your relief, Vala doesn’t give any indication that she notices the way you slip your sweaty hands in and out of your pockets five times in as many seconds. She flips a light switch on the wall, leaving you with only a nightstand lamp to see by - and enough darkness to feel comfortably hidden in.

“Do you want anything?” she asks as she makes her way over to the bed.

You shake your head and begin stripping down to your underwear. “I’m fine.”

One of your feet catches in your pants leg, and you nearly faceplant on the edge of the bed. Both of you let out a nervous laugh, and Vala joins you in undressing. Her pregnant silhouette is cast in stark relief by the lamp at her side, and fresh waves of alternating disgust and arousal wash over you. How can you two ever move past what happened in Cummragh with her carrying that thing inside of her? And how can you derive such perverse joy from watching your wife grow bloated with the fruit of her betrayal?

You consider asking her, but quickly decide that you’re far too tired to begin a conversation that will inevitably drag on for hours and turn into a shouting match that draws Moradys to Vala’s defense.

Vala slips into bed before turning out the last of the lights, and you join her after a few moments more hesitation. The bed is spacious - made for one of those giant humanoid warriors, you suspect - and not at all uncomfortable. With plenty of space left between you and Vala, you might even be able to forget she were there, could you not feel her eyes burning a hole in your skull through the pitch darkness.

Back in the days of normality, this would be the moment she asks you what you’re thinking about, and you spill your guts without hesitation. Not tonight, though. The thoughts running through your head right now are best kept in the privacy of your own mind.

Is there a medical suite onboard that could perform an abortion?

But no prying questions come. Instead, what snakes your way is a hand that creeps over your hips and onto your groin. You flinch and grab hold of her wrist out of pure reflex, but her fingers have already found their way through your fly and wrapped around your cock.

“It’s ok if you’re not in the mood,” she whispers. “I just wanna touch you.”

How kind of her to let you know that she’s already prepared herself for the possibility of your inability to perform. Insulting, yes, but not an altogether unfounded fear. You yourself have wondered how you’ll fare in a normal sexual relationship after plumbing the darkest depths of depravity and sin.

“Then you can touch me up here.”

You move her hand to your chest, well away from your cock, which had begun to hardened under her familiar ministrations. It’s good to know that your body remembers her as it used to, but your mind is in no mood to follow it down that road.
“You told me we'd talk about everything that's happened,” you say to the darkness beside you. “That comes before anything else.”

Vala's arm goes weak in your grip, and you allow her to draw it away from you. The bed creaks and the covers pull across your body as she turns away from you.

“What's there to talk about?” she says in a voice that has had all life and emotion sucked from it. “You know what I did. I know what I did.”

Her soft murmur turns to a crying whimper, and you feel the bedding pull further as she curls up into a ball.

“I'm horrible. Just tell me what I need to do. Hit me if you want to. Punish me.”

You leap up from the bed in horrified anger.

“I don't want to hit you!” you shout. “That'll make you feel better, not me! I'm trying to forgive you, and you're still... it's all about you, isn't it?”

Your own voice cracks with grieved frustration, and you are met by only silence and the blank sight of a dark room.

A soft sobbing rises up from the silence, and your anger drains away as you drop back down onto the edge of the bed. Back in those dark, violent days spent in Cummragh, you had been full of doubt. Doubt of whether you would ever see your wife again, if you were strong enough to survive the torments piled upon you, and if you could ever hope to escape.

But you had never doubted the idea that escape meant victory. Like the bloodthirsty empire that pours the lifeblood of its people into war against a hated enemy, you never considered what comes after. You've won your war - against the Dark Elves, demons, and your own weaknesses - and now you're forced to confront the trail of human wreckage that's been left behind by your battles. Everything and everyone is broken, and there's no one left to put the pieces back together.

“I feel like you hate me.” You lean forward and rest your arms against your knees. If Vala won't talk with you, then you'll at least make her listen.

“No,” you say after a moment of thoughtful lip chewing. “I think you've always hated me. You hate me for making you stay in a small town you always wanted to leave - for keeping you from the life of adventure you dreamed of.”

Vala shifts on the bed, and you twist around to face her.

“It was supposed to be us against the world. I thought we were a team, but I barely ranked above the Elf who beat and raped you.”

The image of those two together is so repulsive that you spit the words out more than speak them.

“No, no, no...” Vala murmurs. She lurches upright and tries to grab hold of your arm, but you push her away.

“I saw your face when you helped me kill her! It was the hardest choice you've ever had to make, but it should've been easy.”

Not that you were much better. Circumstances never forced you into a direct choice between Vala's life and Moradys', but you let the Elf continue living long after the point her murderous intent for
your wife became clear. Even now, you wonder if you're making a mistake by letting that amnesiac wander the ship freely. Is that old love affecting your judgement? Or simple apathy?

Vala crawls back towards you on the bed, and this time you let her take you by the shoulders and rest her forehead against your back.

“What do you want me to do?” she says.

You think for a moment. “Be honest. Do you hate me?”

Though she immediately shakes her head from side to side, it takes some time for her to answer with a weary ‘no’.

“Do you hate me?” she asks afterwards. The reason for her slow response becomes clear - to work up the courage to ask you a question she already knows the answer to. And since she already knows the answer, you might as well tell the truth.

“I don't want to,” you tell her. “And I don't like seeing you like this. You were always the stronger one. That made me feel like less of a man sometimes, but that's just the way it was. Now we're both a mess.”

Vala lifts her head from your back and draws in a long, steady breath.

“Right…” she says, as if finally recollecting some long forgotten memory. Within the span of that single word, the trembling sorrow leaves her voice and what was once a whisper becomes full speech.

Vala pulls on one of your arms, encouraging you to scoot further onto the bed and angle your back towards the headboard.

“What?” you ask, allowing her hand to guide you.

“We're done talking. Maybe tomorrow, but not now. I'm sick of it.”

You had forgotten how much of a country drawl seeps into her voice when she's relaxed. You've no doubt she's affecting the accent deliberately, but the comfortable times you associate with it still make it a relief to hear.

She maneuvers you up the bed until your back is flush with the headboard and your legs are splayed out in front of you. At first you wonder if she intends for you to sleep like this, but as she shuffles her way up your legs with her knees on either side of your thighs, you realize just what she intends to do.

You fumble for her wrists and tell her to stop, but she forces her way on top of you and forces your arms across your chest, then lowers herself atop your groin so that her pregnant belly presses into your abdomen and her hot sex clings to the underwear covering your hard cock.

“Get the fuck off me!” you hiss at her. It wouldn't take you long to overpower her, but you're reluctant to throw your pregnant wife off of you in a dark room. Even if you don't particularly care for the child inside her.

Vala slips a hand between your joined bodies to your fluid-covered underwear and tries to pull the waistband below the head of your cock, a task made difficult by how impossibly hard you've become. In the past, her tits weren't big enough to press into your face when she's sitting in your lap. Pregnancy seems to have changed that.
“I said no!” you snap.

She succeeds in pulling down your underwear, and uses her reclaimed hand to grab a fistful of your hair. You try to push her away, but end up sliding down the bed until you're nearly laying flat on it. In one last half-hearted attempt to free yourself, you roll your body from side to side, gaining momentum while your cock slides all around Vala's fluid-soaked womanhood. On the final pass, it sinks into her warm depths. Vala lets out a moaning gasp, and you stop rolling around as you sink your fingernails into her fleshy thighs.

“You said 'yes' when you fuckin' married me."

To be alone is a horrible thing. Doubly so in a place as labyrinthine as sinister as this spaceship, and thrice even when the night-cycle timers have dimmed every light on the ship. The pipes lining every corridor wall and ceiling become slithering tentacles that threaten to snatch hapless wanderers, and the grand rooms they lead to assume terrifying and dizzying dimensions when cloaked in dusty shadows.

Moradys solitary unease, and the knowledge that Vala's loneliness must be far worse, brought her to the human woman's door this night. After all, what sort of person would cling to a mother and child like some surrogate family? A sad one, surely. One with a dead man walking for a husband, and a child of questionable parentage growing in her belly. Seeing her chase after that man day after day is an unbearable sight - sickening, even. All it takes is for Moradys to get within fifty feet of Orin, and she finds herself struck with the full weight of his dark mood. What sort of man can't suffice with his own despair, and finds it necessary to drag others down with him?

That poor woman.

Moradys raps her knuckles on Vala's door, then shifts awkwardly from one foot to the other while casting anxious glances left and right down the corridor. The Elf wears a blue nightgown Vala sewed from fabric scavenged from the ship's draperies. The bottom is open to the air, allowing a cool breeze to tease at her hanging genitals. A taste of what's to come, she muses.

There's something electric in the air. Something that tells Moradys tonight will be the night that she and Vala make good on weeks of lingering touches and longing glances. The thought of finally being able to touch every part of the woman she's wanted to makes her knees wobble and engorged cock throb. With only two months worth of memory, Moradys has no idea if she's done anything like this before, but her body certainly seems to know what it wants.

As will Vala's.

Moradys presses her cock down to her thigh to keep it from tenting her gown and knocks on the door again. She needs to bury herself in Vala - right between those soft folds she glimpsed so briefly in the showers. She needs to choke her, and slap her, and pound into her guts until pain and pleasure blur together into one drool-soaked haze.
She can't wait anymore. Moradys grabs the lever on the door and rotates it downward to unlock the latch, then pushes inward. There's no light inside, only more darkness, but she is immediately greeted by the scent and sound of two bodies becoming one. A palpable aura of lust and desire claws at her body, demanding she join in with the moaning undulation of passion making the bed smack against the wall with every thrust.

Moradys knows who must be with her in that room. She knows, but still she can't help but fall to her knees and jerk her cock while listening through the cracked door. A colorful static fills the darkness of her vision, and she imagines what must be happening atop that bed. Horrible, wonderful things. Things that make a man groan and a woman moan.

Things she came here to do.

Vala cries out in the darkness. A surge of ecstatic pleasure works its way up Moradys’ abdomen, and her cock throbs in her hand, bathing her fingers in sticky warmth that shoots out in thick ropes. As the lovers in the bedroom descend from the peak of climax into the sighing bliss of post-orgasmic ecstasy, Moradys shuffles away from the doorway on her knees and stares down at her cum-covered hand in horror. Her cock, once so hard and long it rivaled her forearm in size, hung limp between her thighs.

And a mind which had once been so blissfully virgin as to never have touched the fires of true hatred, was now marked by them.

A child's laughter rings out across the ship, though none but its owner can say where it comes from. In between the eight and ninth floors of the fore section, where the vessel's innards become so twisting and complex as to give the impression of a living thing, a network of air ducts gives passage to those parts of the ship barred by the security lockdown.

Even for Ribara, they are a tight squeeze. She hates the way her knees scrape on the metal and how the heat dries out her eyes, but she spurs herself onward with images of what face her mother will wear when she sees what Ribara has grabbed from the armory this time. There is no game more fun than making mother angry, and Ribara is the best player there is. If the man-thing thinks he can stop her from playing by locking a few doors, then he is wrong.

A familiar green light shines through a vent in the bottom of the duct, and Ribara gasps in delight before scurrying ahead like some burrowing animal in its subterranean home. The joy she felt vanishes when she peers through the slatted vent and sees that the green glow isn't that of armory shelves stocked full of plasma batteries, but clear tubes of some noxious-looking fluid.

Ribara roars in frustration, rolling around in the duct while throwing elbows and feet in every direction. The screws holding the vent in place pop out, the vent swings open, and Ribara falls onto the floor below. Pain shoots through her back and shoulder, and she cries out in pain.

She's done playing. She wants to find her mother, or at least the woman-thing, and cry while they
make soft noises and push her face into their chest.

Choking down her sobs and clutching her arm, Ribara picks herself up and examines her surroundings. There are more tubes than she initially thought - both to her left and right - and all bear a mean-looking symbol of warning she knows the meaning of.

Sickness.

There are many things like that. Things she knows, but doesn't know how she knows them. Taking a step closer to the nearest of the tubes - it's just a bit larger than she is - she peers through the intersecting lines of the biohazard symbol at the frothing liquid. As she watches the hypnotic play of bubbles within, she spots a small bit of writing at the center of the symbol

“Veerus boom,” says Ribara, forcefully enunciating each of the strange words. She knows the sounds, but not the meaning behind them. “Sampla eet own…”

She stops mid-sentence and gasps. Not at the gibberish written on the tube, but at the idea that has bubbled into her thoughts like the air in the tube before her. A stubbed toe and a few tears had earned her endless there-there’s and pat-pats from the woman-thing.

What would a sickness earn her? A real sickness, with fevers and chills and sleepiness?

Ribara can hardly contain her excitement as she rushes about the room in search of a weapon. With nothing else in sight except more sick-tubes, she wrenches a pipe free of an exposed section of wall, letting loose a spray of steam that quickly begins to flood the room. She goes to the furthest of the three sick-tubes, brings the pipe back for a mighty swing, and grins.

In the past…

The child Emperor steps free of the eviscerated carcass he’d been birthed from, then watches as Orin charges at him, shouting like a madman with a sword of light held above his head. Behind him, the wife, the slave, the demon, and the Emperor’s lesser half are engaged in their own petty disagreements. He is glad to be free of the mind he’d been imprisoned in, and will be happier still to be away from the idiotic chaos of these people’s lives.

He waves his hand, and Orin’s eyes roll back mid-stride as he collapses to the ground. The sword clatters from his grip and comes to a stop before the Emperor’s feet. Orin’s companions fall next, slumping into unconsciousness and leaving the rooftop in merciful quiet. The Emperor turns around, thrusts his fingers into the air before him, and tears open a hole in space. On the other side of the portal sits the command hall of his lost legion’s ship, now a lifeless monument to their folly.

But it is not without its use - nor are the mortals and amnesiac demigod slumbering before him. He
has been free of that accursed prison of the soul for less than a minute, and already his mind turns
towards the future, weaving plans within plans that will take centuries to come to fruition. Sweeping
his hand across the rooftop, he uses his telekinetic powers to fling each of the unconscious bodies
through the portal.

The slave woman, Charal, is the last to go. He grabs hold of her with his mind and turns to the portal,
preparing to close it as soon she’s through. But just as he begins to pull her through the air, he meets
resistance and turns back to see that he is not the only one with an interest in the woman who, up
until half a Terran year prior, would not have merited a single thought from anyone.

A bloodied Warpspawn, caked in red dirt and its own burnt feathers, holds Charal by her ankle,
pulling against the Emperor with all its might. The thing has taken on the appearance of a human
woman, one whose beauty is more than a bit marred by the battle it had with the Psyker that helped
feed it. Even so, it fights with a tenacity that has him turning the full might of his vast intellect at the
entity. He strips away its physical form bit by bit, but still it resists, clinging to its former host with
two hands that are blasted away to reveal tendrils of dark energy that struggles to maintain its
coherence among the coming embrace of the Warp around them.

Were this battle of wills the only event in the galaxy, it would have only one possible conclusion.
But the galaxy is a busy place, and his intervention is required elsewhere. Without frustration nor
malice, he turns away from the creature and closes the portal to the Thousand Sons’ frigate, sealing
all but Charal on the other side. As he prepares to teleport himself to Terra and make his presence
known, he sees, in the corner of his eye, that formless spirit flitting off into the Warp with Charal
clutched in its twilight embrace.

In the present...

Ryla sits on a hill overlooking Cummragh’s wreckage, surrounded by dozens of her fellow slaves.
What remains of the city is strewn out over the blasted landscape of the planet it had impacted with,
like the entrails of a freshly-gutted squidling. Far off in the distance, so far away that it is hardly
visible through the smoke-choked atmosphere, a particularly large chunk of building has taken out
the side of an active volcano, creating a lava flow that snakes its way over to them and cuts through
the shattered cistern they had been hiding in.

It is nothing short of a miracle that any of them survived, though none of the slaves know quite what
to do with that good fortune. There are no landmarks to distinguish the landscape, beyond more
blasted plains and rolling hills spotted by Cummragh’s corpse. Above them, there is not a single sign
of the stars that Ryla remembered from the time before she had come to Cummragh. Only a vast,
seething ocean of violet energy that simultaneously hypnotizes and horrifies her.

“Is this hell?” says a man standing to her right. He picks up some dirt and throws it into the wind,
then begins spitting as it blows right back into his face.
The woman beside him scoffs. “How could that be? We are not allowed in their hell.”

A heated argument erupts among the group, involving everything from practical concerns of food and water to academic matters of Drukhari theology. Ryla endures their shouting with a calm stoicism that can only be acquired with age, but snaps to alertness as she spots a group of black-armored figures moving through the valley beneath them.

“Elves!” she shouts, climbing to her feet as fast as her old muscles will allow her.

The added danger of their old Masters does little to help the group decide on a course of action. A few flee, but then, seeing nothing in the distance but endless peril, stop and look back to their group. Others pick up rocks, but waver as the well-armed and well-armored Elves trudge up the hill. The slaves that had run return, and the ones that entertained a brief moment of defiance drop their makeshift weapons and wait for the inevitable.

“Mon-keigh! None of you move!” shouts the woman at the head of the group. Her head is shaven except for a long mohawk of red hair that hangs down to the small of her back, and she sports a fresh gash across her right cheek.

The three Elves following her level their pistols at the group of slaves while the leader chews her lip and examines them one by one. It takes only a few seconds for her eyes to reach Ryla at the far end, and she gives a dissatisfied grunt.

“That one, that one…” The leader points to one slave after another, calling them out to her followers, who forcibly separate them from the larger group. Once the’ve been winnowed down by nearly half, Ryla sees what the pattern behind her decisions. The young, healthy men and the attractive women have been pulled aside, leaving those like Ryla who are too old to perform manual labor or serve as a satisfying hole to fuck.

“We move,” says the Elf. “Kill the rest.”

The other three point their pistols at the group of undesirables, and Ryla tilts her head upwards. The twisting currents of the heavens continue their bizarre undulations, flashing all sorts of unnatural colors, and in their midst Ryla swears she sees the white glint of a distant star. She pretends she is back on her homeworld, staring up at the sky she never got to show her daughter. The fantasy fades with her smile, but still the star remains. Even morestartlingly, it grows larger and brighter.

One of the slaves in the other group, a man young enough to be her grandson, shouts in anger and charges the lead elf, holding above his head the rock he had hidden from view. He smashes her in the side of the skull with it, sending her reeling back into one of her comrades. Another one of the elves points her pistol at him and fires, catching him in the side and sending him down in a fit of screaming pain.

The noises of bloody battle vanish, swallowed up by a hum of droning energy that grows in power with the approaching star. There’s a bright flash, and an explosion of air that hits Ryla with the force of a cannon, throwing her onto her buttocks. When she opens her eyes, the star has vanished. In its place, hovering no more than a dozen feet from the ground, is a woman. She has tan skin, braided brown hair, and wears a long dress of luminous white feathers that seem immune to the red dust that clings to everything else in sight. Two severed heads hang from a sash tied around her waist, one that of a Dark Elf, the other a man. Both are still fresh enough that the severed stumps drip with blood, staining her otherwise flawless garment.

“I do not want any fighting in my world,” says the woman. “Do you understand?”
She speaks with the stern but caring tone of a disapproving mother, drifting through the air to meet the eyes of each of the bowled-over Elves and humans. When she comes to Ryla, she Narrowes her eyebrows at her as she waits for a response. Ryla nods in fervent agreement, and the woman resumes her place in the center of the group. The young man who attacked the Elves lays in the dirt, clutching at his side and huffing in pain, though not bleeding in any serious amount. The Elf who shot him, on the other hand, clutches her severed pistol-hand and shrieks in agony.

The Elf leader sits up, eyes wide with the shock of a concussed woman and scalp bleeding profusely. She looks up at the floating figure, and her jaw drops open as the mysterious being moves in front of her.

“I make the rules, so you better not break them! If you do, I will be angry.”

She puts her hands on her hips and bends over at the hip to stare the Elf in the eye. The dumbfounded Elf gives a slow nod, and the woman cracks a self-satisfied smile.

“Excuse me,” says one of the young woman tending to the injured slave. “Are there other rules?”

The being turns her attention to the new speaker, turning away from the Elf and drifting towards the slaves. She launches into a litany of new rules which, while mostly quite reasonable, seem to have no common theme beyond aiming to stop those acts that offend her angelic sensibilities.

“Once someone is married, they aren’t allowed to marry again. No fucking someone in their womanhood, unless they agree to it. No fucking them in the ass, unless they agree to it. No fucking them in the mouth, unless they agree to it.”

The more Ryla hears, the more she likes. If this is indeed damnation, then this must be the Drukhari’s feared Goddess - the one they never spoke about to their slaves, and only mentioned to each other in whispers. A being feared not because of its cruelty, but because its judgement is so anathema to the horrific tastes of the Elves who inevitably find themselves in her clutches upon death.

For Ryla, and all the other slaves who survived Cummragh’s near destruction, there are worse fates than to serve in hell.

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